



to the same thing or the same property, but each has a meaning which is independent of the process of definition in which they are equated to each other. This kind of real definition Hempel calls a meaning analysis, or an analytic definition of the idea or the concept of piety.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand a real definition might be an assertion, as a matter of empirical fact, that such and such conditions, e. g., conditions A, B, and C, jointly, constitute both the necessary and sufficient conditions for the realization of the phenomenon being defined.. This Hempel calls an empirical analysis, and it generally has the character of an empirical law. Hempel uses the illustration of defining air as "a mixture, in specified proportions, of oxygen, nitrogen, and inert gasses."¹⁸⁷ These three "conditions" together, in proper proportions always constitute an instance of air, and any instance of air will be a case of these three conditions appearing jointly and simultaneously in proper proportions. The formal structure of this kind of real definition would read: "'x is Air' if and only if 'x contains a certain % of oxygen, and, x contains a certain % of nitrogen, and, x contains a certain % of inert gases.'" In symbolic notation, if we represent "contains a certain % of oxygen" by "%O," "contains a certain % of

¹⁸⁶Hempel, Fundamentals of Concept Formation, p. 8.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.



nitrogen" by "%N." and "contains a certain % of inert gases" by "%IG," the definition will read as follows:

$$A_x \equiv \%O_x \cdot \%N_x \cdot \%IG_x$$

This kind of "empirical analysis" definition, as Hempel points out, has the character of a general empirical law, and its validation would require reference to empirical evidence about the characteristics of the phenomenon being defined.¹⁸⁸

It seems to me that the kind of definition of human nature or of man that is intended, and that is needed for the sciences of man, is this kind of "empirical analysis" real definition. In other words, if we were able to determine the characteristics, properties, propensities, or, in general, the proper "units" in terms of which to analyze human nature or man; if we were able to determine this list of "units" exhaustively; and if we were to put this exhaustive list of units in conjunction with each other; we would have a "real" definition of man in conformity with the above paradigm. If the lower case letter "m" were to represent the general term "man," and the capital letters A, B, C, D, E, F, Z were to represent exhaustively the proper units of analysis of man, the definition of man, or of human nature, symbolically would be:

$$m_x \equiv A_x \cdot B_x \cdot C_x \cdot D_x \cdot E_x \cdot F_x \cdot Z_x$$

¹⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 7-8.



Verbally, this definition would read: "Anything (x) is human, or is a man, if and only if it possesses or exhibits properties or propensities A and B and C and D and E and F andZ." This definition would refer to the stable and persistent characteristics or propensities a person has in common with other human beings, and would define a range of possible and, theoretically, predictable behavior. The predictability of the behavior of individuals who fit into this definition would be reduced by the fact that, in addition to possessing the characteristics comprehended under the definition, each individual possesses certain unique characteristics of his own. Indeed, one is tempted to speculate that it is this factor of uniqueness that explains why prediction is more limited and less accurate in the human sciences than in the physical sciences, namely, that the degree of uniqueness exhibited by each human being, over and above the characteristics he shares with other members of the species, is much greater than the degree of uniqueness exhibited by individual specimens of other species of things, both organic and inorganic.

Such a definition is free of the vagueness of "essentialist" definitions, and at the same time fits into the methodological requirement for any science, namely, that the science have a stable, persistent, invariant subject matter for its study, and that this invariant subject matter be such that, while remaining the same, it will behave in



varying ways under varying conditions and within varying situations. This kind of definition is also, as Hempel points out, akin to an empirical generalization. It is therefore an empirical problem to determine how the subject matter--human beings--which remains the same, varies in varying situations; the range of the subject matter's variability; the limits or predictable reaches of its variability, i. e., the line of demarcation beyond which any "x," though it might possess some of the characteristics included in the definition of man, could no longer be classified as such; what might happen if specimens of the subject matter were subjected to conditions beyond the range of its variability (e. g., the physical and psychological tortures and "brainwashing" depicted by Arthur Koestler in Darkness at Noon and by George Orwell in 1984, the conditions under which concentration camp inmates were kept by the Nazis, being kept for months in a condition of near starvation, being kept without sleep for days), etc. etc.

There are other problems also entailed by this definition of man, some of them both empirical and logical, and at least one also entails considerations of ethics. I am referring to such problems as the possibility of major biological mutations or genetic changes in what is now man; would we still be talking about the species man in the event of such genetic changes, or about some other species, and at which point would such genetic changes go beyond the range of variability of the human species as defined, and



thus cease to be human? There is the related problem of Eugenics on the one hand, and on the other hand the recent discussions of man's "directing his own evolution," and evolving to "higher levels."¹⁸⁹ There is the ethical problem as to the sense in which the "next development" in man that is talked about in connection with this planned evolution would be "better" than what preceded it. There is also the logical problem as to what it means to say that man, as he is today, would plan for the coming into being of a species of what would in at least some sense be non-men.

These are no doubt important problems. But, barring these, and concentrating on man as he is at present, the definition proposed is theoretically and methodologically sound, and contains implicitly within it, as pointed out above, general guidelines for further investigation of the nature of man. That some such idea of the definition of man is assumed more or less crudely in all undertakings to study man and society, including the efforts of our group of social psychologists, appears to me quite clear. It is also attested to in an interesting passage by a psychiatrist, the late Harry Stack Sullivan, where he states what he calls

¹⁸⁹See Gardner Murphy, Human Potentialities, op. cit.; Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Human Nature as a Product of Evolution," New Knowledge in Human Values, ed. A. H. Maslow (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), pp. 75-85; Julian Huxley, "Man's Role in Nature," Reconstruction in Religion, ed. Alfred E. Kuenzli (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 239-249; also other writings by Julian Huxley.



"The One-Genus Postulate":

I now want to present what I used to call the one-genus hypothesis or postulate. This hypothesis is as follows: We shall assume that everyone is much more simply human than otherwise. . . . In other words, the differences between any two instances of human personality--from the lowest-grade imbecile to the highest-grade genius--are much less striking than the differences between the least-gifted human being and a member of the nearest other biological genus. Man--however undistinguished biologically--as long as he is entitled to the term, human personality, will be very much more like every other instance of human personality than he is like anything else in the world. . . . it is to some extent on this basis that I have become occupied with the science, not of individual differences, but of human identities, or parallels, one might say. In other words, I try to study the degrees and patterns of things which I assume to be ubiquitously human.¹⁹⁰

It is of course clear that the sciences of man have not developed the kind of "empirical analysis," real definition of man and human nature suggested above. Such a definition should be on the one hand an assumption at the beginning of all investigations of man and society, and at the same time an empirical goal of all such investigations. Whether it will ever be possible to discover all the characteristics, propensities, variables, or units, which in conjunction with each other would constitute a complete definition of man, is at present not an answerable question. However, there is no reason to assume that the study of

¹⁹⁰Harry Stack Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry, ed. Helen Swick Perry and Mary Ladd Gawel (New York: The William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, 1953); reprinted in The Collected Works of Harry Stack Sullivan (two vols.; New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), Vol. I, pp. 32-33.



man has not already uncovered systematically some of these propensities or units, neither is there any reason to assume that systematic knowledge of man may not grow in the future, and additional propensities systematically uncovered and added to the evolving definition. It is on such partial knowledge that additional knowledge is generally built; and partial knowledge is not equivalent to no knowledge, and is better than no knowledge.

In connection with the kind of definition we have been discussing, there are two searching comments by Ernest Cassirer that should be noted before proceeding to the next section where I shall try to indicate the kinds of units, or variables, or propensities that appear to be employed or emphasized by our group of social psychologists in their explicit or implicit concept or definition of human nature.

First, Cassirer raises the general question as to whether this kind of empirical definition is satisfactory, i. e., whether it would give us a sense of the "hidden driving force" of human life, and the sense of the "unity of human nature." Cassirer's own words in which he raises the question are as follows:

Can we be content with counting up in a merely empirical manner the different impulses that we find in human nature? For a really scientific insight these impulses would have to be classified and systematized. Obviously, not all of them are on the same level. We must suppose them to have a definite structure--and one of the first and most important tasks of our psychology and theory of culture is to discover this structure. In the complicated wheelwork of human life we must find the hidden driving force which sets the whole



mechanism of our thought and will in motion. The principal aim of all these theories was to prove the unity and homogeneity of human nature. But if we examine the explanations which these theories were designed to give, the unity of human nature appears extremely doubtful.¹⁹¹

There are two instructive caveats here. First, in developing the inventory of propensities, or other units, that is required by Hempel's "empirical analysis" kind of definition, the lurking danger of fragmentizing human nature must be kept in mind at all times. It must always be remembered that a definition, partial, developing, or in the long run hopefully a complete definition, is in the end only an explanation, only to legomenon--only what can be said about man-- and is disparate from what the living human being is. It will always have to be remembered that while we may talk about propensities, or motives, or needs, or impulses (Cassirer), or other units, even in the hypothetical case of our having distilled out all of these units, it is ultimately the total, unified, individual human being that acts, and not any or all impulses or motives or propensities.

The second caveat is against the assumption that, if we succeed in defining human nature exhaustively, through an exhaustive inventory of proper propensities, we shall have succeeded in grasping fully "the complicated wheelwork of human life," or "the hidden driving force which sets the whole mechanism of our thought and will in motion." Such

¹⁹¹Ernest Cassirer, An Essay on Man, op. cit., pp. 20-21.



an assumption would be an arrogant error. No science, including the physical sciences, can claim or, if it is a genuine science, ever does claim, to give exhaustive knowledge of that sector of reality which is the subject of its investigations. At most, science investigates, and succeeds in reporting on, selected aspects of reality. The same is true of the sciences of man. That their pursuit would give us only partial knowledge of man even when their investigations would be most successful, is no reason for not pursuing them. As to the larger question, i. e., whether man will ever be able to attain full knowledge of reality, this is a speculative problem in metaphysics and epistemology which is beyond the scope of our inquiry. There is always a great deal of philosophical comfort and consolation in John Locke's wise observation that "The candle that is set up in us shines bright enough for all our purposes."¹⁹²

Cassirer's second comment on an empirical definition of man is that every philosopher (and, one might add, every psychologist) thinks he has discovered the most important faculty or faculties, propensity or propensities, and, starting out from these arbitrary assumptions, he proceeds to try to squeeze man into this preconceived mold:

¹⁹²John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book I, Chapter I, par. 5.



Every philosopher believes he has found the mainspring and master-faculty--l'idee maitresse, as it was called by Taine. But as to the character of this master faculty all the explanations differ widely from, and contradict, one another. Each individual thinker gives his own picture of human nature. All these philosophers are determined empiricists: they would show us the facts and nothing but the facts. But their interpretation of the empirical evidence contains from the very outset an arbitrary assumption--and this arbitrariness becomes more and more obvious as the theory proceeds and takes on a more elaborate and sophisticated aspect. Nietzsche proclaims the will to power, Freud signalizes the sexual instinct, Marx enthrones the economic instinct. Each theory becomes a Procrustean bed on which the empirical facts are stretched to fit a preconceived pattern.¹⁹³

Except for the names and the doctrines (and except for the misinterpretation of Freud), Cassirer might well have been talking about psychologists in general, or about social psychologists, with their multiplicity of preconceived theories of human nature masquerading as descriptive empirical science. But the answer to this problem, to which Cassirer properly directs our attention, is not less empiricism but more empiricism, plus probing, scalpel-like analysis. Psychologies must be analyzed, their preconceived assumptions must be exhibited, and their assumptions and conclusions examined in the light of empirical evidence. Only thus will dependable knowledge have an opportunity to grow.

We now turn, in the next section and in the following two chapters, to an examination (over and above what has been done in the preceding chapters and sections) of some of the concepts and preconceptions of our group of social

¹⁹³Cassirer, An Essay on Man, p. 21.



psychologists.

F. Some of the Units Employed in Defining Human Nature

Man's nature, like all nature, is composed of relatively stable structures. The success of psychological science, therefore, as of any science, depends in large part upon its ability to identify the significant units of which its assigned portion of the cosmos is composed. Without its table of elements chemistry could not exist. Where would physics be without its quanta, or biology without the cell? All science is analytic, and analysis means 'to loosen or unbind.'¹⁹⁴

The subject of the proper units of analysis for the definition of human nature or man has been in a most unsatisfactory and unproductive state from the very earliest efforts in Western thought to study the nature of man systematically. This state of affairs has shown no significant improvement in contemporary social psychology, or psychology in general. The profusion and confusion of terms suggested to represent alleged units or ingredients in the psychological nature of man is bewildering, and is, as Cassirer suggested, related to the abundance of preconceptions concerning the nature of man that are discernible in the literature of this field of inquiry. Allport's review of this subject leads him to the conclusion that

¹⁹⁴Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, p. 311, and Personality and Social Encounter, p. III.



It is clear that we have not yet solved the problems of the units of man's nature, though the problem was posed twenty-three centuries ago.¹⁹⁵

In his historical review of the "Search for Units in the Past" Allport reminds us that, beginning with early Greek Philosophy and down to the 17th century, European thought analyzed human nature and personality in terms of the four temperaments, each corresponding to one of the four "humoral elements," each of which in turn corresponded to one of the four basic elements in nature as propounded in pre-Socratic Greek philosophy. The four humors and their corresponding "humoral elements" and basic elements of nature, were the following:

Melancholic	--	black bile	--	earth
Phlegmatic	--	phlegm	--	water
Sanguine	--	blood	--	air
Choleric	--	yellow bile	--	fire ¹⁹⁶

Allport's historical review continues with the period between the middle of the 17th century and the middle of the 19th century, when man was analyzed and defined in terms of "faculties," such as perception, will, desire, understanding, imagination, reason, attention, memory, etc. This was followed later in the 19th century by Franz Joseph Gall's

¹⁹⁵Allport, Personality and Social Encounter, p. 112.

¹⁹⁶Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, pp. 36-39 and pp. 312-313; also Personality and Social Encounter, p. 111.

emphasis on the kind of faculties that come closer to "traits" or personal qualities, with a resulting mixture of such elements as self-esteem, good nature, firmness, wit, vanity, love of offspring, friendliness, etc.¹⁹⁷ Then followed in succession sentiments, instincts, drives, wishes (William I, Thomas' "four wishes"), factors, needs, etc., etc.¹⁹⁸

If we looked at a randomly assembled list of units, or elements, or basic structures that appear in psychological literature today, we would find no helpful guide to advance our efforts in the analysis or definition of the nature of man. I present here such an abbreviated list, arranged alphabetically except for the last one, selected from among the units or elements referred to most frequently, either affirmatively or critically, by our group of social psychologists:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Attitudes | 8. Intellectual capacities |
| 2. Dispositions | 9. Intentions |
| 3. Drives (tension-reduction, homeostatic drives) | 10. Interests |
| 4. Factors | 11. Motives (conscious and unconscious) |
| 5. Faculties | 12. Needs |
| 6. Habits, habit systems | 13. Propensities |
| 7. Instincts | 14. Purposes |

¹⁹⁷Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, pp. 47-48, 313.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p. 313.



- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 15. Schema (conceptions
of the world) | 18. Values |
| 16. Sentiments | 19. Wishes |
| 17. Traits (including
expressive traits) | 20. Need-dispositions |

It would take too long, and would probably serve no significant purpose, to comment on each of these suggested units. Nor would I presume (even if I were competent to do it, which I am not) to try to bring some order into this embarrassment of conceptual and terminological riches. Rather, I shall comment briefly on each of the five suggested unit-names upon which the discussions of our social psychologists focus with the greatest persistence, and then suggest, as a procedural matter, a single term to be employed in the discussions below, for the remainder of the present inquiry.

Instinct, drive, motive, trait, and need are the concepts that receive most attention from our social psychologists in connection with their own efforts to find one or more terms that would represent some of the basic structural elements in the psychological constitution of man. (It should be noted that, except for the concept of "instinct," I make no reference in the present sections to other Freudian concepts, such as ego, superego, id, etc. These have been discussed at considerable length in Chapter III, above.) Two general observations must be made about these five concepts before we discuss each one separately.



First, it should be clear that they are theoretical constructs (Cf. supra, pp. 118-126). To quote Henry A. Murray on the concept of need:

. . . needs are not discernible facts. A need is an intervening variable, hidden in the head, the operation of which can only be inferred on the basis of certain criteria. Hence, the task of identifying an active need is not that of labelling the kind of behavior that is observed, but of making a diagnosis.¹⁹⁹

What is true of needs is also true of the other four concepts, in spite of the claims by some Behaviorists that instincts are "real," are organic and physiological. No one has ever seen or touched an instinct and no one ever expects to. Like the other four concepts, instincts are capsulated summaries of inferences made by psychologists. It is perhaps of more than biographical interest that Allport, in his earlier book, Personality, wrote about traits in almost hypostatic terms, saying that a trait has "more than nominal existence, it is independent of the observer, it is really there."²⁰⁰ However, in his most recent book, Allport says that ". . . we would do well to speak of a 'hypothetical construct' in discussing traits, "provided we do not confuse 'hypothetical construct' with mere fiction," and see traits as "action tendencies existing in a person," and "aspects of personality."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹Henry A. Murray and Clyde Kluckhohn, "Outline of a Conception of Personality," Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁰⁰Allport, Personality, p. 289.

