



Preface

A preface to a study of Erich Fromm should be programmatic and typical of both the subject and the author. It should be „disillusionment.“ In Andersen’s fairy tale „The Emperor’s New Clothes,“ the child discovers that the emperor’s splendid garments are mere figments of the imagination, that he is, in fact, naked. To take away those garments, to „dis-illusion“ his subjects, to make both emperor and subjects into human beings and to give them the courage to be human--this is the scientific and ethical interest that pervades Erich Fromm’s life and work. If one is to do his work justice, one must allow it to impose its direction on one’s research.

The first interest of this study is, therefore, the most comprehensive understanding possible of Fromm’s insights and views. After providing some biographical and bibliographical information, this study sets forth Fromm’s sociopsychological approach (Chapter I) and characterology (Chapter II), which, being empirical insights, are fundamental to all further reflections and views. The philosophical-anthropological and historical-philosophical reflections on the nature and history of man follow (Chapter III). Part Two deals with Fromm’s humanism. It contains a critical discussion of the humanistic critique of religion and of humanistic religion (Chapter IV), and presents the humanistic ethic (Chapter V). The relevance of the humanistic ethic to a theological ethic is then examined (Chapter V). In the final section of Chapter V, the second object of interest is articulated, namely, the significance of Fromm’s insights and humanistic ideas for a theological ethic.

Dealing with Fromm’s empirical discoveries and humanistic concerns prompts a third interest, which is to understand his {XII} intellectual antecedents. Part Three attempts this in two sections. In the first, four sources of his thought--Moses Maimonides, Hermann Cohen, Shneur Zalman, and Karl Marx--are introduced (Chapter VI). In the sec-

ond (Chapter VII), the attempt is made to develop the usefulness of the insights that were derived from the critical discussion of Fromm’s humanistic religion in Chapter IV, and of what was discovered about the sources of his thought. It is shown that Fromm is indebted to a particular pattern of thought, that is, a particular kind of dialectics. Such an endeavor may appear questionable because it involves the risk of labeling, and labeling runs counter to Fromm’s living thought. But Fromm himself confirmed that this demonstration of his dialectical thinking does not put him into a strait-jacket but accurately interprets his thought and makes a deeper comprehension of it possible.

The cognitive value of a search for patterns of thought becomes apparent in Part Four, which sets forth the having/being alternative. This last part of the book summarizes all that precedes it, because the question „to have or to be?“ is the common denominator of Fromm’s scientific and religious-ethical humanism. The presentation of the characterological and religious concept of the having/being alternative (Chapter VIII) is followed by a critical appreciation of Fromm’s humanism, which takes the form of reflections concerning a possible dialogue between him and Christian theologians (Chapter IX). The emphasis here is on arriving at the most consistent and persuasive understanding of the distinctiveness of Fromm’s humanism possible. The purpose is to provide an impulse for the discussion of Fromm’s humanism--and that is the fourth interest of this study. The final pages attempt to provide an impetus to theological and theological-ethical discussion by proposing some questions about the self-understanding of theology and mysticism, and the relation between the two.

There is an objective reason for the intensive discussion of the concept of religion, the religious ethos, and mysticism in these pages. A deeper understanding of Fromm’s insights and ideas is possi-



ble only against the background of his humanism, and this humanism is religio-critical for religious and ethical reasons. In fact, that is what makes Fromm's humanism distinctive. If justice is to be done to its distinctiveness, therefore, religious-philosophical and theological-ethical questions must be discussed. {XIII}

The difficulties that attend such an enterprise are considerable, for dealing with Fromm's work means participating in the difficulties that proceed from these problems. To evaluate Fromm fairly, to arrive at a final judgment, one would need to be competent in all the various disciplines and sciences, for to Fromm's credit, he risked a global view of man and his history at a time when the sciences were becoming ever more specialized. His scientific work, its understanding and critique, propose a task one can never discharge in a wholly satisfactory manner. That is why this study reports discoveries from the most diverse disciplines and advances interpretations even though the author lacks expertise in most of these areas. Examples are the human and social sciences that are touched on in connection with Fromm's social psychology and characterology, philosophical questions, Marxism, Eastern and Western mysticism, and the general humanism discussion.

