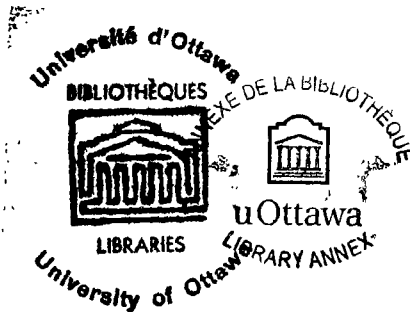


The Epistemological Basis of Erich Fromm's Psychotherapy

by

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par reconnaissance, à mes parents

"L'intelligence vraie est voisine de la sympathie"

Jean GUITTON

INTRODUCTION

Many American social scientists condemn Erich Fromm's work on the basis that his theory is pure fiction, that his whole work is non-scientific, that he is an utopian, that is to say, "at once a critic and a dreamer"¹.

A sociologist, for example, will reject the "cloudy epistemology of Erich Fromm (to know a person is to love him; ...)"². Or a philosopher, G.B. Hammond, notes that "Fromm has not fully abandoned the claim of being scientific in his methodology, but the contrary tendency is dominant."³. Another social scientist, Martin Birnbach, comments:

A purportedly objective study yields a copious array of characteristics that Fromm conceives to be at the core of human nature. It may be questioned whether it is an empirical use of psychoanalysis that has revealed them.⁴

The same critique is addressed to Fromm by John H. Schaar who severely condemns Fromm in his book Escape from Authority

1 SCHAAR, John H., Escape from Authority. The Perspectives of Erich Fromm., (New York), Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, (c. 1961), p. 240.

2 WILSON, E.K., Sociology. Rules, Roles and Relationships, (Homewood, Ill.), The Dorsey Press, (c. 1966), p. vi.

3 HAMMOND, G.B., Man in Estrangement. A Comparison of the Thought of Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm., (Nashville, Tenn.), Vanderbilt U. Press, (1965), p. 41.

4 BIRNBACH, Martin, Neo-Freudian Social Philosophy, (Stanford, Calif.), Stanford Univ. Press, (1961), p. 86.

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The Perspectives of Erich Fromm.: "Far from restricting himself to the empirical procedures of the sciences, Fromm is in fact rather impatient with them."⁵. It therefore seems to be a general opinion among Fromm's commentators that he is not a true scientist.

To this criticism, Erich Fromm answers: "I'm afraid our psychological colleagues sometimes are a little old-fashioned in their conception of science."⁶. And he significantly adds:

It is often the case that psychologists, searching for validity and rigorous proof, prefer to deal with problems which are insignificant but which can be proved, rather than with problems which are significant but which cannot be proved so rigorously.⁷

While others consider him as a "dreamer", Fromm thinks that his own work is much more scientific and much more significant in fact than the so-called "scientific" results attained by many social scientists.

In the above quotations Fromm hints at the fact that he has a different conception of science. It will be the main hypothesis of this essay that Erich Fromm does in fact

5 SCHAAR, J.H., op. cit., p. 35.

6 FROMM, Erich, in
EVANS, R.I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, (New York),
Harper and Row, (c. 1966), p. 78.

7 Ibid., p. 84.

have an understanding of science radically different from that of most contemporary North American social scientists. However we shall partially agree with these critics of Fromm when they speak of his "cloudy epistemology". If Fromm has a different understanding of science, this is not evident immediately; being above all a psychoanalyst and a sociologist, he seems to have gradually elaborated his theory of knowledge through his practice as a psychoanalyst and he has not at any place given his definite and complete theory of knowledge as might have done a philosopher of science or an epistemologist.

Fromm nevertheless provides us with elements of his whole theory of knowledge and of science in his various books and essays. It will therefore be the task of this thesis to discover this theory and the meaning it has for the whole of Fromm's system which he calls "humanistic ethics"⁸ or "normative humanism"⁹, but which could also be called, as we shall see, his theory of individual and social psychotherapy.

* * *

As an introduction to the aspect of Fromm's writings

8 FROMM, E., Man for Himself. An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics., (Greenwich, Conn.), Fawcett Pub. Inc., (c. 1947), p. 27.

9 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, (Greenwich, Conn.), Fawcett Pub. Inc., (c. 1955), p. 21.

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that we are to study in this essay, we shall give a brief summary of what appears to us as an essential point of the whole of his work. This introduction will serve to guide those who happen not to know the whole of Fromm's writings and it will serve, at the same time, to situate the theory of knowledge in its context. Since this is a summary, we shall only give a few examples from different books in order to provide a comprehensive view (rather than a chronological one) of Fromm's thought on this particular (though essential, it seems) point.

The mere frequency with which Fromm speaks of the problem of "human existence" should testify to the fact of its importance. Already in Escape from Freedom, his first English book (1941), he discusses this point in his chapter on "The Emergence of the Individual and the Ambiguity of Freedom"¹⁰. In Man for Himself (1947), he deals with it in a section entitled "The Human Situation"¹¹, and again in The Sane Society, under the same title¹². A section of The Art of Loving, called "Love, the answer to the Problem of Human Existence"¹³,

10 FROMM, E., Escape from Freedom, (New York), Avon Books, (c. 1941), pp. 39-55.

11 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., pp. 47-58.

12 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., pp. 29-33.

13 FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, (New York), Bantam Books, (c. 1956), pp. 6-32.

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exposes the same fundamental theory. His later books still recall the problem: the chapter on "The Nature of Well-being --Man's Psychic Evolution" of his essay on Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism¹⁴, and the beginning of the chapter on "Freedom, Determinism, Alternativism" in The Heart of Man¹⁵, for examples.

Since a brief and clear account of this theory of human existence is given in The Art of Loving, we shall quote extensively from this book to start with:

When man is born, the human race as well as the individual, he is thrown out of a situation which was definite, as definite as the instincts, into a situation which is indefinite, uncertain and open.¹⁶

Man, who was united in an unconscious manner to nature by being part of it, suddenly discovers his separateness (due to his awareness) and feels unbearingly alone. Man has to overcome this feeling of aloneness, he must find a new way to relate to the world and to feel united; otherwise he will become insane¹⁷:

The deepest need of man, then, is the need to overcome

14 FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" in: SUZUKI, D.T., FROMM, E., De MARTINO, R., Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, (New York), Grove Press, (c. 1960), pp. 86-95.

15 FROMM, E., The Heart of Man. Its Genius for Good and Evil., (New York), Harper & Row, (c. 1964), pp. 115-121.

16 FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op. cit., p. 6.

17 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness. The absolute failure to achieve this aim means insanity, because the panic of complete isolation can be overcome only by such a radical withdrawal from the world outside that the feeling of separation disappears--because the world outside, from which one is separated, has disappeared.¹⁸

In a later book (The Heart of Man...), Fromm expands this point, and says that man's need to overcome his feeling of aloneness, man's awareness, create a conflict (or a contradiction) which is indeed the very essence of man¹⁹. He defines "the essence of man not as a given quality or substance, but as a contradiction inherent in human existence"²⁰. Furthermore, it "is necessary to go beyond this description and to recognize that the very conflict in man demands a solution"²¹ and that "basically there are only the regressive or the progressive solutions"²².

Now the so-called regressive solution to the problem of man's loneliness is described as an effort of man "to return to where he came from--to nature, to animal life, or to his ancestors. He can try to do away with that which makes him human and yet tortures him: his reason and self-

18 Ibid., p. 8.

19 FROMM, E., The Heart of Man..., op. cit., p. 117.

20 Ibid., p. 116.

21 Ibid., p. 117.

22 Ibid., p. 118.

awareness."²³. But there is also another solution:

The alternative to the regressive, archaic solution to the problem of human existence, to the burden of being man, is the progressive solution, that of finding a new harmony not by regression but by the full development of all human forces, of the humanity within oneself.²⁴

This progressive solution was described in Man for Himself... as the productive character orientation²⁵. In the same book, the regressive solution was described as the nonproductive character orientation, but within this general orientation Fromm distinguished various regressive solutions²⁶.

These ways of relating to the world, with time it seems, become part of our character, they characterize us. Indeed, while for Freud "the fundamental basis of character is... in various types of libido organization", for Fromm it is "in specific kinds of a person's relatedness to the world"²⁷:

These orientations, by which the individual relates... to the world, constitute the core of his character; character can be defined as the (relatively permanent)

23 Ibid., p. 118.

24 Ibid., p. 118.

25 Compare the following description of the productive character orientation by E. FROMM, in Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 94: "Productiveness is man's realization of the potentialities characteristic of him, the use of his powers.", with the above quoted description of the progressive solution.

26 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., see chart on p. 116 for the various nonproductive orientations.

27 Ibid., p. 66.

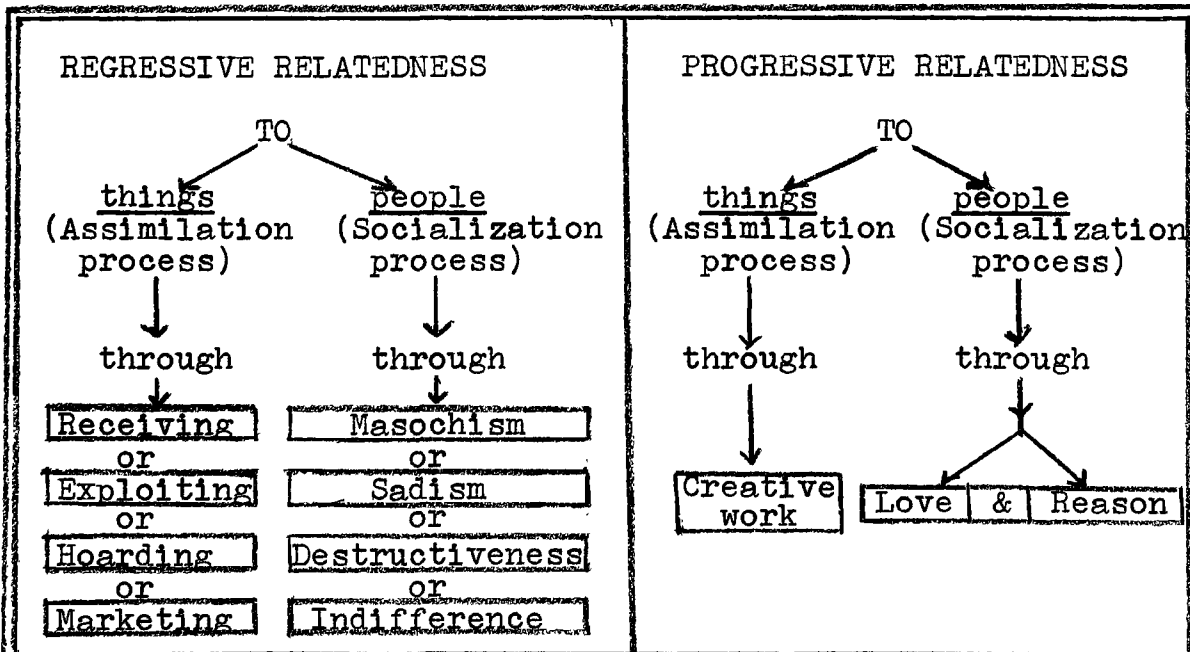
form in which human energy is canalized in the process of assimilation and socialization.²⁸

There are two general ways of relating to the world, the regressive and the progressive solutions; but in each of these ways of relating man can relate to two different kinds of objects:

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.²⁹

Man relates to things (assimilation process) and to people (socialization process). To each of these objects, he can relate either productively (progressively) or nonproductively (regressively).

In order to summarize what has already been said on man's relatedness to the world, we have devised this chart:



28 Ibid., p. 67.

29 Ibid., p. 66.

This chart is essentially based on one of Fromm's own charts in Man for Himself³⁰.

In this thesis we shall especially examine one of the powers through which man can relate to the world, the power to know. Since we are interested in studying the epistemological basis of Erich Fromm's psychotherapy, we shall be especially involved, if we take a look at the chart on page 8, in understanding man's PROGRESSIVE RELATEDNESS TO people (Socialization process) through Reason. Indeed psychotherapy through psychoanalysis seems to be essentially concerned with man, and it seems to be a form of knowledge of man (it might be more than knowledge, but knowledge appears to be at least an element of psychoanalysis). However we will be interested in all that Fromm says on knowledge and it is only afterwards, after having studied his whole theory of knowledge and science, that we shall try to see how he applies his theory to the particular practice of psychoanalysis.

We shall be especially interested in the progressive or productive form of relatedness to people through knowledge, however we shall inevitably have to examine, even though briefly, the other forms of knowledge (e.g. regressive) and the other forms of relatedness to the world. This will be done especially in the first part of Chapter Two where the

30 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 116.

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pathological forms of relatedness to the world will be considered. This essay also intends to show how closely related to Fromm's theory of science is his theory of sanity. Both parts of Chapter Two will indicate this convergence. We shall also see in this chapter the special case that constitutes the science of psychoanalysis among the sciences. We shall conclude by seeing the various critiques made against Fromm, accusing him, precisely, of not being scientific in the elaboration of his theory, and of wanting to transform our alienated society through individual psychotherapy.

* * *

The chronological order will be followed in each Chapter or Part so that the evolution of Fromm's thought may be noticed. For practical reasons, we have restricted our study to the numerous articles and books published in English by Erich Fromm after 1940.

CHAPTER ONE

ERICH FROMM'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

How does man relate to the world through knowledge? It seems that he does so in more than one way: indeed Fromm speaks of the "many layers of knowledge"¹. It will therefore be the task of this first chapter to discover these various layers of knowledge, and to see how they are related one to another. We shall notice how Fromm gradually elaborates, with the years, his theory of knowledge.

A. Practically Relevant Knowledge and Objective Knowledge

1. First English Writings (1941-1944)

In his first writings Fromm does not speak much of knowledge as such. However, already in 1941 with Escape from Freedom, he distinguishes between genuine and pseudo thinking. He gives a few examples of pseudo thinking and concludes that "In all these illustrations of pseudo thinking, the problem is whether the thought is the result of one's own thinking, that is, of one's own activity; ..." ² In pseudo thinking we have not gained the knowledge we have through our own activity but we make ourselves believe it is genuine. Hypnosis, for exam-

1 FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op. cit., p. 24.

2 FROMM, E., Escape from Freedom, op. cit., p. 217.

ple:

...proves that we can have thoughts, feelings, wishes, and even sensual sensations which we subjectively feel to be ours, and yet that, although we experience these thoughts and feelings, they have been put into us from the outside, are basically alien, and are not what we think, feel, and so on.³

On the contrary, genuine thinking is characterized by the fact that we actively contribute ourselves to its process:

The thought that is the result of active thinking is always new and original; original, not necessarily in the sense that others have not thought it before, but always in the sense that the person who thinks, has used thinking as a tool to discover something new in the world outside or inside of himself.⁴

This is about all Fromm has to say on knowledge in this first English book.

An article published in 1944, "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis", does not say much more, though it points to another aspect of knowledge as we can see in the following text:

Many profound insights about man and society have first found expression in myths and fairy tales, others in metaphysical speculations, others in scientific assumptions which have proven to be incorrect after one or two generations⁵.

This means that human knowledge may be expressed in different forms: in myths, in metaphysical statements, or in scientific language. Human knowledge does not necessarily take the form of science. This is a very interesting point: the act of knowing is not the same as the expression of the result of

³ Ibid., p. 212.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 218-19.

⁵ FROMM, E., "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis, American Sociological Review, Vol. 9 (1944), p. 380.

this act.

2. Man for Himself (1947)

It is only in Man for Himself that Erich Fromm really starts distinguishing between the various forms of knowledge.

Man can comprehend the world through reason and through love : "One can be productively related to the world... by comprehending. (...) Man comprehends the world, mentally and emotionally, through love and through reason."⁶. He therefore distinguishes between two powers of comprehending: however he does not say more, in this book, on love as a power of comprehending.

But, on the other hand, he will give a lot of information on reason as a power of comprehending. To do so he will first distinguish between knowledge given to us by intelligence and knowledge given by reason.

"Intelligence is man's tool for attaining practical goals with the aim of discovering those aspects of things the knowledge of which is necessary for manipulating them."⁷. It is essentially a superficial though often used type of know-

6 FROMM, E., Man for Himself, op. cit., p. 103.

7 FROMM, E., ibid., p. 108.

ledge:

Most of our thinking is necessarily concerned with the achievement of practical results, with the quantitative and superficial aspects of phenomena without inquiring into the validity of implied ends and premises and without attempting to understand the nature and quality of phenomena.⁸

This kind of intelligence, in contradiction to reason, is measurable.⁹ It can give us only a superficial knowledge of the practically relevant aspects of things.

Reason, on the contrary, is man's faculty for understanding deeply:

Reason involves a third dimension, that of depth, which reaches to the essence of things and processes. (...) It penetrates through the surface of things in order to discover their essence, their hidden relationships and deeper meanings, their "reason".¹⁰

By searching for the essence, reason is concerned "with the generic and the universal, with the most general and pervasive traits of phenomena, freed from their superficial and accidental... aspects."¹¹

8 Ibid., p. 108.

9 Ibid., p. 83. Speaking of "intelligence" Fromm says: "Most intelligence tests are attuned to this kind of thinking; they measure not so much the capacity for reason and understanding as the capacity for quick mental adaptation to a given situation; ... For this kind of thinking the application of the categories of comparison and of quantitative measurement--rather than a thorough analysis of a given phenomenon and its quality--is essential."

10 Ibid., p. 108.

11 Ibid., p. 109.

Now reason seems to be characterized by two capacities or two powers. Reason is said to be one of man's faculties to relate productively to the world, to know the world productively (love being the other). We therefore assume that Fromm is speaking of reason in the following text since it is an answer to the following question: "How is man related to the world when he uses his powers productively?"¹² and that Fromm does not speak of love as a power to know in this book.

