

**TITLE** Erich Fromm's Concept of Alienation

Master's ☒ Prize Essay ☐

1. May circulate [ X ] ) Not necessary  
 ) for Ph.D.  
 2. Is restricted [ ] for \_\_\_\_\_ years. ) thesis

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis.
- |              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| <del>x</del> | _____ |
| yes          | no    |

*Margo Adler*  
Signature of Author

Microfilmed 9/9/88  
Date

Marilyn Kuder  
Signature of Library Staff Member

ERICH FROMM'S  
CONCEPT of ALIENATION

by  
Margo Adler

Hebrew Union College  
1988  
Dr. Robert Katz

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Masters Degree at Hebrew Union College.

## Thesis

Integral to Fromm's writings are the themes of alienation and freedom. It is the thesis of this paper that consideration of Fromm's analysis and commentaries of Old Testament and prophetic writings provide insights into Fromm's theory of alienation. These insights demonstrate the psychological, sociological, and spiritual dimensions of Fromm's multifaceted concept of alienation as they relate to his concept of human essence as being in the process of becoming.

## Table of Contents

Statement of purpose	1
Abstract	2
Introduction	3
Themes	
Fromm's commentary on the Old Testament	11
<u>Part I.</u> Main Theoretical Ideas	22
A.    BioSociological Model of Man	24
B.    Individuation	36
C.    Mechanisms of Escape from Freedom	53
D.    Conclusion	65
<u>Part II.</u> Fromm and his Critics	74
A.    Introduction	75
B.    Guyton Hammond	77
C.    John Schaar	92
<u>Part III.</u> Conclusion	105
Bibliography	106
Footnotes	110

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of Fromm's concept of alienation of man in modern society. Fromm's analysis and commentaries of the Old Testament and prophets will be discussed as a means of providing insight into the relationship of idolatry and alienation and explicating the relationship of personal freedom and responsibility to Fromm's theory of alienation.

Although commentators of Fromm's thought usually base their analysis of his concept of alienation on the influences of Marx and Freud, the influence of Fromm's Jewish education and upbringing is frequently neglected. It is outside the scope of this present paper to provide an analysis of the influence of Fromm's Judaism upon his thought. However, Fromm's commentary and analysis of the Old Testament<sup>1</sup> and prophets will be discussed to demonstrate his concept of human essence as being in the process of becoming as it relates to his theory of alienation. The insights attained from this analysis will be used to refute the criticisms of the two critics included in this paper.

---

<sup>1</sup>. The term Old Testament is the term used by Fromm and will be used in this thesis to be consistent with Fromm's writings. All translations of commentaries to the Bible throughout Fromm's You Shall be as Gods are from The Soncino Chumash, edited by A. Cohen. (Hindhead, Surrey: the Soncino Press, 1947)

## Abstract

As man developed self-awareness and reason he evolved from his primitive unified relationship with nature to one in which he remained controlled by the dictates of nature but aware of his finitude and separateness. With his awareness and reason came the experience of separation and alienation. The psychosocial history of man is a chronicle of man's attempts to cope with the anxiety of his alienation and his freedom to be responsible for his own life. These attempts are manifested in either progressive choices or regressive choices.

Progressive choices are those which engage man in the process of becoming and enable him to realize his potentiality. These choices allow him to be productive, self-loving and able to love others, and allow him to experience his uniqueness and separateness without feeling alienated. Regressive choices represent man's attempt to return to a primitive unthinking state and negate all the aspects of the progressive choice. The regressive choice, synonymous for Fromm with the Jewish concept of idolatry, is represented in mechanisms of escape from freedom and responsibility. These mechanisms initially ease man's anxiety of separation by allowing him to be part of an external group but ultimately serve to alienate man from his true self and as a consequence alienate him from the world.

## Introduction

The awareness of finitude, isolation, freedom, and meaninglessness produces anxiety as a consequence of the experience of conflict between the reality of what is and what the individual wishes the situation to be. Death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness are an inescapable part of the human being's existence in the world. The basic conflict of existential psychodynamics is not defined as suppressed instinctual strivings nor as conflict with internalized significant adults but rather as a conflict which flows from the individual's confrontation with the givens of existence. Existential psychodynamics defines these givens of existence as follows:

Death is the most easily apprehended ultimate concern. We exist now, but one day we shall cease to be. "Death will come and there is no escape from it; thus, a core existential conflict is the tension between the awareness of the inevitability of death and the wish to continue to be."<sup>1</sup>

Freedom, defined as the absence of external structure, implies that the individual is entirely responsible for authorship of his own world, life design, choices and actions: awareness of one's freedom is experienced as a conflict between the awareness of the lack of structure and one's wish for structure. Increasing the anxiety is the conflict between one's realization of responsibility for



whom one is as a person and one's desire to remain not responsible for oneself.

Existential isolation or alienation refers to inter- and intra-personal isolation, as well as to a more fundamental isolation from creatures and from the world. Even though man seeks to be close to others there always remains the realization that "each of us enters existence alone and must depart from it alone."<sup>2</sup> A conflict arises from the awareness of our absolute isolation and our desire to be part of a greater whole, our desire for contact and protection, and our desire to be unique, separate and autonomous.

Man is a meaning seeking being who is thrown into a universe which has no meaning. Anxiety occurs as one asks "if we must die, and if we constitute our own world, and if each of us is alone in an indifferent universe, then what meaning does life have? Why do we live? How shall we live?"<sup>3</sup> Given that there is not a preordained design for us, man can not find, but must construct or give his own meaning to his life. Anxiety increases as he becomes aware of or senses that a meaning of his own creation may not be substantial enough to bear his own life.<sup>4</sup> The awareness of man's meaninglessness is experienced as a conflict between the realization that he is to find or give his own life meaning and the desire for life to have meaning separate from personal responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

Each encounter with the four existential concerns focuses man's attention on the relevancy of his actions to his own life and on his freedom and responsibility. The individual is free to desire, to choose, to act and to change; the individual is responsible for authorship of his own world, life design, choices and actions. Given this assumption of human responsibility, authenticity and actualization of one's potentiality is possible only when the individual accepts the responsibility of creating his own destiny, life predicament, feelings and suffering. As long as the individual continues to blame other individuals or forces, he has not accepted his own responsibility and thus negates the possibility of change.

While incorporating all of these themes into the context of his theories, Fromm argues that man's primary existential confrontation is one of isolation. This primary isolation, a result of the severance of ties to parents, home, and soil, coincides with and is necessary to one's experience of self awareness. According to Fromm, awareness of his isolation serves as the catalyst for man to confront both the meaning of his life and his freedom and responsibility. This is to say, man becomes aware that he has the freedom to act in such a way as to overcome his isolation and give his life meaning; or act in a way which negates his life and self imposes a state of alienation. He can choose to act progressively and increase his humanity or

he can choose to act regressively or destructively negating himself and others: only when man accepts his freedom and acts responsibly can he find meaning and overcome his isolation.

Fromm is distinguished both for his analysis of the personal and social factors underlying man's isolation (alienation) and fear of freedom, and his analysis of the effect of alienation and fear of on human behavior.

Fromm's early works demonstrated his conviction that the life of Western man was desperately wrong: Escape From Freedom published in 1941, was concerned with the influences of social processes on individual, familial and social health. Fromm's later works, beginning with Man for Himself published in 1947, demonstrate an increasing awareness of the human situation described as the needs of man as rooted in the conditions of man's existence. But not until the publication of The Sane Society in 1955 does Fromm give a thorough discussion of these needs, their relationship to the concept of alienation, and their fulfillment.<sup>6</sup>

The revised edition of Escape From Freedom (1969) along with You Shall Be As Gods (1966), Dialogues With Fromm (1963) and For The Love of Life (1983) represents the evolution of Fromm's thought from a focus on society's responsibility towards man to an emphasis on personal responsibility towards oneself and towards society. In

these texts Fromm increasingly stresses the relevancy of the prophets and the Hebrew concept of idolatry to the modern problem of alienation.

Fundamental to Fromm's theory of alienation as it relates to the Old Testament idea of idolatry is his concept of human essence represented as being in the process of becoming. In his commentary on the Old Testament Fromm demonstrates that man created in the image of God means man is able to be involved in the process of self creation and self actualization. To be alienated means to be separated from one's essential human nature. That which prevents man from being involved in the process of becoming and actualizing his potentiality is alienating. To be human means to be involved in either a self actualizing or a self alienating process because even in the face of external alienating factors man can choose to be aware of his humanity and seek the most actualizing choices from the available alternatives.'

Fromm's psychosocial writings depict the clinical manifestations of the process of alienation, individuation and freedom along with the alienating factors within society and within man's personal experience of being human. Fromm's commentaries and analysis of the Old Testament and prophets serve to elucidate his concept of alienation as inseparable from an understanding of man's essence as being in the process of becoming.

The Old Testament stories and prophets epitomize Fromm's theory of the individual bound to external constraints of an authoritarian society or internal authoritarian ethic who must experience the separation from primary ties of family, home, and soil if he is to mature and actualize himself. This initial process causes man to be aware of his separateness and causes him to experience anxiety as a result of his sense of isolation and alienation. This anxiety is compounded as a conflict arises between his desire to be unique and actualized and his desire to not be separated from his external supports.

The story of Adam and Eve represents the first stage in the necessary separation from primary ties. Man gains reason and self awareness but remains apprehensive and alienated. He evolves through an anxiety provoking process of increasing his freedom from external authority and increasing his freedom to be responsible for creating himself. It is not until man understands God as nondefinable being in the process of becoming that he understands the his essence, man as created in the image of God, means that he is also being in the process of becoming. It is only with this realization that man can engage himself fully in the creative process of becoming and experience his separateness and uniqueness without experiencing the anxiety of alienation. Alienation comes to be defined as that experience which is negating man's true essence, which is

separating him from the creative process of becoming. Alienated from himself, man is alienated from his work, from others, from the world.

Choosing to exercise his freedom to be involved and responsible man feels himself part of the life process and is aware that who he is and what he thinks and how he acts makes a difference. Abraham, in choosing to be involved chooses to not be alienated from God, from society, or from himself; this represents a step in the progression towards full responsibility. Man needed to evolve to assume total responsibility for who he is and what he does separate from God or external authority if he was to loose his sense of alienation. Moses epitomizes the evolution of man's understanding of a nameless God as a being in the process of becoming as coinciding with man's assumption of responsibility for who he is and what he does as separate from external factors. Only then can man experience himself as unique and separate from the world without being alienated from himself and others. But as the Old Testament stories demonstrate, insight does not necessarily lead to action. Man having attained the insight of the essence of his own being must choose to progress if he is to experience his true nature.

The history of man in society just as the history of man in relationship with God is a chronicle of the process of man's insights and progress in dialectic relationship to

man's anxiety and attempts to avoid his responsibility. Fromm's analysis of the Old Testament and prophets demonstrates his understanding of alienation as man's separation from his own essential essence, as man no longer involved as being in the process of becoming but rather as being in the process of regressing.

Fromm's critics find his concept of alienation lacking spiritual depth and his ideal society an unrealistic heaven on earth. Fromm argues however, his concept of alienation can be understood from the context of the Jewish religious experience of idolatry and his vision of an ideal society from the Jewish concept of a Messianic Era: Fromm's healthy, sane society promotes and supports responsible self-actualizing individuals who once freed from the chains of illusion, isolation and suffering, live in the image of God.<sup>8</sup>

The two critics selected, Schaar and Hammond, attempt to understand Fromm works from the perspective of Christian theology and academic sociology. While both critics find Fromm's analysis of Freud and Marx relevant to his concept of alienation, neither considers Fromm's commentary of the Old Testament and prophets: as a consequence they fail to fully appreciate Fromm's concept of alienation. Their assumptions and views will be presented and countered with Fromm's interpretation of the concept of alienation in an attempt to demonstrate the flaws in their assumptions.

## Fromm's Commentary on the Old Testament

The themes of alienation, meaninglessness in life, confrontation with finitude and fear of freedom, are not new, Fromm tells us, to modern thought. These ancient human concerns are expressed throughout the Old Testament and prophetic writings, as well as in religious and philosophical thought through the ages. Fromm's analysis of the Jewish religious experience and the biblical tale of man's evolution in his relationship with God serves as a basis for understanding Fromm's concepts of individuation, alienation, and freedom.<sup>9</sup>

Fromm, born in 1900 in Frankfurt, describes his Orthodox Jewish upbringing as "positive and decisive influence" which served as a foundation for his theories of alienation, individuation, and freedom.<sup>10</sup>

The Old Testament and Prophets represent a chronicle of the evolution of man's self awareness. . . this evolution coincided with the evolution of man's concept of God. . . They chronicle man's evolution from primitive authoritarianism and clannishness to the idea of radical freedom of man and the brotherhood of all man. . . Written by men and not representing the word of God, it is the expression of the genius of a people who were struggling for life and freedom throughout many generations. . . It is a document of the evolution of a small primitive nation whose spiritual leaders insisted on the existence of one God and the nonexistence of idols to a religion with faith in a nameless God in final unification of all men, in the complete freedom of each individual.<sup>11</sup>

The Jewish ideal of Imitatio Dei is held forth by the Rabbis as the highest human ideal: "ye shall be holy: for I



the Lord your God am holy". Holiness is not an abstract or mystical idea but a "regulative principle in the everyday lives of men and women. . . holiness is attained by the spirit in which we fulfill the obligations of life in simplest and commonest details".<sup>12</sup> Fromm concludes, based on this ideal, Judaism can be understood as a humanistic ethical system rather than as theology. "It is a system which teaches one not only to act according to the general principles of justice, truth, and love, but also to sanctify every act of life and thus imbue each act with a religious spirit."<sup>13</sup> From this attitude of right living which underlies the Jewish tradition, Fromm derived his concept of the ethically good man as one who lives with right action with respect to everything that a man does.<sup>14</sup>

The prophets represented for Fromm a source of great wisdom and guidance: "not only from their insights regarding the worship of idols as enslavement, but also from their vision of the salvation of man by means of his own self realization."<sup>15</sup> It is this same Old Testament theme of idolatry and freedom which Fromm says represents modern man's struggle against alienating forces and his striving towards and ethical humanism.

The essence of human evolution lies in man's emergence from the incestuous ties to blood and soil, submission to idols slavery and powerful leaders into independence and freedom. Man, the prisoner of nature, becomes free by becoming fully human. In the biblical and later Jewish view, freedom and independence are the goals of human development, and the aim of human action is the constant process of liberating oneself from the

shackles that bind man to the past, to nature, to the clan, to idols.<sup>16</sup>

Fromm interprets the Old Testament as radical humanism emphasizing the oneness of the human race and "man's capacity to develop his own powers to arrive at inner harmony and establish a peaceful society on earth".<sup>17</sup> Man, responsible for his own salvation, cannot look to heaven or external powers. Man's goal is the development of his awareness beyond the boundaries of illusion and fiction.