The author must beg the reader's indulgence for failing to treat extensively two men who influenced Fromm's thought, Meister Eckhart and Spinoza, an omission ascribable in part to a lack of competence, in part to a lack of space. For the same reasons, it proved impossible to compare Fromm's discoveries and views with the opinions currently held in the various relevant disciplines, even though it would certainly be illuminating to compare Fromm's work with Max Scheler's, Arnold Gehlen's, and Helmut Plessner's anthropologies, for example.

The literature about Fromm presents a special problem. The scientific reception of Fromm's work in the German-speaking countries is still in its initial stages, so it seemed both necessary and justifiable to offer this study as the first comprehensive presentation of his discoveries and ideas. The considerable

resonance his thought has found in the English-speaking countries is more remarkable for its volume than for its quality. To the extent that the secondary literature was available and warranted it, it was given consideration. The bibliography lists monographs, essays, and reviews, and identifies them accordingly.

One reason for the generally limited discussion of Fromm's thought in the German-speaking countries is the contemporary scientific establishment's prejudice that a persuasive and appealing style necessarily indicates scientific inadequacy. Another {XIV} reason has greater justification: although the present study will show that Fromm's thought can be stringently developed from his fundamental humanistic convictions as an experiential value, and that it can be understood in all its detail as the result of that approach, his own presentation frequently suffers from an imprecise and inconsistent use of concepts and too limited a systematic interest--both deficiencies in a scientific discussion.

The last-named difficulties provide the motive for extensive quotations from the sources, not just the sources of Fromm's thought but his thought itself. The attempt was also made to refer the reader to the greatest possible number of passages in Fromm's work that bear on a particular problem. The bibliography includes the most comprehensive listing of Fromm's works presently available.

It was the author's personal contact with Fromm that most decisively contributed to bringing this study to a successful completion. Fromm began taking an interest in this book in 1972. Intensive discussions and a half-year stay at his home corrected many a misinterpretation of his written statements, directed attention to those questions and dimensions of experience that deepened understanding, and clarified those problems and approaches that furthered scientific discussion.

It is therefore to Fromm himself that the author owes the largest debt of gratitude: gratitude for his willingness to engage in dialogue; for the trouble he took to ensure the completion of this study; for the tolerance of much, sometimes unqualified, questioning; and for his hospitality, which



the author availed himself of time and again. I also wish to thank Alfons Auer for his scholarly help and advice in the preparation of the manuscript. His untiring concern about structure and direction, clarity of language and style, but principally his sincere and cordial manner, contributed significantly to its completion. For helpful suggestions and conversations on the New Testament and New Testament problems and exegesis, I thank Herbert Leroy. And I owe special thanks to my wife, Renate Oetker-Funk, for assistance in correcting the manuscript. {XV}

Tübingen, November 1977

Preface to the American Edition

To add one more study to the many English and American dissertations and monographs on the work of Erich Fromm was not a sufficient reason for translating this book. I believe that the special value of this study lies in the fact that it is the first to consider Fromm's entire opus, especially the earliest writings, some of which have never been translated. It should also be said that it is a scientific discussion of Fromm's work that has been significantly shaped by personal acquaintance with Erich Fromm. And finally, it represents an attempt to un-

derstand Fromm's thought against the background of the Jewish and German intellectual history from which he derives. Except for a few minor corrections in the Introduction, this version corresponds to the German text. Even the comments on guiding cognitive interests, such as the significance of Fromm's humanism for questions of theological ethics (Chapter V: 4) and for Christianity generally (Chapter IX), were retained in order to give the reader some insight into the relevant discussion in German-speaking countries.

The bibliography of Fromm's writings was reworked: it contains all presently known titles with the internationally used logograms and indications of first publication, but omits versions, prepublications, reprints, and translations. Readers who are interested in such bibliographical data are referred to the complete bibliography of Fromm's writings in Volume X of the *Collected Works (Erich Fromm Gesamtausgabe in 12 Bänden*, edited by Rainer Funk, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999). The general bibliography in this study was enlarged by a few titles from the secondary literature. {XVI} I thank the translator for his trouble, Inter Naciones for the financial support that made this translation possible, and Maritt Schütt (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart) as well as Werner Mark Linz and Ulla Schnell (Continuum Publishing Co.) for making this book accessible to the English-speaking public.

Tübingen 1981

Copyright © 1978, 1982 and 2009 by Dr. Rainer Funk
Ursrainer Ring 24, D-72076 Tuebingen / Germany
E-Mail: frommfunk[at-symbol]aol.com.

Funk, R., 1982 Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human, pp. xi-xvi

Numbers in {those brackets} between the lines indicate the next page in the original book