

A Memorandum on Identity and Negro Youth

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Introduction

A lack of familiarity with the problem of Negro youth and with the actions by which Negro youth hopes to solve these problems is a marked deficiency in my life and work which cannot be compensated for with theoretical speculation; and this least of all at a time when Negro writers are finding superb new ways of stating their and our predicament and when Negro youth finds itself involved in action which would have seemed unimaginable only a very few years ago. But since it is felt that some of my concepts might be helpful in further discussion, I will in the following recapitulate the pertinent ideas on identity contained in my writings.* This I do only in the hope that what is clear may prove helpful and what is not will become clearer in joint studies.

The fact that problems of Negro youth span the whole phenomenology of aggravated identity confusion and rapid new identity formation—cutting across phenomena judged antisocial and pro-social, violent and heroic, fanatic and ethically advanced—makes it advisable to include remarks concerning the origin of the concept of ego-identity in clinical observation in this review. However, the concept has come a long way since we first used it to define a syndrome in war—neurotics in World War II: I recently heard in India that Nehru had used the term “identity” to describe a new quality which, he felt, Gandhi had given India after offering her the equivalent of a “psychoanalysis of her past.”

* See: “*Childhood and Society*,” W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., New York, 1950

“*Wholeness and Totality*,” In *Totalitarianism*, Proceedings of a Conference held at the Am. Academy of Arts and Sciences, C. J. Friedrich, ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954

“*Identity and the Life Cycle*,” Monograph, *Psychological Issues*, Vol. I, No. 1, New York: Int’l Universities Press, 1959 with an intro. by D. Rapaport.

“*Youth: Fidelity and Diversity*” *Daedalus*, 91:5-27, 1962

1. Childhood and Identity

a. The growing child must derive a vitalizing sense of reality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experience is a successful variant of a group identity and is in accord with its space-time and life plan. Minute displays of emotion such as affection, pride, anger, guilt, anxiety, sexual arousal (rather than the words used, the meanings intended, or the philosophy implied), transmit to the human child the outlines of what really counts in his world, i.e., the variables of his group's space-time and the perspectives of its life plan.

Here is the first observation I made (a decade and a half ago) on Negro children. I will quote it to characterize the point-of-view with which I started. The babies of our colored countrymen, I said, often receive sensual satisfactions which provide them with enough oral and sensory surplus for a lifetime, as clearly betrayed in the way they move, laugh, talk, sing. Their forced symbiosis with the feudal South capitalized on this oral sensory treasure and helped to build a slave's identity: mild, submissive, dependent, somewhat querulous, but always ready to serve, with occasional empathy and childlike wisdom. But underneath a dangerous split occurred. The Negro's unavoidable identification with the dominant race, and the need of the master race to protect its own identity against the very sensual and oral temptations emanating from the race held to be inferior (whence came their mammies), established in both groups an association: light—clean—clever—white, and dark—dirty—dumb—nigger. The result, especially in those Negroes who left the poor haven of their Southern homes, was often a violently sudden and cruel cleanliness training, as attested to in the autobiographies of Negro writers. It is as if by cleansing, a whiter identity could be achieved. The attending disillusionment transmits itself to the phallic-locomotor stage, when restrictions as to what shade of girl one may dream of interfere with the free transfer of the original narcissistic sensuality to the genital sphere. Three identities are formed: (1) mammy's oral-sensual "honey-child"—tender, expressive, rhythmical; (2) the evil identity of the dirty, anal-sadistic, phallic-rapist "nigger"; and (3) the clean, anal-compulsive, restrained, friendly, but always sad "white man's Negro."

So-called opportunities offered the migrating Negro often only turn out to be a more subtly restricted prison which endangers his only historically "successful" identity (that of the slave) and fails to provide a reintegration of the other identity fragments mentioned. These fragments, then, become dominant in the form of racial caricatures which are underscored and stereotyped by the entertainment industry. Tired of his own caricature, the colored individual

often retires into hypochondriac invalidism as a condition which represents an analogy to the dependence and the relative safety of defined restriction in the South: a neurotic regression to the ego identity of the slave.