Since Judaism teaches God is not definable by positive attributes of essence, the Jewish religious system is in actuality Imitatio Dei and not theology, and can be understood as a system of ethical humanism.

The religious experience as defined by Fromm, has certain characteristics elements which are relevant to his description of the healthy man and the ideal society. The first characteristic element is the experience of life as a problem, as a question requiring an answer. This experience engages man and involves him in an active process rather than asking him to be submissive and passive. The questions he encounters are existential dichotomies related to his awareness of being separate, his desire to be unique and his need to not feel isolated and separate. This process of man and society's individuation and the anxiety caused by the awareness of separateness is depicted in the Old Testament stories. The process of individuation, the anxiety and the solutions man chooses are what differentiate him from the

rest of the creatures.

The second element of the religious experience is the decision to make a progressive choice in the face of one's existential anxiety. These progressive choices are represented by a hierarchy of values with highest value being the optimal development of one's own powers of reason, love, compassion and courage thus filling one's worldly life with spiritual aims. Such a decision represents man's recognition of and willingness to except the responsibility of his freedom. The biblical stories depict such an evolution of man from the beginning of his freedom to the willingness to accept and exercise his freedom.

The third element is the recognition of man as an end and never a means and an underlying attitude towards life's events as part of the process of transforming man in the direction of becoming more human: this process of constant inner transformation is the aim toward which all other aims are subordinated. This means continual engagement in the process of being human as becoming, realizing one's potentialities as the answer to the existential anxieties of one's life. The Old Testament stories depict not only mans involvement in the ongoing process of transformation but also the change in man understanding of and relationship to God: as man transforms himself his relationship with God is transformed and vice versa. Lastly the religious experience can be described, according to Fromm, as a letting go of

one's ego in order to become open to the world, to respond to it, to become one with it, to love it.<sup>18</sup>

In Fromm's analysis the Jewish religious experience fit these criteria and expressed a new answer for the solution of the dichotomies of human existence. Judaism teaches that man can find oneness with the world, "not by regressing to the prehuman state or through idolatry, but by the full development of his specifically human qualities: love and reason."<sup>19</sup> This philosophy of self actualization is expressed in idea of One God, not understandable through attributes but understood as being in the process of becoming. The Jewish concept of one God does not require the worship of God which would require giving God human characteristics and thus making God into an idol, but rather Imitatio Dei<sup>20</sup> of God's actions as revealed in history.

The Old Testament and prophets represent for Fromm, Judaism's attempt to teach these principles by means of a chronicle of the evolution of man's concept of and relationship to God as it coincided with the evolution of man's self awareness. The following analysis and commentary is taken from Fromm's books You Shall Be As Gods, For the Love of Life, and Dialogue with Erich Fromm.

During the initial stage of his evolution, man understood God to be an absolute ruler, one who could create and destroy. Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden of

Eden story does not represent the "fall" of mankind but rather the first step in the process of self awareness. This concept is depicted by man's first act of rebellion which is punished by a God who uses force to preserve his supremacy: man, while yielding to God's superior force, does not express regret or repentance. This act does not represent a fall since nowhere in the Hebrew text is the word sin used in reference to man's act of disobedience. Instead, the text says, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" Gen:III,22. Fromm understands this to mean that man was able to challenge the supreme power of God only because he is potentially God; "man is become as God . . . having through disobedience secured the faculty of unlimited knowledge".<sup>21</sup> Man "having been expelled from the Garden of Eden begins his independent life; his first act of disobedience is the beginning of human history, because it is the beginning of human freedom."<sup>22</sup>

A contradiction exists in this early concept of God as a supreme ruler and as creator of a creature who is his own potential challenger. Man's existence as a rebel carrying potential Godhood within means the more man develops his awareness, the more he frees himself from God's supremacy and the more he can become like God. The Old Testament and prophets chronicle the diminution of God's role as man's owner.<sup>23</sup>

The story of Noah represents the first change in the God concept as it evolves from God as an arbitrary ruler to God as a constitutional monarch. This change coincides with the evolution of man's self-awareness and his relationship with God develops into one of increased freedom and mutual respect. While God is able to destroy all life, in the story of Noah God repents, saving Noah, his family, and every species. Most important God for the first time forms a berit or covenant with man.

The literal archaic interpretation of this story is regressive and defines God as having human like qualities. Fromm suggests that a progressive interpretation holds that the covenant constitutes one of the most decisive steps in the religious development of Judaism, "a step which prepares the way to the concept of the complete freedom of man, even freedom from God."<sup>24</sup> In concluding the covenant, God ceases to be the absolute ruler. God and man have become partners in a treaty by which God has been transformed into a constitutional monarch. Both God and man are bound to the conditions of the constitution; God has lost his freedom to be arbitrary and man has gained the freedom to challenge God in the name of God's own promises. "God has obliged himself, with the formation of this covenant, to absolute respect for all life."<sup>25</sup>

The second covenant, formed with Abraham, superficially appears to be between God and the Hebrews. It can be

understood however, upon further analysis to be an expression of universalism in its demonstration of concern for all humanity . The argument between Abraham and God regarding Sodom and Gomorrah represents "a dramatic expression of the radical consequences of the covenant. . . the question 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' marks a fundamental change in the concept of God."<sup>26</sup> Whereas Adam and Eve, representing man at a childlike state, challenge God by disobedience but ultimately yield to his power, Abraham represents a free man with the right to challenge God to comply with the principles of justice. By the formation of the second covenant God is bound by the norms of justice and love, and man, no longer his slave, can challenge God as God can challenge man.<sup>27</sup>

God's revelation to Moses marks the third phase in the evolution of the God concept. While anthropomorphic elements continue describing God as speaking, dwelling, and writing, Fromm says God is not to be understood from these conceptualizations which are merely used by the biblical editors as a means of communication. Instead, God for the first time reveals himself and is to be understood as nameless and as a God of history rather than a God of nature. This idea of a nameless God represents the distinction between a God concept and an idol; the essence of an idol is that it has a name and is a thing complete in time and space.

In Exodus 3:14 God says "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be". From the word Eheyeh, the first person of the imperfect tense of the Hebrew verb to be, (there is no present tense in Biblical Hebrew and the only two basic tense forms are the imperfect and the perfect), Fromm says, we must understand that "God is, but his being is not completed like a thing. It means that the God concept is of a living process, a becoming. This concept of God as a living process is further demonstrated when God says "my name is nameless." This means God can be manifested in history but the God concept "cannot be represented by any kind of image, be it stone, wood, or sound."<sup>28</sup>

God as being in the process of becoming represents for Fromm the most fundamental principle of Jewish theology. "The ten commandments forbid bowing to any graven image, nor likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."Ex.20:4 It is from this concept that Fromm develops his theory of alienation as a form of idolatry.

By Fromm's analysis, belief in God in the Jewish tradition means imitation of God's action and not knowledge about God as a thing. "To know God in the prophetic sense is the same as loving God or confirming God's existence, it is not speculation about God or his existence, it is not theo-logy."<sup>29</sup> Any attempt to know God or to speculate about God's essence is to make God into an idol: giving God human



qualities and then worshipping them, hoping to gain them back. This concept of idolatry is synonymous for Fromm with his concept of alienation: man unaware of who he is gives God human qualities. In the process he objectifies God, objectifies himself, separates himself from the process of becoming and as a consequence alienates himself.

The evolution of the concept of God as nameless, as living process, coincided with the evolution of man's awareness and increased freedom from idolatry. If one accepts that God's being is inseparable from becoming, Fromm says "the most fundamental statement of the Old Testament in regard to the nature of man becomes that man is made in the image of God."<sup>30</sup> For man to realize and actualize himself as having been created in the image of God means he must be involved being in the process of becoming, in the process of creating himself and his world.<sup>31</sup> Being as a participle, communicates a sense of process rather than stasis. A human being, is an individual who is given a choice at every instant, that is he is involved in the process of being.

While "being is the potentiality by which the acorn becomes the oak or by which each of us becomes truly what he is," man's being, unlike the acorn, does not unfold automatically. Rather, being human involves three intrinsic and inseparable elements. The first, self consciousness, requires man to be aware of and responsible for himself if he is to become himself. Aware of himself, a dialectic

relationship arises between man's being with his nonbeing. The third element is man's awareness of his ability through his own choices to affirm or to negate and forfeit his being.<sup>32</sup>

## Part I: Main Theoretical Ideas

### Introduction

The freedom of choice is a key element of Fromm's theory of individuation and alienation: both the individual alone and in society is constantly confronted with the opportunity to choose to progress or to regress. To choose to progress means to choose to be involved in a continuous evolutionary process of becoming. Intrinsic to this process is the realization that the individual will be continually challenged and burdened; one in which the individual will, at every moment, choose anew to be free and responsible. To choose to regress means to turn one's freedom over to another, to choose to not be responsible for one's thoughts, actions, or life. Ultimately, however, the individual is responsible for his own life, for the choice itself confers responsibility.

Determinists argue that freedom is an illusion: by their definition, both individuals, the one who chooses to live and act as though he is free and the one who decides to live and act by another's authority, are determined to make such a choice. Fromm argues that such thinking leads one to conclude that he need not choose to make responsible choices nor should he be held accountable for his decisions and actions. Such thinking, breaks the individual's and society's spirit, denies humanity, and results in regression and destructive patterns of behavior.<sup>33</sup>

As sociologist and a Freudian psychoanalyst, Fromm does not discount the societal and psychological factors which determine one's behavior. Fromm, however, is also a humanist, schooled in Jewish thought and Eastern philosophy both of which he states greatly influenced his ideas on human responsibility and dignity.<sup>34</sup> He argues that the task of each person is to recognize the constraints by which he is bound, to analyze them, to gather information, and to make the most informed and responsible choice he possibly can. This for Fromm is the great dignity of man, bound by the constraints of society and our personal lives, we can still recognize these as "chains of illusion" and seek beyond for the truth.<sup>35</sup> To know if we have truly acted in freedom or if ultimately we have acted under the illusion of freedom is not possible nor essential. We can only know whether we have chosen to be involved in the process. What is essential is the attitude one assumes towards one's self and one's responsibility in life, towards one's freedom. Each individual, free or determined, must be regarded as if responsible. Only then can an individual or a society be healthy and mature.<sup>36</sup> This then is Fromm's fundamental concern; the healthy society and the healthy individual. Fromm's concept of the healthy society and healthy individual is based upon his understanding his model of man as a being in the process of becoming. Having demonstrated Fromm's concept of human essence as being in the process of

becoming, it is now possible to consider Fromm's main theoretical ideas in the context of this insight.

#### A. A Bio-Sociological Model of Man

Fromm's understanding of man consists of a synthesis of biological, sociological and religious (Jewish) theories. His synthesis of ideas from his Jewish background was demonstrated in the previous section. The biological frame of reference states that as man developed from the animal kingdom, his instincts decreased and his self awareness increased. With the awareness of self ensued a sense of anxiety related to being human. Man became a freak in nature. Animals live in harmony with nature; man, however, while continuing to be part of nature and subject to nature's laws, developed reason, imagination and self-awareness. Man's original harmony became disharmony.<sup>37</sup> Fromm describes this phenomenon in The Art of Loving.

This awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own short life span, of the fact that without his will he was born and against his will he dies, that he will die before those whom he loves, or they before him, the awareness of his aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and of society, all this makes his separate disunited existence an unbearable prison. He would become insane could he not liberate himself from this prison and reach out, unite himself in some other form or other with men, with the world outside.<sup>38</sup>

Fromm continues, "the experience of separateness

arouses anxiety; it is indeed the source of all anxiety. The deepest need of man then is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness."<sup>39</sup> Man is compelled by this anxiety to find solutions which will enable him to transcend his separateness and relate to the world. He can choose solutions which allow him to regress to archaic forms of relating or to progress towards developing his creative and potentials and his ability to love. The choice to progress, is for Fromm, the aim of the life process and enables one to give birth to oneself and to transform one's life experiences.

An existential contradiction is inherent in man's biological constitution. This is the conflict, the result of the emergence of reason, between man's physiologically conditioned needs (those needs which arose as instincts decreased and self awareness increased) and his need to avoid isolation, his need to be connected to the world outside himself. Man loses his primal union with nature owing to the development of his reason, imagination and self awareness. He now knows he is alone and is aware of his birth and death as accidental happenings. The knowledge of his human condition is unbearable and man seeks to be connected to the world outside himself in an attempt to replace the lost instinctual or primary ties. "The necessity to unite with other living beings, to be related to them, is an imperative need on the fulfillment of which

man's sanity depends." 40

This conflict becomes the basis for the formation of societies and is based on the individual's need to be part of his society.

In The Sane Society, Fromm says the need to be part of a society is based on five basic underlying needs. The first is the need for relatedness. As with all man's needs, the solutions can be progressive or regressive. A regressive solution involves a symbiotic union in which the individual seeks to be part of something or someone outside himself. He seeks to lose his identity or to have power over something else. Causing the other to lose his identity, both incur a loss of freedom and integrity. It is only through love that man chooses a progressive solution since love enriches both the giver and receiver and allows both giver and receiver to experience himself as in a process of becoming.

The loss of man's natural home causes him to seek human roots. The need for rootedness causes man to build a human home, this includes family and society. Again, the choices can be progressive or regressive. Man can regress and choose the illicit worship of or desire to merge himself with his own blood, soil, or clan, as occurs in nationalism, state worship, racism, and chauvinism. Or man can choose brotherliness, he can affirm others as being entitled to love and justice, he can recognize his brothers right to be

a unique individual. This choice affirms his humanity and recognizes his ability and the ability of others to be productive and self actualizing.

Aware of himself, man seeks to know who he is, in what way is he the author and object of his actions? This need for identity can be fulfilled with a regressive identification with externals, nation, religion, occupation, class or status. Fromm calls this herd conformity, "I belong; therefore I am." In contrast, the progressive solution allows for the development of the fully individuated personality which knows itself as the center and subject of its own being.

Reason requires that man make sense of the world around him. He needs a frame of orientation and devotion. The system of orientation must include some "object of devotion which will give meaning to his existence and his position in the world"<sup>41</sup> for without it he would go insane. In order for the solution to be progressive it must be rational and objective and based on a sound knowledge of self, nature and society. Only then can the solution result in happiness and mental health.

