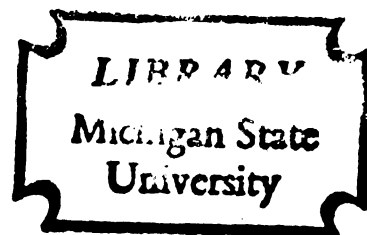


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THE NATURE OF MAN AND GUILT:
IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING DERIVED FROM
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Robert Mansfield Nuermberger

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by

Robert Mansfield Nuernberger

A THESIS

Submitted to
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1968

ABSTRACT

THE NATURE OF MAN AND GUILT: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING DERIVED FROM AN ANALYSIS OF THE PHILOSOPHIES OF CORNELIUS VAN TIL AND ERICH FROMM

By Robert Mansfield Nuernberger

Motivated by the theory of guilt neurosis propounded by O. H. Mowrer, this study probes the nature of man and guilt by comparing and contrasting the opposing philosophies of Cornelius Van Til, philosopher, and Erich Fromm, psychoanalyst, who have both written extensively on these subjects. Their positions are analyzed in the belief that the counselor's attitude toward and treatment of guilt would be determined largely by the philosophical position assumed on the nature of man.

Van Til's system of thought is analyzed in terms of his position on basic presuppositions, theology, reality, knowledge and ethics. Van Til holds that there are only two possible alternatives that are logical to hold and that these are mutually contradictory. Christian man assumes a two-layer theory of being and reality. His primary presupposition is, first, the existence of the God of the Old and New Testaments, a God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth; his second corollary presupposition is that of the creation of the world,

including man. Non-Christian man assumes the ultimacy, autonomy and creativity of the human mind. This presupposition rules out any sovereign God who controls or maintains the world, and depends upon a universe of chance. Paradoxically, this assumption implies that man must also hold to a deterministic cause-and-effect in order to leave room for rational thought. It further demands, says Van Til, that man must have exhaustive and comprehensive knowledge of reality in order to interpret available phenomena.

A detailed study is made of Van Til's theological position, focusing on his doctrines of God, man, Christ, salvation, revelation, the church and eschatology, and on his concepts of reality, knowledge and ethics.

Fromm's theories of reality and ethics are presented. Fromm deals with man's ultimacy and autonomy on the framework of an evolutionary scheme of reality. Man is capable of penetrating to the essence of phenomena, of discovering truth apart from outside sources, and has the potential for growth. Antithetically, man also has the potential for decay and degeneracy. His orientation around either growth or decay is determined by hereditary tendencies and the process of socialization. Man has transcended from the animal world and finds himself alienated from his origins. Fear drives him to project concepts of God; he yields up his independent spirit to authoritarianism and commits idolatry. The way to freedom and reunion with the world is to develop his autonomy and

his capacities for love. Man must save himself guided by social humanitarianism.

The study concludes with a commentary on Van Til and Fromm, pointing out their basic areas of agreement and disagreement and drawing certain conclusions in terms of methodology implications for counseling theory, selection of counselors, research implications and personal observations.

Pro Rege

"For the King"

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Dr. Cornelius Van Til most graciously reviewed the entire manuscript throughout its various developmental stages, carried on an extensive correspondence, and provided many of his published and unpublished works.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the nature of man and guilt as these bear upon the process and research in counseling. The method will be an analysis and comparison of two opposing viewpoints, that of Cornelius Van Til, the philosopher, and of Erich Fromm, the psychoanalyst. Van Til's life work has been that of developing a consistent Christian Weltanschauung encompassing the nature of God and reality, which includes the concepts of being, fact, time, epistemology and ethics, while Fromm, out of a Jewish background, has written extensively in the areas of psychology, philosophy, religion and ethics from a position which he identifies as Socialist-Humanistic. This comparison of a theologian and a psychologist is made in the interests of an experiment; certainly, the profitability and validity of such a comparison could be debated.

MOWRER'S THEORY OF GUILT NEUROSIS

The study originated from an interest in the work of O. Hobart Mowrer, whose theory of guilt neurosis has excited fervent reactions within the counseling, education and religious professions.¹ He proposes that mental dysfunctioning results from excessive and enduring subjective

¹As an example of reactions to Mowrer, refer to the American Psychologist, November, 1960, "Comments" section.

distresses occurring whenever there are objective disruptions in an individual's relationships with "significant others," such as parents, spouses, children, employers, or in abstract relationships with one's community, society, or God. Although the influence of Sullivan's theory of interpersonal relationships are clear in Mowrer, the latter's theory suffers from a lack of philosophical cohesion and scientific testing, and has therefore been criticized as less theory than speculation. However, the clinical research is beginning to cumulate from a variety of sources.² Further, Mowrer's assaults on cherished traditions, theories and institutions, coupled with his use of theological language to define secular concepts, has aroused suspicion and rejection. As London says,

This suggests an extension of Newton's Third Law to human behavior, in which one useful index of the seminal quality of a new theory would be the extent to which it is publicly reviled. If so, then the theory of the origin and treatment of neurosis put forth by O. H. Mowrer may deserve more serious attention than any such theory since Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, for in the two generations that lie between them, no other mental health theorist has been subjected to such voluble and vituperative criticism.³

THE STRUCTURE OF HIS THEORY

Structurally, his theory is quite simple, concentrating on behavioral malfunctions and the educative aspects of therapy. He uses three categories in describing the development of mental breakdown.

²Cf. New Evidence Concerning the Nature of Psychopathology, an unpublished resume' of research reports available from Mowrer, 330 Gregory Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

³London, Perry, The Modes and Morals of Psychotherapy, p. 134.

1. Subjects

Mowrer says that severe mental disruption occurs only in persons who have experienced some form of emotional investment with significant others.⁴ Violations of these interpersonal relationships creates subjective distress because of the patient's capacity of "conscience."⁵ London states that the theory applies to learned functional disorders but not to persons whose environment lacks close relationships with significant others.⁶ However, the statement that subjective distress is caused by a "capacity for conscience" is not an explanation in itself.

2. Sequence

He stresses that mental dysfunctioning is actively self-initiated and maintained through a sequence of overt behaviors culminating in those emotions and symptoms associated with psychopathology.⁷ The necessary sequential conditions are:

- (a) "Ab-normal" behavior, defined as "deviation from the established norms of the individual's reference group or groups."⁸ Mowrer hyphenates "ab-normal" to differentiate it from abnormality in the commonly held

⁴Mowrer, 1964, p. 28.

⁵Mowrer, 1961, p. 17f. "Changing Conceptions of the Unconscious."

⁶London, op. cit., p. 136.

⁷Cf. to Mowrer, "The Behavior Therapies, with Special Reference to Modeling and Imitations." American Journal of Psychotherapy, Vol. XX, No. 3, p. 439-461. July, 1966. Hereafter referred to as Mowrer, 1966d.

⁸Ibid., p. 448.

sense of illness or disease and to indicate that the neurotic misbehavior is ab-normal, not the emotions arising from that misbehavior. "Given a knowledge of the individuals total life situation, these emotions, however turbulent or painful, are seen as essentially reasonable, normal, and, if responded to in the right way, potentially helpful."⁹

- (b) Concealment of the deviancy. Anxiety is stimulated by either the recognition of breaches of sociality produced by the deviant behavior or by the absence of punishment. Conflict is induced by the fear that others may discover the behavior and respond negatively through punishment or by withholding social esteem."¹⁰
- (c) The individual maintains his conflict through continued secrecy, while the conflict is further reinforced by the continuing pressures of the inhibited impulses. The assumption is that the ego is captured by the Id, not by the superego.¹¹
- (d) Trapped on the one hand by revulsion over his behavior and his fear of exposure and, on the other hand, by his

⁹Ibid., p. 449.

¹⁰Mowrer, 1964, p. 72f.

¹¹Ibid., p. 185.

desire to express his id impulses, the individual "comes into a state of chronic insecurity."¹² If he becomes overwhelmed by the intensity of the conflict, he breaks down.

3. Symptoms

Mowrer defines these as the "individual's own attempt at self-cure."¹³ Mowrer holds that most patients and therapists assume "that the basic problem is wrong emotions or bad 'nerves,'"¹⁴ whereas, in fact, the patient's emotions are quite normal. It is his conduct which is "ab-normal."

The above constitutes, for Mowrer and his associates, the essence of the neurosis, which he prefers to call an "identity crisis" or "sociosis."¹⁵

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF HIS THEORY

So far the theory is similar to the classical drive-reduction theory of adjustment. But London finds "three critical points at which it differs in content from other theories of breakdown, whether dynamic reinforcement theories or associationist theories, and whether oriented towards insight or action."¹⁶

First, Mowrer hypothesizes that once the primary drives are minimally satisfied, the secondary drives achieve more functional

¹²Mowrer, 1966d, p. 448.

¹³Ibid., p. 450.

¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 449, p. 456.

¹⁶London, op. cit., p. 137.

significance, especially where they are crucial in human relationships. However, in some cases the individual has totally suppressed his primary drives which usually have priority over secondary drives in order to satisfy the secondary even though he knows that death might result from such suppression.

Secondly, while other theorists emphasize purely mental phenomena as the major sources of conflict, Mowrer proposes that a person's overt misconduct is usually the real source. The covering of his cheating behavior by further deception produces a deep sense of guilt and erodes his character.¹⁷ If guilt is present in awareness, then it is always founded on some past action. Although Mowrer allows for the traditional Freudian concept that guilt feelings can arise from ideas, thoughts and impulses originating in the Id that are unexpressed in overt behavior, he believes that generally some referent in real guilt can be discovered, that somewhere the person committed acts that transgressed his own social context or religious convictions and which now prey upon his conscience.¹⁸ He calls this guilt "real" or "rational" as opposed to the "false" or "illusory" guilt that might arise from unexpressed Id impulses. The ethical standards violated may be merely one's personal concepts of human decency. It is noted here that Mowrer often uses pseudo-theological phrases to define these secular concepts. For

¹⁷Mowrer, 1964, p. 135.

¹⁸Mowrer, 1966d, p. 456; Mowrer, 1966b, p. 1.

example, "God" does not necessarily refer to a real person, but is

the idealized objective of the socialization process. 'Sin' is used to mean the overt behavior that violates sociality, that is, transgression. 'Guilt' is used to mean what it means in law: the objective existence of transgression or sin, as well as the subjective state that describes the recognition of such behavior.¹⁹

Therapists should consider guilt feelings as valid and treat the person accordingly. Failure to deal with this seriously, he says, may be the main reason why commonly accepted therapeutic procedures have produced so few positive results, and may have actually been harmful.²⁰

Thirdly, and most significantly, although Mowrer accepts the existence of ego defenses, he not only maintains that therapy research has failed to show that repression is central to neurotic development, but that recent research has firmly established the centrality of suppression.²¹ Tracing the effects of real guilt in neurosis and psychosis,²² he concludes that both problems develop as the Id captures the Ego, forcing suppression of the Superego. Anxiety arises because of the "unheeded railings and anger of conscience."²³

A vital fourth difference, not mentioned by London, is Mowrer's thesis that psychopathology is the product of undersocialization whereas

¹⁹London, op. cit., p. 139

²⁰Mowrer, 1966d, p. 449; 1966c, p. 24.

²¹Mowrer, 1964, p. 184f, 188f, 225f.

²²Mowrer, 1966a, p. 13-23.

²³Ibid., p. 31

Freud conceived of psychopathology as the result of too intensive, over-extended socialization in combination with a powerful Superego.²⁴

THERAPY TECHNIQUES

To facilitate "cure," Mowrer has devised a sequence of four techniques that reverse the behavioral sequence leading to breakdown.

First, clients learn best when they see an example or model of appropriate behavior, as shown by Bandura (1965). Consequently, the therapist opens himself to the client as he expects the client to do in return, and teaches the client to acknowledge his overt transgressions, reveal his secrets and take responsibility for his guilt.²⁵

Secondly, as soon as possible, the client's referent group is enlarged to include others with whom he shares his true self.²⁶ If feasible, the group might consist of significant others, perhaps the entire family.²⁷ Thus the client becomes reintegrated with his social community which gives him his identity.

Thirdly, the client is encouraged to make restitution, or payment for his "sins,"²⁸ on the order of the Roman Catholic doctrine of penance. The client must endeavor to reconcile himself to those against whom he

²⁴Hall, Calvin, A Primer of Freudian Psychology, p. 31-35.

²⁵Mowrer, 1966d, p. 451; 1966b, p. 38.

²⁶Mowrer, 1966b, p. 14; 1964, p. 89.

²⁷Mowrer, 1964, p. 82.

²⁸Ibid., p. 97.

has transgressed, or else to compensate for his transgressions with actions that are constructive for society.

Lastly, since the client formerly hid his transgressions, and publicized his good works and traits, which amounts to a loss of psychic energy and weakening of character, he is now encouraged to hide his good and publicize his transgressions. The latter is done in an appropriate fashion, i.e., deep crimes or perversions, sins, or weaknesses may be confessed to a small group of significant others, which might be the therapy group, and lesser sins revealed to the general public. It is unnecessary, however, to reveal one's whole self to the world.

Mowrer does not say that he necessarily wishes to strengthen or increase the strictness of the conscience, rather, "All I had said was that perhaps the neurotic's great need was to have his conscience released."²⁹

ANALYSIS OF MOWRER

If Mowrer is correct, then his theory has wide implications for psychotherapy and research. It is commonly accepted that the results of traditional forms of psychotherapy roughly match the rate of "spontaneous remission." Part of the problem may be inadequately conceived studies and the perpetuation of certain myths prevalent in psychotherapy (Kiesler, 1966). But if the neurotic's problem is at the level of wrong actions rather than wrong emotions, then such efforts as conditioning,

²⁹Mowrer, 1961, p. 27.

psychoanalysis, medication, surgery, reassurance, hypnosis, or electroconvulsive shock might be misplaced.

Mowrer says that his position is not new, but was anticipated by Runestam (1932), Boisen (1936) and Stekel (1938), and is rapidly gaining adherents in a variety of fields. Parlour, et. al., (1967) have begun to use these concepts in therapy groups.

Understandably, there is much opposition to this position because it openly attacks the classical psychoanalytic theory of neurotic and psychotic development. This, coupled with Mowrer's "genius for sensing the rawest intellectual nerve of his audience and then addressing himself to it"³⁰ has elicited the wrath of many theologically and psychologically-oriented adversaries! The problem may also arise from Mowrer's failure to establish an integrated philosophical base from which to generate his theory of personality development, which is similar to the situation in empirical research of generating hypotheses without theory. Chronologically, this has resulted, not because Mowrer began with a philosophical position, but because over the years, he has made a transition in thought largely based upon his personal experiences with neurosis and psychosis, readings in literature, and experiments in psychology. His present theory is emerging a posteriori, and lacks solidity at present. A further problem is that his definitions of sin, conscience, guilt and personality attempt to bridge theology and psychology, without doing justice to either.

³⁰London, op. cit., p. 135.

This study was conceived in terms of the above considerations, i.e., the need for developing an integrated concept of the nature of man out of which would flow an understanding of conscience, sin and guilt. It is confined just to these issues, and is not designed as an experimental study for testing the constructs presented.

Religiously-oriented practitioners who traditionally emphasize "real" or rational guilt as a basic problem of man, see it as producing direct, weakening effects upon his body, mind and spirit. They conceive of "cure" as coming through acknowledgment of sin, atonement by God, and forgiveness experienced. Historically, their confidence in this approach has been weakened by the impact of Freudian psychology, behaviorism and other humanistic approaches. While they look upon the new movement sponsored by Mowrer with interest, they feel cautious about accepting his position wholeheartedly because of his antagonism to orthodox Christianity. On the other hand, many members of the psychological fraternity consider Mowrer's position regressive.

PROBLEMS IN CONCEPTUALIZING GUILT

The notion of guilt presents us with a complex variety of problems which have tremendous bearing on the process and research in psychotherapy today. Should we consider guilt as an entirely subjective phenomena resulting perhaps from societal conditioning, subconscious tensions or unrealistic fears, or is there as Mowrer claims, always an objective referent in previous misbehavior?

1. Moral Aspects

There are moral aspects to the problem of guilt. If the individual acts contrary to society's moral standards, he may do so out of the sort of perverseness that Edgar Allen Poe³¹ said was inherent in every man, or he may feel that he acts in "freedom" and "responsibility." Is he then to be judged as "right" or "wrong," or is it a matter of indifference? These questions are at the heart of the moral revolution in every modern society, and there are obvious conflicts between those persons striving for personal independence who fear tyranny and depersonalization and those who are concerned with the maintenance of law and order and who fear anarchy and chaos. Character disorders provide additional complications. Psychopaths seemingly are able to commit a variety of heinous crimes without feeling the least guilty or remorseful, and yet they could eloquently argue that they have acted in responsibility and freedom; or that they merely "lost control" and should really not be held responsible.

2. Legal Aspects

Then there is the whole area of legal considerations. Is an individual always guilty of certain transgressions against society, and if declared guilty, can society always punish or condemn? At what point is the individual considered incompetent? How does society establish culpability? Is it possible to establish culpability in a world of chance

³¹Poe, "The Imp of the Perverse," a poem dealing with guilt reactions. Cf. Bibliography.

and relativism, or do absolutes provide the only adequate foundation?

3. Therapeutic Aspects

In the counseling process, the counselor's attitude as well as the client's may well determine the course of therapy. Suppose that the client experienced powerful guilt feelings. On his part, the counselor may ask whether these feelings emanate from inner tensions alone or from overt actions, and if the latter, whether these actions warrant such intense feelings. Perhaps the counselor is unsympathetic with society's restrictions and prescriptions regarding these specific overt actions, philosophizing that most moral standards are relative, transitory and harshly restrictive. Will the counselor then ignore the overt behavior or try to persuade his client that his fears and guilt feelings are groundless or irrational and then schedule a program of therapy designed to change his client's perceptions? On the other hand, the counselor may be sympathetic with society's standards and concentrate on changing his client's behavior to adjust, at least partially, to society's mores.

We might also ask whether the client will experience any repercussions within himself in the absence of strong guilt feelings, that is, even though he does not feel guilty about certain overt behavior, is there a sort of inner mechanism which subtly reacts to that behavior, effecting him negatively? If we theorize that neurotic conflict presupposes an outraged superego, then the subject faces two alternatives: either to heed the railings of the superego and change his overt behavior, or to

suppress the superego and maintain the behavior. In the latter instance, he runs the risk of deadening sensitivity to his feelings and perhaps dulling his awareness of objective phenomena as well. This would imply that, contrary to prevailing notions in the counseling field, the effective life is enhanced by a sensitive conscience, so that the keener the conscience, the greater the awareness of inner feelings, which would vindicate Mowrer's theory. On the other hand, a sensitive conscience could lead to severe conflict, and if the individual strongly desired to maintain behavior which he felt violated the standards of his society, or even of his own lowest standards of decency, he could choose to suppress his conscience in order to alleviate the conflict. In this case, he might become cynical, pseudo-sophisticated, or hostile to any religion or ethic which pointed out his responsibilities.

Again, the above considerations point out the extreme complexity of the problem of conscience, the attendant symptoms of conflict, and the need for some base of operation from which to make judgments and develop testable hypotheses.

CONTEMPORARY CONCERNS WITH GUILT

Guilt from both the subjective and objective viewpoints is a major concern in literature, philosophy and religion, as well as psychology. Berdyaev confesses in his autobiography, Dream and Reality (1951), that all his life he has been victimized by guilt feelings that incline toward pessimism and apprehensiveness of lasting happiness. He says, "Every

joy in my life has been accompanied by a sense of guilt and wrong."³²

The modern classic on this type of guilt feelings is Kafka's novel, The Trial (1953). The hero is arrested for a crime of which he professes innocence. Nevertheless, he feels guilty, though he never knows why. In all of his frantic efforts to get help, he is unsuccessful in getting to know the nature of his crime. At the end he is condemned and executed, though in the process he breaks down psychologically, committing acts that reveal his capabilities for larger crimes.

Quite a different approach was used by Dostoyevsky, especially in his Crime and Punishment (1953). There, the hero, Rodya, has actually committed two murders and is finally broken by his own conscience which causes him to flirt with danger by repeatedly returning to the police authorities to discuss the crimes. Finally, it is his love for his mother and another woman that brings him out of a delirium to confess and receive clemency, and after eight years in prison he accepts religion in lieu of his driving individualism. Dostoyevsky repeats the theme of the guilty conscience in The Brothers Karamazov (1960), where the son, Ivan, longed for his father's death.

The playwright, Sartre (1947, 1956) and the novelist Faulkner (1965) use the concept of guilt widely. In Graham Green's novels (1960), hidden fear pursues the main characters. The feelings of estrangement and guilt underlie much of the poetry of T. S. Eliot (1962, 1963).

³² Berdyaev, Dream and Reality, p. 60.

Senator Munson, one of the major characters in Allen Drury's Advise and Consent (1961) reflecting on the cold war conflicts endangering the world, attaches universal sharing of guilt to the liberals who made it easy for the Russians by constantly yielding to them, to the embittered conservatives who closed the door to compassion and understanding, to the jealous military, the self-righteous scientists, the compliant press, ambitious politicians and a largely complacent citizenry. He thinks,

Nobody could stand forth now in America and say, 'I am guiltless. I had no part in this. I did not help bring America down from her bright pinnacle.' For that would be to deny that one had lived through those years, and only babies and little children could say that.³³

Even the psychologists have not always agreed with Freud (1923, 1953, 1959). Stekel (1950) laid great stress on the part guilt plays in neurosis development, stressing that neurosis is the disease of the bad conscience, and taking issue with Freud's theory that morality is really a reaction formation against the evil in man. Shneidman and Farberow (1957) feel that patients with suicidal tendencies alleviate their guilt conflicts by threatening or attempting acts of self-punishment.

In theology, although liberalism had moved away from guilt and atonement in Christianity, it was Karl Barth (1956), the founder of neo-orthodoxy, who stressed that guilt was the sure sign of man's depravity, and thereby created the twentieth century revolution in religious thought

³³ Drury, A., Advise and Consent, Cardinal ed., p. 33.

and a reconsideration of the ancient Biblical doctrines. The late P. T. Forsyth (1905) was no less emphatic that the center of Christianity and man's dilemma lay in the problem of sin and guilt; it was this problem, he states, that revelation solves.³⁴ On the other hand, some argue that man's guilt is really nothing more than his sense of "nothingness," while others such as the death-of-God adherents stress that it is rather a sense of man's humanness. Buber (1958) holds that it is the result of estrangement of the I-Thou relationship that ought to exist between man and his world. Bultmann (1958), desiring to preserve the relationship between the I-Thou as essentially between the "I" of man and the "Thou" of God, thinks of guilt as real and in need of forgiveness by God, which he performed through Christ:

Forgiveness does not mean that the sin is to be compensated for (the man is wholly disobedient); it can only be forgiven. When a man accepts forgiveness, he condemns himself most severely, he really bows his head under the judgement of God. And as his character as sinner signified that he failed in the decision and became another man, a condemned man who had lost his freedom, so forgiveness means that he is to become a new man through God's grace, that he has his freedom once more, that God does not abandon His claim upon him but also does not deprive him of His grace--that God means to bring him out of remoteness into nearness to Himself.³⁵

THE DESIGN OF THIS STUDY

It appears that the debate regarding the genesis, function and resolution of guilt will continue until certain basic issues can be resolved.

³⁴Forsyth, Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. xii.

³⁵Bultmann, Jesus and The Word, p. 201.

First, there seems to be the unfounded assumption that whenever we discuss man, we are all talking the same language and mean the same things regarding his nature or the nature of man's contextual, phenomenal world. This is quite apparent in the wide-ranging contemporary debate on freedom-determinism where inadequate definition of terms unnecessarily complicates and prolongs the argument. Secondly, the terms conscience, sin, transgression, and guilt, depend upon a given concept of the nature of the phenomenal world and of man and of his relationship to that world.

It is felt that Mowrer's research points in the right direction, but if Mowrer's theory is essentially correct, it needs some broader philosophical base for integration and power. The natural starting point is the nature of man, which is related to the larger concepts of the nature of being and reality.

In order to constrict this study to a reasonable size, it has seemed advisable to assume a position presently held within Christian philosophy and place it in juxtaposition to an opposing view, that the contrast and comparison might clarify the differences, benefit from any similarities, and indicate the implications for counseling. The study deals with constructs which might prove fruitful for development and testing in later research.

Two men have been chosen whose concepts of man differ markedly. The theological-philosophical position of Dr. Cornelius Van Til will be reviewed and taken as a base from which to consider the concepts of

Dr. Erich Fromm regarding the nature of reality, man, conscience and guilt. The rationale is that Van Til represents a classical tradition of Reformation Theology, and has a keen interest in the psychology of religion, while Fromm is a neo-Freudian psychoanalyst with an interest in philosophy.

Van Til's position is precise and clear, having been carefully honed throughout forty years of teaching and writing. Perhaps more than any other Christian apologist, he makes an assault upon all non-Christian or partially Christian theories of man, for which he has been criticized by his own colleagues within Reformation Theology. In response, he argues that by taking a thoroughly Biblical stance, he sharpens the distinctions between Christianity and non-Christianity which provides the only proper ground for dialogue.

Van Til classifies his theological position as "Reformed," a term applied to the Calvinistic school to differentiate that from Lutheran theology, Arminian theology, and the more inclusive "Evangelicalism," all appearing as aspects of Protestant Reformation Theology which developed a reaction to sixteenth century Roman Catholicism, or "Romanism," as Van Til calls it. While Reformed Theology, Lutheranism, Arminianism and Romanism have fairly well-defined theologies, "Evangelicalism," says Van Til, is a loose mixture of all of these,³⁶ and in some places, he speaks of it as "less consistent Calvinism."³⁷ He sees his own task as that of

³⁶ Van Til, Defense of the Faith, p. 78-79

³⁷ Ibid., p. 79. Cf. p. 80.

creating the most consistent expression of Christianity possible. In so doing, he gives much credit to his predecessors, including among others, Hodge and Warfield of the "Princeton school" of theology and Kuyper, Bavinck, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoeven of the "Dutch school" of theology.³⁸ His other basic sources are Calvin and the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Dr. Van Til was born in the Netherlands in 1895. He is a graduate of Calvin College (A.B.), of Princeton Theological Seminary (Th.M.), and Princeton University (Ph.D.). He spent a year in the pastorate and one year as instructor of Apologetics at Princeton Seminary. Since 1929, he has been Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Van Til is joint-editor of Philosophia Reformata, and frequent contributor to The Westminster Theological Journal, both of which are devoted to Calvinistic theology and philosophy. He has authored many books, syllabi, articles and pamphlets, many of which are included in the bibliography. His primary interest has been the refutation of the "neo-orthodox" school led by the German theologian, Karl Barth.

Dr. Erich Fromm is the better-known scholar, having gained a wide reputation as a "neo-Freudian revisionist"³⁹ along with his colleagues, Karen Horney and Harry Stack Sullivan. All three have attempted to show

³⁸Systematic Theology, p. 2.

³⁹Hammond, Man in Estrangement, p. 24.

the relationship of social structures and personal relationships to psycho-analytic concepts, although it has been surmised that these revisions have been more in the nature of opposition to Freud than reform.⁴⁰ Fromm has been selected because he has drawn out the philosophical implications of psycho-analysis and applied them to many fields of interest, especially politics and religion.

Van Til builds his system upon Calvin while Fromm uses Calvin as one of his major antagonists, frequently quoting from Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion as the epitome of authoritarian religion.

Fromm depends heavily upon Aristotle, Spinoza, Dewey, Nietzsche, Spencer, Kent and Freud, and finds a close correlation between psycho-analysis, Zen Buddhism,⁴¹ and Marxian sociology.⁴² Out of this background, Fromm has been motivated to extend Freudian psychology to the study of the social group, presuming that the psychic attitudes common to most individuals are rooted in the cultural patterns of one's society.

Dr. Fromm was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1900. He studied at the Universities of Heidelberg and Munich and at the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt. When Hitler's regime came into Power in 1932, he came to the United States, where he lectured at several

⁴⁰Loc. cit.

⁴¹Fromm, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, cf. especially pp. 77-141.

⁴²Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p. ix.

colleges , including Michigan State University. Currently, he is Professor of Psychoanalysis at the National University of Mexico, Mexico City, and Professor of Psychology at New York University. He is the author of fifteen major works.

These two scholars are at variance at almost every point in their thinking on the nature of reality, man, and the causes and solutions of guilt. After their positions have been thoroughly summarized, an attempt will be made to compare them and show the implications for counseling practice and research.

CHAPTER II

VAN TIL'S THEOLOGICAL BASIS

INTRODUCTION

Apologetics as the philosophical defense of the Christian faith is concerned with the problem of method. In Van Til, the method of defense and the faith defended merge into an integrated system built upon his concept of basic presuppositions. Defending Christianity from within the theological framework, he uses the language of Scripture and Christian doctrine, borrowing philosophical terms as a bridge to secular thought. This form of reasoning illustrates his contention that all men are forced to argue circuitously once they choose their philosophical points of departure.⁴³

Van Til holds that the place to begin defending the faith is systematic theology and follows this view in his definitive work, The Defense of the Faith, where he first discusses his basic doctrines, and then defends this Calvinistic system as the only possible intelligible position for men to accept. But his approach entirely depends upon his concept of argument by presupposition. He is thus consistent with his own premise that the method of apologetics of Protestant Christians "should be in line with their theology."⁴⁴

⁴³Apologetics, p. 62.

⁴⁴Defense, p. 4.

I. PRESUPPOSITIONS

Characterizing his apologetic is the concept that there are only two alternatives available, that they are radically antithetical to each other and logically impossible to maintain simultaneously. He writes:

Every form of intellectual argument rests, in the last analysis, upon one or the other of two basic presuppositions. The non-Christian's process of reasoning rests upon the presupposition that man is the final or ultimate reference point in human predication. The Christian's process of reasoning rests upon the presupposition that God, speaking through Christ by His Spirit in the infallible Word, is the final or ultimate reference point in human predication.⁴⁵

In his lectures, Van Til frequently uses a diagram similar to figure 1 (p. 29). In summary, he says that these basic epistemological and metaphysical principles are, by the nature of the case, unproveable, but that they control scientific methods and conclusions.⁴⁶ He feels that in most cases fruitful discussion between Christians and non-Christians is hampered because men are not consciously aware of their presuppositions. By constantly placing the alternatives in radical opposition, he hopes to create genuine discussion of the primary issues.⁴⁷

A. CHRISTIAN PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. GOD

Basic to all the doctrines of Christian theism is that of the self-contained God, or, if we wish, that of the ontological

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 180.

⁴⁶Apologetics, p. 62.

⁴⁷Defense, p. 298, 299.

trinity. It is this notion....that ultimately controls a truly Christian methodology.⁴⁸

God is the ultimate reality or fact who determines and interprets all other fact;⁴⁹ the final reference point required to make "facts" and "laws" intelligible.⁵⁰ In Him, the ancient unity-plurality problem is both solved and meaningful.⁵¹

2. CREATION

The creation of the universe is consequent to the concept of God's counsel:⁵² as He willed, so the universe came into existence.⁵³ Since God is self-contained, He does not require the physical universe, nor is it an extension of Himself. Matter is not ultimate, only temporal, and time is seen in both temporal and eternal levels according as the referent is God or His universe.⁵⁴ However, the universe clearly displays something of the character of God, namely, His eternal power and existence.⁵⁵

Man is temporal and the quality of his being is on the creature level. His task is to become properly related to God, his Creator, but this relationship is always personal and ethical because God and man are

⁴⁸Apologetics, p. 62.

⁴⁹Defense, p. 150.

⁵⁰Apologetics, p. 62.

⁵¹Defense, p. 10.

⁵²Apologetics, p. 61.

⁵³Case for Calvinism, p. 19.

