

The Psychological Roots of War and Destruction

Erich Fromm



Fromm was a regular lecturer at the New York YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association), today named 92NY (since it is located at 92nd Street in New York). In April 1963, Fromm gave three lectures there on «The Psychological Roots of War and Destruction», of which the first and the third lecture are accessible as audio recordings via Pacifica Radio Archives (California). (The recording of the second lecture is listed as missing.) The lectures show a closeness in content to the first three chapters of Fromm's 1964 book

The Heart of Man. The recordings also contain excerpts from the ensuing discussions, which are not reproduced here. Martha and Cornelia Bergler of the Erich Fromm Institute in Tübingen have prepared a transcript, which is published here for the first time. The editing was done by Søren Lorenzen and Rainer Funk. Editorial addition and omissions are indicated by [brackets]; also the subheadings were brought in by the editor. The non-gender-appropriate use of «man» for «human being» was retained, as was the labeling of colored people as Negroes. (Rainer Funk)

The topic of these lectures is the psychological roots of war and destructiveness, and I feel I ought to make some comment about this title in order to avoid a number of misunderstandings. Somebody could think that the title implies the idea that the causes for war are essentially of a psychological nature.

About the causes of war

Many people have said in the past and today, that men are so full of destructiveness that, therefore, wars are the result of this psychic disposition of theirs. I do not believe this. I do not believe that the essential causes of war are of psychological nature or that war can be explained psychologically.

I think the essential causes of war are of a political, economic and social nature and are to be found in the structure of the world — in the political and social structure of the world. In fact, while there are some murderers in the world, as we all know, they are relatively rare, and I would almost say astonishingly rare considering the views we hear sometimes about the deep destructiveness of men which leads to war. Most of the soldiers who kill in war would never kill a single human being. And they kill not because of their destructiveness.

I want to quote here a very interesting article, which just has been published in the magazine *Judaism* [Winter 1963], published by the American Jewish Congress, by an Orthodox Rabbi [Aaron Samuel] Tamaret, who died in 1931 and who wrote about war and peace and nationalism.¹ He gives the very interesting interpretation of a famous sentence by the Prophet Isaiah where he says that nation shall not raise its sword against nation. And Rabbi Tamaret says indeed only a nation can raise its swords against a nation. Only when people are organized in nations and therefore each individual member uses his full humanity in his approach to members, to human beings belonging to another nation, only then are they capable of raising a sword against other people. If they would act, not as members of nations, not as people who recognize that the law of the nation is a supreme law, then, if they would act in that way, then indeed very few people would raise their sword or whatever it is against another human being.

But nevertheless, saying that wars are not caused by hostility, destructiveness, aggressiveness of man does not mean that the problem of aggressiveness, hostility is immaterial or negligible. Because while I assume that wars are not caused by it, wars would also not be possible unless men were ready to fight, just as war would not be possible if there were no weapons. There is obviously some human material, some human substance, some human tendencies, which make it possible for war to occur. It is not necessarily so, that this human tendency which makes war possible is primarily a hostility. We shall discuss that a little later.

Religious and philosophical aspects: Man — wolf or sheep?

It may just be the sheeplike nature of men to follow their leaders and to believe any nonsense they are told. But nevertheless, it is also undoubtedly a

1 [See also Fromm's Letter to the Editors of *Judaism*, entitled «Religious Humanism and Politics» and published in *Judaism. A Quarterly Journal*, New York, Vol. XII (Spring 1963), pp. 223-224 = Fromm 1963i.]

phenomenon which is relevant to the possibility of war — this phenomenon of aggressiveness and destructiveness. And therefore, I think it is important — in a time which is threatened by a more terrible destructiveness than the human race has been ever confronted before — to consider the problem: What is human hostility? What is human destructiveness? Is it true, what Hobbes said, and what some theologians say today in different words, that «homo homini lupus»? That one man acts and feels like a wolf to another man? We might then raise the question: is man sheep, or is man wolf? Indeed, much is to be said for the idea that man is sheep. He's easily influenced, easily follows [his] leaders, [and] believes any kind of nonsense, provided it is told to him either harshly or with a sweet tongue of persuasiveness. And those who have a conviction of their own are rare and always have been rare. Indeed, a book, which was read by many, *The Nation of Sheep* [1961 by William Lederer], makes it very clear. That today, in spite, or maybe because of the education, which everybody enjoys, we behave like sheep. And then, indeed, we might say Hobbes was quite wrong. Man is not at all a wolf. He's a sheep who follows. But then a good case can also be made for the idea that man is not a sheep at all, but is a wolf. Because why is it after all, that man's history is so different from the history of sheep? At least I'm not speaking now scientifically about sheep — I'm speaking symbolically, if you please. In a way, sheep impress us in their daily lives when we see them.

The history of man is a history written in blood. It's a history of force and violence. It's a history of roods and exploitation of those who cannot kill by those who have the power to kill. All that does not look like a sheep-like existence. And yet, the arguments on both sides, whether man is sheep or whether man is wolf, leave one puzzled. It is true: we all have seen truly destructive persons. We know them, we have experienced them, and we have seen if one or a group of truly destructive persons gains the power in a state or in a nation, that then he may have the will and the capacity of killing millions and millions of people. But then, are the true killers, the ones whom we see in our daily lives, our neighbors, are most of them killers? I don't think so. I don't think that's our experience. Should we say perhaps then that most of our neighbors are just wolves in sheep's clothing? That they repress their true nature of wanting to kill and to destroy, and only when they have an opportunity like in war, their true nature breaks out and then they become the real killers?

Well, that is possible. And yet, even that is not entirely convincing because we find so many people who, while they would not sacrifice their lives in order not to kill, nevertheless abhor and repel the acts of senseless killing and brutality. Of course, a psychoanalyst might say, «That just proves the point.» They are disgusted because they like it. But with this kind of logic one can prove

almost anything. And unless one has very good evidence indeed, I think this is an explanation which is not legitimate.

Or should we assume then [that] there are really two races: the wolves and the sheep among men; and that the sheep act like wolves simply because they are sheep, namely because they follow? And when the wolves are in power and when the wolves shout loud, then the sheep follow and act as if they were wolves. That's possible, too.

But at any rate, it remains a puzzling question, and, in fact, it has been a puzzling question for several thousand years in the Western civilization. It has been, in fact, one of the most fundamental questions in the history of Western philosophy and especially theology: Is man good or evil? And by evil, one would understand, is he corrupt? — if we speak theologically; is he destructive? — if we speak psychologically.

