



Part Three: Sources and Forms of the Thought of Erich Fromm

6. Sources of Fromm's Thought

Moses Maimonides: The Jewish Tradition of the Negative Knowledge of God

Fromm interprets God's revelation of his name to Moses (Exodus 3:14) as the expression of the idea of the nameless God.¹ Without entering into the exegetical problem in any detail, one can only see the interpretation of the revelation „I am who I am“ as „my name is nameless“² as the extension of the ban on images to the „acoustic image,“ that is, the name, especially since, according to the Old Testament, name expresses being and the person who knows another's name has power over him.³ Subsequently, the ban on images is an important source for the negative attitude of Judaism toward all theology as a „speaking about God.“ In contrast to Christianity, the Jewish tradition has incomparably stronger reservations about all dogmatic theology. The insistence on the doctrine of negative attributes--that is, on negative theology and ethics as the essence of religion--is correspondingly more marked. Jewish negative theology leads to the mysticism of the kabbala and Hasidism, on the one hand, and to a more or less rationalist philosophy of religion on the other.

Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, 1135-1204) occupies a key position in these developments, for

¹ Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), p. 29; on what follows, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 28-38.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³ Cf. P. van Imschoot, „blame,“ 1215.

he not only offers a negative theology that was developed from Neoplatonism and influenced Meister Eckhart's mysticism but, through his study of Aristotle, he also became one of the principal representatives of medieval Jewish rationalism. Beyond that, history paradoxically (?) made him the guarantor of Jewish orthodoxy because he formulated the thirteen articles of the Jewish faith that are valid to this day.⁴ {184}

Fromm sees in Maimonides' formulation of the doctrine of God's negative attributes the logical development of the Old Testament concept of God and its negative interpretation. This place value of Maimonides in Fromm's critique of religion and in the self-representation of the Jewish understanding of religion calls for some scrutiny of Maimonides' negative theology.⁵

⁴ *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 40f, attempts to limit the meaning of these articles of faith as if they played no role whatever. But cf. M. Friedlander, *Die jüdische Religion*, a presentation of the Jewish religion that quite consciously orients itself around the thirteen articles of Maimonides.

⁵ The following comments are more than a discussion of Fromm's understanding of Maimonides. On Maimonides' doctrine of attributes, see Moses ben Maimon, *Guide of the Perplexed*, esp. Vol. I, chaps. 51-61; D. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der jüdischen Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters von Saadja bis Maimuni*, esp. pp. 428-468; H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, pp. 40-43; *Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis; Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums (Religion of reason out of the sources of Judaism); Jüdische Schriften, Vol. 3*, pp.



The starting point of Maimonides' Jewish *theologia negativa* is the question concerning God's attributes and the possibility of knowing them: Are there attributes that can describe God's nature-as Scripture does, for example, when it states that God is faithful, compassionate, and long-suffering, or jealous and wrathful-or do such attributes violate the ban on images that is meant to guarantee God's transcendence and unknowability? The answer is that God can only be assigned negative attributes.⁶ For „with every application of a positive definition to God, he is made similar to the creatures, which means that a step is taken away from the knowledge of his true nature while with every additional negation that is proved necessary, the knowledge of God becomes more perfect.“⁷ The reasons for the impossibility of making a positive statement about God's nature derive from a philosophical and „theological“ concept of God that cannot be conveyed by any kind of analogical thinking. Every positive statement about the nature of God is subject to the ambiguity of definition that requires *genus* and *differentia specifica*. „Such a difference that is based on the connection between genus and species must not exist between God and all that being that is not divine.“⁸ Maimonides' critique of an analogical mode of thought that makes positive statements about God's nature is aimed at those who include God's essential attributes and those of other beings in a single definition: „Similarity is based on a certain relation between two things; if between two things no relation can be found, there can be no similarity between them, and there is no relation between two things that have no similarity to each

44f; J. Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, pp. 180-205; L. Baeck, *Maimonides. Der Mann, sein Werk and seine Wirkung*; E. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 32-37.

⁶ On the history of this doctrine of God's negative attributes in the Middle Ages, see D. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der jüdischen Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters von Saadja bis Maimuni*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

⁸ H. Cohen, *Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis*, p. 94; Cf. Kaufman, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, pp. 431f.

other.“⁹

If it is impossible to make positive statements about God's nature, it would seem plausible to renounce any and every kind of knowledge of God. But Maimonides had to find a way toward the knowledge of God because the true knowledge of God is the foundation for his entire system. The way he finds is that of negation. Of course he could not advance his enterprise simply by negating {185} God's positive attributes, assuming there were legitimate positive attributes to begin with. His solution to the problem of negative attributes is to combine negation and privation: „It is not the positive attributes that are negated but those of privation.“¹⁰ For if attributes „merely negate imperfections but do not claim perfections,“¹¹ God's nature remains unaffected. „In order to pronounce the negative attributes without any qualms, it is necessary to connect with them the idea that they deny an imperfection in God which his very nature excludes.“¹²

Man's knowledge of God grows „the more man succeeds in keeping false, inappropriate definitions away from him and understands his difference from any and every other kind of being. The specific function of this negative knowledge is that it banishes all imperfections from the idea of God.“¹³ This applies down to ultimate philosophical concepts: if it is asserted about God that he exists, this is not an attribution of being but a denial of nonbeing.¹⁴ It is precisely this example that makes it clear that with his doctrine of negative attributes Maimonides teaches a *theologia negativa* that is not

⁹ Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, p. 201.

¹⁰ H. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, p. 63. Cf. Cohen, *Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis*, pp. 95f. In this connection of negation and privation, Cohen sees the decisive step by which the Jewish religion became a religion of reason. Maimonides elaborates on this notion in chap. 58 of *Guide of the Perplexed*.

¹¹ D. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, p. 435.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ J. Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 183; cf. *Guide of the Perplexed*, Vol. I, chap. 59.

¹⁴ Cf. Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 184.



necessarily intent on dissolving theology.¹⁵ Instead, he proposes that the understanding of the negation of attributes as the negation of privations makes possible a knowledge of God that „is based on a content of highest positivity.“¹⁶

In his doctrine of attributes, Maimonides arrives at the conclusion „that there is no possibility of obtaining a knowledge of the true essence of God, and since it has also been proved that the only thing that man can apprehend of Him is the fact that He exists, all possible attributes are inadmissible.“¹⁷ Yet Scripture contains an abundance of statements that appear to be about God’s nature. „Here, Maimonides ... takes the same path as his Jewish and Muslim precursors when he understands the positive biblical statements about God in part as positive forms of statements that are actually negative, in part as statements not about the nature but about the workings of God.“¹⁸ To the extent that with the fact of God’s existence, God is recognized as the supreme cause of being, positive statements can be made about the effects that emanate from

him.¹⁹ Maimonides connects this doctrine with Moses’ request of God: „Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee and find favor in thy sight ...“ (Exodus 33:13). God’s answer, {186} Maimonides writes, is twofold: The petition „show me thy ways“ is answered by God as follows: „I will make all my goodness pass before you“ (Exodus 33:19); while he responds to the second petition by saying: „You cannot see my face“ (Exodus 33:20).²⁰ Maimonides writes: „Consequently the knowledge of the works of God is the knowledge of His attributes, by which He can be known. The fact that God promised Moses to give him a knowledge of His works, may be inferred from the circumstance that God taught him such attributes as refer exclusively to His works, ‘merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness etc.’“²¹

The Jewish tradition knows thirteen qualities of God’s action that can be summarized in two attributes: „love and justice.“²² The meaning of such qualities of action, however, is not „that God really possesses qualities but that He performs actions similar to such of our actions as originate in certain qualities, i.e. in certain psychical dispositions; not that God really has such dispositions.“²³ Qualities of action only seem to be statements about God, for the qualities ascribed to God are actually only descriptions of his effects, whose purpose it is to lead man to perfection: „for the chief aim of man should be to make himself as far as possible, similar to God: that is to say, to make his acts similar to the acts of God, or as our Sages express it in explaining the verse, ‘Ye shall be holy’: ‘He is gracious, so be you also gracious; He is merciful, so be you also merciful.’“²⁴

¹⁵ Fromm opts for this position, *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), pp. 37ff.

¹⁶ Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, pp. 185: Cf. H. Cohen, *Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis*, p. 94. In the negative form of the knowledge of God in Maimonides, Guttman sees the way „Maimonides and similarly earlier Jewish and Islamic thinkers could see in the concept of God of hleo-platonism the scientific expression of their belief in God“ (p. 186). For Maimonides, however, this reshaping of the idea of God does not represent a concession to science. For him, „the philosophical sublimation of the idea of God is a religious demand“ (p. 181). In the most radical fashion possible, the concept of God is freed of every sensuous admixture here and the meaning of the religious idea of the one God is being grasped. If one disregards the admittedly decisive difference that Maimonides is concerned with preserving the purity of the idea of God, one notices that Fromm’s concern is very close indeed to this form of negative theology.

¹⁷ *Guide of the Perplexed*, p. 213.

¹⁸ J. Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 182; cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, chap. 58.

¹⁹ Cf. Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 182.

²⁰ Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, p. 192.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

²² Cf. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, pp. 99f. „Love and justice“ parallel Fromm’s *topos* „reason and love.“ The affinity of ideas becomes apparent when Fromm adds „justice“ to „reason and love.“

²³ *Guide of the Perplexed*, p. 198.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.



It must be noted that „every attribute predicated of God either denies the quality of an action, or--when the attribute is intended to convey some idea of the Divine Being itself, and not of His actions--the negation of the opposite.“²⁵ The meaning of this doctrine of attributes is the pure knowledge of God, though that knowledge is realized only to the extent that God is denied attributes. „It will not be clear to you, that every time you establish by proof the negation of a thing in reference to God, you become more perfect, while with every additional positive assertion you follow your imagination and recede from the true knowledge of God ... by affirming anything of God, you are removed from Him in two respects; first, whatever you affirm, is only a perfection in relation to us; secondly, He does not possess any thing superadded to the essence.“²⁶

According to Maimonides, it is actually „dangerous“ to assign {187} positive attributes to God because such assignment leads to polytheism²⁷ and furthers idol worship: „when we say that that essence which is called 'God' is a substance with many properties by which it can be described, we apply that name to an object which does not at all exist.“²⁸ When man ascribes attributes to such an imaginary being, he projects his own positive attributes (which Maimonides considers capacities) onto the God he himself has created, and at the same time moves further and further away from his own being.²⁹ The strict observation of the ban on images in the sense of the negative knowledge of God prevents idol worship and *eo ipso* man's alienation. Of course, this negative theology can be effective only where the existence of an unknowable God is uncontested, for every attempt to name him

also means the alienation of man as Maimonides understands it. Maimonides' application of the Neoplatonic *via negationis* to the Jewish concept of God produces a *theologia negativa* that proposes to return man from his alienation to himself and his own capacities, and can only accomplish this when--and to the extent that--it clings to the existence of this unknowable God. The true-negative-knowledge of God is not only the guarantee but also the condition that must be met if man is to be able to achieve his own perfection.³⁰

The interpretation of the positive biblical statements about God's nature as statements about qualities of God's actions that are intended to induce man to take such action makes clear once again what this understanding of negative theology is. At the same time, it leads to a specifically „ethical“ concept of God and religion that is characteristic of the Jewish philosophy of religion. Maimonides' *theologia negativa* disputes „those attributes of the divine being that cannot serve as model concepts for human actions.“³¹ This statement logically entails the demand that only „those of God's attributes may become the object of human and religious knowledge that define God's nature as the primordial image of morality.“³² God's nature can

²⁵ Ibid., p. 211.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 216.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, chap. 60, p. 225.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 225.

²⁹ „Not by such methods as would prove the necessity of ascribing to Him anything extraneous to His essence or asserting that He has a certain perfection, when we find it to be a perfection in relation to us“ (p. 215).

³⁰ Hermann Cohen, whom Fromm repeatedly quotes in support of his humanistic interpretation of Jewish tradition, cannot be quoted in support of this view because--albeit from the perspective of Neo-Kantianism--he holds fast to the postulate of an unmistakable Jewish God (as „idea“). Cf. Cohen's concept of „correlation.“ The temptation to interpret negative theology humanistically as positive anthropology in order to be able to negate God in favor of man results from a merely apparent parallel: while it is true that the *theologia negativa* negates all statements about God, it does not do so in order to negate God in favor of man but in order to affirm both God and man in their distinctiveness.

³¹ H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, p. 41.

³² Ibid. J. Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, pp. 186f, calls attention to the fact that Maimonides ultimately „subordinates the moral concept of the God of the bible to the neoplatonic one“ (p. 186), which means that the former goes further because, at least in



therefore be conceived only as the ideal of human action.³³ God does not even mean „the power from which man may derive his morality but merely the model, the pattern by which he is to guide his actions. The Jewish concept of God is thus exclusively one of the ethical meaning of the idea of God.“³⁴ If the knowledge of God thus becomes knowledge of the laws of human action on the basis of which human acts become {188} moral ones,³⁵ then every attempt to make positive statements about God’s nature must be judged as the alienation of man in favor of an idolatry. But here also, it holds true that the alienation of man can only be prevented, and human acts only become moral ones, when a negative knowledge of God is the condition of their possibility.³⁶ „Without the ‘He is gracious,’ there is no ‘Be you also gracious.’“³⁷

Positive statements about God’s nature are actually statements about what man ought to be, but only to the extent that statements about God’s nature are statements about his effects. Clinging to the existence of God is an expression of negative theology and at the same time the condition for the possibility of affirmative and ethical statements about

prophetic monotheism, the Bible makes the ethical concept of God primary and engages in a negative theology on its basis. The ideas being elaborated here are therefore more strongly governed by Hermann Cohen’s interpretation of Maimonides, which also influenced Erich Fromm.

³³ Cf. H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, p. 42: „God’s essence lies wholly in morality.“

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁵ Cf. Cohen, *Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis*, p. 90.

