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ERIK H. ERIKSON

Autobiographic Notes on the Identity Crisis

I HAVE been encouraged to put the concept of "identity crisis" in the center of an autobiographic essay. This, quite fittingly, raises the question as to what kind of identity this concept can claim in a discussion of transforming conceptions of modern science. Whether or not identity crisis is itself such a conception in my own field, psychoanalysis, is difficult to decide in the absence of a representative of my profession who might well assert that the concept is not, strictly speaking, psychoanalytic, because it deals with matters too close to the "social surface" to preserve the essence of depth psychology. I would, at any rate, prefer the more modest assumption that I have been invited to write this essay because *Dædalus*, on the basis of some related past symposia,¹ takes it for granted that the problem of psychosocial identity is relevant to the motivational nature of innovation and builds a bridge between psychoanalytic and other approaches to it.

That I have attempted to demonstrate this bridge in two studies dealing with the interrelation of the life histories and the historical period of great innovators² also seems to suggest to some that I should be willing to confess some of the possible reasons for my having been the person who, at a given time in his life and in the history of psychoanalysis, came to observe and to name something by now so self-evident as the identity crisis and to explain, in fact, why it now seems so self-evident. For identity concepts have immediately secured for themselves, if not the clear status of scientific innovation, yet the onus of a certain novelty in the thinking or, at any rate, the vocabulary, of a wide range of persons in many countries. In my recent collection of essays on the subject³ I reported fondly that not long ago a Catholic student organization at Harvard announced in the paper that it would "hold an identity crisis" in a given place on a certain evening at 8:00 P.M. sharp. More recently, it was reported that President Nixon's son-in-law, being also President Eisenhower's grandson, on that very score felt an identity crisis coming on, whereupon he consulted his father-in-law who in turn asked a

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minister to discuss the matter in a Sunday sermon at the White House. Finally, to continue on this high level, the Pope in a recent speech recommended the image of a newly sainted sixteenth-century Spaniard of Jewish descent to the young priests of our time—"a time when they say the priesthood itself suffers . . . a crisis of identity." The varied uses of the term naturally suggest, to many serious workers, a popularization beyond redemption, while I, of course, continue to insist that the term and what it really stands for is firmly anchored in conceptual necessities. Looking around for some confirmation, I can point to the fact that the items "Identity, psychosocial," and "Lifecycle, human" have appeared in the newest edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.⁴

But as to the suggestion that I should go further and demonstrate how I would use my own tools in an attempt to look at my own life, let me say from the onset that I do not feel obliged to be as effusive in my self-revelations as were the two religious activists who are the subjects of my psychoanalytic studies. They, of their own volition, left passionate confessional data behind them, and this apparently as part of what they considered their over-all mission. Their confessions of overwhelming experiences and of singular usurpations "call" for the enlightened interpretation of subsequent generations. We, on the other hand, have prepared ourselves for just such a job by undergoing didactic psychoanalyses which cooled our self-revelatory fervor and made it clear to us that all voluntary confession can also serve both as ingenious cover up and as disarming propaganda: any "true" confession quickly leads to the unspeakable. My position, then, seems to be midway between the effusive subjects of my biographic efforts, and the representatives of the natural and social sciences in this volume who are reluctant to use sentences beginning with "I." My job is merely to demonstrate some motivational dimensions in the total life situation of an individual who comes to formulate something "new."

Let me present, at this point, a kind of glossary which will, if not define, at least circumscribe what an identity crisis is. Here I take heart from the reassurance of Stuart Hampshire, who states approvingly that I "leave my much misused concept of identity undefined" because it primarily "serves to group together a range of phenomena which could profitably be investigated together."⁵ He understood, it seems, the difficulty of establishing the nature and the position of something that is *psycho* and *social*. For we have as yet no one social science comparable to the natural variety. In each of the social sciences, in fact, the workings of identity appear in different contexts of verifiability. To say then that the identity crisis is *psycho and social* means, when approached psychoanalytically, that the "psycho" side of it:

1. Is partially *conscious* and partially *unconscious*. It is a *sense* of personal continuity and sameness, but it is also a *quality* of unself-conscious living, as can be so gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. In him we see emerge a unification of what is irreversibly given (that is, body type and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and ingrained prejudices) with the open choices provided (available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, friendships made, sexual encounters), and all this within traditional or emerging cultural and historical patterns.

2. It is beset with the dynamics of *conflict*, and especially at its climax can lead to contradictory mental states such as a sense of aggravated vulnerability and, alternatively, one of grand individual promise.

3. It has its own *developmental period*, before which it could not come to a crisis, because the somatic, cognitive, and social preconditions are not yet given; and beyond which it must not be delayed, because the next and all future developments depend on it. This developmental period is, of course, *adolescence and youth*, which also means that the identity crisis partially depends on *psychobiological* factors, which secure the somatic basis for an organism's coherent sense of vital selfhood.

4. It reaches both into the *past* and toward the *future*: it is grounded in the stages of childhood and will depend for its preservation and renewal on each subsequent stage of life.

The "socio" part of identity, on the other hand, must be accounted for in that communality within which an individual must find himself. No ego is an island to itself. Throughout life the establishment and maintenance of that strength which can reconcile discontinuities and ambiguities depends on the support first of parental and then of communal models. Youth, in particular, depends on the ideological coherence of the world it is meant to take over, and therefore is highly aware of whether the system is strong enough in its traditional form to be "confirmed" by the identity process, or sufficiently weakened to suggest renovation, reformation, or revolution. Psychosocial identity, then, also has a *psycho-historical* side, and life histories are inextricably interwoven with history.

All this sounds probable enough and, especially when shorn of its unconscious dimension, appears to be widely and faddishly acceptable in our day. The unconscious complexities usually ignored are outlined in my encyclopedia article, from which I paraphrase:

1. The crisis is sometimes hardly noticeable and sometimes very much so: in some young people, in some classes, at some periods in history, the identity crisis will be noiseless; in other people, classes, and periods, the crisis will be clearly marked off as a critical period, a kind of "second birth," institutionalized by ceremonial procedure, or intensified by collective strife or individual conflict.

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2. Identity formation normatively has its negative side which throughout life can remain an unruly part of the total identity. The *negative identity* is the sum of all those identifications and identity fragments which the individual had to submerge in himself as undesirable or irreconcilable or by which atypical individuals and marked minorities are made to feel "different." In the event of aggravated crises, an individual (or, indeed, a group) may despair of the ability to contain these negative elements in a positive identity. A specific rage can be aroused wherever identity development loses the promise of a traditionally assured wholeness: thus an as yet uncommitted delinquent may become a criminal. Such potential rage is also easily exploited by psychopathic leaders, who become the models of a sudden surrender to total doctrines and dogmas in which the negative identity becomes the dominant one: the Nazis fanatically cultivated what the victorious West as well as the refined Germans had come to decry as "typically German." The rage aroused by threatened identity loss can explode in the arbitrary destructiveness of mobs, or it can serve the efficient violence of organized machines of destruction.

3. The nature of the identity conflict often depends on the latent panic pervading a historical period. Some periods in history become identity vacua caused by three basic forms of human apprehension: *fears* aroused by new facts, such as discoveries and inventions (including weapons) which radically expand and change the whole world-image; *anxieties* aroused by symbolic dangers vaguely perceived as a consequence of the decay of existing ideologies; and the *dread* of an existential abyss devoid of spiritual meaning.