Here is the text:

The world outside one self can be experienced in two ways: reproductively by perceiving actuality in the same fashion as a film makes a literal record of things photographed...; and generatively by conceiving it, by enlivening and re-creating this new material through the spontaneous activity of one's own mental and emotional powers.¹³

The normal human being has both powers, the active and the passive, the generative and the reproductive: "The normal human being is capable of relating himself to the world simultaneously by perceiving it as it is and by conceiving it enlivened and enriched by his own powers."¹⁴ When one of the capacities is atrophied man cannot know correctly: he either gets only a superficial knowledge (when the generative capacity is not working) or no knowledge of the outer world at all (if the reproductive capacity is atrophied)¹⁵.

12 Ibid., p. 95.

13 Ibid., p. 95.

14 Ibid., p. 97.

15 Ibid., p. 97.

Fromm adds: "The presence of both reproductive and generative capacities is a precondition for productiveness; they are opposite poles whose interaction is the dynamic source of productiveness."¹⁶ And a little further, when speaking explicitly of reason, Fromm says that reason is characterized by objectivity and subjectivity, defined in the following manner:

In the process of productive thinking the thinker is motivated by his interest for the object: he is affected by it and reacts to it; he cares and responds. But productive thinking is also characterized by objectivity, by the respect the thinker has for his object, by his ability to see the object as it is and not as he wishes it to be.¹⁷

It appears to us that Fromm is just using different words to describe what he earlier called the reproductive and the generative capacities of productive thinking. Indeed he speaks in this case too of subjectivity and objectivity as two poles of productiveness: "This polarity between objectivity and subjectivity is characteristic of productive thinking as it is of productiveness in general."¹⁸ Objectivity would consist in being able to reproduce what is; subjectivity would be the active or generative capacity of man. One does not exclude the other: subjectivity is necessary for real objectivity:

16 Ibid., p. 97.

17 Ibid., p. 109-110.

18 Ibid., p. 110.

... objectivity is not, as it is often implied in a false idea of "scientific" objectivity, synonymous with detachment, with absence of interest and care. How can one penetrate the veiling surface of things to their causes and relationships if one does not have an interest that is vital and sufficiently impelling for so laborious a task?¹⁹

Let us note that objectivity, in the case of the study of man, constitutes a special problem: "... inasmuch as I want to understand something I must be able to see it as it exists according to its own nature; while this is true with regard to all objects of thought, it constitutes a special problem for the study of human nature."²⁰.

Up to now we have studied, in Man for Himself, the use of reason as it should be done in the normal human being, the productive use of reason. We have seen that it requires the functioning of two poles, the poles of subjectivity and objectivity, of the generative and reproductive capacities. In order to better illustrate this productive thinking, let us take a look at Fromm's description of thinking in the four nonproductive character orientations (to things)²¹. We shall

19 Ibid., p. 111.

20 Ibid., p. 110.

21 See above, page 8 of this thesis, the chart with the regressive or nonproductive forms of relatedness to things.

notice how, in each case of regressive relatedness through knowledge, only the reproductive or objective capacity functions (but not the subjective or generative capacity).

Those people characterized by the Receptive Orientation, "if intelligent, ... make the best listeners, since their orientation is one of receiving, not of producing, ideas; left to themselves, they feel paralyzed."²²

The Exploitative characters, on the other hand, "will tend not to produce ideas but to steal them. This may be done directly in the form of plagiarism or more subtly by repeating in different phraseology the ideas voiced by others and insisting they are new and their own."²³

The Hoarding Orientation "makes people have little faith in anything new they might get from the outside world; their security is based upon hoarding and saving, while spending is felt to be a threat." "They know everything but are sterile and incapable of productive thinking."²⁴ In other words, the Hoarding are capable of erudition but not of creative thinking.

The Marketing Character is also incapable of enlivening his reproductive knowledge of the world through his own subjective (or generative) powers in order to have a deeper

22 Ibid., p. 70.

23 Ibid., p. 72.

24 Ibid., p. 73.

grasp of reality. Thus:

Thinking assumes the function of grasping things quickly so as to be able to manipulate them successfully. Furthered by widespread and efficient education, this leads to a high degree of intelligence, but not of reason. For manipulative purposes, all that is necessary to know is the surface features of things, the superficial.²⁵

"In this orientation, those qualities are developed which can best be sold."²⁶ And today, says Fromm there is accordingly "a skeptical or contemptuous attitude toward the allegedly impractical and useless thinking which is concerned 'only' with the truth and which has no exchange value on the market."²⁷

Now Fromm has described as "realism" the "sickness" which consists in the atrophy of the generative capacity:

The "realist" sees only the surface features of things; he sees the manifest world, he can reproduce it photographically in his mind, and he can act by manipulating things as they appear in this picture.²⁸

The opposite, or rather the complementary sickness of realism, is "insanity", where it is the reproductive capacity which is atrophied: "The insane person is incapable of seeing reality as it is; he perceives reality only as a symbol and reflection of his inner world."²⁹ Both are nevertheless sick:

The sickness of the psychotic who has lost contact with reality is such that he cannot function socially. The sickness of the "realist" impoverishes him as a human being. While he is not incapacitated in his social functioning, his view of reality is so distorted because of its lack of depth and perspective that he

25 Ibid., p. 82. 26 Ibid., p. 84. 27 Ibid., p. 84.

28 Ibid., p. 96.

29 Ibid., p. 96.

is apt to err when more than manipulation of immediately given data and short-range aims are involved.³⁰

Since the four nonproductive characters described above seem to be capable of using only their reproductive capacity, we could therefore assume that they all suffer of various forms of "realism". If it was their reproductive capacity that was atrophied, we would say that they suffer of psychosis (that is to say, insanity). But "the normal person has both capacities"³¹; the normal, productive use of reason requires both.

We retain from this book that there are at least three ways of knowing the world: a superficial way through intelligence, a deeper way through reason, and a third way through love. However in this book Fromm does not describe the last form of knowledge (through love). He does nevertheless distinguish quite clearly between the superficial, practically oriented, knowledge given to us by "intelligence" and the deeper, more essential, knowledge given to us by reason. He has given us a good idea of how reason functions and he has also explained how we could have nonproductive or regressive knowledge through the malfunctioning of one of reason's two capacities, the generative capacity.

Another point we retain is that objectivity "constitutes a special problem for the study of human nature"³². But here, as in the case of love as a way of comprehending

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

the world, Fromm does not explain what he means. We shall have to search in his further writings in order to better understand these two points (the difference between objectivity in the knowledge of people and in the knowledge of things; and the nature of comprehension through love).

We shall call the knowledge given to us by intelligence practically relevant knowledge because it aims at "discovering those aspects of things the knowledge of which is necessary for manipulating them" and that it is a knowledge "concerned with the achievement of practical results"³³.

On the other hand we shall call the knowledge given to us by reason objective knowledge because this is how Fromm refers to it in his later books, in The Sane Society, for example: "Reason is man's faculty for grasping the world by thought... Reason is a faculty which must be practiced, in order to develop, and it is indivisible. By this I mean that the faculty for objectivity refers to the knowledge of nature as well as to the knowledge of man, of society and of oneself."³⁴ Objective knowledge, therefore, (knowledge given to us by reason), is concerned with discovering "the most general and pervasive traits of phenomena"³⁵.

33 Ibid., p. 108.

34 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 65.
See also, FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op.cit., p. 26.

35 FROMM, E., Man for Himself, op. cit., p. 109.

B. Objective Knowledge and Experiential Knowledge

1. Transition writings (1950-1955)

In three books following Man for Himself, Fromm will not speak too much of knowledge even though he will suggest the theories that he will later develop more extensively.

In Psychoanalysis and Religion³⁶, he gives an interesting description of his theory of truth: "truth 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"³⁷. He also speaks of our tendency to rationalize. He shows how it is necessary that our freedom and spontaneity be developed so that we could discover by our own activity whether our judgments really express what is, or whether they are mere rationalizations or expressions of other people's opinions³⁸.

In the following description of religion, Erich Fromm also suggests that there is another type of knowledge, besides objective and practically relevant knowledge:

...religious formulations and religious symbols are attempts to give expression to certain kinds of human experience. What matters is the nature of these experiences. The symbol is only the cue from which

³⁶ FROMM, E., Psychoanalysis and Religion, (New Haven), Yale U. Press, (c. 1950), 119 pp.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

we can infer the underlying human reality.³⁹

Thus, there would be a third kind of knowledge given to us through experience (we might even say a fourth kind if we recall that love is also said to be a form of knowledge in Man for Himself).

More attention will be given in Fromm's next book, The Forgotten Language⁴⁰, to this type of knowledge through experience. He will show how the symbolic language of dreams and myths really expresses deep inner experiences of man: "Symbolic language is language in which we express inner experience as if it were a sensory experience, as if it were something we were doing or something that was done to us in the world of things."⁴¹

This inner world of experience does not have the same logic as the outer world of time and space:

If I feel, for instance, that a person is a coward, I may dream that he changed from man into a chicken. This change is logical in terms of what I feel about the person, illogical only in terms of my orientation to outside reality... Sleep experience is not lacking in logic but is subject to different logical rules, which are entirely valid in that particular experiential state.⁴²

39 Ibid., p. 113.

40 FROMM, E., The Forgotten Language. An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths., (New York), Grove Press Inc., (c. 1951), 263 pp.

41 Ibid., p. 12.

42 Ibid., p. 28.

In symbolic language, it is the inner experience that links the "words" together, that gives the key to the understanding of the meaning. The logic of the dream where I see someone as a chicken refers to the experience I have had of this person's cowardness.

This book (The Forgotten Language) therefore gives us a better understanding of Fromm's brief reference, in his previous one (Psychoanalysis and Religion), to knowledge through experience. We have knowledge of people, for example through experiencing them and this experience may be expressed not only through religious formulations or symbols⁴³, but also through dreams and myths.

In The Sane Society, Fromm restates his distinction 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."⁴⁴ Reason is typically human just as truth can only characterize man's knowledge:

The animal... has no reason, if by reason we mean the ability to penetrate the surface grasped by the senses

⁴³ See above p. 22.

⁴⁴ FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 65.

and to understand the essence behind that surface; therefore the animal has no concept of the truth, even though it may have an idea of what is useful.⁴⁵

Through its intelligence the animal has an idea of what is useful: "The chimpanzee--who puts the two sticks together in order to get at the banana because no one of the two is long enough to do the job--uses intelligence."⁴⁶ Only man can attain the truth.

In this book Fromm says that "rituals" (artistic and religious) can also express human knowledge:

Whether we think of the Greek drama, the medieval passion play, or an Indian dance, whether we think of Hindu, Jewish or Christian religious rituals, we are dealing with various forms of dramatization of the fundamental problems of human existence, with an acting out of the very same problems which are thought out in philosophy and theology.⁴⁷

Thus, not only religion, myths and dreams can express knowledge, but also "rituals" in general.

2. The Difference between Objective and Experiential Knowledge.

a. The Art of Loving (1956)

It is in The Art of Loving that Fromm explicitly says that there is more than one way to know and that love is one of them:

There are many layers of knowledge; the knowledge which is an aspect of love is one which does not stay at the periphery, but penetrates to the core.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 29. ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 152 ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

⁴⁸ FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op. cit., p. 24.

Before speaking of knowledge which is an aspect of love, Fromm feels the necessity of saying that man is an object of knowledge different from things:

While life in its merely biological aspects is a miracle and a secret, man in his human aspects is an unfathomable secret to himself--and to his fellow man. We know ourselves, and yet even with all the efforts we may make, we do not know ourselves. We know our fellow man, and yet we do not know him, because we are not a thing, and our fellow man is not a thing.⁴⁹

However, for the moment, he will not explain this statement and he will immediately speak of the knowledge given to us through the experience of love.

The only way to really know man is in fact through love: knowledge by thought is insufficient to know man:

Love is active penetration of the other person, in which my desire to know is stilled by union. In the act of fusion I know you, I know myself, I know everybody--and I "know" nothing. I know in the only way knowledge of that which is alive is possible for man --by experience of union--not by any knowledge our thought can give.⁵⁰

In this text Fromm says that love is an experience which lets us have knowledge. He thus unites knowledge through experience and knowledge through love: knowledge through love is one type of knowledge through experience of union. This means that we now have three, not four, types of knowledge: knowledge by intelligence, by reason and by experience of union.

49 Ibid., p. 24.

50 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

The specific experience of union required to know man is the act of love: "The only way of full knowledge lies in the act of love: this act transcends thought, it transcends words. It is the daring plunge into the experience of union."⁵¹ Fromm does not say: The only way of full knowledge of another person lies in the act of love, however, from the context, this is clearly what he means.⁵²

Now is "knowledge which is an aspect of love" and "which penetrates to the core"⁵³ the same as knowledge given to us by reason (objective knowledge) which "tries to find out what is behind the surface, to recognize the kernel, the essence of reality"⁵⁴? The following text will help to find an answer:

...knowledge in thought, that is psychological knowledge, is a necessary condition for full knowledge in the act of love. I have to know the other person and myself objectively, in order to be able to see his

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵² Ibid., p. 26. Here is the immediately preceding text: "The longing to know ourselves and to know our fellow man has been expressed in the Delphic motto "Know thyself". It is the mainspring of all psychology. But inasmuch as the desire is to know all of man, his innermost secret, the desire can never be fulfilled in knowledge of the ordinary kind, in knowledge only by thought. Even if we know a thousand times more of ourselves, we could never reach bottom. We would still remain an enigma to ourselves, as our fellow man would remain an enigma to us. The only way of full knowledge lies in the act of love: ..."

⁵³ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁴ FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 152.

reality, or rather, to overcome the illusions, the irrationally distorted picture I have of him. Only if I know a human being objectively, can I know him in his ultimate essence, in the act of love.⁵⁵

In other words objective knowledge (knowledge by thought, which in the case of man is called psychology) is a step towards knowledge in the experience of union. Objective knowledge is therefore distinct from knowledge in the experience of union.

b. Some Essays (1957)

In two essays published in 1957, Erich Fromm will explain what he meant in The Art of Loving when he said that man could not be known as a thing because he was not a thing.

In "Man is not a thing", Erich Fromm asks the question "To which extent is psychology (the knowledge of others and myself) possible?"⁵⁶. "The endeavor to understand man by thought is called psychology..."⁵⁷. Psychology wants to know man by thought. "However", says Fromm, "complete rational knowledge is possible only of things. Things can be dissected without being destroyed; they can be manipulated without

55 FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op. cit., p. 26.

56 FROMM, E., "Man is not a thing", The Saturday Review, March 16, 1957, p. 9.

57 Ibid., p. 10.

damage to their nature; they can be reproduced."⁵⁸. But man cannot be known as a thing because:

Man is not a thing. He cannot be dissected without being destroyed. He cannot be manipulated without being harmed. And he cannot be reproduced artificially.⁵⁹

Does this mean that psychology, knowledge of man through reason, is impossible?

Objective or psychological knowledge of man remains possible, but it must be recognized as partial knowledge only, as a step towards the full knowledge of man:

Psychology can show us what man is not. It cannot tell us what man, each one of us, is. The soul of man, the unique core of each individual, can never be grasped and described adequately. It can be "known" only inasmuch as it is not misconceived. The legitimate aim of psychology, as far as ultimate knowledge is concerned, is the negative, the removal of distortions and illusions, not the positive, full, and complete knowledge of a human being.⁶⁰

Psychology is compared to Negative Theology (knowledge of God by thought): "... we might speak of a 'negative psychology', and furthermore say that full knowledge of man by thought is impossible, and that full 'knowledge' can occur only in the act of love. Just as mysticism is a logical consequence of negative theology, love is the logical consequence of negative psychology."⁶¹.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 10. Note that things can be known completely through knowledge by thought.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 11.

In a conference given in April 1957 ("Medicine and the Ethical Problem of Modern Man"⁶²), Fromm will make even more explicit the difference between knowledge of things and knowledge of people.

We quote extensively because it is a very clear and concise text:

I can study a corpse or study an organ, and it is a thing. I can use my intellect, and my eyes, of course, too, as well as my machines or gadgets, in order to study this thing. But if I want to know a man, I cannot study him in this way. Of course I can try, and then I will write something about the frequency of this-and-that behavior and about the percentage of this-or-that characteristic. A great deal of the science of psychology is concerned with that, but in this way it is treating man as a thing.⁶³

To know man, a different method must be used: the methods of the natural sciences are not sufficient to know people:

... the process of this understanding cannot be accomplished by the same method in which knowledge in the natural sciences can be accomplished. The knowledge of man is possible only in the process of relating ourselves to him. Only if I relate myself to the man whom I want to know, only in the process of relating ourselves to another human being, can we really know something about each other.⁶⁴

And once more he says that "...you can never exhaust the description of a personality, of a human being in his full individuality; but you can know him in an act of empathy, in

62 FROMM, E., "Medicine and the Ethical Problem of Modern Man", in FROMM, E., The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture., (New York), Anchor Books (Doubleday), (1963), pp. 173-194.

63 Ibid., p. 189.

64 Ibid., p. 189.

an act of full experience, in an act of love."⁶⁵.

Thus, these two essays by Fromm tell us that full knowledge of things is possible through reason, but that for the full knowledge of people another layer of knowledge, knowledge in the full experience of union that is love, must also be used.

3. Experiential Knowledge.

a. "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" (1960)

In a text on "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism"⁶⁶, Erich Fromm will further explain what he means by knowledge through experience or to what he refers as "experiential knowledge"⁶⁷.

Man is not aware of all his own experiences, says Fromm, because "experience can enter into awareness only under the condition that it can be perceived, related, and ordered in terms of a conceptual system and its categories"⁶⁸. In other words we have to "think" our experiences in order to become aware of them.

65 Ibid., p. 190.

66 FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism", in SUZUKI, D.T., FROMM, E., De MARTINO, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, op. cit., pp. 77-141.

