

gifts which the average person, psychotic or nonpsychotic, lacks.

In discussing the pathology of narcissism it is important to distinguish between two forms of narcissism—one *benign*, the other *malignant*. In the benign form, the object of narcissism is the result of a person's effort. Thus, for instance, a person may have a narcissistic pride in his work as a carpenter, as a scientist, or as a farmer. Inasmuch as the object of his narcissism is something he has to work for, his exclusive interest in what is *his* work and *his* achievement is constantly balanced by his interest in the process of work itself, and the material he is working with. The dynamics of this benign narcissism thus are self-checking. The energy which propells the work is, to a large extent, of a narcissistic nature, but the very fact that the work itself makes it necessary to be related to reality, constantly curbs the narcissism and keeps it within bounds. This mechanism may explain why we find so many narcissistic people who are at the same time highly creative.

In the case of malignant narcissism, the object of narcissism is not anything the person does or produces, but something he *has*; for instance, his body, his looks, his health, his wealth, etc. The malignant nature of this type of narcissism lies in the fact that it lacks the corrective element which we find in the benign form. If I am "great" because of some quality I *have*, and not because of something I *achieve*, I do not need to be related to anybody or anything; I need not make any effort. In maintaining the picture of my greatness I remove myself more and more from reality and I have to increase the narcissistic charge in order to be better protected from the danger that my narcissistically inflated ego might be revealed as the product of my empty imagination. Malignant narcissism, thus, is not self-limiting, and in consequence it is crudely solipsistic as well as xenophobic. One who has learned to achieve cannot help acknowledging that others have achieved similar things in similar ways—even if his narcissism may persuade him that his own achievement is greater than that of others. One who has achieved nothing will find it difficult to appreciate the achievements of others, and thus he will be forced to isolate himself increasingly in narcissistic splendor.

From Erich Fromm *The Heart of Man*

Interesting Perspectives on Narcissism

A Heuristic that Generates Much Error

We have so far described the dynamics of individual narcissism: the phenomenon, its biological function, and its pathology. This description ought to enable us now to understand the phenomenon of *social narcissism* and the role it plays as a source of violence and war.

The central point of the following discussion is the phenomenon of the transformation of personal into group narcissism. We can start with an observation about the sociological function of group narcissism which parallels the biological function of individual narcissism. From the standpoint of any organized group which wants to survive, it is important that the group be invested by its members with narcissistic energy. The survival of a group depends to some extent on the fact that its members consider its importance as great as or greater than that of their own lives, and furthermore that they believe in the righteousness, or even superiority, of their group as compared with others. Without such narcissistic cathexis of the group, the energy necessary for serving the group, or even making severe sacrifices for it, would be greatly diminished.

In the dynamics of group narcissism we find phenomena similar to those we discussed already in connection with individual narcissism. Here too we can distinguish between benign and malignant forms of narcissism. If the object of group narcissism is an achievement, the same dialectical process takes place which we discussed above. The very need to achieve something creative makes it necessary to leave the closed circle of group solipsism and to be interested in the object it wants to achieve. (If the achievement which a group seeks is conquest, the beneficial effect of truly productive effort will of course be largely absent.) If, on the other hand, group narcissism has as its object the group as it is, its splendor, its past achievements, the physique of its members, then the countertendencies mentioned above will not develop, and the narcissistic orientation and subsequent dangers will steadily increase. In reality, of course, both elements are often blended.

There is another sociological function of group narcissism which has not been discussed so far. A society which lacks the

means to provide adequately for the majority of its members, or a large proportion of them, must provide these members with a narcissistic satisfaction of the malignant type if it wants to prevent dissatisfaction among them. For those who are economically and culturally poor, narcissistic pride in belonging to the group is the only—and often a very effective—source of satisfaction. Precisely because life is not “interesting” to them, and does not offer them possibilities for developing interests, they may develop an extreme form of narcissism. Good examples of this phenomenon in recent years are the racial narcissism which existed in Hitler’s Germany, and which is found in the American South today. In both instances the core of the racial superiority feeling was, and still is, the lower middle class; this backward class, which in Germany as well as in the American South has been economically and culturally deprived, without any realistic hope of changing its situation (because they are the remnants of an older and dying form of society) has only one satisfaction: the inflated image of itself as the most admirable group in the world, and of being superior to another racial group that is singled out as inferior. The member of such a backward group feels: “Even though I am poor and uncultured I am somebody important because I belong to the most admirable group in the world—I am white”; or, “I am an Aryan.”