But why would some decisive insights concerning these universal matters first come from psychoanalysis? The fact is that psychoanalysis as a clinical science discovers new aspects of man's nature by trying to cure previously obscure disorders which, at a given time, suddenly seem to assume epidemiological significance—as did hysteria in Freud's younger years. In our time a state of *identity confusion*, not abnormal in itself, often seems to be accompanied by all the neurotic or near-psychotic symptoms to which the person is prone on the basis of constitution, early fate, and malignant circumstance. In fact, young individuals undergoing such a confusion are subject to a more malignant disturbance than might have manifested itself during the rest of their lives, because it is a characteristic of the adolescent process that the individual should semideliberately give in to some of his most regressed or repressed tendencies in order, as it were, to test rock bottom and to recover some of his as yet undeveloped childhood strengths. Clinically speaking, it is important to recognize that many young people have in the past been judged to suffer from a chronic disturbance, where a severe

developmental crisis was indicated; while the epidemiological variations of such crises over the decades strongly suggest some relation to changing history. This, then, is the clinical anchorage for the conception of an identity crisis. To make the emergence of this conception plausible in historical and autobiographic terms I must now account for my clinical training, and then for the years of childhood and youth that preceded it.

I am about two years younger than the twentieth century, and I therefore can speak roughly of the decades of my life as coinciding with those of the calendar. I was graduated from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute in my (and the century's) early thirties.

The very beginning of my career marks me as one of those early workers in my field who had quite heterogeneous professional origins. I was an artist before I studied psychoanalysis, and can otherwise boast only of a Montessori diploma. In fact, if William James could say that the first lecture in psychology he ever took was the first one he gave, I must concede that the first course in psychology I ever took was also the first and the last I flunked. But, for reasons to be given presently, I seemed acceptable to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute, which was the training arm of a private society not connected with and often opposed and belittled by both academic departments and professional organizations. Although Sigmund Freud was a doctor and medical school lecturer, he had taken it upon himself to select the original circle of men and women (medically trained, as most were, or not) who were willing to learn his methods according to his prescription. For this they had to be gifted with a certain rare perceptiveness for the nonrational, and both sane and just a bit insane enough to *want* to study it. For them, Freud created simultaneously a training institute, a clientele, a publishing house, and, of course, a new professional identity.

The truly transforming scientific and therapeutic orientation created by Freud was based on a radical change in the role of the doctor as well as that of the patient, and thus in the nature of the clinical laboratory. If the "classical" hysterical patients, as Freud had concluded, were far from being the degenerates they were judged to be by his medical contemporaries, he could only conclude that the authoritative methods used to cure them violated, in fact, what alone can free a man from inner bondage, namely, the conscious acceptance of certain truths about himself and others. He advocated that the psychoanalytic practitioner himself undergo treatment so as to come to terms with his own unconscious and to acquire the capacity to explain, and not to evade or to condemn. The patient in turn was asked to verbalize all his available thought processes, and thus to become co-observer as well as client; while the analyst, as observer, continued to observe himself as he ob-

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served the patient's trend of thought. They were thus to become collaborators in the job of becoming conscious of (and of classifying) that reservoir of unconscious imagery and affect which soon proved not only to be festering in individual patients, but also to have been repressed in all past history by the whole race—except for occasional seers and prophets, creative writers and philosophers. The atmosphere thus created in the Vienna circle was one of intense mutual loyalty and of a deep devotion to a truly liberating idea, if often also of morbid ambivalencies and of deep and unforeseeable mental upset. Here much fascinating material is awaiting the historian who manages to become a historian of ideas and to resist the temptation merely to turn early psychoanalysis upon itself.

My own training psychoanalysis was conducted by Anna Freud, who accepted me as a fellowship candidate, and this on the basis of the fact that she and her friends had approvingly witnessed my work with children both as a private tutor and as a teacher in a small private school. Anna Freud had founded the Vienna version of the subspecialty of child analysis, and I, too, was to be primarily trained as a psychoanalyst of children, although the general training program included the treatment of adolescent patients and of adults. The reader will appreciate the complex feelings aroused by the fact that my psychoanalyst was the daughter of the then already mythical founder who often appeared in the door of their common waiting room, in order to invite his analysand into his study. But this is only one circumstance within the peculiar bonds and burdens of a training psychoanalysis. While such a preparation is of the essence in this kind of work, and while this essence can up to a point be comprehended in a systematic and disciplined way, it stands to reason that the generational succession of teachers, so important in all fields, will remain a special burden in the life of any maturing and even of the trained psychoanalyst—a burden reaching well into the conceptualizations he may later feel called upon to confirm or to disavow. Even the most venerable training psychoanalyst is (and must be) both welcomed as a liberating agent and resisted as a potential indoctrinator, and thus be both accepted and rejected as an identity model: for in all pursuits which attempt to gain a rational foothold in man's pervasive irrationality, insights retain an unconscious involvement which can only be clarified by lifelong maturation. At the same time, however, only the systematic clinical acquaintance with the unconscious can convey a certain ceaseless surprise over the creative order that governs affects never faced before and a certain sense of liberated sanity just because of the chaos faced. This is probably hard to comprehend except through the experience itself; and yet some of it must be visible in the impact of psychoanalysis on other fields and

the augmented access it has provided to a wealth of data previously not visualized or not seen in their relation to each other. Considering the total newness of such data, it should not be surprising that it will take many generations to find the proper forms of verification and suitable methods of application: in the meantime, it may be possible also to establish analogies between this novel training situation, extreme in what we may call a *disciplined subjectivity*, and latent factors in more objective courses of study.

I should add here that during the years of my training Freud no longer taught and never appeared at public functions. I sometimes met him in his or the Burlingham's house or garden, but never addressed him, not only out of shyness but because of the pain that all attempts at speaking could cause him. He was in his early seventies; a radical upper-jaw operation had done away with a cancerous affliction years before, but the "infernal prosthesis" which covered the roof of his mouth led to repeated fresh outbreaks and fresh operations. His daughter was also his nurse and his private secretary, his companion and his ambassador both to the old guard of the psychoanalytic movement and to the public on rare ceremonial occasions. Some of the writings which Freud published during these years were of a markedly philosophical bent, or what the Germans call *Weltanschaulich*. In his *Autobiographic Study*,⁸ which he wrote in his sixty-eighth year, he himself ascribed this trend to "a phase of regressive development" back to his premedical and, in fact, adolescent interest in problems of culture, or rather *Kultur*. Theoretically, it all culminated in the concept of the Death Instinct—a grandiose contradiction in terms.

In the meantime, our training continued to impress on us in all their clinical immediacy the five conceptions which Freud in the same autobiographic study had called "the principal constituents of psychoanalysis." These five have remained fundamental to the modifications of psychoanalytic technique and to its application to other fields throughout this century. The most fundamental is "inner resistance," a term which was never meant to be judgmental, but physicalistic: all matter offers resistance to the energy which passes through it. And so, memories and thoughts are resisted even by him who wants to recover them, whether out of despair or out of curiosity. For such inner resistance, Freud blamed "repression," an anticonscious and defensive quality of the mind which marks the "unconscious" as much more than *not* conscious. Its drives and wishes, memories and phantasies, however, reassert their right to awareness and resolution, if only in indirect ways: in the symbolic disguise of dreams and day dreams, in symptoms of commission (acts alien to the actor or unintended in their consequences), and in symptoms of omission (inhibitions, avoidances, and so forth). If Freud,

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on the basis of his Victorian data, found in his patients' special repressions and resistance primarily what he called the "aetiological significance of sexual life"—that is, the pathogenic power of repressed sexual impulses—he, of course, called sexual a wide assortment of impulses and affects never previously included in that definition. It was the burden of the libido theory to show how much in life is codetermined by derivatives of the previously unrecognized infantile sexuality. Freud, therefore, considered systematic attention to the "importance of infantile experiences" an intrinsic part of his method and his theory: and we know now how his and Karl Abraham's first crude findings opened up a whole new view of the stages of life.

I would add to these five points the prime importance of what Freud calls "transference"—that is, a universal tendency to experience another person (unconsciously, of course) as comparable to an important figure of the preadult past. Such transference serves the inadvertent reenactment of infantile and juvenile wishes and fears, hopes and apprehension; and this always with a bewildering "ambivalence"—that is, a ratio of loving and hateful tendencies which under certain conditions coincide dangerously or alternate radically.

