

CHAPTER II

THE ASSAULT ON FAITH

The ground of faith is not necessarily religious. All that is needed is an appreciation of man as the object of designs superior to mere biological ones. More than an unquestioned belief in revelation or postulates, faith is the feeling of certainty which arises when man attunes reality to his pristine spiritual nature and existential dispositions. But since this implies a degree of maturity—and contrary to fanaticism—universality is at the core of adult faith. And since the reality which faith attunes to is essentially cultural, faith will refer to inherited values, doctrines and praxes, making us trusting them as transcendently correct. Now then, if such things merely depended on our choosing, life would always be meaningful. No such luck: he who loses sight of fundamental truths will wander through life clinging to anti-values and anti-concepts. He who finds away from home the same values he cherishes at home, will not lose his faith. But he who denies and rejects his own, he will not find it no matter where and how intently he looks.

All of the above does not imply attributing to faith atomistically considered the power for identifying the exact nature of the facts of reality. For faith relates more to intuition and introspection, and because even an authentic feeling of faith can be immature. Although reason is neither infallible, it has a formal capacity for identifying epoch-related logical impossibles. Not so faith, whose difference with sheer subjectivity is often the razor's edge. Faith contrary to reason is actually naïveté, ignorance, or a defense mecha-

nism by spirits in state of confusion. In fact, without wisdom—more specifically than without reason—faith alone is the most dangerous of all virtues.

Against alienation

Too many today do not have the courage to defend their values as they should, or lack the knowledge to do it. The first are lacking in faith; the last think there are no rational arguments in their favor, and assume that only faith can support them. But it is those who lack faith who make the ideal prey. There really is an alienation, an identity crisis, which many Westerners suffer. And when they ask themselves what causes their existential discontent, those who want to be punished, the confused and the deserters, shout in unison, Capitalism! And this is the result of the ideological bombardment by the Marxist priests, the intellectual and journalistic left, and others, against the inherited values which man struggles to defend but cannot. The feelings of a full individual do not contradict his rational judgment—at least not to an unsurmountable point—as is the case in the alienated. As he is unable to make judgments which agree with natural law, he develops a dual and contradictory emotional attitude towards the world. In other words, there is a lack of primary praxis due to a lack of faith.

A person subjected to communism is educated by means of anti-concepts from infancy, so that he cannot identify himself with his true nature. This cannot last for too long, unless the play of ideas is abolished and all opposition suppressed. In the West, man has no one but himself to blame for his alienation. Why do the alienated cry out desperately against capitalism? The reason is simple: the capitalist system is the one in which they live. Conflict arises, then, with the inherited values. There is little rebellion against imposed values in the communist countries, because the government strangles the people until they are unable to question anything. When conflict (dissidence) arises, people do not have the means or the will to communicate their ideas, and are condemned to be mental pariahs within a forcibly alienated society.

No over-civilization—the term, like so many others of its kind, is relative—can be blamed for the problem of alienation

in the West; at least, it is not its fundamental cause. But sometimes, it is true, any little thing that meets his eyes alienates the individual. This must be overcome without denying progress. But those who are affected cry out that they are not free, that they are forced to consume what television commands that they consume, and who knows what other idiocies. Since when is jail mandatory for turning off the set, or for not buying what is therein advertised? The propaganda which perpetuates machismo in Latin America, or some ideological and religious propaganda in other parts of the world, is a thousand times more alienating. Customs are para-institutionalizations as good as the values they are based on. But the affected identifies his own ones with manifestations of alienation. And of course, there will be the usual complaints that the worker must sell his services, and similar others which grieve so many. There is no humiliation in that; salaried labor is not a synonym for servitude. In the communist countries there are not alternatives since the state is the buyer by law, and nobody is considered a seller precisely because he has been deprived of his rights. What is all the fussing about? Many come from foreign lands to sell their work in the US, and they are functioning well and happily, neither alienated nor insane. The difference is that they come with faith.

But for some writers like E. Fromm, man under capitalism lives the nightmare of an artificial world, and his sanity is threatened merely by having to choose between ten brands of mayonnaise in the supermarket. Sartre and Fromm believe there is no mental health without state mayonnaise. If the system offers so much to choose from, it is because it produces, and because it works. There is an unlimited number of alternatives and variations in life styles and ways of thinking in Western culture, enough so that man can choose among them for his benefit without surrendering his principles. It is unsound to assume that the depersonalization of Western man is due to his basic philosophy, unless by the latter we mean pragmatism. But no other civilization in history seems to have devalued its own achievements to such a serious degree, not in the East and not in the West. The struggle against this wrong is basically neither political nor economic, but above all spiritual, in character.

Now, the more man has to resort to his innate ability and inventiveness in order to survive, or the more he does so in order to raise his standard of living, the more he will understand the things of this world. If material progress is accompanied by spiritual development, man will tend to become realized as a full individual. That is why machines do not distance man from his nature: they are natural, since they are the product of his mind. Machine is an ample concept—basically a practico-praxical instrument—and it was invented not yesterday but thousands of years ago. The wheel is only a machine which serves the purpose of facilitating work for man. Everything that man creates along those lines is nothing but a machine. But some seem to believe the wheel should never have been invented because relatively, and in the context of the time, its use required more reasoning and judgment than carrying the water on foot or settling along the riverside. As Branden well notes, the more man is able to create concepts and think in abstract terms, the better he understands his surroundings. Then he can obey nature intelligently, not blindly like an animal.¹