Let me only mention briefly the history of this problem in theological thinking. Essentially, in the Jewish tradition, in the Old Testament, in the later Jewish tradition, man is not conceived as being evil, man is not presumed to be corrupt. In fact, his first act [is] of disobedience, which in Christian thinking has given rise to the idea that man is corrupt. In Jewish philosophy of history, innocence [is] the first act of freedom; it is the beginning of human history and man redeems himself in the process of history. Or rather, I shouldn't say he redeems himself, he *can* redeem himself. Because according to Jewish thought, man has always the choice, as it is once put in the Bible: «I put before you today blessing and curse, life and death. You choose life.»

Man has both possibilities and in the whole historical process, he can give birth to himself or he can destroy himself. It remains his choice, although this choice is determined by many factors. And it is especially determined by one factor which we see so clearly in the history of the liberation from Egypt. There, the Bible says, that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Well, obviously it would be rather incongruent with any picture we find [of God] in the Bible; that he maliciously harmed the heart of the man whom he wanted to liberate — the Jews, the Hebrews. Obviously, what the sentence means is, that God did not interfere with the natural process. And the natural process is that our heart hardens with every evil deed we do. And it hardens to a point of no return if you continue. And our heart softens — but that is an unpopular term these days among many people, who otherwise think they're good Christians or Jews for that matter — by any good thing we do, by any loving act we do. And we are indeed increasingly determined by the very acts we commit. And when our heart is hardened completely, then indeed it will not change anymore. This is Biblical philosophy and I think it is also a very true picture of what happens in man, what happens in all of us.

Now, in the Christian tradition, the concept of the evilness of man was first one of two opposite views. One concept was — and that was the Augustinian concept, which eventually worn out in Christian theology — that man has been corrupted by Adam's sin. Adam's sin not only touched him, but all future generations, and man can be saved from this intrinsic corruption only by the act of grace, by an act of grace by God. But there was, before this view became generally accepted, the view of Pelagius, who said that man is not corrupt, that he is corrupt only by bad example. That Adam's sin corrupted only him and not the future generations. Or, to quote a sentence of his: «If I ought, I can. And I'm not determined by Adam's sin, by something which happened to a given person.» Pelagius said [this] more radically, [and] Caelestius continued really the older Jewish tradition; but they were defeated in Catholic thought, which accepted the idea of original sin, which is one of the main differences really, or became one of the main differences, between traditional Jewish and Catholic thinking.

But the viewpoint of the prophets, the viewpoint of Pelagius, had a renaissance, and it had this renaissance in the Renaissance; that is to say, in Renaissance humanist thinking. From the 15th and 16th century on in Europe there is a new vision of man: the vision of man as, first of all, a man of dignity, a man with the potentiality of goodness. And there is a new idea, namely that of history, which becomes, like in the Old Testament, the dimension in which God reveals himself and in which man becomes fully human. From Renaissance thinking on until the 19th century, we find the idea that history is a dimension in which man gives birth to himself, and he can give birth to himself because he is not basically corrupt.

Cassirer has pointed to the fact that the Renaissance humanists, of course, could not challenge directly and overtly the Augustinian dogma of the corruption of man and could not openly be adherents of Pelagius. But he points out that he undermined the Augustinian theory and, in reality, or, let us say, virtually, they stayed close to Pelagius' thinking. But then, when the church lost power in the 16th or relatively so in the 17th century, in the 18th and 19th century, then indeed it was one of the essential points of modern thoughts to overcome the thought of the inherent corruption of man and to claim that man can be good.

Of course, nobody will, maybe not nobody, but most people, were not so dumb naive to claim that man is good. This is something which the evidence shows us all the time is not true. But the problem is not whether man is good, [but] whether man can be good, whether man has a potentiality to develop himself to a point where he is good, which means where he loves life rather than destruction, where he prefers to construct, to build, to unite rather than to destroy.

Perhaps I could mention here two of the great thinkers of the Renaissance, which are very characteristic for this spirit I was talking about. For instance, Manetti wrote in a book *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* (*On the Dignity and Excellence of Man*). He wrote there that man is free, great and dignified. While in contrast to him, Pope Innocent III., the representative of papal, of medieval papal-absolutism, wrote a book with the title: *De miseria humanae vitae* (*On the Misery of Human Life*), which proclaims exactly the opposite: man is dead, he is weak and unstable and hence he must be directed by strong authorities. Or let me remind you of a philosopher, with whom more of you will be acquainted with, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who, in *Oratio de Hominis Dignitate* (*On the Dignity of Man*), wrote: «Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have we created thee, so that thou mightest be free according to thy own will and honor, to be thy own creator and builder. To thee alone we gave growth and development depending on thy own free will. Thou bearest in thee the germs of an universal life.»

This idea then you'll find developed from Pico della Mirandola to Leibniz, Spinoza, Herder, Goethe, [and] Marx in the whole humanistic tradition from the 15th to 16th century on; and in men like Schweitzer or Einstein or Russell, the great humanists of our days, you find the same tradition, the same philosophy. But it is not the purpose of these lectures to talk about the philosophical problem. I want to talk more empirically about what is human hostility [and] what is human destructiveness.

Types of human destructiveness

The main point here is that we refrain from making generalizations, that we [do not] talk about hostility in general, about evil in general, [or] about corruption in general; but rather that we try to differentiate between various phenomena which are quite different and which unfortunately are too often confused with each other. And this is really the main topic of these lectures. I want to speak about several types and kinds of hostility and destructiveness as I see it. I do not claim that this is necessarily a complete enumeration or classification. It is the one which seems to me touches upon the most important categories of hostility and destructiveness. I want to talk in these lectures about five, if you don't mind — it seems kind of funny to talk about five, it might be seven or nine or three — but I arrived at five different types of hostility.

(1) The first one I would call *playful aggression*. By which I mean [...] aggression which is not really aggression, but which is a display of skill, and in this sense has a playful character.

