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Youth: Fidelity and Diversity

The subject of this paper is a certain strength inherent in the age of youth. I call it the sense of and the capacity for Fidelity. Such a strength, to me, is not a moral trait to be acquired by individual effort. Rather, I believe it to be part of the human equipment evolved with socio-genetic evolution. This assertion I could not undertake to defend here; nor could I make plausible the fact that, in the schedule of individual growth, Fidelity could not mature earlier in life and must not, in the crises of youth, fail its time of ascendance if human adaptation is to remain intact. Nor (to complete the list of limitations) could I review the other stages of life and the specific strengths and weaknesses contributed by each to man's precarious adaptation. We can take only a brief look at the stage of life which immediately precedes youth, the school age, and then turn to youth itself. I regret this; for even as one can understand oneself only by looking at *and* away from oneself, one can recognize the meaning of a stage only by studying it in the context of all the others.

The school age, which intervenes between childhood and youth, finds the child, previously dominated by play, ready, willing, and able to apply himself to those rudimentary skills which form the necessary preparation for his culture's tools and weapons, symbols and concepts. Also, it finds him eager to realize actual roles (previously play-acted) which promise him eventual recognition within the specializations of his culture's technology. I would say, then, that Skillfulness is

the specific strength emerging in man's school age. However, the stage-by-stage acquisition during individual childhood of each of man's evolutionary gains leaves the mark of infantile experience on his proudest achievements. As the play age bequeaths to all methodical pursuits a quality of grandiose delusion, the school age leaves man with a naive acceptance of "what works."

As the school child makes methods his own, he also permits accepted methods to make him their own. To consider as good only what works, and to feel accepted only if things work, to manage and to be managed, can become his dominant delight and value. And since technological specialization is an intrinsic part of the human horde's or tribe's or culture's system and world image, man's pride in the tools that work with materials and animals extends to the weapons which work against other humans as well as against other species. That this can awaken a cold cunning as well as an unmeasured ferocity rare in the animal world is, of course, due to a combination of developments. Among these we will be most concerned (because it comes to the fore during youth) with man's need to combine technological pride with a sense of identity: a double sense of personal self-sameness slowly accrued from infantile experiences and of shared sameness experienced in encounters with a widening part of the community.

This need too is an evolutionary necessity as yet to be understood and influenced by planning: for men—not being a natural species any more, and not a mankind as yet—need to feel that they are of some special kind (tribe or nation, class or caste, family, occupation, or type), whose insignia they will wear with vanity and conviction, and defend (along with the economic claims they have staked out for their kind) against the foreign, the inimical, the not-so-human kinds. Thus it comes about that they can use all their proud skills and methods most systematically against other men, even in the most advanced state of rationality and civilization, with the conviction that they could not morally afford not to do so.

It is not our purpose, however, to dwell on the easy perversion and corruptibility of man's morality, but to determine what those core virtues are which—at this stage of psycho-

social evolution—need our concerted attention and ethical support; for antimoralists as well as moralists easily overlook the bases in human nature for a strong ethics. As indicated, Fidelity is 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 life stage with the individuals and the social forces of a true community.

At this point, it may be necessary to defend the use of the word "virtue" in this context. It once had the connotation of an inherent strength and of an active quality in something to be described: a medicine or a drink, for example, was said to be "without virtue" when it had lost its spirit. In this sense, I think, one may use the term "basic virtues" to connote certain qualities which begin to animate man pervasively during successive stages of his life, Hope being the first and the most basic.¹ The use of such a term, however, for the conceptualization of a quality emerging from the interplay of individual growth and social structure calls to mind dreaded "naturalist" fallacies. All I can say here is that newer concepts of environment (such as the *Umwelt* of the ethologists) imply an optimum relation of inborn potentialities and the structure of the environment. This is not to deny the special problems adhering to the fact that man creates his environment and both lives in it and judges his own modes of living.

The evidence in young lives of the search for something and somebody to be true to is seen in a variety of pursuits more or less sanctioned by society. It is often hidden in a bewildering combination of shifting devotion and sudden perversity, sometimes more devotedly perverse, sometimes more perversely devoted. Yet, in all youth's seeming shiftiness, a seeking after some durability in change can be detected, whether in the accuracy of scientific and technical method or in the sincerity of conviction; in the veracity of historical and fictional accounts or the fairness of the rules of the game; in the authenticity of artistic production (and the high fidelity of reproduction) or in the genuineness of personalities and the reliability of commitments. This search is easily misunderstood, and often it is only dimly perceived by the individual himself, because youth, always set to grasp both

diversity in principle and principle in diversity, must often test extremes before settling on a considered course. These extremes, particularly in times of ideological confusion and widespread marginality of identity, may include not only rebellious but also deviant, delinquent, and self-destructive tendencies. However, all this can be in the nature of a moratorium, a period of delay, in which to test the rock-bottom of some truth before committing the powers of body and mind to a segment of the existing (or a coming) order. "Loyal" and "legal" have the same root, linguistically and psychologically; for legal commitment is an unsafe burden unless shouldered with a sense of sovereign choice and experienced as loyalty. To develop that sense is a joint task of the consistency of individual life history and the ethical potency of the historical process.