Man also became aware of his finitude and with it he developed a need for transcendence. Brought into the world "without his consent and taken from it without his will", he realizes fate is arbitrary. He seeks to transcend his creatureliness and go beyond himself and fate. Man as the



destroyer sets himself above life, gives himself power over life, this enables him to transcend the role of creature. But there is another, a progressive choice; man can also choose instead to be a creator. In the act of creation man transcends himself as a creature, raises himself into the realm of purposefulness and freedom.<sup>42</sup> Creativeness and destructiveness are not two hostile forces or principles. Instead, they are alternative ways of meeting the need for transcendence; "the will to destroy must rise when the will to create cannot be satisfied"<sup>43</sup> since "destructiveness is the outcome of the unlived life."<sup>44</sup>

Fromm concludes, the conflict resulting from the loss of man's primary unity with nature is expressed through five basic needs: the need for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, identity and frame of orientation and devotion. Man's attempt to find solutions to these conflicts becomes the basis for the formation of societies and the need for the individual to be part of his society. Which solution an individual will choose, the progressive or the regressive solution, is based upon the make up the individual's character structure.

Man is primarily a social being; as such, the fundamental approach to human personality is the understanding of man's relation to the world, to others, to nature, and to himself.<sup>45</sup> Personality, as defined by Fromm, is the totality of inherited (temperament) and acquired

(character) psychic qualities which are characteristic of one individual and which make the individual unique."<sup>46</sup> Character, unlike temperament, is a social product in that it is fundamentally conditioned by social factors. In order to live in the world man must work and produce. His work brings him into society and assigns his relationship to other men. It is the imperative need for self preservation which forces him to accept the conditions under which he has to live.<sup>47</sup>

What of the child, how does society effect the development of his character? Fromm says the role of early experience is crucial in molding the character of the individual. The average family, as the psychic agency of society, transmits society's mores to the child and the child becomes molded by the character of the parents. The parents' character and methods of child raising are in turn determined by the social structure of the culture.

Given this structure or influence, Fromm recognizes the interaction of variables which always leave open the door for individuation. The variables arise from many sources, "personality differences of parents, material and psychological differences between environment, genetic differences and so forth."<sup>48</sup> While the role and influence of family and society cannot be denied, one also cannot assume that they are completely responsible for determining one's character. Fromm is not a determinist, his premise is

always that man has the ability to make use of his freedom, to be responsible, to choose to progress or to regress.

Given the influences of the parents, society and environment, man must still choose his mode of existence. He must choose whether to progress or regress, to be productive or nonproductive, to be involved in the process of being or non being. Fromm says man relates to the world in two ways: through assimilation or the acquisition and use of things and through socialization or mode of relating to himself and to others. Each of these two ways of relating contain productive and nonproductive orientations. The nonproductive orientations are further defined by Fromm as Mechanisms of Escape. They are:

Character orientations

Assimilation

1. receptive
2. exploitative
3. hoarding
4. marketing
5. necrophilic
6. productive

Modes of Relatedness

Socialization

1. masochism
2. sadism
- 3.,4. automation -  
conformity
5. destructiveness
6. love

Character structure, as defined by Fromm, is the substitute for man's lost instinctive determinism. Unlike instincts which are innate, character structure is determined instead by man's biological needs and the

conditions of nature interacting with the process of socialization. Fromm's theory of man's socialization is a dynamic socioeconomic process. The role of culture is to form a superstructure<sup>49</sup> which affects the answers the individual will give to life's questions. These answers are often against man's real human interests in the interest of the society's function. As a result, social character becomes internalized and shared by a given society. The society, in an attempt to preserve itself, influences the individual to make choices which are not necessarily conducive to the well being of the individual.

The break down of mental health occurs when the individual, prevented from realizing himself as a creative being, becomes alienated from himself and from the world. This lack of integrity or defective sense of identity results in a major constriction on the individual psyche. Fromm assumes as a given that man is not a thing nor a means for an ends outside of himself. However, he says that in today's industrial societies man's intellect has been used to master nature and to develop ever increasing technical capacity. As man becomes increasingly involved in the production and consumption of things, he becomes part of the process, experiencing himself as a thing. He manipulates and is in turn manipulated by machines; he exploits others, is exploited by others and exploits himself. He uses "his human essence as a means to serve his existence; his human

powers as a means to satisfy his ever expanding and, to a large extent, artificial material needs. There is a danger then, that man may forget he is man."<sup>50</sup>

Our moral problem is man's indifference to the himself. It lies in the fact that we have lost the sense of the significance and uniqueness of the individual, that we have made ourselves into instruments for purposes outside ourselves, that we experience and treat ourselves as commodities and that our own powers become alienated from ourselves. We have become things and our neighbors have become things; the result is that we feel powerless and despise ourselves for our impotence.<sup>51</sup>

What is this self that man becomes separated or alienated from? Fromm tells us man does not have a definable nature, rather it is the capacity to become aware, to give account to himself of himself and of his existential situation that makes him human, "this capacity is fundamentally his nature...and it is the existential conflict, the spiritual reality that is born as a result of man being able to know himself and others, that is the basis of life."<sup>52</sup> Man must be considered in all his concreteness as a physical being placed in a specific physical and social world with all the limitations and weaknesses that follow from this aspect of his existence. At the same time

he is the only creature in whom life has become aware of itself, who has an ever increasing awareness of himself and his world around him, and who has the possibilities for the development of new capacities both material and spiritual, which make his life an open road with a determinable end.<sup>53</sup>

In summary, there are several forces causing man to adapt to his given society. These forces are described by

Fromm as solutions to the anxiety aroused by man's five basic needs. These five basic needs are a result of man's existential dichotomy or contradiction. Physiological conditioned needs cause man to form societies in order to survive. The need to be related to the world outside himself to avoid aloneness and isolation may however, cause man to cooperate beyond what is necessary for survival. Man must adapt in order to survive both physically and psychologically; man's ideas, values, social patterns and symbols, religion, nationalism, customs, and beliefs all serve as adaptations. While adaptations allow man to live successfully in his given society, they may at the same time cause him to become alienated from himself and the world in the sense that they do not allow him to experience himself as being in the process of creating himself: they do not encourage man to think for himself and permit him to live irresponsibly.

The very emergence of man as a reasoning self aware being resulted in a split between the human and animal parts of his nature. As he became aware of his death, his isolation, his freedom and the meaninglessness of his life, he found himself responsible for creating himself and his world. Fromm's discussion of the differences between healthy and unhealthy individuals and societies are within the context of man's ability to assume responsibility for himself and affirm his being. He states that both mental

health and the sign of a healthy society is the evidence of man's ability to make the most life affirming choices from the available alternatives. The ideal society being one in which the availability of choices promotes productive solutions to man's existential conflicts; solutions that take man from his unthinking animal creatureliness and his human destructiveness towards use of his ability to reason, productiveness, brotherhood, and unity.

Fromm tells us in The Sane Society, it is

only when man succeeds in developing his reason and love further than he has done so far, only when he can build a world based on human solidarity and justice, only when he can feel rooted in the experience of universal brotherliness, will he have found a new human form of rootedness, will he have transformed his world into a truly human home.<sup>54</sup>

Ultimately, Fromm gives the responsibility to individual. The society influences the choices but the individual is responsible for the choices. "The fact that the solutions depend on many factors does not exclude that human insight and will can work towards attempting to reach better rather than worse solutions."<sup>55</sup>

The existential solution to this problem lie in how man approaches his freedom. Man's fear of freedom and responsibility, are for Fromm, the basis of many psychosocial problems. Not only must one strive for freedom from political, economic and spiritual shackles, that is freedom from external pressures, one must also develop the freedom to make choices and be responsible for who he is and

how he will live. How man becomes able to exercise his freedom is discussed in Fromm's theory of individuation.

B. Individuation: The emergence of the individual and the ambiguity of freedom

Man's need for identity, defined as the need to know oneself as the center and object of his own being, is a result of man's increasing reason and self awareness.<sup>56</sup> The individual emerges through a process Fromm describes as individuation. The process towards individuation involves a neurological and physiological development which enable the individual to experience the world outside himself. The process begins when the foetus is cut from the umbilicus. He is free from his physical tie but remains functionally tied; he is not yet free to make use of physical freedom, he is not yet sufficiently mature physically or psychologically to care for himself or make responsible choices. This freedom to make use of his independence must be learned through experience, success, failure, frustration, and prohibition.

At birth, man has two tendencies, either to progress or to regress. We are born every moment in that we are confronted with the question whether to return or to develop; " we can progress only to the extent that we have increased our own human powers of reason, love, and



relatedness to the world and other individuals, and to the extent we can cut our ties to mother, father, soil, blood, and idols."<sup>57</sup> These primary ties to mother, father, soil, clan, church group or social caste give a sense of security and belonging. As reason and imagination develop, so too does self awareness. As the process of individuation evolves and self awareness increases, one recognizes oneself as a separate entity and the primary ties become severed. This is, however, a frightening state, severed from primary ties, confronting his aloneness and solitude, the individual increasingly orients and roots himself in the world in an attempt to seek some new form of security to replace the lost security formerly associated with primary ties.

Prior to the child becoming a separate entity, he continues in a relationship of egocentric submission to the parents. As the child grows in self-awareness and as the strength of self-identity increases, so too does his growing sense of aloneness increase. This growth has dialectic quality: on the one hand physical, emotional and mental growth result in an increase in the integration and organization of personality of self. In contrast, with the severance of primary ties, the individual becomes increasingly aware of his aloneness and as a result feels increasingly powerless and anxious. This anxiety is, as the existentialists define it, the result of the awareness of his existential situation. The individual experiences an

impulse to give up his individuality and submerge himself with the world outside. Submission, to the extent that it negates one's sense of being and creativeness, is not a productive solution. For to the degree that the individual submerges himself in the world outside, that is to the degree with which he replaces egocentric submission to the parents with submission to the external world, he loses his personal strength and self integrity. As the individual loses his sense of self, his insecurity and anxiety increase. At any point the individual can choose to affirm himself by choosing a productive rather than a destructive solution to this growing sense of aloneness and isolation.

Should his anxiety become directed against the person(s) on whom he is dependent, the individual will grow increasingly hostile and rebellious towards them. Should the anxiety lead to a regressive impulse directed towards himself, the individual will become increasingly self-destructive. Fromm offers a productive solution to these dialectic processes: the individual can choose "spontaneous relationship" to men and nature, this will allow the individual to be connected to the world without eliminating his individuality. Fromm suggests that this ability to form spontaneous relationships must be sustained and nurtured in a healthy familial or societal environment. He further suggests that a productive choice is available to all men but there must be some model, some way of making this option

knowable to the individual. Without this knowledge even a healthy home and society cannot guarantee a healthy individual. In other words even though the choices are available, if the individual remains unaware of the availability of the choices or unaware of his ability to make choices, then it is as if the individual has no choices. This in turn increases the sense of powerlessness and isolation.

While physical maturation and functional separation from primary ties is necessary, it is not sufficient. Awareness of self and a sense of aloneness are also necessary if one is to mature and develop. The awareness in and of itself is necessary but not sufficient for maturation for without some way of educating the individual as to his ability or freedom to make choices, he remains as Prometheus bound. This independence and awareness of the ability to make choices can be learned through experience and guidance. The external environment can but does not necessarily play a positive or negative role in the development of the individual. Not necessarily because Fromm as a humanist and social scientist recognizes the ability of some individuals to synthesize the information using both intellect and reason, to make a progressive choice even in the face of negative influences.

This concept of responsibility for one's sense of being as separate from external forces differs from the

traditional psychoanalytic model. Moreover, the classical psychoanalytic definition of ego is as a weak epiphenomenon of other more powerful processes. It defines ego as derived from the id, and because of modifications imposed on it from the external world it serves as a representative of the external world.

In contrast the "I-am" experience is a precondition for the Ego on a more fundamental level. The sense of being refers to one's whole experience, the unconscious as well as the conscious, not merely as an agent of awareness rooted in one's experience of existence since if it mirrors or is a reflection of the outside world, as the ego is, than it is not one's own sense of experience.<sup>58</sup>

Fromm is careful to differentiate the "I-am" experience from the functioning ego. "It is an error to define the emergence of the awareness of one's own being as one phase of the development of the ego."<sup>59</sup> This is a subtle but crucial point and many of the misunderstandings of the Fromm's works and the Old Testament stories hinge on this concept. As Fromm writes in The Art of Loving, the difference between the "I-am" experience and the functioning ego is the difference between love of self and self love:

What we call selfishness, egotism, or "self-love" is really one form of greed. . . . whereas love of self (which is the authentic I-am experience) is a loving affirmative attitude toward oneself and as a consequence towards others since love of self is indivisible.<sup>60</sup>

More important is recognizing that the emergence of self awareness is a precursor to the development of sense of being and ego; this is why the Eden story can be understood

to represent the beginning of self-awareness and the beginning of human history rather than as the "fall" of man. It is owing to awareness of self that the individual experiences anxiety of awareness of one's separateness. As a consequence of this anxiety, the individual's sense of being and ego may be affected, making the individual seek out mechanisms of escape in order to avoid this anxiety.

The emergence of self-awareness is, a precursor to and must be differentiated from the development of a sense of being and ego. Whereas the ego is normally especially weak in childhood, that is weak in proportion to the child's relatively weak assessment of himself and his relationship to reality, the sense of being may be especially strong in childhood."..only later to diminish as the child learns to give himself over to conformist tendencies, to experience his existence as a reflection of other's evaluation of him, to lose his sense of his originality and primary sense of being." <sup>61</sup>

Fromm's theory of the process of individuation from the primary ties of the family, is similar to his description of the dialectic process of individuation within societies.

### C. The development of freedom within society

During the medieval period, mobility and choice were limited. According to Fromm, medieval man, was able to express himself in his work and emotional life, and thus maintained some degree of individualization. The Renaissance however, brought decreased social stratification and increased freedom from external boundaries. These changes served to increase man's self awareness as an individual. Just as the individual's role evolves within the family setting as understood as a micro-society, so too did the individual's role evolve as the society in which he lived evolved.

With the advent of capitalism there was an increase in class mobility and a diminishing of the clear cut socio-economic structures of earlier societies. This increase in class mobility resulted in new independence which was to be coupled with new insecurities. As a result, a sociologic environment was created similar to the one in which the individual is confronted within the family; the individual being confronted with a choice to progress or regress.

The breakdown of the medieval feudal society left the individual alone, isolated, and anxious. His newly gained freedom to act and think independently at the same time

deprived him of economic and spiritual security and his sense of belonging. Only the new aristocracy of money profited from the developing capitalism; as a result of their own activity they could expand, conquer, rule, and amass wealth. While some insecurity and anxiety occurred owing to a need to dominate the masses and fight amongst one another to maintain power, on the whole this class greatly benefited by the social change. As a result of their success, the arts and culture of the Renaissance developed and flourished. On the other hand, the lower class had little to lose and much to gain. Their interest was not with dogma but with the fundamental principles of the Bible which they sought to express in political revolts and religious movements.

