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A POST-FREUDIAN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF AGGRESSION IN THE CONTEXT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

*Drew University* PH.D. 1985

# A POST-FREUDIAN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF AGGRESSION IN THE CONTEXT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School
of Drew University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Philosophy

Ralph Edgar Peters, Jr.
Drew University
Madison, New Jersey
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For Rene

a much appreciated

tough-minded and tender-hearted

companion

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the treatment of aggression in the post-Freudian theories of Erich Fromm, Rollo May, and Erik Erikson and to explore the ethical implications of the problem of aggression in the context of psychology and religion.

In the first chapter, the groundwork is laid for understanding the problem of aggression by means of the post-Freudian framework. The work of Sigmund Freud is the basic source for all the later developments and transformations of psychoanalysis and so the evolution of Freud's concept and ethic of aggression is traced in considerable detail. Freud's work stimulated a wide range of responses in both the sciences and the humanities as well as within psychoanalysis. Representative responses from all three perspectives are briefly surveyed and related to the post-Freudian approaches by way of introduction.

In the second chapter, Fromm's theory of aggression is presented in detail. The presentation is made according to the categories which are intrinsic to the theory itself. These same categories can also be applied to the theories of May and Erikson, as demonstrated in the third and fourth chapters. The theoretical expositions of chapters two, three, and four are preceded by biographical material in an effort to show how each life and theory fit together.

In the fifth chapter, the concern with theory recedes to a degree and ethical considerations become paramount. Each of the post-Freudians have ethical commitments which become most clear in their

implications when contrasted with other prominent positions in psychology and religion. Thus, Fromm's perspective on aggression is contrasted in a critical way with that of the behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner. Skinner's apparent foil, the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers, receives similar treatment from May's perspective. The following chapter, the sixth, draws on Erikson's perspective for a critique of apparent opposites in religion, with Jerry Falwell representing the Protestant right and Camilo Torres representing the Catholic left.

In the seventh and concluding chapter, a retrospective summary of the entire dissertation is undertaken as a prelude to assessing both the contributions and the limits of the post-Freudian approach to the problem of aggression.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION: PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM OF AGGRESSION FROM FREUD TO THE POST-FREUDIANS

The phenomenon of aggression has been a perennial concern throughout human history. Since ancient times aggression has been studied in relation to the animal world, the social order, human nature, and the gods. In the twentieth century, however, many scholars have deemed it necessary to reconsider the nature and meaning of aggression in light of the unprecedented role it has played in our time.

One of the first scholars to develop an influential perspective on aggression consonant with the events of this century was the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. Although Freud began his psychoanalytic work in relative obscurity at the turn of the century, in due time psychoanalysis became an internationally recognized therapy and theory dealing with the mind and its abnormalities. In the early stages of psychoanalysis, Freud was chiefly interested in the forms and functions of sexuality, but after the First World War he became increasingly concerned with the dynamics of human destructiveness. To this day, more than forty years after Freud's death, the psychoanalytic viewpoint contained in his later writings remains among the best known of all the scholarly attempts to address the problem of aggression.

What appears to be less well-known, judging from typical textbook treatments of psychoanalysis and aggression, is that since Freud's day a number of significant contributions to the study of aggression

have been made under the aegis of phychoanalysis. These post-Freudian contributions, however much they share the common rubric of psychoanalysis, are by no means of one piece; in their relation to Freud and to each other they exhibit a complex configuration of divergences and convergences rather than a uniform pattern. It is to the elucidation and evaluation of these more recent and less recognized post-Freudian approaches to the problem of aggression that this study is primarily devoted.

Before the various post-Freudian approaches can be examined in detail, it is necessary to inquire further into their common source--Freud. The mature Freudian position on aggression may have become a point of departure for many of the post-Freudians, but even in such cases it continues to serve as an important point of reference. For even if Freud is no longer granted the last word on a psychoanalytic approach to the problem of aggression, the prerogative of the first word remains decidedly his.

## Freud and Aggression

Although aggression is clearly of secondary importance to sexuality in Freud's early work, it receives more than a little attention. It is evident in such varied phenomena as hysterical and obsessional neuroses, dreams, psychosexual development, superstitions, jokes, phobias, and primitive behavior. Still, it apparently took the devastating impact of World War I to impress upon Freud that relegating aggression to a peripheral existence in the neurotic, the childish, the humorous, and the distant past did not account for its obvious centrality in the normal, the adult, the deadly serious, and the

contemporary. In what follows we will trace the development of Freud's concept of aggression from his early clinical work to his postwar speculations.

Freud's earliest observations pertaining to aggression were made during his prepsychoanalytic (before 1897) clinical work with patients struggling with hysterical and obsessional symptoms. At this time Freud subscribed to the so-called "seduction theory," believing that the patients he was treating were, as children, taken advantage of sexually. Freud hypothesized that such acts of "sexual aggression" were at the root of his patients' disorders. Freud generally, but not exclusively, found that hysterical symptoms were associated with females who had undergone as children an "event of passive sexuality, an experience submitted to with indifference or with a small degree of annoyance or fright."[1] On the other hand, obsessional symptoms were generally found to be associated with males who had, in contrast, experienced as children an active sexuality occasioned by feelings of pleasure. Freud argued that "obsessions can be regularly shown by analysis to be disguised and transformed self-reproaches about acts of sexual aggression in childhood, and are therefore more often met with in men than women, and that men develop obsessions more often than hysteria."[2] Thus, in the clinical observations before 1897, Freud's concern with aggression

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 3 (London: Hogarth Press, 1962), p. 155.

[2]Sigmund Freud, The Aetiology of Hysteria, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 3 (London: Hogarth Press, 1962), p. 220.

was limited to the role that sexual acts of aggression played in the development of the childhood roots of particular neuroses.

In 1897 Freud's perspective underwent a reversal. He abandoned the seduction theory for the Oedipus complex and in doing so transformed the acted-out sexual aggression of the adult into the phantasized desires of the child. He came to the conclusion, based on his self-analysis among other things, that the majority of reported seductions did not actually take place. Instead of occurring literally, most seductions, Freud decided, took place in phantasy--a product of the imagination based on real desires, specifically of a boy desiring his mother and a girl, her father. Since the Oedipus complex involves the triangle of two parents and child rather than simply a dyadic relationship between the child and an adult of the opposite sex, more than just sexual desire is present. Accompanying the desire for the exclusive possession of one parent is the desire to replace the other parent by eliminating him or her.[3] The aggression which was perpetrated on the child in the early theory now becomes an aggressive wish of the child directed against the parent of the same sex.

In his first major work after 1897, The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud would discuss the aggressive wishes growing out of oedipal rivalry and even extend his analysis of aggression to sibling rivalry. Although it is frequently believed that Freud reduced all dream interpretation to nothing but sexuality, Freud himself explicitly repudiated

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[3]Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vols. 4 and 5 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), vol. 4, p. 256.

such charges by stating: "The assertion that all dreams require a sexual interpretation, against which critics rage so incessantly, occurs nowhere in my Interpretation of Dreams."[4]

Freud supported this statement, at least in regard to aggression, by discussing what he referred to as punishment dreams and dreams which involved death wishes. As to the former category of dreams, Freud wrote that they are based on the conflict between pride and self-criticism, with self-criticism winning out due to the "masochistic impulses of the mind."[5] As to the latter category, Freud believed that dreams which involved "the death of persons of whom the dreamer is fond" may conceal a hidden death wish that could be traced back to childhood. Even though Freud conceived of children as being "completely egotistic" and striving ruthlessly to satisfy their needs against all competitors, including siblings, the death wish of children harbored against their rivals was not death in terms of an adult understanding of "the terrors of eternal nothingness," but rather a wish that people die in the sense that they simply "go away."[6]

Freud did not only apply such dream interpretations to others, he also applied them to himself. One of Freud's dreams which clearly has an aggressive meaning is the so-called Non-Vixit ("he did not live") dream. In this dream the manifest rivals are peers rather than family. The characters in the dream are the two men who stand between Freud and

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[4]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 397.

[5]Ibid., p. 476.

[6]Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 248-55.

the associate appointment he wants. One is Ernst Fleischl von Marxow, an associate of Freud's physiology teacher Ernst Brücke, and the other is Josef Paneth. At the end of the dream Freud reports that he gave Paneth a "piercing look" and then:

> Under my gaze he turned pale, his form grew indistinct and his eyes a sickly blue--and finally he melted away. I was highly delighted at this and I now realized the Ernst Fleischl, too, had been no more than an apparition, a 'revenant' ['ghost'--literally 'one who returns']; and it seemed to me quite possible that people of that kind only existed as long as one liked and could be got rid of if someone else wished it.[7]

Freud followed his associations to this dream back to the aggressive side of his relationship with a childhood companion, his nephew John.[8] In his correspondence with his colleague Wilhelm Fliess, Freud went even further and claimed that when he was eleven months old the birth of his younger brother Julius produced "ill wishes and real infantile jealousy" and that "my nephew and younger brother determined not only the neurotic side of all my friendships, but also their depth."[9] Thus when Julius died eight months after his birth in apparent response to Freud's death wishes, the infantile phantasy that one could wish one's rivals away apparently became a lifelong coping mechanism which reappeared in Freud's adult dreams.

After recognizing aggression in oedipal, sibling, and, at least in a manifest sense, professional rivalries, Freud spent the better part

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[7]Ibid., vol. 5, p. 421.

[8]Ibid., pp. 482-83.

[9]Sigmund Freud, The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters, Drafts and Notes to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887 - 1902 (New York: Basic Books, 1954), p. 219.

of a decade attempting to define the place of aggression in the dynamics of human development, beginning with the role of aggression in the history of the individual and culminating in the role of aggression in the history of the species. Characteristic of Freud throughout this period of theorizing is a constant vacillation between viewing aggression as a phenomenon with a source which is separate and independent from sexuality and as a phenomenon rooted in sexuality.

Freud's theoretical vacillation is evident in his early (1905) essays on sexual aberrations, infantile sexuality, and the libido theory. In Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality Freud, on the one hand, notes that the "impulses of cruelty arise from sources which are in fact independent of sexuality," although these impulses may become united with sexuality at an early stage. In a later edition (1915) he identifies the source of the impulse to cruelty as an instinct for mastery.[10] On the other hand, in the same edition Freud argued that aggression is rooted in sexuality. He contends that the source of sadism "would correspond to an aggressive component of the sexual instinct."[11] In another passage Freud gives developmental specificity to the relationship between sadistic-anal sexual organization and aggression by observing how withholding the contents of the bowels expresses hostility toward the environment.[12]

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[10]Sigmund Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 7 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 193.

[11]Ibid., p. 158.

[12]Ibid., p. 186.

In another work from the same year, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, Freud appears to offer more support for the notion that aggression is independent from sexuality. In this book Freud recognized a type of joke which expresses aggressive feelings. He refers to this type of joke as the "hostile joke" as opposed to the "obscene joke."[13] Freud described the technique by which we indirectly satisfy our "powerful inherited disposition to hostility" as one in which "by making our enemy small, inferior, despicable, or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him."[14]

Yet Freud's tentative attempts to establish aggression on a separate basis from sexuality were interrupted by a conflict with Alfred Adler. Adler began to write about a separate "aggressive drive" in 1908 and Freud came to perceive Adler's treatment of aggression as a challenge to the foundations of psychoanalysis, namely, the primacy of the libido theory and the fundamental dualism of sex and self-preservation.[15] Freud explicitly addressed the issue of aggression in relation to Adler in his 1909 case history of "Little Hans":

> I cannot bring myself to assume the existence of a special aggressive instinct alongside of the familiar instincts of self-preservation and of sex, and on an equal footing with them.... I should be inclined to recognize the two instincts which became repressed in Hans as familiar components of the sexual libido.[16]

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[13]Sigmund Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 8 (London: Hogarth Press, 1960), p. 97.

[14]Ibid., pp. 102-3.

[15]Paul Stepansky, A History of Aggression in Freud (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), chap. 5.

[16]Sigmund Freud, Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy, in The

In 1913, two years after Adler left the psychoanalytic movement and founded his own psychological group, Carl Jung was in the process of making a similar break. Against the backdrop of this two-front attack on psychoanalysis, Freud wrote a book about how, in primeval times, the sons rose up in murderous rebellion against the primal father.[17] The book, Totem and Taboo, may have reflected Freud's contemporary circumstances as much as it described prehistory.[18] However, in regard to aggression it represents a restatement of The Interpretation of Dreams and the Oedipus complex. The difference is, of course, that Freud is deploying the Oedipus complex in the context of prehistory rather than in dreams. In this sense Totem and Taboo is an advance in the psychoanalytic theory of aggression, but with the invocation of the Oedipus complex it is a reversion to an earlier theoretical position: aggression arises out of sexual jealousy. One qualification to this assessment of Totem and Taboo is that the sons actually act out their aggression and do, in fact, kill the primal father.[19]

At the beginning of 1914 Freud set out to redefine what was properly psychoanalytic in contrast to the psychologies of Adler and Jung. Again Freud criticized Adler's notions concerning aggression, but

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Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 10 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955) pp. 140-41.

[17]Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 13 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), chap. 4.

[18]Paul Roazen, Freud and His Followers (New York: New American Library, 1974), pp. 253-64.

[19]Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 141.

this time he was polemicizing against Adler's recently developed concept of the "masculine protest." Freud wrote in On Narcissism:

> It is from this context that Adler (1910) has derived his concept of the 'masculine protest,' which he has elevated almost to the position of the sole motive force in the formation of character and neurosis alike and which he bases not on a narcissistic, and therefore still a libidinal, trend, but on a social valuation. Psychoanalytic research has from the very beginning recognized the existence and importance of the 'masculine protest,' but it has regarded it, in opposition to Adler, as narcissistic in nature and derived from the castration complex.[20]

By describing aggression as "narcissistic in nature" and sexual in its origin, Freud reaffirmed the libido theory in a more radical way then ever before. In fact, in the course of this paper he collapsed his old dualism of sex and self-preservation into sex alone. However, by adopting a monistic theory of the instincts against Adler, Freud was coming dangerously close to Jung's conception that libido encompasses all psychic energy.[21] Over the next five years Freud would juggle his older dualistic theory with his newer monistic theory until, under the press of further problems, he would profoundly recast his entire conceptual scheme, thereby clearly distinguishing it from both Jung's and Adler's theories.

In 1915, with the fury of war close at hand, Freud reworked his explanation of hatred and destruction. Although he once again discussed the dynamics of aggression in the respective stages of psychosexual

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[20]Sigmund Freud, On Narcissism, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 92.

[21]Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1973), pp. 498-99.

development, he also provided a grounding for nonsexual aggression. In Instincts and Their Vicissitudes he wrote:

> The ego hates, abhors and pursues with intent to destroy all objects which are a source of unpleasurable feelings for it, without taking into account whether they mean a frustration of sexual satisfaction or of the satisfaction of self-preservation needs. Indeed, it may be asserted that the true prototypes of the relation of hate are derived not from sexual life, but from the ego's struggle to preserve and maintain itself.[22]

In this writing aggression becomes an outgrowth of the ego instincts and is rooted in self-preservation needs. Freud rearticulates in a more forceful way his connection between the instinct for mastery and the instinct for self-preservation, which he discussed ten years earlier as a basis for nonsexual aggression. For the first time, however, aggression clearly appears as a normal function of the modern adult rather than a marginal phenomenon operating in the realm of the neurotic, the child, and the primitive.

As the Great War dragged on and proved to be far more irrational in character and devastating in its consequences than anyone could have imagined, Freud observed how the ego could not only serve the needs of self-preservation, it could also turn on itself. In Mourning and Melancholia he wrote:

> The self-tormenting in melancholia, which is without doubt enjoyable, signifies, just like the corresponding phenomenon in obsessional neurosis, a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been turned round upon the subject's own self in the ways we have been discussing.[23]

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[22]Sigmund Freud, Instincts and Their Vicissitudes, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 138.

[23]Sigmund Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 251.

By recognizing self-hatred as a phenomenon in its own right, Freud set the stage for his last great revision of instinct theory, one that would take into account not just self-preservation, but self-destruction.

In the wake of war, surrounded by a society in shambles and in the midst of a series of tragedies within the psychoanalytic movement and his own family,[24] Freud replaced his old dichotomy of sex and self-preservation with a new dichotomy of life and death instincts in order to explain the forces which drove human beings to their fates. He introduced the new dichotomy in his 1920 work Beyond the Pleasure Principle,[25] but worked out the specific implications for aggression most fully ten years later in his monumental Civilization and Its Discontents. As Freud summarized the development of his thought in the later work:

> Starting from speculations on the beginning of life and from biological parallels, I drew the conclusion that, besides the instinct to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primeval, inorganic state. That is to say, as well as Eros there was an instinct of death. The phenomena of life could be explained from the concurrent or mutually opposing action of these two instincts. It was not easy, however, to demonstrate the activities of this supposed death instinct. The manifestations of Eros were conspicuous and noisy enough. It might be assumed that the death instinct operated silently within the organism towards its dissolution, but that, of course, was no proof. A more fruitful idea was that a portion of the instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness. In this way the instinct itself could be pressed into the service of Eros, in that the organism was destroying some other thing, whether animate or inanimate, instead of destroying its own self. Conversely, any restriction of this aggressiveness directed outwards would

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[24] Roazen, Freud and His Followers, pp. 320 and 497.

[25] Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 18 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955).

> be found to increase the self-destruction, which is in any case proceeding.[26]

In this work Freud's thoughts on aggression culminate in a sweeping vision of tragedy. By fully recognizing the power and pervasiveness of aggression apart from sexuality, Freud was led to the tragic conclusion that the individual is faced with the deadly alternatives of either destroying others or himself.

According to the bleak logic of the final Freudian position on aggression, there seems to be little, if anything, that can be done to escape the destructive consequences of the instinct of aggressiveness. Yet Freud repeatedly attempted to extricate himself from the tragic outcome of his theory. Although Freud was hardly one to offer easy answers for the dilemmas of human existence, he was willing to consider several strategies for mitigating the severity of his position.

In Civilization and Its Discontents Freud assessed two social strategies for the control of aggression. The first was the Marxist strategy, undoubtedly in response to Wilhelm Reich who was attempting to join Marxism with psychoanalysis at that time.[27] Freud thought there was some merit in the Marxist position, affirming that in "abolishing private property we deprive the human love of aggression of one of its instruments"[28] and that "a real change in the relations of human beings

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[26]Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 21 (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), pp. 118-19.

[27]Paul Robinson, The Freudian Left (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 31.

[28]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 113.

to possessions would be of more help in this direction than any ethical commands."[29] Yet Marxists failed to recognize that aggression is generated by human nature, not social conditions. Freud stated that "aggressiveness was not created by property"[30] and that Marxism suffers from "a fresh idealistic misconception of human nature."[31] The second strategy was to intensify communal feeling through identification with a group and its leader. The problem with this strategy was that the heightening of group solidarity was purchased at the price of an increase in intolerance toward outsiders.[32] So this strategy fails as a completely adequate solution as well.

In his letter to Albert Einstein two years later, Freud mentions two psychological strategies: "a strengthening of the intellect, which is beginning to govern instinctual life, and an internalization of the aggressive impulses, with all its consequent advantages and perils".[33] By "perils" Freud was referring to the aggressive character of the superego, which internalizes aggression by directing it against the ego in the form of conscience. This internalized aggression takes its toll on the individual. Thus Freud was left with the strengthening of the intellect as a strategy--one which, not coincidentally, corresponded with the therapeutic goal of psychoanalysis: "Where there was id, there

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[29]Ibid., p. 143.

[30]Ibid., p. 113.

[31]Ibid., p. 143.

[32]Ibid., p. 114.

[33]Sigmund Freud, Why War?, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 22 (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), pp. 214-15.

shall be ego."[34] In his last paper on therapeutic matters, however, Freud expressed his belief that the death instinct was "beyond any possibility of control."[35] Therefore, in the final analysis, Freud left us with no completely satisfactory solution to the problem of aggression.

## Scientific and Humanistic Responses to Freud

The Freudian approach to the problem of aggression has both a scientific and a moral side, even if Freud himself would have been reluctant to admit to the latter. Influenced by the positivism current in his day, Freud tended to cloak his moralizing in the garb of science. However, as Philip Rieff has cogenty argued, this practice should not obscure the essentially moral character of Freud's "science" of psychoanalysis.[36] Rieff's general designation of psychoanalysis as a moral science certainly applies to the particular manner in which Freud

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[34]Erich Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 101.

[35]James Strachey, as quoted by Fromm, in The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 492. As Freud himself noted:

> Even to exert a psychical influence upon a simple case of masochism is a severe tax on our powers.
>
> In studying the phenomena which testify to the activity of the instinct of destruction we are not confined to the observation of pathological material. There are countless facts in normal mental life which require this explanation, and the keener the power of our discernment the greater the abundance in which they present themselves to our notice.

Sigmund Freud, Analysis Terminable and Interminable, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 23 (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 243.

[36]Philip Rieff, Freud: The Mind of the Moralist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

treated aggression. In any case, the responses to Freud's perspective on aggression have been both scientific and moral in nature and have issued from a wide range of disciplines spanning both the sciences and the humanities. It is to some of the more important and influential of these responses that we now turn.

In recent decades the problem of aggression has been of intense interest to the scientific community, generating a great deal of research and considerable controversy. The controversy arose over a fundamental difference in theoretical orientation to the problem. On one side of the debate stands a group of scientists who tend to conceive of and explain aggression in terms of nature. This group, which is comprised mostly of students of animal behavior who work out of the tradition established by Charles Darwin, has directed most of its research toward describing and explaining how aggression originates from innate sources in man and beast. Consequently, this nature orientation has produced theories which tend to explain the operation of aggression by means of instincts, phylogenetic factors, or genetic predispositions. Some of the best known representatives of this viewpoint include the playwright turned scientific popularizer, Robert Ardrey, the founder of the modern science of ethology, Konrad Lorenz, Lorenz's colleagues Niko Tinbergen, Desmond Morris, and Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, the anthropologists Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, and the scientist who has synthesized population genetics with ethology and anthropology to create the modern science of sociobiology, Edward O. Wilson.[37]

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[37]See Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression, trans. Marjorie Kerr Wilson (New

On the other side of the debate stands a group with a theoretical orientation toward nurture, that is, those who, in the tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, focus on how environmental factors contribute to the explanation of aggression. The representatives from this group, who are far more numerous than the nature group, receive their orientation from such disciplines as sociology, cultural anthropology, and behavioral psychology. Some of the best known members of this group to specifically address the problem of aggression include the sociologist Talcott Parsons, the anthropologist Ashley Montagu, and the psychologist Albert Bandura.[38]

In spite of the fundamental disagreements which characterize the nature-nuture debate as it pertains to aggression, there is virtual unanimity among all parties on the question of Freud's death instinct hypothesis. The group which emphasizes environmental factors has no use for any sort of instinct, let alone a death instinct. Even Lorenz,

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York: Bantam Books, 1966); Robert Ardrey, African Genesis (New York: Atheneum, 1961); Robert Ardrey, The Territorial Imperative (New York: Atheneum, 1966); Niko Tinbergen, "On War and Peace in Animals and Man," in Science, vol. 160 (1968), pp. 1411-18; Desmond Morris, The Naked Ape (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); Desmond Morris, The Human Zoo (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969); Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Love and Hate: The Natural History of Behavior Patterns (New York: Holt, Rinhart and Winston, 1972); Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, The Biology of Peace and War (New York: Viking Press, 1979); Lionel Tiger, Men in Groups (New York: Random House, 1969); Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, The Imperial Animal (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971); Edward O. Wilson, Sociobiology: The New Synthesis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Edward O. Wilson, On Human Nature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[38]See Talcott Parsons, "Certain Primary Sources and Patterns of Aggression in the Social Structure of the Western World," in Essays in Sociological Theory, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1954), pp. 298-322; Ashley Montagu, The Nature of Human Aggression (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Albert Bandura, Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

whose instinctivist position on aggression is as close to Freud's as any leading scientist's, does not give any credence to the death instinct:

> In the eyes of the behavioral scientist this hypothesis [the death instinct], which is foreign to biology, is not only unnecessary but false. Aggression, the effects of which are frequently equated with those of the death wish, is an instinct like any other and in natural conditions it helps just as much as any other to ensure the survival of the individual and the species.[39]

Needless to say, the more other scientists move away from the instinctivism of Lorenz and shade into environmentalism, the more the death instinct is vigorously rejected or simply ignored.

In sharp contrast to the condemnation issued by the scientific community, the death instinct has been practically celebrated by two groups of scholars in the humanities. For the first group the death instinct has been construed as a metaphor for the darkness which has descended on the twentieth century and as a symbol for the evil which has plagued humankind since the dawn of time. By means of the death instinct Freud spoke to the horrors of Hitler and Hiroshima and so was a man for the times. Yet he was also a man for all times in that his death instinct seemed to be a secular variant of the traditional doctrine of original sin or a modern version of the classical tragic vision.[40] As far as this group of humanists was concerned, Freud understood the complexity of character and the depths of the soul far beyond the superficial and oversimplified theories so prevalent in the

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[39]Lorenz, On Aggression, p. x.

[40]Richard King, The Party of Eros (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 47.

behavioral sciences, including all the attempts to "revise" Freud. The consummate expression of this trend in the humanities was attained in the work of two men of letters, Lionel Trilling and Stanley Edgar Hyman. Trilling appropriately named the trend himself when he used the phrase "tragic realism" in an essay on Freud:

> The death instinct is a conception that is rejected by many of even the most thoroughgoing Freudian theorists (as, in his last book, Freud mildly noted); the late Otto Fenichel in his authoritative work on the neurosis argues cogently against it. Yet even if we reject the theory as not fitting the facts in any operatively useful way, we still cannot miss its grandeur, its ultimate tragic courage in acquiescence to fate.... No view of life to which the artist responds can insure the quality of his work, but the poetic qualities of Freud's own principles, which are so clearly in the line of the classic tragic realism, suggest that this is a view which does not narrow and simplify the human world of the artist but on the contrary opens and complicates it.[41]

Hyman expressed a similar inclination toward Freudian fatalism and a tough-minded sensibility with which to approach life and death:

> It is my belief that the writings of Sigmund Freud make a tragic view possible for the modern mind....
> ... Here we can find an Original Sin--the Freudian myth of the expulsion from the Eden of the womb added to the Darwinian myth of the origin of death--in which the modern mind can believe ...[42]

For the tragic realists, ancient myths and recent history intersect at the point of the death instinct. The traditional wisdom of the humanities that sin and tragedy are an inescapable part of our existence is as true for us today as it was centuries ago for our ancient counterparts. Only by resigning ourselves to the reality of the fatally flawed

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[41]Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 56-57.

[42]Stanley Edgar Hyman, "Psychoanalysis and the Climate of Tragedy" in Freud and the Twentieth Century, ed. Benjamin Nelson (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1957), pp. 170-71.

human condition, as restated by Freud's death instinct, do we become heroic.

At roughly the same time the tragic realists were recalling life's limitations in the face of the death instinct, a pair of romantic utopians were reclaiming the death instinct for life's possibilities. The philosopher Herbert Marcuse and the classicist Norman O. Brown were as interested in the death instinct as the tragic realists, but for a completely different end. Instead of ensnaring human beings in the tragic dilemma of directing aggression against the self or others, they believed that aggression and the death instinct could be harnessed to fuel the drive for more Eros.

Marcuse and Brown argued that in the course of civilization the death instinct had become disastrously estranged from Eros, from what Marcuse called "the common nature of instinctual life"[43] and Brown, a "unity at the organic level."[44] In order to overcome the deadly instinctual dualism of history and its resulting aggression, it is necessary to reconcile the warring instincts by rebelling against what split them in the first place--repression. As Marcuse puts it:

> ... Eros, freed from surplus repression, would be strengthened, and the strengthened Eros would, as it were, absorb the objective of the death instinct.[45]

And Brown:

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[43]Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 25.

[44]Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), p. 100.

[45]Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 235.

> It is one of the sad ironies of contemporary intellectual life that Freud's hypothesis of an innate death instinct, which has been received with horror as the acme of pessimism, actually offers the only way out of the really pessimistic hypothesis of an innate aggressive instinct.... The death instinct is reconciled with the life instinct only in a life which is not repressed, which leaves no "unlived lines" in the human body, the death instinct then being affirmed in a body which is willing to die. And, because the body is satisfied, the death instinct no longer drives to change itself and make history, and therefore, as Christian theology divined, its activity is in eternity.[46]

For the romantic utopians, the fall into the aggressive and death driven life of homo economicus could be redeemed by conversion to the erotically expressive life of homo sexualis.

## Psychoanalytic Responses to Freud

Few psychoanalysts have responded to the full range of issues raised by the scientists and the humanists in regard to the death instinct. Some scientifically-minded psychoanalysts, such as Heinz Hartmann, discreetly dropped the death instinct as an explanation for aggression.[47] Hartmann, however, failed to formally sanction a psychoanalytic confrontation with the moral issues involved by arguing that psychoanalysis was an ethically neutral science.[48] Other psychoanalysts, such as Wilhelm Reich, confronted the moral implications of the death instinct, but failed to offer any scientifically tenable

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[46]Brown, Life Against Death, pp. 99 and 308.

[47]Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph Lowenstein, "Notes on the Theory of Aggression" in The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, vol. 3 (New York: International Universities Press, 1949), pp. 9-36.

[48]Heinz Hartmann, Psychoanalysis and Moral Values (New York: International Universities Press, 1960).

alternative to the instinctual dualism of Freud.[49] In fact, by rechristening Freud's life and death instincts as "orgone energy" and "atomic energy," Reich took Freud's "scientific" dualism to its most bizarre and lamentable extreme.[50] Some psychoanalysts, however, did attend to the scientific critique and the moral implications of the death instinct without associating themselves with any of the scientific, humanistic, or psychoanalytic positions delineated so far.

## Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm was among the first of a school of psychoanalysts to criticize Freud's concept of the death instinct on both empirical and ethical grounds.[51] Fromm earned the enmity of Freudian psychoanalysts in the 1940s by stressing the role that environmental factors played in the formation of character traits and by rejecting the ethical pessimism entailed in Freud's later position. Fromm's views, along with those of Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan and others, were labeled "neo-Freudian" and were attacked by not only other psychoanalysts but by a wide spectrum of scientists and humanists as well. As an introduction to Fromm, it is important to examine some of these criticisms and to see how they bear on his approach to the problem of aggression.

First of all Fromm repeatedly disavowed the label "neo-Freudian," believing that his work had always differed in significant

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[49]Robinson, The Freudian Left, pp. 34 and 36.

[50]Ibid., p. 68.

[51]Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Discus Avon, 1965), p. 3; Erich Fromm, The Crisis of Psychoanalysis (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1970), p. 32.

ways from other so-called neo-Freudians and that these differences had become even more pronounced as their respective positions developed.[52] Fromm contended that the definition of neo-Freudianism as a "culturalist" orientation distorted his overall position. Unlike other neo-Freudians, who derived their concept of culture from the idea of cultural patterns found in the work of Ruth Benedict or Margaret Mead, Fromm dealt with culture in the tradition of Marx by analyzing the dynamic basis of a given culture's social, economic, and political structures. Fromm did not, however, subscribe to a cultural relativism in the sense that only culture molds the individual. Instead, he viewed culture and the individual in dialectical relation. Human nature has its own dynamics for shaping culture and for reacting, if need be, against culture. Finally, Fromm argued that he had reformulated some of Freud's greatest discoveries such as the Oedipus complex, narcissism, and, significantly, the death instinct in contrast to the relative neglect of these discoveries by other neo-Freudians.

The scientific status of psychoanalysis has been an ongoing issue since its inception. Even though Freud and others claimed it to be a science, its scientific credentials have been frequently questioned.[53] Fromm, like many other psychoanalysts, has often been criticized for being too philosophical and not rigorously empirical.[54] Yet

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[52]Erich Fromm, The Heart of Man (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 3; Erich Fromm, The Crisis of Psychoanalysis , p. 32.

[53]Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 345-73.

[54]Richard Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 73-79.

Fromm's decision to construct a philosophy of human nature in order to structure the contents of what he calls "the science of man" has a distinct advantage over the more strictly inductive approaches which have dominated scientific research.[55] Fromm's philosophy of human nature, which recognizes that human beings are influenced by nature and nurture and yet transcend the determinants of nature and nurture in the specifically human realm of freedom, forms a framework in which particular scientific findings regarding the determinants of evolution and the environment can be assigned their proper place. In this way Fromm avoids, as we shall see, the ethological reductionism of Lorenz, who models human aggression on non-human species without sufficiently considering what constitutes specifically human aggression.[56] Behavioral psychologists such as B. F. Skinner employ a similar reductive methodology in the service of environmental determinants, analyzing human aggression or any other behavior in human society with the same theoretical constructs (or lack of theoretical constructs) one would use to analyze animal behavior in a laboratory.[57] Fromm's philosophical perspective on human nature allows him to critically appropriate the scientific research of both the ethologists and the behaviorists without succumbing to either an exclusively nature determined or an exclusively nurture determined theory of aggression.

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[55]Fromm, Man for Himself (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Premier, 1947), pp. 30-33.

[56]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 42-48.

[57]Ibid., pp. 56-57.

He can then relate these partial and reductive perspectives to the specifically human qualities of our species.

Yet Fromm's efforts to develop a philosophical anthropology as the scaffolding for a science which respects and encourages human freedom in the tradition of the Enlightenment have been met with scorn and derision by all the humanists reviewed so far. The tragic realists praise Freud's greater relevance to the "crisis of our culture"[58] and the "climate of tragedy"[59] by contrasting Freud's biologically-based sense of evil and limitation with Fromm's mood of optimism and possibility which, they contend, reflects the American bowdlerization of psychoanalysis which Freud predicted.[60] By characterizing Fromm as a "social pyschologist,"[61] Hyman fails to do justice to the fact that Fromm has always worked out of a biological frame of reference, even though he believes that Freud's theory of instincts, based on a hydraulic, tension-reducing model of functioning, has only limited applicability.[62] Furthermore, if Fromm's rejection of Freudian instinctivism has led him into an overly optimistic assessment of human possibility, it may be said in his defense that so much of the literature, existential philosophy, and neo-orthodox theology produced in this century has overemphasized human limitation, despair, and sin that his counteremphasis on

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[58]Lionel Trilling, Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

[59]Hyman, op. cit.

[60]Ibid., p. 174.

[61]Ibid., p. 173.

[62]Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 322-23.

positive possibility can be seen as less of a conformist strategy to American optimism than a counterbalance to the prevailing pessimism of the humanists.

Although the romantic utopians went against the gloomy mainstream of the humanities, they too were critical of Fromm's decision to jettison Freudian instinctivism and the conformist implications of a "revisionist" Freud.[63] Marcuse in particular scored the neo-Freudian rejection of the death instinct:

> The revisionist rejection of the death instinct is accompanied by an argument that indeed seems to point up the "reactionary" implications of Freudian theory as contrasted with the progressive sociological orientation of the revisionists.... The revisionist argument minimizes the degree to which, in Freudian theory, impulses are modifiable, subject to the 'vicissitudes' of history. The death instinct and its derivatives are no exception. We have suggested that the energy of the death instinct does not necessarily 'paralyze' the efforts to obtain a 'better future'; on the contrary, such efforts are paralyzed by the systematic constraints which civilization places on the life instincts, and by their consequent inability to 'bind' aggression effectively. The realization of a 'better future' involves far more than the elimination of the bad features of the 'market,' or the 'ruthlessness' of the competition, and so on; it involves a fundamental change in the instinctual as well as cultural structure. The striving for a better future is 'paralyzed' not by Freud's awareness of these implications but by the revisionist 'spritualization' of them, which conceals the gap that separates the present from the future. Freud did not believe in prospective social changes that would alter human nature sufficiently to free man from external and internal oppression; however, his 'fatalism' was not without qualification.[64]

Marcuse's argument that Freud's death instinct provides a better basis for overcoming destructive aggression than Fromm's sociobiological concept of character is gratuitous on both Freudian and humanist

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[63]Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, pp. 240-74; Brown, Life Against Death, p. x.

