GREEK mythology celebrates Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, as the mother of all art. She bore the nine muses to Zeus.1 Centuries after the origin of this myth Plato banned poetry, the child of memory, from his ideal state as being idle and seductive. While lawmakers, generals, and inventors were useful for the common good, the fact that Homer was nothing but a wandering minstrel without a home and without a following proved how useless he was.2 In the Odyssey the voices of the Sirens tempt Ulysses.

For never yet hath any man rowed past
This isle in his black ship, till he hath heard
The honeyed music of our lips, and goes
His way delighted and a wiser man.
For see, we know the whole tale of the travail
That Grecian and Trojan suffered in wide Troy-land
By Heaven's behove; yea, and all things we know
That come to pass upon the fruitful earth.

Their irresistible song, in evoking the past, promises a delight which will allow no future and will be the end of Ulysses' plans to return to an active life and to resume the rule of Ithaca. He prevents his shipmates from listening to the alluring voices by plugging their ears with wax, and he, too curious to renounce the pleasure, has himself chained to the ship's mast so that he will not be able to yield to their song and abandon the future.

This ambivalent attitude toward memory, especially toward its most potent form as embodied in the song, the epic, the tale, in poetry, music, fiction, and in all art, has accompanied the history of man. The modern, popular attitude, so widespread in the United States, the country of the most advanced industrial and technological civilization—that all art and poetry is “sissy”—is the latter-day implementation of the Platonic taboo. But with this difference: the contemporaries of Plato, and before them the shipmates of Ulysses, were susceptible to the promise of happiness that the song of the Sirens and of the muses contains, so that Ulysses and Plato, concerned with planning and not with the past, had to prevent their listening forcefully.

1 The words “muse” and “mnemosyne” derive from the same root: “mnen” or “man.” Prefers, Ludwig, Griechische Mythologie; Berlin 1872; vol. 1, p. 399, footnote 1. In German, too, the words “Gedächtnis” (memory) and “Dichtung” (poetry) derive from the same root “denken” (think); compare also “gedenken” (remember).

2 Plato, Republic, 599, 600.

Today the masses have internalized the ancient fear and prohibition of this alluring song and, in their contempt for it, express and repress both their longing for and their fear of the unknown vistas to which it might open the doors.

The profound fascination of memory and past experience and the double aspect of this fascination—its irresistible lure into the past with its promise of happiness and pleasure, and its threat to the kind of activity, planning, and purposeful thought and behavior encouraged by modern western civilization—have attracted the thought of two men in recent times who have made the most significant modern contribution to the ancient questions posed by the Greek myth: Sigmund Freud and Marcel Proust.

Both are aware of the antagonism inherent in memory, the conflict between reviving the past and actively participating in the present life of society. Both illuminate the nature of this conflict from different angles. Proust, the poet of memory, is ready to renounce all that people usually consider as active life, to renounce activity, enjoyment of the present moment, concern with the future, friendship, social intercourse, for the sublime happiness and profound truth recaptured in the most elusive of all treasures that man has hunted for, the “Remembrance of Things Past.” He pursues this conflict between activity and memory into its most subtle manifestations. He knows that, as the awakening dreamer may lose the memory of his dream when he moves his limbs, opens his eyes, changes the position of his body, so the slightest motion may endanger and dispel the deep pleasure of the vision of the time in Combray, recaptured by the flavor of the madeleine, or the image of Venice conjured up by the sensation and the posture which the unevenness of the pavement in the court of the Guermantes town house brought to him as the unevenness of the pavement of San Marco had years ago. He does not dare to stir, for fear that the exhilarating vision may disappear. Bodily movement is the basic and simplest form of all activity endangering memory. Action itself, the attitude of activity, even the activity of enjoying the immediate present are seen by Proust as the antagonists, the incompatible alternative of memory. From here it is only one step to the insight that the memory which reveals the true vision of something past, the memory celebrated by Proust, is very different from the voluntary, everyday memory, the useful instrument needed by man every hour and every minute to recall a word, a figure, a date, to recognize a person or an object, to think of his plans, tasks, intentions, the eminently utilitarian memory characterized by the very fact that it serves the purposes of active and
conventionally organized life in society. Proust speaks of the artificiality and untruth of the pictures that this memory furnishes, of its flat and uniform quality which cannot do justice to the unique flavor and the true qualities of anything remembered.

While for Proust the antagonism between society and memory of the significant past can be resolved only by renouncing either one or the other, Goethe seeks to reconcile the two. When, at a party, a toast was proposed to memory he objected vehemently with these words: "I do not recognize memory in the sense in which you mean it. Whatever we encounter that is great, beautiful, significant, need not be remembered from outside, need not be hunted up and laid hold of as it were. Rather, from the beginning, it must be woven into the fabric of our inmost self, must become one with it, create a new and better self in us and thus live and become a productive force in ourselves. There is no past that one is allowed to long for. There is only the eternally new, growing from the enlarged elements of the past; and genuine longing always must be productive, must create something new and better."