⁵⁴Christianity and Barthianism, p. 90f., Defense, p. 10.

⁵⁵Theology, p. 76

not correlative, i.e., of the same essence of being, subject to identical limitations of time and space.⁵⁶ Although man thinks rationally, as a creature he cannot understand comprehensively nor exhaustively, only analogically,⁵⁷ and sin further confuses and blinds man both rationally and ethically. He therefore needs to depend upon God for knowledge of God, for personal insight, for understanding of the world around him,⁵⁸ and for God's provision of redemption. Reality and fact become what they are because God mediates this knowledge to man,⁵⁹ not because man possesses the Kantian categories of causality by which he imposes meaning and order upon raw facts. Thus revelation is essential if man is to gain true understanding at all.⁶⁰ Van Til defines revelation as both that general knowledge of God manifested in nature, His eternal existence and power, and the special revelation appearing in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.⁶¹

B. NON-CHRISTIAN PRESUPPOSITIONS

By "non-Christian," Van Til means all those positions whose authority rests upon man's autonomy,⁶² consequently, there is only one

⁵⁶Defense, p. 29.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 119f.

⁵⁸Knowledge, p. 22.

⁵⁹Theology, p. 22.

⁶⁰Knowledge, p. 20, 21.

⁶¹Theology, p. 65

⁶²Knowledge, p. 2.

basic presupposition for the non-Christian, the ultimacy of the human mind.⁶³ From this premise flows all of his concepts of reality, including any definitions of God, man or fact. Authority resides either in himself, personal experience, other experts, or a God who is equally limited and ultimate with himself.⁶⁴ His reasoning, like the Christian's, is also circular; "the starting point, the method, and the conclusion are always involved in one another."⁶⁵

Van Til asserts that it is of the essence of non-Christian methodology to claim that it is neutral on all subjects until the evidence is in, and admits that from the non-Christian viewpoint, Van Til's own statement that conclusions are controlled by presuppositions is evidence of the purest form of authoritarianism.

In spite of this claim to neutrality on the part of the non-Christian, the Reformed apologist must point out that every method, the supposedly neutral one no less than any other, presupposes either the truth or the falsity of Christian theism.⁶⁶

The focus on these antithetical presuppositions appears consistently through Van Til's works, and he uses them as a tool to measure deviation from Scriptural norms. He sees modern theologies, such as the Death of God movement, Neo-orthodoxy and Liberalism operating almost

⁶³Defense, p. 63, 180.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 124f.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 101.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 100.

entirely on the autonomous-man assumption, Roman Catholicism and Arminianism inconsistently using both assumptions simultaneously, Evangelicalism trying to use Christian assumptions with frequent lapses into autonomy, and Reformed theologies as the most consistently Biblical.

Equally important is Van Til's mutually interpretive and interacting concepts of God and fact, which he claims are derived from Scripture and Reformed theology, and from which emerge all his other doctrines. For purposes of clarification, Van Til first specifies his system of doctrine and then defends it by using his concept of fact.

II. VAN TIL'S THEOLOGY

By "Christian theology," Van Til means "Reformed Theology," i.e., "a strong Calvinistic Christian theism."⁶⁷ All other "Christian" theologies have one foot upon the Christian presuppositions of God and His counsel, and one foot upon man's autonomy.⁶⁸ He holds that Romanism starts with the natural theology of man without God and attaches supernaturalism to it, Arminianism makes God and man interdependent for salvation, following the lead of Romanism, while the modern theologies are afflicted with the naturalistic assumptions and therefore fail to present a "Christ who can help sinners in need."⁶⁹

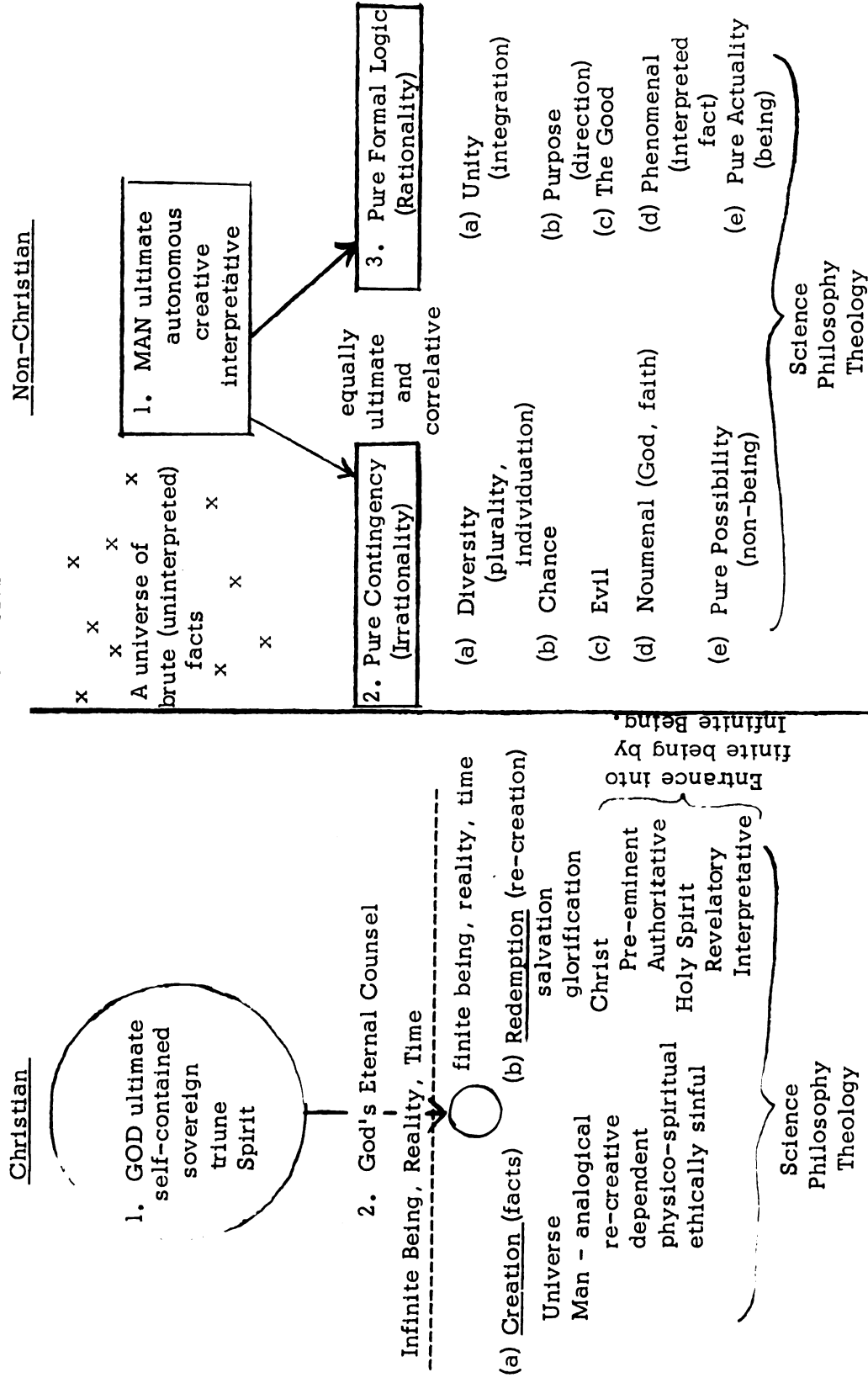
⁶⁷Types of Apologetic Systems, Ramm, p. 187.

⁶⁸Defense, p. 3-6.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 5

Fig. 1

BASIC PRESUPPOSITIONS And Their Corollaries



Of his own Reformed doctrine, he says:

The basic structure of Christian theology is simple. Its every teaching should be taken from the Scriptures of the Old and New testaments as being the words of prophets and apostles spoken on the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, the Saviour of sinners,⁷⁰

noting that it is proper to speak of it as a "system of truth" only if we acknowledge that the various doctrines were not deduced from some master concept extraneous to Scripture.

A. GOD

1. THE ONTOLOGICAL TRINITY

Epistemologically, says Van Til, the Christian theist begins with the Scripturally based assumption that there exists a God who is a self-contained ontological trinity⁷¹--self-existent, self-sufficient, self-determinative, self-conscious, necessary, sovereign and absolutely free.⁷²

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each an active personality and

...together constitute the exhaustively personal God. There is an eternal, internal self-conscious interaction between the three persons of the Godhead. They are co-substantial. Each is as much God as are the other two. The Son and Spirit do not derive their being from the Father. The diversity and unity in the Godhead are therefore equally ultimate; they are exhaustively correlative to one another and not correlative to anything else.⁷³

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 7.

⁷¹The unusual term "ontological trinity" is uniquely characteristic of Van Til's writings. He uses it to mean absolute, self-sufficient, the ultimate source of all being. cf. Apologetics, p. 62.

⁷²Apologetics, p. 5; By What Standard, Rushdooney, p. 12; Types of Apologetic Systems, Ramm, p. 186.

⁷³Apologetics, p. 8.

The trinity is viewed both ontologically, referring to the essence of God's being and, economically, referring to the functional relationships of the three persons to the created universe.

The Father is centrally active in the creation and sustaining of the universe. The Son is centrally active in the objective work of salvation. The Spirit is centrally active in the subjective work of salvation. In all this the triune God is active with respect to the universe.⁷⁴

2. GOD'S INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

Van Til discusses the nature of God in terms of the communicable and incommunicable attributes, that is, those characteristics which man can share or which are unique to God. Under the incommunicable attributes, he lists:

a) The Aseity or Independence of God

God is not correlative to or dependent upon anything extraneous to Himself. Therefore, we cannot speak of the source of His being, for source cannot be applied to God,⁷⁵ who is Himself the category of interpretation for all things⁷⁶ and the "final reference point in human predication."⁷⁷

b) The Immutability of God

Although the Scriptures speak anthropomorphically about God as a condescension to man, God Himself is unchangeable in His existence,

⁷⁴Loc. cit.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 5; Defense, p. 9.

⁷⁶Apologetics, p. 7.

⁷⁷Warfield, p. 25.

essence, will and decrees. The concept deals with the internal relationships of the trinity as distinguished from the continued changes in the universe, or from the incarnation of the Son as the man Christ Jesus.⁷⁸

c) The Infinity of God

God is "concrete self-existence,"⁷⁹ or limitless in existence. In reference to time this is conceived of as His eternity, meaning that there is continuity, not succession of moments, or beginning or end with God. In reference to space, infinity is seen as omnipresence, meaning that God is neither "included in space nor absent from it; rather, He is above all space yet present in every part of it (1 Kings 8:27, Acts 17:27)."⁸⁰

This conception of eternity is of particular importance in Apologetics because it involves the whole question of the meaning of the temporal universe; it involves a definite philosophy of history.⁸¹

d) The Unity of God

Van Til means that God is one God and not composed of discrete parts.⁸² He argues that this doctrine does not contradict the Biblical presupposition that God is both ontologically and economically triune, though superficially, it would appear that to speak of God as one God negates the statement that there are three persons in the Godhead. He protects himself from this paradox by appealing to his concept of exhaustive

⁷⁸Theology, p. 211.

⁷⁹Loc. cit.

⁸⁰Defense, p. 10.

⁸¹Loc. cit.

⁸²Loc. cit.

interaction among the triune persons: each is equally ultimate and equally exhaustive of divinity,⁸³ although distinctions among them occur in Scriptural revelation according to their relationships to man.

Van Til holds that the incommunicable attributes of God are unique to His self-conscious being. Man cannot partake of these in any sense. He cannot be self-contained, infinite, eternal or simple. These attributes emphasize God's transcendence⁸⁴ and at the same time provide Christians with a distinct philosophy of history.

All that has happened in the past, all that happens in the present, and all that will happen in the future rests for its presupposition upon the self-sufficient internal activity of the self-predicating and therefore non-delimited being.⁸⁵

3. GOD'S COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

God, says Van Til, is unlike man in His incommunicable attributes, but like man in his communicable attributes.⁸⁶ He is transcendent but also immanent. But, says Van Til,

It is not a sufficient description of Christian theism when we say that as Christians we believe in both the transcendence and the immanence of God while pantheistic systems believe only in the transcendence of God. The transcendence we believe in is not the transcendence of deism and the immanence we believe in is not the immanence of pantheism.

⁸³Theology, p. 220.

⁸⁴Defense, p. 10.

⁸⁵Theology, p. 212.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 233.

In the case of deism transcendence virtually means separation, while in the case of pantheism immanence virtually means identification. And if we add separation to identification we do not have theism as a result...The Christian doctrine of God implies a definite conception of everything in the created universe.⁸⁷

a) The Intellectual Attributes

(1) Spirituality. When Van Til defines God as a Spirit, he avoids telling of some "vague generic concept of spirituality"⁸⁸ encompassing both God and man. God is the absolute, self-contained, self-individuated Spirit, who "does not need materiality over against Himself in order to individuate Himself."⁸⁹

Man, created in the image of God, has a dim replica of this spirituality although he is not a true spirit but a "physico-spiritual being."⁹⁰ God alone, as Spirit, is immortal and "invisible,"⁹¹ and the Scripture speaks of Him as "light."⁹² Spirituality then becomes for Van Til the foundation for God's self-knowledge.⁹³

(2) Self-Consciousness. In order to avoid pantheism, Van Til asserts that this self-consciousness is coterminous with God's being,

⁸⁷Defense, p. 11, 12.

⁸⁸Theology, p. 233.

⁸⁹Loc. cit.

⁹⁰Loc. cit.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 234.

⁹²Defense, p. 10.

⁹³Theology, p. 234.

otherwise God's knowledge would have to be obtained by investigating being that is independent of God.

If being and knowledge are not coterminous in God then being stands over against the knowledge of God as a complement. There is then no possibility of distinguishing between non-created and created being. There can then be no creation except in the attenuated Platonic sense of formation of a pre-existing material. God's consciousness of self is then interwoven with his consciousness of the world.⁹⁴

And because God possesses this exhaustive knowledge of Himself, he also possesses a comprehensive and exhaustive knowledge of all possibility.⁹⁵ Possibility depends upon the counsel of God, and He is free to create according to His will. Moreover, all facts and laws are what they are because God has freely created and freely known all reality,⁹⁶ and this knowledge of God preceded the creation of the world. So Van Til uses the term "analytical" in reference to the necessary, free, and exhaustive self-knowledge of God. In contrast, Man's mirror-image knowledge is dependent, partial, and true, but "analogical."⁹⁷ Man, therefore, finds difficulty in comprehending such paradoxes as free agency and sovereignty, or actuality and possibility. Man has to wait for events to occur before he can know them, and makes inferences upon which he depends for knowledge of facts and laws.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 235.

⁹⁵Loc. cit.

⁹⁶Loc. cit., Theology, p. 236.

⁹⁷Theology, p. 236.

If we keep this biblical notion of the knowledge of God before us, we shall think of human knowledge as analogical of God's knowledge. And only if we do this can we have a truly Christian apologetic.⁹⁸

b) The Moral Attributes

The moral attributes are God's holiness "whereby He is internally and eternally perfect,"⁹⁹ God's goodness, and God's righteousness. These form the basis for Van Til's Christian ethics and for his later discussion on guilt.

- (1) Holiness. By the holiness of God we therefore signify God's absolute internal moral purity. It is naturally to be expected that when this attribute of God expresses itself in the revelation of God to man, it requires his complete purity. This complete purity in man consists in the complete dedication of man's moral activity to the moral glory of God. Negatively, this will need to express itself as separation from sin.¹⁰⁰

The negative aspects of God's holiness particularly come to expression in the Old Testament period, where, he says, secular persons and things are dedicated to the service and glory of God, not because the secular is considered evil per se, but the secular became evil because of the sin of man.¹⁰¹

In the New Testament, the emphasis is on the positive expression of God's holiness. Van Til says, the Holy Spirit enables men to dedicate

⁹⁸Loc. cit.

⁹⁹Defense, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰Theology, p. 244.

¹⁰¹Loc. cit.

themselves to God after freeing them from slavery to sin. The negative aspect of God's holiness is still revealed in the punishment of those who rebel against God.¹⁰²

(2) The Righteousness of God signifies the "internal self-consistency of the divine being."¹⁰³ God does not respond to a law higher than Himself, for as absolute being He is "absolute law,"¹⁰⁴ and expresses this absolute self-contained consistency in the created world "by maintaining created consistency among men."¹⁰⁵ God distributes justice to men, punishes injustice and rewards justice. Unfortunately, there is no justice in sinners. "There is, to be sure, a measure of civil righteousness among men, but this proceeds from the 'old man' within them which they have not been able to subjugate fully."¹⁰⁶ If men do any justice, it must be given to them, for if they followed their own "self-consciously adopted principles"¹⁰⁷ they would perform only unrighteous acts. The believer, saved by grace, seeks to think God's thoughts after Him in an effort to do His will, and seeks to establish and maintain God's law for all other men "in ways that are themselves in accordance with those laws."¹⁰⁸ In this

¹⁰²Ibid, p. 245.

¹⁰³Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁵Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁸Loc. cit.

fashion the believer seeks to protect the unbeliever from himself. The unbeliever seeks eternal laws as well as eternal truths apart from the person of God, but the fact remains that "true law cannot exist except upon a Christian foundation."¹⁰⁹

(3) The Goodness of God. Van Til distinguishes between what God is in Himself and what He is in relation to His created works. God is in Himself good and, therefore, God's moral deeds must be centered in Himself, for He cannot look to extraneous principles of truth and goodness as standards for His own conduct. "It is this notion of the goodness of God that forms the foundation of true Christian ethics."¹¹⁰

a. Common Grace. The concept of God's conscious goodness to His creatures provides Van Til the basis for his doctrine of grace. God is merciful and piteous¹¹¹ toward a world in suffering, and when He is good to undeserving men "it is called grace."¹¹² But when His goodness, as seen in the rain and the sunshine, talents and opportunities, is freely distributed to both believers and unbelievers alike, it is called "common grace."¹¹³

However, God's attitude and purposes differ. To the believers, He extends grace in respect to their forgiven status in order to enable

¹⁰⁹Loc. cit.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 238.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 239.

¹¹²Loc. cit.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 240.

them to mature in Christlikeness. To the unbelievers, He gives grace in order they might fulfill His purposes, and to restrain "their natural tendency to do only evil continually,"¹¹⁴ although their misuse of His gifts brings them "greater condemnation."¹¹⁵ This principle of common grace enables men to perform civil righteousness, and is the basis of law and order.¹¹⁶

b. Saving Grace. The doctrine of common grace underlies the concept of special or saving grace. "Together they form the covenant framework in which the sovereign God deals with man."¹¹⁷ Through God's special grace He elects unregenerate men to eternal life who, as spiritually dead, are incapable of yielding themselves to God.¹¹⁸

c) The Attributes of Sovereignty

These refer to God's ultimate power over the universe and the destiny He has eternally determined for it.

(1) God's Will. "As the self-existent being God wills Himself as His own end";¹¹⁹ He is altogether self-ruled. In order to avoid such ancient arguments as to whether God can make something greater than Himself, or will something contrary to His being, Van Til replies that "God

¹¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 241.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 245.

¹¹⁷Particularism and Common Grace, p. 20. For definition of "Covenant," cf. to this text, p. 27.

¹¹⁸Common Grace and Witness-Bearing, p. 5.

¹¹⁹Theology, p. 246.

cannot exist otherwise than He exists. His will does not act independently of His nature. His will wills His nature as His nature comes to expression in His will."¹²⁰

a. His Secret Will. God's will with respect to the universe is considered in terms of "His secret and His revealed will."¹²¹ God's will of decree is "secret" because man cannot know that will precisely or in detail. Moreover, it is the "source of all substance and power in the created universe, and is comprehensive; everything is derived from it"¹²² including creation, revelation, government, the work of Christ, election of sinners and reprobation of men, regeneration, sanctification, and the entire destiny of believers. While God as holy is incapable of sin, His secret decrees allow the creation of finite moral beings who could sin, and for the existence of evil,¹²³ although, says Van Til, the answers to these questions remain a mystery to finite man.¹²⁴

b. His Revealed Will. This concept establishes the regulations for human living, says Van Til, and though there seem to be conflicts between God's secret and revealed will, these are only apparent contradictions because of man's limitations.¹²⁵ Van Til acknowledges the

¹²⁰Loc. cit.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 247.

¹²²Loc. cit.

¹²³Ibid., p. 248

¹²⁴Loc. cit.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 251.

difficulties in trying to understand how God can be absolutely determinative and man still exercise a measure of freedom, but he says that the Scripture reveals both of these doctrines which are necessary in order to avoid thinking of man as a helpless irresponsible victim of a blind fate.¹²⁶

B. THE ETERNAL COUNSELS OF GOD

While Reformed theologians¹²⁷ logically discuss the doctrine of Christ as an adjunct to the doctrine of the Trinity, Van Til apparently uses it to emphasize the need for God and man to be reconciled. Therefore it is possible to categorize it under his concepts of the eternal counsels of God, together with man, revelation, salvation, the church and eschatology.

1. THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Van Til's concept of man is related to his doctrine of creation and to his philosophy of reality or fact. The relation of God to man is the substance of his Apologetics, and he discovers the common ground for dialogue between the antithetical Christian - non-Christian presupposition in the image of God in man.

a) The Image of God in Man.

To speak of the image of God in man is, for Van Til, to speak of the first man, Adam in paradise before the Fall. He makes no apology for this concept in spite of almost complete rejection of a literal Adam and

¹²⁶Loc. cit.

¹²⁷Cf. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology.

Eve by the bulk of modern thinkers, depending for his conceptions upon the Scriptural testimony of the Mosaic writings and the theology of Paul, whose doctrine of justification builds upon the analogy between the first Adam and Christ, the "second" Adam.¹²⁸

(1) Personality. Although finite, man has God's image in both a general and a narrow sense.¹²⁹ In the general sense, man has personality. Every act of man is a personal relationship to other men and God, but need not be at the "expense of the personal character of that which surrounds him."¹³⁰ In dealing with himself or others, man deals with God's creation and therefore with the Creator. Personality is manifested in relationship to God's personality, will and interpretation of reality.

(2) Finiteness. In the narrow sense of God's image, man reflects God's moral attributes; he had in Adam true knowledge, true righteousness and true holiness, which were mutilated through rebellion but restored in personal relationship to Christ. The image of God always appears in both the general and narrow sense so that every act of man is a moral act, "an act of choice for or against God."¹³¹ Man reveals righteousness and holiness or unrighteousness and unholiness in every act of knowledge. "The idea of disinterested or neutral knowledge is out of accord with the basic ideas of Christianity."¹³²

¹²⁸Genesis 2:1-4:1, Luke 3:38, Romans 5, I Corinthians 15.

¹²⁹Defense, p. 13.

¹³⁰Rushdooney, By What Standard?, p. 142, quote from Van Til, Metaphysics of Apologetics, p. 64. Out of print.

¹³¹Defense, p. 13.

¹³²Apologetics, p. 14.

Man is also unlike God; he cannot participate in God's incommunicable attributes of aseity, immutability, infinity, and unity.¹³³ He never outgrows his creaturehood.

Although originally it was "no burden to him,"¹³⁴ man now chafes under the awareness of his finite being and knowledge. He desires to know God and himself through and through. He struggles with the idea of mystery, asserting "That there is either no mystery for God or man, or there is mystery for both God and man."¹³⁵ In contrast, the Christian says that "There is mystery for man but not for God."¹³⁶

(3) Autonomous Man. Van Til avers that autonomous man rejects this "doctrine of his creation in the image of God,"¹³⁷ replacing it with a "metaphysics of correlativity between God and man"¹³⁸ so that man can think analytically as God.

Van Til rejects this implication of God and man being correlative, since then man would be self-sufficient. In order for man to make any true interpretation of any single fact, he would have to possess comprehensive and exhaustive knowledge of the universe causing him to face the dilemma of either being absolutely ignorant or absolutely omniscient.¹³⁹

¹³³Defense, p. 14.

¹³⁴Loc. cit.

¹³⁵Loc. cit.

¹³⁶Loc. cit.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 81.

¹³⁸Christianity in Modern Theology, p. 19.

¹³⁹Apologetics, p. 54.

(4) Point of Contact. If then the Christian and non-Christian cannot agree on any common ground upon which to discuss the nature of man and reality, where is the point of contact between them? There must be basis for dialogue, otherwise they could not labor together in any area and the non-Christian would never be convinced of the Christian position. Is there some area upon which all may agree and is there a common method of perceiving this area?

It will not do to assume at the outset that these questions must be answered in the affirmative. For the knower himself needs interpretation as well as the thing he knows. The human mind as the knowing subject, makes its contribution to the knowledge it obtains. It will be quite impossible then to find a common area of knowledge between believers and unbelievers unless there is agreement between them as to the nature of man himself.¹⁴⁰

Rejecting the theories that assert a common area of intellectual agreement between believers and unbelievers,¹⁴¹ or a common religious consciousness acting independently of God,¹⁴² Van Til contends that the only point of contact is the image of God in man.¹⁴³ All men are themselves revelatory of God and surrounded by God's revelation in nature.¹⁴⁴ As rational and moral, man is the "ethically responsible reactor to revelation";¹⁴⁵ his self-consciousness "presupposes God-consciousness."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰Defense, p. 67.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁴²Psychology of Religion, p. 9, 10.

¹⁴³Defense, p. 94.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 88, 89.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁴⁶Loc. cit.

Man is aware of his "inescapable sense of duty"¹⁴⁷ to reinterpret "the counsel of God as expressed in creation to himself individually and collectively."¹⁴⁸ The image of God is man's "borrowed capital" which enables him to operate as a human being even though he may deny responsibility and relationship to God.¹⁴⁹

Man is therefore always "accessible to God."¹⁵⁰ He is always in contact with these inescapable truths. "His efforts to hide this fact from himself are bound to be self-frustrative."¹⁵¹ The Christian can only be true to Scripture and "effective in reasoning with the natural man" by thus "finding the point of contact in man's sense of deity that lies underneath his own conception of self-consciousness as ultimate."¹⁵²

b) Man's Relation to Nature.

Next to noting that man was created in God's image it must be observed that man was organically related to the universe about him. Man was to be prophet, priest and king under God in this created world. The vicissitudes of the world would to a large extent depend upon the deeds of man. As a prophet man was to interpret this world after God, as a priest he was to dedicate this world to God, and as a king he was to rule over it for God. In opposition to this, all non-Christian theories hold that the vicissitudes of man and the universe about him are only accidentally and incidentally related.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷Apologetics, p. 55.

¹⁴⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁴⁹Defense, p. 94.

¹⁵⁰Loc. cit.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁵²Loc. cit.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 14.

In order to understand and fulfill his three-fold task, man was, even in Paradise, given revelation in nature and a "supernaturally communicated positive revelation."¹⁵⁴ Before the Fall, man learned God's purposes with respect to nature and himself through "direct positive revelation."¹⁵⁵ "It was in this atmosphere of revelation"¹⁵⁶ that man lives and moves and has his being. Revelation describes his intimate relationship to the universe for which he is responsible, describes his origin and his goal, though none of this is given in detail, and man must continually refer to it.

His speculation was always to be subject to revelation. His hypotheses with respect to the relation of any one fact of the universe to any other fact were always to be made within the limits of the presupposition that God rules and directs all things. Thus speculation, that is, intellectual articulation, was consciously subject to the sovereign directing activity of God.¹⁵⁷

c) The Fall of Man.

(1) Sin. Among Christian theologians, writes Van Til, only the Calvinist takes sin seriously.¹⁵⁸ Sin has blinded men to the truth¹⁵⁹ and warped all aspects of their being so that they are totally depraved, i.e., no area of their being is unblighted. The heart of man's existential guilt is this breakdown of his personal relationship to God, a breakdown brought

¹⁵⁴Apologetics, p. 29.

¹⁵⁵Systematic Theology, p. 81.

¹⁵⁶The Search for Meaning, p. 66.

¹⁵⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁵⁸Apologetics, p. 98.

¹⁵⁹Loc. cit.

about by man's own willful, rebellious transgression against God. Therefore, the "fall of man needs emphasis as much as his creation."¹⁶⁰ If we accept the fact that man was created by God in temporal time, then we must also accept the fact "that soon thereafter man through disobedience sin."¹⁶¹

According to Van Til, the fall of man is more complicated than believing that Adam merely ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As a creature, man had to live in constant awareness of "the ordinances that God had placed in His creation"¹⁶² which were endemic to man's being. Man's conformity to God's law was in accord with his own nature. The commandment forbidding contact with the knowledge of good and evil was "only to force an immediate and final test as to whether man would really live in accordance with the law of God as everywhere revealed within and about him."¹⁶³ In the fall, man sought his identity apart from God. He preferred his own resources. He "sought his ideals of truth, goodness and beauty somewhere beyond God, either directly within himself or in the universe about him."¹⁶⁴

Barth scoffs at the saga of "the speaking serpent" which he says belongs to natural history along with the physical resurrection of Christ,¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰Defense, p. 14.

¹⁶¹Loc. cit.

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶³Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁵Christianity and Barthianism, p. 14. cf. to Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel, p. 35.

but Van Til's philosophy of history encompasses it as part of Satan's plan to destroy the work of God. Satan is a person, not an abstract principle of evil. The warfare is between God and Satan, the embodiments of good and evil. The natural or fallen man has become the bondservant of Satan.

When Satan tempted Adam and Eve in paradise he sought to make them believe that man's self-consciousness was ultimate rather than derivative and God-dependent. He argued, as it were, that it was of the nature of self-consciousness to make itself the final reference point of all predication... that God had no control over all that might come forth in the process of time.¹⁶⁶

To the extent that man accepts the monistic assumption of his own ultimacy he "misinterprets all things, flowers no less than God."¹⁶⁷ The only thing that saves him from complete capitulation to his "satanic principle"¹⁶⁸ is the "incubus of the sense of deity"¹⁶⁹ engraved within his nature.

(2) The Covenant Concept. God established a covenant relationship with Adam in which he was always to live in accordance with God's laws and in return God would grant life and peace and would be eternally his God.

Through Adam, God assigned mankind its covenant task¹⁷⁰ whereby all men would interpret and rule the world aright as prophets, priests and kings.

¹⁶⁶Defense, p. 92.

¹⁶⁷Theology, p. 27.

¹⁶⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁷⁰Particularism and Common Grace, p. 1.

In this intricate manner the particular and the universal are from the outset of history intertwined with one another. God approaches the mass of mankind through one man as their representative and He approaches each individual human being throughout history through the mass of mankind that has been thus approached through one man. When John Brown is born he may find himself in Africa or in Europe; he may look into the mirror and find himself to be black or white. He may be unable to play ball with other children because of infantile paralysis or he may be a better ball player than his fellows. All the factors of his inheritance and environment are mediated through and are expressive of, the covenant relationship that God from the beginning established with mankind. All the facts of life about him speak of the mandate of God upon mankind, and therefore upon him. And all these facts also speak of the fact that mankind has, through Adam, broken the covenant with God. Thus, self-consciousness for John Brown is identical with covenant-consciousness. John Brown knows he is a covenant breaker to the extent that he knows anything truly at all.¹⁷¹

The effects of sin upon man are manifold and devastating, requiring the restorative powers of the Trinity for salvation and enlightenment. In the fall, man surrounded God as well as himself with "pure contingency or pure irrationalism"¹⁷² in believing that God knew no more than he did about reality. At the same time his apostasy "expressed itself from the outset in the idea of the correlativity of pure rationalism and irrationalism."¹⁷³ Man's sin has become so pervasive and deceitful that he is unaware of the true nature of his apostasy.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁷²The Later Heidigger and Theology, p. 34.

¹⁷³Loc. cit.

