



Part Four: Humanism as Science and as Religious Ethos in Fromm's Work

In Part One, Fromm's discoveries in psychoanalysis, social psychology, and philosophical-anthropological reflection were presented. Using his understanding of religion and ethics as an example, we then set forth and critically evaluated his concept of humanism in Part Two. Part Three identified some of the intellectual sources and antecedents to which Fromm, his thought, and his discoveries owe their peculiar stamp.

Part Four is not simply a summation of what preceded it. Our interest here focuses on the alternative of „having“ and „being“ as Fromm expli-

cated it in his last major work, *To Have or to Be?* This alternative should first be seen as an ultimate abstraction from empirical findings in the context of the character doctrine: all human thinking, feeling, and acting occur either in the mode of having or in the mode of being. Beyond that, this alternative is a key to understanding human reality generally, including religious and ethical reality, so that the words „having or being“ point to that line along which humanism as science and humanism as religion--or, better, humanism as religious ethos--become one.

8. The Art of Living: To Have Or to Be?

The Modes of Having and Being as Characterological Concepts

Having and Being as Ultimate Assessments of Human Reality

The sociopsychological concept of character that is to be understood comprehensively lies at the center of Fromm's scientific view of man. Character is structured, which means that depending on the way it has been shaped, it has a distinctive quality that can be understood ideal-typically as the orientation of the character, and characterized as functional or dysfunctional for the development of man as a system. It is dispositive and determinative of human energy so that man's behavior vis-à-vis his

natural and human environment corresponds to the quality and orientation of the character structure.¹ The various character orientations can enter into a variety of mixtures. Of primary scientific interest is which character orientation is dominant and whether this dominant orientation is productive or nonproductive.

The question as to the degree of intensity the dominance of a productive or nonproductive orientation has in the character structure led Fromm to the insight that one can speak of two character syndromes, the biophilically oriented syndrome of growth, and the necrophilically oriented syndrome

¹ Cf. p.18. The statements apply to both the individual and to social entities. Cf. the comments on the social character on pp. 18-22.



of decay.² The setting up of syndromes takes into account the specific quality of character, namely, that a biophilic-productive or a necrophilic non-productive orientation is accompanied by certain components that converge as the orientation becomes increasingly defined. The {249} more marked the convergence, the more clearly the growth or decay syndrome develops, and the more the alternative orientations exclude each other.³ In other words, if an orientation develops and becomes a syndrome, the biophilic or necrophilic qualities intensify. These insights and ideas about character syndromes also apply to the discovery that human life is always oriented either toward having or toward being.⁴

Fromm's use of the concepts „having“ and „being“ derives from the nomenclature of the critique of capitalism found in Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)*: „Political economy, this science of wealth, is therefore at the same time the science of denial, of starvation, of saving, and it actually goes so far as to save man the need for fresh air or physical exercise. This science of the marvels of industry is at the same time the science of asceticism, and its true ideal is the ascetic but ra-

pacious skinflint and the ascetic but productive slave. Its moral ideal is the worker who puts a part of his wages into savings. ... Self-denial, the denial of life and of all human needs, is its principal doctrine. The less you eat, drink, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you save and the greater will become that treasure which neither moths nor maggots can consume--your capital. The less you are, the less you give expression to your life, the more you have, the greater is your alienated life and the more you store up of your estranged life.“⁵

Fromm attempts to find an empirical basis for the distinction between having and being that lies behind Marx's equation of having more and being less. And he acknowledges: „What I saw led me to conclude that this distinction, together with that between love of life and love of the dead, represents the most crucial problem of existence; that empirical anthropological and psychoanalytic data tend to demonstrate that having and being are two fundamental modes of experience, the respective strengths of which determine the differences between the characters of individuals and various types of social character.“⁶ Having and being are thus

² Cf. pp. 49-54.

³ Cf. the schematic illustration, p. 53.

⁴ The term „discovery“ is justified because Fromm discovers the characterological concepts „having“ and „being“ as keys to the understanding of philosophical and religious statements, indeed as keys to the interpretation of human reality past and present. The thing itself to which the alternative refers is, of course, no discovery of Fromm's. On the contrary, Fromm tries to show that what the alternative refers to is present in the teachings of all the great teachers of mankind. The diaries by Gabriel Marcel that were published under the title *Etre et Avoir* are abstract philosophical reflections that differ, in part, in their intent. (But see G. G. Abril, *Erich Fromm y Gabriel Marcel. La esperanza frustrada y la esperanza absoluta*.) While this book has little to do with the psychosocial concept of having and being, Balthasar Staehelin's *Haben und Sein* confines itself to statements that result from the examination of psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic discoveries and insights.

⁵ K. Marx, *Early Writings*, pp. 360-361. Cf. p. 351, where Marx makes the following comments on having: „All his human relations to the world-seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, contemplating, sensing, wanting, acting, loving-in short, all the organs of his individuality, like the organs which are directly communal in form, are in their objective approach or in their approach to the object the appropriation of that object. This appropriation of human reality, their approach to the object, is the confirmation of human reality. It is human effectiveness and human suffering, for suffering humanly conceived, is an enjoyment of the self for man.“

⁶ Fromm, *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 16. That the impulse toward making this distinction and its verification through characterology come from Fromm's reading of Marx is also shown by the comments in *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 35-37; and „The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory,“ (1965c) p. 215f. Without specific reference to Marx, the alternative is mentioned in *The Revolution of Hope* (1968a), p. 82-84. The strength of the



not character orientations in the sense mentioned above--like the receptive or hoarding orientations, for example.⁷ They are modes of experience, as Fromm writes in this passage, or modes of human existence, as he usually calls them.

Like the concepts biophilia and necrophilia, having and being {250} are ultimate judgments that antedate the individual character orientations and designate two fundamentally different tendencies, attitudes, or strivings of man and his character.⁸ The judgment that someone lives in the mode of having or in the mode of being thus extends the previously discussed distinction into productive and nonproductive character orientations, but differs in (like biophilia and necrophilia) seeing character as a syndrome. The definitions „mode of having“ or „mode of being“ are more encompassing than the judgments „biophilia“ or „necrophilia.“ Their use permits one to define and understand all levels of reality in terms of their value. Compared to the other alternative, the having/being alternative is an ultimate abstraction by which to evaluate human reality. The following description of these modes will show that despite its generality, this distinction most aptly defines human reality in terms of its quality. It can thus apply to any reality to which man can relate, and with these definitions every such reality can be more than adequately judged in regard to its value for the functioning of man as a system. By the ascription of a human reality to either the mode of having or of being, the most encompassing, aptest, and therefore the most definitive, judgment is rendered.

influence Marx's discussion of the problem had on Fromm is shown by the many conceptual borrowings. When Fromm speaks of the „expression of one's essential human faculties,“ for example (in *To Have or to Be?*, p. 117), he is adopting Marx's „expression of human powers“ which we find especially in the *Paris Manuscripts of 1844*.

⁷ Contrary to what the Marx quotations might suggest, Fromm is not concerned with universalizing the hoarding orientation. Nor do the distinctive qualities of having coincide with Freud's anal character.

⁸ Cf. *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 105.

Definition of the Two Modes

The findings of psychoanalytic theory and psychotherapeutic practice, his sociopsychological insights and discoveries, his study of „radical“ thinkers and personalities in the history of philosophy and religion, and finally his personal, untiring efforts to disillusion his own and the social pseudo-world with its rationalizations and ideologies--all these things enabled Fromm to give a very precise definition to the two modes. It is in the nature of things that it is easier to define the mode of having in all its variants and manifestations, that the definition of the mode of being is more difficult and therefore occurs, in part, a *contrario*. In contrast to the mode of having, the mode of being is an experience that cannot be precisely defined.⁹

The easiest access to what Fromm means by the „having mode of existence“ can be had through his view of private property. In the having mode, „all that matters is my acquisition of property and my unlimited right to keep what I have acquired.“¹⁰ There is {251} almost nothing that cannot be owned or become the object of acquisitive striving: material objects of every kind, some of which are acquired by a passion to collect; individuals one is responsible for but of whom one also has the right to dispose, such as children, marriage partners, the sick, the crippled, the ignorant. Virtues and values can become possessions (to have prestige, an image, courage, health, beauty); convictions of a religious, philosophical, and political nature are acquired like possessions and stubbornly defended. Truth and right can be taken possession of through legal proceedings or war, if need be. And through marriage, we also acquire the right to be loved. The methods by which things are acquired or the ways in which they are owned are also multifarious. They extend from acquisition through payment to illegal appropriation, and are called incorporation, interiorization, internalization, introjection, identifi-

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.



cation, and include all varieties of consumption.¹¹

The desire to own something and to therefore have power over it is characteristic of the relation between subject and object in the mode of having: „... the statement ‘I (subject) have O’ (object) expresses a definition of I through my possession of O. The subject is not myself but I am what I have. My property constitutes myself and my identity. The underlying thought in the statement ‘I am I’ is „I am I because I have X’-X equalling all natural objects and persons to whom I relate myself through my power to control them, to make them permanently mine.“¹² This way of defining existence by what one has or can have means nothing other than that the subject is no longer the source of human existence. Instead, it is determined by the object: „it has me, because my sense of identity, i.e. of sanity, rests upon my having it (and as many things as possible).“¹³ The subject-object relation is reified in the mode of having; the well-being and happiness of the individual are determined by possession and the superiority over others and other things.¹⁴