²⁰¹Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, pp. 337, 340.



The second observation is that these concepts appear to point to "dispositions" in man. To quote Murray again, "A need is a general disposition which commonly becomes associated . . . with a number of specific entities . . . and . . . with a number of kinds of (semi-specific) entities . . ." ²⁰² Disposition concepts have assumed a position of considerable importance in recent philosophical discussion generally, as well as in the literature of the philosophy of science, and I shall have a word to say about the concept "disposition" itself later in this section, in connection with the subject under discussion. It may be helpful, however, for later reference, to note here two recent explanations of disposition concepts, one by Ryle and the other by Hempel:

When we describe glass as brittle, or sugar as soluble, we are using dispositional concepts, the logical force of which is this. The brittleness of glass does not consist in the fact that it is at a given moment actually being shattered. It may be brittle without ever being shattered. To say that it is brittle is to say that if it ever is, or ever has been, struck or strained, it would fly, or have flown, into fragments. To say that sugar is soluble is to say that it would dissolve, or would have dissolved, if immersed in water. . . . To possess a dispositional property is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change, when a particular condition is realized. The same is true about specifically human dispositions such as qualities of character. ²⁰³

²⁰²Murray and Kluckhohn, "Outline of a Conception of Personality," op. cit., p. 19.

²⁰³Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 43.



Hempel uses another kind of example:

The property term 'magnetic' is an example of a disposition term: it designates, not a directly observable characteristic, but rather a disposition, on the part of some physical objects, to display specific reactions (such as attracting small iron objects) under certain specifiable circumstances (such as the presence of small iron objects in the vicinity). The vocabulary of empirical science abounds in disposition terms . . .²⁰⁴

To return now to the five concepts which appear most frequently in the literature as suggested elements or structural units in man's psychological make-up. There are serious difficulties and defects in each. However, we can make our comments here quite brief.

Instincts.--Some of the difficulties surrounding the theory of instincts have already been alluded to above in Chapters II and III, in connection with the discussion of the S-R and Freudian doctrines of human nature. Here let me only add, and explain, the observation that the trouble with instinct theory is that it either accounts for too little in the nature of man, or for too much. In one way or another, this observation has been made by several of our social psychologists. Instinct theory accounts for too little when it is of the Behaviorist variety, and offers as the building-blocks of man's psychological constitution, or as the units of human behavior, a group of neuro-chemical, physiological instincts. Contrary to the claims of some

²⁰⁴Carl G. Hempel, Fundamentals of Concept Formation, p. 24.



Behaviorists, such instincts do and of necessity must leave out much human experience, such as conscious, intentional, purposive behavior; non-instrumental, intrinsically satisfying, contemplative, or expressive behavior; social relations and interhuman experiences, etc., etc. Instincts, in this theory, are derived from infra-human models of behavior, and from a hypothetical pre-human model of "original," primitive, pre-social "man," and they are incapable of constituting more than a small segment of an empirical definition of man.

On the other hand, those instinct theories that have gone beyond Behaviorism, and have proposed doctrines which include non-physiological instincts as proposed units in the psychological constitution of man (e. g., William McDougall) account for too much, and therefore really do not explain at all. These theories multiply instincts without limit: a gregarious instinct to explain social behavior; a parental instinct to explain tenderness toward children; an instinct of flight to explain fear reactions; an instinct of pugnacity to explain war; instincts of workmanship, competition, acquisitiveness, play, curiosity, thought, and so on, almost ad infinitum. Allport reminds us that, as far back as 1924, a survey of the literature in the field by L. L. Bernard disclosed that there were approximately 14,000 alleged instincts.²⁰⁵ Obviously these are purely

²⁰⁵Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, p. 201.



ad hoc listings, a new "instinct" being invented each time some phenomenon in human experience or behavior needed to be explained. This procedure does not explain. It merely restates in a different way the facts or the phenomena to be explained. And this is what is meant by saying that instincts explain too much, and consequently explain little or nothing in the basic structure of human nature.

Drives.--Drives too were dealt with earlier in Chapter II, in connection with the S-R theory of human nature, as were the concepts of tension-reduction and of the urge to reach states of homeostatic equilibrium. To suggest that man's constitution is accounted for exhaustively by some catalogue of drives, which create tensions that are intolerable to the organism and that must be reduced or eliminated, is to leave out of the definition of man all the subtle complexities of human behavior and experience in which a multiple variety of tensions are essential parts of the experience, and are pursued and cherished rather than disliked and gotten rid of. Neither can the physiological facts and processes that are explained in the concept of homeostasis serve as a model, with the notion that drives for homeostatic equilibrium constitute satisfactory units for the explanation of the non-physiological aspects of man. The evidence is too overwhelming that man's life either could not be sustained, or would be something altogether different from what it is, without the infinitely



many rejections of homeostatic equilibrium and serenity, or without the many strivings for intellectual, emotional, or social stimulation, excitement, and novelty which make for disequilibrium.

Motives.--The discussion of the concept of motivation in Chapter II above should, it seems to me, be sufficient to show that we do not have here a satisfactory, generic concept for the basic units or elements in the psychological nature of man. "Motives are reasons of a directed sort," as Peters told us, and they explain conscious, rule-following, purposive behavior. To use the term "motive" also in three other senses, namely, in the sense of unconscious motives, in the sense of neuro-chemical or physiological explanations of human behavior including such explanations of purposes, and thirdly, in the sense of causal Freudian explanations of purposes, is most confusing, and hardly contributes to the development of an integrated inventory of units for an empirical definition of human nature.

Traits.--There has been no occasion earlier in this inquiry to discuss extensively the subjects of traits. A brief outline of the theory of traits is therefore necessary. Gordon W. Allport has been the most vocal proponent of the importance of traits, and some commentators have gone to the



extent of calling Allport's work "trait psychology."²⁰⁶

In his earlier work Allport developed and emphasized a theory of individual traits,²⁰⁷ with only minor attention to common traits. In his recent work he has given much greater attention to a "Theory of Common Traits."²⁰⁸ Allport's definition of a common trait is as follows:

A common trait is a category for classifying functionally equivalent forms of behavior in a general population of people. . . . a common trait to some extent reflects veridical and comparable dispositions in many personalities who, because of a common human nature and common culture, develop similar modes of adjusting to their environments, though to varying degrees.

If this statement seems too technical, the reader may prefer the simple though less precise statement that a common trait is any generalized disposition in respect to which people can be profitably compared.²⁰⁹

Allport gives various examples of traits, and I list some of them:

This man, we say, is gruff and shy, but a hard worker; that woman is fastidious, talkative, and stingy. . . . a former student [is characterized] as ambitious, friendly, an enthusiastic teacher, but having a quick temper.²¹⁰

Examples of common traits are, according to Allport,

²⁰⁶Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1957), p. 261.

²⁰⁷Allport, Personality, Chapters XI and XII.

²⁰⁸Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, Chapter XIV.

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 349.

²¹⁰Ibid., p. 332.



. . . neuroticism, social extraversion-introversion, authoritarianism, manifest anxiety, need for achievement, masculinity or femininity of interests, conformity.²¹¹

In his summary of the chapter on common traits, Allport says that "Personality can be analyzed--to a certain extent and with partial success--in terms of common traits."²¹² He repeats that traits are dispositions, in respect to which people in a population can be compared, and he uses as another example the following: "One man, we say, is more dominant than another."²¹³ Now, apart from Allport's own indication that it is only "to a certain extent and with partial success" that man's constitution can be analyzed in terms of traits, there are two other observations that need to be made with reference to the suggestion that traits might be the structural units in terms of which an empirical definition of man might be developed. First, the concept is vague. Allport points out that "there are about 18,000 terms in the English language descriptive of alleged human traits,"²¹⁴ and this number does not include "the vast number of hyphenated and compound expressions: nature lover, a hater of affectation," etc.²¹⁵ Even when this large

²¹¹Ibid., p. 342.

²¹²Ibid., p. 356.

²¹³Ibid.

²¹⁴Ibid., pp. 336 and 353.

²¹⁵Ibid., p. 355.



number of terms is narrowed down to include only those that have direct "relevance to the study of the structure of personality," perhaps the number of single terms "pointed clearly to the designation of permanent . . . traits is between 4,000 and 5,000, and this does not include the large number of combinations of words that are possible, and that make "the number of accessible trait-designations . . . far, far greater."²¹⁶ One aspect of the difficulty inherent in this fact of the multiplicity of trait-names is similar to the difficulty with the concept of instincts, namely, that for every kind of behavior which we may single out for our attention for one or another reason, a different trait-name can be proposed. This hardly constitutes effective empirical definition or explanation.

The second observation on the concept of trait is that it is too non-directive to serve satisfactorily as the sole kind of building block in the make-up of man. By this I mean that traits are not action-concepts. This was pointed out above as an observation made by Peters and others as well. A trait tells us the manner, the style, the quality of a person's many actions; it does not tell us that a person will act, or what actions he will take. A person characterized by the trait of say, extroversion, or anxiety,

²¹⁶Ibid.



will do many things in a certain way or in certain ways, different from the way or ways in which other persons not characterized by these traits will do these same things. However, our knowledge of the person's trait will not tell us whether he will do the things we are talking about. This kind of non-directive concept is useful in the analysis of personality, but is not adequate as a fundamental structural unit in the nature of man.

Needs.--The concept of need is probably the most widely accepted on the part of our social psychologists, as representing a basic unit in the structure of man. It is one of the most important concepts in the writings of Fromm and Maslow. Asch and Rogers write frequently about man's needs. And Allport, while somewhat critical of the theory of needs, seems to adopt many of its overtones and implications. The social psychologist, Henry A. Murray, has proposed 28 "secondary or psychogenic needs," which . . . stand for common reaction systems and wishes. It is not supposed that they are fundamental, biological drives, though some may be innate.²¹⁷

On the other hand, Maslow proposes a hierarchy of seven classes of needs, from the "lowest" to the "highest," as follows: (1) The physiological needs; (2) The safety needs; (3) The belongingness and love needs; (4) The esteem needs; (5) The self-actualization need; (6) The

²¹⁷Henry A. Murray, Explorations in Personality (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 80-89.



need to know and understand; (7) The esthetic needs.²¹⁸ This hierarchical arrangement is also an arrangement of relative potency. The physiological needs are more potent than the safety needs, and the safety needs more potent than the belongingness needs, etc. Moreover, this hierarchical relationship also exhibits another of Maslow's principles, "The chief dynamic principle animating this organization . . . the emergence of less potent needs upon gratification of the more potent ones" (i. e., the "lower ones").²¹⁹

One of the difficulties with the concept of need is similar to the difficulty with the concepts of instinct and of trait, namely, the number of needs one can invoke as explanations is almost limitless: to speak of the body's need for Vitamin B₁₂ and also of a person's need for symmetry or system, is on the one hand confusing, and on the other hand is not explanatory since it merely restates a physiological or psychological fact in the form of a need.

However, another difficulty, one which distinguishes the concept of need from the other four discussed above, is that, instead of being a descriptive or explanatory concept, i. e., a non-normative, non-prescriptive linguistic sign used to represent a description or explanation of processes

²¹⁸Maslow, Motivation and Personality, Chapter V, pp. 80-106.

²¹⁹ibid., pp. 107, 146-47.



or states of affairs, it turns out to be a term invested with normative or prescriptive meaning, of an approving kind. As a consequence of this semantic metamorphosis, that for which it is claimed that a need exists in man becomes ipso facto an object of approval, and the state of affairs in which the "need" is not satisfied becomes a subject of disapproval. **This**, as Peters points out, reflects also the way the word "need" often functions in ordinary language:

. . . at a common-sense level, the term need is mainly normative. It prescribes one of a set of standard goals. It usually functions as a diagnostic term with remedial implications. It implies that something is wrong with a person if certain conditions are absent. We say things like 'The trouble with Jones is that he needs a wife,' or 'every child needs at least ten hours of sleep.' The implication is that there is a state of affairs the absence of which is or is likely to be damaging to the individual in question. . . . In other words, the word 'need' in ordinary language is seldom explanatory. It is used to point out what a person ought to be doing rather than to explain what he is doing . . .²²⁰

This is precisely the way the concept of need functions in Maslow's, Fromm's, and Rogers' writing. Certain needs are posited. Presumably the stating of these needs is a factual report of a state of affairs, or an explanation of certain behavior. Instead, it turns out to be a prescription as to what people ought to be doing, and a premise from which to conclude that if the things are not done to satisfy the need, then this is "bad" and will result

²²⁰Peters, The Concept of Motivation, pp. 17-18.



in mental illness. A normative theory of illness and health is generated out of the normative baggage stowed away in the term "need," and both Fromm and Maslow peddle this normative theory of illness and health which is stuffed to overflowing with value assumptions, as if it were a clinically descriptive theory. We shall have occasion to return to this later, in Chapter VI. But it will be useful to refer here briefly to another aspect of the normative character of the concept of need, to which we shall also return later in Chapters VI, VII and VIII. I have reference to Maslow's equating of "capacities" with needs. Maslow develops the idea that men have certain capacities, and that these capacities "clamor to be used." The man with musical capacities likes to sing or play, and "The muscular man likes to use his muscles, indeed, has to use them in order to 'feel good' . . ."221 He then makes the equation that "capacities are also needs."222 When you unwrap the meanings of these two terms, the only difference between them is the normative connotation of the word "need," so that a need is a capacity that is viewed favorably. One of the consequences of this, as we shall see in the later chapters, is a moral blindness which makes the exercise and fulfillment of capacities "good," and fails to see that it is often essential that some

221Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, p. 187.

222Ibid., pp. 144 and 187.



capacities, and hence some "needs," not be fulfilled.

It is thus clear that the concept of need is no more adequate as a concept representing fundamental structural units in the nature of man, than are the other four concepts discussed. Now, as was said earlier, it is not the business of the present inquiry to solve the problem of proper units or structural elements in the science of man, but rather only to call attention to some of the difficulties that plague this problem. However, one or two additional comments may be helpful at this point, plus an indication of the terminology to be used in the chapters that follow. First, in relation to the "empirical analysis" type of real definition of man, it is helpful to note another characterization of the fundamental concepts that would have to go into such a definition, from the pen of a well known methodologist in the social sciences, Paul Lazarsfeld. He says about such "underlying concepts" that

their role is to summarize a variety of empirical observations and to store them, one might say, for systematic use in a 'theory' which we hope will one day develop.²²³

With this in mind, and in view of the fact, which we observed earlier, that the various concepts proposed as symbols for "units" are disposition-concepts and point to what are claimed to be dispositions in human beings, there is a temptation to

²²³Paul Lazarsfeld, "Latent Structure Analysis," Psychology: A Study of a Science, ed. Sigmund Koch, Vol. III, p. 485.



suggest the term "disposition" as a provisional, working term to refer to such "units." It is this aspect of the subject matter under discussion that prompted another sociologist, Talcott Parsons, to suggest the combination term "need-disposition." Parsons' explanation of this is instructive:

. . . the units of a psychological system constitute, in one respect, what is ordinarily called the needs of the system, in another its dispositions to act, i. e., to control the capacities of the organism and of external objects in the interest of goal-directed behavior. Hence we have adopted the composite term need disposition to refer to these units.²²⁴

This is an attractive suggestion. However, I find that the term "disposition" as defined by Ryle and Hempel is a passive rather than an active, directive term. While it is true that in ordinary usage in English, when we speak of a person's disposition to act, the idea of the impulsion to act, of a wound up spring which presses for action, is no doubt included, in the Ryle-Hempel definition no such action idea is included. In this definition, for something to have a disposition is to have a capacity to react in a certain way if something else acts upon it in a given way under given conditions. Because what is needed is a concept that includes in it the idea of a "disposition to act" rather than a disposition to react to other actions, I find

²²⁴Talcott Parsons, "Psychology in Terms of a Theory of Action," Psychology: A Study of a Science, ed. Sigmund Koch, Vol. III, p. 646.



the terms' "disposition" as well as Parsons' "need-disposition" deficient. My own preference for a provisional, working term is the old term "propensity." This has "actionist" connotations inasmuch as, etymologically, it means a "leaning forward," "inclining forward," and the prefix "pro" gives it a propulsive connotation, and takes care of Allport's criticism (above in Chapter II) that so many of our contemporary psychological terms begin with the prefix "re" connoting passivity and looking backward instead of forward. In the chapters that follow I shall use the term "propensity" most often as a symbol for "basic unit" or "basic structural element" in the psychological make-up of man. However, in order not to lose sight of the continuing confusion with respect to these concepts, I shall from time to time also use, as synonymous with propensity, such terms as disposition, need-disposition, motive, need, and trait.