Let a great tragic play tell us something of the elemental nature of the crisis man encounters here. If it is a prince's crisis, let us not forget that the "leading families" of heaven and history at one time personified man's pride and tragic failure. Prince Hamlet is in his twenties, some say early, some late. We will say he is in the middle of his third decade, a youth no longer young and about to forfeit his moratorium. We find him in a tragic conflict in which he cannot make the one step demanded simultaneously by his age and his sex, his education, and his historical responsibility.

If we want to make Shakespeare's insight into one of "the ages of man" explicit, we know that such an endeavor seems reprehensible to the students of drama, if undertaken by a trained psychologist. Everybody else (how could he do otherwise?) interprets Shakespeare in the light of some prevailing if naive psychology. I will not try to solve the riddle of Hamlet's inscrutable nature, because his inscrutability is his nature. I feel sufficiently warned by Shakespeare himself, who lets Polonius speak like the caricature of a psychiatrist:

*And I do think—or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
as it has us'd to do—that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.*

Hamlet's decision to play insane is a secret which the audience shares with him from the start, without their ever getting rid of the feeling that he is on the verge of slipping into the state he pretends. "His madness," says T. S. Eliot, "is less than madness, and more than feigned."

If Hamlet's madness is more than feigned, it appears to be aggravated at least fivefold: by habitual melancholy, an introverted personality, Danishness, an acute state of mourning, and love. All this makes a regression to the Oedipus complex, postulated by Ernest Jones as the main theme of this as of other great tragedies, entirely plausible.² This would mean that Hamlet cannot forgive his mother's recent illegitimate betrayal, because he had not been able as a child to forgive her for having betrayed him quite legitimately with his father; but, at the same time, he is unable to avenge his father's recent murder, because as a child he had himself betrayed him in phantasy and wished him out of the way. Thus he forever postpones—until he ruins the innocent with the guilty—his uncle's execution, which alone would free the ghost of his beloved father from the fate of being,

*doomed for a certain term to walk the night
and for the day confined to fast in fires.*

No audience, however, can escape the feeling that he is a man of superior conscience, advanced beyond the legal concepts of his time, consumed by his own past and by that of his society.

One further suggestion is inescapable, that Hamlet displays some of the playwright's and the actor's personality: for where others lead men and change the course of history, he reflectively moves characters about on the stage (the play within the play); in brief, where others act, he play-acts. And indeed, Hamlet may well stand, historically speaking, for an abortive leader, a still-born rebel.

We shall return to this in another context. In the meantime, all that has been stated can only support a biographic view which concentrates on Hamlet's age and status as a young intellectual of his time: for did he not recently return from studies at Wittenberg, the hotbed of humanist corrup-

tion, his time's counterpart to Sophist Athens (and today's existentialist centers of learning)?

There are five young men in the play, all Hamlet's age mates, and all sure (or even overdefined) in their identities as dutiful sons, courtiers, and future leaders. But they are all drawn into the moral swamp of infidelity, which seeps into the fiber of all those who owe allegiance to "rotten" Denmark, drawn by the multiple intrigue which Hamlet hopes to defeat with his own intrigue: the play within the play.

Hamlet's world, then, is one of diffuse realities and fidelities. Only through the play within the play and through the madness within the insanity, does Hamlet, the actor within the play-actor, reveal the identity within the pretended identities—and the superior fidelity in the fatal pretense.

His estrangement is one of identity diffusion. His estrangement from existence itself is expressed in the famous soliloquy. He is estranged from being human and from being a man: "Man delights me not; no, nor woman either"; and estranged from love and procreation: "I say we will have no more marriage." He is estranged from the ways of his country, "though I am native here and to the manner born"; and much like our "alienated" youth, he is estranged from and describes as "alienated" the overstandardized man of his day, who "only got the tune of time and outward habit of encounter."

Yet Hamlet's single-minded and tragically doomed search for Fidelity breaks through all this. Here is the essence of the historical Hamlet, that ancient model who was a hero on the folk stage for centuries before Shakespeare modernized and eternalized him:³

He was loth to be thought prone to lying about any matter, and wished to be held a stranger to any falsehood; and accordingly he mingled craft and candor in such a wise that, though his words did not lack truth, yet there was nothing to betoken the truth and to betray how far his keenness went.