He assumes that the abnormal state, introduced by his own disobedience, is normal. Since the fall apostate man is at enmity against God. He seeks, with all his God-given powers, to repress the voice of God speaking to him through Christ and His word. When the Christ of the Scriptures is presented to him with the promise of forgiveness of sins on condition of repentance, then this Christ is asked to show his credentials.¹⁷⁴

Rebelliousness, argues Van Til, has brought man into intellectual and moral darkness¹⁷⁵ so that he cannot receive the "things of the Spirit of God"¹⁷⁶ which he sees only as foolishness. He represses God's revelational truths about himself "lest he should have to confess his own guilt,"¹⁷⁷ affirming that because "no one has transgressed the law of love of his Creator"¹⁷⁸ no one can possibly be condemned. In order to escape the ethical consequences of sin, man either affirms that evil will "eventually fade away into non-being"¹⁷⁹ or reduces "good and evil to correlatives of one another."¹⁸⁰ His suppression of truth has not only led him to cover up his guilt by denial, but eventually to a hatred of God. "When he speaks of the primacy of the ethical he does this only in the interest of making his own moral consciousness the ultimate source of right and wrong."¹⁸¹ But man faces "self-frustration"¹⁸² because "the laws of logic as God had

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 34, 35.

¹⁷⁵The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶I Corinthians 2:14

¹⁷⁷Biblical Ecumenism, p. 6.

¹⁷⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁷⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁸⁰Christianity and Modern Theology, p. 52.

¹⁸¹The Search for Meaning in Modern Thought, p. 78.

¹⁸²Theology, p. 92.

created them in the universe were not broken by sin, but man's ability to use them rightly was weakened, and still it is true that in his logical interpretation man has, in the form of the matter, come very close to the truth."¹⁸³

d) Regenerate Man.

As Ezekiel stood over the valley of dry bones in his vision and watched the Spirit of God breath into them and raise up a host of living men,¹⁸⁴ says Van Til, so the Christian watches Christ restore men to true knowledge, righteousness and holiness, albeit in principle only.

Van Til here refers to the "three types of consciousness."¹⁸⁵ First, the "Adamic consciousness" was perfect and therefore unified, receptive to revelation, and acknowledged creaturehood. Secondly, "fallen or non-regenerate consciousness" claims normality, but "builds upon the non-Theistic assumption,"¹⁸⁶ denies creaturehood, is not "receptive of God's revelation,"¹⁸⁷ wants to construct its own interpretations, lacks unity because "it has cut itself loose from the only existing source of unity,"¹⁸⁸ yet knows God and self "after a fashion," and

¹⁸³Loc. cit.

¹⁸⁴cf. Defense, p. 80, The quote from Warfield. cf. Ezekiel 37.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁸⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁸⁸Loc. cit.

possesses "relative good." Thirdly, the "regenerate consciousness" has been restored to the Adamic consciousness in principle, recognizes its guilt and rebellion, acknowledges dependency and realizes that "it has been saved by grace";¹⁸⁹ desires to receptively reconstruct and possesses unity, "though not comprehensive unity."¹⁹⁰

e) Man's Freedom.

To preserve God's ultimacy, Van Til holds that man is relatively free; free within the atmosphere of law; free within the sphere of God's personality. The idea that man is a "rational and moral being"¹⁹¹ is "not inconsistent with the idea that man lives under certain limitations."¹⁹² Man's character, rationality and environment limit freedom but do not absolutely determine his destiny. Man as a free agent is relatively free to be self-directive and self-determinative. His is not a Platonic kind of freedom that would make God a "finite god...an unknown and powerless God."¹⁹³

2. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

a) His Deity.

The concept of the fall of man lays the base for Van Til's presentation of Jesus Christ. God and man are reconciled, communication is

¹⁸⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁹⁰Loc. cit.

¹⁹¹Boston Personalism, p. 4.

¹⁹²Loc. cit.

¹⁹³Christianity in Conflict, Vol. I, part II, p. 95.

reestablished, and life is breathed into the spiritually dead by Christ as an operation of the "economical trinity."¹⁹⁴

It was the second person of the ontological trinity, who was, in respect of his essence, fully equal with the Father, who therefore existed from all eternity with the Father, who in the incarnation assumed a human nature.

This does not mean that he laid aside his divine nature or that he became a divine-human person. Nor does it mean that the divine and human natures were intermingledThe Creed of Chalcedon has expressed all this by saying that in Christ the divine and the human natures are so related as to be 'two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.'¹⁹⁵

As such, while Jesus Christ in His incarnation "shares in the incommunicable attributes of the Godhead,"¹⁹⁶ at the same time He was a truly human creature. "Accordingly even in the incarnation Christ could not commingle the eternal and the temporal. The eternal must always remain independent of and prior to the temporal."¹⁹⁷

b) His Functions.

In addition, Christ acted as the "true prophet, priest and king,"¹⁹⁸ in relation to all regenerated Christians. As Prophet, He reveals the will of God to man, becoming man's true wisdom and source of knowledge. In Christ the fallen consciousness is restored to the Adamic in principle and

¹⁹⁴Defense, p. 16.

¹⁹⁵Loc. cit.

¹⁹⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁹⁷Apologetics, p. 18.

¹⁹⁸Defense, p. 17f. (also cf. Apologetics, p. 18f.)

man is "reinstated to true knowledge,"¹⁹⁹ although this knowledge is only partial. As Priest, He sacrifices Himself to "satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God,"²⁰⁰ making "continual intercession for us."²⁰¹ His death is the foundation for the gift of true knowledge, which at its root "is an ethical question,"²⁰² involving both knowing and loving God. As King, Christ subdues, rules and defends His people and conquers their enemies. "It is only by emphasizing this organic connection of the aspects of the work of Christ that we can avoid all mechanical separation of the intellectual and moral aspects of the question of knowledge."²⁰³

Rejecting Christ is, for Van Til, rejection of God as the Father, and "tantamount to hatred of God as the Father."²⁰⁴ Conversely, true belief in one necessarily implies belief in the other. "He who is not a Christian is not, properly speaking, a Theist."²⁰⁵ Moreover, if a man does not know Christ as the Son of God, he neither understands Christ for what He truly is, nor does he truly understand himself as a man, nor truly "know reality for what it is."²⁰⁶ As a result, he cannot "know the nature of the dialogue between God and man, nor the nature of dialogue between man and man."²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁹Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰⁰Loc. cit., quote from the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

²⁰¹Loc. cit.

²⁰²Loc. cit.

²⁰³Ibid., p. 17, 18.

²⁰⁴Christ and the Jews, p. 10.

²⁰⁵Loc. cit.

²⁰⁶Loc. cit.

²⁰⁷Loc. cit.

c) Christ and Revelation.

The questions here are: "What Christ to accept? How can we know Him if He speaks? Where does He speak? Can we separate the so-called historical 'facts' surrounding His life from their 'meaning'? These problems bear on the natures of history, Scripture and fact. Further, if possibility lies outside the being and will of God, then 'the very idea of God becoming man is logically impossible.'"²⁰⁸

Van Til disavows the viewpoints of theologians and philosophers who "assume that Immanuel Kant's view of man's absolute self-dependent freedom is the proper starting point for all human predication"²⁰⁹ because he claims that this viewpoint leads ultimately to complete subjectivity.²¹⁰

...one who starts with human autonomy unavoidably uses a principle of unification by which he will, in purely a priori fashion, exclude the possibility of the direct identification of God with the Christ of history. In fact one who starts with human autonomy must, in rejecting the self-attesting Christ, reject everything connected with Him. And this rejecting may be accomplished by direct denial or by reinterpretation.²¹¹

When Albert Schweitzer sought for the real Jesus behind the accretions of Gospel history, he despaired, for the supernatural elements were inextricably woven into its fabric of the Christ image. Barth also

²⁰⁸Christianity in Conflict, Vol. I, part I, p. 18.

²⁰⁹Ibid., Vol. I, part III, p. 113.

²¹⁰Loc. cit.

²¹¹Christianity in Conflict, Vol. I, part II, p. 49.

seeks the Christ of faith apart from the so-called historical facts. Van Til feels that this effort is doomed to failure, and men face the alternative of either choosing to join with the historic church and

bow before the self-attesting and self-explaining Christ of the Scriptures or to construct a Christ-ideal from the materials of a self-existing and self-explanatory man. For the Christ that results from the effort at interpreting Him from historical documents not regarded from the start as the self-attesting Word of Christ, even if that Christ is a skillful combination of the 'historical Jesus' and the 'Christ of faith,' is yet no more than a projection of a man that does not need this Christ in any case. Why teach men to herald, witness to and set forth the meaning of a Christ that cannot be found or, if He can be found, has no help to offer man?²¹²

3. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

There is, says Ramm, "a sharp problem in any man's apologetic, namely, as to how a man becomes a Christian."²¹³ In view of the fact that Van Til "denies any common ground between Christians and non-Christians"²¹⁴ except in the image of God, unbelievers cannot be led from some neutral ground to Christian faith. How then does man come to God and to God-oriented philosophical position?

a) Dynamic God-Man Relationship.

Van Til's solution involves a dynamic relationship between the Trinity and sinful man. It is not enough that God the Father and the Son should provide a potential salvation for man, but God the Spirit must also

²¹²Ibid., Vol. I, part I, p. 4.

²¹³Ramm, op. cit., p. 203.

²¹⁴Loc. cit.

apply to man the redemptive work of Christ. "Inasmuch as we are dead in trespasses and sins, it would do us no good to have a wonderful life-saving potion laid next to us in our coffin. It would do us good only if someone actually administered the potion to us."²¹⁵ The Spirit, then, takes the initiative in the matter of salvation, otherwise if man were able to reject God's particularistic offer of salvation, the redemptive attempts of Christ would be in vain.²¹⁶

Even if we say that in the case of any one individual sinner the question of salvation is in the last analysis dependent upon man rather than upon God, that is if we say that man can of himself accept or reject the Gospel as he pleases, we have made the eternal God dependent upon man. We have then, in effect, denied the incommunicable attributes of God. If we refuse to mix the eternal and the temporal at the point of creation and at the point of the incarnation we must also refuse to mix them at the point of salvation.²¹⁷

b) Unorthodox Views.

Van Til directs attention to views of the Christian Gospel "as visualized by the modern mind"²¹⁸ which include combinations of the following points: First, that mankind commonly originates from some form of animal ancestry, in which creation ex nihilo²¹⁹ is displaced in favor of "some form of saga, as a pictorial presentation,"²²⁰ allowing a

²¹⁵Defense, p. 18.

²¹⁶Loc. cit.

²¹⁷Ibid., p. 19.

²¹⁸The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel, p. 35.

²¹⁹Ex Nihilo = "out of nothing"

²²⁰The Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel, p. 35.

purely impersonal, non-Christian interpretation of man's physical, biological and physiological factors. "This is the general view of Barth, Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr and many others."²²¹

Secondly, that evil is endemic in man as an integral part of his finitude. On this view, man was never created perfect; each is his own Adam. "As such each man originates sin in the absolute sense."²²²

Thirdly, all mankind is actually saved through Christ. But in this view the term saved is not related to God's wrath and man's objective guilt. Rather, "to be 'saved' in the modern theological circle means being lifted up in the scale of being."²²³ It has no reference to the nature of God, a standard for man's behavior, or a set of revealed propositions.

For, on the modern view, God is no more than a hypostatization of man's own ideals....a God of whom nothing can be known, who cannot express His will, who cannot be sinned against, and who therefore cannot forgive sins or do anything to help man in his needs. He has no power over the world. He could not punish man if he would; in any case he would not because He does not exist in any sense that means anything to man.²²⁴

Finally, the popular conceptualization of the Gospel is the Christological interpretation²²⁵ where the Christ "stands for the ideal perfection of mankind."²²⁶

²²¹Loc. cit.

²²²Ibid., p. 36.

²²³Loc. cit.

²²⁴Ibid., p. 37.

²²⁵Ibid., p. 38.

²²⁶Ibid., p. 39.

Van Til charges the psychology of religion school with promoting the popular view of the Gospel by "ignoring the objective factor of redemption"²²⁷ on the ground that "they were dealing only with the psychology of religious experience,"²²⁸ a purely subjective phenomena. In reply, he says that if the Christian God does not exist, "and if there has been no objective process of redemption"²²⁹ by virtue of the suffering of Christ and the soteriological activity of the Holy Spirit, then "there can be no such thing as regeneration in the sense that Christians conceive of regeneration,"²³⁰ by definition and "implanting of the new spiritual life by the Holy Spirit into the souls of those who are in themselves dead in trespasses and sins."²³¹ The assumption of the psychology of religion school is that man acts univocally in an "ultimately impersonal environment,"²³² i.e., that "when man is active, he only is active"²³³ independently of God. Similarly, He avers, though all Christian theories of salvation are supernaturalistic, they are defective if they fail to emphasize the ethical character of man's sin and the particularistic concept of salvation.

4. THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

In the apologetic of Van Til, God's person and eternal counsels are inseparable from His revelation of Himself to man, and He is motivated

²²⁷ Psychology of Religion, p. 126.

²²⁸ Loc. cit.

²²⁹ Loc. cit.

²³⁰ Loc. cit.

²³¹ Loc. cit.

²³² Ibid., p. 133.

²³³ Loc. cit.

by His sovereign good pleasure and love; He does not need to reveal Himself but He has chosen to do so. Van Til consistently stresses three elements in the concept of revelation: First, God has plainly revealed Himself both in nature and in special communications; Secondly, Adam needed and sinful man still needs objective, authoritative revelation; Thirdly, the Bible is the objective revelation. Van Til adds that the doctrine of the infallibility of the Scripture only claims integrity for the original manuscripts, not necessarily for the resultant versions or translations, nor is it a dictation theory of inspiration. "The personality of each writer of Scripture was allowed full play,"²³⁴ but the prophets and apostles "were guided by the Spirit of God and...what they wrote was therefore infallible."²³⁵ Accordingly, while Christians cannot solve all the problems raised by the phenomena of revelations, they accept Scripture's integrity "till the foundations of the rival position are investigated."²³⁶ Moreover, the rival position is meaningless "unless men can show that they themselves have a final interpretation of the facts of the phenomenal world to offer."²³⁷

It is not stubbornness or ignorance when we claim that in the original manuscripts of the Bible, the Word of Christ has come into the world. All the 'phenomena of Scripture' as well as all the 'phenomena of science' need this revelation of God if they are to present anything but chaos...It

²³⁴Intellectual Challenge of the Gospel, p. 26.

²³⁵Loc. cit.

²³⁶Loc. cit.

²³⁷Loc. cit.

is impossible for you to bring any coherence into your experience, unless you make God's revelation through Christ in Scripture your starting point. Without the light of the sun you search in vain for anything. All the lights of human life, science, philosophy or theology derive their light from Scripture, or they convey no light at all.²³⁸

5. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The Westminster Confession's definition of the church is Van Til's definition:

The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.²³⁹

God plans salvation for his people and builds his true church, that is, the "invisible" church from the "whole number of the elect."

"This does not preclude human responsibility...It only brings out clearly that God is absolute, here as elsewhere."²⁴⁰

6. THE DOCTRINE OF ESCHATOLOGY

When we come to the Christian conception of the 'last things,' we see once more how diametrically the Christian position is set over against that of its opponents. It becomes especially plain here that in the Christian conception of things interpretation precedes facts. Every Christian who trusts his future to God believes that God controls the future...that God has interpreted the future; he believes that the future will come to pass as God has planned it. Prophecy illustrates this point.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Pro Rege, p. 13.

²³⁹ Westminster Confession of Faith, cf. "The Church," Vol. XXVII, part I, quoted in Defense, p. 20.

²⁴⁰ The Confession of 1967, p. 9.

²⁴¹ Defense, p. 20, 21.

For, if God cannot control the future, then he is not God, and his promises of salvation are invalid. Thus Van Til emphasizes the integral relationship of man and the universe. When Christ prophesied the end of the world he did it in terms of "the regeneration of all things"²⁴² whereby man's salvation ushered in a "new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell."²⁴³ The church lives "in the glory of that expectation."²⁴⁴

In broad outline then, it is seen how Van Til's presuppositional apologetic permeates his theology, and vice versa. It is now possible to view his concept of reality and ethics which underlay the concepts of the nature of man and consciousness.

²⁴²Ibid., p. 20.

²⁴³Loc. cit.

²⁴⁴Triumph of Grace, p. 120.

CHAPTER III

VAN TIL'S THEORY OF REALITY

INTRODUCTION

Raymond Aron once said:

In a strict sense, all the sciences spring from a certain manner of interrogating the real, and this manner of interrogation is inspired or justified by a certain conception of the structure of reality.²⁴⁵

One of the most perplexing elements of this structure has been the relationship between the one-and-the-many, or the unity that integrates the plurality of particulars. In an attempt to deal with the problem, Van Til develops a Christian "Paideia"²⁴⁶ or theory of reality correlating the various concepts of being, knowledge and ethics; and places it in opposition to the "totality picture of non-Christian thought."²⁴⁷ Yet, consistent to his own thesis, he only claims analogical knowledge of these areas, not total comprehension.

In the debate, he borrows philosophical language but fills it with Christian concepts in order to be able "to contrast the Biblical idea of the Trinity with philosophical theories that are based upon human experience as ultimate."²⁴⁸ There is no pleading of "scientific neutrality," for he

²⁴⁵Farber, ed., Philosophical Thought in France and the United States, p. 302.

²⁴⁶Christianity in Conflict, Vol. II, part I, preface.

²⁴⁷Defense, p. 24.

²⁴⁸Ibid., p. 181.

argues that such a notion is meaningless; "neutrality" is the assumption of autonomous man that he is able to approach reality with an objectively open mind as he compares his interpretations of facts with those of other men for theoretical validation. As Rushdoony says:

Historically, this process has been worked out in Descartes, Berkeley and Hume to the conclusion that man never knows reality except by his ideas of reality. The question then arises, 'is there any valid reason for believing that as I think so reality is?' The Kantian answer is determinative of modern philosophy: Things-in-themselves can never be known. Our knowledge is confined to phenomena, things as they appear to us, never reaching the thing in itself.²⁴⁹

He holds that on this kind of basis there is no such thing as a given world with a given interpretation. It leads to the conclusions that no one can ever reach a valid knowledge of reality in itself and eliminates causality.²⁵⁰

According to Van Til's Paideia, the theory of being centers around the personal creator-creature relationship, the theory of knowledge deals with the "relation between authority and reason,"²⁵¹ and ethics focuses upon "the duties of man as he develops himself and the world in accordance with the principles of knowledge and being that undergirds the Paideia as a whole."²⁵²

²⁴⁹Rushdoony, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁵⁰Loc. cit.

²⁵¹Christianity in Conflict, op. cit., preface.

²⁵²Loc. cit.

I. THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

At the outset, Van Til differentiates between a Christian and non-Christian philosophy of being on the basis of his first presupposition of "God as the absolute, self-conscious Being, who is the source of all finite being and knowledge."²⁵³ Therefore, he posits a two-level view of being rather than speaking of "being-in-itself."

A. ETERNAL UNITY AND PLURALITY

From Van Til's point of view, the first step in answering the one-and-many questions is "to distinguish between the Eternal one-and-many and the temporal one-and-many...because our conception of God as the triune God stands at the center of our thinking."²⁵⁴ There is no "non-being" over against God which defines Him, nor is there an abstract principle of being in which both God and man participate. God is the "absolute personality and therefore absolute individuality"²⁵⁵ who necessarily exists and who gives meaning to both the eternal and the temporal one-and-many.

Idealist philosophy has set forth the notion of the concrete universal "to escape the reductio and absurdum of the abstract particular and the abstract universal."²⁵⁶ Van Til puts the problem this way:

²⁵³Theology, p. 8.

²⁵⁴Defense, p. 25.

²⁵⁵Loc. cit.

²⁵⁶Ibid., p. 26.

The many must be brought into contact with one another. But how do we know that they can be brought into contact with one another? How do we know that the many do not simply exist as unrelated particulars? The answer given is that in such a case we should know nothing of them; they would be abstracted from the body of knowledge that we have; they would be abstract particulars. On the other hand, how is it possible that we should obtain a unity that does not destroy the particulars? We seem to get our unity by generalizing, by abstracting from the particulars in order to include them into larger unities. If we keep up this process of generalization till we exclude all particulars, granted they can all be excluded, have we then not stripped these particulars of their particularity? Have we then obtained anything but an abstract universal? ²⁵⁷

He maintains that the non-Christian cannot answer these problems adequately, the modern philosopher no more than the ancient Greeks. Aristotle, he says, tried to solve it by employing a form-matter scheme in his theory of reality in conjunction with the law of contradiction. The latter is defined by Clark:

The principle is this: the same attribute cannot attach and not attach to the same thing in the same respect. Or, otherwise, contrary attributes cannot belong to the same subject at the same time. This principle...is stated not merely as a law of thought, but primarily as a law of being. The ontological form is basic, the purely logical is derivative: it becomes a law of thought. ²⁵⁸

Aristotle's form-matter scheme was an eternal dualism, the form standing for "abstract-non-personal thought thinking itself," ²⁵⁹ and matter standing for the concept of pure chance or irrationalism. Another way to

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 25, 26.

²⁵⁸ Clark, Thales to Dewey, p. 98.

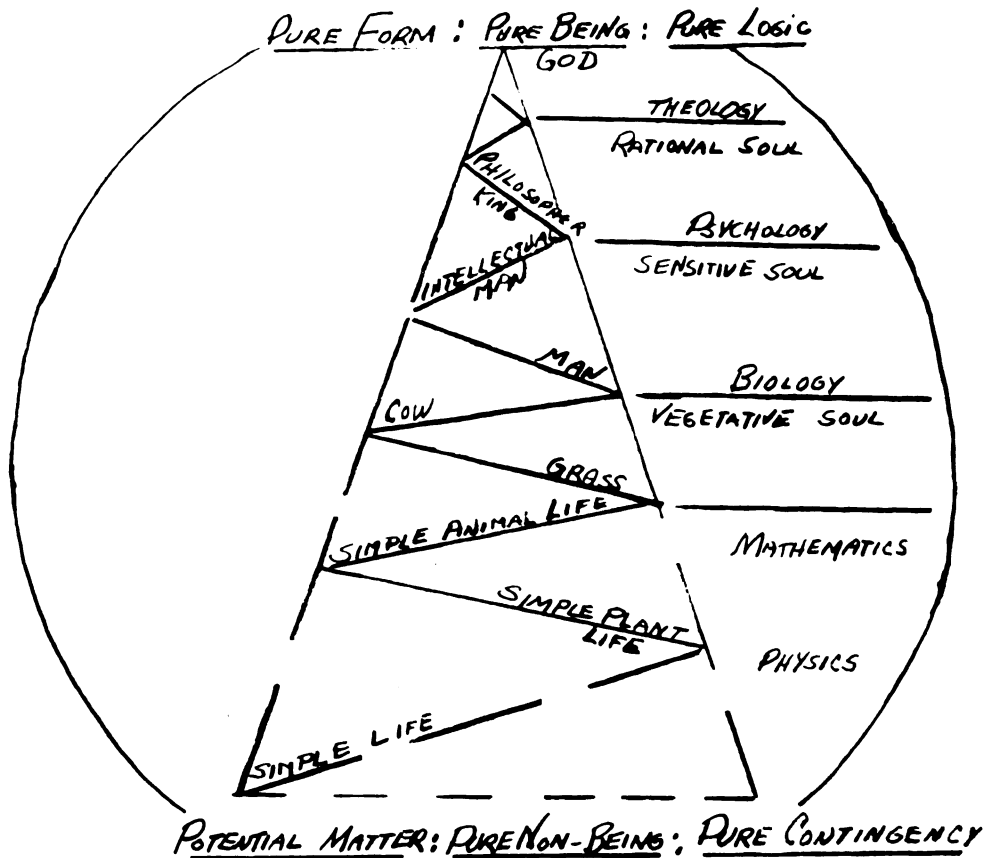
²⁵⁹ Christianity in Conflict, Vol. II, part I, p. 22.

look at it is to see matter as pure non-being and form as pure being or act.

Matter is always in the process of becoming form; it has "potential being."²⁶⁰

Form is pure rationality, pure thought, pure principle, God.

A diagram of Aristotle's theory might look like this:²⁶¹



NOTE: This is a logical, not a chronological evolution.

In this scheme, each lower level of being has potential for achieving a higher level of being; all is in process of becoming. At the bottom is pure individuation, the "many" of Greek philosophy. At the top is pure

²⁶⁰Ibid., p. 9.

²⁶¹Diagram taken from class notes.

unity. Aristotle hoped to create an all-inclusive theory of reality and knowledge and thus solve the problem of the one-and-the-many. It is, comments Van Til, "an attempt to combine an abstract principle of unity with an equally abstract principle of diversity."²⁶² Aristotle is assuming that "all reality is amenable to the exhaustive logical manipulation by man,"²⁶³ but to do this "he has to appeal to intuition or faith; not only so, he must appeal to faith in pure contingency as somehow furnishing the basis for the validity of logical demonstration."²⁶⁴ Aristotle's position is the same as that of Kant, "namely an island of regularity floating on a boiling cauldron of chance."²⁶⁵

Van Til reasons that Hegel, Tillich, Maritain and the existentialists also build upon Aristotle's form-matter scheme when they say that man is in the act of "becoming," that there are, as Maritain says, "degrees of being and goodness,"²⁶⁶ or that man is growing closer to participation in the being of God. If so, contends Van Til, then "why should God be said to be higher than man if God is himself enveloped by pure contingency except so far as he is pure contingency?"²⁶⁷ On such theory, all men are "in principle sons of God already through the idea of the analogy of being";²⁶⁸ there is no individuation left.

²⁶²Ibid., p. 10.

²⁶³Loc. cit.

²⁶⁴Loc. cit.

²⁶⁵Loc. cit.

²⁶⁶Orthodox Protestantism, p. 18, quote from Maritain, St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil, p. 5.

²⁶⁷Ibid., p. 25.

²⁶⁸Ibid., p. 26.

Such a position, he says, which underlies the whole of modern philosophy, theology and science, cannot solve the one-and-the-many. Only the Christian doctrine of the Trinity gives an answer and demonstrates the true concrete universal. "In God's being there are no particulars not related to the universal and there is nothing universal that is not fully expressed in the particulars."²⁶⁹ Nothing is hidden in God's being, in whom "possibility is identical with reality and potentiality is identical with actuality."²⁷⁰

B. TEMPORAL UNITY AND PLURALITY

Van Til asserts that since there is no such thing as an Aristotelian-potentially-active-non-being, nor an abstract Platonic principle of being over against God, it is natural to hold that there is a realm of temporal one-and-many created by God. The doctrine of creation then becomes, for Van Til, the core of his doctrine of fact.

He says that the temporal one-and-many are equal in terms of their derivation and dependency upon the "God who sustains them both."²⁷¹ Their relations to each other are ordained so that "the particulars or facts of the universe do and must act in accord with universals or laws. There is order in the created universe."²⁷² The ultimate universal is God from whom all other facts and universals derive their meaning. If, on the other

²⁶⁹ Defense, p. 26.

²⁷⁰ Apologetics, p. 6.

²⁷¹ Defense, p. 27.

²⁷² Loc. cit.

hand, it would be true that the universe were composed of self-contained facts, or if man's mind alone could interpret facts, then it would logically follow that God would be extraneous.

1. SUBORDINATION

Van Til makes three points relating to the above. First, although all temporal facts or laws are basically equal, "there is a relation of subordination between them as ordained by God."²⁷³ The teleological laws are higher than the mechanical laws, and the will and intellect of man supersede the physical aspects of the universe. So man is spoken of as having dominion over God's creation in order to subdue it as prophet, priest and king. In turn, he is to learn subordination to the will of God. Man and the physical universe are thus intimately related; the destiny of the latter depends upon that of the former.

2. GENERALIZATION

Secondly, God's laws are but His generalized operations with the particulars. At any time, God may "take one fact and set it into a new relation to created law."²⁷⁴ All particular facts are subject to His will. This is Van Til's rationale for miracles which "are at the heart of the Christian position."²⁷⁵ Nowhere does the Christian position allow that "the being of God and the being of man are united with one another,"²⁷⁶

²⁷³Loc. cit.

²⁷⁴Loc. cit.

²⁷⁵Loc. cit.

²⁷⁶The Case for Calvinism, p. 20.

which is the presupposition supporting the popular rejection of miracle. Miracle forms part of the "larger circle of redemptive works"²⁷⁷ generating the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Nor may the fact of miracle be fit into a pragmatic scheme of "abstract impersonal logic, logic which virtually asserts that the facts cannot possibly display the plan of God."²⁷⁸ It only fits into the notion of the self-contained ontological Trinity. Again the physical and historical elements in miracles cannot be removed in order to allow them to be merely interpreted "theologically and redemptively"²⁷⁹ for then they must either be denied as historical fact, or else accepted as historical fact without religious significance. Rather, miracle is "a mode of revelation"²⁸⁰ whereby God fulfills his redeeming work and "destroys the power of sin"²⁸¹ in man.

3. THE BASIS OF SCIENCE

Thirdly, Van Til asserts that God-created and interpreted fact lays the only proper foundation for science. "God makes the facts to be what they are,"²⁸² and the facts are all related to a larger whole sustained by God's counsel. A blade of grass is not a "brute fact" dissociated from

²⁷⁷Evidences, p. 56.

²⁷⁸Theology, p. 18.

²⁷⁹Ibid., p. 68.

²⁸⁰Ibid., p. 130.

²⁸¹Loc. cit.

²⁸²Defense, p. 147.

all other "brute facts." Chance has no place in God's universe. The facts of mathematics, the facts of history, of life, only are "subordinately and derivatively important"²⁸³ and cannot be disentangled from coherent principles of interpretation. Without the undergirding of the Christian (Calvinistic) philosophy of reality, man sinks into a "sea of contingency" and irrationalism. On autonomous principles he can know nothing truly.

This involves Van Til in the scientific ideal set before science. This goal is "complete comprehension."²⁸⁴

Evaluated from Van Til's point of view, such a goal "wipes out the basic distinction between the Creator and the creature"²⁸⁵ and therefore makes two errors: first, it fails to realize that God has already reached the scientific ideal, and, secondly, it puts man in the impossible situation of trying to gain exhaustive comprehension of all things. This ideal manifests itself in all branches of science in the current determinacy-indeterminacy debate.²⁸⁶ Van Til contends that, in practice, scientists assume the equal relevancy of both. On the one hand, determinacy underlies the concepts of prediction, statistical averages and physical laws, and on the other hand, such problems as exceptional cases,²⁸⁷ discreteness

²⁸³Ibid., p. 148.

²⁸⁴Evidences, p. 57, cf. also Christianity in Conflict, Vol. I, part II, p. 43f.

²⁸⁵Loc. cit.

²⁸⁶Ibid., p. 95-98.

²⁸⁷Loc. cit.

of sensations,²⁸⁸ probability,²⁸⁹ and man's apparent freedom²⁹⁰ argue for indeterminacy.

Again, Van Til finds that the doctrines of creation and providence as elements of God's revelation point toward the solution of this apparent paradox. All existence, and meaning, the laws of mathematics and physics, even time itself are not eternal principles, but God-created modes of finite existence²⁹¹ revelatory of the nature of God who determines all things.

C. SIN AND ITS CURSE

The clearness of this revelation is obscured by the all-pervasive effects of the sin of man, the opposition of Satan to God, and the subsequent curse of God upon the world. These aspects, he writes, must be accounted for in any concept of temporal being.²⁹² God has entered temporal time in the person of His Son to reconstruct the whole and set it right.²⁹³

SUMMARY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

In Van Til's metaphysics there is a two-layer theory of reality: eternal ultimate being and temporal analogical being. The relationship

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁹⁰ Christianity in Conflict, Vol. I, 2, p. 45 and 108.

²⁹¹ Theology, p. 66.

²⁹² Defense, p. 28.