67 Ibid., p. 111.

68 Ibid., p. 99.

Unfortunately, this need to conceptualize our experiences easily leads to a distorting factor in our process of knowledge: "...cerebration. I refer by this", says Fromm, "to the fact that I believe I see--but I only see words; I believe I feel, but I only think feelings."⁶⁹ This factor is due to the very nature of language:

As soon as I have expressed something in a word, an alienation takes place, and the full experience has already been substituted for by the word. The full experience actually exists only up to the moment when it is expressed in language.⁷⁰

Thus, on one hand, we have to conceptualize our experiences in order to become aware of them. But in so doing we necessarily impoverish the experience and it is dangerous that we so much impoverish it that it does not refer any more to any real experience. It might then become the pure invention of our mind, pure cerebration.

Fromm then gives two illustrations of experiential knowledge: the case of the discovery of our own self, and the knowledge that exists between the psychoanalyst and his patient. To really know ourselves is an experience, not an intellectual act:

69 Ibid., p. 109.

70 Ibid., p. 109.

As long as the patient remains in the attitude of the detached scientific observer, taking himself as the object of his investigation, he is not in touch with his unconscious, except by thinking about it; he does not experience the wider, deeper reality within himself. Discovering one's unconscious is, precisely, not an intellectual act, but an affective experience, which can hardly be put into words, if at all. This does not mean that thinking and speculation may not precede the act of discovery; but the act of discovery itself is always a total experience.⁷¹

We will also quote extensively to illustrate Fromm's second example of experiential knowledge, the knowledge that exists between the analyst and his patient:

The knowledge of another person requires being inside of him, to be him. The analyst understands the patient only inasmuch as he experiences in himself all that the patient experiences; otherwise he will have only intellectual knowledge about the patient, but will never really know what the patient experiences, nor will he be able to convey to him that he shares and understands his (the patient's) experience. In this productive relatedness between analyst and patient, in... being fully engaged with the patient, in being fully open and responsive to him, in being soaked with him, as it were, in this center-to-center relatedness, lies one of the essential conditions for psychoanalytic understanding and cure.⁷²

Thus, to know ourselves deeply and to know fully others, we must use experiential knowledge. Here Fromm speaks of experiential knowledge only for the knowledge of people: ourselves and other people. In The Art of Loving he had said that "the only way knowledge of that which is alive is possible for man"

71 Ibid., p. 110.

72 Ibid., p. 112.

is "by experience of union"⁷³. Fromm has never said that experiential knowledge was impossible of things but only that knowledge by thought was sufficient to fully know things. However, to know man deeply, we must necessarily use experiential knowledge.

It seems quite evident that Fromm means by experiential knowledge what others meant by "intuition". He says so himself in the following text:

The importance of this kind of experiential knowledge lies in the fact that it transcends the kind of knowledge and awareness in which the subject-intellect observes himself as an object, and thus transcends the Western, rationalistic concept of knowing. (Exceptions in the Western tradition, where experiential knowledge is dealt with, are to be found in Spinoza's highest form of knowing, intuition; in Fichte's intellectual intuition; or in Bergson's creative consciousness. All these categories of intuition transcend subject-object split knowledge. ...) ⁷⁴

We therefore retain from this book that we have experiences, but we are not always aware of them. To become aware we have to think these experiences, but in so doing an alienation takes place: the concept never can express completely the experience. In this sense the concept follows the experience. But the experiential grasp must also be prepared by thinking. Thought, thus precedes and follows the experience which is the source of deep knowledge, which we afterwards try to conceptualize in order to become aware of it.

⁷³ FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, p. 26. (op. cit.)

⁷⁴ FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Religion", op. cit.

b. You Shall be as Gods (1966)

In You Shall be as Gods⁷⁵, E. Fromm confirms

what he already had said about experiential or intuitive knowledge. It is a necessary type of knowledge to know man: "all knowledge of the other is based on shared experience. I cannot understand in another that which I do not experience in myself."⁷⁶.

He gives the example of the stranger: to really know the stranger I have to experience what it is to be a stranger, I have to experience "strangeness", and this type of knowledge is closely related to love:

...the love for the stranger as another human being, as one who is nothing other than human..., is rooted in one's knowledge of him--and this knowledge is based on the commonly shared experience of being a stranger, oppressed and suffering.⁷⁷

In fact, this type of intuitive or experiential knowledge necessarily leads to sympathy, to love for the other: "Once I have discovered the stranger within myself I cannot hate the stranger outside of myself, because he has ceased to be a stranger."⁷⁸ This is even true of experiential knowledge of the enemy. Once I have felt in myself what was "enmity", what it was to be an enemy, I cannot hate the enemy because

75 FROMM, E., You Shall be as Gods. A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition., (New York), Holt, Rinehart and Winston, (c. 1966), 240 pp.

76 Ibid., p. 184. 77 Ibid., p. 184. 78 Ibid., p. 184.

in a sense he has become part of me: "If the stranger is the stranger within me, the enemy is also the enemy within me; he ceases to be the enemy, because he is I."⁷⁹.

In this book, Erich Fromm also gives us some interesting information on his understanding of the concept and its relation to the "experience". It is the first time, it seems, that he explicitly speaks of the "idea" which he describes as "the conceptual expression of a human experience"⁸⁰.

However the idea or the concept can never completely express an experience: "A concept can never adequately express the experience it refers to. It points to it, but it is not it."⁸¹. Indeed, "...the concept, or the symbol, is only an approximate expression of the experience"⁸².

This confirms what Fromm had already said in "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" about the necessity there is for us to conceptualize our experiences if we are to become aware of them. Indeed here again the concept follows the experience. But it is therefore dangerous that this concept be cut from the experience to which it should refer and that it become a mere ideolization:

79 Ibid., p. 185.

80 Ibid., p. 19.

81 Ibid., p. 19.

82 Ibid., p. 19.

If the concept becomes alienated--that is, separated from the experience to which it refers--it loses its reality and is transformed into an artifact of man's mind. The fiction is thereby created that anyone who uses the concept is referring to the substratum of experience underlying it. Once this happens--and this process of the alienation of concepts is the rule rather than the ~~exception~~--the idea expressing an experience has been transformed into an ideology that usurps the place of the underlying reality within the living being.⁸³

* * *

If we recall all that has been said on Erich Fromm's theory of knowledge, we see that there are indeed many layers of knowledge.

There is a layer which belongs to the animal part of man and which gives us a superficial knowledge of the practically relevant aspects of things. This layer relates us superficially to things (and, we assume, to people seen as things).

Another layer of knowledge, given to us by reason, gives us a deeper knowledge of things than knowledge by intelligence. It gives us knowledge of the essence of things and people seen as things; it is concerned "with the essential, with the generic and the universal, with the most general and pervasive traits of phenomena"⁸⁴. It gives us

83 Ibid., p. 18.

84 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 109.

full knowledge of things, but not of people. It nevertheless is a necessary step towards the full knowledge of people.

Man is also characterized by a third layer of knowledge, knowledge through experience of union, or experiential knowledge. This is also called intuitive knowledge by Erich Fromm⁸⁵. Through a deep, affective experience this layer gives us full knowledge of living beings, and in the experience of union that is love, of human beings. This knowledge must be conceptualized: otherwise, it remains unconscious. Sometimes this unconscious knowledge is expressed in our dreams, or in myths and with the correct key we can read this symbolic language. And this symbolic language can often better express this deep experiential knowledge than our ordinary language: "...it is a language which often expresses inner experiences, wishes, fears, judgments and insights with much greater precision and fullness than our ordinary language is capable of"⁸⁶.

This intuitive or experiential knowledge must be prepared by intellectual knowledge (or knowledge given to us by reason) which gives us an objective knowledge of the person (or living being) to be experienced. As Fromm has said:

85 FROMM, E., "On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology", in FROMM, E., The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays... op. cit., p. 206.

86 FROMM, E., "The Nature of Dreams", in Scientific American, Vol. 180, 5, (May 1949), p. 47.

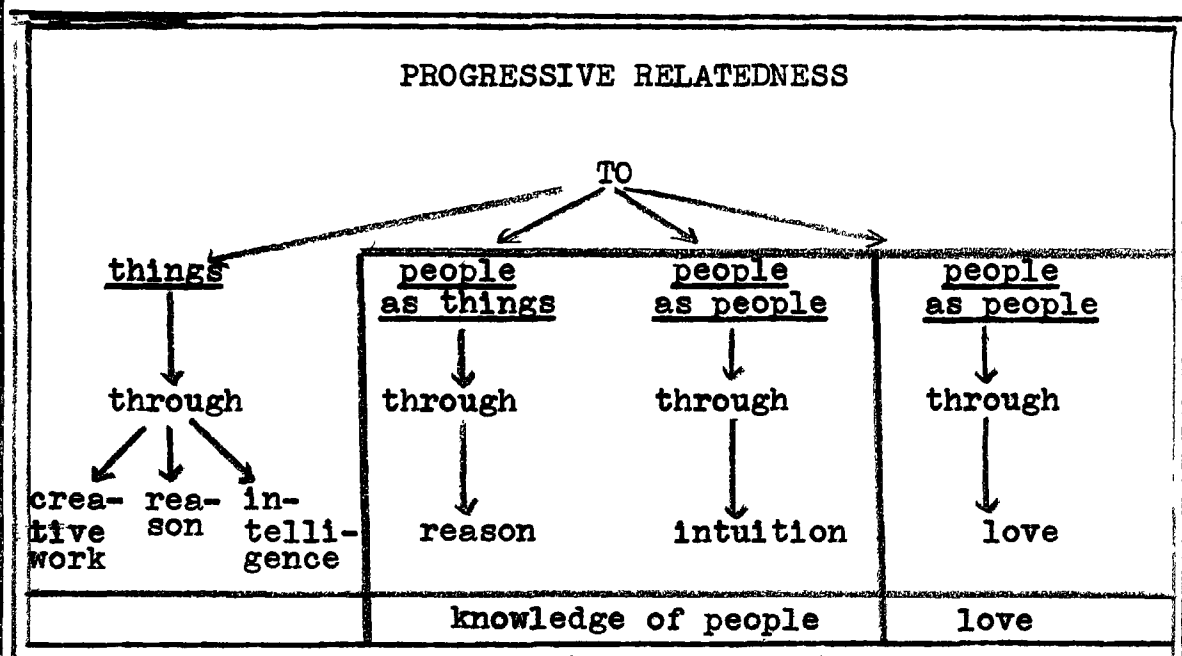
"This does not mean that thinking and speculation may not precede the act of discovery; but the act of discovery itself is always a total experience."⁸⁷. But if we are to become aware of this "total experience" we must conceptualize it! Knowledge by thought thus prepares and follows experiential or intuitive knowledge. There would be a first, incomplete concept, and a second more correct, richer, concept. For example, true knowledge of a human being will not be in the first concept, because at this level we have not really had a deep experiential knowledge of this person yet; it would rather be in the second concept, which follows the deep experience of union (or intuitive knowledge) established between the two persons. Of course this second concept cannot fully express the experience. But it nevertheless permits us to become aware of our own experiences. We can then compare our own experiences with those of other people, and thus communicate, even though "no person's experience is ever identical with that of another; it can only approximate it sufficiently to permit the use of a common symbol or concept."⁸⁸.

In order to better show the evolution in Fromm's theory of knowledge, we have drawn the following chart which

87 FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism", op. cit., p. 110. See above, p. 33.

88 FROMM, E., You Shall be as Gods..., op. cit., p.19

summarizes Fromm's theory of knowledge from Man for Himself (1947) to You Shall be as Gods (1966); since Fromm's theory of Regressive Relatedness has not much changed, we restrict this chart to an illustration of man's Progressive Relatedness to the world:



If we compare this chart to the one on page 8 (based on Man for Himself--1947), we will be able to see the evolution.

He still speaks of love as a way of relatedness, but he has specified that reason was used to know people as things. He has added the way of knowledge through intuition for the knowledge of people. And in the relatedness to things as things we find three powers: creative work, reason and intelligence. Fromm had not shown in his chart the two latter powers even though he had mentioned them in Man for Himself.

CHAPTER TWO

ERICH FROMM'S THEORY OF SANITY AND SCIENCE

We have already seen in Chapter One, in discussing the generative and reproductive capacities of reason¹, that in a way Fromm's theory of knowledge was related to his definition of insanity. To be completely incapable of knowing is to be insane.

In order to better understand this relationship we shall start by taking a look at Fromm's definitions of insanity (psychosis and neurosis). And then we shall have to examine his definition of science as such because it too seems to be closely related to the problem of sanity as we shall see. We will be particularly interested in his definition and justification of the "science" of psychoanalysis, but we will study all he says about science in general before doing so.

A. Sanity, Neuroses and Psychosis

1. In Escape from Freedom (1941)

Fromm speaks of neurosis and insanity especially in his first books and essays. Indeed already in Escape from

¹ See above pp. 15 and 19.

Freedom it seems that he has elaborated the essential part of his theory of neurosis.

According to Fromm, Freud "has asserted that the Oedipus complex is the nucleus of all neuroses, and in the successful overcoming of the Oedipus complex he has seen the main problem of normal development."² In a sense, Fromm will agree with Freud on the importance of this "phenomenon of life-long dependency on an object outside of oneself"³ (the Oedipus complex). However Fromm thinks that Freud:

... has failed in its adequate interpretation; for although the phenomenon of sexual attraction between parents and children does exist and although conflicts arising from it sometimes constitute part of the neurotic development, neither the sexual attraction nor the resulting conflicts are the essential in the fixation of children on their parents.⁴

Fromm thinks that there is a more essential cause to this complex, that is to say: "... when the parents, acting as the agents of society, start to suppress the child's spontaneity and independence, the growing child feels more and more unable to stand on its own feet; it therefore seeks for the magic helper and often makes the parents the personification of 'him'."⁵

In other words the Oedipus complex would rather be

2 FROMM, E., Escape from Freedom, op. cit., p. 200.

3 Ibid., p. 200.

4 Ibid., p. p. 200.

5 Ibid., p. 201.

caused by the fact that the complexed individual's freedom and spontaneity have not been developed; this individual has to rely, therefore, on some "magic helper", since he has not the capacity to act by himself, since this capacity has not been developed in him.

For Fromm too the Oedipus complex is the nucleus of all neuroses and in the successful overcoming of it will he see the main problem of normal development, but he will rather speak of it in terms of freedom and spontaneity: "...we can observe at the kernel of every neurosis, as well as of normal development, ... the struggle for freedom and independence."⁶.

Now many people who do abandon their freedom and independence are not considered as sick: "For many normal persons this struggle has ended in a complete giving up of their individual selves, so that they are thus well adapted and considered to be normal."⁷ They are "considered to be normal" because they submit to the norms of society.

But other people want to keep and develop their freedom and independence even though their own freedom and spontaneity have not been sufficiently developed so that they have still a tendency to search for a magic helper. They thus

⁶ Ibid., p. 201.

⁷ Ibid., p. 201.

feel the conflict between these two tendencies. These people are neurotics, according to Fromm:

The neurotic person is the one who has not given up fighting against complete submission, but who, at the same time, has remained bound to the figure of the magic helper, whatever form or shape "he" may have assumed. His neurosis is always to be understood as an attempt, and essentially an unsuccessful one, to solve the conflict between that basic dependency and the quest for freedom.⁸

Now the one who abandons completely his freedom can be seen as normal, but so as the one, it seems, who develops his independence and spontaneity. We shall have to better examine what is meant by the word "normal" since it seems to cover two different realities. Luckily, Fromm does so himself:

The term normal or healthy can be defined in two ways. Firstly, from the standpoint of a functioning society, one can call a person normal or healthy if he is able to fulfill the social role he is to take in that given society. (...) Secondly, from the standpoint of the individual, we look upon health or normalcy as the optimum of growth and happiness of the individual.⁹

⁸ Ibid., p. 201. It is quite surprising that Martin BIRNBACH, in his book on Neo-Freudian Social Philosophy, o.p. cit., p. 193, could say what follows:

"... the idea that neurosis is due to mental conflict does not loom large in Fromm's thought. The individual is by nature a harmonious psychic unit, to him. Difficulties spring from extrapsychic sources, he believes, from the individual's continuous altercations with his social environment. (...) There being no inner conflict to resolve, the equilibrium to be established will not be within the individual but between the individual and his social environment."

It appears to us that Fromm's above quotation proves exactly the contrary!

⁹ Ibid., p. 159.

Thus the person who abandons his self, who gives up his spontaneity and freedom, can be seen as normal if he is still able to fulfill his role in society. But in another sense this person will be abnormal since he gives up his own self, since he does not develop to its optimum his self, his spontaneity. Indeed "the person who is normal in terms of being well adapted is often less healthy than the neurotic person in terms of human values. Often he is well adapted only at the expense of having given up his self in order to become more or less the person he believes he is expected to be."¹⁰. At least the neurotic still fights to keep his freedom, and in this sense he is more healthy or normal than the person "normal" "from the standpoint of a functioning society" who has lost all genuine individuality and spontaneity.

From the standpoint of the individual, we could therefore say that there are three possible solutions in terms of sanity: there is the normal, healthy person whose spontaneity and freedom are developed to their optimum; there is the individual who has completely abandoned his self, his freedom; and, finally, there is the neurotic who is incapable of solving the conflict between the two above tendencies (to develop the self, or to give it up). Fromm does not yet give a name to the second solution mentioned here.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

Immediately following this discussion on the two meanings of "normalcy", Erich Fromm recalls his theory of human existence¹¹ which he now relates to his theory of neurosis. As we have seen in the introduction, there are two general solutions to the problem of man's aloneness: the progressive and the regressive solutions:

By one course he can progress to 'positive freedom'; he can relate himself spontaneously to the world in love and work, in the genuine expression of his emotional, sensuous, and intellectual capacities; he can thus become one again with man, nature, and himself, without giving up the independence and integrity of his individual self.¹²

The progressive solution, as we can see, corresponds to the normal, healthy human being who develops his self to its optimum growth, to its optimum spontaneity and independence. The individual relates to the world without giving up his freedom, his self.