[64]Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, pp. 272-73.

grounds. In direct contradiction to Marcuse's contention that a liberated sex life would result in a reduction of aggression,[65] Freud has argued in Civilization and Its Discontents that the control of aggression, which made civilization possible, was based on sexual restrictions and not on sexual permissiveness.[66] Freud, as Marcuse half admits, did not distinguish between the "repressive" conditions of capitalism and the potentially "liberating" conditions of socialism.[67] Furthermore, Marcuse's vision of the post-aggressive adult is not the Freudian ideal of the genital character who can love and work, but rather that which corresponds to Freud's definition of neurosis and psychosis.[68] Marcuse's celebration of polymorphous sexuality, sadism, and narcissism as "liberating" leads him to a position in which, as Fromm puts it, "the final progress of man is seen in the regression to infantile life, the return to the satiated baby."[69]

In dialectical relation to both the tragic realists and the romantic utopians, Fromm deals with human limitation and possibility without appealing to a scientifically dubious instinctivism. On the one hand he recognizes that human existence is limited by death, but not by a death instinct.[70] Although the limitations imposed by the reality of

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[65]Ibid., pp. 78-87.

[66]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, ch. 8.

[67]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 512.

[68]Fromm, The Crisis of Psychoanalysis, p. 30.

[69]Erich Fromm, The Revolution of Hope (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 8.

[70]Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 51.

death cannot be overcome, it is possible to overcome the limitations imposed by certain social conditions. By distinguishing what can be changed from what cannot be changed, Fromm avoids the conservative "necessity" of being resigned to the recalcitrant human condition. On the other hand Fromm does not see the internal logic of Freudian instinctivism, however "radicalized," as providing a tenable statement of the problem of aggression or a viable solution. Although Fromm agrees with Marcuse and Brown that radical change in contemporary life is necessary, he firmly believes that the "all or nothing" demand for a new culture and consciousness, so characteristic of the romantic utopians, can create more aggression than it allegedly eliminates, especially when such a "progressive" rebellion is actually empowered by the most regressive elements in human development.

## Rollo May

The psychoanalyst Rollo May shares with Fromm a concern for the specifically human vis-a-vis the reductive methodologies of the behavioral sciences and a desire to maintain a balanced dialectic between human limitations and possibilities. May was even trained in the neo-Freudian orientation to psychoanalysis at the William Alanson White Institute when Fromm was associated with it.[71] May has focused his attention on the potential contributions of existential philosophy and psychology to psychoanalysis, and for this reason he is generally referred to as an existential psychoanalyst. Although May refers to

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[71]Clement Reeves, The Psychology of Rollo May (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977), p. 256.

himself as a psychoanalyst of the neo-Freudian persuasion with existential presuppositions and has called existentialism an underlying attitude rather than a separate school,[72] he is popularly identified as the leader of the American school of existential psychoanalysis.[73]

May's interest in interpersonal psychology and existential philosophy dates back to before his training as a psychoanalyst. As a young man May studied psychology with Alfred Adler, although this experience did not dissuade him from appreciating the genius of Freud.[74] Also, before becoming a psychoanalyst, May was introduced to existential philosophy by the theologian Paul Tillich. It was largely through the influence of Tillich and the existential psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger that May developed his existential position as expressed in the groundbreaking book which he coedited, Existence.[75]

May's existential stance has led him to undercut the nature-nurture split with an ontological approach to the problem of aggression. As May puts it: "Ontological inquiry is directed at the structure in which both nature and nurture are rooted."[76] Although May does not

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[72]Rollo May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1967), pp. 156-57.

[73]Edgar Z. Friedenberg, R. D. Laing (New York: Viking Press, 1973), pp. 51-52.

[74]Rollo May, The Art of Counseling (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1967), pp. 45-48.

[75]Rollo May, "The Origins and Significance of the Existential Movement in Psychology" in Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology, eds. Rollo May, Ernest Angel and Henri F. Ellenberger (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), pp. 15 and 34.

[76]Rollo May, Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 44.

neglect the biological, psychological, social, and historical dimensions of the problem of aggression, the ontological basis of the problem remains at the center of his analysis. Compared with Fromm, May's philosophy of human nature forms more of the substance of his approach, in addition to its structure.

As we have seen, Fromm's views on human limitation and possibility were debated by various occupants of the humanities in the 1950s. By the 1960s, however, the humanistic psychology movement had emerged and May was reckoned as one of the founding fathers along with Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and others.[77] It was in this context that May found himself addressing the issues of human limitation and possibility. Over the years, however, it has become clear that there are important differences between May and the leading contemporary exponent of humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers.

Most members of the humanistic psychology movement emphasize human possibility, that is, the human potential for growth, change, and self-actualization. Both May and Rogers have been at the forefront of criticism directed at both behaviorism and Freudian psychoanalysis for their reductionistic, deterministic, and mechanistic assumptions about human nature.[78] But May has always stressed, being a good Tillichian, the ambiguity of human nature--the capacity for evil as well as good.

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[77]Frank T. Severin, Discovering Man in Psychology: A Humanistic Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

[78]Rollo May, "The Emergence of Existential Psychology" and Carl Rogers, "Two Divergent Trends" in Existential Psychology, 2d ed., Rollo May (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 1-48 and 84-92.

Rogers, unlike May, does not give equal weight to human limitation and human possibility.

## Erik Erikson

If Fromm and May have attempted to expand the cultural and existential bases of psychoanalysis by working outside of the "orthodox" tradition, then Erik Erikson has done similar work from inside the orthodox movement. Erikson is considered part of the most respected tradition to extend Freud's work--ego psychology. Ego psychology grew out of the older Freud's concern with assigning the ego its proper place in the psychic economy.[79] This concern was a common theme in the work of Freud's daughter Anna, and of Heinz Hartmann, who was elected president of the International Psychoanalytical Association in 1951.[80] Building on this work, along with that of Ernst Kris, David Rapaport, Robert White, and others, Erikson constructed bridges from psychoanalytic ego psychology to evolutionary theory, ecology, ethology, anthropology, sociology, biography, history, political science, ethics, and religion. With his wide interests and interdisciplinary range, Erikson has gone far beyond the scope of most ego psychologists.

What Erikson is best known for, and what constitutes an advance beyond Fromm and May to the theory of aggression, is his life cycle theory. While Fromm and May give the structure and dynamics of human

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[79]Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 19 (London: Hogarth Press, 1961).

[80]Fromm, The Crisis of Psychoanalysis, pp. 33 and 39.

development only peripheral attention, Erikson has made life cycle theory the central focus of his whole perspective. In addition, Erikson gives more credence to the psychosexual dimension of Freud's work, even though he has reformulated it for his own purposes and has subordinated it to his emphasis on the psychosocial dimension of ego development.[81] Although Erikson is less inclined to explicitly philosophize in the manner of Fromm and May, it is clear that he brings nature and nurture into relation by means of his life cycle theory. By arguing that nature and culture are not necessarily in conflict in the course of the human life cycle, Erikson fundamentally diverges from Freud, who was forever pitting biology against culture.[82]

As a remarkably innovative figure who nevertheless officially remains within the conventional mainstream, Erikson has been as about inclined to polemicize over values as he has been to philosophize. As two commentators on Erikson's thought have observed: "Unfailingly polite and tactful, his most telling criticisms are gently whispered."[83] Thus, Erikson has not so much confronted his contemporaries in a polemical exchange as has Fromm with Marcuse or May with Rogers, but rather he has addressed the present by treating the past, as is particularly evident in his ethical criticisms of religious figures such

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[81]Erik H. Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), pp. 25-82.

[82]Daniel Yankelovich and William Barrett, Ego and Instinct (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 142.

[83]Ibid., p. 151.

as Luther and Gandhi.[84] In order to place Erikson's ethics of aggression in a more contemporary religious context, I have chosen two figures whose theological ethics concerning aggression symbolize opposite ends of the spectrum of recent Christian theology. By comparing and contrasting Erikson's ethical perspective with those of the revolutionary Catholic priest Camilo Torres and the reactionary Protestant minister Jerry Falwell, Erikson's views on human limitation and possibility in regard to aggression can be brought into bold relief.

## The Nature of Post-Freudianism

Due to their differences in emphasis, distinct terminologies, and separate lines of development, the psychologies of Fromm, May, and Erikson have rarely been grouped together. One scholar of psychology who has done so, however, is Peter Homans.[85] While fully recognizing the particular matrix out of which each man's psychology emerged, Homans has argued that Fromm, May, and Erikson, beyond being clinicians, share a concern with the same cultural issues which were first raised by Freud. Although their precise responses to the issues of tradition versus modernity, personal fulfillment versus social order, and religion versus science are by no means identical, the fact that they all engage these issues and that they differ decisively from Freud in their

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[84]Roger A. Johnson, "Psychohistory as Religious Narrative: The Demonic Role of Hans Luther in Erikson's Saga of Human Evolution" in Psychohistory and Religion, ed. Roger A. Johnson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), chap. 6.

[85]Peter Homans, Introduction to Childhood and Selfhood: Essays on Tradition, Religion, and Modernity in the Psychology of Erik H. Erikson, ed. Peter Homans (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1978), pp. 13-54.

responses justifies linking them together as "post-Freudians." I would simply add to Homans' argument that the willingness of Fromm, May, and Erikson to engage the very fundamental and classic psychoanalytic issue of aggression in both clinical and cultural terms further cements my view that in their basic concerns and broad methodologies these men are proceeding in the tradition of Freud.

Another scholar of psychology who groups Fromm, May, and Erikson together is Don Browning.[86] Browning has contended that a strict separation between the sciences and the humanities and between fact and value is illusory, especially in regard to psychology. As Browning puts it:

> Even those psychologies which present themselves as objective and scientific can become culture. Cautious scientific psychologists can, in ways they do not perceive, gradually elevate their objective findings into more general statements which often have clear and even shocking cultural implications. Scientific findings seldom remain as simply cold, neutral, and impersonal facts. They get interpreted. Someone, maybe the scientist himself or herself, may attempt to tell us what they mean. When this happens, scientific findings can become culture and cautiously stated scientific propositions can easily become inflated and take on wider meanings....
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> ... Culture is a system of symbols and norms that defines and guides a society and the individuals within it.... They [symbols and norms] tell us the meaning of life, point to the good, suggest why life goes wrong, and depict the final destinies which life holds forth.[87]

For Browning, Fromm, May, and Erikson constitute a particular culture within the larger landscape of contemporary psychology--the culture of care.

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[86]Don S. Browning, Pluralism and Personality (East Brunswick, N.J.: Bucknell University Press, 1980), p. 22.

[87]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

While I concur with Browning that the term "care" is the best general way to characterize the central ideal common to the psychologies of Fromm, May, and Erikson, I will argue that in regard to the particular problem of aggression the term "responsibility" better captures the essence of the post-Freudian approach. I also agree with Browning that it is important to clarify what is at stake in the different responses that the various cultures of psychology make to the problems of modernity. Browning, however, has focused his attention primarily on evaluating the relative merits of the normative ideals[88] of these cultures, while I intend to investigate more fully the relative merits of the various cultures in their theoretical and normative approaches to aggression.

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[88]Browning's term for May's normative ideal is "intentionality," but I think "creativity" is equally appropriate and more clearly indicative of his affinity with Fromm's "productivity" and Erikson's "generativity."

## CHAPTER II

## ERICH FROMM'S THEORY OF AGGRESSION

In his careful study of the thought of Erich Fromm, Don Browning observed that Fromm is among the "most severely criticized and misunderstood authors of our day."[1] Nowhere is this observation more true than in respect to Fromm's theory of aggression. As we began to see in the first chapter, Fromm's critics frequently fail to recognize the interdisciplinary structure of his thought and therefore tend to articulate half-truths at best and complete falsehoods at worst. As an example of the former, consider the philosopher Will Herberg's comment on Fromm's theory of aggression:

> Yet Fromm is surely right in feeling that human aggression and destructiveness are not merely biological, but are somehow emergent out of the human situation, which, however, Fromm wrongly takes to be identical with the social situation.[2]

Herberg is half right in this remark: Fromm does understand human aggression as something more than a mere biological phenomenon, but he hardly identifies the human situation with the social situation.[3] An

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[1]Don S. Browning, Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Prespectives (New York: Dell, 1973), p. 105.

[2]Will Herberg, "Freud, the Revisionists, and Social Reality" in Freud and the Twentieth Century, ed. Benjamin Nelson (Cleveland: World, 1957), p. 157.

[3]Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 47-58.

example of the latter is to be found in Edward O. Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, On Human Nature:

> Freud interpreted the [aggressive] behavior in human beings as the outcome of a drive that constantly seeks release. Konrad Lorenz, in his book On Aggression, modernized this view with new data from the studies of animal behavior. He concluded that human beings share a general instinct for aggressive behavior with some other animal species. This drive must somehow be relieved, if only through competitive sports. Erich Fromm, in The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, took a different and still more pessimistic view that man is subject to a unique death instinct that commonly leads to pathological forms of aggression beyond those encountered in animals.[4]

Fromm most emphatically does not explain pathological forms of aggression by means of a death instinct.[5]

Although these criticisms tell us little about what Fromm's theory of aggression is, they do tell us what it is not: Fromm's theory cannot simply be contained by a sociological category or a biological category. In order for a minimally adequate interpretation to be possible, it is necessary to recognize at the outset that the theory is composed of at least four irreducible categories: 1) human nature 2) biology 3) society 4) history. Any interpretation or criticism which fails to acknowledge these four categories is simply engaging a caricature of Fromm's theory rather than the theory itself.

The burden of this chapter will therefore be an exposition of Fromm's theory according to the four categories. For purposes of comparative ease, these same categories will also be utilized in expounding the theories of May and Erikson in the two chapters which follow. In addition, since all three men offer autobiographical

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[4]Wilson, On Human Nature, p. 101.

[5]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 29 and 369.

material which sheds some light on the origins of their respective approaches to aggression, a brief summary of their life experiences with aggression will precede each theoretical exposition.

## Biography

The centerpiece of Fromm's lifework was his distinctive synthesis of Freud and Marx. In his intellectual autobiography, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, Fromm reported two decisive events from his adolescence which stimulated his later interest in the problems studied by these two men. Fromm described his "Freudian" experience as follows:

> I had known a young woman, a friend of the family. Maybe she was twenty-five years of age; she was beautiful, attractive and in addition a painter, the first painter I ever knew. I remember having heard that she had been engaged but after some time had broken the engagement; I remember that she was almost invariably in the company of her widowed father. As I remember him, he was an old, uninteresting, and rather unattractive-looking man, or so I thought (maybe my judgment was somewhat biased by jealousy). Then one day I heard the shocking news: her father had died, and immediately afterwards she had killed herself and left a will which stipulated that she wanted to be buried together with her father.[6]

And his "Marxian" experience:

> Perhaps all these personal experiences would not have affected me so deeply and lastingly had it not been for the event that determined more than anything else my development: the First World War....
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> ... One spoke with soldiers and learned about the life they were leading boxed up in the trenches and dugouts, exposed to concentrated artillery fire which initiated an enemy attack, then trying again and again to break through, and never succeeding. Year after year the healthy men of each nation, living like animals in caves, killed each other with rifles, hand grenades, machine guns, bayonets; the slaughter continued, accompanied by false promises of a speedy victory, false protestations of one's own innocence, false accusations against the devilish enemy, false offers of peace, and insincere annunciations of conditions for peace.
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> The longer this lasted, the more I changed from a child to a man, the more urgent became the question "How is it possible?" How

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[6]Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 4.

> is it possible that millions of men continue to stay in the trenches, to kill innocent men of other nations, and to be killed and thus cause the deepest pain to parents, wives, friends? What are they fighting for? How is it possible that both sides believe they are fighting for peace and freedom? How was it possible for a war to break out when everybody claimed that they did not want it?[7]

Just as the crucible of World War I had crystallized new questions in the mind of the aging Freud, so it initiated the young Fromm's search for the psychological and sociological sources of illusion which may eventuate in individual and collective destruction.

Another point of contact between the biographies of Fromm and Freud lay in their shared Jewish background in tension with the surrounding German, bourgeois, humanistic culture. John Cuddihy[8] and Marthe Robert[9] have recently studied the role that the conflict between the "two cultures" played in Freud's life. Such analyses would be equally applicable to Fromm's life. Fromm was an only child in an orthodox Jewish family in Frankfurt, Germany who, at the age of twenty-two, earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Heidelberg.[10] Although Fromm's obvious capacity for learning made him welcome in the educational systems of either culture, it became clear to him at a young age that the values which his rabbinical teachers embodied (love and justice) were in sharp contrast to the prevailing values of the dominant

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[7] Ibid., pp. 5-6 and 8.

[8] John M. Cuddihy, The Ordeal of Civility (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

[9] Marthe Robert, From Oedipus to Moses: Freud's Jewish Identity (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1976).

[10] Rainer Funk, Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human (New York: Continuum, 1982), pp. 1-2.

secular culture (wealth and power).[11] The cultural differences were also accentuated by the fact that Fromm, like Freud, became acquainted with anti-Semitism at a young age.[12] Fromm reported that he experienced "small episodes of anti-Semitism," but he disliked the clannishness characteristic of both the Christians and Jews he came in contact with while growing up.[13]

After coming to the United Stated in 1933, Fromm spent his career developing critiques of and alternatives to the destructiveness and clannishness he experienced as a youth. With the rise of Hitler, Fromm recognized that Nazism had brought destructiveness and clannishness together in a way that threatened the future of Western civilization.[14] By translating back and forth among the Old Testament polarity of idolatry and the messianic time, the Marxian polarity of alienation and productivity, and the Freudian polarity of transference and independence,[15] Fromm found an intellectual method which mediated the conflict between traditional Jewish and modern German cultures. At the same time these polarities provided analytical and ethical bases for

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[11]Bernard Landis and Edward S. Tauber, eds., In the Name of Life: Essays in Honor of Erich Fromm (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. x.

[12]Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud's Mission (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 57.

[13]Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 5.

[14]Fromm, Escape From Freedom, pp. 207 and 235.

[15]Ibid., pp. 140 and 197-201; Fromm, Beyond The Chains of Illusion, chaps. 3, 6 and 7.

attacking human slavishness and destructiveness and for advocating human freedom and fulfillment in relation to both Nazi culture and our own.[16]

In a truly remarkable and quite exact biographical parallel to Freud, Fromm became very interested in the relationship between aggression and death during the last twenty years of his life.[17] Although his precise theoretical formulations remained significantly different from Freud's, Fromm stated that "I have come to see more and more the overwhelming significance of Freudian concepts that twenty years ago I had 'outgrown.'"[18] In addition to his fresh appreciation of Freud's later theory to illuminate clinical material, Fromm also cited the danger of nuclear war, social unrest, and the assassination of President Kennedy as crucial social and political developments which induced him to dig more deeply for the roots of aggression than he had previously.[19]

Fromm's lifelong study of aggression came to a fitting conclusion with the publication of The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness during the final decade of his life. This book was by far the largest work Fromm ever wrote and was devoted wholly to the problem of aggression. Thus, Fromm, the psychoanalyst who is so well-known for his insightful reflections on the theory and practice of love in the ever-popular The

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[16]Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1955).

[17]See especially Fromm, The Heart of Man, chapter 3, and The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 368-69.

[18]Evans, Dialogue with Erich Fromm, p. 9.

[19]Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 2.

Art of Loving,[20] should be equally recognized for his discerning treatment of aggression.

## Human Nature

In their excellent study of Freud's view of human nature, Daniel Yankelovich and William Barrett make the case that Freud's much-noted pessimism, which seems to have figured so prominently in his formulation of the death instinct, was not so much a product of his temperament or a result of his clinical investigations, but rather the outcome of "a prior commitment to a metaphysical framework that forced him, by its inexorable logic, to impose a negative view on his data."[21] Whether or not Yankelovich and Barrett overstress the role of Freud's philosophical inheritance at the expense of socio-historical factors in their explanation of his pessimism, they do show convincingly how thoroughly the uncritical transfer of the philosophical assumptions of seventeenth century physics and nineteenth century biology colored (or from their existential position, vitiated) the formation of psychoanalytic theory.[22] It has therefore been the task of the more innovative post-Freudian figures to give critical attention to Freud's philosophy of mechanistic materialism and instinctivism and then to recast the enduring insights of psychoanalytic theory within a philosophical framework devised for human beings rather than inanimate objects or non-human species.

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[20]Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).

[21]Yankelovich and Barrett, Ego and Instinct, p. 30.

[22]Ibid., p. 51 and pt. 1 in toto.

Erich Fromm was among the first to attempt to construct a new philosophical anthropology for psychoanalysis.[23] As he summarized his view in a later work:

> I believe that the dilemma can be solved by defining the essence of man not as a given quality of substance, but as a contradiction inherent in human existence. This contradiction is to be found in two sets of facts: (1) Man is an animal, yet his instinctual equipment, in comparison with that of all other animals, is incomplete and not sufficient to ensure his survival unless he produces the means to satisfy his material needs and develop speech and tools. (2) Man has intelligence, like other animals, which permits him to use thought processes for the attainment of immediate, practical aims; but man has another mental quality which the animal lacks. He is aware of himself, of his past and of his future, which is death; of his smallness and powerlessness; he is aware of others as others--as friends, enemies, or as strangers. Man transcends all other life because he is, for the first time, life aware of itself. Man is in nature, subject to its dictates and accidents, yet he transcends nature because he lacks the unawareness which makes the animal a part of nature--as one with it. Man is confronted with the frightening conflict of being the prisoner of nature, yet being free in his thoughts; being a part of nature, and yet to be as it were a freak of nature; being neither here nor there. Human self-awareness has made man a stranger in the world, separate, lonely, and frightened.[24]

Fromm's elucidation of the excruciating dilemma at the heart of what he calls "the human situation"[25] is reminiscent of Søren Kierkegaard's acute analysis of human existence and clearly belies the common charge that he is a straightforward apostle of optimism or a preacher of positive thinking. No matter how sane we may make our child-rearing practices or our political economy, the built-in potential for madness

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[23] Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 47-58.

[24] Fromm, The Heart of Man, pp. 147-48.

[25] For a discussion of Fromm's view of the human situation in the context of various religious and philosophical traditions as well as modern psychology and sociology see the introduction to The Nature of Man, ed. Erich Fromm and Ramon Xirau (New York, Macmillan, 1968).

characteristic of a self-conscious creature will continue to lurk underneath it all. Fromm has even gone so far as to suggest that "the real problem of mental life is not why some people become insane, but rather why most avoid insanity."[26] In fact, as both Ernest Becker and Don Browning have noted, Fromm's description of the human situation in terms of a problematic existential dualism has an affinity with the sober anthropological assumptions of such diverse theologians, philosophers, and psychologists as Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Ricoeur, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Carl Jung, Otto Rank, Rollo May, and Erik Erikson as well as the prescient "psychoanalyst" Kierkegaard.[27]

The historical value of Fromm's philosophical anthropology is that it resolves in one stroke the conflicting claims of materialism and idealism which so bedevilled nineteenth century philosophy, psychology and classical psychoanalysis.[28] By avoiding a view of essential human nature as merely an energy-driven animal on the one hand or simply a disembodied psyche on the other, Fromm manages to circumvent the reductive pitfalls of both materialism and idealism without discounting the partial truth of each perspective. By means of his existential viewpoint (which was not derived from either of the existential philosophies of Martin Heidegger or Jean-Paul Sartre), Fromm can re-view the lasting insights of psychoanalysis without being fully bound to its materialism

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[26]Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 34.

[27]Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death (New York: The Free Press, 1937), pp. 25-26 and 70; Browning, Generative Man, pp. 116-17 and 180.

[28]Ernest Becker, Beyond Alienation (New York: George Braziller, 1967), pp. 118-26 and 149-57.

or simply swinging over to a denaturalized idealism. To be sure, Freud's psychoanalysis may be interpreted to contain both supranatural meaning and natural mechanics, as Herbert Fingarette[29] and Paul Ricoeur[30] have argued, but Freud himself never explicitly formalized such a philosophy, nor even seemed to realize the profound incompatibility between the clinical (meaning) and the metapsychological (mechanics) levels of his work.[31]

Yet Fromm does not end his discussion of human nature with a restatement of "the classic view that man is both body and soul, angel and animal, that he belongs to two worlds in conflict with each other."[32] Fromm's interpretation of the human situation is not only "existential," it is dynamic as well. It is the very conditions of human existence which drive human beings onward. As Fromm puts it:

> The necessity to find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever-higher forms of unity with nature, his fellow men and himself, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man, of all his passions, affects and anxieties.[33]

It is Fromm's Marxian contention that in order to function at the human level of existence, it is necessary to seek a dynamic relationship with nature, the other, and oneself.[34]

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[29]Herbert Fingarette, The Self in Transformation (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

[30]Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy.

[31]Yankelovich and Barrett, Ego and Instinct, pp. 281-87.

[32]Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 148.

[33]Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 31.

[34]Erich Fromm, the chapter titled "Marx's Contribution to the Knowledge of Man" in The Crisis of Psychoanalysis, pp. 66-68.

Lest this dynamic tripartite structure of human existence be too abstract, Fromm particularizes the dynamics underlying human relationships even further by resorting to an extension and refinement of Marx's idea that there are specifically human needs which are to be distinguished from the physiological needs we share with animals on the one hand and the inhuman needs generated by capitalism on the other.[35] In his most comprehensive treatment of the subject, Fromm identifies the following as human needs: 1) relatedness 2) transcendence 3) rootedness 4) identity 5) a frame of orientation and an object of devotion.[36] Although all of these needs are related to the problem of aggression at some point in Fromm's writings, in The Sane Society he singles out transcendence as a need which can be met through destructiveness.

In Fromm's view all human beings have these needs in common because all human beings share the same conditions of existence from which they arise. For this reason Fromm sometimes refers to them as "existential needs" as well.[37] However, what differentiates individuals from one another or even cultures from one another is how they choose or are conditioned to meet a given need. For example, what Fromm calls the need for transcendence can be met in a creative way or, alternatively, in a destructive way. By transcendence Fromm means to suggest that human beings have a need to transcend or overcome their creatureliness

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[35] Ibid., pp. 65 and 70-71.

[36] Fromm, The Sane Society, pp. 33-66.

[37] Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 255.

which is an inescapable part of the human situation. As Fromm describes it:

> Another aspect of the human situation, closely connected with the need for relatedness, is man's situation as a creature, and his need to transcend this very state of the passive creature. Man is thrown into this world without his knowledge, consent, or will, and he is removed from it again without his consent or will. In this respect he is not different from the animals, from the plants, or from inorganic matter. But being endowed with reason and imagination, he cannot be content with the passive role of the creature, with the role of dice cast out of a cup. He is driven by the urge to transcend the role of the creature, the accidentalness and passivity of his existence, by becoming a "creator."[38]

Yet Fromm also recognizes that the urge for transcendence can be met just as well by becoming a "destroyer"--as history shows all too abundantly.[39] Creativeness and destructiveness are both responses "to the same need for transcendence, and the will to destroy must arise when the will to create cannot be satisfied."[40]

In The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness Fromm postulates another closely related existential or human need which may be satisfied through creation or destruction. Fromm refers to this need as the need for effectiveness.[41] The term describes the ability "to bring to pass, to accomplish, to realize, to carry out, to fulfill; an effective person is one who has the capacity to do, to effect, to accomplish something."[42] The need for effectiveness is similar to the need for transcendence in

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[38]Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 41.

[39]Ibid., p. 42.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 264-66.

[42]Ibid., p. 264.

that both are sources of motivation for overcoming the passivity of creatureliness by exercising specifically human capacities. Fromm writes:

> The ways to achieve a sense of effecting are manifold: by eliciting an expression of satisfaction in the baby being nursed, a smile from the loved person, sexual response from the lover, interest from the partner in conversation; by work--material, intellectual, artistic. But the same need can also be satisfied by having power over others, by experiencing their fear, by the murderer's watching the anguish of his victim, by conquering a country, by torturing people, by sheer destruction of what has been constructed.[43]

Fromm's recognition of the moral dimension implicit in how one meets the need for effectiveness distinguishes his view from the frequent designation of a morally vacuous concept of "effectiveness" as a criterion of psychological health. In terms of an amoral concept of effectiveness, men as morally different as Gandhi and Hitler could be said to be "effective" at mobilizing their fellow countrymen and thereby creating some sort of effective social impact. Thus, it is vital to the Frommian mode of interpretation that the alternative possibilities for responding to morally neutral needs be understood as moral valuations as well as psychological reactions.

In summary, Fromm's interpretation of human existence leads him to an understanding of human motivation which is at once existential and dynamic. The situation of an animal endowed with self-awareness, reason, and imagination--the human situation--poses a problem of relating to the world that is unknown elsewhere in nature. Since instincts no longer adequately guide us on how to survive in a particular ecological niche or as to what kind of relationships we are to have

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[43]Ibid., p. 266.

with members of our own and other species, we must learn how to build a new "home" in nature and how to live in some fashion with our fellow inhabitants. Yet we appear as driven as other species--perhaps even more so--because we must not only satisfy our physiological needs, lest we die, but also our existential needs, lest we go insane. Destructive aggression is a possible way of meeting some of our existential needs, specifically the needs for transcendence and effectiveness, but such a possibility is shaped far more by our socio-historically conditioned human situation than by our biological inheritance. Such an interpretation of human aggression brings Fromm into conflict with the interpretation of aggression proffered by Konrad Lorenz, to which we now turn.

## Biology

The biological dimension of Fromm's thought is often overlooked entirely by his interpreters and critics. It is quite understandable why this is so in light of Fromm's frequent criticisms of Freudian instinctivism, as we have seen. But Fromm is not only critical of Freudian instinctivism, he tends to minimize the role of instinct in human evolution generally. In regard to human evolution Fromm has consistently maintained that "man can be defined as the primate that emerged at the point of evolution where instinctive determination had reached a minimum and the development of the brain a maximum."[44] In his reluctance to attribute much explanatory power to the concept of instinct, Fromm is following in the tradition of the sociologist Luther Bernard who, in the 1920s, reported that psychologists and others had

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[44]Ibid., p. 252.

stretched instinct theory to absurd lengths by accumulating over 14,000 instincts in their explanatory repertoires.[45] Yet in formulating his later theory of aggression, Fromm found it necessary to reconsider instinct theory due to the influence exerted by modern ethology and its foremost practitioner, Konrad Lorenz.

The work of Lorenz and his colleagues became increasingly well-known after the Second World War, reaching new heights in the 1960s. The once widely discredited concept of instinct was effectively rehabilitated by Lorenz and his fellow ethologists through the study of animal behavior in its natural environment and theoretical speculation about its origins in the evolutionary process. As a result of his studies and in contrast to his more profligate predecessors, Lorenz enumerated just four major instincts: feeding, sexuality, aggression (fight) and escape (flight).[46] This far more parsimonious and plausible version of instinct theory gradually became acceptable to certain segments of the scientific community and the general public. In fact, the degree of acceptance and respect his total corpus finally attained can be measured by the recognition it received in 1973--Lorenz and two of his colleagues were awarded the Nobel Prize, the first time behavioral scientists were so honored.[47]

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[45]Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 48. Also see Luther L. Bernard, Instinct: A Study in Social Psychology (New York: Holt, 1924).

[46]Lorenz, On Aggression, chap. 6.

[47]Richard Evans, Konrad Lorenz: The Man and His Ideas (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. xi.

However, like many eminent natural scientists before him, Lorenz has felt impelled to address the great issues of war and peace, even if it meant going beyond the confines of his professional expertise. It was the popular book On Aggression, Lorenz's bold attempt to extrapolate the conclusions drawn from his studies of animal aggression to the level of human aggression, which raised a storm of controversy about the ethological approach to human aggression in general and Lorenz's own approach in particular.[48]

Fromm pays a great deal of attention to Lorenz's theory of aggression, subjecting it to a detailed critique on both scientific and humanistic grounds.[49] But Fromm is not wholly critical of Lorenz's approach. On one point Fromm see Lorenz's instinctual theory of aggression as being more scientifically tenable than Freud's. For the Darwinian Lorenz, as for Fromm, animals as well as humans are "innately endowed with aggression, serving the survival of the individual and the species."[50] The biologically given instinct of aggression serves to protect life rather than promote death. Fromm parted company with Freud on this issue early in his work, describing biologically and affectively given aggression as functioning in the service of life as early as the 1940s.[51] So when Lorenz, some two decades later, made a case for an

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[48]See Ashley Montagu, ed., Man and Aggression, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[49]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 37-54.

[50]Ibid., p. 40. Also see p. 25.

[51]Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 203; and Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 216. Rainer Funk points out that Fromm's very first

aggressive instinct which serves life rather than death, Fromm could easily reconcile this particular aspect of Lorenz's thought with his own theory.

Beyond this narrow point of common ground, however, there is much room for disagreement. First of all, Fromm's early characterization of aggression in the service of life as "reactive"[52] in nature indicates a crucial difference between his theory and Lorenz's. Lorenz does not see aggression as a short-lived reaction to an aggression-inducing, life-threatening situation, but rather as a constant, spontaneous flow of energy which, if not expressed, builds up and eventually explodes. In this hydraulically operated drive-discharge model of aggression,[53] Lorenz resembles Freud, their differences on the origins of aggression (life vs. death instincts) notwithstanding. Because Freud and Lorenz share such similar concepts of the energetics and mechanics of aggression, the importance of the distinction between the sources of aggression well-nigh collapses in the final analysis:

> By a number of complicated and often questionable constructions, defensive aggression is supposed to be transformed in man into a spontaneously flowing and self-increasing drive that seeks to create circumstances which facilitate the expression of aggression, or that even explodes when no stimuli can be found or created. Hence even in a society that is organized from a socioeconomic viewpoint in such a way that major aggression could find no proper stimuli, the very demand of the aggressive instinct would force its members to change it or, if they would not, aggression would explode even

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reference to this position was made in a 1939 article. See Funk, Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human, p. 337.

[52] Ibid.

[53] The term "drive-discharge model" is borrowed from an article by Richard D. Sipes entitled "War, Sports and Aggression: An Empirical Test of Two Rival Theories," in American Anthropologist, vol. 75, 1973, pp. 64-86.

> without any stimulus. Thus the conclusion at which Lorenz arrives, that man is driven by an innate force to destroy, is, for all practical purposes, the same as Freud's....
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> ... The so-called evil in animals becomes a real evil in man, even though according to Lorenz its roots are not evil.[54]

Fromm argues against the Freud-Lorenz drive-discharge model of aggression by presenting evidence from neurophysiology which contradicts the instinctivist thesis of a spontaneously flowing, hydraulically regulated motivation for aggression.[55] As Fromm interprets the neurophysiological evidence, the human organism in the "natural" state (without the presence of activating stimuli) does not spontaneously generate aggression, but rather "aggression is in a state of fluid equilibrium, because activating and inhibiting areas [of the brain] keep each other in a relatively stable balance."[56] When the natural or normal balance of the brain is disrupted, whether through the electrical stimulation of the brain with electrodes or through certain physiological changes or organic pathologies, then and only then does the brain become a basis for the spontaneous generation of aggression.[57] Since the natural state of aggression is one of "readiness" or "idling,"

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[54]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 41-42. When Fromm uses the phrase "the so-called evil in animals" he is undoubtedly referring to the original (1963) German edition of On Aggression which was entitled Das Sogennante Böse (The So-called Evil). The psychologist Donald Campbell has gone so far as to suggest the title "The Evil of Human Aggression in Contrast with the Benignness of Animal Aggression in Stable Natural Environments." See Donald Campbell, "Reintroducing Konrad Lorenz to Psychology" in Evans, Konrad Lorenz: The Man and His Ideas, pp. 98-99.