Freud, not unlike Proust, approaches the problem of memory not from wondering what, or how well, or how much man remembers, but how hard it is to remember, how much is forgotten and not to be recovered at all or only with the greatest difficulty, and how the period richest in experience, the period of early childhood, is the one which usually is forgotten entirely save for a few apparently meaningless memory fragments. He finds this surprising since "we are informed that during those years which have left nothing but a few incomprehensible memory fragments, we have vividly reacted to impressions, that we have manifested human pain and pleasure and that we have expressed love, jealousy and other passions as they then affected us." The few incomprehensible memory fragments left over from childhood, he considers as "concealing memories" (Deckerrinnerungen), and his painstaking work to decipher their language bears more than a superficial resemblance to Proust's attempt to decipher the hieroglyphic characters of the images of a cloud, a triangle, a belfry, a flower, a pebble—a most difficult undertaking, but the only way to the true memories enclosed in these signs which seemed to be only indifferent material objects or sensations. It was Freud who made the discovery that a conflict, leading to repression, is responsible for the difficulty of remembering the past. His well-known explanation of infantile amnesia is that the forgetting of childhood experiences is due to progressive repression of infantile sexuality, which reaches the peak of its manifestations in the third and fourth years of life. This repression is brought about by the "psychic forces of loathing, shame, and moral and esthetic ideal demands." These forces have the sanction of society, they serve the purposes of the same conventionally organized life of society which moulds the functions of all social activity and of that "uniform" memory in which Proust saw the irreconcilable antagonists of the true remembrance of things past.

It is the purpose of this essay to explore further the dynamics of this conflict in memory which leads to the striking phenomenon of childhood amnesia as well as to the difficulty, encountered by Proust though more hidden to the average eye, of recovering any true picture of past experience. To speak of a conflict in memory is a convenient abbreviation. Formulated more explicitly and accurately, the intention of this presentation is to shed light on some of the factors and conflicts in man and his society which make it difficult if not impossible for him really to remember his past and especially his early childhood.

No greater change in the needs of man occurs than that which takes place between early childhood and adulthood. Into this change have gone all the decisive formative influences of the culture transmitted by the parents, laying the fundamend of the transformation into the grown-up, "useful" member of society from the little heathen, who is helpless but as yet sees nothing wrong with following the pleasure principle completely and immediately and who has an insatiable curiosity and capacity for experience. An explanation of childhood amnesia that takes into account these changes leads to the following tentative hypothesis:

The categories (or schemata) of adult memory are not suitable receptacles for early childhood experiences and therefore not fit to preserve these experiences and enable their recall. The functional capacity of the conscious, adult memory is usually limited to those types of experience which the adult consciously makes and is capable of making.

It is not merely the repression of a specific content, such as early sexual experiences, that accounts for the general childhood amnesia; the biologically, culturally, and socially influenced process of memory organization results in the formation of categories (schemata) of memory which are

6 Reference footnote 4, p. 383. Freud asserts that the development of these forces during the latency period is organically determined and that it "can occasionally be produced without the help of education." It is surprising that the man who discovered, explored, described, and emphasized over and over again the conflict between culture, society, and sexual instinct should have ascribed the ontogenetic origin of sexual inhibitions to organic factors as though he wanted to explain as natural those inhibitions which a culture, hostile to pleasure and to sex, has created, deepened, and strengthened in every imaginable way. The only explanation for such a strange and questionable hypothesis lies, to my mind, in Freud's and every great discoverer's tragic conflict between a powerful and lucid truth-seeking for truth and the person who never can entirely extricate himself from the thousand threads with which he is captured and tied to the prejudices, ideologies, falsehoods, and conventions of his time and society.
not suitable vehicles to receive and reproduce experiences of the quality and intensity typical of early childhood. The world of modern western civilization has no use for this type of experience. In fact, it cannot permit itself to have any use for it; it cannot permit the memory of it, because such memory, if universal, would explode the restrictive social order of this civilization. No doubt the hostility of western civilization to pleasure, and to sexual pleasure as the strongest of all, is a most important factor operative in the transformation and education of the child into an adult who will be able to fulfill the role and the functions he has to take over in society and will be satisfied by them. Freud has not only called attention to the phenomenon of childhood amnesia but has also singled out a decisive factor in its genesis. I believe, however, that two points are important for a more adequate understanding of the phenomenon. First, it is not sufficiently clear why a repression of sexual experience should lead to a repression of all experience in early childhood. For this reason the assumption seems more likely that there must be something in the general quality of childhood experience which leads to the forgetting of that experience. Second, the phenomenon of childhood amnesia leads to a problem regarding the nature of repression, especially repression of childhood material. The term and concept of repression suggest that material which per se could be recalled is excluded from recall because of its traumatic nature. If the traumatic factor can be clarified and dissolved, the material is again accessible to recall. But even the most profound and prolonged psychoanalysis does not lead to a recovery of childhood memory; at best it unearth some incidents and feelings that had been forgotten. Childhood amnesia, then, may be due to a formation of the memory-functions which makes them unsuitable to accommodate childhood experience, rather than exclusively to a censor repressing objectionable material which, without such repression, could and would be remembered. The adult is usually not capable of experiencing what the child experiences; more often than not he is not even capable of imagining what the child experiences. It would not be surprising, then, that he should be incapable of recalling his own childhood experiences since his whole mode of experiencing has changed. The person who remembers is the present person, a person who has changed considerably, whose interests, needs, fears, capacity for experience and emotion have changed. The two mechanisms of forgetting suggested here shade gradually and imperceptibly into one another. They are neither alternatives nor opposites, but rather the two ends of a continuous scale.