The second solution, the regressive one, is at the source of all neuroses because here the individual has to give up his self in order to relate, in order to overcome his feeling of aloneness:

The other course open to him is to fall back, to give up his freedom, and to try to overcome his aloneness by eliminating the gap that has arisen between his individual self and the world. ... it is...characterized by the more or less complete surrender of individuality and the integrity of the self. Thus it is not a solution which leads to happiness and positive freedom; it is, in principle, a solution which is to be found in all neurotic phenomena.¹³

11 See above, p. 3. 12 Ibid., p. 161. 13 Ibid., pp. 161-2.

Thus all neuroses will be characterized by the regressive solution to the problem of man's separateness, all neuroses will be characterized by the giving up of the self, of individual freedom and spontaneity, in the effort to relate to the world. Now as we have just seen (on page 45), there are two cases where the individual gives up his self: in one case the individual refuses to give it up completely and he still struggles for his freedom. This is called specifically "neurosis" by Erich Fromm. The other case, where the individual completely gives up his self in order to relate, does not yet receive any name by Fromm, even though he seems to refer to it also when, in the above quotation, he speaks of "neurotic phenomena".

We now better understand what Fromm meant when he said that "at the kernel of every neurosis, as well as of normal development, is the struggle for freedom and independence."¹⁴ In the normal, healthy individual freedom and independence have been developed. But in the neurotic individual this freedom and independence have not sufficiently been actualized, and the person has also a tendency to rely on a magic helper, to give up his own spontaneity and independence to this magic helper. This creates a conflict in the individual--that was seen by Freud and called the Oedipus complex, though not explained in terms of freedom but in

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 201. See above p. 43.

terms of early sexual attraction to the parents. This conflict does not permit the person to relate progressively nor regressively to the world: he therefore appears not to be well adapted to society. At least the individual who has completely abandoned his self appears to be well adapted and, thus he can be said to be "normal" in terms of a functioning society, even though he is abnormal in terms of the optimum growth of the individual.

2. In "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis" (1944)

In "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis", Erich Fromm will give a name to the solution where the individual completely gives up his self in order to relate. He does not yet want to call it neurosis in order not to confuse this solution with what he has called neurosis proper¹⁵. Indeed, he says, "defeat in the fight for freedom does not always lead to neurosis. As a matter of fact, if this were the case, we would have to consider the vast majority of people as neurotics."¹⁶

Fromm therefore asks himself "what the conditions are which are responsible for the fact that so many people do not

¹⁵ See above p. 44.

¹⁶ FROMM, E., "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis, op. cit., p. 383.

become neurotic in spite of the failure in their personal fight for freedom"¹⁷. He explains:

It seems...useful at this point to differentiate between two concepts: that of defect and that of neurosis. If a person fails to attain freedom, spontaneity, a genuine experience of self, he may be considered to have a severe defect, provided we assume that freedom and spontaneity are the objective goals to be attained by every human being. If such a goal is not attained by the majority of members of any given society, we deal with the phenomenon of socially patterned defect.¹⁸

In other words, Fromm calls the solution where the individual gives up the struggle for his freedom a "defect". If everybody (or the majority) in a given society share this defect, the individual appears to be "normal" from the standpoint of his adaptation to this society: this defect is then called a socially patterned defect. Indeed, in this way the individual avoids "neurosis" as such (that is, the conflict between the tendency to give up one's freedom and the tendency to struggle for it), but he remains crippled as a human being. However, because the majority is also crippled, this conforming individual appears to be "normal": he shares the same defect: "...he is not aware of it as a defect, and his security is not threatened by the experience of being different, of being an outcast, as it were. What he may have lost in richness and in a genuine feeling of happiness is made up by the security of fitting in with the rest of mankind--as he knows them."¹⁹.

17 Ibid., p. 383.

18 Ibid., p. 383.

19 Ibid., p. 383.

3. In Man for Himself (1947)

In Man for Himself, Erich Fromm will add a new dimension to his theory of sanity by explaining what is "psychosis".

We have seen above²⁰ that Fromm answers the question: "How is man related to the world when he uses his powers productively?" by saying that the "world outside oneself can be experienced in two ways: reproductively...; and generatively..."²¹. "The normal human being is capable of relating himself to the world simultaneously by perceiving it as it is and by conceiving it enlivened and enriched by his own powers. If one of the two capacities is atrophied, man is sick;"²².

We have also seen that when the generative capacity is atrophied man suffers of "realism", of superficial knowledge of reality²³. On the other hand, if the reproductive capacity is atrophied completely, man becomes insane, he becomes psychotic:

20 See above, p. 15.

21 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 95.

22 Ibid., p. 97.

23 Ibid., p. 95-6: "The relative atrophy of the generative capacity is very frequent in our culture. A person may be able to recognize things as they are (or as his culture maintains them to be), but he is unable to enliven his perception from within. Such a person is the perfect "realist", who sees all there is to be seen of the surface features of phenomena but who is quite incapable of penetrating below the surface to the essential..."

...the person who has lost the capacity to perceive actuality is insane. The psychotic person builds up an inner world of reality in which he seems to have full confidence; he lives in his own world, and the common factors of reality as perceived by all men are unreal to him.²⁴

To the three ways of relating to the world (in terms of "sanity") that we have discovered up to now (relatedness in saving one's freedom; relatedness at the expense of one's freedom--that is to say "the socially patterned defect"; and difficulties in relating in either of the above ways because of the conflict between these two tendencies--that is to say neurosis), we must now add another solution: that of not relating at all, that is to say psychosis or complete insanity.

4. In The Sane Society (1955) and The Art of Loving (1956)

In The Sane Society,²⁵ Erich Fromm speaks of the "basic psychic needs" of man: he speaks not only of the need for relatedness (p. 35), but also of the need for "transcendence" and "creativity" (p. 41), the need for "rootedness" and "brotherliness" (p. 42), the need for a "sense of identity" and "individuality" (p. 62) and finally of the need for "a frame of orientation and devotedness" (p. 64). Except for the need of a sense of identity and individuality, it seems that all these needs are aspects of the need to relate.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁵ FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., pp. 33-66.

The need for transcendence and creativeness is said by Fromm himself to be "closely connected with the need for relatedness"²⁶. This need is described as a "need to transcend this very state of the passive creature"²⁷. Man "is driven by the urge to transcend the role of the creature, the accidentalness and passivity of his existence, by becoming a 'creator'."²⁸. It seems that this need refers to what has already been described in Man for Himself²⁹, as the need to relate productively to things.

The need for rootedness and brotherliness seems to be another way of explaining man's need to relate productively to people. After man has severed his natural roots with nature, he has to find new roots, a new relatedness in order to break the feeling of separateness and aloneness: "He can dispense with natural roots only insofar as he finds new human roots..."³⁰.

The need for a frame of orientation and devotion also appears to be an aspect of the need to relate. "The fact that man has reason and imagination leads not only to the necessity for having a sense of his own identity, but also for orienting himself in the world intellectually."³¹. Man

26 Ibid., p. 41

27 Ibid., p. 41

28 Ibid., p. 41.

29 See above, chart p. 8.

30 Ibid., p. 42.

31 Ibid., p. 64.

does not know how to act, how to relate, how to develop his freedom. He gradually learns and expresses his experiences in "frames of reference" which guide him and his children to come. The close relationship of this need for a frame of reference to the need to relate in order to overcome the feeling of aloneness created by man's transcending of nature is better seen in Fromm's description of this need in Man for Himself:

The disharmony of man's existence generates needs which far transcend those of his animal origin. These needs result in an imperative drive to restore a unity and equilibrium between himself and the rest of nature. He makes the attempt to restore this unity and equilibrium in the first place in thought by constructing an all-inclusive mental picture of the world which serves as a frame of reference from which he can derive an answer to the question of where he stands and what he ought to do.³²

Thus the frame of reference can be seen as an intellectual answer that should guide man in his effort to relate either productively or nonproductively to the world³³.

The three above mentioned needs therefore appear to be only aspects of the fundamental need to relate. The other need, the need for a sense of identity and individuality appears to refer to what Fromm earlier described as man's

32 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 55.

33 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 65: "The need for a frame of orientation exists on two levels; the first and the more fundamental need is to have some frame of orientation, regardless of whether it is true or false. ... On the second level the need is to be in touch with reality by reason, to grasp the world objectively."

need to be free, to develop his own freedom in his relatedness to the world if he is to be healthy and normal from the standpoint of the individual, if he is not to suffer either of neurosis or of the socially patterned defect; here is how Fromm describes this need:

Man, being torn away from nature, being endowed with reason and imagination, needs to form a concept of himself, needs to say and to feel: 'I am I'. Because he is not lived, but lives, because he has lost the original unity with nature, has to make decisions, is aware of himself and of his neighbor as different persons, he must be able to sense himself as the subject of his actions.³⁴

And he adds: "As with the need for relatedness, rootedness, and transcendence, this need for a sense of identity is so vital and imperative that man could not remain sane if he did not find some way of satisfying it."³⁵ In other words, just as we have to relate to remain sane, we have also to be ourselves. This indeed very much resembles the description given by Fromm of the healthy, normal human being from the standpoint of the individual, who has to relate to the world by being himself at the same time, by developing his freedom and spontaneity at the same time.³⁶

The deepest need of man appears to be the need to relate. This assumption is confirmed by Fromm himself in

³⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

³⁶ See above, p. 46, first paragraph.

his next book, The Art of Loving: "The deepest need of man, then, is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness. The absolute failure to achieve this aim means insanity..."³⁷. Man becomes insane if he cannot relate. But this is also true of the other fundamental need, the need to be ourselves, to be free. Indeed Fromm says in The Sane Society that:

The basic psychic needs stemming forth from the peculiarities of human existence must be satisfied in one form or other, unless man is to become insane, just as his physiological needs must be satisfied lest he die.³⁸

We have seen that these needs could be brought down to two fundamental ones: the need to relate and the need to be ourselves. If man does not relate and if he has to give up his self he becomes insane.

Fromm gives more precisions in saying that "the way in which the psychic needs can be satisfied are manifold, and the difference between various ways of satisfaction is tantamount to the difference between various degrees of mental health"³⁹. If we take the deepest need of man, the need to relate, we find that the difference between the ways in which this need is satisfied is tantamount to the difference between various degrees of mental illness. In other words, if man is completely unrelated, psychosis, the worst mental ill-

37 FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op. cit., p. 8.

38 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 67.

39 Ibid., pp. 67-8.

ness is the result. If the need to relate is at least partially satisfied, neurosis, that is to say a milder type of mental sickness, is the consequence. The same thing is true for the need to be ourselves, to develop our selves, as we have seen above (page 46). The normal sane human being develops fully his self whereas the neurotic is the one whose freedom and spontaneity have been somehow crippled. Fromm concludes:

If one of the basic necessities has found no fulfillment, insanity is the result; if it is satisfied but in an unsatisfactory way--considering the nature of human existence--neurosis (either manifest or in the form of a socially patterned defect) is the consequence.⁴⁰

For the first time Fromm speaks of the "socially patterned defect" as a form of neurosis. Thus, if one of the basic necessities is not fulfilled, either the fundamental need to relate, or the need to be ourselves, insanity (psychosis) is the result, that is to say the individual is completely cut off from reality⁴¹. If either one of the needs is but partially satisfied, neurosis is the result: if the individual relates but partially, he suffers of one of the forms of neuroses (indeed, the manifest neurotic is the one who has difficulty to relate because of the inner conflict between the tendency to give up his self and to keep it, whereas the one

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴¹ We assume that if the individual's self was completely atrophied he could not relate at all, he'd be psychotic.

who suffers of a defect does not relate deeply because his self is not sufficiently developed to do so) and the same thing is true of the individual who partially gives up his self, as can be seen in the description we have just given of neurosis as partial relatedness. Indeed these two fundamental needs (to relate and to be ourselves) appear to be complementary: we have difficulty to relate if our self is not sufficiently developed, and we have difficulty to develop our self if we are not sufficiently related!

The sane human being, as we shall immediately see, is the one who fulfills the basic needs of man. We have just shown that these two fundamental needs were the need to relate and to be ourselves. The sane human being would therefore be the one who relates (through his various powers, described earlier, in the chart on p. 8, as the power to know, the power to love, and the power to do creative work), but who maintains his self at the same time. This is how Fromm has defined the normal, healthy human being in Escape from Freedom⁴², and this is how he defines him in The Sane Society:

Mental health is characterized by the ability to love and to create, by the emergence from incestuous ties to clan and soil, by a sense of identity based on one's experience of self as the subject and agent of one's powers, by the grasp of reality inside and outside of ourselves, that is, by the development of objectivity and reason.⁴³

⁴² See above, first paragraph, p. 46.

⁴³ FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 68.

5. In "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" (1960)

This definition of sanity as the ability to relate fully while maintaining at the same time one's self, one's spontaneity is expanded in "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism".

We quote Fromm's long description of "well-being":

Well-being is the state of having arrived at the full development of reason: reason not in the sense of a merely intellectual judgment, but in that of grasping truth by "letting things be" (to use Heidegger's term) as they are. Well-being is possible only to the degree to which one has overcome one's narcissism; to the degree to which one is open, responsive, sensitive, awake, empty (in the Zen sense). Well-being means to be fully related to man and nature affectively, to overcome separateness and alienation, to arrive at the experience of oneness with all that exists--and yet to experience myself at the same time as the separate entity I am, as the in-dividual. (...) If it is all that, it means also to be creative; that is, to react and to respond to myself, to others, to everything that exists--to react and to respond as the real, total man I am to the reality of everybody and everything as he or it is. In this act of true response lies the area of creativity, of seeing the world as it is and experiencing it as my world, the world created and transformed by my creative grasp of it, so that the world ceases to be a strange world "over there" and becomes my world. Well-being means, finally, to drop one's Ego, to give up greed, to cease chasing after the preservation and the aggrandizement of the Ego, to be and to experience one's self in the act of being, not in having, preserving, coveting, using.⁴⁴

In other words, to be sane is to be capable of fully relating to the world through all the powers of man: love, creativity and knowledge (in its reproductive and generative, or objective and subjective, aspects), without crippling one's self.

⁴⁴ FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism", op. cit., pp. 91-2.

To be completely insane, as we have seen, is to be either completely incapable to relate or to be completely incapable of being ourselves: but it seems that these two possibilities are correlative. Indeed it would seem that one could precisely not relate because his self is not sufficiently developed and vice-versa.

To be neurotic is either to be capable of only partially relating or to be only partially ourselves. But one is incapable of fully relating precisely because he suffers of the Oedipus complex, that is to say because one's freedom and spontaneity have not sufficiently been developed.⁴⁵ And one's self has not been sufficiently developed precisely because one has not been correctly and fully related (to our parents, for example, in the case of the Oedipus complex).

We have now clarified the question mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter. We had noticed already in Chapter One that to be completely incapable of knowing the outer world is to be insane or psychotic. We can now better understand this. If man cannot relate to the world through knowledge, he is insane, but this is also true of the two other powers to relate. Man is also insane if he cannot

⁴⁵ See above pp. 42-3.

relate through his power of love, for example⁴⁶.

Thus, the problem of knowledge studied in the first chapter is now better situated in the context of the whole of Fromm's thought. To know is one of the powers through which man relates to the world, and to be fully related is to be sane. We now can see how Fromm's theory of knowledge relates to his theory of sanity.

Let us now see how Fromm's theory of sanity relates itself to his theory of "science" as such.

B. Science

1. Science in general

Human knowledge may be expressed in various forms, as we have seen in the first chapter. For example "Many profound insights about man and society have first found expression in myths and fairy tales, others in metaphysical specu-

⁴⁶ FROMM, E., "Medicine and the Ethical Problem of Modern Man", in FROMM, E., The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays..., op. cit., p. 178:

"... a person who in his life negates completely what Albert Schweitzer called 'reverence for life', who is utterly cruel, utterly inhuman, utterly without kindness, utterly without love, is brought to the verge of insanity. When he goes on and on, he is afraid of becoming insane, and sometimes he does become insane. Sometimes he develops a neurosis which saves him from insanity; even some of the worst men on this earth need to keep the illusion ... that there is something human and something kind in them, because if they could not feel that any more, then they would not feel human any more and they would feel, indeed, close to insanity."

lations, others in scientific assumptions."⁴⁷ We have also seen that "religious formulations and religious symbols are attempts to give expression to certain kinds of human experience"⁴⁸. Rituals in general (dramatic and religious) are another form of expressing knowledge, they are "an acting out of the very same problems which are thought out in philosophy and theology"⁴⁹. Poetry itself is another form of expressing our knowledge of the world; Fromm approves the following description of the poet given by Goethe:

"as long as he expresses only these few subjective sentences, he can not yet be called a poet, but as soon as he knows how to appropriate the world for himself, and to express it, he is a poet."⁵⁰

However in this section we are not interested as such in these forms of expressing human knowledge. Rather, we will be interested in understanding the form of expressing human knowledge that is "science". We will try to see what characterizes this type of expression, what distinguishes it from the other forms of expression--according to Fromm.

a. In "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis" (1944)

In Fromm's first description of science as such, we

⁴⁷ See above, p. 12.

⁴⁸ See above, p. 22.

⁴⁹ See above, p. 25.

⁵⁰ GOETHE, conversation with Eckermann on January 29, 1826 (Fromm's italics, and translation) quoted by FROMM, E., in Marx's Concept of Man, (New York), F. Ungar Pub. Co., (c. 1961), 260 pp., p. 28.

notice that science is seen as a process but as a process especially concerned with the discovery of the truth:

The history of science is a history of erroneous statements. Yet these erroneous statements which mark the progress of thought have a particular quality; they are productive. And they are not just errors either; they are statements, the truth of which is veiled by misconceptions, is clothed in erroneous and inadequate concepts. They are rational visions which contain the seed of truth, which matures and blossoms in the continuous effort of mankind to arrive at objectively valid knowledge about man and nature.⁵¹

Science is seen as an interpretation of what is: "The development of scientific thought is not one in which old statements are discarded as false and replaced by new and correct ones; it is rather a process of continuous reinterpretation of older statements, by which their true kernel is freed from distorting elements."⁵².