Group narcissism is less easy to recognize than individual narcissism. 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. (What the majority of people consider to be

"reasonable" is that about which there is agreement, if not among all, at least among a substantial number of people; "reasonable," for most people, has nothing to do with reason, but with consensus.) Inasmuch as the group as a whole requires group narcissism for its survival, it will further narcissistic attitudes and confer upon them the qualification of being particularly virtuous.

The group to which the narcissistic attitude is extended has varied in structure and size throughout history. In the primitive tribe or clan it may comprise only a few hundred members; here the individual is not yet an "individual" but is still united to the blood group by "primary bonds"¹⁰ which have not yet been broken. The narcissistic involvement with the clan is thus strengthened by the fact that its members emotionally have still no existence of their own outside of the clan.

In the development of the human race we find an ever increasing range of socialization; the original small group based on blood affinity gives way to ever larger groups based on a common language, a common social order, a common faith. The larger size of the group does not necessarily mean that the pathological qualities of narcissism are reduced. As was remarked earlier, the group narcissism of the "whites" or the "Aryans" is as malignant as the extreme narcissism of a single person can be. Yet in general we find that in the process of socialization which leads to the formation of larger groups, the need for co-operation with many other and different people not connected among themselves by ties of blood, tends to counteract the narcissistic charge within the group. The same holds true in another respect, which we have discussed in connection with benign individual narcissism: inasmuch as the large group (nation, state, or religion) makes it an object of its narcissistic pride to achieve something valuable in the fields of material, intellectual, or artistic production, the very process of work in such fields tends to lessen the narcissistic charge. The history of the Roman Catholic Church is one of many examples of the peculiar mixture of narcissism and the counteracting forces within a large group. The elements counteracting

¹⁰ Cf. the discussion of primary bonds in E. Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1941).

narcissism within the Catholic Church are, first of all, the concept of the universality of man and of a "catholic" religion which is no longer the religion of one particular tribe or nation. Second, the idea of personal humility which follows from the idea of God and the denial of idols. The existence of God implies that no man can be God, that no individual can be omniscient or omnipotent. It thus sets a definite limit to man's narcissistic self-idolatry. But at the same time the Church has nourished an intense narcissism; believing that the Church is the only chance of salvation and that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, its members were able to develop an intense narcissism inasmuch as they were members of such an extraordinary institution. The same occurred in relation to God; while the omniscience and omnipotence of God should have led to man's humility, often the individual identified himself with God and thus developed an extraordinary degree of narcissism in this process of identification.

This same ambiguity between a narcissistic or an antinarcissistic function has occurred in all the other great religions, for example, in Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism. I have mentioned the Catholic religion not only because it is a well-known example, but mainly because the Roman Catholic religion was the basis both for humanism and for violent and fanatical religious narcissism at one and the same historical period: the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The humanists within the Church and those outside spoke in the name of a humanism which was the fountainhead of Christianity. Nicholas of Cusa preached religious tolerance for all men (*De pace fidei*); Ficino taught that love is the fundamental force of all creation (*De amore*); Erasmus demanded mutual tolerance and a democratization of the Church; Thomas More, the nonconformist, spoke and died for the principles of universalism and human solidarity; Postel, building on the foundations laid by Nicholas and Erasmus, spoke of global peace and world unity (*De orbis terrae concordia*); Siculo, following Pico della Mirandola, spoke enthusiastically of man's dignity, of his reason and virtue, and of his capacity for self-perfection. These men, with many others growing from the soil of Christian humanism, spoke in the name of universality,