- (2) Secondly: *reactive aggression*, an aggression which is a reaction to threats to life and freedom — my own, that of others, and so on.
- (3) Third, what I have called *compensatory hostility*, which is an aggression which is not anymore in the service of life, but which compensates for the failure to be fully alive [and] which compensates for the phenomenon of impotence — and [by] impotence I don't mean here in the sexual sense, but in the much more important general sense of human impotence.
- (4) The fourth type of aggression which I shall talk about is what I have called *necrophilous aggression*. I shall have to do a lot of explaining about this concept, and I shall try to do so; right here I shall only say, I mean by that the kind of aggression which is rooted in the one true perversion that exists in life, and that is the law of death.
- (5) And eventually I shall talk about the fifth type of aggression which I have called a *narcissistic aggression*, by which I mean the type of destructiveness which occurs as a reaction to the wounding of a person's narcissism, provided this narcissism is rather intense. Again, I shall have to explain, and I shall try to later in these lectures, what is meant by narcissism and why the wounding of narcissism creates so much aggression; and why this narcissism is not just an individual phenomenon — it would be innocent then — but why narcissism is a root of one of the most dangerous phenomena which we observe in life and that is of nationalism.

(1) Playful aggression

There's not too much I have to say about what I called a *playful aggression* — aggression as display of skill and virility. You find it in many primitive tribes. You find it in the not that primitive groups of students [fraternities], especially in Germany, who try to hit each other, not out of hostility, but to have the mark of bravery in their face for the rest of their lives; but certainly not because they hate each other. You have it in a highly developed form, let us say, in a phenomenon like the art of swordsmanship in Zen Buddhism. Their swordsmanship is one of the highest skills, just like the performance of the tea ceremony is one of the highest skills.

I remember a discussion we once had with Doctor Suzuki where we kind of critically asked him that, after all, how did sword-fighting go together with a general Buddhist philosophy of compassion and lack of violence? Doctor Suzuki said, well, really there is no violence, no aggression in Zen Buddhist sword-fighting. It just happens that the opponent who is killed was in the wrong place. In other words, the idea is that if both partners were equally

skilled, nobody would ever be killed. It is not, according to the theory of matter, of wanting to kill anybody but of displaying such skill that if the opponent is not skilled enough by accident he will be killed, but not by my intention. Of course, this is a very fine line. But then very few of us know what a master of anything feels, whether he is a master of the tea-ceremony, or master of swordsmanship, or master of living for that matter. So I'm mentioning this only because here you will find, in a highly sophisticated form, the idea that an act which sounds like real aggression, sword-fighting, which could lead and often does lead to the death of a man, is actually supposed to be completely unaggressive; because it is nothing but the display of skill, and the result of this, the death of a man, is entirely incidental.

You find, incidentally, the same thing in children. You find a good deal of aggressiveness in children, which is self-affirmation, which is display of skill. And naturally, you might find that for many people, especially if they have good coordination and many other physical qualities, display of skill in the sphere of fighting is perhaps one of the few areas in which they can display skill and hence are eager to do it there. This playful aggression — aggression as gamesmanship — is to be found in many places, but it is not really the great social problem; [it] has probably not too much to do with war. Although, I would say, it is not entirely to be separated from the phenomena of war either. When the «mass psychosis» seizes upon a nation, then indeed a nation may be as proud of its better sorts of cannon or atom bombs as a little boy is about the big stick he has found. Except this has indeed nothing to do with the mastery with which the Zen master in swordsmanship displays his instrument.

(2) Reactive aggression

The second type of aggression, the one which I called *reactive aggression*, is much more frequent and perhaps one of the most significant causes of war, or conditions of war I should rather say, inasmuch as human motivation is concerned. Here we find aggression as a reaction to a threat to one's life, dignity, freedom, [or] property; to one's own life, to that of one's family, of one's neighbor, of one's nation. Only very few people feel that aggression when the life of the human race is at stake; it seems [in that circumstance] people are more peaceful than they are when their own life is at stake.

It is indeed a question which is debatable — whether it is permissible to kill somebody to save my life, or my family's life, or my nation's life. As you all know, the pacifists believe even then it is not permissible; even then, killing is an act which cannot be tolerated. There may be others who say it is permissi-

ble, perhaps, but it remains evil. But at any rate, whatever one's view is on the merits of killing in order to save life, there can be no doubt that aggression, which is a reaction to attack and the aim of which is saving life, is something in the service of life and not in the service of death. That it is different from those acts of aggression which I shall speak now.

Before I come to the other types of aggression, I must mention one thing which is rather self-evident, and that is that wars are usually fought because people are made to believe that they are defending their lives, or their freedom, or their dignity, or their property, or the lives of their families and their fellow men. In the last 100 years there was, I don't think any war — except wars against very, very small nations like Ethiopia where it wasn't necessary to find a rationalization or good motive — there were very few wars which were not conducted on both sides with the reasoning that this war was a defense of freedom. The First World War, which was a war of the most senseless killing of people, was presented to all nations as a war to save freedom and to save peace. And it was just fortunate for the governments concerned that on the one hand were the Russians and on the other hand was the German emperor. Because of that, the Germans could believe they were fighting for freedom because they were fighting the Czar, and the French could believe that they were fighting for freedom because they were fighting the Kaiser. It is a matter which is difficult to decide who was better [or] who was worse. But as the treaty of every side showed, neither one was fighting for freedom but was fighting to gain certain territories, which they had promised each other before or when the war had started.

The fact that most governments feel obliged to tell their people that they are fighting for their freedom shows, obviously, that you just don't get people to kill and to go into war unless this motivation is made plausible to them, unless they are instilled with a feeling that they are attacked. In other words, it is important to see that while, indeed, a person can be aroused to fight and to kill in order to save his life or the life of others, as far war [is] concerned, the threat is usually manufactured. But since governments cooperate in this manufactured threat, the manufactured threat becomes a real threat. Because once the war starts or once it is about to begin, then indeed the lives of both sides are threatened.

Perhaps this aggression in the defense of life is a very natural human phenomenon. It might not be the highest form of moral or spiritual behavior, but certainly it's not the lowest either. But it is also the most dangerous thing, because governments indeed have a possibility of presenting the situation in such a way that this relatively innocent form of hostility is aroused and then becomes one of the least innocent and most dangerous sources for the possibility of war.

(3) Compensatory hostility

Now let me speak about the next form of aggression, which leads us into that form of hostility which is not in the service of life anymore; which is rather, I would say, a symptom of the failure of life, and by that I am referring to what I call *compensatory aggression*. To explain this term and the concept I'm talking about here, I should begin to say something rather general. Each man has a wish to achieve something — to leave his mark, as it were, in the world around him, in his life, to reach an aim, to influence others, to produce something, to create something which is his own individual creation. This may be in its most natural and fundamental form in the level of sex, it may be in the intellectual level, in the artistic level, in any kind of production, in the wish to move and to influence a person whom I love or a person whom I talk to, with whom I am together. Or in the most common form, perhaps, at least to influence my own children in some way, as we say to educate them, to teach them something, to help them develop into good people — at least that's what most of us want.