²⁹³ Loc. cit.

between the two is not conceived of primarily in terms of principle, but as personal.²⁹⁴ God's being is not subject to becoming and change, nor is it a function of time.²⁹⁵ All of these properly belong to temporal reality. In the Ontological Trinity are ultimately resolved the paradoxes of unity and diversity, determinancy and indeterminancy, time and eternity. Sin and its resultant condemnation have obscured and complicated man's grasp of these ideas, but God's remedial work in Christ provides the ground for and adequate epistemology.

II. THE PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

Van Til makes it plain that "our theory of knowledge is what it is because our theory of being is what it is."²⁹⁶ As his concept of being was taken from the Bible, so he feels compelled to look there for his epistemology.²⁹⁷

The business of philosophy is to ask "How do we know?"²⁹⁸ and the Christian answer is that true knowledge must correspond to God's knowledge.²⁹⁹ If man argues that true knowledge is to be found by appeal to some neutral area of uninterpreted fact, or to some level of knowledge

²⁹⁴Ibid., p. 29.

²⁹⁵Loc. cit.

²⁹⁶Ibid., p. 32.

²⁹⁷Loc. cit.

²⁹⁸Ibid., p. 33.

²⁹⁹Loc. cit.

or being apart from God, then in effect, he denies the ultimacy of God's being and authority,³⁰⁰ which denial was the core of Adam's sin.³⁰¹

Once again Van Til introduces the doctrine of sin. Sin has ruined man's perceptual and emotional fields³⁰² so that he cannot understand or yield to God's interpretation without the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.³⁰³ Sin manifests itself in the field of knowledge whenever man asserts himself as ultimate, refuses God's authority, and fails to correctly interpret the natural phenomena of God's general revelation of Himself.³⁰⁴

A. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF HIMSELF

Van Til posits a "two-layer theory of knowledge,"³⁰⁵ that of the self-determinative God³⁰⁶ who knows Himself exhaustively and analytically as the object of knowledge,³⁰⁷ and that of man who knows analogically.³⁰⁸

God does not have to look beyond Himself³⁰⁹ nor even within Himself for self-knowledge.³¹⁰ As God, He knows analytically or in self-dependence, i.e., He does not obtain knowledge by comparing or contrasting

³⁰⁰Ibid., p. 34.

³⁰¹Loc. cit.

³⁰²Ibid., p. 35.

³⁰³Loc. cit.

³⁰⁴Loc. cit.

³⁰⁵Loc. cit.

³⁰⁶Loc. cit.

³⁰⁷Ibid., p. 37.

³⁰⁸Ibid., p. 39.

³⁰⁹Ibid., p. 37.

³¹⁰Loc. cit.

Himself with being or non-being;³¹¹ He knows "by one simple eternal act of vision."³¹² Therefore, it can be said that in God "the real is the rational and the rational is the real."³¹³

Van Til observes that this point is vital because modern theories of knowledge depend essentially upon the Platonic and Aristotelian logic that God neither knows Himself nor man nor the universe, and is Himself unknowable;³¹⁴ whereas upon Christian terms, human knowledge of both God and man is possible because of the internal coherence of the Trinity.³¹⁵ Though God is eternally incomprehensible,³¹⁶ He has revealed Himself to man, and it is therefore unnecessary to rest upon any such doctrine as the primacy of the intellect in order to establish a basis for human knowledge.³¹⁷

B. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

In dealing with the nature of God's knowledge of things beyond Himself, Van Til turns to the creation doctrine.³¹⁸ God had a plan for the universe from all eternity, though the universe per se is not eternal.³¹⁹ But this creates a problem. If God's self-consciousness is coterminous

³¹¹Loc. cit.

³¹²Loc. cit.

³¹³Loc. cit.

³¹⁴Christianity in Conflict, I, part 2, p. 31.

³¹⁵Theology, p. 22.

³¹⁶Ibid., p. 159.

³¹⁷Ibid., p. 161.

³¹⁸Defense, p. 37.

³¹⁹Loc. cit.

with His being, "would it not seem to follow that God's knowledge of the universe is to be identified with the being of the universe?"³²⁰ i.e., if God eternally knew of the universe, must not the universe eternally exist? After all, if man's self-awareness presupposes his existence, does not God's awareness of the world also presuppose existence of it? In reply, Van Til says that the very analogical quality of human logic is also its weakness; man always thinks in terms of his own limitations. This is "the most basic contrast conceivable between a Christian and non-Christian theory of knowledge,"³²¹ the former interpreting "reality in terms of the eternally self-conscious divine personality"³²² and the latter seeing it as independent of God. God knew the universe and His plan for it prior to its actual existence.

C. MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Man's knowledge is "analogical of divine knowledge."³²³ The question Van Til asks is, can man have true or objective knowledge of God, can "we get back to God by the road that He has used to create us?"³²⁴ He replies that, apart from the ethical complications of sin, it follows that if God is a self-conscious Being who "exists necessarily as a self-complete system of coherence"³²⁵ and men are created as self-conscious image-

³²⁰Ibid., , p. 38.

³²¹Loc. cit.

³²²Loc. cit.

³²³Ibid., , p. 39.

³²⁴Ibid., , p. 40.

³²⁵Loc. cit.

bearers, then men "must have true knowledge of Him."³²⁶ This knowledge need not be comprehensive to be true.³²⁷ Furthermore, the relation between God and man is rational, and Christianity is "an absolute rationalism,"³²⁸ while "all other systems of epistemology believe in ultimate irrationalism."³²⁹

He affirms that non-Christian epistemology does allow for certain types of authority that are in keeping with its principle of autonomy. First, there is an authority that is based upon "the existence of the endless multiplicity of factual material."³³⁰ Time and pure factuality are seen as ultimate and contingent upon chance and irrationalism. This authority rests upon Kant's thesis that the moral and religious aspects of man as well as his intellect are able to come into contact with ultimate experience,³³¹ and thus gives room for both faith and reason. Yet, in Kant's noumenal realm of faith, man can never be really sure of his knowledge of God.³³² This is, responds Van Til, essentially a Greek idea in which God is an impersonal, unknowable, abstract principle.³³³ Such an idea of "pure factuality or chance is the best guarantee that no true authority...will ever confront man."³³⁴

³²⁶Loc. cit.

³²⁷Ibid., p. 41.

³²⁸Loc. cit.

³²⁹Loc. cit.

³³⁰Ibid., p. 124.

³³¹Ibid., p. 125.

³³²Christianity in Conflict, I, 2, p. 46.

³³³Ibid., p. 82.

³³⁴Defense, p. 126.

The second kind of authority acceptable to natural man "springs from the fact that even that which the intellect does assert about the objects of knowledge is, of necessity, involved in contradiction,"³³⁵ i.e., that all logical assertion about phenomena must be "self-contradictory in character"³³⁶ because chance is irrational. On this basis, says Van Til, reality is always reduced to mere perceptualization,³³⁷ a way of seeing things. There can, again, be no true and objective authority, only a relative kind. If "reality" can be spoken of, it must only be in the terms of inward thought and self-experience.³³⁸

Finally, there is the authority of the expert.

D. MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE

By the term "universe," Van Til means "the whole of the created world including man himself and his environment."³³⁹ Man's ultimate environment is God, and therefore is personal.³⁴⁰ His immediate environment contains other finite persons and things intimately related to each other under God's control.³⁴¹ The world of objects was created for man

³³⁵ Loc. cit., Van Til here refers to F. H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality which details this position.

³³⁶ Loc. cit.

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

³³⁸ Christianity in Conflict, I, 1, p. 12.

³³⁹ Defense, p. 42.

³⁴⁰ Loc. cit.

³⁴¹ Loc. cit.

the subject to interpret under God.³⁴² On this basis alone, Van Til holds, can man think of objective knowledge.³⁴³

If man's knowledge is both partial and true, then the problem of "antinomies" or paradoxes is more clearly understood.³⁴⁴ It would seem that if God controls, knows, and interprets all things, then man cannot add anything to this system.³⁴⁵ The historical would be meaningless, scientific endeavor fruitless. One cannot add water to a full bucket.³⁴⁶ But if God is completely coherent and man is not, then man has to learn to live with apparent ambiguity and with the faith that all phenomena is ultimately coherent.³⁴⁷

Van Til depends upon Dooyewerd for the argument that science is totally dependent upon the Christian presupposition for its principle of coherence. Partial truths are insufficient in themselves; they are only truths in the context of theoretical truths which presuppose the totality of truth.³⁴⁸ For example, "the proposition $2 \times 2 = 4$ is not 'true in itself,' but only in the context of the laws of number and the logical laws of

³⁴²Ibid., p. 43.

³⁴³Loc. cit.

³⁴⁴Ibid., p. 44.

³⁴⁵Ibid., p. 45.

³⁴⁶Loc. cit.

³⁴⁷Theology, p. 43.

³⁴⁸Christianity in Conflict, II, 3, p. 52.

thought."³⁴⁹ The function of science is to find the revelational truths of God in the whole of created reality.³⁵⁰ Controlled by the Christian pre-supposition, the scientist rules out certain hypotheses that deny the systematic relationship of the universe to God.³⁵¹ The natural man suppresses this at every point in his knowledge of things,³⁵² being restrained only by the gift of God's common-grace.³⁵³ By the same common-grace principle, Christian and non-Christian can cooperate in scientific and humanitarian enterprises.³⁵⁴ Simultaneously, the Christian must challenge the entire freedom-nature scheme of autonomous man in the interest of showing that on its terms the methods of science, theology and philosophy "lead from nowhere into nothing."³⁵⁵

E. SIN AND ITS CURSE

As in his theory of being, so Van Til feels compelled to introduce the problem of sin and condemnation into his theory of knowledge, for "the question of knowledge is an ethical question at its root."²⁵⁶ True knowledge

³⁴⁹Loc. cit.

³⁵⁰Defense, p. 97.

³⁵¹Ibid., p. 99, cf. Theology, p. 15.

³⁵²Theology, p. 15.

³⁵³Defense, p. 174, 175.

³⁵⁴Loc. cit.

³⁵⁵Case for Calvinism, p. 109.

³⁵⁶Defense, p. 17.

is not only intellectual assent to propositions, but "knowing and loving God."³⁵⁷ To know the world truly is to know God truly, and this is the work of Christ.³⁵⁸ He adds, "From what has been said, it has already become apparent that it is through Christ that the unity of science is to be attained."³⁵⁹

Seen in this light, the Christian can no longer imagine the sinful mind to be "normal."³⁶⁰ Christ transforms the fallen consciousness into regenerate consciousness³⁶¹ that now desires once more to be "receptively reconstructive"³⁶² concerning "the revelational material in which he lives, moves and has his being."³⁶³ Apart from Christ, man's mind is characterized by self-frustration.³⁶⁴

SUMMARY OF THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Van Til affirms that it is beyond human capacities to integrate the antinomies of determinism and indeterminism into a meaningful combination.³⁶⁵ On the intellectual basis of autonomy either man has to claim

³⁵⁷Loc. cit.

³⁵⁸Loc. cit.

³⁵⁹Ibid., p. 154.

³⁶⁰Ibid., p. 48.

³⁶¹Ibid., p. 49.

³⁶²Loc. cit.

³⁶³Intellectual Challenge, p. 14.

³⁶⁴Theology, p. 92.

³⁶⁵Intellectual Challenge, p. 40.

that both are absurd, claim to have comprehensive knowledge, or claim to know nothing. On the Christian two-layer theory of knowledge man has the only coherent foundation for science. On this basis man does not need exhaustive knowledge to have objective and true knowledge. Sin has obscured man's knowledge, but common-grace enables Christian and non-Christian to cooperate. The foundation of knowledge is essentially Christological.

III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF ETHICS

Sooner or later, says Van Til, all ethical writers must deal with man's summum bonum, criterion and motivation.³⁶⁶ Van Til relies on the simplicity of the Reformed Confessions that the highest good of man is the glory of God.³⁶⁷ In the temporal realm, God is glorified when His kingdom becomes man's summum bonum, His revealed will man's criterion, and His life-giving Spirit motivates man to obey and love Him.³⁶⁸

Relating his philosophies of being and knowledge to ethics, Van Til claims that, surrounded by revelation and possessing God's image, "man's very constitution as a rational and moral being is itself revelational to man,³⁶⁹ and, that God's revealed moral attribute of goodness "forms

³⁶⁶Defense, p. 51.

³⁶⁷cf. Westminster Confession, question 1.

³⁶⁸Defense, p. 51.

³⁶⁹Apologetics, p. 55.

the foundation of true Christian ethics."³⁷⁰ In contrast, the ideal in every non-Christian ethic is said to be "no more than an abstract principle of goodness"³⁷¹ subject to the ultimacy of change³⁷² because nothing prevents "man from making himself his own summum bonum."³⁷³ Nor can any "non-Christian system of thought find a solution for the question of human responsibility"³⁷⁴ as long as its God is finite, powerless and unknowable.³⁷⁵ Van Til wonders if there can be any meaning in ethical words like obedience, disobedience, love and hate apart from "the background of the self-determinate triune God of Scripture."³⁷⁶

The basic differences between Christian and non-Christian ethics in Van Til's view are, first, "the acceptance, or denial, of the ultimately self-determinative will of God";³⁷⁷ secondly, the non-Christian assumption of the "ultimacy of chance that either makes the determinate good an achievement, or it sets the good out of relation to its environment, and therewith destroys its value,"³⁷⁸ and thirdly, the non-Christian idea that man's

³⁷⁰Theology, p. 238.

³⁷¹Loc. cit.,

³⁷²Loc. cit.

³⁷³Loc. cit.

³⁷⁴Ibid., p. 251.

³⁷⁵Christianity in Conflict, I, 2, p. 94, 95.

³⁷⁶Theology of James Daane, p. 119.

³⁷⁷Defense, p. 62.

³⁷⁸Ibid., p. 61.

moral activity is "creatively constructive"³⁷⁹ vs. the Christian idea of it being "receptively reconstructive."³⁸⁰

A. THE SUMMUM BONUM OF ETHICS: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Whenever Van Til discusses the Christian summum bonum, he does it in terms of original man in the state of righteousness. Only this is "the normal state of affairs"³⁸¹ by which all other theories of the summum bonum must be judged.

1. THE SUMMUM BONUM IDEALLY CONSIDERED: THE INDIVIDUAL

According to Van Til, God desired man to set before himself the ideal of the glory of God,³⁸² that man would seek His glory directly in religious activity and indirectly in ethical activity.³⁸³ These distinctions are seen merely as a matter of emphasis in the temporal sphere because "strictly speaking, God's glory cannot be increased."³⁸⁴ As emphases, however, religion tends to deal with the will of man in the act of adoration to God, while ethics is more concerned with the "driving and directing forces" of personality in the act of obedience³⁸⁵ to God as these are expressed in dealings with fellow men. Both religion and ethics deal with the whole personality³⁸⁶ in terms of the intimate relationship of the

³⁷⁹Ibid., p. 53.

³⁸⁰Loc. cit.

³⁸¹Ethics, p. 53.

³⁸²Ibid., p. 38.

³⁸³Loc. cit.

³⁸⁴Loc. cit.

³⁸⁵Ibid., p. 40.

³⁸⁶Ibid., p. 39.

individual with society³⁸⁷ through historical process³⁸⁸ as "revelatory of God and as genuinely significant for the development of God's purpose with the universe."³⁸⁹

The most vital aspect in realizing the kingdom of God as the Ideal is that man sees himself as "God's vicegerent in history."³⁹⁰ Man is given a central place in the universe³⁹¹ as the head of all creation. All things in the universe are in "covenant relation with one another"³⁹² so that even the flowers of the field glorify God "indirectly and consciously through man."³⁹³ As King over God's domain, man ought, above all, to seek self-realization as the most direct way of glorifying God.³⁹⁴ Man realizes himself in three ways. First, he learns to develop his own will to its highest capacities.³⁹⁵ To serve God spontaneously, "man's will needs to become increasingly spontaneous in its reactivity."³⁹⁶ He becomes increasingly sensitive to his "subordination" to God and his

³⁸⁷Loc. cit.

³⁸⁸Loc. cit.

³⁸⁹Ibid., p. 40.

³⁹⁰Ibid., p. 41, "Vicegerent: acting in the place of another," Winston Dictionary.

³⁹¹Loc. cit.

³⁹²Loc. cit.

³⁹³Loc. cit.

³⁹⁴Ibid., p. 41, 42.

³⁹⁵Loc. cit.

³⁹⁶Loc. cit.

"coordination" to his fellow men and "therefore increasingly spontaneous in his desire to maintain these relationships."³⁹⁷ His will develops as he exercises obedience to God. "A neutral will cannot develop because it cannot function."³⁹⁸

Secondly, "man's will needs to become increasingly fixed in its self-determination"³⁹⁹ as he reflects the self-determination of God.⁴⁰⁰ "An unstable man would be useless in the Kingdom of God";⁴⁰¹ so he needs solidity of moral character. This self-determination refers to "man's subconscious processes as well as to man's self-conscious processes."⁴⁰²

Thirdly, "man's will must increase in momentum." His area of activity grows larger in proportion to his responsibility, spontaneity and determination.

In respect to this self-realization, says Van Til, all believers should oppose the commonly held notions of determinism and indeterminism which "place man in an impersonal environment"⁴⁰⁴ that excludes God.

³⁹⁷Ibid., p. 43.

³⁹⁸Loc. cit.

³⁹⁹Ibid., p. 42.

⁴⁰⁰Loc. cit.

⁴⁰¹Loc. cit.

⁴⁰²Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁰³Ibid., p. 42.

⁴⁰⁴Ibid., p. 44.

"This is of the utmost significance for the proper conception of his freedom."⁴⁰⁵ For man to be free, there must be nothing in his environment or in himself that would prevent him from doing God's will.⁴⁰⁶ Van Til qualifies this in reference to the types of psychology that find determinism in the drives and instincts of the "subliminal self" motivating man.⁴⁰⁷ He says that man was created to be a replica of God, though he could not, as a temporal being, be entirely self-conscious. "Man can never become pure act as God is pure act,"⁴⁰⁸ for man is subject to change. Nevertheless, as originally created his "will controlled his subconscious life, while after the fall man's sub-conscious life controlled his will."⁴⁰⁹ Man now has become the "slave of his instincts"⁴¹⁰ which are turned against God. Thus man has lost his freedom to become self-realized apart from grace in Christ and the empowering activity of the Spirit.⁴¹¹

2. THE SUMMUM BONUM IDEALLY CONSIDERED: SOCIETY

The immediate task of society is "the self-realization of every finite personality,"⁴¹² but presently this is hampered by the necessity to

⁴⁰⁵Loc. cit.

⁴⁰⁶Loc. cit.

⁴⁰⁷Ibid., p. 45.

⁴⁰⁸Loc. cit.

⁴⁰⁹Loc. cit.

⁴¹⁰Loc. cit.

⁴¹¹Christianity in Conflict, I, 1, p. 6.

⁴¹²Ethics, p. 47.

repair the damages of sin.⁴¹³ If the mind and will of man had not been effected by sin the successive generations could have accomplished unlimited achievements, and self-realization of each individual in developing spontaneity and power of the will would "bring about righteousness in society."⁴¹⁴ Competition would only serve to enhance other men not destroy them.⁴¹⁵

In contrast, Van Til says, any ethic that depends upon the "principle of individuation is ultimately non-rational."⁴¹⁶ On such a principle one man's personality can only be developed "by way of contrast to other men's individual personalities."⁴¹⁷ Law will be seen only in formal, abstract terms "correlative to non-rational individuality,"⁴¹⁸ making it imperative for each man to make his own applications. Self-realization would then be at the expense of society as a whole,⁴¹⁹ whereas in the New Testament sense, every member of society has a function within the whole organism.⁴²⁰

Christian ethics, implies Van Til, favors prosperous use of the world because it does not view matter as evil per se, as does Thomas

⁴¹³Loc. cit.

⁴¹⁴Ibid., p. 48.

⁴¹⁵cf. to Van Til's discussion of Kant's theory that the ethical self must be sufficient to itself in order to be truly free. In Modern Ethical Theories, Chapter III, "Speculation and Revelation," p. 22f.

⁴¹⁶Loc. cit.

⁴¹⁷Loc cit. cf. p. 62, 63.

⁴¹⁸Loc. cit.

⁴¹⁹Ibid., p. 49.

⁴²⁰Loc. cit.

Aquinas, or Arminianism to a lesser degree;⁴²¹ neither does it posit prosperity,⁴²² happiness,⁴²³ utility,⁴²⁴ or good will⁴²⁵ as ends in themselves nor as non-rational principles, nor as means to an end, only as the by-products of seeking the Kingdom of God. There must be no ulterior motives in seeking God's glory.⁴²⁶

3. THE NON-CHRISTIAN SUMMUM BONUM

Van Til charges that all non-Christian ethics take for granted the normality of present existence⁴²⁷ which assumes that there will "never be a perfect world."⁴²⁸ Correlative with this is the assumption of inherent evil in matter,⁴²⁹ although this may sometimes be referred to as "irrationality."⁴³⁰ This, he says, effects a psychological dualism; either the rational and the sensual are seen in continuous internal strife,⁴³¹ as in Greek thinking, or as in modern times, "ethics tends to become an art of skillfully manipulating the drives and instincts of man in order to accomplish

⁴²¹Ibid., p. 49, 50.

⁴²²Loc. cit.

⁴²³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴²⁴Ibid., p. 52.

⁴²⁵Ibid., p. 53.

⁴²⁶Loc. cit.

⁴²⁷Ibid., p. 55, cf. Defense, p. 62.

⁴²⁸Loc. cit.

⁴²⁹Ibid., p. 56, 57, cf. also Psychoanalysis of Religion, p. 127.

⁴³⁰Christianity in Conflict, I, 2, p. 73.

⁴³¹Ibid., p. 60.

the greatest amount of good and prevent the greatest amount of evil"⁴³² on the belief that man lacks a "definitely and intellectually conceived goal."⁴³³ On the other hand, Christian ethics sees man as originally created as a whole personality in perfect harmony with himself, hence tries to avoid the intellectualistic-voluntaristic dualism.⁴³⁴

Society is also seen as an integrated whole. Although nations seem to have unique characteristics because God gave them different gifts, He intended those gifts to be used for all peoples.⁴³⁵ There is more than just a "concidental resemblance between the various ethical ideals of various peoples."⁴³⁶ It is imperative to think of the family of man,⁴³⁷ not just "an aggregate of individuals."⁴³⁸ This principle of an organismic society provides the proper basis for parental authority, whereas the principle of individuation runs either to the perverted extremes of parental autocracy or of the autocracy of the child, or also replaces the autocracy of the king with a "false democracy which seeks the ultimate source of authority in the multitude of men, without recognition of God."⁴³⁹ The

⁴³²Loc. cit.

⁴³³Loc. cit.

⁴³⁴Loc. cit.

⁴³⁵Ibid., p. 61.

⁴³⁶Loc. cit.

⁴³⁷Loc. cit.

⁴³⁸Ibid., p. 62.

⁴³⁹Loc. cit.

middle-of-the-roader ideal man of Aristotle is no solution either, for it subverts "the idea of the possibility of a perfect man."⁴⁴⁰

4. THE BIBLICAL SUMMUM BONUM

Van Til postulates four differences between Old and New Testament ethics in relation to the Biblical summum bonum.⁴⁴¹ First, all Scripture speaks of an absolute ethical ideal. Secondly, the Kingdom of God is a gift. Thirdly, a part of the task of realizing that kingdom is absorbed in eradicating the works of evil. Fourthly, the ideal will never be realized in the present world.

Christian ethics must concentrate on the "original existence of a perfect man,"⁴⁴² a concept only found in the Old and New Testaments.⁴⁴³ In the light of the absolute requirements of perfection in the moral law,⁴⁴⁴ the promises to Israel of a permanent country,⁴⁴⁵ and the progressive nature of revelation,⁴⁴⁶ it is easier to understand the reasons for the threats and penalties incurred by disobedience.⁴⁴⁷ In both Testaments "the reward for obedience is that of eternal life in the presence of God";⁴⁴⁸ with no

⁴⁴⁰Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁴¹Ibid., p. 68.

⁴⁴²Loc. cit.

⁴⁴³Loc. cit.

⁴⁴⁴Loc. cit.

⁴⁴⁵Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁴⁶Loc. cit.

⁴⁴⁷Loc. cit.

⁴⁴⁸Loc. cit.

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concept of an in-between state for immortal souls; it is an either-or. Apart from God the woe is eternal and complete.⁴⁴⁹

In Scripture, says Van Til, "the sin of man is definitely set forth as the cause of all physical evil."⁴⁵⁰ Consequently, every act has moral significance.⁴⁵¹ The Old Testament ordinances on hygiene and the burial of the dead taught that evil was introduced by man and has no place in God's world; disease is abnormal and man responsible.⁴⁵²

The joy of the Kingdom-ideal is that God effects a perfect redemption through Christ, delivering men from sin and re-establishing the principle of harmony in the inward man and between men.⁴⁵³

The task of Biblical ethics is "the destruction of evil within man and round about man, moral and physical."⁴⁵⁴ This is the negative but unavoidable task of every believer;⁴⁵⁵ for sin insults the holiness of God and prevents man's self-realization.⁴⁵⁶ At the same time, this negative aspect of Christian ethics has brought unfavorable criticism, especially when the Old Testament required destruction of God's enemies.⁴⁵⁷ Van Til

⁴⁴⁹Loc. cit.

⁴⁵⁰Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁵¹Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁵²Loc. cit.

⁴⁵³Ibid., p. 72-74.

⁴⁵⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁴⁵⁵Loc. cit.

⁴⁵⁶Loc. cit.

⁴⁵⁷Ibid., p. 77.

argues that the Old Testament goal had to be reached in externalistic fashion while in New Testament times it is done in "more spiritual or internalistic ways."⁴⁵⁸

Lastly, the Biblical summum bonum is other-worldly; it is "an ethics of hope."⁴⁵⁹ The Christian looks for the complete renovation of the universe "in God's own good time."⁴⁶⁰ In that hope, he looks for perfect righteousness in his resurrection in Christ.⁴⁶¹

B. THE CRITERION FOR ETHICS: GOD'S REVEALED WILL

Van Til claims that the notion of a moral or "common consciousness" is insufficient as the standard for Christian ethics for it has too many contradictions.⁴⁶² The only way, he says, that we can properly imagine the propriety of a moral consciousness is if it "has never functioned apart from God,"⁴⁶³ a position rejected by non-Christian ethics.⁴⁶⁴ Van Til does not deny that a general moral consciousness exists, but that man's perception of right and wrong has been subverted by sin, and that in cases where there is conflict between intuition or conscience, and revealed principles, the latter must always prevail.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁵⁸Loc. cit. cf. also p. 104f.

⁴⁵⁹Ibid., p. 80.

⁴⁶⁰Loc. cit.

⁴⁶¹Ibid., p. 104.

⁴⁶²Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁶³Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁶⁴Loc. cit., cf. discussion of Windelband, Modern Ethical Theories, I, p. 1-6.

⁴⁶⁵Ibid., p. 119.

The only logical standard of ethics for the Christian is "in the revealed will of God,"⁴⁶⁶ and centers in the doctrines of God, creation, the fall of man and of redemption in Christ.⁴⁶⁷ Its foundation also rests in the covenantal relationship between God and man.⁴⁶⁸

C. THE MOTIVATION BEHIND ETHICS: REGENERATION

1. SIN AS ETHICAL

Van Til opposes any ethics that views man's sin as an aspect of his finiteness⁴⁶⁹ or as metaphysical tension⁴⁷⁰ because these both imply a "low view of sin"⁴⁷¹ and therefore a "low view of the atonement."⁴⁷² By such methods, he writes, it is possible to obliterate the concepts of the substitution of Christ for man, the transference of sin to Him and the need for miraculous grace.⁴⁷³ The Christian needs to affirm the ethical basis of sin and the total depravity of man in order to proclaim the necessity of God's grace⁴⁷⁴ and the regeneration of the Spirit.

⁴⁶⁶Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁶⁷Defense, p. 66.

⁴⁶⁸Christianity in Conflict, I, 3, p. 138.

⁴⁶⁹Defense, p. 58; Ethics, p. 36; Intellectual Challenge, p. 35.

⁴⁷⁰Case for Calvinism, p. 91f.

⁴⁷¹Christianity in Conflict, I, 2, p. 59.

⁴⁷²Loc. cit.

⁴⁷³Ibid., I, 1, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁴Ibid., I, 3, p. 123, cf. Defense, p. 54.

2. THE REGENERATED CONSCIOUSNESS

Although the consciousness is reinstated, it is merely so in principle.⁴⁷⁵ Nevertheless it now serves as a "reference point."⁴⁷⁶ However it must constantly test itself and sharpen its sensitivity to the inward work of God by regular contact with the revealed will of God in the Scriptures,⁴⁷⁷ since it often errs. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable man to submit his consciousness to an objective standard outside of itself.⁴⁷⁸

However, moral consciousness implies responsibility, and if regenerate man must learn to obey the revealed will of God as his rule of faith and practice, how can he develop his self-determination? Van Til's answer to this is the Reformed doctrine of the "Adiaphora."⁴⁷⁹ The Scripture lays out the basic principles of ethics but often omits the details or the application. The believer must integrate various principles and apply them as he keeps before himself the controlling ideal of God's glory. Thus there is a wide area for disagreement and debate among Christians and a range of activities that are morally indifferent in themselves, their moral significance entirely depending upon the attitude and purpose of the Christian using them.

⁴⁷⁵Defense, p. 55.

⁴⁷⁶Loc. cit.

⁴⁷⁷Loc. cit.

⁴⁷⁸Ethics, p. 128.

⁴⁷⁹Material taken from lecture notes. "Adiaphora" means things indifferent in themselves.

3. CONSCIENCE AND GUILT

The concepts of conscience and guilt, here summarized, have been previously discussed under various topics. It is obvious that, for Van Til, the idea of man's responsibility for his own sin implies belief in an absolute God who is a moral Being and who holds man responsible for his actions. Accountability, he asserts, can only rest on this basis,⁴⁸⁰ for, "only an analogical act is a responsible act."⁴⁸¹ The conscience is an aspect of the image of God which, in turn, cannot be entirely suppressed.⁴⁸² As a created being, man possesses character; he is not an "intellectual and moral blank."⁴⁸³ This sense of ethical power and responsibility to God is always present in his subconscious, if not clearly held in conscious awareness.⁴⁸⁴ Van Til feels that the more one tries to suppress this creator-creature awareness, the more clearly that relationship stands out.

Desiring to escape this relationship, man seeks freedom, authenticity, and identity in terms of his autonomous assumptions.⁴⁸⁵

Now it is precisely this sort of 'freedom' that is designated as slavery to sin in Scripture. For this sort of 'freedom' is based upon the repression of God as man's creator and law-giver. According to the Scriptures, man has become a sinner

⁴⁸⁰Ethics, p. 32.

⁴⁸¹Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁸²Intellectual Challenge, p. 1-7.

⁴⁸³Ethics, p. 34.

⁴⁸⁴Psychoanalysis of Religion, p. 132.

⁴⁸⁵Later Heidigger and Theology, p. 36.

by his disobedience to God's requirements. Man's guilt is the result of this disobedience.⁴⁸⁶

Man lives with a gnawing sense of guilt manifested either when he is aware of his rejection of God, or when estranged from his fellow men, or when experiencing internal conflict. Even if barely glimmering in the recesses of his mind, it drives him to find meaning in life. Everywhere he finds substitutes for the eternal I-Thou relationship, but remains unsatisfied.⁴⁸⁷

By attempting to cut himself loose from God through univocal reasoning, man brings upon himself God's wrath. His sin further warps and corrupts his entire personality. Ideally, the intellect, will and emotions are equal,⁴⁸⁸ although the intellect has primacy in the economical operations,⁴⁸⁹ however sin not only creates conflict between the will, emotions and intellect, but also brings reason at variance with itself.⁴⁹⁰ In time, these elements adapt to this abnormal ethical estrangement so that man now believes that the disruptive conditions within himself and his environment are normal and permanent; on such terms, guilt and conversion seem meaningless.