³⁶ Here also, it must be remembered that while the negation of a „dogmatic“ concept of God in favor of an „ethical“ one creates a conception of religion that differs fundamentally from the Christian concept of God, this does not involve a dissolution or substitution of the concept of God, Fromm’s different interpretation notwithstanding. The „ethical“ concept of God can only be interpreted as a humanistic concept of religion if the *theologia negativa* of Maimonides is dissolved. But that theology establishes the „ethical“ concept of God.

³⁷ Cf. *Guide of the Perplexed*, p. 198.

man.³⁸

Hermann Cohen: The Relationship of Ethics and Religion in the Jewish Philosophy of Religion

In the history of the Jewish faith, the prophets play a central role because they interpret the knowledge of God as the ways of God that man is to walk. They are not concerned with the revelation of God’s nature, for the knowledge of God teaches what man is to be. „The revelation of God and the revelation of what is moral in man come together in this way. ... To search God means to strive for the good; to find God means to do the good.“³⁹ This affinity of religion and morality found its most telling expression in the prophets. It is true of the Jewish faith in general and raises the question regarding the relationship between religion and ethics.⁴⁰

³⁸ Fromm’s question as to what it means in the tradition of negative theology that man affirms God’s existence (*You Shall Be as Gods* [1966a], p. 37) must be answered by Maimonides and other representatives of the Jewish faith in a way that disappoints Fromm’s expectations: it is precisely not a sign of unenlightened thinking to hold fast to God’s existence but an inner necessity of a „*theologia*,“ particularly if it wants to be a *theologia negativa*.

³⁹ L. Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, p. 31. Fromm advanced a similar formulation in a radio talk: „The goal is what the prophets called the full knowledge of God or, in non-theological language, that man fully develop his psychic powers, his life and his reason, have his center within himself and be free to become what, as a human being, he is capable of becoming“ (Fromm, „Die Aktualität der prophetischen Schriften“ [1975d], p. 71). Fromm understands these sentences humanistically, although they could also form part of a doctrine of negative attributes and be understood (mono-)theistically.

⁴⁰ Many statements by Jewish thinkers suggest a dissolution of religion in ethics. But in most instances, such a judgment can only be made when the concept of God is dissolved pantheistically, idealistically, materi-



Since the question concerning the relation of religion and ethics was reformulated by Kant, and since Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) was one of the most distinguished representatives not only of Neo-Kantianism but also of the enlightened „science of Judaism,“ and since, moreover, Fromm quotes Cohen time and again in his interpretation of what is Jewish, this relation will be demonstrated by showing how Hermann Cohen dealt with it.⁴¹

The prophetic tradition and the doctrine of negative attributes in Maimonides create a specifically Jewish concept of religion that cannot dispense with morality. „For religion also is morality, and it is only as morality that it is religion.“⁴² While in Christianity, {189} knowledge of God as the belief „in the nature of God and in divine salvation“ is the essence of religion and this belief „is elevated to

alistically, or naturalistically-humanistically, and this occurs *expressis verbis*. More often than not, it will become apparent that there only seems to be a dissolution of religion in ethics. Actually, identifying statements will turn out to be indissolubly linked to a negative theology of the One God that derives from the ban on images or at least to the postulate of an „idea of God.“ Concerning the relation between religion and ethics in Judaism, the following holds: the Jewish religion „values moral action most highly, it predicates only moral attributes of God, God is the God of the moral law. But an ethics without the belief in God does not exist for it . . . only in God does morality have its ground and its guarantee“ (L. Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, p. 162).

⁴¹ On what follows, see H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit; Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie*; „Gesinnung“ (1910) in *Der Nächste; Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism; Jüdische Schriften, Vols. I, III*, and introduction to Vol. I by Franz Rosenzweig; J. Guttmann, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, pp. 345-362; *Religion and Wissenschaft im mittelalterlichen und modernen Denken*; H. van Oyen, *Hermann Cohen*, pp. 345-352; H. M. Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*, pp. 295-305, and the bibliography on p. 295. The Kant interpretation in M. Lazarus, *Die Ethik des Judentums*, will not be discussed here; cf. the critique by H. Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften, Vol. III*, pp. 19f.

⁴² H. Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, Vol. III, p. 36.

the fundamental condition of human morality,”⁴³ it is ethos that is the essence of Jewish religion. Jewish knowledge of God means that only moral attributes may be predicated of him so that they may serve as a model for man’s actions: „God’s essence is morality and only morality.“⁴⁴ The difference „between the only God and the many gods lies in the idea of morality”⁴⁵ because every positive statement about God’s nature that does not relate to man’s morality leads to idolatry.⁴⁶

This understanding of God involves „his being turned into an idea that demands both the surrender of his metaphysical claims and the renunciation of all elaboration of him as a person. The transcendence of God can only be the transcendence of the idea...”⁴⁷ „Idea“ means that God has no actuality, „for actuality is a concept relating thought to sensation.“ Yet God is an ethical reality insofar as „ideas are archetypes of action.”⁴⁸ God is the primordial image of morality and the real meaning of the idea of God is that „true morality can become real, will become real.”⁴⁹ Where God is understood as idea, he is suprasensuous: something not to be described, reckoned, or understood; „neither a thing nor a lawful nexus nor a concept. But one can say what would not be if there were no God or, differently expressed: for what God ‘lays the ground.’”⁵⁰ „God’s being suprasensuous is the true precondition for moral effectiveness: namely, to serve as the basis for the moral state of mankind and of world his-

⁴³ H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, p. 47.

⁴⁴ H. Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, Vol. I, p. 294.

⁴⁵ H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, p. 34.

⁴⁶ Hermann Cohen defines as myth a religion in which knowledge of God is more than morality. This also applies to Christianity (cf. *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, pp. 43ff).

⁴⁷ Guttmann, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 350.

⁴⁸ H. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, p. 160.

⁴⁹ Guttmann, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 349.

⁵⁰ F. Rosenzweig, Einleitung XXXIII. Franz Rosenzweig emphatically rejects an understanding of the concept of idea in Cohen that sees in God „only an idea“ and where God himself is viewed as no more than „a 'poetic expression' for the idea of God.“



tory.⁵¹ How religion and ethos (morality) become interchangeable in this concept of God is clearly stated by Hermann Cohen: „Ethics would be demeaned and religion obscured if God’s significance were to be found beyond the realm of morality. The ethics intrinsic to God’s nature, and that alone, constitutes religion in Judaism.“⁵²

God’s functional transcendence⁵³--which means that the idea of God becomes the principle of morality, and morality the essence of religion--makes one ask about the concept of religion and its relation to ethics as the science of morality. For Cohen, the Jewish self-understanding of religion is determined by the efforts of the prophets „to first turn the interest of men away from their worry about the gods. ... But as this caused them to be seized by the thought of the good, they discovered the real meaning of the only {190} God.“⁵⁴ (The concept of the „only“ God stands for the distinctiveness of the „idea“ of God as transcendence mentioned above.) But because the idea of God became the principle of morality and morality is religion, this concept of religion has a universal validity, and religion becomes justifiably a „religion of reason.“⁵⁵

According to Cohen, the question concerning the relation between ethics and religion must therefore start from a concept of religion in which religion as the religion of reason is turned into „a general function of human consciousness.“⁵⁶ If ethics as the science of morality and the reflection of the

ethos is determined by reason, then the answer to the question concerning the relation between an ethic governed by reason and a religion of reason is suggested. What is at stake here is nothing less than the question whether ethics is able „to master the entire content of the concept of man [or, if not, whether] religion on its part is able to fill this gap.“⁵⁷

For along time, Cohen believed that in the relation between religion and ethics, „the introduction of Jewish-religious concepts into ethics had made religion superfluous.“⁵⁸ Religion is only a historical presupposition, since ethics „takes the ideas created by the naivete of the creative religious consciousness ... beyond the religious stage ... and gives them the certainty of autonomous moral insight. For the fully developed cultural consciousness, systematic ethics takes over the moral task of religion.“⁵⁹ It is only in his late work⁶⁰ that Cohen discovers a distinctive quality of religion that, though it does not make it autonomous vis-à-vis ethics, yet signifies that religion adds something to ethics.⁶¹ Ethics, which he saw as „wholly defined by the idea of the universal validity of the moral principle and which develops the moral idea of man exclusively from this perspective, therefore defines man as part

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁸ H. M. Graupe, *Die Entstehung des Modernen Judentums*, p. 301.

⁵⁹ J. Guttman, *Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 352.-In this phase of thought, the idea of God passed from religion to ethics, religion was perfected in ethics and Judaism found its philosophical justification in the eyes of H. Cohen (cf. *ibid.*, p. 353).

⁶⁰ For the first time in the essay „Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie,“ published in 1915, and explicitly in *Religion of Reason*.

⁶¹ If this distinctive quality of religion has such weight that one would have to acknowledge religion’s independence from ethical reason, it could no longer be a religion of reason (and Hermann Cohen’s life work to show that the Jewish religion is a religion of reason would have failed), or one would have to postulate two autonomous kinds of reason (and Hermann Cohen would have to renounce his claim to be a philosopher) Cf. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, pp. 12f.

⁵¹ H. Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften, Vol. I*, p. 296; cf. „Gesinnung“ in *Der Nächste*, pp. 8f.

⁵² H. Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, pp. 20f. Also in *Reason and Hope: Selections from the Jewish Writings of Hermann Cohen*, p. 221.

⁵³ „Functional“ here in contrast to „metaphysical.“ Cf. H. M. Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*, pp. 300f.

⁵⁴ H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, p. 33.

⁵⁵ That is the reason Hermann Cohen views Jewish monotheism as the most persuasive example of a religion of reason and why the complete title of his posthumous work is *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, p. 7.



of the All and sets for him the task of rising to the idea of the All.”⁶²

If religion is to have a place in ethics, it must have an idea of God that corresponds to the God of ethics. But the God of ethics knows only the idea of the universality (*Allheit*) of man, the idea of humanity. Religion, on the other hand, also knows a God of the individual who is significant for the moral problems of the individual, for sinful and suffering man.⁶³ Thus the distinctive character of religion vs. ethics is found precisely in its view of the relation between God and man. And the only God’s distinctive character is no longer that „He emerges from the relation between man and {191} man, from the idea of morality,”⁶⁴ and thus confronts messianic mankind as the only God. Instead, it is in compassion with one’s fellow human and in the recognition of man’s weakness and sin that a new meaning of God’s uniqueness arises. „He is unique for the human being insofar as man must be thought of as unique.”⁶⁵ This meaning of God is not posited by moral reason but derives from the distinctiveness of religion, although this distinctiveness does not necessarily mean that there is an autonomous reason within the system of philosophy.

Cohen attempts to do justice to this new relation between man and God in his concept of „correlation,” a concept that goes beyond mere relation and indicates „that a reciprocal relation exists between man and God.”⁶⁶ Reason here „is the condition by virtue of which God can come into correlation with man”⁶⁷ and reveal himself to him.⁶⁸ And

⁶² J. Guttman, *Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 354.

⁶³ Cf. the demonstration of the distinctiveness of religion through the phenomenon of suffering and sin in Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, pp. 16-20.

⁶⁴ H. Cohen, *Religion and Sittlichkeit*, p. 35; *Religion of Reason*, p. 20: „As man in ethics is merely an example of humanity, so God is only the guarantor of humanity.”

⁶⁵ H. Cohen, *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie*, p. 61.

⁶⁶ H. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, p. 86.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁶⁸ „Revelation establishes the correlation of man and

it is only through reason „that man can come into correlation with God.“ „Thus, reason is made the root of the content of revelation. And no offense should be taken because the correlation of God and man, this correlation of the divine spirit to the human, has as an unavoidable consequence a kind of identity of logical reason in both.”⁶⁹

The concept of correlation has special significance for the specifically religious relation between God and man, for it may be understood neither as mediation by a man-god, as in Christianity, nor as mystical unity or pantheistic identification of God and man (and nature). What is involved is the unification of the uniqueness of God and that of man as individual, though „God and man have to remain separated, insofar as they are to be united.”⁷⁰ The pure monotheism of Judaism can be a religion of reason and maintain a distinctive quality vis-à-vis ethics only if it upholds the clear separation between the „individual in its isolation and God in His uniqueness.”⁷¹ Religion is to enter into this correlation of God and man in its distinctiveness, but its moral effort and its moral goals are to be the same.⁷²

God“ (*ibid.*, p. 82). Revelation is implicit in creation because creation involves the creation of man as a rational being. That is the reason Cohen can write: „Revelation is the creation of reason“ (*ibid.*, p. 72).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82. Cohen specifically refers to the tradition of Jewish medieval philosophy: „The attempt of the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages to establish an accord between reason and revelation and therefore ... the origin of revelation in reason, may be justifiably considered the legitimate continuation of monotheism.“

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105. Cf. also: „God and man have to remain separated, insofar as they are to be united“ (*ibid.*). It is by this idea of correlation that it can be most clearly shown that Fromm’s concept of religion as a „mysticism of the ONE“ differs fundamentally from Cohen’s. Where Cohen looks for a philosophical solution, Fromm is a mystic, yet he does not have to renounce the fascination of a „religion of reason.“

⁷¹ H. Cohen, *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie*, p. 66.

