

Roman Church, but also formulated for himself and for all of mankind a new kind of ethical and psychological awareness: and how, at the end, this awareness, too, was marred by a return of the demons, whoever they may have been.

He did it because of his own psychological problems, but they were imposed by his experiences in which there is an external with internal forces reacting to the predicament of the times.

Obedience—To Whom?

AT ITS height, Luther's rebellion centered in the question of man's differential debt of obedience to God, to the Pope, and to Caesar—or rather, to the multitude of Caesars then emerging. At the beginning of his career another and, as it were, preparatory dichotomy preoccupied him: that between the obedience owed to his natural father, whose views were always brutally clear, and the obedience owed to the Father in heaven, from whom young Luther had received a dramatic but equivocal call.

The earlier dichotomy actually followed Luther far into the manhood of his theological struggles; as late as in his thirty-eighth year, having defied emperor and Pope, and having become the spokesman of God's word, Luther appealed to his natural father in a preface to the work in which he justifies the abandonment of his monastic vows (*De Votis Monasticis*): "Would you not rather have lost a hundred sons than miss this glory? . . . For who can doubt that I stand in the service of the Word?"¹ When he had found a new agency to disobey, namely, the Pope, he had to tell his father publicly that he had finally obeyed him; but we cannot overlook the ambivalent wish to be right at all costs, for he adds: "Would you still want to tear me out [of the monastery]? . . . In order to save you from a sense of vainglory, God outdistanced you and took me out himself. . . ." ² Thus Luther stated to all the world (for his works were then best-sellers) not only that his father had opposed the monastic career, but also that the son had belatedly made this

opposition his own—to God's glory, not the father's. At the same time, we can only wonder at the naïveté with which Luther insisted on airing, to the widest possible public, conflicts which seem too ordinary for a man of his stature. Or are they so ordinary? Perhaps only a man of such stature could be sufficiently sensitive to the personal conflicts that contributed to his theological decisions, and would have enough honesty to talk about them. Being a rebellious theologian, not an armchair psychologist, Luther described his conflicts in surprising, sometimes blustering, and often unreliable words. But one cannot help feeling that Luther often publicly confessed just those matters which Freud, more than three hundred years later (enlightenment having reached the psychological point of no return) faced explicitly, and molded into concepts, when, studying his dreams, he challenged and disciplined the neurotic component of his intellectual search.

But now it is time for facts. There are only a few facts about Luther's childhood: his father was a miner who had left the farm; his parents were hard, thrifty, and superstitious, and beat their boy; and school was monotonous and cruel. Martin gleaned from the combined harshness of home, school, and what he considered the Church's exclusive preoccupation with the last judgment, a world-mood of guilt and sadness which "drove him into monkishness."

Except for bits of often questionable amplification here or there, and some diligent background study by the biographers (especially Scheel), these are all the facts we have. If any determining insight had to be drawn from this material alone, it would be better not to begin. But a clinician's training permits, and in fact forces, him to recognize major trends even where the facts are not all available; at any point in a treatment he can and must be able to make meaningful predictions as to what will prove to have happened; and he must be able to sift even questionable sources in such a way that a coherent predictive hypothesis emerges. The proof of the validity of this approach lies in everyday psychoanalytic work, in the way that a whole episode, a whole life period, or even of a whole life trend is gradually clarified in therapeutic crises leading to decisive advances or setbacks sufficiently circumscribed to suggest future strategies. In biography, the validity of any relevant theme can only lie in its crucial recurrence in a man's development, and in its relevance to the balance sheet of his victories and defeats. In dis-

cussing the first and less well-documented half of Luther's life, I can do no better by my readers than to consider them participants or auditors in a seminar in which a first batch of material has been presented; I shall try to formulate, on the basis of my experience, what the material suggests we should be watching for in our search for further material. In this book, we can deal with Luther's later life only in conclusion; but the older Luther is so well-known to so many that a follow-up on my thesis will not depend on my own contribution.

We should realize, however, that in work such as this the law of parsimony can guide us only if adjusted to historical material. This adjustment was made by Freud in his concept of "over-determination." Any historical and personological item is always determined by many more forces and trends working with and upon each other than a sparing explanation can cover. Often a certain extravagance in searching for all possible relevances is the only way to get an inkling of the laws which determine the mutual influence upon each other of some factors, and the mutual exclusion of others.