Mixed-blood Sioux Indians in areas where they hardly ever see Negroes refer to their full-blood brothers as "niggers," thus indicating the power of the dominant national imagery which serves to counterpoint the ideal and the evil images in the inventory of available prototypes. No individual can escape this opposition of images, which is all-pervasive in the men and in the women, in the majorities and in the minorities, and in all the classes of a given national or cultural unit. Psychoanalysis shows that the unconscious evil identity (the composite of everything which arouses negative identification—i.e., the wish not to resemble it) consists of the images of the violated (castrated) body, the "marked" outgroup, and the exploited minority. Thus a pronounced he-man may, in his dreams and prejudices, prove to be mortally afraid of ever displaying a woman's sentiments, a Negro's submissiveness, or a Jew's intellectuality. For the ego, in the course of its synthesizing efforts, attempts to subsume the most powerful evil and ideal prototypes (the final contestants, as it were) and with them the whole existing imagery of superior and inferior, good and bad, masculine and feminine, free and slave, potent and impotent, beautiful and ugly, fast and slow, tall and small, in a simple alternative, in order to make one battle and one strategy out of a bewildering number of skirmishes.

I knew a colored boy who, like our boys, listened every night to Red Rider. Then he sat up in bed, imagining that he was Red Rider. But the moment came when he saw himself galloping after some masked offender and suddenly noticed that in his fancy Red Rider was a colored man. He stopped his fantasy. While a small child, this boy was extremely expressive, both in his pleasures and in his sorrows. Today he is calm and always smiles; his language is soft and blurred; nobody can hurry him or worry him—or please him. White people like him.

As such boys and girls look around now, what other ideal (and evil) images are at their disposal? And how do they connect with the past? (Does non-violence connect totalistically or holistically with traditional patience and tolerance of pain?)

b. When children enter the stage of the adolescent Identity Crisis, a factor enters which characterizes the real kind of *crisis*, namely, a moment of decision between strong contending forces. "A moment" means that here something can happen very rapidly; "decision," that divergence becomes permanent; "strong and contending," that these are intense matters.

Developmentally speaking the sense of ego identity is the ac-

crued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity (one's ego in the psychoanalytic sense) is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others. The growing child must, at every step, derive a vitalizing sense of reality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experience is a successful variant of the way other people around him master experience and recognize such mastery.

In this, children cannot be fooled by empty praise and condescending encouragement. They may have to accept artificial bolstering of their self-esteem in lieu of something better, but what I call their accruing ego identity gains real strength only from wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment, that is, achievement that has meaning in their culture. On the other hand, should a child feel that the environment tries to deprive him too radically of all the forms of expression which permit him to develop and to integrate the next step in his ego identity, he will resist with the astonishing strength encountered in animals who are suddenly forced to defend their lives. Indeed, in the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of ego identity. Or else, there may be total self-abnegation (in more or less malignant forms) as illustrated in this observation. And here is an example of total denial of identity:

A four-year-old Negro girl in the Arsenal Nursery School in Pittsburgh used to stand in front of a mirror and scrub her skin with soap. When gently diverted from this she began to scrub the mirror. Finally, when induced to paint instead, she first angrily filled sheets of paper with the colors brown and black. But then she brought to the teacher what she called "a really *good* picture." The teacher first could see only a white sheet, until she looked closer and saw that the little girl had covered every inch of the white sheet with white paint. This playful episode of total self-eradication occurred and could only occur in a "desegregated" school: it illustrates the extent to which infantile drive control (cleanliness) and social self-esteem (color) are associated in childhood. But it also points to the extent of the crime which is perpetrated wherever, in the service of seemingly civilized values, groups of people are made to feel so inexorably "different" that legal desegregation can only be the beginning of a long and painful inner reidentification.

Such crises come when their parents and teachers, losing trust in themselves and using sudden correctives in order to approach the vague but pervasive Anglo-Saxon ideal, create violent discontinuities; or where, indeed, the children themselves learn to disavow their sensual and overprotective mothers as temptations and a hindrance to the formation of a more "American" personality.

