



3. Concepts of the Nature and History of Man

Man's Nature

In the preceding comments on Fromm's theory of character, it was constantly necessary to recur to assumptions that could only be postulated and that did not result directly from clinical observation. While it is true that analyses of human relatedness point to the necessity of such relatedness, clinical observation alone allows one neither to infer such a necessity nor to establish a classification of positive or negative kinds of relatedness. The correctness of clinical observation is proved only when the assumptions are corrected by analysis. Only in the constant interplay between the philosophical and anthropological model and the continuous modification of this model by analytic work according to the methods of the discipline in question does it become possible to arrive at scientific insights in the human and social sciences that, as statements about man and his nature, are relevant to ethical questions. For this reason, we will now set forth the *conditio humana* as Fromm sees it. For every psychology „must be based on an anthropologico-philosophical concept of human existence.“¹

The „Essence“ or „Nature“ of Man?

The question whether there is such a thing as a human „essence“ or „nature“ increasingly preoccupied Fromm. As he systematically justifies his humanistic

view of man and man's destiny, this question becomes ever more urgent.³ {056}

Fromm did not overlook the difficulties that lie in postulating a definable human „nature“: apart from the fact that the concept of a „human essence“ or „nature“ has been misused to bolster certain claims to domination and certain types of society,⁴ the modern sciences have questioned the possibility of a universally persisting human nature. Historical research, discoveries in cultural anthropology, and evolutionary theory all suggest a relativist perspective⁵ according to which the real problem would be „to infer the *core* common to the whole human race from the innumerable manifestations of human nature ... to recognize the laws inherent in human nature and the inherent goals of its development and unfolding.“⁶ Such attempts have been made repeatedly in the course of history by a distinguishing between the essence itself and certain qualities or attributes that all human beings share. Examples of such shared attributes are reason (*animal rationale*), the capacity for production (*homo faber*), the capacity for social organization (*zoon politikon*), and the capacity for language

¹ Fromm, *Man for Himself* (1947a), p. 45.

² On what follows, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 20-40; *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 12-27; *The Heart of Man* (1964a), pp. 17-23, 115-117; „Introduction“ (1968g), pp. 3-24; *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), pp. 219-230. P. Vranicki, *Geschichte des Marxismus, Vol. II*, pp. 865-876, provides a brief but good overview of Fromm's anthropology.

³ The anthology *The Nature of Man* (1968g), which was edited jointly by Fromm and Ramón Xirau, represents a sort of peak. The book contains an Introduction by Fromm and assembles seventy-two essays on man's nature, ranging from the Upanishads to such authors as Edith Stein, Adam Schaff, and David Riesman.

⁴ Cf. *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 13: „What has often been called 'human nature' is but one of its many manifestations--and often a pathological one--and the function of such mistaken definition usually has been to defend a particular type of society as being the necessary outcome of man's mental constitution.“

⁵ Cf. „Introduction“ (1968g), pp. 3f; *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), pp. 219f.

⁶ *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 13.



(creation of symbols).⁷ But the mere multiplicity of possible attributes shows that they do not „constitute the totality of human nature.“⁸

Fromm proposes a model that transcends both the perspective of an immutable human nature and the position that, some essential attributes notwithstanding, disputes that there is something all human beings share. It is the mathematical idea of constants and variables: „One could say that in man, since he began to be man, there is something that remains constantly the same, a nature, but within man, there are also a great number of variable factors that make him capable of novelty, creativity, productivity and progress.“⁹

Behind this model lies Marx's differentiation between human nature in general and the human nature that is historically modifiable in each and every epoch. The concept of human nature here is no abstraction; rather, „It is the *essence* of man-in contrast to the various forms of his historical *existence*.“¹⁰ While Marx defines the species character as „free, conscious activity“¹¹ and sees man as a being that produces „with foresight and imagination,“¹² Fromm does not feel that such definitions tell us anything about man's nature but only about

human traits.¹³

What is constant in man, man's „essence,“ can only be established in a comparison between man and animal. „We have to {057} arrive at an understanding of man's nature on the basis of the blend of the two fundamental biological conditions that mark the emergence of man. One was the ever decreasing determination of behavior by *instincts* ... the other ... is the *growth of the brain, and particularly the neocortex*“¹⁴ Seen from this biological perspective, man „emerged at the point of evolution where instinctive determination had reached a minimum and the development of the brain a maximum.“¹⁵ The growth of the brain enabled man to increase his „instrumental intelligence.“¹⁶ But beyond that, his thinking „acquired an entirely new quality, that of self-awareness.“¹⁷ Along with this self-awareness, there also came „his ability to remember the past, to visualize the future, and to denote objects and acts by symbols; his reason to conceive and understand the world; and his imagination through which he reaches far beyond the range of his senses.“¹⁸

From the perspective of the animal kingdom, man is the most helpless animal. But this biological weakness also makes possible his specific human qualities-self-awareness, reason, and imagination. These distinctive human qualities preclude interpreting man wholly according to instinctual, animalistic, or biological categories. Man understands himself adequately only when, as he defines who and what

⁷ Cf. „Introduction“ (1968g), pp. 5f.

⁸ Ibid., p. 6. On Fromm's total view of man and the concept „totality,“ cf. R. Funk, „Zu Erich Fromm--Leben and Werk.“

⁹ „Introduction“ (1968g), p. 7. Fromm specifically notes (note 2) that progress does not mean a having more but a constant growth of the consciousness of ourselves.

¹⁰ Marx's Concept of Man (1961b), p. 25. On Fromm's interpretation of such concepts as „being,“ and „nature of man in general,“ but also „true“ in contrast to „real human being,“ as Marx used them, see Marx's Contribution to the Knowledge of Man (1968h), pp. 62-76; Beyond the Chains of Illusion (1962a), pp. 27-32; „The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory“ (1965c), pp. 219-221; A. Schaff, *Marxism and das menschliche Individuum*, pp. 111-120.

¹¹ Marx, Early Writings, p. 328; cf. Fromm, „Marx's Contribution to the Knowledge of Man“ (1968h), p. 64.

¹² Cf. *The Heart of Man* (1964a), p. 116.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*; also „The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory“ (1965c), p. 220.

¹⁴ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 223.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 224.

¹⁶ This refers to a capacity for thought that is common to both man and animal, namely, „the use of thought as an instrument for the manipulation of objects in order to satisfy one's needs“ (*ibid.*, p. 224). Cf. also concepts such as „instrumental reason“ and „technical reason“ that are current today.

¹⁷ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 225.

¹⁸ *Man for Himself* (1947a), p. 39.



he is, he makes his specific human qualities his point of departure and asks what their relevance for his self-understanding is.

But it is these new qualities that have destroyed the harmony between man and nature. Man is „a ‘freak of nature,’ being in nature and at the same time transcending it.“¹⁹ When the definition of man’s nature or essence is involved, therefore, „the answer, in my opinion, is to be found in the fact that man’s essence lies in the very contradiction between his being in nature, thrown into the world without his will, and taken away against his will, at an accidental place and time, and at the same time of transcending nature by his lack of instinctual equipment and by the fact of his awareness of himself, of others, of the past and the present.“²⁰ Man is separated from nature, yet part of it. He is homeless, yet chained to the home he shares with all creatures. „Man is the only animal who does not feel at home in nature ... for whom his own existence is a problem that he has to solve and from which he cannot escape.“²¹ {058}

Fromm’s briefest definition of man’s nature is this: „the questions, not the answers, are man’s ‘essence.’“²² The questions as man’s essence are the contradictions and the resultant disturbances of his inner equilibrium. „The answers, trying to solve the dichotomies, lead to various manifestations of human nature“²³ but are not themselves man’s nature

or essence, for „the various kinds of solutions of these contradictions depend on socio-economic, cultural and psychic factors.“²⁴

By defining man’s nature or essence as a contradiction containing the potential for its own resolution, Fromm steers a sure course between the dogma of natural law on the one hand and total relativism on the other. The specific qualities of self-awareness, reason, and imagination give rise to this contradiction and are at the same time the conditions for its resolution. Whether the specific human qualities are actually employed to bring about an optimal and positive solution-Fromm refers to them briefly as „human qualities of reason and love“²⁵ as they realize themselves in the productive character orientations-depends on a variety of factors, not least among them an appropriate ethical goal. But because there is more to this than the fact of contradiction and the specifically human qualities that give rise to it, neither the specifically human qualities nor human capacities as essential attributes suffice to constitute the essence or nature of man.²⁶

gress. Actually, this striving is a result of the fact that man is a contradictory being who must always renew his attempt to find a new, and possibly better, balance. Cf. *The Anatomy of Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 226.

²⁴ „Introduction“ (1968g), p. 9.

²⁵ In this book, the attempt is made to distinguish between consciousness of self, endowment of reason, and imagination on the one side, and reason and love on the other, by referring to the former as „specifically human qualities“ and to the latter as „human capacities“ or „human powers.“ On the origin of the definition of the capacity for reason and love as human characteristics, see pp. 183-188 and Chap. 6, note 22, passages in which the doctrine of God’s negative attributes and characteristics in the Jewish tradition is discussed.

