have pointed to more dangers than to constructive avenues of action. Perhaps we can hope that this is only an indication that we are progressing through one stage of learning. When a man learns how to drive, he must become conscious of all the things that might happen; and he must learn to hear and see and read all the danger signals on his dashboard and along the road. Yet he may hope that some day, when he has outgrown this stage of learning, he will be able to glide with the greatest of ease through the landscape, enjoying the view with the confident knowledge that he will react to signs of mechanical trouble or road obstruction with automatic and effective speed.

We are now working toward, and fighting for, a world in which the harvest of democracy may be reaped. But if we want to make the world safe for democracy, we must first make democracy safe for the healthy child. In order to ban autocracy, exploitation, and inequality in the world, we must first realize that the first inequality in life is that of child and adult. Human childhood is long, so that parents and schools may have time to accept the child's personality in trust and to help it to be disciplined and human in the best sense known to us. This long childhood exposes the child to grave anxieties and to a lasting sense of insecurity which, if unduly and senselessly intensified, persists in the adult in the form of vague anxiety—anxiety which, in turn, contributes specifically to the tension of personal, political, and even international life. This long childhood exposes adults to the temptation of thoughtlessly and often cruelly exploiting the child's dependence by making him pay for the psychological debts owed to us by others, by making him the victim of tensions which we will not, or dare not, correct in ourselves or in our surroundings. We have learned not to stunt a child's growing body with child labor; we must now learn not to break his growing spirit by making him the victim of our anxieties.

If we will only learn to let live, the plan for growth is all there.

3

THE PROBLEM OF EGO IDENTITY

In a number of writings (Erikson, 1946, 1950a, 1950b, 1951a) I have been using the term ego identity to denote certain comprehensive gains which the individual, at the end of adolescence, must have derived from all of his preadult experience in order to be ready for the tasks of adulthood. My use of this term reflected the dilemma of a psychoanalyst who was led to a new concept not by theoretical preoccupation but rather through the expansion of his clinical awareness to other fields (social anthropology and comparative education) and through the expectation that such expansion would, in turn, profit clinical work. Recent clinical observations have, I feel, begun to bear out this expectation. I have, therefore, gratefully accepted two opportunities offered me to restate and review the problem of identity. The present paper combines both of these presentations. The question before us is whether the concept of identity is essentially a psychosocial one, or deserves to be considered as a legitimate part of the psychoanalytic theory of the ego.

First a word about the term identity. As far as I know Freud used it only once in a more than incidental way, and then with a psychosocial connotation. It was when he tried to formulate his link to the Jewish people that he spoke of an "inner identity".
of his early twenties, namely, the two volumes of fiction which had never been published. As one would expect, Shaw proceeded to make light of the production of his young adulthood, but not without imposing on the reader a detailed analysis of young Shaw. Were Shaw not so deceptively witty in what he says about his younger years, his observations probably would have been recognized as a major psychological achievement. Yet, it is Shaw's mark of identity that he eases and teases his reader along a path of apparent superficialities and sudden depths. I dare to excerpt him here for my purposes only in the hope that I will make the reader curious enough to follow him at every step of his exposition (Shaw, 1952).

G.B.S. (for this is the public identity which was one of his masterpieces) describes young Shaw as an "extremely disagreeable and undesirable" young man, "not at all reticent of diabolical opinion," while inwardly "suffering ... from simple cowardice ... and horribly ashamed of it." "The truth is," he concludes, "that all men are in a false position in society until they have realized their possibilities and imposed them on their neighbors. They are tormented by a continual shortcoming in themselves; yet they irritate others by a continual overweening. This discord can be resolved by acknowledged success or failure only: everyone is ill at ease until he has found his natural place, whether it be above or below his birthplace." But Shaw must always exempt himself from any universal law which he inadvertently pronounces; so he adds: "This finding of one's place may be made very puzzling by the fact that there is no place in ordinary society for extraordinary individuals."

Shaw proceeds to describe a crisis (of the kind which we will refer to as an identity crisis) at the age of twenty. It is to be noted that this crisis was not caused by lack of success or the absence of a defined role but by too much of both: "I made good in spite of myself, and found, to my dismay, that Business, instead of expelling me as the worthless imposter I was, was fastening upon me with no intention of letting me go. Behold me, therefore, in my twentieth year, with a business training, in an occupation which I detested as cordially as any sane person lets himself detest anything he cannot escape from. In March 1876 I broke loose." Breaking loose meant to leave family and friends, business and Ireland, and to avoid the danger of success without identity, of a success...
unequal to "the enormity of my unconscious ambition." He granted himself a prolongation of the interval between youth and adulthood, which we will call a *psychosocial moratorium*. He writes: "... when I left my native city I left this phase behind me, and associated no more with men of my age until, after about eight years of solitude in this respect, I was drawn into the Socialist revival of the early eighties, among Englishmen intensely serious and burning with indignation at very real and very fundamental evils that affected all the world." In the meantime, he seemed to avoid opportunities, sensing that "Behind the conviction that they could lead to nothing that I wanted, lay the unspoken fear that they might lead to something I did not want." This *occupational* part of the moratorium was reinforced by an *intellectual* one: "I cannot learn anything that does not interest me. My memory is not indiscriminate; it rejects and selects; and its selections are not academic ... I congratulate myself on this; for I am firmly persuaded that every unnatural activity of the brain is as mischievous as any unnatural activity of the body ... Civilization is always wrecked by giving the governing classes what is called secondary education ..."

Shaw settled down to study and to write as he pleased, and it was then that the extraordinary workings of an extraordinary personality came to the fore. He managed to abandon the *kind* of work he had been doing without relinquishing the work *habit*: "My office training had left me with a habit of doing something regularly every day as a fundamental condition of industry as distinguished from idleness. I knew I was making no headway unless I was doing this, and that I should never produce a book in any other fashion. I bought supplies of white paper, demy size, by sixpence-worths at a time; folded it in quarto; and condemned myself to fill five pages of it a day, rain or shine, dull or inspired. I had so much of the schoolboy and the clerk still in me that if my five pages ended in the middle of a sentence I did not finish it until the next day. On the other hand, if I missed a day, I made up for it by doing a double task on the morrow. On this plan I produced five novels in five years. It was my professional apprenticeship ..."

We may add that these first five novels were not published for over fifty years; but Shaw had learned to write as he worked, and to wait as he wrote. How important such initial *ritualization of his worklife* was for the young man's inner defenses may be seen from one of those casual (in fact, parenthetical) remarks with which the great wit almost coyly admits his psychological insight: "I have risen by sheer gravitation, too industrious by acquired habit to stop working (I work as my father drank)." He thus points to that combination of *addictiveness* and *compulsivity* which we see as the basis of much pathology in late adolescence and of some accomplishment in young adulthood.

His father's "drink neurosis" Shaw describes in detail, finding in it one of the sources of his biting humor: "It had to be either a family tragedy or family joke." For his father was not "convivial, nor quarrelsome, nor boastful, but miserable, racked with shame and remorse." However, the father had a "humorous sense of anticlimax which I inherited from him and used with much effect when I became a writer of comedy. His anticlimaxes depended for their effect on our sense of the sacredness (of the subject matter) ... It seems providential that I was driven to the essentials of religion by the reduction of every factitious or fictitious element in it to the most irreverent absurdity."

A more unconscious level of Shaw's oedipal tragedy is represented—with dreamlike symbolism—in what looks like a screen memory conveying his father's impotence: "A boy who has seen 'the governor' with an *imperfectly wrapped-up goose under one arm* and *a ham in the same condition under the other* (both purchased under heaven knows what delusion of festivity) *butting* at the garden wall in the belief that he was *pushing open the gate*, and *transforming his tall hat to a concertina* in the process, and who, instead of being overwhelmed with shame and anxiety at the spectacle, has been so *disabled by merriment* (uproariously shared by the maternal uncle) that he has hardly been able to rush to the rescue of the hat and pilot its wearer to safety, is clearly not a boy who will make tragedies of trifles instead of *making trifles of tragedies*. If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance." It is obvious that the analysis of the psychosexual elements in Shaw's identity could find a solid anchor point in this memory.

Shaw explains his father's downfall with a brilliant analysis of the socioeconomic circumstances of his day. For the father was

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8 My italics.
“second cousin to a baronet, and my mother the daughter of a country gentleman whose rule was, when in difficulties, mortgage. That was my sort of poverty.” His father was “the younger son of a younger son of a younger son” and he was “a downstart and the son of a downstart.” Yet, he concludes: “To say that my father could not afford to give me a university education is like saying that he could not afford to drink, or that I could not afford to become an author. Both statements are true; but he drank and I became an author all the same.”

His mother he remembers for the “one or two rare and delightful occasions when she buttered my bread for me. She buttered it thickly instead of merely wiping a knife on it.” Most of the time, however, he says significantly, she merely “accepted me as a natural and customary phenomenon and took it for granted that I should go on occurring in that way.” There must have been something reassuring in this kind of impersonality, for “technically speaking, I should say she was the worst mother conceivable, always, however, within the limits of the fact that she was incapable of unkindness to any child, animal, or flower, or indeed to any person or thing whatsoever...” If this could not be considered either a mother’s love or an education, Shaw explains: “I was badly brought up because my mother was so well brought up... In her righteous reaction against... the constraints and tyrannies, the scoldings and browbeatings and punishments she had suffered in her childhood... she reached a negative attitude in which having no substitute to propose, she carried domestic anarchy as far as in the nature of things it can be carried.” All in all, Shaw’s mother was “a thoroughly disgusted and disillusioned woman... suffering from a hopelessly disappointing husband and three uninteresting children grown too old to be petted like the animals and the birds she was so fond of, to say nothing of the humiliating inadequacy of my father’s income.”

Shaw had really three parents, the third being a man named Lee (“meteoric,” “impetuous,” “magnetic”), who gave Shaw’s mother lessons in singing, not without revamping the whole Shaw household as well as Bernard’s ideals: “Although he supplanted my father as the dominant factor in the household, and appropriated all the activity and interest of my mother, he was so completely absorbed in his musical affairs that there was no friction and hardly any intimate personal contacts between the two men: certainly no unpleasantness. At first his ideas astonished us. He said that people should sleep with their windows open. The daring of this appealed to me; and I have done so ever since. He ate brown bread instead of white: a startling eccentricity.”

Of the many elements of identity formations which ensued from such a perplexing picture, let me single out only three, selected, simplified, and named for this occasion by me.

**The Snob**

“As compared with similar English families, we had a power of derisive dramatization that made the bones of the Shavian skeletons rattle more loudly.” Shaw recognizes this as “family snobbery mitigated by the family sense of humor.” On the other hand, “though my mother was not consciously a snob, the divinity which hedged an Irish lady of her period was not acceptable to the British suburban parents, all snobs, who were within her reach (as customers for private music lessons).” Shaw had “an enormous contempt for family snobbery,” until he found that one of his ancestors was an Earl of Fife: “It was as good as being descended from Shakespeare, whom I had been unconsciously resolved to reincarnate from my cradle.”

**The Noisemaker**

All through his childhood, Shaw seems to have been exposed to an oceanic assault of music making: the family played trombones and ophicleides, violoncellos, harps, and tambourines—and, most of all (or is it worst of all) they sang. Finally, however, he taught himself the piano, and this with dramatic noisiness. “When I look back on all the banging, whistling, roaring, and growling inflicted on nervous neighbors during this process of education, I am consumed with useless remorse... I used to drive [my mother] nearly crazy by my favorite selections from Wagner’s Ring, which to her was ‘all recitative,’ and horribly discordant at that. She never complained at the time, but confessed it after we separated, and said that she had sometimes gone away to cry. If I had committed a murder I do not think it would trouble my conscience very much; but this I cannot bear to think of.” That, in fact, he may have learned the piano in order to get even with his musical tormentors,
he does not profess to realize. Instead, he compromised by becoming—a music critic, i.e., one who writes about the noise made by others. As a critic, he chose the nom de plume Corno di Bassetto—actually the name of an instrument which nobody knew and which is so meek in tone that “not even the devil could make it sparkle.” Yet Bassetto became a sparkling critic, and more: “I cannot deny that Bassetto was occasionally vulgar; but that does not matter if he makes you laugh. Vulgarity is a necessary part of a complete author’s equipment; and the clown is sometimes the best part of the circus.”

The Diabolical One

How the undoubtedly lonely little boy (whose mother listened only to the musical noisemakers) came to use his imagination to converse with a great imaginary companion is described thus: “In my childhood I exercised my literary genius by composing my own prayers...they were a literary performance for the entertainment and propitiation of the Almighty.” In line with his family’s irreverence in matters of religion, Shaw’s piety had to find and rely on the rockbottom of religiosity which, in him, early became a mixture of “intellectual integrity...synchronized with the dawning of moral passion.” At the same time it seems that Shaw was (in some unspecified way) a little devil of a child. At any rate, he did not feel identical with himself when he was good: “Even when I was a good boy, I was so only theatrically, because, as actors say, I saw myself in the character.” And indeed, at the completion of his identity struggle, i.e., “when Nature completed my countenance in 1880 or thereabouts (I had only the tenderest sprouting of hair on my face until I was 24), I found myself equipped with the up-growing moustaches and eyebrows, and the sarcastic nostrils of the operatic fiend whose airs (by Gounod) I had sung as a child, and whose attitudes I had affected in my boyhood. Later on, as the generations moved past me, I...began to perceive that imaginative fiction is to life what the sketch is to the picture or the conception to the statue.”