In the mode of being, well-being and happiness can be experienced when man loves, shares, and gives.¹⁵ This presupposes that man is independent and free and has critical reason, for these presuppositions are required if the most important characteristic of the being mode is to be present, and that is being active.¹⁶ However, activism or busyness is the very thing that is not meant {252} here. „What is meant is to renexy oneself, to groxv, to flow out, to love, to transcend the prison of one’s isolated ego, to be interested, to ‘incline,’ to gi-

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 26f.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 81. This definition of having must be distinguished from the having that is required if life is to be possible. It is not such „functional having“ that is meant when the mode of having is mentioned; the latter is a concept that refers to character and man’s attitude toward life.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁶ On what follows, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 88-92, and the comments on the „productive orientation,“ pp. 34-37.

ve.“¹⁷ All these verbs merely circumscribe an experience and an act that ultimately cannot be described but only lived.¹⁸ In his activity, man experiences himself as source and subject of his human existence. The contrast to the mode of having thus becomes apparent. In the subject-object relation, the subject remains the actor and the center of existence, irrespective of what occurs or has occurred inside this relation. Unity is preserycd: „I and my activity and the result of my activity are one.“¹⁹

Characteristics of the Two Modes

There are certain characteristics that will bring out the differences between the two modes with greater clarity.²⁰ These characteristics distinguish the realizations of the modes of being and having because they result from the way the subject-object relation is shaped even when they are not in the foreground of behavior. Knowledge of these characteristics makes it easier to ascribe behavior to one or the other mode and makes the idea of the two modes more palpable.

In the attempt to give a very general definition of the mode of being, a central characteristic of that mode was named: (productive) activity. The corresponding characteristic in the mode of having is passivity. When man is in the state of passivity, he is not himself in what he does or doesn’t do, in what he thinks, feels, and experiences. He „is lived“

¹⁷ *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 88.

¹⁸ Fromm clarifies the distinctiveness of the being mode by a comparison from optics: a blue glass is blue because it absorbs all other colors. It is called blue precisely because it does not keep back the blue wavelengths: „It is named not for what it possesses but for what it gives out“ (*ibid.*, p. 89).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91. Fromm calls this nonalienated activity „productive activity“ but emphasizes that „productive“ is not the same thing as „producing“; rather, it characterizes activity as the free activity of a subject.

²⁰ It is only in the final version of *To Have or to Be?* that Fromm called these characteristics „aspects“ (p. 108). In the earlier versions, he used „qualities.“



by inner and outer circumstances, constraints, needs, and passions that „have him“ and determine him. For this reason, activism and busvncss are really forms in which passivity expresses itself, while meditation and concentration exerciscs can be forms of the most intense activity.²¹

A further, central characteristic of the two modes can be suggested by the concepts „security“ and „insecurity.“ The human being whose dominant orientation is the value of having is always marked by a specific anxiety and insecurity that are induced by the permanent danger that he may lose what he owns. Such an individual is constantly obliged to mobilize all his energy to cling to and secure what he has. The compulsive need for security, xvhich also characterizes all forms of obsessional neurosis, generally applies where the attempt is made to orient oneself through having. {253}

But the development of human life depends on man's not clinging to what he has. A small child has its body and its mother's breast. In time, it discovers that it has a mother, a father, brothers, sisters, and toys. For a child, this having is a necessity because it is helpless without it. As the individual becomes older and independent, however, progress is possible only through an attitude that enables him to desist from seeking security by clutching his possessions. This developmental law also applies to the having of such things as profession, knowledge, children, social position, and life itself. Where the attitude toward these things is such that one makes oneself and the meaning of one's life depend on them or their possession, constant fear and insecurity necessarily result. Such a life harbors a permanent doubt: „If I am what I have, and if , what I have is lost, who then am I?“²² The answer must necessarily be, „Nobody but a defeated, deflated, pathetic testimony to a wrong way of living.“²³ The

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 91f, and the comments on the historical development of the understanding of „activity“ and „passivity“ in Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Spinoza, and Marx, *ibid.*, pp. 92-97.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²³ *Ibid.*

fact that I can lose what I have creates the unceasing anxiety that this loss may in fact occur. A life in the having mode is therefore always an anxiety-ridden life. This anxiety can attach itself to any and everything. It is fear of thieves, of economic change, of revolutions, illnesses, death, and it is fear of love, of freedom, growth, change, of the unknown.²⁴

This kind of anxiety and insecurity do not exist in a life lived in the being mode. „If I am who I am and not what I have, nobody can deprive me of or threaten my security and my sense of identity. My center is within myself; my capacity for being and for expressing my essential powers is part of my character structure and depends on me.“²⁵ Such powers in man arc his reason, his love, his artistic and intellectual creativity. All of them grow by use. In opposition to all those things that are important in the having mode, it can be said of the powers that are essentially man's: „What is spent is not lost, but on the contrary, what is kept is lost.“²⁶

With the concepts „solidarity“ or „greed“ and „antagonism,“ two other characteristics that always mark the modes of being and having can be named.²⁷ In the having mode, man defines himself by what he has or can have. This definition implies that man is insatiable: he would like to have, have a great deal, have more, most. Thus greed is intrinsic to having. „It can be the greed of the miser or the greed of the profit hunter or the greed of the womanizer or the man chaser.“²⁸ Greed is insatiable in the two senses: a {254} greedy individual will always have an excessive desire and boundless wishes, and all the satisfactions of his greed notwith-

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 109f.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, cf. the biblical logion Luke 17:33: „Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.“ Also Matthew 13:12: „For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has shall be taken away.“

²⁷ On what follows, cf. Fromm, *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), pp. 111-116.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112.



standing, he will never have enough because having cannot truly satisfy his human needs and therefore he will not overcome his inner emptiness and boredom, his loneliness and depression.

Greed is part of the mode of having and creates a permanent antagonism among men. „If everyone wants to have more, everyone must fear one's neighbor's aggressive intention to take away what one has. To prevent such attack one must become more powerful and preventively aggressive oneself.“²⁹ And greed causes everyone to seek to have more than anyone else so „there must be competition and antagonism among individuals in the struggle for getting the most.“³⁰ The antagonism among men that sets in with the mode of having becomes dangerous where it is not just competition and struggle for consumer goods and property but where the right to life and the chance for survival of nations and social groups are at stake. The antagonism among military and political power blocs in the form of the nuclear arms race will necessarily bring destruction over the longer term.³¹

The greedy mode of having necessarily tends to separate human beings, create class opposition, and setup distinctions because it privatizes those objects and values that make life attractive, fulfilled, and worth living, and makes them means of self-assertion. Such striving for private possession has very subordinate affective meaning in the being mode, for here man need not own to experience pleasure or to use an object. „In the being mode, more than one person—in fact millions of people—can share in the enjoyment of the same object, since none need—or want—to have it, as a condition of enjoying it.“³² Sharing the values of this world because the greed to own does not exist means that

²⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

³⁰ Ibid. This insight is important if one wishes to understand Fromm's criticism of a capitalist economic order, for this order needs man's greed if it is to function. Cf. the comments in *ibid.*, Part III, esp. pp. 154-167.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 113f.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 115.

the separation and division of the having mode will be replaced by unity and solidarity. „Nothing unites people more (without restricting their individuality) than sharing their admiration and love for a person; sharing an idea, a piece of music, a painting, a symbol; sharing in a ritual—and sharing sorrow.“³³ It is the wisdom of all great religious, political, and philosophical movements that only the experience of sharing sustains relations between human beings. Solidarity is therefore the alternative to the antagonistic principle of strife and competition in the having mode.³⁴ {255}

From this perspective, it is understandable that the problem of sin and forgiveness should receive an interpretation and a solution that is specific to each mode.³⁵ In the having mode, the religious concept of sin³⁶ means that man resists God in what is called „disobedience“ because the individual infringes on God's right as laid down in his laws and

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ It is this alternative that defines Fromm's concept of humanist socialism and the criticism of existing socialist states that it implies. Among democratic socialist states, Sweden probably shows more clearly than any other how little a socialist social and, in part, economic policy can achieve as long as it follows the dictate of having.

³⁵ On what follows, cf. *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), pp. 120-125.

³⁶ That Fromm should use the religious concept of sin and forgiveness to illustrate the having mode while he limits sin and forgiveness in the being mode to the interpersonal sphere is probably connected with the religio-critical perspective of the authority concept, but does not affect the presentation of the different ways of understanding sin and forgiveness. The result, i.e., the characteristics of the relation sin/forgiveness in the having mode, would be the same if a purely anthropological concept of guilt in the interpersonal sphere had been chosen. The choice of a religious concept of guilt to illustrate the having mode only becomes problematical when it implies that the religious concept of sin and forgiveness is typical for the having mode, while the one that refers to the interpersonal level only is a characteristic of the being mode. Cf. pp. 96-98.



commandments. When man sins, he resists God because he wants to do as he thinks best. This disobedience is forgiven only when there is renewed submission.³⁷ The concepts „disobedience“ and „submission“ characterize the relation sin:forgiveness in the having mode. „Separation“ and „atonement“ are the corresponding terms in the being mode. When it is not the having more or less and the being more or less right, or the differences and structures of order, that are the guiding values in life, but solidarity, unity, love, sharing, and communicating, sin is to be understood as separation that can be ended only when a new „becoming one“ (at-one-ment) between persons occurs.³⁸ In the being mode, sin is not seen as disobedience but as separateness and the consciousness of it. „This sin is rooted in our very human existence ... it does not need to be forgiven. But it does need to be healed; and love, not acceptance of punishment, is the healing factor.“³⁹ Sin in the being mode thus means „unresolved estrangement, and it is overcome by the full unfolding of reason and love, by atonement.“⁴⁰

Still another alternative that can serve to define the difference between the modes of having and being is identified by the concepts „joy“ and

³⁷ This is the reason why, from Fromm's perspective, the concept of justification that the Reformation introduced merely shifts the accent but actually does not overcome the mode of having that is typical of justification by works. For to human existence that knows that it owes itself to *sola gratia*, the following applies: „We have security ... as long as we are-nobody“ (ibid., p. 121).

