With the concept of narcissism Freud has made a contribution of utmost importance for the understanding of man. Basically Freud postulated that man can orient himself in two contradictory modes: his main interest, love, concern, or as Freud puts it, his libido (sexual energy) can either be directed toward himself or toward the world outside: people, ideas, nature, man-made things.

At a meeting of Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society 1909 Freud declared that narcissism was a necessary intermediate stage between auto-eroticism and "object-love."

The first fully fledged discussion of narcissism is to be found in On Narcissism: An Introduction (Freud, 1914c).

Freud did not look any more at narcissism primarily as a sexual perversion, the sexual love for one's own body, as Nicker who had introduced the term (1899) had done, but as a complement of the instinct of self-preservation.

The most important evidence for the existence of narcissism came from the analysis of schizophrenia. Schizophrenic patients were characterized by two features: megalomania and diversion of their interests from the external world - from people and things. The interest

1/ Cf. the editor's remarks on the history of Freud's concept of narcissism in S. Freud, 1954, p. 69.
they had withdrawn from others, they directed to their own person — and thus developed megalomania, the image of their own self as omniscient and omnipotent.

This concept of psychosis as a state of extreme narcissism was one basis of the idea of narcissism. The other was the normal development of the infant. Freud assumed that the infant exists in a completely narcissistic state, at the moment of birth, as it had been in the intra-uterine state. Slowly the infant learns to take an interest in people and things. This original state of "libidinal cathexis of the ego," fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexis much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out.

What was the importance of Freud's discovery of narcissism? It not only explained the nature of psychosis but it also showed that the same narcissism exists not only in the child but also in the average adult; to put it differently, that the "normal person" partakes to some smaller or greater degree in that attitude which constitutes psychosis, even quantitatively stronger.

In what ways did Freud narrow down his concepts?
Again like with so many of his other concepts, by pressing

(Fromm, E., 1979a-000-eng-type-03: Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought (Author's Typescript, chapter II, 4-6, 36 pp.).)
it into the framework of the libido theory. Libido placed in the ego—occasionally sent out to touch other objects—returning to ego again under certain conditions such as physical pain, or the loss of a "libidinally cathected object." Narcissism was essentially a change of direction within the libido household.

Had Freud not been the prisoner of the concept of the psychic "apparatus," an allegedly scientific version of human structure, he would have enhanced the significance of his discovery in many directions.

In the first place he might have emphasized more strongly than he did, the role of narcissism for survival. While from a standpoint of values, the maximal reduction of narcissism is desired, from the standpoint of biological survival, narcissism is a normal and desirable phenomenon. If man did not put his own goals and needs before those of other, how could he survive? He would lack the energetic qualities of egoism to take care of his own life. To put it differently: biological interest of the survival of the race requires a certain amount of narcissism among its members; the ethical-religious goal of the individual, on the contrary, is the maximal reduction of narcissism toward the zero point.

But what is more important is Freud's failure to define narcissism in terms of its being the opposite pole to...
love. Freud could not have done so because, as I have shown before, love for him did not exist except as the attachment of the male to the feeding woman. For Freud, to be loved (the male by the conquered woman) gives strength, to love actively weakens.

This fact is very apparent in Freud’s misunderstanding of Goethe in the Ost-Westlicher Divan. Freud (p. 143) notes:

“You will find it refreshing, I believe, if, after what is the essentially dry imagery of science, I present you with a poetic representation of the economic contrast between narcissism and being in love. Here is a quotation from Goethe’s West-östlicher Diwan:

Zuleika

The slave, the lord of victories,
The crowd, when'er you ask, confess
In sense of personal being lies
A child of earth’s chief happiness.

There’s not a life we need refuse
If our true self we do not miss,
There’s not a thing we may not lose
If one remain theman one is.

Hatem

So it is held, so well may be;
But down a different track I come;
Of all the bliss earth holds for me
I in Zuleika find the sum.

Does she expend her being on me,
Myself grows to myself of cost;
Turns she away, then instantly
To my very self am lost.

That day with Hatem all were over;
And yet I should but change my state;
Swift, should she grace some happy lover,
in him I were incorporated.”
Goethe's picture of one who remains "the man one is" is misunderstood to portray the narcissistic person, while for Goethe, of course, he is the mature independent man of integrity. The second verse is supposed by Freud to represent the person who is in love, while Goethe refers to the dependent person who lacks a strong self and is dissolved in the person he is in love with.