Thus G.B.S., more or less explicitly, traces his own roots. Yet, it is well worth noting that what he finally became seems to him to have been as innate as the intended reincarnation of Shakespeare referred to above. His teacher, he says, “puzzled me with her at-

tempts to teach me to read; for I can remember no time at which a page of print was not intelligible to me, and can only suppose that I was born literate.” However, he thought of a number of professional choices: “As an alternative to being a Michelangelo I had dreams of being a Badeali (note, by the way, that of literature I had no dreams at all any more than a duck has of swimming).”

He also calls himself “a born Communist” (which, we hasten to say, means a Fabian Socialist), and he explains the peace that comes with the acceptance of what one seems to be made to be; the “born Communist...knows where he is, and where this society which has so intimidated him is. He is cured of his MAUVAISE Honte...” Thus “the complete outsider” gradually became his kind of complete insider: “I was,” he said, “outside society, outside politics, outside sport, outside the Church”—but this “only within the limits of British barbarism... The moment music, painting, literature, or science came into question the positions were reversed: it was I who was the Insorser.”

As he traces all of these traits back into childhood, Shaw becomes aware of the fact that only a tour de force could have integrated them all: “...if I am to be entirely communicative on this subject, I must add that the mere rauiness which so soon rubs off was complicated by a deeper strangeness which has made me all my life a sojourner on this planet rather than a native of it. Whether it be that I was born mad or a little too sane, my kingdom was not of this world: I was at home only in the realm of my imagination, and at my ease only with the mighty dead. Therefore, I had to become an actor, and create for myself a fantastic personality fit and apt for dealing with men, and adaptable to the various parts I had to play as author, journalist, orator, politician, committee man, man of the world, and so forth. In this,” so Shaw concludes significantly, “I succeeded later on only too well.” This statement is singularly illustrative of that faint disgust with which older men at times review the inextricable identity which they had come by in their youth—a disgust which in the lives of some can become mortal despair and inexplicable psychosomatic involvement.

The end of his crisis of younger years Shaw sums up in these words: “I had the intellectual habit; and by natural combination of critical faculty with literary resource needed only a clear com
prehension of life in the light of an intelligible theory: in short, a religion, to set it in triumphant operation.” Here the old Cynic has circumscribed in one sentence what the identity formation of any human being must add up to. To translate this into terms more conducive to discussion in ego-psychological and psychosocial terms: Man, to take his place in society, must acquire a “conflict-free,” habitual use of a dominant faculty, to be elaborated in an occupation; a limitless resource, a feedback, as it were, from the immediate exercise of this occupation, from the companionship it provides, and from its tradition; and finally, an intelligible theory of the processes of life which the old atheist, eager to shock the last, calls a religion. The Fabian Socialism to which he, in fact, turned is rather an ideology, to which general term we shall adhere, for reasons which permit elucidation only at the end of this paper.

GENETIC: IDENTIFICATION AND IDENTITY

I

The autobiographies of extraordinary (and extraordinarily self-perceptive) individuals are a suggestive source of insight into the development of identity. In order to find an anchor point for the discussion of the universal genetics of identity, however, it would be well to trace its development through the life histories or through significant life episodes of “ordinary” individuals—individuals whose lives have neither become professional autobiographies (as did Shaw’s) nor case histories, such as will be discussed in the next chapter. I will not be able to present such material here; I must, instead, rely on impressions from daily life, from participation in one of the rare “longitudinal” studies of the personality development of children,4 and from guidance work with mildly disturbed young people.

Adolescence is the last and the concluding stage of childhood. The adolescent process, however, is conclusively complete only when the individual has subordinated his childhood identifications to a new kind of identification, achieved in absorbing sociability and in competitive apprenticeship with and among his age-mates. These new identifications are no longer characterized by the play-


fulness of childhood and the experimental zest of youth: with dire urgency they force the young individual into choices and decisions which will, with increasing immediacy, lead to a more final self-definition, to irreversible role pattern, and thus to commitments “for life.” The task to be performed here by the young person and by his society is formidable; it necessitates, in different individuals and in different societies, great variations in the duration, in the intensity, and in the ritualization of adolescence. Societies offer, as individuals require, more or less sanctioned intermediary periods between childhood and adulthood, institutionalized psychosocial moratoria, during which a lasting pattern of “inner identity” is scheduled for relative completion.

In postulating a “latency period” which precedes puberty, psychoanalysis has given recognition to some kind of psychosexual moratorium in human development—a period of delay which permits the future mate and parent first to “go to school” (i.e., to undergo whatever schooling is provided for in his technology) and to learn the technical and social rudiments of a work situation. It is not within the confines of the libido theory, however, to give an adequate account of a second period of delay, namely, adolescence. Here the sexually matured individual is more or less retarded in his psychosexual capacity for intimacy and in the psychosocial readiness for parenthood. The period can be viewed as a psychosexual moratorium during which the individual through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society, a niche which is firmly defined and yet seems to be uniquely made for him. In finding it the young adult gains an assured sense of inner continuity and social sameness which will bridge what he was as a child and what he is about to become, and will reconcile his conception of himself and his community’s recognition of him.

If, in the following, we speak of the community’s response to the young individual’s need to be “recognized” by those around him, we mean something beyond a mere recognition of achievement; for it is of great relevance to the young individual’s identity formation that he be responded to, and be given function and status as a person whose gradual growth and transformation make sense to those who begin to make sense to him. It has not been sufficiently recognized in psychoanalysis that such recognition provides an entirely indispensable support to the ego in the specific
tasks of adolescing, which are: to maintain the most important ego defenses against the vastly growing intensity of impulses (now invested in a matured genital apparatus and a powerful muscle system); to learn to consolidate the most important “conflict-free” achievements in line with work opportunities; and to resynthesize all childhood identifications in some unique way, and yet in concordance with the roles offered by some wider section of society—be that section the neighborhood block, an anticipated occupational field, an association of kindred minds, or, perhaps (as in Shaw’s case) the “mighty dead.”

II

Linguistically as well as psychologically, identity and identification have common roots. Is identity, then, the mere sum of earlier identifications, or is it merely an additional set of identifications?

The limited usefulness of the mechanism of identification becomes at once obvious if we consider the fact that none of the identifications of childhood (which in our patients stand out in such morbid elaboration and mutual contradiction) could, if merely added up, result in a functioning personality. True, we usually believe that the task of psychotherapy is the replacement of morbid and excessive identifications by more desirable ones. But as every cure attests, “more desirable” identifications tend to be quietly subordinated to a new, a unique Gestalt which is more than the sum of its parts. The fact is that identity as a mechanism is of limited usefulness. Children, at different stages of their development, identify with those part aspects of people by which they themselves are most immediately affected, whether in reality or fantasy. Their identifications with parents, for example, center in certain overvalued and ill-understood body parts, capacities, and role appearances. These part aspects, furthermore, are favored not because of their social acceptability (they often are everything but the parents’ most adjusted attributes) but by the nature of infantile fantasy which only gradually gives way to a more realistic anticipation of social reality. The final identity, then, as fixed at the end of adolescence is superordinated to any single identification with individuals of the past: it includes all significant identifications, but it also alters them in order to make a unique and a reasonably coherent whole of them.

If we, roughly speaking, consider introjection-projection, identification, and identity formation to be the steps by which the ego grows in ever more mature interplay with the identities of the child’s models, the following psychosocial schedule suggests itself:

The mechanisms of introjection and projection, which prepare the basis for later identifications, depend for their relative integration on the satisfactory mutuality (Erikson, 1950a) between the mothering adult(s) and the mothered child. Only the experience of such mutuality provides a safe pole of self-feeling from which the child can reach out for the other pole: his first love “objects.”

The fate of childhood identifications, in turn, depends on the child’s satisfactory interaction with a trustworthy and meaningful hierarchy of roles as provided by the generations living together in some form of family.

Identity formation, finally, begins where the usefulness of identification ends. It arises from the selective repudiation and mutual assimilation of childhood identifications, and their absorption in a new configuration, which in turn, is dependent on the process by which a society (often through subsocieties) identifies the young individual, recognizing him as somebody who had to become the way he is, and who, being the way he is, is taken for granted. The community, often not without some initial mistrust, gives such recognition with a (more or less institutionalized) display of surprise and pleasure in making the acquaintance of a newly emerging individual. For the community, in turn, feels “recognized” by the individual who cares to ask for recognition; it can, by the same token, feel deeply—and vengefully—rejected by the individual who does not seem to care.

III

While the end of adolescence thus is the stage of an overt identity crisis, identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence: it is a lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society. Its roots go back all the way to the first self-recognition: in the baby’s earliest exchange of smiles.
there is something of a *self-realization coupled with a mutual recognition.*

All through childhood tentative crystallizations take place which make the individual feel and believe (to begin with the most conscious aspect of the matter) as if he approximately knew who he was—only to find that such self-certainty ever again falls prey to the discontinuities of psychosocial development (Benedict, 1938). An example would be the discontinuity between the demands made in a given milieu on a little boy and those made on a “big boy” who, in turn, may well wonder why he was first made to believe that to be little is admirable, only to be forced to exchange this effortless status for the special obligations of one who is “big now.” Such discontinuities can amount to a crisis and demand a decisive and strategic repatterning of action, and with it, *compromise* which can be compensated for only by a consistently accruing sense of the social value of such increasing commitment. The cute or ferocious, or good small boy, who becomes a studious, or gentlemanly, or tough big boy must be able—and must be enabled—to combine both sets of values in a recognized identity which permits him, in work and play, and in official and in intimate behavior to be (and to let others be) a big boy and a little boy.

The community supports such development to the extent to which it permits the child, at each step, to orient himself toward a complete “life plan” with a hierarchical order of roles as represented by individuals of different age grades. Family, neighborhood, and school provide contact and experimental identification with younger and older children and with young and old adults. A child, in the multiplicity of successive and tentative identifications, thus begins early to build up expectations of what it will be like to be older and what it will feel like to have been younger—expectations which become part of an identity as they are, step by step, verified in decisive experiences of psychosocial “fittedness.”

**IV**

The *critical phases* of life have been described in psychoanalysis primarily in terms of instincts and defenses, i.e., as “typical danger situations” (Hartmann, 1939). Psychoanalysis has concerned itself more with the encroachment of psychosexual crises on psychosocial (and other) functions than with the specific crisis created by the maturation of each function. Take for example a child who is learning to *speak*: he is acquiring one of the prime functions supporting a sense of individual autonomy and one of the prime techniques for expanding the radius of give-and-take. The mere indication of an ability to give intentional sound-signs immediately obligates the child to “say what he wants.” It may force him to *achieve* by proper verbalization the attention which was afforded him previously in response to mere gestures of needfulness. Speech not only commits him to the kind of voice he has and to the mode of speech he develops; it also *defines him* as one responded to by those around him with changed diction and attention. They, in turn, expect henceforth to be understood by him with fewer explanations or gestures. Furthermore, a spoken word is a *pact*: there is an irrevocably committing aspect to an utterance remembered by others, although the child may have to learn early that certain commitments (adult ones to a child) are subject to change without notice, while others (his) are not. This intrinsic relationship of speech, not only to the world of communicable facts, but also to the social value of verbal commitment and uttered truth is strategic among the experiences which support (or fail to support) a sound ego development. It is this psychosocial aspect of the matter which we must learn to relate to the by now better known psychosexual aspects represented, for example, in the autoerotic enjoyment of speech; the use of speech as an erotic “contact”; or in such organ-mode emphases as eliminative or intrusive sounds or uses of speech. Thus the child may come to develop, in the use of voice and word, a particular combination of whining or singing, judging or arguing, as part of a new element of the future identity, namely, the element “one who speaks and is spoken to in such-and-such-a-way.” This element, in turn, will be related to other elements of the child’s developing identity (he is clever and/or good-looking and/or tough) and will be compared with other people, alive or dead, judged ideal or evil.

It is the ego’s function to integrate the psychosexual and psychosocial aspects on a given level of development, and, at the same time, to integrate the relation of newly added identity elements with those already in existence. For earlier crystallizations of identity can become subject to renewed conflict, when changes in the quality and quantity of drive, expansions in mental equipment, and
new and often conflicting social demands all make previous adjustments appear insufficient, and, in fact, make previous opportunities and rewards suspect. Yet, such developmental and normative crises differ from imposed, traumatic, and neurotic crises in that the process of growth provides new energy as society offers new and specific opportunities (according to its dominant conception and institutionalization of the phases of life). From a genetic point of view, then, the process of identity formation emerges as an evolving configuration—a configuration which is gradually established by successive ego synthesizes and resynthesizes throughout childhood; it is a configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimations, and consistent roles.

V

The final assembly of all the converging identity elements at the end of childhood (and the abandonment of the divergent ones) appears to be a formidable task: how can a stage as “abnormal” as adolescence be trusted to accomplish it? Here it is not unnecessary to call to mind again that in spite of the similarity of adolescent “symptoms” and episodes to neurotic and psychotic symptoms and episodes, adolescence is not an affliction but a normative crisis, i.e., a normal phase of increased conflict characterized by a seeming fluctuation in ego strength, and yet also by a high growth potential. Neurotic and psychotic crises are defined by a certain self-perpetuating propensity, by an increasing waste of defensive energy, and by a deepened psychosocial isolation; while normative crises are relatively more reversible, or, better, traversable, and are characterized by an abundance of available energy which, to be sure, revives dormant anxiety and arouses new conflict, but also supports new and expanded ego functions in the searching and playful engagement of new opportunities and associations. What under prejudiced scrutiny may appear to be the onset of a neurosis is often but an aggravated crisis which might prove to be self-liquidating and, in fact, contributive to the process of identity formation.