Transference, of course, plays a singularly important role in the clinical encounter; but it must be clear that all these interpersonal tendencies, which in the training analysis and in clinical work move into the center of attention, also exist in daily life, and especially where work arrangements are the basis for intense experiences of leader- and followerships and of fraternal or sororal rivalry. The question as to where and when such tensions support or hinder the inventiveness, solidarity, and altruism demanded of scientific workers has been asked repeatedly in these discussions. The answer is that mutual emotional involvement, even of the kind called transference, can evoke, under favorable conditions, powers of filial loyalty and sharpen issues of ambivalence, and can thus support personal growth and creative innovation. If psychoanalysis uses this power (which David McClelland unhesitatingly calls religious) for therapeutic purposes, it only puts to systematic use what Mircea Eliade⁷ has described in primitive rites which seek rebirth in a return to origins: and Eliade rightly recognized a parallel in the (often quite ritualized) faith on which modern psychotherapy was founded.

This, however, does not justify the frequent assumption that psychoanalysis is primarily faith healing. To Freud and his followers the psychoanalyst's office has always been not only a healer's den, but also a psychologist's laboratory. What was thus observed had to find a classification, a terminology, and a methodology which would make therapeutic techniques ever more adequate in dealing with a widening range of pathological conditions and would help formulate a body of insights

amounting to a communicable "field." That in some of Freud's most gifted followers idiosyncratic gifts as well as ideological predilections often seemed to obscure the ground plan for which he thought he alone had a firm sense of schedule—that is certainly not surprising. A truly historical study of these developments is probably far off; but it could throw much light on the influence of such personal passions and such residual pathology as are aroused when man's central motivations are submitted to observation and conceptualization. Yet it sometimes seems that such passions are never totally absent even from the most controlled laboratory work, even when assumptions that have contributed to the stability of a classical world-image are being questioned, and when the necessity of transforming ideas becomes a matter of competition between individuals and schools.

At that time, in Vienna, all theoretical training took place in the evenings in what today might be called something like a free psychiatric university. Again, only those who have attended similarly independent study groups of men and women serving what is felt to be a truly transforming idea—and serving at the sacrifice of income, professional status, and mental peace—will know of the devotional atmosphere in which (as every reader of Freud's work knows) no clinical detail was too small and no theoretical insight too big to merit intensive presentation and debate.

Psychoanalytic writings do not always reflect the high degree of medical and scientific common sense and humane humor pervading the actual study of ongoing treatments. The clinical laboratory includes the regular and exhaustive comparison of treatment histories. Clinical conferences, close to the data, are the heart of the matter. Freud's method, in fact, forced clinicians to attempt to "locate" any given clinical observation on a number of coordinates which he called "points of view." I have discussed these in detail in my paper on clinical evidence.⁸ Here I can only indicate that these points of view include a "structural" one which would locate a given item in a model of the mind, the main compartments of which are the "id" (a cauldron of primeval drives and primal wishes), the "ego" (the organization of functions mediating between the id and the outerworld), and the "super-ego" (the internalization of standards which guard the ego's mediation). There is also a "dynamic" point of view, which takes account of the tension and conflict between these inner domains. An "economic" point of view, in turn, attempts to conceptualize the householding of energy in man's precarious inner balance. Finally, the "genetic" point of view permits the reconstruction of the origin and the development of all these structures, functions, and energies.

Although Freud called these points of view his "metapsychology,"

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and assigned to them a level of abstraction not accessible to direct observation, it is hard to overcome the impression that these points of view served as the bridge by which Freud, a fervent and painstaking medical researcher before he became the first psychoanalyst, could apply his anatomical, physiological, pathological, and developmental modes of thinking to the workings of the mind. I do not mean here Freud's early attempts, in tune with the dominant neurology of his medical school years, to link mental associations to concrete processes in the nervous system. These observations only served to open for him vast promises of finding by a new clinical method an approach to the very secrets of man's conflicted nature—and of making these secrets accessible to science. But as though the elemental sweep of the resulting discoveries had aroused a sense of hybris in the medical researcher he seems to have determined, in his metapsychology, to reconnect his vast findings with the disciplined thought patterns which in his young manhood had commanded his fidelity and helped establish his occupational identity. It is often overlooked that even his preoccupation with an all-pervasive libido was related to a scientific commitment to think in terms of energies "*equal in dignity*" to the forces found in physics and in chemistry. On their neurological homeground, however, such modes of thinking had been based on visible, observable, and verifiable facts, while in the study of the mind they sooner or later served, especially in the hands of dogmatic followers, as unchecked reifications—as though the "libido" or the "ego" had, after all, become observable entities.

The intellectual milieu governing the many evenings spent in small, intensive seminars and "continuous case" discussions (and some were so small that we could comfortably meet in our teachers' homes) is best characterized by a listing of these teachers. All but the first two later came to this country to preside over the strange fate of a psychoanalysis, influential in medical training, lucrative in practice, and popularized in the media.

My training in child analysis took place in the famous *Kinderseminar* led by Anna Freud; that in the treatment of juvenile disturbances (including delinquency) was directed by August Aichhorn. Heinz Hartmann was the leading theoretician, and his thinking which later culminated in his monograph on the adaptive function of the ego influenced me deeply. The basic theoretical struggle at the time was between Anna Freud's clarification of the defensive mechanisms employed by the ego against the drives⁹ and of Hartmann's explorations of the ego's adaptive response to the environment.¹⁰ One of the most obscure and yet fascinating teachers was Paul Federn, and it is quite possible that in his seminar I first heard the term identity mentioned in one of its earlier usages. The preoccupation with the ego was then replacing that earlier pansexual at-

tention to the id which was based on Freud's original determination to find the whole extent of man's enslavement to sexuality. What survived from that first period was a strangely ascetic veneration of Eros, a totally intellectual bacchanalia. Nothing seemed to be further from the mind of those early workers (not even the followers of Wilhelm Reich) than that psychoanalysis might someday be used as an argument for sexual freedom outside the rules of a bourgeois or, for that matter, a proletarian convention. Both Reich and, as visitor, Siegfried Bernfeld, who was deeply involved in problems of youth, I remember as very inspiring teachers already then driven to a certain tragic isolation by their belief that Freud's "libido," which sounded so tangibly quantitative, would *have* to be found and isolated physically. In fact, the student could not help sensing in the didactic milieu a growing conservatism and especially a pervasive interdiction of certain trends of thought. This concerned primarily any idea which might be reminiscent of the deviations perpetrated by those earliest and most brilliant of Freud's co-workers (such as Rank, Adler, and Jung) who had been separated from the movement already before World War I. In other words, the psychoanalytic movement was now already working under the impact of its own historical trauma, its own rebellion against the founder. The possible merits and decisive demerits of those deviations the student could not judge. I must admit that, after such intense training under such complex conditions, the idea of moving on and working independently seemed an invigorating idea. Vienna, at that time, chose not to foresee the total disruption that would soon separate the regions of Europe, not to speak of the old country and the New World.