Thus we retain that science is a process of discovery essentially concerned with saying the truth about what is.

b. In Man for Himself (1947)

In Man for Himself, Fromm makes an interesting distinction between theoretical and practical science.

Fromm criticizes the generally admitted belief that ethics cannot be scientific because it deals with values and norms rather than with facts: "Since Kant, it has been wide-

⁵¹ FROMM, E., "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis", op. cit., p. 380.

⁵² Ibid., p. 380.

ly maintained that objectively valid statements can be made only about facts and not about values, and that one test of being scientific is the exclusion of value statements."⁵³

For Fromm the exclusion of value statements is not a sufficient criterion for judging of the scientific nature of a given expression of knowledge. In order to prove this he shows that many sciences considered to be "scientific" are made up of value judgments--all the applied or practical sciences.

He gives the example of the "arts": Fromm speaks of the arts in a very general sense, since he mentions "the art of engineering or medicine"⁵⁴ to illustrate his point. In the arts, says Fromm, there are always two aspects: on one hand, there are norms to guide the "artist" in his action, and on the other hand there is a body of knowledge that justifies these norms. Indeed, "in the arts we are accustomed to lay down objectively valid norms, deduced from scientific principles which are themselves established by observation of fact and/or extensive mathematico-deductive procedures."⁵⁵ Thus there are two kinds of science in the arts: "The pure or 'theoretical' sciences concern themselves with the discovery of facts and principles..."⁵⁶. "The applied sciences

53 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 26.

54 Ibid., p. 26.

55 Ibid., p. 26.

56 Ibid., p. 26.

concern themselves primarily with practical norms according to which things ought to be done--where 'ought' is determined by scientific knowledge of facts and principles."⁵⁷

"In all arts a system of objectively valid norms constitutes the theory of practice (applied science) based on the theoretical science."⁵⁸ It is therefore clear that the exclusion of norms and value judgments is not a sufficient criterion to establish whether a statement is scientific or not. This might be true for the theoretical sciences but not for the applied sciences.

Now, adds Fromm, "not only medicine, engineering, and painting are arts; living itself is an art."⁵⁹ In this realm as in any other we will need a theoretical science upon which an applied or practical science will be based. In the case of living this applied science is called "ethics": if this ethics is to be "scientific" it will be based on a science of man which will be the theoretical science in the case of man. Fromm calls this conception of ethics "humanistic ethics": "Humanistic ethics is the applied science of the 'art of living' based upon the theoretical 'science of man'."⁶⁰

57 Ibid., p. 26.

58 Ibid., pp. 26-7.

59 Ibid., p. 27.

60 Ibid., p. 27.

What does Fromm mean by this "theoretical science of man"? Fromm explains:

The subject of the science of man is human nature. But this science does not start out with a full and adequate picture of what human nature is; a satisfactory definition of its subject matter is its aim, not its premise. Its method is to observe the reactions of man to various individual and social conditions and from observation of these reactions to make inferences about man's nature.⁶¹

This science has to proceed this way because: "Human nature can never be observed as such, but only in its specific manifestations in specific situations. It is a theoretical construction which can be inferred from empirical study of the behavior of man."⁶² In other words, we build a "model of human nature" which will guide man to establish norms of action, norms of conduct. "In this respect, the science of man in constructing a 'model of human nature' is no different from other sciences which operate with concepts of entities based on, or controlled by, inferences from observed data and not directly observable themselves."⁶³

Erich Fromm also speaks of this theoretical science as "psychology" in the general sense: "... it is, I think, apparent that the development of a humanistic-objectivistic ethics as an applied science depends on the development of psychology as a theoretical science."⁶⁴ Psychology would be

61 Ibid., pp. 32-3.

62 Ibid., p. 33.

63 Ibid., p. 33.

64 Ibid., p. 39.

the theoretical science in the case of the art of living. But he understands "psychology" in the general sense: within psychology he prefers the method of psychoanalysis because it can know man more fully:

...psychoanalytic theory is the first modern psychological system the subject matter of which is not isolated aspects of man but his total personality. Instead of the method of conventional psychology, which had to restrict itself to the study of such phenomena as could be isolated sufficiently to be observed in an experiment, Freud discovered a new method which enabled him to study the total personality and to understand what makes man act as he does.⁶⁵

Ethics, or the applied science of the "art of living", will therefore be based on a theoretical science--just as the arts of engineering or medicine--and this theoretical science of man will be psychology understood in a more general sense than is usually understood in the science of psychology.

c. In The Art of Loving (1956)

In The Art of Loving Fromm recalls what he had said in "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis", that is to say that science is especially concerned with discovering the truth:

In scientific thought, the correct thought is all that matters, both from the aspect of intellectual honesty, as well as from the aspect of the application of scientific thought to practice--that is to technique.⁶⁶

65 Ibid., p. 40.

66 FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op. cit., p. 67.

In other words, the theoretical as well as the applied sciences are characterized by their concern for the truth.

d. In "On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology" (1959)

In this essay "On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology"⁶⁷, Erich Fromm will better explain what he means by a theoretical science of man, that is to say by psychology:

The endeavor to understand man by thought is called "psychology"--"the knowledge of the soul". Psychology, in this sense, attempts to understand the forces underlying man's behavior, the evolution of man's character, and the circumstances determining this evolution. In short, psychology tries to give a rational account of the innermost core of an individual soul.⁶⁸

It is now clear that when Fromm speaks of psychology he means the science of man by thought.

Once more Fromm says that "complete rational knowledge is possible only of things"⁶⁹ and this is why the "legitimate aim of psychology thus is the negative, the removal of distortions and illusions, not the positive, the full and complete knowledge of a human being."⁷⁰ Indeed: "The only way to full knowledge lies in the act of love; this act transcends thought, it transcends words. It is the daring plunge into the essence of another--or my own."⁷¹

67 FROMM, E., "On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology", in FROMM, E., The Dogma of Christ..., op. cit.

68 Ibid., p. 199.

69 Ibid., p. 199.

70 Ibid., p. 201.

71 Ibid., p. 201.

If psychology (or the theoretical science of man) is a "science" by its concern for the truth, it nevertheless cannot use the same methods to attain the truth because its object, man, is not a thing. The only real method to understand man is the knowledge given to us in the act of love.

e. In Beyond the Chains of Illusion (1962)

In Beyond the Chains of Illusions⁷², Fromm says that all the sciences that have "man" as an object cannot proceed in the same manner as the sciences of things. Indeed, a lot can be known by studying man as a thing, but this knowledge is not complete in itself. For the knowledge of man, another method must also be used:

Both psychology and sociology have as their object man. I can get to know a great deal about man by observing him like any other object. I--~~the~~ observer--stand against my "ob-ject"...to observe it, describe it, measure it, weigh it,--yet I do not understand that which is alive if it remains an "object". I understand man only in the situation of being related to him, when he ceases to be a split-off object and becomes part of me or, to be still more correct, when he becomes "me", yet remains also "not-me".⁷³

Indeed, to know man the methods of the natural sciences are insufficient: they cannot give us the complete truth about man. To know man we must use the layer of knowledge by thought but we must also use the layer of experiential or

72 FROMM, E., Beyond the Chains of Illusion. My Encounter with Marx and Freud., (New York), Giant Cardinal by Pocket Books Inc., (c. 1962), xxiv-198 pp.

73 Ibid., p. 161.

intuitive knowledge.

f. In Dialogue with Erich Fromm (1966)

It is in an interview with R.I. Evans⁷⁴ that Erich Fromm gives the most extensive explanation of his theory of science (in a chapter entitled "Fromm's Philosophical Observations").

The interviewer, Dr. Evans, recalls the two orientations in American psychology, on the one hand the "varieties of determinism, most of which present a psychology modeled after the natural sciences."⁷⁵ and on the other, the "many thinkers in the field who are not bound by these models and who seek instead a more humanistic approach"⁷⁶. He then asks the following question to Fromm: "Do you believe that there is room for both frames of reference with psychology?"⁷⁷. Fromm says yes, but feels competent to speak only of his own approach, the humanistic approach⁷⁸, and he describes it in the following manner:

I would say, from my standpoint, that psychoanalysis is the most scientific form of psychology.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ FROMM, E., in EVANS, R.I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, (New York), Harper and Row, (1966), xix-136 pp.

⁷⁵ EVANS, R.I., in EVANS, R. I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, op. cit., p. 73.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

⁷⁸ FROMM, E., in Ibid., pp. 73-4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

In other words, within psychology there are two necessary methods: one consists in studying man as a thing, the other in studying man as a man. This latter method is that of "dynamic psychology" or "psychoanalysis"⁸⁰, and it is considered to be more scientific by Fromm.

But what does he mean by "scientific"? Fromm answers:

If I am to proceed in a scientific way, I must confront myself with this problem and make sense out of it in view of all the data I have in my possession. Detailed observation of facts, deriving of inferences, formation of hypotheses, verification of hypotheses or of their plausibility--this is the method used in all sciences; except that in dynamic psychology and psychoanalysis, the methods of verification are different from those of the natural sciences.⁸¹

In order to illustrate what he means by these different methods of verification, Fromm gives the following example:

A very simple example of this would be to consider a chest X ray. Two doctors who are specialist in the pertinent field see the same shadow. Most of the time they will agree on what the shadow means, but occasionally they completely disagree.⁸²

...indeed, it is necessary to have seen hundreds and hundreds of X rays in order to be able to make sense of this particular shadow; and there is no "rigorous" test for that, either. Yet it is empirical, and it is scientific. It is just observation, the result of long observation, of experience, and of knowledge of what these things mean.⁸³

And Fromm very much criticizes those who require "rigorous proof" for all the sciences: "I would say that psychoanaly-

80 Ibid., p. 74.

81 Ibid., p. 75.

82 Ibid. p. 77.

83 Ibid., p. 77.

tic thinking is a more modern and more sophisticated type of thinking than the kind of psychological research which requires very strict and rigorous proofs. No one in theoretical physics speaks much about rigorous and strict proofs of anything, and the same thing is true very often in biology. Perhaps some psychologists are so concerned with rigorous proof because what they are trying to prove is not too significant."⁸⁴.

The proof for Fromm does not consist in applying the rigorous methods of the sciences of things to all other objects of knowledge, to man for example. The proof for Fromm consists in the critical attitude of the scientist: "The proof of the results lies precisely in the scientific attitude, the critical attitude, toward what one is doing. The problem, then, is really reduced to this question: How correctly is the scientific method being applied?"⁸⁵ In other words, one has to take special care that one has well observed all the facts before making inferences and hypotheses to explain them. One then has to verify these hypotheses.

But it seems that the most important thing is the starting point, that is the observation of all facts. This assumption appears to be justified by Fromm himself when he

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

gives this other definition of the scientific attitude (or proof):

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.⁸⁶

One has to make sure, to start with, that one is dealing with facts and not with subjective wishes. That is to say, in a sense, that one has to be sane. Indeed, we have seen that the insane person was the one who was unable to relate to the world through his powers, through his power of knowledge for example: "...the person who has lost the capacity to perceive actuality is insane. (...) When a person sees objects which do not exist in reality but are entirely the product of his imagination, he has hallucinations; he interprets events in terms of his own feelings, without reference to, or at least without proper acknowledgment of, what goes on in reality."⁸⁷ Thus, in this sense, to be scientific is to be sane, it is to be able to fully relate to what is through our power of knowledge. In another sense, it is to be concerned with the truth, to be able to see what is rather than what one wishes.

Thus to be scientific is to be concerned with the truth, it is to be able to distinguish between fact and fiction. But to be able to do so is also to be sane because it

86 Ibid., pp. 81-82.

87 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 96.

is to be related progressively or productively through the power of knowledge. We therefore can see how Fromm's theory of sanity relates to his theory of science: to be scientific is to be sane, it is to be able to see what is rather than what one wishes.

Among the sciences Fromm gives a special place to psychoanalysis. He has already said that it was the most scientific form of psychological knowledge⁸⁸; but he also assigns it a special task for the discovery of truth. Indeed, psychoanalysis can be very helpful to make us distinguish in ourselves what causes us to take our wishes for facts. It can therefore help us to be more scientific in other realms also: "If analysis produces any effect, it would be that of gradually ridding oneself of one's narcissism, that is to say, of one's confusion between fact and subjective wishes."⁸⁹. For these two reasons, we shall have to take a special look at the science of psychoanalysis.

To summarize what Fromm has written on science in general, we could therefore say that science (theoretical as well as applied science) distinguishes itself from the other

88 See above p. 69.

89 FROMM, E., in EVANS, R.I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, op. cit., p. 82.

forms of expressing human knowledge by its special concern for discovering and saying the truth⁹⁰.

In the case of the study of man, just as in engineering, medicine or painting, a body of theoretical science of man must be developed. This theoretical science is concerned with the discovery of facts and regularities (or "principles" as Fromm says)⁹¹. It is necessary to take special care that it is facts that are discovered about man and not subjective wishes or values. For this we must carefully apply the scientific method and analyze ourselves to discover our subjective wishes and thus prevent or correct distortions. We must especially make sure that all the facts about man are discovered: in other words, the science of man must not restrict itself to the facts that the layer of knowledge by thought is capable of discovering. It must also use the

90 Here is a text that helps to understand Fromm's idea of "truth"--taken from FROMM, E., Psychoanalysis and Religion, op. cit., p. 15:

"Jung's use of the concept of truth is not tenable. He states that 'truth is a fact and not a judgment', that 'an elephant is true because it exists'. But he forgets that truth 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. Jung then states that an idea is 'psychologically true in as much as it exists'. But an idea 'exists' regardless of whether it is a delusion or whether it corresponds to fact. The existence of an idea does not make it 'true' in any sense. Even the practising psychiatrist could not work were he not concerned with the truth of an idea, that is, with its relation to the phenomena it tends to portray. ..."

91 See above, p. 63, for the definition of theoretical science.

layer of experiential or intuitive knowledge to discover deeper facts about man.

Once this theoretical science of man is elaborated, it is possible to deduce norms, that is to say an applied science which in the case of living is called ethics, just as is done in the other arts (norms for good engineering deduced from the theoretical science of physics for example). This science is also concerned with the truth, though in this case it means to make sure that the norms are really based on the theoretical science (of man) and not on our subjective wishes or values. Indeed, in the applied sciences also we must be concerned with the correct thought⁹², with the truth because "norms are by no means arbitrary; their violation is penalized by poor results or even by complete failure to accomplish the desired end."⁹³.

2. The Science of Psychoanalysis

We shall now try to understand why the science of psychoanalysis is the most scientific form of psychology and what is its special role in the discovery of the truth.

a. In Man for Himself (1947)

In Man for Himself Erich Fromm explains why psycho-

92 See above, p. 66.

93 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. 27.

analysis is a more scientific method to understand man than the "usual" method of psychology:

Instead of the method of conventional psychology, which had to restrict itself to the study of such phenomena as could be isolated sufficiently to be observed in an experiment, Freud discovered a new method which enabled him to study the total personality and to understand what makes man act as he does. This method, the analysis of free associations, dreams, errors, transference, is an approach by which hitherto "private" data, open only to self-knowledge and introspection, are made "public" and demonstrable in the communication between subject and analyst. The psychoanalytic method has thus gained access to phenomena which do not otherwise lend themselves to observation.⁹⁴

Psychoanalysis does not restrict its study of man to those facts that can be analyzed and experimented through the methods of the natural sciences. It wants to know the whole of man: "psychoanalytic theory is the first modern psychological system the subject matter of which is not isolated aspects of man but his total personality."⁹⁵ Since it can let us see more of man, more of the truth, it is in this sense, we assume, more scientific.

b. In Psychoanalysis and Religion (1950)

In a sense, says Fromm in Psychoanalysis and Religion, psychoanalysis is a technique to discover the truth:

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 40-1.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

The psychoanalytic process is in itself a search for truth. The object of this search is the truth about phenomena not outside of man but in man himself. It is based on the principle that mental health and happiness cannot be achieved unless we scrutinize our thinking and feeling to detect whether we rationalize and whether our beliefs are rooted in our feeling.⁹⁶

In other words, it is the truth that cures the insane or neurotic patient, it is the capacity to see what is rather than what one wishes. However, as we can see in the above quoted text, it is to get in touch with the truth not only through our intellect, but also with our "feeling". For the moment, Fromm does not say more on this "affective" acquaintance with the truth; he will rather explain how psychoanalysis helps us to distinguish between fact and fiction, between our empirical and fictitious concepts.

Psychoanalysis helps us to see whether we speak the truth or whether we rationalize:

The minute study of the process of rationalization is perhaps the most significant contribution of psychoanalysis to human progress. It has opened up a new dimension of the truth, it has shown that the fact that someone sincerely believes in a statement is not enough to determine his sincerity, that only by understanding the unconscious processes going on in him can we know whether he rationalizes or whether he speaks the truth.⁹⁷

"Indeed", says Fromm, "to help man discern truth from falsehood in himself is the basic aim of psychoanalysis, a therapeutic method which is an empirical application of the state-

96 FROMM, E., Psychoanalysis and Religion, op. cit., p. 77.

97 Ibid., p. 60.

ment, 'The truth shall make you free.'⁹⁸ Thus, the truth, the ability to attain the truth, cures the insane or neurotic person.