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8 William James (1896) speaks of an abandonment of “the old alternative ego,” and even of “the murdered self.”
favor of that of solitary play, so now the mutual “joinedness” of adolescent clique behavior fails to be properly assessed in our concern for the individual adolescent. Children and adolescents in their presocieties provide for one another a sanctioned moratorium and joint support for free experimentation with inner and outer dangers (including those emanating from the adult world). Whether or not a given adolescent’s newly acquired capacities are drawn back into infantile conflict depends to a significant extent on the quality of the opportunities and rewards available to him in his peer clique, as well as on the more formal ways in which society at large invites a transition from social play to work experimentation, and from rituals of transit to final commitments: all of which must be based on an implicit mutual contract between the individual and society.

VI

Is the sense of identity conscious? At times, of course, it seems only too conscious. For between the double prongs of vital inner need and inexorable outer demand, the still experimenting individual may become the victim of a transitory extreme identity consciousness which is the common core of the many forms of “self-consciousness” typical for youth. Where the processes of identity formation are prolonged (a factor which can bring creative gain) such preoccupation with the “self-image” also prevails. We are thus most aware of our identity when we are just about to gain it and when we (with what motion pictures call “a double take”) are somewhat surprised to make its acquaintance; or, again, when we are just about to enter a crisis and feel the encroachment of identity diffusion—a syndrome to be described presently.

An increasing sense of identity, on the other hand, is experienced preconsciously as a sense of psychosocial well-being. Its most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being at home in one’s body, a sense of “knowing where one is going,” and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count. Such a sense of identity, however, is never gained nor maintained once and for all. Like a “good conscience,” it is constantly lost and regained, although more lasting and more economical methods of maintenance and restoration are evolved and fortified in late adolescence.

6 For a new approach see Anna Freud’s and Sophie Dann’s (1951) report on displaced children.

Like any aspect of well-being or, for that matter, of ego synthesis, a sense of identity has a preconscious aspect which is available to awareness; it expresses itself in behavior which is observable with the naked eye; and it has unconscious concomitants which can be fathomed only by psychological tests and by the psychoanalytic procedure. I regret that, at this point, I can bring forward only a general claim which awaits detailed demonstration. The claim advanced here concerns a whole series of criteria of psychosocial health which find their specific elaboration and relative completion in stages of development preceding and following the identity crisis. This is condensed in Figure I.

Identity appears as only one concept within a wider conception of the human life cycle which envisages childhood as a gradual unfolding of the personality through phase-specific psychosocial crises: I have, on other occasions (1950a, 1950b), expressed this epigenetic principle by taking recourse to a diagram which, with its many empty boxes, at intervals may serve as a check on our attempts at detailing psychosocial development. (Such a diagram, however, can be recommended to the serious attention only of those who can take it and leave it.) The diagram (Figure 1), at first, contained only the single-lined boxes along the descending diagonal (I, 1—II, 2—III, 3—IV, 4—V, 5—VI, 6—VII, 7—VIII, 8) and for the sake of initial orientation, the reader is requested to ignore all other entries for the moment. The diagonal shows the sequence of psychosocial crises. Each of these boxes is shared by a criterion of relative psychosocial health and the corresponding criterion of relative psychosocial ill-health: in “normal” development, the first must persistently outweigh (although it will never completely do away with) the second. The sequence of stages thus represents a successive development of the component parts of the psychosocial personality. Each part exists in some form (vertical) before the time when it becomes “phase-specific,” i.e., when “its” psychosocial crisis is precipitated both by the individual’s readiness and by society’s pressure. But each component comes to ascendancy and finds its more or less lasting solution at the conclusion of “its” stage. It is thus systematically related to all the others, and all depend on the proper development at the proper time of each; although individual make-up and the nature of society determine the rate of development of each of them, and thus the ratio of all of them. It is
at the end of adolescence, then, that identity becomes phase-specific (V, 5), i.e., must find a certain integration as a relatively conflict-free psychosocial arrangement—or remain defective or conflict-laden.

With this chart as a blueprint before us, let me state first which aspects of this complex matter will not be treated in this paper: for one, we will not be able to make more definitive the now very tentative designation (in vertical 5) of the precursors of identity in the infantile ego. Rather we approach childhood in an untraditional manner, namely, from young adulthood backward—and this with the conviction that early development cannot be understood on its own terms alone, and that the earliest stages of childhood can not be accounted for without a unified theory of the whole span of preadulthood. For the infant (while he is not spared the chaos of needful rage) does not and cannot build anew and out of himself the course of human life, as the reconstruction of his earliest experience ever again seems to suggest. The smallest child lives in a community of life cycles which depend on him as he depends on them, and which guide his drives as well as his sublimations with consistent feedbacks. This verity necessitates a discussion of the psychoanalytic approach to "environment" to which we shall return toward the end of this paper.

A second systematic omission concerns the psychosexual stages. Those readers who have undertaken to study the diagrams of psychosexual development in Childhood and Society (Erikson, 1950a) know that I am attempting to lay the ground for a detailed account of the dovetailing of psychosexual and psychosocial epigenesis, i.e., the two schedules according to which component parts, present throughout development, come to fruition in successive stages. The essential inseparability of these two schedules is implied throughout this paper, although only the psychosocial schedule, and in fact only one stage of it, is brought into focus.

What traditional source of psychoanalytic insight, then, will we concern ourselves with? It is: first pathography; in this case the clinical description of Identity diffusion. Hoping thus to clarify the matter of identity from a more familiar angle, we will then return to the over-all aim of beginning to "extract," as Freud put it, "from psychopathology what may be of benefit to normal psychology."

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<th>Trust vs. Mistrust</th>
<th>Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt</th>
<th>Initiative vs. Guilt</th>
<th>Industry vs. Inferiority</th>
<th>Identity vs. Identity diffusion</th>
<th>Intimacy vs. Isolation</th>
<th>Integrity vs. Disintegration</th>
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<td>ROLE vs. Mass Identity</td>
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**Figure 1**
Pathographic: The Clinical Picture of Identity Diffusion

Pathography remains the traditional source of psychoanalytic insight. In the following, I shall sketch a syndrome of disturbances in young people who can neither make use of the institutionalized moratorium provided in their society, nor create and maintain for themselves (as Shaw did) a unique moratorium all of their own. They come, instead, to psychiatrists, priests, judges, and (we must add) recruitment officers in order to be given an authorized if ever so uncomfortable place in which to wait things out.

The sources at my disposal are the case histories of a number of young patients who sought treatment following an acutely disturbed period between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four. A few were seen, and fewer treated, by me personally; a larger number were reported in supervisory interviews or seminars at the Austen Riggs Center in Stockbridge and at the Western Psychiatric Institute in Pittsburgh; the largest number are former patients now on record in the files of the Austen Riggs Center. My composite sketch of these case histories will remind the reader immediately of the diagnostic and technical problems encountered in adolescents in general (Bloch, 1953) and especially in any number of those young borderline cases (Knight, 1953) who are customarily diagnosed as preschizophrenias, or severe character disorders with paranoid, depressive, psychopathic, or other trends. Such well-established diagnostic signposts will not be questioned here. An attempt will be made, however, to concentrate on certain common features representative of the common life crisis shared by this whole group of patients as a result of a (temporary or final) inability of their egos to establish an identity: for they all suffer from acute identity diffusion.\(^7\) Obviously, only quite detailed case presentations could convey the full necessity or advisability of such a “phase-specific” approach which emphasizes the life task shared by a group of patients as much as the diagnostic criteria which differentiate them. In the meantime, I hope that my composite sketch will convey at least a kind of impressionistic plausibility. The fact that the cases known to me were seen in a private institution in the Berkshires, and at a public clinic in industrial Pittsburgh, suggests that at least the two extremes of socioeconomic status in the United States (and thus two extreme forms of identity problems) are represented here. This could mean that the families in question, because of their extreme locations on the scale of class mobility and of Americanization, may have conveyed to these particular children a certain hopelessness regarding their chances of participating in (or of successfully defying) the dominant American manners and symbols of success.\(^8\) Whether, and in what way, disturbances such as are outlined here also characterize those more comfortably placed somewhere near the middle of the socioeconomic ladder, remains, at this time, an open question.

Time of Breakdown

A state of acute identity diffusion usually becomes manifest at a time when the young individual finds himself exposed to a combination of experiences which demand his simultaneous commitment to physical intimacy (not by any means always overtly sexual), to decisive occupational choice, to energetic competition, and to psychosocial self-definition. A young college girl, previously overprotected by a conservative mother who is trying to live down a not-so-conservative past, may, on entering college, meet young people of radically different backgrounds, among whom she must choose her friends and her enemies; radically different mores especially in the relationship of the sexes which she must play along with or repudiate; and a commitment to make decisions and choices of dispersion and confusion, and a fear of dissolution. Confusion might have been a better choice; yet a young individual may be in a state of mild identity diffusion without feeling confused. All in all, dispersion being one of the synonyms of diffusion anyway, it may not be too unfortunate to let the term stand—especially since by now it has itself become the subject of a terminological diffusion by way of quotation.

\(^7\) It has been repeatedly pointed out to me that the choice of the term identity diffusion was not a felicitous one. At a meeting of a WHO Study Group, J. Huxley suggested dispersion instead. And indeed, the most common meaning of the term diffusion is the spatial one of a centrifugal dispersion of elements. In culture diffusion, for example, a technological item, an art form, or an idea may have been transmitted by way of migration, or excursion, or trade contact from one culture to another, often far away. In this use of the term, nothing disorderly or confused is implied; the center does not suffer from such dispersion. In identity diffusion, however, a split of self-images is suggested, a loss of centrality, a sense of dispersion and confusion, and a fear of dissolution. Confusion might have been a better choice; yet a young individual may be in a state of mild identity diffusion without feeling confused. All in all, dispersion being one of the synonyms of diffusion anyway, it may not be too unfortunate to let the term stand—especially since by now it has itself become the subject of a terminological diffusion by way of quotation.

\(^8\) See Chapters VIII (Status and Role) and XI (Social Class) in G. H. Mead (1934). For a recent psychoanalytic approach to role and status, see Ackerman (1951).
which will necessitate irreversible competitive involvement or even leadership. Often she finds among very “different” young people a comfortable display of values, manners, and symbols for which one or the other of her parents or grandparents is covertly nostalgic, while overtly despising them. Decisions and choices and, most of all, successes in any direction bring to the fore conflicting identifications and immediately threaten to narrow down the inventory of further tentative choices; and, at the very moment when time is of the essence, every move may establish a binding precedent in psychosocial self-definition, i.e., in the “type” one comes to represent in the types of the age-mates (who seem so terribly eager to type). On the other hand, any marked avoidance of choices (i.e., a moratorium by default) leads to a sense of outer isolation and to an inner vacuum which is wide open for old libidinal objects and with this for bewilderingly conscious incestuous feelings; for more primitive forms of identification; and (in some) for a renewed struggle with archaic introjects. This regressive pull often receives the greatest attention from workers in our field, partially because we are on more familiar ground wherever we can discern signs of regression to infantile psychosexuality. Yet the disturbances under discussion here cannot be comprehended without some insight into the specific nature of transitory adolescent regression as an attempt to postpone and to avoid, as it were, a psychosocial foreclosure. A state of paralysis may ensue, the mechanisms of which appear to be devised to maintain a state of minimal actual choice and commitment with a maximum inner conviction of still being the chooser. Of the complicated presenting pathology only a few aspects can be discussed here.

The Problem of Intimacy

The chart which accompanied the preceding section shows “Intimacy vs. Isolation” as the core conflict which follows that of “Identity vs. Identity Diffusion.” That many of our patients break down at an age which is properly considered more preadult than postadolescent is explained by the fact that often only an attempt to engage in intimate fellowship and competition or in sexual intimacy fully reveals the latent weakness of identity.

True “engagement” with others is the result and the test of firm self-delineation. Where this is still missing, the young individual

when seeking tentative forms of playful intimacy in friendship and competition, in sex play and love, in argument and gossip, is apt to experience a peculiar strain, as if such tentative engagement might turn into an interpersonal fusion amounting to a loss of identity, and requiring, therefore, a tense inner reservation, a caution in commitment. Where a youth does not resolve such strain he may isolate himself and enter, at best, only stereotyped and formalized interpersonal relations; or he may, in repeated hectic attempts and repeated dismal failures, seek intimacy with the most improbable partners. For where an assured sense of identity is missing even friendships and affairs become desperate attempts at delineating the fuzzy outlines of identity by mutual narcissistic mirroring: to fall in love then often means to fall into one’s mirror image, hurting oneself and damaging the mirror. During lovemaking or in sexual fantasies, a loosening of sexual identity threatens: it even becomes unclear whether sexual excitement is experienced by the individual or by his partner, and this in either heterosexual or homosexual encounters. The ego thus loses its flexible capacity for abandoning itself to sexual and affectual sensations, in a fusion with another individual who is both partner to the sensation and guarantor of one’s continuing identity: fusion with another becomes identity loss. A sudden collapse of all capacity for mutuality threatens, and a desperate wish ensues to start all over again, with a (quasi-deliberate) regression to a stage of basic bewilderment and rage such as only the very small child knows.