According to Fromm, man will free himself of alienation, loneliness and other ills when private property of the means of production is abolished. I believe this is not worth commenting on any more. But it must be mentioned that the loss of personal identity Western man confronts depends on a lack of independent thought and of an integrated set of rational and genuine values, because it is such values which give meaning to life. A psychologically mature man, intelligent and courageous enough not to succumb to the ideological bombardment he is subjected to, may overcome the identity crisis. In other words, it is by obeying his nature that man controls it. But since not everyone is able to do so by himself, that is where education is influential, both in the family and at school. For that same reason, the breakup of the family nucleus predisposes man to alienation. In later life, the lack of projection of ideology and of leaders in the internal politics and in the institutions plays an important role.²

This must be corrected from the beginning, and the inherited values must be reasoned, rediscovered, and inculcated in freedom. This is one of the struggles genuine conservatives are

dedicated to. He who grows up appreciating and respecting these values will rarely suffer an identity crisis or a loss of self-esteem. When man matures and is able to use his reasoning ability to the maximum, he will question them and either accept or reject them. This is the duty of every individual: no man can attain his highest evolution and become a full individual unless he does that. Full personal identity is not achieved by accepting the judgment of others without question. That is certain to make the individual a robot, a conformist, a fanatic, a square, or a prejudiced or intolerant person. Intellectual independence and a true sense of identity cannot be derived merely from the phenomenon of belonging, but man must reach a certain age before he can understand that. While man is in the process of developing his ability to judge correctly, his faith—still immature in this case—and his attachment to traditional values support him. Alienation is a process which begins early in life, and all rational explanations offered in later attempts to help him may not suffice. When faith surrenders, the intellect always follows. And that is when the deserters emerge, desperately looking for something in which to believe, something worth fighting for, away from home. That is why Ronald Reagan said that it was wrong to take God out of the schools. But if the liberals' reply is that such defense aims at forcing behavior which attempts against freedom—for it is truly anti-libertarian to brainwash students with a single model to the point they become incapable of making choices on their own—a multicultural religious education seems the way to go.

We all know that youth rebel, and that the old have a hard time understanding the natural rebelliousness of the young; but the generation gap as a subcultural phenomenon is not a natural consequence of adolescence when it is expressed in an exaggerated and almost self-destructive manner, as was the case with the hippie subculture or with the student rebellion on the Berkeley campus. Modern philosophy in itself is not to blame for its bad products, like the fanatic devotees of alien religions—whom I only criticize for their lack of appreciation for the creed they have inherited—cannot be attributed to Hinduism or Zen Buddhism. The breakup of the family is not the product either of drugs or of pop psychology. The real ori-

gin of all these ills is the loss of faith. Many postulates of the Berkeley rebellion deserve consideration. The only thing which must be mentioned is the fund-raising to finance the enemies of the nation, but not even the ease with which this action was carried out was recognized as freedom. Similar behavior under Communism is considered treason, while in the West is excused for being the product of immaturity.

Perhaps hope lies in the supporters of the status quo, because they have not been affected, and because (even if unconsciously) they respect the inherited values. They are the ones who must be made to see the truth, so that they become combative for the sake of the nomocratic system. Many young people are already on the right path: they do not believe in anti-heroes nor in false humanists. Hope lies in those who constitute the silent majority, like the one who found its voice in rejecting communism in my country. The battle is an ideological one, and it must begin right now.

Mea culpa

The curious *mea culpa syndrome* is a product of the assault on the social and spiritual integrity of Western man. It is a socio-psychological syndrome, primarily affecting males, which makes those affected feel responsible (not so much in themselves as individuals but as a social or ideological group) of all that is wrong around them, and by extension, of all that is wrong with the world. The loss of faith provokes insecurity in man, and makes him doubt the validity of his cultural values. The result is a lowered estimation of his own worth and that of his group.³ If there is poverty in the world, he or his group is responsible. If communists hate him, he is to blame because of his faults and defects. Many end up losing even the will to defend their nation's sovereignty, wondering whether they are truly free. It is obvious that free countries do not enjoy absolute freedom. What we make here are relative judgments: the greater the respect for natural rights, and the more life is lived in accordance with human nature, the greater the freedom. No doubt slave peoples still exist. Correspondingly, other peoples must exist who enjoy a greater degree of freedom.

Nations are like people: sometimes they do not care, sometimes they exaggerate their self-worth, and sometimes they have no self-esteem. None of that is desirable, only maturity is. Maturity is generally identified with the responsibility and emotional stability which come with the years, but it is better manifested in the ability to evaluate self-worth without prejudice. A fundamental sign of maturity is the ability to channel, not oppose, our basic instincts. This is what capitalism, the system of political maturity, does. The man who is afflicted with the *mea culpa* syndrome does not understand that the worst defects attributed to him are actually natural tendencies at his stage of spiritual evolution, so a desire for progress and for making his own talents count, accumulation and the creation of luxuries are labeled greed, selfishness, waste and superfluous spending. By giving him examples of absolute praxis, his enemies render him unable to act orthopraxically. Some, instead of striving for justice, for example, look too far ahead for complete detachment. Thus, the dialectical conflict involved is not transcended by a genuine synthesis and is instead reinteriorized unresolved. The result is not then a rational solution, but an externally imposed behavior. The worse cause for remorse is, of course, being citizen of a great nation. Many great men have been proud to have been the sons of empire. He instead feels guilty, and calls to childish repentance. An empire is a responsibility, and just like individual leadership, carries duties and rights.