Both Freud and Proust speak of the autobiographical memory, and it is only with regard to this memory that the striking phenomenon of childhood amnesia and the less obvious difficulty of recovering any past experience may be observed. There is no specific childhood amnesia as far as the remembrance of words learned of objects and persons recognized is concerned. This type of material is remembered because, in contrast to the autobiographical past, it is constantly re-experienced and used and because it is essential for the orientation and adaptation of the growing child to his environment.

The autobiographical memory shows indeed in most persons, if not in all, the amnesia for their early childhood from birth to approximately the fifth or sixth years. Of course, there are gaps in the memory of many people for later periods of their lives also, probably more so for the period before than after puberty; but these gaps vary individually to a much greater extent than does the ubiquitous early childhood amnesia. If one believes Proust, life after childhood is not remembered either, save for the elusive flashes of a vision given only to the most sensitive and differentiated mind as the rare grace of a fortunate moment, which then the poet, with passionate devotion and patient labor, may try to transcribe and communicate.

FREUD contrasts the presumable riches of childhood experience, the child's great capacity for impressions and experience, with the poverty or total lack of memory of such rich experience. If one looks closely at the average adult's memory of the periods of his life after childhood, such memory, it is true, usually shows no great temporal gaps. It is fairly continuous. But its formal continuity in time is offset by barrenness in content, by an incapacity to reproduce anything that resembles a really rich, full, rounded, and alive experience. Even the most "exciting" events are remembered as milestones rather than as moments filled with the concrete abundance of life. Adult memory reflects life as a road with occasional signposts and milestones rather than as the landscape through which this road has led. The milestones are the measurements of time, the months and years, the empty count of time gone by, so many years spent here, so many years spent there, moving from one place to another, so many birthdays, and so forth. The signposts represent the outstanding events to which they point—entering college, the first job, marriage, birth of children, buying a house, a family celebration, a trip. But it is not the events that are remembered as they really happened and were experienced at the time. What is remembered is usually, more or less, only the fact that such an event took place. The signpost is remembered, not the place, the thing, the situation to which it points. And even these signposts themselves do not usually indicate the really significant moments in a person's life; rather they point to the events that are conventionally supposed to be significant, to the clichés which society has come to consider as the main stations of life. Thus the memories of the majority of people come to resemble increasingly the stereotyped answers to a questionnaire, in which life consists of time and place of birth, religious denomination, residence, educational degrees, job, marriage, number and birthdates of children, income, sickness and death. The average traveler, asked about his trip, will tell you how many miles he has made (how many years he has lived); how fast he went (how successful he was); what places he has visited—usually only the well known ones, often he visits only those that one "simply must have seen"—(the jobs he has held, the prestige he has gained). He can tell you whether the driving was smooth or rough, or whether somebody bumped his fender, but he will be quite unable to give you any real idea.
of the country through which he went. So the average traveler through life remembers chiefly what the road map or the guide book says, what he is supposed to remember because it is exactly what everybody else remembers too.

In the course of later childhood, adolescence, and adult life, perception and experience themselves develop increasingly into the rubber stamps of conventional clichés. The capacity to see and feel what is there gives way to the tendency to see and feel what one expects to see and feel because everybody else does. Experience increasingly assumes the form of the cliché under which it will be recalled because this cliché is what conventionally is remembered by others. This is not the remembered situation itself, but the words which are customarily used to indicate this situation and the reactions which it is supposed to evoke. While this ubiquitous and powerful tendency toward pseudo-experience in terms of conventional clichés usually takes place unnoticed, it is quite articulate in some people and is used widely in advertising. There are people who experience a party, a visit to the movies, a play, a concert, a trip in the very words in which they are going to tell their friends about it; in fact, quite often, they anticipate such experience in these words. The experience is pre-digested, as it were, even before they have tasted of it. Like the unfortunate Midas, whose touch turned everything into gold so that he could not eat or drink, these people turn the potential nourishment of the anticipated experience into the sterile currency of the conventional phrase which exhausts their experience because they have seen, heard, felt nothing but this phrase with which later they will report to their friends the "exciting time" they have had. The advertising business seems to be quite aware of this. It does not have to promise a good book, a well-written and well-performed play, an entertaining or amusing movie. It suffices to say that the book, the play, the movie will be the talk of the town, of the next party, of one's friends. To have been there, to be able to say that one has been present at the performance, to have read the book even when one is unable to have the slightest personal reaction to it, is quite sufficient. But while Midas suffered tortures of starvation, the people under whose eyes every experience turns into a barren cliché do not know that they starve. Their starvation manifests itself merely in boredom or in restless activity and incapacity of any real enjoyment.