³⁸ Fromm finds this view of sin also in the biblical story of the fall, namely in the talk about nakedness and shame before and after the fall. The fall itself is no act of disobedience but the becoming aware of his reason that enables man to distinguish between good and evil, but that also makes him realize that the original unity of the two human beings is gone, that they have become strangers to each other. Cf. ibid., pp.122-124.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 123, 124.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 124f.

„pleasure.“⁴¹ Pleasure, which defines the mode of having, is „the satisfaction of a desire that does not require activity (in the sense of aliveness) to be satisfied.“⁴² This applies to all kinds of pleasure and amusement. Fromm mentions the pleasure of social success, of making more money, winning in the lottery, sexual pleasure, the pleasure of eating one's fill, of winning a race, the „state of elation brought about by drinking, trance, drugs; the pleasure in satisfying one's sadism, or one's passion to kill or dismember what is alive.“⁴³ In the case of all these pleasures, man is very busy but never really productive. Characteristically, pleasure has a 'peak' but that peak does not cure the inner instability; at best it obscures it temporarily, after which it reemerges all the more clearly.⁴⁴ A further characteristic of pleasure is the need to intensify the excitement. To feel satisfied, man needs more and {256} more pleasure--the insatiability of the having mode manifests itself with special force in pleasure.

Since we live in a world of „joyless pleasures,“⁴⁵ it is not easy to illustrate the joy characteristic of the being mode with equal clarity. „Joy is the concomitant of productive activity. It is not a 'peak experience' which culminates and ends suddenly but rather a plateau, a feeling state that accompanies the productive expression of one's essential human faculties. Joy is not the ecstatic fire of the moment. Joy is the glow that accompanies being.“⁴⁶

Though joy, in contrast to pleasure, is something inconspicuous and more inward, this does not mean that it did not strike many masters of living as the criterion of a happy and accomplished life. Buddhism rejects pleasure so that man can enter Nirvana in a state of joy that is free of greed. The New Testament warns against the pleasures of this

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 116-119.

⁴² Ibid., p. 116.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Cf. Fromm's reflections on the expression *post coitum animal triste*, ibid., p. 117.

⁴⁵ Cf. ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 117.



world and wants to be Glad Tidings. The Sabbath is a day of joy and anticipates the messianic time in this regard. The experience of inner joy motivates the mystics and masters of spiritual renewal of the most widely differing persuasions. A life in the being mode is directed toward the optimal unfolding of man's powers: „Joy is ... what we experience in the process of growing nearer to the goal of becoming ourselves.”⁴⁷

Aging, dying, and death are the events that most seriously call into question human existence. This fact could be used as an argument against the humanistic belief in a positive and biophilic sense of life: the fear of death could be set against joy in life. Actually, however, the fear of dying and the affirmation of living are not strivings that compete in man. Rather, they are expressions of the fact that man lives and gives form to his life in the having or the being mode.⁴⁸ The more someone lives in the being mode, the less he will fear aging, dying, and death, because even as his physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual powers decline, his attitude

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 119.

⁴⁸ This statement also applies when one goes along with many psychologists, analysts of *Dasein*, and existential philosophers and assumes that the fear of dying and of death is repressed in most cases, and that it is not just a problem for the aging person. The desire for immortality in all its guises (mummification, funerary gifts, belief in a beyond, legacies, literary legacy, children, monuments, last will and testament, etc.) and the tabooing of death (here American funeral institutes seem to have attained the highest degree of perfection) suggest that fear of dying is felt by all men (cf. *ibid.*, p. 126). The question is whether the preponderance of the fear of death over the affirmation of life does, in fact, justify one in postulating an Existential. It is true that the fear of death defines the condition of the individual whose dominant interest is having, and to the extent that the having dominance is statistically preponderant, the condition of fear of dying can create the impression of ubiquity. But this does not prove an Existential. To speak of a proof nonetheless suggests merely that such philosophizing corresponds to an existence in the philosopher of a having orientation.

toward this fact of human existence will be an affirmative one.

The antithetical experiences of fear of dying and the affirmation of life are characteristics of the orientation of human existence. They become plausible as such when we consider that in the having mode, one makes a constant effort to make one's own life the object of possession and of the insatiable desire for more. In that case, fear of dying is not the justified fear of the suffering and {257} pain that precedes death, but rather the fear „of losing what I have: the fear of losing my body, my ego, my possessions, and my identity: the fear of facing the abyss of non-identity, of 'being lost.'”⁴⁹

The fear of death as of a loss of possession has its counterpart in the being mode, where it is the affirmation of life as a productive and active process. A life in that mode is the task of life itself. When a person concentrates on what is alive, the problem of existence as a „being toward death“ does not arise.⁵⁰ For „the more we rid ourselves of the craving for possession in all its forms ... the less strong is the fear of dying, since there is nothing to lose.”⁵¹

A further characteristic that distinguishes the modes of being and having becomes apparent in an examination of the relation to time. The having mode is bound to time. Past, present, and future are determining factors of the life to which having gives direction. In contrast, timelessness is a striking aspect of the being mode: productive activity occurs here and now, is accomplishment of the *kairos*, and means immediacy.

„In the having mode we are bound to what we have amassed in the past: money, land, fame, social status, knowledge, children, memories.”⁵² Nostalgia, sentimentality, the desire to deck oneself

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁰ It is at this point that we see the decisive difference from existential philosophy. Fromm follows Spinoza, whom he quotes: „The sages reflect about life, not about death.”

⁵¹ *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 127.

⁵² Ibid.



out in traditional costumes or to preserve historical monuments, historicism, and the like are expressions of a being bound to the past in the having mode. This being bound to time becomes especially conspicuous when rituals, customs, conventions, and routines are involved, for they convey the experience of identity through the time-boundness of having. A change in routine or ritual—eating fifteen minutes later than usual, for example, or the change in a religious ceremony that results from liturgical reform—these changes can completely unsettle people because the shock of the unaccustomed disrupts their sense of identity. A change in social customs has a similar effect, as when men begin to wear their hair long. New ideas do not have as revolutionary an impact as changes in habitual behavior. Time-boundness in the having mode also affects the attitude toward future events. The perspective is that of having: how many things, and what sort of things, someone will have or will have had. „The future is the anticipation of what will become the past.”⁵³ The present can only be understood as the borderline between past and future. {258}

The statement that timelessness is characteristic of the being mode does not mean that life in that mode necessarily realizes itself outside of time. The mere fact that human life is limited to a certain number of years shows clearly enough that man cannot escape the temporal dimension. He therefore has no choice but to respect time, „but this respect for time becomes submission when the having mode predominates.”⁵⁴ „Timelessness,” therefore, means that the temporal dimension does not dominate man in all he does.⁵⁵ Significant events such as the artist’s creative act or the experience of an idea or vision occur in the timelessness of the moment.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

⁵⁵ A glance at leisure-time behavior shows that leisure time is anything but a sphere of timelessness. It is merely another kind of rule of time over man. Depending on their dominance, the having or being modes stamp the individual’s use of both working time and leisure time. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 129.

„The experience of loving, of joy, of grasping truth does not occur in time, but in the here and now.”⁵⁶ The here and now is eternity as timelessness, while the understanding of eternity as an indefinitely extended duration is the expression of a conception of time according to the having mode. Whereas in that mode, the past is something dead to which man clings and over which he can dispose, there is a re-creation of the past in the being mode so that what is dead awakens to new life. „To the extent that one does so, the past ceases to be the past; it is the here and now.”⁵⁷ The future can similarly be experienced as a here and now in the being mode. „This occurs when a future state is so fully anticipated in one’s own experience that it is only the future objectively, i.e. as external fact, but not in the subjective experience.”⁵⁸ Fromm considers „genuine utopian thought,”⁵⁹ which he contrasts with utopian daydreams, as one such possibility.

Exemplifications of the Modes in Human Action

The various characteristics of the two modes make it clear that there are differences in principle in the experience, interpretation, and shaping of human reality. All these characteristics reflect the alternative of being and having, and all ways of living and expressing one’s life are formed by these two fundamental tendencies and orientations. The following examples are meant to illustrate the different forms that are given to human action in the two

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* The quarrel of dogmatists over the controversial questions of the real presence and transubstantiation, and also more fundamental questions as to how religious acts are initiated and mediated in religions that refer to a historically manifest revelation, can be explained by the differing understanding of time in the two modes.