But to do this, to fulfill this aim of influencing, moving, touching another person to fulfill this aim one has to use one's *own powers*. One has to be productive in some fashion. [Or to put it like Marx:] If you want to be interesting, you must be interested. If you want to be loved, you must love. You must make use of your own human powers, your artistic powers, intellectual powers, and emotional powers. You must use your own powers to move anything. You must give an example if you want to influence somebody. But here comes the important phenomenon that while we all want to create something, many of us are impotent. Now, sexual impotence is relatively rare, relatively speaking; you can go to a doctor and that might help. And it's actually a trick of nature, probably, and biologically very understandable, that so few people are sexually impotent, because that would be a real danger to the survival of the human race.

Impotence in a more general human sense is very, very frequent indeed. In its most pathological forms, it is what we in psychopathology would find as complete detachment in schizoid sense, or depression, or a sense of emptiness. In less pathological forms, we find it in so many of us, namely those hidden forms of impotence in which life doesn't make sense, in which one has no hope, in which one has no aim, in which one has no vision. One lives as a brave and courageous man or woman because it is embarrassing and shameful not to live. But one really lives without the sense of potency, without the sense that one changes something.

Now you will find that in people, in every one of us, that when we are particularly interested in something, in an aim, let us say, that our children

behave in a certain way or that our wives behave in a certain way, or that our friends do this or the other, or that the telephone operator gives us a connection quickly. That if we are not able to achieve this aim, that something wails up that is rage, that is a wish to force it, that is an attempt to use violence when we cannot achieve an aim by the productive use of our powers or by our example.

You will find, I'm sure — with the exception of a few saints who are here tonight — that all of us experience more or less a sense of rage, a sense of using force, when what one usually calls, «we are frustrated» — by which one usually means if we don't attain what we want. But really, this is an oversimplification of the phenomenon. It's not really being frustrated. It is a sense of impotence which makes us angry, which makes us wish to use force.

People have become very sensitized, I'm afraid, by psychoanalysis and by many other devices of being so concerned with the danger of frustration. So it's terrible that little Johnny doesn't get what he wants, because if he's frustrated then he will become neurotic, as his parents are, and so on and so on. But actually the problem is not at all frustration. *The problem is impotence.* The problem is a sense that I do not have the powers, the patience and the concentration to achieve something, with my own powers, which I want to achieve. And this sense of impotence, of *human* impotence, is a phenomenon which creates the wish to use force. It is the psychology sometimes you find in crippled people, and you find then crippled people who don't have it at all. (I shall talk a little later about this.) And it's not always the impulse to use force. Force has many aspects. It's not necessarily the physical force; it's political force, it's economic force, it is a force of persuasion. It is everything by which instead of being interesting and stimulating in one form or another, you use force in order to make somebody do what you want.

Actually, I would say that the lust for using force as a reaction to the sense of impotence is perhaps the most widespread source of human aggressiveness. It is one which everybody can observe in himself, everybody can see in others. It is almost as if force were the universal coin of impotence. That the impotent person who cannot make use of his proper forces productively is prone to use the one thing which requires nothing but to have a pistol, to have a rifle, to have power, to have money. If you have that, you can be as weak and as dumb as anybody on the earth. And yet you have something which is as powerful in its results as the tremendous achievement of changing something by human productivity, by human example, [or] by human love, skill, [or] reason.

Of course, most people don't have the guns and they don't have the power, so they become tyrants towards those who still have less power than they. They are mostly children, and in some cultures, their wives, and in some cultures the husband. I think we have to study and examine the problem of *the passion for*

force. Here I may quote Simone Weil: «Power is the capacity of transforming a man into a thing because you transform a living being into a corpse.» That's what force is. If you examine this phenomenon as a general human phenomenon, then indeed you will find that it is the symptom of human impotence. *Violence*, you might say, is a counterfeit of creation. It is rooted in a mood of despair which makes the person incapable of standing any longer the awareness of incapacity to produce, to change, to create in any form which is rooted in himself and his own productiveness.

I might mention something here in addition [...]: For all of us, it seems to be very difficult to accept the position of the pure creature; that is to say of a thing which has been created or born without his willing, without being asked, and usually even dies without being asked, and most of the time even against his will. We want to transcend life, to transcend rather not life but the situation of, let us say, the creature which feels like dice thrown out of a cup. We can transcend this situation in two ways. Either by creating: there we must make use of our powers. By creating life, we transcend the passive situation of the creature. In the act of creation, we become, if you want to speak the theological language, you become god. But as I said before, to create is not so simple. It requires a great deal of effort, of risk and of concentration. Or we transcend life by destroying. To create life is a miracle. But to destroy life is a miracle too. Only it is a miracle which is very simple to perform. We transcend the role of creatures if we destroy life, because we become the masters of life by destroying. We are not subject to its laws anymore. Just as we become the masters of life by creating. In a wider sense this aggressiveness and hostility, which I called compensatory hostility, is an attempt of man to master life when he feels incapable or impotent to create life.

Incidentally, I should like to just make a footnote: I said in order to create life, or in order to create anything, we must make an effort and we must be able to concentrate. I think that in our times, people tend to forget the importance of concentrating. It's a usual thing that somebody, as you all know, reads the paper, talks to his wife and listens to the radio, and gives some good advice to his children, and he is at the same time thinking what he will do in business today. But that is not the only example.

Almost everything is done with half concentration. People listen without listening. People talk without talking. That's why they misunderstand each other so often and why conversation leaves people so disappointed — because nobody has been concentrated in listening and in talking. It is a fact, which everyone who observes these things will confirm, that you do not achieve anything without concentration. Nature has given us a lesson in this respect because perhaps the most natural creation in the realm of nature, namely

sexual relations between man and a woman, [is] not possible without concentration — without a certain amount of concentration at least. If people were as unconcentrated in their sexual affairs as they are in their life in general, I'm afraid the overpopulation problem would disappear. There we can learn from nature that actually even what is the most fundamental natural action, that of sexual potency, would not occur without concentration.