Memory is even more governed by conventional patterns than perception and experience are. One might say that, while all human experience, perception, and thought are eminently social—that is, determined by the socially prevailing ways of experiencing, perceiving, and thinking—memory is even more socialized, to an even higher degree dependent on the commonly accepted categories of what and how one remembers. "Rationalization," as psychoanalytic theory knows it, is but one type of such transformation of actual experience into individually and socially acceptable clichés. One important reason why memory is even more susceptible than experience and perception to such conventionalization is that experience and perception always are in some, however flimsy, immediate relation to the situation experienced, the object perceived, while memory is distant from it in time and space. The object of memory has less chance than the objects of experience and perception to penetrate and do away with part of that glass, colored and ground by the social mores and viewpoints, through which man sees everything or fails to see it. Memory is a distance sense, as it were, and—to an even greater degree than the two other distance senses, vision and hearing—less immediately related to its objects than the proximity senses of smell, taste, and touch, and more influenced and moulded by the categories of the mind. Also like sight and hearing, only more so, memory is a phylogenetically and ontogenetically more differentiated, later, and more "spiritual" development than smell, taste, and touch. All this predestines memory to lose contact with actual experience and to substitute preformed, conventional patterns of thought for it. And, as will be seen later, it has significant bearing especially on the problem of early childhood amnesia.

It is safe to assume that early childhood is the period of human life which is richest in experience. Everything is new to the newborn child. His gradual grasp of his environment and of the world around him are discoveries which, in experiential scope and quality, go far beyond any discovery that the most adventurous and daring explorer will ever make in his adult life. No Columbus, no Marco Polo has ever seen stranger and more fascinating and thoroughly absorbing sights than the child that learns to perceive, to taste, to smell, to touch, to hear and see, and to use his body, his senses, and his mind. No wonder that the child shows an insatiable curiosity. He has the whole world to discover. Education and learning, while on the one hand furthering this process of discovery, on the other hand gradually brake and finally stop it completely. There are relatively few adults who are fortunate enough to have retained something of the child's curiosity, his capacity for questioning and for wondering. The average adult "knows all the answers," which is exactly why he will never know even a single answer. He has ceased to wonder, to discover. He knows his way around, and it is indeed a way around and around the same conventional pattern, in which everything is familiar and nothing cause for wonder. It is this adult who answers the child's questions and, in answering, fails to answer them but instead acquaints the child with the conventional patterns of his civilization, which effectively close up the asking mouth and shut the wondering eye. Franz Kafka once formulated this aspect of education by saying that "probably all education is but two things, first, parrying of the ignorant children's impetuous assault on the truth and, second, gentle, imperceptible, step-by-step initiation of the humiliated children into the lie."

Most children go through a period of endless question-
ing. While at first they desire an answer, gradually their search turns into an almost automatic repetition of the same seemingly senseless question or into the related ritual of countering every answer with a new question. It is as though the child no longer really expected or perhaps wanted to obtain information by this type of questioning, but expressed only the last stubborn assault against the unbroken wall of adult "answers." The child has already almost forgotten what he wanted to know, but he still knows that he wanted to know and did not receive an answer. The automatic questioning may have the unconscious purpose of driving this point home to the adult. It is chiefly during the period of early childhood that the quality of the world around him changes for the growing child from a place where everything is new and to be explored—to be tasted, smelled, touched and handled, wondered about and marveled at—to a place where everything either has received a name and a label or is potentially capable of being "explained" by such a label, a process which will be pursued systematically in school. No experience, no object perceived with the quality of freshness, newness, of something wonder-full, can be preserved and recalled by the conventional concept of that object as designated in its conventional name in language. Even if, in modern western civilization, the capacity for such fresh experience has largely been deadened, most people, unless they have become complete automatons, have had glimpses of the exhilarating quality that makes fresh experience, unlabeled, so unique, concrete, and filled with life. They can realize, if their attention is called to it, the great difference between such experience and one which merely registers the label of things seen, the furniture of the room, the familiar faces, the houses on the street. Yet this difference is small when compared with the difference that separates the young child's fresh experience and discoveries from the adult's recognition of the familiar clichés into which the automatic labeling of perception and language has transformed the objects around him. Since adult memory functions predominantly in terms of recalling clichés, the conventional schemata of things and experiences rather than the things and experiences themselves, it becomes apparent how ill-equipped, in fact incapable, such conventionalized memory is to recall the experiences of early childhood in their freshness, in the real significance which they had at that time. The age of discovery, early childhood, is buried deep under the age of routine familiarity, adulthood.