If I should now briefly indicate what uncertainty and curiosity I took with me when my graduation coincided with my emigration from Europe, I would oversimplify it in the following way. Psychoanalysis had broken through to much that had been totally neglected or denied in all previous models of man: it had turned *inward* to open up man's inner world to systematic study; it searched *backwards* to the ontogenetic origins of the mind and of its disturbances; and it pressed *downwards* into those instinctual tendencies which man thought he had overcome when he had repressed or denied the infancy of individuals and the evolution of the race. That (as Darwin, too, had discovered) was the territory to be conquered, the origins to be acknowledged. But conquerors so easily lose themselves in the discoveries of the new territory; how to reassimilate them to what is already known—that is the job of the second stage. The question remained, I felt dimly, whether an image of man reconstructed primarily on the basis of observation in the clinical laboratory might not lack what, in man's total existence, leads *outward* from self-centeredness to the mutuality of love and communality, *for-*

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ward from the enslaving past to the utopian anticipation of new potentialities, and *upwards* from the unconscious to the enigma of consciousness. All of this, however, seemed to me always implicit in Freud's own writings: if not in the *content* he grimly pursued, then in the *style* of this pursuit—the style for which, in those very days, he received the Goethe Prize as the best scientific writer in the German language. To Freud, the *via regna* to mental life had been the dream. For me, children's play became the first *via regna* to an understanding of growing man's conflicts and triumphs, his repetitive working through of the past and his creative self-renewal in truly playful moments. I identified with Freud, then, not as the former laboratory worker who insisted on a terminology made for the observation of transformable quantities of drive enlivening inner structures, but as the sharp discerner of verbal and visual configurations which revealed what was clearly suggested or flagrantly omitted, that meant what it said or meant the opposite. To put it bluntly, I have always suspected (maybe because I do not really understand these things) that what sounded most scientific in psychoanalysis in terms of nineteenth-century physicalism was more scientism than science, even though I understood that psychology and social science in attempting to free themselves from philosophy and theology had no choice but to try, for a while, to think in the scientific imagery of the century. But Freud's phenomenological and literary approach, which seemed to reflect the very creativity of the unconscious, held in itself a promise without which psychoanalytic theory would have meant little to me. This may be one reason why, in later years, I proved inept in theoretical discussion and was apt to neglect ruefully the work of my colleagues—and not only where they seemed to take Freud at his most atomistic and mechanical word, or where they turned neo-Freudian. All this may well have an admixture of a particular transference on Freud. But then, he was the father of it all—a fact which I probably tried to objectify in my later studies of great men, as well as in a few essays on Freud himself.¹¹

But before I sketch the direction of my own work which, in a new era and on a new continent, brought me to such concepts as the "identity crisis," I will briefly account for those aspects of my childhood and youth which had led me to Vienna and then pursued me to this country.

In the Europe of my youth the choice of the occupational identity of "artist" meant, for many, a way of life rather than a way of making a living; and, as today, it could mean primarily an anti-Establishment way of life. Except that the European Establishment had created a well-institutionalized social niche for such idiosyncratic needs. A certain adolescent and neurotic shiftlessness could be contained in the custom

of *Wanderschaft*; and if the individual had some gifts into the bargain, he could convince himself and others that he should have a chance to show that he might have a touch of genius. There were, of course, youth movements for those who wanted to abandon themselves to some collective utopia; but much of what young people today display in alienated and concerned groups was then more commonly experienced in an isolation shared only with a few equally special friends. To be an artist, then, meant to have at least a passing identity, and I had enough talent to consider it for a while an occupational one. The trouble was, I often had a kind of work disturbance and needed time. *Wanderschaft* under those conditions meant neurotic drivenness as well as deliberate search, even as today dropping out can be a time of tuning in, or of aimless negativism. But somehow, when we did not work, we had a deep and trusting relationship (often called "romantic" today) to what was still a peasants' Nature; we kept physically fit by interminable hiking; we trained our senses to changing perspectives, and our thoughts to distilled passages of, say, Angelus Silesius and Laotse, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, which we carried in our knapsacks. I will not describe the pathological side of my identity confusion which especially in its psychosexual aspects included disturbances for which psychoanalysis later seemed, indeed, the treatment of choice, while no doubt it assumed at times what some of us today would call a "borderline" character—that is, the borderline between neurosis and psychosis. But then, it is exactly this kind of diagnosis to which I later undertook to give a developmental perspective. And indeed, some of my friends will insist that I needed to name this crisis and to see it in everybody else in order to really come to terms with myself. And they can quote a whole roster of problems related to my *personal* identity.

There is first of all the question of origin which often looms large in persons who are driven to be original. I grew up in Karlsruhe in Baden as the son of a pediatrician, Dr. Theodor Homburger, and his wife Karla, née Abrahamsen, a native of Copenhagen, Denmark. All through my earlier childhood they kept secret from me the fact that my mother had been married previously and that I was the son of a Dane who had abandoned her before my birth. They apparently thought that such secretiveness was not only possible (because children then were not meant to know what they had not been told) but also advisable, so that I would feel thoroughly at home in their home. As children will do, I played in with this and more or less forgot the period before the age of three when my mother and I had lived alone. Then, her friends had been artists working in the folk style of Hans Thoma of the Black Forest. They, I believe, provided my first male imprinting before I had to come to terms with that intruder, the bearded doctor, with his healing

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love and mysterious instruments. Later, I enjoyed going back and forth between the painters' studios and our house, the first floor of which, in the afternoons, was filled with tense and trusting mothers and children. My sense of being "different" took refuge (as it is apt to do even in children without such acute life problems) in phantasies of how I, the son of much better parents, had been altogether a foundling. In the meantime, however, my adoptive father was anything but the proverbial stepfather. He had given me his last name (which I have retained as a middle name) and expected me to become a doctor like himself.

Identity problems sharpen with that turn in puberty when images of future roles become inescapable. My stepfather was the only professional man (and a highly respected one) in an intensely Jewish small bourgeoisie family, while I (coming from a racially mixed Scandinavian background) was blond and blue-eyed, and grew flagrantly tall. Before long, then, I acquired the nickname "goy" in my stepfather's temple; while to my schoolmates, I was a "Jew." Although I had tried desperately to be a good German chauvinist, I became a "Dane" when Denmark remained neutral during the First World War. The general setting was that of an old state capital of a Lutheran principality (we lived on the castle square) with a sizeable Catholic population. I do not remember having been interested in the old Luther of the state church or, for that matter, in the young one; and yet years later I was to choose young Luther as a matter of course for the presentation of some views on youth, history, and primal Christianity. At the time, like other youths with artistic or literary aspirations, I became intensely alienated from everything my bourgeois family stood for. At that point I *wanted* to be different. After graduation from the type of high school called a humanistic gymnasium (where one then acquired classical *Bildung* and a sense for languages), I went to art school, but always set out again to be a wandering artist—as described. I now consider those years an important part of my training. Sketching (as even a man like William James experienced) can be a good exercise in tracing impressions. And I enjoyed making very large woodprints: to cut stark images of nature on this primary material conveyed an elemental sense of both art and craft. And in those days every self-respecting stranger in his own (northern) culture, drifted sooner or later to Italy, where endless time was spent soaking up the southern sun and the ubiquitous sights with their grand blend of artifact and nature. But if this was a "moratorium," it certainly also was a period of total neglect of the military, political, and economic disasters then racking mankind: as long as one could expect some financial support from home, and was not suddenly lost in some cataclysm, one lived (or so one thought) by the measure of centuries, not of decades. Such narcissism obviously could be a young person's

downfall unless he found an overweening idea and the stamina to work for it.

It was my friend Peter Bloss (today a New York psychoanalyst best known for his classical writings on adolescence)¹² who came to my rescue. During our later childhood in Karlsruhe, he had shared his father with me, a doctor both prophetic and eccentric (he first told us about Gandhi), and we had been friends in Florence. Now he invited me, with the encouragement of the founder, Dorothy Burlingham, to join him in that small school in Vienna. With his help I learned to work regular hours, and I met the circle around Freud.

It must be more obvious now what Freud meant to me, although I would not have had words for it at the time. Here was a mythical figure and a great doctor who had rebelled against the medical profession. Here also was a circle which admitted me to the kind of training that came as close to the role of a children's doctor as one could possibly come without going to medical school. What, in me, responded to this situation was, I think, an ambivalent identification with my stepfather, the pediatrician, mixed with a search for my own mythical father. And if I ask myself in what spirit I accepted my truly astounding adoption by the Freudian circle, I can only surmise (not without embarrassment) that it was a kind of favored stepson identity that made me take for granted that I should be accepted where I did not quite belong. By the same token, however, I had to cultivate not-belonging and keep contact with the artist in me: my psychoanalytic identity therefore was not quite settled until much later, when with the help of my American wife, I became a writing psychoanalyst, if again in a language which had not been my own. At any rate, I could begin to repay my debt to the Freuds, too, only in my currency.