⁷² *ibid.*



If religion and ethical (or moral) reason become one, the meaning of God in the correlation of God and man is merely „to guarantee the goal, the success, the victory and the ethical self-improvement of man. ... This transcendence of God means that man can preserve his humanness unaided.“⁷³ But because the correlation between God and man is „the fundamental equation of religion, {192} man in this correlation must first of all be thought of as fellowman.“⁷⁴ Respect for the moral dignity of the other as ethics knows it is thus transformed into love of one's fellow man through compassion.⁷⁵ The distinctive quality of religion becomes even clearer in the experience of guilt, for guilty man asks for a God who is not only a God of mankind but also a God of the individual. Yet this distinctive quality does not imply a *deus ex machina*, for the experience is possible only in the correlation of God and man: „the work of liberation is wholly man's. But the result of the liberation is something remote from his nature, his profession, his concept, for that result is salvation. It lies wholly in God's hands. ... Man and God remain separate, like striving and success, like struggle and victory prize.“⁷⁶

Despite this difference between religion and ethics, it must not be overlooked that moral reason can also make these statements. The concept of correlation clearly shows that Cohen is concerned with showing that the Jewish religion is a religion of reason.⁷⁷ In the correlation of the unique God and man in his isolation, religion makes a contribution to moral reason, but that contribution does not signal any deficiency of reason. The relation of ethos (morality), ethics, and religion (as religion of

reason) should be defined once again: „theoretically, morality constitutes the content of ethics and practically it is the content of man's self-education. This self-education appears in the light of religion as the divine education of mankind. Hence morality and religion are conceptually distinguished. If, however, religion has its own share in the spirit of man ... then the concepts of God and man meet again.“⁷⁸ Even in the religious language of Cohen's late work, God remains „idea,“ though religious ideas (such as God's love, fellow man, reconciliation) enter into Cohen's idea of God. „The turn to religion has changed the content of the idea of God, not its methodical character.“⁷⁹ The Jewish doctrine of negative attributes, reinterpreted as moral reason, governs Cohen's thought throughout. „The love of God must be interpreted as love of the moral ideal, and the idea of God's love for man is justified only as an exemplar for pure moral action.“⁸⁰ Cohen's religion of reason places him in a certain tradition of Jewish intellectual history, which had an outstanding medieval representative in Maimonides and which is frequently labeled „rationalism.“ But it is a rationalism {193} that seeks to show that moral demands necessarily follow from a prophetically understood monotheism.⁸¹ „The religious experience here is that of God as the power of the good“⁸² because his unknowability makes him the model of morality. Consequently, there is no conflict between God's revelation and reason as moral reason. Human reason can recognize revela-

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ H. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, p. 114.

⁷⁵ Cf. Guttman, *Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 356.

⁷⁶ H. Cohen, *Der Begriff der Religion...*, pp. 66f; cf. the criticism of Cohen's conception of reconciliation in J. Guttman, *Philosophie des Judentums*, pp. 361f.

⁷⁷ This attempt of a religion of reason is to be understood in the Kantian sense „according to which philosophy not merely has to assign religion its place in the system of reason but also to derive it from reason“ (Guttman, *Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 360).

⁷⁸ Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, p. 109.

⁷⁹ Guttman, *Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 361. Man's sufficiency to maintain his humanness for which the transcendence of God as „idea“ is the necessary condition is based on „man's autonomous morality ... which is achieved and not limited by the goal toward which, like any other human activity, it must aim“ (Cohen, *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie*, p. 66).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Cf. Guttman, *Religion und Wissenschaft im mittelalterlichen und im modernen Denken*, p. 162.

⁸² Ibid.



tion because revelation reveals morality.⁸³ In this Jewish tradition of rationalism, the purpose of revelation lies not in the speculative but in the moral sphere.⁸⁴ Since the substantive definition of what religion corresponds to the purpose of revelation, religion has its purpose in morality.

Still, the difference between the medieval concept of rationalist religion as represented by Maimonides and the modern one as represented by Cohen cannot be overlooked: while revelation as understood by reason is the source of religion for Maimonides, Cohen, who follows Kant, sees reason itself as the source of religion and can therefore speak of a „religion of reason.“⁸⁵ „Cohen proposes to construct true religion as the religion of reason and to reveal the doctrine of the religion of reason in the historical religion of Judaism.“⁸⁶ The detailed comments here on Maimonides' negative knowledge of God and on the relation between ethics and religion in Cohen--both of whom illuminated a specifically Jewish tradition of rationalist understanding of religion as moral reason-- were intended to show both their closeness to, and their difference from, Fromm's thought. Especially with reference to Cohen's religion of reason, this matter can be summarized as follows:

At the beginning of his „radical interpretation of the Old Testament and its tradition,“⁸⁷ Fromm

observes that his own method of understanding the Bible has been profoundly influenced by Cohen's mode „of viewing the Old Testament and the later Jewish tradition as a whole.“⁸⁸ While Cohen understood the Bible in the spirit of Kant, Fromm writes,⁸⁹ he, Fromm, interprets it from the standpoint of a radical humanism.⁹⁰ If this reinterpretation is to indicate more than a purely formal similarity in method, there must be something that Bible, tradition, and reinterpreter's point of view have in common. In Cohen's attempt, this common element is the thread that runs from the prophets' negative knowledge of God to the view of the attributes as God's workings or {194} effects to the identity of the religion of reason and moral reason--a thread that was identified here as a specifically Jewish rationalism.

Fromm takes up this thread of development but proposes to continue it from his own humanistic perspective. He also looks for the common element in the negative theology of the prophets, Maimonides, and Cohen, but his aim is to negate God in favor of man. This means that he reinterprets the prophets, Maimonides, and Cohen humanistically, although they themselves were not interested in the negation of God but in a rationalistic interpretation of God as the condition for the possibility (as guarantor, in Cohen's case) of morality. Their concern was not to negate the concept of God in religion but to preserve ethical monotheism from idolatry and to solidify that monotheism as moral reason.⁹¹

Cohen's and Fromm's common interest is man and his future, the liberation from all powers that hinder his moral capacity of reason and love. Cohen's struggle against the myth of religion⁹² corre-

⁸³ It is in the relation between reason and revelation that one must see the essential difference between Jewish and Christian rationalism, for the Christian concept of revelation comprehends more than revelation and its natural religion that is accessible to reason. Traditionally speaking, the supernatural is posited along with the Christian concept of revelation so that „a distinction is to be made between the natural morality of reason and a higher level of the morality of grace“ (Guttman, *Religion und Wissenschaft*, p. 162: cf. pp. 155f, 174f, 185f).

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 163.

⁸⁵ Cf. H. J. Schoeps, *Geschichte der jüdischen Rechtsphilosophie in der Neuzeit*, pp. 3-21.

⁸⁶ Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, p. 360.

⁸⁷ This is the subtitle of Fromm's *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a).

⁸⁸ *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), p. 13.

⁸⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹¹ It is precisely the rationalistic interpretation of religion as morality that can ground ethos and ethics with the concept of God. But in Fromm's humanism where the critique of religion must ground man as moral being, another solution is required, and that is mysticism.

⁹² By this he means all attempts to mediate God and man. In this sense, he hews Christianity as a relapse



sponds to Fromm's struggle against all irrational authority. The two men share an antipathy to religion as dogma and plead for a religion that is the essence of morality. Both want man to develop his powers of reason, justice, and love, and thus to usher in the messianic age. Yet their fundamental differences must not be overlooked. In Cohen's work, man's existence and his future are assured only if the uniqueness of God as negative theology understands it is asserted and maintained, for only „God's transcendence means that man can maintain his humanness unaided.”⁹³ Fromm, on the other hand, wishes to preserve man and assure his future by negating the „idea“ of God for the sake of humanism. According to the logic of negative theology up to Cohen's religion of reason, to negate God is, in effect, to affirm him. At the very point where the attempt is made to derive humanism from monotheism by taking recourse to a concept of negative theology that proposes to subvert monotheism itself, the irreconcilability between „ethical monotheism”⁹⁴ and radical humanism becomes apparent.

The fundamental question of every religion, including Fromm's humanistic one, concerns the relation between God and man. By definition, this is a relation of difference that presses toward unity. Within the Jewish tradition, there is a wide stream that {195} understands this unity as the „experience“ of unity, and that is Jewish mysticism. During the years the socialist Shneur Salman Rabinkov tutored him in the Talmud, Fromm became acquainted with such a tradition, namely Habad Hasidism.

into myth that cultivates idolatry. Cf. H. Cohen, *Religion und Sittlichkeit*, pp. 32f; L. Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, pp. 92-95.

⁹³ H. Cohen, *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie*, p. 66.

⁹⁴ L. Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, p. 87. This is probably the correct characterization of the Jewish concept of religion and of the relation to God, which indicates that „moral optimism“ has its base in this ethical monotheism.

Shneur Zalman: Ethos Become Mysticism

If Gershom Scholem is correct, religion in its classical form does not emerge from the world of myth that fills nature with gods and makes it „the scene of man's relation to God“ until man is torn out of „the dream-harmony of Man, Universe and God”⁹⁵ and made aware of a duality. „The great monotheistic religions live and unfold in the ever-present consciousness of this bipolarity. ... To them, the scene of religion is no longer Nature, but the moral and religious action of man and the community of man...”⁹⁶ All their offers to bridge this abyss notwithstanding, religions cling to the polarity of God and man; it is their very lifeblood. In contrast to this function of separation, mysticism proposes to make experienceable a new unity in the soul of man.⁹⁷

This general notion of mysticism includes the following characteristic elements:

1. Every mysticism develops within a religion and, depending on the historical distinctiveness of that religion, attains a greater or lesser degree of autonomy.⁹⁸ Insistence on autonomy vis-à-vis the prevailing religion can lead mysticism to negate religion. „Every mysticism stands above a ground that it vigorously rejects and from which it nonetheless receives its distinctive quality that is never identical with mysticisms grown elsewhere.”⁹⁹

2. What distinguishes mysticism is the immediacy of the individual's contact with God, and the possibility of a direct experience of unity. „Mystical religion seeks to transform the God whom it encounters in the peculiar religious consciousness of its

⁹⁵ G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 7.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ To what extent it is truly a new unity and not a regression to a unity prior to all disunity depends significantly on the degree to which myth plays a role as an uncritical monism of God, nature, and man.

⁹⁸ On this, see *Major Trends*, p. 6f, where Scholem opposes a religio-philosophical view that argues for a „chemically pure mysticism.”

⁹⁹ R. Otto, „Geleitwort,” IX.



own environment from an object of dogmatic knowledge into a novel and living experience and intuition."¹⁰⁰

3. Mysticism seeks unity on a level meant to be definitive, so that mystical knowledge is eschatological: „The Mystic ... forestalls the process of history by anticipating in his own life the enjoyment of the last age.“¹⁰¹ {196}

These characteristics apply generally *cum grano salis* to Jewish mysticism. Here it is especially religio-philosophical rationalism that develops in a reciprocal relation to mysticism, especially the Kabbala.¹⁰² In contrast to the classical Jewish theology of the Middle Ages and the modern period as represented, respectively, by Maimonides and Hermann Cohen, men whose concern was the struggle against all forms of pantheism and myth, Jewish mysticism proposes to preserve the vitality of the religious experience of unity.¹⁰³ It accomplishes this task by a mystical „interpretation of the attributes and the unity of God in the so-called doctrine of the ‘Sefiroth,’“¹⁰⁴ and by a mystical view of the Torah as revelation, „the living incarnation of the divine wisdom which eternally sends out new rays of light.“¹⁰⁵ The various Jewish mysticisms understand the unity of God and the meaning of the Torah differently. Our interest here is the last historical form of Jewish mysticism, modern Hasidism,¹⁰⁶ specifi-

cally Habad Hasidism.¹⁰⁷

Our interest in Habad Hasidism is both objective and subjective. Our discussion of the humanistic concept of religion pointed to mysticism, and our attempt to better understand Fromm’s humanistic elaborations against the background of Jewish traditions suggests an examination of this particular form of Jewish mysticism, especially since Habad Hasidism emphasizes the rational aspect more strongly than Hasidism and mediates that rationalism with the tradition of Jewish rationalism.¹⁰⁸ Our subjective interest in Habad Hasidism is that while Fromm was a student in Heidelberg, his teacher of the Talmud was Schneur Salman Baruch Rabinkov, a Habadnik--that is, a follower of Habad Hasidism, which was founded by Rabbi Shneur Zalman. Since Habad Hasidism is a modification of Hasidism, it cannot be understood without a glance at fundamental Hasidic tenets.

Hasidism was established by Israel Baal-Shem-Tov. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century it spread from Podolsk and Volhynia and also flowered in Poland and Galicia. It had emerged from the ruins of Sabbatianism, a chiliastic and messianic

¹⁰⁰ Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Charles Bennett, *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism*, quoted by Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 20. Scholem considers this an element of Jewish mysticism, although *mutatis mutandis* it is also true of Buddhism, even though that religion is not tied to a theory of history.

¹⁰² On the question whether the philosophical presentation of Jewish monotheism gave rise to the Kabbala or not, see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 23f.

¹⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 37-39.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ In contrast to the German Hasidism of the Middle Ages.

¹⁰⁷ On what follows, cf. especially M. Buber, *Der grosse Maggid and seine Nachfolger*; Hasidism; Der Chassidismus and die Krise des abendländischen Menschen, pp. 83-94; *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*; S. Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, 2 vols.; *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes*; L. Gulkowitsch, *Der Hasidismus, religionswissenschaftlich untersucht*; S. A. Horodezky, *Religiöse Strömungen im Judentum*. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Chassidismus; S. Hurwitz, *Archetypische Motive in der chassidischen Mystik*, pp. 121-212; P. Levertoff, *Die religiöse Denkweise der Chassidim nach den Quellen*; W. Rabinowitsch, *Der Karliner Chassidismus. Seine Geschichte and seine Lehre*; G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.

¹⁰⁸ S. Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, Vol. II, p. 466, views Habad Hasidism as a system of thought „that strove for a synthesis of Bescht and Maimonides, as it were“ („Bescht“ stands for Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism). In contrast to Simon Dubnow, Martin Buber sees Habad Hasidism as a „synthesis of Hasidism and rabbinism.“



movement centered around Sabbatai Z'vi, which, though in the tradition of late medieval Jewish mysticism, perverted this tradition with an apocalyptic and personified messianism.¹⁰⁹ Hasidism can be seen as the attempt „to preserve those elements of Kabbalism which were capable of evoking a popular response, but {197} stripped of their Messianic flavor to which they owed their chief successes during the preceding period.“¹¹⁰

During the first fifty years¹¹¹ Hasidism was marked by a „spirit of enthusiasm which expressed and at the same time justified itself by stressing the old idea of the immanence of God in all that exists.“¹¹² This immanence is not to be understood pantheistically but rather as the divine emanations that entered nature at the „breaking of the vessels“: „A divine spark dwells in beings and things.“¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ On the historical data, cf. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 324f; on messianism, cf. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays in Jewish Spirituality*; on the link between Sabbatianism and Hasidism, *Major Trends*, pp. 330f.