For the purpose of the present section one more matter remains to be noted again, namely that different psychological theories tend to select for attention, as was shown above in the chapters on our social psychologists' critiques of the S-R and Freudian theories of human nature, different human propensities, for which a variety of concepts and terms have appeared in the literature. This process of selection is to a substantial extent guided by the psychologist's assumptions concerning the nature of man.



Some of the emphases of our social psychologists have already been exhibited above in Chapters II and III. A more systematic account of the propensities emphasized by our social psychologists, and of their image of man will be the subject of our next chapter.



CHAPTER V

OUR SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' IMAGE OF MAN

We had occasion to make reference earlier, in another connection, to the fact that the work of our social psychologists is classified as belonging to a loosely demarcated sector of the empirical science of psychology. The science of psychology is a descriptive and not a normative discipline, and the writers who form the subject of our inquiry recognize it as such. Allport says that

It is true, as most partisans are willing to admit, that psychology is not a normative discipline in a broad sense, all [psychologists] may be said to be committed to the use of the scientific method¹

Erich Fromm says that the subject of the "science of man" is human nature, and that the method of the science of man is

to observe the reactions of man to various individual and social conditions and from observation of these reactions to make inferences about human nature. . . . the science of man in constructing a 'model of human nature' is no different from other sciences which operate with concepts and entities based on or controlled by, inferences from observed data . . .²

And S. E. Asch, distinguishing the science of psychology

¹Allport, Becoming, pp. 4-5. (Emphasis mine)

²Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 23-24. (Emphases mine)



from other enterprises "seriously concerned with the character of society and its members," defines its task and methods to be, as was noted in our first chapter,

the formation of a theory of man based on systematic observation and, wherever possible, the method of experimentation.³

And again,

The new social psychology was committed to seek for answers by means of the methods of science, of controlled observation, where possible of experimentation . . .⁴

This sampling of quotations ought to suffice to establish the posture of our social psychologists with reference to psychology as a science, and also to make it possible to test their claims against their performance. In pursuit of their scientific work as descriptive psychologists, they discuss, criticize, suggest, or emphasize a great variety of human propensities. While all five, Allport, Asch, Fromm, Maslow, and Rogers, leave much to be desired so far as logical and methodological sophistication is concerned (as I had occasion to say earlier, Asch is philosophically the most sophisticated of the group), there is none the less implicit in their work a search for the kind of "empirical analysis" definition of

³Asch, Social Psychology, p. 5 (the first emphasis is Asch's, the others are mine).

⁴Asch, "A Perspective on Social Psychology," Psychology: A Study of a Science, ed. Sigmund Koch, p. 364.



man and human nature which was discussed in Section E of the last chapter. The large number and variety of propensities discussed by them in effect constitute a list of candidates for the units of analysis that would, in conjunction with each other, go into an empirical analysis definition of man.

Accordingly, in addition to what has already been said in the preceding chapters, and especially in Chapters II and III, about the theory of human nature advocated by our social psychologists, the principal features of their image of man may be brought into bolder relief through an inspection of a catalogue or inventory of most of the specific propensities they discuss. Doing it in this form of listing propensities will of course mean a loss in the bringing out of some of the richness (or poverty), some of the depth (or shallowness) of their insight into the human being as an integrated, dynamic being. However, this sacrifice is necessary in the interest of brevity. Moreover, some of the fuller, more rounded discussion does appear in Chapters II and III above, and will appear again in the chapters that will follow this one.

I shall therefore first list below, often in their own words, but omitting references to sources (again, in the interest of brevity), many of the so-called propensities discussed by our social psychologists. This will be followed by a listing of these propensities without reference



to the specific author, and rearranged in accordance with a three-fold scheme of organization; in turn to be followed by some interpretative and analytic comments on the claim of our social psychologists that the analysis of man in these terms is scientific and descriptive. This inventories will, of course, be neither complete nor free of redundancy. But this is unavoidable, and is inherent in the present state of affairs in social psychology.

Taking our group of social psychologists in alphabetical order, we begin with Allport, who includes among the propensities discussed by him the following:

- Love needs.
- Affiliativeness, desire for warm, friendly relations with other humans.
- Cognitive and exploratory needs.
- Conscious intentions and purposes (de-emphasis on unconscious processes).
- Concern with the present and the future, autonomy and contemporaneity of motives (de-emphasis on influence of the past, especially infantile experiences).
- Reason, Rationality (de-emphasis on rationalization).
- Inner ought-conscience (as opposed to authoritarian must-conscience).
- Self-actualization.
- Humor.
- Use of language, capacity for symbolic communication with other humans.
- Religious belief.
- Seeking variety in experience, risk taking (as opposed to alleged wish for homeostatic equilibrium).
- Seeking stability.
- Experiencing anxiety.
- Desire for self-esteem, ego-recognition, self-respect, personal status, prestige.

Solomon E. Asch emphasizes the following propensities, with the observation that these are "capacities and forces in men that modern psychology has systematically neglected":



Need to understand, desire to face the facts,
determination to rid oneself of distortions.
To make sense out of happenings, to grasp the order
of things.
To explore and inquire, objective interest in one's
surroundings.
To expose oneself to hardships.
To forego immediate satisfactions.
To make sacrifices.
To become concerned with other human beings.
To be essentially social.
Possession of unusual intellectual powers.
To act with reference to ideas and ideals of right
and wrong, even when he violates them.
Ability to keep faith or betray faith with others.
Ability to cry out for justice.
Religious beliefs have played quite a part in man's
history.
Need to surround himself with objects that are
attractive.

Among the propensities discussed by Erich Fromm, I shall
list first the five needs which he says are 'rooted in the
conditions of man's existence, and which would still be
there even if all man's physiological needs were satisfied;
the others will follow immediately after these five:

The need for relatedness, for union with other
living beings, i. e., for love.
The need for transcendence, for transcending his passive
creatureliness.
The need for rootedness, to overcome the trauma of
birth, need for warmth, protection, security.
The need for a sense of identity, for awareness of
oneself, for being able to say "I am I, for being
able to form a concept of oneself.
The need for a frame of orientation, for orienting
oneself in the world intellectually, for grasping the
puzzling phenomena of the world by thought.
The propensity for self-actualization.
Spontaneity.
Harmony.
Freedom.
Survival.
Humanistic ought-conscience and authoritarian
must-conscience (superego).
Language and symbolic communication.
Wish for survival.



Lust for power.
Need for self-aggrandizement.
Sadism.
Tendency to submit.

The specific propensities discussed by Maslow in various parts of his work are all, or almost all, classifiable under the seven basic needs in his hierarchy of needs, going from the "lower" to the "higher," with the higher needs inevitably manifesting themselves, according to Maslow, when the lower needs are satisfied. I shall list Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs, and append to them several specific needs discussed by him:

The physiological needs.

The safety needs--"Practically everything looks less important than safety (even sometimes the physiological needs, which being satisfied are now underestimated)."

The belongingness and love needs: "friends, sweetheart, wife, children, one's group."

The esteem needs: "self-esteem, prestige, status, dominance, recognition," etc.

The need for self-actualization: "to become actualized in what he is potentially."

The desire to know and understand.

The esthetic needs: "the needs for order, symmetry, closure, system," etc.

Love, kindness, courage, creativeness, altruism: "are deeper" than "hostility, fear, greed, etc."

Intrinsic conscience.

Spontaneity.

No person is "exempted from the basic human predicament, of being simultaneously merely-creaturely and godlike, strong and weak, limited and unlimited, merely-animal and animal-transcending, adult and child, fearful and courageous, progressing and regressing, yearning for perfection yet afraid of it, being a worm and also a hero."

These propensities or "forces" are listed in juxtaposition to each other in a context of reiterated claims that man is "not intrinsically evil, but rather either neutral or



positively 'good.'" It is in a similar context of vigorous and reiterated assertions that man is inherently "good" that the list of propensities discussed by Carl R. Rogers must be read:

Man is not fundamentally hostile, antisocial, destructive, evil.
Affiliation and communication with others are among man's deepest requirements.
Man's propensities are positive, forward-looking, constructive, realistic, trustworthy.
Man's propensities are in the direction of development, differentiation, independence, self-responsibility, cooperation, maturity.
Following therapy the individual can be trusted to be self-controlled and socialized.
The notion of self-love as the fundamental and pervasive sin must be rejected.
Other propensities include,
Responsible personal choice.
Exquisite rationality.
Inherent tendency toward self-actualization.
Keeping one's self-concept congruent with one's experience.
A need for positive regard.
A need for positive self-regard.

I shall conclude this crude inventory with an addendum on Gardner Murphy. In his book Human Potentialities which contains a visionary and utopian picture of the future, self-guided, evolution of human nature, Murphy in passing notes a number of human propensities:

Man needs to be social: he needs other men.
Man needs order.
Man wants safety and protection against the unknown.
Man wants companionship, love, and dependable cooperation.
Man has a great deal of intelligence, and propensities for discovery, abstract knowledge, science, philosophy, morals, esthetics, and religion.
Among man's propensities are pettiness, self-deceptions in everyday affairs, crudity and meanness.



The "lust for personal power and an occasional urge of a purely sadistic sort," "satisfactions from power and prestige which we see everywhere in the human family . . ."; "The power and prestige needs are notoriously insatiable."

When this welter of propensities, tendencies, needs, capacities, wants, etc., is reduced to simple, bare-boned, and, wherever possible, single-word concepts, and when the gross duplications are eliminated, one can discern within the long inventory that remains, two natural groupings of propensities, and, within the second of these two groupings one can discern again two subgroupings into which it may be divided. There is a good deal of overlapping among the items on the list as a whole, and also overlapping between the two major groupings as well as between the two subgroupings. The first of the two major groupings contains a list of propensity-concepts, for each of which there is a corresponding propensity-concept which is the denial, the negation, the "opposite" of the first. I classify these concepts, each of which is the opposite or the denial of one of the original propensity-concepts, as also propensity-concepts. I do this because at one time or another, some thinker or writer or psychological investigator has claimed that one or more of these "negative" or "opposite" concepts represented propensities in man's psychological structure.

Accordingly, our first grouping contains a paired list of what are claimed to be propensities, or needs, or



trends, or capacities within man's psychological make-up, with each of the claimed propensities in one of the parallel columns being the "opposite" or the denial of the corresponding claimed propensity in the other column. Thus, it is claimed that man inherently has a propensity for:

- 1) Love Hate
- 2) Affiliativeness Hostility, Aggressiveness
- 3) Socialization Anti-social Actions
- 4) Belongingness Lone-wolf Individualism
- 5) Altruism Selfishness, Egotism
- 6) Kindness, Sympathy . . Cruelty
- 7) Generosity Greed, Meanness, Pettiness
- 8) Trustworthiness Deception, Dishonesty
- 9) Rationality, Reasoning. Irrationality
- 10) Cognition, Quest for Knowledge Rationalization, Autistic Distortion
- 11) Realistic Perception and Action Self-delusion, Self-deception
- 12) Conscious, Planned Action Unconscious Actions
- 13) Contemporary and Future-oriented Determination of Action. Action Determined by Infantile Past
- 14) Creativity, Constructiveness . . Destructiveness
- 15) Goal-directedness, Purposiveness . . . Tension-reduction Directedness
- 16) An Inner Ought-conscience Authoritarian Must-conscience
- 17) Spontaneity Conformity



- 18) Exploration, Security, Homeostatic
Self-testing Equilibrium
- 19) Courage Fear
- 20) Freedom Submission
- 21) Striving of the
Self Passive Reaction
- 22) Good Evil

In the second grouping of the propensities discussed by our social psychologists, each propensity does not admit, or at least does not readily admit, of an "opposite" so-called propensity with which it could be paired and contrasted. Each of these propensities therefore stands alone. However, I have subdivided this second grouping into two subgroups: (a) Propensities frequently referred to and discussed by our social psychologists; and (b) Propensities infrequently referred to and discussed by them. The division is made not on the basis of any precise statistical analysis of frequency. Rather it is made on the basis of cumulative impressions in the course of reading our social psychologists' writings.

(a) Frequently discussed propensities:

- 1. Self-actualization.
- 2. Use of language for communication and storage of ideas.
- 3. Internalizing social norms.
- 4. Esthetic and other intrinsic satisfactions.
- 5. Joy, exultation, ecstasy.
- 6. Self-esteem, esteem by others.



7. Need for achievement.
8. Need for superiority.
9. Sense of anxiety, threat, loneliness.

(b) Infrequently discussed propensities:

10. Awareness and fear of death, of one's mortality and finitude.
11. Capacity for neurosis.
12. Insatiable appetites, desires, and needs.
13. Insatiable lust for power and prestige.
14. Ability to delay and control the satisfaction of desires and impulses.
15. The transmission of culture (acquired characteristics) to posterity.
16. Repression (in Freudian sense).
17. Humor.
18. Varieties of religious belief.
19. Ability to blush (pointed out by Arthur O. Lovejoy).

The ability to blush is a human propensity not mentioned by any of our social psychologists. It comes out of Arthur O. Lovejoy's book Reflections on Human Nature, and I include it here, first, because it is a shrewd insight which I had not come across before. Secondly, I include it here because Lovejoy refers to it as a "distinctively human" propensity. This leads me to observe that all but perhaps five or six out of the 44 so-called propensities on the paired list, and all 19 on the unpaired lists, if it were really established



that they are human propensities, would be "distinctively human" propensities. They would point to some of the differentia of the species homo sapiens that distinguish this species from other species in the genus "animal." This in turn leads me to mention three additional so-called human propensities, which are frequently discussed by our social psychologists, but which I did not include in the list of 19 above, precisely because they do not appear to me to be distinctively human, but are propensities of members of other species also. They are

1. Non-coping behavior, play, etc.
2. The need for safety, security, etc.
3. The propensity for self-preservation, for survival.

Let us now return to the main thrust of the present chapter. Over and above the image of man espoused by our social psychologists as it emerged in our examination of their critique of the S-R and Freudian psychologies (Chapters II and III), their image of man can also be discerned in the composite sum-total of the list of 22 propensities in the left-hand column of the first (paired) grouping of propensities, plus the 9 "frequently discussed" propensities which form the first part of the unpaired list. Their image of man is given additional sharpness by the fact that, on the whole, our social psychologists either reject or deemphasize the claimed 22 propensities contained



in the right-hand column of the paired list, and that they give scant attention to the claimed 10 propensities in the second sub-grouping of the unpaired list. According to their own testimony, as was noted at the beginning of this chapter, their theory of human nature, their concept of man, is supposed to be the product of empirical research, even of the employment of experimental methods, and not of preconceived normative or prescriptive ideas as to what the nature of man ought to be. Their work as practitioners of the descriptive science of psychology is supposed to give us, to the extent possible, a descriptive report as to what man is, and this is supposed to be the gravamen of the distinction between psychology as a descriptive science and other, normative disciplines, and also between the social psychologists and their predecessors who produced many insights into the nature of man, but as part of intuitive impressions and speculative thought.

Now, let us look briefly at the image of man our social psychologists have produced, and test it against their claims to be empirical scientists. If we look even cursorily at the 22 claimed propensities in the left-hand column of the paired list, and compare them with their "opposites" in the right hand column, we cannot escape noting the fact that in our culture, different and indeed contradictory ethical characterizations attach themselves to these two sets of claimed propensities. The propensities



in the left hand column, which are affirmed by our social psychologists to be among man's basic psychological propensities, would be almost universally characterized as good, right, beneficent propensities. And contrariwise, those listed in the right hand column, and either rejected or deemphasized by our social psychologists, would be almost universally regarded with disparagement ethically, and many would be characterized as evil, wrong, or maleficent propensities.

Similarly, this kind of polarization takes place in the case of the lists of unpaired claimed propensities. The 9 that are frequently discussed, and on the whole asserted by our social psychologists really to be human propensities, would generally be perceived in our culture, and are perceived by our social psychologists, as ethically good and beneficent (with some possible reservations about the needs for self-esteem and for superiority). On the other hand, if we look at the group of infrequently discussed propensities, e. g., the claim that man's appetites, desires and needs are insatiable, and that this is one of the differentiating characteristics that distinguishes men from other animals; the claim that men have an insatiable lust for power and prestige; the claim that it is an escapable part of being human for persons to repress (in the Freudian sense) certain experiences and certain memories; the claim that one of man's propensities



is his capacity for neurosis as a response to frustration of impulses or desires; these claimed propensities would be generally considered as ethically inferior, if not downright wrong and maleficent, and most of our social psychologists either ignore them, or express doubts about them, or reject all or some of them.