However we must also see, on the other hand, that "in psychoanalysis man's ability to search for the truth is held to be inseparably linked to the attainment of freedom and independence."⁹⁹ To be able to relate to the world through knowledge, to be able to attain the truth, one's self must be developed. Otherwise, one will have a tendency to rationalize, to take fictions for facts; one will be incapable to relate fully if one's spontaneity is crippled¹⁰⁰:

The ambiguity of thinking, the dichotomy between reason and a rationalizing intellect, is the expression of a basic dichotomy in man, the coextensive need for bondage and freedom. The unfolding and full emergence of reason is dependent on the attainment of full freedom and independence. Until this is accomplished man will tend to accept for truth that which the majority of his group want to be true; his judgment is determined by need for contact with the herd and by fear of being isolated from it.¹⁰¹

That is to say: Man has to relate. The sane, healthy (we could now also say the "scientific") human being is capable of relating to people and to things by maintaining at the same time his self and his freedom. However, the neurotic

98 Ibid., pp. 78-9. 99 Ibid., p. 79.

100 See above, pp. 46-47.

101 FROMM, E., Psychoanalysis and Religion, op. cit., p. 59.

human being, the person whose self and freedom have not been sufficiently developed (by his parents and educators...) can relate to the world only at the expense of his self. He cannot relate and be himself at the same time: he gives up his self in order to relate. But this causes him to relate regressively: for example, if in the case of the power to relate that is knowledge, man's self, man's spontaneity is not sufficiently developed, this means that man's generative capacity to know is crippled. He will be able to relate through knowledge, but only through his "reproductive" power. He will therefore only have a superficial knowledge, because the generative capacity is required to have a deeper acquaintance with the world. He therefore cannot have a complete and deep view of the world, he cannot attain the truth, he cannot be really scientific because his freedom and independence are not sufficiently developed.

The psychoanalyst, in order to develop the patient's capacity to attain the truth, in order to cure his patient, must try to develop the patient's spontaneity and freedom:

The role of the analyst in this process is a very restricted one. He can ask questions which make it difficult for the patient to defend his loneliness by taking refuge in self-pity or by any of the many avenues of escape. He can be encouraging, as the presence of any sympathetic human being is to one who feels frightened, and he can help the patient by clarifying certain connections and by translating the symbolic language of dreams into the language of our waking life. But there is nothing the analyst, or any other person for that matter, can do to replace the patient's laborious process of sensing, feeling, and experiencing what goes on in his own soul.¹⁰²

102 Ibid., p. 92.

The patient must become himself: he must come to experience his experiences as his own. This cannot be done by the psychoanalyst or anyone else for the patient. The psychoanalyst can only guide his patient in this direction. The patient must become himself in order to be able to relate, through love, creativity and knowledge, in order to be sane, and in the realm of knowledge, in order to be "able of science!"

c. In "On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology" (1959)

In "On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology", Erich Fromm further illustrates the psychoanalytic process with the following example:

... the psychoanalytic situation looks sometimes like that of a man wanting to learn how to swim, yet being terrified of the moment when he has to jump into the water and have faith in its carrying power. (...) No amount or depth of psychological insight can ever take the place of the act, of the commitment, of the jump. It can lead to it, prepare it, make it possible--and this is the legitimate function of psychoanalytic work.¹⁰³

The patient has to experience his deep being, he has to be himself, but this he can do only by himself.

The psychoanalyst, by using the layer of knowledge through experience of union, can help the patient to experience himself as he is. But for this the psychoanalyst must not consider his patient as a thing: he must consider him as a human being if he wants the patient to become able of expe-

103 FROMM, E., "On the Limitations and Dangers of Psychology", in FROMM, E., The Dogma of Christ..., op. cit., p. 205.

riencing himself as a human being. Unfortunately, says Fromm, "Contemporary psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis are involved in this universal process of alienation. The patient is considered as a thing, as the sum of many parts."¹⁰⁴ The psychiatrist "does not look at the patient as a global, unique totality which can be fully understood only in the act of full relatedness and empathy."¹⁰⁵ The psychoanalyst must overcome his own alienation, he must not consider man as a thing:

If psychoanalysis is to fulfill its real possibilities, the analyst must overcome his own alienation, must be capable of relating himself to the patient from core to core, and in this relatedness to open the path for the patient's spontaneous experience and thus for the "understanding" of himself.¹⁰⁶

It is only through experiential knowledge that the patient can understand himself and become himself, it is only through experiencing his being as his own that he will develop his spontaneity. But in order to achieve this aim the psychoanalyst must establish between himself and his patient such an experiential relationship, such an intuitive knowledge; the psychoanalyst...:

...must not look on the patient as an object, or even only be a "participant observer"; he must become one with him and at the same time retain his separateness and objectivity, so that he can formulate what he experiences in this act of oneness. The final understanding cannot be expressed fully in words; it is not an "interpretation" which describes the patient as an object with various defects, and explains their genesis, but it is an intuitive grasp.¹⁰⁷

104 Ibid., p. 205.

105 Ibid., p. 206.

106 Ibid., p. 206.

107 Ibid., p. 206.

In other words, the analyst must use the layer of knowledge that is an experience of union, he must use experiential knowledge if he is to know really his patient and if he is to contribute to his cure.

d. In "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" (1960)

We have seen in the first part of this chapter that insanity or psychosis was to be unable to relate and unable to be oneself. To become sane the psychotic therefore has to be able to relate and he must also develop his self, his independence: He must be able to relate while remaining himself.

To become himself the patient must discover his deeper self, he must not become aware only of his superficial being. He must discover what remains unconscious. Indeed we have already seen that we are not aware of all our own experiences¹⁰⁸: we must perceive our own experiences through a conceptual system if we are to become aware of them. But these conceptual systems (language, logic...) are social products, they change with every society:

We come, then, to the conclusion that consciousness and unconsciousness are socially conditioned. I am aware of all my feelings and thoughts which are permitted to penetrate the threefold filter of (socially

108 FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism", in SUZUKI, D.T., FROMM, E., DeMARTINO, R., Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, op. cit., p. 99. See above, p. 31.

conditioned) language, logic, and taboos (social character). Experiences which can not be filtered through remain outside of awareness; that is, they remain unconscious.¹⁰⁹

Our society lets us become aware of what it needs to function, of what is important enough for this society: "...when it comes to a more subtle or complex experience, like seeing a rosebud in the early morning, a drop of dew on it, while the air is still chilly, the sun coming up, a bird singing--this is an experience which in some cultures easily lends itself to awareness..., while in modern Western culture this same experience will usually not come into awareness because it is not sufficiently 'important' or 'eventful' to be noticed."¹¹⁰

Already in The Forgotten Language¹¹¹ Fromm had spoken in similar terms of the unconscious, in speaking of the knowledge of the unconscious given to us by our dreams. "The way we think", he said, "is largely determined by what we do and what we are interested in achieving."¹¹² Now while we are awake "thoughts and feelings respond primarily to challenge--the task of mastering our environment, changing it, defending ourselves against it. Survival is the task of the waking man; he is subject to the laws that govern reality. This means that he has to think in terms of time and space and that his thoughts are subject to the laws of time and

109 Ibid., p. 104.

110 Ibid., p. 100.

111 FROMM, E., The Forgotten Language..., op. cit.,

112 Ibid., p. 26.

space logic."¹¹³. But while we are asleep we are not concerned with surviving: "We need not look at the outside world; we look at our inner world, are concerned exclusively with ourselves. (...) In sleep the realm of necessity has given way to the realm of freedom in which 'I am' is the only system to which our thoughts and feelings refer."¹¹⁴. In other words, while we are awake we are so concerned with the necessity of material survival that we are not aware of the experiences we have that do not concern survival. However, very often the symbolic language of our dreams expresses this deep experiential knowledge that remains unconscious unless we translate our dreams into a conceptual system. Very often this symbolic language of dreams expresses our unconscious experiences much better than our ordinary language is capable of¹¹⁵. It is possible to become aware of these deeper experiences that do not concern survival.

It is the role of psychoanalysis to make us become aware of these deep unconscious experiences. In "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" Fromm speaks of "the nature of insight and knowledge which is to affect the transformation of unconsciousness into consciousness"¹¹⁶. Here is how he describes this knowledge:

113 Ibid., p. 27.

114 Ibid., p. 27.

115 See above, p. 38.

116 FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism", op. cit., p. 110.

...soon Freud and other analysts had to discover the truth of Spinoza's statement that intellectual knowledge is conducive to change only inasmuch as it is also affective knowledge. It became apparent that intellectual knowledge as such does not produce any change, except perhaps in the sense that by intellectual knowledge of his unconscious strivings a person may be better able to control them...¹¹⁷

Indeed, "As long as the patient remains in the attitude of the detached scientific observer, taking himself as the object of his investigation, he is not in touch with his unconscious, except by thinking about it; he does not experience the wider, deeper reality within himself. Discovering one's unconscious is, precisely, not an intellectual act, but an affective experience, which can hardly be put into words, if at all."¹¹⁸

The aim of psychoanalysis is to have the patient experience himself deeply, experience his own deep relatedness to the world. "The process of discovering the unconscious can be described as a series of ever-widening experiences, which are felt deeply and which transcend theoretical, intellectual knowledge."¹¹⁹. This is the aim of psychoanalysis, but nobody can experience for the patient: he has to do the jump by himself. Others, the analyst for example, can only encourage him in this direction. In other words, the cure consists in having the patient discover his own deep self of which he very often is not sufficiently aware because in his life he is too preoccupied with the survival of his physical,

117 Ibid., p. 110.

118 Ibid., p. 110.

119 Ibid., pp. 110-111.

superficial being. He does not know his total self. He can not become aware of his total self through knowledge given to us by thought, because this is not a sufficiently deep knowledge to know man. If he wants to discover himself, he has to use the layer of experiential knowledge also.

Now the sick person needs help to discover his deep being, to learn what is experiential knowledge. This is the role of the psychoanalyst. He has to understand his patient through experiential knowledge (not only through knowledge by thought), and this very experiential understanding is part of the cure because it renders the patient capable of this type of intuitive knowledge. He will then be able to use it to discover his own deep self. This relatedness, this progressive or productive relationship, that is established between the patient and the psychoanalyst is also part of the cure because it renders the patient capable of deep and full relatedness¹²⁰. The insane person is precisely the one who can-

120 Ibid., p. 112:

"The knowledge of another person requires being inside of him, to be him. The analyst understands the patient only inasmuch as he experiences in himself all that the patient experiences; otherwise he will have only intellectual knowledge about the patient, but will never really know what the patient experiences, nor will he be able to convey to him that he shares and understands his (the patient's) experience. In this productive relatedness between analyst and patient, in the act of being fully engaged with him, ... , in this center-to-center relatedness, lies one of the essential conditions for psychoanalytic understanding and cure. The analyst must become the patient, yet he must be himself; ..."

not relate himself to the world, the neurotic, the one who cannot relate fully--who relates partially, but at the expense of his self. By establishing a deep relatedness with his patient--where both retain their independence and freedom--, the psychoanalyst contributes to the cure of the sick person.

We thus come to the conclusion that psychotherapy, for Erich Fromm, has a double aim: that of helping the patient to discover his own deep self, his own spontaneity and freedom, and that of establishing a progressive relatedness through knowledge (experiential and objective) that does not cripple either's freedom or independence. The patient discovers his full self through experiential or intuitive knowledge (and partially through objective knowledge). The psychoanalyst understands his patient through experiential knowledge also, but this very relatedness helps the patient to become able of such experiential knowledge through which he will be able to discover his own self and then to relate progressively or productively to other human beings. This discovery of one's self is not only an intellectual act, but it is always a total experience. It is total in the sense that the whole person experiences it; it is an experience which is characterized by its spontaneity and suddenness. One's eyes are suddenly opened; oneself and the world appear in a different light, are seen from a different viewpoint. There is usually a good deal of anxiety aroused before the experience takes place, while afterwards a new feeling of

strength and certainty is present."¹²¹. In short, experiential knowledge cannot leave us indifferent: it affects us deeply, and thus transforms us.

e. In Dialogue with Erich Fromm (1966)

In Dialogue with Erich Fromm, Erich Fromm gives more arguments on the scientific nature of psychoanalysis. He considers "that every psychoanalysis is an original research project which requires a great deal of capacity for research."¹²². Even though it deals with problems that can not be rigorously proved¹²³, it remains empirical:

I definitely do not believe it is correct to assert that psychoanalysis does not lend itself to empirical tests. Let us say I have listened to a patient for thirty hours. I have heard some of his dreams. I form a hypothesis. His next thirty hours, his next thirty dreams, will prove or disprove my assumption. I form a new hypothesis. I get more material, and eventually whatever further information comes forth from him will or will not make sense in terms of my hypothesis. I consider this a rather empirical test. (...) However, this test can be made only by someone who has studied this kind of procedure.¹²⁴

Just as any one can not interpret X rays, anyone cannot understand a patient through this psychoanalytic procedure.

121 Ibid., p. 110.

122 FROMM, E., in EVANS, R.I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, op. cit., p. 75.

123 See above, pp. 70-1

124 FROMM, in EVANS, R.I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, op. cit., pp. 76-7.

Psychoanalysis is not less scientific than any other science. To be scientific is to be concerned with the truth: this is also true of psychoanalysis: "Science in this context is not merely a method: it involves a relentless willingness to see the truth in a situation honestly and objectively."¹²⁵ To be scientific is not just to apply the scientific method, it is also to have the right attitude:

As far as the proof is concerned, this is to a large extent what I would call, as I suggested before, a matter of scientific conscience. It's perfectly true that in the fields in which one can measure and weigh, one is perhaps less tempted to swindle than in a field in which one cannot measure and weigh--although we all know there is nothing more tempting to lie about than statistics, because they can be manipulated so easily. (...) But it's a matter of conscience, and this is also the case in other sciences. ...I do not think that the psychoanalytic method in itself is any more prone to falsification than are other methods, or that its unique interests and aims make it less scientific.¹²⁶

To be scientific, in psychoanalysis as in any other science, is to be concerned with the truth. It is to search for all the relevant facts and to apply the scientific method (draw hypotheses, verify them, etc.).

However, to be scientific in the case of the study of man, in the case of what Fromm often calls "psychology",

125 Ibid., p. 79.

126 Ibid., p. 82.

means that one does not restrict oneself to the methods of the science of things. In short, this means that one does not only use the layer of objective knowledge, because this layer gives us complete knowledge only of things. Indeed, "Man is not a thing. He cannot be dissected without being destroyed. He cannot be manipulated without being harmed. And he cannot be reproduced artificially."¹²⁷. To know man deeply we must also use the layer of experiential knowledge: only if we use this type of knowledge will we have the complete facts about man, only in this case will we be truly scientific.

Psychoanalysis can be said to be the most scientific form of psychology in the sense, it seems, that precisely it aims at having total knowledge of man, and that it uses experiential knowledge to understand the patient. It also wants to understand the patient's own experiential knowledge by studying the dreams, which express this inner knowledge, these inner experiences. Psychoanalysis cannot restrict itself to objective knowledge because this is not a satisfying enough type of knowledge to understand the whole person. It thus can have knowledge of more facts about man, it can be more scientific.

127 FROMM, E., "Man is not a thing", op. cit., p. 10.

Psychoanalysis also has a special role as a science, since the one who has successfully been psychoanalyzed can then be more scientific in other realms, especially in the sciences of man but also in all other sciences. It makes us discover the value of experiential knowledge, which can give us fuller knowledge of man. But also, by developing our self, our spontaneity and independence, it permits us to have better objective knowledge, better knowledge through reason. Indeed we have seen above that reason was characterized by two poles, the poles of objectivity and subjectivity (or reproductive and generative capacities): by developing our self, our subjective capacity, psychoanalysis permits us to have deeper objective knowledge, to be more scientific even in the realm of things.¹²⁸

* * *

In the first part of this Chapter Two (Part A), we have seen Fromm's theory of sanity. To be sane is to be able to relate fully through our powers of loving, knowing and creating while retaining at the same time our self, our freedom and independence. This model of sanity can be said to be Fromm's model of human nature: indeed, as Fromm himself says, "The concept of mental health depends on our concept

128 See above, pp. 16-7.

of the nature of man."¹²⁹ Fromm's concept of mental health is different from that of Freud because his concept of human nature is different: "...Freud constructed a 'model of human nature'. This model was constructed in the spirit of nineteenth-century materialistic thought. Man is conceived as a machine, driven by a relatively constant amount of sexual energy called 'libido'. This libido causes painful tension, which is reduced only by the act of physical release..."¹³⁰. Freud believed man was a thing and that he had only physical needs. Fromm discovers that man cannot be sane if his psychic needs, basically the need to relate and to be oneself, are not satisfied. He concludes that man is more than a thing and that he cannot be treated as a thing.

In the second part of this Chapter, we have seen Fromm's theory of science: To be scientific is really to be sane, says Fromm¹³¹. It is to be able to distinguish the truth, that is to say, to be able to see what is fact and what is fiction. Now, this is the definition of the sane person, capable of using his power of knowledge progressively. Fromm's theory of sanity is therefore closely related to his

129 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 67.

130 FROMM, E., Beyond the Chains of Illusion, op. cit. p.34.: "This dynamism, which leads from tension to release of tension to renewed tension, from pain to pleasure to pain, Freud called the 'pleasure principle'. He contrasted it with the 'reality principle'... ...a certain equilibrium between the two is the condition for mental health."

131 See above, p. 72.

theory of science. To be really scientific, one has to be fully developed, fully sane. And to be sane, one has to be able to distinguish between fact and fiction, one has to be capable of discovering the truth, in other words, one has to be scientific, one has to be capable of science.

In the second part of Chapter Two we have also seen Fromm's understanding of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. If mental illness consists in the crippling of the two fundamental psychic needs of man--the need to relate and to be oneself--, psychotherapy will consist in developing these two capacities in the sick person. The layer of experiential knowledge has a special importance in this task. The patient must discover his own self through this experiential layer, he must experience himself deeply, and not only "think" about his self. But he needs the help of another person to do so--this is very often the task of the psychoanalyst. He must know his patient through experiential knowledge, and not only through objective knowledge. He thus establishes a deep relationship with his patient which contributes to the cure of this person who was incapable of relating without giving up his self, or who was completely incapable of relating. In this relatedness the patient and the analyst retain their own freedom, their self. Now this experiential knowledge between the patient and analyst lets the patient discover this type of knowledge. The analyst encourages his patient to discover his own being, his own deep unconscious through

this type of knowledge: the patient must become aware of his own deep experiences, and particularly of the experience of being himself. The patient can then use this type of experiential knowledge to relate progressively, fully, to other human beings, while retaining at the same time his newly discovered self.