It must be remembered that the counterpart of intimacy is distantiation, i.e., the readiness to repudiate, to ignore, or to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own. Intimacy with one set of people and ideas would not be really intimate without an efficient repudiation of another set. Thus, weakness or excess in repudiation is an intrinsic aspect of the inability to gain intimacy because of an incomplete identity: whoever is not sure of his “point of view” cannot repudiate judiciously.

Young persons often indicate in rather pathetic ways a feeling that only a merging with a “leader” can save them—an adult who is able and willing to offer himself as a safe object for experimental surrender and as a guide in the relearning of the very first steps toward an intimate mutuality, and a legitimate repudiation. To such
a person the late adolescent wants to be an apprentice or a disciple, a follower, sex mate or patient. Where this fails, as it often must from its very intensity and absoluteness, the young individual recoils to a position of strenuous introspection and self-testing which, given particularly aggravating circumstances or a history of relatively strong autistic trends, can lead him into a paralyzing borderline state. Symptomatically, this state consists of a painfully heightened sense of isolation; a disintegration of the sense of inner continuity and sameness; a sense of over-all ashamedness; an inability to derive a sense of accomplishment from any kind of activity; a feeling that life is happening to the individual rather than being lived by his initiative; a radically shortened time perspective; and finally, a basic mistrust, which leaves it to the world, to society, and indeed to psychiatry to prove that the patient does exist in a psychosocial sense, i.e., can count on an invitation to become himself.

**Diffusion of Time Perspective**

In extreme instances of delayed and prolonged adolescence an extreme form of a disturbance in the *experience of time* appears which, in its milder form, belongs to the psychopathology of everyday adolescence. It consists of a sense of great urgency and yet also of a loss of consideration for time as a dimension of living. The young person may feel simultaneously very young, and in fact baby-like, and old beyond rejuvenation. Protests of missed greatness and of a premature and fatal loss of useful potentials are common among our patients as they are among adolescents in cultures which consider such protestations romantic; the implied malignancy, however, consists of a decided disbelief in the possibility that time may bring change, and yet also of a violent fear that it might. This contradiction often is expressed in a general slowing up which makes the patient behave, within the routine of activities (and also of therapy) as if he were moving in molasses. It is hard for him to go to bed and to face the transition into a state of sleep, and it is equally hard for him to get up and face the necessary restitution of wakefulness; it is hard to come to the hour, and hard to leave it. Such complaints as, "I don't know," "I give up," "I quit," are by no means mere habitual statements reflecting a mild depression: they are often expressions of the kind of despair which Edward Bibring (1953) has recently discussed as a wish on the part of the ego "to let itself die." The assumption that life could actually be made to end with the end of adolescence (or at tentatively planned later "dates of expiration") is by no means entirely unwelcome, and, in fact, can become the only pillar of hope on which a new beginning can be based. Some of our patients even require the feeling that the therapist does not intend to commit them to a continuation of life if (successful) treatment should fail to prove it really worth while; without such a conviction the moratorium would not be a real one. In the meantime, the "wish to die" is only in those rare cases a really suicidal wish, where "to be a suicide" becomes an inescapable identity choice in itself. I am thinking here of a pretty young girl, the oldest of a number of daughters of a millworker. Her mother had repeatedly expressed the thought that she would rather see her daughters dead than become prostitutes; at the same time she suspected "prostitution" in their every move toward companionship with boys. The daughters were finally forced into a kind of conspiratorial sorority of their own, obviously designed to elude the mother, to experiment with ambiguous situations, and yet probably also to give one another protection from men. They were finally caught in compromising circumstances. The authorities, too, took it for granted that they intended to prostitute themselves, and they were sent to a variety of institutions where they were forcefully impressed with the kind of "recognition" society had in store for them. No appeal was possible to a mother who, they felt, had left them no choice; and much good will and understanding of social workers was sabotaged by circumstances. At least for the oldest girl (and this, because of a number of reasons) no other future was available except that of another chance in another world. She killed herself by hanging after having dressed herself up nicely, and having written a note which ended with the cryptic words "Why I achieve honor only to discard it...".

Less spectacular but not less malignant forms and origins of such "negative identities" will be taken up later.

**Diffusion of Industry**

Cases of severe identity diffusion regularly also suffer from an acute upset in the sense of workmanship, and this either in the form of an inability to concentrate on required or suggested tasks, or in a self-destructive preoccupation with some one-sided activities,
i.e., excessive reading. The way in which such patients sometimes, under treatment, find the one activity in which they can re-employ their once lost sense of workmanship is a chapter in itself. Here, it is well to keep in mind the stage of development which precedes puberty and adolescence, namely, the elementary-school age, when the child is taught the prerequisites for participation in the particular technology of his culture and is given the opportunity and the life task of developing a sense of workmanship and work participation. The school age significantly follows the oedipal stage: the accomplishment of real (and not only playful) steps toward a place in the economic structure of society permits the child to reidentify with parents as workers and tradition bearers rather than as sexual and familial beings, thus nurturing at least one concrete and more “neutral” possibility of becoming like them. The tangible goals of elementary practice are shared by and with age-mates in places of instruction (sweathouse, prayer house, fishing hole, workshop, kitchen, schoolhouse) most of which, in turn, are geographically separated from the home, from the mother, and from infantile memories: here, however, wide differences in the treatment of the sexes exist. Work goals, then, by no means only support or exploit the suppression of infantile instinctual aims; they also enhance the functioning of the ego, in that they offer a constructive activity with actual tools and materials in a communal reality. The ego’s tendency to turn passivity into activity here thus acquires a new field of manifestation, in many ways superior to the mere turning of passive into active in infantile fantasy and play; for now the inner need for activity, practice, and work completion is ready to meet the corresponding demands and opportunities in social reality (Hendrick, 1943; Ginsburg, 1954).

Because of the immediate oedipal antecedents of the beginnings of a work identity, the diffusion of identity in our young patients reverses their gears toward oedipal competitiveness and sibling rivalry. Thus identity diffusion is accompanied not only by an inability to concentrate, but also by an excessive awareness as well as an abhorrence of competitiveness. Although the patients in question usually are intelligent and able and often have shown themselves successful in office work, in scholastic studies and in sports, they now lose the capacity for work, exercise, and sociability, and thus the most important vehicle of social play, and the most sign-
ificant refuge from formless fantasy and vague anxiety. Instead infantile goals and fantasies are dangerously endowed with the energy emanating from matured sexual equipment and increased aggressive power. One parent, again, becomes the goal, the other, again, the hindrance. Yet this revived oedipal struggle is not and must not be interpreted as exclusively or even primarily a sexual one: it is a turn toward the earliest origins, an attempt to resolve a diffusion of early introjects and to rebuild shaky childhood identifications—in other words, a wish to be born again, to learn once more the very first steps toward reality and mutuality, and to acquire the renewed permission to develop again the functions of contact, activity, and competition.

A young patient, who had found himself blocked in college, during the initial phase of his treatment in a private hospital nearly read himself blind, apparently in a destructive overidentification with father and therapist both of whom were professors. Guided by a resourceful “painter in residence” he came upon the fact that he had an original and forceful talent to paint, an activity which was prevented by advancing treatment from becoming self-destructive overactivity. As painting proved a help in the patient’s gradual acquisition of a sense of identity of his own, he dreamed one night a different version of a dream which previously had always ended in panicky awakening. Now he fled, from fire and persecution, into a forest which he had sketched himself; and as he fled into it, the charcoal drawing turned into live woods, with an infinite perspective.

The Choice of the Negative Identity

The loss of a sense of identity often is expressed in a scornful and snobbish hostility toward the roles offered as proper and desirable in one’s family or immediate community. Any part aspect of the required role, or all parts, be it masculinity or femininity, nationality or class membership, can become the main focus of the young person’s acid disdain. Such excessive contempt for their backgrounds occurs among the oldest Anglo-Saxon and the newest Latin or Jewish families; it easily becomes a general dislike for everything American, and an irrational overestimation of everything foreign. Life and strength seem to exist only where one is not, while decay and danger threaten wherever one happens to be. This typical case fragment illustrates the superego’s triumph of depre-
ciation over a young man's faltering identity: "A voice within him which was disparaging him began to increase at about this time. It went to the point of intruding into everything he did. He said, 'if I smoke a cigarette, if I tell a girl I like her, if I make a gesture, if I listen to music, if I try to read a book—this third voice is at me all the time—'You're doing this for effect; you're a phony.' " This disparaging voice in the last year has been rather relentless. The other day on the way from home to college, getting into New York on the train, he went through some of the New Jersey swamplands and the poorer sections of the cities, and he felt that he was more congenial with people who lived there than he was with people on the campus or at home. He felt that life really existed in those places and that the campus was a sheltered, effeminate place."

In this example it is important to recognize not only an overweening superego, overclearly perceived as an inner voice, but also the acute identity diffusion, as projected on segments of society. An analogous case is that of a French-American girl from a rather prosperous mining town, who felt panicly to the point of paralysis when alone with a boy. It appeared that numerous superego injunctions and identity conflicts had, as it were, short-circuited in the obsessive idea that every boy had a right to expect from her a yielding to sexual practices popularly designated as "French."

Such estrangement from national and ethnic origins rarely leads to a complete denial of personal identity (Piers and Singer, 1953), although the angry insistence on being called by a particular given name or nickname is not uncommon among young people who try to find a refuge from diffusion in a new name label. Yet confabulatory reconstructions of one's origin do occur: a high-school girl of Middle-European descent secretly kept company with Scottish immigrants, carefully studying and easily assimilating their dialect and their social habits. With the help of history books and travel guides she reconstructed for herself a childhood in a given milieu in an actual township in Scotland, apparently convincing enough to some descendants of that country. Prevailed upon to discuss her future with me, she spoke of her (American-born) parents as "the people who brought me over here," and told me of her childhood "over there" in impressive detail. I went along with the story, implying that it had more inner truth than reality to it. The bit of reality was, as I surmised, the girl's attachment, in early childhood, to a woman neighbor who had come from the British Isles; the force behind the near-delusional "truth" was the paranoid form of a powerful death wish (latent in all severe identity crises) against her parents. The semideliberateness of the delusion was indicated when I finally asked the girl how she had managed to marshal all the details of life in Scotland. "Bless you, sir," she said in pleading Scottish brogue, "I needed a past."

On the whole, however, our patients' conflicts find expression in a more subtle way than the abrogation of personal identity; they rather choose a negative identity, i.e., an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which, at critical stages of development, had been presented to the individual as most undesirable or dangerous, and yet also as most real. For example, a mother whose first-born son died and who (because of complicated guilt feelings) has never been able to attach to her later surviving children the same amount of religious devotion that she bestows on the memory of her dead child may well arouse in one of her sons the conviction that to be sick or dead is a better assurance of being "recognized" than to be healthy and about. A mother who is filled with unconscious ambivalence toward a brother who disintegrated into alcoholism may again and again respond selectively only to those traits in her son which seem to point to a repetition of her brother's fate, in which case this "negative" identity may take on more reality for the son than all his natural attempts at being good: he may work hard on becoming a drunkard and, lacking the necessary ingredients, may end up in a state of stubborn paralysis of choice. In other cases the negative identity is dictated by the necessity of finding and defending a niche of one's own against the excessive ideals either demanded by morbidly ambitious parents or seemingly already realized by actually superior ones: in both cases the parents' weaknesses and unexpressed wishes are recognized by the child with catastrophic clarity. The daughter of a man of brilliant showmanship ran away from college and was arrested as a prostitute in the Negro quarter of a Southern city; while the daughter of an influential Southern Negro preacher was found among narcotic addicts in Chicago. In such cases it is of utmost importance to recognize the mockery and the vindictive pretense in such role playing; for the white girl had not really prostituted
herself, and the colored girl had not really become an addict—yet. Needless to say, however, each of them had put herself into a marginal social area, leaving it to law-enforcement officers and to psychiatric agencies to decide what stamp to put on such behavior. A corresponding case is that of a boy presented to a psychiatric clinic as “the village homosexual” of a small town. On investigation, it appeared that the boy had succeeded in assuming this fame without any actual acts of homosexuality except one, much earlier in his life, when he had been raped by some older boys.

Such vindictive choices of a negative identity represent, of course, a desperate attempt at regaining some mastery in a situation in which the available positive identity elements cancel each other out. The history of such a choice reveals a set of conditions in which it is easier to derive a sense of identity out of a total identification with that which one is least supposed to be than to struggle for a feeling of reality in acceptable roles which are unattainable with the patient’s inner means. The statement of a young man, “I would rather be quite insecure than a little secure,” and that of a young woman, “At least in the gutter I’m a genius,” circumscribe the relief following the total choice of a negative identity. Such relief is, of course, often sought collectively in cliques and gangs of young homosexuals, addicts, and social cynics.

A relevant job ahead of us is the analysis of snobbism which, in its upper-class form, permits some people to deny their identity diffusion through a recourse to something they did not earn themselves, namely, their parents’ wealth, background, or fame. But there is a “lower lower” snobbism too, which is based on the pride of having achieved a semblance of nothingness. At any rate, many a late adolescent, if faced with continuing diffusion, would rather be nobody or somebody bad, or indeed, dead—and this totally, and by free choice—than be not-quite-somebody. The word “total” is not accidental in this connection, for I have endeavored to describe in another connection (Erikson, 1953) a human proclivity to a “totalistic” reorientation when, at critical stages of development, reintegration into a relative “wholeness” seems impossible. We will return to this problem in the last section.