In Chapter IX, below, I shall raise serious doubts as to whether ethical attributes can be meaningfully ascribed to individual psychological propensities in themselves, and I hope to be able to show there that we cannot meaningfully ascribe ethical attributes to psychological propensities, and that psychological propensities are ethically neutral. However, at this point, continuing to use the uncritically popular (though I believe mistaken) ethical polarization or dichotomization of human propensities into good and evil propensities, right and wrong, beneficent and maleficent, one is forced to conclude that our social psychologists, judged by the propensities they assert and emphasize as constitutive of human nature, and judging also by those they reject or deemphasize, present an optimistic, euphoric, utopian portrait of human nature. It would serve no particular purpose to multiply here direct quotations that have been given in earlier chapters, and that will be referred to again in proper context in the ensuing chapters, in which our social psychologists claim that man is essentially good and the "negative"



elements in man are purely reactive, and in which they attack Freud for allegedly painting a pessimistic portrait of man. What is important here is only the fact that the crude analysis above, in terms of the propensities affirmed and rejected by our social psychologists would seem to add evidentiary confirmation to their categorical claims that man is essentially good.

However, here a vexing problem arises out of the very claims and procedures of our social psychologists. They claim to be empirical social psychologists, engaged in giving a descriptive account of the nature of man. Now, what are the grounds on which they base their choices of propensities to be affirmed as being constitutive of man's psychological structure, and what are the grounds on which they base their rejection or their deemphasis of others? Are their choices made on the grounds of empirical evidence? Is there stronger empirical evidence in support of the claim that the propensities in the left-hand column of the paired list are constitutive of human nature, than in support of those listed in the right-hand column? It seems to me clear that the answer is decidedly in the negative. Their rejection of many of the psychological propensities pointed to and analyzed by Freud was not based (as was pointed out repeatedly in Chapter III above) on any empirical evidence that would refute Freud's basic theory of man, but rather on our social psychologists' preconceptions,



and on their preference for a more optimistic (Maslow's recent term is "eupsychic"), more congenial image of man. Similarly, their contention that the propensities in the left-hand column of the paired list, and those listed in the first sub-group of the second list, are constitutive of man's psychological make-up is not based on weightier empirical evidence than their rejection of Freudian doctrines or their rejection or deemphasis of the propensities in the right-hand column of the paired list. Much of the conflict revolves around the matter of comparative emphasis, as I pointed out in Chapter III, and these kinds of pseudo-statistical comparisons are not very fruitful.

If their choices of the propensities they emphasize, and their advocacy of an optimistic and even utopian depiction of human nature, are not based on weighty empirical evidence, then how are they to be explained? I believe that the answer resides in the fact that, their claims to be engaged in the descriptive science of psychology aside, our social psychologists are also moralists and social theorists in disguise, who are searching for logical foundations for an ethics and for a just, humane, democratic social order. They believe that ethical norms and guidance, as well as guidance for a blueprint for a just social order, are deducible from factual knowledge about the nature and psychological constitution of man. They believe



further that only if man is possessed of "good" propensities will the necessary conditions for a system of ethics and for a good society be present. They therefore develop an elaborate theory of a "good" human nature which they believe will supply the logical grounding for ethics and democracy.

In the chapters below, which will discuss (a) our social psychologists' theory that the propensity of "self-actualization" can serve as an ethical norm; (b) their theory that man's possession of an "inner moral sense" furnishes an automatic moral guide; (c) the theory that psychological propensities are in themselves good or bad; and (d) the theory that man must be "good" for democracy to be possible; the documentation will be presented to show how their essentially moralistic preconceptions determine their inquiries and discussions with reference to the nature of man. It will suffice here only to recall the refrain repeated and repeated by all our social psychologists, that S-R and Freudian psychology have "disparaged" man, have "downgraded" him, have painted a "dark portrait" of him, have created theories which are not "worthy" of man, have created doctrines which can not "live up to the democratic ideal," etc., etc. Their concern therefore is, very often, less to discover what man really is, and more to develop a "proper" portrait of man, a portrait of man as he should be. There is nothing novel in this procedure. Other thinkers on the nature of man have done precisely the same



thing in the past. The only difference is that our social psychologists do this in the name of the descriptive science of psychology, and the imperative therefore is so much more compelling to analyze their work, and to show that much of it is a contribution neither to the advancement of the science of psychology, nor to ethical theory or to social and political theory.

Cassirer makes the same point with references to the traditional definition of man as rational animal, and his words are helpful here:

The great thinkers who have defined man as an animal rationale were not empiricists, nor did they intend to give an empirical account of human nature. By this definition they were expressing rather a fundamental moral imperative.⁵

One may say similarly, with complete confidence, that, for example, our social psychologists' attack on the Freudian idea of the superego, and in general on the idea of man's being guided by what they call an authoritarian must-conscience, and their favoring the theory that man has a built-in, inner, ought-conscience, is also a case not of conviction on the basis of empirical evidence, but rather an expression of a "fundamental moral imperative."

Of course, our social psychologists do not necessarily conceal their moralistic interests and objectives, nor should they in their functioning as citizens or as moralists.

⁵Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man, pp. 25-26.



Their moral goals are, on the whole, highly praiseworthy, and, again, on the whole, I associate myself with them. It is only their psychology that is so often bad, as well as their theoretical ethics, and their attempts to deduce ethical guidance and political and social theory from what is claimed to be descriptive psychology. If we use Maslow as an example, we find him saying that he is

. . . not only the disinterested and impersonal seeker for pure cold truth for its own sake. I am also very definitely interested and concerned with man's fate, with his ends and goals for the future. I hope to help teach him to be brotherly, cooperative, peaceful, courageous and just
. . . the humanistic task of psychology [is] that of constructing a scientific system of values to help men live the good life, i. e., a humanly usable theory of human motivation.⁶

This kind of psychology leads David C. McClelland to comment that Maslow

. . . seems to be searching for . . . a scientific basis for ethics or, at the very least, for a rapprochement between psychology and ethics.⁷

And then McClelland significantly asks

. . . should we . . . admit that we will take [Maslow's] conclusions neither more nor less seriously than those

⁶Maslow, "Deficiency Motivation and Growth Motivation," Nebraska Symposium on Motivation: 1955, ed. Marshall R. Jones (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1955; pp. 1-30), pp. 1-2; reprinted in Toward a Psychology of Being, with the above quotation omitted.

⁷David C. McClelland, "Comments on Professor Maslow's Paper," Nebraska Symposium on Motivation: 1955, op. cit. (pp. 31-37), p. 31.



of other distinguished writers in this field in the past, such as Aristotle, Spinoza, McCosh, James, or MacDougall?⁸

To summarize then. Our social psychologists single out for emphasis the "good" propensities in man's make up, and reject or deemphasize the "evil" propensities, less on the basis of empirical evidence, and more on the basis of their ethical preconceptions. They do this also because they have the mistaken notion that, e. g., the Freudian image of man, does not provide the necessary foundation for a normative ethics or for a good social order, and that a theory of man as constituted of "good" propensities is needed as a foundation for an effective normative ethics and a democratic, humane society. Having presented an excessively optimistic and therefore distorted picture of man because of these preconceptions, they proceed to try to deduce from the alleged factual data about man's propensities, ethical guidance and ideas for the good society. In doing this I believe that they commit five errors:

1. Their entire argument is hopelessly circular.
2. They produce a distorted portrait of man, and offer scant empirical evidence to support their attribution to man of consistently and almost exclusively "good" propensities, and for their utopian view of man.

⁸Ibid., p. 34.

3. They believe that man's psychological propensities are in themselves "good" or "evil"; it is my contention that these are ethically neutral.
4. They believe that one can deduce ethical guidance about "ends" from psycho-data about the nature of man.
5. They believe that a democratic social order can be based only on the assumption of a theory of man as inherently good.

In the next chapter I shall try to argue that one cannot deduce value judgments or ethical guidance about ends from factual psychological information, and in two subsequent chapters apply this to the claimed psychological propensities of "self-actualization" and "an inner moral sense." This will be followed in turn by a discussion of errors number 3 and 5 above in Chapters IX and X.



CHAPTER VI

FACT AND VALUE: DESCRIPTIVE vs. NORMATIVE DISCOURSE

At the very beginning of this inquiry I had occasion to quote Maurice Mandelbaum's assertion that

. . . there must be acknowledged to be an infrangible bond between what man values or feels obligated to do and what is characteristic of his psychological nature.¹

P. H. Nowell-Smith also warns against any absolute separation between ethics and psychology:

Psychology is not as irrelevant to ethics as some modern philosophers insist
. men choose to do what they do because they are what they are, and . . . moral theories which attempt to exclude all considerations of human nature as it is do not even begin to be moral theories.²

Another contemporary writer on ethics, Kai Nielsen, also affirms the existence of the "bond" Mandelbaum is talking about, but what follows this affirmation places it in a context which is of crucial importance to the major thrust of the present chapter. Nielsen concludes a paper entitled "Conventionalism in Morals and the Appeal to Human Nature" as follows:

¹Maurice Mandelbaum, The Phenomenology of Moral Experience, op. cit., p. 306 (see supra, p.).

²P. H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics (London: Penguin Books, 1954), p. 182.



Certainly there is an important link between our human natures and our morality. But we have not shown . . . that we have the rule of right within. We need an accurate description of the exact relationships here--a description I am painfully aware that I cannot at present give--but it is apparent that understanding morality is not just really understanding ourselves. The Butlerian dream is tempting but it remains a dream.³

Neilsen's point that, whatever the link is between human nature and ethics, ethical norms are neither identical with information about the nature of man, nor are they deducible from such factual information, is also made by Nowell-Smith. For, Nowell-Smith offers the admission quoted above against considering psychology irrelevant to ethics in conjunction with the declaration that "moral judgments do not follow from psychological statements," and that to suppose "that 'good' could be extracted from its context and be said to mean the same as 'satisfactory'" is a "mistake of logic."⁴

Now, I do not believe and I shall not argue, that there is an absolute separation or an unbridgeable gulf between fact and value, or between psychology and ethics. I do believe that there is an important link between human nature and ethics, though I do not know what this link is, and I submit that this continues to be one of the most vexing problems in philosophy. I have found very little light shed on this problem in the

³Kai Nielsen, "Conventionalism in Morals and the Appeal to Human Nature," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research: A Quarterly Journal (Vol. XXIII, No. 2, December 1962; pp.217-231), p. 231. (Bishop Joseph Butler's views will be referred to briefly below, in Chapter VIII.

⁴P. H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics, p. 182.



literature with which I am familiar. Accordingly, while I find it difficult to accept the radical Intuitionist position, I also find some of the Intuitionists' arguments against what G. E. Moore (mistakenly) called the "naturalistic fallacy"⁵ irrefutable, and the rebuttals offered by Naturalists against the Intuitionist arguments strike me as feeble, and at best they inspire the verdict sometimes heard in Scottish courts of law: "Not proven."

The principal thesis I wish to present in the present chapter, and in the following two chapters on "Self-Realization as Ethical Norm" and on "The Inner Moral Sense as Ethical Guide," contains in effect an extended argument in support of the Intuitionist view which I believe to be correct, namely, that from factual information about human nature and about man's psychological propensities one cannot deduce ethical prescriptions about ends; that human propensities do not constitute and cannot be equated with ethical norms; that from descriptive statements about the nature of man or of his propensities one cannot deduce

⁵G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), pp. 9-20 and passim. (The term "naturalistic fallacy" is a mistaken one, for two reasons: a) Moore's Intuitionist position may be correct, and those whom he charges with the naturalistic fallacy may be in error; but if they are guilty of error, their error is not that of having committed any logical fallacy in the sense of having violated any canon of valid reasoning (See William K. Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," Mind: A Quarterly Review (Vol. XLVIII, No. 192, October 1939), pp. 464-477). b) Moore and the Intuitionists consider it an error not only to give a naturalistic definition of "good," but to define "good" or any ethical notions in non-ethical terms generally.)



statements about what man's ethical duties are; that from descriptive statements about what man is one cannot deduce normative statements about what moral ends man ought to pursue; that an argument which has as its conclusion a normative statement that such and such ought to be the case or ought to be done (referring to ends), can be valid if and only if at least one of its premises is also this kind of normative statement.

It is my contention that, as part of their circular argument on a large scale, our social psychologists have tried to make, and that they believe they have been successful in making, the deduction which I consider illicit, from factual information, or claimed factual information, about human nature to ethical norms and prescriptions. I contend that the deduction cannot be made, that our social psychologists do not, in fact, ever succeed in making the deduction, and that the normative evaluations and moral prescriptions they end up with have their logical foundation elsewhere rather than in the descriptive information about man and his psychological propensities.

Let me, at this point, reproduce, in bare, skeletal form, the outline of the implicit "circular argument on a large scale" of our social psychologists. It is approximately as follows:



1. S-R and Freudian psychologies have downgraded man by ascribing to him ethically reprehensible, maleficent propensities.
2. Man according to this downgraded image does not have within him the resources for developing and adhering to a system of normative ethics, nor does he possess the propensities which are logically necessary for establishing and maintaining a free, humane, democratic social order.
3. A free, humane, democratic social order is a good and desirable social order, and should be established and maintained.
4. For man to be able to establish and maintain a humane, democratic society, he must be endowed with "good" propensities.
5. One of the responsibilities of psychology, and it is a responsibility which psychology is able to discharge, is to develop and provide an image of man "worthy of the democratic dream"; an image of man on which it will be possible to base a humane, democratic society; an image of man that will have built into it the moral principles and guidance necessary for the good life; an



image of man as fundamentally good and constituted of "good" propensities.

6. Man is essentially good, and it is the business of psychology to single out and emphasize man's good, constructive, beneficent propensities in its theory of human nature, and it must reject or deemphasize man's alleged evil and maleficent propensities (which Freud's theory of human nature has mistakenly and regrettably emphasized).
7. From descriptive information about a "proper" portrait of man's nature and his propensities we can deduce ethical norms and ethical guidance.
 - 8a. One of man's propensities is his tendency to "self-actualization." THEREFORE self-actualization is good and men should pursue it.
 - 8b. One of man's propensities is his possession of a "conscience," an "inner moral sense" which tells him what is right and what is wrong, what he ought to do and what he ought not to do. THEREFORE man ought to follow the guidance of his conscience.



I want to concentrate now on steps #5 and #7 in this implicit argument, i. e., the step which asserts that it is the business of psychology to develop a theory of human nature on which a normative ethics can be based, and the step which asserts or implies that from factual data about the "proper" concept of human nature ethical norms or ethical guidance can be deduced. However, before getting into this I want to note two observations. First, it should be clear from the outline of the tacit, large scale argument of our social psychologists, that their image of man is in a very large measure normative rather than descriptive, this image often being not what man is, but rather what they believe man ought to be in order to fulfill the requirements they deem necessary for normative ethics and the good society. Second, in order for them to be under the illusion that they have actually made the deduction from the facts about human nature to the conclusion that "self-realization" is good, and that the "inner moral sense" is always right and should be obeyed, our social psychologists found it necessary to affirm that man was essentially good and his propensities good. They thus showed that the alleged ethical qualities of self-realization acts, and of the deliverances of conscience, are not deductions from the fact that men tend to self-actualize and possess conscience, but are really derived from other sources, and their justification or logical foundation must be sought elsewhere.



Maslow is no doubt the most vocal and the most ebulliently naive among our social psychologists in seeing one of the tasks of psychology to be the essentially normative task of providing a "proper" foundation for ethics, and that psychology can indeed do this. The quotations given in the preceding chapter from his paper "Deficiency Motivation and Growth Motivation" in the 1955 Nebraska Symposium on Motivation are typical in this connection. Maslow reiterates this in his book Toward a Psychology of Being, adding now to this claim (which is #5 in the outline of the "implicit large-scale circular argument" given above) the contention that ethical guidance can be deduced from the information or assumptions about human nature (which is step #7 in the "circular argument" outlined above). After listing the assumptions made by the "third force" group of psychologists concerning man, and including in the list the assumptions that man has an "inner nature," and that "this inner nature is good or neutral," Maslow announces that

. . . if these assumptions are proven true, they promise a scientific ethics, a natural value system, a court of ultimate appeal for the determination of good and bad, of right and wrong. The more we learn about man's natural tendencies, the easier it will be to tell him how to be good, how to be happy, . . . how to love, how to fulfill his highest potentialities.

And again,

By taking these data into account we can also solve many value problems that philosophers have struggled with ineffectually for centuries. For one thing,



it looks as if there were a single ultimate value for mankind, a goal toward which all men strive.