We therefore see that to really understand Fromm's method of psychotherapy, we have to be able to distinguish experiential knowledge from objective and practically relevant forms of knowledge. Experiential knowledge has an essential part to play in the understanding and curing of the mentally sick.

CONCLUSION

Many books and articles have been written on Fromm¹, and many of these criticize him for one reason or another. But very often the critique made against Fromm, as we have seen in the Introduction, is that he is not scientific, that he is not empirical, but rather is an idealistic philosopher. Since the arguments against Fromm are often similar in content, we have neglected for practical reasons the articles written against Fromm's epistemology and have concentrated on the books written on Fromm (those books that deal with his theory of science).

The most extensive analysis of Fromm's theory of knowledge is made by John H. Schaar in Escape from Authority. The Perspectives of Erich Fromm. He accuses Fromm of being wrong at once in his theoretical science of man and in his applied science of living (ethics).

Let us first examine his criticism against Fromm's theoretical science of man. Schaar says:

¹ For these various books and articles on Fromm, refer to the bibliography at the end of this thesis.

CONCLUSION

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Fromm rests his case on the possibility of a science of man which will build a true model of human nature. He admits that such a science does not yet exist. Therefore, it would appear that Fromm is duty bound to undertake the scientific researches into the nature of man which he himself calls for. He does not. Far from restricting himself to the empirical procedures of the sciences, Fromm is in fact rather impatient with them. He has a model of man, to be sure, but it is not a model built by scientific procedures. It is a picture drawn from the writings of certain philosophers, moralists, and religious teachers.²

Schaar then tries to demonstrate this accusation. "The appeal to 'science' merely clutters Fromm's case and confuses his arguments. Let me illustrate this point with two examples. The first will show that he thinks all the features of man's nature prerequisite to a system of ethics have already been discovered and, therefore, a science of man is superfluous. The second will show that in his view no merely scientific method will ever uncover the essential secrets of man's nature."³

Let us first see how Schaar shows that Fromm does not really believe in the necessity of a science of man because all the essential aspects of man's nature would have already been discovered. Immediately after having described his concept of mental health in The Sane Society⁴, Erich Fromm

² SCHAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority. The Perspectives of Erich Fromm, op. cit., p. 35.

³ Ibid., pp. 35-6.

⁴ This concept of mental health is quoted above, on page 57.

makes the following comments quoted by Schaar:

This concept of mental health coincides essentially with the norms postulated by the great spiritual teachers of the human race. This coincidence appears to some modern psychologists to be a proof that our psychological premises are not 'scientific' but philosophic or religious 'ideals'. They find it difficult, apparently, to draw the conclusion that the great teachings of all cultures were based on a rational insight into the nature of man, on the conditions for his full development. This latter conclusion seems also to be more in line with the fact that in the most diverse places of this globe, at different periods of history, the 'awakened ones' have preached the same norms, with none, or little influence from one upon the other. Ikhnaton, Moses, Kung Futse, Lao-tse, Buddha, Isalah, Socrates, Jesus have postulated the same norms for human life, with only small and insignificant differences.⁵

First of all, says Schaar, "it is sufficient to say that whatever other methods of research the 'awakened ones' may have used to achieve their 'rational insight into the nature of man', they did not use the methods of modern empirical social science."⁶ In other words, the great spiritual teachers of mankind had a model of human nature but this model is not scientifically built (in terms of contemporary understanding of science). Now, keeps on Schaar, "I am arguing not that something should be excluded from science because it was stated in some other context by a 'great spiritual teacher', but that, for Fromm, the findings of the great spir-

5 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., pp. 68-9, quoted by SCHAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority..., op. cit., p. 36.

6 SCHAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority..., op. cit., pp. 36-7.

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itual teachers are quite enough."⁷ Unfortunately, Schaar does not quote any text other than the one quoted on top of page 97 (above) to substantiate this accusation. Schaar says that in fact Fromm builds his concept of mental health from the writings of the great spiritual teachers, and he has shown that these "great teachers" have not built their concept of man by scientific procedures. Fromm's concept of man, his theoretical science of man, his concept of mental health are therefore not scientific.

However Fromm never says that he develops his own concept of man from the writings of religious thinkers and philosophers. He rather says: "Regardless of whether we speak of 'mental health' or of the 'mature development' of the human race, the concept of mental health or of maturity is an objective one, arrived at by the examination of the 'human situation' and the human necessities and needs stemming from it."⁸ Through his practice as a psychoanalyst Fromm has discovered that man had more than physiological needs:

Man... After he has satisfied his animal needs, he is driven by his human needs. While his body tells him what to eat and what to avoid--his conscience ought to tell him which needs to cultivate and satisfy, and which to let wither and starve out.⁹

7 Ibid., p. 37.

8 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 71.

9 Ibid., p. 34.

For Schaar, since Fromm's concept of man (his concept of the healthy human being) has already been described by the great spiritual teachers of mankind, since "all the features of man's nature prerequisite to a system of ethics have already been discovered", "therefore, a science of man is superfluous" (see above, page 96).

But by making such a deduction, Schaar does not seem to understand Fromm's theory of science. Indeed, for Fromm, human knowledge does not always take the form of "science", it is not always written in "scientific", "logical" language; sometimes it is written in symbolic language, in myths, in dreams or in a primitive scientific language. Even though the great spiritual teachers had a concept of "mental health", they did not see it in the same context as we can today. Indeed, says Fromm,

It has usually been the case in the history of science that an older statement proves to be not simply true or untrue; it may have its original application only in a specific frame of reference. In the next stage of development this special case is seen in a broader aspect. Its restricted application is broadened by later development, and scientific thought proceeds in this way.¹⁰

The fact that the great spiritual teachers had a concept of well-being does not make it superfluous for us today to try, in a different context, to discover what makes man mentally

10 FROMM, E., in,
EVANS, R.I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, op. cit.
p. 83.

healthy. This can be done through psychoanalysis where all the aspects of a man's life can be carefully and lengthily analyzed¹¹. Now if through this type of analysis we arrive at a concept of mental health, a concept of well-being similar to that of the "great spiritual teachers", this does not mean that our task has been superfluous: it would be rather part of the process of science, it would be a verification of what had previously been discovered in a different context. One discovery would support the other, and could encourage further research, further discoveries.

Fromm does this. For example, in his essay on "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism"¹², here is what Fromm says of this humanistic religion:

... the knowledge of Zen, and a concern with it, can have a most fertile and clarifying influence on the theory and technique of psychoanalysis. Zen, different as it is in its method from psychoanalysis, can sharpen the focus, throw new light on the nature of insight, and heighten the sense of what it is to see, what it is to be creative, what it is to overcome the affective contaminations and false intellectualizations which are the necessary results of experience based on the subject-object split.¹³

However, J.H. Schaar cannot admit of such a method: for him, knowledge given to us by other methods than that of the

11 Ibid., p. 74: "What is the essence of psychoanalytic procedure? It is observing facts. Nobody is as minutely observed as is a patient during hundreds of hours of psychoanalytic interviews."

12 FROMM, E., "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism", op.cit.

13 Ibid., p. 140.

social sciences is not useful knowledge about man and he criticizes Fromm for having "read the classics of philosophy, literature, religion, and mythology in a spirit which is rapidly disappearing from social science."¹⁴:

The social scientist is coming increasingly to regard such works as data in the history of ideas, or as objects to be understood by the methods of the sociology of literature, or as "merely" esthetic experiences which ought to be strictly distinguished from scientific and useful knowledge about man.¹⁵

On the contrary, "Fromm's whole work shows how differently he regards such materials. He cites them not as illustration but as deepest truth. He reads them not for pleasure but for wisdom."¹⁶. For Schaar, all of what has been discovered in philosophy, art, great spiritual writings, literature is useless for the knowledge of man. For Fromm, they are merely different ways of expressing deep knowledge about man, in a symbolic way, in a way which is not explicitly concerned with the "truth" of this expression (as in the case of "science"). Schaar and Fromm therefore disagree on their understanding of what is science: for Schaar it appears that to be scientific in the case of the study of man is to apply the "methods of the social sciences"; for Fromm it is to be concerned with the full observation of all facts, to be concerned with the

14 SCHAAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority..., op. cit., p. 39.

15 Ibid., p. 39.

16 Ibid., p. 39.

truth.

This difference in the understanding of "science" can be even better seen in Schaar's second argument to show that Fromm is not scientific. "The second will show that in his view no merely scientific method will ever uncover the essential secrets of man's nature."¹⁷

Schaar summarizes in the following manner Fromm's argument in his article "Man is not a thing"¹⁸:

In the last analysis, man's mystery is not accessible to thought but can be grasped only through love. And what is known by love cannot be told in words. ¹⁹

That is the language of mystical religion, not of empirical science.²⁰

For Schaar the only possible science is attainable through the layer of knowledge by thought. What is attained by intuitive or experiential knowledge is "mystical religion", not science. The knowledge we can gain of man can be acquired only through thought. But for Fromm if we restrict ourselves to this type of knowledge, to knowledge by thought we will get a correct knowledge of man as a thing. But psychoanalysis shows that man has needs that transcend the realms of things and animals. To get all the facts about man, to know the full truth about man, to have a knowledge that is not superficial,

17 Ibid., p. 36.

18 See above p. 28.

19 SCHAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority, op. cit., p. 37

20 Ibid., p. 38.

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in a word, to be scientific, we must also use the layer of experiential or intuitive knowledge to get a deeper knowledge of man. But for Schaar, Fromm is precisely not scientific, not empirical in his intention of establishing a theoretical science of man, because he uses such experiential (mystical) knowledge.

Let us now see why, according to Schaar, Fromm has not succeeded, either, in his intention of developing an applied science of living.

First of all, Schaar states that there can be only two possible general types of ethical systems which he calls naturalism and supernaturalism, even though "Fromm has tried to find a way between them, which he calls normative humanism."²¹

He describes "naturalism" as an ethical system in the following terms:

As a philosophy... naturalism means two things. First, nature is complete in itself and inferior to no other realm. Man is immersed in nature and subject to all its laws. Naturalism is, in the second place, a theory of morals based upon the notion that what is natural is good and what is unnatural is evil.²²

But this is the "wrong" ethical system, according to Schaar. He brings a few arguments against this ethical system, among which the following one quoted as an example: (Fromm, as we

21 Ibid., pp. 13-4.

22 Ibid., p. 16.

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shall immediately see, is classified by Schaar as a naturalist):

If nature is complete in itself and inferior to no other realm, then everything that exists in nature is natural. Fromm asserts that evil exists. Therefore, evil is natural. Since what is natural is good, it follows that evil is good--which is absurd. In short, a moral theory which admits the existence of evil can locate the standard of perfect good only outside nature. On this one score, supernaturalism is a more logically satisfying doctrine than naturalism.²³

Naturalism, as an ethical system is absurd. There is only one ethical system left, supernaturalism, and this one must be the only correct one.

Now how is this supernaturalistic ethical system characterized? Schaar answers:

Logic will not bring one to accept the supernaturalist position. It must be embraced with reasons that the reason knows not of.²⁴

Ethics, for Schaar, is therefore not a matter for reason, for science. It cannot be based on scientific, objective grounds but must "be embraced with reasons that the reason knows not of". Fromm definitely is not a supernaturalist since his object is to establish a "science" of ethics: "I have written this book with the intention of reaffirming the validity of humanistic ethics, to show that our knowledge of human nature does not lead to ethical relativism but, on the

²³ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

contrary, to the conviction that the sources of norms for ethical conduct are to be found in man's nature itself;..."²⁵

Since Fromm is not a supernaturalist, he must be a naturalist, since this is the only other possible ethical system--according to Schaar. Because Fromm makes the following statement, he is accused of naturalism by Schaar:

The decision as to what is good and bad has to be made on the basis of our knowledge of man's nature and the laws which govern its growth.²⁶

In other words, Fromm would claim that "Man is immersed in nature and subject to all its laws" and that "what is natural is good and what is unnatural is evil"²⁷, because he has said the above text.

Now, first of all, in none of his texts published in English after 1940 does Fromm say that "Man is immersed in nature and subject to all its laws": he rather says the exact contrary, even in Escape from Freedom: after showing how much man was determined, he then adds a text to show that "man is not only made by history--history is also made by man"²⁸. And his definition of man is precisely that man has a capacity to overcome nature, to free himself from its laws:

25 FROMM, E., Man for Himself, op. cit., p. 17.

26 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 35.
quoted by SCHAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority, op. cit., p.18.

27 See above, p. 103.

28 FROMM, E., Escape from Freedom, op. cit., p. 28.

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When the animal transcends nature, when it transcends the purely passive role of the creature, when it becomes, biologically speaking, the most helpless animal, man is born. (...) He is part of nature, subject to her physical laws and unable to change them, yet he transcends the rest of nature.²⁹

Fromm does not say that man is immersed in nature: he says that man transcends nature! "Man... cannot go back to the prehuman state of harmony with nature; he must proceed to develop his reason until he becomes the master of nature, and of himself."³⁰ Man precisely can overcome the laws of nature to which he is subjected.

It is surprising that Schaar could make such an accusation against Fromm when most of Fromm's texts testify to the contrary. When Fromm says that "The decision as to what is good and bad has to be made on the basis of our knowledge of man's nature..."³¹, he does not say "of our knowledge of nature". It appears to us that Schaar confuses these two completely different understandings of "nature": Fromm believes on a science of ethics based on the model of human nature given to us by the theoretical science of man, not on a science of ethics based on "nature". By "man's nature", Fromm means the essence of man. But Schaar seems to confuse

29 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 30.

30 FROMM, E., Man for Himself, op. cit., p. 49.

31 See above, p. 105.

the two meanings of the word "nature".

On the basis of Fromm's own texts, Schaar's accusation of "naturalism" therefore appears to be abusive. Fromm would not be a "naturalist" because he never does say that "Man is immersed in nature and subject to all its laws". But Fromm would not be a supernaturalist either, since he believes that ethics can be built on reasons that reason does understand. Fromm would therefore be neither a supernaturalist, nor a naturalist. He would therefore have succeeded in finding a way between these two systems! Anyhow, Schaar has not shown that he did not.

Schaar's criticism against Fromm's epistemology can be summarized in the following manner. Fromm has not really succeeded to establish a theoretical science of man because he really does not believe in the necessity of such a science. The correct concept of well-being would have already been discovered by the great spiritual teachers and Fromm would have built his concept of the sane man on these teachings. But these teachings are not scientific. Therefore Fromm's concept of man is not scientific. Anyhow Fromm does not believe in science because he says man can be known fully only through the layer of experiential knowledge (act of love in the case of man); this type of knowledge is that of mystical religion, says Schaar, but not of empirical science.

On the other hand, Fromm is a naturalist in what concerns his "applied science of living": in other words he

holds an absurd ethical theory. Schaar brings more arguments to prove that Fromm has not succeeded in his purpose and he summarizes these arguments in the following sentence: "Fromm's attempt to show that the logical status of ethical judgments is the same as that of empirical judgments is unsuccessful because the whole case rests upon the assertion that living is the same as living well"³². In other words, Fromm wants to show that living, just like engineering or medicine, is an art. As any art, it has three aspects, three elements: a theoretical science, an applied science, and the assumption that the end is desirable. By arguing against the third aspect or element only (that living is desirable, that is to say, good living)³³ Schaar concludes that the two first elements are incorrect (that is to say that a theoretical science of man and an applied science of living would be also impossible). We do not want to enter further into this discussion, and we refer to the text³⁴ to illustrate what we have just said. Our conclusion is that Schaar does not show that Fromm has not succeeded in establishing an ethical theory that is neither naturalism nor supernaturalism as Schaar understands them.

32 SCHAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority, op. cit., p. 32

33 FROMM, E., Man for Himself, op. cit., pp. 27-8.

34 SCHAAR, J.H., Escape from Authority, op. cit., pp. 1 to 32.

A political scientist, Martin Birnbach, also condemns Fromm on the basis that he is not scientific in his procedure. Birnbach comes close to distinguish the difference between the layer of objective knowledge and experiential knowledge. He sees that reason sometimes seems to be close to "intuition" and for this, he accuses Fromm of being old-fashioned. Birnbach notices "that the borderline between reason, as Fromm uses the term, and intuition, as that word is commonly understood, practically disappears"³⁵, and he concludes:

Fromm is in reality turning the clock back to the day before yesterday. Likewise, the insistence on relatedness, on finding a sense of union with nature, on devotion to a transcendent cause--be it called humanistic psychoanalysis or religion--is evidence of a mistrust of reason. It is a renunciation of the integrity of reason unmixed with emotion; it could all too easily be considered a reversion toward irrationalism.³⁶

In other words, one reason why Fromm is not scientific is that he believes in intuition, he thinks that man cannot be known fully by reason, that he must also be known through experiential knowledge.