Withal, there is something at bottom. It is quite true, for example, that the United States has not acted as it should have with certain peoples, especially in Central America. In general terms, however, it has constituted an empire based on legitimate alliances, and it tends to correct the mistakes that it makes. The syndrome sufferers cannot allow themselves to be on the side of an alleged powerful oppressor, and tend to support every struggle against established authority which is said to be backed by North American imperialism. Even the Europeans, with their greater political sophistication, have fallen into the same trap. We must learn how to distinguish between maintenance of the public order and the present connotations of the term repression. It is clear that established authority is responsible for maintaining order, and that rebel

groups, on the contrary, promote disorder. Established authority must stop all acts of vandalism, and this places it at a disadvantage when the time comes to judge the actions of the conflicting parties. In the Western countries, every mistake or excess of authoritarian allied governments is promptly placed before the public eye, even exaggerated, provoking everything from criticism to boycotts and threats. The same acts committed by the enemy, however, are painted over and promptly forgotten. That is why there is no coordinated action to oppose communist expansion. In Central America, for instance, the attitude of some Western European countries in regard to regional US policy under Reagan was absolutely irresponsible, to say the least. Courageous attitudes, such as that of the wounded Marine, the attitude of much of the new generation, and that of present-day conservatives in the defense of capitalism, make us think a solution is possible.

In all this, the so-called *Vietnam syndrome* deserves special attention. It has been said that the Vietnam war was lost mainly because of corruption. I believe, however, that a lack of faith in the cause was a much weightier factor. The war coincided with the time of the hippies, and of little disposition to make sacrifices. It does not seem, either, that the US army was allowed the praxis needed to fight a hard guerrilla-type war, or that anti-communist allies were prepared for the struggle. This they were in El Salvador, and that should have been exploited as a decisive factor in winning the war by military means. The Vietnam syndrome is no more than another expression of the social malady suffered by the Western nations. Wars must not be fought for trivialities, but failing to fight a war for just cause is even worse. The US army was militarily fit to fight, but was not given all the moral and political support needed to win.

Related to the *mea culpa* syndrome, there also seems to be a willingness to justify certain terrorist actions carried out against US citizens, as in the case of the thirty-nine TWA hostages. While there were those who felt just indignation, others saw the Shiite cause with sympathetic eyes, an attitude which we could accept as a matter of individual feelings after all. But between that and justifying action against innocent people, there is a great divide. Those who were sympa-

thetic to the Shiite cause revealed in part the noble sentiments of the North American people, but also revealed the ideological confusion, political innocence and lack of self-esteem which result from the syndrome under discussion.⁴ They resemble some of the victims of kidnappings in El Salvador, who came out feeling grateful to their guerrilla captors, failing even to understand the assault on their human rights they had been made the objects of. And somehow the feelings of the terrorists come to be placed above those of their victims, enemies before friends, and strangers before our own kind. Only by accepting the challenge and committing to fight all transgressions of individual right can these evils be redressed.

El Salvador experienced a situation similar to the one which ties the hands of free men, the case of the silent majority. It was silent because it was morally defeated. And that was because the communists are very cunning: they will point at real faults, such as corruption and injustice, but extend the blame to others who are not the real culprits, thus paralyzing their will. Denouncing a fault does not make the accuser perfect. Maturing (politically) means to correct rationally the errors of the past. The capture of Grenada was an act of defense, not imperialism. Was Grenada enslaved? Maturing is learning from defeat, such as in Vietnam, where the lesson must not be that we cannot win, but that we must conduct ourselves with greater spirit and will if called to fight again. If every one of our faults made us feel guilty for the rest of our lives, we could never rectify our path or hold our heads high. Few perfect beings have trod this earth; what is important is to choose well now. Thus, if one day a man finds himself on the side of the truth—or what he deems so by his best judgment—and fails to do the right thing only because he has been wrong before, that will be an even greater failure. Nobody wants to support an unjust cause, but just because troops were once sent to impose an imperialist will, that does not mean that troops sent today follow the same designs. Other men and other reasons write history today. The defense of regional interests on the part of the United States of America will be fully justified if it means to defend high principles. But only a man of faith can understand this.

Atheists and religious pariahs

In order to defeat capitalist democracies, it is necessary not only to weaken them in the purely military aspects and in those which properly constitute their ideological essence, but to attack the fundamentals of the Christian faith as well. This is partly achieved through the diffusion of the Marxist ideas themselves, but this may not be enough. It is necessary to infiltrate the Church so that it may itself divide the faithful. That is the mission of liberation theology. We shall go into this matter later.

Now then, there is no justification for the reasons some deserters give for abandoning Christianity and embracing another faith. In time, a universal religion should be supported because each faith is merely an adaptation to what the human mind and heart are able to assimilate at a given historico-cultural moment. Therefore, he who finds the truth in another must not fail to find it in his own. But it so happens that the adoption of another faith usually reveals not the search for the truth, but a desperate seeking which often ends in embracing a new true God. Others grow richer in the knowledge of new religions. These do not abandon their faith but instead identify it with others, adopting other manifestations of worship because of a greater idiosyncratic communication with another culture while not denying their own. What is more, I am convinced that a good background in Oriental philosophy—always so attuned with religion—greatly facilitates an understanding of Christianity. It is a sign of weakness to take offense at the wisdom espoused in another religion, and rejecting such wisdom without even attempting to uncover the kernel of truth in it denotes a closed mind. Buddhism has demonstrated—at least within the sphere of motivations and goals—that the only thing man needs in order to reach holiness and perfection is to transcend to the higher dimensions of Being which dwell within ourselves. Besides, nothing could ever safeguard natural values as much as religious unification.

Now then, when it comes to the counterpart—from the Theosophical Society to Hindu and Buddhist sects—there are those who show an inclination not toward a communion of

faiths, or if only toward challenging certain outdated tenets of the Church, but sometimes even underestimating the stature of Christ.⁵ This type of assault on the faith is most dangerous, because it takes advantage of the ignorance of the masses in matters of philosophy, dazzling them with often simplistic concepts which any diligent student of Western philosophy could challenge, yet still manage to sound impressively wise when uttered. And unfortunately, even though there is generally a good intention, in practice the result is often the creation of a confused and contradictory state of heart and mind, that is, of *religious pariahs*.