[55]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 112-24.

[56]Ibid., p. 118.

[57]Ibid., pp. 117-18.

aggressive energy does not accumulate in a dammed-up form until it overflows or altogether ruptures; on the contrary, aggression is mobilized only in response to specific stimuli which threaten the human organism's survival or vital interests.[58]

But Fromm does more than question the neurophysiological basis of Lorenz's drive-discharge model of aggression. He also formulates a critique of Lorenz's theory of aggression within the terms of instinct theory itself, that is, in terms of fight and flight:

> Aggression is by no means the only form of reaction to threats. The animal reacts to threats to his existence either with rage and attack or with fear and flight....
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> ... The data on fight and flight as defense reactions make the instinctivistic theory of aggression appear in a peculiar light. The impulse to flee plays--neurophysiologically and behaviorally--the same if not a larger role in animal behavior than the impulse to fight. Neurophysiologically, both impulses are integrated in the same way; there is no basis for saying that aggression is more "natural" than flight....
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> ... These speculations are only intended to point to the ethological bias in favor of the concept of Homo aggressivus: the fundamental fact remains, that the brain of animals and humans has built-in neuronal mechanisms which mobilize aggressive behavior (or flight) in response to threats to the survival of the individual or the species, and that this type of aggression is biologically adaptive and serves life.[59]

The most concrete illustration of the differences between Fromm and Lorenz can be seen in the alternative interpretations they give to the behavior of Lorenz's aunt, whom Lorenz briefly depicts in On Aggression.[60] The key issue which the case raises in this: Can a drive-discharge model of aggression, which may be a plausible explanation for

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[58]Erich Fromm, "The Erich Fromm Theory of Aggression" in The New York Times Magazine, Feb. 27 1972, p. 74.

[59]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 119-21.

[60]Lorenz, On Aggression, p. 52.

the aggressive behavior of certain species of fish and birds, be legitimately applied, through analogy, to the human species and, moreover, to any given individual within the human species? In a nutshell, Lorenz says yes to this questions and Fromm says no. Yet it is unfair to imply that Lorenz does not know the difference between animals and human beings. Lorenz is quite aware of the glories and miseries peculiar to the human species but this knowledge is not consistently in evidence when he attempts to explain certain instances of human aggression, as witness the following description of his aunt:

> She never kept a maid longer than eight to ten months. She was always delighted with a new servant, praised her to the skies, and swore that she had at last found the right one. In the course of the next few months her judgment cooled, she found small faults, then bigger ones, and toward the end of the stated period she discovered hateful qualities in the poor girl, who was finally discharged without a reference after a violent quarrel. After this explosion the old lady was once more prepared to find a perfect angel.[61]

Fromm comments:

> From a psychoanalytic standpoint, one would assume that his aunt was a very narcissistic, exploitative woman; she demanded that a servant should be completely "devoted" to her, have no interest of her own, and gladly accept the role of a creature who is happy to serve her. She approaches each new servant with the phantasy that she is the one who will fulfill her expectations. After a short "honeymoon" during which the aunt's phantasy is still sufficient to blind her to the fact that the servant is not "right"--and perhaps also helped by the fact that the servant in the beginning makes every effort to please her new employer--the aunt wakes up to the recognition that the servant is not willing to live up to the role for which she has been cast. Such a process lasts, of course, some time until it is final. At this point the aunt experiences intense disappointment and rage, as any narcissistic-exploitative person does when frustrated. Not being aware that the cause for this rage lies in her impossible demands, she rationalizes her disappointment by accusing the servant. Since she cannot give up her desires, she fires the servant and hopes that a new one will be "right." The same mechanism repeats itself until she dies or cannot get any more

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[61] Ibid.

> servants. Often the history of marriage conflicts is identical; however, since it is easier to fire a servant than to divorce, the outcome is often that of a lifelong battle in which each partner tries to punish the other for ever-accumulating wrongs. The problem that confronts us here is that of a specific human character, and not that of an accumulated instinctive energy.[62]

For Fromm, it is the species-specific traits of Homo sapiens, the human situation itself, which gives rise to the peculiarly human phenomenon of character. Not only is the capacity and necessity for developing character the phenomenon which decisively separates human beings from animals, but, in Fromm's way of thinking, it is what differentiates one culture from another and one individual from another. In light of the considerable evidence that analogies from the animal world explain only at best a limited degree of human aggression, as well as the fact that cultures and individuals vary a great deal in the amount and forms of aggression which they express, one can only conclude that the concept of character would appear to be a more plausible basis for explaining human aggression than the concept of instinct.

As far as Fromm is concerned, Lorenz commits a double fallacy by taking a drive-discharge model of aggression which, on the evidence,[63] should not even be applied to most animal species, and then applying it to the human species which differs in the most significant ways from any animal species which Lorenz has studied. Even the broad concept of defensive aggression, the biologically programmed impulse to mobilize fight or flight behavior when the life or life-supporting necessities of an animal are attacked or threatened, is not considered by Fromm to be

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[62]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 44-45.

[63]Ibid., pp. 142-44.

directly transferable from the animal to the human level.[64] Fromm notes that the specifically human capacities for memory, foresight, and imagination make it possible for human beings to "defensively" aggress against past events, events that may be expected to occur in the future, and dangers which exist only in the imagination of a given individual or group.[65] Furthermore, life-supporting necessities, or what Fromm calls "vital interests," are necessarily much wider for humans than for animals. The aggressivity of human beings is not limited to those situations when such things as food, space, offspring, or sexual access are threatened. They can also feel under attack when their particular solutions to various existential needs are threatened, as in the case of a challenge to one's "frame of orientation and devotion":

> Whatever they are--values, ideals, ancestors, father, mother, the soil--they are perceived as sacred.... The individual--or group--reacts to an attack against the "sacred" with the same rage and aggressiveness as to an attack against life.[66]

The major failing of Lorenz's approach to human aggression is a lack of consideration for those qualities which distinguish human beings from animals. For Fromm, it is not so much our animal instincts which generate the bulk of human aggression, but rather the universal human situation in interaction with particular sociohistorical and individual circumstances--in short, our character. It is this distinction between instinct and character which sets Fromm's approach apart from not only Lorenz's approach, but also the approaches of such writers as Ardrey,

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[64] Ibid., p. 221.

[65] Ibid., pp. 222-23.

[66] Ibid., pp. 223-224.

Morris, and Tiger. Ironically, the emphasis of many ethologically oriented writers on our alleged "killer instinct," "territorial imperative," "hierarchy of dominance," "predatory predilection," "carnivorous adaption," etc. not only ignores the many human cultures and individuals who in no way can be accurately described by such terms, but ignores a great deal of biological evidence as well.[67] It would appear, then, on both human and biological grounds, that Fromm's concept of character would be a more promising explanatory principle than the instinctivism of Lorenz (and most other ethologically oriented writers) in accounting for the phenomenon of human aggression.

## Society

The key to Fromm's whole perspective on aggression lies in the distinction between "benign" and "malignant" aggression. We will consider the former first in brief fashion and then deal with the latter at some length.

Benign aggression largely refers to the kind of aggression which is reactive or defensive in nature. As we have seen, this defensive aggression is a phylogenetically programmed impulse in both animals and humans to attack (or flee) when vital interest are (or appear to be) threatened. Such aggression generally functions "in the service of the survival of the individual and species, is biologically adaptive, and ceases when the threat ceases to exist."[68] The role, then, that normal

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[67] Ibid., chaps. 5-8.

[68] Ibid, p. 25.

biology plays as a motivation for human aggression is limited to the mobilization of defensive aggression.

Yet defensive aggression at the human level is often much wider in scope and more dangerous in character than animal studies or our own biology might indicate. The human capacities for memory, foresight, reason, and imagination make a great expansion of defensive aggression possible; what makes it actual is the degree to which some members of a given society can convince and/or coerce other members to perceive and act on a socially defined threat, be it genuine or spurious. In light of the time-honored techniques for inducing aggression as refined by such varied social institutions as the military and the juvenile gang, Fromm sees a considerable amount of defensively motivated human aggression as being "conformist" in nature.[69] Conformist aggression is "performed not because the aggressor is driven by the desire to destroy, but because he is told to do so and considers it his duty to obey orders" or he wishes "not to appear 'yellow.'"[70] Human beings are

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[69]Ibid., p. 234.

[70]Ibid. Many other students of aggression--from Hannah Arendt to Philip Zimbardo--have also stressed the all too common human tendency to ignore or override moral considerations for the sake of following orders of fulfilling role expectations. For a discussion of how monstrous evils can flow from the banal bureaucratic rubberstamping of an Adolf Eichmann see Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (New York: Viking Press, 1965). From Fromm's point of view, Eichmann's concern for efficient procedure and indifference toward flesh-and-blood human beings is symptomatic of the "pathology of normalcy" which is generally found throughout modern bureaucratic societies, although nowhere did it take a more virulent turn than in Eichmann's Nazi Germany. On Eichmann and modern bureaucratic society see Fromm, The Heart of Man, pp. 42 and 63-66. On the "pathology of normalcy" see Fromm, The Sane Society, chap. 2. With respect to the psychological experiments conducted by Stanley Milgram and Zimbardo,

better compared to sheep than wolves for the most part, although sheep armed with contemporary military weaponry leads Fromm to observe that "the ordinary man with extraordinary power is the chief danger for mankind--not the fiend or the sadist."[71]

Another form of defensive aggression which is also subject to quite dangerous social manipulations is "instrumental" aggression.[72] Instrumental aggression "has the aim of attaining that which is necessary or desirable."[73] Of course what a given individual or society defines as "necessary or desirable" bears considerably on what forms and how much instrumental aggression may be produced in a particular context. For example, as Fromm points out, a consumer culture based on a psychology of greed in which the guiding social norm sanctions the common striving for ever greater amounts of possessions, power, prestige, etc. can expect to generate a great deal of instrumental aggression due to the "normal" competition to have as much as possible.[74] However, instrumental aggression can be more immediately and forcefully

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Fromm is as impressed by the number of people who did not conform to the aggression-inducing experimental designs as the number who did. He regards the resistance to the experimental designs as evidence that human behavior is not a straightforward response to the surrounding environment, but rather it is mediated through character and that a significant number of the participants did not appear to be predominantly conformist or sadistic in character. See Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 68-90, especially p. 75 and p. 81.

[71] Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 14.

[72] Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 234-37.

[73] Ibid., p. 234.

[74] Ibid., pp. 235-37. Also see Erich Fromm, To Have or to Be?, (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), pp. 3-8.

destructive in the geopolitical realm insofar as instrumental aggression under certain conditions may constitute an act of war. In many wars both sides believe they are fighting in order to ultimately secure a stable peace, but, as World War I tragically demonstrated, the mobilization of instrumental aggression on a large-scale can lead to massive destruction in the short run and a very unstable peace in the long run.[75]

Besides defensive aggression, the other subcategory under the general rubric of benign aggression is what Fromm calls "pseudoaggression." Pseudoaggression is defined as "those aggressive acts that may cause harm, but are not intended to do so."[76] He lists accidents (leaving open the possibility that some accidents may be unconsciously motivated), play and the display of skill in sports and ritual, and self-assertion as various kinds of pseudoaggression.[77]

If accounting for benign aggression requires at least some reference to specifically human capacities, then to understand malignant aggression fully requires human nature as a premise because malignant aggression refers to the cruelty and destructiveness characteristic of the human species alone.[78] Only in the human species do we find examples of aggressive behavior which appear to be motivated by an insatiable lust for causing other people pain and destructiveness simply for

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[75]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 234-37.

[76]Ibid., p. 213.

[77]Ibid., pp. 213-20.

[78]Ibid., pp. 25 and 246.

the sake of destruction.[79] Yet such malignant aggression is distributed so unequally throughout history, across cultures, and among individuals that merely utilizing a universal human nature (or, for that matter, a universal instinct) to explain such a patently ununiversal phenomenon would not make much sense.[80] Therefore, Fromm attempts to explain malignant aggression on the additional basis of specific character types, which are formed according to the prevailing social structure, individual temperament and circumstance, and historical period.[81] It is on this theoretical basis that Fromm contends, against Freud and Lorenz, that cruelty and destructiveness are not generated by normal biology, but can be better accounted for in terms of sociohistorically conditioned psychopathology.[82] Thus, in order to understand the anatomy of human destructiveness, it is necessary to examine the various types and functions of character and the malignant forms they can take.

It was Freud, of course, who pioneered the psychoanalytic approach to the study of character, most notably in his early paper Character and Anal Eroticism.[83] By developing a systematic and clinically-based approach to characterology, Freud transformed what had previously been the art of portraying character into the science of

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[79]Ibid., pp. 313-481.

[80]Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[81]Ibid., pp. 26-27.

[82]Ibid., pp. 19-20; Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 54.

[83]Sigmund Freud, Character and Anal Eroticism in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 9 (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), pp. 167-75.

analyzing it. Fromm builds on this legacy, recognizing with Freud that seemingly separate and unrelated character traits (e.g. orderliness, parsimoniousness, obstinacy) fit together as a type of system, structure, or syndrome (e.g. the "anal" character).[84] He also agrees with Freud that all character types can be conceived as dynamic energy systems which are organized as relatively permanent structures under ordinary conditions.[85]

What Fromm takes exception to in the early Freud's characterology is the assumption that libidinal energy is the driving force behind the dynamics of character.[86] In Fromm's view the dynamic nature of character is a result of the existential energetics associated with the variety of human passions--the strivings for love, truth, justice, freedom, as well as narcissism, masochism, sadism, and destructiveness.[87] The decisive influence in shaping what specific passions or character traits predominate in a particular individual is not so much a matter of reaction formations against or sublimations of zone and stage-specific libidinal energy, but rather it is a question of the mode of relatedness by which the individual orients himself or herself toward others and the world.[88] Hence, Fromm defines character

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[84]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 104-5.

[85]Ibid., p. 105.

[86]Ibid., p. 106.

[87]Ibid., pp. 297-98.

[88]Ibid., pp. 106 and 327.

as "the relatively permanent system of all noninstinctual strivings through which man relates himself to the human and natural world."[89]

Fromm calls the process by which a particular mode of relatedness is formed relative to the natural world and to things "assimilation," and the complementary process, relative to the human world and to people, "socialization."[90] Briefly, the pathological possibilities in the process of assimilation are four-fold: the orientations of receiving, exploiting, hoarding, and marketing are pathological to the extent that they do not partake of the productive orientation, which is Fromm's criterion for health in I-It relations.[91] Correspondingly, the pathological possibilities in the process of socialization are four-fold as well: masochistic loyalty, sadistic authority, destructive assertiveness, and indifferent fairness.[92] These social orientations are also pathological to the extent that they do not partake of love, Fromm's criterion for health in I-Thou relations.[93] While most people can be described in terms of a dominant orientation, few, if any, can be fully described without the recognition of a complex blending of orientations.[94]

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[89]Ibid., p. 255.

[90]Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 66.

[91]Ibid., pp. 69-113 and 118-22.

[92]Ibid., pp. 113-16.

[93]Ibid., pp. 102-7 and 116. Also see The Art of Loving. The I-It and I-Thou language of Martin Buber is particularly appropriate in this context because Buber was one of Fromm's teachers. See Browning, Generative Man, p. 120.

[94]Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 118-22.

For Fromm, as for Freud, the family is a crucial influence in the formation of character. Fromm, however, is not so much interested in the character type produced by the family per se, but has instead focused on the demands and necessities of the surrounding society within which the family functions.[95] Fromm is concerned with how society at large transmits the kinds of character types it needs (for its own economic and ideological self-preservation) to the individual child through the medium of the family:

> Of course the first critical influences on the growing child come from the family. But the family itself, all its typical internal emotional relationships and the educational ideals it embodies, are in turn conditioned by the social and class background of the family; in short, they are conditioned by the social structure in which it is rooted.... The family is the medium through which the society of the social class stamps its specific structure on the child, and hence on the adult.[96]

Thus, Fromm's signal contribution to psychoanalytic theory has been the study of social character, which is the analysis of the characterological qualities which are shared by the members of a given class or society.[97]

Fromm first demonstrated the relevance of the concept of social character to the problem of aggression in a study of the incidence of authoritarianism in selected German populations on the eve of Hitler's rise to power.[98] By means of what Fromm refers to as "interpretative

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[95]Erich Fromm, Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought (New York: New American Library, 1980), pp. 58-59.

[96]Fromm, The Crisis of Psychoanalysis, pp. 144-45.

[97]Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 78.

[98]See the bibliographical reference in Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 535.

questionnaires" (which are designed to probe unconscious motivations as well as conscious responses),[99] it was possible to roughly predict (on the order of ten per cent) the percentage of German workers and employees who would later become ardent supporters of Hitler.[100] In subsequent theoretical analysis Fromm found that such political authoritarianism was associated with the psychological dynamics common to both sadism and masochism.[101]

Sadism and masochism are generally assumed to be exclusively related to sexuality and, furthermore, to be rooted in nearly opposite desires, but Fromm interprets them in quite a different fashion. For Fromm, sexual sadism and masochism are simply special cases of a more general phenomenon--symbiotic relatedness. Symbiosis is the common source of both sadism and masochism:

> Symbiosis, in this psychological sense, means the union of one individual self with another self (or any other power outside of the own self) in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely dependent on each other. The sadistic person needs his object just as much as the masochistic needs his: only instead of seeking security by being swallowed, he gains it by swallowing somebody else. In both cases the integrity of the individual self is lost. In one case I dissolve myself in an outside power; I lose myself. In the other case I enlarge myself by making another being part of myself and thereby I gain the strength I lack as an independent self. It is always the inability to stand the aloneness of one's individual self that leads to the drive to enter into a symbiotic relationship with someone else. It is evident from this why masochistic and sadistic trends are always blended with each other. Although on the surface they seem

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[99] Ibid., p. 70 and Appendix A: "The Interpretative Questionnaire and Examples of Scoring" in Social Character in a Mexican Village (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 239-70.

[100] Erich Fromm, "The Revolutionary Character" in The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publication, 1963), p. 138.

[101] Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 163-201.

> contradictions, they are essentially rooted in the same basic need. People are not sadistic or masochistic, but there is a constant oscillation between the active and passive side of the symbiotic complex, so that it is often difficult to determine which side of it is operating at a given moment.[102]

Although both sadism and masochism may flow from the same inner dynamic, their main external difference must be kept in mind in that "the sadistic person commands, exploits, hurts, humiliates, and the masochistic person is commanded, exploited, hurt, humiliated."[103] Furthermore, masochism is limited to the self, but the sadistic side of the authoritarian character may in extreme cases affect millions of people. For example, "Hitler reacted primarily in a sadistic fashion toward people, but masochistically toward fate, history, the 'higher power' of nature."[104] It is due to the social nature and active quality of sadistically motivated aggression that Fromm gives it greater attention and considers it one of the two major forms of malignant aggression.[105]

Fromm distinguishes three different kinds of sadistic tendencies. The first kind of sadism "is to make others dependent on oneself and to have absolute and unrestricted power over them, so as to make of them nothing but instruments, 'clay in the potter's hand.'"[106] A second kind "consists of the impulse not only to rule over others in

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[102]Ibid., p. 180.

[103]Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 17.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 313-61.

[106]Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 165.

this absolute fashion, but to exploit them, to use them, to steal from them, to disembowel them, and, so to speak, to incorporate anything eatable in them."[107] A third kind "is the wish to make others suffer or to see them suffer."[108] In summary Fromm notes that sadism "is the transformation of [human] impotence into the experience of omnipotence."[109]

If sadomasochism is a mode of socialization characterized by overly close relations of dependency, then destructiveness and indifference are marked by relations involving too much distance and a tendency toward withdrawal.[110] In a manner analogous to sadism and masochism, destructiveness is the active form of withdrawal and indifference is the passive form.[111] The self can achieve a certain distance from the other by ignoring him or her, but the ultimate distance is secured by doing away with the other altogether.

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 323. It should be noted that Fromm further elaborated symbiotic relatedness in his later work under the rubric of incestuous-symbiotic fixation. In typical Fromm style, he does not use the term "incest" to merely describe a form of sexual desire but rather he broadens it to mean the tendency to desire a merger with or remain fixated to the mother or her later equivalents--the family, clan, political party, church, nation, or any other social matrix that offers security and protection against the anxiety and risks of individuation. See Fromm, The Heart of Man. chap. 5.

[110] Fromm, Man for Himself, p. 115.

[111] Ibid., pp. 115-16. However, Fromm observes that the difference between destructiveness and indifference is greater than that between sadism and masochism.

In his later work Fromm elaborated another, still more extreme tendency toward withdrawal: narcissism. Freud and others first interpreted narcissism in relation to early infancy and the psychoses, but Fromm is more interested in how narcissism functions in normal adults and neurotic personalities.[112] Fromm defines narcissism as "a state of experience in which only the person himself, his body, his needs, his feelings, his thoughts, his property, everything and everybody pertaining to him are experienced as fully real, while everybody and everything that does not form part of the person or is not an object of his needs is not interesting, is not fully real, is perceived only by intellectual recognition, while affectively without weight and color."[113] The narcissistic person "compensates for his nonrelatedness to the world outside him by excessive estimate of his own worth, and this compensation makes it possible to live only for himself, his body, his possessions, his illnesses, his guilt, his beauty, his virtues, and so on."[114] In its more benign forms, narcissism can function in a more or less constructive way, say in support of the job requirements of an entertainer, but it necessarily restricts a person's capacity for objectivity, fair-mindedness and genuine love.[115]

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[112]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 227.

[113]Ibid., pp. 227-28.

[114]Funk, Erich Fromm, p. 44.

[115]Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 107.

The relationship of narcissism to aggression becomes especially clear when we consider not just individual narcissism, but social narcissism as well. As Fromm puts it:

> Assuming a person tells others, "I (and my family) are the most admirable people in the world; we alone are clean, intelligent, good, decent; all others are dirty, stupid, dishonest, and irresponsible," most people would think him crude, unbalanced, or even insane. If, however, a fanatical speaker addresses a mass audience, substituting the nation (or race, religion, political party, etc.) for the "I" and "my family," he will be praised and admired by many for his love of country, love of God, etc. Other nations and religions, however, will resent such a speech for the obvious reason that they are held in contempt. Within the favored group, however, everybody's personal narcissism is flattered and the fact that millions of people agree with the statements makes them appear as reasonable.[116]

In group narcissism the distortions of perception and judgment which are characteristic of individual narcissism are given a heightened reality by being socially confirmed. Thus, the prejudices of group narcissism, the belief that a given race, religion, nation, etc. is inherently superior to a comparable group is a common psychological basis for innumerable lynchings, persecutions, wars, and other forms of violent aggression.

Fromm expanded his concept of destructiveness in his later writings. In his early work he interpreted destructiveness as a secondary potentiality which developed when the primary potentiality of the person to grow in a healthy manner was blocked, thwarted, or somehow turned against itself due to pathogenic conditions.[117] This is what Fromm meant with his early description of destructiveness as "the

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[116] Ibid., p 95-96.

[117] Fromm, Man for Himself, pp. 218-20.

outcome of unlived life."[118] In his later work Fromm maintained his earlier views, but went even further in his analysis of destructiveness by identifying a new orientation: necrophilia.[119] It is necrophilia, along with sadism, that constitute the two major forms of malignant aggression.

Fromm defines necrophilia in the characterological sense as

> ...the passionate attraction to all that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive; to destroy for the sake of destruction; the exclusive interest in all that is purely mechanical. It is the passion to tear apart living structures.[120]

The clinical evidence for necrophilia shows up in the themes of death, sickness, corpses, burials, murder, blood, skulls, darkness, dirt, feces, sadistic force, and destruction which pervade the dreams, language, and seemingly frivolous behavior of the necrophilous character.[121] According to Funk, this type of character should be interpreted as a possible orientation in both the processes of assimilation and socialization.[122] Fromm's writings indicate that the destruction of the natural environment is the paradigmatic example of the former and Adolf Hitler is the paradigmatic example of the latter.[123]

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[118] Ibid., p. 218.

[119] Fromm, The Heart of Man, pp. 37-38 and 54.

[120] Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 369.

[121] Ibid., pp. 369-80. Also see Fromm, The Heart of Man, pp. 38-45.

[122] Funk, Erich Fromm, p. 47.

[123] See Fromm, The Crisis of Psychoanalysis, pp. 190-92, and The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, chap. 13.

Fromm derived his concept of necrophilia from two main sources. First, the term itself was adopted from the meaning ascribed to it by the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in a speech delivered in 1936.[124] Unamuno used the term in opposing the nationalist general Millan Astray, whose favorite motto was "Viva la Muerte!" ("Long live death!").[125] Second, Fromm utilized Freud's concepts of the anal character and the death instinct as theoretical reference points in generating his own concept of necrophilia, although he considerably modified the materialistic Freudian scheme in developing his more purely psychological explanation. Specifically, Fromm does not subscribe to the theoretical explanation of the anal character in terms of the physiology of the libido theory, nor the death instinct in terms of the later Freud's speculative biology; however, he still believes that the clinical data these concepts point to is real enough and that his own psychological concept of necrophilia may be "a first step toward bridging the gap between the earlier and later theories of Freud."[126]

Yet Fromm does not see the normal dynamics of Freud's anal character or even his own hoarding character as adequately accounting for the phenomenon of necrophilia. Rather, Fromm considers the "necrophilous character as being the malignant form of the character

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[124]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 367-68.

[125]Ibid., p. 368.

[126]Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 61. Fromm has also pointed out that the psychological polarity between biophilia and necrophilia can be found in the work of Marx. See The Crisis of Psychoanalysis, pp. 72-73.

structure of which Freud's 'anal character' is the benign form."[127] Although Fromm agrees with Freud that sadism is often associated with the more pathological expressions of the anal-hoarding character, necrophilia represents an even deeper pathology than sadism:

> But even sadists are still with others; they want to control, but not to destroy them. Those in whom even this perverse kind of relatedness is lacking, who are still more narcissistic and more hostile, are the necrophiles. Their aim is to transform all that is alive into dead matter; they want to destroy everything and everybody, often even themselves; their enemy is life itself.[128]

Thus, Fromm's clinical observations that the necrophilious character is attracted to feces (dead matter, waste) and to the process of elimination (to defecate, to kill) indicate that such a character orientation is the pathological end point in a continuum that runs in the following sequence: normal anal-hoarding character ⟶ sadistic character ⟶ necrophilous character.[129]

Fromm also agrees with the later Freud that the most fundamental forces confronting human beings are those represented by Eros and destruction or, as Fromm would put it, the affinity to life (biophilia) and the affinity to death (necrophilia).[130] However, Fromm disagrees with Freud that this duality is made up of contending biological forces

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[127]Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 60.

[128]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 387. Fromm has suggested that at the deepest levels of pathology the orientations of necrophilia, narcissism, and incestuous symbiosis, which are distinguishable as separate trends in their less malignant forms, tend to merge into a single "syndrome of decay." See Fromm, The Heart of Man, pp. 134-44.

[129]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 387.

[130]Fromm, The Heart of Man, p. 53.

of relatively equal strength (although, to be sure, the death instinct prevails in the end):

> Destructiveness is not parallel to, but the alternative to biophilia. Love of life or love of the dead is the fundamental alternative that confronts every human being. Necrophilia grows as the development of biophilia is stunted. Man is biologically endowed with the capacity for biophilia, but psychologically he has the potential for necrophilia as an alternative solution.[131]

In this way Fromm avoids Freud's assumption that "the strength of Thanatos is constant, and environmental influences can do nothing but direct the death instinct toward one's own person or toward others."[132] For Fromm, the crucial factors for the development and intensity of necrophilia are primarily non-biological in nature and so history and not anatomy becomes the key to human destiny.

When the human capacities for memory, reason, foresight, imagination, and technology are socially organized in the service of aggression, both biologically-based benign aggression and character-conditioned malignant aggression can become far more destructive than any manifestation of aggression in the animal kingdom. Although defensive aggression is a natural human response to a life-threatening situation and as such is ethically acceptable in its motivation, in actuality the defensive impulse is frequently exploited, often unwittingly, for ethically dubious social purposes. However, the social pressures which bear on the exploitation of defensive aggression are situationally-specific and so will last only as long as one is a member of a juvenile gang or the army, but when social and individual

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[131]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 406-7.

[132]Funk, Erich Fromm, p. 50.

conditions conspire to produce character-rooted malignant aggression the sadistic or necrophilous person will undoubtedly create situations for the expression of their destructive aggression throughout their lifetimes. Since in Fromm's view the character structure of society itself is the most decisive influence in shaping the individual characters which make up a given society, it is necessary in turn to examine how the various types of social character came to be in the course of historical evolution. In this way the abstract discussion of the forms of aggression can become joined to the concrete forces of history.

## History

Fromm begins his history of human aggression with the "fall" into human consciousness, in which our hominid ancestors lost their instinctive recognition of all other cospecifics as members of the same species:

> Precisely because man has less instinctive equipment than any other animal, he does not recognize or identify cospecifics as easily as animals. For him different language, customs, dress, and other criteria perceived by the mind rather than by instincts determine who is a cospecific and who is not, and any group which is slightly different is not supposed to share in the same humanity. From this follows the paradox that man, precisely because he lacks instinctive equipment, also lacks the experience of the identity of his species and experiences the stranger as if he belonged to another species; in other words, it is man's humanity that makes him so inhuman.[133]

Thus, Fromm sees the paleontological origins of the more destructive forms of human aggression as deriving from the shift in consciousness that marked the transition from ape to human rather than from any

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[133]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 148-49.

inheritance, predatory or otherwise, which was carried over from our animal ancestors.[134]

While some writers have pointed to our pre-human or semi-human predecessors as the "anthropological Adam" who first committed the original sin of wanton destructiveness, still others have held the primitive hunters of prehistory to be responsible for the primal crime. According to this view, since the human species has lived ninety-nine percent of its evolutionary history as hunters, it would seem reasonable to assume that even today our basic psychology is still that of "man the hunter."[135] If, in fact, the psychology of the hunter remains an influence on those human beings who have moved on to agricultural, industrial, and cybernetic economies, it is necessary to have as accurate a view as possible as to what that psychology is or was. In contrast to the whole modern tradition from the seventeenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes to the twentieth century anthropologist Sherwood Washburn, who tend to imagine primitive life as "nasty, brutish, and short," Fromm draws on the leading contemporary authorities on primitive economics (primarily Elman Service and Marshall Sahlins) and arrives at a very different picture from the Hobbesian one.[136] In essence Fromm is again denying that sadism and destructiveness are innate or even dominant traits of human beings in primitive cultures as, for example, Washburn implies when he writes:

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[134]Ibid., pp. 149-52.

[135]Ibid., pp. 153-54.

[136]Ibid., pp. 153-76.

> For at least 300,000 years (perhaps twice that) carnivorous curiosity and aggression have been added to the inquisitiveness and dominance striving of the ape. This carnivorous psychology was fully formed by the middle Pleistocene [about 500,000 years ago] and it may have had its beginnings in the depradations of the australopithecines.
>
> And: Man has a carnivorous psychology. It is easy to teach people to kill, and it is hard to develop customs which avoid killing. Many human beings enjoy seeing other human beings suffer or enjoy the killing of animals...[137]

Fromm counters by acknowledging that although many people enjoy killing and cruelty, "all it means is that there are sadistic individuals and sadistic cultures."[138] Such sadism is not characteristic of human beings as such and is not necessarily or even normally the case in primitive cultures:

> There is also no evidence for the assumption that primitive hunters were motivated by sadistic or destructive impulses. On the contrary, there is some evidence to show that they had an affectionate feeling for the killed animals and possibly a feeling of guilt for the kill. Among Paleolithic hunters, the bear was often addressed as "grandfather" or was looked upon as the mythical ancestor of man. When the bear was killed, apologies were offered; before he was eaten, a sacred meal took place with the bear as an "honored guest," before whom were placed the best dishes; finally the bear was ceremoniously buried.[139]

If anything, Washburn's characterizations of primitive hunters as carnivorous and sadistic in their motivations probably better describes

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[137] As quoted by Fromm in The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 154. Fromm's source for the first quote was an article by Sherwood L. Washburn and V. Avis titled "Evolution of Human Behavior" in Behavior and Evolution, ed. A Roe and G. G. Simpson, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); his source for the second quote was an article by Sherwood titled "Speculations of the Interrelations of the History of Tools and Biological Evolution" in The Evolution of Man's Capacity for Culture, ed. J. N. Spechler (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1959).

[138] Ibid., p. 155.

[139] Ibid., p. 156.

the motives behind "civilized" hunting behavior as a sporting pastime of ruling elites.[140]

Furthermore, Fromm points out that what may appear to our contemporary mentality as barbaric "blood-lust" or "cannibalism" may in fact have had a ritual and religious meaning to those who practiced it and therefore was not motivated by destructive aggressiveness:

> To modern man the shedding of blood appears to be nothing but destructiveness. Certainly from a "realistic" standpoint that is what it is, but if one considers not only the act itself but its meaning in the deepest and most archaic layers of experience, then one may arrive at a different conclusion. By shedding one's own blood or that of another, one is in touch with the life-force; this in itself can be an intoxicating experience on the archaic level, and when it is offered to the gods, it can be an act of the most sacred devotion; the wish to destroy need not be the motive.[141]

Still, it is unnecessary to overly romanticize the life and motives of primitives, past or present. At least some primitive tribes can be said to engage in "warfare," but if we are to call it that it is important to note the qualitative differences between primitive and civilized warfare:

> Primitive warfare, particularly that of the lower primitives, was neither centrally organized nor led by permanent chieftains; it was relatively infrequent; it was not war of conquest nor was it bloody war aimed at killing as many of the enemy as possible. Most civilized war, in contrast, is institutionalized, organized by permanent chieftans, and aims at conquest of territory and/or acquisition of slaves and/or booty.[142]

While most primitives do not have the population, social organization, technical means, or material motives (i.e. desire for territory, slaves,

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[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid., p. 301.

[142] Ibid., pp. 171-72.

or wealth) to conduct warfare in the same way and for the same reasons that their civilized counterparts do, this does not mean that all primitive peoples necessarily have peaceful social characters. In his analysis of some thirty (mostly contemporary) primitive tribes, Fromm comes to the conclusion that some tribes can best be characterized as life-affirmative cultures (e.g. the Zuñis), others as nondestructive but aggressive cultures (e.g. the Manus), still others as destructive cultures (e.g. the Dobus).[143] What seems to be a crucial influence in shaping different categories of social character among primitives is not simply the socioeconomic situation (e.g. relative scarcity or abundance of food and other resources, the presence or absence of competition, private property, and hierarchies), but also the general atmosphere or spirit of a given culture. As Ruth Benedict described the Dobus:

> The Dobuan lives out without repression man's worst nightmares of the ill-will of the universe, and according to his view of life virtue consists in selecting a victim upon whom he can vent the malignancy he attributes alike to human society and to the powers of nature. All existence appears to him as a cut-throat struggle in which deadly antagonists are pitted against one another in a contest for each one of the goods of life. Suspicion and cruelty are his trusted weapons in the strife and he gives no mercy, as he asks none.[144]

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[143] Ibid. pp. 193-204.