¹¹⁰ Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 329. Fromm's criticism of Scholem on the question of the significance of messianism in Hasidism (*You Shall Be as Gods* [1966a], p. 148) is really superfluous when one considers the context of Scholem's remark. He does not propose to dispute the messianic element in Hasidism but merely observes that Hasidism eliminated a personified messianism and differs in that respect from Sabbatianism.

¹¹¹ Already with the death of the Baal Shem Tov (1760), but especially after the death of his successor, Rabbi Baer in 1772, so-called Zaddikism developed in which the successors as the only true Zaddikim were elevated to the position of mediators of the experience of God. Mystical immediacy was increasingly personified, and by virtue of their mediating role, the Zaddikim became the objects of a despotic cult. See Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes, Vol. II*, pp. 462-466; and his *Geschichte des Chassidismus, Vol. II*, pp. 278f. Habad Hasidism, which was founded by Shneur Zalman, was the only countermovement.

¹¹² Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 336.

¹¹³ L. Gulkowitsch, *Der Hasidismus*, p. 48. The story of the divine sparks originated in late kabbalistic cosmogony and doctrine of creation (cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*). The Lurianic Kabbala (so called after Isaac

„Things are important as the exile of divine being. ... By concerning himself with them in the right way, man comes into contact with the destiny of divine being in the world and helps in the redemption.“¹¹⁴ The sparks represent the scattered divine light, the divine glory (*Shekhina*) that went into exile at the breaking of the vessels.¹¹⁵ These divine sparks can be „raised“ by man when he acts with „Kavvana,“ „in the inwardness of his soul's concen-

Luria, the most prominent representative of the so-called Safed Kabbala who settled in Palestine around 1570) teaches in the doctrine of the „breaking of the vessels“ that „we have to assume that the divine light which flowed into primordial space-of which three dimensional space is a late development-unfolded in various stages and appeared under a variety of aspects Since however the divine scheme of things involved the creation of finite beings and forms, each with its own allotted place in the ideal hierarchy, it was necessary that these isolated lights should be caught and preserved in special 'bowls' created-or rather emanated-for this particular purpose“ (*Major Trends*, p. 265). Where the divine light manifests itself, it becomes visible under ten aspects that are called „Sefirot.“ They are visible only to the human eye, but in them, undifferentiated God makes himself accessible to man (cf. S. Hurwitz, *Archetypische Motive in der chassidischen Mystik*, pp. 141f). While those bowls that corresponded to the three highest Sefirot could „give shelter to“ the light, the other vessels broke: „The impact proved too much for the vessels which were broken and shattered“ (*Major Trends*, p. 265). „The breaking of the bowls ... is the cause of that inner deficiency which is inherent in everything that exists and which persists as long as the damage is not mended. For when the bowls were broken ... the fiendish nether worlds of evil, the influence of which crept into all stages of the cosmological process, emerged from the fragments In this way, the good elements of the divine order came to be mixed with the vicious ones. Conversely, the restoration of the ideal order, which forms the original aim of creation, is also the secret purpose of existence“ (*Major Trends*, p. 268).

¹¹⁴ M. Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, pp. 238-239.

¹¹⁵ On the kabbalistic interpretation of the *Shekhina*, cf. especially Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 229-233.



tration.¹¹⁶ „The task of man is seen to consist in the direction of his whole inner purpose toward the restoration of the original harmony which was disturbed by the original defect—the Breaking of the Vessels—and those powers of evil and sin which date from that time.”¹¹⁷

These views, which are taken from the Kabbala of Isaac Luria,¹¹⁸ made it possible for Hasidism to offer a direct form of religiosity for everyone without its being necessary to deny the fundamental tenets of Jewish monotheism. The knowledge of God means a searching for God, but this search occurs in the midst of life „in order to unite all things of this world with his thoughts, his speech and his act, and all that only in the name of God in truth and simplicity, for nothing in the world stands outside of God’s unity, and whoever does a thing not in the name of God separates that thing from God’s unity.”¹¹⁹ It is man who effects salvation through his moral action and everyone who does his work with *Kavvana* „works on the redemption of the world, on its conquest for God.”¹²⁰

„The sparks doctrine of the later Kabbala has become in the hands of the Baal Shem Toy an ethical teaching, and has been amplified into a precept embracing the whole life of man”¹²¹ because „it rests with man to purge the sparks of things and beings which are met with every day.”¹²² The Zaddik, the „devout individual,”¹²³ brings salvation because „in his entire thought, feeling and acting, he unites what seems to be separate and independent with {198} the root, with God, and brings the light of God into it.”¹²⁴ In this way, all difference between the sacred and the profane is abolished. The profane now becomes merely a preliminary stage of the sacred, it is „what has not been sanctified as yet.”¹²⁵

With the Hasidic principle of „man’s responsibility for the fate of God in the world”¹²⁶ the ethical and the religious spheres are brought into unity by man’s sanctification, which is based on the idea that it is through man’s action that creation is perfected: „The final goal of piety is to unify the divine sparks in the universe with God, to unite creation with its creator.”¹²⁷ The Zaddik is like „the patriarch Enoch“

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gulkowitsch, *Der Hasidismus*, p. 35.

¹¹⁷ *Major Trends*, p. 275.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 43: Isaac Luria, who died in 1572, at the age of thirty-eight, in Palestine, „did not have the gift of the pen“ and is known to posterity primarily by the presentation of his system by his disciple Hayim Vital. Cf. *Major Trends*, p. 253.

¹¹⁹ Beer mayim chayim, quoted from S. A. Horodezky, *Religiöse Strömungen im Judentum*, p. 61.

¹²⁰ M. Buber, *Hasidism*, p. 27. This interpretation also gives the breaking of the vessels a positive meaning, as is shown in the following comparison, which is mentioned by Rabbi Salomo von Luzk (a disciple of the Bescht disciple Rabbi Baer) in his *Magid debarav le-Jakob*, and conveys an idea of the simplicity of the metaphorical language of Hasidism. „When a tailor, for example, cuts up a large piece of cloth into delicate smaller pieces, the ignorant can view that as harmful but those who know that these pieces are needed to make a sleeve or such-like will understand that there was no other way except to cut up the whole. Thus, in the beginning, there was only He, the Blessed, but later he created worlds A breaking

must occur so that the light may be known“ (quoted from S. A. Horodezky, *Religiöse Strömungen im Judentum*, p. 80).

¹²¹ M. Buber, *Hasidism*, p. 55.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹²³ On the history of this concept, cf. Scholem, *Major Trends* and *Die Lehre vom 'Gerechten' in der jüdischen Mystik*, pp. 239f; Nissan Mindel, *Rabbi Shneur Zalman*, p. 271, adopts the definition of Habad Hasidism that the Zohar gives. Accordingly, that individual is a Zaddik „who deals benevolently with his creator.“

¹²⁴ Cf. P. Levertoff, *Die religiöse Denkweise der Chassidim*, p. 34.

¹²⁵ Cf. M. Buber, *Der Hassidismus und die Krise des abendländischen Menschen*, p. 87. In this contribution, which also describes his changed position on Hasidism, Buber rejects the misunderstanding that this view of sanctification is the same as self-redemption (pp. 87f).

¹²⁶ M. Buber, *Hasidism*, p. 63.

¹²⁷ L. Gulkowitsch, *Der Hasidismus*, p. 50. Simon Dubnow vigorously attacks this view. As an antipode of



who was a cobbler; „with each stitch of his awl as it sewed the upper leather and the sole together, he joined together God and his Shekhina.“¹²⁸ Because „it is man’s duty to do all that he does with the purpose of uniting the highest divine Essence with its Shekhina which dwells in the world,“¹²⁹ he unites God and world so that the world is redeemed and he finds his unity with God in it. In Hasidism, according to Buber, an event unique in the history of mankind occurred, and it is that „mysticism has become ethos. Here the original mystical unity, to which the soul desires to ascend, is no other form of God than the demander of the demand, and the mystical soul cannot become real, if it is not one with the moral soul.“¹³⁰ This distinctive quality of Hasidism as mysticism turned ethos¹³¹ is given special significance in Shneur Zalman’s Habad Hasidism.¹³² Generally speaking, there are no profound

differences between Habad Hasidism and Hasidism, but the Habad school represents the first attempt to systematically verbalize the lived mysticism of Hasidism: „study becomes as important as, and sometimes more important than, I service of the heart.“¹³³ The function of the Zaddik as mediator between God and man is also rejected. In addition, Habad Hasidism and its systematization makes clear that unlike the Kabbala, Hasidism is interested in giving „a new emphasis to psychology, instead of theosophy.“¹³⁴ „With every one of the endless stages of the theosophical world corresponding to a given state of the soul-actual or potential but at any rate capable of being perceived-Kabbalism becomes an instrument of psychological analysis and selfknowledge.“¹³⁵ This is the point of view under which kabbalistic ideals remain valid and are chosen: „What has really become important is the direction, the mysticism of the personal life.“¹³⁶ [199]

Buber’s, he considers Hasidism a perversion. After six hundred pages on the topic, he comes to the following conclusion: „There is thus justification for the observation that Hasidism shifted the focus of religion from morality to faith The new Hasidim understood the principle of unity with God to be no more than a mystical marriage of the human soul with its creator which could be accomplished through prayer, ecstasis, and by taking one’s thoughts back to their original source“ (S. Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, Vol. 11, p. 277). With this view, Dubnow stands at the end of an interpretation of Hasidism that was widespread in the nineteenth century and which judged it primarily by its flawed development in Zaddikism and the Zaddikim cult. But see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 342ff.

174-178, does not provide much more than some general information. W. Rabinowitsch, *Der Karliner Chassidismus*, deals with Habad Hasidism only secondarily but furnishes much historical material on the life of Shneur Zalman, among other things. This life is also treated in Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, pp. 92-99. There is a very extensive, although uncritical, discussion of the life in N. Mindel, *Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi*. The following comments rely primarily on Rabbi Shneur Zalman, *Liqqutei Amarim (Tanya)*, Vol. 1, and the introduction by Nissan Mindel; M. Buber, *Der grosse Maggid und seine Nachfolger*, pp. lxxiv-lxxvii; and *Hasidism*; Scholem, *Major Trends*; Hurwitz, *Archetypische Motive in der chassidischen Mystik*.

¹²⁸ M. Buber, *Hasidism*, p. 56.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹³¹ Scholem who, in connection with a phrase in Buber’s first book on Hasidism speaks of Hasidism as „the Kabbala become ethos,“ also feels that this formulation captures the specifically Hasidic.

¹³² By and large, the literature on Habad Hasidism is either unsatisfactory or exists only in Hebrew. Simon Dubnow’s presentation (*Geschichte des Chassidismus*, Vol. II, esp. pp. 100-115) is ignorant of the Kabbala and the concerns of mysticism generally; S. A. Horodezky, *Religiöse Strömungen im Judentum*, pp.

¹³³ M. Buber, *Der grosse Maggid und seine Nachfolger* LXXV. This is the basis for the much quoted rationalism of the Habad school. Actually, Shneur Zalman seeks a balance between kabbalistic mysticism and rabbinical scholarship.

¹³⁴ *Major Trends*, p. 340.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* Cf. N. Mindel, Introduction, *Liqqutei Amarim (Tanya)*, Vol. 1, p. xviii: „Such basic beliefs as the Existence of G-d, *creatio ex nihilo*, Revelation, and others, are taken for granted by the author. Others, such as the Divine attributes, Providence, Unity, Messian-



Shneur Zalman's principal work, which was published under the title *Liqqutei Amarim* in 1796 and as *Tanya* in 1798, characteristically begins with the „Book of the Intermediates,“ „so-called after the type of personality on which the book centers attention, that is, the intermediate type whose moral position is between the Zaddik (‘righteous man’) and the rasha (‘wicked man’).“¹³⁷ How this intermediate man comes about, what elements define him, and what powers he has are all explained by kabbalistic ideas. The doctrine of the (negative) attributes of God as statements about his effects that was influenced by the ban on images found expression in the Sefirot doctrine of the En Sof, who is to be understood as the divinity. The *sefirot* are aspects or manifestations of a divinity that is unknowable in principle. Shneur Zalman gives the traditional understanding of God's attributes as archetypes and exemplars for man's morality a new meaning: while he views the kabbalistic speculations about God as archetypes of statements about the manifestations of the human soul, he also understands the manifestations of the soul as the struggle between the various faculties and potencies of an animal soul and a divine soul, and correspondingly places the capacity for morality in the divine soul.

The *benoni* (average man) is possible because „in every Jew, whether righteous or wicked, there are two souls. ... There is one soul which originates in the qelipah and sitra ahra. ... From it stem all the evil characteristics deriving from the four evil elements which are contained in it. ... From this soul stem also the good characteristics which are to be found in the innate nature of all Israel. For example, mercy and benevolence are derived from it.“¹³⁸ In addition to this „animal“ soul, every Jew has another, „which is truly a part of God above“¹³⁹ and can therefore be called „divine.“ The divine soul

ism, etc., are treated as integral parts of his ethical system, and illuminated by the light of Qabbalah.“

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. xiv.

¹³⁸ Shneur Zalman, *Liqqutei Amarim*, pp. 22f.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

manifests itself¹⁴⁰ in ten faculties „corresponding to the supernal Ten Sefirot [divine manifestations], from which they have descended“¹⁴¹ These ten faculties are subdivided into the three powers of reason [*sechel*] and the seven attributes [*middot*] of love of God, fear, honor, and so on, that have their source in the powers of reason.

The three powers of reason are wisdom (*hokhma*), understanding (*bina*), and knowledge (*da'at*). In Luria's Kabbala, they represent the first three *sefirot* of the En Sof and, as „the core of the divine soul,“¹⁴² constitute the essence of Shneur Zalman's **HaBaD** {200} Hasidism. The first element of the acrostic represents „*hokhma* (‘the potentiality of what is ‘),¹⁴³ that which is not yet comprehended and understood, or grasped intellectually; consequently, there is vested in it the light of the En Sof, blessed be He, Who can in no way be comprehended by any thought.“¹⁴⁴ When this power is brought from potentiality to actuality, that is, „when a person cogitates with his intellect in order to understand a thing truly and profoundly as it evolves from the concept which he has conceived in his intellect, this is called *bina*,“¹⁴⁵ the second element in the acrostic. Etymologically, *bina* means to separate, to distinguish between two opposites.¹⁴⁶ „Metaphorically, it also means ‘to perceive’ and in the so-called causative form, it primarily means ‘to distinguish, to understand.’“¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 30, n. 1.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 30f.