One could well suspect that later on I succeeded in making a professional life style out of being a stepson when I, throughout, worked in institutional contexts for which I did not have the usual credentials—except, of course, for my psychoanalytic training. But, as pointed out, psychoanalysis then almost methodically attracted and collected men and women who did not quite belong elsewhere, and some of my most outstanding colleagues have followed similarly irregular life plans. What is to be demonstrated here, then, is not singularity of achievement, but the configurational affinity of life plan and choice of concepts.

While I am on the stepson theme, I must also, with due surgical brevity, expose the dangers of such a development both for a person's character and his concepts. That a stepson's negative identity is that of a bastard need only be acknowledged here in passing. But a habitual stepson might also use his talents to avoid belonging anywhere quite irreversibly; working between the established fields can mean avoiding

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the disciplines necessary for any one field; and being enamored with the aesthetic order of things, one may well come to avoid their ethical and political as well as their conceptual implications. If one can find all these weaknesses in my work, there are also some energetic attempts to balance them, and this exactly in a serious and methodical turn to social and political conditions and—possibly inspired by my great compatriot Kierkegaard—to religious actualists such as Gandhi, certainly a man almost totally devoid of the aesthetic dimension.

That much about the circumstances of my life. If it seems obvious that such a life would predispose a person to a severe identity crisis, this must be said to be only partially true; for in my instance the more obvious identity conflicts concerned my *personal* identity and *psycho-social* choices which were relatively clearly delineated. If the malignancy of the identity crisis is determined both by defects in a person's early relationship to his mother and on the incompatibility or irrelevance of the values available in adolescence, I must say that I was fortunate in both respects. Even as I remember the mother of my early years as pervasively sad, I also visualize her as deeply involved in reading (what I later found to have been such authors as Brandes, Kierkegaard, Emerson) and I could never doubt that her ambitions for me transcended the conventions which she, nevertheless, faithfully served. On the other hand, she and my stepfather had the fortitude to let me find my way unhurriedly in a world which, for all the years of war and revolution, still seemed oriented toward traditional alternatives, so that the threatening cataclysms could still be ascribed to criminal men and evil nations or classes. What I eventually came to describe as more malignant forms of identity crises both in groups and in individuals was probably of quite a different order than what we then experienced. All the warring ideologies of our young years harbored some *saving* scheme which was to dominate forever after just one more war, just one more revolution, just one more new deal. It is only in our lifetime that the faith in change has gradually given way to a widespread fear of change itself—and a suspicion of faith itself. Identity problems and even the symptoms of identity confusion probably have changed accordingly. At any rate, the comparative study of the nature of identity crises at different periods of history (and in different groups during the same period) may well turn out to be a historical as well as a clinical tool, provided that the uses of the concept itself are submitted to historical scrutiny.

The direction of a man's work, then, always derives from history as well as from his life history. The German holocaust opened other countries to the migration of psychoanalysts who not only survived but, in fact, succeeded in establishing power spheres in the cities of their choice.

In adapting to new classes of patients in a variety of national and cultural settings (and also by reflecting on their own fate and on the fate of those who had perished), some psychoanalysts found it mandatory to revise their model of human functioning.

My training psychoanalysis had ended when I met and married Joan Serson, then a dancer and teacher, later also an artist and writer; she, too, was a member of our small school. At about the time when Hitler came to power in Germany, I graduated and we left Vienna with our two small sons. I first attempted to regain my Danish citizenship and to help establish a psychoanalytic training center in Copenhagen. When this proved impracticable, we emigrated to the United States and settled in Boston where a psychoanalytic society had been founded the year before. Since my graduation in Vienna had made me a member of the International Psychoanalytic Association I was welcomed in the American Association as well. Although the medical professionalization of psychoanalysis in the United States would soon thereafter lead to the exclusion of further nonmedical candidates from the national association, I remained as one of its very few nonmedical members, hoping that the quiet contributions of nonphysicians would sooner or later impress American psychoanalysts with the wisdom of Freud's conviction that this field should not be entirely subordinated to medical professionalism. Personally I was, of course, ready to abide by the medical and legal cautions necessary in therapeutic work; and I cannot say that my being a non-physician has ever interfered with my work.

In fact, to an immigrant with a specialty (and the term immigrant had not yet given way to that of refugee) this country proved, indeed, a land of unlimited possibilities. Harvard, and later Yale, did not hesitate to provide medical school appointments, and thus an expanded clinical experience. At Harvard there was also Harry Murray's Psychological Clinic, where an intensive study of students proved a valuable guide to the characteristics and values of American academic youth, while Murray's style of thinking conveyed something of the grand tradition of William James. And there was a flowering of interdisciplinary groups, led and financed by imaginative men like Lawrence K. Frank of the General Education Board and Frank Freemont-Smith of the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, and vigorously inspired by such wide-ranging observers as Margaret Mead and Kurt Lewin. Each participant was expected to make himself understood at these small and intense meetings, and I think that this also taught me (as I slowly learned to speak and write in English) to write for an interdisciplinary audience, an effort which, in turn, may have had some influence on my choice of concepts. After the Second World War, we made contact again with receptive colleagues from all over Europe in the Child Study Group of the World

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Health Organization. The conferences of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences have since assumed the important role of interdisciplinary meetings in my professional life.

In the thirties, I was first of all a practicing psychoanalyst, primarily with children, making frequent excursions to clinical conferences in the medical area of Harvard. I did some graduate work in psychology on the side, but when the Yale Medical School gave me a full-time research appointment, I decided to weather the future without belated degrees. The Yale Institute of Human Relations offered then a remarkable interdisciplinary stimulation under the leadership of John Dollard; and my job permitted me my first field trip (with Scudder Mekeel) to the Sioux Indians in South Dakota. I spent the forties in California, having been invited to abstract the ongoing records of a longitudinal study (led by Jean Macfarlane) of a cross section of Berkeley children. From there I made my second field trip (with Alfred Kroeber) to the Yurok Indians in California. Later, having been appointed a training psychoanalyst, I resumed private practice in San Francisco, but continued to act as a consultant in various public clinics, including a veteran rehabilitation clinic at the conclusion of the Second World War. My first professorship, in Berkeley, was short-lived because of the loyalty oath controversy during the McCarthy era. I was fired before the first year was up, and, after being reinstated as politically dependable, I resigned because of the firing of others who were not so judged. As I think back on that controversy now, it was a test of my American identity; for when we foreign born among the nonsigners were told to "go back where we came from," we suddenly felt quite certain that our apparent disloyalty to the soldiers in Korea was, in fact, quite in line with what they were said to be fighting for.

I think I have now said enough about myself to come to the question of how the concepts of "identity" and "identity crisis" emerged from my personal, clinical, and anthropological observations in the thirties and forties. I do not remember when I started to use these terms; they seemed naturally grounded in the experience of immigration and Americanization. As I summed the matter up in my first book which appeared in 1950:

We began to conceptualize matters of identity at the very time in history when they become a problem. For we do so in a country which attempts to make a super-identity out of all the identities imported by its constituent immigrants; and we do so at a time when rapidly increasing industrialization threatens these essentially agrarian and patrician identities in their lands of origin as well.