⁵⁸ *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 128.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* It goes without saying that Fromm’s humanistic religious experience as a mysticism of the ONE can only be grasped against the background of the understanding of time in the being mode.



modes. They have been selected from the chapter „Having and Being in Daily Experience.“⁶⁰

The first example is conversing as discussing. In the having mode, the relation to the world and oneself is such that „I want to make everybody and everything, including myself, my property.“⁶¹ {259}

When two individuals whose character structure is strongly oriented toward having converse with each other, each of them has his own opinion and identifies with it. The discussion may be „heated“ and take place at a high scientific or philosophical level but no real exchange occurs. The only thing that counts for either participant is to put forward the most telling argument by which to defend his property--his opinion. Actually, neither has any interest in changing either his own opinion or that of the other: „Each is afraid of changing his own opinion, precisely because it is one of his possessions, and hence its loss would mean an impoverishment.“⁶²

A conversation between two persons who have no need to cling to their opinions, their knowledge, their image, takes an entirely different course. Because their egos do not stand in their way, mutual engagement, spontaneity, and creativity are possible. „While the having persons rely on what they have, the being persons rely on the fact that they are, that they, are alive and that something new will be born if only they have the courage to let go and to respond.“⁶³ Such a conversation is not

⁶⁰ Fromm demonstrates the alternative of having and being with reference to the following forms of action: learning, remembering, conversing, reading, exercising authority, knowing, believing, loving. See *ibid.*, pp. 28-47. In this connection, one should point out the revelatory linguistic peculiarities and idiomatic changes in the use of the verbs „having“ and „being.“ Of special importance is the observation that in cultures and societies where the tendency to react in the having mode is growing, verbs of activity are increasingly replaced by terms that denote having. See *ibid.*, pp. 20-24, esp. p. 20f.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

a trading of arguments and information but a living and enlivening dialogue in which it no longer matters who has the truth because the truth lies in the act of conversing.

Another example that also gives us a better understanding of Fromm's religio-critical position is the experience of faith.⁶⁴ Religious, political, and personal convictions always involve faith, but faith in the having mode differs in principle from faith in the being mode. „Faith in the having mode is the possession of an answer for which one has no rational proof.“⁶⁵ Such possession usually is one of many articles of faith that were formulated by others and adopted because they are administered by an authority (the church as bureaucracy in the widest sense). Such a faith makes one's own thinking and deciding, but particularly one's own experience, unnecessary and gives certainty despite, or precisely because of, that fact.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-44.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶⁶ From this approach, there result a number of critical reflections that apply to an ecclesiastically and theologically mediated faith: The conflict between scientific theology and the teachings of the Church with its papal, episcopal, and presbyterial representation is due to the concern of the public administrators of the faith that this very functionality of a faith oriented around having be preserved. Whether this concern is called „office“ or „service“ is merely a matter of terminology. Of course, the interpretation of the conflict between theology and the teachings of the Church cannot ignore the fact that this quarrel within scientific theology bears all the marks of a struggle for possessions-i.e., that the scholarly or scientific articulation of the meaning of faith is concerned only with the preservation of the possession of truth. Competing with the teaching of the Church, theology then attempts to administer a faith that is understood in the mode of (scientific) having. A reorientation of the self-understanding of theology and the teaching of the Church would have to begin with the understanding of the faith itself. And it would have to define the functionality of theology and Church teaching in terms of the task of furthering the act of faith in the being mode and renounce all administration of a pos-



When the content of a faith becomes a possession that gives security, the relation between the subject and the object of faith is changed in such a way that the object as a reified possession determines the subject. When this occurs, faith in the having mode becomes idolatry: „While I can have the idol because it is a thing, {260} by my submission to it, it, simultaneously, has me.“⁶⁷ Faith in the having mode guarantees security at the price of the self's surrender.

Faith in the being mode is primarily an inner attitude. What is involved here is less the having of a faith than a being in it. What is important is not specific ideas or articles that must be believed, although faith in the being mode can certainly be belief in convictions, values, and hopes. But it is a precondition that the person who has faith really be the subject of that faith so that it may be said of him that he is „in faith toward“ himself or others and, in the case of a theistic belief, in faith toward God.⁶⁸ „My faith in myself, in another, in humankind, in our capacity to become fully human also implies certainty, but certainty based on my own experience and not on my submission to an authority that dictates a certain belief.“⁶⁹ Of course, the certainty such a faith, which is a direct product of one's own experience, can offer depends directly on the extent to which the believer realizes his life in the being mode and can recognize himself and the world without the rationalizations and ideologies that are characteristic of the having mode.⁷⁰

The experience of love will provide a final illustration of the two modes.⁷¹ The characteristic expression „to have love“ makes it clear that the act of love can be reified so that loving becomes an object one can have and possess. In actuality, however, loving is a productive activity and one can

session of the faith. Cf. R. Funk, *Frömmigkeit zwischen Haben and Sein*, pp. 41-46.

⁶⁷ *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 42.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 43f.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 44-47.

only adequately speak of love when someone loves in the being mode. Such love can be described as „caring for, knowing, responding, affirming, enjoying: the person, the tree, the painting, the idea. It means bringing to life, increasing his/her/its aliveness.“⁷² Loving in the being mode can only be understood as a process in which man renews and strengthens his self through love.

Where the having mode is dominant, the word „love“ is usually misused; it is meant to veil the absence of love. For in the having mode, it is not the experience of love but the possessing, capturing, and controlling of the love object that is involved. This taking hold of and having another for the purpose of securing and affirming the self that generally passes for „love“ finds expression in the observation that with marriage, love often ends. While two individuals court each other and one seeks to win the other, all the marks of {261} love are there: both are alive, attractive, interesting, and beautiful. But with marriage or soon thereafter, the situation often changes fundamentally. „The marriage contract gives each partner the exclusive possession of the other's body, feelings, and care. Nobody has to be won over any more, because love has become something one has, a property ... the error that one can have love has led them to cease loving.“⁷³ The real purpose of love is to make one's own life safer through the possession of the partner. And there is a particular kind of marriage that corresponds to this goal: it changes into „a friendly ownership, a corporation in which the two egotisms are pooled into one: that of the 'family.'“⁷⁴ In this community of interests, the partners can possess jointly what they have: money, prestige and standing, a home, children, relations, and so forth. That love can develop into a pure community of goods does not militate against marriage as such, but shows that a life in the having mode makes people incapable of true love. Neither a (new) marriage nor group marriage, nor group sex, nor switching

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*



partners can deal with this shortcoming,⁷⁵ for it has its base in a character structure that having orients.

Having and Being as Fundamental Orientations of the Character Structure

The preceding examples illustrated the relevance of the having and being modes to a few fundamental experiences of human life. Their key function in the concrete diagnosis, evaluation, change, critique, and reorientation of life also became clear. The reason the having/being alternative applies to all these functions is that it designates fundamental orientations of the character structure. The judgments that are made when we speak of an orientation around having or being have this encompassing significance only because they are connected with the empirical key concept „character.“ They have a share in the discovery that it is in character that the individual in his totality, with all his limitations and possibilities, becomes an object of empirical experience; that the methodical unity of all the discoveries of the human and social sciences can be found in the concept of character; and finally, that it is in character that we find the sphere that is dispositive of the thinking, feeling, and acting of both the individual and of social entities, and that it can be understood idealtypically. Even {262} though it may sound speculative to speak of the „having or being“ alternative, the fact remains that it is always characterological entities that are being referred to: fundamental orientations of the character structure that represent ultimate assessments of the human reality in all its manifestations, according to Fromm’s view of character.

When it is said that the having and being modes shape human life alternatively, this does not mean that only one mode can be present. On the contrary, in the majority of cases, the presence of both modes can be demonstrated, and there is usually a mixture of the two, although one of them will be dominant. The more one controls, of course,

the less important the other will be: the two extremes are the exclusive dominance of one of them. Because both modes are real possibilities for the majority of individuals and societies, dominance is decided by socioeconomic structures and the ethical norms that prevail in them. „Cultures that foster the greed for possession, and thus the having mode of existence, are rooted in one human potential; cultures that foster being and sharing are rooted in the other potential. We must decide which of these two potentials we want to cultivate, realizing however, that our decision is largely determined by the socio-economic structure of our given society that inclines us toward one or the other solution.“⁷⁶ That character structures are shaped by economic and social structures and demands makes it understandable why it is in the industrialized and highly civilized cultures that the character structure that is oriented around having dominates. All of these are societies whose principles are increase, profit, and wealth, for which reason they foster a social character that is oriented to having. And as soon as such a social character becomes dominant, no one wants to remain an outsider, so one simply follows the majority, all of whom have nothing in common but mutual antagonism.⁷⁷

The pull of a social character oriented around having does not imply that the fundamental orientation of the individual character is totally determined. Just as socioeconomic conditions do not altogether determine the character structure, so the fundamental orientation of the society does not mean that the individual has no choice.⁷⁸ But the greater the dominance of the having mode in a society, the more personal effort, religious experience of what is {263} humane, and critical reason are required if life is to be led in the being mode. To wrest dominance from the social character that is oriented around having, the economic conditions and the political and social structures, as well as the ideas concerning the meaning and goal of man and

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 46f.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 106f.