It accords with the general diffusion of truth in Hamlet that this central theme is announced in the old fool's message to his son:

POLONIUS: *This above all; to thine own self be true
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

Yet it is also the central theme of Hamlet's most passionate pronouncements, which make his madness but an adjunct to his greatness. He abhors conventional sham, and advocates genuineness of feeling:

*Seems, madam! Nay, it is; I know not "seems."
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief
That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passes show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.*

He searches for what only an elite will really understand—"honest method":

*I heard thee speak me a speech once but it was never
acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play I
remember, pleased not the million . . . I it was (as I
received it, and others, whose judgments cried in
the top of mine) an excellent play, well digested
and in the scenes, set down with as much modesty and
cunning. I remember one said there were no sallets
in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter
in the phrase that might indict the author of affection;
but called it an honest method.*

He fanatically insists on purity of form and fidelity of reproduction:

*. . . let your discretion be your tutor. Suit the
action to the word, the word to the action, with this
special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty*

*of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose
of playing whose end, both at the first and now, was,
and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature,
to show virtue her own image and the very age and
body of time his own form and pressure.*

And finally, the eager (and overeager) acknowledgment of genuine character in his friend:

*Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath sealed thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and bless'd are those
Whose blood and judgement are so co-mingled
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is nor passion's slave, and I will wear him
in my heart's core, ay in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. Something too much of this.*

This, then, is the Hamlet within Hamlet. It fits the combined play-actor, the intellectual, the youth, and the neurotic that his words are his better deeds, that he can say clearly what he cannot live, and that his fidelity must bring doom to those he loves: for what he accomplishes at the end is what he tried to avoid, even as he realizes what we would call his negative identity in becoming exactly what his own ethical sense could not tolerate: a mad revenger. Thus do inner reality and historical actuality conspire to deny tragic man the positive identity for which he seems exquisitely chosen. Of course, the audience all along has sensed in Hamlet's very sincerity an element of deadliness. At the end he gives his "dying voice" to his counterplayer on the historical stage, victorious young Fortinbras, who in turn insists on having him,

*. . . born like a soldier to the stage
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royal.*

The ceremonial fanfares, blaring and hollow, announce the end of this singular youth. He is confirmed by his chosen peers, with the royal insignia of his birth. A special person, intensely human, is buried—a member of his special kind.

To be a special kind, we have said, is an important element in the human need for personal and collective identities—all, in a sense, pseudospecies. 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 be all these 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 superidentities which have divided him, and with an international ethics replacing all moral systems of superstition, repression, and suppression. Whatever the political arrangement that will further this utopia, we can only point to the schedule of human strengths which potentially emerge with the stages of life and indicate their interdependence on the structure of 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.

Let us go back, then, to the origins of that combination of drivenness and disciplined energy, of irrationality and courageous capability which belong to the best discussed and the most puzzling phenomena of the life cycle. The puzzle, we must grant throughout, is in the essence of the phenomenon. For the unity of the personality must be unique to be united, and the functioning of each new generation unpredictable to fulfill its function.

Of the three sources of new energy, physical growth is the most easily measured and systematically exercised, although its contribution to the aggressive drives is little understood. The youthful powers of comprehension and cognition can be experimentally studied and with planning applied

to apprenticeship and study, but their relation to ideological imagination is less well known. Finally, the long delayed genital maturation is a source of untold energy, but also of a drivenness accompanied by intrinsic frustration.

When maturing in his physical capacity for procreation, the human youth is as yet unable to love in that binding manner which only two identities can offer each other; nor to care consistently enough to sustain parenthood. The two sexes, of course, differ greatly in these respects, and so do individuals, while societies provide different opportunities and sanctions within which individuals must fend for their potentials—and for their potency. But what I have called a psychosocial moratorium, of some form and duration between the advent of genital maturity and the onset of responsible adulthood, seems to be built into the schedule of human development. Like all the moratoria in man's developmental schedules, the delay of adulthood can be prolonged and intensified to a forceful and a fateful degree; thus it accounts for very special human achievements and also for the very special weaknesses in such achievements. For, whatever the partial satisfactions and partial abstinences that characterize premarital sex life in various cultures—whether the pleasure and pride of forceful genital activity without commitment, or of erotic states without genital consummation, or of disciplined and devoted delay—ego development uses the psychosexual powers of adolescence for enhancing a sense of style and identity. Here, too, man is never an animal: even where a society furthers the genital closeness of the sexes, it does so in a stylized manner. On the other hand, the sex act, biologically speaking, is the procreative act, and there is an element of psychobiological dissatisfaction in any sexual situation not favorable in the long run to procreative consummation and care—a dissatisfaction which can be tolerated by otherwise healthy people, as all partial abstinences can be borne: for a certain period, under conditions otherwise favorable to the aims of identity formation. In the woman, no doubt, this dissatisfaction plays a much greater role, owing to her deeper engagement, physiologically and emotionally, in the sex act

as the first step in a procreative commitment of which her monthly cycle is a regular bodily and emotive reminder.