If we, then, speak of the community's response to the young

individual's need to be "recognized" by those around him, we mean something beyond a mere recognition of achievement; for it is of great relevance to the young individual's identity formation that he be responded to, and be given function and status as a person whose gradual growth and transformation make sense to those who begin to make sense to him. Identity formation goes beyond the process of *identifying oneself* with ideal others in a one-way fashion; it is a process based on a heightened cognitive and emotional capacity to *let oneself be identified* by concrete persons as a circumscribed individual in relation to a predictable universe which transcends the family. Identity thus is not the sum of childhood identifications, but rather a new combination of old and new identification fragments. For this very reason societies *confirm* an individual at this time in all kinds of ideological frameworks and assign roles and tasks to him in which he can *recognize himself* and *feel recognized*. Ritual confirmations, initiations, and indoctrinations only sharpen an indispensable process of self-verification by which healthy societies bestow and receive the distilled strength of generations. By this process, societies, in turn, are themselves historically verified.

The danger of this stage is *identity diffusion*; as Biff puts it in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, "I just can't take hold, Mom, I can't take hold of some kind of a life." Where such a dilemma is based on a strong previous doubt of one's ethnic and sexual identity, delinquent and outright psychotic incidents are not uncommon. Youth after youth, bewildered by some assumed role, a role forced on him by the inexorable standardization of American adolescence, runs away in one form or another; leaving schools and jobs, staying out all night, or withdrawing into bizarre and inaccessible moods. Once "delinquent," his greatest need and often his only salvation, is the refusal on the part of older friends, advisers, and judiciary personnel to type him further by pat diagnoses and social judgments which ignore the special dynamic conditions of adolescence. For if diagnosed and treated correctly, seemingly psychotic and criminal incidents do not in adolescence have the same fatal significance which they have at other ages. Yet many a youth, finding the authorities expect him to be "a nigger," "a bum," or "a queer," perversely obliges by becoming just that.

To keep themselves together, individuals and groups treated in this fashion temporarily overidentify, to the point of apparent complete loss of individual identity, with the heroes of cliques and crowds. On the other hand, they become remarkably clannish, intolerant, and cruel in their exclusion of others who are "different," in skin color or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in entirely petty aspects of dress and gesture arbitrarily selected as *the* signs of an in-group or out-group. It is important to understand (which does

not mean condone or participate in) such intolerance as the necessary *defense against a sense of identity diffusion*, which is unavoidable at a time of life when the body changes its proportions radically, when genital maturity floods body and imagination with all manners of drives, when intimacy with the other sex offers intense complications, and when life lies before one with a variety of conflicting possibilities and choices. Adolescents help one another temporarily through such discomfort by forming cliques and by stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies.

In general, one may say that we are apt to view the social play of adolescents as we once judged the play of children. We alternately consider such behavior irrelevant, unnecessary, or irrational, and ascribe to it purely delinquent or neurotic meanings. As in the past the study of children's spontaneous games was neglected in favor of that of solitary play, so now the mutual "joinedness" of adolescent clique behavior fails to be properly assessed in our concern for the individual adolescent. Children and adolescents in their presocieties provide for one another a sanctioned moratorium and joint support for free experimentation with inner and outer dangers (including those emanating from the adult world). Whether or not a given adolescent's newly acquired capacities are drawn back into infantile conflict depends to a significant extent on the quality of the opportunities and rewards available to him in his peer clique, as well as on the more formal ways in which society at large invites a transition from social play to work experimentation, and from rituals of transit to final commitments: all of which must be based on an implicit mutual contract between the individual and society.

2. Totalism and Negative Identity

If such contact is deficient, youth may seek perverse restoration in a negative identity, "totalistically" enforced. Here we must reconsider the proposition that the need for identity is experienced as a need for a certain wholeness in the experience of onself within the community (and community here is as wide as one's social vision); and that, where such wholeness is impossible, such need turns to "totalism."

To be a bit didactic: *Wholeness* connotes an assembly of parts, even quite diversified parts, that enter into fruitful association and organization. This concept is most strikingly expressed in such terms as wholeheartedness, wholemindedness, and wholesomeness. In human development as well as in history, then, wholeness emphasizes a progressive coherence of diversified functions and parts. *Totality*, on the contrary, evokes a Gestalt in which an absolute boundary is emphasized: given a certain arbitray delineation, nothing that belongs

inside must be left outside; nothing that must be outside should be tolerated inside. A totality must be as absolutely inclusive as it is absolutely exclusive. The word "utter" conveys the element of force, which overrides the question whether the category-to-be-made-absolute is an organic and a logical one, and whether the parts, so to speak, really have a natural affinity to one another.