⁷⁸ See the comments on social character in *ibid.*, pp. 133f.



the corresponding ethical norms and religious convictions, would have to be fundamentally changed.⁷⁹ Thus we come to the conclusion that „social change interacts with a change in the social character; that ‘religious’ impulses contribute the energy necessary to move men and women to accomplish drastic social change, and hence, that a new society can be brought about only if a profound change occurs in the human heart-if a new object of devotion takes the place of the present one.“⁸⁰

Having and Being as Religious Concepts

From the Characterological to the Religious Understanding of the Having/Being Alternative

With the having/being alternative, Fromm refers to „two fundamental modes of existence, to two different kinds of orientation toward self and the world, to two different kinds of character structure the respective predominance of which determines the totality of a person’s thinking, feeling and acting.“⁸¹ From our comments up to this point, it is clear how encompassing this definition is. Every human expression, every feeling, every form of conduct toward others, nature, the self—in short, every manifestation of human existence is governed by the having/being alternative. The reason for this claim to universality lies in Fromm’s view of character: character directs every expression of human existence. And for this character, he can identify two competing fundamental orientations that apply to

⁷⁹ Fromm concretizes this demand in some detail in the concluding section of *To Have or to Be?* He emphasizes the possibility, but also the urgency, of a fundamental change because the current development of the international economy and the increase in political, social, and personal conflicts bear all the marks of a syndromelike convergence of the fundamental having orientation which threatens that present-day human civilizations will totally collapse.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

every expression of human existence: every human reality can be ascribed to a character structure that is oriented either around having or being. It is true, however, that the unambiguousness of this ascription depends on the strength of the fundamental orientation in question.⁸²

For Fromm, the having/being alternative with its universal validity and applicability to all levels of human reality is always a characterological magnitude that is defined by his sociopsychological experiences and insights. But what is really surprising in the {264} study of the having/being alternative is that the great masters of life throughout human history, especially the founders of religious movements, were also persuaded of the existence of this having/ being alternative.⁸³ The reason for their historical impact lies precisely in the fact that they called on man to live in the mode of being rather than in that of having, and that they took this step themselves. This is true of Buddha’s teaching: arriving at the highest level of human development precludes the craving for possessions.⁸⁴ An experience

⁸² Along with the having/being alternative, it is postulated that every scientific or artistic product, every historical development, every theoretical conception in the sciences, every religious confession, every dream and every fantasy, every custom and every fad, every cultural development, every ethos and ethic, philosophy and so on, can be evaluated and criticized by the having/being alternative, provided the phenomena in question can be comprehensively described. Fromm made such evaluations and criticism in some areas that go beyond the investigation of character. There are his studies on the capitalist and socialist social order and on (especially American) politics, particularly the politics of rearmament; his research on the Reformation; his writings on religion and the critique of religion and his comments on humanistic ethics. Although the having/being alternative is not named in any of these publications, Fromm’s discovery of the sociopsychological method during the early thirties involved both the specific understanding of character and the productive or nonproductive character orientation as a yardstick of evaluation and criticism.

⁸³ Cf. *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*



of the world that proposes to wholly renounce having in order simply to be is practiced in Zen Buddhism.⁸⁵ The prophetic oratory of the Old Testament testifies to the having/being alternative, as do the *logia* in Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The poverty movement of the Middle Ages, Francis of Assisi, and Meister Eckhart are examples from the Christian tradition. Spinoza expressed it in philosophical ethics,⁸⁶ Goethe in the language of the poet.⁸⁷ In Karl Marx, having and being are not only concepts of economics but the essence of a secularized messianism as well.⁸⁸ And Albert Schweitzer is an example in our century of the determinative power of a life lived in the being mode.⁸⁹

That the having/being alternative is also at the center of religious questions and problems and that having and being are „at the same time fundamental 'religious' categories"⁹⁰ will be demonstrated in the following discussion of that alternative in the Old and New Testaments and in Meister Eckhart. The demonstration from the New Testament goes far beyond Fromm's comments.⁹¹

The Having/Being Alternative as the Essence of a Religious Ethos

A central theme in the Old Testament that pervades

⁸⁵ Cf. the comparison of poems by Basho and Tennyson in *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸⁶ Cf. the comments on Spinoza's differentiation between „activity“ and „passivity“ in *ibid.*, pp. 93-96.

⁸⁷ Cf. the interpretation of the poems „Gefunden“ and „Eigentum“ in *ibid.*, p. 18f.

⁸⁸ Cf. the comments in *ibid.*, pp. 156-160.

⁸⁹ Cf. Fromm, „Die Zwiespaltigkeit des Fortschritts“ (1975c) and *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), pp. 161-164.

⁹⁰ *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 157.

⁹¹ Fromm's comments on the New Testament (*ibid.*, pp. 53-59) are based on studies the author of this work made for him. The following presentation of the having/being alternative in the New Testament therefore goes beyond the material in *To Have or to Be?* Cf. also R. Funk, *Frömmigkeit zwischen Haben and Sein*, pp. 21-31.

both the theology of history and the prophetic speeches is the symbolism of the exodus. „Abraham is to leave what he has-land and family and go to the unknown.“⁹² The departure from Egypt is considered the historical exodus, but it gets its religious and liturgical meaning primarily from the inherent symbolism: on the one hand, we see the abandonment of a way of life that guarantees safety and a home in which there are fleshpots and drink, but that way of life also makes man dependent and enslaves him so that the loss of a home and security becomes the freedom for a new way of life. The promised land as ythe goal of a new way of life, on the Jother hand, {265} means true fulfillment, though the promise cannot be taken as assurance. The symbol of the new life is the desert: „The desert is no home: it has no cities; it has no riches; it is the place of nomads who own what they need, and what they need are the necessities of life, not possessions.“⁹³ The desert makes it impossible to lead a life of having and holding. It yields no food or drink, allows no settling down. The nomad is a traveler.

Because the desert is the symbol of a form of existence that renounces all having, it is the place where man encounters God, where God acts. Only in the mode of being is that immediacy which Israel speaks of as God's action in history experienced. The relevation of God's name must be seen under this aspect of not having. The dance around the golden calf and the ban on images represent the two modes of belief in God. Settling in the land of Canaan meant the end of the direct way of life in the being mode, but the knowledge of this way finds a new form in the critique of the prophets: „These revolutionary thinkers, the Hebrew prophets, renewed the vision of human freedom--of being unfettered of things--and the protest against submitting to idols--the work of the people's own hands.“⁹⁴ The prophets' criticism of the cult and the

⁹² *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 48; cf. Genesis 12:1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 48f.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52f; cf. Fromm, „Die Aktualität der prophetische Schriften“ (1975d).



laws is always a critique of attempts and temptations of man to make himself secure by possession.

The destruction of the Temple, the Babylonian exile, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the centuries of persecution during the Diaspora and the establishment of the state of Israel in this century, reflect the changing dominants in the way of life of the Jewish people. For Fromm, the richness of the Jewish religion becomes visible only when it renounces state, temple, a priestly and military bureaucracy, animal sacrifice and ritual, where all that remains is „the ideal of being.“⁹⁵

The New Testament gospels demonstrate that Jesus adopts and carries on the prophetic tradition in many respects. The prophetic quality in his sermons becomes very clear when historical-critical methods are used to attempt to get at the oldest layer of the Christian tradition. That the so-called second source, *Q*, which predates the gospels of Matthew and Luke, must be given special attention here is due to the fact that before Jesus' teaching was written down, it was passed on orally for a

⁹⁵ *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 53. The question as to what is specifically Jewish interested Fromm from the very beginning. His dissertation *Das jüdische Gesetz* (1989b) already tries to answer it. As he investigated the function of the law in Karaism, Reformed Judaism, and Hasidism, he encountered what is specific to Hasidism in contrast to Reform Judaism and Karaism. Hasidism „does not seek to change religion for the sake of the economy but to overcome need through the power of religion Karaism and Reform lack new religious ideas, they dogmatize religion. Hasidism, in contrast, integrates its specific religious life in the sociological structure of Judaism, avoids dogma, and retains the objective validity of the law. Reform Judaism is the non-creative, ideological way out that takes the place of mass baptism. Hasidism is the creative, religious way out that overcomes pseudo-messianism“ (*Das jüdische Gesetz* [1989b], p. 237). In these concluding lines of Fromm's dissertation, in the characterization „creative/non-creative“ we have the first alternative; alternatives persist in the antithetical concepts „productive/ non-productive“ and in the „having/being“ alternative.

considerable time. For {266} mnemotechnical reasons, if for no other, this oral tradition preferred parables and images and easily remembered (because sometimes offensive) *logia*.⁹⁶ The earliest *Q* texts are individual utterances that come from the oral tradition of a Judaeo-Christian community in the Palestinian-Syrian border region. All of the texts have the literary form of prophetic sayings and are usually introduced by an appropriate formula. As one surveys this material, one is struck first by the fact that most of it is part of the so-called ethical demands Jesus made. There is the rigorous ban on divorce (Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18) that becomes comprehensible when one knows that according to the law of the time, the wife was part of a man's possessions so that divorce for the sake of remarriage was necessarily prompted by the motive of having. The statement that one should turn the other cheek „when struck“ (Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29) and the command to love one's enemies (Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:27f; 32-36), only become plausible when they are seen as the radical

⁹⁶ Siegfried Schulz' *Q. Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* can be considered the standard work on the transmission of the *logia* source. An extensive discussion of this work by New Testament scholars has not yet taken place, and this is especially true of his distinction between the oldest *Q* texts that are marked by a Judaeo-Christian eschatological enthusiasm and other *Q* texts that came into existence later and which also contain stories, apothegmata, apocalyptic sayings, and parables (cf. pp. 53, 165-168, 482-486). In spite of these reservations, the following comments are based on Schulz' work. Recently, that author radicalized his position in the essay „Der historische Jesus. Bilanz der Fragen und Losungen“ and now counts most of the texts of the oldest layer of *Q* among the *ipsissima* of Jesus (cf. pp. 10, n. 35). Much less use was made of Dieter Lührmann's *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, and Paul Hoffmann's *Studien zur Theologie der Logienquelle*. See E. Käsemann, „Das Problem des historischen Jesus.“ R. Bultmann, „Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus“; K. Kertelge, ed., *Rückfrage nach Jesus*; W. Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, pp. 38-44, for a discussion of the questions concerning the historical Jesus in our time.



renunciation of having the right on one's side. That one should give to everyone who asks and not demand that what is taken be returned (Matthew 5:42; Luke 6:30) is possible only where possessions no longer exert power over man.