brotherliness, dignity, and reason. They fought for tolerance and peace.¹¹

Against them stood the forces of fanaticism on both sides; that of Luther and that of the Church. The humanists tried to avoid the catastrophe; eventually the fanatics on both sides won. Religious persecution and war, culminating in the disastrous Thirty Years' War, were a blow to humanist development from which Europe has still not recovered (one cannot help thinking of the analogy of Stalinism, destroying socialist humanism three hundred years later). Looking back to the religious hatred of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its irrationalities are clear. Both sides spoke in the name of God, of Christ, of love, and they differed only in points which, if compared with the general principles, were of secondary importance. Yet they hated each other, and each was passionately convinced that humanity ended at the frontiers of his own religious faith. The essence of this over-estimation of one's own position and the hate for all who differ from it is narcissism. "We" are admirable; "they" are despicable. "We" are good; "they" are evil. Any criticism of one's own doctrine is a vicious and unbearable attack; criticism of the others' position is a well-meant attempt to help them to return to the truth.

From the Renaissance onward, the two great contradictory forces, group narcissism and humanism, have each developed in its own way. Unfortunately the development of group narcissism has vastly outstripped that of humanism. While it seemed possible in the late Middle Ages and at the time of the Renaissance that Europe was prepared for the emergence of a political and religious humanism, this promise failed to materialize. New forms of group narcissism emerged, and dominated the following centuries. This group narcissism assumed manifold forms: religious, national, racial, political. Protestants against Catholics, French against Germans, whites against blacks, Aryans against non-Aryans, Communists against capitalists; different as the con-

¹¹ Cf. the excellent work by Friedrich Heer, *Die dritte Kraft* (S. Fischer Verlag, 1960).

tents are, psychologically we deal with the same narcissistic phenomenon and its resulting fanaticism and destructiveness.¹²

While group narcissism grew, its counterpart—humanism—also developed. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—from Spinoza, Leibniz, Rousseau, Herder, Kant, to Goethe and Marx—the thought developed that mankind is one, that each individual carries within himself all of humanity, that there must be no privileged groups claiming that their privileges are based on their intrinsic superiority. The First World War was a severe blow to humanism, and gave rise to an increasing orgy of group narcissism: national hysteria in all the belligerent countries of the First World War, Hitler's racialism, Stalin's party idolization, Muslim and Hindu religious fanaticism, Western anti-Communist fanaticism. These various manifestations of group narcissism have brought the world to the abyss of total destruction.

As a reaction to this threat to humanity, a renaissance of humanism can be observed today in all countries and among the representatives of diverse ideologies; there are radical humanists among Catholic and Protestant theologians, among socialist and nonsocialist philosophers. Whether the danger of total destruction, the ideas of the neohumanists and the bonds created between all men by the new means of communication will be sufficient to stop the effects of group narcissism is a question which may determine the fate of mankind.

The growing intensity of group narcissism—only shifting from religious to national, racial, and party narcissism—is, indeed, a surprising phenomenon. First of all because of the development of the humanist forces since the Renaissance, which we discussed earlier. Furthermore, because of the evolution of scientific thought which undermines narcissism. The scientific

¹² There are other more harmless forms of group narcissism directed toward small groups like lodges, small religious sects, "the old school tie," etc. While the degree of narcissism in these cases may not be less than in those of the larger groups, the narcissism is less dangerous simply because the groups involved have little power, and hence little capacity to cause harm.

method requires objectivity and realism, it requires seeing the world as it is, and not distorted by one's own desires and fears. It requires being humble towards the facts of reality, and renouncing all hopes of omnipotence and omniscience. The need for critical thought, experimentation, proof; the attitude of doubting—these are characteristic of scientific endeavor, and they are precisely the methods of thought which tend to counteract the narcissistic orientation. Undoubtedly the method of scientific thinking has had its effect on the development of contemporary neohumanism, and it is not accidental that most of the outstanding natural scientists of our day are humanists. But the vast majority of men in the West, although they have "learned" the scientific method in school or at the university, never really have been touched by the method of scientific, critical thinking. Even most of the professionals in the field of the natural sciences have remained *technicians*, and have not acquired a *scientific attitude*. For the majority of the population, the scientific method they were taught has had even less significance. Although it may be said that higher education has tended to soften and to modify personal and group narcissism to some extent, it has not prevented most of the "educated" people from joining enthusiastically the national, racial, and political movements which are the expression of contemporary group narcissism.