²⁶ It is important to remember this although Fromm sometimes uses the concept „nature“ or „being“ when he means „characteristics“ or when-and this is especially true of his early writings-he wants to have the concept „nature of man“ include the productive answer to man’s contradictions. On this, cf. pp. 134-136.

¹⁹ „Introduction“ (1968g), p. 8.

²⁰ „The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx’s Theory“ (1965c), p. 220.

²¹ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 225. J. J. Forsyth and J. M. Beniskos, „Biblical Faith and Erich Fromm’s Theory of Personality,“ therefore interpret incorrectly when they write: „Man’s true nature ... is ... the dichotomy between body and soul, between his animal and his spiritual nature.“

²² „Introduction (1968g), p. 9.

²³ *Ibid.* The question-and-answer game of human life should not be seen as a unique event but as a continuing process. For the moment an inner imbalance is resolved, new contradictions emerge and require that a new balance be searched for. This is the reason why it is unnecessary to postulate an innate drive for pro-



*Man's Dichotomies*²⁷

If animal life is defined by its fundamental unity with surrounding nature, human existence is defined by the fact that man „is a part of nature, subject to her physical laws and unable to change them, yet he transcends the rest of nature.”²⁸ The human situation is determined by this fundamental contradiction which manifests itself in a number of ways that man perceives existentially. It is the distinctive quality of these contradictions that they are rooted in man's existence and therefore called „existential dichotomies”²⁹ to distinguish them from contradictions that are historically determined. And while there exists a solution to these contradictions, they cannot be abolished. They are „contradictions which man cannot annul but to which he can react in various ways, relative to his character and his culture.”³⁰

The most important existential dichotomy comes from the {059} awareness of death as unavoidable. The dichotomy of life and death cannot be abolished. Rather, the fact of death must be taken seriously and not denied (by postulating an immortal soul, for example). Love for life and the living is therefore the only human reaction to this dichotomy, for our specifically human qualities entail a need to resolve the dichotomy defined by the

fact of death.³¹

The inevitable death of the person is the source of a further existential dichotomy between the unfolding of all a person's potential and the shortness of human life, which even under favorable conditions hardly permits a full unfolding. Here again, ideologies attempt to persuade man that these dichotomies are not tragic. They suggest that life is fulfilled only after death, that the present historical period represents the goal of human development, or that the individual's happiness must take second place to society's. Faced with such attempts to deny these existential dichotomies, man must accept the tragic brevity of his life and react by the optimal unfolding of his potential.

The existential dichotomies are explications of the situation and of the special conditions of human existence. All of them show that man is subject to nature, yet „transcends all other life because he is, for the first time, life aware of itself.”³² This conflict is man's essence and it enables and obliges him to find an answer to his dichotomies. According to Fromm, this answer can only come from the specific human qualities of self-awareness, reason, and imagination that give rise to those dichotomies in the first place: „There is no meaning to life except the meaning man gives his life by the unfolding of his powers, by living productively.”³³

In contrast to the existential dichotomies that constitute man's essence because they are inextricably part of his existence, there are contradictions in

²⁷ On what follows, cf. *Man for Himself* (1947a), pp. 38-45; *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 22-27; „Values, Psychology, and Human Existence (1959b), pp. 152f; *The Heart of Man* (1964a), pp. 115-121; „Introduction“ (1968g), pp. Sf; *The Anatomy of Human destructiveness* (1973a), pp. 225f.

²⁸ *Man for Himself* (1947a), p. 40.

²⁹ The designation „existential“ was chosen by Fromm without conscious reference to a philosophical school such as the philosophy of existence or existentialist philosophy. Cf. *Man for Himself* (1947a), p. 41, n. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41. In *The Sane Society* (1955a), he writes: „The necessity to find ever new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever-higher forms of unity with nature, his fellowmen and himself, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man, of all his passions, affects and anxieties.“

³¹ The argument as it is advanced here and elsewhere is correct as long as the presupposition is accepted and it is not disputed philosophically that man is in fact his own master. Only doubt about the ultimate validity of this assumption-be it nihilistic or the expression of the faith of a redemptive religion-will affect the understanding of dichotomy and, in the case of a nihilistic position, the forms of reaction to the dichotomies.

³² *The Heart of Man* (1964a), p. 117.

³³ *Man for Himself* (1947a), p. 45. This identification of the development of specific human qualities as the answer to the dichotomies, and the substantive definition of productive living, is discussed further on pp. 134-136.



individual and social life that are produced by man himself. They can therefore be resolved where they appear, even if at a later time in human history. Fromm calls these contradictions „historical dichotomies.“ They emerge wherever a technical, economic, social, cultural, emotional, or physical development begins to contradict the dispositive and creative powers man potentially has to deal with such developments. The present contradiction between the abundance of technical resources for the satisfaction of human needs and the incapacity to use these resources {060} exclusively for peaceful aims and for the well-being of mankind, for example, is not an existential dichotomy but a historical one that can be solved by man.³⁴

The difference between the existential and the historical dichotomy is extremely important. It shows which contradictions in the individual's life and in the life of mankind can be resolved because men produced them and can therefore deal with them, and which constitute man's essence and can only be reacted to as his specifically human qualities dictate. The observation that only a historical dichotomy is involved in a certain contradiction unmasks the motto of all ideologies and individual rationalizations, that what cannot be must not be, and thus makes man conscious of himself and able to create a productive relatedness to the world.³⁵

*The Needs of Man as Human Needs*³⁶

Man's essence lies in the contradiction that he is subject to nature, yet can transcend it by self-awareness, reason, and imagination, and this existential conflict produces certain psychic needs that are common to all men. Man „is forced to overcome the horror of separateness, of powerlessness and of lostness, and find new forms of relating himself to the world to enable him to feel at home.“³⁷ Fromm calls these psychic needs „existential needs“ because they are rooted in the very conditions of human existence.

Like physiological needs, existential needs are common to all men and must be satisfied if the person is to remain healthy. Unlike physiological needs, however, existential ones can be satisfied in a variety of ways, depending on social conditions, and these various responses express themselves in varying character traits and character orientations. In his later publications, Fromm also refers to them as „rooted in the character“ or simply as „human passions.“ Depending upon whether they are productive or nonproductive, human passions are „rational“ (love, tenderness, striving for justice, for example) or „irrational“ (hatred, sadism, destructiveness).³⁸ Individuals differ because the dominant pas-

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁵ Although the distinction between existential and historical dichotomies appears perfectly plausible at first, there is a problem where man's historicalness is being taken seriously as belonging to his existence in the sense that historical dichotomies are invariably part and parcel of man's existence and therefore themselves existential dichotomies—that is, an intrinsic part of that existence. On this, see Fromm's account of the concept of alienation on pp. 72-82, esp. 79-82.

³⁶ On what follows, cf. *Man for Himself* (1947a), pp. 45-50; *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 25-66; „Values, Psychology, and Human Existence“ (1959b), pp. 152-162; *The Heart of Man* (1964a), pp. 118f; „Introduction“ (1968g), pp. 9, 17-24; *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), pp. 230-242; See also Schaar, *Escape from Authority*, pp. 42-54; McGrath, *An Examination of Erich Fromm's Ethics*, pp. 14-19; C. J. Sahlin, *An Analysis of the Writings of Erich Fromm*, pp. 154-180; J. J. Forsyth and J. M. Beniskos, „Biblical Faith and Erich Fromm's Theory of Personality,“ pp. 69-91.

³⁷ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 226.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 226. On the definition of the function of character and of character traits and character orientations as productive (rational) and nonproductive (irrational), see pp. 29-31 and 34-36.



sion in each varies and therefore the responses to common needs (existential needs) must also vary.

The view of man as a contradictory being who has existential human needs because of his contradictions calls for a new estimate of those needs that man, remaining subject to nature, shares with {061} animal life, such as hunger, thirst, and sexuality, the so-called *physiological needs*. Like other animals, man must satisfy these needs, but while in animals their satisfaction is synonymous with being in harmony with nature, in man they only attain a similar value when they are satisfied within the framework of the specifically human needs as determined by the existential dichotomies.³⁹

Finally, what is referred to as existential or human needs must be distinguished from the „inhuman needs“ that are suggested to man. Artificially produced, these needs are meant to draw his attention away from his true human needs. The historical background for this distinction is Karl Marx's concept of needs that are created to force man to make new sacrifices and to place him in new dependencies.⁴⁰ Alienated man and a society characterized by alienation create artificial needs that enslave the individual even more and thus alienate him increasingly from his own needs because they make him the means for the satisfaction of others' needs.

For Fromm, this distinction between human and inhuman needs is central. Psychology can only make a contribution to the knowledge of human nature if it stops taking alienated man as its point of departure--someone who feels the need for wealth

³⁹ Cf. *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 25. C. J. Sahlin, *An Analysis of the Writings of Erich Fromm*, p. 71. Fromm's anthropological approach, so fundamentally different from Freud's, expresses itself here once again. While Freud's point of departure is a concept of sexuality that emphasizes instinct, and a sexuality that „needs“ others as love objects, sexuality in Fromm functions as a means, as, e. g., for man's specific need for interpersonal relatedness in the form of productive love.