The study of identity, then, becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud's time. Such historical relativity in the development

of a field, however, does not seem to preclude consistency of ground plan and continued closeness to observable fact. Freud's findings regarding sexual etiology of a mental disturbance are as true for our patients as they were for his; while the burden of identity loss which stands out in our considerations probably burdened Freud's patients as well as ours, as re-interpretations would show. Different periods thus permit us to see in temporary exaggeration different aspects of an essentially inseparable whole.¹³

Identity problems were in the mental baggage of generations of new Americans, who left their motherlands and fatherlands behind to merge their ancestral identities in the common one of self-made men. Emigration can be a hard and heartless matter, in terms of what is abandoned in the old country and what is usurped in the new one. Migration means cruel survival in identity terms, too, for the very cataclysms in which millions perish open up new forms of identity to the survivors. In the Roosevelt era, we immigrants could tell ourselves that America was once more helping to save the Atlantic world from tyranny; and were we not hard at work as members of a helping profession which—beyond the living standards it made us accustomed to—contributed to a transforming enlightenment apt to diminish both the inner and the outer oppression of mankind? What now demanded to be conceptualized, however, called for a whole new orientation which fused a new world-image (and, in fact, a New World image) with traditional theoretical assumptions. I could not look at my patients' troubles any more in (what I later came to call) "originological" terms—that is, on the basis of where, when, and how "it all started." The question was also, where were they going from where they were and who was going with them? And if something like an identity crisis gradually appeared to be a normative problem in adolescence and youth, there also seemed to be enough of an adolescent in every American to suggest that in this country's history, fate had chosen to highlight identity questions together with a strangely adolescent style of adulthood—that is, one remaining expansively open for new roles and stances—in what at the time was called a "national character." This, incidentally, is not contradicted by the fact that today some young adults are forcefully questioning the nation as to what generations of Americans *have*, indeed, *made* of themselves by claiming so irreverently to be self-made, and what they have made of their continent, of their technology, and of the world under their influence. But this also means that problems of identity become urgent wherever Americanization spreads, and that some of the young, especially in Americanized countries, begin to take seriously not only the stance of self-made men, but also the question of adulthood, namely, how to *take care* of what is being appropriated in the establishment of an industrial identity.

At any rate, the variety of my clinical and "applied" observations now helped me to see a nexus of individual and history as well as of past and

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future: the Berkeley children, in the particular setting of their parents' Californization, could be seen approaching a special and yet also normative identity crisis, such as seemed to be built into the human life plan. A different version of such a crisis could be seen in the American Indians, whose expensive "reeducation" only made them fatalistically aware of the fact that they were denied both the right to remain themselves or to join America. I learned to see traumatically renewed identity crises in those returning veterans of World War II who had broken down with what were alternately called symptoms of shock or fatigue or of constitutional inferiority and malingering. In retrospect, I had by then recognized a national identity problem in that most surrounded great nation in Europe, once defeated and humiliated Germany, now hypnotized by a markedly adolescent leader promising a thousand years of unassailable super-identity. And I could later, in the fifties, verify the symptoms of acute and aggravated identity confusion on my clinical home ground—that is, in the young patients of the Austen Riggs Center in the Berkshires where I had turned after the University of California debacle. There also I found my critic and friend David Rapaport, who professed to see a place for my concepts (next to Heinz Hartmann's) in the edifice of psychoanalytic ego psychology,¹⁴ but not without having added to the dynamic, structural, economic, and genetic points of view an "adaptive" one, relating the ego to the environment. In the sixties I temporarily suspended my clinical work in order to learn how to teach my whole conception of the life cycle—including the identity crisis—to people normatively very much in it: Harvard undergraduates. But this is another chapter, as is the more systematic pursuit of psychohistorical problems by myself and by my colleagues during this decade. In this essay, I restrict myself to the emergence of the identity concepts.

Clinical verification, as I have indicated, is always of the essence in any conceptual shift in psychoanalysis because it confirms that (and why) a syndrome such as "identity confusion" is not just a matter of contradictory self-images or aspirations, roles or opportunities, but a central disturbance dangerous for the whole ecological interaction of a mind organism with its "environment"; man's environment, after all, is the shared social universe. The symptoms of identity confusion, then, could be found in the psychosomatic sphere as well as in the psychosocial one, in the times as well as in the individual. Psychosocial identity proved to be "situated" in three orders in which man lives at all times.

1. The somatic order, by which an organism (as René Dubos has emphasized in our discussions) seeks to maintain its identity in a constant renewal of the mutual adaptation of the *milieu intérieur* and the environment.

2. The ego order, that is, the integration of personal experience and behavior.

3. The social order maintained together by ego-organisms sharing a geographic-historical setting.

These three orders, however, are apt to endanger each other even as they are relative to each other. Much of man's creative tension as well as of his debilitating conflict originate in this incompatibility. For these orders seem to wholly support each other only in utopian schemes, which give man the visionary impetus to correct, at intervals, the accrued dangers to health, sanity, or social order. In this context, too, the study of the identity crisis in adolescence becomes strategic because at that stage of life, the organism is at the height of its vitality and potency; the ego must integrate new forms of intensive experience; and the social order must provide a renewed identity for its new members, in order to reaffirm—or to renew—its collective identity.

At this point, it must be rather obvious why the concept of identity crisis also helped me to recognize the transforming function of the "great man" at a certain junction of history. As I put it in my book on young Luther: deeply and pathologically upset, but possessed both by the vision of a new (or renewed) world-order and the need (and the gift) to transform masses of men, such a man makes his individual "patient-hood" representative of a universal one, and promises "to solve for all what he could not solve for himself alone."

Finally, after all the new insights that totalitarianism, nuclear warfare, and mass communication have forced us to face, it can no longer escape us that in all his past man has based much of his identity on mutually exclusive group identities in the form of tribes, nations, castes, religions, and so on. We really suffer from an evolutionary identity problem: is man one species, or is he destined to remain divided into what I have referred to as "pseudo-species" forever playing out one (necessarily incomplete) version of mankind against all the others until, in the glory of the nuclear age, one version will have the power and the luck to destroy all others just moments before it perishes itself?

If in a given field the "classical" approach is identified totally with one man, it stands to reason that in his lifetime or right after his death even the most necessary conceptual transformations become associated with emotions of sacrificial loyalty or, indeed, father murder. Thus, often quite in contrast to the founder's own irreverent beginnings, the followers' thinking comes under the shadow of the question of what "he" would have approved or would have disavowed, as if even the greatest among men could (if, indeed, they would) guarantee the purity of their

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creation once it enters the domain of historicity. Incidentally, to decide what the word “classical” really implies in all its logical and emotional ramifications would be well worth some psychohistorical study. In any given historical period there must be a mutual assimilation of all the concepts deemed classical in various fields; for even as the individual ego attempts to maintain a livable orientation in the multiplicity of experience, so must a civilization strive to receive and to integrate all transforming ideas into a coherent universe. Such a process is, of course, more obvious in religio-ideological and medico-humanitarian pursuits because they both simplify and unify in order to reassure, cure, and teach. But even in the hallowed objectivity of science, truly transforming ideas seem to have a fate which not only leads from scientific incredulity to verification, but also from philosophical repugnance to a new sense of classical coherence proving once more that “God does not play dice with mankind.” And who could be greater, even if he is only very partially understood, than the modest scientist who takes a daring new look behind appearances and returns to affirm that God knows what He is doing?

And being somewhat of an expert in play I must add that while we remember great men usually as severe creators, they are certainly also the ones in whom a divine playfulness is undiminished in its capacity to transcend in new formulae some of the traumatic discrepancies of the times. To me, Freud, too, had throughout his decades played so sovereignly with so many types of conceptualization (from nature philosophy to economics) that I could not see how he could have thought of himself as anybody but a man who had to *bring the thought patterns of the millenia up to the moment of scientific introspection* while utilizing the modes of hippocratic observation which had become part of his medical identity. Perhaps great transforming ideas always contain only a limited number of truly provable assumptions—enough to establish some lasting roots in observation while branching out into new world-images.

Because of the marked ideological-humanitarian aspects of psychoanalysis, the development of a revolutionary approach into a classical and even an orthodox one—and into the resulting heresies—took little time. I, at least, could witness it in one lifetime; although I must admit that my primary interest in the flux of phenomena precluded any attempt to find safety in orthodoxy or escape in heresy.