¹⁴² S. Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, p. 106.

¹⁴³ This is Shneur's etymological explanation of the concept *hokhmah*; cf. *Liqqutei Amarim*, pp. 31, 110, and the variant pp. 274f.

¹⁴⁴ *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 111. S. Hurwitz, *Archetypische Motive in der chassidischen Mystik*, interprets *hokhma* according to texts by the Maggid of Mezritsh as unconsciousness in the human realm whereas *bina* is consciousness. In the divine realm, as *sophia*, it is a kind of elemental spiritual substance.

¹⁴⁵ *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. S. Hurwitz, *Archetypische Motive in der chassidischen Mystik*, p. 143f.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 143.



The third aspect of reason (and the third element in the acrostic) is *da'at*, „the etymology of which is to be found in the verse: ‘And Adam *knew* Eve.’”¹⁴⁸ The closeness of *da'at* to what Fromm calls „radical knowledge“ is apparent even though Fromm interprets the object of knowledge humanistically.¹⁴⁹ *Da'at* means „that people should know the greatness of God from authors and books; but the essential thing is to immerse one’s mind deeply into the greatness of God and fix one’s thought on God with all the strength and vigor of the heart and mind ...“¹⁵⁰ „Da’at implies attachment and union.”¹⁵¹ Since every *sefirah* is the source for the next lower *sefirot*, *da'at*, in this mystical sense of „radical knowledge,“ is the „basis of the middot”¹⁵² and the source of their vitality.¹⁵³

The three potencies of reason are to be understood as three emanations of a self-unfolding divinity. But one must also see them as the three stages of development that represent the principle of development of all beings. All beings „are initially hidden in the divine wisdom. They become manifest in understanding and recognizable in the knowledge of God.”¹⁵⁴ Since in Hasidic thought it is the intrapsychic events that are emphasized in parallelism with intradivine events, the Habad principle takes on a special significance for processes within the human soul, especially when it is understood as the coincidence of the divine and the animal soul.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ See p. 118f.

¹⁵⁰ *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 267.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁵² The middot are the seven action attributes of God, which the Kabbala understands as aspects (Sefirot) of the En Sof. In man, the middot are the seven emotional attributes of the soul. Cf. N. Mindel, *Liqqutei Amarim* (Tanya), Glossary and Notes, pp. 343f.

¹⁵³ *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁴ S. Hurwitz, *Archetypische Motive in der chassidischen Mystik*, p. 143.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Hurwitz' attempt to show a parallel between kabbalistic speculation and psychological insight. „One might say that from our perspective, the development of man’s consciousness from the unconscious appears

The Habad reason and the *middot* are the inner faculties of the divine soul and express themselves only in the three external faculties of the soul: speech, thought, and action.¹⁵⁶ When the {201} divine soul is seen in this totality of its inner and outer faculties, the totality of the 613 Torah precepts appears in them. For „the faculties of Habad in his soul are clothed in the comprehension of the Torah. ... And the middot, namely, fear and love, together with their offshoots and ramifications, are clothed in the fulfillment of the commandments in deed and in word, namely, in the study of Torah which is ‘the equivalent of all the commandments.’”¹⁵⁷ Love is the root of the Torah’s 248 commands, while fear is the root of its 365 prohibitions.

The „divine“ element of man’s divine soul has its basis in this relatedness to the Torah. The optimal realization of the faculties of the divine soul by the optimal fulfillment of the commands of the Torah means at the same time the mystical knowledge of God: „For the essence of the Holy One, blessed be He, no thought can apprehend Him at all, except when it apprehends, and is clothed in the Torah and its Middot, only then does it truly apprehend, and is clothed in, the Holy One, blessed be He, inasmuch as the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one and the same.”¹⁵⁸ This identification of the good with the holy becomes clearer when the distinctiveness of the animal soul and its polarity to the divine soul in man are perceived.

Just as the divine soul manifests itself in ten holy *sefirot* and is clothed in three garments, so the animal soul manifests itself in ten „crowns of uncleanness”--namely, the seven evil *middot* and

as a kind of refraction or reflection of the development of divine reason (bina) from divine wisdom (hokhma). In this way, the human soul is made worthy of becoming a mirror image of a drama within the divinity, just as conversely a differentiation of the divine image corresponds to man’s becoming conscious“ (*ibid.*, p. 201).

¹⁵⁶ *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 34.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40; cf. p. 325.



threefold reason--and these ten unclean „categories“ cause the garments of thought, speech, and action to be unclean.¹⁵⁹ The animal soul comes from the *sitra ahra*, „the other side,“ the side that is the opposite of holiness and belongs to the world of the *qelipot*.¹⁶⁰ Without discussing in detail the complicated kabbalistic theories about the coming into existence of the world of the *qelipot* as forces of evil,¹⁶¹ it should be noted that evil is seen as a secondary phenomenon of the creation *ex nihilo* that does not exist for its own sake and can be overcome.¹⁶²

Among the evil powers of the *qelipot* that are represented by materiality, Shneur Zalman distinguishes two kinds: „the qelipot are subdivided into two grades, one lower than the other. The lower grade consists of the three qelipot which are altogether unclean and evil, containing no good whatever.“¹⁶³ The second grade is found only among Jews and kosher animals and plants. It {202} is called *qelipat noga* and „is an intermediate category between the three completely unclean *qelipot* and the category and order of holiness.“¹⁶⁴ While the unclean *qelipot* are the cause of evil desires and bad qualities, the *qelipat noga* is the source of natural physical needs that can be influenced by reason. Because in the *qelipat noga*, which is found in Jews alone, good and evil are mixed, one must postulate that compassion and kindness are innate Jewish

qualities.¹⁶⁵

The decisive question revolves around the divine and animal soul in man. According to kabbalistic opinion, every soul has an „abode“ in man, a place, that is, where it tends to manifest itself.¹⁶⁶ These „abodes“ for the animal soul are „the left ventricle that is filled with blood“ and from which all bad qualities spread throughout the body. The divine soul, on the other hand, is concentrated in the brain and spreads over the body, principally into the right ventricle. From here, the holy feelings (*middot* of the divine soul) that have their origin in the brain, the scat of Habad reason, make their effects felt. Since both souls in man strive to „rule the body and all its limbs, they wage war against each other.“¹⁶⁷ „Just as two kings wage war over a town, which each wishes to capture and rule, that is to say, to dominate its inhabitants according to his will, so that they obey him in all that he decrees for them, so do the two souls—the divine and the vital animal soul that comes from the qelipah—wage war against each other over the body and all its limbs. It is the desire and will of the divine soul that she alone rule over the person and direct him, so that all his limbs should obey her and surrender themselves completely to her ...“¹⁶⁸ The object of the war is not the destruction of evil, but rather that „the evil is converted into, and becomes, completely good, like the good nature itself, through the shedding of the soiled garments, the pleasures of this world, in which it had been clothed.“¹⁶⁹ The only weapons in this war are the mobilization of Habad reason (and its *middot*) in their garments of thought, speech, and action.¹⁷⁰ Because this divine reason is clothed in the Torah and its commands,¹⁷¹ the encompassing fulfillment of the Torah precepts on the basis of a profound study of the Torah is the only effective

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 45f.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 47f, 29, 126.

¹⁶¹ On this, cf. especially Shneur Zalman's doctrine of Tsimtsum (*Liqqutei Amarim*, chaps. 48, 49, and chap. 6, p. 48), and Luria's doctrine of Tsimtsum (Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 260-265). On Luria's qelipot doctrine, cf. *Major Trends*, p. 268; on the Hasidic qelipot doctrine, *Liqqutei*, pp. 136-143.

¹⁶² Cf. Shneur Zalman, *Liqqutei*, p. 312, where the overcoming of evil is declared to be the purpose of creation: „The purpose of all the 'contractions' is the creation of the material human body and the subjugation of the sitra ahra, to bring about the pre-eminence of light supplanting darkness ...“

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

¹⁶⁶ On this and what follows, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 62f.

¹⁶⁷ Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, vol. II, p. 107.

¹⁶⁸ Shneur Zalman, *Liqqutei Amarim*, pp. 63f.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. the comments on Habad reason, pp. 200-201.

¹⁷¹ Shneur Zalman, *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 325.



weapon if the divine soul is to be dominant over the animal one.

The degree of superiority of the divine over the animal soul corresponds to the realization of Habad reason in the fulfillment of {203} the precepts of the Torah. „When a person fortifies his divine soul and wages war against his animal soul to such an extent that he expels and eradicates its evil from the left part ... he is called ‘incompletely righteous’ or ‘a righteous man who suffers.’”¹⁷² To be a completely righteous individual, a Zaddik, requires that one have „completely divested himself of the garments of evil,” renounce the pleasures of this world, and devote himself wholly to his love for God.¹⁷³ When the animal soul dominates in man, the goodness of the divine soul is subservient to the evil of the *qelipa* and destroyed by it. Depending on the degree of dominance of evil, one speaks of „the wicked man who prospers“ and the „wicked who suffers.”¹⁷⁴ Both extremes, the Zaddik and the wicked, are relatively rare, which means that it is the intermediate forms that hold the greatest interest. The *benoni*, „intermediate man,” is an individual „in whom evil never attains enough power to capture the ‘small city’ so as to clothe itself in the body and make it sin. That is to say, the three ‘garments’ of the animal soul, namely, thought, speech and act, originating in the qelipah, do not prevail within him over the divine soul to the extent of clothing themselves in the body”¹⁷⁵

Intermediate man is not a goal of the moral and religious life. Yet the dominance of the good (=divine) within him is the presupposition for his sanctification, which means eo ipso a strengthening of his good faculties: „The essential thing is to govern and rule the nature that is in the left ventricle of

the heart¹⁷⁶ by means of the Divine light that irradiates the divine soul in the mind.”¹⁷⁷ But the heart can only be governed by Habad reason when, through meditation on the greatness of the En Sof, a spirit of radical knowledge and fear of God are developed in the right ventricle. This love of God consists in the desire „to cleave to Him through the fulfillment of the precepts of the Torah and of the Rabbis, and through the study of the Torah which is equivalent to them all.”¹⁷⁸

This outline of the „Kabbala turned ethos”¹⁷⁹ and „presented in the guise of mystical psychology”¹⁸⁰ suffices to show the parallels between the ideas of Habad Hasidism and Fromm’s humanistic view of man. Although Fromm never drew on this Jewish mysticism for his concept of a humanistic religion,¹⁸¹ his work shows conspicuous parallels with

¹⁷⁶ The heart is primarily the seat of the affects, and the left ventricle of the heart the locus of the animal soul.

¹⁷⁷ Shneur Zalman, *Liqqutei Amarim*, p. 99.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 343, as the quotation of a formulation by Buber.

¹⁸⁰ Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 341.

¹⁸¹ Fromm mentions Hasidism only in his discussion of the messianic idea (cf. *You Shall Be as Gods* [1966a], pp. 148-152), but hardly elsewhere. Since Habad Hasidism probably had a considerable influence through the socialist and Habadnik Shneur Salman Rabinkov when Fromm was a student and still a practicing Orthodox Jew—an influence Fromm confirmed in conversations with the author—it is probably for personal reasons connected with his turn away from Orthodox Judaism that Jewish mysticism, and Hasidism in particular, found so little resonance in his literary output. Up to a point, the interest in Hasidic psychology expressed itself in Fromm’s study of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. The mere fact that over a period of years, Fromm held seminars on Spinoza’s *Ethics* in the United States, in which he did not deal with the ontology in Books I and II but rather with the psychological material in Books III to V suggests a survival of his interest in Hasidic psychology, considering that there is an extensive kinship between Shneur Zalman’s psychology, which is written in the language of the Kabbala, and Spinoza’s psychology, which is written in the language of Scholasticism. Since the focus of these comments is



Habad Hasidism of both a philosophical-anthropological and a concrete psychological-ethical kind, {204} parallels that go beyond the similarities in patterns of thought that exist between him and Maimonides and Cohen. The conflict between divine and animal soul has a counterpart in Fromm's alternative of productive and nonproductive character orientations, and the parallel becomes more marked in Fromm's understanding of the various character structures as syndromes of growth and decay whose extreme forms are the saint and the criminal, respectively. The identification of the good and the holy in the divine soul recurs in humanistic inversion when the productive and the ethical are posited as identical. To an extent, the Sefirot doctrine is a model for the dynamic view of character in which character trait represents the expression of an underlying character structure, for in their psychological interpretation, the *sefirot* are manifestations of the divine or animal soul and emanate from them. The view of the character structure as a mixture of productive and nonproductive orientations and the dominance of some quality can be found under the „crust“ of the kabbalistic conceptual apparatus in the struggle of Habad reason against the *qelipat noga*. And it is obvious that the kabbalistic struggle between divine and animal soul for the „small city“ gave birth to Fromm's „alternativism“ doctrine.