9 Wholeness connotes an assembly of parts, even quite diversified parts, that enter into fruitful association and organization. This concept is most strikingly expressed in such terms as wholeheartedness, wholemindedness, wholesomeness, and the like. As a Gestalt, then, wholeness emphasizes a progressive mutuality between diversified functions and parts. Totality, on the contrary, evokes a Gestalt in which an absolute boundary is emphasized: given a certain arbitrary delineation, nothing that belongs inside must be left outside; nothing that must be outside should be tolerated inside. A totality must be as absolutely inclusive as it is absolutely exclusive. The dictionary uses the word “utter” in this connection. It conveys the element of force, which overrides the question whether the original category-to-be-made-absolute is a logical one, and whether the parts really have, so to speak, a yearning for one another.

There is both in individual and in group psychology a periodical need for a totality without further choice or alternation, even if it implies the abandonment of a much-desired wholeness. To say it in one sentence: Where the human being despairs of an essential wholeness, he restructures himself and the world by taking refuge in totalism.

Psychoanalysis reveals how strong and systematic are man’s unconscious proclivities and potentialities for total realignments, often barely hidden behind one-sided predilections and convictions, and, on the other hand, how much energy is employed in inner defenses against a threatening total reorientation in which black may turn into white and vice versa. Only the affect released in sudden con condensations testifies to the quantity of this energy. (See Erikson, 1953.)

10 I owe new insights in this field to Robert Knight (1953) and to Margare Brennan (1952).

11 David Rapaport’s (1953) ego-psychological approach to “activity and passivity” sheds new light on the ego’s role in such crises.
The element of deliberateness added here to “true” regression is often expressed in an all-pervasive mockery which characterizes the initial therapeutic contact with these patients; and by that strange air of sadomasochistic satisfaction, which makes it often hard to see and harder to believe that their self-depreciation and their willingness to “let the ego die” harbors a devastating sincerity. As one patient said: “That people do not know how to succeed is bad enough. But the worst is that they do not know how to fail. I have decided to fail well.” This almost “deadly” sincerity is to be found in the patients’ very determination to trust nothing but mistrust, and yet to watch from a dark corner of their minds (and indeed, often from the corner of an eye) for new experiences simple and forthright enough to permit a renewal of the most basic experiments in trustful mutuality. The therapist, manifestly faced with a mocking and defiant young adult, actually must take over the task of a mother who introduces a baby to life’s trustworthiness. In the center of the treatment is the patient’s need to reevaluate himself, and thus to rebuild the foundations of his identity. At the beginning these delineations shift abruptly, even as violent shifts in the patient’s experience of his ego boundary take place before our eyes: the patient’s mobility may suddenly undergo a “catatonic” slowdown; his attentiveness may turn into overwhelming sleepiness; his vasomotor system may overreact to the point of producing sensations of fainting; his sense of reality may yield to feelings of depersonalization; or the remnants of his self-assurance may disappear in a miasmic loss of a sense of physical presence. Cautious but firm inquiry will reveal the probability that a number of contradictory impulses preceded the “attack.” There is first a sudden intense impulse completely to destroy the therapist, and this, it seems, with an underlying “cannibalistic” wish to devour his essence and his identity. At the same time, or in alternation, there occur a fear and a wish to be devoured, to gain an identity by being absorbed in the therapist’s essence. Both tendencies, of course, are often dissimulated or somatized for long periods, during which they find a manifestation (often kept secret) only after the therapeutic hour. This manifestation may be an impulsive flight into sexual promiscuity acted out without sexual satisfaction or any sense of participation; enormously absorbing rituals of masturbation or food intake; excessive drinking or wild driving; or self-destructive marathons of reading or listening to music, without food or sleep.

We see here the most extreme form of what may be called identity resistance which, incidentally, far from being restricted to the patients described here, is a universal form of resistance regularly experienced but often unrecognized in the course of analyses. Identity resistance is, in its milder and more usual forms, the patient’s fear that the analyst, because of his particular personality, background, or philosophy, may carelessly or deliberately destroy the weak core of the patient’s identity and impose instead his own. I would not hesitate to say that some of the much-discussed unsolved transference neuroses in patients, as well as in candidates in training, are the direct result of the fact that the identity resistance often is, at best, analyzed only quite unsystematically. In such cases the analysand may throughout the analysis resist any possible inroad by the analyst’s identity while surrendering on all other points; or he may absorb more of the analyst’s identity than is manageable within the patient’s own means; or he may leave the analysis with a lifelong sense of not having been provided with some essence owed to him by the analyst.

In cases of acute identity diffusion this identity resistance becomes the core problem of the therapeutic encounter. Variations of psychoanalytic technique have in common that the dominant resistance must be accepted as the main guide to technique and that interpretation must be fitted to the patient’s ability to utilize it. Here the patient sabotages communication until he has settled some basic—if contradictory—issues. The patient insists that the therapist accept his negative identity as real and necessary (which it is and was) without concluding that this negative identity is “all there is to him.” If the therapist is able to fulfill both of these demands, he must prove patiently through many severe crises that he can maintain understanding and affection for the patient without either devouring him or offering himself for a totem meal. Only then can better known forms of transference, if ever so reluctantly, emerge.

These are nothing more than a few hints regarding the phenomenology of identity diffusion as reflected in the most outstanding and immediate transferences and resistances. Individual treatment,
child may identify primarily with the father, or, worse, base his very identity on that of the father. It must be added that whatever these mothers are, they are more so toward the patient; the conclusion is inescapable that these patients, in turn, have, from the beginning, deeply hurt their mothers by shying away from them, and this because of an utter intolerance of extreme temperamental differences. These differences, however, are only extreme expressions of an essential affinity: by which I mean to imply that the patient’s excessive tendency to withdraw (or to act impulsively) and the mother’s excessive social intrusiveness have in common a high degree of social vulnerability. Behind the mother’s persistent complaints, then, that the father failed to make a woman out of her, is the complaint, deeply perceived by both mother and child, that the patient failed to make a mother out of her.

The fathers, while usually successful, and often outstanding in their particular fields, do not stand up against their wives at home because of an excessive mother dependence on them, in consequence of which the fathers also are deeply jealous of their children. What initiative and integrity they have either surrenders to the wife’s intrusiveness or tries guiltily to elude her: in consequence of which the mother becomes only the more needy, plaintive, and “sacrificial” in her demands upon all or some of her children.

Of the relationship of our patients to their brothers and sisters I can only say that it seems to be more symbiotic than most sibling relationships are. Because of an early identity hunger, our patients are apt to attach themselves to one brother or sister in a way resembling the behavior of twins (Burlingham, 1952): except that here we have one twin, as it were, trying to treat a nontwin as a twin. They seem apt to surrender to a total identification with at least one sibling in ways which go far beyond the “altruism by identification” described by Anna Freud (1936). It is as if our patients surrendered their own identity to that of a brother or sister in the hope of regaining a bigger and better one by some act of merging. For periods they succeed; the letdown which must follow the breakup of the artificial twinship is only the more traumatic. Rage and paralysis follow the sudden insight that there is enough identity only for one, and that the other seems to have made off with it.

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136 ERIK H. ERIKSON

however, is only one facet of therapy in the cases under discussion. The transferences of these patients remain diffused, while their acting out remains a constant danger. Some, therefore, need to undergo treatment in a hospital environment in which their stepping out of the therapeutic relationship can be observed and limited; and in which first steps beyond the newly won bipolar relationship to the therapist meet with the immediate support of receptive nurses, cooperative fellow patients, and helpful instructors in a sufficiently wide choice of activities.

Specific Factors in Family and Childhood

In the discussion of patients who have a relevant pathogenic trend in common, we are apt to ask what their parents have in common. I think that one may say that a number of the mothers in our case histories have in common some outstanding traits. The first is a pronounced status awareness, of the climbing and pretentious or of the “hold-on” variety. They would at almost any time be willing to overrule matters of honest feeling and of intelligent judgment for the sake of a façade of wealth, propriety, and “happiness”: they, in fact, try to coerce their sensitive children into a pretense of a “natural” and “glad-to-be-proper” sociability. They also have the special quality of a penetrating omnipresence; their very voices and their softest sobs are sharp, plaintive, or fretful, and cannot be escaped within a considerable radius. One patient, all through childhood had a repetitive dream of a pair of flapping scissors flying around a room: the scissors proved to symbolize his mother’s voice, cutting, and cutting off. These mothers love, but they love fearfully, plaintively, intrusively; they are themselves so hungry for approval and for recognition that they burden their young children with complicated complaints, especially about the father, and they plead with the children to justify by their existence their mother’s existence. They are highly jealous and highly sensitive to the jealousy of others; in our context it is especially important that the mother is intensely jealous of any sign that the
The early childhood histories of our patients are, on the whole, remarkably bland. Some infantile autism is often observed early but usually rationalized by the parents. Yet one has the general impression that the degree of malignancy of the acute identity diffusion in late adolescence depends on the extent of this early autism, which will determine the depth of regression and the intensity of the encounter between new identity fragments and old introjects. As to particular traumata in childhood or youth, one item seems frequent, namely, a severe physical trauma either in the oedipal period or in early puberty—and this in connection with a separation from home. This trauma may consist of an operation or a belatedly diagnosed physical defect; it may be an accident or a severe sexual traumatization. Otherwise the early pathology conforms with that expected as typical for the dominant psychiatric diagnosis given.

The Therapeutic Design

I promised a composite sketch, and a sketch I have presented. Again, only the detailed presentation of a few cases could elucidate the relation of ego weakness to congenital proclivities, on the one hand, and to the educative deficiency of families and classes, on the other. In the meantime, the most immediate clarification of the ego's relationship to its “environment” ensues from the study of the young patient's recovery in a hospital setting, i.e., the study of his determined “oneliness” (as a young woman patient put it); of his tendency to exploit and provoke the hospital environment; of his growing ability to utilize it; and finally, of his capacity to leave this kind of institutionalized moratorium and to return to his old or new place in society. The hospital community offers the clinical researcher the possibility of being a participant observer not only in the individual patient’s personal treatment but also in the “therapeutic design” which is to meet the legitimate demands of patients who share a life problem—here identity diffusion. It stands to reason that a typical problem receives elucidation as the hospital community studies what is required to treat a particular age group: in this case the hospital becomes a planfully institutionalized world-between-worlds, which offers the young individual support in the rebuilding of those most vital ego functions, which—as far as he ever built them—he has relinquished. The relationship to the indi-

vidual therapist is the cornerstone for the establishment of a new and honest mutuality of function which must set the patient's face toward an ever so dimly perceived and ever so strenuously refuted future. Yet, it is the hospital community in which the patient's first steps of renewed social experimentation take place. The privileges and obligations of such a community immediately demand his subjection to and his initiation in a communal design which will also strive to meet his and his fellow patients' needs—and incidentally, also, those of the staff: for it stands to reason that a communal setting such as a hospital is characterized not only by the identity needs of those who happen to be the patients, but also of those who choose to become their brothers' (and sisters') keepers. The discussion of the ways in which the professional hierarchy distributes the functions, the rewards, and the status of such keepership (and thus opens the door for a variety of countertransferences and “cross-transferences” which, indeed, make the hospital a facsimile of a home) is entering the literature on the subject of hospital morale (i.e., Batesman and Dunham, 1948; Schwartz and Will, 1953). From the point of view of this paper, such studies also clearly point to the danger of the patient's choosing the very role of a patient as the basis of his crystallizing identity: for this role may well prove more meaningful than any potential identity experienced before (see K. T. Erikson, 1957).

Once More: the Diagram

Diagrams have a quiet coerciveness all their own. Especially does a diagram which has neither been completed nor discarded become a conceptual Harvey: one converses with it unawares. In therapeutic work, one tries to ignore the embarrassing fact that now and again the diagram looks over one's shoulder, as it were, and makes a suggestion; nor do the patients appreciate such atmospheric interferences. Only as I concluded this impressionistic survey of some of the main features of identity diffusion, did it occur to me to “locate” them on the chart: and it cannot be denied that they clarify previously vague parts of the diagram and suggest specific expansions of theory. Insisting, then, that in principle Harveys should remain expendable, we will briefly outline what this one can teach us.

The original chart showed only the diagonal, i.e., the successive
relative achievements which now become part and parcel of the struggle for identity. It is necessary to emphasize (and possible to illustrate briefly) the principle according to which early relative achievements (diagonal) when considered at a later stage (any horizontal below the diagonal) must be reviewed and renamed in terms of that later stage. Basic Trust, for example, is a good and a most fundamental thing to have, but its psychosocial quality becomes more differentiated as the ego comes into the possession of a more extensive apparatus, even as society challenges and guides such extension.