⁴⁰ On this, cf. Marx's *Contribution to the Knowledge of Man* (1968h), pp. 70-72.

to be his primordial human need, for example--and addresses itself to man in his nonalienated existence, which is determined only by existential dichotomies. Authentic human needs can be discovered only if one puts oneself in the psychological position of the person who has lost unity with nature as a result of his specific human qualities, and seeks to recover that unity.

Fromm identified the human needs, though without being wholly consistent as to their number or names.⁴¹ The most comprehensive explication is found in *The Sane Society*,⁴² where he identifies five of them: the need for relatedness, for transcendence, for rootedness, for a sense of identity, and for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion.

In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*,⁴³ the „need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion“ (and, as part of this, „the need for transcendence“) and „the need for rootedness“ recur. The older formulation of „need for identity“ becomes a „need for a sense of unity.“ There is an aspect that is influenced by {062} the neurophysiological studies on the question of aggression and that is renamed the „need for effectiveness,“ while the „need for relatedness“ is not expressly mentioned because it manifests itself in the other needs.”⁴⁴ The following presentation adds the need

⁴¹ Fromm himself sees no change here but merely „an expansion of the discussion on the same subject.“ Cf. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 230, n. 8.

⁴² *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 25-66.

⁴³ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), pp. 230-242.

⁴⁴ It is not just Fromm's lack of interest in systematization that should be blamed for his lack of precision in the definition and number of human needs. The various needs are interpretations of man's fundamental conflict and are nuanced differently, depending on the perspective from which they are interpreted. (In this regard, the needs can be compared to the fundamental conditions postulated in existential philosophy, although Fromm does not derive the needs from reflection by way of a phenomenological analysis of exis-



for effectiveness to the five needs listed above.

A first *need is for relatedness*. „Man is torn away from the primary union with nature, which characterizes animal existence. Having at the same time reason and imagination, he is aware of his aloneness and separateness, of his powerlessness and ignorance.“⁴⁵ It is precisely the severance of primary ties--that is, of the instinctual unity with nature--that makes it necessary for man to create human forms of relatedness to nature, to others, and to himself, and this with the aid of specifically human qualities. Where this need for relatedness is not realized, human life is impossible. Just as the physiological need, hunger, causes death if not satisfied, so intellectually and spiritually healthy human life is possible only where the specifically human need for relatedness is responded to. Without this response, man becomes psychotic, „spiritually“ ill. But the necessity to respond to the human need for relatedness does not suffice to ensure that the kind of relatedness achieved will be appropriate to the specifically human situation. As our discussion of the various character orientations showed, only productive relatedness does full justice to this need and the human situation that creates it.

The *need for transcendence* is another aspect of the human situation that is closely connected to

tence.) Fromm does not reflect „being with“ and „being there“ (Dasein) as a being toward death, like Heidegger, to then arrive at needs. His thought is based on the experiences of his psychoanalytic practice--i.e., faulty reactions to the problem of human existence. This experiential approach allows the formulation of fundamental conflicts and problems (isolation, impotence, being different, separateness, etc.), which are not themselves negative answers to other problems and conflicts underlying them but fundamental problems (in the sense of fundamental givens) to which man must react and which can be called needs for that reason. The demonstration of these fundamental problems (dichotomies) and needs through reflection on man's phylogenetic birth and the break with nature entailed in that process is actually merely a way of verifying the discoveries that resulted from reflection on psychotherapeutic experiences.

⁴⁵ *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 30.

the need for relatedness. It „concerns man's situation as a *creature*, and his need to transcend this very state of the passive creature.“⁴⁶ Through the acquisition of his specifically human qualities, man is obliged to overcome the role of being merely created. Here also, two fundamentally different kinds of reaction are possible. In the case of the productive reaction, the person himself takes on the role of creator by creating life and culture. In the case of the other transcendent reaction, the non-productive, man destroys life and creation, for „to destroy life is as transcendent as to create it.“⁴⁷ Fromm's concept of „transcendence“ is to be understood humanistically; it has nothing to do with God as a transcendent entity. It means instead „a need to transcend one's self-centered, narcissistic, isolated position to one {063} of being related to others, to openness to the world, escaping the hell of self-centeredness and hence self-imprisonment.“⁴⁸

The *need for rootedness* directly results from the fact of birth. Once born, man loses that safety and security that up to this moment had been guaranteed by his rootedness in nature. He can renounce his rootedness in nature and become truly human only if he finds new roots that are appropriate to him; only then can he (once again) feel at home in this world. Ontogenetically, this rootedness in nature is realized in an elemental sense in the child's tie to his mother. The child's development to maturity is a continuous birth, the ever-renewed cutting of the umbilical cord that symbolizes rootedness in nature. Ontogenetically and phylogenetically, man's birth is the same as the acquisition of genuine independence and freedom,⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁷ Dialogue with Erich Fromm (1966f), p. 19.

⁴⁸ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 231, n. 9. Cf. the explication of this concept in „Introduction“ (1968g), pp. 18f.

⁴⁹ In Fromm's thought, the striving for independence and freedom almost have the place value of a human need and are the very essence of his understanding of humanism, for „Man can be free inasmuch as he is aware, inasmuch as he can become awake to reality“ („Introduction“ [1968g], p. 15). For that reason, the



which are realized when man reacts to the need for rootedness by planting new roots for his existence.

Man has two possibilities of reacting to his need for rootedness: „either to persist in his craving to regress, and to pay for it by symbolic dependence on mother (and on symbolic substitutes, such as soil, nature, god, the nation, a bureaucracy), or to progress and to find new roots in the world by his own efforts, by experiencing the brotherhood of man, and by freeing himself from the power of the past.“⁵⁰ Here again we find different kinds of reaction, negative (all forms of incestuous fixation) and productive, the latter ultimately a rootedness in the experience of a universal brotherhood that transforms man's world into a truly human one.

The *need for an experience of identity or unity* is closely akin to that for rootedness. „Man, being torn away from nature, being endowed with reason and imagination, needs to form a concept of himself, needs to say and feel: 'I am I.' Because he is not lived, but *lives*, because he has lost the original unity with nature, has to make decisions, is aware of himself ... he must be able to sense himself as the subject of his actions.“⁵¹ But the problem of the experience of identity is not only a philosophical one that concerns our intellect and thinking. It takes in the entire person and expresses itself as the search for the experience of unity with oneself and the natural and human environment. The ways of realizing the need for the experience of identity or unity are even more intimately dependent upon the degree of mankind's and the {064} individual's development than is the case with the need for rootedness. The more closely the possibility of the experience of identity is tied to the consciousness of class or clan, or some kind of conformism through which the self experiences itself only if it is as others wish it to be, the less developed and productive

need for rootedness initially means the renunciation of natural symbiotic ties and entails criticism and striving for independence.

⁵⁰ *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), pp. 232f.

⁵¹ *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 60-61.

this experience of identity will be. Conversely, it may be said that the need for an experience of unity or identity is realized most strongly when man experiences his individual identity as productive activity, because then it is in line with specific human qualities. While the negative type of response to this need is always a forgetting and a self-forgetfulness in the sense that the individual's reason is being narcotized, „there is only one approach to unity that can be successful without crippling man. Such an attempt was made in the first millennium B.C. ... by fully developing human reason and love.“⁵²

The specific human qualities that cause man to become aware of his break with nature are the conditions for man's developing a *need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion*. Man, being endowed with reason, must also orient himself intellectually in his world if he is to understand himself and the meaning of his life. In this process, it does not matter initially whether the interpretation he gives himself, his life, and his world is correct or false. At first, there is simply the necessity to find any frame of orientation for his existence so that he may react to the dichotomies inherent in that existence. Such frames of orientation or systems are all sorts of religion (animism, totemism, theistic and nontheistic religions), philosophies, and world views including the idolatrous striving for money, prestige, success, and so on.⁵³ It is only at a second level that the question concerning the content and the truth of such frames of orientation arises. The answer depends on the capacity for seeing the world, nature, others, and oneself objectively, as they truly are. This means that reality must be grasped by reason and not veiled by illusions and rationalizations. The more reason and the less irrational elements determine the content of the frame of orientation, the more adequate the answer to this need will be, and the more fully will man realize his own distinctive qualities. The instinctual ani-

⁵² *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a), p. 234.