We are interested here in the phenomenon of religious desertion because it tends to be accompanied by the desertion of Western values and traditions. Perhaps up to a certain measure this phenomenon is also a consequence of the culture of fashion. When Orientals embrace the Christian faith, they do not generally lose the natural ideological values. Yet that often happens when Christians embrace other faiths, because such cases often reflect a general loss of faith in their culture. This ill afflicts Western man to a greater extent, especially in the large democracies, and is to be feared the most: although libertarian values are not foreign to any enlightened person, they have been better conceptualized and are more highly valued in the West. Marxists, on their part, have attacked religion for its links with nomocratic systems of life instead. They know full well that religion is one of the main bulwarks supporting the faith of man in natural values and institutions. But they cannot fight openly and militantly against it lest they lose adherents or cause rebellions, so they have chosen to get at religion by means of the Church. The assault on religious faith is primary, because no matter what efforts are made to propagate ideological confusion, his faith will always give man the will to fight for the truth. And that is because faith has an objective (and rational) basis which is explicit to the intuition, even if not to the intellect.

I may have overstated my case in branding Marxism and orthodox Marxists the pure crystallization of evil: even though they project upon others their frustrations and psychological unbalances, they may be also sensitive to real injustices. Most likely, the majority of Marxists are simply

ignorant of good—of one of its spheres, that is. In the last instance, perhaps every human shortcoming may be reduced to an ignorance of good. And even though ignorance, being that man is expected to overcome it, does not constitute an excuse, failing to live up to good, when good is known, is even less excusable and no less dangerous to faith. The omission of this important task is one of the most worrisome developments today. The assault on the faith also presupposes an assault on moral values, which is carried out in subtle ways, as for example pretending to defend freedom by acting in behalf of certain groups, such as pro-abortion, in such a way that Western man lets go of his traditional values little by little and then questions his entire life design. This phenomenon, which of course can occur spontaneously to a lesser degree, prepares the ground by undermining the will to defend genuine libertarian ideals. Without faith in what one has inherited, no cause can take firm root.

A good portion of the assault on the faith derives from philosophies which, even though not pursuing any political goals, constitute atheistic intellectual affectations which distort our perception of the sociological implications of religious teachings. B. Russell, for example, asserted that if God is omnipotent nothing can happen against His will, and if sin is the result of disobeying the commandments of God and everything happens according to His will, He must wish for sin to occur. Murder would turn out to be good, and God could not punish those He Himself had caused to sin.⁶ To examine the above from a philosophical viewpoint, I recommend turning to the notes. Our concern here is how such gross conceptions (which he terms logic!) have somehow resulted not only in the rejection but in the deformation and capricious depiction of divine nature. From the presumed desire of God that sin exist, we are led to similar presumptions regarding poverty and injustice, and thus such ideas emerge as that God is unfair to the poor when He wills that there be differences between men, ideas which contribute to the loss of the faith and to the adoption of anti-natural systems of life.

The assaults described in this work are against a form of faith, whose loss apparently also derives from a distortion in the process of reinteriorizing a value. In the global sense, loss

of faith is a contra-cultural phenomenon. That is why atheism, for instance, is not necessarily related to the rejection of the natural system of life, except when it emerges in the said way. In any case, there are atheists which possess more faith and values than many who call themselves believers. The latter often deform what must be divine nature in such a way that all what remains is less faith than blindness and confusion. And as is usually the case, those who are supposed to defend it are most to blame for its loss.

The Catholic Church has become overrationalized, and little by little, mysticism, renunciation, and the appearance of true saints has come to be ever less frequent in its midst. Politicizing the clergy, which made the Church more mundane, was a decisive influence in this regard, and has brought as a consequence the dreadful absence of mystics, which weakens the faith of believers. And it is not that I oppose reason, because I believe that reason is sufficient to defend natural values effectively. But since sophistry abounds, the supraconscious intuition of values is important as an aid in the process of reconceptualizing those values.⁷ Only a fundamentalist church can make the faithful come back to it. True, the divisions of the Church may weaken or strengthen the faith, but what they do undoubtedly destroy is unity, which can be taken advantage of politically. A unity of historic importance which has been destroyed is that between the Jews and the Christians. Let us now look at some aspects of that break.

Of the Judeo-Christian schism

The split of the Christian Church into Catholicism and Protestantism has not been a major problem for the West in the context which concerns us here. The Judeo-Christian schism has, because there are those who believe that the religious differences imply a political conflict. This is not, strictly interpreted, an assault on the faith. But its best defenders may be defamed as a result of the internal struggle.

When Christianity caught fire in the West, the historical event of the crucifixion of Christ and what derived from it generated confrontations that to this day continue to divide two

religions which share a common origin and which most clearly should be one.⁸ The historical struggle, however, has diminished, and the differences do not seem to be mounting. That is not the case, however, when such things appear as the famous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (describing a purported Zionist conspiracy, and a conspiracy of Orthodox leaders and high financiers, against the rest of humanity), almost surely apocryphal writings put into circulation for who knows what purposes. Here we see how an indirect assault on the faith can take place. Assuming their authenticity and an external threat, some Christians tend to generalize and exhaust themselves in efforts worthy of a better cause, dismissing a clearly verifiable conspiracy against humanity being carried out by presumed Christians: liberation theology.