Real peasants, *rechte Bauern*, Luther calls his father and grandfather; and it has become customary to call Luther a peasant or a peasant's son. Even quite modern works speak of Luther's lifelong nostalgia for a peasant's life, such as he is said to have enjoyed as a child. Yet Luther's father, in Luther's memory, never lived the life of a peasant; and Martin as a child never knew whatever homogeneity the life of the German peasant may have had to offer at that time. On the contrary, he was a second-generation ex-peasant; and we in America have learned a few things about second-generation migrants. Martin's father, in his early twenties, had to leave the grandfather's farm in Thuringia. The law was that older sons yielded a paternal farm to the youngest brother; an older son could either become the youngest brother's sharecropper, marry into another farm, or leave and seek work elsewhere. Hans Luder decided to work in the mines, and moved to Eisleben with his wife, who was then pregnant with Martin. Half a year after Martin's birth they moved again, this time to Mansfeld, a thriving copper and silver mining center.

Whatever such enforced migration meant to the rest of those oldest sons, it is, I think, possible to trace in Martin that split about

ancestral images which is apt to occur in the second generation of migrating families. Sometimes to be "a peasant" meant to him to be *rusticus et durus*—the kind of hard simplicity he was pleased to call his own; at other times he felt a nostalgia for the muddy paradise of the village, which was expressed in the sermon on the sow; but in his later years, with increasing frequency and vehemence, he divorced himself from the German peasant whom he condemned for being vulgar, violent, and animal-like. During the great Peasants' War, he used his efficient propaganda machine to suggest the ruthless extermination of all rebellious peasants—those same peasants who, at the beginning, had looked to him as one of their natural leaders. Yet toward the end of his life he accused himself of having the blood of these peasants on his head—the brow of which had never known a peasant's sweat. (Possibly he overstated things; yet the peasants might never have gone as far as they did in challenging their masters had it not been for their faith in Luther, and, because of him, their faith in a new image of man. We will come back to this.) The main point is that the second-generation ex-peasant Luther was highly ambivalent about his ancestry.

The sociologist might see in Luther's turning against the German peasants a reflection of the inexorable class war; and he would be quite right as far as his theory and his historical curiosity go. However, this interpretation ignores the pivotal role of childhood and youth in the transfer of positive or negative values from generation to generation. Luther's childhood illustrates the fact that adherence to an occupation, or rather an "estate," such as that of peasant, cannot remain a reliable factor in one's inner sense of continuity unless one is involved in the common hardships, hopes, and hates of that estate. These alone keep an ideology relevant. Luther's father not only abandoned a peasant's identity, he also turned against it, developing and imposing on his children in the shortest possible time those virtues which would serve the pursuit of new goals: the negative goal of avoiding the proletarianization which befell many ex-peasants; and the positive goal of working himself up into the managerial class of miners. Incidentally, Martin's mother was of urban origin; it is not clear how she came to marry a disinherited peasant, but it stands to reason that she supported his fight upward. In Martin's upbringing, then, the image of a peasant may have become what we call a negative identity fragment, i.e., an identity a family

wishes to live down—even though it may sentimentalize it at moments—and the mere hint of which it tries to suppress in its children. As a matter of fact, the literature on Luther abounds in the same ambivalence. In one place a reference to his peasant nature is made to underline his sturdiness; in another, to explain his vulgarity and blockheadedness; and Nietzsche, for example, calls him a *Bergmannssohn*, a miner's son (literally, the son of a man of the mountain) when he wants to do him honor.

The life of a miner in those days was hard, but honorable and well-regulated. Roman law had not penetrated to it; far from being slave-labor, it had a self-regulating dignity, with maximum hours, sanitation laws, and minimum wages. By succeeding in it at the time when he did, Hans Luder not only escaped the proletarianization of the landless peasant and unskilled laborer, he also made a place for himself in the managerial class of mine shareholders and foundry co-lessees; he thus became one of the "masters," who, increasingly well-organized, were able to establish through their guilds a kind of closed succession in that they decided about the admission and the advancement of apprentices. To call Hans Luder a peasant, therefore, shows either sentimentality or contempt. He was an early small industrialist and capitalist, first working to earn enough to invest, and then guarding his investment with a kind of dignified ferocity. When he died he left a house in town and 1250 *Goldgulden*.