⁵³ Cf. *Man for Himself* (1947a), pp. 47-50.



mal need not worry about a frame of orientation, nor does it ask itself toward what end its life and action are to be directed. „But man, lacking instinctive determination and {65} having a brain that permits him to think of many directions in which he could go, needs an object of ‘ultimate concern,’ to use Tillich’s expression; he needs an object of devotion to be the focal point of all his strivings and the basis for all his effective--and not only proclaimed--values.“⁵⁴

The need for an object of devotion is an essential part of man and *must* be satisfied. The kinds of reaction to this need differ considerably. Man can devote himself to the most various goals and idols: „He can be devoted to the growth of life or to its destruction. He can be devoted to the goal of amassing a fortune, of acquiring power, of destruction, or to that of loving and of being productive and courageous.“⁵⁵

A final interpretation of the contradictory being that is man, of his characteristic of having specified and specifiable needs to which he must always respond and to which he does in fact respond, is the *need for effectiveness*. Time and again, it has become clear that the various needs can be understood as aspects of a single fundamental human need, and this is why the descriptions of the individual needs are very similar. This observation also applies to the description of the need for effectiveness, although this need identifies an aspect that is not covered by the other needs. The loss of harmony with nature when man is born results from the loss of instinctive adaptation to nature. The break with nature means not only man’s superiority over nature but also nature’s superiority over that „defective being“ that is man. And this superiority is experienced as life threatening. The human need for effectiveness is the expression of this dichotomy between nature and man. Man needs to experience himself as „able to do something, to move somebody, to ‘make a dent’ or, to use the most adequate

English word, to be ‘effective.’ ... To effect is the equivalent of ‘to bring to pass, to accomplish, to realize, to carry out, to fulfill’; an effective person is one who has the capacity to do, to effect, to accomplish something.”⁵⁶ There are many ways of responding to this need. If the need for effectiveness is frustrated by prohibitions, for example, it can express itself in a variety of flawed forms in which what is forbidden or even impossible has a special attractiveness. Basically, two opposite reactions can be observed here as well: „In the relationship to others, the fundamental alternative is to feel either the potency to effect love or to {066} effect fear and suffering. In the relationship to things, the alternative is between constructing and destroying.“⁵⁷ When the response to the need for effectiveness is productive, productivity results, though the need for effectiveness does not necessarily entail the concept of productivity and activity;⁵⁸ rather, this concept is only the expression of a reaction to that need. It follows that the need for effectiveness cannot be understood as a need for productive activity: the needs themselves are neutral, but the designations for the reactions to the needs are value terms that acquire their positive or negative quality from psychoanalytic ideas about what constitutes a sick and what a healthy psyche.

The History of Man

Man is a creature of needs and can only be understood when he is seen as a historical and history-making being. To the extent that man originates and makes his history and frees himself from his ties to nature by developing his own powers, he is a historical being in whose hands the responsibility for history lies. Man, then, is accountable for history and therefore needs an idea about its meaning and direction. The point of departure for such a historical view is man’s break with the original unity

⁵⁴ The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (1973a), p. 231.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 232.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 235.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 236f.

⁵⁸ See pp. 34-37.



with nature and his striving for a new unity in reason and love. „This new harmony, the new oneness with man and nature, is called in the prophetic and rabbinic literature ‘the end of the days,’ or ‘the messianic time.’ It is not a state predetermined by God or the stars; it will not happen except through man’s own effort. This messianic time is the historical answer to the existence of man. He can destroy himself or advance toward the realization of the new harmony. Messianism is not accidental to man’s existence but the inherent logical answer to it--the alternative to man’s self-destruction.”⁵⁹

*The History of the Messianic Idea as a Historical-Philosophical Theory*⁶⁰

„While for the Greeks, history had no aim, purpose or end, the Judaeo-Christian concept of history was characterized by the idea that its inherent meaning was the salvation of man.“⁶¹ In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, history unfolds in three stages: history {067} before man’s existence, the history of man as a contradictory being, and the history of saved man. Thus history has a direction. When this direction is defined as the new unity of man with himself, with mankind, and with nature, history is understood as the realization of the messianic idea.

A survey of the history of the messianic idea, of the history of Jewish belief and of the Jewish people, reveals an inner dynamic in the development of the messianic idea that allows one to recognize the goal of history in its contours. At the same time, the history of the messianic idea shows that man can, and has the responsibility to, work out his own salvation.⁶² „Man ... has to give birth

to himself, and at the end of the days, the new harmony, the new peace will be established, the curse pronounced against Adam and Eve will be repealed, as it were, by man’s own unfolding in the historical process.“⁶³ For Fromm, this religio-critical aspect of man’s self-salvation is part of the messianic idea: „The Messiah is a symbol of man’s achievement.“⁶⁴ From the perspective of the messianic idea as understood in these terms, we first get an interpretation of biblical prehistory. Before the fall, man finds himself in a state of undifferentiated harmony with nature. It is only the development of his reason that opens his eyes. His first act is both the first act of disobedience and of freedom, the expression of the genesis of his consciousness of himself. When the Bible states that the curse is enmity and struggle between man and beast, between man and the soil, between man and woman, between woman and her natural functions, this means that while man has lost the original unity because of his specifically human qualities, it is through these same qualities that he „creates himself in the process of history which began with the first act of freedom, with ‘sin.’“⁶⁵ Fromm sees the biblical *Urgeschichte* as the mythological portrayal of the beginning of the history of man’s self-liberation: „his sinning is justified in the process of history.“⁶⁶

Both the beginning of human history in the Bible and the history of the Hebrews are characterized by the renunciation of a paradisiacal home. With his renunciation of a home, Abraham symbolizes the exodus that becomes the essence of the messianic idea and of Israel’s theology of history.⁶⁷ A second realization of this „*leitmotiv*“⁶⁸ of the exo-

⁵⁹ Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 88f.

⁶⁰ 60. On the following, cf. Fromm, „Der Sabbath“ (1927a), esp. pp. 228f; *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950a), pp. 42-44; *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 234-236; „Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism“ (1960a); „The Prophetic Concept of Peace“ (1960d), pp. 19-25; „Afterword“ (1961c), pp. 257f; *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 87-157.

⁶¹ *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 234.

⁶² The following comments are limited to the presenta-

tion of the history of the messianic idea as Fromm sees it. For a critical discussion of the conceptual model behind such a view of history, see pp. 106-112.

⁶³ *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 235.

⁶⁴ „The Prophetic Concept of Peace“ (1960d), p. 22.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁷ Cf. *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), p. 89.

⁶⁸ In his text, Fromm uses the word „*leitmotiv*.“ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 89.



„dus is Moses' exodus from Egypt,⁶⁹ a third the journey through the desert and the revelation of the laws to {068} Moses.⁷⁰ With Moses' death and the return of the people to slavery and idolatry, this „first revolution“--as Fromm calls the attempts to realize the messianic idea--fails and ends.⁷¹ „After the failure of the first prophet, Moses, new prophets continued his work, deepened and clarified his ideas, and developed a concept of history which ... was to flower only in the prophetic literature, in the concept of the messianic time, which was to have the deepest influence on the development not only of the history of the Jews but of the whole world.“⁷² The new prophets have a fourfold task whose first and most important part is the passing on of the message „that man's goal is to become fully human; and that means to become like God.“⁷³ Beyond that, they indicate the alternatives between which man can choose. They protest when man takes the wrong path and, opposing all individualistic concern for salvation, call for a society that is ruled by love, justice, and truth.⁷⁴

The self-understanding of the prophets also stamps the prophetic theory of messianic time.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 91-108. Fromm attempts to interpret the texts about the exodus and the revelation to Moses in such a way that they show man to be the sole originator and shaper of history: „Man is left to himself and makes his own history“ (ibid., p. 92).

⁷⁰ Cf. ibid., pp. 108-114.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 114. In his humanistic approach, failure is seen positively. God does not change men by changing their hearts. Instead, God wants man to assume all responsibility for his history and become its maker. Cf. ibid., pp. 115-121.

⁷² *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), p. 115.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 117. Cf. Fromm, „Die Aktualität der prophetischen Schriften“ (1975d): „The prophet is concerned „about the goal of ... a complete knowledge of God or, in non-theological language, the goal that man fully develop his psychic powers, his life and his reason, that he have his center within himself and be free to become what, as human being, he is capable of becoming.“

⁷⁴ *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 117f.

⁷⁵ A comparison with the characterization of the prophets

Messianic time is the „time when man will have been fully born,“⁷⁶ a time within history, in other words (and not, as in Christianity, a metahistorical and merely spiritual entity⁷⁷). It is not given to man in an act of grace but is the result of his own effort to resolve his dichotomies through reason and love and thus to arrive at a new unity. The paradisiacal, original unity of man with nature at the beginning of history corresponds to the messianic time as a new, historical unity of man with himself, with others, and with nature. Paradise and messianic time, however, are different „inasmuch as the first state of harmony existed only by virtue of man's *not yet* having been born, while the new state of harmony exists as a result of man's having been fully born.“⁷⁸

The elaboration of the idea of messianic time and of the circumstances of its realization by the biblical prophets is varied. The principal characteristics of messianic time are peace and universalism. While the prophets of the Hebrew Bible do not know the word „messiah“ in the sense of a hoped-for redeemer, this sense of the term does emerge

in L. Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, pp. 26-30, and in M. Friedlander, *Die jüdische Religion*, pp. 41-43, shows that Fromm's view of the prophets is not representative of Jewish orthodoxy but is a humanistic interpretation of the rationalist understanding of the prophets to be found in Moses Maimonides. But see the comments on p.

⁷⁶ *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), p. 123.

⁷⁷ Cf. Fromm, „Afterword“ (1961c), p. 257.