It seems that, on the contrary, science has created a new object for narcissism—*technique*. Man's narcissistic pride in being the creator of a formerly undreamed-of world of things, the discoverer of radio, television, atomic power, space travel, and even in being the potential destroyer of the entire globe, has given him a new object for narcissistic self-inflation. In studying this whole problem of the development of narcissism in modern history, one is reminded of Freud's statement that Copernicus, Darwin, and he himself deeply wounded man's narcissism by undermining his belief in his unique role in the universe and in his consciousness as being an elementary and irreducible reality. But while man's narcissism has been wounded in this manner, it has not been as greatly reduced as would appear. He

has reacted by transferring his narcissism to other objects: nation, race, political creed, technique.

Concerning the *pathology of group narcissism*, the most obvious and frequent symptom, as in the case of individual narcissism, is a lack of objectivity and rational judgment. If one examines the judgment of the poor whites regarding Negroes, or of the Nazis in regard to Jews, one can easily recognize the distorted character of their respective judgments. Little straws of truth are put together, but the whole which is thus formed consists of falsehoods and fabrications. If political actions are based on narcissistic self-glorifications, the lack of objectivity often leads to disastrous consequences. We have witnessed during the first half of this century two outstanding examples of the consequences of national narcissism. Many years before the First World War it was the official French strategic doctrine to claim that the French army did not need much heavy artillery or a large number of machine guns; the French soldier was supposed to be so endowed with the French virtues of courage and offensive spirit that he needed only his bayonet to defeat the enemy. The fact is that hundreds of thousands of French soldiers were mowed down by German machine guns, and that only German strategic mistakes and later American help saved France from defeat. In the Second World War, Germany made a similar mistake. Hitler, a man of extreme personal narcissism, who stimulated the group narcissism of millions of Germans, overestimated the strength of Germany and underestimated not only the strength of the United States, but also the Russian winter—as had another narcissistic general, Napoleon. In spite of his cleverness, Hitler was not capable of seeing *reality objectively*, because his wish to win and to rule weighed more heavily for him than the realities of armaments and climate.

Group narcissism needs satisfaction just as individual narcissism does. On one level this satisfaction is provided by the common ideology of the superiority of one's group, and the inferiority of all others. In religious groups this satisfaction is easily provided by the assumption that *my* group is the only one which believes in the true God, and hence since *my* God is

the only true one, all other groups are made up of misguided unbelievers. But even without reference to God as a witness for one's superiority, group narcissism can arrive at similar conclusions on a secular level. The narcissistic conviction of the superiority of whites over Negroes in parts of the United States and in South Africa demonstrates that there is no restraint to the sense of self-superiority or of the inferiority of another group. However, the satisfaction of these narcissistic self-images of a group requires also a certain degree of confirmation in reality. As long as the whites in Alabama or in South Africa have the power to demonstrate their superiority over the Negroes through social, economic, and political acts of discrimination, their narcissistic beliefs have some element of reality, and thus bolster up the entire narcissistic thought-system. The same held true for the Nazis; there the physical destruction of all Jews had to serve as proof of the superiority of the Aryans (for a sadist the fact that he can kill a man proves that the killer is superior). If, however, the narcissistically inflated group does not have available a minority which is sufficiently helpless to lend itself as an object for narcissistic satisfaction, the group's narcissism will easily lead to the wish for military conquests; this was the path of pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism before 1914. In both cases the respective nations were endowed with the role of being the "chosen nation," superior to all others, and hence justified in attacking those who did not accept their superiority. I do not mean to imply that "the" cause of the First World War was the narcissism of the pan-German and pan-Slavic movements, but their fanaticism was certainly one factor which contributed to the outbreak of the war. Beyond this, however, one must not forget that once a war has started, the various governments try to arouse national narcissism as a necessary psychological condition for the successful waging of the war.