The conspirators, according to the mentioned writing, are said to seek world domination through communism, and that high financial circles seek to ruin landowners, autocrats, the nobility and the bourgeoisie in order to run the Third World into so much debt that it would give rise to revolutions which the conspirators would take advantage of. Marx never seems to have thought in those terms. Actually, his ideas must necessarily involve the assets of the conspirators. An important point mentioned in *The Protocols* is that the destruction of every non-Jewish state must be attempted, fomenting internal revolutions and class hatred behind the shield of a false humanism. How this favors the Jews, however, is difficult to imagine: they certainly did not benefit from the Bolshevik triumph and the defeat of Trotsky, or in Cuba, Nicaragua and Africa, where what really took hold was the imperial rule of the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, the international communist movement is rather markedly anti-Jewish, just like Jews are generally anti-communist. That is why it is said that Zionists themselves are anti-Semitic, when other Jews oppose their plans. The matter then moves into a higher level of political gamesmanship, with the presumed intervention of a sort of world supergovernment and other supranational elements whose analysis does not belong here at the moment. All in all, the search for a government which establishes libertarian principles all around the world may even become a praxical need of the times. But the problem is that—irrespec-

tively of any explanation—the resulting attitude is likely to be generalized distrust. The matter is that a series of mutual accusations has been unleashed—together with abundant literature (of a non-representative nature, whose purposes are difficult to evaluate), most of it worthless—which indirectly hampers a joint ideological pro-libertarian fight.

All racist dreams of world domination are enormously risky, because a loyal army, which can only be a racist army, is absolutely necessary in order to retain power. If power is attained through intrigue, the intriguers will surely find that they were used, rather than that they used others. Some Jews, on their part, have accused Christians of overestimating the communist danger, especially when Nazism surfaced. It is true that the Church should not have kept silent in the face of the Holocaust; but the accusations reached the extreme of asserting that the Vatican had formed an alliance with Hitler. And while Marxists accused Nazis of being pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist, Nazis accused communists of working for the interests of the Jewish great capital. In the face of such a jumble, the only ones to benefit are the communists.

Of course, any conspiracy intent on ruining and subjecting peoples must be combatted. But one must first ascertain it, and then the basis for the struggle must be ideological, political and specific, never racist, religious or generalizing. It is true that the majority of the Jewish people possesses an attitude of such great solidarity that a certain *socialist* tendency surfaces. I consider that a manifestation of a capitalist mentality of the left, with ancient cultural roots, since they clearly defend individual rights on the other hand. Communism also clashes with the principles of the Jewish faith—even attempting to suppress it, as Marx declares unambiguously in *On the Jewish Question*—in denying man the natural rights so clearly defended in the Old Testament.⁹

The schism may be further bridged if strengths are joined in the defense of the principle common to both religions, and if men thus join for the purpose of neutralizing the challenge posed by the enemy. The unification of Jews and Christians, and even more, of all religious men in the world and of all men of true faith, against communism, is imperative today.

Notes

¹Rand, A., *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, Alienation, pp.282-283. New American Library, New York 1967. The thought of E. Fromm on these matters is quite well known, and it should not surprise that it has become popular among left-wing intellectuals. Although not in the same field as others, the work of Fromm exemplifies pop psychiatry. His ideas, which are meant to liberate Western society from alienation, according to him, actually contribute to cause it since they engulf pragmatism and mercantilism within capitalism.

²In the book, *La soledad del hombre* (Monte Avila Editores, C. A., Caracas 1970), there is a chapter written by Fromm, *Alienación y capitalismo*, which does not fail to say some truths: it is a fact that Western man often acquires objects in order to keep them or to show off, although not quite as generally as is implied. Capitalism, however, only guarantees the freedom to buy whatever one wishes, and advertising merely puts the consumer in touch with the products and explains to him their presumed advantages. The ills, such as buying for the sake of buying, must be corrected by extragovernmental institutions. But it places an excessive burden on man to think that he must familiarize himself fully with every object around him which he only uses in an automatic fashion. We could spend our entire lives, and more, merely acquiring the necessary information. Neither is the desire to acquire ever better products reproachable, for it stimulates creativity and creates a natural contentment.

It is incomprehensible how Fromm can say that there are no social laws in capitalism which are based on tradition and political power but merely a clash between particular interests in the market, when it is obvious that such a *clash* has been validated by previously accepted rules. It is precisely when individuals seek their own interests that their activity rules the market. But a truly capitalist market is never anarchic, and the social laws which rule it are those of the oldest political tradition in the world. That is why it should not surprise, as it does Fromm, that the system has bloomed and led to political freedom. If we want Western man to become more interested in the fundamental problems of human existence, let us educate him in the cultural heritage and in the arts. Let us inculcate in him a genuine sense of self-esteem. Psychiatrist that he was, Fromm should have known better than to postulate a sort of exchange neurosis in Western mores. Exchange is never an end in itself, but a means, in capitalist society. Constant buying, for no precise and logical ends, is a sign either of an underlying emotional imbalance or of a lack of profound human aspirations. And the shopaholic is merely manifesting such states, or is using a defense mechanism just like any other in order to combat the inner dissatisfaction which comes from a life spent in search of superficial pursuits. The cure lies in acquiring faith and spiritual values, and that must be achieved within the best socio-political-economic framework of life: the capitalist one.

³At least as a primordial factor, the familial model must influence the choice of a system of life as it must influence its historical origin; within limitations, we can extrapolate from the psychological to the social. In the normal family, familial justice regulates the recognition of both need and merit naturally. In some aspects, that model works within the framework of nomocratic right, where the formative units are primary subjects of good. Socialist planning may originate in the education in a dysfunctional family system

where its members are controlled by a variety of mechanisms damaging to the personality. Just like in socialism, these mechanisms prevent members from achieving their full individuality—with the result that, paraphrasing J. Bradshaw, their private *self* is totally under the control of their public self. This might be the alienation which socialists (especially the envious and the insecure) suffer: statism may occur as a result of despotic or ill-understood paternal authority; works of public welfare resemble hostility disguised as overprotection. The social outcome of this disorder is a system which relegates individuals as primary subjects of right, and puts an aberrant model forged since infancy in their place.