⁷⁸ Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 123f. It is obvious that in characterizing these conditions that he sees as standing in a „dialectical relationship“ with each other, Fromm is transferring the image of the birth of the individual to the history of mankind: what applies to the child as it leaves the state of unconscious harmony and enters into a new and autonomous relatedness to the world as his reason and capacity for love develop applies to human history generally. In analogy to the humanistic conscience, we have the prophets, who represent the conscience of mankind. In *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 35, Fromm sees this parallel realized in Karl Marx's understanding of history, and compares child and adult to the history of mankind.



during the time of Herod the Great. But „it is only after the Jews had lost their kingdom and their king that the personification of the messianic time in the figure of the anointed king becomes popular.”⁷⁹ {069}

The postbiblical development of the messianic idea is fundamentally different. With the Book of Daniel, messianic time becomes metahistorical and personified so that it stops signifying the perfection of man's history through man. Apocalyptically, messianic time now becomes the „supernatural being who descends from the heavenly heights to end history.”⁸⁰ The only element the secular-historical

⁷⁹ *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), p. 124.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133. Since Fromm does not explicitly reflect on the fact that messianic time as he understands it is seen in terms of the process of individuation (cf. note 78), this development of messianic time can only strike him as a decadent form of the original, prophetic messianism. When the history of individual man and of mankind become parallel developments, the further elaboration of the messianic idea into a metahistorical messiah takes account only of the matter of man's meaning. Since there is illness, sin, and death, the individual realization of the powers of reason and love can no longer provide the experiential substrate for the hope that the perfection of man through man will occur in history. The messianic idea therefore necessarily transcends the self-redemption of man and of his history. Fromm's term, „apocalyptic orientation,” by which he refers to this breakthrough to the „vertical” (*You Shall Be as Gods* [1966a], p. 133), does not correspond to the normal use of the term „apocalypticism.” Gershom Scholem, for example, turns rather vigorously against the kind of interpretation Fromm subscribes to: „The bible and the apocalyptists know nothing of any progress toward redemption within history. Redemption is not the result of inner-worldly developments, as for example in the modern, western re-interpretation of messianism since the Enlightenment. ... Rather, it is an irruption of transcendence into history ...” (Scholem, *Über einige Begriffe des Judentums*, p. 133). This criticism does not only refer to the apocalyptic version of the messianic idea: „... precisely in those texts that helped crystallize the messianic idea, it is nowhere made dependent on human activity. Neither the Day of the Lord in Amos nor Isai-

and the transcendent-metahistorical ideas of salvation have in common is that salvation is not individual but collective.⁸¹ After the destruction of the Temple, rabbinical Judaism renounces sacrifice and priests and develops its own idea of messianic time, which, though differing widely in its forms, everywhere holds the conviction that messianic time occurs within history.⁸² According to the Talmud, two versions concerning the preconditions for messianic time persist throughout the history of the messianic idea: „One is that the messiah will come only when suffering and evil have reached such a degree that men will repent and thus be ready. There are numerous descriptions of this catastrophic situation ... the other concept is that the messiah will come, not after catastrophes, but as the result of man's own continuous improvement.”⁸³

Clinging to the historical realization of messianism during this era made it easier to give a direct historical interpretation of a person as the messiah,

ah's vision of the future are causally related to such activity” (*ibid.*, p. 138). That Gershom Scholem's criticism is not representative of all interpreters of Jewish messianism is shown by the work of Jews such as Hermann Cohen, who emphasizes the Noachian as Messianic (*Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*), and Leo Baeck, who speaks of the „moral concept of world history”: „The true world history is the history of the good; it will have realized itself when the good has been recognized by all” (*Das Wesen des Judentums*, pp. 260f). Fromm's distinction derives from Joseph Klausner's differentiation between the messianic idea and Jewish eschatology, as Klausner puts it. While both have the same origin, he writes, eschatology differs from messianism in expecting „a kingdom that is not of this world” (J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 418f; cf. pp. 237-243, 516-523; and Klausner, *Die messianischen Vorstellungen des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter der Tannaiten*).

⁸¹ Cf. *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 134f.

⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 137.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 139f. In Fromm's thought, we find both versions in a more evolutionary and dialectical view of the development of man and his history. See pp. 100-101 and pp. 239-243.



so that the history of Jewish messianism is at the same time one of the „false messiah figures,“ from Bar Kochba (C.E. second century) to Moses the Cretan (fifth century), Abraham Abulafia and Nissim ben Abraham (both thirteenth-century figures), to the „greatest“ false messiah, Sabbatai Zvi (seventeenth century), and his imitators Michael Cardozo and Jacob Frank (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively).⁸⁴ The messianic idea flowered again in eighteenth-century Hasidism, which incorporated much of the original prophetic hope for messianic time through man’s self-improvement.⁸⁵

Fromm believes that the prophetic idea of man’s new unity with himself and his human and natural world in a universal society found its ultimate valid realization in Karl Marx’s conception of history, which strives for socialism as the goal of man as he attains new unity in history.⁸⁶ Marx’s concept is a valid realization of prophetic messianism because it takes wholly seriously the view of man as creating and making his history, and Marx thus represents {070} a humanism that renounces any power that transcends man.⁸⁷ Fromm believes that „Marxist and other forms of socialism are the

heirs of prophetic messianism. ...“⁸⁸ In spite of many a false turn-especially in its final realization in Marx’s writings-the history of the messianic idea reveals the contours of the goal of all history: the realm of freedom in humanistic socialism on the basis of a socialist humanism.⁸⁹

Fromm’s View of History as a Continuation of Karl Marx’s Theory of History

Fromm sees in the history of the messianic idea the dynamic unfolding of a theory of history whose climax is prophetic messianism. This prophetic messianism has its final and valid-because humanist-realization in Karl Marx’s view of history. For this reason, Marx’s views form the starting point for Fromm’s own reflections on the theory of history. His historical-philosophical theses are therefore a reception of the Marxist view of history and can only be presented as such.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Cf. *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 143-147. On the history of the calculation of time in Jewish messianism, see A. H. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First Through the Seventeenth Centuries*.

⁸⁵ Thus „the Hasidic conception of the Torah is an elaboration of the traditional belief that God wants to win through man the world created by Him. He wants to make it truly His world, His kingdom, but through human deed“ (Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 50). For an extensive presentation of Hasidism, see pp. 195-205.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961b), pp. 63-69.

⁸⁷ This humanistic approach is described by Fromm as follows: „Marx’s socialism is the realization of the deepest religious impulses common to the great humanistic religions of the past ... provided we understand that Marx, like Hegel and like many others, expresses his concern for man’s soul, not in theistic, but in philosophical language“ (ibid., p. 63). That this is not just a question of language is shown on pp. 205-218, esp. pp. 214-215.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 68.

⁸⁹ The verification of messianism in Hermann Cohen’s Neo-Kantianism will not be discussed here. But see pp. 188-195. While it is true that the political element of the prophetic marks the reactivation of a prophetic-political messianism in the „Reform Judaism“ of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and especially in „Zionism,“ it lacks the universalist component of Jewish messianism. For this reason, Fromm was no friend of Zionism. On this matter, see L. Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, pp. 369-389; H. Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*, pp. 343-353. On the development of „Reform Judaism“ in the United States, cf. especially D. Philipson, „Reform Judaism“ in *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI, pp. 240f; and the „Pittsburgh Platform“ of 1855, in which the Reformed Jews decided, among other things: „We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.“

⁹⁰ For a critique of Fromm’s Marx reception, see pp. 205-218. The distinctive quality of Fromm’s view of history is primarily the effort to show that the historical-philosophical positions are legitimate interpretations



To avoid the misunderstandings associated with such terms as „materialist“ and „economic,“ Fromm writes that „Marx’s interpretation of history could be called an anthropological interpretation of history ... it is the understanding of history based on the fact that men are ‘the authors *and* actors of their history’.”⁹¹ An anthropological interpretation of history as formulated here has a variety of consequences: „The first premise of all human history is the existence of living human individuals. ... They themselves begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.”⁹² This occasions a fundamental change in man’s relationship to nature: „Man, at the beginning of his history, is blindly bound or chained to nature. In the process of evolution, he transforms his relationship to nature, and hence himself.”⁹³ The factor that mediates between man and nature, that changes man’s relationship to nature and therefore man himself, is labor.⁹⁴

of the theology of history of the Old Testament, especially of messianism.

⁹¹ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 13. The quotation in the quotation cannot be found in Marx, *MEGA* I, 6, 179, as indicated, however.

⁹² K. Marx, *MEGA* I, 5, 10.

⁹³ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 15; cf. esp. *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), pp. 34f.

⁹⁴ Although not in direct connection with Marx’s theory of labor, Fromm referred to the meaning of work in the Jewish Sabbath ritual—a meaning that may well have influenced Marx. If Marx initially spoke of „the abolition of labor’ as the aim of socialism“ (*Marx’s Concept of Man* [1961b], p. 40), and did not as yet distinguish between free and alienated labor, he saw labor as it is understood in the Sabbath ritual: if the Sabbath is the anticipation of messianic time, it makes sense to ban every type of work. The Sabbath is „a symbol of redemption and freedom“ (Fromm, *The Forgotten Language* [1951a], p. 248). „Work is a symbol of struggle and discord; rest a symbol of dignity, peace and freedom“ (ibid., p. 247; cf. Fromm, „The Sabbath“ [1927a], esp. pp. 233f; *You Shall Be as Gods* [1966a], pp. 194-199).