If the narcissism of a group is wounded, then we find the same reaction of rage which we have discussed in connection with individual narcissism. There are many historical examples for the fact that disparagement of the symbols of group narcissism has often produced rage verging on insanity. Violation of

the flag; insults against one's own God, emperor, leader; the loss of a war and of territory—these have often led to violent mass feelings of vengeance which in turn led to new wars. The wounded narcissism can be healed only if the offender is crushed and thus the insult to one's narcissism is undone. Revenge, individual and national, is often based on wounded narcissism and on the need to "cure" the wound by the annihilation of the offender.

One last element of narcissistic pathology must be added. The highly narcissistic group is eager to have a leader with whom it can identify itself. The leader is then admired by the group which projects its narcissism onto him. In the very act of submission to the powerful leader, which is in depth an act of symbiosis and identification, the narcissism of the individual is transferred onto the leader. The greater the leader, the greater the follower. Personalities who as individuals are particularly narcissistic are the most qualified to fulfill this function. The narcissism of the leader who is convinced of his greatness, and who has no doubts, is precisely what attracts the narcissism of those who submit to him. The half-insane leader is often the most successful one until his lack of objective judgment, his rage reactions in consequence of any set-back, his need to keep up the image of omnipotence may provoke him to make mistakes which lead to his destruction. But there are always gifted half-psychotics at hand to satisfy the demands of a narcissistic mass.

We have so far discussed the phenomenon of narcissism, its pathology, and its biological and sociological function. As a result we might come to the conclusion that narcissism is a necessary and valuable orientation, provided it is benign and does not transcend a certain threshold. However, our picture is incomplete. Man is not only concerned with biological and social survival, he is also concerned with *values*, with the development of that by virtue of which he is human.

Looking at it from the standpoint of values it becomes evident that narcissism conflicts with reason and with love. This statement hardly needs further elaboration. By the very nature

of the narcissistic orientation, it prevents one—to the extent to which it exists—from seeing reality as it is, that is, objectively; in other words, it restricts reason. It may not be equally clear that it restricts love—especially when we recall that Freud said that in all love there is a strong narcissistic component; that a man in love with a woman makes her the object of his own narcissism, and that therefore she becomes wonderful and desirable because she is part of him. She may do the same with him, and thus we have the case of the “great love,” which often is only a *folie à deux* rather than love. Both people retain their narcissism, they have no real, deep interest in each other (not to speak of anyone else), they remain touchy and suspicious, and most likely each of them will be in need of a new person who can give them fresh narcissistic satisfaction. For the narcissistic person, the partner is never a person in his own right or in his full reality; he exists only as a shadow of the partner’s narcissistically inflated ego. Nonpathological love, on the other hand, is not based on mutual narcissism. It is a relationship between two people who experience themselves as separate entities, yet who can open themselves to and become one with each other. In order to experience love one must experience separateness.

The significance of the phenomenon of narcissism from the ethical-spiritual viewpoint becomes very clear if we consider that the essential teachings of all the great humanist religions can be summarized in one sentence: *It is the goal of man to overcome one’s narcissism.* Perhaps this principle is nowhere expressed more radically than in Buddhism. The teaching of the Buddha amounts to saying that man can save himself from suffering only if he awakens from his illusions and becomes aware of his reality; the reality of sickness, old age, and death, and of the impossibility of ever attaining the aims of his greed. The “awakened” person of whom Buddhist teaching speaks is the person who has overcome his narcissism, and who is therefore capable of being fully awake. We might put the same thought still differently: Only if man can do away with the illusion of his indestructible ego, only if he can drop it together with all other objects of his greed, only then can he be open to the world

and fully related to it. Psychologically this process of becoming fully awake is identical with the replacement of narcissism by relatedness to the world.

In the Hebrew and Christian traditions the same goal is expressed in various terms which also mean the overcoming of narcissism. The Old Testament says: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Here the demand is to overcome one's narcissism at least to the point where one's neighbor becomes as important as oneself. But the Old Testament goes much further than this in demanding love for the "stranger." (You know the soul of the stranger, for strangers have you been in the land of Egypt.) The stranger is precisely the person who is not part of my clan, my family, my nation; he is not part of the group to which I am narcissistically attached. He is nothing other than human. One discovers the human being in the stranger, as Hermann Cohen has pointed out.¹³ In the love for the stranger narcissistic love has vanished. For it means loving another human being in his suchness and his difference from me, and not because he is like me. When the New Testament says "love thine enemy" it expresses the same idea in a more pointed form. If the stranger has become fully human to you, there is also no longer an enemy, because *you* have become truly human. To love the stranger and the enemy is possible only if narcissism has been overcome, if "I am thou."