To say it in one sentence: Where the human being despairs of an essential wholeness of experience, he restructures himself and the world by taking refuge in a totalistic world view. Thus there appears both in individuals and in groups a periodical need for a totality without further choice or alternation, even if it implies the abandonment of a much-needed wholeness. This can consist of a lone-wolf's negativism; of a delinquent group's seeming nihilism; or in the case of national or racial groups, in a defiant glorification of one's own caricature.

Thus, patients (and I think it is in this respect that patients can help us understand analogous group processes) choose a *negative identity*, i.e., an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which, at critical stages of development, had been presented to them as most undesirable or dangerous, and yet also as most real. For example, a mother having lost her first-born son may (because of complicated guilt feelings) be unable to attach to her later surviving children the same amount of religious devotion that she bestows on the memory of her dead child and may well arouse in one of her sons the conviction that to be sick or dead is a better assurance of being "recognized" than to be healthy and about. A mother who is filled with unconscious ambivalence toward a brother who disintegrated into alcoholism may again and again respond selectively only to those traits in her son which seem to point to a repetition of her brother's fate, in which case this "negative" identity may take on more reality for the son than all his natural attempts at being good: he may work hard on becoming a drunkard and, lacking the necessary ingredients, may end up in a state of stubborn paralysis of choice. The daughter of a man of brilliant showmanship may run away from college and be arrested as a prostitute in the Negro quarter of a Southern city; while the daughter of an influential Southern Negro preacher may be found among narcotic addicts in Chicago. In such cases it is of utmost importance to recognize the mockery and the vindictive pretense in such role playing; for the white girl may not have really prostituted herself, and the colored girl may not really become an addict—yet. Needless to say, however, each of them could have placed herself in a marginal social area, leaving it to law-enforcement officers and to psychiatric agencies to decide what stamp to put on such behavior. A corresponding case is that of a boy presented to a psychiatric

clinic as "the village homosexual" of a small town. On investigation, it appeared that the boy had succeeded in assuming this fame without any actual acts of homosexuality, except that much earlier in his life he had been raped by some older boys.

Such vindictive choices of a negative identity represent, of course, a desperate attempt to regain some mastery in a situation in which the available positive identity elements cancel each other out. The history of such choice reveals a set of conditions in which it is easier to derive a sense of identity out of a *total* identification with that which one is *least* supposed to be than to struggle for a feeling of reality in acceptable roles which are unattainable with the patient's inner means.

There is a "lower lower" snobbism too, which is based on the pride of having achieved a semblance of nothingness. At any rate, many a late adolescent, if faced with continuing diffusion, would rather *be a total nobody, somebody totally bad, or indeed, dead—and all of this by free choice—than be not-quite-somebody.*

Thus, individuals, when caught up in the necessity to regroup an old identity or to gain a new and inescapable one, are subject to influences which offer them a way to wholeness. Obviously, revolutions do the first to gain the second. At any rate, the problem of totalism vs. wholeness seems to be represented in its organized form in the Black Muslims who insist on a totally "black" solution reinforced by historical and religious mysticism on the one hand; and the movement of non-violent and legal insistence on civil rights, on the other. Once such a polarization is established, it seems imperative to investigate what powerful self-images (traditional, revolutionary, and, as it were, evolutionary) have entered the picture, in mutually exclusive or mutually inclusive form, and what the corresponding symptoms are, in individuals and in the masses.