THE process of schematization and conventionalization and its effect on the raw material of experience, especially childhood experience, can be well observed in two of its specific developments which take place as the child learns to make use of his senses and to speak. Language, in its articulating and its obscuring function, may be considered first since the adult, too, encounters the problem of the incompatibility of experience with language and the consequent forgetting of experience or its distortion by the cliché of language. The fact that language is adult language, the language of an adult civilization, and that the infant and small child is moulded only very gradually from its natural existence into a member of the civilization into which it is born makes the discrepancy between his precivilized, unschematized experience and the categories of civilized, conventional language much greater. Yet between this discrepancy and that existing between the adult's experience and his language, there is a difference of degree rather than of kind. Everyone who has honestly tried to describe some genuine experience exactly, however small and insignificant it may have seemed, knows how difficult if not impossible that is. One might well say that the greatest problem of the writer or the poet is the temptation of language. At every step a word beckons, it seems so convenient, so suitable, one has heard or read it so often in a similar context, it sounds so well, it makes the phrase flow so smoothly. If he follows the temptation of this word, he will perhaps describe something that many people recognize at once, that they already know, that follows a familiar pattern; but he will have missed the nuance that distinguishes his experience from others, that makes it his own. If he wants to communicate that elusive nuance which in some way, however small, will be his contribution, a widening or opening of the scope of articulate human experience at some point, he has to fight constantly against the easy flow of words that offer themselves. Like the search for truth, which never reaches its goal yet never can be abandoned, the endeavor to articulate, express, and communicate an experience can never succeed completely. It consists of an approach, step by step, toward that distant vantage point, that bend of the road from which one hopes to see the real experience in its entirety and from where it will become visible to others—a point which is never reached. The lag, the discrepancy between experience and word is a productive force in man as long as he remains aware of it, as long as he knows and feels that his experience was in some way more than and different from what his concepts and words articulate. The awareness of this unexplored margin of experience, which may be its essential part, can turn into that productive energy which enables man to go one step closer to understanding and communicating his experience, and thus add to the scope of human insight. It is this awareness and the struggle and the ability to narrow the gap between experience and words which make the writer and the poet.

Two major trends operate in the direction of the eventual outcome of early childhood amnesia. First, the schemata for articulate experience and for recall of such experience are relatively slow and late in developing. They are entirely lacking in the earliest period of life and one could say generally that as they develop, experience gradually loses its character of newness and acquires the quality of familiarity and recognition. The tremendous amount of experience which the small child undergoes does not, therefore, find a proportionate variety of suitable vessels (schemata) for its preservation. Second, the quality of early childhood experience does not fit into the developing schemata of experience, thought, and memory since these are fashioned by the adult culture and all its biases, emphases, and taboos.

Both these trends become even more apparent if one...
considers them in connection with the development of the senses in the child. Such a consideration also shows how closely biological and cultural factors are interwoven in the causation of early childhood amnesia and how difficult, if not impossible, it is to draw a clear borderline between the two. What might have been a cultural factor in man’s prehistory may well seem to the present observer like a biological development. Phylogenetically as well as ontogenetically the distance senses, sight and hearing, attain their full development later than the proximity senses, smell, taste, and touch. Sight and hearing are more highly differentiated and more closely linked up with the human mind than smell, taste, and touch. The latter senses, especially smell and taste, are neglected and to a considerable extent even tabooed by western civilization. They are the animalistic senses par excellence. Man, who has been engaged for thousands of years in a battle for control and mastery of nature outside and inside himself, especially western man, does not want to be reminded that he is not only man but also nature, also animal. Because of the cultural taboo on smell and taste—smell even more than taste, but the two are inseparable—it is even possible for the adult to realize clearly the effect which the discrepancy between experience on the one hand, and language and memory schemata, on the other hand, has on the capacity for recall, especially voluntary recall. English vocabulary, and equally the vocabulary of the other western languages, is conspicuously poor in words for the description of smells and tastes. Even when it comes to the flavor of wine or of a dish, in spite of the great material and historical role of drinking and eating, language is quite incapable of expressing any but the crudest differences, in taste. A wine is said to be dry, sweet, robust, fine, full and so on, but none of these words enables one to imagine the flavor and bouquet of the wine. Compared with this poverty of words, the vocabulary for the description of the visible world and its forms and colors is much richer. Even poetry has never succeeded in conjuring the flavor of a smell or taste, although it sometimes enables the imagination to evoke a visual image. For these reasons, the experience schemata for smell and taste sensations are relatively undeveloped. This is true even more of the memory schemata. A taste or a smell is usually remembered only involuntarily; that is, the former experience may be recognized by renewed encounter with the same stimulus. But it is difficult or impossible for most people to recall voluntarily the taste of a particular wine or the smell of a particular flower, animal, or person. In fact, most people are hardly aware of the differences in smell of different people.

Both pleasure and disgust are more intimately linked with the proximity senses than with the distance senses. The pleasure which a perfume, a taste, or a texture can produce, the former experience may be recognized by renewed encounter with the same stimulus. But it is difficult or impossible for most people to recall voluntarily the taste of a particular wine or the smell of a particular flower, animal, or person. In fact, most people are hardly aware of the differences in smell of different people.