All this implies a naturalistic system of values, a by-product of the empirical description of the deepest tendencies of the human species and of specific individuals. The study of the human being by science or by self-search can discover . . . what is good for him and what is bad for him . . .⁶

The discussion of the use specifically of self-actualization as an ethical norm I reserve for the next chapter. Here I only want to comment on the claim that "a scientific ethics, a natural value system, a court of ultimate appeal for the determination of good and bad, right and wrong" will be deducible from the assumptions concerning human nature. Maslow says that this will be possible if his assumptions are proven true. This is a rather important and revealing if. Let us assume for a moment that Maslow's assumptions are proven false, and that man is different from Maslow's portrait of him. Let us assume, and for Maslow this would be a shattering assumption, that Maslow discovered that the Pauline, Augustinian, Hobbesian, Freudian, Nieburian doctrines of man as "evil," "self-seeking," "anti-social," are really true, would he still say that "all this implies a naturalistic system of values," would he still maintain or imply that a scientific ethics is deducible from information concerning the nature of man? The logic of Maslow's position should be that a

⁶Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, pp. 4, 145, 191.



scientific ethics is deducible from human nature irrespective of what human nature is. Manifestly, however, this isn't Maslow's position at all. What he is really getting at is that an ethics is deducible from an image of man as a good being, and this is quite different from saying that ethics is deducible from human nature. If the ethical criterion of the goodness and value of human behavior resided in its springing from the "deepest tendencies" in man, and if the deepest tendencies in man were those emphasized by Paul, Augustine, Hobbes, et al. then Maslow's logic would require him to say these tendencies are good. But this of course sounds absurd. Now, it sounds absurd because the idea of deducing normative ethics from a description of man is an absurd idea.⁷ The fact is that Maslow is really not deducing ethics from human nature-- an impossible task--; what he is doing is presupposing a normative ethics the justification or logical foundation of which lies elsewhere, and proceeding to find, or to claim

⁷Cf. "Suppose it be a fact that originally all motives are selfish. What implication does this have for ethics? Directly, none whatever! Suppose at all stages of human development all motives are selfish. What implications does this have for ethics? Directly, none whatever! This is just another way of saying that factual statements do not answer normative questions. It might be morally better to seek the good of others than one's own, even though no one as a matter of fact does so, or even though people can be convinced to do so only through the establishment of appropriate associations."

(Everett W. Hall, Modern Science and Human Values: A Study in the History of Ideas (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1956), p. 382.



that he has found, in man propensities which he believes conform to the norms of this ethical system. He then deludes himself into thinking that he is deducing ethics from the inner nature of man.

We shall return to Maslow a little later in connection with the discussions of the concept of "need," and the concepts of "health and illness." Let us now turn our attention to Fromm, whose position is similar to Maslow's (minus the Quixotic euphoria), but who in one particular comment shows himself to be a bit inconsistent, and in that comment, not surprisingly, turns out to be completely right. It is Fromm's view that ethics is a deduction from information about the nature of man:

. . . the sources of norms for ethical conduct are to be found in man's nature itself; . . . moral norms are based upon man's inherent qualities

Humanistic ethics . . . proposes that in order to know what is good for man we have to know his nature.

Humanistic ethics is the applied science of the 'art of living' based upon the theoretical 'science of man' . . .

In the tradition of humanistic ethics the view prevails that the knowledge of man is the basis of establishing norms and values.⁸

Indeed, Fromm criticizes Freud for not using descriptive psychological and motivational information to help establish the validity of value judgments:

In spite of the great possibilities which psychoanalysis provides for the scientific study of values, Freud and his school have not made the most productive use of their

⁸Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 7, 18, 25.



method for the inquiry into ethical problems; in fact, they did a great deal to confuse ethical issues. The confusion springs from Freud's relativistic position, which assumes that psychology can help us to understand the motivation of value judgments but can not help in establishing the validity of value judgments themselves.⁹

Fromm is of course right about Freud's refusal to try to deduce value judgments from descriptive psychological and motivational information. However, contrary to Fromm's view, this is all to Freud's credit, who hardly ever mixed up his role as empirical psychologist with his role as moralist, and who saw that moral principles and value judgments entail decisions, choices, and that the validity of the choices can not be established by deduction from factual psychological or motivational descriptions alone. It is interesting to note, though that in a moment of creative inconsistency Fromm departs from his view that "moral norms are based upon man's inherent qualities" alone, and expresses the correct view that choices and goals must be brought into the deduction before norms can be validly deduced from psychological facts or theories. However, this insight of Fromm's is temporary, and he does not develop it further as an integral part of his position. In making this correct and important point, Fromm leads into the problem of the concepts of health and illness, to which we shall turn after quoting Fromm's inconsistency, and

⁹Ibid., pp. 33-34.



departure into truth from his own mistaken views:

But one can deduce norms from theories only on the premiss that a certain activity is chosen and a certain aim is desired. The premiss for medical science is that it is desirable to cure disease and to prolong life; if this were not the case, all the rules of medical science would be irrelevant. Every applied science is based on an axiom which results in an act of choice: namely, that the end of the activity is desirable.¹⁰

Allport recognizes this fundamental logical point, and states it in connection with the concept of maturity, and of mental health as well:

What is the mature personality like? We cannot answer this question solely in terms of pure psychology. In order to say that a person is mentally healthy, sound, mature we need to know what health, soundness and maturity are. Psychology alone cannot tell us. To some degree ethical judgment is involved our choice is based on ethical grounds, and not on scientific fact. Science alone can never tell us what is sound, healthy, or good.¹¹

And yet, both Maslow and Fromm proceed to discuss the subject of mental health uncritically, as if what is mental health and what is mental illness is a matter of scientific determination, deducible from the alleged facts of the nature of man. One of their basic approaches to the subject of mental health and mental illness is in terms of the alleged needs of man. They maintain that from the factual knowledge of the basic needs and propensities of man

¹⁰Fromm, Ibid., p. 18.

¹¹Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, pp. 275-76.



we can deduce what is health and what is illness. Their formula is rather simple: the satisfaction or fulfillment of man's basic needs results in health, whereas the frustration of these basic needs or propensities results in mental illness:

. . . a man who is thwarted in any of his basic needs may fairly be envisaged simply as a sick man.¹²

. . . man has an essential nature of his own . . . he has needs, capacities, tendencies that are genuinely based . . . there is involved the conception that full health and normal and desirable development consist in . . . fulfilling these potentialities . . .¹³

For Fromm, "the aim of man's life . . . is . . . the unfolding of his powers according to the laws of his nature," and "man's failure to use and spend what he has is the cause of sickness . . ."¹⁴ But obviously this is not a deduction of the normative and prescriptive notion of what is health and what is sickness, from the alleged descriptive facts of man's basic needs or propensities alone. This is rather more like an attempt at what Hempel calls a "meaning analysis," or an "analytic definition,"¹⁵ which is the kind of "real definition" that claims that there is complete identity of meaning, complete synonymy, between both sides of the equivalence: "Need gratification = Health." But there is no such complete synonymy between

¹²Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 105.

¹³Ibid., p. 340.

¹⁴Fromm, Man for Himself; pp. 20 and 219.

¹⁵Hempel, Fundamentals of Concept Formation, p. 8.



the two. Need gratification and need-frustration are supposed to be descriptive psychological terms whose cash value is the factual description of psychological processes and states of affairs, whereas health and illness are normative terms which refer to desirable or undesirable states of affairs, and whether a state of affairs is desirable or undesirable is a matter of choice and decision, and not of factual description. We may decide that certain cases of need-frustration are not at all cases of illness: who is to say that the poet, jilted by his loved one, and pouring out (or sublimating) his love frustration into beautiful poetry is not "healthier" than he would have been if the lady had reciprocated his love and the motivation for this poetry had been absent?

There is thus a circularity here again, because the value judgments, the "decision" that such and such psychological phenomena are cases of "health," are not deduced from the phenomena themselves, or from other factual information about the psychological nature of man, but are presupposed and imported into the process which leads to the assertion that the phenomena are an instance of health. The subject of need-gratification will be discussed more completely in the next chapter, in connection with our social psychologists' use of "self-actualization" as an ethical norm. Here I only want to make the point that need gratification is assumed by them to be "good" and need-



frustration to be "evil," and that this requires a brief discussion of the concept of "need," by way of amplification of what has already been said about it earlier in Chapter IV, Section F.

As I pointed out in that section, the concept "need," which is ostensibly a descriptive concept used to symbolize or explain psychological processes, in fact has very weighty normative connotations, and its use by our social psychologists hardly ever escapes carrying these normative connotations with it as excess baggage. A need is interpreted to mean something without the satisfaction of which the organism is somehow defective. This conforms to usage in ordinary language; for ordinarily, when we say that a person needs some thing or has a need for something, we generally mean that he better get it, and that if he does not get it there will be something wrong or something missing in the situation. Accordingly, the failure to gratify a need carries with it the connotation that this is bad, and by the same token, satisfying or gratifying the need is assumed to be good. This in part helps to explain the attempt to deduce an ethical norm from human needs and propensities, which is discussed in the next chapter. It also helps explain in part the attempt to make health synonymous with need gratification.

Another interesting thing has happened as a result of the normative connotations in the word need. In discuss-



ing human propensities, including human "capacities," Maslow has made another equivalence, one which is echoed loudly by Fromm and Rogers, and more feebly by Allport and Asch, namely, that capacities are needs:

The muscular person likes to use his muscles, indeed, has to use them in order to . . . achieve the subjective feeling of harmonious, uninhibited, satisfying functioning which is so important an aspect of psychological health. . . . Capacities clamor to be used. . . . That is to say, capacities are needs, and therefore are intrinsic values as well.¹⁶

Thus, through the legerdemain of equating propensities or capacities with needs, the normative excess baggage becomes its main and most weighty content, and the exercise of a person's capacities or propensities becomes an ethical imperative. The extreme expression of this metamorphosis is contained in Maslow's remarkable dictum: "What man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization."¹⁷ The destructive implications of this kind of dictum for normative ethics need not detain us here, since they will also be dealt with in the next chapter. One is only tempted to reflect here upon the vast distance between Kant's principle that ought implies can to Maslow's can implies ought or even must, and the subversion of all meaningful ethical inquiry when there is a failure to respect the

¹⁶Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 144; also p. 187.

¹⁷Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 91. (Emphasis mine)



distinction between descriptive and normative discourse.

Another illustration of the logical trap contained in the term "need" as a result of its exemplifying the failure to observe the distinction between descriptive and normative discourse, is shown in a bit of a debate between Kai Nielsen and Paul W. Taylor. Nielsen argues that the statement "Children have a need for love and affection but they ought not to have it satisfied," is a logical oddity, like "That's wrong but I do not disapprove of it," or "I have a thoughtful dog." This statement, say Nielsen, gives us a "linguistic shock" rather than a "moral shock." Taylor in turn maintains that the shock is moral rather than linguistic, because

we happen to live in a society which has adopted a moral code such that, for most needs, needs ought to be satisfied.

We perfectly well understand such sentences, according to Taylor. We are shocked only because this statement contradicts our society's standards.¹⁸

Clearly Taylor and Nielsen are talking about two different connotations of the word need. For Taylor the original sentence is presumably a descriptive sentence about psychological matters, and its logical status is no different than the logical status of "This barn needs a coat of paint."

¹⁸Kai Nielsen, "On Human Needs and Moral Appraisals," Inquiry, (Vol. VI, No. 2, Summer 1963), pp. 170-183.



However, as Nielsen reads the word need in the original statement its normative excess baggage is quite prominent, and it takes the form of the normative connotation: "what is a need is good" (and of course its fulfillment is good). If we jettisoned the normative excess baggage, and retained the term need in its pristine descriptive purity Taylor would be right, because then it would make perfectly good moral discourse to say:

Children have a need for love and affection, however, if you satisfy this need they will grow up spoiled, soft, dependent, lacking in the character traits for a productive and creative life. What children should be given instead is good, hard discipline without any sentimental displays of affection.

Here, since need is used descriptively, there is neither linguistic nor moral shock conveyed by the sentence.

There is an interesting and eloquent comment on what has happened to the concept need in our culture, in the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel:

The alarming fact is that man is becoming 'a fighter for needs' rather than 'a fighter for ends,' as defined by William James,
Needs are looked upon today as if they were holy, as if they contained the totality of existence. Needs are our gods, and we toil and spare no effort to gratify them. Suppression of a desire is considered a sacrilege that must inevitably avenge itself in the form of some mental disorder. We worship not one but a whole pantheon of needs, and have come to look upon moral and spiritual norms as nothing but personal desires in disguise. . . .
Short is the way from need to greed. Evil conditions make us seethe with evil needs, with mad dreams. Can we afford to pursue all our innate needs, even our will to power?
In the tragic confusion of interests, in which every one of us is caught, no distinction seems to be as



indispensable as the distinction between right and wrong interests. Yet the concepts of right and wrong, to be standards in our dealing with interests, cannot themselves be interests. . . . needs are our problems rather than our norms. They are in need of, rather than the origins of, standards. We can ill afford to set up needs . . . as a universal standard, as a supreme, abiding rule or pattern for living We must beware of converting needs into ends, interests into norms. The task is precisely the opposite: it is to convert ends into needs, to convert the Divine commandment into a human concern.¹⁹

This, together with what we have said above, underscores Paul W. Taylor's all-important and fundamental distinction between descriptive (or factual) and normative discourse:

The truth of normative decisions depends on human decision: the truth of factual assertions does not. A factual assertion is true if it corresponds to the way the world is, regardless of whether we want the world to be that way. . . . A normative assertion is true, on the other hand, only because we have decided to adopt a standard or rule as applicable to what we are making the assertion about. Unless we make such a decision our assertion has no truth or falsity Thus we see that the logical basis of a factual assertion and the logical basis of a normative assertion are essentially different. The first includes no element of decision, whereas the second includes an element of decision at two stages--immediately, in the decision to adopt a standard or rule of evaluation, and ultimately, in the rational choice of a way of life.²⁰

In discussing the problem whether moral and ethical norms and guides can be deduced from or identified with

¹⁹Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Religious Message," *Religion in America*, ed. John Cogley (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), pp. 246-252 *passim*.

²⁰Paul W. Taylor, *Normative Discourse* (Edgewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), pp. 248-49.



statements of fact about human nature and human propensities, I have limited myself in this chapter to such issues as health and illness, and the meaning of need-gratification. The illustrative material I have used came chiefly from Maslow and Fromm. But what is true of Maslow and Fromm is also true, to a greater or lesser degree, of Rogers, Allport and Asch, in relation to other issues. The confusion between fact and value, between descriptive and normative discourse, between statements of fact and ethical prescriptions, is rampant in their writings. Their illusion that they are advancing the cause of furnishing a solid foundation for ethics and for a democratic society by pointing to certain human propensities and identifying these propensities with ethical norms, or deducing ethical guidance from them, is a persistent case of logical self-deception. They do not see that the ethical norms and principles they espouse are among the preconceptions which they import into their psychology, rather than logical deductions from their psychology, and that the justification or vindication of these ethical principles resides elsewhere than in their psychology.

This will be illustrated further not only in the next chapter on self-actualization, but also in Chapter VIII with reference to our social psychologists' common assumption that from the alleged psychological fact that the possession of a conscience, of an inner moral sense,



we can deduce the ethical imperative: "We ought to obey the guidance of our conscience." Thus, our social psychologists' dalliance with problems of ethics and the search for a normative ethics brings us back to Bishop Butler again.

In general, our social psychologists' dalliance with these problems of ethics has contributed nothing to the solution of Hume's well-known problem as to whether a logical foundation can be found for drawing ought conclusions from exclusively is premises.²¹ The problem remains unsolved, in spite of much discussion of it in current philosophical literature. In some of the current discussions, some authors seem to me to neglect the distinction between ought statements about means and ought statements about ends, and this simply skirts around the basic problem. There appears to me to be no problem in deducing instrumental ought statements, i. e., statements about means, from is statements. Once the decision has been made about what end to pursue, then what one ought to do is no longer the same type of question as the question whether one ought to choose this particular goal. The instrumental question is not a normative question, it is a factual or a scientific question, and the ought in the answer to the instrumental

²¹David Hume, A Treatise of Human Understanding, ed. L. A. Selby-Biggs (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), Book III, Part I, Sec. i., p. 469.



question is not a normative ought. Let me borrow Nowell-Smith's illustration. Suppose that a parent has decided that he did not want his child to be grasping and aggressive. Whether or not he ought to adopt this goal for his child, is a normative question, and is a matter of normative decision. But once that ought has been decided, the question as to how he ought to go about achieving this goal, or what he ought to do to achieve this goal, is a question of fact, and can be answered in a factual way.