The fight against idolatry, which is the central issue of prophetic teaching, is at the same time a fight against narcissism. In idolatry one partial faculty of man is absolutized and made into an idol. Man then worships himself in an alienated form. The idol in which he submerges becomes the object of his narcissistic passion. The idea of God, on the contrary, is the negation of narcissism because only God—not man—is omniscient and omnipotent. But while the concept of an indefinable and indescribable God was the negation of idolatry and narcissism, God soon became again an idol; man identified himself with God in a narcissistic manner, and thus in full contradiction to the

¹³ H. Cohen, *Die Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Frankfurt-am-Main: F. Kaufman, 1929).

original function of the concept of God, religion became a manifestation of group narcissism.

The full maturity of man is achieved by his complete emergence from narcissism, both individual and group narcissism. This goal of mental development which is thus expressed in psychological terms is essentially the same as that which the great spiritual leaders of the human race have expressed in religious-spiritual terms. While the concepts differ, the substance and the experience referred to in the various concepts are the same.

We live in a historical period characterized by a sharp discrepancy between the intellectual development of man, which has led to the development of the most destructive armaments, and his mental-emotional development, which has left him still in a state of marked narcissism with all its pathological symptoms. What can be done in order to avoid the catastrophe which can easily result from this contradiction? Is it at all possible for man to take a step in the foreseeable future which, in spite of all religious teachings, he has never been able to take before? Is narcissism so deeply ingrained in man that he will never overcome his "narcissistic core," as Freud thought? Is there then any hope that narcissistic madness will not lead to the destruction of man before he has had a chance to become fully human? No one can give an answer to these questions. One can only examine what the optimal possibilities are which may help man to avoid the catastrophe.

One might begin with what would seem to be the easiest way. Even without reducing narcissistic energy in each person, the *object* could be changed. If *mankind*, the entire human family, could become the object of group narcissism instead of one nation, one race, or one political system being this object, much might be gained. If the individual could experience himself primarily as a citizen of the world and if he could feel pride in mankind and in its achievements, his narcissism would turn toward the human race as an object, rather than to its conflicting components. If the educational systems of all countries stressed the achievements of the human race instead of the achievements of an individual nation, a more convincing and moving case could be made for the pride

in being man. If the feeling which the Greek poet expressed in Antigone's words, "There is nothing more wonderful than man," could become an experience shared by all, certainly a great step forward would have been taken. Furthermore, another element would have to be added: the feature of all benign narcissism, namely, that it refers to an achievement. Not one group, class, religion, but all of mankind must undertake to accomplish tasks which allow everybody to be proud of belonging to this race. Common tasks for all mankind are at hand: the joint fight against disease, against hunger, for the dissemination of knowledge and art through our means of communication among all the peoples of the world. The fact is that in spite of all differences in political and religious ideology, there is no sector of mankind which can afford to exclude itself from these common tasks; for the great achievement of this century is that the belief in the natural or divine causes of human inequality, of the necessity or legitimacy of the exploitation of one man by another, has been defeated to the point of no return. Renaissance humanism, the bourgeois revolutions, the Russian, Chinese, and colonial revolutions—all are based on one common thought: the equality of man. Even if some of these revolutions have led to the violation of human equality within the systems concerned, the historical fact is that the idea of the equality of all men, hence of their freedom and dignity, has conquered the world, and it is unthinkable that mankind could ever return to the concepts which dominated civilized history until only a short time ago.