Nevertheless, says Van Til, it is not necessary for man to live burdened with guilt. Forgiveness and reconciliation with God is provided

⁴⁸⁶Loc. cit.

⁴⁸⁷Defense, p. 173, 174.

⁴⁸⁸Van Til is not concerned whether one accepts a three-fold conception of man or a two-fold conception in which the emotions are included under the will as long as the ethical considerations are made prominent. Theology, p. 36.

⁴⁸⁹Theology p. 32.

⁴⁹⁰Ibid., p. 33.

in Christ's atonement.⁴⁹¹ Through Christ's righteousness, man can be "accounted ethically perfect."⁴⁹² Once ethically reunited to the Trinity regenerated man begins the "existential" process of self-understanding the "covenantal response of the whole man to the total and many-sided revelation of God to man in Christ and His Word."⁴⁹³ Under the control of the Holy Spirit, man grows in freedom, power and spontaneity in his responses to the will of God.

Warfield⁴⁹⁴ directs attention to the perfect man, Jesus, who maintained a perfect symmetry between all elements of His personality, although He manifested the strongest emotions of both love and wrath, not because He held to the primacy of the intellect, but because as the sinless One, He showed that powerful emotions are naturally in accord with the will of God.

⁴⁹¹Later Heidigger and Theology, p. 36.

⁴⁹²Ethics, p. 35.

⁴⁹³Later Heidigger, op. cit. p. 41.

⁴⁹⁴Warfield, Biblical and Theological Studies, p. 66.

CHAPTER IV

FROMM'S THEORY OF REALITY

Fromm's evolutionary approach gives the structure to his concepts of human nature and society. Man is seen as moving from his primal unity with nature to a transcendence which ultimately enables him to establish a productive reunion with nature. In order to draw these conclusions, Fromm makes certain assumptions regarding the nature of reality that he never questions, but accepts on faith.

I. THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

A. FACTS

In his book Socialist Humanism, Fromm introduces the contributors as those who are concerned about "the reality of human existence, and hence are critical of ideology "⁴⁹⁵ who desire to know the essence of things, what life is really all about. These men are realists, he says, who passionately seek truth. Sharing a "belief in the possibility of man's perfectibility,"⁴⁹⁶ the humanist commitment to reason has always constituted a "threat to mankind"⁴⁹⁷ for mankind has historically been swayed more by emotion and tradition than by reason.

⁴⁹⁵Socialist Humanism, p. 11.

⁴⁹⁶Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁹⁷Ibid., p. 8.

Fromm sees reason "as a means for discovering the truth and penetrating the surface to the essence of phenomena."⁴⁹⁸ It is autonomous, incapable of being interfered with by even "the supernatural voices from heaven."⁴⁹⁹ In this fashion, Fromm accepts the Kantian view that man is capable of being objective to phenomenal facts,⁵⁰⁰ of making valid statements about facts,⁵⁰¹ and of seeing "the totality of a phenomenon"⁵⁰² in terms of its nature.⁵⁰³ The only alternative to human autonomy and reason is moral confusion.⁵⁰⁴

On these premises, Fromm suggests that man is able to discern and make value judgments about reality in order to arrive at "valid ethical norms"⁵⁰⁵ that can guide us toward productive living. These ethical norms are based on the knowledge of man's nature, not on revelation or man-made laws and conventions,⁵⁰⁶ and true knowledge "always and necessarily refers to a judgment and not to a description of a phenomenon which we perceive with our senses and which we denote with a word symbol."⁵⁰⁷

⁴⁹⁸Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁹Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁰⁰Man for Himself, p. 110.

⁵⁰¹Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁰²Ibid., p. 110.

⁵⁰³Ibid., p. 111.

⁵⁰⁴Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁰⁵Ibid., p. 16.

⁵⁰⁶Loc. cit.

⁵⁰⁷Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 15.

Fromm holds that this is the only possible position to maintain, that while it is possible to have "ideas" about things, these ideas may be delusional or they may correspond to facts, but they are not necessarily "true" in themselves; in the final analysis, all "ideas" must be subjected to the "criterion of truth," to which even the great religions of the world attest.⁵⁰⁸ "But even if man's frame of orientation is entirely illusory it satisfies his need for some picture which is meaningful to him."⁵⁰⁹

Fromm further differentiates between reason and intelligence:

Reason is man's instrument for arriving at the truth, intelligence is man's instrument for manipulating the world more successfully; the former is essentially human, the latter belongs to the animal part of man.⁵¹⁰

Man needs some frame of reference to give meaning to his life and to keep sane,⁵¹¹ but his objectivity can be distorted by malignant narcissism.⁵¹² Nevertheless, man's powers of love and reason enable him to comprehend the world, mentally and emotionally, and in utilizing these powers over matter, he is able to produce things in creative process.⁵¹³

Fromm views each society as essentially normal in relationship to itself, and that "pathology can be defined only in terms of the individual's lack of adjustment to the ways of life in his society."⁵¹⁴ Considering the

⁵⁰⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁵⁰⁹Sane Society, p. 64.

⁵¹⁰Ibid., p. 65.

⁵¹¹Loc. cit.

⁵¹²Heart of Man, p. 85.

⁵¹³Man for Himself, p. 103.

⁵¹⁴Sane Society, p. 21.

environmental, hereditary and constitutional forces interacting in an individual and in his society, each man has a number of "real possibilities"⁵¹⁵ for personal choice in his process of development. In terms of ethics, this implies that "the concept of absolute is meaningless"⁵¹⁶ and has little place in a scientific outlook.

B. SCIENCE

According to Fromm, all sciences are based on discovery, "on what dominates nature."⁵¹⁷ The proof of what makes a science is the attitude of the researcher, the critical approach to problem-solving and the correctness of the scientific method being applied.⁵¹⁸ All scientists are prone to falsification, therefore the scientific attitude is basically a matter of conscience.⁵¹⁹ "In the last analysis, the whole of the scientific orientation is really a matter of sanity; namely, knowing the difference between fact and thought, between reality and subjective experience."⁵²⁰ On these terms, he justifies psychoanalysis as a science.⁵²¹ The main task of the psychoanalyst is to examine his own subjective motivation, biases and distortions of data.⁵²² The combination of self-analysis and patient

⁵¹⁵Heart of Man, p. 140.

⁵¹⁶Man for Himself, p. 26.

⁵¹⁷Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, p. 80.

⁵¹⁸Ibid., p. 81.

⁵¹⁹Ibid., p. 82.

⁵²⁰Ibid., p. 81.

⁵²¹Loc. cit.

⁵²²Loc. cit.

analysis qualifies psychoanalysis as a rigorously empirical science;⁵²³
it lays the basis for hypothesis testing and continual growth in the search
for truth.⁵²⁴

We might perhaps agree that the history of science is a history of errors, for it is the nature of the scientific process that one error be replaced by a new error. Nevertheless, in this process of replacing one error with another (or one truth with another) scientific thought proceeds. There is no such thing as a final statement about ultimate truth. The difference really is whether an error is productive or sterile. The history of science is the history not only of fertile error but also of fertile truth."⁵²⁵

The study of psychology, says Fromm, "must be based on an anthropologico-philosophical concept of human existence"⁵²⁶ that takes into account social and economic forces. Consequently, "the scientific study of character begins on the day when Freud published his short paper on the anal character."⁵²⁷ While Fromm occasionally refers to other branches of psychology and their respective contributions to the knowledge of man, he is thoroughly committed to psychoanalysis as the most rigorous of the branches⁵²⁸ as well as the one that has contributed the most significant material.⁵²⁹ Acknowledging that in the past, it made mistakes in "divorcing psychology from problems of philosophy and ethics,"⁵³⁰ Fromm

⁵²³Ibid., p. 76.

⁵²⁴Ibid., p. 79, 83, 84.

⁵²⁵Ibid., p. 83.

⁵²⁶Man for Himself, p. 54.

⁵²⁷Evans, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵²⁸Ibid., p. 74.

⁵²⁹Man for Himself, p. 40.

⁵³⁰Ibid., p. 16.

finds that psychoanalysis today seeks to understand "man in his totality, which includes his need to find an answer to the question of the meaning of his existence and to discover norms according to which he ought to live."⁵³¹

Psychoanalysis is concerned with experience; "the investigation of its influence on emotional development is its primary purpose."⁵³² One of its presuppositions is that a person's constitution more or less determines the emotional development of the individual, "but psychoanalysis itself is concerned exclusively with the investigation of the influence of the individual's life-situation on his emotional development."⁵³³ In practice this means that the analyst must have "extensive information concerning the individual's life pattern"⁵³⁴ based on general observations and case history. Psychoanalysis aims at removing illusions that block decision-making,⁵³⁵ overcoming alienation within both the analyst and patient,⁵³⁶ enabling the unconscious to become conscious,⁵³⁷ freeing man to live according to rational rather than irrational forces,⁵³⁸ and helping the patient to adjust psychically to reality.⁵³⁹

⁵³¹Ibid., p. 17.

⁵³²Dogma of Christ, p. 7.

⁵³³Loc. cit.

⁵³⁴Loc. cit.

⁵³⁵Ibid., p. 198.

⁵³⁶Ibid., p. 200.

⁵³⁷Hammond, Man in Estrangement, p. 51.

⁵³⁸Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 6, Man for Himself, p. 44.

⁵³⁹Dogma of Christ, p. 9.

C. EVOLUTION

Fromm's conceptualization of the development of man and society along evolutionary lines is another crucial theme in all of his writing, leading him to continual revision of Freud's classical theories in order to incorporate current data on personality.⁵⁴⁰

He views man's birth as essentially a negative event.⁵⁴¹ Man is the most helpless of animals at birth and learns to develop his potentials gradually. Environmental conditions can either encourage independence and growth in man or bring conflicting demands, discourage growth and act contrary to man's nature. In order to maintain sanity, man must either react to "bring about conditions which are more in accordance with his needs"⁵⁴² or else face deterioration and death. Man's ability to adapt, coupled with "certain indestructible qualities of his nature"⁵⁴³ which propel him forward, make him unique in the animal world. He is a freak of nature because "he is the only case of a living organism having awareness of itself."⁵⁴⁴ This ability to transcend nature, Fromm calls the "psychic evolution,"⁵⁴⁵ and it leaves man frightened because his animal ancestry binds him to the very nature he transcended.

⁵⁴⁰Hammond, op. cit., p. 25. Sane Society, p. 34, 238, 240.

⁵⁴¹Sane Society, p. 27.

⁵⁴²Loc. cit.

⁵⁴³Man for Himself, p. 32.

⁵⁴⁴Evans, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵⁴⁵Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, p. 86. Hereafter cited Zen Buddhism.

There is only one solution to his problem: to face the truth... to recognize that there is no power transcending him which can solve his problem for him...recognize that there is no meaning to life except the meaning man gives his life by the unfolding of his powers, by living productively..."⁵⁴⁶

As man has evolved, his societal forms, ethical norms⁵⁴⁷ and religious concepts⁵⁴⁸ have changed to meet his current needs. Therefore man cannot be thought of in terms of "good" or "evil,"⁵⁴⁹ only in terms of his creativeness or destructiveness in relation to himself and his society.⁵⁵⁰ Society evolves because man is "by origin a herd animal";⁵⁵¹ it is destroyed because of man's alienation and narcissism.⁵⁵²

D. FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

Fromm uses his concepts of man's animal origins and transcendent self-awareness to develop his discussions on freedom. By this procedure, he hopes to circumvent the dilemma of, on the one hand, holding the view that there is no essence in man, which is the view held by those who claim that man is only the product of his culture or, on the other hand, holding the Freudian view that man has a basic nature, which seems to

⁵⁴⁶Man for Himself, p. 53.

⁵⁴⁷Ibid., p. 28, 29.

⁵⁴⁸Dogma of Christ, p. 8.

⁵⁴⁹Heart of Man, p. 123.

⁵⁵⁰Sane Society, p. 312.

⁵⁵¹Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 58.

⁵⁵²Sane Society, p. 312.

deny evolution by assuming that man's nature has remained basically the same since his emergence.⁵⁵³ "There is," he says, "one condition which every answer must fulfill: it must help man to overcome the sense of separateness and to gain a sense of union, of oneness, of belonging."⁵⁵⁴

Fromm rejects several solutions to the separateness-unity problem. He first rejects what he terms the "regressive answer,"⁵⁵⁵ the seeking to return to one's origins or one's ancestors so widely found in primitive religions and severe psychopathology. Equally invalid is the "progressive solution, that of finding a new harmony...by the full development of all human forces, of the humanity within oneself."⁵⁵⁶ This latter view depends upon revelations and man becoming god-like. Both of these views force belief in man's goodness or evilness and ultimately lead either to bitter disillusionment or false optimism.⁵⁵⁷

The question is raised whether man is free to choose the good for himself, or whether he is controlled by forces within and outside of himself. "A realistic view sees both possibilities as real potentialities, and studies the conditions for the development of either of them."⁵⁵⁸ Fromm

⁵⁵³Heart of Man, p. 115.

⁵⁵⁴Ibid., p. 117.

⁵⁵⁵Ibid., p. 118.

⁵⁵⁶Loc. cit.

⁵⁵⁷Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁵⁸Loc. cit.

asserts that the answer is found in a compromise between both positions, or in "alternativism," and hinges upon the problem of "real possibility,"⁵⁵⁹ mentioned above. Man is a "constellation of forces" structured in an identifiable manner and influenced by "environmental conditions (class, society, family) and by hereditary and constitutional conditions."⁵⁶⁰ His fictitious possibilities are symbolized by his wishes that can never be realized, and his real possibilities are those capable of fulfillment. A person with a particular constitutional make-up has no real possibility of transforming himself into an entirely different kind of person; he may be able to control certain tendencies, but he will never be indifferent to his own constitutional factors. For example, the person with "a constitutionally given or early acquired sadistic component"⁵⁶¹ has the real possibilities of becoming a sadist, or overcoming it through formation of "a particularly strong mental 'antibody' which makes him incapable"⁵⁶² of cruelty, but he will always be sensitive to sadistic tendencies on his or another's part.

He concludes that the unconscious forces or inclinations operating in personality reach high or low intensities which either determine a man's actions or provide him with reasonable choices. These choices are also influenced by the environmental forces. Freedom consists in the awareness of alternatives and consequences. "There is never indeterminism; there

⁵⁵⁹Ibid., p. 140.

⁵⁶⁰Loc. cit.

⁵⁶¹Loc. cit.

⁵⁶²Loc. cit.

is sometimes determinism, and sometimes alternativism based on the uniquely inhuman phenomenon: awareness."⁵⁶³ Although the laws of cause and effect determine man, both Marx and Freud proposed that by "awareness and right action he (man) can create and enlarge the realm of freedom."⁵⁶⁴ Freedom, per se is an abstract concept; the only reality is "the act of freeing ourselves in the process of making choices."⁵⁶⁵

In the light of the above, Fromm reaches certain conclusions regarding the problem of evil. First, evil is an "attempt to regress to the pre-human state, and to eliminate that which is specifically human: reason, love, freedom."⁵⁶⁶ But, tragic as is regression, it can never satisfy man who still yearns for survival. Secondly, evil manifests itself in degrees corresponding to the degrees of regression. Lesser evil appears as lack of love, lack of reason or of courage. The greater evils appear as malignant narcissism and the love of death. Thirdly, man is capable of moving backward or forward depending on "the balance of inclinations" within him. Fourthly, man is only responsible when he is relatively free to make his own choices. Lastly, "man's heart can harden; it can become inhuman, yet never non-human";⁵⁶⁷ man always retains his uniqueness.

E. FAITH

Any discussion of Fromm's concept of the world would be incomplete without mentioning his ideas of faith. Usually when he speaks of faith,

⁵⁶³Ibid., p. 143.

⁵⁶⁴Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁶⁵Ibid., p. 136.

⁵⁶⁶Ibid., p. 148.

⁵⁶⁷Ibid., p. 150.

he clearly eliminates any theological connotations, especially those of Calvinism, which he considers anathema.⁵⁶⁸

He argues for a humanistic faith in man resting upon man's courage to be himself.⁵⁶⁹ This faith preserves us from becoming sterile⁵⁷⁰ and consists of a basic attitude, "a character trait which pervades all his (man's) experiences, which enables man to face reality without illusions."⁵⁷¹ True faith avoids irrational doubting of the validity of all experience, a doubting that says that there can be no certainty anywhere. Faith does encompass rational doubting of the assumptions of authority, so important in the emancipation of youth.⁵⁷² It has critical elements that lead to hypothesis formation and testing.⁵⁷³ It is "rooted in one's own experience, in the confidence in one's power of thought, observation and judgment,"⁵⁷⁴ and sees the potentialities in every individual.⁵⁷⁵

To live by faith is to live productively⁵⁷⁶ and creatively. Without rational faith, man cannot find real meaning or the will to progress.

Fromm's world view repeats itself throughout all of his discussions on the nature of man and ethics. It colors his methodology and his conclusions; therefore it is well to keep it in focus in the following discussions.

⁵⁶⁸Man for Himself, p. 212.

⁵⁶⁹Ibid., p. 251.

⁵⁷⁰Ibid., p. 201.

⁵⁷¹Loc. cit.

⁵⁷²Ibid., p. 203.

⁵⁷³Ibid., p. 207.

⁵⁷⁴Ibid., p. 208.

⁵⁷⁵Ibid., p. 209.

⁵⁷⁶Ibid., p. 210.

II. THE NATURE OF MAN

For the purposes of this study, Fromm's position on man is viewed in terms of his concepts of the human situation, personality and socialization, and partly overlaps what has already been said.

A. THE HUMAN SITUATION

The basis of Fromm's psychology of man is what he calls the "human situation": Any person represents all human beings as a "specific example"⁵⁷⁷ of man's peculiarities and uniqueness. Thus, while Fromm eschews any idea of a basic nature for man, he cannot help speaking about man's self-awareness that distinguishes him from all other animals.⁵⁷⁸

1. MAN'S BIOLOGICAL WEAKNESS

Man, Fromm proposes, is negatively differentiated from other animals by his relative inability to instinctively adapt himself to his surroundings.⁵⁷⁹ He says that "the less complete and fixed the instinctual equipment of animals, the more developed is the brain and therefore the ability to learn."⁵⁸⁰

2. EXISTENTIAL AND HISTORICAL DICHOTOMIES

Man's unity and harmony with nature has been disrupted by his emerging transcendence, his "self-awareness, reason and imagination."⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁷Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁷⁸Sane Society, p. 29.

⁵⁷⁹Ibid., p. 30. Man for Himself, p. 48.

⁵⁸⁰Man for Himself, p. 48.

⁵⁸¹Ibid., p. 48.

Man's "break with nature," symbolically referred to as the fall of man,⁵⁸² now drives him "to seek new unities and harmonies with nature, his fellow man and himself."⁵⁸³ Actually, it is only by breaking with nature that man can find his true humanity. Here Fromm again introduces his concepts of regression and progression, previously mentioned.

Rooted in man's existential situation are three dichotomies. The most fundamental is the dichotomy between life and death.⁵⁸⁴ Death is man's ever present enemy, irrevocable and tragic. Awareness of it "profoundly influences"⁵⁸⁵ man's life and he has tried to negate it through such ideologies as the Christian doctrines of immortality and resurrection,⁵⁸⁶ but he cannot alter its final defeat of him. The mortality of man faces him with the second dichotomy: every human being is "the bearer of all human potentialities, but the short span of his life does not permit their full realization under even the most favorable circumstances."⁵⁸⁷ Again, man does not really solve this problem, but chooses vainly to establish ideologies; that life is fulfilled after death, or that man is subordinate to the state or the community. Thirdly, man is an alienated individual who somehow must find his identity and solidarity in relationship to society; this is the eternal problem of the one-and-the-many coupled with that of isolation vs. fellowship.

⁵⁸²Sane Society, p. 30.

⁵⁸³Hammond, op. cit., p. 45.

⁵⁸⁴Man for Himself, p. 50.

⁵⁸⁵Loc. cit.

⁵⁸⁶Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁸⁷Loc. cit.

Faced by these dilemmas, man may choose either to deny his uniqueness and his powers, or else use them in creative productivity and the acceptance of responsibility. Only the latter course will lead him to find meaning for himself.⁵⁸⁸

B. PERSONALITY

Fromm defines personality as "the totality of inherited and acquired psychic qualities which are characteristics of one individual and which make the individual unique."⁵⁸⁹ "Temperament, gifts, and constitutionally given psychic qualities"⁵⁹⁰ are inherited, while the acquired qualities are one's character. The latter reveal one's success in the art of living and form the basis for the problem of ethics.

1. CHARACTER

Fromm prefers to deal with character rather than with temperament. Temperament is constitutional and unchangeable, the "mode of reaction"⁵⁹¹ of man, and its confusion with character has complicated the history of ethics,⁵⁹² especially the questions of responsibility⁵⁹³ and moral judgment.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁸⁸Ibid., p. 53.

⁵⁸⁹Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁹⁰Loc. cit.

⁵⁹¹Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁹²Ibid., p. 60-62.

⁵⁹³Heart of Man, p. 128.

⁵⁹⁴Man for Himself, p. 232.

a) The Dynamic Concept of Character

Fromm contends that Freud developed the first, and "the most consistent and penetrating theory of character as a system of strivings which underlie, but are not identical with, behavior,"⁵⁹⁵ i.e., the theory of unconscious motivation. Behavior can be understood and predicted only by understanding the highly charged unconscious forces motivating man.⁵⁹⁶

Closely allied with this is Freud's "theory of the conative nature of character traits"⁵⁹⁷ which states that a person's specific character structure largely determines his perceptions and emotions and his ability to control his inner dynamic forces.⁵⁹⁸ The character structure is an organizational pattern or syndrome of character traits that result from what Fromm calls an "orientation of character."⁵⁹⁹ However, he modifies Freud's idea that "the sexual drive was the source of energy of the character"⁶⁰⁰ in order to include the larger dimensions of man's interpersonal relationships to society, nature and self.

The main difference...is that the fundamental basis of character is not seen in various types of libido organization but in specific kinds of a person's relatedness to the world. In the process of living, man relates himself to the world (1) by acquiring and assimilating things, and (2) by relating himself to people (and himself). The former I shall call the process of assimilation; the latter, that of socialization.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁵Ibid., p. 63.

⁵⁹⁶Heart of Man, p. 65.

⁵⁹⁷Man for Himself, p. 64.

⁵⁹⁸Loc. cit.

⁵⁹⁹Ibid., p. 66.

⁶⁰⁰Ibid., p. 65.

⁶⁰¹Loc. cit.

With these orientations forming the core of personality structure, Fromm defines character as "the (relatively permanent) form in which human energy is canalized in the process of assimilation and socialization."⁶⁰² And simultaneously, he rejects the typically behavioristic explanation "that man reacts in a semiautomatic fashion by developing habits of action and thought which can be understood in terms of conditioned reflexes."⁶⁰³

Fromm is also aware of the problems of defining the conscious and the unconscious. He points out that the term unconscious has been variously used to refer to the lack of subjective awareness of inner experiences, a specific "part of personality,"⁶⁰⁴ as "the seat of irrationality"⁶⁰⁵ as Freud conceived of it, or as "the seat of the deepest sources of wisdom"⁶⁰⁶ as Jung thought. Fromm argues that both the conscious and the unconscious depend on the mores of society and "on the patterns of feelings and thoughts it produces";⁶⁰⁷ both are socially conditioned in large part. Man is conscious only of those thoughts and feelings that are capable of penetrating the barriers of socially conditioned language, logic and taboos.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰²Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁰³Loc. cit.

⁶⁰⁴Zen Buddhism, p. 95f.

⁶⁰⁵Loc. cit.

⁶⁰⁶Loc. cit.

⁶⁰⁷Ibid., p. 106.

⁶⁰⁸Ibid., p. 104.

"Experiences which can not be filtered through remain outside of awareness; that is, they remain unconscious."⁶⁰⁹ But the unconscious "always represents the whole man, with all his potentialities for darkness and light."⁶¹⁰

b) Non-Productive Character Orientations

According to Fromm, "the character of any given person is usually a blend"⁶¹¹ of several types of orientation, both productive and non-productive, but a person may be dominated by one of them.

In the "Receptive Orientation"⁶¹² the person believes that all good comes from outside of himself. He is almost exclusively concerned with being loved and cared for, rather than with loving and giving; therefore, he is utterly dependent on others for support, the typical "yes-man."

The "Exploitative Orientation"⁶¹³ also operates on the premise that all good comes from without, the difference being that this type uses force and cunning to manipulate others in giving the "good." These persons tend to fall in love with some other person's spouse, plagiarize the works of others, lack originality, underrate their own talents, and overrate the talents of others.

⁶⁰⁹Loc. cit.

⁶¹⁰Ibid., p. 106.

⁶¹¹Man for Himself, p. 69.

⁶¹²Ibid., p. 70.

⁶¹³Ibid., p. 71.

The "Hoarding Orientation"⁶¹⁴ gains security from keeping and saving; giving constitutes threat. "Death and destruction have more reality than life and growth."⁶¹⁵ They are seen as rigid, sterile, backward looking, orderly and compulsive.

The "Marketing Orientation"⁶¹⁶ fits well into modern societies geared to the advertising approach to life. The self is submerged to fit the laws of supply and demand, gradually becoming a commodity, an object with exchange value. Success depends on how well one can sell oneself, manage the appearance, or fit in to the group. This orientation leaves the personality vague and undefined, and the person fails to develop in freedom and individuality.

c) The Productive Orientation

This refers to a basic attitude, or mode of relatedness in "mental, emotional and sensory responses to others, to oneself and to things."⁶¹⁷ It mobilizes all the life-giving forces in "man's inherent primary potentialities"⁶¹⁸ to fight against destructive and evil impulses. It can constructively use any of the forms of social relatedness--loyalty, authority,

⁶¹⁴Ibid., p. 73.

⁶¹⁵Ibid., p. 74.

⁶¹⁶Ibid., p. 75-85.

⁶¹⁷Ibid., p. 91.

⁶¹⁸Ibid., p. 230.

fairness, assertiveness--which in the non-productive person would become submission, domination, withdrawal, destructiveness.⁶¹⁹

The productive person experiences himself fully, participates in life, uses his powers of reason love and imagination,⁶²⁰ and lives realistically. Productivity is not to be confused, however, with creativity⁶²¹ or with activity⁶²² per se.

2. PERSONALITY SYNDROMES

When Fromm wrote his second book, Man for Himself (1947), he was apparently just beginning to formulate concepts that later became identified as the "personality syndromes" in The Heart of Man (1964). In the intervening years, a significant shift took place which Hammond saw as incongruity in Fromm's ideas of mature love.

It would seem that in discussing 'progressive' love Fromm alternates between two partially contradictory conceptions. On the one hand...progressive (as well as regressive) love springs from man's deep need to be reunited with the world and his fellow man. This understanding suggests that love presupposes alienation, that union presupposes separation. On the other hand, Fromm describes love as a form of productivity. Love is self-giving, the highest expression of human potency.⁶²³

⁶¹⁹Ibid., p. 119.

⁶²⁰Ibid., p. 95.

⁶²¹Ibid., p. 92.

⁶²²Loc. cit.

⁶²³Hammond, op. cit., p. 53.

Probably when Fromm concentrated on the problem of ethical norms (Man for Himself) and rationality (The Sane Society), he was mainly concerned with the idea of interrelatedness in terms of productivity and economics, the result of his Marxist interest. In pursuing the problem of good and evil he focussed on man's capacity to love (The Art of Loving, 1956), and later dealt with man's capacity to destroy, his narcissism and his incestuous fixation. In The Heart of Man, these paradoxical tendencies are called Biophilia, the love of life and Necrophilia, the love of death. Oriented to one or the other, man develops either the syndrome of growth or the syndrome of death. He speaks of them in The Sane Society (1955) as orientation in the process of socialization.

a) The Syndrome of Decay.

The syndrome of decay is composed of three sub-orientations or phenomena, which in Fromm's opinion, form "the basis for the most vicious and dangerous form of human orientation."⁶²⁴ Because this syndrome epitomizes stagnation and destruction, it fulfills Fromm's criterion by which he measures whether man is good or evil,⁶²⁵ that man is evil only if he lacks growth and development⁶²⁶ and reverts to archaic impulses.⁶²⁷

(1) Necrophilia - The Love of Death. The necrophile is attracted by "all that is not alive, all that is dead; corpses, decay, feces, dirt";⁶²⁸

⁶²⁴Heart of Man, p. 23.

⁶²⁵Man for Himself, p. 212.

⁶²⁶Ibid., p. 220; cf. p. v-9.

⁶²⁷Heart of Man, p. 121.

⁶²⁸Ibid., p. 39.

they love to discuss sickness, burials and death. Here they find a perverted source of strength. The theme of decay reappears in their passions, dreams, attachments and behavior, even their appearance.⁶²⁹ Usually, it is blended with the sexual instinct, which produces sadism, masochism, necrophagia and coprophagia,⁶³⁰ and Fromm also related it to Freud's anal character distinguished by extreme orderliness, parsimony and obstinacy.⁶³¹

The necrophile dwells in the past,⁶³² nurses old grudges,⁶³³ glories in destruction of life.⁶³⁴ He is magnetized by force and by those who symbolize the power to kill.⁶³⁵ Thus, he loves mechanical devices, the bureaucratic order⁶³⁶ and is only attracted by an object or a person if he can possess them.⁶³⁷

Fromm's prime examples of the pure necrophilic type are Hitler and C. G. Jung. Hitler's "deepest satisfaction lay in witnessing total

⁶²⁹Ibid., p. 42.

⁶³⁰Ibid., p. 46. Necrophagia: eating of corpses; Coprophagia: eating of excrement.

⁶³¹Ibid., p. 53.

⁶³²Ibid., p. 39.

⁶³³Ibid., p. 40.

⁶³⁴Loc. cit.

⁶³⁵Loc. cit.

⁶³⁶Ibid., p. 42.

⁶³⁷Ibid., p. 41.

and absolute destruction: that of the German people, of those around him, and of himself."⁶³⁸ Jung, whose dreams were "filled with corpses, blood, killings"⁶³⁹ and who was fascinated by corpses,⁶⁴⁰ balanced his tendencies with a desire to heal and create, using his necrophilic interests as the subject matter for "his brilliant speculations."⁶⁴¹

(2) Malignant Narcissism. This concept provides Fromm with an understanding of "psychosis ('narcissistic neurosis'), love, castration, fear, jealousy, sadism" in relation to the individual, and "nationalism, national hatred and the psychological motivations for destructiveness and war"⁶⁴² in relation to society. He accomplishes this by expanding Freud's concept of narcissism that Fromm claims was restricted to the states of infancy and psychosis.⁶⁴³

According to this Freudian theory, man develops from "absolute narcissism to a capacity for objective reasoning and object love,"⁶⁴⁴ and narcissism is never absent in even the most mature adult. While Freud used his notion of sexual libido as a basis for the narcissistic impulse,⁶⁴⁵ Fromm uses a concept of non-sexual psychic energy. The person is bound,

⁶³⁸Ibid., p. 39

⁶³⁹Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁴⁰Loc. cit.

⁶⁴¹Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁴²Ibid., p. 62.

⁶⁴³Loc. cit.

⁶⁴⁴Ibid., p. 63.

⁶⁴⁵Ibid., p. 64.

unified, integrated by psychic energy that enables him to relate to himself and the outside world.⁶⁴⁶ The infant is seen as having not yet related to the outside world and therefore being unable to differentiate between the "I" and the not "I." To the insane person the world outside has "ceased to be real,"⁶⁴⁷ while the paranoid and the neurotic fear the world. Psycho-
sis is the "state of absolute narcissism";⁶⁴⁸ the patient himself alone is real, a God to himself.