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 known 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.⁴ 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 new 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.

In connection with locomotion, we must mention two great industrial developments; the motor engine and the motion picture. The motor engine, of course, is the very heart and symbol of our technology and its mastery, the aim and as-

piration of much of modern youth. In connection with immature youth, however, it must be understood that both motor car and motion pictures offer to those so inclined passive locomotion with an intoxicating delusion of being intensely active. The prevalence of car thefts and motor accidents among juveniles is much decried (although it is taking the public a long time to understand that a theft is an appropriation for the sake of gainful possession), while automobiles more often than not are stolen by the young in search of a kind of automotive intoxication, which may literally run away with car and youngster. Yet, while vastly inflating a sense of motor omnipotence, the need for active locomotion often remains unfulfilled. Motion pictures especially offer the onlooker, who sits, as it were, with the engine of his emotions racing, fast and furious motion in an artificially widened visual field, interspersed with close-ups of violence and sexual possession—and all this without making the slightest demand on intelligence, imagination, or effort. I am pointing here to a widespread imbalance in adolescent experience, because I think it explains new kinds of adolescent outbursts and points to new necessities of mastery. The danger involved is greatly balanced in that part of youth which can take active charge of technical development, manages to learn, and to identify with the ingeniousness of invention, the improvement of production and the care of machinery, and is thus offered a new and unlimited application of youthful capacities. Where youth is underprivileged in such technical experience, it must explode in riotous motion; where it is ungifted, it will feel estranged from the modern world, until technology and non-technical intelligence have come to a certain convergence.

The cognitive gifts developing during the first half of the second decade add a powerful tool to the tasks of youth. J. Piaget calls the gains in cognition made toward the middle teens, the achievement of "formal operations."⁵ This means that the youth can now operate on hypothetical propositions, can think of possible variables and potential relations, and think of them in thought alone, independent of certain concrete checks previously necessary. As Jerome S. Bruner puts it, the child now can "conjure up systematically the full

range of alternative possibilities that could exist at any given time."⁶ Such cognitive orientation forms not a contrast but a complement to the need of the young person to develop a sense of identity, for, from among all possible and imaginable relations, he must make a series of ever narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual, and ideological commitments.

Here again 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.

The sense of ego identity, then, becomes more necessary (and more problematical) wherever a wide range of possible identities is envisaged. Identity is a term used in our day with faddish ease; at this point, I can only indicate how very complicated the real article is.⁷ For ego identity is partially conscious and largely unconscious. It is a psychological process reflecting social processes; but with sociological means it can be seen as a social process reflecting psychological processes; it meets its crisis in adolescence, but has grown throughout childhood and continues to re-emerge in the crises of later years. The overriding meaning of it all, then, is the creation of a sense of sameness, a unity of personality now felt by the individual and recognized by others as having consistency in time—of being, as it were, an irreversible historical fact.

The prime danger of this age, therefore, is identity confusion, which can express itself in excessively prolonged moratoria (Hamlet offers an exalted example); in repeated impulsive attempts to end the moratorium with sudden choices, that is, to play with historical possibilities, and then to deny that some irreversible commitment has already taken place; and sometimes also in severe regressive pathology, which we will illustrate presently. The dominant issue of this, as of any other stage, therefore, is that of the active, the selective, ego being in charge and being enabled to be in charge by a social structure which grants a given age group the place it needs—and in which it is needed.

In a letter to Oliver Wendell Holmes, William James speaks of wanting to "rebaptize himself" in their friendship—and this one word says much of what is involved in the radical direction of the social awareness and the social needs of youth. From the middle of the second decade, the capacity to think and the power to imagine reach beyond the persons and personalities in which youth can immerse itself so deeply. Youth loves and hates in people what they "stand for" and chooses them for a significant encounter involving issues that often, indeed, are bigger than you and I. We have heard Hamlet's declaration of love to his friend Horatio, a declaration quickly broken off—"something too much here." It is a new reality, then, for which the individual wishes to be reborn, with and by those whom he chooses as his new ancestors and his genuine contemporaries.

This mutual selection, while frequently associated with, and therefore interpreted as a rebellion against or withdrawal from, the childhood environment, is an expression of a truly new perspective which I have already called "historical"—in one of those loose uses of an ancient and overspecialized word which sometimes become necessary in making new meanings specific. I mean by "historical perspective" something which every human being newly develops during adolescence. It is a sense of the irreversibility of significant events and an often urgent need to understand fully and quickly what kind of happenings in reality and in thought determine others, and why. As we have seen, psychologists such as Piaget recognize in youth the capacity to appreciate that any process can be understood when it is retraced in its steps and thus reversed in thought. Yet it is no contradiction to say that he who comes to understand such a reversal also realizes that in reality, among all the events that can be thought of, a few will determine and narrow one another with historical fatality, whether (in the human instance) deservedly or undeservedly, intentionally or unintentionally.