Fromm's main focus of analysis is, however, the effect of the Reformation on the middle class since their new freedom brought both isolation and personal insignificance. Their resentment towards the wealthy, among whom was included the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, increased significantly: Protestantism gave expression to the feelings of insignificance and resentment and prepared man for his role in the capitalistic society. Luther and Calvin manipulated the insecurities and anxieties of the masses which had resulted with the newly gained freedom and loss of social ties and their inability to prosper by their own activity. They destroyed man's confidence in God's

unconditional love, taught him to despise and distrust himself and others, and made him a tool instead of an end. As a consequence of their increased insecurity and isolation,

man capitulated before the secular power and relinquished the principle that secular power is not justified just because of its mere existence if it contradicts moral principles. They told men that the insignificance and powerlessness which they felt came from the qualities of man as such and that he ought to feel as he felt.<sup>62</sup>

The new religious doctrines not only gave expression to what the average member of the middle class felt, they also rationalized and systematized the attitude thereby both strengthening it and at the same time giving people a way to cope with their anxiety. To overcome one's doubt and anxiety it was necessary to fully accept the powerlessness and evilness of one's nature: one's whole life was to be considered as atonement for one's sins and one was to live with utmost self humiliation and unceasing effort. Only through complete submission could one hope to be one of those loved by God and chosen for salvation.

The authoritarian personalities of Luther and Calvin and their theologies served as the catalyst in the preparation of the masses for capitalism. Luther urged freedom from unconscionable church authorities while at the same time telling man he was essentially powerless and must submit to a higher power. Fromm describes Luther's philosophy as one which depicts the evilness of human nature



and the uselessness of man's will and efforts. Therefore while encouraging man to rebel against traditional church authority, Luther was encouraging submission to a replacement authority, God's law as interpreted by Luther. The result of Luther's theology was to produce a psychologically disabling merger of love and surrender.<sup>63</sup>

Fromm accuses Calvin of preaching a humility which similar to self-contempt emphasized the wickedness of man and the need for self humiliation in order to decrease self-pride. Man, as described by Calvin, had no purpose in life of his own, his purpose was exclusively the glorification of God. The Calvinist had few alternatives and turned to compulsive activity as a means to the fulfillment of this purpose, which was in turn to become an aim in itself. In Fromm's assessment, this aim became the most important psychological change which has happened to man since the end of the middle ages. "As a consequence, man came to be driven to work not so much by external pressure, but by an internal compulsion"<sup>64</sup>

The result of the economic and social change and new religious doctrines, was, in Fromm's estimation, the evolution of a new character structure. The elements of this character structure were seen as a compulsion to work, passion for thrift, readiness to make one's life a tool for the purposes of extra personal power, asceticism, and a compulsive sense of duty. This new character was to become

the productive force in the capitalistic society. The effect of modern religion and capitalism on personality is the phenomenon of alienation.

### Alienation Under Capitalism

The central issue of the effects of modern religion and capitalism on personality is the phenomenon of alienation....Man does not experience himself as the creator of his own acts, but rather his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship.<sup>65</sup>

The alienated person is alienated from himself, from others, from the world, and from his labors. This definition of alienation is synonymous with Fromm's concept of idolatry: Through man's effort and energy he builds an idol which he then worships, failing to recognize that the idol is merely a result of his own effort. The idol is then experienced not as a result of man's productive effort but rather as something apart from himself over and against him which he worships and to which he submits.<sup>66</sup>

Religion helped prepare man for this mode of thought. Unlike true monotheism which Fromm defines as, God is unrecognizable, indefinable and not a thing, Luther and Calvin offered man a God to which they must bow and submit, a God which represented the projection of particular human qualities. If man is created in the likeness of God, then man becomes the bearer of infinite qualities, if instead, man projects the power of love and reason unto God, man

regresses to idolatry. He no longer experiences himself as the center from which the acts of love and reason radiate. He must pray to this God to give back some of what he has projected unto God. Early Protestantism and Calvinism required a religious attitude in which "man should feel himself empty and impoverished and thus put his trust in the grace of God...into the hope that God may return to him part of his own qualities which he has put unto God."<sup>67</sup>

Fromm tells us that any form of submissive love, be it to God, another person, a cause, or material possession, is synonymous with idolatry. Submissive worship leads to alienation for the person projects his love, strength and thought unto the other and experiences the other as superior. In so doing, he no longer experiences himself in full reality as the bearer of productive human powers. Instead, he experiences himself as an "impoverished thing dependent on the powers outside himself unto whom he has projected his living substance." While Fromm affirms the undeniable role of religion and society in the process of alienation, he continues to emphasize the responsibility of the individual. It is the individual who when confronted with the anxiety of separation from primary ties must choose from available choices either to progress or regress. Should the individual choose to project himself unto some idol, he is responsible for his choice to regress, and be further alienated.

As man increasingly experiences himself as an abstraction alienated from his real nature, from his creative being expressed in such qualities as love, fear, conviction, doubt, productiveness, and his ability to reason, he increasingly defines himself as fulfilling certain functions within the social system. His sense of value depends on the success received from selling himself favorably, his body soul and mind serve as capital, his life task becomes to invest and make profit of himself. Human qualities are by this evaluation, assets in a market. It was owing to the advent of protestantism and capitalism that man's sense of his own value became dependent "factors extraneous to himself, on the fickle judgement of the market, which decides about his value as it decides about the value of commodities."<sup>68</sup>

Relying upon external factors to attain a sense of his worth, man loses his sense of dignity and sense of self as a unique individual: he experiences himself as a thing for things have no self and men who have become things can have no self. The sense of self, according to Fromm, stems from the experience of oneself as subject of one's experiences, thoughts, feelings, decisions, judgments, and actions. It presupposes that one's experience is one's own and not an alienated one.<sup>69</sup>

What then is the relationship of man to his fellow man? Man experiencing himself as a thing or as an abstraction,

uses other men as things to improve his own status or value. With the loss of the general and social bonds of medieval and precapitalistic societies, man was presented with a conflict. Fromm sees man as a social being, needing to share, help and be a member of a group. The loss of the sense of individuality in the private realm, man turns to the public realm to gain some sense of himself, some definition as to who he is. Separated from his personal sense of individuality, alienated from himself, man projects his social feelings unto the church, state, or cause, projecting human qualities unto them; making them into idols. He then submits himself to these external bodies as the embodiment of his own social feelings which he then worships as powers alienated from himself. In his private life as an individual he suffers from the isolation and aloneness which are the necessary result of this separation. " Only when man builds communities in which private and social existence are one and the same can he hope to become an integrated person. Otherwise man will continue to be governed by laws he does not want and yet does not want to take the responsibility to control. In this alienated society men produce their economic and social situation while at the same time willfully refusing to take responsibility for the situation, waiting to see what the future will bring." 70

Fromm tells us that in order to appreciate the nature

of alienation, it is important to consider certain aspects of modern life. These include routinization and the repression of the awareness of the basic problems of human existence. Fromm recognizes what he calls the universal problem of life which is the need to earn one's daily bread coupled with the time and energy consuming tasks of daily life. As man becomes enmeshed in routines necessary for the fulfillment of these tasks his awareness of the basic problems of human existence become repressed until he can no longer see anything but the man made common sense appearance of the world.

In an effort to ease the demands on his time and energy, man builds structures, social orders, conventions, habits and ideas which will help him perform whatever is necessary to live with his fellow man with a minimum of friction. All cultures, Fromm concedes, have built man-made, artificial worlds, superimposed on the material world in which man lives. The conflict between the routine of daily life and the attempt to get back to the fundamental realities of existence is not a new one. It is just that by Fromm's assessment, modern man is more alienated and less aware of the fundamentals and therefore less able to get back to them. For Fromm, man can only fulfill himself if he remains in touch with the fundamental facts of his existence, with the "experience of exaltation of love and solidarity as well as the tragic fact of his aloneness and

the fragmentary character of his existence."<sup>71</sup> Historically art and ritual have provided a means for man to get in touch with the essence of reality. Through art and ritual man acted out the fundamental problems of human existence which are thought out in philosophy and theology, and functioned to bring man in touch with himself as a human being and the roots of his existence. At worst, they became part of the routine and serve to alienate man from himself, from others, from his work, and from his leisure.

Man's alienated attitude causes him to become increasingly becomes passive until he is both an alienated producer and an alienated consumer. His work, his relationships, his leisure all lose their meaning and he is unable to use his leisure in an active and meaningful way; the alienated individual may be alienated in all aspects of his life. He lives without meaningful experiences, grasping onto life by means of illusion. Fromm says that if man is to grow he needs to break through these illusions through productive, spontaneous activity "in which something happens inside himself...when he is reading looking at scenery, talking to friends. In the alienated form of experience nothing happens within the individual, He has consumed this or that but nothing has changed within and all that is left are memories of what he might have done. An authentic experience leaves the individual feeling he is not the same after the experience as he was before. This is possible only

when everyone of your relationships to man and nature is a definite expression of your real, individual life corresponding to the object of your will."<sup>72</sup>

Fromm has differentiated between man alienated from himself and from the world. He is alienated not only from his productions but also from his acquisitions. Acquisitions may be mere possessions, ownership of which gives the individual a sense of personal value. Consumption of these acquisitions produces an illusion which satisfies an artificially stimulated fantasy. This illusion is created for consumer goods through advertising, it is created in one's thoughts about God and leaders through religious and political propaganda. Modern man, for Fromm, has lost concrete relatedness to his spiritual life and objects. He lacks knowledge of how objects function or are constructed, and he has lost a sense of his own spiritual creativeness and must rely on external powers to construct it for him.

In summary, the Catholic church had provided the individual with a relationship to God through the church. Even though man's individuality was somewhat restricted, he was part of a group. Economic activities were, in the medieval world, a means to an end, that end was life itself or the spiritual salvation of man. The significance of external activity was determined by the extent to which it furthered the spiritual salvation of man.



Protestantism was the catalyst for capitalism. With capitalism, man gained economic and political freedom and progressed towards increased self-awareness. Simultaneously, as man gained freedom from authority, he increasingly felt alone isolated and insecure. To overcome this increased anxiety of isolation and aloneness, man clung to possessions, prestige, power, family, or cause. These gave him social credibility and increased his self-esteem. Advertising, religious, and political propaganda further dulled man's capacity for critical thought. While man has, Fromm says, developed supporting factors to compensate for his insecurity and anxiety, he has not increased the strength and dignity of self. Loss of self-esteem or self-love lead man to selfishness and cause him to further objectify those around him; increasing his isolation and aloneness. The average person, unaware of the struggle, uses daily routines and activities, approval in private and social relations, success in business, distractions, having fun, etc., to overcome his isolation. Fromm says, the aloneness, fear, and bewilderment remain. Alienated man, unable to perform productive spontaneous activity, turns to social avenues of escape and finds them in submission to a leader and or in compulsive conforming to social mores in an attempt to give his life meaning and overcome his isolation. Fromm describes these regressive nonproductive alternatives to productive spontaneous activity as mechanisms of escape.

### III. Mechanisms of Escape

The normal healthy human, from the standpoint of a functioning society, has been defined by Fromm, as a man who is able to fulfill a social role in society, a man who is able to work in the fashion required, and as a man who is able to participate in the raising of a family. From the standpoint of the individual, Fromm defines a normal healthy human as one who is involved in the creative process of becoming, using his ability to reason for growth and happiness, and is able to engage in productive spontaneous activity. These two views do not coincide in society: Social necessity is at times in conflict with the values and norms which are the aims of the individual's existence or which provide the optimum possibility for the individual's happiness. While the socially normal man may be well adapted, he may also be less healthy in human values and demonstrate loss of genuine individuality and spontaneity.

With the severance of his primary bonds, be they to family or to the greater society, man is presented with two choices of action. He could accept the freedom and relate spontaneously to the world in love and work as a genuine expression of his emotional, sensuous and intellectual capacities so that he could be one again with man, nature and self without giving up his independence and integrity, or, he could give up his freedom, surrender his

individuality and integrity and regress to an alienated form of production and consumption.

Man in attempting to cope with this conflict to progress or to regress, may either assume to be productive and loving or to be nonproductive and destructive. Fromm defines these nonproductive mechanisms as :

1. authoritarianism which is seen as the sado-masochistic character and the need for a magic helper
2. destructiveness which is seen as the desire to destroy others so that the world is less threatening
3. automation conformity which is seen as the adoption of a personality offered by cultural patterns

#### Authoritarianism

Fromm's early descriptions of authoritarianism were concerned with the manipulations of the qualities of submission and dominance. Both of these elements represent the outcomes of one basic need, springing from the inability to bear the isolation and weakness of one's own self...The sadistic person needs his object just as much as the masochistic needs his."<sup>73</sup>

Both elements represent a symbiotic union of self with another. Fromm describes the interaction between these two modes of relatedness with the receptive and exploitative character orientations.

The receptive character orientation is associated with

masochistic relatedness, while the exploitative character is associated with sadistic relatedness. The exploitative character is a person whose whole sense of life is based on the conviction that he cannot produce, that all he can get is what he takes. The receptive character expects others to care for him as long as he is lovable and nice. The difference between them is that one seeks security by being swallowed by another, the other, by swallowing someone else. In both cases existential isolation is assuaged, either through losing one's separateness and isolation or through enlarging oneself by the incorporation of others. Masochism and sadism are different solutions to the same problem and thus may oscillate within an individual.<sup>74</sup>

We see that the sado-masochistic individual copes with feeling inferior and powerless by seeking to be part of something and attempts to submerge himself in something bigger and more powerful. This can be God, nation, or some psychic compulsion. In this manner, the individual is saved from responsibility and decisions. He no longer feels threatened with the doubt involved in making a choice or in life meaning or in determining who he is.

Insecure and isolated, man can easily be manipulated by societal factors to assume authoritarian thinking. It is characterized by a devotion to forces outside man's own self interest. Feeling powerless, man believes happiness lies in the submission to outside forces: his activity must be in

the name of something higher than himself such as God, the past, nature, or duty but never in the name of life itself. In its milder form authoritarian thinking is characterized by what Fromm calls the "magic helper". The individual believing strength is derived from leaning on a superior which is never assailable or changeable, relates his whole life to a power outside himself. Protection is expected from the magic helper and "he" is made responsible for the outcome of the individual's actions. This "magic helper" is frequently personified as God, psychoanalyst, minister, or teacher. The basis of this thinking is a symbiotic drive owing to an inability to stand alone and take responsibility for one's own actions. The question one asks himself as to how to live becomes how to manipulate "him".

While security increases so too does man's weakness and bondage. Should the individual desire to rebel, new fears and conflicts arise. He must suppress these feelings or lose his source of happiness and security. Failure is not in the choosing of the wrong magic helper, as many belief systems would lead one to believe, but rather in having tried to obtain that which can be achieved only through one's own spontaneous activity. Neurosis develops owing to the individual's unsuccessful attempt to solve the conflict between his basic dependency and his quest for freedom.