Bordering on psychotic isolation are persons who have reached an extraordinary degree of God-like power: "the Egyptian pharaohs, the Roman Caesars, the Borgias, Hitler, Stalin, Trujillo,"⁶⁴⁹ who have all attained the authority of absolute judgment and demand the impossible. Less severe narcissism is found in preoccupation with one's body, appearance and talents, and the demand for attention. In "moral hypochondriasis"⁶⁵⁰ the person is absorbed with overwhelming guilt feelings, inadequacy, unreality and self-accusation. The Narcissist acts and looks smug and self-satisfied, but may hide behind a disguise of modesty and humility. Essentially he is an idol worshipper: asked who he is, he replies that "he is

⁶⁴⁶Loc. cit.

⁶⁴⁷Ibid., p. 65.

⁶⁴⁸Ibid., p. 66.

⁶⁴⁹Loc. cit.

⁶⁵⁰Ibid., p. 69.

his brain, his face, his wealth, his penis, his conscience, and so on."⁶⁵¹

Fromm argues that narcissism is necessary for survival, but that it is also a "threat to survival"⁶⁵² when it distorts rational judgment.⁶⁵³ Individual narcissism is effected by group narcissism, becoming prejudiced⁶⁵⁴ and biased against the extraneous world. Criticism of the group is met with hostility, possibly resulting in rationalistic justification for "defensive warfare" and "righteous indignation." "The highly narcissistic group is eager to have a leader with whom it can identify itself,"⁶⁵⁵ and submits to him in an "act of symbiosis."⁶⁵⁶

(3) Incestuous Symbiosis. The fixation on the mother figure is the core of incestuous symbiosis. Fromm agrees with Freud that this attachment persists into adulthood, weakening independence and goal-striving, and leading to "various neurotic conflicts and symptoms."⁶⁵⁷ But it is the "pre-Oedipal attachment of boys and girls to their mother"⁶⁵⁸ that is for Fromm, far more vital than any genital desires, and "one of the central phenomena in the evolutionary process and one of the main causes of neurosis or psychosis."⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵¹Ibid., p. 71.

⁶⁵²Ibid., p. 73.

⁶⁵³Ibid., p. 85.

⁶⁵⁴Loc. cit.

⁶⁵⁵Ibid., p. 87.

⁶⁵⁶Loc. cit.

⁶⁵⁷Ibid., p. 95.

⁶⁵⁸Ibid., p. 97.

⁶⁵⁹Loc. cit.

This 'incestuous' striving, in the pregenital sense, is one of the most fundamental passions in men or women, comprising the human being's desire for protection, the satisfaction of his narcissism; his craving to be freed from the risks of responsibility, of freedom, of awareness; his longing for unconditional love, which is offered without any expectation of his loving response.⁶⁶⁰

Adults as well as infants are dependent, helpless and crave certainty; they know the risks and dangers of life, therefore seek protection and power for control of life's forces. It is this seeking that provides the base for all religions in Fromm's view;⁶⁶¹ and indicates why there is a paradoxical fear and love of God in so many of them.⁶⁶²

By the "symbiotic" attachment, Fromm means that the "person is part and parcel of the 'host' person to whom he is attached";⁶⁶³ he cannot live apart from the host person, whether that host is living or dead or merely a symbol. The deepest level of this mother fixation is "incestuous symbiosis,"⁶⁶⁴ a condition of complete identity between the person and the host. The person "may sometimes feel superior, sometimes inferior, sometimes equal to the host person--but always they are inseparable."⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁰Loc. cit.

⁶⁶¹Ibid., p. 99. cf. also You Shall Be As Gods, p. 7.

⁶⁶²Ibid., p. 100.

⁶⁶³Ibid., p. 104.

⁶⁶⁴Loc. cit.

⁶⁶⁵Loc. cit.

The level of regression determines the extent of the symbiotic pathology. In many cases there is only a minor dependence on, or fear of, women. Pathology increases from hostility toward any critics of the host person, distortion of reason, failure to experience "another being as fully human,"⁶⁶⁶ loss of independence and integrity, and finally, self-imprisonment.

When all these three phenomena join together in greater or lesser degree, they form the syndrome of decay, resulting in various forms of violence⁶⁶⁷ and destructiveness;⁶⁶⁸ and in masochistic-sadistic characteristics.⁶⁶⁹ Fromm says that the fact that most people do not fear total destruction, such as nuclear war, is because they do not love life, are indifferent to life, or are attracted to death.⁶⁷⁰ The most fundamental contradiction in man is the affinity to life opposed by the affinity to death.⁶⁷¹

b) The Syndrome of Growth

Just as the syndrome of death is the "evil" in man, so Fromm sees the "good" existing in the syndrome of growth.

⁶⁶⁶Ibid., p. 107

⁶⁶⁷Ibid., p. 24-36. Fromm lists eight types of violence.

⁶⁶⁸Escape From Freedom, p. 203. Fromm speaks of rational and irrational destructiveness.

⁶⁶⁹Ibid., p. 163f. Fromm thinks of masochism as vicarious participation in a power enterprise. p. 177.

⁶⁷⁰Heart of Man, p. 56.

⁶⁷¹Ibid., p. 50.

(1) Biophilia--The Love of Life. Fundamental to all living substance is "the tendency to preserve life and to fight against death,"⁶⁷² and this drive toward life integrates, unites and enhances development and growth in the entire organism.⁶⁷³ This provides the basis for attractions between males and females culminating in sexual union and creative productivity.

The most basic conditions for the development of biophilia are, first, for the child to "be with people who love life, love of life is just as contagious as love of death";⁶⁷⁴ secondly, for the child to grow up in an atmosphere of economic and psychological abundance;⁶⁷⁵ thirdly, the abolition of injustice;⁶⁷⁶ fourthly, the freedom to venture and be creative.⁶⁷⁷ Such conditions enable the person to develop his true identity as an authentic individual, fully experiencing himself as the "center and subject of human power."⁶⁷⁸

(2) The Love of Man. Man's narcissism can be overcome by "the scientific and humanist orientations."⁶⁷⁹ The humanist creed is

⁶⁷²Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁷³Ibid., p. 46.

⁶⁷⁴Ibid., p. 51.

⁶⁷⁵Ibid., p. 52.

⁶⁷⁶Loc. cit.

⁶⁷⁷Loc. cit., cf. Sane Society, p. 61.

⁶⁷⁸Evans, Loc. cit., p. 28.

⁶⁷⁹Ibid., p. 92.

essentially religious-spiritual,⁶⁸⁰ viewing each man as representative of all mankind with worth and value; "the 'human condition' is one and the same for all men, in spite of unavoidable differences in intelligence, talents, heights, and color."⁶⁸¹

Humanism transcends nationalism, preferring to extend group narcissism to include "the entire human family"⁶⁸² where no man would be alien to another, since all are equal⁶⁸³ and all carry within themselves the elements of sinner and saint, child and adult, sane and insane, the past and the future.⁶⁸⁴

(3) Independence. Man becomes increasingly independent as he becomes increasingly aware of himself, basing his behavior "on the awareness of alternatives and their consequences."⁶⁸⁵ He is able to cut the umbilical cords binding him to any gods, to mother and to tribe,⁶⁸⁶ thus freeing him to bear his own convictions, to think rationally, to experience himself.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁰Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁸¹Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁸²Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁸³Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁸⁴Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁸⁵Ibid., p. 143.

⁶⁸⁶Ibid., p. 107.

⁶⁸⁷Loc. cit.

C. SOCIALIZATION

When Fromm deals with the problem of human consciousness, he depends more upon Marx than upon Freud. Although both Marx and Freud taught that ideology and rationalism created a "false" consciousness⁶⁸⁸ in men and that behavior is basically controlled by unconscious motivations, Marx attributed to society the direction of consciousness and the blocking of awareness of facts and experiences,⁶⁸⁹ while Freud attributed these to "man's libidinal strivings."⁶⁹⁰

This way of looking at character development is the foundation for Fromm's "social character," which refers to

the nucleus of the character structure which is shared by most members of the same culture in contradistinction to the individual character in which people belonging to the same culture differ from each other.⁶⁹¹

Society, therefore, plays a large role in shaping the individual, particularly through the agency of the family. It is this concern for social pathology that sets Fromm's work apart from Freud's, leading him toward the possibilities of social health in a "sane society."⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁸Zen Buddhism, p. 98.

⁶⁸⁹Marx's Concept of Man, p. 21.

⁶⁹⁰Loc. cit.

⁶⁹¹Sane Society, p. 76.

⁶⁹²Ibid., p. 13-20.

Earlier, we noted that Fromm emphasized man's distinctiveness as his evolutionary transcendence, his self-awareness that in turn led to isolation, or alienation from nature, and eventually brought him toward reunion with nature.⁶⁹³ By coupling this idea with Marx's view of the social origin of consciousness, Fromm radically departed from Freud's conceptualization of socialization as being primarily a process of controlling and redirecting the internal desires.⁶⁹⁴ Freud saw physiological motivations as the root of self-awareness, but Fromm holds that self-awareness develops in addition to physiological forces.⁶⁹⁵

1. ORIENTATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATIONS

In 1955, Fromm spoke of assimilation and socialization as the "two kinds of relatedness to the world"⁶⁹⁶ distinguished by three forms: symbiotic relatedness, withdrawal-destructiveness and love. By 1964 these developed into his "personality syndromes" mentioned above. The point here is that Fromm sees these syndromes as largely influenced and controlled by socialization, although man has freedom to cooperate with his affinity to life and thus transform or modify his personality.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹³cf., p. v-6, v-12.

⁶⁹⁴Freud, Civilization and its Discontent, p. 94-103.

⁶⁹⁵Evans, op. cit., p. 10.

⁶⁹⁶Man for Himself, p. 113.

⁶⁹⁷Heart of Man, p. 57.

2. ALIENATION AND SOCIALIZATION

Hammond points out that Fromm uses the concept of alienation from nature and from self to explain the process of socialization, but that he does not always use it consistently.⁶⁹⁸ In his earlier writing, Fromm used alienation as a positive term to describe man's necessary progression toward maturity, but in his later works, he differentiates between alienation as such and man's regressive answer to the fact of alienation. In this, he differs from Marx, who, he says, thought of alienation only as corrupting and perverting all human values,⁶⁹⁹ and restricted it to the unskilled working class, whereas today all classes are alienated to the extent that they have lost the sense of self and the sense of their creative powers.⁷⁰⁰ And he suggests that dynamic psychology ought to empirically study those specific behaviors, "all those religions, philosophical and political phenomena"⁷⁰¹ associated with alienation.

a) Alienation and Self-Awareness

Fromm sees two sides to alienation. Negatively, man "must first separate himself from nature and his fellow man, and in a real sense from

⁶⁹⁸Hammond, op. cit., p. 65-77, 121-130.

⁶⁹⁹Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 52.

⁷⁰⁰Evans, op. cit., p. 89

⁷⁰¹Ibid., , p. 90.

himself"⁷⁰² before he can become "fully born."⁷⁰³ Positively, alienation leads to a higher consciousness of self and the better use of one's powers.⁷⁰⁴

The process of achieving self-awareness has three aspects: "intellection," overcoming narcissism and the distortion of consciousness by society.

As the person matures, he splits the subject from the object, the "me" from the "not-me." "This separation gradually takes place, and the final achievement is expressed by the fact that the child can say 'I.'"⁷⁰⁵ This development of objectivity is called intellectual reflection, or "intellection."⁷⁰⁶

The second aspect of mature self-awareness is the overcoming of narcissism. The child soon learns to distinguish reality as it is from what he wants it to be. It is essentially an affective development. But if the person does not accept reality and continues to live in his wishes, he will neurotically attempt "to force reality to correspond to his wishes (that is, to do the impossible)."⁷⁰⁷ This is narcissistic omnipotence.

⁷⁰²Hammond, op. cit., p. 65.

⁷⁰³Zen Buddhism, p. 94.

⁷⁰⁴Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 61.

⁷⁰⁵Zen Buddhism, p. 128.

⁷⁰⁶Ibid., p. 97.

⁷⁰⁷Ibid., p. 90.

Thirdly, society influences the development of consciousness and unconsciousness by means of its "social filters." At this point, Hammond clarifies Fromm's analysis of self-awareness by differentiating between abstract consciousness (the form) and the content of consciousness, which society regulates.

Man...has the formal or abstract capacity for consciousness. However, the actual content of consciousness (that is, how self and the world are understood) is deeply affected by the type of society into which the individual is born. A regressive society...may force the individual to repress some aspects of his own self-awareness. As we have seen, it is the limitation of the content of consciousness that must be eliminated in full maturity. Since this limitation is due in large measure to the repressive effect of the society on the individual, and since this in turn stems from regression in society, we can see that alienation and regression cannot be completely separated, though they must be distinguished.⁷⁰⁸

The aspects of intellection and overcoming of narcissism lead to temporary alienation; as one sees himself separate from other persons he feels his separation and aloneness more keenly. The societal factor may not, in itself, lead to alienation, but could increase or decrease this feeling depending on whether the "social character" of the culture was progressive or regressive.

b) Alienation and Regression

Not only does Fromm use alienation to mean a progressive movement upward, but he also uses it in reference to man's regressive answer to the fact of alienation, which tends to confuse the issue. It would probably be better if he had restricted its use to the progressive form.

⁷⁰⁸Hammond, op. cit., p. 68.

Man, declares Fromm, tries to escape from his alienation. Authoritarian religion, repression, neurosis and psychosis are a few of the common forms of escape. Any attempt to fall back on destructive impulses, find symbolic security in the womb or in death, or in archaic forms of pre-human existence are regressive impulses, totally incompatible "with the inherent goals of the evolution of man's nature."⁷⁰⁹

(1) Repression. Repression is a form of regression. Repression is the process of limiting consciousness or of preventing any impulse from entering the realm of consciousness, or removing the experience of the impulse from the conscious.⁷¹⁰ All forms of neuroses are the result of deep repressions of "unconscious strivings which tend to harm and block a person's growth,"⁷¹¹ and, he writes, it is the task of psychoanalysis to "de-repress," i.e., "to make the unconscious conscious."⁷¹²

On the whole, he feels that regression in any form is evil and archaic. Regression in the form of neurosis is a "symptom of moral failure ...the specific expression of moral conflicts."⁷¹³ The pre-Oedipal attachment is "one of the main causes of neurosis and psychosis."⁷¹⁴
Neurosis is the failure to live productively.⁷¹⁵

⁷⁰⁹Zen Buddhism, p. 105.

⁷¹⁰Man for Himself, p. 228.

⁷¹¹Ibid., p. 183.

⁷¹²Zen Buddhism, p. 95, 105.

⁷¹³Man for Himself, p. 5.

⁷¹⁴Heart of Man, p. 97.

⁷¹⁵Man for Himself, p. 222.

(2) Regression in Religion. Fromm sees all religions and ethical systems, except those of humanism, as regressions to archaic forms, dehumanizing their adherents. Religion is "the formalized and elaborate answer to man's existence"⁷¹⁶ that creates "a feeling of reasonableness and of security by the very communion with others."⁷¹⁷

He correlates religious ideas with neurotic ideas. When the regressive wishes of man clash with consciousness and society's demands, the result is often a regression to primitive forms of religion.⁷¹⁸ In a sense, a neurosis is a "private form of religion."⁷¹⁹ In neurotic regression, one passion comes to dominate the person and becomes set apart from the rest of his personality. It becomes his ruler, his idol. He grows weaker as "it" grows stronger until "he has become alienated from himself precisely because 'he' has become the slave of part of himself."⁷²⁰

It is in this sense that he often uses the term alienation.

I use 'alienation' as it was used by Hegel (1960) and later by Marx (1932): instead of experiencing his own human powers--for example, love or wisdom, thought or reason, acting justly--a person transfers these powers to some idol, to force or forces outside himself. In order, then, to get in touch with his own human power, he must submit completely to this idol.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁶Zen Buddhism, p. 91.

⁷¹⁷Loc. cit.

⁷¹⁸Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 27.

⁷¹⁹Zen Buddhism, p. 91.

⁷²⁰Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 60.

⁷²¹Evans, op. cit., p. 88.

Fromm attacks any religion that demands submission to a force or God, and although he admits that the concept of monotheistic authority "guarantees man's independence from human authority."⁷²² He states that "every act of submissive worship, is an act of alienation and idolatry";⁷²³ the power undergirding the Christian church is nothing but "group narcissism,"⁷²⁴ and religious devotion is an attempt to remove "reason and self-awareness,"⁷²⁵ the "regressive, archaic solution to the problem of human existence."⁷²⁶

The problem of religion is vital to Fromm's position on man and ethics, occupying a major portion of all his works. He assumes that man's concepts of God are always projections or fantasies of man's inner needs and impulses,⁷²⁷ and that the history of religion parallels man's evolution.

...religion has a threefold function: for all mankind, consolation for the privations exacted by life; for the great majority of men, encouragement to accept emotionally their class situation; and for the dominant minority, relief from guilt feelings caused by the suffering of those whom they oppress.⁷²⁸

⁷²²You Shall Be As Gods, p. 75.

⁷²³Sane Society, p. 113.

⁷²⁴Heart of Man, p. 85.

⁷²⁵Ibid., p. 118.

⁷²⁶Loc. cit.

⁷²⁷Dogma of Christ, p. 46.

⁷²⁸Ibid., p. 20.

Fromm's concern for religious ideas stems from their psychic influences on man,⁷²⁹ and the fact that all men have religious needs which find expression somehow,⁷³⁰ even though some deny it. His definition of religion is: "any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion."⁷³¹

Fromm is particularly hostile to Calvinism as his example of the most authoritarian form of religion. He sees its main virtue as obedience and "its cardinal sin is disobedience."⁷³² It epitomizes worship of dependence, self-degradation and self-limitation, and is therefore "masochistic and self-destructive."⁷³³

There is no such thing as a God who is a real being in Fromm's system, only a symbol "of man's own powers."⁷³⁴ But ecclesiastical authorities established a concept of God as a father figure in order to increase the guilt feelings of the masses and thus through the rituals of repentance and pardon, to maintain control.⁷³⁵ The ethical implications will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

⁷²⁹Heart of Man, p. 118, Dogma of Christ, p. 9.

⁷³⁰Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 25.

⁷³¹Ibid., p. 21.

⁷³²Ibid., p. 35.

⁷³³Ibid., p. 53.

⁷³⁴Ibid., p. 49.

⁷³⁵Dogma of Christ, p. 66.

CHAPTER V

FROMM'S PHILOSOPHY OF ETHICS

Fromm's concept of ethics emanates from his concern for the growing skepticism and moral confusion in today's world where man finds himself cut off from the traditional "guidance of either revelation or reason."⁷³⁶

The result is the acceptance of a relativistic position which proposes that value judgments and ethical norms are exclusively matters of taste or arbitrary preference and that no objectively valid statement can be made in this realm. But since man cannot live without values and norms, this relativism makes him an easy prey for irrational value systems. He reverts to a position which the Greek Enlightenment, Christianity, the Renaissance, and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment had already overcome. The demands of the State, the enthusiasm for magic qualities of powerful leaders, powerful machines, and material success become the sources for his norms and value judgments.⁷³⁷

Because this study is concerned primarily with the problem of conscience and guilt, it has not seemed necessary to detail Fromm's position on every area he discusses in ethics; consequently, only brief summarizations will be made on some problems which are arbitrarily assigned to the section following.

I. ABSOLUTE VS. RELATIVE ETHICS

True to his presuppositions on the nature of man, Fromm establishes his ethics on man's autonomy, and rejects any authoritarian ethics

⁷³⁶Man for Himself, p. 15.

⁷³⁷Loc. cit.

founded on

...the premise that the criterion of validity is the unquestionable superior and omniscient power of the authority. It is the very essence of this claim to superiority that the authority cannot err and that its commands and prohibitions are eternally true.⁷³⁸

Fromm disposes of this claim on the basis of appeal to "all other fields of scientific thought, where it is generally recognized that there is no absolute truth but nevertheless there are objectively valid laws and principles."⁷³⁹ Every new insight enables man to make a closer approximation of the truth;⁷⁴⁰ every culture makes its contributions.

A. NORMS

Furthermore, he argues, ethical norms are not only subject to constant revision, but there are situations "which are inherently insoluble and do not permit any choice which can be considered the 'right' one."⁷⁴¹ These situations arise in connection with existential dichotomies and with conditions inherent in the social order.

Fromm also distinguishes between "universal" and "socially immanent" ethics.⁷⁴² "Universal ethics" refer to those norms of conduct

⁷³⁸Ibid., p. 239

⁷³⁹Loc. cit.

⁷⁴⁰Ibid., p. 240.

⁷⁴¹Loc. cit.

⁷⁴²Ibid., p. 241-245.

that appear in most world cultures, and the "socially immanent norms" are those specific codes of conduct enabling a particular culture to maintain itself efficiently; i.e., people do "what they have to do under the existing circumstances."⁷⁴³

In this connection, it is interesting to note that Fromm uses the term "norm" in a distinctive manner. As commonly used, norm refers to "an authoritative standard; a principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior,"⁷⁴⁴ or perhaps in the sense of the usual kind of behavior observed. But Fromm uses the word norm as an equivalent of "principle," which has the meaning of "a comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine or assumption; a rule or code of conduct; a primary source; an underlying faculty or endowment..."⁷⁴⁵ He also believes that both norms and principles can remain valid for an indefinite period in a variety of cultures, and that they have the force of an "ought," as in the following:

A few words must be said about my approach to the Bible in this book. I do not look at it as the 'word of God,' not only because historical examination shows that it is a book written by men--different kinds of men, living in different times--but also because I am not a theist. Yet, to me, it is an extraordinary book, expressing many norms and principles that have maintained their validity throughout thousands

⁷⁴³Ibid., p. 242.

⁷⁴⁴Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 575.

⁷⁴⁵Ibid, p. 676.

of years. It is a book which has proclaimed a vision for men that is still valid and awaiting realization.⁷⁴⁶

Moreover, Fromm seems to hold to a Platonic concept of eternal principles that govern both God and man. In discussing the evolutionary development of the concept of God in the Old Testament, Fromm writes:

With Abraham's challenge (for God to comply with the principles of justice) a new element has entered the Biblical and later Jewish tradition. Precisely because God is bound by the norms of justice and love, man is no longer his slave. Man can challenge God--as God can challenge man--because above both are principles and norms.⁷⁴⁷

B. AUTHORITARIAN VS. HUMANISTIC ETHICS

One of Fromm's major themes is his distinction between authoritarianism and humanistic ethics. Fromm asserts that man's religious needs stem from man's dichotomous relationship to nature, i.e., his identity with and transcendence of nature, resulting in an inherent fear of his alienation, insecurity, and a vast feeling of powerlessness.⁷⁴⁸ This condition generates within him a desire to restore his equilibrium, to establish ideals, to seek satisfaction and meaning.⁷⁴⁹ This is seen by Fromm as the moral problem of man today: "man's attitude toward force and power"⁷⁵⁰ which

⁷⁴⁶You Shall Be As Gods, p. 7.

⁷⁴⁷Ibid., p. 28.

⁷⁴⁸Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 22.

⁷⁴⁹Ibid., p. 24, 25.

⁷⁵⁰Man for Himself, p. 246.

is rooted in his existence. Threatened by his fears, man becomes paralyzed emotionally and mentally, grasping at any promises made by those in possession of power who offer peace and security. "Man's submission to this combination of threat and promise is his real 'fall.' By submitting to power = domination he loses his power = potency."⁷⁵¹ Man becomes indifferent to himself,⁷⁵² losing his sense of uniqueness, and in his loss of courage, he turns to idolatry.

1. AUTHORITARIANISM

The error of authoritarian religion as Fromm sees it is that it originally fought against idolatry in the name of God, and then proceeded to turn its God into another idol.

The approach to the understanding of what an idol is begins with the understanding of what God is not. God as the supreme value and goal is not man, the state, an institution, nature, power, possession, sexual powers, or any artifact made by man. The affirmations 'I love God,' 'I follow God,' 'I want to become like God'--mean first of all 'I do not love, follow, or imitate idols.'

An idol represents the object of man's central passion, the desire to return to the soil-mother, the craving for possession, power, fame, and so forth. The passion represented by the idol is, at the same time, the supreme value within man's system of values.⁷⁵³

As we noted previously, Fromm sees idol worship as the impoverishment of man that occurs when he transfers his "passions and qualities

⁷⁵¹Ibid., p. 247.

⁷⁵²Ibid., p. 249.

⁷⁵³You Shall Be As Gods, p. 43.

to the idol,"⁷⁵⁴ which then becomes the "alienated form of man's experience of himself."⁷⁵⁵ Through the media of the idol, man worships himself. Thus, "God" can become an idol. Man can transfer his qualities to the supreme being, impoverish himself by submission, guilt feelings and devotion. What does Fromm ask of man? Simply, "not to blaspheme God and not to worship idols."⁷⁵⁶ "If mankind has achieved solidarity and peace, not even the common worship of one God is necessary."⁷⁵⁷

To briefly sum up Fromm's concept of the development of authoritarian religion and ethics: The Old Testament prophets and leaders intended to restrain their people from idol worship and indignity. They developed the concept of a single authoritarian God who must be obeyed; God became "the constitutional monarch"⁷⁵⁸ who later "becomes bound by the principles he has announced."⁷⁵⁹ Eventually, he becomes the nameless God, "EHEYEH,"⁷⁶⁰ who bears no possible representation, but is only experienced.⁷⁶¹ Man becomes liberated to determine his own history, free to

⁷⁵⁴Loc. cit.

⁷⁵⁵Ibid., p. 44.

⁷⁵⁶Ibid., p. 51.

⁷⁵⁷Ibid., p. 52.

⁷⁵⁸Ibid., p. 225.

⁷⁵⁹Ibid., p. 226.

⁷⁶⁰Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁶¹Ibid., p. 30-42.

accept or reject the prophetic message. The concept of God became merely a "unifying principle"⁷⁶² for the Jewish nation, a religious attitude that easily developed into a humanistic affinity toward their fellow men and nature. Later, the Christian Church slowly evolved a system of theology that reverted to idolatry in the figure of Jesus, who originally satisfied the need for the suffering masses to identify with one who had proclaimed deliverance from life's misery and who had himself suffered under the hands of authorities whom the masses despised.⁷⁶³ Soon the suffering servant was transformed into the Son of God; the Christian could now identify with the God-man, and thereby relieve his hostilities against a sovereign God of judgment and oppressive power.

Since the believing enthusiasts were imbued with hatred and death wishes--consciously against their rulers, unconsciously against God the Father--they identified with the crucified; they themselves suffered death on the cross and atoned in this way for their death wishes against the father, Through his death, Jesus expiated the guilt of all, and the first Christians needed such an atonement.⁷⁶⁴

Identification with Jesus meant that in the after-life, the believer would also rule alongside God and become content.

Next, the "Church" promulgated the idea that Jesus had eternally existed with the Father-God, but only after the composition of the Christian

⁷⁶²Ibid., p. 226.

⁷⁶³Dogma of Christ, p. 29-41.

⁷⁶⁴Ibid., p. 48.

community shifted from the oppressed masses to the middle and upper classes in the age of Constantine.⁷⁶⁵ The theology of Paul, an intellectual, predominated over the simplicity of the Gospels. The eschatological expectation that the Kingdom of God was imminent began to dissipate and Christians looked backward to the cross,⁷⁶⁶ and to inward, rather than political salvation.

Finally, a decisive change took place in Christian doctrine: Christ was conceived of now as God becoming man and this, contends Fromm, destroyed the revolutionary spirit of the early Christian community that had directed its aggressive impulses against the established authorities. When the Christian masses began to think of Christ as God coming down to mankind, they could no longer relieve their hostility against the Father, but now had to turn their aggressiveness against themselves, thus simplifying their subjugation to the clergy. Church authorities then assumed complete control; by rigidifying their doctrines, they bound the masses in subservient obedience.⁷⁶⁷

While the Protestant Reformation began the movement away from "the passively infantile attitude of the Middle Ages"⁷⁶⁸ and toward a revivification of the Father-God, Lutheranism and especially Calvinism,

⁷⁶⁵Ibid., p. 50.

⁷⁶⁶Ibid., p. 58.

⁷⁶⁷Ibid., p. 64-71.

⁷⁶⁸Ibid., p. 91.

"emphasized the wickedness of man and taught self-humiliation and self-abasement as the basis of all virtue."⁷⁶⁹ Says Fromm:

An illustration is the feeling of guilt and anxiety which Calvin's doctrines aroused in men. It may be said that the person who is overwhelmed by a feeling of his own powerlessness and unworthiness, by the unceasing doubt of whether he is saved or condemned to eternal punishment, who is hardly capable of any genuine joy and has made himself into the cog of a machine which he has to serve, that person, indeed, has a severe defect.⁷⁷⁰

Authoritarian ethics forces the person to "internalize" the rules and prohibitions of higher authorities, and to obey them "as if he were obeying himself."⁷⁷¹ He believes this voice to be his own conscience. Disobedience to the conscience is evil; compliance is virtuous.

2. HUMANITARIANISM

Quite different from the authoritarian (heteronomous) conscience is the 'humanistic' (autonomous) conscience. It is not the internalized voice of an authority whom we are eager to please and afraid of displeasing; it is the voice of our total personality expressing the demands of life and growth. 'Good' for the humanistic conscience is the voice of our self which summons us back to ourselves, to become what we potentially are.⁷⁷²

Fromm avers that man is free to choose the kinds of ideals that he will follow, but that he "is not free to choose between having or not having ideals."⁷⁷³ For humanistic ethics, the summum bonum is the

⁷⁶⁹Escape from Freedom, p. 117.

⁷⁷⁰Man for Himself, p. 223.

⁷⁷¹You Shall Be As Gods, p. 55.

⁷⁷²Loc. cit.

⁷⁷³Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 24.

productive character:⁷⁷⁴ "the ability of man to make productive use of his powers is his potency; the inability is his impotence."⁷⁷⁵

To live productively, one must be able to love, which is possible only when one knows and respects the loved one. This depends on the use of reason, which attempts to grasp "the total picture"⁷⁷⁶ of self and others, reaching to the depth or "the essence of things and processes."⁷⁷⁷

Fromm rejects any attempt to establish the "dicta" of the authority as the criteria for good or evil, but aware of the complicating factors, he says:

Humanistic ethics has to cope with the difficulty... that in making man the sole judge of values it would seem that pleasure or pain becomes the final arbiter of good and evil. If this were the only alternative, then, indeed, the humanistic principle could not be the basis for ethical norms... How can our life be guided by a motive by which the animal as well as man, the good and the bad person, the normal and the sick are motivated alike? Even if we qualify the pleasure principle by restricting it to those pleasures which do not injure the legitimate interests of others, it is hardly adequate as a guiding principle for our actions.⁷⁷⁸

The empirical approach, he holds, is the answer to the fallacious alternative of choosing between submission to either authority or to pleasure. It leads him to conclude that:

⁷⁷⁴ Man for Himself, p. 93.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 108.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 176.

Happiness and joy although, in a sense, subjective experiences, are the outcome of interactions with, and depend upon, objective conditions... (which) can be summarized comprehensively as productiveness.⁷⁷⁹

Psychoanalysis gives us the empirical method of discovering the foundations for the proper norms of behavior and pleasure, confirming the view "that the subjective experience of satisfaction is in itself deceptive and not a valid criterion of value."⁷⁸⁰ "Every neurosis... confirms the fact that pleasure can be in contradiction to man's real interests."⁷⁸¹ Happiness is actually a function of our entire personality, an "expression of the state of the entire organism."⁷⁸² For a few, pleasure is "the feeling accompanying the relief from painful tension,"⁷⁸³ but the tension can be psychic tension as well as physiological (as Freud hypothesized) springing from insatiable irrational desires that represent "a dissatisfaction within oneself."⁷⁸⁴

The conditions influencing irrational or rational pleasure and satisfaction include economic and psychological scarcity or abundance,⁷⁸⁵ independence, self-accomplishment and awareness.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 176-177.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 182.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., p. 183.