While according to Freud men's love is "narcissistic", i.e. it has as its object the person who loves him, women's love is narcissistic, that they only can love themselves, and cannot participate in that "great achievement" of men: to love the hand that feeds them. Freud is completely unaware that the women of his class used to be cold precisely because their men wanted them cold, i.e. to behave like property, and no even to grant them "separate but equal" roles in bed. The bourgeois man got the woman as he imagined and he rationalized his superiority by believing this deformed female - deformed by him - was only concerned with wanting to be fed and taken care of. This is of course typical male propaganda in the war between the sexes, like that of women being less realistic and less courageous than men. Indeed, this insane world which does not seem to stop running into catastrophe is governed by men.
cases of illness, women are much better able to cope with difficulties than men, who want mother to help them. As to narcissism, women are forced to present themselves attractively, because they are exhibits on the slave market; but when they love they love more deeply and reliably than men, who roam around and try to satisfy their narcissism, invested in their penis of which they are so proud.

When Freud presented his distorted picture of women, he himself could not help considering whether he was entirely objective. But he did away with such doubts in an elegant way: "Perhaps it is not out of place here to give an assurance that this description of the feminine form of erotic life is not due to any tendentious desire on my part to depreciate women. Apart from the fact that tendentiousness is quite alien to me, I know that these different lines of development correspond to the differentiation of functions in a highly complicated biological whole. Further, I am ready to admit that there are quite a number of women who love according to the masculine type and who also develop the sexual overvaluation proper to that type."

This indeed is an elegant but not psychoanalytic way out. What self-delusion of a man when he can assure us that "tendentiousness is quite alien to me" even in a question which is so obviously charged with emotional dynamite.

This statement points to the limitations of Freud; insight into himself is narrowed down by various dogmatic statements about his personality traits which he obviously cannot possess.
This physiological concept of libido cathexes of ego as against objects, has made it somewhat difficult for those who are not among the initiated ones, to understand the nature of narcissism on the basis of their own experience. For this reason I want to describe it in a more easily accessible manner.

For the narcissistic person the only sector that seems "fully real to him is his own person. His or her feeling, thoughts, ambitions, wishes, body, family, everything that he or she is or what is theirs. What they think is true, because they think it, and even their bad qualities are beautiful because they are theirs. Everything related to him or her has color and full reality. Everybody and everything outside is gray, ugly, without color, hardly existing.

Here is an example: A man called me to ask for an appointment. I answered him that I had no free time in the week but could see him in the following week. He responded by pointing out that he lived very near to my office and hence it would take him little time to come over. Then I answered by pointing out that this was indeed convenient for him but it did not alter the fact that I had no free time, he was unimpressed and continued with the same argument. This is an example of a rather severe case of narcissism, because he was totally unable to distinguish between my needs and his.
It is obvious that it makes a great difference how intelligent, artistically talented, knowledgeable a very narcissistic person is. Many artists and very creative writers, musical conductors, dancers and politicians are extremely narcissistic; their narcissism does not interfere with their art; on the contrary it often helps. They have to express what they subjectively feel, and the more important their subjectivity is for their performance, the better they perform. The narcissistic person is often particularly attractive for his or her very narcissism. Think for example of a narcissistic entertainer. He is filled with himself; he exhibits his body and his wit with pride of owning a rare jewel. He has no doubts about himself as a less narcissistic person necessarily has. What he says, he does, the way he walks and moves is enjoyed by himself like a precious performance and he is among his greatest admirers.

I assume that the reason for the attractiveness of the narcissistic person lies in the fact that he portrays an image of what the average person would like to be: he is sure of himself, has no doubts, feels always on top of the situation. The average person, in contrast, does not have this certainty, he is often plagued by doubts, prone to admire others as being superior to himself. The narcissistic person is, as it were, what the average person wants to be. One may ask why extreme narcissism does not repel people. Why do they not resent the lack of real love? This question is easy to answer: real love is so rare todayes to be almost outside the field of vision of most people. In the narcissistic person one sees a person who at least loves one person, himself.

Fromm, E., 1979a-000-eng-type-03: Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought (Author's Typescript, chapter II, 4-6, 36 pp.)
The completely untalented narcissist, on the other hand, may be only ridiculous. If the narcissistic person, on the other hand, is extremely gifted, his success is virtually guaranteed. Narcissistic people are often to be found among successful politicians. Even if they are talented or gifted with they would not be so impressive without the narcissism that, as it were, oozes out of them. Instead of feeling "How do they dare to be so arrogant?" many people are attracted by the narcissistic self-image that they see in it nothing more than the adequate self-appreciation of a very talented man.

It is important to understand narcissism, which may be called "self-infatuation," is a contrast to love, if we mean by love the act of forgetting oneself, caring more for others than for oneself. Of equal importance is the contradiction between narcissism and reason.

Just having talked about narcissistic personalities, the statement of a conflict between narcissism and reason seems absurd. But I am not speaking of intelligence but of reason. Manipulative intelligence is the capacity to use thinking for the world outside, manipulating for many purposes. Reason is the faculty to recognize things as they are, regardless of their value or danger for us. Reason aims at the recognition of things and persons in their suchness, undistorted by our subjective interest in them. "Cleverness" is a form of manipulating intelligence, but wisdom is an outcome of reason. The narcissistic person can be extremely clever, if his manipulative intelligence is at its best. But he is apt to make severe mistakes, because his
narcissism seduces him to overestimate the value of his own wishes and thoughts and to assume that the result has already been accomplished, simply because it is his wish or his thought.