## Destructiveness

Fromm describes man as a "freak of nature": He is the only animal with an awareness of himself. This situation of self-awareness incorporated into the body of an animal creates a tremendous sense of separateness and fright. Man in looking for some unity or meaning can either progress and develop his human powers to find new unity, or regress and become a nonreflective animal in his attempt to live with awareness and reason.<sup>75</sup>

The destructive person is one who believes he can't live productively, can't create at all, yet at the same time he doesn't want to be passive, he wants to transcend life, he wants to make an imprint in the world. Unable to make a productive creative choice to transcend his creature status, he instead becomes destructive, taking out his vengeance against life for not permitting him to be oriented to it productively. Destructiveness can be defined as the "outcome of an unlived life" resulting from suppressive individual and social conditions which in turn nourish hostile tendencies.<sup>76</sup>

In the extreme is the necrophilic character orientation which is related to the destructive mode of relatedness. Fromm uses this term to describe a person whose full orientation is to be attracted to death, decay, illness, to all that is not alive. The necrophilic attitude is directed against others as well as against oneself. The orientation

of the personality is " if I love death, I love the inanimate, the mechanical; and it makes no difference whether my destructiveness is directed more toward myself than toward others." In contrast the productive character orientation has a loving, friendly, affirmative attitude towards himself and towards others.<sup>77</sup>

Fromm does not believe that destructiveness is an inherent quality of mankind. Rather, he says it is man's thwarted creative attempt at transcendence. If man can't create, he will destroy "for the act of destruction like the act of creation sets man above life, gives him power over it, and enables him to transcend the role of creature."<sup>78</sup> Hate, envy, cruelty, pride, selfishness, all the destructive passions are, according to Fromm, "perverted expressions of energy of a being who is naturally loving, creative, generous, and reasonable."<sup>79</sup> "Creativeness and destructiveness are not two hostile forces or principles. they are alternative ways of meeting the need for transcendence. There exists a struggle between them only in the sense that the will to destroy must arise when the will to create cannot be satisfied."<sup>80</sup> It is Fromm's premise that the absence of ideals and visions is in itself a cause of destructiveness, authoritarianism and contempt. "If men don't struggle toward light they will fall into darkness."<sup>81</sup>

## Automation Conformity

Fromm's works demonstrate the process of continued evaluation and reevaluation of the social environment that he describes in his dialectic of individuation and history. His earlier works emphasized the mechanism of authoritarianism which he says was the dominant form during the era of Hitler and Stalin. In his later writings (Dialogue with Erich Fromm, 1966) Fromm sees "overt authoritarianism yielding more and more to covert authoritarianism or automation conformity as a mechanism of escape from freedom. It is manifested by the manipulation of people through signals. This form is very subtle and operates on a more unconscious level. Not being told directly what to do, one does not clearly know what the choices are; "one receives signals which operate in a subliminal or indirect or unconscious way. The socialization process, rather than developing individuality in a constructive sense, creates, through social conditioning individuals who function as automatons."<sup>82</sup> The society needs men who want to do what they have to do. The 20th century needs, by his analysis, individuals who have a marketing character mode of relatedness. This individual is not truly productive. He sees the only way to create is to exchange goods in which he includes himself. The market becomes the judge of values, of things of labor and of



personality. People in this system are traded and used as commodities based on personality and appearances. Modern man as an automaton, tends to be more nonproductive than productive. An automaton, the kind of individual who operates on the signal system, escapes from his freedom of choice and its concomitant responsibility but has the illusion that he is free. "To be truly productive freedom and responsibility are necessary."<sup>83</sup>

The well-adjusted or conditioned man has learned to read society's signals. He is not, Fromm asserts, to be confused with the productive character. The productive character is distinguished in his activity in physical work, thinking, feeling, and in his relationships with people. The productive individual approaches the world as

the possessor in an active manner, and all the expressions of his being are authentic; that is, they are genuinely his own and are not put into him by an outside influence such as a newspaper or a movie...The productive person is capable of genuine love of self, while the non productive individual shows greediness or self love.<sup>84</sup>

The person with the productive character orientation has a capacity to love that which is other than himself and a capacity to use his freedom. Together these constitute what Fromm calls authenticity.

Modern man, Fromm says, as automaton, is unable to discriminate between authenticity and facade both in others and in himself. He is able to assume the marketing orientation, use external market values as his own values of

judging his worth and the worth of others. He has lost the ability to think authentically and while convinced of the spontaneity of his own mental acts, man, is in fact living an illusion. This is the crux of the problem. The problem is not what is thought, but how we think about something, not whether thought is right or wrong but whether the thought ensued from one's own thinking ability. Man has become unable to differentiate between genuine thinking and pseudo-thinking; between original thought and accepted thought one believes to be one's own. Pseudo-thinking is characterized by rationalizations. It is not determined by the logic of a statement but by some personal motivation. Unlike genuine thinking which has the quality of uncovering and discovering, pseudo-thinking confirms the emotional prejudice existing in oneself.

Thinking our decisions have been our own if we have not overtly been forced by some external power, we live lives of great illusion. In reality we have received suggestions and expectations to conform from outside influences. Fearing isolation, threats to our life, freedom, or comfort, we engage in pseudo-acts. These pseudo-acts result in repression which in turn eliminates part of the self. Eventually pseudo- feelings become substituted for authentic feelings. Man, set off from himself, no longer knows who he is, he looks to others to tell him and acts according to their expectations. This is pseudo-will, the less he knows

himself, the more he accepts their word and the more he becomes involved in pseudo-thinking. The result being that man becomes more alienated, less free, less responsible, and less authentic.

It is a misconception of our culture that we are free-thinking, free-acting, free-feeling individuals. In fact, automation conformity is the consequence of living an illusion. This mechanism, prevalent among the majority of normal people in modern society, is defined as the adopting of the personality offered by cultural patterns whereby the individual ceases to be himself. As the discrepancy between "I and the world" decreases, the loss of self increases, and the individual becomes increasingly alienated from his essential nature as a human being.

What is the solution? How can man overcome the chains of illusion and live in freedom? Man needs to ask himself certain questions if he is to overcome this illusion. These include: what is self? what is the nature of the acts giving the illusion? what is an original mental act? what does this have to do with freedom? In other words, man needs to state I think, I feel, I will, I choose based on use of his ability to reason and as an expression of his freedom. Only thus can man become authentic, productive, loving, and thus master society. Mastering society requires that each individual actively participates in the social process, subordinating it to the purposes of human happiness. In the

process of active authentic participation man will overcome his aloneness and powerlessness. Modern suffering is not, for Fromm, the result of poverty, it is the result of alienation and it ensues from a life which is empty and lacking meaning. Society can provide the opportunities but ultimately it remains the individual's responsibility to be aware of his options and make the most productive choice. It remains the individuals responsibility to be engaged in the creative process of expressing his being as becoming and actualizing his potentiality.

Fromm's focus has been that given the dichotomies of man's existence: between life and death, between the realization of what one could have done with one's life as compared to what one has done, and between the desire to be unique and to also have a sense of belonging, man is presented with questions which are inherent in mans being human. These questions and the processes in which he tries to find solutions define man's nature and thus define his society and history. The processes of personal and historical individuation are. according to Fromm, similar in that both require the severing of primary ties. The severance of these ties result in a sense of anxiety and separateness as man is confronted with the freedom be responsible for himself and his decisions. Man seeks to avoid these choices through mechanisms of escape defined by Fromm as authoritarianism, destructiveness and automation

conformity. Seeking to avoid choices, man gives up his freedom and lives behind chains of illusion. He needs to be free of these illusions if he is to use the freedom to be fully human, that is to experience self love, self respect, love for the world and productive work.

Man's social character is, to a large extent, historically conditioned. This is to say that society through its education mechanisms, teaches the inhabitants certain values, beliefs, and modes of operation. Social character is the shared aspects of character traits assumed by members of a given society. The social character internalizes external necessities and thus harnesses human energy for the task of a given economic and social system. Culture structures man to conform to a social mold making him what he has to be in accordance with the necessities of the society in which he lives. It follows then that the ideal or utopian society would reverse this process. The ideal of the Utopian society, as defined by Fromm, is a society whose needs and purpose mesh perfectly with the psychological needs inherent in man. It is a society which allows man to be authentic, to be productive, to be loving. At the same time the ideal society is possible only through increased individual self awareness. This in turn is possible only through a regime of daily meditation or introspection, concentration, patience, a disciplined way of life, avoidance of trite conversation and avoidance of

meaningless activity.<sup>85</sup> Fromm suggests psychotherapy as one means or tool man can use to develop his self awareness, confront his existential concerns, and learn to use his freedom responsibly, productively, and authentically. Whatever method the individual selects, what is needed is a strong will and impulse to affect change. The individual will progress to throw off the chains of illusion only if he assumes an increasing degree of responsibility for and participation in his own life.<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

In Fromm's theory of man, based upon the concept of man's essence as being in the process of becoming, one individual represents the human race. He is an individual with all his peculiarities and in this sense unique while at the same time is representative of all characteristics of the human race. He means by this that there are certain givens of existence common to all human beings; he defines these as the existential dichotomies in man.<sup>87</sup>

Man, a "freak of nature", is a part of nature, subject to nature's physical laws, unable to change those laws, he at the same time transcends the rest of nature. The original unity and harmony of animal existence became disrupted as man evolved into a self-aware, reasoning, imagining being. Aware of himself, man realizes the powerlessness and limitations of his existence, he visualizes his own death, and he realizes he is unable to rid himself of the dichotomy of his existence.

Human existence, for Fromm, differs from that of all other organisms in that man's very existence presents him with insoluble questions. Consequently, man is in a constant state of unavoidable disequilibrium. His reason forces him to cope with and attempt to solve this insoluble dichotomy, to develop, to create a world of his own in which he can

feel at home with his fellow man. This is not to say that man has an innate drive for progress, but rather that it is the contradiction inherent to his existence that makes him proceed. Human existence is thus characterized for Fromm as compelling man to go forward with everlasting effort to make the unknown known, to try to fill in the blanks in his knowledge. Man is impelled to give account of himself to himself and for the meaning of his existence. He is driven to overcome the inner split he experiences, that is the separateness from nature, man, and himself.

The existential dichotomies are rooted in man's existence, they are contradictions which he can't annul but to which he can react in various ways relative to his character and culture. The most fundamental of these dichotomies is between life and death. This is an unalterable fact, the awareness of which profoundly influences man's life. He tries to negate the anxiety aroused by this dichotomy through the formation of and belief in ideologies which promote a concept of immortality. Aware of his death, man is aware that the time he has on earth for the realization of his potentialities is also limited. A conflict arises between what he could achieve and what he does in actuality achieve. Again he tries to negate the anxiety caused by this awareness through ideologies which promote the concept of life fulfillment in the after-life, or in ideologies which promote fulfillment



through involvement in social service and duties and say that the development, freedom, and happiness of the individual is subordinate to or irrelevant in comparison with the welfare of the external power. Meaning does not imply certainty in fact, the quest for meaning blocks the search for meaning, while uncertainty implies the unfolding of human potentialities. There is no meaning to life except the meaning man gives to his life by the unfolding of his powers; by living productively.

Man aware of his birth and death, aware of the need to give his own life meaning experiences a sense of isolation. He is aware of the dichotomy between being alone and related at the same time. Each man is a unique entity, aware of himself as a separate entity alone when he judges, makes decisions solely by the power of his reason. At the same time, man cannot bear to be alone for man is a social being who seeks to be related to his fellow man, whose happiness depends on a sense of solidarity. In an effort to negate this anxiety he becomes involved in ideologies which give him a sense of belonging and lessen his need to make decisions based on his autonomy and reason.

These dichotomies are the source of anxieties which make men vulnerable to those who seek power. They try to convince man that historical dichotomies, which are manmade, not necessarily part of human existence, and are ultimately soluble, are one and the same as existential dichotomies and

are therefore unalterable. They encourage man to resign himself to accept his tragic fate.

Man is involved in a process whereby he is confronted with existential contradictions. These contradictions are on the one hand the basis for human progress however the anxiety they arouse may cause men to attempt to deny their reality. In an attempt to negate these conflicts, men seek out individual rationalizations and ideologies (socially patterned rationalizations), in social life. As a result man accepts as true the thoughts shared by most of the members of his given culture but remains untrue to his authentic self which requires autonomy and reason in decision-making.

Man can't annul the existential dichotomies but he can react to them in different ways. He can appease his mind by soothing, harmonizing ideologies, he can escape the inner restlessness by ceaseless activity or he can abrogate his freedom giving it to external powers. Should he choose any of these alternatives, he will remain dissatisfied, anxious and restless. The solution lie in his awareness. Man must face the truth and acknowledge his fundamental aloneness and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate. He must recognize that there is no power transcending him which can solve his problems for him, and he must accept responsibility for himself. Only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life. This requires constant vigilance, activity and effort.

The one task that matters is the full development of our powers within the limitations set by the laws of our existence. Only when man recognizes the human situation, the dichotomies inherent in his existence and his capacity to unfold his powers will he be able to succeed in his task to be himself and for himself and to achieve happiness by the full realization of those faculties which are peculiarly his of reason, love, productive work.<sup>88</sup>

Man denied the possibility of unfolding his potentiality, is objectified. This process may be externally or internally imposed and results in both inter- and intra-personal alienation. Man's self-awareness and the awareness of himself as involved in the process of becoming is one of the factors which differentiates man from other animals. Modern man's dilemma is that he has increased his knowledge about matter but he remains ignorant with regard to the most important and fundamental questions of human existence: what man is, how he ought to live, how the tremendous energies within him can be released and used productively.<sup>89</sup>

Who is man? Man is not a thing- we do not ask what is man yet we often define him as a thing in terms of his place in society. Man is a living being, a living process, this means he is involved in a continual process of development, of becoming. At every moment in his life, he is not yet what he can be and what he may yet become. . . his thinking can reach beyond the satisfaction of his physical needs. Thought is not merely a means to procure goods, it is also a means to explore the reality of his own being and of the world around him. Man possesses not only intelligence but also reason by means of which he can perceive truth... Man cannot be defined from externals, we must rely on our own personal experience as human beings to define man. . . We are thus obliged to ask Who am I, not Who is man. The only answer we can give if we are to avoid objectifying ourselves and others is to say- I am a human being, a being in the process of becoming

human.<sup>90</sup>

The experience of "I-am" a being in the process of becoming is not in and of itself the solution to the experience of alienation. Rather, it is the precondition for its solution. To achieve a sense of being means to achieve a relationship with one's self and one's world, to experience one's own existence and identity, that is to love oneself. It is only then that one can begin to think, will, act authentically by saying "I am therefore I think, I act."<sup>91</sup> While the acceptance by and trust for another human being may serve as the catalyst for the "I-am" experience, it cannot be assumed that the experience of one's own being will take place automatically if one is accepted by someone else.<sup>92</sup> "The crucial question is what the individual himself, in his own awareness of and responsibility for his existence does with the fact that he can be accepted."<sup>93</sup> This is to say that external verification does not insure the individual of self acceptance and authenticity. Ultimately the individual is responsible to be the catalyst of his own I-am experience.