To begin, then, with the pathology just described: Time Diffusion (V, 1) or a loss of the ego’s function of maintaining perspective and expectancy is related to the earliest crises in life (I, 1), and this because of the fact that the conception of temporal cycles and of time qualities is inherent in and develops from the first experience of mounting need tension, of delay of satisfaction, and final unification with the satisfying “object.” As tension increases, future fulfillment is anticipated in “hallucinatory” images; as fulfillment is delayed, moments of impotent rage occur in which anticipation (and with it, future) is obliterated; the perception of an approaching potential satisfaction again gives time a highly condensed quality of intense hope and feared disappointment. All of this contributes temporal elements to the formation of basic trust, i.e., the inner conviction that—after all—sufficient satisfaction is sufficiently predictable to make waiting and “working” worth while. Whatever the original inventory of time qualities are, our most malignantly regressed young people are clearly possessed by general attitudes which represent something of a mistrust of time as such: every delay appears to be a deceit, every wait an experience of impotence, every hope a danger, every plan a catastrophe, every potential provider a traitor. Therefore, time must be made to stand still, if necessary by the magic means of catatonic immobility—or by death. These are the extremes which are manifest in few, and latent in many cases of identity diffusion; yet, every adolescent, I would believe, knows at least fleeting moments of being at odds with time itself. In its normal and transitory form, this new kind of mistrust quickly or gradually yields to outlooks permitting and demanding an intense investment in a future, or in a number of possible futures. If these, to us, seem often quite
“utopian” (i.e., based on expectations which would call for a change in the laws of historical change as we know them), we must, for the moment, postpone any judgment of value. The adolescent—or some adolescents—may need, at all costs, an outlook with a perspective worth an investment of energy. The actual realizability of such an outlook may be a matter of later learning and adjusting, and often a matter of historical luck.

In the following, I shall let each step on the chart lead to a few suggestive social considerations which were only briefly touched on in the foregoing. To envisage a future, the young adult may also need that something which Shaw called “a religion” and “a clear comprehension of life in the light of an intelligible theory.” I indicated at the beginning that we would call this something-betweentheory-and-a-religion an ideology, a term highly conducive to misunderstanding. At this point let me stress only the temporal element in world views which might be called ideological: they are grouped around a utopian simplification of historical perspective (salvation, conquest, reform, happiness, rationality, technological mastery) in accordance with newly developing identity potentials. Whatever else ideology is (Mannheim, 1949; Schilder 1930-1940), and whatever transitory or lasting social forms it takes, we will tentatively view it here and discuss it later—as a necessity for the growing ego which is involved in the succession of generations, and in adolescence is committed to some new synthesis of past and future: a synthesis which must include but transcend the past, even as identity does.

We proceed to Identity Consciousness (V, 2) the ancestors of which are Doubt and Shame (II, 2). They counteract and complicate the sense of autonomy, i.e., the acceptance of the psychosocial fact of being, once and for all, a separate individual, who actually and figuratively must stand on his own feet. Here, I beg to quote myself (1950a): “Shame is an emotion insufficiently studied,” because in our civilization it is so early and easily absorbed by guilt. Shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at: in one word, self-conscious. One is visible and not ready to be visible; which is why we dream of shame as a situation in which we are stared at in a condition of incomplete dress. Shame is early expressed in an impulse to bury one’s face,

18 See, however, Piers and Singer (1953).

or to sink, right then and there, into the ground. But this, I think, is essentially rage turned against the self. He who is ashamed would like to force the world not to look at him, not to notice his exposure. He would like to destroy the eyes of the world. Instead he must wish for his own invisibility. . . . Doubt is the brother of shame. Where shame is dependent on the consciousness of being upright and exposed, doubt, so clinical observation leads me to believe, has much to do with a consciousness of having a front and a back—and especially a ‘behind’ . . . . This basic sense of doubt in whatever one has left behind forms a substratum for later and more verbal forms of compulsive doubting; which finds its adult expression in paranoiac fears concerning hidden persecutors and secret persecutions threatening from behind and from within the behind” (p. 223). Identity Consciousness then is a new edition of that original doubt, which concerned the trustworthiness of the training adults and the trustworthiness of the child himself—only that in adolescence, such self-conscious doubt concerns the reliability and reconcilability of the whole span of childhood which is now to be left behind. The obligation now to achieve an identity, not only distinct but also distinctive, is apt to arouse a painful over-all ashamedness, somehow comparable to the original shame (and rage) over being visible all around to all-knowing adults—only that such potential shame now adheres to one’s identity as a being with a public history, exposed to age-mates and leaders. All of this, in the normal course of events, is outbalanced by that Self-certainty, which comes from the accrued sense of an ever-increased identity at the conclusion of each previous crisis, a certainty now characterized by an increasing sense of independence from the family as the matrix of childhood identifications.

Among the societal phenomena corresponding to this second conflict there is a universal trend toward some form of uniformity (and sometimes to special uniforms or distinctive clothing) through which incomplete self-certainty, for a time, can hide in a group certainty, such as is provided by the badges as well as the sacrifices of investitures, confirmations, and initiations. Even those who care to differ radically must evolve a certain uniformity of differing (snobs, zoot-suiters). These and less obvious uniformities are supported by the institution of comprehensive shaming among peers, a judgmental give-and-take and free banding together which leaves
only a few “holding the bag” in painful (if sometimes creative) isolation.

The matter of the choice of a Negative Identity (V, 3) as against free RoleExperimentation has been discussed. The position of these terms on the chart signifies their obvious connection with the earlier conflict (III, 3) between free Initiative (in reality, fantasy, and play) and oedipal guilt. Where the identity crisis breaks through to the oedipal crisis and beyond it, to a crisis of trust, the choice of a negative identity remains the only form of initiative, complete denial of guilt or complete denial of ambition the only possible ways of managing guilt. On the other hand, the normal expression of relatively guilt-free initiative at this stage is a kind of disciplined role experimentation which follows the unwritten codes of adolescent subsocieties.

Of the social institutions which undertake to channel as they encourage such initiative, and to provide atonement as they appease guilt, we may point here, again, to initiations and confirmations: they strive, within an atmosphere of mythical timelessness, to combine some form of sacrifice or submission with an energetic guidance toward sanctioned and circumscribed ways of action—a combination which assures the development in the novice of an optimum of compliance with a maximum sense of fellowship and free choice. This ego aspect of the matter (namely, the achievement of a sense of a choice as a result of ritual regimenation) still awaits study and integration with the better explored sexual aspects of initiation rites and related rituals, official or spontaneous. Armies, of course, utilize this potentiality.

As we approach the middle region of the chart, we find that a more detailed discussion of the terms used has already been offered. Extreme Work Paralysis (V, 4) is the logical sequence of a deep sense of inadequacy (regressed to a sense of basic mistrust) of one’s general equipment. Such a sense of inadequacy, of course, does not usually reflect a true lack of potential: it may rather convey the unrealistic demands made by an ego ideal willing to settle only for omnipotence or omniscience; it may express the fact that the immediate social environment does not have a niche for the individual’s true gifts; or it may reflect the paradoxical fact that an individual in early school life was seduced into a specialized precocity which early outdistanced his identity developmen. All of these reasons, then, may exclude the individual from that experimental competition in play and work through which he learns to find and to insist on his kind of achievement and work identity.

Social institutions support the strength and the distinctiveness of work identity by offering those who are still learning and experimenting a certain status-of-the-moratorium, an apprenticeship or discipleship characterized by defined duties, sanctioned competitions, and special freedoms, and yet potentially integrated with the hierarchies of expectable jobs and careers, castes and classes, guilds and unions.

In Box V, 5 we again meet the diagonal, and the over-all focus of this paper; crossing it we enter the area of psychosocial elements which are not derivatives but precursors of future psychosocial crises. The first such element (V, 6) is Sexual Identity vs. Bisexual Diffusion, the most immediate precursor of Intimacy vs. Isolation. Here the sexual mores of cultures and classes make for immense differences in the psychosocial differentiation of masculine and feminine (M. Mead, 1949), and in the age, kind, and ubiquity of genital activity. These differences can obscure the common fact discussed above, namely, that the development of psychosocial intimacy is not possible without a firm sense of identity. Bisexual diffusion can lead young adults toward two deceptive developments. Induced by special mores, or otherwise seduced, they may foreclose their identity development by concentrating on early genital activity without intimacy; or, on the contrary, they may concentrate on social or intellectual status values which underplay the genital element, with a resulting permanent weakness of genital polarization with the other sex. Different mores (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, 1948) demand from some the ability to postpone genital activity, and from others, the early ability to make it a “natural” part of life: in either case, special problems ensue which may well impair true heterosexual intimacy in young adulthood.

Social institutions here offer ideological rationally for a prolongation of the psychosexual moratorium in the form of complete sexual abstinence, in the form of genital activity without social commitment, or in the form of sexual play without genital engagement (petting). What a group’s or an individual’s “libido economy”
will stand for depends to some extent on the identity gain which accrues from such preferred sexual behavior.

The study of horizontal V of the chart, then, reveals certain systematic consistencies in the described elements of identity diffusion, and in those of identity formation. As pointed out parenthetically, these consistencies correspond to certain social institutions, which (in ways still to be elucidated) support the ego needs and ego functions subsumed under the term identity. In fact, the two remaining boxes of horizontal V (which at any rate are marginal to this clinical section) cannot be approached at all without a discussion of social institutions. The prime institution which awaits clarification here is that system of ideals which societies present to the young individual in the explicit or implicit form of an ideology. To ideology we may, in tentative summary, ascribe the function of offering youth (1) an orderly clear perspective of the future, encompassing all foreseeable time, and thus countering individual “time diffusion”; (2) an opportunity for the exhibition of some uniformity of appearance and action countering individual identity consciousness; (3) inducement to collective role and work experimentation which can counteract a sense of inhibition and personal guilt; (4) submission to leaders who as “big brothers” escape the ambivalence of the parent-child relation; (5) introduction into the ethos of the prevailing technology, and thus into sanctioned and regulated competition; and (6) a seeming correspondence between the internal world of ideals and evils, on the one hand, and, on the other, the outer world with its organized goals and dangers in real space and time: a geographic-historical framework for the young individual's budding identity.

I am aware of having, in the conclusion of a pathographic sketch, “sketched in” some references to phenomena which are the domain of social science. I can justify this only with the assumption that clinical work, in cutting through the immense diversity of individual pathology in order to arrive at some workable generalities, may well come upon an aspect of matters institutional which the historical and the economic approach has necessarily neglected. Here, however, we must first attempt to bring some order into the terminological household of our own field, and this especially where it overlaps with areas of social science.

THE PROBLEM OF EGO IDENTITY

SOCIETAL: EGO AND ENVIRONMENT

I

It has not escaped the reader that the term identity covers much of what has been called the self by a variety of workers, be it in the form of a self-concept (George H. Mead, 1934), a self-system (Harry S. Sullivan, 1946-1947), or in that of fluctuating self-experiences described by Schilder (1934), Federn (1927-1949), and others. Within psychoanalytic ego psychology, Hartmann, above all, has circumscribed this general area more clearly when in discussing the so-called libidinal cathexis of the ego in narcissism, he comes to the conclusion that it is rather a self which is thus being cathexed. He advocates a term “self-representation,” as differentiated from “object representation” (Hartmann, 1950). This self-representation was, less systematically, anticipated by Freud in his occasional references to the ego’s “attitudes toward the self” and to fluctuating cathexes bestowed upon this self in labile states of “self-esteem” (Freud, 1914). In this paper, we are concerned with the genetic continuity of such a self-representation—a continuity which must lastly be ascribed to the work of the ego. No other inner agency could accomplish the selective accentuation of significant identifications throughout childhood and the gradual integration of self-images in anticipation of an identity. It is for this reason that I have called identity, at first, ego identity. But in brashly choosing a name analogous to “ego ideal,” I have opened myself to the query as to what the relationship of these two concepts is.

Freud assigned the internalized perpetuation of cultural influences to the functions of the “superego or ego ideal” which was to
represent the commands and the prohibitions emanating from the environment and its traditions. Let us compare two statements of Freud's which are relevant here. "... the super-ego of the child is not really built up on the model of the parents, but on that of the parents' super-ego; it takes over the same content, it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the age-long values which have been handed down in this way from generation to generation. You may easily guess what great help is afforded by the recognition of the super-ego in understanding the social behavior of man, in grasping the problem of delinquency, for example, and perhaps, too, in providing us with some practical hints upon education. . . . Mankind never lives completely in the present; the ideologies of the super-ego\(^{15}\) perpetuate the past, the traditions of the race and the people, which yield but slowly to the influence of the present and to new developments, and, so long as they work through the super-ego, play an important part in man's life" (Freud, 1932, pp. 95-96). Freud, it is to be noted here, speaks of the "ideologies of the super-ego," thus giving the superego ideational content; yet he also refers to it as a "vehicle," i.e., as a part of the psychic system through which ideas work. It would seem that by ideologies of the superego Freud means the superego's specific contributions to the archaic, to the magic in the inner coerciveness of ideologies.

In a second statement Freud acknowledges the social side of the ego ideal. "The ego ideal opens up an important avenue for the understanding of group psychology. In addition to its individual side, this ideal has a social side; it is also the common ideal of a family, a class or a nation" (1914, p. 101).

It would seem that the terms superego and ego ideal have come to be distinguished by their different relation to phylogenetic and to ontogenetic history. The superego is conceived as a more archaic and thoroughly internalized representative of the evolutionary principle of morality, of man's congenital proclivity toward the development of a primitive, categorical conscience. Allied with (ontogenetically) early introjects, the superego remains a rigidly vindictive and punitive inner agency of "blind" morality. The ego ideal, however, seems to be more flexibly bound to the ideals of the particular historical period and thus is closer to the ego function of reality testing.