The image of the human race and of its achievements as the object of benign narcissism could be represented by supranational organizations such as the United Nations; it could even begin to create its own symbols, holidays, and festivals. Not the national holiday, but the "day of man" would become the highest holiday of the year. But it is clear that such a development can occur only inasmuch as many and eventually all nations concur and are willing to reduce their national sovereignty in favor of the sovereignty of mankind; not only in terms of political, but also in terms of emotional, realities. A strengthened United Nations and the reasonable and peaceful solution of group conflicts are

the obvious conditions for the possibility that humanity and its common achievements shall become the object of group narcissism.¹⁴

Such a change in the object of narcissism from single groups to all mankind and its achievements would indeed tend, as pointed out before, to counteract the dangers of national and ideological narcissism. But this is not enough. If we are true to our political and religious ideals, the Christian as well as the socialist ideal of unselfishness and brotherhood, the task is to reduce the degree of narcissism in each individual. Although this will take generations, it is now more possible than ever before because man has the possibility to create the material conditions for a dignified human life for everybody. The development of technique will do away with the need for one group to enslave and to exploit another; it has already made war obsolete as an economically rational action; man will for the first time emerge from his half-animal state to a fully human one, and hence not need narcissistic satisfaction to compensate for his material and cultural poverty.

On the basis of these new conditions man's attempt to overcome narcissism can be greatly helped by the scientific and the humanist orientations. As I have already indicated, we must shift our educational effort from teaching primarily a technical orientation to one that is scientific; that is, toward furthering critical thought, objectivity, acceptance of reality, and a concept of truth which is subject to no fiat and is valid for every conceivable group. If the civilized nations can create a scientific orientation as one fundamental attitude in their young, much will have been gained in the struggle against narcissism. The second factor which leads in the same direction is the teaching

¹⁴ As an example of more specific measures for such an attempt, I want to mention only a few suggestions. History textbooks should be rewritten as textbooks of *world history*, in which the proportions of each nation's life remain true to reality and are not distorted, just as world maps are the same in all countries and do not inflate the size of each respective country. Furthermore, movies could be made which foster pride in the development of the human race, showing how humanity and its achievements are the final integration of many single steps undertaken by various groups.

of humanist philosophy and anthropology. We cannot expect that all philosophical and religious differences would disappear. We could not even want this, since the establishment of one system claiming to be the "orthodox" one might lead to another source of narcissistic regression. But even allowing for all existing differences, there is a common humanist creed and experience. The creed is that each individual carries all of humanity within himself, that the "human condition" is one and the same for all men, in spite of unavoidable differences in intelligence, talents, height, and color. This humanist experience consists in feeling that nothing human is alien to one, that "I am you," that one can understand another human being because both share the same elements of human existence. This humanist experience is fully possible only if we enlarge our sphere of awareness. Our own awareness is usually confined to what the society of which we are members permits us to be aware. Those human experiences which do not fit into this picture are repressed. Hence our consciousness represents mainly our own society and culture, while our unconscious represents the universal man in each of us.¹⁵ The broadening of self-awareness, transcending consciousness and illuminating the sphere of the social unconscious, will enable man to experience in himself all of humanity; he will experience the fact that he is a sinner and a saint, a child and an adult, a sane and an insane person, a man of the past and one of the future—that he carries within himself that which mankind has been and that which it will be.

A true renaissance of our humanist tradition undertaken by all religions, political, and philosophical systems claiming to represent humanism would, I believe, result in considerable progress toward the most important "new frontier" that exists today—man's development into a completely human being.

By presenting all these thoughts I do not mean to imply that teaching *alone* can be the decisive step for the realization of

¹⁵ Cf. E. Fromm, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); and *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, "The Credo Series," planned and edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962; and New York: Pocket Books, 1963).

humanism, as the Renaissance humanists believed. All these teachings will have an impact only if essential social, economic, and political conditions change; a change from bureaucratic industrialism to humanist-socialist industrialism; from centralization to decentralization; from the organization man to a responsible and participating citizen; subordination of national sovereignties to the sovereignty of the human race and its chosen organs; common efforts of the "have" nations in co-operation with the "have-not" nations to build up the economic systems of the latter; universal disarmament and availability of the existing material resources for constructive tasks. Universal disarmament is also necessary for another reason: if one sector of mankind lives in fear of total destruction by another bloc, and the rest live in fear of destruction by both blocs, then, indeed, group narcissism cannot be diminished. Man can be human only in a climate in which he can expect that he and his children will live to see the next year, and many more years to come.