The goal for man is to be able to experience the anxiety of self awareness without seeking escape but rather choosing to be responsible. This requires a developed sense of being which is a goal Fromm.<sup>94</sup> It entails a capacity to see oneself as a being in the world, and to know oneself as the being who can do certain things. Love of self is a

precondition for ego development, since the sense of self occurs on a level prior to the subject object dichotomy of ego development. Instead of experiencing oneself as a subject or as the object one experiences oneself as the being who can among other things know himself as the subject of what is occurring. The sense of being gives one the capacity to set oneself against the external world and confront one's non-being.<sup>95</sup>

While not denying the influences of society, Fromm says being cannot be reduced to the introjection of social and ethical norms. Authentic existence is not what others have told one he should be, that is the ontological sense can't wholly be reduced to external influences. The sense of being gives the basis for self esteem which is separate from what others say: self esteem validated by society is merely social conformity. "This is to say that the sense of one's own existence, though interwoven with all kinds of social relatedness, is in basis not the product of social forces, it always presupposes the own world."<sup>96</sup>

While Fromm's earlier writings emphasize the culpability and influence of society, Fromm's later writings demonstrate an increased emphasis on the ability of the individual to become aware of these forces and to choose to see beyond the chains of illusion, be they internal or external myths. He assumes the ontological awareness below

the ego theory and like the existentialists, gives back to the individual the responsibility for his own life.

The question arises as to whether man has free will or is determined. He appears on one hand to be determined by bio-sociological factors and on the other hand need to exercise his free will to change his life conditions. The argument is not for Fromm, one of free will and determinism. Freedom is in itself an alienated concept in that one can free oneself from something but one does not have freedom. Rather, freedom infers for Fromm, a dialectic process, thus man can only say I am in the process of freeing myself. Man does not have endless possibilities to choose from; he is free to choose among the possibilities and alternatives available to him; he is not free to choose anything else. Furthermore, man's freedom changes with every act he performs. Thus, the degree of freedom of choice changes constantly with our actions. Fromm defines this choice between available possibilities as Alternativism.

Only by being aware of the forces which act upon one can man achieve optimal freedom as a human being. As long as he remains unaware of the forces which drive him is he irresponsible; he is shoved around by forces which act behind his back. Yet, he lives under the illusion that he is free and that he has determined his own fate.<sup>97</sup>

## Fromm and His Critics

Fromm's unique theoretical perspective allows him to discuss the concepts of alienation, human nature and freedom as universal concepts relevant to diverse fields of study ranging from the sciences to the humanities. Fromm's concepts of human nature, freedom and the messianic period have Jewish albeit not necessarily theological sources; thus, to a critic of Fromm who is unfamiliar with the multifaceted Jewish understanding of God, human nature, freedom and the messianic period, Fromm's discussion may appear over optimistic and contradictory.<sup>98</sup> The following analysis will present two critics of Fromm's work, in particular their critiques of his concept of alienation. In response to their critiques, an analysis will be presented combining concepts from Fromm's most recent writings as well as a brief summary of the intellectual, cultural and religious environment which influenced Fromm's thought.

## Setting the Problem

Man is first a being with certain specifically human conditions of existence; second, he is a social being largely formed by the structure of his society, and that structure has to be explored; third, he is a being who seeks an answer to the question of why he was born, why he is living. . . . Any attempt to understand man must include knowledge of his biological instinctive equipment as well as of the social influences of the society in which he lives and of the religious, moral, and ethical problems with which he must cope. If he omits any of them, one has a crippled and restricted picture of man.<sup>99</sup>

Given the conditions Fromm has stated above, it follows that it is necessary to have an understanding of such influences upon Fromm's life if one is to understand his writings. While Fromm's critics discuss the influence of Marx and Freud upon Fromm's work, they fail to mention the other factors Fromm identifies as having a decisive influence upon his thought. Among these factors Fromm includes his traditional Orthodox Jewish upbringing and his studies of the Old Testament, prophets and Jewish writings.

Fromm points out that many thinkers tend to look at man from one vantage point or another; such an attitude he says, leads to distortions.<sup>100</sup> The two critics selected attempt to analyze Fromm's work from the perspectives of Christian theology and academic sociology; in the process they fail to recognize the influence of Fromm's Jewish education upon his thought. Fromm's interest is not an understanding of man's existential questions in relationship to God; rather, he is interested in developing a philosophy which can probe origins and seek out truth in order to understand growth.



Fromm attempts to explain the human situation and offer a solution of what men need to do if they are to actualize their human potential. This solution is, according to Fromm, a religious position that can manage without God.<sup>101</sup>

## Guyton Hammond: Assumptions

In Man in Estrangement: A Comparison of the Thought of Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm, Guyton Hammond addresses the concept of estrangement from a theological perspective. He attempts to analyze Fromm's concept of alienation from a theological viewpoint and finds that Fromm's theory falls short of answering the problem of estrangement on a theological level. Hammond criticizes Fromm's theory for failing to understand estrangement as separation from God. Fromm however, says it is the idolatrous nature of man's relationship to God which epitomizes alienation. The stated purpose of Hammond's book is "to look through the eyes of both Tillich and Fromm at human nature"<sup>102</sup>; however, Hammond's analysis of Fromm's writings is based on certain assumption which limit his understanding of Fromm's work. These assumptions include:

1. Fromm's concept of alienation was primarily influenced by Marx; thus, Hammond disregards the influence of Fromm's Jewish education and background.

2. Since Fromm's writings have a nontheological orientation, Fromm, therefore, has a nonreligious orientation; Hammond assumes Fromm is a secularist whose analysis of alienation has only a psychological or sociological basis.

3. The fundamental discovery of modern man's self

Hammond's stated purpose is "to follow in the tradition of studies of human nature which have been enriched in recent years by a renewal of communications between religious and secular evaluations of the human condition."<sup>104</sup> Hammond attempts to compare Tillich's theological analysis of estrangement with what Hammond describes as Fromm's nontheological, psychoanalytical and sociological insights about alienation. Hammond defines Fromm's insights as an attempt to combine the sciences of man with a philosophical perspective. Such an approach Hammond says has its roots in the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and the nineteenth century existentialist sources; assuming the former, Hammond further assumes Fromm's works represent the major currents of modern thought concerning man.

Fromm however, tells us his theory has much more ancient roots. For Fromm, modern Western thought concerning man has as its source the Old Testament and prophetic writings, and ancient philosophy:

Something that had a positive influence and decisive influence on me was my family heritage...The spirit of this old (Orthodox Jewish) tradition was prebourgeois, precapitalist, and certainly more medieval than it was modern. And that tradition had greater reality for me than the twentieth-century world I was living in. . . my sense of the world was a premodern one; and that attitude was reinforced by studying the Talmud, reading the Bible, and hearing stories of my ancestors."<sup>105</sup>

Fromm states that insights gained from his studies of

ancient sources served as the foundation for his description of the mentally healthy man and the ideal society. Hammond failing to recognize the decisive influence of Fromm's Jewish education upon his thought, falls short of understanding Fromm's concept of alienation.

Hammond assumes that since Fromm has a nontheological orientation, he, therefore, has a nonreligious orientation. Categorizing Fromm as a secularist with a sociopsychological orientation, Hammond then criticizes Fromm's theory for lacking depth in its analysis of estrangement from God. Hammond does not discuss the influence of Fromm's Jewish background, Fromm's concepts of religion nor his concepts of God and idolatrous worship as alienation. Unaware of Fromm's biblical source of the term "alienation", Hammond consequently fails to understand Fromm's analysis of the concept of alienation.

Hammond assumes that the fundamental discovery of modern man's self-analysis is the fact of his estrangement. It is unclear whether Hammond means by this that estrangement, as he defines it, is a modern phenomenon or that it is a discovery of modern man that estrangement is a condition of human existence. While Fromm does not use the word "estrangement", he does say that the process of alienation, in its many manifestations, is by no means a modern phenomenon. Nor, he adds, is it a phenomenon peculiar to Western society: "Alienation seems to differ from culture

to culture, both in the specific spheres which are alienated and in the thoroughness and completeness of the process."<sup>106</sup>

It is important to differentiate two points between Hammond's use of the term "estrangement" and Fromm's use of the term "alienation". For Hammond estrangement is a condition represented by man's separation from something with which he ought to be united. Fromm, on the other hand, uses the term "alienation" to mean both a process in which one is involved and a condition resulting from that process. For Fromm the process of alienation has specific spheres and degrees whereas the term "estrangement" is indicative of a state and a totality. Alienation as a condition is defined by Fromm as man not experiencing himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished "thing" dependent on powers outside himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance. Therefore one can deduce that Fromm would say that to be estranged in the sense of being separated is one of the consequences of the process of alienation.<sup>107</sup>

Hammond's second assumption is a definition of "estrangement" which he feels was marked by the inception of Hegel's usage of the term. He fails, however, to recognize that Hegel differentiated, as does Fromm, between alienation and estrangement. Hegel used the term Entausserung to mean alienation and the term Entfremdung to mean estrangement.

Entausserung, or going outside itself, is necessary for man to be more than a mere animal and for civilization to exist and develop. Entausserung involves opposition and division whereas Entfremdung is the "felt turmoil or unhappy state of mind resulting from the perception of the gap between the spirit of man and the world."<sup>108</sup>

Hammond's assumption that Fromm's use of the term "alienation" and Tillich's use of the term "estrangement" both mean Entfremdung when they use different terms is to lead to faulty conclusions. Furthermore, Fromm says that the word "alienation", as used by Hegel and Marx, refers to a form of self-estrangement which permits the person to act reasonably in practical matters, yet which constitutes one of the most socially patterned defects. By this he means that a person may appear by society's standards to be well integrated and productive and at the same time have an internal personal sense of meaninglessness. Marx, he says, further defined "alienation" as "that condition of man where his own act becomes to him an alien power, standing over and against him, instead of being ruled by him."<sup>109</sup>

We see that not only do Fromm and Hammond use different terms but also they disagree in their understanding of Hegel and Marx's use of the term "alienation". Fromm does not mean by the term "alienation" what Hammond means by the term "estrangement" and Hammond's analysis of Fromm's concept of alienation as estrangement is based on a faulty assumption.

While Fromm concedes that the use of the term "alienation" in a general sense is a modern one, he adds that it is frequently misunderstood and misused.<sup>110</sup> Fromm says that the concept of alienation as he understands it, in opposition to Hammond's notion of having its inception with Hegel, has Old Testament sources. "It (Fromm's concept) is the same one to which the prophets of the Old Testament referred as idolatry. As prophet Hosea says (XIV,8): neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods;"<sup>111</sup>

Fromm says that in order to understand the concept of alienation one must understand the monotheistic meaning of idolatry. The underlying principle of monotheism

is that God is unrecognizable and indefinable; God is not a thing. If man is created in the likeness of God, he is created as the bearer of infinite qualities. That is to say, man is infinite, that there is no partial quality in him which can be hypostatized into the whole.<sup>112</sup>

Idolatry means that man denies that in himself which makes him human, instead he submits to a projection of one partial quality in himself and does not experience himself as the center from which living acts of love and reason radiate but instead experiences himself as a thing. The prophets of monotheism did not denounce heathen religions as idolatrous primarily because they "worshiped several gods instead of one... rather, the essential difference lies in the fact of self-alienation, that is the idol represents man's own life-forces in an alienated form."<sup>113</sup>

In Fromm's analysis modern monotheistic religions, to the extent that man projects his power of love and reason unto God, have regressed to idolatry. Love of God as an act of submissive worship is merely an idolatrous form of alienation. For Fromm, to define estrangement as a state in which man is separated from something other than that which is his true self, is to give the other human qualities and make the other an idol. To say that man is estranged and mean that he is estranged from God and that reconciliation can occur only through man's relationship to God rather than through his relationship to himself, is a form of idolatry and involves man in a process of alienation.

By Fromm's reasoning, if God is infinite and undefinable and man is created in the likeness of God, then man is never separated from that which is infinite, rather what man experiences is a lack of awareness of who he truly is. Although Fromm does not use term reconciliation, if one understands it to mean the reestablishment of a relationship, then Fromm would say it is not through a reestablishing of one's relationship with God that one is no longer estranged; instead, it is through man's involvement in the process of self awareness that he experiences what it means to be created in the likeness of God. It is by means of this involvement in the process of being authentic, productive, responsible, using his reason and imagination and loving that man overcomes alienation. The salvation of



man, which Fromm likens to the messianic period described by the prophets, is by means of man's own self-realization.<sup>114</sup>

Self-realization cannot, Fromm says, be based on some externally imposed standard; rather it is the fulfillment of the potentialities of man's own nature. Those potentialities include productiveness, full awareness, freedom, and a new relatedness based on love, reason and creativity. Moreover, it is through self-realization that man experiences the essence of his human nature as life aware of itself; that is man becomes conscious of himself as a meaning seeking being in need of answers to the existential questions posed to him.

Hammond's criticism of Fromm is based on a comparison with Tillich's writings on estrangement; to understand Hammond's criticisms of Fromm it is necessary to compare Hammond's analysis of Tillich with Fromm's writings.

Hammond, assuming that Fromm's concept of alienation was influenced by Tillich's, uses Tillich's definition of existentialism as a criterion for understanding the existential themes in Fromm's work. Hammond quotes Fromm as saying, "Essentially the whole existentialist philosophy, from Kierkegaard on, is, as Paul Tillich puts it, an over one-hundred-years-old movement of rebellion against the dehumanization of man in industrial society."<sup>115</sup> From this Hammond concludes that Fromm conceives existentialism along

the lines of Tillich's concept, and therefore he analyzes Fromm's thought as existential in Tillich's sense of the term.<sup>116</sup>

Fromm, however, refutes this categorization, saying that his terminology is unrelated to the literature of existentialism with which he professes little acquaintance. While Fromm acknowledges that his writings contain existential themes, his works are not considered existentialist in the sense of belonging to modern existentialist philosophy.<sup>117</sup> The Old Testament and prophets, Fromm says, are his source of existential themes, and not the literature of the modern existentialists.

According to Hammond, Tillich's analysis of existence leads inevitably to the discovery of estrangement: for Tillich, man's existence is totally estranged. Further, since existence means estrangement and not reconciliation, the only possible answer is that which comes to man from beyond his existence. Reconciliation as the reunion of existence with essential finitude is, in Tillich's evaluation, a matter of anticipation and expectation, but not reality.