[144] As quoted in Ibid., p. 204. It is important to note that Fromm is not what he would call a "vulgar Marxist materialist" in his interpretation of social character. Although Fromm typically begins his analysis of social character with a description of the socioeconomic situation, he does not envision a unidirectional, cause and effect relationship between socioeconomic structure and social character. Rather, there is a mutual shaping and multi-leveled system of feedback among socio-economic base, social character and the "spirit" or ideas and ideals of a give culture, as the following diagram indicates:

With the transformation from primitive hunting-gathering economies to the agricultural economies of civilization, the economic basis for larger populations, food surpluses, and new kinds of social organizations came into existence. Along with the rise of cities, class stratification, greater economic specialization, and patriarchal religious authority came institutionalized warfare and slavery.[145] The destructiveness and sadism which has characterized the rise and fall of so many civilizations now made its decisive historical appearance:

> Lewis Mumford has expressed the new principle governing the life of the city very succinctly: "To exert power in every form was the essence of civilization; the city found a score of ways of expressing struggle, aggression, domination, conquest--and servitude." He points out that the new ways of the cities were "rigorous, efficient, often harsh, even sadistic," and that the Egyptian monarchs and their Mesopotamian counterparts "boasted on their monuments and tablets of their personal feats in mutilating, torturing, and killing with their own hands their chief captives."
>
> ... [Mumford] quotes Patrick Geddes as saying that each historic civilization begins with a living, urban core, the polis, and ends in a common graveyard of dust and bones, a Necropolis, or city of the dead: fire-scorched ruins, shattered buildings, empty workshops, heaps of meaningless refuse, the population massacred or driven into slavery.[146]

While primitive hunting-gathering societies were characterized by cooperation and sharing in the main and only exceptionally by destructive aggression, with the rise of civilization these norms became reversed. Although considerable cooperation may still have existed

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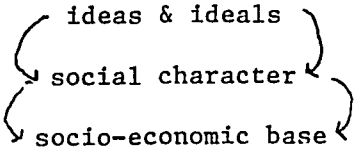


[145] Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 187-92.

[146] Ibid., p. 191.

within a city-state or an empire, when separate peoples came into conflict more often than not their differences were settled by force of arms. Whether it was the Hebrews bringing down the walls of Jericho or the Romans bringing Jerusalem underfoot, the story of civilization during its agricultural phase followed the cycle of nature: a season of growth in the sun followed by a bitter winter of destruction.

With the development of the industrial mode of production in the eighteenth century, a new means of production had come into being, but so did new means of destruction. The group who represented the culmination of industrial possibilities for destruction with their factory-like production of mass death was, of course, Adolf Hitler and the Nazis.[147]

In his early work Fromm analyzed Hitler and the Nazis in terms of their sadomasochistic (authoritarian) character and in his later work he analyzed Hitler's necrophilia.[148] He believes such analyses are complementary because Hitler and his ideology were a blend of authoritarianism and necrophilia, although the latter is to be considered primary.[149]

In assessing the historical sources of Nazism, Fromm believes that to analyze Nazism in terms of political economy or social psychology alone is insufficient, that both must be considered together.[150] For example, the loss of the First World War, the fall of the old German

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[147]Ibid., p. 386.

[148]See Fromm, Escape from Freedom, Chap. 6, and The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, chap. 13.

[149]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 418.

[150]Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 231-32.

monarchy, and the economic instability and decline that characterized the postwar period all contributed to a psychological climate receptive to those who could identify who was responsible for the present troubles and could promise new prestige and certain security for the future.[151] No class within German society responded more passionately to Hitler's claims and aspirations than the lower middle class:

> The answer to the question why the Nazi ideology was so appealing to the lower middle class has to be sought for in the social character of the lower middle class. Their social character was markedly different from that of the working class, of the higher strata of the middle class, and of the nobility and the upper classes. As a matter of fact, certain features were characteristic for this part of the middle class throughout its history: their love for strong, hatred of the weak, their pettiness, hostility, thriftiness with feelings as well as with money, and especially their asceticism.[152]

With all of Germany reeling from the aftereffects of World War I, Hitler could find an especially active affirmation of his authoritarian ideology from many members of the lower middle class and passive resignation from much of the disappointed working class (who were defeated in their attempt at revolution in 1918), and, to some extent, from the other strata of society, whose economic interests Hitler more or less promised to represent and ensure.[153]

Hitler's Mein Kampf, in addition to reflecting the personal ideology of its author, was a quintessential expression of the authoritarian character of the lower middle class which was, in turn,

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[151]Ibid., pp. 238-42. Here I am describing only the immediate historical sources of Nazism. In a later chapter I will comment on Fromm's view of the relationship between Protestantism and Nazism in connection with Erikson's and Brown's perspectives on Luther and Hitler.

[152]Ibid., pp. 235-36.

[153]Ibid., pp. 242-45.

projected onto the screen of the entire German nation.[154] As Hitler described the desires of the "masses": "What they want is the victory of the stronger and the annihilation or the unconditional surrender of the weaker."[155] As Hitler sought to consolidate his power over the German masses and have them submit to "der Führer," so he simultaneously urged them to dominate other, "inferior" races and nations.[156] On this psychopolitical basis Hitler's Germany began the most ambitious war of conquest in history.

Toward the latter part of the Second World War, however, it became increasingly clear that Hitler's necrophilia was overshadowing his authoritarianism and his emphasis consequently shifted from the victory of the stronger over the weaker to utter annihilation.[157] As Hitler's will to dominate became less and less realistic and effective in the face of mounting military defeats, his will to destroy came into full force. With the initiation of his "scorched earth" policy, which called for the systematic destruction of his own country, his own people and finally himself, it became apparent that Hitler's character went beyond the bounds of the authoritarianism typical of Germany's lower middle class in what can only be described in individual terms as an extremely pathological desire to destroy.[158] In Hitler's character

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[154]Ibid., p. 241.

[155]Ibid., p. 246.

[156]Ibid., p. 250.

[157]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 452.

[158]Ibid., p. 442 and pp. 445-46.

necrophilia (scorched earth), symbiotic fixation (blood and soil), and narcissism (the leader), which in combination constitute the deepest level of pathology, came together as a consummate clinical illustration of the syndrome of decay which, tragically enough, was acted out on the largest historical stage.[159]

At about the same time the Third Reich collapsed, the fourth economy of human history began to emerge with the invention of computers. What Fromm and others call the cybernetic economy has since become well-entrenched in certain sectors of the world.[160] With computers on the one hand and nuclear weapons on the other, the spirit of necrophilia has now assumed a new guise in that the old factory model of mass destruction has been replaced with the new push-button model of total destruction.[161] In Fromm's view the necrophilia of cybernetic society is well expressed by the schizoid character type who can function without humane feeling and is therefore capable of the most inhumane calculations of destruction:

> An example of this emotion-free thinking is Herman Kahn's book on thermonuclear warfare. The question is discussed: how many millions of dead Americans are "acceptable" if we use as a criterion the ability to rebuild the economic machine after nuclear war in a reasonably short time so that it is as good as or better than before. Figures for GNP and population increase or decrease are the basic categories in this kind of thinking, while the question of the human results of nuclear war in terms of suffering, pain, brutalization, etc. is left aside.[162]

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[159] Ibid., chapter 13, passim.

[160] Fromm, The Revolution of Hope, pp. 26-28.

[161] Ibid., pp. 44-45 and 50-53.

[162] Ibid., p. 43.

By overemphasizing strategic and technical thinking at the expense of normative evaluation and emotionally informed insight, Fromm believes the plans for military power and material "progress" that make up the dominant goals of cybernetic society could lead to complete disaster:

> Man, in the name of progress, is transforming the world into a stinking and poisonous place (and this is not symbolic). He pollutes the air, the water, the soil, the animals--and himself. He is doing this to a degree that has made it doubtful whether the earth will still be livable within a hundred years from now. He knows the facts, but in spite of many protesters, those in charge go on in the pursuit of technical "progress" and are willing to sacrifice all life in the worship of their idol. In earlier times men also sacrificed their children or war prisoners, but never before in history has man been willing to sacrifice all life to the Moloch--his own and that of all his descendants.[163]

For Fromm the history of human destructiveness is a product of the nature of human consciousness and the forms and functions of human character and culture. Although it is popular to attribute our present tendencies toward destructiveness to our animal inheritance or our primitive ancestors, a careful study of the biological and anthropological evidence suggests that destructive aggression occurred relatively and absolutely less in the distant past than in the more recent period of civilization. Indeed, viewed from the perspective of human destructiveness, each major economic transformation in human history brought with it new technical means of destruction and in many cases the psychological disposition to employ them.

Although few historical cultures have not engaged in some form of socioeconomic exploitiation and geopolitical destructiveness for whatever reasons, a nondestructive character structure remains a human

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[163]Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 389-90.

possibility if the human capacities for freedom and fulfillment are properly nourished and exercised. But for such a possibility to come into being a thoroughgoing transformation of the contemporary human condition would necessarily have to take place. It is Fromm's vision of the possibility of human freedom and the nature of human fulfillment that decisively distinguishes him from that most eminent of contemporary behaviorists, B. F. Skinner. The philosophical and ethical differences between Fromm and Skinner will be covered in chapter five and will complete our interpretation of the meaning of Fromm's perspective on human aggression.

# CHAPTER III

## ROLLO MAY'S THEORY OF AGGRESSION

### Biography

Rollo May begins his book Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence with a preface that illuminates the title in a manner befitting an existential psychoanalyst:

> As a young man, I held innocence in high esteem. I disliked power, both in theory and practice, and abhorred violence. I came down with tuberculosis in my early thirties, a time when there was still no medication for the disease. For a year and a half I did not know whether I would live or die. As best I could, I tried to do what my doctors instructed me to do. This meant, as I then interpreted it, accepting the program of rest and giving my healing over to others....
>
> But I found, to my moral and intellectual dismay, that the bacilli were taking advantage of my very innocence. This innocence had transformed my helplessness into passivity, which constituted an open invitation to the bacilli to do violence to my body. I saw, too, that the reason I had contracted tuberculosis in the first place was my hopelessness and sense of defeatism....
>
> Not until I developed some "fight," some sense of personal responsibility for the fact that it was I who had the tuberculosis, an assertion of my will to live, did I make lasting progress.[1]

Along with a number of other therapists, such as Viktor Frankl,[2] May's interest in existentialism was rooted in an intense personal experience of the precariousness of life when it is immediately yet indefinitely suspended over the abyss of death.

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[1] May, Power and Innocence, pp. 13-14.

[2] See Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (New York: Pocket Books, 1963). My point is more clearly made by the original title: From Death-Camp to Existentialism.

Unlike those existentialists who rarely, if ever, get beyond personal and bodily experience, May has always been explicitly cognizant of the larger sociohistorical currents which impinge upon the individual and constitute an integral part of "private" existence:

> When I was in college before World War II I recall how taken aback I was when a professor of English literature remarked that he was fairly sure there would be more wars. This teacher was a soft-spoken, sensitive, unwarlike type, if ever such existed; but I silently looked at him as though he were a pariah. How could a man entertain such a thought? Wasn't it clear that we must refrain from thinking of or believing in war--and certainly from predicting it--if we were to attain peace? Several other hundred thousand fellow collegians and I, who were pacifists, were under the illusion that if we only believed in peace strongly enough, we could that much more insure international peace. We had no idea of how close our attitude came to superstition--do not think of the devil or he will already be in your midst.[3]

Through his individual and collective experiences, May learned that the "innocence" of the patient and the pacifist may not provide protection from powers beyond their horizons, that in fact it may be necessary to recognize and come to terms with the whole host of powers within and without if health and peace are to be authentically approached. Since May believes that power is ultimately an ontological quality, to avoid dealing with power is to cut outselves off from a vital dimension of being itself. Indeed, it has been May's vocational task to explore the interface between ontology and psychotherapy not only in regard to power and innocence (and, concomitantly, aggression and violence), but also in relation to anxiety[4] and integration,[5] love

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[3]May, Power and Innocence, pp. 172-73.

[4]Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety, rev. ed. (New York: Pocket Books, 1977).

[5]Rollo May, Man's Search for Himself (New York: New American

and will,[6] courage and creativity,[7] and, most recently, freedom and destiny.[8]

## Human Nature

Like Fromm, May calls for a "science of man" that would function as "a working theory which will enable us to understand and clarify the specific, distinguishing characteristics of man."[9] Such a science would embrace what is typically relegated to philosophy on the one hand and the practice of psychotherapy on the other, namely, the recognition of a universal human nature which nevertheless receives unique expression in each individual. As May points out:

> Does not every human conflict reveal universal characteristics of man as well as the idiosycratic problems of the individual? Sophocles was not writing merely about one individual's pathology when he showed us, step by step, through the drama of King Oedipus, the agonizing struggle of a man to find out "who I am and where I came from."...

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Library, 1953). It should be noted that May does not adopt an explicitly ontological approach until after the publication of Existence in 1958. However, obvious precursors of the existential turn in May's thought exist in his earlier works as, for example, in the case of the sense of self being replaced by the sense of being in his later works. See Reeves, The Psychology of Rollo May, pp. 16, 35 and 38.

[6]Rollo May, Love and Will (New York: Dell, 1969).

[7]Rollo May, The Courage to Create (New York: Bantam Books, 1975).

[8]Rollo May, Freedom and Destiny (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981).

[9]May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, p. 183. In the second (1979) edition May regrets the use of the phrase "science of man" and uses "science of human beings" in the new Introduction, p. ix. In contrast, Fromm retains the traditional usage, pointing out that in German the work "Mensch" is used for the nonsex-differentiated being. In order to make the difference more clear in English, however, Fromm decided to capitalize "Man" in order to refer to the nonsex-differentiated usage. See Fromm, the Forward to To Have or To Be?, p. xxiii.

> ... One of the values of living in a transitional age--an "age of therapy"--is that it forces upon us this opportunity, even as we try to resolve our individual problems, to uncover new meaning in perennial man and to see more deeply into those qualities which constitute the human being as human.[10]

Although May has stated that "psychological problems are produced by a three-cornered dialectical interplay of biological and individual and historical-social factors,"[11] such a statement should be seen against the backdrop of his ontology of human nature.[12] It is at this ontological level of inquiry where the universal and the unique in human experience are related to but not reducible to the biological and the historical-social, that May begins his search for the sources of aggression and violence.

May views aggression and violence as the final two phases in a five-phase ontology of power.[13] The first three phases function as a necessary basis for understanding aggression and violence as well as an implicit statement of May's philosophy of human nature, which is elaborated in greater detail in books other than Power and Innocence. Therefore, May's ontology of power will be presented with some additional interpretation concerning his presuppositions about human nature.

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[10]May, Love and Will, pp. 19-20.

[11]Ibid., p. 26.

[12]In one essay May identifies the following as ontological characteristics or basic structures of human existence: centeredness, self-affirmation, participation, awareness, self-consciousness, and anxiety. See May, "Existential Bases of Psychotherapy" in Existential Psychology, pp. 72-83. Yet it is clear from his other writings that this list is not exhaustive, as witness the ontological treatment of care in May, Love and Will, pp. 286-89 or, as we shall soon see more fully, power.

[13]May, Power and Innocence, pp. 40-45 and Part 2 in toto.

Power, May notes, comes from the Latin posse, meaning "to be able."[14] Although human life begins in what seems to be a pretty powerless condition, even the most helpless infant, if he or she is to survive, must be able to exercise at least one kind of power--the power to be:

> This power can be seen in the newborn infant--he can cry and violently wave his arms as signs of the discomfort within himself, demanding that his hunger or other needs be met. Whether we like it or not, power is central in the development in this infant of what we call personality. Every infant becomes an adult in ways that reflect the vicissitudes of power--that is, how he has been able to find his power and use it--indeed, how to be it. It is given in the act of birth, not by the culture as such but by the sheer fact that the infant lives. If the infant is denied the experience that his actions can get a response from those around him--as shown in Rene Spitz's studies of the pitiable infant orphans in Puerto Rico who were given no attention by the nurses or other mother substitutes--the infant withdraws into a corner of his bed, does not talk or develop in other ways, and literally withers away physiologically and psychologically. The ultimate in impotence is death.[15]

May argues that the power to be is neither good nor evil but prior to both. It simply is. Yet it should not be construed as psychologically neutral because "it must lived out or neurosis, psychosis, or violence will result."[16] So the power to be has a dynamic nature which drives for expression in one form or another.

The second phase of May's ontology of power is self-affirmation, which is inherent in the power to be.[17] While self-affirmation grows out of the power to be, it is less of a built-in phenomenon. The need

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[14]Ibid, p. 19.

[15]Ibid., p. 40.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., p. 137.

for self-affirmation "is not inborn but begins to develop in the infant after a few weeks, is not fully developed for several years, and, indeed, continues developing throughout his life."[18] The reason that self-affirmation is a later and much more intricate development in human beings than the power to be is because it is complicated by the more or less coextensive emergence of that pivotal human ontological characteristic, self-consciousness. Thus the capacity for self-affirmation, which May describes variously as the capacity for self-esteem, self-belief, self-worth, significance, recognition, and dignity,[19] cannot be adequately understood without some discussion of self-consciousness.

For May, the existential source of human consciousness lies in the contradiction found at the center of human nature:

> This situation is what people in past ages have had in mind when they spoke of man's being "caught between two worlds." It is in reality not a matter of <u>two</u> worlds, but of two aspects of the same world; and this is precisely what makes the problem so complicated. For man must hold within himself the tension between these two opposite aspects of the world--the unconditioned and the conditioned. Man is not a horizontal creature entirely, nor a vertical creature; he lives both horizontally and vertically.[20]

The problematic character of consciousness, the condition of finite freedom, is the basis of what May calls the "human dilemma," that is, the human capacity to experience oneself "<u>as both subject and object at the same time</u>."[21] The capacity to experience both subject and object permits the peculiarly human phenomena of self-relatedness (<u>Eigenwelt</u>),

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[18]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[19]Ibid., pp. 41 and 137-38.

[20]May, <u>The Art of Counseling</u>, p. 73.

[21]May, <u>Psychology and the Human Dilemma</u>, pp. 74-75.

relating to others (Mitwelt) and relating to the biological world (Umwelt).[22] So the tripartite structure of human existence is made possible by the dialectical nature of human consciousness.

As indicated above, self-consciousness has a developmental basis in young children. To become conscious of oneself necessarily moves one beyond "the innocence of the infant before consciousness of self is born"[23] and it is only at this self-conscious stage that it makes sense to speak of the capacity for self-affirmation, for only then is there a self to affirm.

May summarizes the relationship between self-affirmation and self-consciousness and how it bears on aggression as follows:

> The fact that a human being can be self-conscious vastly increases his need for self-affirmation. We can know we affirm ourselves; or we can experience the lack of self-affirmation and feel shame. In man, nature and being are not identical....
>
> Consciousness is the intervening variable between nature and being. It vastly enlarges the human being's dimensions, it makes possible in him a sense of awareness, responsibility, and a margin of freedom proportionate to this responsibility. The reflective nature of human consciousness accounts for the fact that studies of animal behavior cast only peripheral light on human aggression. The human being can be infinitely more cruel and can destroy for the sadistic pleasure of it--a "privilege" that is denied animals....
>
> ... And this is why man is infinitely more educable than animals and the rest of nature; being less instinctually guided, he can, through his own awareness, influence to some extent his own

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[22]Rollo May, The Discovery of Being (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), chap. 9. The terms Eigenwelt (literally "own world"), Mitwelt (literally "with world") and Umwelt (literally "world around") are Ludwig Binswanger's and are meant to refer to three simultaneous modes of being in the world rather than three different worlds. Of course, other species have relationships in some sense with their cospecifics as well as with other species, but these relationships lack the human dimension of conscious participation and the possibilities for affirmation or rejection. To some degree human beings can consciously choose how to relate to themselves and all others.

[23]May, Man's Search for Himself, p. 119.

> evolution. Therein lies the collective shame and bewilderment of being a man, and therein also lies the greatness of being one.[24]

The third phase, self-assertion, arises "when self-affirmation meets resistance" and it becomes necessary to "give power to our stance, making clear what we are and what we believe; we state it now against opposition."[25] The "stronger" and "more overt" action of self-assertion reminds us that "it is a potentiality in all of us that we react to attack."[26]

The developmental roots of self-assertion can be observed in children in the second to fourth years when they are especially prone to "'test the limits,' see how far they have to go to invite the opposition of parents, cross the parents for the sake of crossing them, say 'no' for the sake of saying 'no.'"[27] But the adult form of self-assertion involves more than saying a simple no. It may involve, broadly speaking, the assertion of the power of being against nonbeing, to follow May's use of Tillich's terms.[28] Forms of nonbeing include "conformism, which destroys uniqueness and originality; hostility, which shrinks courage, generosity and capacity to understand the other; destructiveness; and, eventually, death itself."[29]

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[24] May, Power and Innocence, pp. 141-42.

[25] Ibid., p. 41.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 143.

[28] Ibid., p. 144.

[29] Ibid.

No one person can engage in self-assertion for anyone else--each person must generate it for himself or herself. As May puts it:

> This is why power cannot, strictly speaking, be given to another, for then the recipient still owes it to the giver. It must in some sense be assumed, taken, asserted. For unless it can be held against opposition, it is not power and will never be experienced as real on the part of the recipient.[30]

To experience and utilize the power of self-assertion, then, assumes a great deal of individuation, a strong sense of oneself. In this regard May writes:

> For adults, then, who are engaged in rediscovering themselves, the battle is centrally an internal one. The struggle to become a person takes place within the person himself. None of us can avoid taking a stand against exploitative persons or external forces in the environment, to be sure, but the crucial psychological battle we must wage is against our own dependent needs, and our anxiety and guilt feelings which will arise as we move toward freedom.[31]

We must therefore be relatively successful at waging this internal battle if we hope to wage our external battles by means of mature self-assertion.[32]

The next phase is aggression. In one discussion of the sources of aggression May contends that "when self-assertion is blocked over a period of time--as it was for the Jews for many years, and as it is for every minority people--this stronger form of reaction tends to

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[30] Ibid., p. 145.

[31] May, Man's Search for Himself, pp. 118-19. May emphasizes the struggle against the mother figure as much as the father figure in the struggle to become an individuated person. Hence, his frequent allusions to both Orestes and Oedipus in the same breath. See, for example, Ibid., p. 108.

[32] May, Power and Innocence, pp. 143-44.

develop."[33] Yet aggression need not simply be the upshot of an oppressed group or individual; it may also involve an overt conflict of equals as in the case of "a pitting of interest against interest, and the aggressive act is an endeavor to come to some resolution in this conflict."[34]

In defining the meaning of aggression, May notes that it comes from the "Latin root aggredi, which means 'to go forward, to approach.'"[35] He then goes on to spell out the meaning of aggression in an unusual way:

> Primarily, this means 'to approach someone for counsel or advice.' Second, it means 'to move with intent to hurt.' In other words, aggression in origin is pure conjuncture, a reaching out, a making contact either for friendly affirmation of yourself and another or for the hostile purposes the way a bear hug is part of a pugilist's technique. The opposite of aggression is not loving peace or consideration or friendship, but isolation, the state of no contact at all.[36]

Thus, for May, aggression unquestionably has a positive, constructive meaning as well as the more conventional understanding of aggression as being negative and destructive.[37] A fuller discussion of May's view of the morally ambiguous nature of aggression will be undertaken in chapter five.

In rounding out his discussion of the varieties of aggression, May observes that aggression may be directed not only toward others, but

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[33] Ibid., p. 42.

[34] Ibid., p. 149.

[35] Ibid., p. 150.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., pp. 151-52 and 156-63.

also toward oneself. He uses the illustration of art and the artist for the latter:

> All art must be aggressive in some sense. Artists are not necessarily belligerent people as a group; they are generally the ones who fight their most important battles within themselves and on canvases, typewriters, or some other medium of art.... Robert Motherwell and Franz Kline, as they seek to paint the tension and restlessness of our time, splash a black form across a canvas and leave it hanging in air with the rough edges, as though some great object was bodily torn apart right there on the canvas. The power in conflicting forms is, in these paintings, strained to the breaking point. But how can we, today, create in any authentic sense without such aggression? Norman Mailer's passion is boxing, and Ernest Hemingway not only climbed into the ring whenever he could but described getting ready to write a novel as being similar to getting in shape for a fight.[38]

Of course not all aggression directed against the self issues in great art. In appreciating Freud's insights into the forces of self-destruction, May observes "that much behavior that is called tragic in human experience, much of what Freud meant by the 'death instinct,' is to be understood in the light of this potentiality of man for acting against the self."[39]

The fifth and final stage of May's ontology of power is violence. Violence occurs when the other phases are ineffective or blocked.[40] Although "we often speak of the tendency toward violence as building up inside the individual, ... it is also a response to outside conditions."[41] Yet the nature of a violent response differs markedly from an aggressive one:

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[38]Ibid., pp. 153-54.

[39]May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, p. 199.

[40]May, Power and Innocence, pp. 43-44.

[41]Ibid., p. 44.

> When aggression builds up in us, it feels, at a certain point, as though a switch has been thrown, and we become violent. The aggression is object-related--that is, we know at whom and what we are angry. But in violence, the object-relation disintegrates, and we swing wildly, hitting whoever is within range.[42]

Such violence erupts when a group or individual feels completely violated.[43] When attempts to secure the power necessary for self-esteem, significance, and recognition have not been minimally successful, violence is nearly an inevitability:

> We are going to have upheavals of violence for as long as experiences of significance are denied people. Everyone has a need for some sense of significance; and if we can't make that possible, or even probable[44] in our society, then it will be obtained in destructive ways.

May identifies five varieties of violence. The first is what he calls "simple violence."[45] May views many student rebellions as exemplifying this kind of violence, which he sees arising from a "general protest against being placed continuously in an impotent situation, and it typically carries highly moral demands."[46]

May refers to the second kind of violence as "calculated violence."[47] This is the sort of violence practiced by some professional revolutionaries as in the case when the "rebellion of French students in Paris was taken over by professional revolutionaries on the second or

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[42] Ibid., p. 183.

[43] Ibid., p. 31.

[44] Ibid., p. 179.

[45] Ibid., p. 186.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

third day, and the leadership, which began with moral demands, changed as the leaders exploited the profound frustration of the students and their energy."[48]

May calls the third form of violence "fomented violence."[49] This type of violence is instigated by extremists of the left or the right. Citing the Nazi Heinrich Himmler as an example, May notes that "modern history is full of illustrations of how treating people like beasts leads them to become beasts in the process."[50]

The fourth kind is "absentee or instrumental violence."[51] This is the sort of violence that nearly everyone partakes of, in so far as we pay taxes which support such military operations as Vietnam, whether or not we support such things morally.[52]

The fifth and last category is what May refers to as "violence from above."[53] This kind of violence generally stems from the government in power and is used to maintain and protect the status quo.[54] He observes that such violence is frequently "more destructive than other violence--partly because the police have clubs and guns, and partly

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid. p. 187.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

because they have a large reservoir of inner resentment on which they can draw in their rage."[55]

May's ontological perspective on human nature leads him to view power as a vital dimension of being human and becoming human. Power is the birthright of every human being, but as it pushes for expression in the developing human being, it becomes mediated through self-consciousness and the structure of human existence. Through these mediating conditions we experience the power to say yes and no, to stand up for ourselves, to reach out to others and the world, or turn against everything and everybody, including ourselves. Every human being needs some sense of significance and if we are unable to affirm and assert our powers in relation to ourselves and others in significant ways we may be driven to aggression, thereby intruding beyond conventional boundaries, or we may explode into violence, resulting in the destruction of any and all boundaries. From this perspective the insignificance of powerlessness appears to be the root of corruption, but May also recognizes that power too can corrupt. To understand the dangers of power gone awry, however, we must venture into the realm of the daimonic, which we will explore next.

## Biology

The biological dimension of human beings has always attracted a good deal of attention from May.[56] Following his own insight into the

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[55]Ibid.

[56]See, for example, chap. 3, "Anxiety Interpreted Biologically" in May, The Meaning of Anxiety.

human dilemma, May looks at the impact of biology on human beings from both subjective and objective viewpoints. In this way May can speak about the physiological basis of aggression and violence in both experiential and conventionally scientific terms.

As an illustration of this dual approach, May uses the example of aggression resulting from a jostling on the subway. First, as an experience:

> If someone suddenly gives me a hard shove on the subway, I 'see red' and have an immediate urge to punch him in return. But I know, when I calm down, that if I make it a practice of punching men on the subway, my early doom is assured.[57]

In this brief description, May has implicitly suggested some experiential correlates to the classical physiological study of the same process:

> Ever since Walter B. Cannon's classical work in the Harvard physiology laboratory, it has been generally agreed that there are three responses of the organism to threat: fight, flight, and delayed response. Cannon demonstrated, for example, that when somebody suddenly shoves me roughly on the subway, adrenalin is poured into my bloodstream, my blood pressure rises to give my muscles more strength, my heartbeat becomes more rapid--all of which prepares me to fight the offending person or to flee out of range. The "flight" is what occurs in anxiety and fear; the "fight" in aggression and violence....
> ...The capacity for delayed response is a gift--or burden--of civilization: we wait to absorb the event into consciousness and then decide what is the best response.[58]

By recognizing that our physiological responses to an aggressive stimulus are generally mediated through our perceptions of the event and our capacity to delay and choose, May steers clear of biological reductionism. Continuing with the subway example May observes:

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[57]May, Power and innocence, p. 182.

[58]Ibid., pp. 183-84.

> How I interpret the situation will determine my readiness to strike back in hostility, making it causa belli, or to simply smile and accept an apology, if one is offered. Interpretation takes in unconscious as well as conscious factors: I give a certain meaning to it; I see the world as being hostile or friendly. Here enters the symbol, the means we have as human beings of uniting conscious and unconscious, historical and present, individual and group.[59]

It is May's emphasis on the symbolic consciousness of human beings that forms the substance of his critique of Lorenz's position.[60] May contends that "the capacity to create and deal with symbols, actually a superb achievement, also accounts for the fact that we are the cruelest species on the planet."[61] It is not simply some biological instinct that impells us to kill, but rather it is "out of allegiance to such symbols as the flag and fatherland; we kill on principle."[62]

May brings his approaches to biology and symbolic consciousness together in order to understand the dynamics of the daimonic. He defines the daimonic as "any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person."[63] Examples of these natural functions include sex and eros, anger and rage, and the craving for power.[64] In this definition May may be close to Freud's understanding of the term. Freud hinted at such an interpretation when he said, commenting on

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[59] Ibid., p. 184.

[60] Ibid., p. 156.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] May, Love and Will, p. 121.

[64] Ibid.

Aristotle's "for Nature is daimonic," that it contains "deep meaning if it be correctly interpreted."[65]

The daimonic (from the Greek word "daimon")[66] should not be confused with its one-sided derivative, demonic, for "the daimonic can be either creative or destructive and is normally both."[67] Thus the daimonic always retains a dual potential:

> The daimonic is the urge in every being to assert itself, perpetuate and increase itself. The daimonic becomes evil when it usurps the total self without regard to the integration of that self, or to the unique forms and desires of others and their need for integration. It then appears as excessive aggression, hostility, cruelty--the things about ourselves which horrify us most, and which we repress whenever we can or, more likely, project on others. But these are the reverse side of the same assertion which empowers our creativity. All life is a flux between these two aspects of the daimonic. We can repress the daimonic, but we cannot avoid the toll of apathy and the tendency toward later explosion which such repression brings in its wake.[68]

While "the daimonic always has its biological base,"[69] it also has a symbolic side when it operates in, through, and between human beings. Human beings can transmute the blindly driven nature of the daimonic when they give it personal form. Art is one method for channeling the daimonic into form, but the most universally shared method is language:

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[65]Ibid., p. 124.

[66]Ibid., p. 334. May says he uses the Greek term rather than the popularized "demonic" or the medieval "daemonic" because the concept is Greek in origin and the Greek meaning included the divine as well as the diabolical.

[67]Ibid., p. 121.

[68]Ibid., p. 122.

[69]Ibid., p. 125.

> Traditionally, the way man has overcome the daimonic is by naming it. In this way the human being forms personal meaning out of what was previously a merely threatening impersonal chaos. We need only recall the crucial importance of knowing the particular name of the demon in order to expel him.[70]

Of course, many contemporary schools of psychotherapy use this same time-honored method of confronting the daimonic by naming it, with their Oedipal complexes, identity-crises, shadows and what have you.[71] By bringing the daimonic into dialogue in this fashion, it becomes possible to understand the healing, constructive use of the symbol, being "that which draws together, ties, integrates the individual in himself and with his group."[72]

But the antonym of the symbolic, May reminds us, is the diabolic, and both are part of the Janus-faced daimonic.[73] The symbolic can be transformed into the diabolic when the daimonic is not experienced in dialogue. Nations at war provide a striking, if tragic, example:

> Unfaced within one's self and one's group, the daimonic is projected on the enemy. It is no longer seen as a nation which has its own security and power needs, but as the Evil One, the personification of the devil; one's own daimonic tendencies are placed on it....
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> The next step in war psychology is that imagination and vision are blocked. There comes out of the capital--of whatever nation--cliche after cliche, each one thinner than its predecessor, which people do not believe on one level but join together in a conspiracy to believe on another. They become rigid in their daimonic obsession. It is impossible for them even to conceive of any solutions....
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> This process makes the daimonic impersonal again. It removes the whole area from our having control over it; the daimonic

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[70] Ibid., p. 166.

[71] Ibid., p. 172.

[72] Ibid., p. 137.

[73] Ibid.

regresses to what it originally was--a blind, unconscious push unintegrated with consciousness.[74]

The daimonic "arises from the ground of being"[75] and is both the power of nature and the power underlying self-becoming. As an impersonal force related to aggression and violence, the daimonic is expressed through the physiological processes and emotions associated with anger and rage. In the grip of such impulses, we seem to be "demon possessed," not quite realizing what we are doing until afterwards. Yet when we direct and channel the daimonic into the realm of personal consciousness and give it form and meaning through symbols and language, it can become a source for creativity, healing, and integration. When we profoundly personalize and therefore "tame" the daimonic, we may appear at peace with ourselves as individuals, as did Socrates and Jesus, but when such individuals follow their "daimon" the daimonic once again emerges in full force, for what is one man's creativity becomes another man's destructiveness.

## Society

The social expression of the daimonic appears in the dialectic between the rebel and civilization. May defines the rebel as "one who opposes authority or retraint: one who breaks with established custom or tradition."[76] The rebel can be described as one who is perpetually

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[74]Ibid., pp. 157-58.

[75]Ibid., p. 123.

[76]May, Power and Innocence, p. 122. May distinguishes between the rebel, who seeks primarily internal change, and the revolutionary, who seeks external change. The revolutionary is like the slave who simply wants to kill and replace his master, but the rebel realizes that both

restless, seeks above all "a change in the attitudes, emotions, and outlook of the people to whom he is devoted," and "rebels for the sake of a vision of life and society which he is convinced is critically important for himself and his fellows."[77] The reception accorded the rebel during his lifetime is often hostility climaxing in death; but later generations may respond very differently:

> Society can tolerate only a certain amount of threat to its mores, laws, and established ways. But if civilization has only its own mores and no input to fertilize its growth--that is, has only its established ways--it stagnates in passivity and apathy. The adaptation that has been worked out is to martyr the rebel during the time in which he lives and then, when he is dead and there is no chance for him to alter his message (it is now established), disinter him, apotheosize him, and finally worship him.[78]

Although the rebel necessarily attacks society and then society inevitably strikes back, they cannot do without each other. Strangely enough, May contends, the rebel and society need each other and, in fact, would not even exist without each other.[79]

As May sees it, civilization begins with rebellion.[80] In the mythical accounts of the Greeks and Hebrews, Prometheus steals fire from the gods and Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. In both cases there is a price to be paid for the rebellion against the gods that initiates civilization: Prometheus is chained to Mount Caucasus

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slave and master are imprisoned by the institution of slavery and so he seeks to break the chains which bind both master and slave to the institution itself. See pp. 221-22.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., p. 224.