In order to achieve all this, young Hans and his wife undoubtedly had to work extremely hard and be meticulously thrifty. It was this aim-conscious self-denial which Luther in later years—when he was sitting at his well-appointed meals, practically dictating his famous *Tischreden* to the openmouthed children and busily-writing students, boarders, and friends—was fond of glamorizing as a poverty-ridden childhood, in the same breath denouncing his teacher's beastliness and the monastery's corruption. The image of a very poor and intensely unhappy childhood is thus based on Luther's own later reports.

It cannot be stated too emphatically that Luther, the public figure, is not a very reliable reporter on Martin, the child, or the struggling young man. Reporter of facts, I mean. But then, any autobiographical account of a person's childhood requires a key for the unconscious motto guiding the repression of some items and the special

selection of others. Psychoanalysis realized early that all memories must pass through a number of screens; because of these screens, earlier years appear in a haze which distorts form and modifies color. The period of language development forms one screen; going to school (the post-oedipal period) another. To these we must add the period of the completion of identity development at adolescence, which results in a massive glorification of some of the individual's constituent elements, and repudiation of others. In the life of a man like Luther (and in lesser ways in all lives), another screen is strongly suggested: the beginning of an official identity, the moment when life suddenly becomes biography. In many ways, life began for Luther all over again when the world grabbed eagerly at his ninety-five theses, and forced him into the role of rebel, reformer, and spiritual dictator. Everything before that then became memorable only insofar as it helped him to rationalize his disobediences. Maybe this motivation is behind most attempts at historicizing the past.

Luther's parents were simple folk, to be sure: hard, thrifty, and superstitious—but most of all, Hans Luder was an ambitious man. This ex-peasant, who had to yield his father's farm and fortune, made his wife go and gather firewood in the forest—one of the items which has impressed biographers. But anybody who has wandered in a German forest knows that when Luther's mother carried firewood from the feudal forest she was exercising a customary privilege which did not mark her as destitute. He also made his son go to Latin school and to a university, and expected him to become a jurist and, maybe, a *Buergermeister*. For this, no price was too high, and money was available. In this family framework—a past to be lived down and a future to be started then and there, and at any cost—we must view the scant data on Luther's upbringing, sometimes surer of the forces than of the facts.

It is always difficult to ascertain from historical works which of the over-all political and economic changes that stand out so clearly in retrospect were central to a particular individual in a particular region—central to his conscious hopes and worries, and central to his unconscious aspirations and adaptations. The Holy Roman Empire and the medieval papacy of Hans Luder's time were invigorated and threatened by the same combination of technological and po-

litical developments which beset the empires of today. These were and are: *Mastery over geographic space*: then the globe was being circumnavigated by water routes which opened new continents; now the conquest is by air and space-ship. *Communication*: then printing was being developed; now we have television and face the problems involved in the amplified and cheapened power of the image and the voice. *Holy wars*: then the attempts to contain or destroy the world of Islam, and the struggle against the gradual penetration of medieval learning by the philosophical and scientific ideas of the Arabic thinkers; today the wars of economic ideologies, with a similar interpenetration of scientific ideas and social values. *Technology*: then the transition from feudal land ownership to the accumulation of money by an international banking and business class, and the involvement of the Church itself in international finance; now the emergence of an industrial civilization, and the involvement of government itself in the race for atomic power. *Armament*: then the supersession of chivalry and man-to-man combat by fire-power; now armed services made obsolete by the technicians of space war. This brief list characterizes some of the horizons of the medieval world as we recognize them now; every one of these developments had ramifications for the course of Luther's life. How little he was aware of some of them is indicated in his table talk.