Narcissism is often confused with egoism. Freud thought that narcissism was the libidinous aspect of egoism, that is to say that the passionate nature of egoism lies in its libidinous character. But the distinction is not entirely satisfactory. An egoistic person may have an undistorted view of the world. He may not give his thoughts and feelings a greater value than they have in the outside world. He may see the world, including his role in it, quite objectively. Egoism is basically a form of greediness; the egoist wants everything for himself, he does not like to share, he perceives others as threats rather than as possible friends. What Freud in his earlier writings called "self-interest" prevails in them more or less completely; but the prevalence of self-interest does not necessarily distort the egoist's picture of himself and the world around him, as with the narcissistic person.

Among all character orientations narcissism is by far the most difficult to recognize. To the extent to which a person is narcissistic he glorifies himself and is unable to see his defects and limitations. He is convinced that the image of a wonderful person he has of himself is correct, and since it is his image he sees no reason to doubt it. Another reason why narcissism is so difficult to detect in oneself is that many narcissistic persons try to demonstrate that they are everything but narcissistic. One of the most frequent examples of this is the attempt of narcissistic persons to hide their narcissism behind a behavior which is characterized by concern and help for others. They spend much energy and time in helping others,
even making sacrifices, being kind etc., all with the aim (usually unconscious) of denying this narcissism. The same, as we all know, for persons who are particularly modest, often or humble. Not only do such persons try to hide their narcissism, they satisfy it at the same time by being narcissistically proud of their kindness or modesty. A nice example of this is the joke about a man who was dying and heard his friends who were at his bedside praise him; how learned he was, how intelligent, how kind, how concerned. The dying man listened and when they had finished praising he angrily shouted: And you fail to mention my humility!

Narcissism wears many masks: saintliness, obedience to duty, kindness and love, humility, pride; it ranges from the attitude of a haughty and arrogant person to that of a modest and unobtrusive one. Everybody has many tricks to disguise his or her narcissism, and is hardly aware of them and their function. If the narcissistic person is successful in persuading others to admire him, he is happy and functions well. But when he is without success in convincing others, if his narcissism is pricked as it were, he may collapse like a deflated balloon; or he may be intensely furious, filled with a kind of unforgiving rage.

To inflict a wound on a person may either produce a depression or an unforgiving hate.

Of particular interest is group narcissism.

Fromm, E., 1979-000-eng-type-03: Greatness and Limitations of Freud’s Thought (Author’s Typescript, chapter II, 4-6, 36 pp.)
Group narcissism is a phenomenon of the greatest political significance. After all, the average person lives in social circumstances which restrict the development of intense narcissism. What should feed the narcissism of a poor man, who has little social prestige, whose children even tend to look down upon him? He is nothing— but if he can identify with his nation, or can transfer his personal narcissism to the nation, then he is everything. If such a person said: "I am the most wonderful man or woman in the world; I am the cleanest, cleverest, most efficient, best educated of all people, I am superior to everybody in the world, everybody who heard this would be disgusted and feel the person was kind of crazy. But when people describe their nation in these terms, nobody takes exception. On the contrary if a person says: "My nation is the strongest, the most cultured, the most peace-loving, the most talented of all nations," he is not looked upon as being crazy but a very patriotic citizen. The same holds true for religious narcissism. That millions of adherents to a religion can claim that they are the only possessors of the truth, that their religion is the only way to salvation, is considered to be perfectly normal. Other examples of group narcissism are political groups and scientific groups. The individual satisfies his own narcissism by belonging to and identifying himself with the group. Not he the nobody is great, but he the number of the most wonderful group on earth.

But, so one might object, how can we be sure that
his evaluation of his group is not realistically correct. For one, a group can hardly be as perfect as its members describe it; the more important reason though is that criticism of the group is reacted to with intense rage, reaction of whose individual narcissism is wounded. In the narcissistic character of national, political and religious group reaction lies the root of all fanaticism. When the group becomes the embodiment of one's own narcissism, any criticism of the group is an attack against oneself. In cases of cold or hot wars, the narcissism takes on a still more drastic form. My own nation is perfect, peaceful, cultured etc; the enemy's is the exact contrary; vile, treacherous, cruel etc. In reality most nations are equal in the overall balance of good and evil traits; however virtues and vices are specific for each nation. What narcissistic nationalism does is to see only the virtues of one's own nation and the vices of the other. This observation is so impressive because it is right; it is false only because it leaves out the vices of one's own and the virtues of the enemy's nation. The mobilization of group narcissism is one of the important conditions for the preparation of war; it must begin much earlier than at the outbreak of the war, but it becomes reinforced the closer nations move toward war. The feelings at the beginning of the First World War are a good example of the fact that reason becomes silenced when narcissism rules. The British war propaganda accused the German soldiers of
bayonetting infants in Belgium (a complete lie but believed by many in the West), the Germans called the British a nation of treacherous traders while they themselves were heroes fighting for freedom and justice.