Youth, therefore, is sensitive to any suggestion that it may be hopelessly determined by what went before in life histories or in history. Psychosocially speaking, this would mean that irreversible childhood identifications would de-

prive an individual of an identity of his own; historically, that invested powers should prevent a group from realizing its composite historical identity. For these reasons, youth often rejects parents and authorities and wishes to belittle them as inconsequential; it is in search of individuals and movements who claim, or seem to claim, that they can predict what is irreversible, thus getting ahead of the future—which means, reversing it. This in turn accounts for the acceptance by youth of mythologies and ideologies predicting the course of the universe or the historical trend; for even intelligent and practical youth can be glad to have the larger framework settled, so that it can devote itself to the details which it can manage, once it knows (or is convincingly told) what they stand for and where it stands. Thus, "true" ideologies are verified by history—for a time; for, if they can inspire youth, youth will make the predicted history come more than true.

By pointing to what, in the mind of youth, people "stand for," I did not mean to overemphasize the ideological explicitness in the meaning of individuals to youth. The selection of meaningful individuals can take place in the framework of pointed practicalities such as schooling or job selection, as well as in religious and ideological fellowship; while the methods of selection can range from banal amenity and enmity to dangerous play with the borderlines of sanity and legality. But the occasions have in common a mutual sizing up and a mutual plea for being recognized as individuals who can be more than they seem to be, and whose potentials are needed by the order that is or will be. The representatives of the adult world thus involved may be advocates and practitioners of technical accuracy, of a method of scientific inquiry, of a convincing rendition of truth, of a code of fairness, of a standard of artistic veracity, or of a way of personal genuineness. They become representatives of an elite in the eyes of the young, quite independently of whether or not they are also viewed thus in the eyes of the family, the public, or the police. The choice can be dangerous, but to some youths the danger is a necessary ingredient of the experiment. Elemental things are dangerous; and if youth could not over-

commit itself to danger, it could not commit itself to the survival of genuine values—one of the primary steering mechanisms of psychosocial evolution. The elemental fact is that only when fidelity has found its field of manifestation is the human as good as, say, the nestling in nature, which is ready to rely on its own wings and to take its adult place in the ecological order.

If in human adolescence this field of manifestation is alternately one of devoted conformism and of extreme deviancy, of rededication and of rebellion, we must remember the necessity for man to react (and to react most intensively in his youth) to the diversity of conditions. In the setting of psychosocial evolution, we can ascribe a long-range meaning to the idiosyncratic individualist and to the rebel as well as to the conformist, albeit under different historical conditions. For healthy individualism and devoted deviancy contain an indignation in the service of a wholeness that is to be restored, without which psychosocial evolution would be doomed. Thus, human adaptation has its loyal deviants, its rebels, who refuse to adjust to what so often is called, with an apologetic and fatalistic misuse of a once good phrase, "the human condition."

Loyal deviancy and identity formation in extraordinary individuals are often associated with neurotic and psychotic symptoms, or at least with a prolonged moratorium of relative isolation, in which all the estrangements of adolescence are suffered. In *Young Man Luther* I have attempted to put the suffering of a great young man into the context of his greatness and his historic position.⁸

It is not our purpose, however, to discuss what to many youths is the most urgent question, and yet to us the most difficult to answer, namely, the relation of special giftedness and neurosis; rather, we must characterize the specific nature of adolescent psychopathology, or, even more narrowly, indicate the relevance of the issue of fidelity to the psychopathology of youth.

In the classical case of this age group, Freud's first published encounter with an eighteen-year-old girl suffering from

"*petite hystérie* with the commonest of all . . . symptoms," it is interesting to recall that at the end of treatment Freud was puzzled as to "what kind of help" the girl wanted from him. He had communicated to her his interpretation of the structure of her neurotic disorder, an interpretation which became the central theme of his classical publication on the psychosexual factors in the development of hysteria.⁹ Freud's clinical reports, however, remain astonishingly fresh over the decades, and today his case history clearly reveals the psychosocial centering of the girl's story in matters of fidelity. In fact, one might say, without seriously overdoing it, that three words characterize her social history: sexual infidelity on the part of some of the most important adults in her life; the perfidy of her father's denial of his friend's sexual acts, which were in fact the precipitating cause of the girl's illness; and a strange tendency on the part of all the adults around the girl to make her a confidante in any number of matters, without having enough confidence in her to acknowledge the truths relevant to her illness.