⁷⁸² Ibid., p. 185.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., p. 186.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 188.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 189.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 192-194.

Fromm also depends on rational faith in the development of humanistic ethics, which has already been discussed.

In his earlier works, Fromm realized that man achieves happiness through practical activities, primarily his work, but also through other interests. Man is free under the conditions of economic, intellectual and moral freedom,⁷⁸⁷ a freedom that can only be attained when he is able to reconcile his conflicts in the interpersonal relationships in society. The only alternative to alienation, automatization and insanity is "humanistic communitarianism";⁷⁸⁸ this involves sharing property, work and experience.

II. LOVE

Fromm warns that the growing interest in psychology can easily blind us to those aspects that are "dangerous and destructive to the spiritual development of man."⁷⁸⁹ The patient can be considered as an object, a thing for manipulation and dissection. Yet, the psychologist is driven to "penetrate into the secret of man's soul, into the nucleus which is 'he.'"⁷⁹⁰ Moreover, psychology functions negatively, telling us what man is not, how man is bound by his illusions and fears; but "it cannot tell us what man, what each one of us, is."⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁷ Sane Society, p. 277.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 313.

⁷⁸⁹ Dogma of Christ, p. 191.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 194.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., p. 195.

However, there is "another path to knowing man's secret; this path is not that of thought, but that of love,"⁷⁹² and psychological knowledge may provide the "condition for full knowledge in the act of love";⁷⁹³ it ought never become a substitute for love or for union with others.

Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one 'object' of love. If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism.⁷⁹⁴

Love is an act of the will, a "decision to commit my life completely to that of one other person."⁷⁹⁵ It is vital to productiveness; the ability to achieve unity with others, while remaining independent.

A. LOVE AND CHARACTER

Man's desire to reunite with nature and his fellows motivates him to alleviate his anxieties through productive work,⁷⁹⁶ orgiastic union⁷⁹⁷ and conformity.⁷⁹⁸ These are only partial answers; "the full answer lies

⁷⁹²Loc. cit.

⁷⁹³Loc. cit.

⁷⁹⁴The Art of Loving, p. 38, 39.

⁷⁹⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁷⁹⁶Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁹⁷Ibid., p. 9-11.

⁷⁹⁸Ibid., p. 12-14.

in the achievement of interpersonal union, of fusion with another person, in love." ⁷⁹⁹ Essentially, it comes through the act of giving.

It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that the ability to love as an act of giving depends on the character development of the person. It presupposes the attainment of a predominantly productive orientation; in this orientation the person has overcome dependency, narcissistic omnipotence, the wish to exploit others, or to hoard, and has acquired faith in his own human powers, courage to rely on his powers in the attainment of his goals. To the degree that these qualities are lacking, he is afraid of giving himself--hence of loving. ⁸⁰⁰

The perversion of love is manifested in passive and active states of symbiotic union with others, the seeking of oneness with another by destroying the integrity of oneself. The passive form of symbiotic union is masochism, the submitting of oneself to another by merging with the more powerful entity. The masochist rids himself through humiliation and abasement. Pain may be present, but pain in itself is not his aim; his goal is the destruction of himself as a unique person. ⁸⁰¹

Fromm uses Calvinism as his example of theological masochism. It is a theology,

...according to which man is essentially evil and powerless. Man can achieve absolutely nothing that is good on the basis of his own strength or merit...Man should have not only the conviction of his absolute nothingness but he should do everything to humiliate himself. ⁸⁰²

⁷⁹⁹Ibid., p. 15.

⁸⁰⁰Ibid., p. 21, 22.

⁸⁰¹Ibid., p. 16.

⁸⁰²Man for Himself, p. 124, 125.

The active form of symbiotic union is sadism, or domination. Here, too, the sadist wants to become part of the host person, but accomplishes this escape from alienation by enhancing and inflating himself at the expense of the other.⁸⁰³ In seeking power, the sadist often uses pain, but pain is, again, not the ultimate concern. In the more benign forms of sadism, the sadist permits the host some measures of satisfaction, except the most vital one: independence.

Masochism and sadism manifest different symptoms, but they have in common the element of "fusion without integrity";⁸⁰⁴ consequently, some persons react sadistically-masochistically toward different objects.

Hitler reacted primarily in a sadistic fashion toward people, but masochistically toward fate, history the 'higher power' of nature. His end--suicide among general destruction--is as characteristic as was his dream of success--total domination.⁸⁰⁵

Sadistic-masochistic tendencies have been interpreted by some people as their love for the objects of their desires; the proof is in the limits granted to the host persons.

B. SELF-LOVE

Fromm criticizes Calvin, Kant, Nietzsche and Freud for their inadequate conceptualizations of self-love. He says that Freud's self-love

⁸⁰³Art of Loving, p. 16.

⁸⁰⁴Ibid., p. 17.

⁸⁰⁵Loc. cit.

is "the same as narcissism, the turning of the libido toward oneself";⁸⁰⁶
Libido could only be turned toward others or self; in extreme cases the
person "is insane." On such terms,

Love and self-love are thus mutually exclusive in the sense
that the more there is of one, the less there is of the other.
If self-love is bad, it follows that unselfishness is
virtuous.⁸⁰⁷

In contrast, Fromm stresses the conjunctive relation in love, that
love for self "is inseparably connected with the love for any other being."⁸⁰⁸
The Biblical injunction, "love thy neighbor as thyself" expresses this idea.
Here, once more, is Fromm's idea that, "not he who has much is rich, but
he who gives much";⁸⁰⁹ it is the psychological as well as the material
hoarder who is impoverished. Therefore, in order to give, one must be
able to possess, and one must know and appreciate one's own possessions.
The failure of modern culture, he asserts, is that people are not concerned
enough with their own real interests, "not in the fact that they are too
selfish, but that they do not love themselves."⁸¹⁰

True self-love has four indispensable elements that are missing
in the selfish, narcissistic person: concern for others, acceptance of

⁸⁰⁶Ibid., p. 48.

⁸⁰⁷Ibid., p. 49.

⁸⁰⁸Loc. cit.

⁸⁰⁹Ibid., p. 20.

⁸¹⁰Man for Himself, p. 143.

responsibility, respect, and knowledge of self and others.⁸¹¹ To put love into practice, one must have concentration, patience, and supreme concern.⁸¹² Concentration means the abilities to observe, listen, and "live fully in the present,"⁸¹³ i.e., development of sensitivity. In order to love, one needs courage and faith in his fellow men.

In the light of this, what does Fromm mean when he says that the mature person might learn to love God?

The truly religious person, if he follows the essence of the monotheistic idea, does not pray for anything, does not expect anything from God; he does not love God as a child loves his father or his mother; he has acquired the humility of sensing his limitations, to the degree of knowing that he knows nothing about God. God becomes to him a symbol ...He has faith in the principles which 'God' represents; he thinks truth, lives love and justice, and considers all of his life only valuable inasmuch as it gives him the chance to arrive at an ever fuller unfolding of his human powers--as the only reality that matters, as the only object of 'ultimate concern'; and, eventually, he does not speak about God--nor even mention his name. To love God, if he were going to use this word, would mean then, to long for the attainment of the full capacity to love, for the realization of that which 'God' stands for in oneself.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹¹Ibid., p. 134-145; cf. also Art of Loving, p. 48-53.

⁸¹²Art of Loving, p. 91-112.

⁸¹³Ibid., p. 96.

⁸¹⁴Ibid., p. 59-60.

III. CONSCIENCE

A. CONSCIENCE AND CHARACTER

According to Fromm, man has a limited ability to control or influence internal and external forces through some modification of those conditions that bring about realization of the good. However, it must be kept in mind that,

...while we have reason and conscience, which enable us to be active participants in our life, reason and conscience themselves are inseparably linked up with our character. If destructive forces and irrational passions have gained dominance in our character, both our reason and our conscience are affected and cannot exercise their function properly.⁸¹⁵

This point was previously elaborated in discussing Fromm's concept of the "social character" and here merely serves to underscore his ideas of the humanistic conscience, sin, and guilt. Just as the problem of moral judgment relates to those of determinism and indeterminism, so the individual conscience can be viewed in these same terms. All aspects of man, his conscience no less than his will, are expressions of his character.⁸¹⁶ The productive person acts according to his reason and is able to exercise his will toward his own enhancement, but the nonproductive person is slave to irrationality and lacks willpower. Therefore we need to understand "the strength of a person's innate vitality that made

⁸¹⁵ Man for Himself, p. 234.

⁸¹⁶ Loc. cit.

it possible for him to resist environmental forces acting upon him in his childhood and later on"⁸¹⁷ in order to make judgments upon him. But only the authoritarian conscience really feels qualified to pass judgments on the conscience of its fellow men, for it assumes a prior supreme authority,⁸¹⁸ which would, of course, be absurd as long as the "concept 'God' was conditioned by the presence of a socio-political structure."⁸¹⁹

B. HUMANISTIC CONSCIENCE

The humanistic conscience, ideally, "is the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or dysfunctioning."⁸²⁰ It represents the real self; "it contains also the essence of our moral experiences in life."⁸²¹

Fromm asks, why does not man develop his natural tendencies for a humanistic conscience? The fact is, he replies, the human situation is morally precarious.⁸²² There are extremely difficult problems for the humanistic conscience to overcome. One is the fact that its voice is feeble in most people because they have lost themselves.⁸²³ Another

⁸¹⁷Ibid., p. 235.

⁸¹⁸Ibid., p. 236.

⁸¹⁹You Shall Be As Gods, p. 18.

⁸²⁰Man for Himself, p. 162.

⁸²¹Ibid., p. 163.

⁸²²Ibid., p. 164.

⁸²³Loc. cit.

fact is that most people refuse to listen, or have become insensitive to it, for this requires discipline plus the rare art of learning to "be alone with oneself."⁸²⁴ Then, too, our conscience speaks indirectly; we only realize its symptoms: guilt, anxiety, the fear of death, the fear of disapproval.⁸²⁵ Fromm concludes that man has too long been under the domination of the authoritarian conscience. It has left him with irrational guilt feelings; it has suppressed that true conscience that would lead him on toward life.⁸²⁶

C. GUILT

It is by now quite obvious that the themes of conscience and guilt pervade Fromm's writings, that the antagonists are authoritarian conscience and guilt vs. humanistic conscience and guilt. Why speak of "humanistic" guilt? Fromm proposes that,

Often guilt feelings are consciously experienced in terms of the authoritarian conscience while, dynamically, they are rooted in the humanistic conscience. A person may feel consciously guilty for not pleasing authorities, while unconsciously he feels guilty for not living up to his own expectations of himself.⁸²⁷

He gives the example of a man who repressed his own desires to be a musician in order to satisfy his father, who wanted him to enter the business field. Unsuccessful, and feeling frustrated and depressed, he

⁸²⁴Ibid., p. 165.

⁸²⁵Ibid., p. 165-167.

⁸²⁶Ibid., p. 171.

⁸²⁷Ibid., p. 169.

went to a psychoanalyst. At first, he superficially felt that his guilt feelings were caused by his father's disappointment in him; however, later he came to see that,

the core of his guilt feeling is not the failure to satisfy his father, but, on the contrary, his obedience to him and his failure to satisfy himself.⁸²⁸

These guilt feelings, says Fromm, are common to patients; they feel overwhelmed for not loving their parents as they should, performing unsatisfactory work, hurting another's feelings:

They react with a sense of inferiority, of depravity, and often with a conscious or unconscious desire for punishment. It is usually not difficult to discover that this all-pervasive guilt reaction stems from an authoritarian orientation.⁸²⁹

Fromm refers to The Trial by Kafka as "a beautiful illustration of the complex interrelation of authoritarian and humanistic conscience."⁸³⁰ The hero, K, is arrested and kept ignorant of his crime. After vainly trying to find means of escape, he is finally executed. K's inner experiences symbolize,

...the sense of guilt of a man who feels accused by unknown authorities and feels guilty for not pleasing them; yet these authorities are so beyond his reach that he cannot even learn of what they accuse him, or how he can defend himself. Looked at from this angle, the novel would represent the theological viewpoint most akin to Calvin's

⁸²⁸Ibid., p. 170.

⁸²⁹Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 90.

⁸³⁰Man for Himself, p. 171.

theology. Man is condemned or saved without understanding the reasons. All he can do is to tremble and to throw himself upon God's mercy.⁸³¹

In contrast, he argues, the humanistic conscience rejects any transcendent power. Man is responsible to save himself; "Only if he understands the voice of his conscience, can he return to himself."⁸³² Here Fromm returns to his concept of responsibility. The usual denotation given to responsibility, he says, is that the person is "punishable or accusable."⁸³³ Fromm much prefers to think of responsibility apart from any connection between punishment or guilt. "In this sense responsibility only means 'I am aware that I did it.'"⁸³⁴ As soon as the deed is experienced as "sin" or "guilt" it is alienated from the subject. Now, it is no longer the person who did the deed, but "the sinner," "the bad one," the "other person" who needs punishment; thus the subject avoids loathing himself and life.⁸³⁵

The biophilic conscience is motivated by its attraction to life and joy; the moral effort consists in strengthening the life-loving side in oneself. For this reason the biophile does not dwell in remorse and guilt which are, after all, only aspects of self-loathing and sadness. He turns quickly to life and attempts to do good.⁸³⁶

⁸³¹Loc. cit.

⁸³²Ibid., p. 174.

⁸³³Heart of Man, p. 128.

⁸³⁴Loc. cit.

⁸³⁵Loc. cit.

⁸³⁶Ibid., p. 47.

Man ought, therefore, asserts Fromm, not to be oppressed by a sense of sin, which is after all human, "almost unavoidable."⁸³⁷ Fromm interprets the Old Testament words for "sin" as meaning "to miss (the road), ""to err," and as rebellious "transgression."⁸³⁸ The man who repents is the man who returns to the right road, "to God, to himself."⁸³⁹ "Because we all share in the same humanity, there is nothing inhuman in sinning, hence nothing to be ashamed of, or to be despised for."⁸⁴⁰ We are just as capable of returning to the good as we are to the evil.

⁸³⁷You Shall Be As Gods, p. 169.

⁸³⁸Ibid., p. 168.

⁸³⁹Ibid., p. 169.

⁸⁴⁰Ibid., p. 176.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

This study probed into the larger problem of the nature of man as it related to the narrower problem of guilt. Van Til and Fromm were chosen because of their diametrically opposite positions; placing them in juxtaposition has revealed how deep and irreconcilable are the Christian and non-Christian conceptions of man and guilt as viewed by these men. Certainly other men could have been chosen whose positions on the issues would have varied from those of Van Til and Fromm, but in retrospect the selection seems most fortunate; they represent extreme views on the nature of reality, and enable us to see more clearly, perhaps, what kind of impact their philosophies would have upon the client in therapy, and what might be some of the implications for practice and research in counseling.

Depending upon their background, critical readers will see other points of comparison and arrive at implications and conclusions varying from those presented here. In the interests of brevity, the following areas have been selected for summary discussion: Methodology, Implications for Counseling Theory, Selection of Counselors, Research Implications and Personal Observations.

I. METHODOLOGY

A. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS: SUMMARIZATION

1. REALITY

The most obvious differences between Van Til and Fromm are their fundamental presuppositions. Van Til holds that there are only two alternatives concerning reality that man could logically maintain, and Van Til chooses to assume the ultimacy of God. Corollary to this assumption is a two-layer theory of being and knowledge, and the analogical relationship of nature and man, to God. The uniqueness of Van Til lies in his consistent application of this principle to every area under discussion even though it leads him to antinomies, or seeming paradoxes such as that of God's sovereignty and man's free agency. The question could be raised: "Does Van Til really solve anything by positing paradox as a function of human limits?" Van Til would probably reply that he is simply stating a truism; paradox is inherent in man's perception of reality by virtue of man's lack of exhaustive and comprehensive knowledge of that reality. This does not mean that man should avoid grappling with the antinomies, but that he should become aware that God alone knows the ultimate solutions. Man must live with ambiguity and by faith. Van Til argues that the antinomies are naturally expected by one who believes that the world has mystery for man, but not for God, and that it is faith in God's sovereign power and ultimate goodness that gives men the motivation to face life rationally; that unless one firmly holds to these principles,

rational thinking collapses; that there would be no basis for science or philosophy, and finally, no meaning to life.

Fromm also sees the challenge of alternatives, but he chooses to accept man's autonomy, and is generally consistent in applying this principle. Man's reason cannot be interfered with, even by supposedly supernatural powers, it can make valid statements about the phenomenal world, it is capable of piercing to the essence of phenomena; reason can make value judgments about reality. This primacy of the intellect is the basis for all true science. He feels that the only alternative to the autonomy of man is meaninglessness, confusion, fear and subjugation to blind irrationalism and authoritarianism.

2. MAN

Van Til understands man to be a creature of God, utterly dependent upon Him for life and knowledge, both temporally and eternally. Man's dignity lies in his possession of the Divine Image, which reflects certain attributes of God's own nature, i.e., His righteousness, holiness, goodness, spirituality and self-consciousness. Created by God as unique from all other creatures, man is responsible to live in active obedience, the only condition that gives him true freedom to develop his full potentials.

Fromm views man as not having a basic nature, but as being the peak of the evolutionary continuum and thus intimately related to the animal world. Man has also transcended the animal world, but the ensuing self-awareness creates existential dichotomies, or tensions,

between life and death, between potentiality and lack of fulfillment, and between independence and a need for social communion. Man finds meaning for life only in himself, though at the same time, he is conditioned by society. In spite of his denial of man's basic nature, Fromm speaks of man's uniqueness, transcendence, and alienation, which really seems to imply a "nature" that is identifiable.

3. ETHICS

Both Van Til and Fromm agree that society falls short of its ideal state, that good and evil are resident in man, that perfectibility is possible and that alienation is the root of man's troubles, but they thoroughly disagree on the meaning of and the solution for each of these problems.

For Fromm, the ideal state for man and society is productivity in terms of life, love, and freedom. "Good" and "evil" are relative terms, universally present and equally ultimate in all persons, i.e., it is equally possible for man to grow as it is for him to decay. However, man can perfect himself if he will only learn to cooperate with the biophilic tendencies motivating him toward growth and if he fights against the death-pursuing necrophilic tendencies, which are evil. Alienation is man's human condition, and Fromm talks of this in terms akin to metaphysics: man's self-awareness has separated him from nature; frightened, man flees to illusions about reality, creating idols to which he projects aspects of his own personality, thus impoverishing himself by the loss of his "soul." Maintenance of this alienated condition brings ethical conflicts

within man, and between man and his peers. But, since man is responsible to himself, his sin is essentially against himself, and he can seek forgiveness from himself and "save" himself by using his own productive powers; he can destroy his idols and become independent. The "cure" for man's neurotic symbioses leads to "adjustment" to society and self. Adjustment is relative to different societies, but because all societies are slowly growing towards each other according to the universal norms and principles established by the criterion of truth, Fromm holds that it is possible to speak of the "ideal state" for all men. However, he fails to deal with the origin, the locus, or the functioning of his "criterion of truth."

Van Til accepts only the Adamic State as the criterion for "normality"; man's summum bonum is God's glory, which finds expression on earth in the kingdom of God. The fall of man was ethical, not metaphysical, and produced an estrangement between God and man. Cut off from direct relationship with his Creator, man is lost, adrift on the sea of contingency and irrationalism and suffering under the wrath of God. Although the image of God is damaged by man's rebellion, it can never be completely eradicated; this image serves as the voice of conscience, that seed of religion continually motivating man to return to true fellowship. The divine image reinforced by common grace enables even the worst of sinners to perform some measure of civil good and empowers many to develop a large measure of their creative potential; nevertheless, man's blindness and hardness of

heart prevent him from fulfilling his destiny. God's saving grace, manifested in Christ and transmitted through the Holy Spirit, regenerates man, establishes him in the proper Creator-creature covenantal relationship, and thus enables man to become, in principle, an integrated personality. Sin is still present in the believer, which hampers his full growth and prevents his perfectibility until the after-life when he participates fully in the resurrection of Christ. Meanwhile, society stands in desperate need of the restraining force and constructive efforts of regenerate men who are free to cooperate on every level with unbelievers for the common good, and all society "borrows" the principles of Christianity for its own use. All things are "good" that glorify God, all that detracts from His glory are "evil." Adjustment means renewal to relationship with God, and implies that believers will become unadjusted to their culture in terms of ultimate goals, methods of operation, standards, and mores, but only this reconciliation to God is able to free man from slavery to self (idolatry) and set him on the road toward inner growth, peace and happiness.

B. AUTHORITARIANISM AND HUMANISM

Fromm's antagonism against authoritarianism in all its forms provides a major theme for his works. Ironically, he speaks from the authoritarian position of psychoanalysis to establish his case. Authoritarianism, says Fromm, reflects sadism and masochism in its efforts to control, establish symbiotic union, and destroy freedom. It deludes man into believing

that the higher authority has a right to demand worship and that irreverence and disobedience constitute sin. In reply,⁸⁴¹ Van Til declares that Fromm's analysis of Christianity is a caricature, a straw man existing only in Fromm's imagination. While Christianity accepts an omnipotent Creator, says Van Til, "it does not believe in a God of pure power"⁸⁴² in any arbitrary sense. It does believe that man was created to return God's love; obedience is love's expression. "Accordingly to the Christian, sin is a setting aside of God as man's loving Father, not an effort to escape from a tyrant, as Fromm suggests."⁸⁴³ Van Til asserts that Calvin also fought against authoritarian religion in "its most objectionable form," and that Calvin's concern for man's humility before God was the result of Calvin's appreciation that man in his sinful condition experienced misery and powerlessness, not that Calvin sought to imprison man in such a condition.

Fromm holds that man's independence rests upon the principle of autonomy, while Van Til replies that on Fromm's basis, man would be in a vacuum: "It is only on the presupposition of the truth of the Christian position that human personality stands in an intelligible relationship to its environment."⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴¹cf. Appendix A.

⁸⁴²Van Til, Search for Meaning, p. 38.

⁸⁴³Loc. cit.

⁸⁴⁴Ibid., p. 39.

In view of the purpose of this study, a few comments are in order regarding Fromm's hostility against Calvin. In pursuing Calvin, Fromm usually quotes those passages supporting his own thesis that Calvinism is masochistic, perhaps sadistic, but he fails to point out that there are semantic and presuppositional differences behind this running argument. In fact, Fromm may only be reacting to a popular misconception of Calvin rather than to Calvin himself.

Referring to Calvin's teaching on self-love, Fromm comments,

This emphasis on the nothingness and wickedness of the individual implies that there is nothing he should like and respect about himself. The doctrine is rooted in self-contempt and self-hatred. Calvin makes this point very clear: he speaks of self-love as 'a pest.'⁸⁴⁵ If the individual finds something 'on the strength of which he finds pleasure in himself,' he betrays this sinful self-love. This fondness for himself will make him sit in judgement over others and despise them. Therefore to be fond of oneself or to like anything in oneself is one of the greatest sins. It is supposed to exclude love for others⁸⁴⁶ and to be identical with selfishness.⁸⁴⁷

Calvin did, indeed, see man as sinful and worthless in himself with respect to salvation by virtue of the fact that, through sin the will of man "is in a state of captivity, so that it can do nothing towards righteousness" until it has been liberated by "Divine grace."⁸⁴⁸ The

⁸⁴⁵ Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949. (Note that Fromm's 1928 edition which he cites has different page references.) Vol. I, Bk. III, Chp. II, p. 756.

⁸⁴⁶ Fromm makes a reference to Calvin that does not exist. Perhaps typographical error: Man for Himself, p. 125, footnote 5.

⁸⁴⁷ Man for Himself, p. 125.

⁸⁴⁸ Calvin, op. cit., Chp. II, par. 8, p. 288.

other half of the coin is that Calvin saw the dignity of man resident in the image of God, which, although mutilated by sin, was restored in Christ; conformed to Him, "we are so restored that we bear the Divine image in true piety, righteousness, purity, and understanding."⁸⁴⁹

For Fromm, this is the height of folly, a base submissiveness to God as an idol, but he forgets that both he and Calvin are consistent with their basic presuppositions. Fromm's god is man; self-love is therefore right and good. Calvin's God would be offended by this self-adulation and by the detraction from His glory.

There is also a semantic difference interwoven in the presuppositional one. When Calvin uses the term "self-love," it is apparently synonymous with what Fromm calls "selfishness." Fromm accuses Calvin of misunderstanding self-love, but he does this, first, by standing on his own assumptions of man's autonomy in order to attack Calvin's concept of self-love which rests on other assumptions. Secondly, after defining self-love in terms of productivity, care, responsibility, and respect, as "the affirmation of one's own life; happiness, growth, freedom,"⁸⁵⁰ and as the capacity for love, he then argues that Calvin did not have this concept of self-love. And, indeed, Calvin did not have that concept. By self-love, Calvin meant pride, haughtiness, ostentation, avarice, libidinousness, luxury, effeminacy, and "a depraved passion for glory."⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., Chap. XV, par. 4, p. 209.

⁸⁵⁰ Man for Himself, p. 135.

⁸⁵¹ Calvin, op. cit., Vol. I, Book III, Chp. VII, par. II, p. 753.

"For we are all so blinded and fascinated by self-love, that every one imagines he has a just right to exalt himself, and to undervalue all others who stand in competition with him."⁸⁵²

Far from attaining a level of superiority over, or desire to judge, men, in view of the Christian's relationship to God, Calvin said:

We should remember, that we must not reflect on the wickedness of men, but to contemplate the Divine image in them; which, concealing and obliterating their faults, by its beauty and dignity allures us to embrace them in the arms of our love.⁸⁵³

C. SPECIAL PROBLEMS

1. DETERMINISM AND FREEDOM

Oriented as he is to a philosophical-theological structure, Van Til does not spell out in psychological terms the relationship of determinism and freedom to the development of the Self. Psychology looks for causes in order to explain behavior. Perhaps there are those who might commit themselves to a strict concept of determinism, but most psychologists seem to accept some measure of freedom in man's development,⁸⁵⁴ i.e., that in some aspects of living, man experiences liberation from necessity or coercion or constraint in choice or action. Indeed, psychotherapy has for its task the motivation of some inner factors whose influence will enable us to respond differently under the same

⁸⁵²Ibid., par. IV, p. 755.

⁸⁵³Ibid., par. VI, p. 759.

⁸⁵⁴cf. to Hook, ed., Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science.

conditions. For example, McKenzie accepts self-determination as a "causal agency,"⁸⁵⁵ adding that, if the Self fails to act in the interest of the whole personality, there must be some adequate explanation. Van Til would say that the believer as well as the unbeliever acts contrary to his best interests because of the effects of sin on his emotional and intellectual being. The difference between believers and unbelievers is that the former are restored in principle to a condition of integration and thus have the possibility to grow indefinitely because their powers of life are given by God's grace. Believers have attained a new measure of freedom because they have been freed from slavery to sin by the atonement of Jesus Christ. They may now cooperate with God toward the full development of their potentials, whereas the unbeliever is still bound by the principle of sin and therefore determined in rebelliousness toward God.

On the other hand, says Van Til, the principle of common grace enables unbelievers to develop their potentials to a partial degree, at least until death stops the process of growth, and even in this life, sin tends toward disintegration of the entire organism.

Granted that the above is true, at what points does man possess real freedom to enhance his own development? How can he change circumstances if God controls all things? For example, how would Van Til conceive of the relationships between character and behavior on the one hand, and definite motives, habits, emotions and interests on the

⁸⁵⁵ McKenzie, Guilt: Its Meaning and Significance, p. 115.

other? If the Self is not free, how can God expect man to be responsible? But if the Self is free, then how does God exercise control? Van Til implies that such questions are mysteries. The researcher might choose to assume either freedom or determinism as man's condition and proceed with investigation. Van Til would reply that the researcher needs a sovereign God; the alternative is research in a vacuum.

Seemingly, Fromm's appeal to "alternativism" as a compromise between freedom and determinism supplies a better answer in psychological terms. Man is a constellation of forces that are structured in a definable manner (one's character) and influenced by environmental conditions. There are circumstances within and outside the self over which man cannot exercise control regardless of his wishes, but there are also real choices and possibilities. Fromm says that man has the capabilities of cooperating with his biophilic or necrophilic tendencies, and agrees with Marx and Freud that man can enlarge the realm of freedom.

As neat as it may appear, Fromm's appeal does not supply the answer. Under closer scrutiny, Fromm's position is seen to be essentially an assumption about the nature of man and reality. He simply affirms that man is capable of progressing or regressing. This is the beginning and ending of his argument. But we are not told why man chooses to move one way or the other. On Fromm's own ground, is it possible that some men might have extremely powerful necrophilic tendencies which would predispose them toward personality orientations around the syndrome of

decay? If so, then these persons would be pre-determined regarding their choices, they would have no "real" freedom. Conversely, the same argument would hold regarding persons born with, or conditioned to develop, powerful biophilic tendencies. Fromm does say that a particular society can possess a particular "social character." To the degree that each member of that society is conditioned toward the orientation he loses a measure of freedom. In that case, it is highly unlikely that the individual will ever break out of the mold of his society. Fromm might respond that the individual's biophilic tendencies would clash with society's demands, and the person would free himself. In that case, it is evident that the person's biophilic tendencies were so powerful that he was predetermined to break his chains. Where then is freedom? He could do no other than what he did! And, on the other hand, if the person was afraid to contradict his culture, then his fear determined his choices, and he, too, lacked real freedom.

Therefore, it is evident that the problem of freedom and determinism remains a mystery for both Van Til, who admits it, and for Fromm, who claims he has the solution.

2. EMPIRICISM

While Van Til does not claim to be an empiricist, Fromm repeatedly affirms his commitment to psychoanalysis as a rigid, empirical science because it relies upon cautious observations and integration of psychic data. Therefore, he contends, psychoanalysis is able to

determine valid norms and principles for human behavior. His generalizations reflect Freud's view that psychoanalysis was a revolutionary movement promising to transform the world.⁸⁵⁶

It can be shown that Fromm has committed himself to an untenable position. Empiricism depends solely on observation or experience, often without regard to system or theory, and is open to verification, disproof and revision. Now, it is true that Fromm has followed the dictates of his observations to some degree in revising his original Freudian and Marxian theories in order to fit subsequent evidence, but it is also clear that Fromm does operate within a theory. In fact, analysis of his sixteen major works produced from 1941 to 1966 indicates that he has not only maintained essentially the same theoretical position in this period, but also that he has used essentially the same language, case histories and illustrations with only minor revision.

He further jeopardizes his empiricism when he states that there are eternal norms standing above both God and man, thus revealing his presupposition of a Platonic principle of eternal truth, a principle incapable of empirical observation.

Moreover, it is apparent that both the data obtained in psychoanalysis and the methods used to obtain the data are completely bound to subjectivism. First, there is the fact of the diversity of psychoanalytic schools. Secondly, the psychoanalyst is not dealing with events in

⁸⁵⁶Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission, last chapter.

their historical situation, that is, as they have been experienced, are now perceived, and are being transmitted by the patient. Therefore, the analyst can never be sure that the events occurred precisely as the patient describes them. For example, the patient's quotation of another person's remark is distorted by his attitudes toward the other person, the environmental setting, the tone and pitch of voice used, and perhaps by relevant variables antecedent to the event of the quotation. The analyst can only make his judgments on the event or the quotation as given to him by the patient, and does not make any verification beyond the therapeutic setting itself.

Also, the analyst is himself influenced by his own feelings toward the patient, his immediate emotional condition, the environment, and his psychological theories and training.