This phenomenon can also be partly attributed to distorted conceptualizations of good, and we must mention another important external alienating factor: drugs. The worst problem of drug addiction is that such substances greatly facilitate introspection, and that can be extremely dangerous for unprepared individuals at vulnerable psycho-social moments. The insight hippies and others believed that they had gained (on such matters as justice, for example) was simply a distorted appreciation of Western cultural values.

⁴As on many others, I am neutral on the Arab-Israeli conflict, because, at least for now, the cause of freedom is not in jeopardy there. Actions such as those we have been discussing, however, are not in any way justifiable. The fact that the US government is an ally of Israel does not excuse taking action against innocent passengers who had nothing to do with the matter. If the hostage-takers wanted to gain the release of the Shiites held by Israel, first it would have been worthwhile to assess what kind of prisoners they were. Then, depending on the case, the next step could have been resorting to diplomacy, or a prisoner exchange. This requires deep knowledge of the prevailing circumstances of the conflict, which is not our place to elucidate. Some expressed an understanding that the Shiites were human beings which nobody denies, and besides, I can understand that human action often springs out of confusion. What makes the hostage-taking condemnable is that, had Israel not agreed to release its prisoners, the hostages would have been executed. And even though a happy outcome was reached, and the plan fulfilled, risking the physical integrity of the hostages and the mental well-being of their relatives was inadmissible.

⁵Let the presumed *astral voyage* to a meeting in the Himalayas suffice as an example: a ceremony takes place there which culminates in the apparition of a Buddha dwarfing even the mountains, with Jesus (as Lord Maitreya) performing only the preparation rituals for the big climax. I will not, however, stop even to consider of the nature of the event itself—a self-induced collective hallucination, or an astral fabrication in any case (serious claims of extracorporeal experiences must keep an objective correlate to the facts of the world), prompted by the mythology elaborated by H. P. Blavatsky and her followers, although some of her insights could prove worthy on the other hand—and will instead delve somewhat into more theological matters. Alan Watts, well known through *The Yoga Journal* and other widely circulated periodicals, is a convenient focus point. He accuses Christians of anthropomorphizing God in depicting Him as a bearded gentleman looking down from Heaven, or as an Architect of everything that exists, and scorns them for believing that He made man in His image and likeness, giving rise to the ceramic concept of Creation. Strangely, however, he forgets that, according to the Upanishads, the illusory manifestation of the world arose

from Brahman (Unmanifest Being), which fits broadly with the concept of Creation. More to the point, every conception of God is anthropomorphic, since everything man is capable of knowing carries his seal, only that here concepts tend to be more bound to his subjectivity, more anthropomorphic in that sense. This need not imply misrepresentation of the nature of reality, for in addition to what has been stated elsewhere, in the context which concerns us, the knowing beings and objects of knowledge would share in the highest essence, and since knowledge might be, ultimately, self-awareness.

If we can at all come to know God, we must admit, within the framework just cited, His similarity to us. Otherwise neither God nor His messengers would have ever made clear that when we act from love or justice, we act in accord with His nature and will. The a different degree, all Creation presents an isomorphism of sorts with the absolute. There is a contradiction of elemental logic in denying the resemblance of man to God, and in accepting (as Watts accepts) the pantheistic Oriental concept that *I am God*. Is Watts saying that man is God, but does not resemble Him? On the other hand, if the ceramic concept of Creation can be said to define Christianity, Hinduism is not far behind. Let us remember that in Hindu mythology, the universe arose from the mouth and the limbs of a sacrificial primeval man. In other version, the unmanifested original being is portrayed as a man. Afraid of his loneliness, this being splits his body in two, giving rise to a wife which assumes the form of a cow, which whom he copulates under the form of a bull (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 4: 1-4). "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye...?"

The most serious accusation Watts makes is when, based on the Judeo-Christian belief that nothing occurs if it is not the will of God, he states that since there is evil, God must have created it in order to punish man. This is a weak point of the theological dualism. But Watts defends Hindu beliefs by defining pantheism as the feeling that every role in the drama of life is played by the Supreme Lord. This, if we take the same biased stand, would lead to something *worse*: God is not only the creator of evil, but its incarnation, since He plays a role in every facet of life. Within an objective monistic perspective, this only implies that God expresses His inferior contents in the world and as-world. But in the way that Watts conceives it, God actually seems to be the generator of evil. Watts sees the Judeo-Christian God as a vengeful one, punishing those who do not follow His commandments, and asserts that Buddhism does not contain similar precepts. Yet, when man does not follow the middle way, is he not condemned to an eternal cycle of reincarnation and death? Of course, in Buddhism there is no condemnation in the sense of an external punishment. But neither in the correct exegesis of Christ preaching, which is that bad deeds turn things against us, *even God*, only as a consequence of our contradiction of Truth, not because any formal non-compliance with an established set of rules. Christ merely uses' his native cultural elements to show the consequences of transgressing the laws of nature. But this subject must wait a future publication.

Watts also takes up such matters as the impossibility of liberation as long as man persists in believing the illusion of his body. This is like saying that the effect-illumination in short-is real, but that the cause-at least within certain parameters, the human body-is not, or that *atman* (our ultimate spiritual reality, God in ourselves) acts through an illusion to return to Brahman. If the world is necessary substrate for such a goal, it seems rather farfetched to postulate that the reality of spiritual evolution

will develop from the unreality of Manifestation. Believing that the human body is real has not stood in the way of sainthood for many great Christian mystics. Besides, let us remember that a radical (absolute idealist) illusory concept of *maya*, is shared only by a few Hindu philosophers today, and that Buddhism in its origins constituted a basically phenomenological doctrine. The concept of *maya* may be valid in portraying the relationship between phenomenon and *noumenon*, and man's attachment to his inferior nature, or in showing the transcendence of the separatedness of spatio-temporal realities in the absolute.