Can this group narcissism ever disappear and with it one problem for war? Indeed there is no reason to assume that it cannot. The conditions for its disappearance are manifold. One is that the life of individuals must be so rich and interesting that they can relate to others with interest and love. This in turn presupposes a social structure that engenders being and sharing and discourages having and possessing. With the development of interest and love in others, narcissism tends to be increasingly reduced. The most important and most difficult problem however, is that group narcissism can be produced by the basic structure of society, and how this can happen. I shall try to sketch an answer by analyzing the relation between the structure of cybernetic society and the narcissistic development of the individual.

The first condition for the increasing development of narcissism in industrial society is the separateness and antagonism of individuals toward each other. This antagonism is a necessary consequence of an economic system that is built on ruthless selfishness and on the principle of seeking advantages at the expense of others. When sharing and mutuality are absent narcissism is bound to thrive.
But the more important condition for the development of narcissism, and one which has been given full measure only in the last decades, is the worship of industrial production. 

Man has made himself into a God. He has created a new world, the world of man-made things. Using the old creation as raw material, modern man has laid bare the secrets of microcosmos as well as the macrocosm. He has discovered the secrets of the atom and the secrets of the cosmos, relegating our earth to an infinitely small entity among the galaxies. The scientist making these discoveries had to perceive things as they are, objectively and hence with little narcissism. But the consumer, as well as the technicians and practitioners of applied science, did not have to have the mind of a scientist. The overwhelming part of the human race did not have to devise the new technic; they could build it according to the new theoretical insights and admire it. Thus it happens that modern man developed an extraordinary pride in his creation; he deemed himself to be a god, he felt his greatness in the contemplation of the grandeur of the man-made new earth. Thus admiring his second creation, he admired himself in it. The world he made, harnessing the energy of coal, of oil, and now of the atom, and especially the seeming limitless capacity of his brain, has become the mirror in which he can see himself. Man gazes into this mirror which reflects not his beauty but his ingenuity and power. Will he drown in this mirror as Narcissus drowned in gazing at the picture of his beautiful body mirrored in the surface of the lake?
Freud's concept of character is of no less importance than that of the unconscious, of repression and resistance. Here Freud dealt with the human being as a whole and not with single "complexes" and mechanisms, such as the "Oedipus complex," castration fear, penis envy. Of course, the concept of character was not new; but the concept of character in the dynamic sense in which Freud used it was new in psychology. What is meant by dynamic is the concept of character as the relatively permanent structure of passions. Psychologists at Freud's time as well as today spoke of character in a purely descriptive sense; a person could have been described as orderly, ambitious, industrious, honest etc. but one was referring to single traits to be found in a person, not to the organized system of passions. Only the great playwrights such as Shakespeare, and the great novelists such as Dostojevski and Balzac, described character in the dynamic sense, the latter with the intention of analyzing the character of the various classes of French society of his time.

Freud was the first psychologist to analyze character scientifically instead of artistically as his novelist-predecessors had done. The results, enriched by some of Freud's students, especially K. Abraham, were marvellous. Freud and his school constructed four types of character structure: the oral-receptive character, the oral sadistic character, the anal character and the genital character. According to Freud, each person who develops in a normal
pass through all these stages of character structure; but many are stuck at any one of these points of evolution and retain as adults the features of these preadult character stages.

By oral-receptive character Freud refers to the person who expects to be fed, materially, emotionally and intellectually. He is the person with the "open mouth," basically passive and dependent, who expects that what he needs will be given to him; either because he deserves it because he or she is so good, or so obedient, or because of a highly developed narcissism that makes him feel he is so wonderful that he can claim to be taken care of by others. This type of person expects that all satisfactions are offered to him without any reciprocity.

The oral-sadistic person also believes that everything he needs comes from the outside and not from his own work. But unlike the oral-receptive character he does not expect anyone to give him what he needs voluntarily, but tries to take what he needs from others by force; he is a predatory character.

The third type of character is the anal-sadistic one. This is the character structure of persons who do not believe that anything new is created; that the only way to have something is to save what one has. They consider themselves as a kind of fortress, which nothing may leave. Their safety lies in isolation. Freud found in them the three following characteristics: to be orderly, parsimonious and obstinate. The fully developed and, as it were, mature character is the genital character.
While the three "neurotic" character orientations can be clearly recognized, the genital character is very vague. Freud describes it as being the basis for the capacity to love and to work. After what we have seen about Freud's concept of love, he can refer only to the degraded form of love in a society of profit makers. What Freud means by the genital character is simply the bourgeois man, that is the man whose capacity for love is very restricted and whose "work" is the effort of organizing and using the work of others, to be the manager and not the worker.