In one other area of life, namely in the realm of dreams, one finds a general amnesia, although it is not quite so pervasive as that pertaining to early childhood. A closer study of the recall of dreams and especially of the period of awakening from a dream, when quite often one can observe its disappearance from memory or its transformation or fragmentation, may therefore add to, disprove, or corroborate the hypotheses developed so far. It is probable that the majority of dreams are not remembered at all.

8 Groddeck, speaking about the paramount importance of the sense of smell in infancy and early childhood, asserts that, even more than the dog, the child judges people and objects largely by their smell and, since the child is small or is being held on the lap, this means chiefly the smell of legs, lap, sexual and excretory organs. Groddeck, G., The World of Man; The C. W. Daniel Company, London 1934; p. 132.

9 Something of the importance of the deeply rooted taboo on smell in western man comes to the surface in the vituperative and hateful use that is made of body odor in interracial conflicts.
A great many others are recalled in fragments only. Of those that are still remembered at the time of awakening, very many are forgotten in the course of the day, quite often in the first few minutes or the first hour of beginning the daily activities of rising, getting dressed, and so on. The relatively small proportion of dreams surviving in memory undergo a rapid transformation and fragmentation and usually they, too, are forgotten after a few days. If they are not forgotten, they lose increasingly their peculiar dream quality, and the peculiar language of the dream changes in the direction of conventionalization and rationalization. The dreams that make such a profound impression on the dreamer that they survive all these obstacles, although not without some damage, are rare indeed. Thus the question arises: What are the causes of this usual, general dream-amnesia? Why does one forget by far the greater part of his mental life going on during sleep, a life that in most people, judging from the fragments recalled, seems to be far more original, interesting, spontaneous, and creative than their waking life? It shares these latter qualities with early childhood which, from all one can observe, seems to be the most fascinating, spontaneous, original, and creative period in the life of most or perhaps of all people. Is it because of these qualities that the conventionalized memory schemata cannot reproduce the great majority of dreams and their real character?

Freud devotes a whole section of *The Interpretation of Dreams* to the problem of the forgetting of dreams. His purpose in this section is to defend the validity of dream interpretation against the objection that one does not really know his dreams because he either forgets or distorts them. Freud's answer to the problem is that the "forgetting of dreams depends far more on the resistance [to the dream thought] than on the mutually alien character of the waking and sleeping states" and that the distortion of the dream in recalling or recounting it is "the secondary and often misunderstanding elaboration of the dream by the agency of normal thinking" and thus "no more than a part of the elaboration to which dream thoughts are constantly subjected as a result of the dream-censorship." I think that the question should be raised whether "resistance" and "mutually alien character of the waking and sleeping states" are really, as Freud seems to assume, mutually exclusive and contradictory explanations of dream amnesia and dream distortion by waking thought. Or whether, as I believe, "resistance" is operative in the awake person, not only against the dream thought but against the whole quality and language of the dream, a resistance, to be sure, of a somewhat different character, yet fundamentally related to that which represses and censors those dream thoughts which are intolerable for consciousness.

In sleep and dream, man's activity in the outer world is suspended, especially his motor activity. Attention and perception are withdrawn from outer reality. The necessity to cope with the environment is interrupted for the duration of sleep. The stringent rules of logic and reason subside—rules which during waking life are geared to useful, rational, adaptive, conventional control of behavior and thought. The psyche receives leave, for the period of sleep, from the demands of active life in society. As Freud expresses it, endopsychic censorship is reduced. And the psyche makes good use of this short leave from the demands of reality. Its productions, seen from the usual, realistic viewpoint, seem utterly useless. It is true that other, older civilizations did not always share this viewpoint, but attributed considerable importance to dreams, sometimes greater importance than to waking thought. But measured with the yardstick of modern western civilization with its emphasis on useful, efficient production and work, dreams are really quite useless.

During sleep motor activity, most essential for dealing with the outer reality of objects and people, is reduced to a minimum. The dream is a mental production without any conscious effort and one in which the dreamer passively gives in to the images evoked by his phantasy. In that sense the dream is the opposite of work as it is known to western civilization, the opposite of efficiency. When awakening, it is often possible to catch hold of a dream [as Rorschach has pointed out] if one lies perfectly still and does not open his eyes. But the first movement, especially an active one like jumping out of bed, will very often chase the dream into oblivion. In other words, the return to the outer world through motor activity and reshifting of attention and perception to the environment leads to forgetting of the dream. This process is a quite general one and, as far as I have been able to observe, bears no relation to specific dream content. Therefore it seems to stem from the incompatibility of the extroversive attitude of waking with the introversive attitude of dreaming, rather than from resistance to specific strivings which are expressed in the dream thoughts. The antagonism between motor activity and dream recall brings to mind Proust's words, that he could recapture his former being only "dehors de l'action, de la jouissance immédiate" and that in such a moment he did not dare to budge lest he lose the refound memory of the past.