To have the right on one's side and to have possessions as forms of a life in the having mode are also warned against by Christ: „Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal. ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also“ (Matthew 6:19, 21; cf. Luke 12:33f). „Judge not, and you will not be judged“ (Luke 6:37; cf. Matthew 7:1). And the comment about the mote and the beam (Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:41f) only takes on concrete meaning when one realizes that the person who is nothing in his own right is always tempted to see the injustice in what others do because he wants to be in the right. The „golden rule“ (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31) formulates the same insight positively.

Food and clothing can be significant expressions of the having mode. Where they are vital concerns because it is believed that existence depends on having them, Christ's warning against „being anxious“ applies (Matthew 6:25-33; Luke 12:22-31). And finally, the fundamental orientation around having for the purpose of assuring and securing one's existence is itself the object of a warning by Christ: Men should fear the one who can not only kill {267} the body but also the soul or, as Matthew puts it: „fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell“ (Matthew 10:28). That this dangerous power is life in the having mode is shown by the discourse about the two sparrows that can be had for a farthing--which have practically no commercial value, in other words, yet do not fall to the ground. The following observation that even the hairs on the head are numbered has the same meaning. And in conclusion, there is the positive statement of what counts. The string of sayings ends with the phrase: „Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows“ (Luke 12:7; cf. Matthew 10:28-31), which means that it is not the (market) value of a person that is important, but

that he experience himself as value, and live accordingly.

In all these *logia* that belong to the oldest layer of Q, we note that their common denominator is the renunciation of having and the demand to be, so that the having/being alternative can in fact be considered a key to the understanding of these sayings. Still, it must not be overlooked that these commands, prohibitions, and warnings relate to something that is not simply called „mode of being“ or „unfolding of one's powers of reason and love.“ Regarding concrete ethical and religious living, Christ's prophetic speech becomes reality in the individual just as it does in the person who obeys the humanistic call to a life in the being mode. But the fact remains that Jesus' call is tied to belief in him and God as father, and to his message about the Kingdom of God (or „heaven“ in Matthew) as an event that refers to the future and that is already being realized in following Christ.

That the call to renounce a life in the having mode is linked to Christ's message concerning the Kingdom of God is the reason that the Kingdom of God itself (now and in the future), belief in Christ or the Father, following Christ and other central concepts of the New Testament, become the essence and symbol of a life that is oriented around the being mode. Entities such as hell, damnation, the Pharisees, the devil, and the demons, on the other hand, stand for a life in the having mode. The claim to truth that the various theological (and also mythological) concepts and the realities they wish to make comprehensible have for modern man cannot be examined here.⁹⁷ But it should be

⁹⁷ This could only be accomplished by a thorough discussion of Christologies. Of course, the theological dogmatists and systematists would have to be willing to entertain the question whether the cognitive concern of a Christology does not bypass the historical Jesus *a priori*. For it could be that every (Christological) statement and conceptualization abets the temptation to paralyze the radicalism of the religious ethos. Why is it that the historical Jesus does not teach a particular confession of faith but a religious ethos in word and deed? It is probably true that „the content of a faith



kept in mind that Christ's message is profoundly determined by the having/being alternative and {268} that its center is an ethos that is oriented around being but remains tied to atheist faith. A life in the being mode does not only mean the optimal unfolding of man's productive powers, and the renunciation of all desire to have. In the biblical sense, this ethos remains tied to the religious commitment to the person of Christ and is realized only in following him.

Against the background of the specific New Testament understanding of the having/being alternative, the other texts that are part of the oldest layer of the Q tradition also become plausible. The prophetic statement about the confessing and denying of Christ (Matthew 10:32f; Luke 12:8f) is valid precisely because Christ lives wholly in the being mode. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3f; Luke 6:20b f) speak for themselves \when we read: „Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God“ (Luke 6:20). The petitions of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13) are the expression of a knowledge about a life in the being mode that comes from community with God. And the condemnations of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:25; 27:29-31; Luke 11:39, 42-44, 46-48, 52) require no special explanation after what has been said so far: „Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity“ (Matthew 23:25). The necrophilous quality of a life in the having mode could hardly be expressed more pointedly: „Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness“ (Matthew 23:27).

can only be recognized in the act of faith,“ but is it really true that the act of faith is necessarily „meaningless unless it is directed toward a content?“ (W. Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, p. 25). On the problems raised by contemporary Christology, see Kasper, pp. 13-26. On Christological statements generally, cf. n. 98.

It is not just in the oldest traditions that the closeness of Christ's message to the having/being alternative can be shown, although it is especially clear here. Once one sees the connection between the religious ideas and statements of biblical man and the having/being alternative, one notices at every step that this alternative is the key to these texts.⁹⁸ The following considerations are therefore

⁹⁸ Although it is not being carried out here, such a procedure certainly does not obviate the need for a careful exegesis according to all the rules of historical and critical research. The having/being alternative might be of use in theological and systematic work on the New Testament because every systematic study approaches the exegetical data with certain conscious, unavowed, or unreflected conceptions. It is precisely in this task that the having/being alternative might serve as a key and grid, for it not only assures a comprehensive plausibility of textual statements but also accords with the assumption that Christ, as a Jew who was close to Essene circles, represents an eschatology that is wholly marked by a radicalized and decisive ethos. The question as to the legitimacy of understanding and using the having/being alternative as a common denominator and therefore as an interpretive key to Jesus' message and life receives an affirmative answer in discoveries that Herbert Braun conveys in his essay „Der Sinn der neutestamentlichen Theologie.“ He observes a constant that persists through all the gospels and the epistles of Paul, a paradox that is typical in the life of the historical Jesus: „alongside the radicalized Torah, we find a radicalized grace that is equally repugnant to official and heretical Judaism,“ (p. 248). Jesus represented „the paradoxical unity of a radicalized demand and limitless acceptance“ (p. 249). „It is in this way that God makes demands on, and acts toward, man in concrete individuation ... and this acting of his is an eschatological acting“ (pp. 250f). The paradoxical unity is „the defining characteristic of what is Christian, the New Testament constant of believing self-understanding“ (p. 276) that expresses itself in the Christological statements. („Anthropology is the constant; Christology is the variable,“ p. 272.) Historically, the believing self-understanding is passed on neither by formulae nor as an „idea.“ The believing self-understanding of the paradoxical unity of radicalized demand and limitless acceptance „belongs to that third category of phenomena ... that occur and be-



meant to serve as examples.

Among the parables that arc intended to illustrate the distinctiveness of God's Kingdom, those that make clear that what is quantitatively wholly inconsequential can yet attain a never suspected fullness, provided one is willing to renounce an orientation around the quantitative (=the measurable and ownable) and to {269} allow the seemingly insignificant within oneself to grow. Such parables include the one about the sower (Mark 4:3-8; Matthew 13:3-8; Luke 8:5-8), about the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32; Matthew 13:31 f; Luke 13:18f), and about the leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:200). The parables about the treasure in the field (Matthew 13:44) and the precious pearl (Matthew 13:45f) show with particular clarity that it is necessary to renounce much for the sake of a single thing.

The meal as an image for the being mode is utilized in all its aspects: in the parable about the feast (Matthew 22:1-10; Luke 14:16-24), in the sto-

come valid and binding only in the act of their occurrence It is an event that occurs from time to time" (p. 277).

Even though Herbert Braun interprets his findings in terms of reformed theology and therefore cannot translate the constant of the paradoxical unity of Torah demand and grace into the having/being alternative, the parallels must not be overlooked: there is a constant that is seen as the paradoxical unity of ethos and plenitude of being-which is bestowed through grace (the paradox here refers to both the alternative character and the unexpectedness in the demand/acceptance relation). The peculiarity of the paradox that it can only be realized by engaging oneself in it is emphasized. The decisive difference between the two constants, the paradoxical unity and the having/being alternative, becomes apparent when the new experience is verbalized. For Fromm, the religious experience of the being mode as the mystical experience of the ONE is the experience of the totality of man's humanness and its potentialities. For the reform theologian Herbert Braun, the event makes possible an acknowledgment of both forlornness and salvation in such a way „that this self-understanding comes to him from outside himself“ (p. 282).

ries about the miracle of the feeding of the multitude (Mark 6:32-44; 8:1-10; Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15), in the discourse on the loaves (John 6:26-59), and in the establishment of the Lord's Supper before Christ's death (Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:15-20).

The harsh sermons about wealth require no explanation. One should mention what is said about the „laving up“ of treasure (Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:33f), the warning against covetousness: „Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions“ (Luke 12:15); the parable about the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21); the parable about the rich man and poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31); the rich youth (Mark 10:17-22; Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 18:18-23); the danger of wealth: „It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.“ (Mark 10:23-31; Matthew 19:23-30; Luke 18:24-30); the observation about the widow's farthing (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4).

Close to the question of wealth is another peculiarity that is part of Christ's gospel and life, and that is his turning to the poor, the despised, the lost, the outcasts for whom a number of miracles are performed. Christ's traffic with public sinners, publicans (perhaps also with Samaritans and heathens), and the simple folk--that is, people who are insignificant in a religious and social sense--is not the expression of a revolutionary pathos or a desire for political upheaval but the realization of a religious ethos that recognizes institutionalized structures of the having mode in religious, cultic, and social classifications.