Even though the view that man is to unfold his productive powers of reason and love is considered self-evident, it presupposes something that is anything but that--that man is potentially good by nature. From a theistic point of view, both elements are present in the Hasidic doctrine of creation and its purpose. Fromm adopts them in their humanistic inversion: the study of the Torah that constitutes the basis for the fulfillment of the Torah in Shneur Zalman becomes the reason of scientific knowl-

ideas and their reception insofar as they had a direct influence on Fromm's thought, a discussion of connections to Spinoza's thought was considered unnecessary.

edge,¹⁸² and the realization of the precepts in the love of God becomes the realization of the capacity for productive love. As the Habad reason of the divine soul finds its expression in the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of its precepts of love, the productive character finds its expression in the realization of the powers of reason and love. Still, the difference between the two views is enormous, and lies in the way they are grounded. In Shneur Zalman's Hasidism, the Habad reason of the divine soul guarantees the capacity for holiness. In Fromm's humanism, it is the experience of one's capacity for humanness in reason and love that must guarantee the capacity to become universal man. {205}

Karl Marx: Man as the Maker of His History¹⁸³

Our analysis of humanistic religion revealed the religio-critical aspect of Fromm's humanism concept: „humanistic“ is the dialectical counterconcept of „theistic.“ When one looks for the figure in intellectual history who set Fromm on this path of religio-critical understanding of humanism, one finds that Fromm himself points to Karl Marx (1818-1883).¹⁸⁴ „Marx was capable of connecting a spiritual heritage of the Enlightenment humanism and German idealism with the reality of economic and social facts, and thus to lay the foundations for a new science of man and society which is empirical and at the same time filled with the spirit of the Western

¹⁸² This applies only on the basis of a humanistic interpretation, however, since for Shneur Zalman, the secular sciences sully the divine soul (cf. *Liqqutei Amarim*, pp. 57-61).

¹⁸³ Cf. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (1966a), p. 115, where these words introduce a section.

¹⁸⁴ Fromm understood his *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a) as an intellectual autobiography in which, in addition to Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx is assigned a dominant place.



humanistic tradition."¹⁸⁵

According to Fromm, it is characteristic of Marx's understanding of humanism that he enlarges on the belief shared by all humanists that man can perfect himself unaided, and that he maintains against the theists among them that man makes his own history and is his own creator.¹⁸⁶ „Marx fought against religion exactly because it is alienated, and does not satisfy the true needs of man. Marx's fight against God is, in reality, a fight against the idol that is called God.“¹⁸⁷ Marx's influence on Fromm's thought, especially on his religio-critical humanism concept, is obvious. But to evaluate this influence critically in the context of today's exegesis of Marx is difficult because there is such an enormous number of frequently conflicting interpretations. Statements Fromm himself made permit an initial orientation as one investigates his understanding of Marx in the context of Marx interpretation. According to these statements, historically and politically important Marxisms can hardly claim to be legitimate heirs of Marx, for to them, „socialism is not a society humanly different from capitalism, but rather, a form of capitalism in which the working class has achieved a higher status.“¹⁸⁸

In face of such an understanding of man in communist and socialist systems,¹⁸⁹ Fromm believes

that Marx is interpreted correctly only if his humanistic concern is understood. This concern is articulated principally in the writings of the young Marx, especially in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Paris 1844 manuscripts). Fromm's view of Marx is therefore close to the so-called humanistic or anthropological interpretation of Marx,¹⁹⁰ {206} which assumes that these early writings are the key to understanding him¹⁹¹ and underlines the continuity of Marx's thought up to the „mature“ Marx of Capital.¹⁹² Against this humanistic interpretation is the group of Marx interpreters who see Capital as the central work and the early humanism as no mo-

these schools of Marx interpretation; see *Marxisten-Leninisten über den Sinn des Lebens. Eine Studie zum kommunistischen Menschenbild*.

¹⁸⁵ *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 12; cf. pp. 17 and 25f.

¹⁸⁶ Fromm, „Introduction“ (1965b), VII.

¹⁸⁷ Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 63. Cf. *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), p. 202.

¹⁸⁸ *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 6. The tragedy of this misunderstanding also lies in the fact that in some political circles in the West this false interpretation is considered to be Marxist in its very essence, a misunderstanding that contributes to the falsification of Marx's theories. This reproach must also be leveled at Western social democracies insofar as their program of an increase in the „quality of life“ simply aims at a maximization of consumption and misinterprets „materialism“ as greater material well-being (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 2-5). See also Fromm, „Problems of Interpreting Marx“ (1965d); *To Have or to Be?* (1976a), pp. 158-160.

¹⁸⁹ H. Steiner gives a critical and informative discussion of

¹⁹⁰ P. Vranicki, *Geschichte des Marxismus*, provides a comprehensive overview of the history of Marxism. Cf. in Vol. 2, pp. 865-877, the only correct presentation of Fromm's philosophical anthropology to have appeared in German. W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, reports on the present state of Marx research, pp. 16-70. There are also suggestions for further reading on p. 16. The volume *Neomarxismus*, however, which was published in the series *Kolleg Philosophie* by A. von Weiss, contains little that is of help, even though the book shows a good knowledge of Marxist movements in the United States (pp. 92-95) and is aware of Fromm's importance to the reception of Marx in the United States.

¹⁹¹ But there are also significant differences within this group of Marx interpreters. W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, p. 90, n. 52, and pp. 90ff, tries to divide the various types of interpretation of the earliest Marx texts and early writings into six groups. This list of types of interpretation could be supplemented by the attempts that discover Marx the Jew in the early writings. A. Massiczek, *Der menschliche Mensch. Karl Marx' jüdischer Humanismus*, esp. p. 476, is exemplary here. The interpreters are judged by whether they respect Marx's affinity with the Jewish prophets.

¹⁹² Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961b), pp. 69-79. R. Wiegand, *Gesellschaft und Charakter*, p. 345, believes that *Grundrisse*, first published in Moscow in 1939, is the connecting link between the young and the „mature“ Marx.



re than a residue of youthful idealism.¹⁹³

For Fromm, however, Marx's entire oeuvre constitutes an explication of the humanistic approach. „The Marxist theory, as well as the socialist movement, was radical and humanistic--radical in the above-mentioned sense of going to the roots, and the roots being man; humanistic in the sense that it is man who is the measure of all things, and his full unfolding must be the aim and the criterion of all social efforts. The liberation of man from the stranglehold of economic conditions which prevented his full development was the aim of all of Marx's thought and efforts.”¹⁹⁴ Fromm believed that this interpretation placed him in the same camp as Marxists and critics of Marxism of a great many different persuasions such as the Yugoslay philosophers associated with the journal *Praxis*,¹⁹⁵ the Pole Adam Schaff,¹⁹⁶ Ernst Bloch,¹⁹⁷ and the

Christian scholar of Marxism Jean-Yves Calvez.¹⁹⁸ All of these men agree that Marx's ultimate aim was human, not economic, change. The difference between their interpretation and the one that proposes to grasp Marx by way of his economic interests is the result of a different understanding of the methodical approach of Marx's view of reality. Reflection about this makes it possible to understand the significance the critique of religion has for the selfemancipation of man.

Hegel's attempt to make thinking and being coincide provoked Marx's criticism because the tension between an interpretation of reality and the actual structures of that reality was intolerable for him in the long run.¹⁹⁹ He noted, „To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e. the process of thinking which, under the name of 'the idea,' he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of the 'the Idea.' With me, on the contrary, the idea is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.”²⁰⁰ Marx criticizes the Hegelian philosophy of history because its exclusive interest is pure thought; it eschews real interests, even political {207} ones.²⁰¹ Therefore, he believed, Idealistic philosophy itself must be questioned: „Because Hegel puts self-consciousness where man ought to be, the most divergent human reality appears merely as a certain form, a determination of self-consciousness. ... Hegel makes man the man of self-consciousness, instead of making selfconsciousness the self-consciousness of man, of real man, of the man who

¹⁹³ Alfred Schmidt, who was director of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research for a while, is representative of this group. In what follows, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Marx* will represent that type of Marx interpretation that contrasts with Fromm's.

¹⁹⁴ *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962a), p. 142. Cf. „The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory,” (1965e), pp. 207f. A Gebb, *Der entfremdete Marx. Zur existenzialistisch-'humanistischen' Marxismus-Deutung*, opposes this view of Fromm's.

¹⁹⁵ Svetozar Stojanović, Gajo Petrović, and Mihailo Marković are especially noteworthy. The latter two contributed one article each to the *Festschrift* honoring Fromm's seventieth birthday: G. Petrović, „Humanism and Revolution,” pp. 288-298; and M. Marković, „The Possibilities for Radical Humanism,” pp. 275-287.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Adam Schaff's contribution to the Fromm *Festschrift*, „What Does It Mean to 'Be a Marxist?'”; and Schaff, *Marxismus and das menschliche Individuum*, esp. pp. 220ff, 322ff; Schaff, „Marxism and the Philosophy of Man” in Fromm, *Socialist Humanism* (1965a).

¹⁹⁷ *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Bloch Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 5. See also the very extensive Marx interpretation by A. Massiczek, *Der menschliche Mensch. Karl Marx' jüdischer Humanismus*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁸ Especially *La Pensée de Karl Marx*. Calvez' study continues a tradition of „religious socialism” whose most prominent representative was Paul Tillich. Cf. the essays by Theodor Steinbüchel on Marx interpretation, which have been published in Alfons Auer's *Sozialismus*, a collection of essays.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. H. Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens im marxistischen Denken*, p. 29.

²⁰⁰ K. Marx, preface to the second edition of *Capital*, p. 25.

²⁰¹ Cf. Marx, „Die deutsche Ideologie,” *MEGA I*, 5, 29.



lives in the real world and is conditioned by it. He sets the world on its head and can therefore do away with all limitations in his head though this means that they remain in force for bad sensuousness, for real man.”²⁰²

The world must be put back on its feet. As a formal principle, this „materialistic“ seizing of reality persists throughout Marx’s work. „Materialism ... means that it is the political, social and economic praxis that primarily determines the life of man, and therefore history.“²⁰³ The materialist concept of history is a „socioeconomic theory of history.“²⁰⁴ The materialist view of reality places man as active subject „into the center of history and development, and this must be the point of departure for every further statement.“²⁰⁵ Materialism thus means „that all aspects of the historical process depend on how man fashions his existence.“²⁰⁶ The correctness of this materialist view of man and history according to which the possibility of change lies wholly with the capacity of the subject of history, man, to effect it becomes apparent when the critique of existing conditions reveals the alienation of reality and the liberation of man restores him as the subject of history: „All emancipation is the reduction of the human world and of relationships to man himself.“²⁰⁷

The methodical principle for man’s self-

²⁰² K. Marx, „Die heilige Familie,“ *MEGA I*, 3, 370.

²⁰³ W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, p. 301.

²⁰⁴ Th. Steinbüchel, „Karl Marx. Gestalt-Werk-Ethos,“ p. 13; also „Zur philosophischen Grundlegung des marxistischen Sozialismus,“ pp. 63-65.

²⁰⁵ H. Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens im marxistischen Denken*, pp. 35f. Rolfes calls this view of Marx „anthropological attitude to reality“ (p. 36).

²⁰⁶ P. Tillich, *Christentum und Marxismus*, p. 175. On the differentiation of this concept of materialism from others, cf. Marx, *Die heilige Familie*; and Calvez, *La Pensée de Karl Marx*, pp. 325-330.

²⁰⁷ K. Marx, „On the Jewish Question“ in *Early Writings*, p. 234; cf. *Early Writings*, p. 356: „A being sees himself as independent only when he stands on his own feet, and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his existence to himself.“

emancipation is a „critical dialectic of theory and praxis”²⁰⁸ as a „philosophy of history with practical intent.”²⁰⁹ „Marx’s dialectic of theory and praxis consists in deriving a theory from the empirical analysis of social and economic conditions that criticizes and changes undesirable states of affairs. But change cannot be effected by a theory unless it be one that passes back into praxis.”²¹⁰

Marx’s interpreters differ in their view of the application of the methodological principle of the critical dialectic of theory and praxis. A good many students of Marx do not limit his dialectic to the social process as determined by economic factors, but see it as universal, as the dialectic of man and nature in history. In the {208} birth of man as man, these interpreters see the emergence of the unavoidable conflict between man and nature that is subsequently articulated in the alienation of man from his work, his fellow man, and himself, and that is manifested as capitalistic class society. To abolish the alienated situation by abolishing private property,²¹¹ then, means not only „the emancipation from economic constraints and a humane re-ordering of the social organization of work”;²¹² it means a new unity of man and nature as a realm of freedom and the beginning of man’s true history. The new unity is positive communism: „This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being. ... It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution.”²¹³

²⁰⁸ Cf. W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, p. 301.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, a formulation of Jürgen Habermas.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ „Private property here means what is based on exploitation and increases man’s alienation more and more by reducing to the one meaning of having the multi-form relations man has to objects“ (Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens im marxistischen Denken*, p. 63).

²¹² W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, p. 302.

²¹³ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 348. This quotation from the



The various camps of Marx interpreters are distinguished by their differing applications of the methodical principle of the critical dialectic of theory and praxis. When, as in Fromm, the dialectic is also applied to the universal relationship of man and nature, it is primarily the Marx of the „Paris Manuscripts of 1844“ who is being interpreted. Commentators who apply the dialectic only to the social process as determined by economic factors vices its wider application as an erroneous interpretation that Marx himself refutes „in part in his early writings, and altogether in his late work.“²¹⁴ These differing applications of the dialectic lead to conflicting views of important Marxist concepts. Since Fromm’s application can serve as an example of the wider application of the dialectic and has already been discussed in some detail,²¹⁵ the following brief comments are confined to the narrower application of the dialectic.²¹⁶

By „history,“ Marx means neither an anarchic piling up of facts nor a unified process as Hegel understands it.²¹⁷ „The materialistic dialectic is non-teleological. ... While it is true that the lawful succession of social formations introduces something like an overarching structure into human history, we are not dealing with a pervasive ‘teleology.’ ... Because Marx does not start off from a total meaning that predates man, history becomes the sequence of ever-new individual processes, a phenomenon that can only be {209} understood by a philosophy of universal discontinuities that consciously renounces the claim that it can provide an unbroken deduction from principle.“²¹⁸ According

Paris Manuscripts of 1844 may be considered the confession of faith of the „humanistic“ Marx interpreters.

²¹⁴ W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, p. 302.

²¹⁵ On the concept of „history,“ see pp. 70-72; on alienation, see pp. 73-74; on „nature and man,“ pp. 55-58.

²¹⁶ On what follows, cf. especially A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Marx*

²¹⁷ W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, p. 180.