[79] Ibid., p. 226.

[80] Ibid., pp. 222-23.

where vultures consume his liver and Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden. The consciousness which sets us free to rebel and create civilization also brings with it the gnawing anxiety and the painful guilt associated with our being part of and yet separate from both the divine and nature.[81]

The rebel is also responsible for those continuing breakthroughs in consciousness and culture which, while they disrupt the ongoing life of civilization in the short run, actually sustain civilization in the long run:

> Jesus' dictum was: 'It was said unto you of old, ... but I say unto you ...' Although Socrates refused to evade the law, he challenged it: 'Men of Athens, I shall obey God rather than you, and so long as I live I shall never cease from the teaching of philosophy.' Both are introductions to frank espousal of rebellious teachings; they are challenges to the structure and stability of the society....
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> ...But as we enlarge and purify our insights (say about justice) and our visions (say of a better world), we also enlarge our symbols of the gods....
>
> ...The highest function of rebellion is rebellion in the name of the "God above God."[82]

The enlarged vision of God revealed by the rebel then sustains the generations until yet another rebellion against God in the name of God occurs.

As society needs the rebel to challenge what is outmoded and overly rigid, so the rebel needs society. The very language, knowledge, perhaps even the style of his rebellion, originally comes from the very culture which the rebel seeks to reform.[83] Without the preexisting

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., pp. 224-25.

[83] Ibid., p. 226.

structure and substance of society, within which the rebel was born and bred, there would be no rebel and nothing to rebel against.

The rebel both creates and destroys civilization and civilization both creates and destroys the rebel. In those comparatively rare moments of history when a given culture's myths and symbols are powerful enough to integrate its participants into a harmonious and healthy whole, the rebel may appear unnecessary. But in a period of radical transition, as May believes our own age is, when myths and symbols no longer empower us with shared meanings and workable values and the fabric of community becomes tattered and torn, then a new version of the timeless dialectic between the rebel and civilization becomes necessary if human community is to survive and emerge once again in some yet unimagined form.

## History

May does not have an all-encompassing and systematic philosophy of aggression in history, but he does have a definite perspective on contemporary life, its modern sources and its ancient parallels. May's historical perspective illuminates, among other things, the interrelationship among power, innocence, aggression, and violence, which we will now consider.

May consistently describes contemporary life as a time of radical transition. In one place he characterizes in this way:

> We live at the end of an era. The age that began with the Renaissance, born out of the twilight of the Middle Ages, is now at a close. The era that emphasized rationalism and individualism is suffering an inner and outer transition; and there are as yet only

dim harbingers, only partly conscious, of what the new age will be.[84]

The last half of the twentieth century is an age of transition for external and internal reasons. Externally, the events of the first half of the twentieth century, with its "two world wars in thirty-five years, economic upheavals and depressions, the eruption of fascist barbarism and the rise of communist totalitarianism, and now not only interminable half-wars but the prospects of cold wars for decades to come while we skate literally on the edge of a Third World War complete with atom bombs,"[85] have undermined the values of individual reason and competition which guided the confident development of modern science and economics.[86] The inability to really believe in the central values which helped create and sustain the modern world due to changing and generally disastrous historical circumstances led to a pervasive internal crisis which appeared in many of May's postwar patients. While this internal crisis was often manifested in May's patients as emptiness, loneliness, passivity, and apathy, its major underlying causes were determined to be anxiety and powerlessness:[87]

> The feeling of emptiness or vacuity which we have observed sociologically and individually should not be taken to mean that people are empty, or without emotional potentiality. A human being is not empty in a static sense, as though he were a storage battery which needs charging. The experience of emptiness, rather, generally comes from people's feeling that they are powerless to do anything effective about their lives or the world they live in. Inner vacuousness is the long-term, accumulated result of a person's

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[84]Ibid., p. 47.

[85]May, Man's Search for Himself, p. 30.

[86]Ibid., pp. 41-49.

[87]Ibid., pp. 13-34.

> particular conviction toward himself, namely his conviction that he cannot act as an entity in directing his own life, or change other people's attitudes toward him, or effectually influence the world around him. Thus he gets the deep sense of despair and futility which so many people in our day have. And soon, since what he wants and what he feels can make no real difference, he gives up wanting and feeling. Apathy and lack of feeling are also defenses against anxiety. When a person continually faces dangers he is powerless to overcome, his final line of defense is at last to avoid even feeling the dangers.[88]

While May believes that emptiness and apathy were the major ways of coping with the feelings of powerlessness evident in his patients of the 1940s and 1950s, during the 1960s and 1970s a new form of adaptation to this same problem took place. Instead of suffering neurotic symptoms as May's postwar patients had done, certain pockets of the so-called counterculture and human potential movements made a joyful virtue out of powerlessness.[89] May calls this way of coping with powerlessness "innocence," or, even more frequently, "pseudoinnocence."[90] The difference between what May refers to as "authentic innocence" and pseudoinnocence is that the former is "the preservation of childlike attitudes into maturity without sacrificing the realism of one's perception of evil," while the later form of innocence encourages a more or less complete denial of those unpretty parts of reality that do not fit into the vision and lifestyle of the

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[88]Ibid., p. 22.

[89]May, Power and Innocence, chap. 2. Although addressing the counterculture and human potential movements appears to be May's main concern, he also includes the so-called "establishment" in his critique, as when he assails the pseudoinnocence of the use of "law and order" rhetoric. See Ibid., pp. 57-59.

[90]Ibid., pp. 48-50.

"innocent."[91] Indeed, May believes such pseudoinnocence can be maintained only by denying history itself:

> To hang on to this picture of innocence, you must deny history. For history is the record, among other things, of man's sins and evils, of wars and confrontations of power, and all the manifestations of man's long struggle toward an enlarged and deepened consciousness. Hence so many of the new generation turn their backs on history as irrelevant; they do not like it, they are not part of it, they insist we are in a brand-new ball game with new rules. And they are completely unaware that this is the ultimate act of hubris.[92]

For May, a historical perspective on innocence shows that it generally does not promote peace but actually may "invite its own murder."[93] He observes that in both ancient and modern cultures it was not the old and experienced adults who were the favored victims of sacrifices, but rather youth and virgins, the quintessence of innocence:

> The seven virgins and youths sent annually from Athens to satisfy the Minotaur in Crete is but one of countless examples. Why do we always sacrifice the innocents? They obviously have a special attraction for the human-flesh-eating creature; it loves the tender, the helpless, and the powerless rather than the experienced. We know that this is true in the fantasies of all of us--the innocent and powerless, the inexperienced, have a special attraction....
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> ... Let no one think that we, in our vaunted modern civilization, have gone 'beyond the primitive human sacrifice.' We do it as well, only not in sevens but by the tens of thousands. And the name of the god to whom we sacrifice them is Moloch.[94]

Innocence invites its own murder because it symbolizes the animal-like condition before the experience of the daimonic, the childish naiveté before we become conscious of how the powers of sexuality

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[91] Ibid., p. 49.

[92] Ibid., p. 56.

[93] Ibid., p. 15.

[94] Ibid., pp. 213-14.

and aggression can work for both good and evil. The innocents, youth, virgins, and even animals, are therefore blank screens for the projection of the guilt and anxiety that accompanies the adult experience of consciousness, the experience of the daimonic. We sacrifice the youth, virgins, animals outside of ourselves, victims of our attempt to rid ourselves of guilt and anxiety through violence, when we cannot or will not confront the daimonic inside of ourselves. The drama of Oedipus and the Sphinx, that mythical beast who hovered outside the city waiting for her sacrifice of human flesh, remains the classical expression of these dynamics:

> Oedipus, the one who forces himself to see it all; and then in an act that dramatizes the eternal conflict, cuts out his eyes, the very organs of sight, the symbol of becoming conscious, of understanding human life and the world.... For the drama of his life says that the only way to deal with the Sphinx is to take her back to her true home within our own psyche, and to face her there--which is to confront guilt and responsibility. The choice is clear: we must pay our human sacrifice to the Sphinx outside the city gates, or we must accept guilt and responsibility as realities within ourselves.[95]

To live in a historical moment when one age is dying and another one is not yet born is to live in an age of anxiety. The myths, symbols, attitudes, and values which effectively oriented and guided the majority of individuals in an earlier time are increasingly becoming confused and unconnected to peoples' lives. As more and more people report feelings of emptiness and apathy, it becomes clear that the anxiety, insignificance, and, ultimately, powerlessness that underlies these feelings is the seedbed for the interplay of innocence and violence in our contemporary culture. For to deny ourselves the power to

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[95]Ibid., pp. 212-13.

confront the anxiety and insignificance which plagues our own age is to ignore the lessons of human history--when the powerful fail to integrate the daimonic, the innocence of the powerless is regularly sacrificed.

For May, aggression takes on destructive dimensions when it is motivated by too little or too much unconscious power. In such cases aggression is outside of conscious integration and regulation and may result in pathological repression (apathy) or pathological expression (destructive violence). However, the healthy and constructive affirmation and assertion of personal power is an equal and opposite human potentiality if there remains a significant possibility for choice and integration. To maintain the human possibility for choice and integration while fully facing the daimonic potential of aggression is what distinguishes May's perspective from that of Carl Rogers', as we will see in more detail in chapter five.

CHAPTER IV

# ERIK ERIKSON'S THEORY OF AGGRESSION

## Biography

Over three decades ago Erik Erikson began to publish in book form a series of groundbreaking contributions to psychoanalytic theory.[1] The pivotal concept to emerge out of these early studies of childhood and society, youth and history, was the notion of "identity," an idea whose time had apparently come. After another decade of demonstrating, among other things, how rich and versatile the concept of identity can be, Erikson was asked by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to recount the formation of his own (increasingly famous) identity.[2] It is by means of Erikson's autobiographical reflections and by reading between the lines of his various books that it is possible to glean some of the ways in which the aggression that he experienced may have contributed to the formulation of his theory.

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[1]See Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950); Young Man Luther (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958); and Identity and the Life Cycle (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).

[2]Erik H. Erikson, "Autobiographical Notes on the Identity Crisis" in Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences vol. 99 (Fall, 1970), pp. 730-59. Revised as "'Identity Crisis' in Autobiographical Perspective" in Life History and the Historical Moment (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975). Also see Robert Coles, Erik H. Erikson: The Growth of His Work (Boston: Little, Brown and Co.), especially chap. 2 and pp. 180-81.

Like Fromm, Erikson was brought up in a devout Jewish family and so was subjected to the same sort of anti-Semitism that was prevalent in the Imperial Germany of the early twentieth century. Unlike Fromm, however, Erikson suffered prejudicial treatment from both sides, because he was of Jewish descent without appearing to be. As Erikson explains it:

> I grew up in Karlsruhe in southern Germany as the son of a pediatrician, Dr. Theodor Homburger, and his wife, Karla, née Abrahamsen, a native of Copenhagen, Denmark. All through my earlier childhood, they kept secret from me the fact that my mother had been married previously; and that I was the son of a Dane who had abandoned her before my birth....
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> ... My stepfather was the only professional man (and a highly respected one) in an intensely Jewish small bourgeois family, while I (coming from a racially mixed Scandinavian background) was blond and blue-eyed and grew flagrantly tall. Before long, then, I was referred to as "goy" [gentile] in my stepfather's temple; while to my schoolmates I was a "Jew."[3]

What is clear from these confusing childhood circumstances is how an older Erikson would be predisposed to recognize the somatic, personal, and social dimensions of an "identity crisis."[4] Furthermore, such circumstances indicate why Erikson would be inclined to study the

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[3]Erikson, Life History and the Historical Moment, p. 27.

[4]Throughout his writings Erikson describes the impossibility of restricting human identity and clinical work to one dimension. As he puts it in his first book: "We are speaking of three processes, the somatic process, the ego process, and the societal process.... As we review each relevant item in a given case, we cannot escape the conviction that the meaning of an item which may be 'located' in one of the three processes is co-determined by its meaning in the other two." Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), pp. 36-37. Hereafter all references will be to the second edition.

relationship between religiously or racially motivated aggression and the formation of identity.[5]

Like May, Erikson studied art as a young man and became something of a wandering artist.[6] His "narcissistic"[7] preoccupation with this pastime along with his youthful faith in a progressive future prevented him from being profoundly disturbed by World War I:

> If this was a "moratorium," it certainly was also a period of total neglect of the military, political, and economic disasters then racking mankind:...
> ... All the warring ideologies of my young years harbored some saving scheme which was to dominate forever after just one more war ...[8]

If World War I had little impact on the young artist, the sea change made necessary by the Nazi era and World War II affected the more mature psychoanalyst very deeply. In addition to investigating the origins of the individual crises of identity observed in the veterans

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[5]In the first case history related in Childhood and Society, Erikson describes the problem of aggression in the life of a young Jewish boy and then comments: "For I believe that this boy's low tolerance for aggression was further lowered by the over-all connotation of violence in his family. Above and beyond individual conflict, the whole milieu of these children of erstwhile fugitives from ghettos and pogroms is pervaded by the problem of the Jew's special fate in the face of anger and violence. It had all started so significantly with a God who was mighty, wrathful, and vindictive, but also sadly agitated, attitudes which he had bequeathed to the successive patriarchs all the way from Moses down to this boy's grandparents. And it all had ended with the chosen but dispersed Jewish people's unarmed helplessness against the surrounding world of always potentially violent Gentiles." Erikson, Childhood and Society, pp. 30-31. Also, in his initial study of black identity, Erikson writes about the problem of "the evil identity of the dirty, anal-sadistic, phallic-rapist 'nigger,'" Ibid., p. 242.

[6]Erikson, Life History and the Historical Moment, p. 28. See May, The Courage to Create, p. 34.

[7]Erikson, Life History and the Historical Moment, p. 28.

[8]Ibid., pp. 28 and 32.

returning home from the war,[9] Erikson felt compelled to research the origins of the collective identity crises occasioned by the Second World War. In order to complete the latter task, it was necessary to study the national identities of the three major powers involved, namely, the United States, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union.[10] What these three countries had in common, different as they may have been (as liberal, fascist, and communist in their respective ideologies), was that they all prided themselves on their revolutionary rise to power. Erikson would trace the ultimate origins of their respective identities to the first revolutionary of the modern world, young man Luther.[11] Indeed, in Erikson's narrative of the origins and evolution of the modern world it is the unresolved legacy of aggression from Luther--a legacy which found its most lethal expression in Hitler--that continues to haunt our world down to the present day.[12]

Yet in spite of Erikson's study of Hitler's childhood and society and their origins in Luther and history, some critics have made the claim, curious to say the least, that Erikson has "evaded" a confrontation with the Jewish component of his identity and its implications.[13]

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[9]Ibid., p. 45.

[10]Erikson, Childhood and Society, chaps. 8, 9, and 10.

[11]Ibid., pp. 352 and 399-402; Erikson, Young Man Luther, pp. 108-9.

[12]See the extraordinarily perceptive essay by Roger A. Johnson in Psychohistory and Religion, pp. 127-61. While I am very much indebted to this essay, I go further than Johnson by not only connecting Hans and Martin Luther to Hitler and Gandhi, but also by connecting the United States and the Soviet Union to the whole Eriksonian narrative of the evolution of human aggression.

[13]See Marshall Berman, The New York Times Book Review, March 30,

While in fairness to these critics I would agree that Erikson has been more reticent than most of us would like concerning the import of his Jewish childhood and his mid-life name change (from Erik Homburger to Erik H. Erikson), nevertheless a consideration of Erikson's total corpus points in my mind to a completely contrary conclusion. I would claim that it is possible, and even plausible, to view Erikson's work as an extended reflection on the origins, nature, and alternatives to the kind of aggression the Nazis directed first and foremost toward the Jews. While fuller supporting evidence for this claim may be found throughout the rest of this chapter, with special reference to the history section, suffice it to state for now that any man who is willing to say, "I know very well that the Nazis would have categorized me as a Jew and eliminated me if they had caught me"[14] and begin his study of Luther and the modern world by remembering "the bleached bones of men of my kind in Europe"[15] is hardly "refusing to confront himself as a Jew."[16]

If such critics find Erikson speaking too much about a universal human identity and too little about a particular Jewish identity, it may be because in the nuclear age we are all Nazi-era Jews. That is to say, we are all potential victims of the totalistic[17] tendency which drove the

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1975, p. 22; ibid., May 4, 1975, pp. 56-58. More or less repeating Berman's claims is Paul Roazen, Erik H. Erikson: The Power and Limits of a Vision (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 95-99.

[14]Kai T. Erikson, ed., In Search of Common Ground: Conversations with Erik H. Erikson and Huey P. Newton (New York: Dell, 1973), p. 50.

[15]Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 10.

[16]Berman, The New York Times Book Review, March 30, 1975, p. 22.

[17]As Erikson puts it one place: "The transitory Nazi identity,

Nazis to conceive and, to a horrifying degree, execute a "solution" which they called "final." Erikson knows as well as anyone that if the Nazi mentality of viewing the Jews as a separate (and quite inferior) species --a pseudospecies[18]--should ever gain equivalent power and influence in a nuclear setting, then we will really discover the meaning of the "final solution" with a technical efficiency surpassing the wildest dreams of the Nazis and our own worst nightmares.[19]

## Human Nature

Although Erikson characteristically pays careful attention to the relative particulars of the cultural configuration and historical background which may shape a given expression of aggression, he recognizes that aggression is a universal human potential that ultimately emerges from conditions which are cross-cultural and trans-historical in nature. The methodological consequence of such a perspective is that Erikson refuses to explain away, for example, Nazi totalitarian-based aggression in terms of some evil flaw peculiar to German culture and history.[20]

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however, based as it was on a totalism marked by the radical exclusion of foreignness and especially Jewishness, failed to integrate the rich identity elements of Germanness, reaching instead for a pseudologic perversion of history." Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), p. 313. The meaning of totalism will be further elaborated on in the society section of this chapter.

[18]This term will be further discussed in the history section of this chapter.

[19]See Erik H. Erikson, "Reflections on Ethos and War" in The Yale Review, Summer, 1983, pp. 481-86. Also see Paul R. Erhlich et al., The Cold and the Dark: The World After Nuclear War (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984).

[20]Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, pp. 74-90.

Instead, he begins "with the assumption that totalitarianism is based on universal human potentialities and is thus related to all aspects of human nature."[21] In this way Erikson helps us to recognize that any group of people may get caught up in a set of dynamics similar to those which entangled the German people during the Third Reich, and therefore such a tragic expression of aggression is not simply part and parcel of "those Germans" but is a perennial possibility for the peoples of any and all nations.

One perspective Erikson typically uses to gain a universal vantage point on human nature is evolution:

> Man is natively endowed only with a patchwork of instinctual drives, which to be sure, owe much of their form and their energy to inherited fragments of instinctive animality, but in the human are never and cannot ever be in themselves adaptive or consummative (or, in brief, "natural"), but are always governed by the complexities of individuation and of cultural form ...
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> ... We are, in Ernst Mayr's terms, the "generalist" animal, set to settle in, to adapt to and to develop cultures in the most varied environments, from the Arctic to the steaming jungle and even to New York.[22]

What distinguishes human beings from animals in an evolutionary perspective is our relative freedom from fixed patterns of instinct and our relative freedom to engage in flexible patterns of psychosocial, ethical, and ritual encounter in the context of a particular cultural adaptation to a given environment.[23]

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[21] Ibid., p. 77.

[22] Erik H. Erikson, "Psychoanalysis and Ongoing History: Problems of Identity, Hatred, and Nonviolence" in Sigmund Freud, ed., Paul Roazen (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 37.

[23] Erikson's latest and fullest statement (and chart) of psychosocial, ethical, and ritual possibilities can be found in Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, especially pp. 32-33.

Since human beings are far less "preadapted" to their environments at birth than the rest of the animal kingdom, we must learn to unfold and, to some extent, direct our biological, psychosocial, ethical, and ritual possibilities through a process of human development.[24] Indeed, and this is Erikson's second and complementary perspective on universal human nature, all human beings have a biologically rooted yet distinctly human life cycle. Thus, evolution has "freed" the human species to shape its cultural adaptation and individual development and while this has permitted us to adapt widely and quickly to diverse and changing environments, the process by which we do so also limits and frequently undoes our species in equally impressive fashion.

Beyond what is biologically given at birth, our adaptive flexibility is both greatly enhanced and greatly limited by the fact that all human beings begin their life cycles as children. The considerable number of years between our birth and our maturity lends itself to extended and complex cultural transmission through learning and the development of numerous individual capacities. But this also leaves the immature human being vulnerable to more mishandling and misdirection than is the case in other species. As Erikson characterizes it:

> The contribution of man's extended childhood to the development of his technical capabilities and to his capacity for sympathy and faith is well known, but often too exclusively known. For it is becoming

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[24]This is not to say that the human species is not preadapted to its environment at all. Erikson likes to refer to the work of Heinz Hartmann on this issue: "His statement that the human infant is born preadapted to an 'average expectable environment' implies a more truly biological as well as an inescapably societal formulation. For not even the very best of mother-child relationships could, by themselves, account for that subtle and complex 'milieu' which permits a human baby not only to survive but also to develop his potentialities for growth and uniqueness." Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 222.

> equally clear that the polarity adult-child is the first in the inventory of existential oppositions (male-female being the second) which makes man exploitable and induces him to exploit. The child's inborn proclivity for feeling powerless, deserted, ashamed, and guilty in relation to those on whom he depends is systematically utilized for his training, often to the point of exploitation. The result is that even rational man remains irrationally preoccupied with anxieties and suspicions which center on such questions as who is bigger or better and who can do what to whom. It is therefore necessary to acquire deeper insight into the earliest consequences of the psychological exploitation of childhood. By this I mean the misuse of a divided function in such a way that one of the partners is impaired in the development of his potentialities, with the result that impotent rage is stored up where energy should be free for productive development.[25]

Yet Erikson does not succumb to psychoanalytic reductionism in the form of explaining away all adult aggression in terms of its childhood antecedents. Beyond his deep appreciation for the presence of childhood in adulthood, Erikson treats adulthood on its own terms--and what comes in-between, namely, adolescence. Erikson is able to view the human life cycle as a series of relatively discrete (though always inter-related) stages because of his master concept of epigenesis, the guiding principle of Erikson's whole developmental scheme:

> Whenever we try to understand growth, it is well to remember the epigenetic principle which is derived from the growth of organisms in utero. Somewhat generalized, this principle states that anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole. This, obviously, is true for fetal development where each part of the organism has its critical time of ascendance or danger of defect. At birth the baby leaves the chemical exchange of the womb for the social exchange

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[25] Ibid., pp. 75-76. It is in this context that Erikson reformulates the frustration-aggression school of thought: "Here we must qualify, at least in its simplified interpretation, the statement which summarized the first impact of psychoanalytic enlightenment on this country--namely, that frustration leads to aggression. Man, in the service of a faith, can stand meaningful frustration. Rather, we should say that exploitation leads to fruitless rage: exploitation being the total social context which gives a specific frustration its devastating power." Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 418.

> system of his society, where his gradually increasing capacities meet the opportunities and limitations of his culture.... Personality, therefore, can be said to develop according to steps predetermined in the human organism's readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with a widening radius of significant individuals and institutions.[26]

Thus, the effect of the epigenetic principle is to put childhood and adulthood on equal footing as human beings develop biologically, psychologically, and socially in the context of the cycle of generations (history).[27]

However much Erikson goes beyond traditional psychoanalytic thinking by respecting adulthood in its own right, he keeps Freud's dynamic imagery of two opposing forces[28] battling for supremacy while enlarging developmental theory to include psychosocial, ethical, and ritual components.[29] To illustrate the implications of this theoretical

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[26]Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, pp. 92-93. Browning has fully recognized the degree to which the epigenetic principle alters traditional psychoanalytic thinking about the developmental relationship between childhood and adulthood: "Erikson's epigenetic principle calls for a reverse of the logic of psychoanalytic thinking. The end of life must not be understood in terms of the beginning; rather, the beginning must be understood in terms of what it contributes to and how it is directed by those emerging potentials which arise late in development but which are just as fundamental to life as that which appears much earlier." Browning, Generative Man, p. 181.

[27]See Erikson, "Human Strength and the Cycle of Generations" in Insight and Responsibility, chap. 4.

[28]The Jungian analyst Joseph Wheelwright, whom Erikson worked with while Childhood and Society was in the process of being written, has suggested that Hegel also was an influence on Erikson's adoption of a dialectical method of thinking. See Newsweek, Dec. 21, 1970, p. 88.

[29]Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, pp. 32-33. Erikson differs from Freud, however, in that he understands the "negative" side of a developmental crisis to have possible adaptive significance (e.g. it is as important to learn who and when not to trust as it is to trust, whereas in the case of the later Freud it is hard to see how the death instinct could serve any adaptive function. Also, in an effort to

extention for the problem of aggression in adulthood, consider Erikson's concept of "rejectivity." By rejectivity, Erikson means to refer to "the unwillingness to include specified persons or groups in one's generative concern--one does not care to care for them."[30] Thus, rejectivity is a basic antipathy at the adult stage of the human life cycle, the counterpart of care, the stage-appropriate basic strength. While some rejectivity in some form and degree is undoubtedly adaptive, in its more pathological forms it can endanger psychosocial development and, most dangerous of all, group or even species survival:

> Rejectivity, furthermore, periodically finds a vast area for collective manifestation: such as in wars against (often neighboring) collectivities who once more appear to be a threat to one's own kind, and this not only by dint of conflicting territorialities or markets, but simply by seeming dangerously different--and who, of course are apt to reciprocate this sentiment. The conflict between generativity and rejection, thus, is the strongest ontogenetic anchor of the universal human propensity that I have called pseudospeciation.... that is, the conviction (and the impulses and actions based on it) that another type or group of persons are by nature, history, or divine will, a species different from one's own--and dangerous to mankind itself. It is a prime human dilemma that pseudospeciation can bring out the truest and the best in loyalty and heroism, cooperation and inventiveness, while commiting different human kinds to a history of reciprocal enmity and destruction.[31]

As is often the case with Erikson, one thing inevitably leads to another, and so in considering rejectivity as a basic antipathy in an individual's development, we are led to ponder the impact of rejectivity on the

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circumvent moralistic connotations and confusions which may have been attached to his earlier "schedule of virtues" (and vices) terminology, Erikson has most recently resorted to the terminology of "basic strengths" and "basic antipathies" in his attempt to describe the ethical component of human development.

[30] Ibid., p. 68.

[31] Ibid., p. 69.

collective as well. Such considerations open the door to even larger issues concerning the historical outcome of aggression in the present--issues which will be dealt with at the end of this chapter. For now, let us return to the beginning, and that means beginning with Erikson's first order of human life--biology.

Erikson's perspective on human nature is an evolutionary and developmental one which manages to fully incorporate origins without being originological.[32] By means of the epigenetic principle, Erikson can trace the continuities of some forms of aggression from their origins in childhood to their expressions in adulthood and, at the same time, acknowledge the specific forms of aggression which emerge in their entirety only in adulthood. In addition to the possibility that some forms of aggression may appear or be most prevalent during certain stages of the life cycle, they may also be most closely associated with a certain dimension of development--psychosocial, ethical, or ritual. In good Freudian fashion, Erikson conceives of each of these dimensions as consisting of two possibilities in dialectical tension with each other, with aggression being an adaptive or nonadaptive outcome of these developmental dynamics. But before these other dimensions can be considered more fully, we must begin with the Freudian foundation, the psychosexual.

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[32]Originology is a term coined by Erikson. It means "a habit of thinking which reduces every situation to an analogy with an earlier one, and most of all to that earliest, simplest, and most infantile precursor which is assumed to be its 'origin.'" Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 18. Failure to understand the difference between originology, which does tend to reduce everything adult to its childhood "cause," and overdeterminism, which assumes multiple causes and discrete levels, has led some of our church historians to misunderstand what Erikson was up to when he interpreted young man Luther's motives and behavior in continuity with his childhood experiences. See Johnson, Psychohistory and Religion, pp.

## Biology

Erikson is faithful to the classical Freudian style of emphasizing the importance of biology in his descriptions of human ontogeny and phylogeny, but in substance he has made significant theoretical revisions of infantile sexuality in particular and instinct in general. Such revisions are consistent with Erikson's recognition that psychoanalytic knowledge (and knowledge of other kinds, of course) is historically relative and that new observations within psychoanalysis and other fields require that the theory be revised accordingly.[33] As Erikson replied when asked if Freud would have reformulated his libido theory according to recent developments in the biological sciences, "I'm reasonably convinced of that."[34] At any rate, Erikson has drawn on his own developmental and clinical observations to revise the early Freud's theory of infantile sexuality and on the ethological observations (not the theory) of Lorenz to revise the later Freud's theory of an aggressive instinct. We will deal with each of these in turn as they relate to aggression.

In his revision of the Freudian theory of infantile sexuality, Erikson begins with the classical conception of childhood as being divided into stages on the basis of sequential libidinal concentration in the bodily orifices or "erogenous zones"--oral, anal, and phallic.[35]

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[33]Erikson, "Historical Relativity in the Psychoanalytic Method" in The Life Cycle Completed, pp. 94-103.

[34]Richard Evans, Dialogue with Erik Erikson (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), p. 85.

[35]Erikson, Childhood and Society, pp. 59-62 and 273. Erikson

Although Erikson keeps the Freudian terminology of zones, he defines them differently and then goes considerably beyond the Freudian scheme, as the Erikson scholar Nelson Thayer has pointed out:

> Erikson retains the notion of zones, but rather than seeing them as sources of energy, he sees them as focal points of experience, each having characteristic modes of action by means of which the infant experiences his environment. Thus, the earliest system of experiencing is the oral-sensory-kinesthetic system and its primary modes of interaction are receiving and taking in. The modes of interaction appropriate to the stage of prominence of the anal-musculature system are elimination and retention, and for the phallic-loco-motor system, intrusion and introception. While these modes are characteristic of the particular zone, they give rise to analogous modalities of social interaction, modalities of experiencing the world. By stages, the modalities are receiving and taking, holding on and letting go, intrusion and introception. While all these modes and modalitites are present in each stage, each stage has its focal modalities of interaction with the world.[36]

By giving this existential and social twist to Freudian theory, Erikson has shifted its emphasis from libidinal energy to physical actions and social interactions.

This revision of psychosexual theory also entails a new view of the energetics of aggression. Erikson suggests that "organ modes are ... patterns of going at things, modes of approach, modes of seeking relationships: this is what ad-gression means before it becomes aggression."[37] Or, as Erikson puts it more generally, "the very essence of

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believes this Freudian theory of psychosexual development is implicity based on what he has explicitly called the epigenetic principle: "I think that the Freudian laws of psychosexual growth in infancy can best be understood through an analogy with physiological development in utereo." Ibid., p. 65.

[36]Nelson S. T. Thayer, "The Place of Religion in Erik H. Erikson's Theory of Human Development," unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1973, pp. 66-67.

[37]Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 69.

pregenitality seems to be the absorption of libidinal interests in the early encounter of the maturing organism with a particular style of child care and in the transformation of its inborn forms of approach (aggression) into the social modalities of the culture."[38] Thus, the energetics of ad-gression can provide a dynamic basis for the physically maturing body to engage in developmentally appropriate relationships.

The developmentally progressive thrust of ad-gression, however, can easily slide into clinically problematic aggression in the ever ambiguous processes of the human life cycle. To illustrate from the first stage, Erikson describes some of the psychosocial consequences which may follow from the onset of teething:

> Our clinical work indicates that this point in the individual's early history is the origin of an evil dividedness, where anger against the growing teeth, and anger against the withdrawing mother, and anger with one's impotent anger all lead to a forceful experience of sadistic and masochistic confusion leaving the general impression that once upon a time one destroyed one's unity with a maternal matrix.[39]

This, then, is the ontogenetic version of the expulsion from Eden, whereby good and evil have come into existence, pain can no longer be so easily ameliorated, and the experience of separation between the self and the enveloping presence is a heightened reality.[40] While undoubtedly the

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[38]Ibid., p. 94.

[39]Ibid., p. 79.

[40]Nicholas Piediscalzi has observed that withdrawal of the breast (due to the infant's biting) could hardly be the source of a sense of evil in babies that are bottle fed. While this point may be well taken, J. Eugene Wright, Jr. points out that the baby experiences pain whether or not this involves rejection from the mothering person. See J. Eugene Wright, Jr., Erikson: Identity and Religion (New York: Seabury Press, 1982).

onset of teething is not the first time the child feels anger, pain, and rejection,[41] it is clear that feelings related to aggression occur early in the life cycle and such experiences may be the ontogenetic roots for such adult expressions of aggression as "biting" criticism.

The second stage, the Freudian anal stage, also has its physical and psychosocial possibilities for the clinically problematic expression of aggression as when, for example, children engage in "the use of feces as ammunition to be shot at people."[42] Such hostile behavior "may take the form of aggressive evacuation or deposition of fecal matter."[43] And, to follow through with future possibilities, such behavior may "survive in adults as the tendency to hurl profanities referring to fecal matter."[44]

The third stage, the Freudian phallic stage, is first of all characterized by what Erikson calls the "intrusive mode." This mode includes "the intrusion into other bodies by physical attack: the intrusion into other people's ears and minds by aggressive talking, the intrusion into space by vigorous locomotion, the intrusion into the unknown by consuming curiosity."[45] Although Erikson sees important sex-related differences in the various modes associated with this stage,

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[41] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

[42] Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 84.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 87.

he does maintain that females as well as males can act in terms of the intrusive mode.[46]

The energies of ad-gression then, are expressed through the developing organ modes and social modalities of the growing child. As growth unfolds there is the danger that these stage-specific actions and interactions may cross a certain threshold and take on aggressive patterns familiar to clinicians treating children and, when these patterns continue or reemerge later, adults. Yet the nature of the biological forces which drive ad-gression and aggression remain unclear in this early work.[47] It was only after Erikson had appropriated the ethological work of Lorenz that he was able to give a fuller account of the ambiguity inherent in the biological basis of such phenomena and its implications for the health and pathology of human beings.

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[46]Ibid., p. 88. Kate Millett has sharply criticized Erikson's sex-differentiated modes and other sex-related attributions. However, they are not as rigid and biologically determined as Millett assumes and there is no better evidence that adult women can be intrusive than Millett's essay and adult men inclusive than Erikson's reply. See Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 210-20; and Erikson, "Once More the Inner Space" in Life History and the Historical Moment, pp. 225-47.

[47]Although Erikson writes, with reference to Hartmann et al.: "Child training utilizes the vague instinctual (sexual and aggressive) forces which energize instinctive patterns and which in man, just because of his minimal instinctive equipment, are highly mobile and extraordinarily plastic," he follows it up with the sentence: "Here we merely wish to gain an initial understanding of the timetable and systematic relationship of the organ modes of pregenitality which establish the basic orientation that an organism or its parts can have to another organism and its parts and to the world of things." Erikson, Childhood and Society, pp. 95-96. After his study of Lorenz, Erikson will state in very specific terms the connection of aggression with the instinctive and instinctual as well as the healthy and pathological in humans.