The question 'What sort of upbringing prevents people from becoming grasping and aggressive?' is a question of fact, the ability to answer which could be a matter of expertise. If it is true that early weaning makes people grasping and aggressive, which is something that psychologists might be able to establish empirically, that settles the matter. Psychology is a young science; but enough is now known to make many questions about the best method of achieving an end 'scientific' questions. That they continue to be treated as philosophical or moral questions is a matter of regret.²²

If we adhere to the crucial distinction between questions about ends and questions about means to achieve the ends that have been chosen, and we remember that the philosophical question is about deducing moral or ethical imperatives about ends, then my conclusion at present is the same as Nowell-Smith:

Decisions and imperatives do not follow logically from psychological or biological descriptions.²³

²²p. H. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics*, pp. 15-16.

²³Ibid., p. 319.



CHAPTER VII

SELF-ACTUALIZATION AS ETHICAL NORM

One of the concepts that plays a major role in the attempt to deduce ethical norms or a blueprint for the "good society" from a psychological theory of human nature is the concept of self-actualization or self-realization. Most prominent in the work of Maslow, Fromm, and Rogers, self-actualization as the putative logical nexus between human nature and ethics is also relied on to some extent by Allport and Murphy. In the writings of these men the concept of self-actualization functions also in two other ways. It is used descriptively, that is, to describe aspects of human action. It is also used as an explanatory concept, that is, to explain aspects of human behavior. There will be occasion to make reference to these two other uses. However, our principal concern in the present chapter is with self-actualization as a logical foundation for ethical norms or for value judgments.

The concept may be defined or described in Maslow's words:

A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is ultimately to be at peace with himself. What man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization. . . . This term [was] first coined by Kurt Goldstein. It refers to man's desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is



potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.¹

Or, to quote Maslow again:

For the purposes of this discussion, [self-actualization] may be loosely described as the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, etc. Such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and to be doing the best that they are capable of doing, reminding us of Nietzsche's exhortation, 'Become what thou art!' They are people who have developed or are developing to the full stature of which they are capable.²

Now, that there exists, as part of the inner nature of man, a trend or pressure, or propensity toward self-actualization is maintained by some and hypothesized by others in this group of social psychologists. In his first book Erich Fromm stated it as follows:

. . . there are also certain psychological qualities inherent in man that need to be satisfied and that result in certain reactions if they are frustrated. . . . The most important seems to be the tendency to grow, to develop and realize potentialities which man has developed in the course of history. . . . Once they have developed in the process of evolution they tend to be expressed.³

He restated it in his second book, Man for Himself:

The assumption that man has an inherent drive for growth and integration . . . follows from the very nature of man, from the principle that the power to

¹Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 91-92.

²Ibid., pp. 200-201.

³Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 287-88.



act creates a need to use this power and that the failure to use it results in dysfunction and unhappiness.⁴

Rogers proposes the hypothesis that self-actualization is the one fundamental human need:

The organism has this one basic tendency and striving --to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism.

Rather than many needs and motives, it seems entirely possible that all organic and psychological needs may be described as partial aspects of this one fundamental need. . . . The words used here are an attempt to describe the observed directional force in organic life . . .

We are talking here about the tendency of the organism to maintain itself . . .

This involves self-actualization. . . . The term 'self-actualization' is used by Goldstein to describe this one basic striving . . .⁵

Maslow at first proposed the self-actualization tendency as a theoretical postulate:

. . . various recent developments have shown the theoretical necessity for the postulation of some sort of positive growth or self-actualization tendency within the organism. . . . This kind of tendency to growth and self-actualization, in one or another vague form, has been postulated by thinkers as diverse as Aristotle and Bergson, and by many other philosophers. Among psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and psychologists it has been found necessary by Goldstein, Rank, Jung, Horney, Fromm, May, and Rogers.⁶

⁴Promm, Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics, p. 219.

⁵Carl R. Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951), pp. 487, 488, 489.

⁶Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 124.



In his subsequent book Maslow again refers to self-actualization as a theoretical, explanatory concept. He makes reference to the "evidence that forces us in the direction of a concept of healthy growth and self-actualizing tendencies," and describes it as "partly deductive evidence in the sense of pointing out that unless we postulate such a concept, much of human behavior makes no sense."⁷ However, on the very next page, Maslow, referring to his study of "self-actualizing people," and claiming that the conclusions of his study "have been so strongly paralleled by the clinical and philosophical conclusions" of the writers mentioned above, as well as others, proposes the "tendency" toward self-actualization as a kind of empirical generalization:

We can certainly now assert that at least a reasonable, theoretical, and empirical case has been made for the presence within the human being of a tendency toward, or need for growing in a direction that can be summarized in general as self-actualization, or psychological health, and specifically as growth toward each and all of the sub-aspects of self-actualization . . .⁸

And again, two pages later, Maslow states:

. . . I think these findings can be generalized to most of the human species because it looks to me (and to others) as if most people (perhaps all) tend toward self-actualization. . . .⁹

Allport asserts that "Human personality . . . is . . .

⁷Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 146.

⁸Ibid., p. 147.

⁹Ibid., p. 149.



is advancing toward the fulfillment of plans and hopes. Self-actualization is the term often employed," a term, he adds later, "that covers the main interest systems of adulthood." Relying on Maslow and Kurt Goldstein, Allport categorically states, in his chapter on "The Development of Motives," that

Self-actualization is at the bottom the only motive of men. The concept is not specific . . . each personality is different from all others, and strives to maintain its integrity and fulfill its own destiny in its own way. The concept also . . . implies that . . . there is over and above sheer reactivity a large scope for conflict-free growth and self-realization.¹⁰

And, to complete the inventory, there is Gardner Murphy's acknowledgement:

Gratefully here we may use . . . the efforts of . . . Kurt Goldstein, of Gordon Allport, to find fulfillment in the wholeness of the living individual.¹¹

In quoting thus at length, care has been taken to show that, whatever other meanings the self-actualization concept may have for these writers, it is proposed by them as a descriptive psychological concept, the function of which is to describe or to explain aspects of man's behavior. It is of importance to remember that, whatever else happens to the concept of self-actualization in the writings of some of these men, the fundamental proposition they advance

¹⁰Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, pp. 85, 212, and 215 respectively.

¹¹Murphy, Human Potentialities, p. 323.



in their role of psychologists is that men as a matter of fact tend to actualize themselves. The status of this proposition, therefore, is either that of an empirical generalization based on clinical and other observation, or of an hypothesis advanced as an explanation of men's actual behavior. This is the import of the concept in the work of Kurt Goldstein, to which the writers under discussion refer frequently. For Goldstein self-actualization functions as a descriptive concept, and the statement that there is in man's nature a tendency to self-actualization is for him a factual report of what he discovered in the course of his extensive research on brain-damaged patients, and of his other psychological researches. That Fromm, Maslow, and Rogers, and to some extent Allport and Murphy, misread Goldstein's theory of self-actualization, will be argued later. For the present it will suffice to emphasize once more that for these social psychologists, as for Kurt Goldstein, the proposition that man tends to actualize himself is fundamentally, and irrespective of what other purposes it may be used or misused for, part of the psychological enterprise of describing factually or explaining the behavior and nature of human beings. This is underscored by Maslow in his reply to a commentator on his paper entitled, "Psychological Data and Human Values":



I think I have shown that the concepts of psychological health and of self-actualization need not be based on implicit value judgments. When properly defined, they are derived from scientifically observed facts. They are descriptive concepts.¹²

Logical problems therefore arise immediately when we find Maslow and others employing the concept of self-actualization as a norm, as a criterion for distinguishing between good and bad, between right and wrong, between what one ought and what one ought not to do. Maslow summarizes this transition to the normative use of the concept of self-actualization, and in doing this he betrays no awareness of any logical difficulties in this transition:

The group of thinkers who have been working with self-actualization, with self, with authentic humanness, etc., have pretty firmly established their case that man has a tendency to realize himself. By implication he is exhorted to be true to his own nature, to trust himself, to be authentic, spontaneous, honestly expressive, to look for the sources of his action in his own deep inner nature.¹³

Maslow's own view, which is hopelessly confused, as I shall attempt to show later, is in complete accord with this program which derives self-actualization as a norm of conduct from self-actualization as an inherent tendency in man:

¹²Maslow, "Reply to Professor Weisskopf," New Knowledge in Human Values, ed. Abraham H. Maslow (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), p. 246. (Emphasis mine)

¹³Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 152. (Emphasis mine)



First of all . . . is the strong belief that man has an essential nature of his own . . . that he has needs, capacities, and tendencies that are genuinely based . . . there is involved the conception that full health and normal and desirable development consist in actualizing this nature, in fulfilling these potentialities. . . . By this conception what is good? Anything that conduces to this desirable development in the direction of actualization of the innernature of man. What is bad or abnormal? Anything that frustrates or blocks or denies the essential nature of man.¹⁴

Maslow suggests that there is implicit here a generalized value system. He contends that by taking into account data concerning man's psychological needs,

. . . we can solve many value problems that philosophers have struggled with ineffectually for centuries. For one thing, it looks as if there were a single ultimate value for mankind, a far goal toward which all men strive. This is called variously by different authors self-actualization, self-realization, integration, psychological health, individuation, autonomy, creativity, productivity, but they all agree that this amounts to realizing the potentialities of the person, that is to say, becoming fully human, everything that the person can become.¹⁵

All this implies a naturalistic system of values, a by-product of the empirical description of the deepest tendencies of the human species and of specific individuals. The study of the human being by science or by self-search can discover where he is heading, what is his purpose in life, what is good for him and what is bad for him. . .¹⁶

Rogers makes the transition from description to the prescription of self-actualization as follows:

¹⁴ Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 340.

¹⁵ Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 145.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 191.



. . . These views thus have an empirical or experiential foundation . . . I have learned what the good life seems to be by observing and participating in the struggle of disturbed and troubled people to achieve that life. . . . The good life, from the point of view of my experience, is the process of movement in a direction which the human organism selects when it is inwardly free to move in any direction. . . . Still another characteristic of the person who is living the process of the good life appears to be an increasing trust in his organism as a means of arriving at the most satisfying behavior in each existential situation . . . he could permit his total organism [to] discover that course of activity which would come closest to satisfying all his needs in the situation.¹⁷

In another paper, after stating that "this basic actualizing tendency is the only motive which is postulated in this theoretical system," Rogers moves to his value judgments by affirming that,

. . . there is already implicit in what has been given a concept of the ultimate in the actualization of the human organism. This ultimate hypothetical person would be synonymous with 'the goal of social evolution,' 'the end point of optimal psychotherapy,' etc. . . . the person would be continually in a process of further self-actualization.¹⁸

Erich Fromm, deploring "the human automation" that characterizes our Western culture, holds forth "positive freedom" as a desideratum, and then equates this desideratum

¹⁷Carl R. Rogers, "The Meaning of the Good Life," Reconstruction in Religion, ed. Alfred E. Kuenzli, pp. 173, 177, 181.

¹⁸Carl R. Rogers, "A Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships, as Developed in the Client-Centered Framework," Psychology: A Study of a Science, ed. Sigmund Koch, Vol. III, pp. 196, 234-35.



with self-actualization:

We believe that . . . man can be free. . . . This freedom man can attain by the realization of his self, by being himself. . . . We believe that the realization of the self is accomplished not only by an act of thinking but also by the realization of man's total personality, by the active expression of his emotional and intellectual potentialities. . . . positive freedom consists in the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality.

. . . positive freedom . . . is identical with the full realization of the individual's potentialities, together with his ability to live actively and spontaneously.¹⁹

Fromm is even more specific in his affirmation of self-actualization as an ethical norm:

If human freedom is established as freedom to, if man can realize his self fully and uncompromisingly, the fundamental cause for his asocial drives will have disappeared and only a sick and abnormal individual will be dangerous.²⁰

All organisms have an inherent tendency to actualize their specific potentialities. The aim of man's life, therefore, is to be understood as the unfolding of his powers according to the laws of his nature.

To sum up, good in humanistic ethics is the affirmation of life, the unfolding of man's powers. . . . Evil constitutes the crippling of man's powers. . . .²¹

Allport, in a brief listing of the various goals of psychotherapy "as stated or implied in leading therapeutic systems," affirms that "the desideratum for Goldstein,

¹⁹Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 257-58, 270.

²⁰Ibid., p. 269.

²¹Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 20.



Maslow and Jung is self-actualization."²²

The logical structure of the argument implicit in the claim that ethical norms can be deduced from self-actualization is approximately as follows:

1. Man has an inner nature, with inherent potentialities and capacities.

2. Part of man's inner nature is the tendency to, the pressure or propensity toward, self-actualization, i. e., toward fulfilling his potentialities and capacities.

3. Self-actualization, the fulfillment of man's potentialities and capacities is good. Psychic health consists in self-actualization, whereas the denial of self-actualization, i. e., the frustration or denial of the fulfillment of man's capacities, is bad and constitutes psychic illness.

4. Therefore, people ought to actualize themselves, ought to combat elements or forces that frustrate self-actualization, and ought to seek the establishment of a social order in which self-actualization is facilitated and encouraged.

The principal step in the argument, then, is the inference from the alleged fact that the need to self-actualize is a

²²Allport, Personality and Social Encounter, p. 166.



central propensity in man's behavior, to the conclusion that self-actualization and its products and consequences are morally good and ought to be pursued and encouraged. The ethical norm, the criterion for ethical judgment, is thus allegedly contained in or built into the phenomenon and pursuit of self-actualization, and the logical guarantee of the correctness of the ethical judgment is allegedly contained within this propensity itself. From the descriptive psychological premise, "Man has a tendency toward self-actualization," is inferred the normative and prescriptive proposition, "All self-actualizing behavior is, by virtue of its being an instance of self-actualization, good, and ought to be encouraged."

Of course, the logic of part of this position is not unfamiliar. It resembles, in part, a trend in Western Ethical theory, found in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Bishop Butler, F. H. Bradley, and others, who offer self-realization as man's highest good. To the extent of the resemblance, the position of our social psychologists and the position of the philosophers mentioned are both afflicted with the same fatal fallacies. For invariably, the highest good proposed by these philosophers turns out in fact to be not self-realization, but something else. And neither do the social psychologists under discussion ever in fact deduce ethical norms from the principle of self-actualization. What they in fact do is advocate or prescribe that certain aspects of the self and not the entire



self, certain propensities of man and not all of his propensities, ought to be actualized, namely, only those aspects of the self or those human propensities that are considered by these psychologists to be "good." That these propensities are "good" is not in fact deduced from the principle that man has a tendency to actualize them; it could not be, inasmuch as there are other human propensities that also press to be actualized but are considered undesirable, and their clamoring to be actualized does not transmute these undesirable propensities into "good" ones. The "goodness" of some propensities and the "oughtness" that is attached to the idea of their realization, are thus not at all intrinsic to the fact that men have an intrinsic tendency to realize them. The claimed goodness or oughtness of these propensities is completely extrinsic to the "need" for their realization, and the justification of the claim that they are good must rest upon some other foundation.

I shall attempt to analyze this further, especially in the work of Fromm and Maslow, But before proceeding to this task it may be useful to note some salient differences between the self-realizationism of, for example, Aristotle and Bradley, and the self-realizationism of Fromm, Maslow, Rogers, et al. One thing is quite clear: Aristotle and Bradley were far better logicians than our social psychologists, and, while advocating a position that leaves



logical questions unanswered, they were far more clearly aware of the difficulties involved in their position than are the social psychologists under discussion.

In the first place, unlike our social psychologists, Aristotle and Bradley do not employ self-realization as a descriptive psychological concept. For them the concept (in Aristotle it is implied, whereas Bradley uses the term directly and repeatedly) is normative or prescriptive in the first instance. But it does not function in isolation. For these philosophers self-realization is a goal, but it is a goal only in connection with the affirmation of certain aspects of the self as aspects worthy of realization. In the case of Aristotle, it is that function of man that is unique to man, namely, the exercise of reason, that is advanced as worthy of self-realization.²³ In Bradley's case, the goal of self-realization is to be pursued by that aspect of the self that represents "our function as an organ in the social organism."²⁴ Thus, neither Aristotle's proposal that it is man's rational self that ought to be realized, nor Bradley's proposal that it is man's social self that should be realized, is inferred from the proposition that the part of the self to be realized is a part of

²³Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, Chapter 7, 1097b 23 -- 1098a18.

²⁴F. H. Bradley, Ethical Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 163, as well as all of Essay V, entitled "My Station and Its Duties," pp. 160-213.



human nature. Neither Aristotle nor Bradley proposed that the total, empirically discovered self is the self to be realized. And, neither Aristotle nor Bradley proposed that the aspect of the self which is selected for self-realization must be selected solely because it is part of human nature.