As indicated, Freud had, to my mind, transferred the modes of medical research to psychology as he learned to “locate” early psychic trauma in a way analagous to the investigation of brain lesions. Such transfer of conceptual imagery could probably be demonstrated in the work of other originators of transforming ideas and found to be highly productive if balanced and counteracted by other modes of thought pervading the thinker’s over-all identity. In Freud’s case there was, no doubt, a con-

tinuous struggle between the doctor role and such powerful identity fragments as liberator, scholar, writer. These he permitted himself to cultivate only sparingly, for he was, above all, a physician who would cure man of the curse of the past whether it originated in evolution, in primitive history, or in early life history—all three aspects of man's life discovered in Freud's very century by the Darwinists, the archeologists and anthropologists, and by himself: his many analogies between the mind's layers and archeological research come to mind here. Freud's antiteleological concern with the past as incapsulated and entombed in the mind has led, both in practice and theory, to astonishing discoveries; and if it is true that the mood of this kind of mastery of the past resembled somewhat the ritual reenactment of beginnings (creation, spring, birth), then it would seem plausible that psychoanalysis appealed above all to people who had lost their origins in soil, ritual, and tradition. But as we have seen, it will not do to explain human phenomena by their origins in childhood without asking why and how the social environment initiates, reinforces, and aggravates selected childhood conflicts and makes their outcome part of the positive and negative identity fragments which will vie with each other in adolescence. By an exclusive emphasis on origins, psychoanalysis has in fact contributed to a world-image pervaded by a new sense of predestination, which, it so often seems, can be alleviated only by a religious faith in psychoanalysis, or at least in its habitual vocabulary.

Freud's combination of a retrospective and introspective approach in psychoanalysis is often referred to as his "fatalism"; while I am only too aware of the fact that later concepts such as mine are welcomed by many as a more "optimistic" promise of life chances not doomed by childhood experience. But identity concepts only emphasize for one stage of life what is true for all, namely that periods of rapid growth and of a widening range of cognition permit, in interaction with living institutions, a renewal of old strengths as well as an initiation of new ones. That, however, does not in itself provide a more benign outlook. Rather it demands new and ruthless insights into the functioning of society and this especially in a world of rapid and unpredictable change.

Are such conceptions as the identity crisis, then, mere additions to the classical scheme, or do they call for a transformation in clinical and theoretical outlook? I can only introduce this question in conclusion with a few notes on what, over the years, I have found to be significant theoretical differences between the classical psychoanalytic outlook and newer perspectives such as my own. These differences will highlight what I meant when, earlier in this paper, I suggested that backward *and* forward, inward *and* outward, downward *and* upward may all be dimen-

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sions to be considered in the development of a psychoanalytic model of human existence.

1. *Super-ego and Identity.* In his contribution to this volume, Talcott Parsons relates his momentous integration of Freudian thought and modern sociology. He emphasizes the usefulness which the Freudian concept of the super-ego (as “the internalization of the social structures”) has had for his attempts to link man’s inner life and his social world. Let me, therefore, compare the super-ego as an earlier concept—both in the sense that the concept was created earlier in the history of psychoanalysis and in the sense that the super-ego originates earlier in life—with the identity concept.

The child internalizes into the super-ego most of all the prohibitions emanating from the social structure—prohibitions, furthermore, which are perceived and accepted with the limited cognitive means of early childhood and are preserved throughout life with a primitive sadomasochism inherent in man’s inborn moralistic proclivities. (These are aggravated, of course, in cultures counting heavily on guilt as an inner governor.) Thus internalized infantile moralism becomes isolated from further experience, wherefore man is always ready to regress to and to fall back on a punitive attitude which not only helps him to re-repress his own drives but which also encourages him to treat others with a righteous and often ferocious contempt, quite out of tune with his more advanced insights. Man could not become or remain moral without some such moralistic tendency; yet without a further development of truly *ethical* strivings, that is, a subordination of his moralism to the shared affirmation of values, man could never build the social structures which define his adult privileges and obligations.

Such further development, however, is not taken care of by Freud’s “structural” point of view, which is useful primarily in analyzing the extent to which a person has become a system to himself, unable to adapt to and to grow with the actual present. I have briefly accounted for the way in which a psychosocial theory can explain why adolescents must and can (as children cannot) join each other in cliques and “subcultures” and eventually join up with large-scale ideological trends of past or present, while a few close themselves up in malignant states of individual isolation equally unknown in earlier life. Here the strength of the ego seems to be dependent not only on the individual’s preadolescent experience (including the contents of the super-ego), but also on the support it receives from adolescent subcultures and from the living historical process.

But in psychoanalysis, what has thus been learned about later stages of life must always be reapplied to previous observations on earlier stages

and disturbances. It becomes obvious, then, that an intricate relation between inner (cognitive and emotional) development and a stimulating and encouraging environment exists from the beginning of life, so that no stage and no crisis could be formulated without a characterization of the mutual fit of the individual's capacity to relate to an ever expanding life-space of people and institutions, on the one hand, and, on the other, the readiness of these people and institutions to make him part of an ongoing cultural concern. All this, in fact, determines the nature of the identity crisis which, in turn, determines what happens to the remnants of the super-ego, even as later crises will decide the ultimate fate of the identity.

2. *Clinical and Actual Reality.* Psychoanalytic treatment will reveal much of the "scarcity economics" of an impoverished condition, in which much of the available energy has been directed inward as anxiety spread and anticipation became inhibited. But just because the "economic" point of view was invented to account for such simplified circumstances—simplified by the stereotypy of symptomatic behavior—they serve less well to understand the exchange of energies and, in fact, that shared multiplication of energies with a widening radius of individuals and institutions dictated by ongoing life throughout its stages. What is at stake here is not more and not less than psychological "reality." The clinical world view rightly takes regression and repression as its base-lines and endeavors to fill in blind spots, to correct distortions, and to do away with illusions caused by infantile fixations. And, indeed, in removing all these, therapy creates a minimum condition for dealing with the world "as it is." But, in doing so, the clinician must take it for granted that his own function within the established order is "reality oriented."

In the absence of theories including such communal concerns, and in urban settings culturally predisposed to seek roots and sanction in intellectual explanation, some circles can come to cultivate a "reality" and a "normality" oriented toward a psychoanalytic utopia. Such considerations give due warning that a science so close to questions of health and ethics must include methods of observing its own functioning in the cultural-historical process and its (intended and unintentional) influence upon it. For mankind will always attempt to absorb insights into its unconscious as it absorbs other shocking truths, namely, with an adaptation combining overacceptance with deeper resistance. Always in danger of becoming part of the disease it meant to cure, a method bent on honesty must also remain vigilant enough to seek the cure for new disguises. The vigilance demanded here concerns the intrinsic dilemma of all research concerning man's motives: here explanatory assumptions are especially apt to become not only reductionist but also accusatory as well as

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excusatory, as if what is found to be true increased the guilt of some and absolved others.

The experience of the identity crisis, so I have indicated, takes place when the world of childhood gives way to that of an ideological universe which for a while coexists with the accumulative knowledge of "reality." True, youth gradually becomes equipped with all the cognitive functions which adult man will ever call his own. And yet, it is often radically involved in world-outlooks which make the "facing of reality" a hazardous criterion of creative imagination. To give this whole matter another dimension, I have insisted that the German *Wirklichkeit* really combines "reality" with "actuality," that is, a consensually validated world of facts with a *mutual activation* of likeminded people.¹⁵ Even among the most intelligent and informed men, there is always a search for communality with those who not only think alike but also make each other feel active and masterly. And it must be obvious how often, in adolescence as well as in adult ideology, the most gifted minds must surrender their sense of verifiable fact to that of a mutual actualization through the sharing of a unified world image.

3. *The Inner and the Outer World.* The classical psychoanalytic technique was also the original research laboratory; how human nature works outside it was, by necessity, a matter of the speculative application of clinical findings to the "world outside." But psychoanalysis, as any other field, can renew itself only by gaining insight into the nature of its observational setting. The natural sciences have had to take account of the fact that not only the personal equation of old, but also all the details of the laboratory arrangements are apt to become inseparable from the bit of nature isolated for observation. In psychoanalysis, however, it is still claimed that only the clinical situation provides the setting that can reveal the true workings even of the "normal" mind. The authority often quoted in this context is Freud's statement that only a broken crystal reveals its structure which is invisible in intactness. But a living ego-organism is not a crystal, and even as anatomy and pathology must yield to physiology and biochemistry in the attempt to reconstruct intact functioning, psychoanalysis must complement its clinical findings with the study of psychosocial functioning.