The three "neurotic" or as Freud would put it "progenital" character orientations are a key to the understanding of human character exactly because they do not refer to a single trait but to the whole character system. It is in general easy to recognize to which type of character a person belongs even if one has only a few clues. The tight-lipped, withdrawn man whose first concern is that everything must be orderly and right, who shows little spontaneity, whose skin color tends to be sallow, is easily recognizable as an anal character; if one knows of him that he tends to be stingy, ungenerous, distant, one receives confirmation. The same holds true for the exploitative and the receptive type. It is true of course that people try to hide their true faces, provided they are aware of the fact that it betrays trends that they would rather not divulge. Hence the facial expressions are not even the most important indications of character structure. More important are those expressions that are much less controllable; the movements, the voice,
the gait, the gestures and all that of a person which is in our field of vision when we look at him or see him walking. People who have understood the meaning of the three pregenital character traits can without difficulty understand each other when they speak of this or that person as an anal character or when they speak of a mixture of anal/oral traits or especially oral sadistic traits. It was Freud’s genius to have captured in these character orientations of the possible ways in which man can relate himself to the world in the process of assimilation that is to say in the process of getting from nature or from other human beings what is necessary for survival. The problem is not that we all need to get something from the outside; even the saint could not survive without any food. The real problem is what our method of getting it is; whether it is a method of being given, robbing, hoarding or producing. Since Freud and some of his pupils presented this characterology, our understanding of man and of cultures has been greatly enhanced. I say of cultures because societies can be characterized also in terms of these character structures because their respective social characters, that is to say the core of character common to most members of a society, will also be of the one or the other type. Just to give an example: the character of the French middle class of the 19th century was that of the anal character structure, the character of the entrepreneur of the same period, that of the exploiter. The foundations of characterology that Freud laid led to the discovery of other forms of character orientations. One can speak of an
authoritarian authoritarian character, of a destructive authoritarian character, and in this way refer to an outstanding authoritarian character, and in this way refer to an outstanding authoritarian character, and in this way refer to an outstanding authoritarian character, and in this way refer to an outstanding authoritarian character, and in this way refer to an outstanding trait which determines the rest of the character structure.

The study of character has hardly begun and the consequences of Freud’s discovery are far from exhausted. But all this admiration for Freud’s theory of character must not prevent one from seeing that he narrowed down the significance of the theory by linking it up with sexuality. He expressed that very clearly already in the Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: “What we call the character of the person is built up to a large extent from the material of sexual excitation, it is composed of impulses fixed since infancy and won through sublimation, and of such structures as are destined to suppress effectually those perverse feelings which are recognized as useless.” His naming of the character orientations makes this very clear. The two first, get their energy from oral libido, the third from anal libido, and the fourth from the so-called genital libido, that is to say the sexuality in the adult man or woman.

The most important contribution of Freud to his characterology is the paper Character and Anal Erotism (Freud, 1905b): All the three traits of the anal character — Cornelius, parsimoniousness and obscurian — are seen as direct expressions, reaction formations to or sublimation of anal libido. The same holds true for the other character structures in terms of the oral and genital libido.

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Freud subsumed many of the great passions such as love, hate, ambition, thirst for power, avarice, cruelty, as well as the passion for independence and freedom under the various kinds of libido. Love and hate in the newer part of Freud's theories concerning the death and life instincts were supposed to have an essentially biological origin. The construction of the theory of life and death instincts orthodox analysts assume that aggression is as original an impulse inherent in human nature as is love. The wish for power was dealt with in connection with the sadistic character, although it must be admitted that the wish for power, perhaps the most important impulse to be found in modern men, has not found adequate consideration in psychoanalytic literature. Dependency was dealt with in terms of submission to the Oedipus complex in various ways. This reduction of the great passions to various kinds of the libido was a theoretical necessity for Freud, since aside from his striving for survival, all energies within man were supposed to be of sexual nature. If one is not under a compulsion to explain all human passions as being rooted in sexuality, one is not forced to accept the Freudian explanation; one arrives at a simpler and as I believe, more accurate analysis of human passions. One can distinguish between biologically given passions, hunger and sex, which serve the survival of the individual and the race, and passions, which are socially and historically conditioned. Whether...
predominantly love or hate, submit or fight for freedom, are stingy or magnanimous, are cruel or tender, depends on the social structure that is responsible for the formation of all passions except the biological ones. There are cultures in which in the social character the passion for cooperation and harmony dominates, such as in tribes like the Zuni Indians of North America, and others in which extreme possessiveness and destructiveness dominate, as with the Dobu. (Cf. the detailed discussion of societies with respectively, aggressive and sharing attitudes, in E. Fromm, 1973a, Chapter 8.)