But even without the described effect of the resumption of motor activity on the voluntary recall of dreams, it seems obvious that the experience and memory schemata developed and formed by man's life in his society are much less suitable to preserve the phantastic world of the dream than to recall conventional waking experience. The awakening mind has to cope again with outer reality, and to this end has to remobilize all the patterns and schemata useful for, and developed by, the conventional social forms of life and work. Attention has to be paid to the environment. And the attitude of attention is to the mind what purposeful motor activity is to the body.

In the forgetting and distortion of dreams during waking life it is important to distinguish between that which is due to the resistance to and repression of a specific dream thought or dream content and that which is due to the incapacity of the conventional memory schemata to retain the phantastic general quality and the strange language of dreams. The distortion of a dream thought which resistance wants to keep from awareness has to be distinguished from the process of conventionalization which, more or less, all dream elements undergo because the medium of the dream language is incompatible with the medium of the conventional world of waking life. In the degree of this incom-

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patibility there are, of course, considerable variations between different people and, even more so, between different cultures. But modern western civilization with its streamlined efficiency, uniform mass culture, and emphasis on usefulness in terms of profitable, material production is particularly and strikingly at the opposite pole from the world of dreams.

The hidden quality of lost memories, their separation from the rest of life, their inaccessibility, and their incompatibility with voluntary memory and with conventional, purposeful, daily activity are described lucidly by Proust. He compares the recesses of the lost memories to a thousand vases distributed on the various altitudes of the past years of one's life, filled with the particular atmosphere of that period of his life, and containing sometimes a gesture, a word, an insignificant act which, however, may be the key to the recapturing of the lost experiences, the lost past of his life. According to him, the very fact that the experience, the past time, has been forgotten and thus has remained isolated at the bottom of a valley or on the peak of a summit, gives it an incomparable air of freshness and aliveness when it is recovered, because it has not been able to form any link with the present. In other words, it has not been distorted by the memory schemata, by the needs and fears of the present, by the routine of daily life. Proust's view, here, is almost identical with that of Freud, whose theory of memory postulates that only that which is unconscious can leave a permanent memory trace and that "becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory trace are processes incompatible with each other in the same system."

In Proust's work the recovery of the forgotten past is characterized as the supreme satisfaction, carrying with it a sense of exhilarating happiness and constituting the very core of the work of art. This is not the place to discuss the profound meaning of his evaluation which, three thousand years after the Greek myth, again celebrates memory as the mother of art and poetry. Be it sufficient to say that in the conflict of modern society between efficient adaptation and activity, on the one hand, and the preservation and recovery of the total personality, which to him seems possible only by the fullest awareness of the individual past, Proust sides against his society and with the "lost paradieses" of his own past. And it is true that each genuine recovery of forgotten experience and, with it, something of the person that one was when having the experience carries with it an element of enrichment, adds to the light of consciousness, and thus widens the conscious scope of one's life.

 Cultures vary in the degree to which they impose clichés on experience and memory. The more a society develops in the direction of mass conformism, whether such development be achieved by a totalitarian pattern or within a democratic framework by means of the employment of market, education, the patterns of social life, advertising, press, radio, movies, best-sellers, and so on, the more stringent becomes the rule of the conventional experience and memory schemata in the lives of the members of that society. In the history of the last hundred years of western civilization the conventional schematization of experience and memory has become increasingly prevalent at an accelerating pace.

Mankind's belief in a lost paradise is repeated in the belief held by most people, in the individual myth of their happy childhood. Like most myths this one contains elements of both truth and illusion, is woven out of wishes, hopes, remembrance and sorrow, and hence has more than one meaning. One finds this belief even in people who have undergone cruel experiences as children. One had, without being or remaining aware of it, a childhood with hardly any love and affection from their parents. No doubt, one reason for the myth of happy childhood is that it bolstered parental authority and maintains a conventional prop of the authority of the family by asserting that one's parents were good and benevolent people who did everything for the good of their children, however much they may have done against it. And disappointed and suffering people, people without hope, want to believe that at least once there was a time in their life when they were happy. But the myth of happy childhood reflects also the truth that as in the myth of paradise lost, there was a time before animalistic innocence was lost, before pleasure-seeking nature and pleasure-forbidding culture clashed in the battle called education, a battle in which the child always is the loser. At no time is life so exclusively and directly governed by the pleasure principle as it is in early infancy; at no other time is man, especially civilized man, capable of abandoning himself so completely to pleasure and satisfaction. The myth of happy childhood takes the place of the lost memory of the actual riches, spontaneity, freshness of childhood experience, an experience which has been forgotten because there is no place for it in the adult memory schemata.