For Tillich, the power of life which produces self-transcendence and alienation cannot of itself achieve reconciliation. Finite life is tragic; its greatness leads inevitably to its own disruption. Only the holy, the ecstatic, is beyond tragedy. . . Tillich therefore foresees no progressive realization of reconciled existence but only its fragmentary manifestations in moments of grace. His view of history is one of tragedy.<sup>118</sup>

In contrast, "human existence", for Fromm, means "self awareness, defined as the knowledge that one exists, that one is different, that one is something apart from nature, apart from people.. the experience of one-self, the awareness of one's thoughts and feelings." Existence understood this way involves an understanding of separation from the original unity or harmony with nature as a positive and necessary one. This separation was not, for Fromm, estrangement from essential being, instead it was the first necessary step in the process toward a full self awareness which represents a true, mature, unification with essential being.<sup>119</sup>

Consequently existence does not mean "estrangement and not reconciliation" for Fromm as it does for Tillich; rather human existence means the birth of self-awareness and necessary separation from the "parent" or primary ties needed to develop one's independence and humanity. The process of individuation involves the necessary separation from the primary ties of child with parent. This separation is a reenactment of the process of man's becoming a self-aware human being in the historic evolutionary process. When Fromm speaks of a messianic harmony and unity, he is not referring to a return to the womb, a return to man's original self-unaware relationship with God or to his original creature-like harmony with nature. The answer to man's struggle with separation does not come from beyond

man's existence; it is by the means of man's own self realization. Fromm's understanding of the possibility of a messianic period for all men, within the lifetime of man upon this earth, is a biblical concept, found within the Jewish tradition.

Hence for Fromm finite life is not tragic; it is a story of becoming, of fulfillment of potentiality, and of hope. If only the holy is beyond tragedy, then Fromm would reply that man, created in the likeness of God is holy and beyond tragedy to the extent that he can fully actualize his human potentiality to be holy.<sup>120</sup> History for Fromm is not tragedy but dialectic process, learning and evolving, making wrong turns, but always with the possibility of progress. Tillich's reconciled existence does not, for Fromm, occur through the grace of God: it is through man's use of reason to make the best possible choices from the givens of his existential situation.<sup>121</sup>

Whereas Hammond understands the term "life to be a dynamic one and the term being-itself to be a static one",<sup>122</sup> Fromm says existence involves being defined as involvement in the process of becoming and asking questions. Fromm says the term "being", a participle in both Hebrew and in English, connotes process and becoming rather than stasis. While the ultimate although unachievable goal for Tillich and Hammond is reconciliation, Fromm's goal for man is not reconciliation but self-realization. Fromm's concern

is not for the time when man will finally be reconciled and no longer involved in the process. Instead, Fromm emphasizes the process whereby each thought, decision, and act provide man with the opportunity to be authentic, productive, loving and non-alienated. He asks, "Who is man? Man is not a thing; he is a living being caught up in a continual process of development. At every point in his life he is not yet what he can be and what he may become." <sup>123</sup>

Hammond draws the following conclusions from his comparison of Fromm and Tillich theories of alienation and estrangement:

1. Fromm's version of alienation is naturalistic and does not demonstrate an understanding of the completeness of man's alienation: "Fromm describes the alienation of the ego, or conscious self, from the nonego, or unconscious self, the subjective from the non subjective. This is a separation within the totality of the self, rather than an alienation of the self viewed as a totality."<sup>124</sup> Misunderstanding Fromm's concept of ego, Hammond fails to understand Fromm's differentiation between self awareness, sense of being and ego and thus does not fully understand the complexity of Fromm's concept of alienation as a process nor the complexity of Fromm's understanding of man beyond the psychoanalytic model.

2. There is a contradiction in Fromm's definition of alienation; if on one hand "alienation includes regression,

how can it also be considered a progressive step."<sup>125</sup> This criticism was refuted by demonstrating Fromm's multi-faceted use of the term alienation: Fromm's concept of alienation includes a progressive aspect which is a given of human evolution and existence and serves as both the catalyst for and the result of self-awareness, and a regressive aspect which is result of man's attempt to escape the reality and freedom of his primary alienation.

3. The "progressive, utopian" aspects of Fromm's thought is unrealistic in comparison to Tillich's world view. Hammond in actuality concludes that Fromm's ideal society which is based upon Jewish concepts of human nature, God, messianic period, and the meaning of the Old Testament and prophets, is unrealistic in comparison to Tillich and Hammond's Christian perspective.

4. Fromm's major accomplishments are his "analysis of the nature of human consciousness and the delineation of the ways in which society restricts the content of consciousness, thus alienating man from the fullness of his humanity".<sup>126</sup> Hammond described the source of Fromm's thought to be the unification of Marxian concepts of ideology and false consciousness with the psychoanalytic ideas of rationalization and repression. Fromm, however, identified his Jewish upbringing, the Old Testament, and the prophets as having the most decisive impact upon his thinking. Furthermore it was demonstrated that while Fromm

is concerned with the alienating influences within society, his greater concern is with those qualities of human nature that motivate man to become alienated and seek mechanisms of escape from freedom.

### John Schaar Basic Assumptions:

Schaar's analysis of Fromm's work is based on assumptions, some of which are similar to Hammond's including his criticism of Fromm's concepts of human nature and the ideal society. Schaar, however, is an academician and not a theologian. Whereas Hammond addresses Fromm's concept of alienation from a theological perspective, Schaar addresses Fromm's concept from a sociological perspective. Schaar, like Hammond, says his purpose is "to convey a reasonably full sense of Fromm's broadened and deepened idea of alienation".<sup>127</sup> Schaar's assumptions include:

1. Fromm's concern is the sickness of modern man. This sickness is defined as alienation and is a byproduct of modern society; hence mental health is determined by the health of the society.
2. Fromm's concept of alienation is understandable solely on the basis of the concept of alienation of Hegel and Marx. Schaar like Hammond neglects the influence of Fromm's Jewish education upon his concept of alienation.
3. Fromm's central principle of Old Testament monotheism is that God is indefinable and infinite.
4. Central to Fromm's work is the conviction that civilization relentlessly and systematically crushes and corrupts man's deepest needs and noblest powers.



5. Fromm understands man's mental health to be determined by the society in which he lives, and
6. society's economic institutions are the chief forces molding personality.
7. Fromm's theme of goodness and mental health is based on an idea that man is perfect.<sup>128</sup>

Schaar, bases his analysis of Fromm on the assumption that Fromm was most influenced by Marx and Freud. He concludes that Fromm's theory is overly optimistic and utopian and is fallacious to the degree that Fromm believes nature and man are perfect. Fromm however argues that to say that man is perfect suggests stasis and makes society the source of man's corruption. Therefore, Schaar, assuming Fromm believes nature and man are perfect, fails to understand a concept fundamental to Fromm's writings: the concept of life as process and evolution. Fromm does not say man is perfect, he says that man is perfectible. Man created in the likeness of God has infinite possibilities: hence man's essence can not be defined and man cannot be made into an object.

Since man's essence and therefore the concept of what is good for man can only be inferred, Fromm says that which helps man towards the goal of realizing his potentiality, that which helps man in his goal towards realizing his perfectability is that which is good. Evil for Fromm

consists of those factors, be they internal or external, which inhibit and prevent man's growth. By this definition, society is not separate from man as a force acting upon him. Society can be understood as part of man's evolution, as a response to man's need to overcome the isolation he feels secondarily to the severance of his primary ties. It is not until his later writings and revisions that Fromm clearly formulates this concept of man and society.<sup>129</sup>

Schaar, assuming alienation is a byproduct of modern society, discusses Fromm's criticism of society without demonstrating the relationship of the process of personal individuation with the evolution of society in history. This concept is fundamental to Fromm's theory; to discuss alienation as something caused by society is to misunderstand Fromm's theory of human development and the development of self-awareness and self-consciousness.

Fromm not only objectively states the conditions of society which alienate man, he also proposes an analysis of what it is about human nature that allows man to become alienated. Whereas Schaar assumes Fromm to say "that whether or not a man will be healthy is out of his hands; it is determined by the society in which he lives"<sup>130</sup>, Fromm, while describing the societal factors which influence a man's mental health, believes that ultimately man can, through his reason become aware of these factors and make choices from the from the options available to him. Fromm

says ultimately it is involvement in the process of increasing awareness and responsibility that man frees himself from the chains of illusion and alienation. Ultimately it is not some external authority, be it God or society, which determines man's health and development; it is man's decision to accept or reject the responsibility of his human potentiality and the responsibility to exercise his freedom to actualize his own life.<sup>131</sup>

Schaar recognizes the source of alienation to be as old as literary history; yet he fails to recognize that it is just such an ancient source that was influential to Fromm's thought. Schaar's describes "the motif of the eternal wanderer as beginning in the dawn of the Jewish tradition and weaving in and out of the whole of subsequent western history."<sup>132</sup> However, even if he were to grant this influence upon Fromm's thinking, Schaar's understanding of the Abraham story is so alien to Jewish thought that it clearly exemplifies Schaar's misunderstanding of Fromm's concept of alienation on a very fundamental level.

Schaar understands Abraham to be the prototype and universal symbol of the alienated man. Separated from his family, nation, and national religion, Abram wanders without a home in society, soil, or faith. He is a nomad unable to love, who ultimately subjects himself to a transcendent power and substitutes law for communion and subordination for love. Estranged from himself, Abram projects all that is

good in him unto a strange absolute being which no longer constitutes his absolute being. In return for this he gains a new identity, symbolized by a change of name to Abraham.<sup>133</sup>

Schaar's analysis of this story and consequently of alienation, differs from Fromm's interpretation on several key issues.<sup>134</sup> Abram was not forcibly separated but rather exercised his freedom to make choices: Abram chose to be separated and thus chose to be involved in a process of evolution and self actualization. Moreover, Fromm's analysis of this story is of the evolution of man's relationship with God from that of disobedient children to that of free men able to challenge God on the principle of justice.<sup>135</sup>

What is the nature of this human evolution? Its essence lies in the man's emergence from the incestuous ties to blood and soil into independence and freedom. Man, the prisoner of nature, becomes free by becoming fully human. In the biblical and later Jewish view, freedom and independence are the goals of human development, and the aim of human action is the constant process of liberating oneself from the shackles that bind man to the past, to nature, to the clan, to idols.<sup>136</sup>

As previously stated, the story of Adam and Eve was not the "fall" of man but his awakening and the beginning of his rise. With the acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil, and the severance of the primary ties between man and nature, man began the process of individuation. This marked according to Fromm, the beginning of human history and human alienation.

The story of Abraham represents the next step in the process of liberation from incestuous ties. In severing his ties of blood and soil, Abraham cut the social ties which make man a slave, and dependent on a master. Abraham's challenge to God regarding the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18;23-32) is not the "attitude of a meek suppliant but that of the proud man who has a right to demand that God uphold the principle of justice. . . he is a free man who has the right to demand."<sup>137</sup> This challenge was made to God, not on behalf of the Hebrews but on behalf of non-Hebrews. As such it represents for Fromm the concept of universality: "it represents the expression of a free man who recognizes the unity of the human race."<sup>138</sup>

Fromm's analysis of the Abraham story and the evolution of the concept of alienation differs dramatically with Schaar's interpretation.<sup>139</sup> Schaar's assumption that "the sources of Fromm's thinking are in Hegel and Marx, and that in order to understand Fromm, it is useful to look first at Hegel and Marx's concepts of alienation"<sup>140</sup>, demonstrates a misunderstanding of the evolution of Fromm's works.

Schaar, while personally identifying the Old Testament as a source of the concept of alienation, does not credit Fromm with this discovery. Similarly Schaar's assumption that the idea of alienation begins with the story of Abraham fails to recognize the elements of process and cohesiveness in totality of the story of the Old Testament. Fromm's

analysis of the concept of alienation and man's process of individuation begins with the story of Adam and Eve. This type of alienation, necessary for the maturation and actualization of man, is different in kind from the alienation which is characterized by idolatry. It is only by means of the former that man is able to overcome the idolatrous alienation.<sup>141</sup>

This point seems to have eluded both Hammond and Schaar who criticize Fromm's concept of alienation "as confusing, contradictory, and protean".<sup>142</sup> Schaar understands Fromm's concept of alienation to merely be an update and expansion of Marx, in that Fromm has "kept the core constant, but expanded the idea at the margins, he has given the idea more psychological depth, and has gained the perspective of mass society rather than limited to class society".<sup>143</sup> As previously demonstrated, Fromm argues that his concept of alienation as well as Marx' concept of alienation as idolatry have Old Testament and prophetic sources.<sup>144</sup>

Further failure to understand Fromm's concept of alienation is demonstrated by Schaar's misinterpretation of Fromm's statements concerning the central principle of Old Testament monotheism that God is indefinable and infinite.<sup>145</sup> Fromm, however, writes "the Old Testament and prophets represent a chronicle of the evolution of man's self awareness. This evolution of man's self awareness coincided with the evolution of man's concept of God."<sup>146</sup>

Fromm's emphasis is on the process as distinct from the knowledge of a thing in stasis.

This God who manifests himself in history cannot be represented by any kind of image, neither by an image of sound-that is, a name-nor by an image of stone or wood. This prohibition of any kind of representation of God is clearly expressed in the Ten Commandments, which forbid man to bow down before any "graven image, nor likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth"(Ex.20:4). This command is one of the most fundamental principles of Jewish theology'.<sup>147</sup>

Fromm precedes this quotation with a discussion of the concept of a nameless God. "The Hebrew text EHEYEH asher EHEYEH...I am who I am (Ex.3:14)...what does this strange name which God gives himself mean?"<sup>148</sup> Fromm tells us that the importance of the Eheyeh, the first person of the imperfect tense of the Hebrew verb to be, lies in the fact that it is the imperfect of the verb to be. It says God is, "but his being is not completed like that of a thing, but is a living process, a becoming: only a thing, that is, that which has reached its final form, can have a name."<sup>149</sup>

To say the central principle is that God is indefinable and infinite is to miss the underlying meanings of this concept. These meanings include: the concept of God as process and becoming, the concept of man as a being created in the image of God and as a being involved in the process of being and becoming. Included in these meanings is the emphasis on the concept of God's actions as revealed in history rather than on knowledge of God's essence and the

consequent emphasis on Imitatio Dei rather than worship of God.

To say "God is thus and so" is to give God attributes and consequently to make God into an idol. It is not that God is unknowable, it is that man is unable to know God; it is not that God is infinite but that man as a finite being cannot grasp that which is beyond his finiteness. Any statement to the effect of "God is...", attempts to define God rather than describing man's ability and limitation. To say more than this is to attempt to describe God, be it with words, sounds, or image and to make God into an idol, to be involved in a subject object relationship and as a consequence to be involved in a self alienating process.

The concepts of process and becoming are fundamental to Fromm's concept of human essence and human evolution in history. Alienation, as idolatry, is that which separates man from this process of becoming.