Detailed analysis of the social character typical of any given society is required in order to understand how economic, geographical, historical and genetic conditions have led to the formation of various types of social character. To give a simple example: a tribe which has too little fertile soil and even lacks supplies of fish and animals, is likely to develop a belligerent, aggressive character because its only way of survival is by robbing and stealing from other tribes. On the other hand, a tribe that does not produce a great surplus but enough for all to live, will tend to develop a peaceful and cooperative spirit. These examples are of course oversimplified; the problem of the conditions for the development of certain types of social character is a difficult one and requires thorough analysis of all relevant and even seemingly irrelevant factors. This is the field of social analysis or historical analysis, which I believe has a great future, although until now only the foundations of this branch of analytic social psychology have been laid.

The historically conditioned passions are of such intensity that they can be greater than even the biologically conditioned passions of survival, hunger, thirst and sex.
This may not be so for the average person whose passions have largely been reduced to the satisfaction of his physiological needs. But it is so for a considerable number of people in any historical period who risk their lives for their honor, their love, their dignity, or their hate. The Bible expressed that in simple words: "Man cannot live by bread alone." Let us imagine that Shakespeare had written his dramas on the sexual frustration of a hero or on the wish for food of his heroine; it would have become as banal as some of the contemporary plays which are produced on Broadway. The dramatic element in human life is rooted in non-biological passions and not in hunger and sex. Hardly anybody commits suicide because of the frustration of his or her sexual desires, but many are ready to give up living because their ambition or their hate has been frustrated.

Freud never saw the individual as an isolated being, but always in his or her relationship to others. He says: "Individual psychology, to be sure, is concerned with the individual human being, and it examines the ways in which he tries to satisfy his instinctual drives. But only rarely and under specific exceptional circumstances is it in a position to abstract from this person's relationships with other individuals. In the individual's psychic life, other people ordinarily must be considered as either models, objects, helpers or opponents. Thus, from the beginning, individual psychology is simultaneously social psychology—in this extended but legitimate sense. Nevertheless, this nucleus of a social psychology did not develop further because the ultimate entity for Freud, the family, was supposed to be decisive for the child's development. Freud

It is an interesting fact that the suicide rate by and large has risen in the same proportion as the rate of industrialization.
did not see that the human being from early childhood on, lives in several circles: the narrowest one is the family, the next one is his class, the third one is the society in which he lives, the fourth one the biological conditions of being human in which he participates, and finally, he is part of a larger circle of which we know almost nothing, but which comprises at least our solar system. Only the narrowest circle, that of the family, has relevance for Freud, and thereby he greatly underestimates all other circles of which man is part. More specifically, he did not recognize that the family itself was determined by the class and social structure and constituted an "agency of society" whose function it is to transmit the character of society to the infant before it has even any direct contact with society. This is done by early upbringing and education, as well as by the character of the parents which is in itself a social product.

Freud considered the bourgeois family as the prototype of all families and ignored the very different forms of family structure or the complete absence of the family in other cultures, even in other classes of his own society. An example of this is the importance that Freud gives to the so-called "primal scene" in which the child witnesses the sexual intercourse of the parents, an experience to which Freud gives great significance. It is obvious that the significance of this experience is inflated by the fact that in the bourgeois family, children and parents live in different rooms. Had
Freud thought of the family life among the poorer classes of his time, where children lived in the same room with their parents and were witnesses of their intercourse as a matter of course, this early experience would not have loomed as large and significant as it did for Freud. He also did not consider the many so-called primitive societies in which there was no taboo on sexuality and neither the parents nor the children had to hide their sexual acts and plays. By the premises held concerning all passions being of a sexual nature and of the bourgeois family and the prototype of all families he could not see that the primary phenomenon is not the family but the structure of society that creates that kind of character which it needs for its proper functioning and survival. He did not arrive at the concept of a social character because on the narrow basis of sex, such a concept could not be developed. As I have shown (in *The Art of Loving*, 1956, Appendix) the social character is that character structure which is common to most members of a society, its contents depend on the necessities of a given society which mould the character of the individual in such a way that people want to do what they have to do in order to secure the proper functioning of society. What they want to do depends on the dominating passions in their character which have been formed by the necessities and requirements of a specific social system. The differences brought about by different family constellations is minor in comparison with the differentiation brought about by different structures of society and in the respective classes. A member of the feudal class had to develop a character which made him able to rule others, to harden his heart toward their misery.
The bourgeois class of the 19th century had to develop an anal character which was determined by the wish to save and to hoard and not to spend. In the 20th century the same class developed a character which made saving only a minor virtue, if not even a vice, in comparison with a trait of the modern character, to spend and to consume. This development is conditioned by the fundamental economic necessities; in the period of primary accumulation of capital, saving was necessary; in a period of mass production, instead of saving, spending is of the greatest economic importance. If the character of the 20th century man suddenly reverted to that of the 19th century man, our economy would be confronted with a severe crisis if not of collapse.