Childhood amnesia covers those aspects and experiences of the former personality which are incompatible with the culture. If they were remembered, man would demand that society affirm and accept the total personality with all its potentialities. In a society based on partial suppression of the personality such a demand, even the mere existence of a really free personality, would constitute a threat to the society. Hence it becomes necessary for the society that the remembrance of a time in which the potentialities of a fuller, freer, and more spontaneous life were strongly present and alive be extinguished. In memory's service of this purpose one may distinguish two processes which overlap and shade into one another. One process leaves the culturally unacceptable or unusable experiences and the memory thereof to starvation by the expedient of providing no linguistic, conceptual, and memory schemata for them and by channeling later experience into the experience schemata of the culture. As the person, in the process of education, gradually comes to live more and more exclusively within the framework of the culturally and conventionally provided experience schemata, there is less

and less to remind him of the possibility of trans-schematic experience.

Compared with this process, the dynamism of the taboo and of repression of individually or culturally tabooed experience and strivings is like the nightstick of the policeman compared with the gradual, slow, insinuating process of education in which some things are just not mentioned and others said to be for the best of the child. But the dynamism active in normal amnesia is even more subtle than what is usually called education. It is an education of which the educators are not aware and of which the child is too helpless and too inarticulate to have more than the vaguest feeling that something is happening to him. On the other hand, those strivings, qualities, and potentialities of the child which are too strong to be left behind to die by the side of the road of education and which endanger the current social and cultural pattern have to be battled by the more drastic means of taboo and repression.

In this sphere sexuality and the conflict with parental authority play central roles. One might say that taboo and repression are the psychological cannons of society against the child and against man, whereas in normal amnesia society uses the method of blockade and slow starvation against those experiences and memories which do not fit into the cultural pattern and which do not equip man for his role in the social process. The two methods of warfare supplement each other and, in the siege conducted by society against the human potentialities and inclinations which transcend the cultural pattern, the cannon helps to maintain the blockade, and the blockade and ensuing starvation make it less necessary to use the cannon.

Hesiod tells us that Lethe (Forgetting) is the daughter of Eris (Strife). Amnesia, normal and pathological, is indeed the daughter of conflict, the conflict between nature and society and the conflict in society, the conflict between society and man and the conflict within man. Lethe is the stream of the underworld, of forgetting, the stream which constantly flows and never retains. In the realm of Lethe dwell the Danaides, who are condemned eternally to pour water into a leaking vessel. Plato interprets this as the punishment of those unwise souls who leak, who cannot remember and are therefore always empty.

But Mnemosyne is an older and more powerful goddess than Lethe. According to Hesiod she was one of the six Titanesses from whom all gods stem. And it was one of the world-founding deeds of Zeus that he begot the muses on her. Memory cannot be entirely extinguished in man, his capacity for experience cannot be entirely suppressed by schematization. It is in those experiences which transcend the cultural schemata, in those memories of experience which transcend the conventional memory schemata, that every new insight and every true work of art have their origin, and that the hope of progress, of a widening of the scope of human endeavor and human life, is founded.

11 Hesiod, Theogony, 227.

12 Plato, Gorgias, 493 c 2. For the mythology of Mnemosyne and Lethe, see Kerényi, Karl, Mnemosyne-Lemnoe, in Die Geburt der Helene, Rhein Verlag, Zürich 1945.

Here and Now

PEACEMAKERS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Early in April, some 200 persons met in Chicago for a three-day conference on ways of achieving "more disciplined and revolutionary pacifist activity." Out of this meeting came the formation of "Peacemakers," among whose executive committee members are David Dellinger, Julius Eichel, Cecil Hinshaw, George Houser, Ray Kepler, Dwight Macdonald, Milton Mayer, A. J. Muste, David Newton, Bayard Rustin and Ralph Templin. "Peacemakers" is not a membership organization; it is not, in fact an organization at all; its executive committee acts as a stimulating and coordinating center between individuals and groups willing to "practice what they preach" by (a) taking politically radical steps in furtherance of pacifism, and (b) changing their way of life in a cooperative, communal direction. The whole thing is still pretty vague, but at least a few people are trying to make a start toward a more radical kind of pacifist activity.

There are five planks in the Peacemakers' platform, as follows:

1. NON-VIOLENCE

All men are members of one human family. They have to live as such in order to accomplish any good or to find any joy in life. A family cannot exist if its members are armed and try to build "defences" against each other, in spirit or physically. To strike back means further to disrupt the family and hence to harm oneself. Violence cannot remove violence, but only add to it. Therefore all violence, whether in "aggression" or "defense," is ruled out. Non-violence is the law of human life and of all productive work.

2. UNILATERAL & UNIVERSAL DISARMAMENT

The only way in which we can end the threat of a Third World War is for the United States to give unquestionable proof of its desire to build world community. That proof would be for the United States to disarm completely now, and to share food, natural resources, and other goods with the needy peoples of the world.

This would remove the tension now created by American possession of the atomic bomb and the presence of our battleships and bombers in every region of the earth. This would calm the fears of American might now felt by the Russian people and a good many others. It would knock the props from under the war-propaganda of the Russian leaders. Thus war would, we are convinced, become impossible.

Even if, in the face of such a policy, the U.S.S.R. should invade the United States, the American people should not be trapped into prolonging the mutual slaughter by