What holds true for sexual potency holds true for everything else, except the lesson isn't as clear. And since everybody is equally not concentrated, everybody believes he is very concentrated; because we usually believe that if we are a good average, everything is fine. That's like in H. G. Wells's *Country of the Blind* [1926]: If everybody is blind, this is healthy and the person who sees is sick. And the doctors can describe the sickness [of seeing] very accurately: «Those queer things (...) are greatly distended, he has eyelashes, and his eyelids move, and consequently his brain is in a state of constant irritation and distraction.»

I think it is very worthwhile to study objectively and in oneself this phenomenon of compensatory hostility; to watch oneself whenever this wave of rage, this tendency to force or using force and violence come up. And then to ask oneself and the answer is then not so difficult: What is the experience of impotence I have at that very moment? I think that holds true for individuals, and it holds true for nations, for groups of people. And I believe that the question of combatting aggression and hostility to its largest extent needs to be discussed in terms of the question: How can human impotence be transformed into a sense of human potency? That indeed is or should be the aim of all education, of all learning, of all religion. But in fact, most of us are concerned in our society with problems of economic productivity rather than with that of human productivity, although we talk a great deal about these things and call it our tradition which you are to defend and so on. But actually, the phenomenon of hostility in everyday life and in national life, I think, is to a large extent rooted in this very point of the phenomenon of impotence.

This type of hostility which I have been talking about right now, the compensatory hostility, is still not in the service of destruction. It is, in a sense, still a compensation for the failure of living. It expresses a disappointment with living, a frantic attempt to achieve that which one expects from life; namely as a human being, to create something, to make a dent on somebody, to move somebody.

I shall [now] talk about two types of hostility which are not anymore in the service of life. Namely, what I call *necrophilous aggression*, aggression which is born out of love for death and destruction and decay, and *narcissistic aggression*. [...]

(4) Necrophilous aggression

[...] I speak about necrophilous orientation² as an intense, profound attraction to death, to decay, to the inorganic, to the controllable, to the mechanical, [in comparison with] the biophilic orientation, which expresses an attraction to life, to growth, to organic processes. [...] The difference of the view represented here and that of Freud [is] that I'm not speaking about two biological principles inherent in our life which fight with each other. I am speaking about the primary principle of living matter, namely the tendency to be alive and to be attracted to life, and the pathology when something has gone wrong and this tendency to be alive has been transformed or perverted, if you want, into the pathological tendency to be attracted by death and decay.

I should like to make here a remark which is very difficult to formulate, and yet I think I should, for the better understanding, say something about it. [...] When I speak of «attraction» here, I really mean it in the sense of physics rather than in the sense of speaking of an attractive girl. By that I mean that there is energy involved in the person's relationship to a certain goal, or energy involved in which a person, for instance, in this case relates himself to death and decay. [...] What we observe is that any human personality constitutes a particular structure charged with intense energy. And one might say we would simply disintegrate if we were not held together by high charges of energy in the particular way in which our drives, our impulses, our tendencies are directed.

Just as the energy which is seen as matter and not as energy where nothing happened, so the personality seems, if I may use this analogy from physics, seems like matter, seems like this table. When nothing happens, everything seems to be static. But when something does happen, as for instance in the case of neurosis or mental illness, then we see that energies are at work which are even much stronger than that which seems to be the most fundamental biological drive — the wish to live — [and] which in fact are much stronger than the sexual drive. The energy invested in the attraction to death is certainly stronger and more intense than the energy invested in the wish to live or in

2 [In the second lecture, which is currently not available, Fromm spoke of his concept of necrophilia vs. biophilia, presumably very close to what he published as chapter III «Love of Death and Love of Life» in his book *The Heart of Man* (1964). Hence the text follows the third lecture of «The Psychological Roots of War and Destruction». Here Fromm goes on to speak of his understanding of necrophilia vs. biophilia and summarizes his concept of necrophilous aggression before he speaks of narcissism and group narcissism and its impact for narcissistic aggression. For more about necrophilia and necrophilous destructiveness, see the mentioned chapter in *The Heart of Man* and a detailed discussion in chapter 12 of *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973).]

sex. The sexual drive in these people sometimes mitigates the intensity of this drive to destroy by smuggling itself into the drive to destroy, blending itself with it and therefore making it somewhat less risky and dangerous.

It is also true that to change the basic distribution of energy in the nuclear structure of a person is almost as difficult as splitting an atom. That is to say: It is easy to teach somebody to think differently, to behave differently, to adopt different patterns. But if you want a basic change, and that is always a change in the distribution of energy in the nuclear pattern of a structure of a person — let us say — from a high degree of destructiveness to shifting it to less necrophilia and more biophilia, or from a high degree of narcissism shifting it to more capacity to being related to the world, this cannot be done simply by teaching him how to do it. This requires some change in distribution of energy within the structure of the personality. How this is possible to happen is the secret of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. [...]

In speaking of necrophilia or what I shall talk about today, narcissism, I speak of them in terms of energy charged tendencies, not so different from Freud, except that I leave what seems to be a narrow framework of Freud's libido-theory and use a framework which has nothing directly to do with sexual energy; but which, indeed, has to do with energy and the way energy reacts to influences and the inertia which it gives unless there are influences. Unless one understands the energy, the intensity of the energy charge involved in all this, one cannot understand why people rush to their death, why people prefer to destroy rather than to save, why people prefer unhappiness to happiness. This is what we call irrational behavior alright.

This irrational behavior and the difficulty of changing it in any person or any group rests exactly on the fact that this irrationality is not an error of thought. This irrationality is «mis-growth» if you want, if I may use that word, is a faulty growth, is a faulty channeling of energy. And that is what really constitutes human pathology [and] ill mental pathology; and in some cases, that is also what constitutes physiological pathology.

I should like to add [...] that man, who is not determined, as the animal is, strongly by a built-in direction to his actions, namely instincts, that man is held together by the energy which is charged in his particular character structure. And also his relationship with the world outside is established and made firm by the energy which is involved in the *particular relatedness* he has to the world outside. [...] The difference between the premises I have here and Freud's premises, is only that I do not use the libido- and sex-concept as a frame of reference for what Freud discovered, namely, this energetic, dynamic quality of human attitudes. But I rest upon the basic discovery of Freud, namely of this dynamic and energetic character of all that is truly motivating a person.