It is, of course, true that no situation affords a better access to the workings of the unconscious than does the psychoanalytic one. Yet the greatest difficulty in the path of psychoanalysis as a general psychology probably consists in the remnants of its first conceptualization of the environment. To a patient under observation, the "world" he records (and more often than not, complains about) easily becomes a hostile environment—"outer" as far as his most idiosyncratic wishes are con-

cerned, and “outside” his relation to his therapist. This says much about him and about man; but it seems difficult to account for the nature of the clinical laboratory if the nature of the human environment is not included in the theory which guides the therapeutic encounter. The fact is, such neglect sooner or later leads to the adoption of a clinical world view. When I once heard a revered teacher refer to the world at large as the “outer-psychoanalytic outerworld” I experienced a conceptual as well as a philosophical shudder. For even though it is true that, by definition, “the world” must always resist psychoanalytic insight, the acceptance and study of such resistance in its historical disguises is of the essence in the psychoanalytic enterprise.

A related problem is the application of what has been observed in the encounter of therapist and patient to other forms of relationships. In the psychoanalytic situation, early and earliest relations with significant persons is ever again transferred and relived, relost and renewed, and this (it seems probable) at least partially because of the technical choice of the basic couch arrangement by which the observer and the observed do not look each other in the face, communicate only with words, and thus avoid the earliest and the most lasting mutual affirmation: that by vision. Here, again, what is produced in the laboratory is highly instructive all around. But it presents a partially induced repetition of what in psychoanalytic theory is referred to as the search for an “object”—meaning both the original libidinal attachment to the mother as a whole person and the cognitive capacity to (literally) envisage her as a whole. This is truly basic; but it would seem wise to apply this “object” imagery only with caution to the functioning infant, as well as to any other person outside clinical captivity, and especially also to the young person whose needs during the identity crisis demand (beside some “parent substitutes”) a vigorous peer group, an ideologically integrated universe, and the experience of a chosen mutuality with newly met persons and groups.

A close study of the original clinical setting as a laboratory would, incidentally, also reveal the fact that at least one vital aspect of life—namely, violence—systematically escaped the treatment situation, as if the individual would participate in any uses of direct violence (from aimless riot to armed force) only when absorbed in the unenlightened and uncivilized mass that makes up the “outerworld.” But then, as pointed out, the clinical laboratory channels all impulse to act into introspection, so that the cured patient may be prepared for rational action. Thus, the clinician learns much more about the nature of inhibited and symptomatic action than about that of concerted action in actuality—with all its shared a-rationalities.

4. *The Ego and the I.* A final methodological problem may or may not point beyond psychoanalysis. Freud’s puritanical self-denial as an

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observer in the long run prejudiced the very act of observing. Freud, it is true, went further than any man before him in revealing publicly the role which his own conflicts played not only in his own dreams, but also in his dealings with his patients. But in doing so, he failed to analyze the role of the observer who chooses to study conflict in himself as well as in others. He conceptualized the ego as a psychological part of man's unconscious inner structure, but he did not question the "I," the core of consciousness. But who wields this consciousness, so vastly refined as a weapon and tool in dealings with the unconscious? In using the word puritanical, I meant to imply that Freud's self-restraint in this regard, though it could be expressed in antireligious terms, was deeply religious in nature: man had talked enough of his soul, and had for too long congratulated himself on being "the measure," or the conscious "center," of the universe. If a man like Kierkegaard could write about the leap of faith, a doctor and scientist could only grimly and rationally describe with the ears and the methods given to him what many of the most sublime men as well as the most depraved had previously refused to acknowledge.

It is one thing, however, to cultivate the proud rationality of the Enlightenment of which Freud was probably the last great representative, and which he crowned by insisting that irrationality and the unconscious be included in the sphere to be understood rationally. It is another matter to derive from such inquiries into man's conflicts a model of man. At any rate, I have found myself studying in the lives of religious innovators that border area where neurotic and existential conflict meet and where the "I" struggles for unencumbered awareness. And again, is it not in adolescent experience that the "I" can first really perceive itself as separate? It does so, as it finds itself both involved and estranged in peculiar states which transcend the identity crisis in psychosocial terms, because they represent not only the fear of otherness and the anxiety of selfhood, but also the dread of individual existence bounded by death. All of this, of course, is easily forgotten when the young adult assumes his responsibilities and when he is forced to participate in the hierarchies of his society, with their organized beliefs and convincingly concealed irrationalities. But in the long run, the "I" transcends its over-defined ego and, sooner or later, faces the dilemma of existence versus politics which I have attempted to approach in my work on the Gandhian version of truth.

Behind all this may well be another and wider identity crisis. Psychoanalysis, in line with the Enlightenment, has debunked the belief (and the need to believe) in a deity. It has suggested that the god image "really" reflects the infantile image of the father, as, indeed, it does in transparent cultural variations. On the other hand, it may be for good phylogenetic reasons that the ontogenetic father is overendowed with

an awe which can later be shared in common beliefs in god-images and in semidivine leaders. For a community of I's may well be able to believe in a common fund of grace only to the extent that all acknowledge a super-I. This is a problem of such magnitude that mere intellectual denial hardly touches it, least of all if this denial is accompanied by a displacement of divinity to "immortal" leaders. In the eyes of the young, the disenchantment practiced by generations of self-made men and of unbelievers has only sealed the demotion and abrogation of the fathers. The young, therefore, feel that there must be a concerted (if at times playfully anarchic) search for new bonds which will endow the modern person with a novel sense of communality and of actuality. At any rate, what religion calls grace and sin transcends the comfort of adaptation and the management of guilt.

All this takes us beyond the identity crisis in its developmental and psychosocial determinants. But, then, this crisis is (and makes sense as) only one of a series of life crises. What does happen, we may well ask in conclusion, to adults who have "found their identity" in the cultural consolidation of their day? Most adults, it is true, turn their backs on identity questions and attend to the inner cave of their familial, occupational, and civic concerns. But this cannot be taken as an assurance that they have either transcended or truly forgotten what they have once envisaged in the roamings of their youth. The question is: what have they done with it, and how ready are they to respond to the identity needs of the coming generations in the universal crisis of faith and power? In the end, it seems, psychoanalysis cannot claim to have exhausted its inquiry into man's unconscious without asking what may be the inner arrest peculiar to adulthood—not merely as a result of leftovers of infantile immaturity, but as a consequence of the adult condition as such. For it is only too obvious that, so far in man's total development, adulthood and maturity have rarely been synonymous. The study of the identity crises, therefore, inexorably points to conflicts and conditions due to those specializations of man which make him efficient at a given stage of economy and culture at the expense of the denial of major aspects of existence. Having begun as a clinical art-and-science, psychoanalysis cannot shirk the question of what, from the point of view of an undivided human race, is "wrong" with the "normality" reached by groups of men under the conditions of pseudo-speciation. Does it not include pervasive group retrogressions which cannot be subsumed under the categories of neurotic regressions, but rather represent a joint fixation on historical formulae dangerous to further adaptation?

But I have promised to pursue the matter of the "identity crisis" only as far as autobiographic considerations would carry it. At the same time I have recapitulated my conceptual ancestry insofar as it originates in

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psychoanalysis, in order to indicate that psychoanalysis represents a very special admixture of "laboratory" conditions, methodological climate, and personal and ideological involvement. Other fields may claim to be governed by radically different admixtures and certainly by much less subjective kinds of evidence. But I wonder whether they could insist, at any time, on a total absence of any one of the ingredients described here.

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