\(^{15}\) My italics.
invoked superego as well as the again overly demanding ego ideal. Until the matter of ego vs. self is sufficiently defined to permit a terminological decision, I shall use the bare term identity in order to suggest a social function of the ego which results, in adolescence, in a relative psychosocial equilibrium essential to the tasks of young adulthood.

II

The word “psychosocial” so far has had to serve as an emergency bridge between the so-called “biological” formulations of psychoanalysis and newer ones which take the cultural environment into more systematic consideration.

The so-called basic biological orientation of psychoanalysis has gradually become a habitual kind of pseudo biology, and this especially in the conceptualization (or lack thereof) of man’s “environment.” In psychoanalytic writings the terms “outer world” or “environment” are often used to designate an uncharted area which is said to be outside merely because it fails to be inside—inside the individual’s somatic skin, or inside his psychic systems, or inside his self in the widest sense. Such a vague and yet omnipresent “outerness” by necessity assumes a number of ideological connotations, and, in fact, assumes the character of a number of world images: sometimes “the outer world” is conceived of as reality’s conspiracy against the infantile wish world; sometimes as the (indifferent or annoying) fact of the existence of other people; and then again as the (at least partially benevolent) presence of maternal care. But even in the recent admission of the significance of the “mother-child relationship,” a stubborn tendency persists to treat the mother-child unit as a “biological” entity more or less isolated from its cultural surroundings, which then again become an “environment” of vague supports or of blind pressures and mere “conventions.” Thus, step by step, we are encumbered by the remnants of juxtapositions which were once necessary and fruitful enough: for it was important to establish the fact that moralistic and hypocritical social demands are apt to crush the adult and to exploit the child. It was important to conceptualize certain intrinsic antagonisms between the individual’s and society’s energy households. However, the implicit conclusion that an individual ego could exist against or without a specifically human “environment,” i.e., social organization, is senseless; and, far from being “biological” in its orientation, threatens to isolate psychoanalytic theory from the rich ethological and ecological findings of modern biology.

It is again Hartmann (1939) who opens the way to new considerations. His statement that the human infant is born preadapted to an “average expectable environment” implies a more truly biological as well as an inescapably societal formulation. For not even the very best of mother-child relationships could, by themselves, account for that subtle and complex “milieu” which permits a human baby not only to survive but also to develop his potentialities for growth and uniqueness. Man’s ecology includes among its dimensions constant natural, historical, and technological readjustment; which makes it at once obvious that only a perpetual social metabolism and a constant (if ever so imperceptible) restructuring of tradition can safeguard for each new generation of infants anything approaching an “average expectability” of environment. Today, when rapid technological changes have taken the lead, the matter of establishing by scientific means and of preserving in flexible forms an “average expectable” continuity in child rearing and education has, in fact, become a matter of human survival.

The specific kind of preadaptedness of the human infant (namely, the readiness to grow by predetermined steps through institutionalized psychosocial crises) calls not only for one basic environment, but for a whole chain of such successive environments. As the child “adapts” in spurts and stages, he has a claim, at any given stage reached, to the next “average expectable environment.” In other words, the human environment must permit and safeguard a series of more or less discontinuous and yet culturally and psychologically consistent steps, each extending further along the radius of expanding life tasks. All of this makes man’s so-called biological adaptation a matter of life cycles developing within their community’s changing history. Consequently, a psychoanalytic sociology faces the task of conceptualizing man’s environment as the persistent endeavor of the older and more adult egos to join in the organizational effort of providing an integrated series of average expectable environments for the young egos.
III

In a recent paper which thoughtfully yet somewhat sweepingly reviews efforts at approaching the relation of culture and personality, Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein (1951) state: "Cultural conditions could and should be viewed also with the question in mind which and what kind of opportunities for ego functions in a sphere free from conflict they invite or inhibit." In regard to the possibility of studying the reflection of such "cultural conditions" in the psychoanalysis of individuals, the writers seem less encouraging. They state: "Analysts too are aware of differences of behavior caused by cultural conditions; they are not devoid of that common sense which has always stressed these differences, but their impact on the analytic observer tends to decrease as work progresses and as available data move from the periphery to the center, that is from manifest behavior to data, part of which is accessible only to an analytic investigation." The present paper ventures to suggest that rather central problems of ego development, which are, indeed, "accessible only to an analytic investigation," demand that the psychoanalyst's awareness of cultural differences go well beyond that "common sense" which the three authors (being themselves outstanding cosmopolitans) seem to find sufficient in this particular area of observation, while they would assuredly urge a more "analyzed" common sense in other areas.

In order to approach this whole matter psychoanalytically, it may well be necessary for the individual psychoanalyst to ask himself what particular configuration of drives, defenses, capabilities, and opportunities led him into the choice of this ever-expanding field. Some search in this area may clarify the fact that some of the most heated and stubborn answers to the question of what psychoanalysis is or is not originate in another question of great urgency, namely: what psychoanalysis must be (or must remain or become) to a particular worker because a particular psychoanalytic "identity" has become a cornerstone of his existence as a man, a professional, and a citizen. I am not denying here the necessity, in a suddenly expanding and unexpectedly popular field, to define the original sources of its inspiration and the fundamentals of its specific morality. Yet, psychoanalysis, in its young history, has offered rich opportunities for a variety of identities: it gave new function and scope to such divergent endeavors as natural philosophy and Talmudic argument; medical tradition and missionary teaching; literary demonstration and the building of theory; social reform and the making of money. Psychoanalysis as a movement has harbored a variety of world images and utopias which originated in the various stages of its history in a variety of countries, and this as a result of the simple fact that man, in order to be able to interact efficiently with other human beings, must, at intervals, make a total orientation out of a given stage of partial knowledge. Individual students of Freud thus found their identity best suited to certain early theses of his which promised a particular sense of psychoanalytic identity, and with it, an inspiring ideology. Similarly, overstated antitheses to some of Freud's tentative and transient theses have served as bases for professional and scientific identities of other workers in the field. Such identities easily find elaboration in ideological schools and in irreversible systematizations which do not permit of argument or change.

In speaking of scientific proof and scientific progress in a field which deals directly with the immediate needs of men, it is necessary to account not only for methodological, practical, and ethical factors, but also for the necessity of a professional identity backed by an ideological quasi synthesis of the available orientations. Sooner or later, then, training analyses must encompass the varieties of professional identity formation in candidates-for-training, while theoretical teaching must throw light also on the ideological background of principal differences in what is felt to be most practical, most true, and most right at various stages of this developing field.

IV

The discussion of "professional identities" has necessarily led us beyond identity formation proper, to its derivatives in later, truly adult stages. I will make one more step into adulthood, before returning, in conclusion, to the problem of ideological polarization as an aspect of the societal processes which meets a necessity of adolescent ego development.

I have already implied a hypothesis which goes beyond that of Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein (1951), who state that "cultural
conditions could and should be viewed also with the question in mind which and what kind of opportunities for ego functions in a sphere free from conflict they invite or inhibit. It may well be that the relationship between the organized values and institutional efforts of societies, on the one hand, and the mechanisms of ego synthesis, on the other, is more systematic; and that, from a psychosocial point of view at any rate, basic social and cultural processes can only be viewed as the joint endeavor of adult egos to develop and maintain, through joint organization, a maximum of conflict-free energy in a mutually supportive psychosocial equilibrium. Only such organization is likely to give consistent support to the young egos at every step of their development.

I have characterized the psychosocial gains of adult ego development with the terms Intimacy, Generativity, and Integrity (VI, 6—VII, 7—VIII, 8 on the chart). They denote a postadolescent development of libidinal cathexes in intimate engagements; in parenthesis or other forms of “generating”; and, finally, in the most integrative experiences and values accrued from a lifetime. All of these developments have ego aspects and social aspects; in fact, their very alternatives (Isolation, VI, 6—Self-Absorption, VII, 7—and Despair, VIII, 8) can be held in check only by the individual’s fitting participation in social endeavors which “invite opportunities for ego functions in spheres free from conflict.” The older generation thus needs the younger one as much as the younger one depends on the older; and it would seem that it is in this mutuality of the development of the older and younger generations that certain basic and universal values such as love, faith, truth,

16 My italics.

17 See the concern over personal children, patients, and germinating ideas in Freud’s “Irma dream” (Erikson, 1954). In my psychosocial interpretation of this dream I pointed out that a dream can be seen to retrace the steps of psychosocial development at the same time that it represents a psychosexual regression to a certain infantile stage of libido development. Freud’s dreams (because of the strong inner structure of his personality and maybe also because of the didactic interest with which he went about dreaming them) prove to be continuously enlightening even in regard to matters not explicitly formulated by him, such as the parallelism of psychosocial and psychosexual themes. In the Irma dream, so I showed in my paper, the theme of phallic intrusion can be seen to be closely associated with that of initiative. Similarly, Freud’s dream of the Three Fates clearly points to the close relationship of may be incorporation and the problem of trust; while the dream of Count Thun strongly emphasizes themes of autonomy and the modes of anal elimination. A paper comparing these three dreams is in preparation.

18 In this paper, I cannot more than approach the possible relation of the problem of identity to ideological processes (see Erikson, 1958a), and I can only parenthetically list possible analogous correspondences between stages of psychosocial development in the individual and major trends of social organization. As pointed out in “Growth and Crises of the Healthy Personality” (pp. 65-82), the problem of Autonomy (versus Shame and Doubt) has intrinsic relations with the delineation of individual rights and limitations in the basic principles of law and justice, and the problem of Initiative (versus Guilt) with the encouragement and limitations emanating from the dominant ethos of production. The problem of workmanship critically prepares for the predominant techniques of production and their characteristic division of labor.
Before briefly applying this general assumption to ideology, I must ask the reader to take one more look at the chart. In boxes V, 6—V, 7—and V, 8 he will find whatever indication I can give of the precursors in adolescence of what later on are Intimacy, Generativity, and Integrity. The struggle for Sexual Identity, V, 6, while, at first, consumed with the question as to what kind of a male or female one is, through the selective search for Intimacy, VI, 6, approaches the problem of a choice of a future co-parent. The clarification, through a firmer identity formation, of one’s status as a follower (of some) and a leader (of others), V, 7, permits the early development of a responsibility toward younger age-mates which, although an important social phenomenon in its own right, is a precursor of the sense of responsibility for the next generation (Generativity), VII, 7. Finally, some form of Ideological Polarization, V, 8, some breakdown of the multiplicity of values into a few which coerce commitment, must be part and parcel of this gradual reversal of roles, through which the “identified” individual becomes a figure of identification for the young. Such polarization, however, cannot fail eventually to become a critical part of the problem of Integrity, VIII, 8: a matter which we saw reflected in Shaw’s statement (1952): that he “succeeded only too well” in living the public identity “G.B.S.,” i.e., in the polarization of his propensities for acting like an actor on the stage of life, and for acting as a reformer in social reality.

V

Shaw, of course, was a studiedly spectacular man. But, to extend a Shavianism quoted above: a clown is often not only the best but also the most sincere part of the Great Show. It is, therefore, worth while at this point to review the words chosen by Shaw to characterize the story of his “conversion”: “I was drawn into the Socialist revival of the early eighties, among Englishmen intensely serious and burning with indignation at very real and very fundamental evils that affected all the world.” The words here italicized convey to me the following implications. “Drawn into”: an ideology has a compelling power. “Revival”: it consists of a traditional force in the state of rejuvenation. “Intensely serious”: it permits even the cynical to make an investment of sincerity. “Burning with indignation”: it gives to the need for repudiation the sanction of righteousness. “Real”: it projects a vague inner evil onto a circumscribed horror in reality. “Fundamental”: it promises participation in an effort at basic reconstruction of society. “All the world”: it gives structure to a totally defined world image. Here, then, are the elements by which a group identity harnesses in the service of its ideology the young individual’s aggressive and discriminative energies, and encompasses, as it completes it, the individual’s identity. Thus, identity and ideology are two aspects of the same process. Both provide the necessary condition for further individual maturation and, with it, for the next higher form of identification, namely, the solidarity linking common identities. For the need to bind irrational self-hate and irrational repudiation makes young people, on occasion, mortally compulsive and conservative even where and when they seem most anarchic and radical; the same need makes them potentially “ideological,” i.e., more or less explicitly in search of a world image held together by what Shaw called “a clear comprehension of life in the light of an intelligible theory.”

As far as Fabian Socialists are concerned, Shaw seems fully justified in using terms characterizing an ideology of marked intellectual brilliance. More generally, an ideological system is a coherent body of shared images, ideas, and ideals which (whether based on a formulated dogma, an implicit Weltanschauung, a highly structured world image, a political creed, or a “way of life”) provides for the participants a coherent, if systematically simplified, over-all orientation in space and time, in means and ends.

The word “ideology” itself has somewhat of a bad name. By their very nature ideologies contradict other ideologies as “inconsistent” and hypocritical; and an over-all critique of ideology characterizes its persuasive simplifications as a systematic form of collective hypocrisy (Mannheim, 1949). For it is true that the average adult, and in fact, the average community, if not acutely engaged in some ideological polarization, are apt to consign ideology to a well-circumscribed compartment in their lives, where it remains handy for periodical rituals and rationalizations, but will do no undue harm to other business at hand. Yet, the fact that ideologies are simplified conceptions of what is to come (and thus later can serve as rationalizations for what has come about) does
not preclude the possibility that at certain stages of individual development and at certain periods in history, ideological polarization, conflict, and commitment correspond to an inescapable inner need. Youth needs to base its rejections and acceptances on ideological alternatives vitally related to the existing range of alternatives for identity formation.