„Initially, work is a process between man and nature, a process where man mediates, regulates and controls his metabolism with nature through his own act. He confronts the natural substance as a natural force. He puts into motion the natural powers that are {071} part of his physical nature, arms and legs, head and hand, to appropriate the natural substance in a form that his own life can use. By acting on nature outside of him in this fashion and by changing it, he simultaneously changes his own nature.”⁹⁵ Labor, accordingly, is not a necessary evil, not a means toward the end of producing, but rather „the meaningful expression of human energy; hence work is enjoyable.”⁹⁶

Man’s self-production through work makes him free and independent and allows him to make his own history.⁹⁷ This implies that the manner of working—the mode of production of material life—determines the social, political, and intellectual life process. „It is not the consciousness of men that determines their social being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.”⁹⁸ The course of history is shaped by conflicts between the productive forces (which include not only raw materials, energy, capital, and labor, but also, and increasingly, the sciences and all of man’s capacities⁹⁹) and the mode of production in a given

⁹⁵ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 192.

⁹⁶ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 42.

⁹⁷ On the alienation of man by the alienation of work, see pp. 72-82.

⁹⁸ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961 b), p. 198. (and cf. Marx, *German Ideology*): „Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach, the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second it is the real living individuals themselves, as they are in actual life, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness.“ According to Fromm, Marx does not assert in this sentence that ideas and ideals are not real and effective: „Even as far as the influence of ideas on human evolution is concerned, Marx was by no means as oblivious to their power as the popular interpretation of his work makes it appear“ (*Marx’s Concept of Man* [1961b], p. 22).

⁹⁹ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 22.



social organization. „When a mode of production or social organization hampers, rather than furthers, the given productive forces, a society, if it is not to collapse, will choose such forms of production as fit the new set of productive forces and develop them.“¹⁰⁰

„Together with the conflict between productive forces and sociopolitical structures goes the conflict between social classes.“¹⁰¹ Man is involved in the dynamics of this process; indeed, he is its propulsive force and progressively frees himself through these conflicts in the productive process from what ties him to nature. Along with the work process, his intellectual and psychological powers become more independent and attain full development. Since man in an everchanging unity with nature is both origin and goal of history, what counts in all modes of production and social relations is that man and the unfolding of the powers with which he can dominate nature always remain the center of all efforts.

Once man has extended his control as governed by his reason over all of nature, he will be completely independent and free. Society will then lose its antagonistic class character and the true history of man will begin, „in which free men plan and organize their exchange with nature, and in which the aim and end of all social life is not work and production, but the unfolding of man’s powers as an end in itself. That is, for Marx, the realm of freedom {072} in which man will be fully united with his fellow men and with nature.“¹⁰²

The realm of freedom is the goal of socialism. For both Marx and Fromm, socialism means independence and freedom.¹⁰³ It is identical with man’s self-realization „in the process of productive relatedness and oneness with man and nature. The aim of socialism was the development of the individual

personality.“¹⁰⁴ Thus both Fromm and Marx refuse to identify the aim of all of history with socialism.¹⁰⁵ Socialism is the „condition of human freedom and creativity, not ... in itself ... the goal of man’s life.“¹⁰⁶ It is only when man creates a socialist, that is, rational,¹⁰⁷ form of society that the goal of life becomes achievable: „the development of human power which is its own end, the true realm of freedom. ...“¹⁰⁸ Then man will have fully given birth to himself in the historical process. Being free and independent, he will be at one with nature and his fellow man, in reason and love.¹⁰⁹

„Since, however, for socialist man, the whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labor, and the emergence of nature for man, he therefore has the evident and irrefutable proof of his self-creation, of his own origins.“¹¹⁰ Once man is truly born, his „prehistory“ will have ended and true human history will begin.¹¹¹ With this view, Marx, and Fromm along with him, clearly stand in the tradition of prophetic messianism. Yet there is another essential aspect to their theory of history that proposes to do justice to actual historical development. Fromm called this aspect idolatry—that is, man’s alienation in the historical process.

Man’s Alienation in History

In Fromm’s work, the concept of alienation is closely linked to the historical-philosophical interpretation of man and his nature. The literature on the concept of alienation in the intellectual history

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰¹ *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 35.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 36f.

¹⁰³ Independence and freedom are central concepts in Fromm’s critique of religion. Cf. pp. 93-95.

¹⁰⁴ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 38.

¹⁰⁵ This critique of an identification is not only aimed at what are currently socialist states. What is involved here is the goal of history, which is not to be seen in a social system but only in free--i.e., wholly productive-man.

¹⁰⁶ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961 b), p. 61.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁰⁸ *Capital*, Vol. III, p. 828.

¹⁰⁹ *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961b), pp. 64f, 68f.

¹¹⁰ Marx, *MEGA* I, 3, p. 125.

¹¹¹ Cf. *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961 b), p. 19.



of the last one hundred and fifty years, a literature that has grown enormously in recent times, cannot be considered here. Only sources that influenced Fromm and the way he developed his own concept of alienation against this intellectual background will be discussed.¹¹² {073}

The Roots of Fromm's Concept of Alienation In Intellectual History

„The thinker who coined the concept of alienation was Hegel. To him, the history of man was at the same time the history of man's alienation.“¹¹³ Objectification, alienation, and reunification are part of the life process, and in this movement, Hegel sees man's innermost nature. Through the creation of an objective world, the absolute spirit becomes alienated from itself so that it may return to itself. „Hegel, taking God as the subject of history, had seen God in man, in a state of self-alienation, and in the process of history God's return to himself.“¹¹⁴ For man, this means that his existence is alienated from his essence, that he, in other words, „is *not what he ought to be, and that he ought to be that which he could be.*“¹¹⁵

Karl Marx's adoption of Hegel's concept of alienation was influenced by Feuerbach's inversion of Hegel's „theology“ into an anthropology. Ludwig Feuerbach sees in God a projection of man's being, which means that alienation becomes a movement within man's consciousness. „In the thought of Feuerbach, God's selfexternalization in nature becomes, through inversion, man's projection of his own essence into an imagined objectivity.“¹¹⁶ In contrast to Feuerbach, however, Marx

sees alienation primarily as man's losing himself in the things he makes, and religious alienation as only a reflection in consciousness of the alienation of „real life.“ This „real life“ is shaped by labor, which is man's active relationship to nature, the creation of a new world, and of man himself.¹¹⁷ „For Marx, [alienation means] that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature, others, and he himself) remain alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation. Alienation is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object.“¹¹⁸

This process began with the rise of private property and the division of labor, with the result that labor ceased to be the expression of human powers. „The object produced by labor, its product, now stands opposed to it as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object and turned into a physical thing; this product is an *objectification* of labor.“¹¹⁹ Along with man's alienation {074} from his own product, which, having become independent, now controls him, there is the alienation of productive activity itself. Man is no longer active; instead, all activity appears merely as alienated man's livelihood. „A direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labor, from his life activity and from his species life is that man is alienated from other men. When man confronts himself, he also confronts other men.“¹²⁰

Marx believes that alienation can be overcome where the liberation of the human being aims at

Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 44.

¹¹⁷ See pp. 70-72.

¹¹⁸ *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 44. On the problem of this definition, especially in the context of the theory of history, see p. 79-82.

¹¹⁹ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 324; cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 23-26, 168-170; F. Tomberg, *Der Begriff der Entfremdung in den 'Grundrissen' von Karl Marx*; R. Wiegand, *Gesellschaft and Charakter*, pp. 11-27.

¹²⁰ Marx, *Early Writings*, pp. 229-230.



the restoration of the nonalienated and therefore free activity of all men, at a society whose end is man, not the production of objects.¹²¹ This view of alienation and the overcoming of it, which Fromm documents principally by quotations from Marx's early writings, is of importance because it means that, contrary to certain Marxist doctrines, efforts to deal with alienation must go beyond mere socioeconomic manipulations. Rather, the point of departure must be an encompassing image of man and history, and the goal of all effort must be to overcome man's estrangement from life, from himself, and from his fellow man.¹²²

Alienation as idolatry

The intellectual background outlined above is essential to Fromm's view of alienation. But by an analysis of the prophetic struggle against idolatry, he also attempted to make his understanding of it more precise. „I use 'alienation' as it was used by Hegel and later by Marx: instead of experiencing his own human powers, for example love or wisdom, thought or reason, acting justly, a person transfers these powers to some idol, to force or forces outside himself. In order then to get in touch with his own power, he must submit completely to this idol. ... What I'm saying is that the biblical concept of idolatry is essentially the same as the Hegelian and Marxian concept of alienation.”¹²³

The essence of idolatry is not the worship of this or that idol but that idol worship itself represents a certain human attitude.¹²⁴ It is equally unimportant whether many gods are worshipped or a

single one. The core notion of the prophetic struggle against idolatry is that idols are the work of human hands, so that man transfers to the things of his creation the attributes of his own life, and instead of experiencing himself as the creating person, he is in {075} touch with himself only by the worship of the idols.¹²⁵ The idol thus represents man's own powers in alienated form to which he must submit and by which he allows himself to be dominated.