Rather than relying on institutional (Church) interpretations and tenets, extrapolating to a trans-cultural context the words of the great religious leaders is the best way of appreciating the perfection of such words, and tends to avoid falling into Chauvinism, which is precisely the most dangerous assault on faith. The belief that only our own religion possesses the ultimate truth, or that only our maximum spiritual leader is the highest incarnation of the divinity or the only son of God, is of such nature that it implies the inferiority of any religion or *Avatar* that may exist through the whole universe, and that even extraterrestrial beings of high spiritual evolution would need to be converted into our own faith. In His historico-cultural framework, Christ had to preach that He was the only way to the Father. Otherwise His words would have sounded empty and even detrimental for the faith of unprepared audiences.

⁶Russell, B., *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, An outline to intellectual rubbish p.79. Simon and Schuster, New York 1961. It is truly incredible how superficially Russell delved into matters of this sort. Curiously, such an argument has been cited in a similar form by some Communist philosophers with other intentions, as G. Lukacs does in *El asalto a la razón*. Both criticize the idea of a God subject, like men, to passions, when it is clear that ascribing wishes, complacency, anger and other emotions to God is simply a way of conveying a theo-cosmological parallelism. Such criticism makes sense only against a dualist theology, not when God is viewed from the monistic perspective, which should have been considered here. In such a case, the mentioned parallelism expresses the essential unity of two of the existential planes of Being, and helps us to open the door for identifying pantheism as conveying the objectivist notion of God. Being cannot be fragmented, but since its multiple expressions are transcended in the absolute, we can refer to this as God. The absolute itself remains as a motor force but without any spatio-temporal configuration, and man can only begin to grasp its expressions with the aid of an expanded consciousness, or through incarnations of the kind *Supreme Personality or Logos*. Thus, God desires nothing, not as a person separated from Being. Nothing moves Him, pleases or angers Him, because everything is transcended in the eternal presence of Being. Divine wishes, ire and satisfaction reflect the accord or discord of human behavior with *trans-absolute truth*, a definitive existential state we can only grasp in anthropomorphic terms. This state stands for the revealed and necessary—though impossible to represent—final transcendence of Being, which implies the redressing of evil into a univocally good Essence.

Within the monistic theological context of the creator-creation relationship (which seems to me the most adequate for, among other reasons, thus we avoid making God smaller than Being) the nature of the absolute includes the occurrence of evil—even though historically man is the one to introduce (moral) evil, the latter is present forever in an all-encompassing

nunc—which acquires meaning only vis a vis human existence, and is an indispensable requisite for evolution. For sure, evil's dynamics by itself never leads to good. But evil is always an occasion for good to take place, and a necessary condition for its intelligibility. Thus, in the divine plan, or the cosmological manifestation of Being, evil exists only as an inferior manifestation of nature, which simply has to run its course. That means it is not desired by God. What is *desired*—in the sense that it constitutes the inevitable evolutionary way to return to Him (the absolute nature)—is that evil be superseded by free will, for which the plan culminates in the appearance of a superior nature (self-consciousness) capable, in encompassing it, of transcending the inferior one. Thus, in the ultimate sense (within the ontological category of fulfillment), punishment and evil do not exist, even as error or aberration, everything being perfection and blessing.

Russell first accepts the existence of an absolute being in order to discuss it, and then attempts to frame it within uncritical dualistic concepts. As I said, I use the latter for illustration purposes, not because I actually believe in a personal God, capable of such things as possessing and giving. Christ references to God as a loving Father must be taken in the context of the epoch and the culture, but also in that of praxis, that is, as a pastoral need to reform the previous idea of a dreadful Creator. To me, Christ concept has provided man with an invaluable psychological tool for attuning his soul with the higher spheres of Being, not with any apodictic reason to identify a metaphysical fact. Assuming the latter from an uncritical account of His words reveals an excessive methodological simplicity. Probably the closest insight we can get of God's nature relates to the absolutization of consciousness. Thus, it would be man's participation in absolute nature which would judge his worldly actions in terms of attaining spiritual evolution according to their transcendence. Such must be the theological essence in this matter, open to polemic for various reasons which do not merit analysis here. Of course, the subject is worthy of discussion on another level, accepting or denying the existence of God, but the problem is irrelevant for our present concerns.

⁷It is difficult to outline supraconscious intuition because very few people are able to attain the states in which it is manifested. We could, however, see it as an immediate knowledge of essence that—based on certain personal experiences and diverse references—I will briefly describe as constituting an expanded field of direct perception and intuitional sensitivity in which opposites are transcended and, at least in a certain dimension of reality, the distinction between subject and object is lost, that is, a state approaching unity with the whole.

Intuition and reason are two complementary forms and sequential steps of knowledge. As Kant said, concepts without intuitions are empty, and intuitions without concepts are blind. We must then investigate why there are such notably different ways of looking at things, especially in our field of interest. One possible explanation lies in accepting a diversity of ways of feeling or being impressed by our own psychological processes. Another option is to assume a distortion—we will not deal here with the possibility of distinct praxical requirements related to different degrees of spiritual evolution or diverse natural dispositions—in the cognitive process which resides neither in intuition nor in reason themselves. I favor the second alternative because the first one makes it impossible to make judgments in terms of true and false as well as good and evil, thus being inconsistent with the objectivist tenets, with the fundamental principles of psychology and

with moral, philosophical and religious precepts, which ascribe man a basic identity and the existence of truth. According to the second explanation, there is probably an error in the formation of the concept due to a distortion in the most primitive elaboration on the *given*: on our subject, the immediate value and moral data of consciousness. The origin and nature of such distortion is obscure, and therefore fertile soil for theorization. The gist of the matter is that this distortion is susceptible of correction by reaching spiritual heights, which is precisely where the highest intuitive states occur, and these would constitute new and solid bases for reconceptualization.