There is another reason why Fromm is not scientific, according to Birnbach. Fromm's thought is in fact a theory of natural law written in modern words: "... for those who desire a text on which to base a thoroughgoing impeachment of

³⁵ BIRNBACH, M., Neo-Freudian Social Philosophy, op. cit., p. 192.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 203.

modern society, Fromm's application of natural law theory has much to offer. It is, in fact, a modernization of an ancient doctrine."³⁷

Here is how Birnbach describes this modernized theory of Natural Law:

Fromm's psychoanalytic equivalent of the natural rights theory takes the form of what he calls "humanistic ethics". Claiming that "there are immutable laws inherent in human nature and human functioning which operate in any given culture" whose violation inflicts serious damage on the personality, he implies that psychoanalysis has found certain psychological minima that set a limit to the adaptation of the individual to cultural demands. Adaptation cannot go on indefinitely. Culture patterns contradictory to man's nature induce psychic stresses that compel him to change the patterns, for man cannot alter his nature.³⁸

Now, says Birnbach, "All will acknowledge the good service done by that doctrine in furthering the development of modern political institutions under the rule of law; the Western intellectual heritage would perhaps be unrecognizable without it."³⁹ But Birnbach adds:

Very probably, however, it is unsusceptible to validation by an empirical investigation of human nature and its formation--although in a sense Fromm's work can be interpreted as an effort at such validation--and it lends itself all too readily to the building of utopias which may be wide of the mark.⁴⁰

In short, Fromm is a Natural Law theoretician. Natural Law

37 Ibid., p. 205.

38 Ibid., pp. 84-5.

39 Ibid., pp. 205-6.

40 Ibid., p. 206.

is very probably not scientific. Therefore Fromm very probably is not scientific: "Erich Fromm's ideas... appear to have been gathered largely from quasi-philosophical sources rather than from clinical psychoanalytic experience."⁴¹

Unfortunately, Birnbach does not show why Natural Law cannot be scientific, nor does he show how Fromm is not scientific except by stating that he uses non-scientific intuitive knowledge and that his theory is in fact a Natural Law theory expressed in modern psychoanalytical terms. It nevertheless appears that Birnbach, also, has a different understanding of what science is: science cannot use intuitive knowledge, science must be based only on knowledge given to us by reason. Fromm thinks that to know man this type of knowledge is not scientific enough.

A third commentator of Fromm also labels him as a philosopher "rather" than a scientist; G.B. Hammond comments:

In fact, his position is clear enough, although Fromm makes some claims to the contrary: Fromm is a philosopher in the final analysis, albeit a philosopher who makes considerable use of various types of scientific evidence.⁴²

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 209.

⁴² HAMMOND, G.B., Man in estrangement. A Comparison of..., op. cit., p. 38.

And why is he not a scientist? Hammond explains:

Is it conceivable that a scientific model of human nature could be constructed on the basis of empirical data? If so, one would expect this construction to be founded upon carefully defined methods of procedure and modes of verification. Fromm, however, has devoted himself primarily to another type of substantiation: he has sought to show that the concept of essential man suggested by certain selected types of psychoanalytic and sociological evidence can be assimilated into the prophetic, Renaissance, and Enlightenment tradition of naturalistic and religious humanism.⁴³

In other words, Hammond too believes that Fromm has not succeeded in his intention of establishing a theoretical science of man. Instead of explaining where he got his concept of man, Fromm would have rather preferred to show that this concept of mental health was very similar to the concept of well-being found in the ancient spiritual teachings, and in the writings of humanist thinkers. In fact, Hammond accuses Fromm of not explaining enough his epistemology, rather than of not being scientific in this text.

Hammond seems to understand pretty well Fromm's intention of developing a science of man that would not use only the layer of objective knowledge, as the following text illustrates:

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

Fromm has come to feel that the basic method of science as usually understood is inadequate to the task of full awareness, although it is useful in practical pursuits. He views the detachment required by science as a form of alienation which must be overcome (although not eliminated). Man cannot be understood as an object; full knowledge requires participation in the being which is to be known. Science tends to make man into a thing, and this tendency is one of the great threats to humanism in our time. Thus knowledge of man's nature would be, in contemporary parlance, "existential" knowledge rather than knowledge from detached observation. Fromm has not fully abandoned the claim of being scientific in his methodology, but the contrary tendency is dominant.⁴⁴

Because Fromm does not want to use only the layer of knowledge by thought, because he wants to use experiential knowledge, he would not be scientific. This is the same argument that was given by both Schaar and Birnbach.

Hammond nevertheless recognizes that Fromm's theory of science is very much similar to that of the European school of "phenomenology". Hammond says: "Insofar as Fromm concerns himself with the structures of conscious experience, it could be said that he adopts a phenomenological method."⁴⁵ Let us quote Hammond's description of this phenomenological method:

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 40-1.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

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There are some similarities between Fromm's work and recent elaborations of a "phenomenological" method by various European philosophers. This method consists in a focusing of attention on the structures of the "life-world", of conscious experience. In a recent essay, James Edie explains the main thrust of the movement in this way: "Phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the subject; it is a science of experience. It does not concentrate exclusively on either the objects of experience or on the subject of experience, but on the point of contact where being and consciousness meet."⁴⁶

Hammond believes that "Insofar as Fromm concerns himself with the structures of conscious experience"⁴⁷, he could be said to have a phenomenological method. However, "to the extent that Fromm seeks to develop a normative humanism or naturalism it would appear that he abandons the descriptive and 'radically empiricist' method of Husserl and his followers"⁴⁸. In other words, Fromm might have applied the empirical method of phenomenology to discover the facts about man, --but he ceases to be empirical when he strives to build an applied science of living on the basis of this theoretical science of man.

In fact, Hammond criticizes Fromm for not being explicit enough in the description of his epistemology in the case of the theoretical science of man, and he accuses him

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 43-4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

of ceasing to be empirical when he wants to deduct an applied science of living from the theoretical science. It seems that for Hammond too, ethics or the applied science of living cannot possibly be scientific. Hammond also condemns Fromm for wanting to use "intuitive" knowledge, but then states that Fromm's methodology might be that of phenomenology and that he might therefore still be scientific by using experiential knowledge.

We thus come to the conclusion that Fromm's commentators accuse him of not being scientific for at least two general reasons. The first one is that he claims valid knowledge of man can and must be gained through experiential or intuitive knowledge. For this Fromm is accused of mistrusting reason. Fromm answers that we cannot really get all the facts about man if we use only the layer of knowledge by thought, we cannot therefore be really scientific if we do not use the layer of experiential knowledge.

Fromm is accused also of not being scientific because he attempts to build a normative science based on his theoretical science of man. All these commentators think that ethics (the normative or applied science in the case of man) cannot possibly be scientific. They therefore must conclude that Fromm cannot possibly be scientific. To this criticism, Fromm would answer that he does not see why a normative science or an applied science in the case of man

would be less scientific than in the case of science of things, or of sciences that deal with only one aspect of man (medicine for example). There are many applied sciences which are normative, "say music, painting, carpentry or the art of medicine or engineering"⁴⁹. These sciences are said to be scientific even though they are normative, on the condition that they are based on a theoretical science which is objective and valid. This would also be true, says Fromm, of the normative science of man, of "humanistic ethics" or "normative humanism", because it is an applied science based on the theoretical science of man; and he does not see why in the case of man this applied science could be less scientific than in the case of engineering.

* * *

But Fromm is not only condemned for the epistemological basis of his psychotherapy, he is also rejected for his psychotherapy as such by some of his commentators. We have already seen above⁵⁰ what Martin Birnback has to say on this point. Many critiques are made against him on this point too, but we shall only examine one which appears to be rough on Fromm, by Herbert Marcuse in Eros and Civilization⁵¹

49 FROMM, E., The Art of Loving, op. cit., p. 4.

50 See above, p. 44.

51 MARCUSE, H., Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud, (London), Routledge..., (1956), xii-277

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The Epilogue of this book is dedicated to the "Neo-Freudian Revisionists" and especially to Fromm. Marcuse first describes and praises Freud's psychotherapeutic method in the following words:

Repression and unhappiness must be if civilization is to prevail. The "goal" of the pleasure principle--namely, to be happy,--"is not attainable", although the effort to attain it shall not and cannot be abandoned. In the long run, the question is only how much resignation the individual can bear without breaking up. In this sense, therapy is a course in resignation: a great deal will be gained if we succeed in "transforming your historical misery into everyday unhappiness" which is the usual lot of mankind.⁵²

Freud wants, in other words, to adapt his patient to his dull civilization: he must help him to accept the fact that he cannot be fully happy because this would mean that he would follow all his desires: if everybody in society would do this, this would mean the end of civilization. For the sake of civilization, the patient has to resign himself, he has to learn not to follow all his instincts, he has to accept to be unhappy. Any society will tend to repress man's desires, any society will impede man's happiness.

However, according to Marcuse, Fromm is not satisfied with such a resignation. Fromm does not want man to adapt himself to a society that is sick, he wants man to eventually transform this alienated society instead of conforming to it.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 246-7.

In fact, says Marcuse, this means Fromm wants to make rebels of his patients, instead of resigned, relatively unhappy adapted human beings:

Over and against such a "minimum program", Fromm and the other revisionists proclaim a higher goal of therapy: "optimal development of a person's potentialities and the realization of his individuality". Now it is precisely this goal which is essentially unattainable--not because of limitations in the psychoanalytic techniques but because the established civilization itself, in its very structure, denies it. Either one defines "personality" and "individuality" in terms of their possibilities within the established form of civilization, in which case their realization is for the vast majority tantamount to successful adjustment. Or one defines them in terms of their transcending content, including their socially denied potentialities beyond (and beneath) their actual existence; in this case, their realization would imply transgression, beyond the established form of civilization, to radically new modes of "personality" and "individuality" incompatible with the prevailing ones. Today, this would mean "curing" the patient to become a rebel or (which is saying the same thing) a martyr.⁵³

Indeed Fromm's "rebels" would become martyrs because they would be crushed by an alienated civilization that they could not possibly succeed in transforming. In fact, Fromm is also a conformist because since it is impossible to relate productively in an alienated society, in practice the patient will have to resign himself to unhappiness anyhow: "productiveness, love, responsibility become 'values' only in so far as they contain manageable resignation and are practiced within the framework of socially useful activities (in other words, after repressive sublimation); and then they involve the

⁵³ Ibid., p. 258.

effective denial of free productiveness and responsibility--the renunciation of happiness."⁵⁴.

However Fromm does not think that contemporary society, contemporary civilization cannot change. He does not think that the cure of his patients will make them become rebels or martyrs, but he does admit that his ambition, his idea of psychotherapy make of the fully sane human being a "revolutionary":

This summary may suggest that what I have been describing is mental health and well-being, rather than the concept of a revolutionary character. Indeed, the description given is that of the sane, alive, mentally healthy person. My assertion is that the sane person in an insane world, the fully developed human being in a crippled world, the fully awake person in a half-asleep world--is precisely the revolutionary character. Once all are awake, there need no longer be any prophets or revolutionary characters--there will be only fully developed human beings.

The majority of people, of course, have never been revolutionary characters. But the reason why we are no longer living in caves is precisely because there have always been enough revolutionary characters in human history to get us out of the caves and their equivalents.⁵⁵

Thus Fromm's theory is not only an individual psychotherapy but it is also a social psychotherapy, in the long run. He thinks that by curing the individual one also eventually cures the whole of society.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 259.

⁵⁵ FROMM, E. "The Revolutionary Character", in The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays..., op. cit., p. 171.

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Indeed Fromm believes that society can also be sick.

To speak of a whole society as lacking in mental health implies a controversial assumption contrary to the position of sociological relativism held by most social scientists today. They postulate that each society is normal inasmuch as it functions, and that pathology can be defined only in terms of the individual's lack of adjustment to the ways of life in his society.⁵⁶

Fromm admits that he does not have the philosophy, the presuppositions, of most social scientists of today. This we have clearly seen in the first part of this conclusion. Indeed to speak of a "sane society" "...implies that there are universal criteria for mental health which are valid for the human race as such, and according to which the state of health of each society can be judged. This position of normative humanism is based on a few fundamental premises."⁵⁷

The species "man", can be defined not only in anatomical and physiological terms; its members share basic psychic qualities, the laws which govern their mental and emotional functioning, and the aims for a satisfactory solution of the problem of human existence. It is true that our knowledge of man is still so incomplete that we cannot yet give a satisfactory definition of man in a psychological sense. It is the task of the "science of man" to arrive eventually at a correct description of what deserves to be called human nature.⁵⁸

A society would be "neurotic" or insane if its members were neurotic: "From a standpoint of human values... a society could be called neurotic in the sense that its members are crippled in the growth of their personality."⁵⁹

56 FROMM, E., The Sane Society, op. cit., p. 21.

57 Ibid., p. 21.

58 Ibid., p. 21.

59 FROMM, E., Escape from Freedom, op. cit., p. 161.

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Thus in a sense to cure the individual in an insane society is to cure this society because the healthy human being becomes a revolutionary in such a crippled culture.

* * *

Psychoanalysis, and all the other sciences which study man, seem to be closely related to philosophy and to ethics.

To cure the patient, says Fromm, we must have an idea of what a sane human being is. If we are to be really scientific, we must make explicit this concept of well-being, and describe it more extensively than Freud did.⁶⁰ It will be the task of the theoretical science of man to gradually elaborate this "model" or "concept" of the healthy human being. If it is to be really empirical, this science of man must be concerned with the truth, with discovering all the facts about man. Fromm shows that it is impossible to get all the facts about man through reason alone, through the layer of knowledge by thought. We must also make use of

60 FROMM, E., in EVANS, R.I., Dialogue with Erich Fromm, op. cit., p. 13:

"...I first would say a word about the difference between Freud's concept of the genital character and my concept of the productive character. Descriptively, at least, they are very close, as were the pre-genital orientations. The interesting difference is that while Freud gave a detailed picture of the syndrome of the various pre-genital characters, or what I call the non-productive characters, he talked relatively little about what he termed the genital character."

the layer of intuitive knowledge to deepen and sharpen our intellectual grasp of man.

Once we have established a tentative model of the sane human being through this science of man, it is possible to elaborate norms for the cure of the sick patient. This would be the applied science of living--or "humanistic ethics" as Fromm also calls it. This applied science deduces norms of conduct to guide the sick person to a healthy living.

It appears that psychoanalysis is closely related to ethics, to ethics understood as an applied science of living based on the theoretical science of man. Indeed Fromm admits that they are closely related:

My experience as a practicing psychoanalyst has confirmed my conviction that problems of ethics can not be omitted from the study of personality, either theoretically or therapeutically. The value judgments we make determine our actions, and upon their validity rests our mental health and happiness.⁶¹

If Ethics is very useful for the understanding of mental illness, Psychoanalysis can also help to clarify certain ethical problems:

If humanistic ethics is based on the knowledge of man's nature, modern psychology, particularly psychoanalysis, should have been one of the potent stimuli for the development of humanistic ethics.⁶²

61 FROMM, E., Man for Himself..., op. cit., p. v.

62 Ibid., p. 16.

Unfortunately this has not been the case: "Psychoanalysis, in an attempt to establish psychology as a natural science, made the mistake of divorcing psychology from problems of philosophy and ethics. It ignored the fact that human personality cannot be understood unless we look at 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."⁶³

On the other hand, we could add, philosophy has usually refused to accept that ethics could be based on a theoretical science of man because it thought that this was too narrow a base. Durkheim wanted to build a science of ethics based on the theoretical science of sociology. However his sociology, his science of man was based only on knowledge given to us by thought, he studied man as a thing. Fromm wants a wider basis for his ethics: he wants a science of man that can gather all the facts about man. In other words, he wants a science of man based not only on objective knowledge (knowledge by thought) but also on experiential or intuitive knowledge. He wants a theoretical science of man that studies all the aspects of man.

For Fromm, it seems that the key to a rapprochement of philosophy and ethics with social or human sciences lies in this layer of experiential or intuitive knowledge. It

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 16-7.

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would seem that philosophers would accept that ethics should be based on the theoretical science of man, on the "model of human nature" given to us by the various sciences of man, as long as this theoretical science is not restricted to the knowledge that can be gained through "reason" only, as long as it would "widen" its knowledge of man through intuitive or experiential knowledge. On the other hand, if the social scientists "discovered" the layer of experiential knowledge, no doubt that they would hesitate less to consider more carefully the knowledge of human nature that has been gained and expressed through the centuries thanks to "intuition".

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ABSTRACT OF

The Epistemological Basis of Erich Fromm's Psychotherapy¹

While Erich Fromm considers that his work is more scientific than that of most American Social Scientists, these Scientists precisely accuse him of being a dreamer rather than a true scientist. Fromm describes man as a being who has emerged from nature because of his awareness. But this causes him to feel separated, and in order to overcome this intolerable feeling of aloneness, man must relate, either by falling back into a fusion with nature (regressive solution), or by searching for a new way of relatedness (progressive solution) without giving up his self, his newly acquired freedom.

The first chapter examines man's progressive relatedness to the world through his power of knowledge and it shows the evolution in Fromm's thought. Man can relate to the world of things through his "intelligence" (superficial knowledge of the practically relevant aspects of things), and through his "reason", for a deeper knowledge which aims at the essence. But man has also another way of knowing: he can get a deep knowledge of human beings through knowledge by experience, that is to say by "experiential" or intuitive knowledge. This latter type of knowledge is the only way to know people fully.

The second chapter shows how, in fact, to be scientific is to be "sane". To be sane is to be able to relate

¹ M.A. thesis, presented by Denis Gilles LA ROSE, in 1968, to the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Ottawa, 135 pages.

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progressively, fully, without giving up one's self. In the case of the power to relate that is knowledge, sanity means to be able to know "what is" rather than "what one wishes"; facts rather than fiction (in the case of knowledge of people, sanity means that we are capable of using both intellectual and intuitive knowledge). Now Fromm defines science as the mode of expressing reality that is especially concerned with the truth--with distinguishing fact from fiction. To be scientific is therefore, in a sense, to be sane. The second chapter also considers the special role of psychoanalysis among the sciences: since it aims at making us more sane, more capable of distinguishing fact from fiction, psychoanalysis contributes to render us more empirical in other realms of science. Within psychology, Fromm thinks that "dynamic" psychoanalysis is the most scientific, because it gives us a more total knowledge of man--indeed, it does not only use knowledge given to us by "reason", but it also uses "experiential" or intuitive knowledge.

Finally, we see that Fromm is accused of not being scientific, because he uses intuitive knowledge, and also because he believes psychoanalysis can help to make of ethics a real science, an applied science based on the theoretical science of man. Fromm is also accused by Herbert Marcuse of curing his patients to become rebels or martyrs in our alienated society, while Fromm says that he cures them to become sane, that is to say, rather, "revolutionaries" in an insane world. We notice, to conclude, how intuitive knowledge might be the key to a rapprochement of the social sciences with philosophy.