3. "Conversion" and More Inclusive Identity

In a little-known passage, Bernard Shaw relates the story of his "conversion": "I was *drawn into* the Socialist *revival* of the early eighties, among Englishmen *intensely serious* and *burning with indignation* at very *real* and very *fundamental evils* that affected *all the world.*" The words here italicized convey to me the following implications. "Drawn into": an ideology has a compelling power. "Revival": it consists of a traditional force in a state of rejuvenation. "Intensely serious": it permits even the cynical to make an investment of sincerity. "Burning with indignation": it gives to the need for repudiation the sanction of righteousness. "Real": it projects a vague inner evil onto a circumscribed horror in reality. "Fundamental": it promises participation in an effort at basic reconstruc-

tion of society. "All the world": it gives structure to a totally defined world image. Here, then, are the elements by which a group identity harnesses the young individual's aggressive and discriminative energies, and encompasses, as it completes it, the individual's identity in the service of its ideology. Thus, identity and ideology are two aspects of the same process. Both provide the necessary condition for further individual maturation and, with it, for the next higher form of identification, namely, the *solidarity linking common identities*. For the need to bind irrational self-hate and irrational repudiation makes young people, on occasion, mortally compulsive and conservative even where and when they seem most anarchic and radical; the same need makes them potentially "ideological," i.e., more or less explicitly in search of a world image held together by what Shaw called "a clear comprehension of life in the light of an intelligible theory."

What are, then, the available ideological ingredients of the new Negro and the new American identity? For (such is the nature of a revolutionary movement) the new Negro cannot afford any longer just to become "equal" to the old White. As he becomes something new, he also forces the white man as well as the advanced Negro to become newer than they are.

4. Weakness and Strength

a. In my clinical writings I have suggested that delinquent joining stands in the same dynamic relationship to schizoid isolation, as (according to Freud) perversion does to neurosis: negative *group* identities (gangs, cliques, rings, mobs) "save" the individual from the symptoms of a negative identity neurosis, to wit: a disintegration of the sense of time; morbid identity consciousness; work paralysis; bisexual confusion; and authority diffusion.

Unnecessary to say, however, a *transitory* "negative identity" is often the necessary pre-condition for a truly positive and truly new one. In this respect, I would think that American Negro writers may turn out to be as important for American literature as Irish expatriates were in the Europe of an earlier period.

On the other hand, there are certain strengths in the Negro which have evolved out of or at least along with his very submission. Such a statement will, I trust, not be misunderstood as an argument for continued submission. What I have in mind are strengths which one would hope for the sake of all of us, could remain part of a future Negro identity. Here I have in mind such a traditional phenomenon as the power of the Negro mother. As pointed out, I must glean examples from experiences accessible to me; the following observation on Caribbean motherhood will, I hope, be put into

its proper perspective by experts on the whole life-space of the Negro on the American continent.

b. Churchmen have had reason to deplore, and anthropologists to explore, the pattern of Caribbean family life, obviously an outgrowth of the slavery days of Plantation America, which extended from the Northeast Coast of Brazil in a half-circle into the Southeast of the United States. Plantations, of course, were agricultural factories, owned and operated by gentlemen, whose cultural and economic identity had its roots in a supra-regional upper class. They were worked by slaves, that is, men who, being mere equipment put to use when and where necessary, had to relinquish all chance of being the masters of their families and communities. Thus, the women were left with the offspring of a variety of men who could give no protection as they could provide no identity, except that of a subordinate species. The family system which ensued can be described in scientific terms only by circumscriptions dignifying what is not there: the rendering of "sexual services" between persons who cannot be called anything more definite than "lovers"; "maximum instability" in the sexual lives of young girls, whose pattern it is to relinquish the care of their offspring to their mothers; and mothers and grandmothers who determine that "standardized mode of co-activity" which is the minimum requirement for calling a group of individuals a family. They are, then, mostly called "household groups"—single dwellings, occupied by people sharing a common food supply. These households are "matrifocal," a word understating the grandiose role of the all powerful mother-figure who will encourage her daughters to leave their infants with her, or, at any rate, to stay with her as long as they continue to bear children. Motherhood thus becomes community life; and where churchmen could find little or no morality, and casual observers, little or no order at all, the mothers and grandmothers in fact also became father and grandfathers,* in the sense that they exerted that authoritative influence which resulted in an ever newly improvised set of rules for the economic obligations of the men who had fathered the children, and upheld the rules of incestuous avoidance. Above all, they provided the only super-identity which was left open after the enslavement of the men, namely, that of the mother who will nurture a human infant irrespective of his parentage. It is well known how many poor little rich and white gentlemen benefited from the extended fervor of the Negro women who nursed them as Southern mummies, as creole das, or as Brazilian babas. This cultural fact is, of course, being played down by the racists as mere servitude while

* See the title "My Mother Who Fathered Me."

the predominance of maternal warmth in Caribbean women is characterized as African sensualism, and vicariously enjoyed by refugees from "Continental" womanhood. One may, however, see at the root of this maternalism a grandiose gesture of human adaptation which has given the area of the Caribbean (now searching for a political and economic pattern to do justice to its cultural unity) both the promise of a positive (female) identity and the threat of a negative (male) one: for here, the fact that identity depended on the procreative worth of being born, has undoubtedly weakened the striving for becoming somebody by individual effort.