Well before Lorenz published his observations on the aggressive behavior of wolves, Freud took a long and hard look at the human inclination for destructive aggression and reaffirmed the age-old dictum that "man is a wolf to man."[48] Since Freud's time the researches of ethology have shown that this dictum is an insult to the wolves. As Erikson points out:

> Wolves, Dante's bestia senza pace, are, in fact, capable of devoted friendships among themselves. When two wolves happen to get into a fight, there comes a moment when the one that is weakening first bares his unprotected side to his opponent who, in turn, is instinctively inhibited from taking advantage of this now nonviolent situation.[49]

However common it is for those influenced by popularized Darwinism[50] to attribute human aggression to the "animal in us," observation of aggressive animal behavior in the wild[51] just does not account for the kind of violent and destructive aggression "characterized by irrational rage,

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[48]See Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 424.

[49]Erikson, "Psychoanalysis and Ongoing History" in Sigmund Freud, pp. 34-35.

[50]See Floyd Matson's summary of the degree to which Darwin himself constructed an image of nature "red in tooth and claw" not so much based on empirical observation but due to the influence of such social thinkers as Thomas Malthus and Herbert Spencer and the surrounding society of laissez-faire capitalism, which sported a marketplace "red in tooth and claw." Floyd W. Matson, The Idea of Man (New York: Dell, 1976), chap. 1. Also see Roger A. Johnson on the degree to which Freud and Nietzsche derived their images of human aggression from the reigning popularized Darwinism. Roger A. Johnson, "Instinct and Ideology: Psychological and Sociological Perspectives on Conflict," unpublished paper, Wellesley College, 1982, pp. 5-10.

[51]As Erikson notes in regard to predatory aggression, "A hungry lion when ready for the kill (and he only kills when hungry) shows no sign of anger or rage: he is doing his job. Mutual extermination is not in nature's book: wolves on the chase do not decimate healthy herds but pick out the stragglers who fall behind." Erikson, "Psychoanalysis and Ongoing History" in Sigmund Freud, p. 34.

wild riot or systematic extermination ."[52] Such expressions of violence and destruction are, unfortunately, not attributable to the "lower orders" but rather are quintessentially human.

Yet for all of Erikson's appeals to Lorenz's observations as evidence that we should reject the popularized Darwinist and Freudian explanations of the "animalistic" origins of human aggression, he does not uncritically accept Lorenz's theory. While Erikson is not about to jettison instinct theory altogether, there is something "incomplete" about "Lorenz's reapplication of instinct theories to humanity."[53]

What both Freud and Lorenz lack is a clear distinction between two different kinds of instinct:

> There is something instinctive and something instinctual about aggression, but one would hesitate to call aggression an "instinct." If one abandons the term altogether, however, one neglects the energetic and the driven aspect of man's behavior. Here is the crux of the matter: Freud's Trieb is something between the English "drive" and "instinct." In comparing the statements of animal psychologists with those of psychoanalysts, it is always useful to ask whether "instinct" is meant to convey something instinctive (an inborn pattern of adaptive competence), or something instinctual (a quantity of drive or drivenness, whether adaptive or not).[54]

This distinction permits Erikson to interpret much peculiarly human aggression as deriving from instinctual motivations.[55]

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p. 36. By "reapplication" Erikson means that, in his view, Lorenz has applied the (human) model of a Freudian instinct (derived from sexuality) to animals and then reapplied the "animal" instinct to humans. See Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 429.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Thus, says Erikson, "Freud could have meant to blame only an 'instinctual' craving (even if he is translated as having blamed an 'instinctive' one) for man's pleasure in torturing and killing an enemy." Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 429.

If this distinction has some measure of validity, then "the rift between the animal's adaptive competence and man's florid and paradoxical drive-equipment" constitutes "one prime dividing line between animal-in-nature and man-in-culture."[56] While it is the function of a healthy culture to channel and contain human energies in adaptive and reasonable "patterns of mutuality, reliability, and competence,"[57] human "instinctual forces are never completely bound in adaptive or reasonable patterns; some are repressed, displaced, perverted, and often return from repression to arouse strictly human kinds of anxiety and rage."[58]

In contrast to the kinds of human aggression which are driven by our "wayward instinctuality," almost all animal aggression under natural and normal conditions is characterized by built-in limits which minimize the destructive consequences of aggressive interaction. By means of their instinctive patterns, "animals are equipped with a complex array of inhibitions, submissive gestures, unambiguous displays of threat, appeasement, and pacifying rituals which prevent an attack from leading to injury or death of the other."[59] Yet a recognition of species-preserving limits to aggression in the animal world does not lead Erikson to an overly romantic view that aggression is not part and parcel of life in nature. Thus, he concludes that "to aggress in the sense of ad-gredere

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[56]Erikson, "Psychoanalysis and Ongoing History" in Sigmund Freud, p. 37.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 428. In another context Erikson calls this our "wayward instinctuality." See Erikson, Life History and the Historical Moment, p. 147.

[59]Johnson, "Instinct and Ideology," p. 11.

and to defend in that of de-fence must be instinctive in any creature that occupies or moves in space in unison with his own kind and in both symbiotic and antagonistic relation to other kinds."[60]

Erikson's favorite illustration of the normative reliance in the animal kingdom on aggressive but nonviolent forms of interaction, which clearly shows the species-preservative function of most animal aggression, is the antler tournament among the Damstags. Erikson calls this pattern of interaction instinctive pacific behavior:

> The tournament begins with a parade à deux: the stags trot alongside one another, whipping their antlers up and down. Then, suddenly, they stop in their tracks as if on command, swerve toward each other at a right angle, lower their heads until the antlers almost reach the ground, and crack them against each other. If it should happen that one of the combatants swerves earlier than the other, thus endangering the completely unprotected flank of his rival with the powerful swing of his sharp and heavy equipment, he instantly puts a brake on his premature turn, accelerates his trot, and continues the parallel parade. When both are ready, however, there ensues a full mutual confrontation and a powerful but harmless wrestling. The victor is the one who can hold out the longest, while the loser concedes the tournament by a ritualized disengagement which normally stops the attack of the victor. Lorenz suggests that there are untold numbers of analogous rituals of pacification among the higher animals; but he also points out (most importantly for us) that de-ritualization at any point results in violence to the death. Skeletons of stags whose antlers are entwined in death have been found; but they are victims of an instinctive ritual that failed.[61]

By introducing the notion of an instinctive ritual in relation to aggression, Erikson is once again describing a form of animal interaction which has both continuities and discontinuities with human behavior.

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[60] Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 425.

[61] Ibid., pp. 425-26. The same species-preserving principle applies to both intra-specific aggression (aggression between animals of the same species) and predatory aggression, as we noted earlier in relation to wolves attacking stragglers rather than decimating the whole herd in species-destructive fashion.

Although the term "ritualization" was coined by the biologist Julian Huxley to describe instinctive animal interaction,[62] Erikson tends to emphasize the psychosocial rather than the instinctive dimension of ritualization in describing human behavior. Therefore we will consider ritualizations and their counterparts, ritualisms, under the category of society.

To Erikson, the biological basis for human aggression is twofold: instinctive and instinctual. The instinctive basis for aggression is an evolutionarily grounded, species-preserving pattern we share with other animals. Aggression arising from such a pattern is characteristically delimited in its means and defined in its ends. However, human beings are distinguished by their capacity for instinctually-based aggression which is exemplified by all the irrationally violent and uncontrolled destructive aggression which we often attribute to "wild beasts." However, because human instincts are largely channeled and completed by cultural forms and individual development, the category of instinct only begins to describe the dynamics of aggression in Eriksonian theory. For a fuller description, it is necessary to examine aggression and ritual in human society.

## Society

Erikson first applied the term "ritualization" to human interaction at a symposium in 1965 which included Huxley and Lorenz.[63] As he

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[62]Erik H. Erikson, Toys and Reasons: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), pp. 78-79.

[63]See Erik H. Erikson, "Ontogeny of Ritualization in Man" in Philosophical Transactions of The Royal Society of London, Ser. B, 251

later characterized their respective contributions to the meaning of the term:

> Julian Huxley, the chairman of that symposium, had years ago described as ritualization in animals such instinctive performances as the exuberant greeting ceremonials of bird couples, who, after a lengthy separation, must reassure each other that they not only belong to the same species but also to the same nest. This is a "bonding" procedure which, Huxley suggested, functions so as to exclude ambiguity and to facilitate unimpaired instinctive interplay. Lorenz, in turn, concentrated on the ritualizations by which some animals of the same species given to fighting matches make peace before they seriously harm each other. It was my task to point to the ontogeny of analogous phenomena in man. But with us, so I suggested, ritualization also has the burden of overcoming ambivalence in situations which have strong instinctual components (that is, drives not limited to "natural" survival), as is true for all important encounters in man's life. Thus the ontologically earliest ritualizations in man, the greeting of mother and baby adds to the minimum facial stimulation required to attract a baby's fascination (and eventually his smile) such motions, sounds, words, and smells as are characteristic of the culture, the class, and the family, as well as the mothering person.[64]

So Erikson understands ritualization to be a phenomenon which "furthers and guides, from the beginning of existence, that stage-wise instinctual investment in the social process that must do for human adaptation what the instinctive fit into a section of nature will do for an animal species."[65] It is through this process that human beings become "speciated," that is, take on and participate in a particular vision of

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(1966): 337-49.

[64]Erik H. Erikson, "Play and Actuality," in Play and Development, ed., Maria W. Piers (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), pp. 140-41.

[65]Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, p. 43.

human existence.[66] The participants themselves would most likely express ritualization as, simply, "the way we do things."[67]

Since all versions of human existence must contend with what may appear to be the irreconcilable polarities intrinsic to existence as such, it is the function of ritualization to reconcile the irreconcilable through both grand rituals and the less grand, but no less important, rituals of everyday life. Among the polarities which ritualization attempts to cope with are the following: instinct and humanity, children and adults, male and female, the individual and the community, the symbolic and the practical, the familiar and the surprising, and the formal and the playful.[68] Because vital and life-enhancing ritualization requires a delicate balance of all the polarities as we negotiate our path through human existence, it is easy to imagine how the dance of life might fall out of rhythm and become an injurious stumbling or, at its most pathological extreme, a march of death. Indeed, Erikson has tried to account for the degeneration and disintegration of ritualization with the terms "pseudo-ritualization" or "ritualism."[69]

Erikson has classified a whole gamut of ritualizations and their corresponding ritualisms according to the stages of his life cycle theory. How aggression operates through ritualization at the human level will be elaborated on in more detail in the next section with reference

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[66]Erikson, Toys and Reasons, p. 79.

[67]Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, p. 43.

[68]See Browning's discussion of "creative ritualization" in Browning, Generative Man, pp. 201-7.

[69]Erikson, Toys and Reasons, p. 90.

to Gandhi. In what immediately follows we will see how Erikson's theory of ritualism makes it possible to suggest how the ritualisms of childhood and adolescence may have contributed to the adulthood of that paradigm of twentieth century destructive aggression, Adolph Hitler.

The first stage of the life cycle is subject to the ritualism which Erikson calls "idolism." Idolism distorts the "aura of hallowed presence" which pervades those vital interchanges of face-to-face recognition whereby the other (from the primal other to the Ultimate Other) helps create and then periodically reaffirms the sense of "I."[70] Instead of a relationship in which the "I" experiences "separateness transcended and yet also a distinctiveness confirmed,"[71] the paradox breaks down and what was adoration for the other becomes addictive adulation, thus destroying the distinctiveness of the "I" in relation to the primal other or even the integrity of the "I" in relation to the Ultimate Other.[72]

The second stage is subject to the ritualism of "legalism." Legalism "is expressed in the vain display of righteousness or empty contrition, or in a moralistic insistence on exposing and isolating the culprit whether or not this will be good for him or anyone else."[73] Thus, legalism is descriptive of those obsessive and compulsive needs to distinguish between good and bad in a way which is not so much an

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[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid., pp. 89-90. See also Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, pp. 45-46.

[72]Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, pp. 45-46. See also Donald Capps, Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 29.

[73]Erikson, Toys and Reasons, p. 97.

expression of fair-minded moral judgment or judicious legal prosecution as much as it is an expression of moralistic sadism and legalistic persecution.

The third stage is subject to the ritualism of "impersonation." At this stage "we experiment with and, in a visionary sense, get ready for a hierarchy of ideal and evil roles."[74] If we fail to find a viable ego-ideal to identify with in a playfully imagined drama, we may opt for assuming "the role of shameless evildoers--as preferable to being either nameless or overly typed"--and then play-act that we really believe in such a role as we go through the motions.

The fourth stage is subject to the ritualism of "formalism." As we are taught to perform the formalities of method, we may lose the human qualities of such education and then the creative sharing of skill can become a mechanical repetition of technique.[75]

Erikson brings all of these ontogenetic elements together in viewing Hitler and the dynamics of Nazism from the perspective of ritualism:

> ...we see in our time totalitarian methods of involving new generations ideologically in staged state rituals combining the numinous (the Leader's face) and the judicial (loud condemnations in unison of the "criminals"), the dramatic (parades, dances, assemblies) and the precise in performance (military precision, mass sports) on a large scale.[76]

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[74]Ibid., p. 101. In another place Erikson refers to this ritualism as "moralism." See Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, p. 48.

[75]Erikson, Toys and Reasons, p. 106.

[76]Ibid., p. 109.

But Erikson's more extensive analysis of Hitler and Nazism was done under the rubric of the ritualism associated with adolescence--totalism. Totalism is a distortion of the human need for wholeness, which first becomes self-conscious and urgent during the adolescent years, when the explosion in sexual maturation, cognitive growth, and social role opportunities are potentially disorienting to the youth who no longer necessarily needs to be childish in these respects but has not yet achieved the relative stability and integration characteristic of (healthy) adulthood.[77] Caught in this biopsychosocial limbo between childhood and adulthood and in existential limbo between allness and nothingness,[78] identity-seeking youth are especially prone to fall for totalism masquerading as wholeness and fanaticism for commitment. As Erikson explains the difference:

> In discussing identity, I have used the terms "wholeness" and "totality." Both mean entireness; yet let me underscore their differences. Wholeness seems to connote an assembly of parts, even quite diversified parts, that enter into fruitful association and organization. This concept is most strikingly expressed in such terms as wholeheartedness, wholemindedness, wholesomeness, and the like. As a Gestalt, then, wholeness emphasizes a sound, organic, progressive mutuality between diversified functions and parts within an entirety, the boundaries of which are open and fluent. Totality, on the contrary, evokes a Gestalt in which an absolute boundary is emphasized: given a certain arbitrary delineation, nothing that belongs inside must be left outside, nothing that must be outside can be tolerated inside...True identity, however, depends on the support which the young individual receives from the collective sense of identity characterizing the social groups significant to him: his class, his nation, his culture. Where historical and technological

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[77] See Erikson, Identify: Youth and Crisis, chap. 6. In this chapter Erikson traces the trials and tribulations of achieving identity in the cases of Hamlet, Freud's patient known as Dora, and contemporary youth.

[78] See Erikson, Young Man Luther, chap. 4. Before he achieved his historically confirmed identity as Luther, young Martin struggled between being somebody and being nobody before the metaphysical mysteries of existence.

> developments severely encroach upon deeply rooted or strongly emerging identities (e.g. agrarian, feudal, patrician) on a large scale, youth feels endangered, individually and collectively, whereupon it becomes ready to support doctrines offering a total immersion in a synthetic identity (extreme nationalism, racism, or class consciousness) and a collective condemnation of a totally stereo-typed enemy of the new identity. The feat of loss of identity which fosters such indoctrination contributes significantly to that mixture of righteousness and criminality which, under totalitarian conditions, becomes available for organized terror and for the establishment of major industries of extermination. Since conditions undermining a sense of identity also fixate older individuals on adolescent alternatives, a great number of adults fall in line or are paralyzed in their resistance.[79]

So it was that the Germans, having had their proud military defeated and then humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles, their once productive economy and technical mastery rendered impotent and their Lebensraum (living space) encircled and "contaminated" by foreigners, "began to listen to Hitler's imagery, which, for the first time in Reichs-German history, gave political expression to the spirit of the German adolescent."[80] What Hitler offered German youth and those youthful in spirit (which included most Germans after having suffered a "widespread traumatic identity loss"),[81] was a new identity amidst the mourning for the past and the threatening confusions of the present. Although Hitler seemed to be a prophet proclaiming a forward-looking ideology which could unite the German people in concerted action "without looking backward,"[82] this "new" identity configuration was, in reality, a thought-circumventing repackaging of the past with a new cover:

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[79]Erikson, Insight and Responsibility, pp. 92-93.

[80]Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 351.

[81]Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, p. 192.

[82]Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 343.

"everything that the world had always criticized as 'German,' the Nazis made to appear positive and pretended that it was what they really wanted to be."[83] Instead of engendering a larger wholeness, Hitler and the Nazis responded to the need to grow beyond the difficulties and humiliations of postwar German in a twisted, destructive, and ultimately self-destructive fashion by marshalling men and machines in a march for an ever expanding Lebensraum--"for today Germany is ours; tomorrow, the whole world."[84]

However, such grandiose, totalistic attempts at expressing wholeness invariably turn out to be counterfeit, because they are purchased at a real price: in this case the elevation of the Nazi "superman" occurred at the cost of depressing the "inferior" Jew and, eventually, nearly everyone else. That Hitler should begin with the Jews, however, bears out the logic of a tragically resolved identity-crisis, as "the Jew seemed to remain himself despite dispersion all over the world, while the German trembled for his identity in his own country."[85] By making the Jews' stable identity consolidation negative and the identity confusion of the Germans positive, Hitler could give an artificial stability to the German identity by rendering the Jewish identity as unstable as possible through systematic means--extermination.

The tragic spectacle of Nazi culture exemplifies, as a worst possible case, the potentially destructive uses of ritualism. By

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[83]Evans, Dialogue with Erik Erikson, p. 66.

[84]Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 343.

[85]Ibid., p. 353.

managing to exploit each ritualism of childhood and adolescence to its own end, the essentially adolescent movement of Nazism could draw on the mystique of the Leader's face, moralistic sadism, a dramatic parody of their own ideals and fears, a mechanized military in technology and performance (Blitzkrieg), and, finally, an identity which could include Germans only when it excluded all Jews. Yet the destructive aggression associated with ritualisms in human society is also, as has been indicated, historical in nature. It is to the historical sources of destructive aggression and to its alternatives that we turn next.

## History

For Erikson, "historical considerations lead back into man's prehistory and evolution."[86] From pre-human evolutionary sources, the human species has inherited the potential for performing instinctively patterned rituals of aggression which are biologically adaptive and species-preserving in nature. Insofar as the human species relies on instinctive patterns for our aggressive behavior, we differ little from the animal kingdom in style and effect, killing only for purposes of immediate survival, with the great preponderance of aggression being ritualized in a manner which minimizes destructive consequences.

As we have seen, however, the dominant influence on human behavior at the level of instinct is not what we share with animals but what we do not share, namely, the disorders of the instinctual. The aggressive energies of animals are contained and directed by their instinctive

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[86]Erik H. Erikson, "Identity: Psychosocial," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, vol. 7 (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 62.

patterns in response to specific conditions but the instinctual aberrations which drive much human aggression can create destructive energies which are free-floating, explosive, and persistent far beyond what is required by the conditions at hand.

Coterminous with the evolution of human instinctuality was the emergence of new adaptive structures which functioned to contain and redirect the potential waywardness of our instincts--in a word, culture. It became characteristic of human beings that much of our aggression was patterned by and through cultural forms as they were experienced in psychosocial encounters. In Erikson's view, most primitive cultures have done this rather successfully, as witness the example of two New Guinea tribes:

> The motion picture Dead Birds shows with great esthetic skill how two tribes discovered only in this century in the New Guinea highlands indulge in regular, ritualized, and dramatized warfare; facing each other across an appointed battlefield in impressive warriors' plumage, advancing boisterously and retreating loudly in alternation. These tribes have many sinister rituals; their blatantly phallic bragging and their mutilation of female fingers can arouse nausea as well as awe. But with all such martial obsession, there is no attempt at annihilation, suppression or enslavement; and while shouted contempt is part of the bragging display, these tribes must have maintained, for decades or for centuries, a convention of warfare, in which the enemy can be trusted to abide by a certain ritualization which sacrifices to the martial ethos only a minimum number of individuals on either side. Here the existence of a cultural arrangement somewhere between the instinctual and the instinctive and somewhere also between tribal self-insistence and an intertribal league may well be assumed.[87]

If we take this example as a representative illustration of primitive aggressive behavior, it is clear that there are continuities between the functions of animal ritualization and primitive custom: both

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[87]Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 429.

serve to contain the aggressive instinct and limit species-destruction. What is not so clear, however, are the discontinuities: animal ritualization comes as a built-in part of any normal member of a given species and is "automatic" in its operation and so it is necessarily species-wide and effective; primitive custom, on the other hand, is only as wide as the tribe or tribes which share those customs and only as effective as the transmission of the tradition can make it. Therefore, when tradition worked best and bound its members tightly to its particular version of tribal custom, then, paradoxically, aggression could function at its worst if and when one tribe encountered another tribe with fundamentally conflicting customs. In other words, when human evolution achieved new adaptive advantages in the shift from the biological to the cultural level, there also came the risk that, species-wide, culture might fail in its capacity to regulate aggression in an adaptive manner. As Erikson depicts the simultaneous origins of the human species and the potential for pseudospeciation:

> One could go far back into prehistory and envisage man, the most naked and least identifiable animal by natural markings, and lacking, for all his self-consciousness, the identity of a species. He could adorn himself flamboyantly with feathers, pelts, and paints, and elevate his own kind into a mythological species, called by whatever word he had for "the people." At its friendliest, "pseudo" means only that something is made to appear to be what it is not; and, indeed, in the name of his pseudo-species man could endow himself and his universe with tools and weapons, roles and rules, with legends, myths, and rituals, which would bind his group together and give to its existence such super-individual significance as inspires loyalty heroism, and poetry. One may assume some tribes and cultures have for long periods peacefully cultivated just such an existence. What renders this "natural" process a potential malignancy of universal dimensions, however, is the fact that in times of threatening change and sudden upheaval the idea of being the foremost species must be reinforced by a fanatic fear and hate of other pseudo-species.[88]

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[88]Ibid., pp. 431-32.

During the same era of prehistory, when the human species was becoming externally differentiated into culturally distinct pseudo-species, the internal life of humankind was undergoing a corresponding process of separation:

> But man's relation to nature, whether he trapped and slaughtered wildlife or bent plant and animal to cultivation and domestication, was always a most complex one; because together with the capacity to invent tools goes that inner split of conscience which must do for man in his cultured and invented world what instinct does for the animal in its ecology. As psychoanalysis has verified, this process has created in man a sense of being uprooted from his own animal nature, and of being abandoned or expelled by his own conscience.[89]

As the external division of one species into potentially warring cultures was taking place, so was the internal division of a once unified world of instinct, thereby creating a potential battlefield in the human psyche.

Following the evolution of primitive custom and tradition into civilized law and morality,[90] history produced a series of religious and political leaders who would "lay down the law." Whether it was the law of Moses or the law of the Roman Empire, the law had the ambiguous effect of creating wider identities (the Jews, the Empire), while at the same time reinforcing the outer split between us and them (Jews-Gentiles, citizens-barbarians) and the inner split between good and bad (conscience-instinct). Thus, the nearly ceaseless succession of wars and other kinds of mass destruction which civilization remorselessly ground out was generated from the "connection between the murderousness with

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[89]Erikson, Insight and Responsibility, pp. 106-7.

[90]For a discussion of the differences between primitive custom and civilized law from an anthropoligist's perspective see Stanley Diamond, In Search of the Primitive (New Brunswick, New Jersey: E. P. Dutton, 1974), chap. 8.

which righteous man attacks his enemy and the cruelty with which moralistic man views himself."[91] Such were the psychohistorical dynamics when Hans Luther brought a son into the world whom he wanted to be, of all things, a man of the law.

The father-son relationship between Hans and Martin Luther is, among other things, a study in microcosm of the macrocosmic dynamics of aggression characteristic of civilization. Hans is indeed the quintessentially divided man of civilization.

> Hans seems to have considered himself the very conception, the Inbegriff, of justice. After all, he did not spare himself, and fought his own nature as ruthlessly as those of his children. But parents are dangerous who thus take revenge on their child for what circumstances and inner compulsion have done to them; who misuse one of the strongest forces in life - true indignation in the service of vital values - to justify their own small selves. Martin, however, seems to have sensed on more than one occasion that the father, behind his disciplined public identity, was possessed by an angry, and often alcoholic, impulsiveness which he loosed against his family (and would dare loose only against his family) under the pretense of being a hard taskmaster and righteous judge.[92]

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[91]Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 234.

[92]Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 66. Erikson's one-sided interpretation of Hans as a brutal father has been taken to task as historically inaccurate and psychologically implausible (given the usual pattern of abused children turning into abusing parents, whereas Martin's tender love and deep care for his children is well documented). See Johnson, Psychology and Religion, chaps. 1-3; Homans, Childhood and Selfhood, chaps. 1-2; Donald Capps, et al., Encounter with Erikson: Historical Interpretation and Religious Biography (University of California: Scholars Press, 1977), chaps. 1-2. While I think these criticisms are valid as far as they go, they do not address the clinical-psychohistorical issue of how Hans subjectively appeared (rather than "objectively" was) to Martin as a child and how the internalization of those perceptions (however "factually" distorted) may have worked themselves out through the course of Luther's life history and, indeed, history itself. In any case the story of Hans and Martin can be viewed as a paradigmatic study of the dynamics of aggression under the conditions of civilization.

Coming to terms with the moralistic brutality Martin experienced as a child became more of a psychological imperative than assuming either of his father's preordained choices for young Martin's private identity (as a married son) and his public identity (as a lawyer). So when the time came for Martin to become what Hans had intended, Martin made a "vow in the thunderstorm," thereby "unconsciously" avoiding both of Hans' identity choices.[93] By vowing to become a monk, Martin could concentrate his attention on the legacy of Hans' private identity which was the primary diving force of his inner life.

In the monastery young Martin turned the legacy of Hans' aggression against himself with the means at hand: confessing for hours at a time, excessive fasting, self-flagellation, etc.[94] Yet none of these means of grace turned means of torture could quell the beast within:

> All of which led to his final totalism, the establishment of God in the role of the dreaded and untrustworthy father. With this the circle closes and the repressed returns in full force; for here God's position corresponds closely to the one occupied by Martin's father at the time when Martin attempted to escape to theology by way of the thunderstorm.... And so, as Martin put it, the praising ended and the blaspheming began.[95]

But in addition to being a deeply troubled young man, Martin was also a potentially a great young man. Under the wise and benevolent guidance of Johann von Staupitz, Luther achieved his advanced degrees in theology and succeeded Staupitz himself as professor of biblical

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[93]Erikson, Young Man Luther, pp. 90-95.

[94]Ibid., pp. 155-56 and 174.

[95]Ibid., pp. 164-65.

theology.[96] It was in his capacity as a professor that Luther summoned the ego strength to turn around the image of the father--on earth and in heaven--from one of righteous wrath to one of merciful grace. And, it was this "tower experience" breakthrough which enabled Luther to anticipate what Freud would later conceptualize as the relative freedom of the ego from the inner tyrannies of conscience and desire.[97]

Luther's mastery of his father's legacy of aggression was brief indeed, however. With the posting of the ninety-five theses and the beginning of the struggle with the Church, Luther found that his temporarily latent aggression became manifest once again, but this time, with his stronger and more developed ego, it would be externally rather than internally directed. In moving the theatrics of his inner battle to the stage of history, Luther could unleash his internalized wrath on the Papacy itself--in the most theologically articulate as well as crudely vulgar language.[98] The frightened little boy was could not talk back at home or in school and grew to maturity in monastic silence now talked back in terms of a theology of the Word.[99]

After Luther took his stand against the Emperor with some of the most audacious language in history, the floodgates opened with a vengeance and an overwhelming torrent of abusive polemic poured forth against a lifelong succession of opponents--Carlstadt, Henry VIII,

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[96]Ibid., pp. 165-69.

[97]Ibid., pp. 216-18.

[98]Ibid., pp. 228-29.

[99]Ibid., p. 230.

Müntzer, the peasants, Erasmus, Zwingli, and the Jews, to name a few. And so, in spite of his positive psychosocial legacies from Staupitz and his mother and his own immense ego strength, Luther could not sustain his momentary mastery of aggression. Indeed, as an aging man Luther suffered from a return of the past: in 1527 he internalized his aggression again in the form of manic-depressive symptoms.[100] Old man Martin could not transcend the legacy of old man Hans.

For the most part, though, Luther's adult aggression was directed outward and this aggression had repercussions far beyond the immediate circle of Luther's psychosocial activities. Erikson understands Luther's aggression to be a key aspect of the ideological movement which issued forth from Luther's identity--a movement that initiated the modern world and is still operative today. The Reformation is "something we have neither completely lived down nor successfully outlived"[101] and it "is continuing in many lands, in the form of manifold revolutions, and in the personalities of protestants of varied vocations."[102]

One of the revolutions ideologically connected with Protestantism is the American:

> They [Americans] were heirs of a reformation, a renaissance, the emergence of nationalism and of revolutionary individualism.... Protestantism, individualism, and the frontier together created an identity of individual initiative which in industrialization found its natural medium.[103]

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[100]Ibid., p. 243.

[101]Ibid., p. 10.

[102]Ibid., p. 266.

[103]Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 399.

Included with the Protestant package of individualism and initiative is, however, the ambiguous aggression of Luther. While the historical manifestation of Luther's aggression began with "Luther's preaching against taxation without representation (i.e. indulgences),"[104] it ended with a vicious attack on a certain pseudospecies with whom Luther did not see eye to eye--the Jews.[105] The American Revolution began in the same way and, after the initial achievement of independence, the founders of the new nation attempted to institutionalize a system that would avoid the same fate. For America began as "a most radical experiment in overcoming the national and religious hates traditionally expressed and renewed in the old world in habitual periodical warfare between close neighbors."[106] The instruments for this experiment were the Constitution, with its ritualized checks and balances, and the ritualized two-party system.[107] So the American Dream seemed at its birth to be "history's most promising attempt at the political containment of what we have described as man's most dangerous evolutionary burden, namely, his pseudo-speciation."[108]

As these dream seeds were being planted, however, so were the seeds for future nightmares:

> Yet from the beginning the dream assigned a pseudo-mythic function to the Indians, who <u>were there</u> in that newly conquered "emptiness"; and it took for granted the segregation of blacks, whose arrival on these

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[104]Erikson, <u>Young Man Luther</u>, p. 198.

[105]Ibid., p. 236.

[106]Erikson, <u>Toys and Reasons</u>, pp. 154-55.

[107]Ibid., p. 155.

[108]Ibid.

> shores was anything but self-chosen: to them, Egypt was here ("let my people go"). And if a "way of life" needs witches on whom to project diabolic intentions, America has had its "real" witches from the beginning ...[109]

The aggression that continually hovered around the edges of the dream would periodically sweep into the center of American life and create waves of violence, particularly at intervals of about a century--the Civil War and the Vietnam era. Thus, the country that began with a vision of freedom through the institutional regulation of aggression was only partly and periodically capable of fulfilling that vision. The regulation of aggression and even the protection of individual rights remain, in Erikson's view, only a partly achieved ideal historically and a considerably endangered ideal altogether in light of recent events:

> But I think that recent developments in our national life such as the sudden shift of attention from military atrocity in foreign lands to political scandal at home, and then the dramatic public display of individuals responsible for or caught in such scandal, should leave no doubt about the psychological relationships I have been able to sketch here: namely, that between the repression of inner conflict in those who overadjust to power, the suppression of adversary opinions, and the ready oppression of foreign people.[110]

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Erikson, Dimensions of a New Identity (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), pp. 110-11. Some of Erikson's critics, notably David Gutmann and Frederick Crews, have complained about Erikson's shift from a predominantly positive and affirmative tone about America in the 1950s to a predominantly negative and critical tone in the 1970s. Somehow they construe this shift as evidence that Erikson is not doing "objective" social science. This criticism, however, overlooks the fact that Erikson never claimed to be doing objective social science and that he believes social analysis and criticism of this kind is especially subject to historical relativity. New events may bring into existence new aspects of a country's identity or they may cast old aspects in a new light. See David Gutmann, "Erik Erikson's America," Commentary, September, 1974, pp. 60-64; Frederick Crews, "American Prophet," The New York Review of Books, Oct. 16, 1975, pp. 9-15.

Even a greater potential threat to the American Dream is our contemporary situation in which "one powerful pseudospecies can save itself from what it considers the malicious intentions of an equally powerful one only by the total annihilation of the whole species."[111] The two powerful pseudospecies to which Erikson is referring are, of course, the United States and the Soviet Union and so it is necessary to consider the aggression of our great adversary and fellow heir to the Reformation.

Like the story of the Luthers and modern Germany, the story of modern Russia begins with paternal abuse:

> Paternal violence ... characterizes Russia's leading families from the beginning of history, and it permeates the literature of the pre-revolutionary epoch. In both it developed to heights of crude violence unknown in comparable regions and periods of history.[112]

This pattern of violence has its roots deep in the past. Over a thousand years ago the original Slavs, whom Erikson characterizes as "peaceful and prolific peasants, hunters and stockade dwellers" asked a Viking named Rurik to protect them against nomadic invaders from the south, thereby giving up their autonomy.[113] By forfeiting their freedom in order to protect themselves from violence from without, the Slavs were unwittingly creating the conditions for violence from within:

> Whatever forced them to surrender their autonomy to those shiningly armored, light-skinned warriors of the north, they received more protection than they had bargained for. The protectors begot sons who wanted to be in on the protection business. "Foreigners" muscled in. Soon, protecting the people against other protectors became an

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[111] Erikson, "Reflections on Ethos and War" in the Yale Review, p. 481.

[112] Erikson, Childhood and Society, p. 372.

[113] Ibid., p. 373.

> established occupation. The first prince initiated the grand-prince system, a king of rank-order of residences for his sons which led to endless feuds over the cities which first emerged: Kiev and Novgorod. Such feuds were repeated over and over in smaller and larger segments of the land, making the people at last wish and pray for the one "strong father," the central authority who would unite the various sons even if he had to murder them all. Thus in early Russian history the stage was set for the interplay of the people who needed guidance and protection against enemies; the oligarchic protectors who became petty tyrants; and the central super-tyrant who was a captive of the oligarchy and a secret redeemer.[114]

And so Russian history unfolded according to this pattern until, centuries after Germany, it reached its protestant crisis. Then it was ready to challenge the central authority of the strong, if violent, father in a revolutionary manner. However, this uprising to grasp a new identity in freedom collapsed into totalism almost before a novel wholeness could be conceived, let alone actualized:

> The Communist Party, in absorbing an emerging protestantism, could not tolerate an important protestant ingredient: sectarianism. To maintain absolute power it felt the need for absolute unity. The party's desperate and finally cruel attempts at warding off sectarian splits are well documented in the minutes of its early conventions, which were characterized by a hair-splitting most reminiscent of ecclesiastic history: the issues were the truth of dialectic history, the infallibility of the Politburo, and the mystic wisdom of the masses. We know how this hair-splitting ended.[115]

The attempted overthrow of the traditionally terrible Czar ended in the enthronement of the most ruthless Czar of all--Joseph Stalin.