Schaar, as a sociologist understands the focus of Fromm's work to be a commentary on the destructive effects of society on man's mental health and well being. As Schaar notes, Fromm's earlier books were concerned with the influences of social process on individual, familial, and social health while his later works demonstrated an increasing awareness of the human situation: the needs of man as rooted in the conditions of man's existence. Those



needs, as identified by Schaar, include, the need for relatedness, transcendence, relatedness, identity and frame of reference and devotion.

Schaar, however, publishing in 1961 did not anticipate the further evolution of Fromm's thought, the decreased emphasis on the role of society and the increased emphasis on personal responsibility. Having credited Fromm's Marxist convictions as having the greatest influence upon Fromm's thought, Schaar assumes economic institutions are the chief force molding man's personality.<sup>150</sup> Not only does this assumption fail to recognize the influence of Fromm's Jewish education upon his thought but also it does not address Fromm's theory of the role of family and personal responsibility in the process of individuation.

Schaar assumes Fromm's concept of alienation is a byproduct of modern society. His analysis, similar to Hammond's, fails to recognize the complexity of Fromm's concept of alienation. Given that alienation is evident in modern society, Fromm's focus is not merely a commentary on alienation and the external factors responsible for alienation. Rather Fromm is concerned with the dialectic process between the internal factors which make man susceptible to external alienating forces and the internal forces which motivate man to seek escape or idolatry. Fromm is concerned with the positive aspects of alienation as a necessary catalyst in the process of developing self-

awareness. Alienation for Fromm is multifaceted and not merely the cause of avoidance behaviors nor the result of external factors.

Schaar's analysis of Fromm's concept of alienation fails to recognize these concepts. He finds Fromm's concept of alienation as filled with ambiguities which stem from a more basic difficulty in Fromm's style of thought, that is

Fromm seems to use the term alienation in two different ways. Sometimes he uses it as a subjective, descriptive term, and sometimes as an objective, diagnostic one. That is sometimes he uses it to describe felt human misery, and other times it is postulated to explain unfelt anxiety and discontent.<sup>151</sup>...failure to keep these two usages distinct confuses the reader and allows Fromm to do some dubious things with empirical finds.<sup>152</sup>

While Fromm does use the term alienation to describe both a positive progressive concept and a negative regressive concept, the two concepts are inter-related and part of the dialectic process of being and becoming. A misunderstanding of Fromm's concepts of process, being, and becoming and hence of alienation appear to underlie Schaar's criticisms of Fromm's writings.

In conclusion, Schaar's criticism of Fromm's analysis of alienation is based upon an inadequate understanding of Fromm's concept of alienation and individuation as demonstrated in Fromm's analysis of the Old Testament and prophets. Schaar's understanding of alienation as presented in his analysis of the story of Abraham is diametrically

opposed to the interpretation as given by Fromm. This divergence of interpretation is indicative of the differences in world view of Schaar and Fromm and explicates some of the criticisms Schaar has of Fromm's concept of alienation. As a result Schaar finds Fromm's sociological theory of alienation superficial in that

it blinds him to the basic dimensions of the problem of alienation. . . it spares him from considering the hard question of how far social reform can heal the wounds of alienation, and that it predisposes him toward utopian solutions for problems which may have no sociological solutions at all.<sup>153</sup>

Schaar's analysis apparently fails to recognize the multi-faceted nature of Fromm's theory of alienation which is based upon the concepts of process, evolution, and becoming both for the individual and for the history of man in the world.

Fromm, as a social commentator, recognizes that historically there have been individuals who have exploited the vulnerability of man. This exploitation is seen in the form of institutions, be they religious, political or economic, which further alienate man by offering him a source of escape from his responsibility to choose to live authentically and form authentic bonds. Social institutions while playing on man's vulnerabilities and hence serving to further alienate man, are not in and of themselves the primary source of man's vulnerability. Social factors are culpable but not ultimately responsible for man's sense of alienation. Primary alienation is both a cause and a

product of man's being in the process of becoming. Secondary alienation is the result of the choices man makes in response to the anxiety caused by his isolation and self awareness.

Schaar's closing statement illustrates his analysis of Fromm: "We disagree on the questions of the probable location of the City of God, and on the best method of searching for it."<sup>154</sup> Fromm puts the City of God on that near hill. Schaar puts the City of God back in heaven where it was before the eighteenth century. "Located there, it is certainly harmless, probably beneficial, and possibly even true."<sup>155</sup>

This statement belies not only a lack of awareness of the decisive influence of Fromm's Judaism on his thinking, but indicates a fundamental difference in world view. Schaar criticizes Fromm's utopianism as unrealistic and better placed in heaven. Fromm's utopianism is in actuality a description of the traditional Jewish concept of the messianic era when all men will live in accordance with the seven precepts of Noah. This concept implies that mankind for its salvation, does not need to worship God, "all it needs is not to blaspheme God and not to worship idols...thus will man achieve unity and harmony."<sup>156</sup> To say that this can occur only in heaven, is according to Fromm a form of alienated thinking for it removes the responsibility from man to actualize his own life on earth.

## CONCLUSION

Fundamental to Fromm's writings is the discussion of certain existential themes central to which is his discussion of the alienation of man in modern society. Whereas the phenomenon of alienation of man in modern society is a topic of current concern, Fromm argues that the assumption is made fallaciously that alienation is a modern concept. Alienation, as analyzed by Fromm, is a multifaceted concept having sources in Old Testament and prophetic writings. Fromm distinguishes between two types of alienation, a progressive one which serves as the catalyst for man's self-awareness and a regressive one which Fromm says is similar to the Old Testament and prophet's concept of idolatry. While recognizing the forces of society which impede man's actualization and serve as alienating factors, Fromm concludes that ultimately the responsibility lies with the individual to make the best choices possible from those available. He further concludes it is only when the individual is willing to accept his freedom and act responsibly that he will be able to free himself from illusion and alienating forces to live a productive life.

## Bibliography

Erich Fromm,

The Art of Loving, ( New York: Harper and Row, 1956)

Beyond the Chains of Illusion, ( New York: Simon and  
Schuster, 1962 )

Escape from Freedom, ( New York: Avon Books, 1969 )

For the Love of Life, ( New York: Free Press, 1983 )

et al., Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society,  
( New York: Dell, 1962 ) pp. 56-63

Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of  
Ethics, ( New York: Ballantine Books, 1947 )

The Heart of Man, ( New York: Harper and Row, 1964 )

The Sane Society, ( New York: Rinehart, 1955 )

You Shall be as Gods, ( New York: Rinehart, 1966 )

et al., Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis,  
( New York: Dell, 1962 )

- Richard I. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, ( New York:  
Harper and Row, 1966 )
- Erich Fromm, et al., The Nature of Man, ( New York:  
Macmillan, 1968 )
- Guyton Hammond, Man in Estrangement: A Comparison of the  
Thought of Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm, ( Tennessee:  
Vanderbilt University Press, 1965 )
- Don Hausdorff, Erich Fromm, ( New York: Twayne Publishers,  
1972 )
- Landis and Tauber, In the Name of Life: Essays in Honor of  
Erich Fromm, ( New York: Rinehart ,1971 )
- Rollo May, ed., Existence, (New York: Basic Books, 1958 )
- Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, ( New York:  
Washington Square Press, 1956 ) pp. 559-765
- John Scharr, Escape From Authority, ( New York:  
Basic Books, 1961 )
- Irwin Yalom, Existential Psychotherapy, ( New York:  
Basic Books, 1980 )

1. I.Yalom, Existential Psychotherapy, ( New York: Basic Books, 1980 ) p. 8 and pp. 29-33
2. Ibid., p. 9
3. Ibid., p. 9
4. Ibid., p. 9 Many existential thinkers, Sartre and Camus among them, later concluded that while we construct our own life meaning we give it substance and vitality by being involved in a continual process of seeking and choosing. Meaning is not something which can be created once and expected to endure.
5. Ibid., pp. 1-26
6. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, ( New York, Basic Books, 1961 ) p. 4
7. R. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) pp. 94-95
8. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 4
9. Ibid.
10. E.Fromm, For the Love of Life, ( New York, The Free Press, 1986 ) pp. 98-106
11. E. Fromm, You Shall be as Gods, pp. 10-12
12. Soncino Chumash, p. 13 and p. 497
13. Ibid., pp. 52-54
14. Ibid., p.54
15. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, p. 134-139
16. E. Fromm, You Shall be as Gods, p. 71\_\_
17. Ibid., pp. 11-12
18. Ibid. p.59
19. Ibid. pp. 56-62
20. Soncino Chumash, pp. 13



21. Soncino Chumash, p. 13
22. E. Fromm, You Shall be as Gods, pp. 20-24
23. Ibid., p. 24
24. Ibid., p.25
25. Ibid., p. 25
26. Ibid., p. 26
27. Ibid., p. 27
28. Ibid., p. 28-30
29. Ibid., p. 40
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p. 47
32. Ibid., pp. 40-42
33. R. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, ( New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966) pp. 92-119
34. Ibid.,
35. E. Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) pp. 1-10
36. R.Evans, Dialogue With Erich Fromm, pp. 92-99
37. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 43
38. E. Fromm, The Art of Loving, ( New York: Harper and Row, 1956 ) p. 15
39. E. Fromm, The Art of Loving, pp. 21-22
40. E. Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 30
41. E. Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 66
42. E.Fromm, The Sane Society, p.37
43. Ibid., p. 38
44. E. Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 216
45. E. Fromm, Escape From Freedom, p.290

46. E. Fromm, Man for Himself, p.3
47. E. Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 60
48. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 90
49. E. Fromm, Escape From Freedom, pp. 304-327  
and Man for Himself, pp. 47-59\_
50. E. Fromm, ed., The Nature of Man, p. 11
51. E. Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 249
52. E. Fromm, ed., The Nature of Man, p. 10
53. Ibid., p. 9
54. E. Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 60
55. E. Fromm, ed., The Nature of Man, p. 9
56. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 51
57. E. Fromm, Escape From Freedom, pp. 39-53
58. Ibid., p. 46 and  
E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, pp. 66-87
59. R. May, Existence, p. 46
60. R. Evans, Dialogue With Erich Fromm, pp. 24-27
61. Ibid., p. 47
62. E. Fromm, Escape From Freedom, p. 121
63. Ibid., pp. 81-122
64. Ibid., pp. 81-122
65. E. Fromm, quoting K. Marx, Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society, ed. E. and M. Josephson ( New York: Dell, 1962 ) p.57
66. Ibid., p. 57
67. Ibid., p. 58
68. Ibid., p. 70
69. Ibid., p. 70

70. Ibid., p. 68
71. Ibid., p. 71
72. Ibid., p. 67
73. E. Fromm, Escape From Freedom, p. 58
74. I. Yalom, Existential Psychotherapy, p. 382
75. R. Evans, Dialogue With Erich Fromm, p. 18
76. E. Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 216
77. Ibid., p. 26
78. J. Schaar, Escape from Authority, p. 49
79. Ibid., p. 63
80. E. Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 38
81. J. Schaar, Escape From Freedom, p. 237
82. R. Evans, Dialogue With Erich Fromm, p. 16
83. R. Evans, Dialogue With Erich Fromm, p. 17
84. Ibid., p. 15
85. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, pp. 81-86
86. Ibid., pp. 83-87
87. E. Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 47-58
88. Ibid., pp. 47-54
89. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, pp. 140-148
90. Ibid., p. 140-143
91. R. May, Existence, p. 44
92. R. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, pp. 30-34 and 52-54
93. R. May, Existence, p. 93.

94. E.Fromm. This theme is found throughout Fromm's works.  
ref. You Shall Be As Gods.  
For the Love of Life.  
Escape from Freedom.  
discussions on the nature of man
95. R. May, Existence, p. 45
96. Ibid. p.45 The concepts contained in these paragraphs, although quoted from May, can be found throughout Fromm's writings. ie. Refer to Fromm "automaton conformity" in R.Evans.Dialogue With Erich Fromm. pp.21-27 and "self" in E.Fromm. Escape From Freedom. pp.44,137-42,283-90
97. E. Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 47-62
98. R. Evans, Dialogue With Erich Fromm, pp. 96-97
99. R. Evans, Dialogue With Erich Fromm, p. 100
100. R. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, pp. 92-98
101. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, p. 105-106
102. G. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, p. x
103. G.Hammond, Man in Estrangement, (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 1965) pp. ix-xii
104. Ibid., p. 3
105. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, pp. 99-100
106. E. Fromm, Man Alone Alienation in Modern Society, p. 59
107. E. Fromm in Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society, pp. 56-59
108. J. Schaar, Escape from Authority, pp. 182-183
109. Ibid., p. 56-57
110. R. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, pp. 89-90
111. Ibid., p. 57
112. Ibid., pp. 56-57
113. Ibid., pp. 56-57
114. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, pp. 136-139

115. E. Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p.46
116. G. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, pp. 43-44
117. R. May, Existence, p. 57 and  
I. Yalom, Existential Psychotherapy, p. 279
118. G. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, pp. 171-181
119. E. Fromm. This theme is to be found throughout Fromm's writings: in example, The Nature of Man pp.8-12  
Ye Shall be as Gods  
The Heart of Man  
For the Love of Life pp.8-38,134-148
120. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, pp. 137-138
121. R. Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, pp. 92-99
122. G. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, p. 13
123. E. Fromm, For the Love of Life, pp. 140-148
124. G. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, pp. 172-173
125. G. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, p. 173
126. G. Hammond, Man in Estrangement, p.180
127. Ibid., p. 193
128. Ibid., pp. 10-11
129. Fromm, For the Love of Life  
Evans, Dialogues With Erich Fromm and  
Fromm, Escape From Freedom, You Shall be as Gods
130. Ibid., p. 161
131. E. Fromm, Escape from Freedom and For the Love of Life
132. Ibid., p. 174
133. Ibid., p. 174
134. Refer to pages 26-27 of this thesis
135. Ibid., pp. 19-29 of this thesis
136. E. Fromm, You Shall be as Gods, p. 70

137. Ibid., pp. 26-28
138. Ibid., p. 83
139. Refer to E. Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods. for Fromm's discussion of the Old Testament and Prophetic Judaism
140. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 175
141. E. Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, pp. 87-135
142. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 193
143. Ibid., pp. 192-193
144. see discussion of alienation in respect to Hammond and refer to E. Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods for a through discussion of Fromm's concept of alienation as idolatry.
145. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 193
146. E. Fromm, You Shall be as Gods, pp. 10-12
147. E. Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, p. 31
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid., pp. 30-31
150. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 169
151. J. Schaar, Escape From Authority, p. 204
152. Ibid., p. 204
153. Ibid., p. 212
154. Ibid., pp. 10-11
155. Ibid., p. 11
156. E. Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, pp. 50-54