²¹⁸ A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Karl Marx*, p. 26f. Fromm also believes that the goal and meaning of history must be posited by man. But

to this interpretation, the „middle“ and the „mature“ Marx rejected Feuerbach’s „true man.“ The disappearance of talk about „man“ and „the nature of man“ in his work is taken as an indication that Marx abandoned the Feuerbachian idols „man“ and „nature“ as he acquired a more precise knowledge of economic history.²¹⁹ Concurrently, Marx discarded the use of „estrangement“ and „alienation“ because he discovered in the meantime that men are never wholly at home with the objects of their production. While everything must be done to end man’s enslavement by capitalist relations, the „realm of freedom“ is not free of work, nor does communism mean „the true resolution of the conflict between man and nature.“²²⁰

„Marx’s equation humanism = naturalism is no more correct than he took Hegel’s equation subject = object to be.“²²¹ The „realm of necessity“ remains „because even in a world that has become genuinely human, the complete reconciliation of subject and object cannot occur.“²²² „Men cannot ultimately free themselves of natural necessities.“²²³

The variety in the way the methodological principle of the critical dialectic of theory and praxis is applied, either to social and economic processes only or, following the early Marx, to the universal relation between man and nature in history not only explains the various views of Marx but also affects Marx’s own understanding of religion and its critique. That critique initially derived from Feuerbach,²²⁴ who developed it in confrontation with

because man is defined as contradictory being, the goal of history becomes a new unity with nature. On this matter and on what follows, cf. W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Marx*, pp. 240-248, and J.-Y. Calvez, *La Pensée de Karl Marx*, pp. 446-454.

²¹⁹ Cf. A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Karl Marx*, pp. 109-110.

²²⁰ K. Marx, *MEGA* 1, 3, p. 114.

²²¹ A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Karl Marx*, p. 117.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²²⁴ Cf. especially Calvez, *La Pensée de Karl Marx*, pp. 78-82; Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens im marxistischen Den-*



Hegel and for whom „religion represents the most ominous consequence of the abstraction from sensuous and material reality”²²⁵ and puts man at odds with his own nature. „All of man’s qualities and values are hypostasized as a transcendent being.”²²⁶ This thesis, which has an inner relation to the theistic doctrine of God’s negative attributes,²²⁷ identifies the core idea of the critique of religion: If „man affirms ... in God what he denies in himself,”²²⁸ then the true nature of religion is anthropology and it becomes the aim of all critiques of religion to emancipate man from religion so that his own being may be restored to him and he become his own God.²²⁹

Initially, Marx adopted Feuerbach’s critical position and joined {210} him in criticizing Hegel: „And to you, speculative theologians and philosophers, I give this piece of advice: free yourselves of the concepts and prejudices of traditional speculative philosophy if you wish to arrive at things as they are, i.e. at truth. For you, there is no other way to truth and freedom except through Feuerbach. Feuerbach is the purgatory of our time.”²³⁰ But Feuerbach’s critique of religion turned out to be only a passing purgatory, for Marx came to believe that it is not religion that causes man’s self-alienation; religion is merely „the general theory of this world ... its logic in popular form ... its universal

ken, pp. 47-66; W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Marx*, pp. 91-103.

²²⁵ W. Post, *Kritik*, p. 110.

²²⁶ H. Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens im marxistischen Denken*, p. 42.

²²⁷ See above, and the comments on alienation as idolatry.

²²⁸ L. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 33.

²²⁹ Cf. H. Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens im marxistischen Denken*, p. 42f.

²³⁰ K. Marx, „Anekdoten zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik“ (1942), quoted in Post, *Kritik*, p. 89. On the authenticity of this article, see p. 88, n. 48. More recently the essay containing the quotation, „Luther als Schiedsrichter zwischen Strauss and Feuerbach,” has also been ascribed to Feuerbach himself.

basis of consolation and justification.”²³¹ Therefore a critique of religion alone cannot restore his perfection to man, for „man is no abstract being squatting outside the world, Man is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, which is an inverted world-consciousness, because they are an inverted world. Religion ... is the fantastic realization of the human being because the human being has attained no true reality.”²³² The very existence of religion suggests that man demands an illusory happiness because real happiness eludes him. The abolition of religion involves the demand that man surrender all illusions about his condition. This means, in turn, the abandonment of „a condition which requires illusions. Thus, the critique of religion is the critique in embryo of the vale of tears of which religion is the halo.”²³³

The critique of religion points to man’s true reality, which must be defined more closely against the background of conflicting interpretations of Marx. But first the task of the critique of religion in Marx’s work should be indicated in summary fashion. Marx does not share Feuerbach’s view regarding the function of the critique of religion because he feels that religion refers us away from the religious individual and to a differently understood, true reality of the human being.²³⁴ „The true critique of religion and of religious alienation thus

²³¹ K. Marx, „Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right,’” in *Early Writings*, p. 244.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid. Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 349: „Religious estrangement as such takes place only in the sphere of consciousness, of man’s inner life, but economic estrangement is that of real life—its supersession therefore embraces both aspects.”

²³⁴ This is the reason Marx is not interested in atheism as a criticism of religion. For atheism always addresses itself to the religious individual. „Precisely because of its peculiar humanism,” Jean-Yves Calvez sees Marxism as atheistic (*Karl Marx*, p. 455). But he also feels that Marxism is a practical atheism, for „Marx’s humanism is the overcoming of abstract humanism and of theoretical atheism“ (p. 461). Cf. also Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens*, pp. 39f, 77-97.



presupposes the critique of the secular world. But what is at first a purely intellectual critique of religion is necessary so that man's attention may be called to the phenomenon of self-alienation and alienation, to this cause of all his misery."²³⁵

Through the critique of religion, both Feuerbach and Marx attempt {211} to make man the creator and actor of his history. For the intention of the critique is to disillusion man and make him realize he is the center of reality: „The critique of religion disillusions man so that he will think, act, and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason, so that he will revolve about himself as his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself."²³⁶ Thus the critique of religion has no less a function than to usher in the Copernican revolution from God to man, from theism to humanism, and to make Prometheus the model for man.²³⁷ *Man's true reality* becomes visible when he is understood materialistically. This happens when he is taken seriously in his concrete situation and it is understood that he is enmeshed in a variety of empirically accessible conditions. For Marx, man's ultimate and greatest dependency lies in his being a part of economic conditions and of the social conditions that are shaped by them. If the true human being is to be known, his enmeshment in economic and social conditions must be investigated. But because the critique of heaven has become that of earth, man must be seen in the critical dialectic of theory and praxis. Man's alienated dependence on alienated processes of production that create alienated social conditions and philosophy and religion as alienations of man,

²³⁵ Calvez, *Karl Marx*, p. 53.

²³⁶ Marx, „Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction,“ in *Early Writings*, p. 244. Cf. W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Karl Marx*, pp. 170-172.

²³⁷ Cf. Post, *Kritik*, p. 112. Cf. Calvez, *Karl Marx*, on the further development of the criticism of religion into a criticism of philosophy and of politics on the basis of an insight into man's philosophical and political alienation. Cf. W. Post, *Kritik*, pp. 73-183; Rolfes, *Der Sinn des Lebens im marxistischen Denken*, pp. 45-50.

in turn, calls for a true reality of man in which he is free of the chains of economic alienation and creates his history himself in „free, conscious activity.“²³⁸

At this point, the controversial application of the methodological principle of the critical dialectic of theory and praxis again becomes noticeable because the idea of liberated man-of-man in his true reality-will differ according to the *kind* of application. Those interpreters who judge Marx by his mature economic work believe that liberated man will come into existence when he has become the master of economic conditions because those conditions will then no longer dominate him as incalculable natural forces. These interpreters also take a more modest view of the degree of freedom that will be achieved because, in contrast to Engels,²³⁹ Marx continued to believe „that the true realm of freedom can only flower on the realm of necessity as its base.“²⁴⁰ In the realm of natural necessity, freedom „can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, regulating their metabolism with {212} nature rationally, subjecting it to their common control instead of being ruled by it as by a blind power.“²⁴¹

In contrast to this view of man's true reality, which limits itself to the perception of the „real possibilities“ in socioeconomic processes, the application of the critical dialectic to the universal nexus between man and nature in history allows a more encompassing view of man's true reality. In this view, it is man's perfection that is of interest-in other words, his capacity to exhaust all his possibilities in a complete unity with nature. The insights into socioeconomic relations and laws as preconditions for a revolutionary praxis and the realization of socialism are means to an end: „a fully devel-

²³⁸ Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 328: „... free conscious activity constitutes the species-character of man.“

²³⁹ On this dispute in the „Anti-Dühring,“ see A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Karl Marx*, p. 115f.

²⁴⁰ K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, Vol. III, p. 828.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*



oped humanism that equals naturalism ... the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being-between freedom and necessity."²⁴²

If the question concerning the meaning of history is part of man's true reality, man in his concrete situation is taken seriously only if he is also understood in his conformation to a certain perfection and in his capacity to realize it. In his early writings, Marx formulated this task,²⁴³ although he lacked the apparatus for its empirical investigation and consequently shifted his analytic interests increasingly to the area of socioeconomic processes.²⁴⁴ Yet he set forth important psychological insights about man's true reality²⁴⁵--for example, in the concept of „passion“ and „alienated passion“; in the distinctions between „constant“ and „variable“ drives, between „the real needs of man“ and his „artificially produced“ ones,²⁴⁶ between „ideas“ that, as ideologies, have the function of rationalizations and „real ideas“ that are rooted in human and social reality.²⁴⁷ There is, besides, the concept of a „human nature“ as a „human nature in general“ and a „modifiable human nature“²⁴⁸; the concept of „love“; and finally the concept of „productive life“ as „free conscious activity,“ which is man's true wealth²⁴⁹ because it makes him biophilous and turns him against the domination of dead matter over him.²⁵⁰

²⁴² Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 348.

²⁴³ This is the way the characterizations „humanistic“ and „anthropological“ Marx are to be understood.

²⁴⁴ The scientific tool for the empirical investigation of psychic peculiarities is not discovered until Freud develops his psychoanalytical method.

²⁴⁵ On this, see especially Fromm, „Marx's Contribution to the Knowledge of Man“ (1968h).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, pp. 358ff, e.g.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Marx, „Die deutsche Ideologie,“ pp. 344-349.

²⁴⁸ See p. 56f.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 328: „But productive life is species-life. It is life-producing life. The whole character of a species, its species-character, resides in the nature of its life activity, and free conscious activity constitutes the species-character of man.“

²⁵⁰ Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, pp. 345f.

It is Fromm's achievement to have taken up the question the young Marx asked, and to have juxtaposed it with the insights of psychoanalysis. The concept of character that Fromm took from Freud and developed can serve to identify the psychic preconditions for the realization of man's true reality.²⁵¹ At the same time, {213} he postulated an interdependence between socioeconomic conditions and psychic needs and introduced the concept of „social character“ that mediates between the two entities.²⁵² Fromm's Marx reception represents a logical development of the investigation of man's true reality as a universal humanism = naturalism. It is a development in the sense that it attempts to take seriously the discovery of man's enmeshment in his psychic needs. Fromm revealed this enmeshment as the psychic dependence on a variety of human needs, which means that man cannot but react to these needs. One of these needs is for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion, to which, according to Fromm, humanistic religion reacts optimally. The following comparison of this concept of religion with Marx's critique will also describe the concept of humanism more precisely.

Fromm's concept of a humanistic religion and Marx's critique of religion initially appear to have little in common. Marx was never seriously interested in theology or religion, and certainly not in an analysis and discussion of the contents of religion.²⁵³ The consequence is that there exists no genuine Marxist atheism,²⁵⁴ the atheistic interpretation of religion as „the opium of the people“²⁵⁵ being

²⁵¹ Cf. above, Fromm's character theory, pp. 27-54.

²⁵² See pp. 18-22, the comments on the „social character,“ and especially Fromm, „The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory“ (1965c), pp. 210-214.

²⁵³ Cf. W. Post, *Kritik*, pp. 304f.

²⁵⁴ Cf. A. Massiczek, *Der menschliche Mensch*, pp. 566-570.; and Marx's statements themselves in *Early Writings*, pp. 357f.

²⁵⁵ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 244. On the expression „opium of the people,“ cf. H. Gollwitzer, „Die marxistische Religionskritik and der christliche Glaube,“ pp. 23-28.



primarily an expression of anti-Marxist apologetics. Marx's interest in religion was inspired by Feuerbach's and the left Hegelians' critique and his own insight „that religion is exhaustively defined as a function of bad social conditions.“²⁵⁶ Religion is of interest as a social phenomenon and tells us something about man's alienation. Once alienation has been done away with, religion will no longer be necessary.

In spite of this difference in what they take religion to be, the two men give the same treatment to important aspects of the concept of religion. It must first be noted that what Marx called „religion“ is largely its social manifestation as church and state church, and he translates religious values into nontheological language.²⁵⁷ And Fromm's humanistic religion is called „religion“ only because its underlying experience („X experience“) articulates itself in the historical religions. The aim of humanistic religion is the dissolution of the historical, socially established religions.²⁵⁸ When these terminological differences are taken note of and the difficulties of nomenclature attending a nontheistic standpoint in a linguistic {214} universe stamped by theism are allowed for, it turns out that what both concepts of religion have in common is more significant than what divides them.

The common features of Marx's and Fromm's concepts of religion stand out even more clearly when they are seen against the background that shaped their critiques of religion, namely the Enlightenment idea that man is not truly himself when he owes himself to someone other than himself. Independence and freedom are the preconditions for the birth of man as man come of age. The possibility of a reconciliation between man and a reality

beyond him is unacceptable to this free thinking because it would be counter to the autonomy postulate. Both theonomy and heteronomy are *a priori* contradictions of man's self-creation, and because the claim of theonomy has always been articulated as a claim to rule by ecclesiastical and social groups, every theonomy always also means heteronomy.²⁵⁹ For both Marx and Fromm, only a concept of autonomy that excludes any sense that one's existence is owed to something other than oneself is valid: „A being sees himself as independent only when he stands on his own feet, and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his existence to himself. A man who lives by the grace of another regards himself as a dependent being.“²⁶⁰ For both, autonomy can only be attained in opposition to heteronomous = authoritarian structures. But both also agree (and herein they differ from Feuerbach) that this opposition is not to direct itself primarily against the contents and manifestations of the established religions²⁶¹ but against those conditions that allow such narcotizing religions to come into existence. „Enlightenment will bring genuine liberation only ... when the conditions that give rise to religion are also changed in such a way that the need for approval and consolation disappears ...