Added to this is the fact that psychologists do not agree on certain universal norms or principles governing human behavior, that there is no accepted body of concepts regarding man's nature, and that psychologists are themselves motivated by a wide variety of desires and goals. At least one psychology professor describes his field as "an amalgam of humbug, platitude, piercing intuition, naivete, soaring flight of imagination, dull dogma, incisive reasoning, and sheer drive!"⁸⁵⁷ and suggests that a healthy dosage of salt to be taken during its study.

⁸⁵⁷McKenzie, op. cit., p. 61. Quote from Cohen, Humanistic Psychology, p. 11.

Even Fromm, himself, underscores this notion when he says that the average man is half asleep even when awake!

I mean that his contact with reality is a very partial one; most of what he believes to be reality (outside or inside of himself) is a set of fictions which his mind constructs. He is aware of reality only to the degree to which his social functioning makes it necessary.⁸⁵⁸

Finally, Fromm fails to realize the contradiction in affirming, on the one hand, that science is a history of errors in which we make small approximations of the truth, and on the other hand, saying that humanism in general and psychoanalysis in particular have "laid the foundations for value systems based on man's autonomy and reason."⁸⁵⁹ This is compounded by his claim that psychoanalysis (and by implication, he himself) is capable of penetrating to the essence of man's "nature" in terms of man's total personality. In order to accomplish this, Fromm has to assume comprehensive, exhaustive knowledge, not only of man as an individual phenomenon, but of society as a group phenomenon and of reality as a whole. Van Til stresses the impossibility of possessing such knowledge.

3. THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

In every system, the problem of epistemology is foremost. How does man really know anything truly? Does he have to know the whole before he can understand the part? In view of the complexity of data and

⁸⁵⁸Fromm, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, p. 108.

⁸⁵⁹Man for Himself, p. 16. (Perhaps Fromm should have said that science is a history of diminishing errors.).

the problem of integrating the data into a meaningful system, one is forced to a position of humility.

Van Til declares that man only knows partially, but that he can know truly, provided he has been given a foundation for that knowledge in revelation. Revelation from God enables man to understand truths about God and the world; the only other choice is to possess comprehensive knowledge. Is revelation in the Bible, then, trustworthy? There are those who argue with Fromm that the Bible is filled with errors and is only the product of man's mind. Van Til says that unless the revelation in Scripture is trustworthy, we have no source of knowledge that is authoritative. But Van Til is not a literalist, in the extreme sense of that word. He simply accepts the Scriptures as authentic and authoritative and endeavors to discern what they mean if taken at their face value. To argue that Van Til is a literalist is to set up a straw man, for hardly anyone holds a completely literal point of view in reference to the Bible. The issue as Van Til sees it, is what should be taken literally and what should be taken symbolically in terms of the Scripture as supernaturally conceived literature.

Can Van Til be sure that God exists and that it is possible to know Him? Can Fromm be equally sure that God does not exist and on that assurance dismiss all contentions to the contrary? One could wish for absolute knowledge about knowledge itself. There is only that principle to which Van Til and Fromm subscribe, each in his own way, namely, the

principle of faith. One must be satisfied with sufficient and necessary implications based upon logical analysis of both positions. One must assume each position for the sake of argument to see where the ultimacy of God or man lead to, and then live by the faith one concludes is most reasonable. However, Van Til would say that without God as one's presupposition, there is no possibility for predication.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING THEORY

A. VIEW OF THE CLIENT

It would seem logical that both Fromm and Van Til would view the person coming to therapy, not as a "client" as in the Rogerian view where the counselor and counselee are peers in an existential situation, but as a "patient" who comes to the expert for assistance. Both men deal with the patient from a favored position of authority; Van Til from the authority of the revelation in Scripture, and Fromm from the authority of psychoanalysis. Each believes that he clearly knows the goals for the patient and fairly well understands the patient's general situation. However, the specific therepeutic techniques used might be the same. On the other hand, it is possible that the Van Tilian counselor who perceives himself as a "sinner saved by grace" would feel on a par with the counselee, and thus speak of him as a "client."

B. GOALS IN THERAPY

The counselor operating on Van Til's theories would relate to the patient on a foundation of loving concern, hoping eventually to bring the patient to acknowledgment of his guilt and into relationship with God. The counselor would rest in the authoritative, subjective work of the Holy Spirit as the Agent of regeneration, believing that He alone knows the extent of temptation, the inherent weaknesses, the delicacies of healing, and man in his totality. It could be argued that this position is essentially "soul-saving" rather than a liberating of growth forces and therefore cannot serve as a basis for therapy as an interpersonal professional endeavor. Van Til would probably reply that there is no such thing as a liberation of growth forces on any permanent basis apart from a true-Creator-creature relationship, and that the concept, "liberation of growth forces," is a value judgment based upon a particular philosophy of man.

The Frommian would also relate lovingly to the patient in the hope of making the unconscious conscious, replacing the irrational (the id) by reason (the ego) and changing the habits of thinking. He would seek adjustment, defined as the person's "ability to act like the majority of people in his culture."⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁶⁰Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 73.

The Van Tilian might experience conflict between his genuine desire to help every patient regardless of the patient's own religious convictions, and his own conviction that the patient cannot really be helped unless the patient becomes reconciled to God. Therefore, it would be difficult for the counselor, if not impossible, to set aside his own personal convictions. However, he would probably justify his approach on the ground that it is the only position to assume, and that any other approach could not lead to healing. He might contend truly permanent therapy would have to include conversion as a requisite for positive, long-range growth.

The Frommian also faces inherent problems in his therapeutic goals. It is to be noted that REPRESSION is a moderate form of REGRESSION in psychoanalysis. Fromm uses the term "de-repress" to indicate the psychoanalyst's task of making the unconscious conscious.⁸⁶¹ But, Fromm points out that certain human impulses are incurably destructive, that the "syndrome of decay" represents the evil in man. If so, then should not the analyst help the patient to repress those evil tendencies for the sake of the patient himself as well as for the security of society? Does it not seem reasonable that the analyst would seek to enhance the patient's development of life by repressing those tendencies toward death? Then repression cannot be altogether "unhealthy", yet this would defeat Fromm's goal.

⁸⁶¹Zen Buddhism, p. 95, 105.

Fromm comes close to accepting the usefulness of some forms of repression when he speaks of benign as well as malignant forms of mother-fixation,⁸⁶² but on the whole, he feels that any form of regression is archaic, a symptom of moral failure.⁸⁶³

C. TREATMENT OF GUILT FEELINGS

If a patient entered therapy with a Frommian or a Van Tilian counselor, he would probably be considered in terms of the counselor's theoretical attitude toward man.

Fromm classifies the person who is overwhelmed with his guilt as a moral hypochondriac,⁸⁶⁴ one who is constantly preoccupied with his transgressions, although outwardly he may appear conscientious, moral, and concerned with others. Actually, says Fromm, he is quite narcissistic. The Frommian might even be suspicious of the person's true motives on the assumption that behind all guilt feelings is this "narcissistic preoccupation with oneself."⁸⁶⁵ Through interpretation of case history, free association and dream material, the Frommian would select out those variables that he considered relevant. If the patient focused attention on his guilt and frustrations, the analyst would probably deal with this material as actions taken by the patient against himself.

⁸⁶²Heart of Man, p. 101.

⁸⁶³Man for Himself, p. 5.

⁸⁶⁴Heart of Man, p. 69.

⁸⁶⁵Loc. cit.

In order to help the patient toward productive living, the analyst would endeavor to remove the authoritarian conscience by substituting the humanistic conscience. Using a progressive society as a model, the patient would be encouraged to follow his own desires, establish his own goals, free himself from the shackles of standards and mores that thwarted his self-enhancement. Attention would be concentrated on early parent-child relationships and other significant relationships during the formative years of growth.

The feeling of guilt would be viewed as rooted in the patient's alienation. The solution would also lie in alienation, but this time by alienating oneself from the unwholesome action committed.

In this sense responsibility only means 'I am aware that I did it.' In fact, as soon as my deed is experienced as 'sin' or 'guilt' it becomes alienated. It is not I who did this, but 'the sinner,' 'the bad one,' that 'other person' who now needs to be punished...⁸⁶⁶

From the description given of this procedure, it would seem that Fromm helps the person rid himself of the feelings of guilt without actually doing anything about the deed itself assuming that it is possible to do something. But, does the "alienation" of the deed really mean that the person no longer feels responsible for the deed? Is it psychologically possible to rid oneself completely of the impression of responsibility? If it were possible, what would be the social and legal implications of this action? Finally, how would we define "responsibility"?

⁸⁶⁶Ibid., p. 128.

How would a Van Tilian handle this problem? Van Til says that man has confused the metaphysical and ethical aspects of reality; man somehow rationalizes that his finiteness, or his human condition is the source of "sin." Instead "sin" is his ethical estrangement from God, and this influences his relationships with other men and his own psychological conditions. Unwilling to accept the blame for his own sin, man lays the blame on the circumstances around him and within him. It would follow from this, that the Van Tilian would encourage the patient to accept his guilt as real, that is, guilt would have some basis in objective fact. This position would be along the lines proposed by Mowrer, as we have seen before, although Mowrer sees guilt on non-theological lines. Mowrer wants to help the patient face the consequences of the deed in order to solve the problem of the social repercussions.

What would be the effects of facing the deed and admitting responsibility? It would separate the deed from the person! Fromm is saying to the patient, "Don't worry about it; look at the deed from another point of view. You don't have to loath yourself; after all, we are all in the same 'human situation'!" He wants the patient to experience the effect of alienation without going through any struggle, and expects that behavior will change as a result of changed attitudes. It would seem that what Van Til (and Mowrer) are saying is, "The only way to solve the problem is for you to acknowledge responsibility for the deed and then do something about it. Repentance and reconciliation, perhaps even

penance, will relieve your feelings of guilt. Consequently, your behavior will change: attitudes follow actions."

The Frommian would be optimistic about the success of therapy because he has faith in the patient's motivation for life; the Van Tilian would be pessimistic about the patient's abilities to help himself, but optimistic because he has faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring men to God and because he would feel that, though he only is a human counselor, he would be God's instrument for healing. They would differ on whether or not the guilt feelings could be accounted for by some objective event.

D. THE FUNCTION OF CONSCIENCE

It appears that the Freudian view of conscience is essentially negative, although Fromm differentiates between the constructive humanistic conscience and the destructive authoritarian type. The problem is: how is one's "inner voice" qualitatively different from an "externalized conscience," i.e., a conscience formed by introjecting societal standards? Fromm would reply that the inner voice, or source of the humanistic conscience, moves one toward growth, while the externalized or authoritarian conscience pushes one toward decay. But since man is, on all terms, societally conditioned, his conscience is part of this conditioning. And therefore, would it not be difficult for the person to know whether a particular desire or "good" will truly enhance him or cause ultimate decay? Perhaps the person will become confused and imagine

that the healthy demands of society are actually unhealthy. He might then reject those demands and seek to loose himself from mores which experience has proven to be useful for individual growth. He might turn toward decay simply out of a desire to become independent and "free."

Fromm only approximates a reply to these concerns. He assumes that somewhere there are norms and principles which science will discover.

On the positive side, Fromm does appreciate the fact that conscience can serve in two ways. A rigid, unyielding conscience that has internalized the standards of others may create undue anxiety within the patient. It is suggested that both Fromm and Van Til would agree that this kind of conscience needs adjustment. Conversely, conscience can serve as an organizational system integrating the self-structure of the patient and freeing him for productivity. Obviously both Fromm and Van Til would seek to establish this kind of conscience.

McKenzie gives a definition of conscience along the lines of the latter type, which definition might serve as a guide to further study:

Conscience is that sentiment which co-ordinates and regulates our moral ideas, emotions and behavior according to moral values, moral ideals, and moral principles we have consciously or unconsciously assimilated. It has an executive function as well as a judicial. It is a dynamic structure of the **Self**. If we define Will as the ability of the **Self** to canalize its energy toward its self-chosen ends, then so far as these ends are consistent with the content of conscience the Will is reinforced by the conscience.

This is the definition of the mature conscience. Its violation leads to realistic guilt-feelings. It is authoritative in

the sense that it acts on behalf of the Self as a whole; it is this which gives it authority over every partial impulse. It is related to the fundamental need for moral unity in our lives.⁸⁶⁷

III. SELECTION OF COUNSELORS

Any professional or lay persons in a position of referring persons to counselors would certainly want to know whether the counselor operated in an acceptable value system, i.e., whether they could trust their patients to the counselor. It seems obvious that a Van Tilian would avoid referring patients to a Frommian out of concern that the Frommian would change the values of the patients, and that a Frommian would think it folly to refer his patients to a Van Tilian counselor.

IV. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The ultimate answers to the problem of guilt are unavailable. However, the theories of Fromm and Van Til could serve as the foundation for further research if studies could be designed to test certain elements of these two viewpoints.

At present, research in psychoanalysis is confined to analysis of theoretical essays. If psychoanalysts would allow use of more rigorous testing of their claims and theory in their own clinical settings, it would open up much more fruitful avenues for research. Kiesler (1966) has stated that at present research in psychoanalysis has been very ambiguous.

⁸⁶⁷ McKenzie, op. cit., p. 54.

If, however, therapists of each persuasion could be matched on certain variables and then given certain matched groups of patients to insure uniformity of both therapist and patient groups, it would be possible to pursue the question of whether the patient's behavior would change more effectively if concentration were placed upon his attitude or upon his transgressions.

V. PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

I think that it is appropriate to make a few remarks concerning my own commitments now that this study has concluded, for research is, after all, a mode of self-expression and should have some practical application.

The problems here discussed are vital to the entire field of counseling because they deal with ultimate values and because there are so many tensions between Christian theology and psychoanalytically-oriented psychology. Like Erich Fromm, many psychologists experience strong feelings against traditional religion, and especially against Christianity, and also like Fromm, while they disclaim Christianity, they cannot leave it alone. Fromm exemplifies this paradox. He says in The Art of Loving (p. 59, 60), and in his most recent book, You Shall Be As Gods, that the mature person does not need to speak God's name, yet Fromm himself constantly speaks of God, of revealed religion, of idolatry, and of John Calvin. He seems obsessed with God. But the God with whom he is obsessed is not the Christian God of the Scriptures,

but a God of wrath and anger and infantile desires. Logically enough, Fromm's concept of God seems to have come from Freud, who saw God as a magnified father image⁸⁶⁸ and who prophesied the demise of religion.⁸⁶⁹ Years before Fromm challenged the notion that man's chief business was to glorify God, Cattell said that the physical sciences finally destroyed "illusory religious notions."⁸⁷⁰ Later, Flugel proclaimed the doctrine of man's autonomy and the uselessness of supernaturalism.⁸⁷¹

It is precisely here that Van Til's position is so relevant. He emphasizes that the real battle for men's minds does not lie in the physical sciences, or even in the behavioral sciences, which are far more esoteric, but in the philosophical presuppositions upon which men base their sciences. Once man begins on the wrong foundation, his whole house of cards will eventually tumble around him in chaos.

The problem has been set in perspective by Clark who intimated that there are no facts, only theories about facts, and that science does not explain the why of things, only the how.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁸Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. III, p. 354.

⁸⁶⁹Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 68.

⁸⁷⁰Quoted in White, God and the Unconscious, p. 3.

⁸⁷¹Flugel, Man, Morals and Society, p. 280-281.

⁸⁷²Clark, The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God, p. 42.

The question has been raised: Does Christianity (or any philosophy for that matter) effect empirical science? Aren't we talking about two different things? Put another way, when the chemist sets up a laboratory experiment, does his philosophy of life in any way determine his methods? Isn't the scientist neutral in relationship to the facts of his data, and isn't he led by conclusions derived from the data?

Perhaps this problem could be answered by asking whether it is possible to compartmentalize the scientist's subjectivity and objectivity. In this view, when he deals with philosophical, religious and ethical values and concepts, he would be said to act subjectively, and he would be objective when he arranges his laboratory experiment and arrives at his conclusions about physical laws. In reply, Clark points out that:

At best, scientific law is a construction rather than a discovery, and the construction depends on factors never seen under a microscope, never weighed in a balance, never handled or manipulated.⁸⁷³

He writes that, regardless of its complexity, the process of experimentation is essentially the "measurement of a line."⁸⁷⁴ In order to measure any event, whether the temperature or pressure of a liquid, or the factors within light and sound, the scientist must calibrate it on a scale, and make inferences from his readings. However, repeated measurements bring varied results to which he assigns a range of error, such as

⁸⁷³Ibid., p. 61.

⁸⁷⁴Ibid., p. 62.

$20.35 \pm .004$. He then adds his readings and divides in order to obtain an arithmetic mean. He could, however, choose the median or mode of his readings. The choice of mean, median or mode is entirely arbitrary; it is not dictated by the data, but is contributed by the scientist himself. He may then also plot his readings on a graph, pass a line or curve through the various points, and derive a formula that expresses the relationship between the data. But, since there are an infinite number of lines and curves that could connect the points on the graph, the choice of one is entirely arbitrary again, the product of his own subjective decision process.

Even through a series of points apparently on a straight line it is equally easy to pass a straight line or sine curve.... The empirical data do not necessitate any given curve. In other words, so far as observation is concerned, the scientist could have chosen a law other than the one he actually selected. Indeed, his range of selection was infinite; and out of this infinity, he chose, he did not discover, the equation he accepts.⁸⁷⁵

From this specific data and his newly derived law, the scientist now begins to establish relationships with other data and laws, increasingly broadening his base of inferences. We ask, then, at what point does he cease to be objective and introduce his philosophy of science, and we reply, at the point of simple measurement. In like manner, it is inferred here that any man's philosophy of science is intimately related to his philosophy of life, and that it is impossible to separate them at any place.

⁸⁷⁵Ibid., p. 64.

If this is so, then there is really no such thing as pure empiricism, or a purely scientific method. There is only good or bad philosophy. As Clark suggests also, science is useless outside its own restricted sphere because "science cannot determine its own value."⁸⁷⁶

There might be some truth to the statement that,

The psychologist is an authority in his own subject, yet when he leaves his own field and commences to propound a philosophy of life, he ceases to be an expert. His opinion outside his own specialty must carry no more weight than that of any other non-specialist. The Christian believes that the Bible contains profound principles to which human psychology (like all other branches of knowledge) must defer for their basic view of life and the world. The Bible certainly contains the most penetrating analysis of man's personality which we know. The Christian will ordinarily be grateful for the contributions to knowledge and for the new methods of treatment which modern psychology has brought. Where, however, psychological theory is in conflict with the plain teaching of the Bible, he will naturally hold to the latter.⁸⁷⁷

The problem is that no psychologist is an expert on human behavior, but rather a student in a vastly complicated field, and he must incorporate knowledge from a larger array of sciences in order to arrive at meaningful inferences in his own specialty.

Furthermore, I believe that the scientist ought to go to the original source and consider what the Bible itself says about reality, God, and man's destiny, and avoid building his arguments either on the distorted religious views held by neurotic patients in therapy or on some second-hand data.

⁸⁷⁶Ibid., p. 95.

⁸⁷⁷Intervarsity Fellowship, A Christian Approach to Psychological Medicine, p. 19.

As I see it, Fromm misinterprets the Christian view, and particularly the Calvinistic viewpoint because he insists on running the Biblical data through his Freudian sieve. His method in You Shall Be As Gods, which is a radical interpretation of the Old Testament, is to transform Bible language into psychoanalytic thought patterns regardless of the original writer's intent. Fromm's method is extremely clever, but if Van Til's assumptions are correct, then Fromm has gravely transgressed against God and if Fromm's own assumptions about God are correct, then his study seems irrelevant, or at least improperly focussed.

Nevertheless, Fromm has done what Van Til expects of the superior non-Christian: he has produced works that offer insight into the human mind. His writings are very useful as springboards for thinking, and suggest a theoretical approach to therapy. His synthesis of the syndromes of growth and death, his productive and non-productive character orientations and his attempts to relate ethics to various fields stimulate creative thought.

It has been suggested that psychology (or psychiatry) and religion ought to work together for the common good, and that in a large sense, established facts of science and true religion can never really be at odds with each other.⁸⁷⁸ Once we rid ourselves of the distortions of both, we can arrive at the common truth. Yet, Jansma has said that there exists

⁸⁷⁸Ibid, p. 18.

a "Christian psychotherapy"⁸⁷⁹ that recognizes the subjectivity, the value-centered orientations of the counselor, and the illusions of neutrality, and that unless Biblical Christianity is wedded with an adequate psychology of man, "psychiatry cannot be a healing science."⁸⁸⁰

Assuming that it is possible to wed these two disciplines, how can we look at conscience and guilt? Fromm's position is that man creates the idea of a wrathful God in order to solve the problems of his fears, hostilities and guilt. Similarly, a moral code was developed for society, and the authorities in society were invested with authority from the supreme Law-Giver. Carried over into the family the father was given moral authority, and the child identified his father with God. Thus, for Fromm, God is an illusion, morality relative, and religion a regressive adaptation. There is undoubtedly some truth to what he says, but the Christian holds that such distortions are the result of man's failure to relate to God, and the natural result of man's sin and degenerate state. Those infantile adaptations or forms of idolatry are what is left from man's original high estate. Therefore, Fromm's theorizing about morality, sin, conscience and guilt lose their significance for the Christian. These same distortions might also be the product of Fromm's own projections.

⁸⁷⁹Jansma, "Christian Psychotherapy," Christianity Today, Vol. IV, 19, June 20, 1960, p. 9, 10.

⁸⁸⁰Quoted in Christianity Today, Vol. V, 9, Jan 30, 1961, p. 12.

Sin implies personal and social responsibility. Personally, I feel that this may be why Christianity is attacked more widely than any other religion; among all the major religions, it leaves no room for man to escape full responsibility for his misery. Man has no one else to blame, not even God. If there is no room for responsibility, then there is also none for free choice, independent action, or creativity. Indeed, if man is largely conditioned by society, then Fromm's view is of no more significance than any layman's view on life and its meaning.

Apparently, Fromm avoids facing the patient with the need to bear full responsibility for misbehavior, as was pointed out in the discussion on alienating oneself from one's deeds. The results of such an issue are clearly stated by Frankel:

The year is 1930. The place, Berlin. You are a practicing psychoanalyst confronting an interesting new patient in your office. His name, Adolf Hitler. He is a professional politician regarded as one of the country's rising young men. Now he has come to you because he is troubled by persistent anxieties. He speaks confidently about his plans for Germany, yet he admits to fear of failure and therefore punishment by 'lesser' beings. Lately, however, when he considers some of the harsh deeds demanded by his grandiose plans, he has been bothered by feelings of guilt. Nevertheless, he is convinced that the ends he has in mind fully justify the means. He is bothered only because his increasing anxieties and guilt feelings may impede him in the execution of his designs. Hitler asks you to put an end to these disturbing feelings. Can you help him? ⁸⁸¹

⁸⁸¹Marvin Frankel, "Morality in Psychotherapy," Psychology Today, Vol. I, 4, Aug. 1967, p. 25.

Hitler's purpose was to relieve himself of his feelings of guilt, not to have his values or plans changed. Would it be right for the therapist to argue that "there is no virtue in confronting one's fear"?⁸⁸² I believe that the therapist must help the client to become sensitive to the voice of conscience, but in a healthy manner. By this, I mean that the conscience can serve a constructive purpose. Obviously, a person can feel excessively guilty about overt actions or thoughts. He can unnecessarily blame himself for things for which he is not responsible, or only partially responsible. On the other hand, if he is committing or planning actions detrimental to others, then clearly, something is amiss if he does not feel concerned about the consequences. His conscience needs to be heeded.

In the Scriptures, the key reference to the concept of conscience is Romans 2:15, where Paul writes that men "show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them..." The conscience acts as a moral sense of right and wrong, warning us of the danger to our welfare and permitting us to pursue constructive goals. Obviously, the conscience can be warped, acting as a taskmaster and tyrant. But God acts to calm that conscience according to Scripture, as it is written in I John 3:20, "... (if) our hearts (conscience) condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything." So the

⁸⁸²Ibid., p. 26.

conscience can be trained to serve man as well as it can be allowed to destroy him.

In the psychoanalytic theory, "the superego performs the functions of self-criticism and control; much of this function is unconscious, and guilt is its normal concomitant."⁸⁸³ However, there has been a confusion between guilt and guilt feelings. In the Biblical view, all men are sinners and ethically guilty. Associated with objective guilt is some degree of feelings of guilt. Lack of such a sense of guilt is regarded as abnormal, just as it would be abnormal and harmful if a person felt no pain when burned. It is regarded as useful to help men acknowledge this guilt and become reconciled to God.

Guilt feelings, or a guilt complex are different problems. They can be considered psychopathic, if they are out of proportion to their origin. Fear of punishment by the father-figure, self-abasement, a lack of worth, and suicidal tendencies emanate from a hyperactive, distorted conscience. It is possible for a Christian to have a neurosis resulting from such a conscience.

It is also possible for a person to be lead into deeper religious experiences and to develop a sensitized conscience through psychoanalysis. As Tournier says, psychoanalysis as he practices it, does not eliminate guilt, but shifts it.⁸⁸⁴

⁸⁸³Inter-Varsity Fellowship, op. cit., p. 29.

⁸⁸⁴Tournier, Guilt and Grace, p. 129.

...above all, and without the analysed person perhaps realizing it, guilt is the driving force towards healing, the decisive power which determines the result of the struggle. It is easy to unburden oneself up to a point to someone who is neutral and kindly disposed. Sooner or later, however, the analysis of dreams or the free-association of ideas brings into consciousness memories of feelings the acknowledgement of which seems almost impossible.

At that point, any loophole of escape or deception can decisively jeopardize the cure; while on the other hand, the courage to retain absolute frankness even to the bitter end, will open the door to a great deliverance. The inward struggle is terrible. What is it that determines the issue? Two forms of guilt are at stake, engaged in mortal combat: one which creates a sense of terrible shame at giving expression to the memory or the feeling, and the other urges the patient to keep silent, to create a diversion or to take cowardly flight from this difficult task. When the latter form of guilt appears even less tolerable than the former, then the turning point of the cure is passed.⁸⁸⁵

Thus the sense of guilt awakened by Biblical doctrines is not seen as contrary to the love of God any more than the pain experienced in surgery is contrary to continued health. The ultimate aim is not to "suppress the arrogant sinner, but to arouse his sense of guilt, and so to humble him, thereby opening for him the way to grace."⁸⁸⁶

Man is full of paradoxes. Set apart from the animal world by his powers of reason and imagination, capable of producing works of beauty and reaching heights of ecstasy, he as easily turns upon himself destructively. He traps himself, destroys what he has created, slaughters his

⁸⁸⁵Loc. cit.

⁸⁸⁶Ibid., p. 142.

fellow man. Why does he seem bent upon crushing all that is fine and beautiful, delicate and intelligent? The imagination is fired when it conceives of what mankind could have become through gradual refinement of what Fromm has so aptly called the syndrome of growth. Yet, through bitter wars and centuries of violence, man seems destined to wander in circles, ever re-learning and re-losing the experiences of the past. Education has not granted man moral integrity, even though it has been influenced over the centuries by a variety of religious concepts, and in many cases, the sharpened intelligence has only made him more able to circumvent the laws designed to protect all of society. He is torn by a powerful drive upward and a matching drive downward, the good and the evil. Reflection upon man's historic dilemma caused at least one man to wonder, "what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?"⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁷ Psalm 8:4.

APPENDIX A

A Quotation From

C. Van Til, The Search for Meaning in Modern Thought
Class Syllabi Mimeographed
October, 1961

Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm deals with the subject "humanistic Religion." What he says here on the subject is taken from his work on Psychoanalysis and Religion.

There are, says Fromm, basically only two kinds of religion, the authoritarian and the humanistic. Fromm himself holds to the latter. This seems to make it impossible for him even to give an objectively correct statement of "authoritarian" religion.

(1) On the authoritarian view, says Fromm, "man is controlled by a higher power outside of himself." Because of this control this higher being is said to be "entitled" to "obedience, reverence and worship." Thus, he adds "the reason for worship, obedience, and reverence lies not in the moral qualities of the deity, not in love or justice, but in the fact that it has control, that is, has power over man. Furthermore it shows that the higher power has a right to force man to worship him and that lack of reverence and obedience constitutes sin." But, Christianity believes nothing of the sort. Christianity does indeed believe that God is all-powerful, but it does not believe in a God of pure power. It believes that God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. ...It believes that God created man holy and righteous and asked him for the return of his love. Man's obedience to God was to be but the expression of his love. How can a child be said really to love his parents if he does not obey them? Obedience is but the expression of love.

Accordingly to the Christian, sin is a setting aside of God as man's loving Father, not an effort to escape from a tyrant, as Fromm suggests.

It is not surprising that, from his point of view, Calvin gives expression to authoritarian religion in its most objectionable form. Calvin speaks of the believer's humility due to his sense of misery and powerlessness. Regarding this Fromm remarks: "In authoritarian religion God is a

symbol of power and force, He is supreme because He has supreme power, and man in juxtaposition is utterly powerless."

Then, as over against this authoritarian view, in which "religious or secular 'elites' control the lives of their fellow men" is humanistic religion. This humanistic religion is "centered around man and his strength." "Man's aim in humanistic religion is to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness; virtue is self-realization, not obedience. Faith is certainty of conviction based on one's experience of thought and feeling, not assent to propositions on credit of the proposer. The prevailing mood is that of joy, which the prevailing mood in authoritarian religion is that of sorrow and of guilt."

Now "Jesus' precept that 'the Kingdom of God is within you' is the simple and clear expression of nonauthoritarian thinking." It was the Church, not Jesus, that introduced the authoritarian idea of religion. But the "humanistic, democratic element was never subdued in Christian or in Jewish history, and this element found its most potent expressions in the mystic thinking within both religions."

Having thus set forth the contrasting characteristics of the two mutually exclusive religions, Fromm goes on to an "analysis of their dynamics." It is here, he says, that the psycho-analyst can make his special contribution. For he can probe even into the "unconscious processes" that control men's attitudes.

The "mechanism of projection" with which the believer in authoritarian religion works, enriches God at man's expense. "The more perfect God becomes, the more imperfect becomes man. He projects the best he has onto God and thus impoverishes himself." "The more he praises God, the emptier he becomes. The emptier he becomes the more sinful he feels. The more sinful he feels, the more he praises his God--and the less able is he to regain himself."

Fromm speaks of two "fallacies of reasoning" in connection with the authoritarian view of religion. Authoritarians do not realize that though man is dependent on forces beyond his control it is masochistic and self-destructive to worship such forces. Authoritarians do not realize that though man has a longing to relate himself to something beyond himself this is not proof that there is a God that actually exists. "Obviously that follows as little as our strongest desire to love someone proves that there is a person with whom we are in love. All it proves is our need and perhaps our capacity."

In reply to Fromm it should be noted that if with him we reject the idea of man's dependence on God through Christ then we place man in a vacuum. It is only on the presupposition of the truth of the Christian position that human personality stands in an intelligible relation to his environment.

Then as to the logical fallacies that Fromm finds in the authoritarian view it should be remarked that there would be no contact between human logic and his environment at all except upon the presupposition that man and his world are placed in relation to one another by God. It is only because Fromm assumes human autonomy that he finds the fallacies he mentions. He assumes that man is self-dependent and not the creature of God. But, if man were self-dependent, then it would be illogical to prove that God exists as his creator. Christianity finds no intelligibility in the idea of man except in terms of his creation and direction by God in Christ. The believer does not start with the idea of man as autonomous in order, then, to prove the existence of God. This is indeed the Roman Catholic way of reasoning, but it is not the Protestant one. The Protestant view is that no human reasoning has meaning except on the presupposition of the truth of Christianity.

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