Still, mystics differ on these as well as on other matters, even though they are presumably capable of eliminating intellectual content to the point where knowledge achieves its original purity, and of grasping the thing in itself when they are left strictly with the given. That does not seem to be sufficient, then, to develop a finished concept, much less a doctrine, nor is it capable by itself of surmounting the factor which leads to the distortion of the idea. One difficulty we run across all the time—and a matter of concern for everyone who defends the cause of freedom—is the doctrine of non-judgment, to which several lay and religious Western philosophers have surrendered. It argues that in judging we introduce our egos and our own particular programming, thus distorting reality; that we must blame, not the sinner, but the sin; and that there are only circumstances to be understood, which cannot be judged as either true or false. The last is particularly said of ideological differences and of justice. The necessary corollary of such a doctrine—in the context which concerns us, that is, anything that involves action as a determinant or modifier of events of rather worldly character—is non-action, which, unless it occurs precisely as the absolute praxis of action, would impede the fulfillment of many worthy goals. Christ commands us to withhold judgment in order to exalt the virtue of humility. He never proclaims that the truth cannot be known or that it is equally shared. Christ, and the saints of Christendom, have severely judged man and his motivations. And men have never been considered equal in the Hindu religion which implies no more and no less than a judgment.

Some will say that only the common man is precluded from judging. But it would seem that what is ultimately demanded from man is discernment. As I see it, the crux of the matter lies in that sin can be judged in its abstract sense but it exists only in specific entities: the sinners—unless we accept a sort of Platonic forms. Thus, the problem with judging does not reside in the act itself, but in that we fail to temper judgment with charity, anathematizing the defects of the others, but not our own, when it is not up to man to pronounce the last judgment. Yet we are asked to accept unquestioningly that their doctrine of non-judgment is not a product of their own programming. In fact, there are acceptable ways of programming the ego, especially the subconscious. Attributing everything that ails man to the separation of the I from the non-I is exaggerated, since all we have to negate are the inferior expressions of Being, and since the negation of individuality is, ultimately, a fact of rather metaphysical than of moral or dispositional character. It is actually by affirming our individuality that we are capable of such expressions as I love, I obey, I forgive... The origin of such a doctrine could lie in a misinterpretation of the spatio-temporal realities, based on an intuitive experience of unity in which every moment or part can be extrapolated to the whole—having, so to say, the same validity. In the world qua world, that would make truth lose all of its meaning. To preach non-action is to

preach surrender to inertia and the forces of evil. The triumph of good must be the product of an act through a judgment and a decision. That is what happened in Kuruksetra, that is what happens every time man historicizes spirituality, and that is what happens every time man comes close to God. Non-action is acceptable only at a utopian social level as the absolute praxis of action—or, sometimes, in the sense of letting nature to express itself *homeopathically*, letting oneself just being—but endorsing it for every state of spiritual evolution constitutes a clear breakdown of orthopraxis. If God has preached one truth, it is because that truth can be known, not as circumstance but as something with its own content which excludes the false. We can accept evil as an error, but if we accept the existence of error we are duty bound to act in order to correct it and make truth prevail. He who says that God has not preached that creates a terrible obstacle for the realization of His plan on Earth, and undermines the faith in natural values and the will to defend them.

⁸Even though Christ was a most exalted being, His personality did not satisfy the longings of the Jewish people, leading to their rejection of Him as the Messiah. Because two thousand years ago they were subjected to the rule of Rome, and they dreamed of a warrior, or at least Davidic Messiah who would come to liberate them. But as it turned out, the presumed Messiah offered a different kind of liberation, based on renunciation and love; and while there undoubtedly were ascetic mystics among the Jews, their moral code based on the Ten Commandments does not ascribe special importance to this aspect of life. Christ demanded strict obedience to transcendent laws, and the Jews (the common people) were intent on regaining their rights as men—for the sake of simplicity, let us disregard their unified concept of body (or ego) and soul.

Although Christ was not explicit on the matter, His life and preaching bear a predominant feeling of universality and mega-fraternity—crystallized later in Paul's praxis—that may have appeared to some to clash with their concept of a covenant with God as the chosen people. But at that point His choice would have been better understood in terms of the privilege thereby granted of the Messiah being born in their midst. The Jewish orthodoxy also opposed Christ on doctrinal matters. Among other things, they did not approve of His working on the Sabbath, and that He called Himself the Son of God—the *Son of Man* to be precise. The Pharisees, strict doctrinaires and unaware of the subtleties of religious praxis, were His most bitter critics because Christ put Himself above the Law, although the difficulty this represented could have been overcome if they had understood that the time had come to expand on Revelation. We must also take into account that their rejection was influenced by the fact that Christ was gaining so many followers; according (if I remember correctly) to Luke, and to John (when he quotes Caiphas), the Jews feared indiscriminate retaliation by the Romans. If we look at the matter in context, we shall see that there is no room for hard feelings, and the whole thing was a sorry episode more to be blamed on the times and the circumstances.

⁹Marx, K., *The Portable Karl Marx*, "On the Jewish Question." Penguin Books, New York 1983. In this work, Marx states his opposition not only to Judaism as a religion, but to any attempt by the Jews to enforce their rights. He directly deem them selfish, and calls on them to work for the emancipation of all of humanity (p.96). We already know what Marx meant by that.