(This is an ancient pattern taking many forms in the modern Negro world. But—parenthetically speaking—it may give us one more access to a better understanding of the magnificently bearded group of men and boys who have taken over one of the islands and insist on proving that the Caribbean male can earn his worth in production as well as in procreation.)

My question is whether such maternal strength has survived not only in parts of our South but also in family patterns of Negro migrants; whether it is viewed as undesirable and treated as delinquent by Negroes as well as whites; and whether America can afford to lose it all at a time when women must help men more planfully not only to preserve the naked life of the human race but also some "inalienable" values.

c. This brings me, finally, to the issue of Fidelity, that virtue and quality of adolescent ego strength which belongs to man's evolutionary heritage, but which—like all the basic virtues—can arise only in the interplay of a stage of life with the social forces of a true community.

To be a *special kind*, has been an important element in the human need for personal and collective identities. They have found a transitory fulfillment in man's greatest moments of cultural identity and civilized perfection, and each such tradition of identity and perfection has highlighted what man could be, could he fulfil all his potentials at one time. The utopia of our own era predicts that man will be one species in one world, with a universal identity to replace the illusory super-identities which have divided him, and with an international ethic replacing all moral systems of superstition, repression, and suppression. Whatever the political arrangement that will further this utopia, we can only point to the human strengths which potentially emerge with the stages of life and indicate their dependence on communal life. In youth, ego strength emerges from the mutual confirmation of individual and community, in the sense that society recognizes the young individual as a bearer of fresh energy and that the individual so confirmed recognizes society

as a living process which inspires loyalty as it receives it, maintains allegiance as it attracts it, honors confidence as it demands it. All this I subsume under the term Fidelity.

Diversity and fidelity are polarized: they make each other significant and keep each other alive. Fidelity without a sense of diversity can become an obsession and a bore; diversity without a sense of fidelity, an empty relativism.

But Fidelity also stands in a certain polarity to adolescent sexuality: both sexual fulfillment and "sublimation" depend on this polarity.

The various hindrances to a full consummation of adolescent genital maturation have many deep consequences for man which pose an important problem for future planning. Best studied is the regressive revival of that earlier stage of psychosexuality which preceded even the emotionally quiet first school years, that is, the infantile genital and locomotor stage, with its tendency toward auto-erotic manipulation, grandiose phantasy, and vigorous play. But in youth, auto-erotism, grandiosity, and playfulness are all immensely amplified by genital potency and locomotor maturation, and are vastly complicated by what we will presently describe as the youthful mind's historical perspective.

The most widespread expression of the discontented search of youth is the craving for locomotion, whether expressed in a general "being on the go," "tearing after something," or "running around"; or in locomotion proper, as in vigorous work, in absorbing sports, in rapt dancing, in shiftless *Wanderschaft*, and in the employment and misuse of speedy animals and machines. But it also finds expression through participation in the movements of the day (whether the riots of a local commotion or the parades and campaigns of major ideological forces); if they only appeal to the need for feeling "moved" and for feeling essential in moving something along toward an open future. It is clear that societies offer any number of ritual combinations of ideological perspective and vigorous movement (dance, sports, parades, demonstrations, riots) to harness youth in the service of their historical aims; and that where societies fail to do so, these patterns will seek their own combinations, in small groups occupied with serious games, good-natured foolishness, cruel prankishness, and delinquent warfare. In no other stage of the life cycle, then, are the promise of finding oneself and the threat of losing oneself so closely allied.