Both Bradley and Aristotle employ normative criteria in their selection of the part of the self to be realized. For Aristotle, the proposed goal of self-realization for the rational part of man is based on his view that the rational is what is unique to man, and that the fulfillment of the unique capacities of anything is "good." For Bradley, the goal of realizing the social self is based on his view that a person, being a member of society, must transcend himself, and have as his duty the realization of imperatives that go beyond his own particularity and are in some ways universal. Aristotle's and Bradley's employment of avowedly normative criteria for selecting the aspects of the self that are to be realized, has of course not prevented these philosophers from leaving important problems unresolved, and to this I shall return in a moment. The point here, however, is that attention to the employment by these philosophers of normative criteria by which they determine what aspects of man are to be actualized, helps highlight the differences between them and our social psychologists, and also helps throw into bold relief the logical failures of the espousal of self-actualization as an ethical norm.



First, unlike the social psychologists under discussion, who presume to be inferring their proposal of self-actualization as ethically a desideratum from "empirical data about psychic health and psychic illness," Aristotle and Bradley avoid the logical trap of attempting to deduce ethical prescriptions solely from factual data about the nature of man. Second, the two philosophers' employment of normative criteria for selecting the aspects of man to be self-actualized makes it immediately and abundantly clear that it is not self-actualization that is for them the ethical norm or the ethical goal, but rather the exercise of reason in the case of Aristotle, and adherence to the values of the social organism in the case of Bradley, and that neither of these is a deduction from the facts of human nature, but has other actual or claimed logical foundations. On the other hand, the procedure of Maslow and the others blinds them to the fact that what they are asserting to be ethically desirable is really something other than self-actualization. Third, whereas their uncritical step of trying to infer self-actualization as an ethical norm from self-actualization as a descriptive concept prevents our social psychologists from seeing the logical difficulties of their position, by contrast, the procedure of philosophers such as Aristotle and Bradley exhibits quite clearly and unmistakably the problems left unresolved by their position.



So far as Aristotle's position is concerned, the obvious questions that it leaves unanswered are:

(a) - Does every being have some unique function?

(b) Is reason, or "man's rational part," really the only unique capacity that distinguishes man from other living things? Surely one can list other activities and capacities of man that are not shared by other animals; are these other unique capacities also worthy of realization?

(c) Is the element of uniqueness an acceptable criterion of what is "good" and worthy of realization? Is it not possible that some parts or capacities of the self that man shares with other animals may be judged good, and that some capacities of the self that are unique to man may be judged bad? The very posing of this question without its sounding absurd, makes it clear that the judgment of any human capacity as good is not really based on its being unique to man, but on some other criteria.

With respect to Bradley's position, it must be said that no one was more keenly aware of the difficulties implicit in it than Bradley himself. Indeed, he proceeded to recite at considerable length the "very serious objections" to his theory that the self to be realized is the social self. His self-examination led him to the conclusion that morality is "a self-contradiction":



It is a self-contradiction in this way: it is a demand for what can not be . . . reality is not wholly good. Neither in me, nor in the world, is what ought to be what is, and what is what ought to be. . . . The reason of the contradiction is the fact that man is a contradiction . . .²⁵

Bradley therefore concluded that "Reflection on morality leads us beyond it. It leads us, in short, to see the necessity of a religious point of view . . . Morality issues in religion."²⁶

It is beyond the scope of the present inquiry to undertake any discussion of Bradley's proposal to ground morality in religion. However, it may be instructive, and helpful in our analysis of the self-realizationism of the social psychologists under discussion, to take note of some of the difficulties perceived by Bradley himself with reference to his own self-realizationism. Unlike our social psychologists, Bradley was keenly aware of the fact that his position had not "got rid of the opposition between the 'ought and the 'is.'" Bradley saw that the 'ought' can not be identified with the 'is' either so far as the self is concerned, or so far as the social organism or the community is concerned. For, as he pointed out:

(a) . . . The self can not be so seen to be identified with the moral whole that the bad self disappears.

²⁵P. H. Bradley, Ethical Studies, p. 313.

²⁶Ibid., p. 314.



(b) Again, the moral man need not find himself realized in the world . . . the community in which he is a member may be in a confused or rotten condition, so that in it right and might do not always go together. . . . There are afflictions for which no moral organism has balm or physician . . .²⁷

The question "Which self is to be realized?" was faced most realistically by Bradley, who polarized man into two selves:

The existence of two selves in man, a better self which takes pleasure in the good, and a worse self which makes for the bad, is a fact which is too plain to be denied . . . the good and the bad selves exist, and every one knows what they mean. . . . I feel in myself impulses to good in collision with impulses to bad, and I feel myself in each of them.²⁸

"What is the content of the bad self?" Bradley asked, and he listed some of the ingredients: "Pride, hate, revenge, passionateness, sulkiness, malice, meanness, cowardice, and recklessness . . . I please myself and my worse self in all . . ."²⁹ We find ourselves evil," Bradley said further, "the evil is as much a fact as the good, and without our bad self we should hardly know ourselves."³⁰

Bradley's question is, of course, fundamental. In any theory of self-realization as a logical foundation for ethics, it is a certain self that is to be realized. It is never the case that the total empirically discovered self is proposed as the self to be realized or actualized. Rather, it is always the case that selected phases of the

²⁷Ibid., pp. 203-204.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 276-277.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 279-280.

³⁰Ibid., p. 308.



self are the ones to be realized, phases selected not on the basis of the criterion of their being part of the self, but on the basis of other criteria which are not logically entailed by the nature of the self. No prescriptive ethical imperative of self-realization is thus ever deduced solely from psychological facts concerning the nature of man.

Let us now return to Fromm and Maslow. As shown earlier, at so many points they assert that it is the total empirically discovered self, with all its capacities and propensities, that presses for self-actualization, and that such self-actualization is good and should be pursued and encouraged. It is therefore not surprising that further inquiry leads them into hopeless contradictions and circularity, and in fact, though they do not seem to realize it, to the abandonment of self-actualization as an ethical norm.

Let us again see what it is they are saying. Earlier we quoted Fromm's statement that ". . . the power to act creates a need to use this power and . . . the failure to use it results in dysfunction and unhappiness." According to Fromm, ". . . the only way [man] can succeed in the act of living is to use his powers, to spend that which he has."³¹

³¹Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 220.



Fromm places considerable emphasis on the value and importance of "spontaneity" as part of "positive freedom."³² In other words, Fromm is urging that persons ought to have the courage of their impulses. Maslow's language is even more sweeping in its undifferentiated proposal of the self and the "capacities" to be actualized:

To make growth and self-actualization possible, it is necessary to understand that capacities, organs and organ systems press to function and express themselves and to be used and exercised. . . . The muscular person likes to use his muscles, indeed, has to use them in order to 'feel good' and to achieve the subjective feeling of harmonious, successful, uninhibited functioning (spontaneity). . . . So also for intelligence, for the uterus, the eyes, the capacity to love. Capacities clamor to be used. . . . capacities are also needs.³³

And again,

The muscular person likes to use his muscles, indeed, has to use them in order to self-actualize, and to achieve the subjective feeling of harmonious, uninhibited, satisfying functioning which is so important an aspect of psychological health. . . . Capacities clamor to be used . . . That is to say, capacities are needs, and therefore are intrinsic values as well.³⁴

Let us again take note of the logical difficulty here. Using Maslow's example, his argument here may be stated as follows:

³²Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 256-76 et passim. Also Man for Himself, passim.

³³Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 187.

³⁴Ibid., p. 144.



The muscular man's use of his muscles is part of his self-actualization.

Therefore:

The muscular man's use of his muscles is good.

But obviously, one can assert the premise of this argument and at the same time raise doubts about the conclusion, without sounding absurd. It is not nonsensical to ask: "The muscular man's use of his muscles is part of his self-actualization, but is his use of his muscles good?" Or, one can assert Maslow's premise in conjunction with the proposition that is the contradictory of his conclusion, without contradicting oneself. Thus, it is no logical self-contradiction to say: "The muscular man's use of his muscles is part of his self-actualization, but his use of his muscles is not good."

Now, the logical problem arises because there are obvious questions as to what exactly is meant by Maslow's position. Are all cases of a muscular man's use of his muscles "good" in Maslow's view? What about the muscular man who exercises his muscles by frequently provoking fights with people, in which he beats them up? What about the exercise of their muscles by muscular "goons" and "muscle men" in the employ of racketeers, etc.? Such illustrations can be multiplied out of the long annals of human history, and out of the more recent use of muscular men by totalitarian regimes. Clearly Maslow would agree that such use of their muscles by muscular men is not "good." However, since many



of these muscle men obviously "feel good," and have "a subjective feeling of . . . successful, uninhibited functioning" in this exercise of their muscles, Maslow's thesis would require him to call this good. If he rejects the proposition that this kind of use of one's muscles is good, then it follows that he is employing a criterion other than self-actualization by which to pass ethical judgment over a case of self-actualizing behavior.

Let us, for a moment, look at Fromm's illustrations:

Man has the power to walk and move; if he were prevented from using this power severe physical discomfort or illness would result. Women have the power to bear children and to nurse them; if this power remains unused . . . she experiences a frustration which can be remedied only by increased realization of her powers in other realms of her life. Freud has called attention to another lack of expenditure as a cause of suffering, that of sexual energy, by recognizing that the blocking of sexual energy can be the cause of neurotic disturbances. . . . his [Freud's] theory is a profound symbolic expression of the fact that man's failure to use and to spend what he has is the cause of sickness and unhappiness.³⁵

Now, the obvious question is, again, whether every case of the expenditure of sexual energy is "good," and whether every case of "blocking" of sexual energy is "bad." It is of course true that Freud called attention to the importance of the sex need or propensity in man, and to frustration of the sex need as a source of some neuroses. However, it would be a misinterpretation of Freud to suggest or imply

³⁵Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 219.



that he deduced from these factual or descriptive data about man's sex needs an ethical guide to the effect that all gratifications of the sex need are "good" and all inhibitions of the sex need are "bad." We pointed out above in Chapter III that this regrettably has been and continues to be a popular misinterpretation of Freud's work. Indeed, when Freud steps out of his role as descriptive psychologist and takes on the role of moralist, his emphasis, we repeat, is on the problem of balancing on the one hand need gratification, and on the other hand controls over needs, impulses, instincts, etc. The logic of Freud's position is that some expenditure of sexual energy is good, but some blocking of sexual energy is also good; and thus, when sexual gratification is judged to be good, the criterion for this judgment is not contained in the fact that man has a propensity or a need for sexual gratification, but in some other source. The significance of Freud's slogan, "Where id was there shall ego be,"³⁶ and of much of Civilization and Its Discontents, is precisely that man's drives require controls for the sake of ethical and social goals which are not in themselves deducible from the facts about human nature.

From the above it should not be concluded that the social psychologists under discussion are completely

³⁶Freud, New Introductory Lectures, p. 112.



oblivious to the fact that any doctrine that proposes self-actualization as an ethical norm must ultimately come up with an answer to the crucial question as to what kind of self is to be realized. But their awareness of it is fuzzy, and their attempts to answer this question are either self-contradictory or circular. Consequently they fail to understand that they do not and can not , on the basis of their own procedure, establish self-realization as an ethical norm, and that they are in fact using other ethical norms to justify their advocacy of the pursuit of self-realization.

One can distinguish three kinds of attempt made by our social psychologists to answer the question as to what kind of self is to be actualized, and thus to justify self-actualization as an ethical norm. They are as follows:

1. Man is inherently good, therefore the total self that is to be actualized is good.
2. Self-actualization can be entrusted only to self-disciplined people.
3. People who are "self-actualizers" are good people.

I shall try to discuss each of them briefly.

(1) Man Is Inherently Good

The proposition is advanced that man is inherently good, that the self to be actualized is inherently good, and that therefore, self-actualization is ethically good



and its pursuit is a moral desideratum. The claim that man is inherently good is advanced with varying degrees of insistence, and with varying degrees of naivete, by Maslow, Fromm, Rogers, Allport, and Murphy. In the case of Fromm, Rogers, and Maslow, this neo-Rousseauism is accompanied by the indictment that it is society that is afflicted with evil forces, that society corrupts the individual, and that if the individual were liberated from the corrupt influences of society and were free to actualize himself and his potentialities, a morally desirable state of affairs would ensue. A few selected quotations may be of help here.

Rogers says that in his experience he has "discovered man to have characteristics which seem inherent in his species," and the terms he suggests for these characteristic are: "positive, forward-moving, constructive, realistic, trustworthy."³⁷ "The basic nature of the human being, when functioning freely," says Rogers, "is constructive and trustworthy. . . . We do not have to ask who will socialize him, for one of his deepest requirements is affiliation and communication with others."³⁸ Rogers' description of what he calls "The Fully Functioning Person," which is his

³⁷Rogers, "The Nature of Man," The Nature of Man in Theological and Psychological Perspective, ed. Simon Doniger, p. 91.

³⁸Ibid., p. 70, quoted by Rogers from his "A Therapist's View of the Good Life," The Humanist, 1957, No. 17.



equivalent for the self-actualized person, claims, among other things, that "He will live with others in the maximum possible harmony."³⁹

So far as Erich Fromm is concerned, "There are certain factors in man's nature which are fixed and unchangeable: . . . the necessity to avoid isolation and moral aloneness." Moreover,

If individuals are allowed to act freely in the sense of spontaneity, if they acknowledge no higher authority than themselves. . . . the fundamental cause for . . . asocial drives will have disappeared.

We believe that man is primarily a social being . . .

. . . the striving for justice and truth is an inherent trend of human nature . . .

. . . we believe that ideals like truth, justice, freedom, . . . can be genuine strivings . . . [and] are rooted in the conditions of human life . . .⁴⁰

The principal thesis of Fromm's The Sane Society is that ". . . the striving for mental health, for happiness, harmony, love, productiveness, is inherent in every human being who is not born a mental or moral idiot,"⁴¹ and that it is society that perverts man.

Allport is more cautious in his assertions. None

³⁹Rogers, "A theory of Therapy, Personality . . .," Psychology: A Study of a Science, ed. Sigmund Koch, Vol. III, p. 235.

⁴⁰Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 22, 269, 288, 290, 294.

⁴¹Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 275.



the less he also repeats the refrain that friendship, affiliativeness, love are basic in human nature.

Desires for affiliation are . . . the inescapable ground work of human life.

. . . men are basically eager for friendly and affiliative relations with others.

The truest statement that can be made of a normal person is that he never can love or be loved enough. He always wants more love in his life.⁴²

In Maslow's view, man's inherent needs and capacities "are on their face good or neutral rather than evil."⁴³ Man's "inner nature, as much as know of it so far, seems not to be intrinsically evil, but rather either neutral or positively good."⁴⁴ However, the most instructive of Maslow's statements on this subject is the following:

The group of thinkers who have been working with self-actualization . . . have implied without making explicit that if you can behave authentically, you will behave well, that if you emit action from within, it will be good and right behavior. What is very clearly implied is that this inner core, this real self, is good, trustworthy, ethical. This is an affirmation that is clearly separable from the affirmation that man actualizes himself, and needs to be separately proven (as I think it will be).⁴⁵

The purpose of quoting these affirmations of the

⁴²Allport, Personality and Social Encounter, pp. 200, 202, 205.

⁴³Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 340.

⁴⁴Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, pp. 3, 150, and 181; Motivation and Personality, p. 153.

⁴⁵Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, pp. 152-53.



inherent goodness of man is not at this point to raise any questions as to the empirical evidence for or the factual truth of this claim. Rather, my purpose is to exhibit clearly how our social psychologists themselves cause their proposal of self-actualization as an ethical norm to vanish into thin air, without their fully realizing that this has happened. For, as Maslow, in a rare moment of logical acumen, points out above, the proposition that self-actualizing behavior will be "good and right behavior" has to be predicated on the assumption that man's inner core, "this real self" is good and ethical; and the affirmation that man's real self is good, is "separable from the affirmation that man actualizes himself, and needs to be separately proven." But, let us assume that the affirmation of man's inherent goodness is true, or is proved to be true, what would this prove about self-actualization as an ethical norm? It is clear, as Maslow appears to perceive, that the criteria or norms that would be used to establish the inherent goodness of man would be criteria other than and independent of the concept of self-actualization. In other words, to the question "What is the evidence for the contention that man is inherently good?", the answer would be given in terms of concepts and categories that would not include the concept of self-actualization. If man is inherently good, it is not because he is a self-actualizing animal, but by virtue of his conforming to other criteria of goodness. It is not the case that man is good because he is



a self-actualizer; rather, self-actualizing behavior is good if it is the behavior of men who are always inherently good, and whose goodness is established by criteria extrinsic to and independent of the empirical fact of man's being a self-actualizing animal.