As Stalin was turning the new protestant hopes of the revolution into the old Czarist fears, the modern history of aggression was reaching its perverse culmination in the greatest revolutionary reversal of all.

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid., pp. 400-1.

In Germany, the son of yet another alcoholic, brutal father[116] would attempt to make a success out of all the earlier revolutionary failures. In a sense, Hitler was a success in so far as he outdid old man Luther's authoritarianism,[117] the American Revolution's pseudospeciation and the Russian Revolution's totalism. However, by bringing the repeated failures of the protestant revolution to its, shall we say, final failure, Hitler most clearly demonstrated the need for a new approach to the historical problem of aggression which would embody the strengths of the protestant revolution even as it transcended its increasingly tragic shortcomings.

About the same time Hitler was preparing to unleash his lethal aggression on the West, Mohandas Gandhi was preparing to release his healing aggression on the East. Gandhi was raised by his father, Kaba, "who never laid hands on this boy" even when young Gandhi was guilty of theft.[118] Building on this fortunate childhood, Gandhi would reach all the way back to the evolutionary antecedents of history in order to

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[116]Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 105.

[117]Erikson writes: "Luther tried to free individual conscience from totalitarian dogma; he meant to give man credal wholeness, and, alas, inadvertently helped to increase and to refine authoritarianism." Ibid., p. 252. In criticizing Luther's authoritarianism and in that way recognizing him as a precursor of Hitler, Erikson is at one with Erich Fromm. See Fromm, Escape from Freedom, pp. 81-122 and chap. 4. On the other hand, Erikson also recognizes, as we have noted, that in working through his personal neuroses to achieve a degree of freedom for his ego functions, Luther anticipates Freud. Norman O. Brown also views Luther as a precursor to Freud. See Brown, Life Against Death, chap. 14. So, in a sense, Erikson's perspective on Luther is a synthesis of the particular vantage points of Fromm and Brown.

[118]Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 123.

reroot the history of human aggression. From these roots a new method of enacting aggression would flower.

First, Gandhi's method, which he called Satyagraha ("Truth-Force"), utilized the instinctive pattern of pacific ritualization as exemplified by the Damstags. Like such animals, Gandhi sought for an "engagement at close range" which was "among equals."[119] Just as the animals engaged in such ritualized conflict would not take advantage of their opponents' vulnerability or weakness, so Gandhi instructed his followers "to remain so attuned to the opponent's position that he would be ready, on the leader's command, even to come to the opponent's help in any unforeseen situation which might rob him of his freedom to remain a counterplayer on the terms agreed upon."[120] Finally, both the animals and Gandhi structured their conflict by means of a scheduled and reciprocal exchange so that neither side would be thrown off balance or out of step, thereby minimizing the possibility of injury through deritualization.[121]

Second, Gandhi recognized that humans are more than animals and so his method must also draw on human nature as well. At the human level Satyagraha is "an instance of man's capacity to let inspiration, insight, and conviction 'cure' his instinctual complexity and to reinstate on a human level what in the animal is so innocently and yet so fatefully

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[119] Ibid., p 434.

[120] Ibid., p. 416.

[121] Ibid., pp. 414-16.

given."[122] By bringing inspiration, insight, and conviction into play as pacific resources, Satyagraha opens the possibility that the tendency in civilization to create more inclusive identities can be capitalized on without the usual costs:

> He refused, then, to permit the cumulative aggravation of bad conscience, negative identity, and hypocritical moralism which characterizes the division of men into pseudo-species. In fact, he conceded to the [Ahmedabad] mill owners that their errors were based only on a misunderstanding of their and their workers' obligations and functions, and he appealed to their "better selves."[123]

In bringing out the opponent's "latent capacity to trust and love"[124] via the pursuit of truth through non-violence and, if necessary, self-suffering, Gandhi was demonstrating that "only faith gives back to man the dignity of nature."[125]

Third, Gandhi is "the prophet who extends into sociopolitical arenas the strengths of the therapeutic tradition from Luther through Freud while healing the liabilities of that same tradition."[126] After Luther internalized the destructive aggression of his father, he transferred the locus of that aggression from himself to God, then to his various opponents, and finally it came to rest in sanctioned form in the state: "his reformation led to the all-powerful church-state."[127] From there, the American, Russian, and German Revolutions met with

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[122] Ibid., p. 428.

[123] Ibid., p. 434.

[124] Ibid., p. 437.

[125] Ibid., p. 435.

[126] Johnson, Psychohistory and Religion, p. 153.

[127] Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 240.

successively decreasing success in taming Luther's legacy of destructive aggression, culminating with Hitler. During the same modern period, however, Luther's other legacy of ego mastery of aggression was operative to a degree. This movement climaxed with the work of Freud.[128] Gandhi was able to, in effect, take Freud's method of actualizing the strength of the other in a therapeutic relationship out of the clinic and into history:

> Gandhi's and Freud's methods converge more clearly if I repeat: in both encounters only the militant probing of a vital issue by a nonviolent confrontation can bring to light what insight is ready on both sides. Such probing must be decided on only after careful study, but then the developing encounter must be permitted to show, step by step, what the power of truth may reveal and enact. At the end only a development which transforms both partners in such an encounter is truth in action; and such transformation is possible only where man learns to be nonviolent toward himself as well as others. Finally, the truth of Satyagraha and the "reality" of psychoanalysis come somewhat nearer to each other if it is assumed that man's "reality testing" includes an attempt not only to think clearly but also to enter into an optimum of mutual activation with others. But this calls for a combination of clear insight into our central motivations and pervasive faith in the brotherhood of man.[129]

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[128]Erikson writes: "Freud is both a successor to Luther and a contemporary to Gandhi." Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 99.

[129]Ibid., p. 439. Lest this Herculean task of transforming history seem too much for one man, it is necessary "to remember that Gandhi, in Erikson's saga, is not an ordinary man but a homo religiosus, one of those rare agents of the historical drama, who--through a confrontation with their own nothingness and the psychosocial crises of their day--extend the process of psychosocial evolution." Johnson, Psychohistory and Religion, p. 153. While it is obvious that Erikson's respect for Gandhi and his achievement is immense, it should be noted that even he is not above criticism. Erikson devotes a whole chapter to a "personal confrontation" with Gandhi, pointing out to the Mahatma his occasional hypocricies, failures, and limitations. For example, Erikson notes that Gandhi apparently had little understanding of unconscious ambivalences. This lack of insight prevented Gandhi from seeing the subtle sadism behind the unilateral termination of sexual relations with his wife for the sake of ascetic purity or the moralistic cruelty in cutting off the hair of young girls for being innocently provocative, or how the disapproval of his son's (Harilal's) desire to get married may have contributed to his suicide. Erikson is especially concerned that

In this fashion Gandhi was able to demonstrate how the pacific propensities of evolution could become the basis for an historical revolution in the use of human aggression.[130] The nonviolent method of Satyagraha provides both a symbolic and practical hope that humankind may yet heal its dangerous tendencies toward self-hatred and murderous righteousness which continue to loom so ominously over the future of a divided human species in the nuclear age. Since we can "no longer afford to cultivate illusions" about those pseudospecies we call enemies,[131] it is necessary to critically examine from an Eriksonian perspective some of the bases for enemy-making in our own time. That is the task for chapter six.

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nonviolence be applied more consistently to those areas of life which happen to be the crux of Gandhi's most serious failings and the special domain of psychoanalysis--sexuality and the family. In this way Freud can serve as a corrective to Gandhi on the issues of sexuality and the family even as Gandhi can serve as a corrective to Freud on the issues of violence and politics. Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, pt. 3, chap. 1.

[130]Ibid., p. 435.

[131]Ibid., p. 51.

# CHAPTER V

## POST-FREUDIAN ETHICS OF AGGRESSION IN PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT

In the first chapter of this study we observed that most of the major theoretical positions advanced by contemporary psychologists are, or end up being, much more than neutral, objective, and value-free descriptions of human beings. Whether or not it is possible or desirable to construct a purely positivist science of human beings,[1] the normative characteristics of contemporary psychological science become readily evident when we realize that psychologists from the behaviorist Skinner to the humanist Rogers have developed theories which have immediate implications for human socialization and therapy and are, in fact, being widely implemented for such purposes. Thus, whatever claims a given psychologist may make about the scientific neutrality of his or her theory in principle, in practice it is necessary, for example, to value the control of behavior over not controlling it (Skinner) or

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[1]Developments in the philosophy and history of science since Freud's day indicate that a purely positivist conception of the scientific enterprise is untenable. See Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Also, leading figures in psychology and social theory have contended that it is undesirable as well. See Abraham Maslow, The Psychology of Science (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); and Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

exploring the process of becoming a fully functioning person over not exploring it (Rogers).[2] This fabric of the descriptive interwoven with the normative is what the phrase "culture of psychology" refers to.[3]

As leading representatives of the behaviorist and humanist cultures of contemporary psychology, it would appear that Skinner and Rogers have little common ground between them. Indeed, whether the issue is a positivistic or normatively guided conception of science, the primacy of behavior or experience, or the advocacy of more control or more freedom, Skinner and Rogers seem worlds apart.[4] On the issue of how to deal with aggression, however, there may be surprisingly little difference. In contrast to the post-Freudians, who always draw a distinction between positive and negative kinds of aggression (i.e. benign and malignant, constructive and destructive, species-preservative and species-destructive), Skinner and Rogers join in their ethic of eliminating aggression en bloc for the benefit of future human culture. Since Fromm has directly addressed Skinner on this issue and May has directly addressed Rogers, we will examine the arguments of each pair in turn in order to delineate the ethical implications of post-Freudian culture in contrast to our representatives from the behaviorist and humanist cultures.

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[2]B. F. Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

[3]The phrase is from Don Browning. Browning, Pluralism and Personality, pp. 19-26.

[4]The famous Skinner-Rogers debate outlines some of their characteristic differences. Carl Rogers and B. F. Skinner, "Some Issues Concerning the Control of Human Behavior: A Symposium" in Richard Evans,

## Fromm and Skinner

The first problem in elucidating Skinner's ethics is that ethics in the traditional sense--as a discipline which presupposes the human capacity for choice on the basis of rationally justified values--does not exist for him. Ethical "choices" are, for Skinner, not a matter of reasons but rather a matter of reinforcements. As Skinner puts it, "people behave in ways which, as we say, conform to ethical, governmental, or religious patterns because they are reinforced for doing so."[5] What we used to think of as ethics becomes dissolved into behavioral science because "it is the nature of an experimental analysis of human behavior that it should strip away the functions previously assigned to autonomous man and transfer them one by one to the controlling environment."[6] Thus, for Skinner, "the reinforcing effects of things are the province of behavioral science, which, to the extent that it is concerned with operant reinforcement, is a science of values."[7]

There is one key which unlocks the behavioral science of values: "survival is the only value according to which a culture is to be judged, and any practice that furthers survival has survival value by

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Carl Rogers: The Man and His Ideas (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975), pp. xliv-lxxxviii.

[5]Ibid., p. lxxxiv.

[6]Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, p. 189.

[7]Ibid., p. 99.

definition."[8] Skinner is well aware of what the supreme threat to the survival of culture in the nuclear age is:

> It is a serious problem that we remain almost continuously at war with other nations, but we shall not get far by attacking "the tensions which lead to war," or by appeasing warlike spirits, or by changing the minds of men (in which, UNESCO tells us, wars begin).[9]

What we must do instead, according to Skinner, is design and implement a radically new culture which will effectively control, among other things, aggressive behavior.[10] To eliminate human aggression in this fashion is possible because in the present state of behavioral science "the extent to which aggression exemplifies innate tendencies is not clear" and so we can safely assume that aggression is caused by our present "aversive" environment: "When treated aversively people tend to act aggressively or to be reinforced by signs of having worked aggressive damage."[11] The elimination of aggressive behavior would be effected by sweeping away all the aversive reinforcements in our sloppy and ultimately suicidal present environment and replacing them with a systematically designed and controlled behavioral culture of positive reinforcements. As one commentator has critically summarized Skinner's vision of behavioral utopia:

> In this model society, based upon the "new conception of man compatible with our scientific society," behavioral engineering has succeeded in extinguishing all inconvenient emotions and anti-social impulses in favor of the positive reinforcement of political indifference and a complacent life-style which bears a striking resemblance to a middle-class retirement community. There are no moral

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[8] Ibid., p. 130.

[9] Ibid., p. 149.

[10] Ibid., chap. 8.

[11] Ibid., p. 27.

> questions to be struggled with in Walden Two, nor any serious issues of choice; the residents (some would call them patients) are instead conditioned from birth to make the "right choices" automatically, without the anxiety of reflection. The government of the place, insofar as we are told about it, is ostensibly in the hands of a board of planners who in turn are actually controlled by a junta of "Managers"--among them a Manager of Personal Behavior and a Manager of Cultural Behavior--a self-selecting and (in principle) self-perpetuating elite. There is little or no political participation by the rank-and-file members of the community; control is willingly left to the custodial cadre. "In Walden Two no one worries about the government except the few to whom that worry has been assigned.... Even the constitutional rights of the members are seldom thought about, I'm sure. The only thing that matters is one's day-to-day happiness and a secure future."[12]

However one-sided this characterization of Skinner's utopia may be, it clearly makes the point that in terms of Fromm's characterology it could only be classified as authoritarian. Behind the facade of mindless bliss Fromm's theory would alert us to a human reality shorn of independence, activeness, and individual responsibility--the sort of reality which could well serve as the seedbed for the generation of pathological aggression, be it latent or manifest. According to Frommian theory, we could possibly expect to find a sadistic form of aggression churning under the placid surface and indeed, Skinners' alter ego Frazier comes right out with it in Skinner's waking dream, the novel Walden Two:

> I've had only one idea in my life--a true idée fixe ... to put it as bluntly as possible, the idea of having my own way. Control expresses it, I think. The control of human behavior, Burris. In my early experimental days it was a frenzied, selfish desire to dominate. I remember the rage I used to feel when a prediction went awry. I could have shouted at the subjects of my experiments: "Behave, damn you, behave as your ought."[13]

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[12] Matson, The Idea of Man, p. 124-25.

[13] B. F. Skinner, Walden Two (New York: Macmillan, 1948), p. 289.

Skinner's adamant refusal to admit the study of motivation as a legitimate part of his "behavioral science" leads him to build his whole utopian castle, which purportedly does away with aggression in toto, on psychoanalytic quicksand. By treating aggression en bloc and reducing it to an evil which must be eliminated in order to ensure security and happiness, Skinner risks the return of the repressed, and, if Frazier is any indication, would sooner or later find sadistic aggression interrupting the smooth schedule of positive reinforcements.

Not only does Skinner's behavioral science prevent him from analyzing the possible authoritarian motivations which may ultimately transform the "happy" face of Walden Two into its opposite, it also blinds him to the authoritarianism evident right on the surface of his system. As Skinner himself describes the characteristics of control:

> In noticing how the master controls the slave or the employer the workers, we commonly overlook reciprocal effects and, by considering action in one direction only, are led to regard control as exploitation, or at least the gaining of a one-sided advantage, but control is actually mutual. The slave controls the master as completely as the master the slave (italics added), in the sense that the techniques of punishment employed by the master have been selected by the slave's behavior in submitting to them.[14]

By rendering terms which could well describe a form of aggression (such as exploitation or sadism) meaningless by way of his mutual logic of control no matter what type of relationship it involves, Skinner's abstract logic precludes the recognition of manifest aggression, let alone latent aggression. As Fromm points out:

> By the same logic the relation between torturer and the tortured is "reciprocal," because the tortured, by manifestation of his pain,

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[14] B. F. Skinner, as quoted in Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 61.

conditions the torturer to use the most effective instruments of torture.[15]

What Skinner's mechanistic, linear, and one-dimensional system lacks is the humanistic sensibility, the dialectical logic, and the ethical perspective which would permit a critical distance to be achieved on such appalling authoritarianism disguised as behavioral benevolence. The philosopher William Barrett has clearly perceived the hidden dangers of Skinner's system and has pondered the irony of an American psychologist who unwittingly advocates as future utopia the past horrors of the Soviet system:

> Yet the comparison with Communist regimes must be made because Skinner's society is a totalitarian one. The individual is to be shaped from cradle to grave. And not only is it in fact totalitarian, but also it has to be so in principle; for if conditioning were incomplete or faulty at any point, the whole structure might come apart at the seams. A link untended anywhere in the sequence of causation and the whole chain might break apart. In the world that the determinist constructs there can be no loose ends. The minimal cause may trigger a maximal effect.[16]

Fromm escapes from the behavioral entrapment of Skinner's system by setting up a dialectic between two characterological types and their corresponding ethical orientations. On the one hand is the familiar authoritarian character type, which was defined in a different context in chapter two, but in this chapter is serving to describe Skinner's system. On the other hand is what Fromm calls the "revolutionary" character type:

> Suffice it to say that in speaking of the "revolutionary" as a character type we do not refer to the purely political definition according to which anyone who aims at a social and political

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[15] Ibid.

[16] William Barrett, The Illusion of Technique (New York: Anchor Press, 1979), p. 327.

> revolution would be called a revolutionary. The "revolutionary" in our characterological sense expresses a particular quality of independence and wish to liberate life from conditions that block its free growth. The revolutionary person does not oppose authority as a rebel. He is not motivated by resentment or hatred, but by the impulse to create a better social system, rather than avenging himself against the present one.
>
> The revolutionary transcends the narrow limits of his own society and is able, because of this, to criticize his or any other society from the standpoint of reason and humanity.[17]

It is possible for the revolutionary character to be free and act on behalf of freedom because of his or her use of consciousness and conscience. Although we are necessarily limited by the biological and sociohistorical givens which unconsciously shape our character, at the same time conscious awareness is an existential given in human beings. To the extent we can become aware of our character-mediated unconscious desires which may otherwise severly distort our perception of the real possibilities in a given situation, we are free to clearly perceive and rationally choose among alternatives and their consequences.[18] When such decisions are made in relative freedom, we are relying on what Fromm calls our "humanistic conscience" as opposed to the "authoritarian conscience":

> The authoritarian conscience is the voice of an internalized external authority, the parents, the state, or whoever the authorities in a culture happen to be....
>
> ... Humanistic conscience is not the internalized voice of an authority whom we are eager to please and afraid of displeasing; it is our own voice, present in every human being and independent of external sanctions and rewards.[19]

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[17] Fromm, Social Character in a Mexican Village, p. 82.

[18] I am summarizing in a sentence what Fromm spends an entire chapter developing in a detailed and subtle discussion which would require a long digression to fully recount. See Fromm, The Heart of Man, chap. 6.

[19] Fromm, Man For Himself, pp. 148 and 162.

From Fromm's perspective, the automatons of Skinnerian culture would pass on their authoritarian structure through their authoritarian consciences without being able to consciously consider what they were doing and would be equally unable to criticize themselves by means of their humanistic consciences. Fromm's theory makes it possible for people to be free enough to reflect on the ethical implications of whatever types of aggression may be at hand and be responsible enough to seek revolutionary alternatives if their consciences call for it. In being able to utilize aggression in the service of life, the Frommian revolutionary would not need to repress all aggression only to have it return to serve the death-in-life which constitutes the completely controlled culture of Skinner.

By studying animals in a laboratory rather than humans in society, Skinner imagines he has discovered a simple and scientific solution to all the major global problems of our time, including the terribly pressing problem of aggression in the nuclear age: "Overpopulation, the depletion of resources, the pollution of the environment, and the possibility of a nuclear holocaust--these are the not-so-remote consequences of present courses of action."[20] If earlier scientific programs for progress in agriculture and medicine contributed to overpopulation, the progress of industry contributed to the environmental crisis, and the progress of physics contributed to nuclear weapons, one can only shudder at the thought of what Skinner's self-

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[20]Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, p. 131.

proclaimed crowning culmination to this whole tradition may yet bestow upon us.

Yet Skinner's program is really not the culmination of anything other than the Newtonian premises (determinism, positivism, mechanistic materialism) and quasi-Darwinist ethics (survival of the positively reinforced) of behaviorism, a philosophy which is about as complete a corruption of the original Enlightenment quest for a human science as possible. Instead of putting science in the service of humanity, Skinner's program amounts to putting humanity at the service of behavioral science. Therefore, Skinner's work does not represent the fulfillment of the Enlightenment hopes for a "Science of Man," as the philosopher Paul Sagal thinks,[21] but rather the betrayal of what the Enlightenment scholar Peter Gay has rightly called the "Science of Freedom."[22] If a choice as to who is a legitimate heir to the Enlightenment tradition is necessary, then I side with the judgment of the Pulitzer Prize-winning student of both the Enlightenment and contemporary psychology, Ernest Becker:

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[21]Sagal writes: "It is in this guise that the enlightenment dream lives. In the twentieth century the dream shines brightest perhaps in the work of John Dewey and B. F. Skinner." Paul T. Sagal, Skinners's Philosophy (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), p. 9.

[22]To understand how centrally psychoanalysis stands in the Enlightenment tradition (recalling how Philip Rieff referred to psychoanalysis and its medical underpinnings as a "moral science"), we must listen carefully to Gay's observations:

> It was a time in which philosophers--most of them philosophes--invented new sciences ... the Enlightenment was the age of what David Hume called "the moral sciences": sociology, psychology, political economy, and modern education....
>
> ... Nothing could be plainer than this: medicine was philosophy at work; philosophy was medicine for the individual and for society.

> One has to go directly to him [Fromm] and study how compelling are these insights, how well they continue what is essential in Freud and apply it to present-day problems of slavishness, viciousness, and continuing political madness. This, it seems to me, is the authentic line of cumulative critical thought on the human condition. The astonishing thing is that this central line of work on the problem of freedom since the Enlightenment occupies so little of the concern and ongoing activity of scientists. It should form the largest body of theoretical and empirical work in the human sciences, if these sciences are to have any human meaning.[23]

The Skinnerian subject in his "aggression-free" behavioral utopia is not only incapable of learning from the ironies and ideals of modern history, but is equally unable to take in the insights of the entire Western tradition's "literature of freedom and dignity" from Plato to Dostoevski. The juxtaposition of Skinner with Plato's Philosopher-King and Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor, which could yield a harvest of insights, would undoubtedly be dismissed as so much pre-scientific rubbish. However, the ultimate consequence of banishing the human capacity for insight, freedom, and dignity is revealed by Fromm's

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[23]Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 134. In an earlier work Becker characterized the Enlightenment program this way:

> It laid the basis for nothing less than a fully "secular" theodicy: a program for analyzing and remedying the evils that befall man in society....
>
> To meet this need, the threefold idea was gradually evolved: Liberty, Progress, and the ideal-type -- an interdependent conceptual scheme that put progress under the control of reason and that brought reason down to the happenings of the real world.... They link the individual to social life in a nondeterministric and open way: they declare that the science of man is a science that must be based on the possibility of freedom... The science of man, in other words, as the Enlightenment gradually realized, had this peculiar character that none of the other sciences had: it was a critical "projective," moral science, an anthropodicy within the vision of man and potentially under his control."

Ernest Becker, The Structure of Evil: An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 31-32.

perspective on how behaviorism is unconsciously captive to what conditioned Skinner's theory and ethics of conditioning in the first place:

> In the cybernetic age, the individual becomes increasingly subject to manipulation. His work, his consumption, and his leisure are manipulated by advertising, by ideologies, by what Skinner calls "positive reinforcements." The individual loses his active, responsible role in the social process: he becomes completely "adjusted" and learns that any behavior, act, thought, or feeling which does not fit into the general scheme puts him at a severe disadvantage; in fact he is what he is supposed to be....
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> ... Skinner recommends the hell of the isolated, manipulated man of the cybernetic age as the heaven of progress.... In summary, Skinnerism is the psychology of opportunism dressed up as a new scientific humanism.[24]

## May and Rogers

If Skinner's case for "solving" the problem of human aggression through the behavioral technology of positive reinforcements seems something less than a satisfactory scientific humanism, perhaps Rogers' well-researched and scrupulously documented "person-centered" approach may better fit the bill. In contrast to Skinner's extrapolations from animals to humans and from laboratories to societies, Rogers has formulated and tested his ideas through direct experiences with many different kinds of people in a wide variety of relationships including individual therapy, marriage counseling, encounter groups, and educational instruction.[25] More importantly for our present purposes, Rogers holds a very different viewpoint on the relation between ethics and

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[24] Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, pp. 63-64.

[25] One book which illustrates both the breadth of Rogers' interests and how different his approach to power is from May's is Carl R. Rogers, On Personal Power (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977).

science than Skinner, a viewpoint Rogers made very explicit during their debate:

> In conclusion then, it is my contention that science cannot come into being without a personal choice of the values we wish to achieve. And these values we choose to implement will forever lie outside of the science which implements them; the goals we select, the purposes we wish to follow, must always be outside of the science which achieves them. To me this has the encouraging meaning that the human person, with his capacity of subjective choice, can and will always exist, separate from and prior to any of his scientific undertakings. Unless as individuals and groups we choose to relinquish our capacity of subjective choice, we will always remain persons, not simply pawns of a self-created science.[26]

Whatever bearing Rogers' view of ethics and science has for establishing a realm of freedom outside of Skinner's system of controls, it has little apparent effect on defining their differences in regard to their treatment of aggression. In the first place, Rogers, like Skinner, sees aggression only in its negative forms and functions and so conceives of it as a piece with such phenomena as "terrorism and hostility."[27] Secondly, this aggression does not come from anything within our human nature, but rather from such environmental contingencies as "the rough manner of childbirth, the infant's mixed experience with the parents, the constricting, destructive influence of our educational system, the injustice of our distribution of wealth, our cultivated prejudices against individuals who are different--all these elements and many others, warp the human organism in directions which

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[26]Evans, Carl Rogers, p. lxxxii.

[27]Carl Rogers as quoted in Rollo May, "The Problem of Evil: An Open Letter to Carl Rogers," in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Summer 1982, p. 10.

are antisocial."[28] Third, Rogers' proposed solution has a strangely familiar external, total, and deterministic ring to it:

> The winds of scientific, social, and cultural changes are blowing strongly. They will envelop us in this new world.... We may choose it, but whether we choose it or not, it appears that to some degree it is inexorably moving to change our culture.[29]

It may be because Rogers has so little sense of the dialectics of human nature that his person-centered science and ethic ends up being as unable to distinguish or deal with the varieties of aggression as Skinner's science of behavior. As one commentator has perceptively remarked:

> By and large he is unable to recognize either the coexistence of opposites or the enormous complexity of human affairs. His is essentially a linear theory, as opposed to a curvilinear one; maximizing rather than optimizing. His concepts, like most others in humanistic psychology, are based on the idea of "the more the better," as opposed to "there can be too much of a good thing." Rogers would have you believe that the more congruence, the more honesty, the more closeness, the more empathy, the better. Sounds good, but, as is the case with most linear thinking, it fails in the extreme, and that unfortunately is where it is taken by both Rogers and his students who seem to believe that all human problems from marriage to international negotiation should yield to the application of his principles of human communication. They cannot be solved with these techniques because they are not problems in an ordinary sense but complicated paradoxical dilemmas.[30]

Both Rogers and May characteristically refer to their therapeutic experiences when discussing the issues surrounding human nature and aggression and it is at this fundamental level that their respective approaches to aggression begin to diverge. The divergence first

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[28]Carl Rogers, "Notes on Rollo May," in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Summer 1982, p. 8.

[29]Carl Rogers as quoted by Rollo May in "The Problem of Evil: An Open Letter to Carl Rogers," p. 13.

[30]Richard Farson in Evans, Carl Rogers, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

clearly appeared in the 1960s when Rogers and his associates conducted a three-year research project designed to assess the effects of client-centered therapy in treating schizophrenics and May was chosen to be one of the independent judges.[31] As May expressed his evaluation:

> In listening to tapes of this therapy, I was struck by the fact that whereas the Rogerian therapists were very good at reflecting the loneliness, resignation, abandonment, sadness, and so on, of the patient, they practically never reflected the anger of the patient. Other negative emotions, such as aggression, hostility, and genuine conflict (as distinguished from mere misunderstanding) were also almost absent in what the therapist responded to on the tapes. I found myself asking, did these patients never feel rage? Surely feelings of hostility and expressions of desire to fight can never by wholly absent in a person except in almost complete pathology. And they were not absent, it turned out, in these patients: occasionally in the tapes a patient was enraged at hospital personnel or at the therapist himself. But the therapist almost always failed to see this, but interpreted the affect as loneliness or being misunderstood even though the patient would try to make his emotion clear with angry and profane expletives.[32]

Aggression and related emotions do indeed appear to be the blind spot of client-centered therapy. This persistent oversight cuts both ways. On the one hand, May believes that "therapists need to be able to perceive and admit their own evil--hostility, aggression, anger--if they are to be able to see and accept these experience in clients."[33] On the other hand, "this anger, aggressiveness, and hostility often express the patient's most precious effort toward autonomy, his way of trying to find some point at which he can stand against the authorities who have

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[31]May, "The Problem of Evil," p. 15. See C[arl] R. Rogers, E. T. Gendlin, D. J. Kiesler, and C. Truax, The Therapeutic Relationship and Its Impact: A Study of Psychotherapy with Schizophrenics (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967).

[32]May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, pp. 17-18.

[33]May, "The Problem of Evil: An Open Letter to Carl Rogers," p. 17.

always suffocated his life--suffocated it by 'kindness' as well as exploitation."[34] The apparent hazard of overlooking or denying both the good and evil potentialities of aggression is that Rogerian therapy risks becoming transformed into its Skinnerian opposite, as May and the other judges implicitly noted:

> In spite of the fact that "client-centered therapists, both individually and collectively, have advocated openness and freedom in the therapeutic relationship," the outside judges focused "upon what they perceive as the therapist's rigid and controlling nature which closes him off to many of his own as well as to the patient's experiences."[35]

Rogers' exclusion of aggression at the level of therapy becomes transposed onto the next level of his work, his theory of human nature. As Rogers describes his theory:

> I suppose my major difference with Rollo is around the question of the nature of the human individual. He sees the demonic as a basic element in the human makeup, and dwells upon this in his writing. For myself, though I am very well aware of the incredible amount of destructive, cruel, malevolent behavior in today's world --from the threats of war to the senseless violence in the streets --I do not find that this evil is inherent in human nature. In a psychological climate which is nurturant of growth and choice, I have never known an individual to choose the cruel or destructive path. Choice always seems to be in the direction of greater socialization, improved relationship with others.[36]

Unfortunately, Rogers misses the point that May is not talking about human nature and the one-dimensional demonic, but rather human nature

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[34]May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, pp. 18-19.

[35]May, "The Problem of Evil: An Open Letter to Carl Rogers," p. 16. Elsewhere May notes that "Rogers has always rejected the full implications of Freud's concepts of resistance and repression," a rejection that, as we saw with Skinner, has a way of doubling back, especially in regard to aggression. See May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, p. 22, n. 12.

[36]Rogers, "Notes on Rollo May," p. 8.

and the ambiguous daimonic, a distinction which was discussed at some length in chapter three. Aggression is not for May, as it is for Rogers, simply destructive in psychological terms and evil in ethical terms. When aggression is integrated into the personality and neither sealed off in repression nor released like an overwhelming flood, then it can have constructive uses and effects.

Rogers' ethic of unilinear growth toward goodness and fulfillment, in which persons, if given nurturing conditions, will necessarily grow, does not seem to be a humanistic ethic to May, but rather a technological ethic:

> Man's "unlimited potential" is a term one hears often, and we are adjured to "fulfill it" as much as possible. But what tends to be missing is the recognition that this potential never functions except as it is experienced within its own limits. The error is in treating potential as if it had no limits at all, as though life's course were perpetually "onward and upward." The illusion that we become "good" by progressing a little more each day is a doctrine bootlegged from technology and made into a dogma in ethics where it does not fit....
>
> ... Growth cannot be a basis for ethics, for growth is evil as well as good. Each day we grow toward infirmity and death. Many a neurotic sees this better than the rest of us: he fears growing into greater maturity because he recognizes, in a neurotic way of course, that each step upward brings him nearer to death.[37]

From this perspective it is clear that Rogers' humanistic progressivism and Skinner's technological progressivism are cut from the same cloth. In neither case is there anything seriously limiting or genuinely ambiguous about human nature.

When we move from human nature to culture, similar problems reappear in Rogers' "solution" to aggression. Rogers claims: '[my] experience leads me to believe that it is cultural influences which are

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[37]May, Power and Innocence, pp. 254-55.

the major factor in our evil behaviors.[38] Instead of reifying culture as the evil something out there that corrupts our natural innocence and goodness, May wonders: "but who makes up the culture except persons like you and me?"[39] Indeed, for May, the ambiguities of culture are a reflection of the ambiguities of human nature: "The culture is evil as well as good because we, the human beings who constitute it, are evil as well as good."[40] If it is just a matter of changing our evil or, in Skinner's terms, aversive, culture and not ourselves, then Rogers is playing right into Skinner's behavioral designs:

> If you conclude that the trouble lies in the fact that human beings are so susceptible to influence by their culture, so obedient to orders they are given, so pliable to their environment, then you are making the most devastating of all judgments on evil in human beings. In such a case we are all sheep, dependent upon whoever is the shepherd, and Fred Skinner is right.[41]

Rogers unwittingly lends Skinner even more support when he sees the culture of the future, a culture characterized as a "new world [which] will be more human and humane,"[42] as "inevitably coming."[43] In such a deterministic process of cultural change, human beings do not have much choice in the matter, either in shaping the transition process or in the content of the new world itself. If this new world is to be more human and humane, which presumably means at the very least more

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[38]Rogers, "Notes on Rollo May," p. 8

[39]May, "The Problem of Evil: An Open Letter to Carl Rogers," p. 12.

[40]Ibid., p. 13.

[41]Ibid., p. 15.

[42]Ibid., p. 13.

[43]Ibid., p. 12.

freedom to choose, then the means for getting there and even the unchosen world itself seem to be peculiarly dehumanized in terms of Rogers' own view of ethics. Having dispensed with the necessity for choice and commitment, social and political action on behalf of a better world becomes gratuitous:

> As with Skinner's viewpoint, your statement that it will come regardless of what we do about it cuts the nerve of social action. A danger of which I am very aware is that people, hypnotically seduced by rosy predictions of the future, will conclude that it requires no effort from them and will sit back and do nothing. This, as Edmund Burke said so well, is the quickest way for evil to triumph.[44]

In addition to playing into the hands of Skinner, Rogers' theory of culture opens the door to the pounding that the human potential movement has taken from its critics as the foremost example of the "culture of narcissism."[45] The problem with seeing our future culture as almost uniformly good and our present culture as almost uniformly bad is that we see neither the present nor the future as a realistic mix of good and evil and we relieve ourselves of the responsibility for the ethical character of both present and future. Without responsibility for the quality of culture either in the present or the future, it is tempting to turn to the self or one's immediate group as the source of good in the evil present and simply wait until the good future comes marching in on its own accord:

> The narcissists are persons who are turned inward rather than outward, who are so lost in self-love that they cannot see and relate to the reality outside themselves including other human beings. Some people who join and lead the humanistic movement do so

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[44]Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[45]See Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York: Warner Books, 1979), chap. 1.