From this perspective, Christ's curiously ambivalent attitude {270} toward the law becomes understandable. On the one hand, not even a tittle of it must be changed (Matthew 5:18; Luke 16:17), and sometimes it is even made more stringent or reduced to its original meaning, as in the question of divorce (Mark 10:2-12; Matthew 5:27f, 31f; 19:3-12; Luke 16:18). On the other hand, Christ criticizes the law, and he and his disciples violate it, as when



Jesus heals on the Sabbath (the withered hand, Mark 3:16; Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11; the infirm woman: Luke 13:10-16; and the man with dropsy: Luke 14:1-6), or when he uses the occasion of the plucking of the ears of corns by his disciples to make a fundamental criticism of it: „The sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath“ (Mark 2:27). The paradox of a more stringent application of the Torah and a simultaneous critique and violation of it is resolved when the having/being alternative becomes the decisive criterion for determining the meaning of the injunctions.

A choice between a life in the having or the being mode is articulated in the many calls to follow Christ. Rejection of all ties and assent to a life for others after the model of Christ are demanded. Who follows him must abandon father and mother, son and daughter (Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 14:26f; cf. Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21), and agree to the conditions of such a decision („For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?“ [Matthew 16:25f; cf. Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-26]). Following Christ means a life of watchfulness *in statu viatoris* after the model of Israel's march through the desert. This expresses itself in Christ's own wandering and in his pitilessness toward everything „settled,“ or in his instructions as he sends out his disciples: „Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head. ... Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.“ ... No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God“ (Luke 9:58,60,62; cf. Matthew 8:20-22). The disciples are allowed neither purse nor shoes and are to ask for food and drink where they enter (cf. Luke 10:3-12; Matthew 10:5-16; Mark 6:7-13).

The evangelists, finally, describe the life of Christ as a life in the mode of being. Thus Jesus is born in a manger because there is no room for the family in the inn, and he is first discovered by the shepherds (cf. Luke 2:4-20). Christ's self-understanding is verified {271} in the story of the

temptation (cf. Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12f; Luke 4:1-13): after forty days of fasting, he is to prove to the devil(!) in the desert(!) that days „is“ someone because he „has“ power over nature--that is, power to turn stones into bread(!) and to suspend gravity. When he refuses, the devil offers him power over all men so that he would be the greatest and strongest, though on the condition that he submit to the devil. Christ rejects this devilish offer to „be“ through „having“ power over men.

The realization of a life in the being mode and the renunciation of all desire to have reaches its climax in Christ's suffering and death. He understands himself as a „corn of wheat“ that will bear fruit for many (cf. John 12:24). The total renunciation of having leads to the goal of a life in the being mode. This is the content of his statement about his resurrection. The stories about encounters with the resurrected one therefore testify to his being and life, but emphasize at the same time when they talk of his being a spirit that he can no longer be encountered in the having mode. For this reason, the spirit is the essence of life, reason and love, efficacy and being, for Christians.

Depending on the addressee and the situation-in-life of the writing, the Acts of the Apostles, and especially Paul's letters, reflect the having/being alternative more or less clearly. And even though the „early Christian communism“ of the Acts cannot be taken so literally as to mean that the Jerusalem community was always of the same mind, it is undeniable that the first communities were wholly shaped by the religious ethos of Christ's life and gospel, and that people were capable of a total renunciation of all having. It was this renunciation that made them share and distribute everything they owned, that made them willing to roam the land as wandering prophets, and that made them ready for martyrdom.⁹⁹ The radicalism in matters of

⁹⁹ This applies not only to the Lucan tradition. Regarding the Matthean community toward the end of the first century, E. Schweizer, *Mattäus und seine Gemeinde*, p. 163, writes that „there must still have been individuals who literally followed Christ. They gave up



property survived for a relatively long period in the history of the church, as the statements by a number of church fathers on the question of property and the development of monasticism and the poverty movement demonstrate.

The Pauline handling of traditions that were not part of the Jesus tradition is especially illuminating as regards the sensitivity of men to the having/being alternative in the Hellenistic and Judaeo-Christian cultural sphere around the beginning of our era. In addition to the catalogues of vices and virtues that characterize {272} the modes of being and having, it is especially the statements about love in I Corinthians 13:1-7 that are typical. What is said here (in I Corinthians 13:4, e.g.: „love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; love is not arrogant or rude“) is equally true of a life in the being mode. The lines have a number of Greek and Jewish parallels. It can be shown that Paul took them from the Jewish tradition, which had adopted Greek motifs, and transformed them into the style of Jewish wisdom.¹⁰⁰ Although I Corinthians 13:1-7 does not come from the Jesus tradition, it is impossible to overlook the relation between the statements made in I Corinthians 13 and Christ's religious and ethical message about a life in the being mode.

Another affinity shows up in the reception of gnostic ideas by John. This is true of central concepts of the Gospel According to John (such as light, world, *pneuma*), of theological statements (such as his so-called realized eschatology concerning the raising of the dead and the final judgment, which illustrate the problem of time-boundness and timelessness in the having and being modes, respec-

their possessions and proclaimed the Kingdom of God as wandering prophets and charismatic individuals.“ Cf. the entire section „Von Jesus zur Monchs-bewegung der katholischen Kirche.“ (pp. 163-170, and P. Hoffmann and V. Eid, *Jesus von Nazareth and eine christliche Moral*, pp. 214-230, and the bibliography given there.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, p. 257, and the excursus on the parallels in Tyrtæus, Plato, and Maximus of Tyre (pp. 258-260).

tively), and of the theological and religious and ethical statements in the Epistles of John: „No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ... No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ... He who does not love abides in death. Any one who hates his brother is a murderer“ (I John 3:6, 9, 14, 15). Here also, love and God are interchangeable concepts, and in its religious and ethical relevance, love is identical with a life in the being mode: „Love is of God; and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. ... There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love“ (I John 4:7-8, 18).

The having/being alternative as the essence of a religious ethos can also be demonstrated in Eastern and Western mysticism. Since Fromm read Meister Eckhart for decades, his mysticism can serve as an example of that alternative. What Meister Eckhart means by being and having becomes clear in his sermon on Matthew 5:3: „Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.“¹⁰¹ He asks himself what this poverty can mean, and arrives at this answer: „A poor person is one who wills nothing, knows nothing, and has nothing.“¹⁰² To have no will can mean very {273} different things. For Meister Eckhart, it means neither that one should be will-less or weak-willed, nor that one should fulfill God's will rather than one's own. Instead, „the person who wants nothing is the person who is not greedy for anything: this is the essence of Eckhart's concept of non-attachment.“¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ On the following, cf. Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke, Vol. II*, pp. 478-517, 727-731.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 727; cf. pp. 488 and 507f, n. 10.

¹⁰³ *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 61. Cf. the references to Eckhart texts in Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Predigten, Vol. II* p. 528, n. 3, where „detachment“ is mentioned as the principal virtue and most important presupposition for the experience of *unio mystica*.



Nor does the person who knows nothing mean someone without education or culture, for by knowledge, Eckhart does not mean the object of knowledge--that is, knowledge as a having--but the act of abstraction from all knowledge: someone who knows nothing „must be so completely free of all knowledge that he does not know, recognize or feel that God lives within him; even more: he is to be free of all knowledge that is alive within him.”¹⁰⁴ It follows that what is involved here is a forgetting of what one knows. „In the mode of being, knowledge is nothing but the penetrating activity of thought--without ever becoming an invitation to stand still in order to find certainty.”¹⁰⁵ Finally, it is only the person who has nothing who is truly poor in spirit. Meister Eckhart radicalizes this idea when he asks whether man should be so poor that God cannot even find a place in him to be active. His answer is of ultimate stringency and involves the identification of the concepts of God and soul: „that [only] is being poor in spirit when man is so utterly free of God and all his works that God, if He wished to be active within the soul, would himself be the place wherein He wished to be active ...”¹⁰⁶ And a little later, he adds: „Therefore I ask of God that he rid me of God.”¹⁰⁷

These and similar formulations have always been the objects of conflicting Eckhart interpretations. Some feel that they confirm Meister Eckhart as an atheist who uses religious language, while others interpret these statements that dissolve God's transcendence from the perspective of Meister Eckhart's theological interest and take them for the most radical expression of his belief in God. The interpretation of Diemar Mieth¹⁰⁸ probably gets to the core of what Eckhart's wishes to say: „The father-sonship of the human being is taken so seriously that man in God is really God's deputy. His willing of God, his knowing of God, his having of

God does not take grace seriously enough, because it makes God its intention rather than making the intention of God, which is man, its own.” A true belief in God and a life genuinely lived through God's grace are realized only when man renounces God, for it is only in renouncing God that he can make God's intent--perfect {274} man--his own. For Meister Eckhart, the imputation that he denies God is merely a confession by which the person making that imputation proves his unbelief--his wanting to have God. But that this argument is correct will be plausible only to the person who, for the sake of God's grace--and for Eckhart, this means for perfected man's sake--renounces all willing, knowing, and having of God, and is therefore poor. Because the truth of his belief in God is wholly dependent on the realized experience of such belief, Meister Eckhart can close his sermon with these words: „Those who do not understand this sermon should not be troubled in their hearts. For as long as man does not resemble this truth, he will not understand this speech. May God grant us that we live so as to eternally experience it. Amen.”¹⁰⁹

Eckhart sees in poverty the freedom from any and every possible object of having, and this even includes the concept of God. Only when man is radically poor is he himself, and free, and at one with things. Only where he is wholly free of God can God be entirely within him, only then are he and God truly he and God, the only way they can be one.