Idols and the objects of idolatry vary from culture to culture and from period to period. „Once, idols were animals, trees, sears, figures of men and women. ... Today they are called honor, flag, state, mother, family, fame, production, consumption, and many other names.”¹²⁶ It is the function of such idols to serve crippled and self-alienated man as crutches that, though expressions of his loss of himself, enable him to preserve a minimal self and a minimal experience of identity.

It is not only in relation to other objects and persons that Fromm speaks of idolatry or alienation. When someone is controlled by his irrational passions, he worships his own partial striving as an idol and is „obsessed“ by it: „In this sense, the neurotic person is an alienated person. His actions are not his own; while he is under the illusion of doing what *he* wants, he is driven by forces which are separated from his self.”¹²⁷ The psychotic represents the extreme case. He is a person who is alienated from himself, who has totally lost his self as the cen-

¹²¹ Cf. *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961 b), p. 50.

¹²² Cf. *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 46.

¹²³ *Dialogue with Erich Fromm* (1966f), pp. 88f. On the problematics of this identification of the concept of alienation, cf., e.g., J. H. Schaar, *Escape from Authority*, pp. 192-197; J. S. Glen, *Erich Fromm: A Protestant Critique*, pp. 126-137; G. B. Hammond, *Man in Estrangement*, pp. 33-35, 65-69; P. Tillich, *Der Mensch im Marxismus und Christentum*, pp. 194-209; R. Schacht, *Alienation*.

¹²⁴ *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950a), p. 118.

¹²⁵ *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 44; cf. *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 121f.

¹²⁶ *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 47f. Fromm actually calls for an „ideology“ whose task it would be not only to ferret out earlier and present idols but also to unmask the idolatrous attitude of submissiveness (for which he reproaches Calvinism, e.g.). This view is so radical that it ultimately leads to a substitution of an „ideology“ for theology as the attempt to make statements about God (ibid., pp. 47-49). Cf. the discussion below pp. 183-188.

¹²⁷ *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 124; cf. „Marx's Contribution to the Knowledge of Man,” (1968h), pp. 68f.



ter of his experiences.¹²⁸

What is common to all these phenomena of idolatry is that „man does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished ‘thing,’ dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance.“¹²⁹ This is especially true of contemporary industrial civilization, in which alienation is nearly total and pervades the individual’s relations to his work, to the objects he uses, to his fellow man, and to himself. Modern man has become „the object of blind economic forces which rule his life.“¹³⁰ In contrast to Marx’s view, Fromm observes that the entire work force, management even more than the traditional working class, is exposed to the alienating dictate of economic forces.¹³¹

A typical feature of our industrial society that is independent of the social system is the hypertrophy of the administrative apparatus in all spheres, in the industrial-technical bureaucracy, in unions, and in political, military, church, and social institutions. „They function rather like electronic computers, into which all the data have been fed and which--according to certain principles--make the ‘decisions.’ When man is transformed into a thing and {076} managed like a thing, his managers themselves become things; and things have no will, no vision, no plan.“¹³² It is on the basis of such insights that Fromm refers to our contemporary soci-

ety as an „insane society“ in which men have become incapable of experiencing themselves as active but have instead idolatrously surrendered to enslavement by their own achievements and powers.

The Possibility of Overcoming Alienation

Does Fromm believe that the phenomena of alienation are purely the result of modern capitalism? The question must be answered negatively in two respects. First, he notes that typical alienation phenomena are also observable in socialist economic systems.¹³³ Second, by showing the structural affinity between the biblical concept of idolatry and the alienation concept in Marx, Fromm suggests that alienation is not a distinctive characteristic of capitalist or state-capitalist systems or some corresponding social structure. Conversely, it demonstrates suicidal blindness to ask in the atomic age „to what extent the bad features of alienation [are] simply the price we have to pay for the good features of modern economic and political freedom and progress.“¹³⁴ Fromm believes that the need to overcome alienation today is a matter of life and death, and he is persuaded that the attempt can be successful. Following Marx, he recognizes „that contemporary idolatry is rooted in the contemporary mode of production and can be changed only by the complete change of the economic-social constellation together with the spiritual liberation of man.“¹³⁵ This insight also contains a criticism of Marx’s position that brings out Fromm’s point of view more sharply. For change to be possible, Fromm believes, there must also be spiritual liberation. It is his view that Marx „had not sufficiently

¹²⁸ *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 124. That is the reason a number of languages used to employ the term „alienation“ in their medical nomenclature to refer to psychotic phenomena. Even today, an „alienist“ is a physician who treats diseases of the mind. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹³⁰ *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 59; on this matter, see especially Fromm’s central work on this problem, *The Sane Society* (1955a).

¹³¹ Cf. *Marx’s Concept of Man* (1961 b), pp. 56f.

¹³² E. Fromm, *May Man Prevail?* (1961 a), p. 79. Cf. *Escape from Freedom* (1941a), pp. 118-135, and the comments on the „marketing orientation“ on p. 33-34 above.

¹³³ *May Man Prevail?* (1961 a), pp. 68-85; A. Schaff, *Marxismus und das menschliche Individuum*, pp. 168-182, 254-259.

¹³⁴ This is a question raised by A. Gewirth, *Review*, pp. 291f.

¹³⁵ *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 59. On the problem of raising the consciousness of the dependent masses, cf. F. Tomberg, *Der Begriff der Entfremdung in den „Grundrissen“ von Karl Marx*.



recognized that human nature has its own needs and laws which are in constant interaction with the economic conditions which shape historical development.¹³⁶ The socialization of the means of production is, then, a necessary but not a sufficient condition for overcoming alienation.¹³⁷ So long as the needs that are a consequence of man's self-consciousness—and this includes their deformations by socioeconomic conditions—are not recognized, and recognized as essential needs that have a share in fundamentally determining and stabilizing socioeconomic conditions, and so long as man's unfolding {077} does not become a driving element in development, one cannot expect alienation to be overcome.¹³⁸

From this insight into human needs and their pseudo-solutions in nonproductive orientations, Fromm proceeds to establish guidelines for changes in economic factors and social structures. His insights are provided by a dynamic psychology: „A concept like alienation, to be meaningful beyond a relatively speculative level of description, must be studied empirically by dynamic psychology. ... If alienation isn't thus investigated, it remains in itself an alienated term.“¹³⁹ This does not mean that Fromm concedes that the power of human consciousness to bring change is greater than that of economic or social forces.¹⁴⁰ He is not concerned

with establishing the primacy of consciousness but with respecting the specifically human qualities that imply specific, inalienable human needs whose reality and effectiveness no effort to overcome human alienation can ignore. And because alienation is possible only in the human sphere, every insight into alienation and every attempt to overcome it depend on the specific human quality of consciousness and illuminate the conscious and unconscious forces that determine man in his unique situation. This is why psychology „must empirically study key concepts of religion, philosophy and sociology,“¹⁴¹ why psychology is given priority in the process of cognition.¹⁴² And it is also this circumstance that makes the „spiritual liberation of man“ the necessary condition if alienation is to be overcome.

Fromm lived up to this insight in his writings. In *The Sane Society*, his principal work on this problem, he starts out by setting forth the human situation and the human needs resulting from it, and ends with practical reflections on ways to overcome alienation.¹⁴³ For alienation must be overcome if individuals are to be spiritually healthy and there is to be a society in which productive persons can exist. Nonalienated man „relates himself to the world lovingly, and ... uses his reason to grasp reality objectively ... experiences himself as a unique individual entity, and at the same time feels one with his fellow man ... is not subject to irrational authority, and accepts willingly the rational authority of conscience and reason ... is in the process of being born as long as he is alive, and considers the gift of life the most precious chance he has.“¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 262f. The critique of Marx does not aim at taking reality and real man as the point of departure for its method, but it does object to a foreshortened view of man and his intellectual and spiritual needs and qualities. Cf. *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961 b), pp. 21f, on this problem.

¹³⁷ Cf. *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 265; F. Tomberg, *Der Begriff der Entfremdung in den „Grundrissen“ von Karl Marx*, p. 156.

¹³⁸ Cf. *The Sane Society* (1955a), pp. 264ff; G. B. Hammond, *Man in Estrangement*, pp. 33-35.

¹³⁹ *Dialogue with Erich Fromm* (1966f), pp. 89f.

¹⁴⁰ G. B. Hammond, *Man in Estrangement*, p. 35, interprets Fromm's position in this way: „Fromm returns to the non-Marxian view that alienation is primarily a form of awareness or unawareness.“ But see below, pp. 81-82.

¹⁴¹ *Dialogue with Erich Fromm* (1966f), p. 90.

¹⁴² *The Sane Society* (1955a): „The analysis of society and of the historical process must begin with man, not with an abstraction, but with the real, concrete man, in his physiological and psychological qualities. It must begin with a concept of the essence of man, and the study of economics and of society serves only the purpose of understanding how circumstances have crippled man, how he has become alienated from himself and his powers.“

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-66, 270-352.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 275.