Thus far I have described the problem of the relationship between individuals and social psychology in over-simplified terms. A fuller analysis of this problem, which would go beyond the limits of this book, would have to distinguish between needs or passions rooted in the very existence of human beings, and which are not primarily conditioned by society but by the very nature of man, so that their absence must be considered as the result of repression or of severe social pathology. Such strivings are those for freedom, for solidarity, for love.

My own studies of the social character continue the line of research which was begun by Sombart, Max Weber, Brentano, Tawney, Kraus and other social scientists in the first part of this century and I greatly benefited from their theories.
If Freud's system is freed from the narrowing effect of his libido theory, the concept of character will have even greater importance than Freud himself gave it. This requires the transformation of individual psychology into social psychology and reduces individual psychology only to the knowledge of small variations brought about by individual and idiosyncratic circumstances which influence the basic socially determined character structure. In spite of this critique of Freud's concept of character, it must be emphasized again that Freud's discovery of the dynamic concept of character offers the key to the understanding of the motivation of individual and social behavior and to some extent, the prediction of it.

6. Significance of Childhood

Among the great discoveries of Freud is that of the significance of early childhood. This discovery has several aspects. The infant has already sexual (libidinous) strivings although not yet in terms of genital sexuality but in what Freud terms pregenital sexuality which is centered on respectively the erogenous zones of mouth, anus, and skin. As against the bourgeois picture of the "innocent" child, Freud recognized the fictitiousness of this picture and showed that the little child from birth on was endowed with many libidinous strivings of a pregenital nature.
At Freud's time the myth of the innocent child who knew nothing still governed, and in addition one was not aware of what importance the experiences of the child and particularly the very young child had on the development of his character and thereby of his whole fate. With Freud all this changed. He could show in many clinical examples how early events, especially those of a traumatic nature, formed the character of the child to such a degree that he assumed that the character of a person was fixed and did not undergo further changes, with rare exceptions. Freud showed how much a child knew, how sensitive it was, how events which may sound trifling to an adult were of deep influence on the development of the child, and on later formation of neurotic symptoms. For the first time one began to take the child and what happened to him seriously, so seriously indeed that one believed one had found... It must be noted that the whole concept of a child as a special status in contrast to that of the adult, is relatively modern. Up to the 18th century this division hardly existed, the child was simply a small adult who was not romanticized and did his chores according to his abilities. I am grateful to Ivan Illich for some fruitful suggestions in this direction.

Fromm, E., 1979a-000-eng-type-03: Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought (Author's Typescript, chapter II, 4-6, 36 pp.)
the key to all further development in the events of early childhood.

A great deal of clinical data show the correctness and the wisdom of Freud's observation but I believe also certain limitations in his theoretical assumptions. In the first place Freud underrated the significance of constitutional genetic factors in the character formation of children. He did not do so in theory where he stated that constitutional factors and experience are both responsible for the development of the person but for all practical purposes he neglected the genetic disposition of a person.

In crude Freudianism it is the family and the experience of the child in it which are made responsible for the development of the child. This has gone so far that psychoanalysts as well as parents believe a neurotic or bad or unhappy child must have had parents who produced this negative state, while on the contrary the happy and healthy child had a correspondingly happy and healthy environment. In fact parents took the whole of the blame for the unhealthy development of a child on themselves but equally so the praise for the happy outcome of childhood. All data show that this is not so.

This is a good example. A psychoanalyst may see a very neurotic, distorted person with a terrible childhood and say, "It is obvious that the childhood experiences have produced this unhappy outcome." If he only asked himself, however, how many people he had seen who came from the same type of family constellation and turned out to be remarkably happy and healthy people, he would begin to have doubts about the simple connection between childhood experiences...
and the respective mental health and illness of a person.
The first factor which can account for this theoretical disappointment must lie in the analyst ignoring the differences in genetic dispositions. To take a simple example: one can see even among newborn infants a difference in degree of aggressiveness or timidity. If the aggressive child has an aggressive mother this mother will do him little harm or perhaps even much good. It will learn to fight with her and not be frightened of her aggressiveness. If a timid child is confronted with the same mother, it will be intimidated by the mother’s aggressiveness, it will tend to become a frightened, submissive and later on perhaps a neurotic person. Indeed, we touch here upon an old and much discussed problem of nature versus nurture or genetic disposition versus environment. The discussion of this problem has by no means yet led to conclusive results. From my own experience I have come to the conclusion that genetic dispositions play a much greater role in the formation of a specific character than most analysts credit it with.