²⁵⁶ W. Post, *Kritik*, p. 304.

²⁵⁷ Cf. e.g., „alienation“ instead of the theological concept „sin,“ or „true man“ instead of „saved man,“ etc.

²⁵⁸ In his talk, „Gibt es eine Ethik ohne Religiosität,“ given on the occasion of the symposium honoring Fromm's seventy-fifth birthday in May 1975 in Locarno, A. Auer therefore rightly asks if this use of language was not designed to take advantage of the „surplus value“ of traditional ideas.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Karl Marx*, p. 29: „In the concept of God, Marx sees the abstract expression of domination, always connected with a dogmatic, antecedent, unitary meaning of the world as a whole“ (the concept „abstract“ is to be understood negatively). Cf. W. Post, *Kritik*, p. 198f.

²⁶⁰ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 356.

²⁶¹ Here we have much of the reason for Fromm's aversion to all dogmatic belief. A criticism of statements concerning religious belief would mean that religion is being taken seriously in more than in its function to deceive man about his true situation. At a deeper level, the reason for Marx's and Fromm's aversion must be looked for in their rootedness in specifically Jewish traditions in which a disinclination against making any kind of theological statement was cultivated. Cf. the comments on the doctrine of negative attributes, pp. 181-188, and A. Massiczek, *Der Menschliche Mensch*, pp. 570-574.



."262 A critique of the various established religions becomes unnecessary once man and his world are understood humanistically.²⁶³

The critique of heaven must become the critique of earth. The goal toward which all criticism strives is the knowledge of man's true reality, „the essentiality of man and of nature."²⁶⁴ The combative quality of the opposition to all heteronomy disappears the moment heteronomy is dismissed as the opposite of autonomy, and one can therefore dispense with all discussion of the contents {215} of religion, indeed with all critiques of it. Confrontation becomes unnecessary because in the active understanding of man's true reality--that is, of man in his nature as socialism perfects him--all heteronomous determinations dissolve. Then „the question of an alien being, a being above nature and man--a question which implies an admission of the unreality of nature and of man--has become impossible in practice. Atheism, which is a denial of this unreality, no longer has any meaning, for atheism is a negation of God, through which negation it asserts the existence of man. But socialism as such no longer needs such mediation. Its startingpoint is the theoretically and practically sensuous consciousness of man and of nature as essential beings."²⁶⁵

This quotation from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* also defines Fromm's concept of religious humanism. But it also makes clear the difference between his concept of humanistic religion and Marx's concept of religion. Fromm's understanding of humanism coincides with the early Marx's critique of religion in that the negation of God „which co ipso makes possible and posits man's existence is to be viewed as a historical process of enlightenment that reaches its goal with

²⁶² H. Gollwitzer, „Die Marxistische Religionskritik und der christliche Glaube," p. 37; in line with Fromm's terminology, religion here is always to be understood as authoritarian religion.

²⁶³ W. Post, *Kritik der Religion bei Marx*, p. 305; cf. Werner Post's criticism (pp. 304-309) of this indifference of Karl Marx toward the contents of religion.

²⁶⁴ K. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 357.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

the materialistic view of man."²⁶⁶ It is therefore no longer necessary to deal with theistic religions²⁶⁷ unless humanistic values and insights „in theologic garb" can be discovered there and utilized for the humanistic understanding of man and reality.²⁶⁸ Because the birth of that man who no longer owes his existence to any alien being has become historical fact in the process of enlightenment, all attempts regarding „the essentiality of man in nature"²⁶⁹ articulate themselves as „science of man."²⁷⁰ In the case of Marx, this science is primarily determined by man's enmeshment in socioeconomic conditions, while Fromm believes that „man's true reality" can only be perceived when his psychic needs are taken seriously as human needs.

By humanism, Fromm means science. But humanism is also a religious concept for him, although only to the extent that he believes that the traditional religions have come to an end in humanism. Anyone who wishes to take seriously man in his true reality as a creature of needs must note man's

²⁶⁶ Cf. Fromm, *The Sane Society* (1955a), p. 235f.

²⁶⁷ This does not mean that Fromm came to a definitive conclusion regarding the problem of religion. The comments below will show that Fromm's understanding differs from Marx's in the sense that with the religio-critical grounding of humanism, the problem of religion arises again as a question concerning a humanistic religion. Both are concerned with the grounding of humanism in a critique of theistic = authoritarian = heteronomous religions whose end in history both believed to have occurred with the Enlightenment.

²⁶⁸ It is in this way that Fromm's efforts to interpret humanistically the religious traditions of the Old Testament, Buddhism, the Vedas, and the mysticism especially of Meister Eckhart must be legitimated. *To Have or to Be?* (1976a) represents a culmination of these efforts. Cf. the concluding part of this study.

²⁶⁹ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 357.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 356. Fromm believes that Buddhism realizes the same insight. Both the Buddha and Karl Marx are concerned with a „radical knowledge" that, as an encompassing „science of man," studies human existence. On this, cf. Fromm, „Fromm contra Auer," p. 3, and the present work, p. 133f.



need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion, a need that has manifested itself historically in the major religions. If humanism is the {216} ultimate form of man's religious need, a humanistic self- and worldunderstanding and the humanistic experience of the ONE necessarily form part of man's productive unfolding.²⁷¹ Fromm calls the productive reaction to this need the X experience or humanistic religion; the concept „religion“ here is to be understood „humanistically.“

As to the question of what Marx's and Fromm's concepts of religion have in common, only a nuanced answer is possible. Fromm himself attempts to show an objective continuity when he interprets Marx's struggle against religion merely as the socially adapted expression of one who in reality was a very religious, prophetic person opposed to the authoritarian and idolatrous realizations of religion in church and state because they offended against profound religious interests: „Marx's atheism is the most advanced form of rational mysticism, closer to Meister Eckhardt or to Zen Buddhism than are most of those fighters for God and religion who accuse him of 'godlessness.'“²⁷² For Fromm, the religious element in Marx lies primarily in the fact that he opposed all idolatry, particularly the idolatry that turns man into god.²⁷³ Man is to

become true man: such is Fromm's view of Marx's understanding of religion.

As long as only the religio-critical humanism concept that is common to, and binding on, both men is considered, no objection can be raised to this interpretation of Marx's criticism of religion. But Marx believed that man has already become true man when he views religion materialistically. In Marx, the critique of religion has the function of defining religion as illusory. When man, having stood on his head, returns to his feet, religion loses its claim to existence. Because religion is merely „the sigh of the oppressed creature ... the call to abandon illusions about the people's condition is the call to abandon a condition that requires illusions.“²⁷⁴ The critique of religion has done this job of disillusionment once and for all, which means that all interest is now focused on man's true reality. As far as Marx is concerned, this reality does not include a human need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion. His understanding of materialism implies the dissolution of religion because religion is no more than a function of bad social conditions.²⁷⁵ He knows that „for Germany, the critique of {217} religion is essentially completed; and the critique of religion is the prerequisite of every critique.“²⁷⁶

This claim has important consequences for a judgment of Marx's understanding of history and man, and those consequences make clear why Marx interpreters who are interested in Marx the economist and want to limit the application of the methodical principle of the critical dialectic of theory and praxis to social processes as shaped by economic factors refuse to accept the early Marx as the true one. Denying that religion has any claim means that one anticipates a condition that can only be

²⁷¹ See for detail pp. 119-128.

²⁷² Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961b), p. 64. Those who classify „Marx statements about religion ... as (conscious) criticism and (unconscious) adoption of religious, especially Jewish and Christian elements,“ arrive at a similar result when they infer from this distinction „that Marx's teaching is a 'religion without God.',“ (W. Post, *Kritik*, p. 279). Examples would be Th. Steinbüchel, „Karl Marx: Gestalt-Werk-Ethos,“ pp. 28-34; and A. Massiczek, *Der menschliche Mensch*, pp.466-508.

²⁷³ This view cannot remain altogether uncontradicted. Karl Marx does not wish to make man into God but: „The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that for man, the supreme being is man, and thus with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being-conditions that are best described in the exclamation of a Frenchman on the occasion of a

proposed tax on dogs: Poor dogs! They want to treat you like human beings“ (*Early Writings*, p. 251); cf. also W. Post, *Kritik*, pp. 171f.

²⁷⁴ K. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 244; cf. Gollwitzer, „Die marxistische Religionskritik,“ p. 66-71.

²⁷⁵ Cf. W. Post, *Kritik*, pp. 257-259; 304.

²⁷⁶ K. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 243.



worked for in the revolutionary struggle to change socioeconomic conditions. The Marx criticism that is based on Marx the economist objects to adopting the contents of a theistic religion in the critique of religion and to interpreting them humanistically. It therefore also refuses to interpret humanistically and as an event in history the eschatological and messianic ideas according to which the unification and unity of God and man will be accomplished in the days of the Messiah.²⁷⁷ When religion is unmasked as a historically outdated epiphenomenon, no substantive statements can be made about what man in his perfection will be.

For Marx, it is a historical fact that religion has been overcome: man's eschatological true reality has already been achieved. With the postulate of an existential need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion, Fromm necessarily revises the merely functional aspect the critique of religion has in Marx. If man is taken seriously in his existential needs, and the need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion is defined as an existential need and not merely as a historical and therefore artificial one that must be overcome, then religion is an essential part of man and everything depends on how the religion that optimally corresponds to this existential need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion can be more closely defined.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ J.-Y. Calvez also criticizes Marx on this point and sees the root for the idea that every division in man must be abolished in the „postulate of identity and immanence“ that German Idealism adopted. But this criticism does not apply to Fromm because with the postulate of a humanistic religion, he understands man's perfect form and man's history as a „presentist eschatology.“

²⁷⁸ Fromm (*Marx's Concept of Man* [1961b], p. 64; cf. *To Have or To Be?* [1976a], p. 165) feels that because of how he views socialism, one can speak of a „religious“ Marx who can be discovered behind all the criticism of religion. This would mean that what Fromm calls „humanistic religion“ is contained in a manner of speaking in Marx's concept of „socialism,“ and that Marx's concept of religion would be equated

The difficulties that result when the materialistic approach is applied to psychic needs and an existential need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion is postulated are not merely difficulties of nomenclature. Along with Marx, Fromm takes the established, authoritarian religions as his starting point and criticizes their ideological and idolatrous character.²⁷⁹ For both, {218} religions are historical phenomena that were overcome by religiocritical humanism, and it is only as a result that humanism attained its rightful place. When this humanism is taken seriously and the materialistic approach is applied to man's psychic structure of needs, the necessity to deal with religion arises once again, and the critique of religion again becomes necessary if a productive reaction to this existential need is to be made possible.²⁸⁰ Because the critique of religion remains an essential part of humanistic

with Fromm's concept of authoritarian religion. To judge the legitimacy of such an interpretation, a distinction would have to be made between an interpretation of Marx's ideas as reflecting a specific historical horizon, and an interpretation of his thought from a historical distance in which Marx's approaches are developed. Fromm's contribution to the interpretation of Marx lies along the latter line. But in the first type of interpretation, one would have to inquire why Marx showed scant interest in the development of a „religious“ socialism, and why this interest decreased with advancing age.

²⁷⁹ A critical judgment of theology and religion can therefore call their role „ideology.“ For „ideology is ... theory that bears no relation to how things really are, is camouflage of actual conditions, pseudo-autonomy of consciousness, the faithful reflection of untrue praxis, in short, ideology simulates rational insights where, because social processes are opaque, alienated and wrong, practical and theoretical irrationality predominates“ (*W. Post, Kritik*, p. 233). Socialism strives to overcome ideology and idolatry because it is anti-authoritarian as regards both the state and the Church (cf. Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* [1961b], p. 68).

²⁸⁰ The fact that it has become necessary once again to think about religion does not mean that there is a need to regress to Feuerbach's critique of religion, as R. Xirau intimates in his contribution to the *Fromm Festschrift* (see „What Is Man's Struggle?“).



religion, religio-critical humanism can no longer simply be grounded by asserting that the Enlightenment has put an end to religion. Marx could announce that history had invalidated the claim of religion because he declared religion to be ultimately a product of economic alienation and the critique of religion unnecessary as man's real dependencies were understood.²⁸¹ In this respect, Marx's thought is stringent. But it is also shortsighted, as Fromm's application of the materialistic approach to man's psychic needs makes clear. Conversely, Fromm's concept of religion can no longer simply legitimize the humanistic approach as deriving from a critique of religion whose historical role has already ended, because in the religio-critical confrontation, the humanistic reaction to the need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion must always prove itself anew.

Both humanism and humanistic religion need

²⁸¹ In this context, we will merely allude to the controversial Marx interpretation that is associated with this observation. It seems plausible that those interpreters whose concern is the „economic“ Marx will tend to feel that the stringency of Marx's materialist approach is better and more easily preserved when one confines oneself to the economic discoveries and changes. It is equally plausible that there is a danger in codifying certain insights into a Marxist orthodoxy.

Fromm's interpretation of the „humanistic“ Marx, on the other hand, derives its legitimation from the serious consideration of man's psyche and the postulate of a humanistic religion. With this postulate, Fromm enlarges the understanding of Marx and can rightfully refer to the Marx of the *Early Writings* in so doing.

constant religiocritical grounding: they are not simply facts of scientific credulity but the object of a trusting belief in man because he is man. By elevating man to the role of originator and actor of his history in opposition to any heteronomous determination of him by authoritarian religion, Fromm, along with Marx, grounds humanism religio-critically. Yet in Fromm's case, humanism remains belief and tied to the possibility and experience of humanistic religion. Still, this difference from Marx's concept of religion merely represents a variation of the two men's common fundamental belief that „the question of an alien being, a being above nature and man ...“²⁸² is redundant insofar as their concept of autonomy, derived from the Enlightenment, implies an *a priori* dialectical contradiction between any theonomy and man as the creator and actor of his history. {219}

²⁸² K. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 357.