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Progress toward spiritual liberation begins when the conflict between human needs and the existing social structure is pointed out. The next step is to raise consciousness about this conflict and what has been lost through it. Then practical changes in the economic, political, and social, as well as the cultural, sphere must be initiated.¹⁴⁵ These practical changes aim at a „sane society in which no man is a means toward another’s ends but always and without exception an end in himself; where nobody is used, nor uses himself, for purposes which are not those of the unfolding of his own human powers; where man is the center, and where all economic and political activities are subordinated to the goal of his growth ... where the individual is concerned with social matters so that they become personal ones, where his relation to his fellow man is not separated from his relationships in the private sphere...”¹⁴⁶

To a considerable extent, these postulates were realized in the so-called work communities (*communautés de travail*) that came into existence during the Second World War and, especially, in the period following it in France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland.¹⁴⁷ These agricultural and industrial communities, which consisted of as many as one thousand working individuals, were characterized by a fundamentally new kind of life with others,¹⁴⁸ ranging from the abolition of the distinction between employer and employee and institution of the common ownership of capital, to democratic codetermination in such matters as production, management of the enterprise, and personnel policies, the dynamic acting out of conflict management, leisure-time management, the formation of neighborhood groups, and the establishment of a

specific catalogue of norms. The communities were successful in considerably raising production levels, even though this was not one of their goals, but were more remarkable for instilling a new experience of human value whereby man „knows what he is doing, has an influence on what is being done, and feels united with, rather than separated from, his fellow man.”¹⁴⁹

While such experiments cannot be transferred en bloc to larger social structures, they proved to Fromm that alienation is not fated. In contrast to all previous attempts at a one-sided manipulation of socioeconomic elements without concurrent consideration of inalienable human needs-attempts such as the Communist {079} states and England have undertaken-the work communities demonstrate the possibility and rightness of a „humanistic communitary socialism.”¹⁵⁰

On the Ambiguity of the Concept of Alienation

The historical-philosophical context of Fromm’s concept of alienation is indispensable to an adequate understanding of it, but it is also essential to grasp the differing use of the term he makes in his writings. The history of man (both individual and mankind) originates in the break with nature that is due to the emergence of specifically human qualities and must therefore be seen as the process of man’s birth. „History is seen as an extension of nature, moving through stages of growth toward the full realization of human potentialities.”¹⁵¹ This goal of history means a new unity between man and nature, his fellow human beings, and himself, on a higher, a conscious level.

The stretch of history that extends from the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 276.

¹⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 306-321, for an extensive presentation.

¹⁴⁸ The question remains whether the monastic traditions such as the Benedictine did not realize the same sort of thing at an earlier period, so one can hardly talk about a fundamentally new kind of life with others.

¹⁴⁹ *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 321.

¹⁵⁰ A. Gewirth, *Review*, p. 292; A. Briggs, *Review*, p. 739; M. Birnbach, *Neo-Freudian Social Philosophy*, pp. 197-203, all raise doubts concerning the exemplariness of the work communities for a new economic and social order.

¹⁵¹ G. B. Hammond, *Man in Estrangement*, p. 65.



origin of man to the full realization of human potentialities is necessarily marked by alienation. The new unity can only be attained „after man has experienced his separateness, after he has gone through the stage of alienation from himself and from the world, and has been fully born. This new unity has as a premise the full development of man’s reason, leading to a stage in which reason no longer separates man from his immediate, intuitive grasp of reality.“¹⁵² Until he has overcome it by the total unfolding of his productive capacities of reason and love, alienation is thus an essential characteristic of man’s condition.¹⁵³ It has a positive aspect in that it is both a necessary step and a constructive stimulus toward the full unfolding of human potentialities-but only if man’s reaction to his alienated situation is productive.

This use of the term „alienation“ is supplemented by another that, although related to the first, must be distinguished from it, even if Fromm himself did not always do so. Where man does not react productively but nonproductively to his alienated situation, Fromm also speaks of alienation. His use of the concept of alienation, which he took from Hegel and Marx to define idolatry as a non-productive response to the human situation, shows that the second alienation concept is problematical. Idolatry is not alienation pure and simple but a nonproductive and regressive result of {080} man’s alienated situation (regressive because it strives to restore man’s original unity).¹⁵⁴ A distinction must

be made here between alienation as a positive necessity if the specifically human qualities are to unfold toward a new unity of man in a nonalienated society, and unnecessary negative alienation as regression that manifests itself in the decay syndrome as a nonproductive and therefore pathological reaction to man’s alienated situation.

This distinction also becomes relevant to an understanding of the difference between the existential and the historical dichotomies.¹⁵⁵ Something can be done about the historical dichotomies because they are flawed developments caused by man, and therefore can be overcome by him during this historical period. Existential dichotomies, on the other hand, are contradictions that are inherent in human nature and can therefore never be resolved. Man’s only productive reaction to them is to counteract their potential for fettering his developmental possibilities--that is, to refuse to succumb to regression. Historical dichotomies arise when man reacts to his alienated situation in a manner that is not adequate to specific human qualities, meaning in a manner that is nonproductive. To the extent that man deals with these dichotomies consciously, using his productive powers, they can be overcome.

This raises a question concerning the correlation between alienation as a positive necessity and the pathological regression that is the negative result of alienation. It also raises a more fundamental question concerning the legitimacy of distinguishing between existential and historical dichotomies, and between man’s alienated situation and the regression reaction that may or may not be a necessary consequence of it.

Fromm’s insufficient clarity and his confusion about these distinctions is probably due to the fact that his thinking proceeds from two points in intellectual history. On the one hand, he follows Marx in seeing a form of alienation that is essentially the product of alienated socioeconomic conditions; this

veloping -the concepts syndrome of growth and syndrome of decay.

¹⁵⁵ See pp. 58-60.

¹⁵² Fromm, „Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism“ (1960a), p. 65.

¹⁵³ This is not the place to determine whether such a vision of the future is „realistic.“ As for Fromm, it can be said that the analysis of the history of the struggle against idolatry in Judaeo-Christian culture, e.g., suggests the possibility of such a development of man, although it is also true that he judges the present situation as almost hopelessly alienated. What we can do here is to show the stringency of the argument: under the conditions stipulated, does man in fact have the power to redeem himself?

¹⁵⁴ In his later work, Fromm took account of the differences in meaning of the concept of alienation by de-



alienation of man from himself, from nature, and his fellow man can be resolved by changing socio-economic conditions. On the other hand, in the psychological analysis of the human situation he discovers contradictions within man that cannot be resolved by a change in socioeconomic {081} conditions. Via Hegel's theory of history he links these contradictions with the theory of alienation. Thus the contradiction between nature and reason as it expresses itself in inalienable human needs itself appears as alienation, alienation that only the unfolding of the productive forces of reason and love can overcome.

Fromm was dissatisfied with the truncated concept of alienation that takes the historical development of economic factors for the sole cause of man's alienation from the world and himself, and that therefore can understand consciousness only as the reflection of socioeconomic conditions and consequently maintains that it can overcome all alienation merely by changing socioeconomic conditions. Opposing this view, Fromm proceeds from an image of man that characterizes him as marked by existential dichotomies that are not caused by socioeconomic conditions and, for that very reason, cannot be overcome by changing these conditions. What is required instead is an autonomous response. Because these dichotomies are part and parcel of man's endowment with reason, it is reason that permits man to become conscious of the need for an autonomous response and also makes it possible for such a response to occur. Fromm thus assigns to the modifying power of reason a place that is independent of socioeconomic forces. This view implies that a reason that is tied to nature while also transcending it can be overcome by those capacities that are given along with reason.

This final consequence represents the logical limit of Fromm's idea of man's liberation from himself through himself. Because he feels that the break between nature and reason constitutes man's alienation (i.e., because he does not make economic and social forces the only cause of, nor their change the panacea, for alienation), yet does not postulate a metahistorical entity beyond nature and human

reason but sees the productive forces that have to overcome this break as deriving from the break itself, he must bank on man's undivided belief in himself and those positive powers within him that press toward unfolding.¹⁵⁶

In the course of history, therefore, everything depends on the unfolding of man's productive forces. An indispensable condition of this unfolding is the alteration of alienating socioeconomic conditions because these conditions prevent the full unfolding of the {082} productive powers and produce inhuman needs. The criterion for all change, however, is that it make possible a productive reaction to human needs as determined by the existential dichotomies.

In the end, Fromm's view of man and his history remains subject to the dilemma of all immanent beliefs in perfection. On the one hand, man is capable of much greater things than he has so far achieved. On the other, the risk of failure remains an integral part of his condition and historical situation. Because of this risk, it is necessary to postulate that the project that is man will succeed. But it is possible that the actual consequence of this constitutive risk of man's failure will be that he is seen to be capable of less than he needs to prevail. {083}

¹⁵⁶ From this perspective, the two meanings of Fromm's concept of alienation, necessity and pathological phenomenon, become clearer. Negative alienation as (pathological) regression is an expression of the necessary positive alienation of man, who is determined by existential dichotomies. However, it is also a negative answer to this situation insofar as the possibility of a positive reaction that is implicit in the alienated situation is being neglected. But because nonproductive reactions are possible as an expression of the necessary situation of alienation, historical dichotomies come into play. These can be overcome to the extent that productive forces gain the upper hand in reactions to the existential dichotomies.