Ideologies seem to provide meaningful combinations of the oldest and the newest in a group's ideals. They thus channel the forceful earnestness, the sincere asceticism, and the eager indignation of youth toward that social frontier where the struggle between conservatism and radicalism is most alive. On that frontier, fanatic ideologists do their busy work and psychopathic leaders their dirty work; but there, also, true leaders create significant solidarities. All ideologies ask for, as the prize for the promised possession of a future, uncompromising commitment to some absolute hierarchy of values and some rigid principle of conduct: be that principle total obedience to tradition, if the future is the eternalization of ancestry; total resignation, if the future is to be of another world; total martial discipline, if the future is to be reserved for some brand of armed superman; total inner reform, if the future is perceived as an advanced edition of heaven on earth; or (to mention only one of the ideological ingredients of our time) complete pragmatic abandon to the processes of production and to human teamwork, if unceasing production seems to be the thread which holds present and future together. It is in the totalism and exclusiveness of some ideologies that the superego is apt to regain its territory from identity: for when established identities become outworn or unfinished ones threaten to remain incomplete, special crises compel men to wage holy wars, by the cruelest means, against those who seem to question or threaten their unsafe ideological bases.

We may well pause to ponder briefly the fact that the technological and economic developments of our day encroach upon all traditional group identities and solidarities such as may have developed in agrarian, feudal, patrician, or mercantile ideologies. As has been shown by many writers, such over-all development seems to result in a loss of a sense of cosmic wholeness, of providential planfulness, and of heavenly sanction for the means of production (and destruction). In large parts of the world, this seems to result in a ready fascination with totalistic world views, views predicting milleniums and cataclysms, and advocating self-appointed mortal gods. Technological centralization today can give small groups of such fanatic ideologists the concrete power of totalitarian state machines (Erikson, 1953).

Psychoanalysis has made some contributions to the understanding of these developments especially in so far as they reflect the universal anxieties, inner dependencies, and vulnerabilities adhering to the common fact of human childhood. Psychoanalysis can also help to understand the fact that even in civilized beings the superego's paternalistic-primitive simplicity may call for an irrational trust in superpolice chiefs on earth, now that the heavenly discipline which encompassed earlier world images seems to have lost its convincing firmness. However, the application of the psychoanalytic instrument to the questions as to how man changes in his depth as he changes the expanses of his environment, and as to who is affected (and how, and how deeply) by technological and ideological changes (Erikson, 1953)—these questions must await better formulations of the ego's relationship to work techniques, to the technological "environment," and to the prevalent division of labor.

VI

In a recent seminar in Jerusalem I had an opportunity to discuss with Israeli scholars and clinicians the question of what the identity of an "Israeli" is, and thus to envisage one extreme of contemporary ideological orientations. Israel fascinates both her friends and her enemies. A great number of ideological fragments from European history have found their way into the consciousness of this small state; and many of the identity problems which have occupied a century and a half of American history are being faced in Israel within a few years. A new nation is established on a distant coast (which does not seem to "belong" to anybody) out of oppressed minorities from many lands, a new identity based on imported ideals which are libertarian, puritanic, and messianic. Any discussion of Israel's manifold and most immediate problems sooner or later leads to the extraordinary accomplishments and the

19 Organized by Professors S. Eisenstadt and C. Frankenstein of the Hebrew University. The initial impressions presented here are mine.
extraordinary ideological problems posed by the pioneer Zionist settlers (now a small minority) who make up what is known as the Kibbutz movement. These European ideologists, given—as it were—a historical moratorium created by the peculiar international and national status of Palestine first in the Ottoman Empire and then in the British mandate, were able to establish and to fortify a significant utopian bridgehead for Zionist ideology. In his “homeland,” and tilling his very home soil, the “ingathered” Jew was to overcome such evil identities as result from eternal wandering, merchandising, and intellectualizing (Erikson, 1950a) and was to become whole again in body and mind, as well as in nationality. That the Kibbutz movement has created a hardy, responsible, and inspired type of individual, nobody could deny, although certain details of its educational system (such as the raising of children, from the very beginning, in Children’s Houses, and the rooming together of boys and girls through the high-school years) are under critical scrutiny, both in Israel and abroad. The fact is, however, that in Israel a utopia was established on a frontier exposed all around, under conditions reminiscent of those faced by the Mormons. This historical fact is the only framework for judging the rationale and the rationalizations of the style of life which ensued. For no doubt, these pioneers (comparable to this country’s settlers, who, in turn, utilized the historical moratorium offered by the discovery of an empty continent, for the establishment of a new “way of life”) provided a new nation, sprung up overnight, with a historical ideal. A legitimate question, however, and one not too foreign to this country’s historians, concerns the relationship of a revolutionary elite to those who subsequently crowd into and thrive on the lands occupied and on the gains made.20 In Israel, the by now somewhat exclusive elite of Kibbutzniks faces that incomparably larger part of the population which represents an ideologically all but indigestible mixture: the masses of African and Oriental immigrants, powerful organized labor, the big city dwellers, the religious orthodoxy, the new state bureaucracy—and then, of course, the “good old” mercantile class of middlemen. Furthermore, the more uncompromising part of the Kibbutz movement has not failed to place itself between the two worlds to both of which Zionism maintains strong historical bonds: American and British Jewry (which bought much of the Kibbutz land from Arab absentee landlords) and Soviet Communism, to which the (shall we say) communalistic Kibbutz movement21 felt ideologically close—only to be repudiated by Moscow as another form of deviationism.

The Kibbutz movement thus is one example of a modern ideological utopia which freed unknown energies in young people who considered themselves as of one “people,” and created a (more or less explicit) group ideal of pervading significance—if of quite unpredictable historical fate in an industrial world. However, Israel is, undoubtedly, one of the most ideology-conscious countries that ever existed; no “peasants” nor workers ever argued more about the far-reaching meanings of daily decisions. The subtler meanings of ideology for identity formation can probably be fathomed best by comparing highly verbal ideologies with those transitory systems of conversion and aversion which exist in any society, in that no-man’s land between childhood and adulthood more or less derisively called adolescence—exist as the most meaningful part of a young person’s or a young group’s life, often without the knowledge, or indeed, curiosity, of the adults around them. It must be assumed that much of the spontaneous polarization of tastes, opinions, and slogans which occupy the arguments of young people, and much of the sudden impulse to join in destructive behavior, are loose ends of identity formation waiting to be tied together by some ideology.

VII

In the pathographic section of this paper I have pointed to the total choice of a negative identity in individuals who could achieve such escape on the basis of autistic and regressive proclivities.

The escape of many gifted if unstable young individuals into a private utopia or, as another patient put it, a “majority of one,” might not be necessary were it not for a general development to which they feel unable to submit, i.e., the increasing demand for

20 We may state tentatively that the elites which emerge from historical change are groups which out of the deepest common identity crisis manage to create a new style of coping with the outstanding danger situations of their society.

21 I.e., relative communism within the individual community, which, however, in its relation to the national economy, rather represents a capitalist cooperative.
standardization, uniformity, and conformity which characterizes the present stage of this our individualist civilization. In this country, the demand for large-scale conformity has not developed into an explicit totalitarian ideology; it has associated itself with the total dogmas of churches and with the stereotypes of businesslike behavior, but, on the whole, shuns political ideology. We appreciate as we study the capacity of our youth to manage the identity diffusion of an industrial democracy with simple trustfulness, with playful dissonance, with technical virtuosity, with “other-minded” solidarity (Riesman, 1950)—and with a distaste for ideological explicitness. What exactly the implicit ideology of American youth (this most technological youth in the world) is—that is a fateful question, not to be lightly approached in a paper of this kind. Nor would one dare to assess in passing the changes which may be taking place in this ideology and in its implicitness, as a result of a world struggle which makes a military identity a necessary part of young adulthood in this country.

It is easier to delineate that malignant turn toward a negative group identity which prevails in some of the youth especially of our large cities, where conditions of economic, ethnic, and religious marginality provide poor bases for positive identities: here negative group identities are sought in spontaneous clique formations ranging all the way from neighborhood gangs and jazz mobs, to dope rings, homosexual circles, and criminal gangs. Clinical experience can be expected to make significant contributions to this problem. Yet, we may well warn ourselves against an uncriti-

22 We may ask, for example, what inner, unconscious gain the delinquent may derive from a total choice of delinquency as a way or as a goal of life. It is possible that his radical closing up, his provocative smugness, his utter denial of remorse, may cover and counterfeit the anxiety of threatening identity diffusion. Are we, in turn, exposing him to this very danger as we hammer at him, offering him a “chance” at the price of remorse—the one price that he cannot afford to pay? A glance at the components of identity diffusion (column V, p. 120) will lead to these considerations.

Juvenile delinquency saves some young individuals from time diffusion. In the delinquent state, any future perspective, with its demands and uncertainties, is overruled by the dominant emphasis on short-range goals serving, say, a need to “get at somebody,” or to just “do something,” or “go somewhere.” This, of course, also constitutes a simplification of social modalities, together with a primitivization of intimate life.

Identity consciousness is escaped also; or, at any rate, it is firmly hidden by the delinquent's particular identification-with-himself-in-the-role-of-delinquent, which offers such an impenetrable façade to investigator and judge. This façade—the
cical transfer of clinical terms, attitudes, and methods to such public problems. Rather we may come back to a point made earlier: teachers, judges, and psychiatrists, who deal with youth, come to be significant representatives of that strategic act of “recognition” (the act through which society "identifies" its young members and thus contributes to their developing identity) which was described at the beginning of this paper. If, for simplicity's sake or in order to accommodate ingrown habits of law or psychiatry, they diagnose and treat as a criminal, as a constitutional misfit, as a derelict doomed by his upbringing, or—indeed—as a deranged patient, a

outward appearance of a total choice—denies any emotional response, and prevents the emergence of any sense of shame or guilt.

Work paralysis, the painful inability to enjoy the mastery of materials and of cooperative situations, is also sidetracked in delinquency. Work mastery is in any culture the backbone of identity formation. In delinquents (often recruited from groups who are denied a meaningful work experience) there appears, instead, a perverse but deep satisfaction in "doing a job" in the destructive sense. The legal classification of such a deed may seal a young individual's negative identity as a criminal once and for all. This, in turn, relieves him of the necessity to search further for a "good" identity (Erikson and Erikson, 1957).

In addition, delinquent behavior saves many individuals from bisexual diffusion. The exaggeration of the phallic-sadistic role on the part of the boy delinquent and the careless and loveless promiscuity on the part of the girl in either an escape from a sense of sexual inferiority or from any commitment to true intimacy.

In this connection a development highly characteristic of our time must be emphasized: I mean the new emphasis on locomotion, as provided by the machine. There is first of all what might be called the locomotorist intoxication of our time—the pleasure of imagining oneself to be an immensely powerful driver, while actually being moved by powers stronger and faster than those of the human body.

The second intoxication (now conveniently combined with the first in drive-in shows) is the passive intoxication by powerfully moving spectacles—in which continuous motion is not only observed but experienced, while the organism "races its engine," as it were. Since youth is an eminently locomotor period, and since in adolescence perambulatory (as well as mental) exploration must take over much of sexual tension, the disbalance between increased passive stimulation provided by mechanical invention and decreased opportunities for vigorous action is probably a major contributor to such specific delinquencies as the appropriation of motorcars and the urge to do physical violence, and to the widespread addiction to excessive forms of dancing.

As for authority diffusion, it is clear that organized delinquency clearly aligns the young person with an ingroup of equals with a defined hierarchy of leadership, and clearly circumscribes outgroups such as other gangs, or all the world outside the gang. Similarly, gang ethics protect the ingroup member from a sense of diffusion of ideals.

It is in this way that I would approach the problem of juvenile delinquency with concepts gained from the observation of psychiatric kinds of juvenile disturbance. Such a comparison suggests that we may learn much about the dynamics of youth by juxtaposing the delinquent joiners and the schizoid isolates (even as Freud juxtaposed perversion and neurosis as the expression and the inhibition of certain impulses) (Erikson, 1956c).
masseity.

communication can become the subject of social play and of joint
authenticity of ideological choices, and potentialities of radical
social movement during which extremes of subjective experience,
embrace a world between childhood and adulthood: a psychic
and movement through which societies and subcultures
are raised in those more or less institutionalized tribe and tribe
from specific dynamic conditions. Such studies in turn, throw new
angled identity crisis may result from specific general causes and
promotes its potentialities, its potentialities, and subtle communions.
The
meaning of new freedom powers to institutionalize and provide a necessary
condition for the ego: power to institutionalize freedom,
and the discussed reproduction of abuse. Such freedom
intangible super ego, permits the individual to focus excessive self-
material super ego. I would like to present (Ekman, 1979a). In the
history, dream, life, ideology (well follow Ekman, 1979a). In the
identity, dream, life, ideology, or specific level of specific meaning (the history, case
the specific dynamic nature of specific meaning (the hierarchy, case
this condition: set, as it possible. There is nothing into account
been, all over the map. I do not propose to leave the nature in
my attempt to circumvent the problem of identity I have

SUMMARY

thru more or this problem than to sound a warning.
It is hoped that the theory of identity, in the long run, can con-
communally express him to be—can make a role job of it.
Erik H. Eriksen

Erik H. Eriksen

164