Consciously we are often not aware of what truly motivates us. We may be attracted to death and decay and think we are attracted to life. We may wish to eat somebody up and consciously think we love him. We may wish to dominate somebody, and we may consciously think that we mean only the best for him. Usually all these regressive tendencies are hidden and not conscious to us in our culture. In a group of cannibals in a cannibalistic culture, there is no need to repress the wish to eat somebody up because one hopes that in eating him up it will increase one's own strength. No repression needed there. Maybe repression needed there against the revulsion to do this. We need repression for our cannibalism. And if I might remind you, we all are cannibals, more or less so. [...]

I cannot avoid saying a word about the situation we are confronted with [just now in 1963], and that is the danger of nuclear destruction. I have often asked myself, as many people have asked themselves, how is it possible? [...]

I was a boy at 14 when the First World War broke out and when this slaughter went on, year after year, and I was 16 and 17, I asked myself: How is it possible that men stay in the trenches, worse than animals, and are slaughtered for the whims and the further stupidity of generals? There are a few books which have been published right now which show that in all details, although it was no secret before.

More people ask themselves, and I ask myself, how is it possible today that the Western world, and I think Russia is also part of the Western world historically speaking, is preparing, and soon the Eastern world, and by that I mean the Chinese, are preparing weapons which can only lead to a destruction of unimaginable horror. Why do people do it? Why are people ready to let things go on? And really, one answer, which I feel is not *the* answer, but *one* answer, is not that people are so destructive, but that people do not love life enough. That we are not precisely in a culture where people hate life, in a necrophilous culture, but we are living in a culture where life is not anymore so terribly attractive, unconsciously. Consciously, everybody wants fun and excitement. But underneath I think there is a great deal of depression and boredom and feeling that, after all, why is it so important to go on living? A feeling in which life is not the most precious opportunity which every human being has and of which he wants to make use. I think this increasing lack of love of life, is one of the factors which bring us in this situation. [...]

(5) Narcissistic aggression

Let's talk now about a concept which I think is at the root of a great deal of hostility, and that is the *concept of narcissism*. The concept of narcissism is a

concept Freud created. He took it from the Greek myth of Narcissus, a beautiful youth with whom the nymph Echo fell in love, but he rejected her. And as a punishment, he looked into a lake, saw his face in the mirror of the lake, and was so preoccupied with his own face that he fell into the lake and was drowned.

Freud used this concept in order to indicate [that] there is a kind of personality who is in love with himself. [According to Freud,] for the newborn infant there is not yet a reality outside of him. [...] The other case where Freud talked about narcissism is the psychotic person. The psychotic person is characterized by Freud as a person for whom the world outside does not have reality either. The only reality is its own certain feeling and the world outside does not exist.

To speak again in terms of energy concepts, I would say [that] the highly narcissistic person experiences that all energy is turned toward himself [...]. The world outside does not exist. It is not real. If you take the paranoid person — in contrast, let us say, to all of us who are more or less neurotic persons — then the paranoid feels: People don't like me and even people hate me; while I feel: People don't like me and even people hate me, but still I know, I feel that, that they don't. But I'm not quite sure. I am afraid of it. I still know: This is my fear. If I am not anymore aware that this is a fear and if I see that you people tonight have come here to kill me and to put some poison in this water before I came, with no doubt about it, then my own fear has become a substitute for reality. I am not anymore afraid you dislike me; I am convinced, I know you have put poison here. And how do I know? How can I ever prove that it's not true? Only by drinking the water and waiting.

The *extreme* forms of narcissism [...] in the psychotic person are easy to recognize. But what is much more difficult to recognize is the *normal* narcissism of all of us, in us who are so-called normal persons. Let me give you a few examples for the normal narcissism. The first example is a little bit less normal, the others are a little bit more normal. [...] Somebody calls up and says «Doctor, I want to have an appointment with you.» I say, «Well, I am sorry, I am not free this week, but next week.» «But doctor, I live only five minutes from your office.» Then I say, «Yes, that's fine. But this does not change the fact that I have no time this week.» «But Doctor, can't you see, it means nothing to me, it is only five minutes.» This goes on maybe for two or three minutes, depending on the patience of the doctor and the insistence of the patient. [...]

There is nothing funny about it, because what this woman shows is that she is not capable of distinguishing in her own thought between her and myself. Because it is easy for her, it is easy for me. And it is not possible for her to understand that her requirements could be different from my requirement. You find very often the same situation where somebody would say this, and I would give the same answer; and then the person would say, oh, I see, yes, you

are quite right. Here the diagnosis would be different because obviously here you have a person who is capable of seeing it — although there is a good deal of narcissism which even brings forward the first argument, which is ludicrous in itself, logically speaking. [...]

Let us take a less pathological and more frequent narcissism [that] is contained in the well-known joke of a writer talking to a friend. The writer talks about himself for 15 minutes and then he says, «Now we have talked so much about myself. Let's talk about you.» And the friend says, «Fine.» And the writer says, «How did you like my latest book?» Here you find a much more frequent form of narcissism and that is the preoccupation with self or with ego and the lack of interest in what goes on in the other person.

Or let me give you an example, which I heard recently, just a few days ago in fact, of a conversation between one of the most intelligent men in this country and an acquaintance. They talked about politics and this intelligent man happens to be a Jew and a refugee. The acquaintance who came from abroad said to him, «Well, after all, America is not so pure either. Take, for instance, the race problem you have.» The intelligent man said, «Race problem, why do you talk about anti-Semitism? We have no anti-Semitism here.» It was very difficult to understand for him that when the other man talked about a race problem in America, he talked about Negroes. When eventually it was cleared up, that he was talking about Negroes, the intelligent man said, «Negroes, indeed, they are a failure and I wouldn't want to have my daughter going to school where there are Negroes.» (He didn't even talk about marriage.) Now, this is again a typical narcissistic and rather pathological narcissistic reaction. That, when it is so obvious that if one speaks about the race problem in America, one speaks about the Negro problem, [but] that for him, being a Jew, all that he hears is his problem and not the problem of America. [...]

If we come to the more normal forms of narcissism, then you find a phenomenon which we are all familiar with: a certain amount of overvaluation of our *own* ideas, pains, feelings, joys, activities as against the interest we have in the ideas, feelings and joys of *other* people. Speaking [about] overvaluation simply implies that we are not at least equally interested [in others], but we are a little bit more interested in what *we* feel, *we* suffer. And then you have the people who can talk by the hour of their operations or of their sicknesses. Although that could be necrophilous, it's not necessarily so because, unfortunately in our culture, in spite of everything, for many people their sicknesses are the most interesting events in their lives. This is a sad comment, but it's a fact for many. [...]