Freud, of course, focused on other matters, opening up, with the concentration of a psychosurgeon, the symbolic meaning of her symptoms and their history; but, as always, he reported relevant data on the periphery of his interests. Thus, among the matters which somewhat puzzled him, he reports that the patient was "almost beside herself at the idea of its being supposed that she had merely fancied" the conditions which had made her sick; and that she was kept "anxiously trying to make sure whether I was being quite straightforward with her"—or perfidious like her father. When at the end she left analyst and analysis "in order to confront the adults around her with the secrets she knew," Freud considered this an act of revenge on them, and on him; and within the outlines of his interpretation, this partial interpretation stands. Nevertheless, as we can now see, there was more to this insistence on the historical truth than the denial of an inner truth—and this especially in an adolescent. For, the question as to what confirms them irreversibly as a truth, full or a cheating, a sick or a rebellious type is paramount in the minds of adolescents; and the further question, whether

or not they were right in not accepting the conditions which made them sick, is as important to them as the insight into the structure of their sickness can ever be. In other words, they insist that the meaning of their sickness find recognition within a reformulation of the historical truth as revealed in their own insights and distortions, and not according to the terms of the environment which wishes them to be "brought to reason" (as Dora's father had put it, when he brought her to Freud).

No doubt, Dora by then was a hysteric, and the meaning of her symptoms was psychosexual; but the sexual nature of her disturbance and of the precipitating events should not blind us to the fact that other perfidies, familial and communal, cause adolescents to regress in a variety of ways to a variety of earlier stages.

Only when adolescence is reached does the capacity for such clear regression and symptom formation occur: only when the historical function of the mind is consolidated can significant repressions become marked enough to cause consistent symptom formation and deformation of character. The depth of regression determines the nature of the pathology and points to the therapy to be employed. However, there is a pathognomic picture which all sick youth have in common and which is clearly discernible in Freud's description of Dora's total state. This picture is characterized first of all by a denial of the historical flux of time, and by an attempt to challenge retrospectively, while retesting in the present all parental premises before new trust is invested in the (emancipated) future.

The sick adolescent thus gradually stops extending experimental feelers toward the future; his moratorium of illness becomes an end in itself and thus ceases to be a moratorium (Dora suffered from a *taedium vitae* which was probably not entirely genuine," Freud wrote). It is for this reason that death and suicide can be at this time such a spurious preoccupation—one leading unpredictably to suicide (and to murder)—for death would conclude the life history before it joins others in inexorable commitment. (Dora's parents found "a letter in which she took leave of them because she could

no longer endure life. Her father . . . guessed that the girl had no serious suicidal intentions.") There is also a social isolation which excludes all sense of solidarity and can lead to a snobbish isolation which finds companions but no friends (Dora "tried to avoid social intercourse," was "distant" and "unfriendly"). The energy of repudiation which accompanies the first steps of an identity formation (and in some youngsters can lead to the sudden impulse to annihilate) is in neurotics turned against the self ("Dora was satisfied neither with herself nor with her family").

A repudiated self in turn cannot offer loyalty, and, of course, fears the fusion of love or of sexual encounters. The work inhibition often connected with this picture (Dora suffered from "fatigue and lack of concentration") is really a career inhibition, in the sense that every exertion of skill or method is suspected of binding the individual to the role and the status suggested by the activity; thus, again, any moratorium is spoiled. Where fragmentary identities are formed, they are highly self-conscious and are immediately put to a test (thus Dora obviously defeated her wish to be a woman intellectual). This identity consciousness is a strange mixture of superiority, almost a megalomania ("I am a majority of one," one of my patients said), with which the patient tries to convince himself that he is really too good for his community or his period of history, while he is equally convinced of being nobody.

We have sketched the most obvious social symptoms of adolescent psychopathology, in part to indicate that, besides the complicated structure of specific symptoms, there is in the picture presented of each stage an expression of the dominant psychosocial issue, so open that one sometimes wonders whether the patient lies by telling the simple truth or tells the truth when he seems most obviously to lie.

The sketch presented, however, also serves as a comparison of the isolated adolescent sufferer with those youths who try to solve their doubt in their elders by joining deviant cliques and gangs. Freud found that "psychoneuroses are, so to speak, the negative of perversions,"¹⁰ which means that neurotics suffer under the repression of tendencies which

perverts try to "live out." This has a counterpart in the fact that isolated sufferers try to solve by withdrawal what the joiners of deviant cliques and gangs attempt to solve by conspiracy.