It is thus clear that self-actualization is not an ethical norm. From the proposition that man is in fact a self-actualizer, by itself, one can not deduce what is ethically good or right. From the fact that certain behavior is in fact self-actualizing behavior, one can not infer that it is good behavior. The very need of the self-realizationists to rely on the doctrine of man's inherent goodness is proof that ethical criteria independent of self-actualization are in fact hidden in their judgment that the pursuit of self-actualization is good. When Maslow, in the course of developing the "empirical case" for "the presence within the human being of a tendency toward . . . self-actualization," says that

. . . the human being is so constructed that he presses toward fuller and fuller being and this means pressing toward what most people would call good values, toward serenity, kindness, courage, honesty, love, unselfishness, and goodness⁴⁶

he seems blissfully unaware of the fact that the values he lists are ethical presuppositions espoused by him and others

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 147.



prior to and in complete independence of the concept of self-actualization. What these ethical presuppositions are based on, what their justification is, is of course one of the most difficult and one of the oldest of philosophical problems, a problem to the discussion of which the present inquiry does not address itself. What is important here is that these and other ethical values are not based on the fact that man is a self-actualizer. Precisely the reverse is the case. The proposition that self-actualization is desirable would make any kind of sense only if it were logically grounded on another and prior proposition to the effect that self-actualization will bring about the realization of ethical goals which have already been espoused as desirable. Without such ethical presuppositions, self-actualization is an ethically barren concept. That their discourse about it does not appear ethically barren to our social psychologists is a result of their having surreptitiously imported into the descriptive concept of self-actualization independently held value judgments which make their discourse sound deceptively normative.

(2) Self-actualization and Self-disciplined People

Maslow, while on the one hand maintaining that self-realization is a desideratum, and that man's "inner nature" is either neutral or good, on the other hand expresses an awareness that "unbridled indulgence and gratification has its own dangerous consequences," and may



"bring catastrophe" not only upon the self-actualizer "but upon others as well." To the problem that follows out of this recognition, namely, what kind of self is it that is to be actualized, Maslow's solution takes the form of invoking limits, controls, self-discipline, and he ends up with the proposition that only to the self-disciplined can we entrust the pursuit of self-actualization. That Maslow thus contradicts himself is quite obvious. What is more important from the point of view of this part of our inquiry is that, in doing this, Maslow again, without realizing what he is doing, inevitably shows the concept of self-actualization to be empty of all ethical content, and again employs ethical principles extrinsic to self-actualization as the criteria for his ethical judgments.

Let us look at Maslow's own language here. In speaking of "the group of thinkers who have been working with self-actualization," on the basis of whose claims man is "by implication . . . exhorted to . . . trust himself . . . to be authentic, spontaneous . . .", Maslow comes up with this caveat:

But, of course, this is an ideal counsel. They do not sufficiently warn that most adults don't know how to be authentic and that, if they 'express' themselves, they may bring catastrophe not only upon themselves but upon others as well. What answer must be given to the rapist or the sadist who asks 'Why should I too not trust and express myself?'⁴⁷

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 152.



Maslow then proceeds to point out, as quoted earlier, that the thinkers he refers to imply or assume that man is inherently good, but that this needs to be proven separately, and that he thinks it will be. But at the same time he acknowledges that

. . . of all the problems in this area of instinct, the one of which we know least and should know most is that of aggression, hostility, hatred, and destructiveness. . . . The truth is that we don't really know. Clinical experience hasn't settled the problem because good clinicians come to . . . divergent conclusions.⁴⁸

Averring that "to most psychologists," ". . . evil behaviors . . . seem to be reactive rather than instinctive," Maslow draws the implication that

. . . though 'bad' behavior is very deeply rooted in human nature and can never be abolished altogether, it may be expected to lessen as the personality matures and as society improves.⁴⁹

But Maslow's solution to the problem of self-actualization by the rapist and the sadist, and by implication the problem of all cases of "bad behavior" that is "very deeply rooted in human nature," is revealing and instructive. Affirming again that "the main prerequisite of healthy growth is gratification of basic needs," Maslow continues as follows:

But we have also learned that unbridled indulgence and gratification has its own dangerous consequences . . . there is now available a large store of

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 153.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 183.



clinical and educational experience . . . that the young child needs not only gratification; he needs also to learn . . . limitations . . . , and he has to learn that other human beings seek for gratifications, too, even his mother and father, i. e., they are not only means to his ends. This means control, delay, limits, renunciations, frustration-tolerance and discipline. Only to the self-disciplined and responsible person can we say, 'Do as you will, and it will probably be all right.'⁵⁰

To repeat, what is significant in this solution is not so much Maslow's obvious self-contradiction. What is significant here is that once more man's self-actualization in itself has vanished as an ethical desideratum, and now it is only the self-actualization of "the self-disciplined and responsible person" that "will probably be all right." The ethical guidelines now are "control, delay, limits, renunciation, frustration-tolerance and discipline." None of these suggested ethical guidelines is deduced from or justified by the descriptive proposition that man is a self-actualizing animal. Irrespective of what the ultimate foundation or logical justification may be for these ethical guidelines, it is certainly not to be found in the psychological fact of man's self-actualization. Indeed, these guidelines are appealed to as desiderata in the service of ethical goals precisely because they serve the purpose of counteracting some of the possible effects of self-actualizing behavior which, by ethical standards

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 154.



extrinsic to the fact that man is a self-actualizer, are considered undesirable. It is thus clear that the fact of man's self-actualization is not for Maslow himself (though he does not seem fully to see this), and cannot be, either an ethical norm or a logical foundation for ethical norms.

(3) Self-actualizers Are Good People

A third strategem in the attempt to answer the question as to the kind of self that is to be actualized, and thus to justify inferring ethical norms from the fact of self-actualization, is Maslow's study of and conclusions about "self-actualizing people."⁵¹ Maslow selected a group of subjects "from among personal acquaintances and friends, and from among public and historical figures," who met "the negative criterion [of] an absence of neurosis, psychopathic personality, psychosis, or strong tendencies in these directions, and "the positive criterion . . . [of] evidence of self-actualization . . ."⁵² The criterion of conformity to Maslow's definition of self-actualization (quoted earlier) "implies," according to Maslow, "either gratification, past or present, of the basic emotional needs for safety, belongingness, love, respect, and self-

⁵¹ Maslow, Motivation and Personality, Chapter 12, pp. 199-234.

⁵² Ibid., p. 200.



respect . . . or in a few cases, conquest of these needs."

"This is to say," Maslow continues, "that all subjects felt safe and unanxious, accepted, loved and loving, respect-worthy and respected, and that they had worked out their philosophical, religious, or axiological bearings."⁵³

Such self-actualizers, according to Maslow, automatically desire and choose the good and the right. He refers to his "careful efforts to describe the empirical fact that self-actualizing people are altruistic, dedicated, self-transcending, social, etc."⁵⁴ Their free choices can be descriptively studied as a naturalistic value system . . ." Again, let us attend to Maslow's own language:

. . . in these [self-actualizing or healthy] people, desires are in excellent accord with reason. St. Augustine's 'Love God and do as you will' can easily be translated, 'Be healthy and then you may trust your impulses.'

The dichotomy between selfishness and unselfishness disappears altogether in healthy people because in principle every act is both selfish and unselfish.⁵⁵

. . . healthy people . . . uniformly yearn for what is good for them and for others. . . . They spontaneously tend to do right because that is what they want to do, what they need to do, what they enjoy, what they approve of doing . . .⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., p. 201.

⁵⁴Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. iii.

⁵⁵Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 233.

⁵⁶Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. 150.



. . . those people whom we call relatively healthy (mature, evolved, self-fulfilled, individuated, etc.) . . . when they feel strong, if really free choice is possible, tend spontaneously to choose the true rather than the false, good rather than evil, beauty rather than ugliness . . .⁵⁷

To see Maslow's move toward the derivation of a value system "scientifically" from the choices of these healthy, self-actualizing people, it will be necessary to inspect another extended quotation:

It is the free choices of such self-actualizing people . . . that I claim can be descriptively studied as a naturalistic value system with which the hopes of the observer absolutely have nothing to do, i. e., it is 'scientific.' I do not say, 'He ought to choose this or that,' but only, 'Healthy people, permitted to choose freely, are observed to choose this or that.' This is like asking, 'What are the values of the best human beings,' rather than, 'What should be their values?' or, 'What ought they be?' . . .

. . . I think these findings can be generalized to most of the human species because it looks to me (and to others) as if most people (perhaps all) tend toward self-actualization . . .

. . . our description of the actual characteristics of self-actualizing people parallels at many points the ideals urged by the religions, e. g., the transcendence of self, the fusion of the true, the good and the beautiful, contribution to others, wisdom, honesty and naturalness, the transcendence of selfish and personal motivations, the giving up of 'lower' motivations in favor of 'higher' ones, the easy differentiation between ends (tranquility, serenity, peace) and means (money, power, status), the decrease of hostility, cruelty and destructiveness and the increase of friendliness, kindness, etc.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 158.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 149-150. Cf. also pp. 158, 159, 181.



What is most remarkable about this passage and the others referred to is Maslow's capacity to delude himself into thinking that he is really proposing a purely descriptive naturalistic value system, that does nothing more than report on the behavior and choices of self-actualizing people. As a matter of cold fact, however, he immediately invites the reader's attention to the similarity between the choices or values of his self-actualizing people, and the "ideals urged by the religions," wishing in this fashion to establish the normative proposition that the choices and values of the self-actualizers are good and desirable. Now, are they good and desirable because they are the values of self-actualizers? Or are they good and desirable because they conform to other criteria of goodness, e. g., the criteria incorporated in the ideals urged by religion? In the paragraph that follows immediately after the lengthy quotation above, Maslow, in blissful naivete, betrays his inescapable normative or prescriptive intent as follows:

One conclusion from all these free-choice experiments . . . is a very revolutionary one . . . namely, that our deepest needs are not, in themselves, dangerous or evil or bad. (Ibid., p. 150)

Isn't it perfectly clear that these deepest needs are being judged as not "dangerous, or evil or bad" by ethical norms extrinsic to what are reported to be the choices of self-actualizers?

The hopeless circularity in Maslow's attempt to deduce ethical norms from the fact of man's self-



actualization becomes glaringly evident when we put together what he says about the number of self-actualizing people, and his evaluation of their choices in the many unguarded moments when he forgets that he is supposed to be adumbrating a descriptive, naturalistic value system.

a) Maslow's observation leads him to conclude that the number of self-actualizing people is very small:

Self-actualization is a relatively achieved 'state of affairs' in a few people.

Though, in principle, self-actualization is easy, in practice it rarely happens (by my criteria, certainly in less than 1% of the adult population).⁵⁹

b) Maslow is not content with merely reporting factually on the choices of the very small group of self-actualizers, or, as he repeatedly calls them, "healthy people." In spite of his claim that "the hopes of the observer" have nothing to do with the naturalistic value system that is constituted by the choices of the small number of self-actualizing, healthy people, Maslow repeatedly passes normative judgment upon them:

It is only in the healthiest, most mature, most evolved individuals that higher values are chosen and preferred consistently more often . . .

. . . healthy people are better choosers than unhealthy people . . .

⁵⁹ibid., pp. 151 and 190.



Hedonistic theory does work for healthy people; it does not work for sick people. The true, the good and the beautiful do correlate some, but only in healthy people do they correlate strongly.⁶⁰

What Maslow is saying is that this very small number of healthy, self-actualizing people choose higher values, that they are better choosers, that for them "Hedonistic theory does work," meaning, I suppose that what these self-actualizers desire and pursue turns out to be "good." Again, that these values, or choices, or desires are "higher," or "better," or good, is not a deduction from the fact that they come from self-actualizing people. Manifestly, these value judgments or ethical evaluations are prior to and independent of the fact that it is the acts or choices of self-actualizers that are being thus judged. It is by these prior and independently arrived at evaluations, that the choices of self-actualizers are judged to be good. In other words, what Maslow is in effect saying is: "If people desire or choose what is good, then their desires or choices are good."

The circularity becomes even more manifest when we consider the criteria by which Maslow selected his small group of self-actualizing or healthy people. These are, of course, normative criteria in the first place: people who have satisfied or conquered their needs for belongingness,

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 163,159, 151.



love, respect; people who felt loved and loving, respect-worthy and respected; etc. In other words, the implicit ethical criteria built into the selection of the healthy, self-actualizing people are, not surprisingly, the same ethical criteria by which the choices of the self-actualizers are judged to be "good" choices. These normative criteria are obviously not deduced from the scientifically observed facts of self-actualizing behavior. It would not be a burlesqued distortion of the substance of Maslow's position with reference to the small number of healthy, self-actualizing people, to sum it up as saying: "If you select out of the population the small number of good people, who have ethically good desires and make ethically good choices, then their actions and choices will be ethically good."

Once again, therefore, the attempt to deduce ethical principles from the fact that man has a tendency to self-actualization, and that a few men actually are self-actualizers, must be dismissed as self-refuting.

Kurt Goldstein on Self-Actualization

It now remains only to sketch briefly what has actually been said on the subject of self-actualization by Kurt Goldstein, the man whom our social psychologists repeatedly credit with having introduced into the mainstream of contemporary psychology the proposition that man strives



toward self-actualization. In doing this I hope to help make clear Goldstein's use of self-actualization as essentially a descriptive psychological concept, and not an ethical norm. In juxtaposition to Goldstein's use of this concept, the distortion by our social psychologists of the concept of self-actualization will perhaps be more clearly evident. Perhaps this will also help us understand that the transformation of the concept of self-actualization, by the psychologists under discussion, into an ethical norm and guideline for conduct, is in part motivated by their moralistic desire to provide, for the ethical and social ideals which they espouse, a logical justification in descriptive facts concerning the psychological nature of man.

Goldstein advances the proposition that man has the need for self-actualization, as an empirical generalization, and as an explanatory principle. His simple statement of the proposition is repeated in two of his books:

The organism has definite potentialities, and because it has them it has the need to actualize or realize them. The fulfillment of these needs represents the self-actualization of the organism.⁶¹

Indeed, Goldstein believes that the "drive" of self-actualization is the one basic drive. He states this several times:

⁶¹Kurt Goldstein, The Organism (New York: American Book Co., 1939), p. 204. Also Human Nature in the Light of Psychopathology (New York: Schocken Books, 1963 (originally Harvard University Press, 1940)), p. 146; Cf. also pp. 172, 194.



The tendency to actualize itself is the motive which sets the organism going; it is the drive by which the organism is moved.

Since the tendency to actualize itself as fully as possible is the basic drive, the only drive by which the sick organism is moved, and since the life of the normal organism is determined in the same way, it is clear . . . that we have to assume only one drive, the drive of self-actualization.

We assume only one drive, the drive of self-actualization . . .⁶²

The purely descriptive character of the principle is made clear by the evidence and the illustrations adduced by Goldstein for the presence of the drive. Let us limit ourselves to two examples. The first concerns the completion of incomplete actions:

A special form of self-actualization is the need to complete incomplete actions, a tendency which explains many of the activities of the child. In the innumerable repetitions of children we are . . . dealing with . . . the tendency toward completion and perfection. . . . the goal is the fulfillment of the task. The nearer we are to perfection, the stronger is the need to perform. This is valid for children as well as for adults.⁶³

The second example comes from Goldstein's studies of brain-damaged people, and of patients with severe bodily diseases such as severe heart failure. He reports that, following the acute state with its experiences of extreme anxiety and fear of catastrophe, these patients undergo an

⁶²Kurt Goldstein, Human Nature in the Light of Psychopathology, pp. 140, 142, 145.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 146-47.



adjustment to their new condition, abnormal though it is, and endeavor to actualize themselves, "even if in an imperfect way."

Innumerable instances teach us that it is the basic tendency of the sick organism to utilize what capacities it has in the best possible way (considered, of course, in relation to the normal nature of the organism concerned).⁶⁴

The range of self-actualization of these patients is diminished by their injury or severe illness, and they accordingly either do not react to situations with which their now limited capacity can not cope, or, if such overdemanding situations are forced upon them, their reaction is catastrophic. The brain-damaged or severely sick person

can exist--that is, actualize his capacities--only if he finds a new milieu that is appropriate to his capacities. Only then can he act in an orderly way . . .⁶⁵

Unlike brain-damaged patients, those with severe heart failure

are aware of the restrictions in their activities and of the shrinkage of their world by the conditions of a regained order, and with that they are aware of their diminished self-realization. . . . They tend, as all mentally normal individuals do, to achieve a self-realization that corresponds to their unchanged personality, their intrinsic nature. They can achieve a higher self-realization only if they can endure suffering. They are in a dilemma that demands a choice between accepting and enduring suffering and getting fuller self-realizations, or the simultaneous diminution of suffering and of self-realization.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 141.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 194.