The normal neurotic narcissism in all of us implies one thing: that we are not fully open to the world, that we are more or less filled with our own ego,

and, therefore, that there is something like a veil between ourselves and the world. It is simply a matter of degree how thick that veil is, how immovable it is, how often it is torn or raised and, at that point, we are fully engaged and interested in the world.

I said of the psychotic person that he represents the extreme form of narcissism. But then you find many psychotic persons who have sensitivity and insight into another person which is far beyond that of the normal person. And this seems completely to contradict what I was saying before. I don't have the time to explain it much, but I should like to say one thing: It seems that when you have broken off your relationships to the world in a practical sense, when you are really not interested anymore, because you don't want anything anymore, that then you are sometimes capable of an insight which is greater than the normal person has, who is more related to the world. In other words, you might say the extreme form of narcissism is in some way less inhuman, less close to the world than the normal form of narcissism, in which my whole relationship to the world, because it is not interrupted, because it's not severed, is one in which I want to get all the things from the world which feed my narcissism.

What I said right now will probably remain kind of mysterious to most of you. But I had to say it, simply because it would be a distortion of the facts not to point out this peculiar quality [that] you will find in many psychotic visions. And anyone who talks to them, sometimes any normal person envies them for the sensitivity of their judgment, of their response.

Now let me say one word about narcissism as a phenomenon in general. You might say narcissism is a *biological* necessity from the standpoint of survival. If man did not have a special interest in his own survival [that] is stronger than the interest in his fellow man, survival of the individual and of groups would probably be threatened. Therefore, [...] it would be to be expected that nature used the trick of endowers with narcissism for the purpose of biological survival. But it is also true that if narcissism transcended a certain threshold, it would work against survival because it would make impossible that many more social cooperation on which even the individual life rests. Hence, biological grounds would expect that there is an optimum of narcissism, an optimum which is not the maximum, which keeps the individual and even a group more interested in their survival than in the survival of others, and yet which is below that threshold in which social cohesion is threatened. That there is another aspect, namely that of *spiritual* survival and affirmation, which does not require narcissism, is something I shall mention in a few minutes.

Let me now say something about the *pathology of narcissism*. One pathological effect of narcissism is that it creates faulty judgment and [a] lack of

appreciation of reality. The narcissistic person, being mainly concerned with himself and not with the world outside, will make severe mistakes because he doesn't see the reality outside. I want to mention Hitler as an example. He was, aside from being a necrophilous person, a very narcissistic person. If you study his history, then you will find that he made some of the most severe blunders. I only mention three: that he did not push the invasion of England, that he did not push the development of atomic energy, and that he made this big mistake in his attack against Russia. All these big mistakes he made were mistakes of [a] lack of judgment because this man was filled only with his ego and he was not capable of seeing reality fully. He was not a dumb man. He was a very clever man, but this characterological lack of his narcissism made it impossible for him to see the facts; to appreciate the strength of the United States, for instance; to appreciate the importance for him of spending more money on the development of atomic energy; to appreciate the fact of the Russian winter. This narcissistic mad man felt he was stronger than the winter. He was stronger than anything and so his simple rational judgment was lacking and faulty. That is one pathological result of narcissism directly.

I want to add a pathological result: If a person's narcissism is wounded, you have usually two results. So I have the picture of myself secretly as [a] film star, or high up in the government, or something, even not secretly, that I'm really wonderful [at]. I do not make any mistakes. I'm just wonderful. This is my image. As long as I can act in such a way that the reality supports me in this — that is to say millions of people think that this film star, man or woman, is just wonderful and a silly picture is wonderful and they spent millions of dollars for this — then narcissism cannot be recognized because it seems like real. The narcissistic fiction is confirmed by consensus or by reality. This is the true *folie à million*.

If someone of us got up here and said, «Don't you want to spend millions to see me?» — well, everybody would laugh. But if there is a way to produce a lot of nonsense and [have] millions of people say, «This woman who has a love affair with every third actor she meets and whose films [earn] millions of dollars,» then suddenly the narcissism is confirmed by what seems reality. Then, in fact, those who admire this person are equally narcissistic because they live from reflected glory, and that's why they call themselves they are fans. They are fans of that idol. The higher they make the idol, the more is reflected on themselves. [...] If you are a boss in a big enterprise and a head of a corporation and you say «Good morning!» in a distinct way, then all your underlings will react as if you had said something wonderful. If you are just an ordinary person people will say, «So, what the hell?» [...]

Some of you will remember the pictures of the Nazi leaders at the top in

the Nuremberg trials. Compared with how they looked when they had power, they looked like poor schlubs and that is a mild expression, I believe; frightened, impoverished, uninteresting little men who were not even interesting to look at. If you compare the same men [with] when they had power, you see precisely this difference, the narcissistic inflation of a dumb ordinary man who succeeds inflating himself by his own feeling that he is somebody great.

When a person's narcissism is wounded, then you have two results: Either one result is *depression*. Depression, I would venture to say as a very hypothetical remark, seems to me in many cases the result of the wounding of the narcissistic image. I have felt inflated and at one point I see that this is not so. I cannot persuade anybody anymore to share it with me, not even one person perhaps, and this thing collapses. Then I feel utterly empty because I have been the image, my narcissistic image. [...] I really think what we [often] find in depression is mourning for the disappearance of one's own narcissistic image. If that falls, the person is left with utter emptiness. That is the reason why people hang on so much to the narcissistic image and to those things which help make it real. What seems very often as a wish for power is actually the fright to lose that narcissistic image, which would be lost once I lose my power. Therefore, people fight for it as they fight for life or more so. If they lose the power, they lose their narcissistic image; and if they lose that, they are nobody and they fall into depressions.

The other possibility of reaction to the wounding of the narcissism is *rage*. You observe that in yourself and in others. If the narcissistic person, depending on how narcissistic he is, is hurt in his narcissism, then he will react, consciously or unconsciously, because this is a threat to himself. This attack to his narcissism, which is the fact that he's criticized, is a threat to his whole personality, which is identified with his narcissistic picture. Indeed, here you have the picture of narcissism as one of the great sources of hostility and destructiveness. When high narcissistic persons are attacked, they can develop hostility — unless they develop a depression which is of utmost intensity and probably as strong as a hostility [that] is rooted in a necrophilia.