> in order to find a haven, a port in the storm, a community of like-minded persons who are playing possum to the evils about us. I, for one, choose to be part of the minority that seeks to make the Association for Humanistic Psychology an organization that commits itself actively to confronting the issues of evil and good in our selves, our society, and our world.[46]

The cul-de-sac of narcissism does not provide a useful solution to the problem of aggression--it only provides the illusion of an escape. For narcissism, by defining the self or one's group alone as really real and attributing goodness alone to that reality, does not "include a view of evil in our world and in ourselves no matter how much that evil offends our narcissism."[47] As such, narcissism not only compromises the ability to deal with evil, it also sacrifices freedom:

> The ultimate error is the refusal to look evil in the face. This denial of evil--and freedom along with it--is the most destructive approach of all. To take refuge with the Moonies, or with Jonestown, or any others of the hundreds of cults, most of which seem to spring up in California, is to find a haven where our choices will be made for us. We surrender freedom because of our inability to tolerate moral ambiguity and we escape the threat that one might make the wrong choice. The mass suicides at Jonestown seem to me to be the terrible, if brilliant, demonstration of the outworking of the attitudes with which the adherents joined in the first place. They committed spiritual suicide in surrendering their freedom to evade the partial evil of life, and they end up demonstrating to the world in their own mass suicides the final evil.[48]

To sustain freedom in human existence it is necessary not to repress evil but to take responsibility for it because "as long as there is freedom, there will be mistaken choices, some of them catastrophic."[49] Freedom to choose always entails the possibility to

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[46]May, "The Problem of Evil: An Open Letter to Carl Rogers," p. 19.

[47]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

choose evil as well as good, but if our power of choice is foreclosed in pursuit of a greater good, an even greater evil will most likely occur. Thus, May advocates a dialectical ethic of responsibility in which working through rather than working around the problem of aggression is the preferred approach to a solution:

> It is possible to reconstitute our consciousness in wider dimensions to include perceiving and understanding the socially destructive aspects of power, and also enlist our own aggression and power needs on the constructive side of social issues.[50]

In search of an adequate psychologically informed ethic of aggression, Fromm and May alert us to the inadequacies of Skinner's behavioral approach and Rogers' humanistic approach. By attempting to solve the problem of aggression by controlling it or denying it, Skinner and Rogers seem to be intent on collapsing the ambiguity of aggression and then proceeding to eliminate it as an evil. This misguided attempt to pursue the good, however, risks an even greater evil by failing to recognize the unconscious generation of pathological aggression entailed when all aggression is removed from the human personality. For both Fromm and May, it is better to rely on the conscious and responsible utilization of aggression on the part of the individual in relation to the community, rather than repressing aggression altogether, thereby risking the unconscious outpouring of destructive aggression in the name of either a behavioral or humanistic utopia.

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[50] May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, p. 207.

# CHAPTER VI

## POST-FREUDIAN ETHICS OF AGGRESSION IN RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Theology, unlike modern psychology, does not concern itself with debates over whether or not it is, can be, or should be a value-free discipline because it has never attempted to emulate the natural sciences to the same degree and values have traditionally been at the heart of theological concern. In fact, in the hands of some theologians, theology seems to be little more than apologizing for and polemicizing against certain kinds of values. Among those in contemporary Christian theology who are actively engaged in widely heard value debates are the Moral Majority on the theological right and the liberation theologians on the theological left.

Like the behaviorist and humanist schools of contemporary psychology, the Moral Majority and liberation theologians would appear, prima facie, to have very little in common beyond the shared appellation "Christian." Whether it is their characteristic differences over method (deductive-biblically-based vs. inductive-experience of the oppressed), ideological affinities (capitalism vs. Marxism), or diagnosis of contemporary social ills (secular humanism, lack of leadership, and moral decadence contributing to military, political, and economic weakness vs. racism, sexism, and economic oppression supported by unjust political and military structures), few theological positions seem so

fundamentally opposed and far apart. But at one point, in their common advocacy of the necessary interrelationship between religion and politics, they make contact and it is at this point that the ethics of such representatives of the two schools as Jerry Falwell and Camilo Torres intersect with the ethical interests of Erik Erikson.

Few figures in history would be large enough and contradictory enough to contain in germ the contemporary views of a reactionary Protestant minister (Falwell) and a revolutionary Catholic priest (Torres). Yet in Erikson's psychohistorical perspective, Martin Luther emerges as just such a figure: "In the long run, one may fairly say that this reactionary established some of the individualist and equalitarian imagery, and thus the ideological issues for both the rightists and the leftists in the revolutions then to come."[1] Thus, in interpreting and critiquing the theological ethics of Falwell and Torres from an Eriksonian perspective, it will be useful to begin by revealing certain resemblances to Luther. It will be equally useful to conclude by showing how different Falwell's and Torres' positions on the interrelationship between religion and politics are from the twentieth century figure who also made the confluence of the "two kingdoms" his special concern--Mahatma Gandhi. The outstanding testimony to Gandhi's chief passion is recorded by Erikson to be located over the entrance door to the Gandhi Museum: "I am told that religion and politics are different

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[1]Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 236.

spheres of life. But I would say without a moment's hesitation and yet in all modesty that those who claim this do not know what religion is."[2]

## Erikson and Falwell

As Luther thought Germany had reached its apocalyptic crisis and risked God's wrathful judgment in the fifteenth century, so Jerry Falwell believes that America has reached its apocalyptic crisis and risks God's wrathful judgment in the twentieth century. Falwell writes:

> We the American people have to make a choice today. Will it be revival or ruin? There can be no other way. One has only to turn to history to find that this is a proven fact....
>
> The rise and fall of nations confirm the Scripture that says "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Ga. 6:7) Psalm 9:17 admonishes, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." American will be no exception. If she forgets God, she too will face His wrath and judgment like every other nation in the history of humanity.[3]

This apocalyptic crisis has come about, according to Falwell, because America has recently deviated from her original course as set by the Founding Fathers and sanctioned by God Himself. As Falwell characterizes what the original course was and where it was headed:

> I believe America has reached the pinnacle of greatness unlike any nation in human history because our Founding Fathers established America's laws and precepts on the principles recorded in the laws of God, including the Ten Commandments. God has blessed this nation because in its early days she sought to honor God and the Bible, the inerrant Word of the living God. Any diligent student of American history finds that our great nation was founded by godly men upon godly principles to be a Christian nation.[4]

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[2]Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 22.

[3]Jerry Falwell, Listen, America! (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), p. 21.

[4]Ibid., p. 25.

America, although she was born great and has achieved even more greatness under the guidance of God's principles, is in danger of losing her greatness as a "Christian nation" for the following reasons: (1) American has fallen away from the true faith, because "humanism in some form has taken the place of the Bible,"[5] and (2) America has fallen away from good (i.e. biblical) values due to its indulgence in sin in every imaginable form:

> In almost every aspect of our society, we have flaunted our sinful behavior in the very face of God Himself. Our movies, television programs, magazines and entertainment in general are morally bankrupt and spiritually corrupt. We have become one of the most blatantly sinful nations of all time.[6]

Among the specific sins Falwell lists are abortion, homosexuality, promiscuity, pornography, drug addiction, alcoholism, and the movements for children's rights and women's rights as they contribute to the "fractured family."[7] Falwell believes that public education, television, and the popular arts are key instruments in the transmission and glorification of the false faith of secular humanism and its associate plethora of sins.[8] It is these failures of faith and morals that are primarily responsible for our fall from being a great Christian nation with supreme military, political and economic power to an almost apostate nation in serious decline. It is only through an immediate moral

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[5]Ibid., p. 56.

[6]Ibid., p. 217.

[7]Ibid., pt. 2.

[8]Ibid.

conversion from our present iniquities that America's role as a "chosen" nation can be restored:

> But I do not believe that America will be turned around solely by working in the areas of politics, economics, and defense, as important as these may be. These are crucial issues that face us in the 1980s, but America can only be turned around as her people make godly, moral choices. When history records these ten years, I think it will be fair to project that this will have probably been, since the days of the American Revolution, the most important decade this nation has known. This is a grave statement because I believe that the outcome of how we stand as a free people at the end of this decase will depend upon the moral decisions we as a people make in the very near future.[9]

If we listen to Falwell's whole line of argument with an Eriksonian ear, it soon becomes evident that Falwell's railings against evil and sin resonate quite well with Luther's similar railings almost five centuries ago. In light of Erikson's interpretation that Luther's excessive concern with evil and sin was rooted in his lifelong struggle with his super-ego, we could hypothesize that Falwell's railings also come from the moralistic dynamics of the super-ego. This seems to be plausible enough when we consider Falwell's primary emphasis on sex-related sins (e.g. abortion, homosexuality, pornography, promiscuity, etc.) and his view of social instruments (e.g. education, television, and popular arts), potentially associated with the functions of the ego, as caught in the middle of a struggle which may make them either purveyors of sin (id material) or purveyors of moral absolutes (super-ego material).

The inner split between conscience and instinct in Falwell's theology should further alert us to the probability of a corresponding

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[9]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

outer split between us and them. Sure enough, Falwell sets America over and against "godless communism" in general and the Soviet Union in particular:

> As a preacher of the Gospel, I must speak out against evil. Evil forces would seek to destroy America because she is a bastion for Christian missions and a base for world evangelization....
> ... I must speak out against godless communism, which would seek to destroy the work of Christ that is going out from this base of America.[10]

But an attack on Christ and Christianity is not the only threat posed by communism. Since, for Falwell, "the Soviets have always had only one goal, and that is to destroy capitalistic society,"[11] we should suspect that Christ and capitalism are tied together as two parts of the same package and, indeed, that is clearly the case. In a truly remarkable example of Falwellian biblical interpretation, the relationship is made plain:

> The free-enterprise system is clearly outlined in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible. Jesus Christ made it clear that the work ethic was a part of His plan for man. Ownership of property is biblical. Competition in business is biblical. Ambitious and successful business management is clearly outlined as a part of God's plan for His people.[12]

If Falwell sees America's proper role in the world as being the stalwart defender of capitalism and Christ, then his assertions that our nation's economy and government are drifting toward socialism and our society is supporting atheism[13] could be seen, in Erikson's terms, as a

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[10] Ibid., pp. 91-92.

[11] Ibid., p. 9.

[12] Ibid., p. 12.

[13] Ibid., pp. 11 and 84.

negative national identity. Given the isomorphism between what Falwell sees is going wrong in America and what is wrong with the Soviet Union, it may be that Falwell projects onto the Soviet Union America's negative identity and then proceeds to totalize it as completely evil. From there it is a small step to regarding as "sad" the "fact" that we cannot annihilate the Soviet Union more thoroughly than they can annihilate us: "The sad fact is that today the Soviet Union would kill 135 million to 160 million Americans, and the United States would kill only 3 to 5 per cent of the Soviets because of their antiballistic missiles and their civil defense."[14] In Falwell's rantings and ravings against his mirror opposite, godless communism, we can hear a distant echo of Luther's rantings and ravings against his mirror opposite, the Pope as Anti-Christ.

Falwell's whole Moral Majority program is the latest demonstration of the dangers that can grow out of a moralistic mixing of selected ideological elements of the Christian religion with selected interests of the American Republic. In creating the most recent version of a long tradition of "American civil religions,"[15] Falwell remains oblivious not only to the possible distortions of religion when it is refracted through national interests, but also to the moralistic and ideological sanctioning of potentially devastating acts of destructive aggression in

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[14]Ibid., p. 85.

[15]Falwell's version seems to touch upon three of the five types of American civil religion (folk religion, religious nationalism, and Protestant civic piety, the other two being transcendent universal religion of the nation and democratic faith). See Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, American Civil Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 15-18.

the name of God and country. Without a species-inclusive ethic, Falwell can only resort to a civil religion form of pseudospeciation, purchasing godliness for his fellow Americans at the price of demonizing his foes.

## Erikson and Torres

Just as Falwell perceives contemporary America as being in the grip of a grave crisis which has decisive implications for the future of this country, so Camilo Torres had a similar sense of urgency some two decades ago in his native Columbia. Unlike Falwell, however, Torres did not see the apocalyptic divide between sinners and godly men but rather between an oppressive oligarchy and liberating revolutionaries.[16] As Torres expressed his sense of urgency and single-mindedness shortly before his death in action in 1966 as a member of the Army of National Liberation:[17]

> All sincere revolutionaries must realize that armed struggle is the only remaining way open. However, the people wait for their leaders to set an example and issue the calls to arms by their presence in the struggle. I want to tell the Columbian people that the time is now and that I have not betrayed them. I have gone from village to village and from city to city, speaking in the public squares in favor of the unity and organization of the popular classes to take power. I have said to the people, "Let us all devote ourselves to these goals until death!"[18]

For Torres, this social crisis came about because of the economic and political sins of the oligarchy:

> To direct a message to those who neither want it nor can hear it is very hard. Nevertheless, it is a duty, and a historical duty, in

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[16] Camilo Torres, Revolutionary Priest: The Complete Writings & Messages of Camilo Torres, ed. John Gerassi (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 423.

[17] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[18] Ibid., p. 426.

> the moment when the Columbian oligarchy is trying to culminate its iniquity against the country and against all Columbians. For more than a hundred and fifty years, this economic caste, the few families which own almost all of Columbia's riches has usurped political power for its own benefit.[19]

Whatever the truth in Torres' characterization of the oligarchy as insensitive, intransigent, and oppressive, his inflexible appeal to violence as the only way and his absolute division of good and evil leads one to suspect again that an intense super-ego dynamic is at work. Whereas in the case of Falwell the dynamic tension appeared to be mostly psychosexual, this time it appears to be more psychosocial in nature.

In his study of Luther, Erikson observed the irony of Luther's reaction to the peasant revolution. Luther, whom Erikson calls a "second-generation ex-peasant,"[20] took revenge on his peasant class origins by siding with the princes and calling for violent suppression of the uprising. As Luther put it, in a statement that sounds similar enough to Torres' statements with only the roles reversed: "A rebel is not worth answering with arguments, for he does not accept them. The answer for such mouths is a fist that brings blood from the nose."[21]

In many ways Torres seems to be the revolutionary mirror opposite of the reactionary Luther. Instead of turning on his peasant origins as Luther did years after an intense struggle with his father,

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[19]Ibid., p. 421.

[20]Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 51.

[21]Martin Luther as quoted in Ibid., p. 236.

Torres turned on his upper class origins[22] years after the following event with his mother:

> "He left me a note explaining his decision" [to become a Dominican priest], says Camilo's mother. "I immediately ran to the railroad station and found him; then a great scene arose, with a huge crowd watching us, as I shouted that he was a minor and couldn't go, and he yelled he would, and I said he would go over my dead body, because I'd stay in front of the locomotive. Camilo answered 'As God wills.'" But she willed otherwise, and, with two policemen she dragged him home by force.[23]

As Erikson interprets Luther's anger with his father as one source of his later aggression against the peasants, one must wonder what impact this event must have had in Torres' life, particularly since he subsequently became a priest and eventually attacked the captors of his country who would not listen or yield to anything but force.

Whatever the relative contributions of the subjective and objective to Torres' decision to become a member of the Army of National Liberation, the psychoethical structure and dynamics of Torres' ideology differs little from Luther's or Falwell's. Common to all three ideologies is the striving for liberty, freedom, or liberation, but the efforts to reach that goal involve some unconsciously determined form of pseudospeciation, a totalistic division between us and them, good and evil. Whether it is the Pope or the peasants, the Russians or the oligarchy, the inability or unwillingness to see the other as a human opponent rather than an inhuman enemy makes the expression of aggression

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[22]Gerassi writes: "His father, Calixto Torres Umana, was a well-established pediatrician, while his mother, Isabel Restrepo Gaviria, was descended from one of Colubia's most aristocratic families." Gerassi, Revolutionary Priest, pp. 14-15.

[23]Ibid., p. 17.

in these various situations potentially or actually violent and destructive. While Gandhi's nonviolence may have its tactical limitations and while both reactionary and revolutionary movements of the kind we have reviewed here may have limited ethical justifications in certain historical contexts, as a general ethical principle and practice for the twentieth century Gandhi's ethic of nonviolence encourages the aggressive pursuit of freedom in mutual relation with the opposing other rather than at the expense of the other as enemy. Particularly when viewed in the context of the nuclear age, such as ethic may not only be justified as ideal, but also as a matter of species survival. For Erikson, freedom as a reactionary or revolutionary ideal in the last half of the twentieth century is insufficient unless it is accompanied by a deeper sense of freedom made possible by Freud's method of analysis of unconscious determinants and a wider sense of responsibility for each and every member of the human species.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE POST-FREUDIAN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF AGGRESSION: RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION

In order to further clarify how the post-Freudian theories and ethics of aggression found in the works of Fromm, May, and Erikson form a distinct alternative to various other options in contemporary science and ethics, it will be necessary to conclude by restating the three post-Freudian positions in comparison with each other and in contrast to selected other positions.

The basic framework of this study was established by the rich and comprehensive work of Freud. It was Freud who first ventured to study aggression in both the microcosm of the clinic and the macrocosm of civilization. Behind the manifestations of aggression in the individual and the collective, Freud analyzed the complex interplay of instinct and environment and reflected on the ethical implications of it all. After considerable study of aggression without the full recognition of its primacy and centrality, Freud finally came to conceive of aggression as a devastating expression of the death instinct and a dangerous discontent of civilization. While the poetic power of the death instinct appealed to many in the humanities, most scientists, including more than a few psychoanalysts, found it laden with logical and empirical difficulties. Even Anna Freud went so far as to suggest

that "if Freud had lived, he would have radically revised his concept of aggression."[1]

The response of the post-Freudians to Freud's concept of the death instinct was similar in spirit to the humanists in that they agreed about the significance of the phenomenon of aggression--it is indeed of fundamental importance to both human nature in general and the twentieth century in particular. Yet the post-Freudians also agreed in substance with the scientists that the death instinct could not be substantiated in scientific terms. So the task before the post-Freudians was how to take aggression as seriously as the humanists desired and at the same time approach it more stringently as the scientists demanded.

In regard to the scientific community, which tended to be polarized around either instinct or environment as an explanation for aggression, the post-Freudians could critically appropriate something from each side and end up with a larger synthesis. From the ethological critique of the death instinct by Lorenz, the post-Freudians[2] find a partial contribution to a more adequate theory. If the death instinct is to be construed as a biological phenomenon in continuity with evolution and the animal kingdom,[3] then the post-Freudians reject it in

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[1]May, Power and Innocence, p. 155.

[2]As we have seen, Fromm and Erikson deal with Lorenz's contribution at considerable length, but May only mentions "both the excellence and the failings" of Lorenz's theory without elaborating on what he considers the excellence to be. May, Power and Innocence, p. 156.

[3]Paul Ricoeur has brilliantly argued the case that the death instinct is to be understood as a metabiological metaphor:

agreement with Lorenz. The conclusion reached by the post-Freudians based on the work of Lorenz and others is that all inherited instincts, including any instinct of aggression, could only have evolved to serve survival functions for both the individual and the species, as the ritualization of animal aggression indicates.

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> No treatise of Freud's is so adventurous as Beyond the Pleasure Principle. The reason is clear: all direct speculation about the instincts, apart from their representatives, is mythical....
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> Why did Freud thus venture, hesitancy matching intransigency, into the area of metabiology, speculation, and myth? It is not enough to say that Freud's theorizing was always in excess of interpretation in every field of investigation. What poses a problem is the quasi-mythological nature of the metabiology. Perhaps it must be supposed that Freud was fulfilling one of his earliest wishes--to go from psychology to philosophy--and that in this way he was setting free the romantic demands of his thought which the mechanistic scientism of his first hypotheses has only masked over.

Riceour, Freud and Philosophy, pp. 311-312. On the other hand, Ernest Becker has presented an equally brilliant case for understanding the death instinct in terms of scientific biology:

> Freud's new idea of the "death instinct" was a device that enabled him to keep intact the earlier instinct theory, now by attributing human evil to a deeper organic substratum than merely ego conflict with sexuality. He now held that there was a built-in urge toward death as well as toward life; and thereby he could explain violent human aggression, hate, and evil in a new--yet still biological--way: Human aggressiveness comes about through a fusion of the life instinct and the death instinct. The death instinct represents the organism's desire to die, but the organism can save itself from its own impulsion toward death by redirecting it outward. The desire to die, then, is replaced by the desire to kill, and man defeats his own death instinct by killing others. Here then was a simple new dualism that tidied up the libido theory, that allowed Freud to keep it as the bulwark of his main prophetic task: to proclaim man firmly embedded in the animal kingdom. Freud could still keep his basic allegiance to physiology, chemistry, and biology and his hopes for a total and simple reductionist science of psychology.

Becker, The Denial of Death, p. 98.

While the post-Freudians generally concur with both Freud and Lorenz that there is a driven quality behind aggressive human behavior, there are disagreements across the board as to what specifically constitutes that drivenness. For Fromm, biological drives play a role in human aggression only in so far as they are the basis of a specific kind of aggression, defensive aggression. Other forms of aggression, such as sadism and necrophilia, are driven by character-rooted passions specific to the pathological possibilities of human existence. For May, the biological drive for aggression is one aspect of the daimonic. If intergrated into the person's consciousness, this drive can be experienced in any of a number of constructive forms of power. If unintegrated, this drive can overpower the person and result in diabolic destruction. For Erikson, at the biological level human aggression may be driven by self-limiting instinctive patterns or non-limiting instinctual forces which are subject to the various and sundry perversities known only to human beings. Perhaps more in agreement with Freud than Lorenz on this issue, the post-Freudians see human drivenness as more powerful and problematic than straightforward analogies between human and animal instinct might suggest.

At the same time the post-Freudians go beyond any of the instinctivists in the large role they assign to the environment as it conditions human aggression. They point to the evidence which shows that cultural variability and historical relativity shape aggression in different ways at different times and places. No theory which adheres only to a constant and universal instinct of aggression can explain the great variety of human aggression not only between cultures but within cultures as well. Individuals vary in their expression of aggression

just as groups do. Yet none of the post-Freudians would argue that the environment shapes aggression or the lack of it to the degree that Skinner does. This is because human beings can think and act not only according to the dictates of the environment, but also against those dictates, if we are conscious of them and are capable of doing so.

Above and beyond the determinisms of both instinct and environment, the post-Freudians recognize a human nature which is to some degree under all conditions partially subject to those determinants, yet also transcends those determinants to the extent that some measure of choice is possible under most conditions and that such choices may change the experience and expression of human aggression. In fact, the freedom characteristic of the post-Freudian viewpoint is, in a sense, even more difficult to achieve and rigorous in nature than that of a freedom affirming biologist or behaviorist because it requires that one take into account the biological, the environmental, and the unconscious determinants of any decision or act which claims to be maximally free.

For the post-Freudians, the reality of aggression and the possibility of freedom in human existence entails a great deal of ethical responsibility. When we do not recognize aggression as part and parcel of human existence, we do not so much eliminate it as much as exacerbate it. Skinner and Rogers wish to eliminate aggression from the human condition, but they are more likely to set the stage for its return in a pathological guise with redoubled force. The signs and symptoms of the uncontrolled aggression that may be stirring in the unconscious of Skinner's culture of behavioral control are more readily evident than the dark side of the daimonic in Rogers' culture of human potential, but the dangers are equally apparent in the capitulation of

freedom to wishes for a total solution in a future culture which would purport to free us from our aggression by binding human freedom itself. Against such authoritarianism, however well intended, Fromm and May claim the ongoing reality of human aggression and the necessity of individual responsibility for aggression as opposed to the group repression of aggression that would be a feature of both behavioral and humanistic utopias.

Falwell and Torres, like Skinner and Rogers, appear to be working for very different kinds of values and goals, but in the final analysis the surface differences are less important than the structural similarities. Falwell claims to be working on behalf of God and the Moral Majority for the freedom of America and Torres claimed to be working on behalf of God and the Army of National Liberation for the liberation of Columbia. In both cases they appeared to be unconscious of the psychosexual and psychosocial determinants (respectively) which may have determined their tendency to attempt to free their group at the expense of another. Without the awareness of the dynamics and dangers of pseudospeciation, Falwell and Torres sought a freedom that obviously entailed aggression, but because of their unconsciously determined totalistic ideologies, the aggression they expressed was necessarily group destructive. With the deeper consciousness of humanity made accessible by the work of Freud and the wider consciousness of humanity made possible by the work of Gandhi, the alternative to the reactionary ideology of Falwell and the revolutionary ideology of Torres would be the species responsibility ethic of Erikson. Movements for freedom, in the name of God or anything else, which target whole groups as the enemy may eventually find themselves very unfree due to their bondage to the

devil of destruction, who is someone for everyone to reckon with in the nuclear age.

When all is said and done about the post-Freudian approach to the problem of aggression, there remains the issue of assessment. What have the post-Freudians achieved with their approach to the problem of aggression and what may be the limits of that achievement?

What the post-Freudians have achieved scientifically is that they have managed to move beyond the instinct-environment or nature-nurture debate on how to conceive the problem of aggression. They have done so by incorporating the partial truth of both extremes in the debate and then have transcended the whole debate by pointing to our humanity as the decisive source of the problem. Neither Lorenz's animals in the wild nor Skinner's animals in the laboratory can even begin to serve as explanatory models for the extremes of human aggression, be it in the form of the saintly self-sacrifice of a Socrates, a Jesus, or a Gandhi, or the demonic sacrifice of others of a Genghis Khan, a Stalin, or a Hitler. Human aggression can be explained more fully with the aid of such concepts as character, existence, or identity, than with instinct and environment alone or in combination.

The limits of the post-Freudian explanatory principles may be seen, strangely enough, against the backdrop of the life and work of the very man whom nearly everyone agrees has little to offer to the contemporary scientific debate on aggression--the ever resourceful Sigmund Freud. Although Freud tended to couch his thinking on such matters as the death instinct in terms of physics, chemistry, and biology, psychoanalysis also had, from the point of Freud's self-analysis onward, an inescapable, if implicit, existential dimension. However historically

dated or conceptually questionable Freud's analogies from the natural sciences may have been, his existential insights have proven to be fertile theoretical soil for later investigators. As Becker has described Freud's genius:

> In the ways we just sketched he was ordinary; in one way he was extraordinary--and it was this that fed directly into his genius: He was extremely self-analytic, lifted the veil from his own repressions, and tried to decipher his deepest motivations to the very end of his life. We remarked previously on what the death instinct might have meant to Freud personally, and this subject is out in the open. Unlike most men, Freud was conscious of death as a very personal and intimate problem. He was haunted by death anxiety all his life and admitted that not a day went by that he did not think about it. This is clearly unusual for the run of mankind ...[4]

Becker himself has done a magnificent job at recovering exactly what the Freudian contribution to a theory of aggression really is when one begins with the existential insights of Freud and the existential premises of Freud's disciple turned dissenter, Otto Rank. In the view of Rank and Becker, it is not a death instinct that generates so much human aggression, but rather a deep-seated fear of death.[5] This death fear is necessarily denied through immortality strivings (character) and symbols (culture) and is given flesh-and-blood expression through sacrifice:

> The reason for this added viciousness is that man compensates for his physical insecurity by psychological tricks, something no other animal can do. And this is what makes man so "naturally" dangerous. Does he fear death? Then he can sacrifice someone else in this place, to "pay off" death, "buy it off," as Rank so penetratingly argued. Man has used sacrifice since pre-historic times just as he has employed ritual cannibalism: to strengthen his life and to banish death by consuming others in his place. The fantastic slaughter by the Assyrian and other emperors had the same motive,

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[4] Ibid., p. 102

[5] See Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death, and Escape from Evil (New York: Free Press, 1975).

> just as the mass murders of Nazism did in our time: kill lavishly to assure one's own life. Could this also explain the propensity to mass murder in modern revolutionary movements? I mean that someone has to pay for the serenity of a utopia cleansed of evil: you build you own life securely on a pile of bodies offered to death. When we consider how terrible man's animal fears are, and how "naturally" he can buy them off psychologically by murderous aggression, it should make us very sober about what is possible from within the painful limits of the human condition ...[6]

Becker's existential Freudianism would add another dimension to all the post-Freudian theories. In reference to Fromm's theory, it would suggest that people not only kill out of an attraction to death, but also due to the denial of death. In reference to May's theory, it would suggest that the ontological interpretation of Freud's death instinct include not only self-destruction, but other-destruction as well. In reference to Erikson's theory, it would suggest that the denial of death necessary for generativity could feed rejectivity as well.[7]

The ethical achievement of the post-Freudians consists in their grasp of the ambiguity of aggression as an essential part of the human condition. In so doing they have moved beyond ethical programs which

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[6]Ernest Becker, The Birth and Death of Meaning, 2d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1971), p. 208.

[7]In regard to the denial of death required by generativity Erikson writes:

> The Hindu concept of the life cycle, as we say, allots a time for the learning of eternal concerns in youth, and for the experience of near-nothingness at the end of life, while it reserves for the middle of life a time dedicated to the "maintenance of the world," that is, a time for the most intense actualization of the erotic, procreative, and communal bonds: in this period of life, adult man must forget death for the sake of the newborn individual and the coming generations.

Erikson, Gandhi's Truth, p. 399.

advocate simple elimination of aggression without respecting human freedom or those which advocate the expression of aggression without responsibility to any and all others.

By recognizing that aggression is part and parcel of human nature and that any program for a truly human peace would need to utilize the human capacity for aggression responsibly, the post-Freudians harken back to that other bearded patriarch of modern psychology, William James. Yet the great problem with James' "moral equivalent of war,"[8] which Fromm[9] and May[10] more or less concur with and Erikson implicitly agrees with in his advocacy of a psychoanalytically chastened Gandhiism, is that it assumes that the rationality and ethical good will of human beings are sufficient resources to redirect the martial virtues from war to peace.[11] In spite of all the reasoned arguments, demonstrations, and even enacted alternatives to war since the rise of civilization, war has clearly proven to be an ever so much more powerful, popular, and persistent institution than its opposition could contend with.

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[8]William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War" in Instead of Violence, ed. Arthur Weinberg and Lila Weinburg (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), pp. 300-304.

[9]Fromm cites James' essay in support of a critique of Lorenz's program that more competitive sports would reduce aggression: "The poverty of what Lorenz has to say about channeling militant enthusiasm becomes particularly clear if one reads William James' classic paper 'The Moral Equivalent of War.'" Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 52.

[10]May, Power and Innocence, p. 173.

[11]James writes: "Extravagant ambition will have to be replaced by reasonable claims ... but I have no serious doubts that the ordinary prides and shames of social man, once developed to a certain intensity,

While the post-Freudians have brilliantly and convincingly argued that it is primarily our human nature and not our animal nature or environment alone that can be our greatest liability in regard to the problem of aggression, it is less clear how or why the rational and ethical assets of that same human nature can necessarily overcome now what it has not overcome for the past five thousand years. Although the use of nuclear technology obviously would entail a greater objective cost to engaging in war than ever before in history, even that fact hasn't made a significant dent in the controlling subjective perceptions and behaviors of the human race in so far as nuclear arms races are just as frantic as any other arms race in history, if not more so.

It may be that a more persuasive approach to solving the greatest of all problems related to aggression would need to begin with a larger conception of human nature than the post-Freudians have given us. While the post-Freudians have shown us that we are animals by virtue of our organismic bodies and humans by virtue of our self-consciousness, it may be a mistake to define our complete human nature by means of only our animal and our self natures. As the transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber points out:

> ... any careful study and interpretation of the stages of meditation as it occurs in present-day practitioners shows that the overall progress of meditation follows precisely, and in order, the higher stages we have numbered 5, 6, 7, and 8. That is to say, successful and complete meditation moves first into the psychic realm of intuition (5), then into the subtle realms of archetypal oneness, light, and bliss (6), then into the causal realms of unmanifest absorption (samadhi) and radical insight (prajna/gnosis, level 7), and finally into the ultimate realm of absolute dissolution of the separate-self sense in form, high or low, sacred

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are capable of organizing such a moral equivalent as I have sketched." James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," pp. 302 and 304.

> or profane, and the simultaneous Resurrection of All-Pervading Life and Spirit (which is prior to self, mind, soul, and world, but which embraces them all in non-dual or Unobstructed Consciousness, level 8).
>
> My point is that there is precisely nothing occult or spooky, let alone psychotic, about true meditation. It is simply what an individual at this present stage or average-mode consciousness has to do in order to go beyond that stage in his or her own case. It is a simple and natural continuation of evolutionary transcendence: just as the body transcended matter, and as mind transcended the body, so in meditation the soul transcends the mind and then the Spirit transcends the soul.[12]

From Wilber's transpersonal perspective, human nature is not necessarily defined by and limited to self-consciousness. Rather, self-consciousness is a phase-specific phenomenon which may be transcended in the development of the individual and the evolution of the species. Since so few individuals have managed to include yet transcend self-consciousness over the course of evolution (and certainly the species in general has not), all the brilliant analyses of self-consciousness by such Western luminaries as Augustine, Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Freud appear to be the last word on human nature. Indeed, from the point of view of a self-consciousness enmeshed in anxiety, guilt, and fear of death, self-destruction and other-destruction do seem to be what we can necessarily expect from "human nature":

> For unfreedom, aggression, and anxiety are not characteristic of the <u>nature</u> of humanity, but characteristic of the <u>separate self</u> of humanity. It is not man's instincts that undo him, but his psychological appetites, and those appetites are a product of <u>boundary</u>, not of biology. The boundary between self and other causes fear, the boundary between past and future causes anxiety, the boundary between subject and object causes desire....
>
> ... For once a boundary is constructed between subject and object, self and other, organism and environment, that self-sense is

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[12]Ken Wilber, <u>Up From Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution</u> (Boulder: Shambhala, 1983), pp. 320-21.

> then inherently unfree and inherently capable of total viciousness to itself and to others out of a sheer reactive panic to its own mortality and vulnerability. This is not natural to human awareness, but it is normal, because all normals possess a separate-self sense. And for the self sense, both repression and oppression are mandatory--not only must the self repress itself, screen out the apprehension of vulnerability and mortality, it must as well oppress others to one degree or another in its own drive to separate self-preservation.[13]

But, for Wilber and many other mystics from both the East and the West, self-consciousness is not the terminal stage in the adventure of consciousness. It may, however, literally turn into a terminal stage if we are unable to begin to transcend it as a species. Beyond self-consciousness and its logic of destructive aggression there is an alternative:

> ... if men and women are truly miserable creatures because they have made death conscious, they can go one step further and--transcending self--transcend death as well. To move from subconsciousness to self-consciousness is to make death conscious; to move from self-consciousness to superconsciousness is to make death obsolete.[14]

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[13] Ibid., pp. 333-35.

[14] Ibid., p. 337. It cannot be stressed enough that Wilber's logic of development and evolution is a logic in which the "higher levels" necessarily build on the "lower levels," so that transcendence to higher levels always includes the lower levels:

> The mystic transcends but includes the lower levels, and no true mystic would ever seek enlightenment for himself while neglecting the reforms that can and must be made on the lower levels of exchange. In fact, this is the difference between the Arhat, who neglects others in his pursuit of self-enlightenment, and the Boddhisattva, who refuses enlightenment until all others can be charitably ministered to and then uplifted to enlightenment. The point is rather that the Boddhisattva is not lured into the illusion that the separate self can be made ultimately comfortable through any isolated activities or reforms in the subjective or objective realms. The mystic solution is an ultimate one, not an intermediate one. Nonetheless, while rightly claiming absolute liberation, it would never shun the relative liberations to be effected in the interim. That, again, is the beauty of the Boddhisattva ideal. While transcending the subject and the object, it neglects neither, includes both, and finds therein a consummate unity.

In the final analysis the post-Freudians take us beyond narrow determinisms and ideologies to the broader perspective of self-consciousness as the key source and solution to the problem of aggression. That is their achievement. Yet that also defines their limit insofar as they do not include an even larger perspective which rises to the peak of self-transcendence.

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Wilber, Up From Eden, p. 334.

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