The Function of Humanistic Religion in the Grounding of a Humanistic Understanding of Man

Meister Eckhart's application of the idea of poverty to the concept of God makes it clear that it is only through the having/being alternative that the answer mysticism gives to the question about man's innermost and ultimate destiny becomes plausible. And it is only through it that the relevance of hu-

¹⁰⁴ Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, Vol. II, p. 729.

¹⁰⁵ Fromm, *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, Vol. II, p. 730.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 730.

¹⁰⁸ D. Mieth, *Christus--das Soziale im Menschen*, pp. 117f.

¹⁰⁹ Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, Vol. II, p. 731.



manistic religion to Fromm's understanding of man becomes apparent. If the being mode is understood as the total renunciation of every form of having, it is the condition and the possibility of a mystical experience of the ONE.

For the self-understanding of humanistic religion, it follows that the question concerning the validity and dogmatic truth of the concept of God is irrelevant¹¹⁰ because it is still rooted in the having mode, the very thing that must be overcome. The experience of God is possible only if one resolves not to make a distinction between man (soul) and God. But it is also true that one's own {275} self can be experienced only if it renounces all autonomy. God and man (soul) can only become one and be experienced as one if there is mutual renunciation.¹¹¹ Where God and man are involved and both are to be known--that is, where the truth of religion and the truth of an empirical knowledge of man are at stake--knowledge is possible only as the experience of the ONE that is both man and God at the same time. The truth content of both realms of reality and truth must be negated if the truth that connects both is to be attained. But this truth is real only as the mystical experience of the ONE.

The mystical experience of the ONE is the experience of a life that is lived wholly in the being mode. Because it is a „pure“ experience, its concrete realization occurs only when all possible experiences of having are renounced. Such an experience of being becomes accessible through breath-

ing-concentration and meditation exercises¹¹² whose aim is to rid man of every concrete experience so that he can experience the totality of man and God in one, that is, the totality of man in his humanity.

This self-understanding of humanistic religion gives access to an understanding of the function of humanistic religion in the ultimate grounding of scientific knowledge and of man's meaning and end. With the postulate of the mystical experience of the ONE as an experience of life in the being mode, that base has been found in which both empirical, anthropological, and ethical knowledge and religious statements are ultimately grounded and which also grounds their claim to truth and general validity. In its claim to be both science and religion, Fromm's humanism has its ultimate ground, which is the same for both claims in the experience of the ONE. For both scientific humanism, which rejects a theistic belief even as its ultimate ground and therefore does not require a theonomous grounding of its autonomy concept, and religious humanism, which sees a form of having in every dogmatic concept of God and for which religion is therefore identical with the experience of a life in the being mode, are views that have their warrant and legitimation in the mystical experience of the ONE.

The experience of the ONE is the point at which the two aspects of the humanism concept, the empirical and the religious, come together. The characterological findings are these: Man attains an optimal unfolding if he is oriented toward renouncing all {276} reification of the experience of self and world and develops his powers of reason and love instead. The religious-critical reflections produced the demand that any and every concept of God be negated because the experience of the ONE is possible only through the dialectical abolition of every distinction between God and man. The results in the two cases can be formulated as follows: The insight into man and his end is grounded in the experience he has of himself. This experience is total--that is, the experience of the oneness of world, man, and God--to the extent that man renounces

¹¹⁰ Whether it must also be asserted that the question regarding the philosophical truth of the concept of God is irrelevant cannot be decided here since metaphysics and philosophy occasionally understand themselves as negative theology. On this problem, see J. Möller, *Die Chance des Menschen--Gott genannt; Glauben and Denken im Widerspruch*. There is a bibliography on more recent formulations of the problem on the part of philosophy and theology in H. Küng, *On Being a Christian*.

¹¹¹ On the question of the self-understanding of humanistic religion, see the comments on the „X experience as the mysticism of the ONE,“ pp. 119-128.

¹¹² Cf. p. 118f.



the possibility of reifying his being by a form of having.

In contrast to philosophical attempts that define reason as the ultimate principle of being,¹¹³ and also in contrast to theological and philosophical views that make God as person and/or reason the guarantor of reality, Fromm's grounding provides a different „solution.“ Here the mystical experience of the ONE is the ultimate ground for the reality of the world and of man and the ultimate warrant for trust in this reality. This solution will always be criticized by representatives of the other two positions because the mystical experience of the ONE cannot be objectified, which is why its persuasive power is always tied to subjective experience (even if the reasonableness of this mystical „solution“ can be shown). But the person who acknowledges the mystical experience of the ONE as the only true warrant of the experience of self and world will reject every attempt to ground human existence in an entity that controls man heteronomously. For the mystic, every religion and philosophy that is centered around concepts, words, doctrines, beliefs, logical laws, and so on hinders the experience of the immediacy of the ONE. Where such entities as God, being, the Church, and reason exist, they, being negations of the ONE, must be negated in the experience of the ONE if man is to be rid of all knowing, willing, and having. They are of no positive significance for the experience of the ONE.

No statements about the *unio mystica* can be made, but something can be said about the way to it. Humanistic religion as experience of the ONE is about the way, the *halacha*, the eight paths, *mondo* and *koan*, concentration and meditation exercises. All of them are based on the religious ethos of a renunciation of all having and aim at the experience of man in his totality.

Fromm's postulate that the claim to the truth

¹¹³ Most aptly formulated in the „*Cogito ergo sum*“ of Descartes. What is meant is every philosophy that seeks to ground being in man's „having“ certainty of thought, of consciousness, of cognition, of knowledge, etc.

and bindingness of {277} human reality be grounded in a mystical experience does not mean that the ultimate grounding in the mystical experience of the ONE is any less stringent. Even from the perspective of a philosophy and/or religion that is wholly oriented around reason, it has to be conceded that the mystical experience of the ONE fulfills the function of an ultimate ground of human existence and of what human existence should be. It is true, of course, that the communicability of this postulate is tied to subjective experience: only for the person who enters into the mystic experience of the ONE can that experience lay claim to ultimately ground existence. Fromm gave stringency and objective validity to this experience by making the transcendental experience of the ONE--the *unio mystica* being the experience of the total negation of the objects of experience, that is, of empirical entities--the goal of the perfectly palpable experience of the renunciation of having. And not only is this experience palpable, it can be demonstrated by empirical methods. This means that man is, develops, is healthy and happy, to the extent that he renounces having as a means of defining his existence. Both kinds of experience, the empirical experience of world and self and the religious, mystical experience of the ONE, are based on the having/being alternative, which is itself an experiential value that is demonstrable in both an empirical and a religious sense. This makes it apparent that the mystical experience of the ONE is the negation of all objects of experience--that it consequently renounces all having--and thus grounds itself, and becomes the ground for, any and every empirical experience of the having/being alternative.

Just as God's reason is recognized as the ultimate ground of all empirical and moral reason in Aquinas' philosophical thought, and as the grounding reason of God and the grounded reason of man and his world are mediated in analogous fashion through the concept of law,¹¹⁴ so the having/being alternative serves in Fromm's „solution“ as an „in-

¹¹⁴ Cf. the comments of the lex model in Thomas Aquinas, p. 156f.



terpretive key“¹¹⁵ that grounds the truth, validity, and bindingness of all empirical and moral experience in the all-encompassing mystical experience of the ONE. Because it is not man’s reason and the reason of God that both grounds and transcends it, but rather experiences that have their base in the mystical experience of the ONE, the following differences result: {278}

1. To the extent that they mean the renunciation of having, experiences of being admittedly have no objective or logical stringency. They are, however, tied to a subjective experience that is immediately persuasive and effective in and of itself; experiences have a transforming power.
2. The mystic experience of the ONE as the ultimate ground of the experience that it is only being and not having that has a transforming power is not transcendent in the sense of that transcendence that can be spoken of only by way of analog-. It is the concrete and historical individual who experiences ,vithin himself his ultimate ground as he experiences the ONE. But this ultimate ground is not understood as transcendence: rather, it is that endpoint of the empirically experienceable dialectic that man has being to the degree he negates manifestations of willing, knowing, and having as nega-

tions of his humanness. To a view of man that is oriented around having, the experience of the ONE must seem something „altogether different,“ a NOTHING, and transcendent for that reason. In reality, it is the experience of the totality of man in the full unfolding of his reason and love.

The experience of the ONE grounds what human existence is, and should be. The having/being alternative plays the role of a key that interprets how empirical and mystical experience are grounded. The understanding of the having/being alternative corresponds to the dialectic that is rooted in what eye have called the tradition of the ecstatic-cathartic model. Where what exists is functionalized and made to serve as a means for securing one’s existence, this orientation is recognized as the having mode and judged to be the negation of „true“ or „genuine“ humanness. The demand that the having mode be renounced and the being mode become dominant can only be met when the having/being alternative is used in the sense of a critical theory: the having mode is a negation of human existence and human potential and can be sublated by negation. The substantive definition of this dialectical process is this: negation of everything man has, the object and goal being the experience of his totality in the mystical experience of the ONE. {279}

¹¹⁵ On the concept „interpretive key,“ see the interpretation of the lex model by W. Korff in *Norm und Sittlichkeit*, p. 49.