One of the early students of Freud, Karl Abraham, made the very interesting distinction between positive and negative narcissism. Let us say a woman spends many, many hours concerned with her own body and her beauty and so on. Another woman spends just as many hours concerned with possible illnesses she has, something one calls hypochondriasis. With men it is just the same. He just combs his hair 20 times or practices God knows what facial expression in front of the mirror — how he wants to talk to his boss or to the people under him. Actually, what we call vanity and hypochondriasis are not basically different. They are the same concern with oneself [...]. In both

instances you think of yourself all the time. Because as soon as you become really involved and engaged and interested in the world, you just don't think so much about your sickness, nor about how wonderful you are.

Still I have to mention one concept which I think is very important for understanding narcissism: the transformation of personal narcissism into group narcissism. [...] The most important result of it is that narcissism is transferred from the personal to religion, nation, political ideology or political parties. What you found especially in the 16th and 17th century was a tremendous narcissism invested in one's religion. Catholics and Protestants accused each other of being devils, of poisoning wells, of God knows what, all because of differences in theology; which to most people who are not particularly familiar with this theology would hardly even be recognized when they read the statement of both sides. Where came this fanaticism from? Psychologically speaking, they have transferred their own personal narcissism to their religion. Being members of this religion endowed the religion with the same qualities with which the personal narcissism [had].

You see the same thing today about race. Behind the attitude of the Whites in the South, and I don't mean of all Whites, but of those who are so fanatical about the inferiority of Negroes and so on, is their narcissism. And you find an interesting phenomenon: The less reason a man has to be proud of himself — material, intellectual, morally — the more narcissistic he is, and the more he will choose his race as the most wonderful race in the world. That is a phenomenon to be seen in the South of the United States. It could be seen in Germany under Hitler because the bearers of the racial narcissism of Hitler [were] not the working class, not the middle class and not the upper class; it was a lower middle class, which indeed have lost almost everything in the historical process which made them feel proud in any realistic sense. If you have nothing to be proud of you are proud to be white or to be an Aryan. We know that nationalism has played a great role; that in fact, [for the last] 200 years the fanaticism of religion has been changed to fanaticism of nationality — my nation is the most wonderful nation. And today I think we see the picture that it is not so much anymore nationalism and race but political ideology or certain political concepts which become the full tie of narcissism.

This transference from personal narcissism to group narcissism has great advantages. If I stand up here and say, «Ladies and Gentlemen, I am the most wonderful man in the world. My mother, my father, my family, is superior to all other families,» [then] I am pretty sure where you would send me. If I say, however, «Ladies and Gentlemen, my nation, my race, my political party is the most wonderful in the world, every other nation and race and so on superior,» then, I doubt not this audience, but many people will say [that] I am a very

good man because I love my nation, my race, my religion, when actually I do nothing but [make] an extreme narcissistic statement.

The group narcissism has a terrific advantage that it is shared — and I mean by terrific a terrifying advantage that it is shared by millions — and therefore it loses its pathological character. The madness of group narcissism is as great as the madness of individual narcissism. But the madness is invisible because of the consensus within the group. But when group narcissism is hurt, then indeed people act as madly as highly narcissistic individuals act when their private, personal narcissism is hurt. And then we get hostilities and aggression and destructiveness, which can be fostered by all kinds of things. Nevertheless, they have their root in the fact that [the] narcissistic energy, which has been transferred to the group, has been wounded.

Inasmuch as a person is not proud in the narcissistic sense of his person, but has transferred all narcissism to the idol, when this group- or this idol-narcissism is attacked, then he acts like a mad man. Because then in reality, the own individual personal narcissism is attacked and therefore — if it were not true that the narcissistic group image is true — then he is nothing again. If you tell one racist in the South or in South Africa that it is not true that the Negroes are a failure, then indeed for him this means that he is nobody because he lives only by the strength of the narcissistic belief: Just being white is enough, or rather not enough, it is the most wonderful thing in the world, and everybody else is inferior. Then you get the extreme hostilities and destructiveness which follow from the wounding of this national, racial, religious, political narcissism. That is the reason why I spoke of narcissism at such length in this course of lectures.

If you want to become human then we must try to overcome our narcissism — first to recognize it, then to overcome it. If you want to understand a good deal of the hostility and destructiveness which exists between groups, we have to have some appreciation of the narcissistic phenomenon which is involved here.

Before I close, I should like to make one statement which is related to what I just said. If you try to understand what is the teaching of all great humanist or religious philosophy — by which I mean Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and humanist philosophy — then, I would say, all their precepts and teaching can be summarized or can be expressed, if we use psychological terminology, in one form: They all teach that the task of human development is to overcome one's narcissism. That means, in its most modest form, to love thy neighbor, as I said. That really means: If you can love thy neighbor as much as you love yourself, you are at least beyond the worst pathology of narcissism [and] you are at least as open to the world outside as you are to yourself.

There is another formulation that you also find in the Old Testament: to love the stranger. That is to say, to be able to see another human being as you see yourself and to forget about your membership in a group, in a family, in a nation, in a race, in a religion because thy neighbor becomes fully human. Or you might say, you cease to be a stranger to yourself and that is why the stranger ceases to be a stranger. The New Testament has expressed it in a still more radical form, which in content is not essentially different, I believe, from the command to love thy neighbor: to love thy enemy, because if you have lost all your narcissism there is no enemy. There is only another human being whom you see objectively.

All this religious and philosophical teaching of all humanistic religions, though they did not develop explicitly the concept of narcissism, nevertheless amounts to the great insight: Nature has endowed us with a good deal of narcissism for biological survival, but if our aim is not only and exclusively biological survival, but if our aim is to become fully human, then all spiritual laws tell us that our aim is to overcome all narcissism, to be able to be completely open to the world — and that means also to stop hating and to become fully alive.

In that sense there is a great deal of connection between necrophilia and narcissism and biophilia, and the overcoming of narcissism, although they are not identical concepts. To be aware of one's narcissism means to be aware of the way one has transferred one's personal narcissism to certain groups [and] to be aware of the anger and of the depression which may be the result of any wounds of our narcissism. If we want to become fully human, then indeed our main task is to recognize and overcome our narcissism [at] every moment.

I think this theme is not only of theoretical importance. It is also of great importance for individual growth and specifically for that which all of us want and which we find so difficult to attain — and that is peace.