To summarize: Fidelity, when fully matured, is the strength of disciplined devotion. It is gained in the involvement of youth in such experiences as reveal the essence of the era they are to join—as the beneficiaries of its tradition, as the practitioners and innovators of its technology, as renewers of its ethical strength, as rebels bent

on the destruction of the outlived, and as deviants with deviant commitments. This, at least, is the potential of youth in psychosocial evolution; and while this may sound like a rationalization endorsing any high sounding self-delusion in youth, any self-indulgence masquerading as devotion, or any righteous excuse for blind destruction, it makes intelligible the tremendous waste attending this as any other mechanism of human adaptation, especially if its excesses meet with more moral condemnation than ethical guidance. On the other hand, our understanding of these processes is not furthered by the "clinical" reduction of adolescent phenomena to their infantile antecedents and to an underlying dichotomy of drive and conscience. Adolescent development comprises a new set of identification processes, both with significant persons and with ideological forces, which give importance to individual life by relating it to a living community and to ongoing history, and by counterpointing the newly won individual identity with some communal solidarity.

In youth, then, the life history intersects with history: here individuals are confirmed in their identities, societies regenerated in their life style. This process also implies a fateful survival of adolescent modes of thinking in man's historical and ideological perspectives.

Historical processes, of course, have already entered the individual's core in childhood. Both ideal and evil images and the moral prototypes guiding parental administrations originate in the past struggles of contending cultural and national "species," which also color fairytale and family lore, superstition and gossip, and the simple lessons of early verbal training. Historians on the whole make little of this; they describe the visible emergence and the contest of autonomous historical ideas, unconcerned with the fact that these ideas reach down into the everyday lives of generations and re-emerge through the daily awakening and training of historical consciousness in young individuals.

It is youth which begins to develop that sense of historical irreversibility which can lead to what we may call acute historical estrangement. This lies behind the fervent quest for a sure meaning in individual life history and in collective history, and behind the questioning of the laws of relevancy which bind datum and principles, event and movement. But it is also, alas, behind the bland carelessness of that youth which denies its own vital need to develop and cultivate a historical consciousness—and conscience.

To enter history, each generation of young persons must find an identity consonant with its own childhood and consonant with an ideological promise in the perceptible historical process. But in youth the tables of childhood dependence begin slowly to turn: it is no longer exclusively for the old to teach the young the meaning

of life, whether individual or collective. It is the young who, by their responses and actions, tell the old whether life as represented by their elders and as presented to the young has meaning; and it is the young who carry in them the power to confirm those who confirm them and, joining the issues, to renew and to regenerate, or to reform and to rebel.

I will not at this point review the institutions which participate in creating the retrospective and the prospective mythology offering historical orientation to youth. Obviously, the mythmakers of religion and politics, the arts and the sciences, the stage and fiction—all contribute to the historical logic presented to youth more or less consciously, more or less responsibly. And today we must add, at least in the United States, psychiatry; and all over the world, the press, which forces leaders to make history in the open and to accept reportorial distortion as a major historical factor.

Moralities sooner or later outlive themselves, ethics never: this is what the need for identity and for fidelity, reborn with each generation, seems to point to. Morality in the moralistic sense can be shown by modern means of inquiry to be predicated on superstitions and irrational inner mechanisms which ever again undermine the ethical fiber of generations; but morality is expendable only where ethics prevail. This is the wisdom that the words of many languages have tried to tell man. He has tenaciously clung to the words, even though he has understood them only vaguely, and in his actions has disregarded or perverted them completely. But there is much in ancient wisdom which can now become knowledge.

What then, are the sources of a new ethical orientation which may have roots in Negro tradition and yet also reach into the heroic striving for a new identity within the universal ethics emanating from world-wide technology and communication? This question may sound strenuously inspirational or academic; yet, I have in mind the study of concrete sources of morale and strength, lying within the vitality of bodily experience, the identity of individual experience, and the fidelity developed in methods of work and cooperation, methods of solidarity and political action, and methods permitting a simple and direct manifestation of human values such as have survived centuries of suppression. As a clinician, I am probably more competent to judge the conditions which continue to *suppress* and attempt to *crush* such strengths; and yet I have also found that diagnosis and anamnesis can turn out to be of little help where one ignores sources of recovery often found in surprising and surprisingly powerful constellations.

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