If we now turn to this form of adolescent pathology, the denial of the irreversibility of historical time appears to be expressed in a clique's or a gang's delusion of being an organization with a tradition and an ethics all its own. The pseudo-historical character of such societies is expressed in such names as "The Navahos," "The Saints," or "The Edwardians"; while their provocation is countered by society (remember the Pachucos of the war years) with a mixture of impotent rage wherever murderous excess does actually occur, and with a phobic overconcern followed by vicious suppression wherever these "secret societies" are really no more than fads lacking any organized purpose. Their pseudo-social character reveals itself in their social parasitism, and their pseudo-rebellion in the conformism actually governing their habits. Yet the seemingly unassailable inner sense of callous rightness is no doubt due to an inner realignment of motivations, which can best be understood by briefly comparing the torment of the isolated youngster with the temporary gains derived by the joiner from the mere fact that he has been taken into a pseudo-society. The time diffusion attending the isolate's inability to envisage a career is "cured" by his attention to "jobs"—theft, destruction, fights, murder, or acts of perversion or addiction, conceived on the spur of the moment and executed forthwith. This "job" orientation also takes care of the work inhibition, because the clique and the gang are always "busy," even if they just "hang around." Their lack of any readiness to wince under shaming or accusation is often considered the mark of a total personal perdition, while in fact it is a trademark, an insignia of the "species" to which the youngster (mostly marginal in economic and ethnic respects) would rather belong than to a society which is eager to confirm him as a criminal and then promises to rehabilitate him as an ex-criminal.

As to the isolate's tortured feelings of bisexuality or of an immature need for love, the young joiner in social pathology,

by joining, has made a clear decision: he is male with a vengeance, she, a female without sentimentality; or they are both pervers. In either case, they can eliminate the procreative function of genitality altogether and can make a pseudo-culture of what is left. By the same token, they will acknowledge authority only in the form chosen in the act of joining, repudiating the rest of the social world, where the isolate repudiates existence as such and, with it, himself.

The importance of these comparative considerations, which have been stated in greater detail elsewhere, lie in the impotent craving of the isolated sufferer to be true to himself, and in that of the joiner, to be true to a group and to its insignia and codes. By this I do not mean to deny that the one is sick (as his physical and mental symptoms attest), nor that the other can be on the way to becoming a criminal, as his more and more irreversible acts and choices attest. Both theory and therapy, however, lack the proper leverage, if the need for (receiving and giving) fidelity is not understood, and especially if instead the young deviant is confirmed by every act of the correctional or therapeutic authorities as a future criminal or a lifelong patient.

In Dora's case, I have tried to indicate the phenomenology of this need. As to young delinquents, I can only quote again one of those rare newspaper reports which convey enough of a story to show the elements involved. Kai T. Erikson and I have used this example as an introduction to our article "The Confirmation of the Delinquent."¹¹

JUDGE IMPOSES ROAD GANG TERM FOR BACK TALK

Wilmington, N. D. (UP)—A "smart alecky" youth who wore pegged trousers and a flattop haircut began six months on a road gang today for talking back to the wrong judge.

Michael A. Jones, 20, of Wilmington, was fined \$25 and costs in Judge Edwin Jay Roberts Jr.'s superior court for reckless operation of an automobile. But he just didn't leave well enough alone.

"I understand how it was, with your pegged trousers and flattop haircut," Roberts said in assessing the fine.

"You go on like this and I predict in five years you'll be in prison."

When Jones walked over to pay his fine, he overheard Probation Officer Gideon Smith tell the judge how much trouble the "smart alecky" young offender had been.

"I just want you to know I'm not a thief," interrupted Jones to the judge.

The judge's voice boomed to the court clerk: "Change that judgment to six months on the roads."

I quote the story here to add the interpretation that the judge in this case (neither judge nor case differs from a host of others) took it as an affront to the dignity of authority what may have also been a desperate "historical" denial, an attempt to claim that a truly antisocial identity had not yet been formed, and that there was enough discrimination and potential fidelity left to be made something of by somebody who cared to do so. But instead, what the young man and the judge made of it was likely, of course, to seal the irreversibility and confirm the doom. I say "was likely to," because I do not know what happened in this case; we do know, however, the high recidivity of criminality in the young who, during the years of identity formation, are forced by society into intimate contact with criminals.

Finally, it cannot be overlooked that at times political undergrounds of all kinds can and do make use of the need for fidelity as well as the store of wrath in those deprived in their need by their families or their societies. Here social rejuvenation can make use of and redeem social pathology, even as in individuals special giftedness can be related to and redeem neurosis. These are matters too weighty to be discussed briefly and, at any rate, our concern has been with the fact that the psychopathology of youth suggests a consideration of the same issues which we found operative in the evolutionary and developmental aspects of this stage of life.

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 renews 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 lives of generations and re-emerge through the daily awakening and training of historical consciousness in young individuals.

It is youth, then, 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 principle, 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 youth 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: no longer is it merely 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 the old 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 preached 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 the leaders to make history in the open and to accept reportorial distortion as a major historical factor.