I believe that one aim of the analyst should be to reconstruct a picture of the character of the child when it is born in order to study which of the traits he finds in the analysand are part of the original nature which are acquired through influential circumstances; furthermore which of the acquired qualities conflict with the genetic ones and which tend to reinforce them. What we find very often is that by the wish of the parents (personally and as representatives of society) the child is forced to repress or weaken his original dispositions and to replace them by those traits which society
wants it to develop. At this point we find the roots of neurotic developments; the person develops a sense of false identity. While genuine identity rests upon the awareness of one's suchness in terms of the person one is born as, pseudo identity rests upon the personality which society has imposed upon us. Hence a feeling in constant need of approval in order to keep his balance. Genuine identity does not need such approval because the person's picture of himself is identical with his authentic personality structure.

The discovery of the significance of early childhood events in the development of a person leads easily to an underestimation of the importance of later events. According to Freudian theory the character of a person was more or less definitely formed at the age of 7 or 8 and hence fundamental changes in later years were supposed to be virtually impossible. Empirical data, however, seem to show that this assumption exaggerates the role of childhood. To be sure, if the conditions which have helped to form the character of a person in childhood continue, the character structure is likely to remain the same. It must further be admitted that this in fact holds true for most people who in later life continue to live under similar conditions to those that existed in their childhood. But Freud's assumption has deflected the attention from those cases in which radical changes have occurred in people radically new experiences they had. For instance, a person who throughout his childhood was convinced that nobody would ever care for him or her unless they planted something from them they was no sympathy or love which was not the payment for services, or a bribe to
perform them. A person may go through life without ever having experienced that somebody might care or be interested and not want anything in response. But when it happens to such a person that he or she experiences that another person has a real interest without wanting anything, such event might drastically change such character traits as suspicion, fear, the feeling of being unlovable, etc. Of course, from the bourgeois viewpoint of Freud and his lack of belief in love, this kind of experience was not to be expected. In very drastic cases of character change one can speak of genuine conversions, which means a complete change in values, expectations, and attitudes because something entirely new has occurred in the life of the converted person. And yet such conversions were not possible unless the person had already the potentiality within himself, that became manifest in his conversion. I admit that the superficial evidence does not speak for such an assumption because people usually do not change, but one has to consider that most people do not experience anything that is truly new. They usually find what they expect to find, and hence are barred from the possibility of a fundamentally new experience bringing about fundamental character changes.

The difficulty of discovering what the face of a person was at the moment of birth and in the first months or the first year lies in the fact that hardly anybody remembers what he or she felt or was at the age of 6 months or the age of one year. The first memories usually do not go back earlier than the first two or three years and hence...
lies one of the crucial difficulties of Freud’s assumption of the significance of early childhood. He tried to cope with this difficulty by study of the transference. This is sometimes but if one studies the case histories of the Freudian school one is forced to acknowledge that much of what are supposed to be experiences of the earliest childhood are reconstructions. These reconstructions however are very unreliable. They are based on the postulates of Freud’s theory and the conviction of authenticity is often the product of a subtle kind of brainwashing. While the analyst is supposed to remain on the empirical level, in reality in a subtle way he suggests to the patient what he is supposed to have experienced and after a long analysis and on the basis of the dependency toward the analyst, the patient will very often proclaim – or as one reads sometimes in analytic case histories “admit” – that he can genuinely feel the correctness of what the theoretical construction expects him to feel. To be sure the analyst should let the patient be free from all persuasion. The sensitive patient, or even the not-so-sensitive one, catch on after a while to what the analyst expects to hear and consent to an interpretation while in fact he has only give in to the analyst’s construction of what is supposed to have happened. Furthermore, it must be considered that the expectations of the analyst are based not only on the demands.
of the theory but also on the demands of the bourgeois picture of what the "normal" person is like. Assuming, for instance, that in a person the wish for freedom and the protest against being determined by heteronomous demands are particularly strongly developed, it would be assumed that the very rebelliousness of this person has an irrational quality and is to be explained by the Oedipal hate of the son against the father, the root of which is the sexual rivalry for the mother-wife. The fact that children are controlled and manipulated in childhood and later on in life is assumed to be normal and rebelliousness therefore the expression of irrationality.

I wish to add another complicating factor, to which little attention has been paid. The relationship between parents and children is usually seen as a one-way street, namely the effect parents have upon children. But what is often ignored is that this influence is by no means one-sided, as it is often assumed to be. Parents may have a natural dislike for a child and even for an newborn baby, not only for the reason which is often discussed, that it is an unwanted child or that the parent is destructive, sadistic, etc., but that child and parents just are not compatible by their very natures, and that in this respect the relationship is no different from that between grownup people. The parent may just have a dislike for the kind of child they produced and the child may feel this dislike from the very beginning. On the other hand, the child may have a dislike for the kind of parents he has and being the weaker he is punished for his dislike by all kinds of more or less subtle sanctions.

The child - and equally the mother - is