I have spoken of Hamlet as an abortive ideological leader. His drama combines all the elements of which successful ideological leaders are made: they are the postadolescents who make out of the very contradictions of adolescence the polarities of their charisma. Individuals with an uncommon depth of conflict, they also have uncanny gifts, and often uncanny luck with which they offer to the crisis of a generation the solution of their own crisis—always, as Woodrow Wil-

son put it, being "in love with activity on a large scale," always feeling that their one life must be made to count in the lives of all, always convinced that what they felt as adolescents was a curse, a fall, an earthquake, a thunderbolt, in short, a revelation to be shared with their generation and with many to come. Their humble claim to being chosen does not preclude a wish to universal power. "Fifty years from now," wrote Kierkegaard in the journal of his spiritual soliloquy, "the whole world will read my diary." He sensed, no doubt, that the impending dominance of mass ideologies would bring to the fore his cure for the individual soul, existentialism. We must study the question (I have approached it in my study of young Luther) of what ideological leaders do to history—whether they first aspire to power and then face spiritual qualms, or first face spiritual perdition and then seek universal influence. Their answers often manage to subsume under the heading of a more embracing identity all that ails man, especially young man, at critical times: danger from new weapons and from natural forces aggravated by man's misuse of nature; anxiety from sources within the life-history typical for the time; and existential dread of the ego's limitations, magnified in times of disintegrating superidentities and intensified in adolescence.

But does it not take a special and, come to think of it, a strange sense of calling, to dare and to care to give such inclusive answers? Is it not probable and in fact demonstrable that among the most passionate ideologists there are unreconstructed adolescents, transmitting to their ideas the proud moment of their transient ego recovery, of their temporary victory over the forces of existence and history, but also the pathology of their deepest isolation, the defensiveness of their forever adolescent egos—and their fear of the calm of adulthood? "To live beyond forty," says Dostoevsky's underground diarist, "is bad taste." It warrants study, both historical and psychological, to see how some of the most influential leaders have turned away from parenthood, only to despair in middle age of the issue of their leadership as well.

It is clear that today the ideological needs of all but intellectual youth of the humanist tradition are beginning to be

taken care of by a subordination of ideology to technology: what works, on the grandest scale, is good. It is to be hoped that the worst implications of this trend have outlived themselves already in fascism. Yet, in the technological superidentity, the American dream and the Marxist revolution also meet. If their competition can be halted before mutual annihilation, it is just possible that a new mankind, seeing that it can now build and destroy anything it wishes, will focus its intelligence (feminine as well as masculine) on the ethical question concerning the workings of human generations—beyond products, powers, and ideas. Ideologies in the past have contained an ethical corrective, but ethics must eventually transcend ideology as well as technology: the great question will be and already is, what man, on ethical grounds and without moralistic self-destruction, must decide *not* to do, even though he could make it work—for a while.

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.

As in the near future peoples of different tribal and national pasts join what must become the identity of one mankind, they can find an initial common language only in the workings of science and technology. This in turn may well help them to make transparent the superstitions of their traditional moralities and may even permit them to advance rapidly through a historical period during which they must put a vain superidentity of neonationalism in the place of their much exploited historical identity weakness. But they must also look beyond the major ideologies of the now "established" world, offered them as ceremonial masks to

frighten and to attract them. The overriding issue is the creation not of a new ideology but of a universal ethics growing out of a universal technological civilization. This can be advanced only by men and women who are neither ideological youths nor moralistic old men, but who know that from generation to generation the test of what you produce is in the *care* it inspires. If there is any chance at all, it is in a world more challenging, more workable, and more venerable than all myths, retrospective or prospective: it is in historical reality, at last ethically cared for.

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Archetypal Patterns of Youth

Youth constitutes a universal phenomenon. It is first of all a biological phenomenon, but one always defined in cultural terms. In this sense it constitutes a part of a wider cultural phenomenon, the varying definitions of age and of the differences between one age and another.¹ Age and age differences are among the basic aspects of life and the determinants of human destiny. Every human being passes through various ages, and at each one he attains and uses different biological and intellectual capacities. At each stage he performs different tasks and roles in relation to the other members of his society: from a child, he becomes a father; from a pupil, a teacher; from a vigorous youth, a mature adult, and then an aging and "old" man.

This gradual unfolding of power and capacity is not merely a universal, biologically conditioned, and inescapable fact. Although the basic biological processes of maturation (within the limits set by such factors as relative longevity) are probably more or less similar in all human societies, their cultural definition varies from society to society, at least in details. In all societies, age serves as a basis for defining the cultural and social characteristic of human beings, for the formation of some of their mutual relations and common activities, and for the differential allocation of social roles.

The cultural definitions of age and age differences contain several different yet complementary elements. First, these