The communication of news by its very methods of legendizing and advertising tends to make universal news unreal for the individual—until universal change hits the marketplace, Main Street, and the home. The common man is apt to set his faith on what he can encompass with his provincial mind and do something about in his daily chores. This is the source of his search for smaller and often reactionary entities which will keep the world together, maintain sensible values, and make action rewarding. Of the late medieval world in which Hans Luder lived, Tawney says:

Its primary unit had been the village; and the village, a community of agrarian shareholders fortified by custom, had repressed with a fury of virtuous unanimity the disorderly appetites which menaced its traditional routine with the evil whose name is Change. Beyond the village lay the greater, more privileged, village called the borough, and the brethren of borough and guild had turned on the foreign devil from upland and valley a face of flint. Above both were the slowly waking nations. Na-

nationalism was an economic force before nationality was a political fact, and it was a sound reason for harrying a competitor that he was a Florentine or a man of the Emperor. The privileged colony with its depot, the Steel-yard of the Hanseatic League, the Fondaco Tedesco of the south Germans, the Factory of the English Merchant Adventurers, were but tiny breaches in a wall of economic exclusiveness. Trade, as in modern Turkey or China, was carried on under capitulations.

This narrow framework had been a home. In the fifteenth century it was felt to be a prison. Expanding energies pressed against the walls; restless appetites gnawed and fretted wherever a crack in the surface offered room for erosion.³

New times are coming.

Mining was one of the breaches in the wall, and it prospered during the fifteenth century as a source of wealth storable as money and durable household goods. The mining industry, although prosperous, also reflected the enormous disparities in the distribution of wealth; and its workers were subject to the same danger that large classes of people (including most of the clergy) then faced: proletarianization. Social units structured themselves more tightly to withstand the shifts of the times. Territorial princes asserted their borders, free cities their walls and their intersection of the trade routes, and guilds their monopoly of economic pursuits. One might speak of a search for territorial identity, and of autonomies increasingly guarded by explicit law, while implicit laws of the universal—the Roman—identity crumbled.

What Hans Luder realized of all this, we do not know; but I think it is fair to assume that he employed his personal idiosyncracies in the service of certain overwhelming apprehensions and hopes fed by the world situation. He wanted his son to be a lawyer, that is, one who would understand and profit by the new secular laws which were replacing those of the Roman commonwealth. He wanted his son to serve princes and cities, merchants and guilds, and not priests and bishoprics and papal finance—an economic attitude which at that time did not preclude a devout Christian sentiment. Most of all he wanted, as did millions of other ex-peasants and miners, to see his son employ his mind in higher matters, instead of dulling it with miners' superstitions, and to enjoy the wealth unearthed by others instead of dirtying his hands in shafts sunk into the earth. This, then, was what the history books call the "peasant" father of a "peasant" son.

A clinician can and should make a connection between global occurrences and certain small town items recorded in the records of Mansfeld. Hans Luder had a brother in Mansfeld who was called Little Hans. The brothers had been baptized *Gross-Hans* and *Klein-Hans*, which paired them in a possibly significant way for Martin. At any rate, Little Hans followed Big Hans to Mansfeld, while their other two brothers stayed in Thuringia; one took a landed wife, and the other, the father's farm. Little Hans was a drunkard, and when drunk, violent and quick with the knife. Some sources suggest that his court record is blackest when Martin was between five and ten years old, usually years of heightened values in a boy with a sensitive conscience. Other sources add that the uncle arrived in town just when Martin left for boarding school. In any case, his infamy must have preceded him; and the very existence of such a brother whom scandal (maybe even murder) eventually brought to town must have underlined for Big Hans the danger of losing his own hard-won position—and this especially because he himself apparently had a towering temper, and was, in fact, supposed to have killed a shepherd before coming to Mansfeld. Any such killing must be viewed in the light of a then greater leeway for a citizen's taking the law in his own hands; yet it must also reflect a feeling which Luder the home-owner would want to contain, which means that he would have to express some of his native fury, thus diverted from potential enemies, in the home itself.

Martin, as we know from his outbursts in later life, had inherited his father's temper with interest, *mit Zins und Zinseszinsen*. And yet, in his childhood and youth this temper was strangely dormant. Had his father beaten or scared it out of him? Much speaks for this assumption. At any rate, we must add Little Hans to the concept of "dirty peasant" in the list of possible negative identities: as an evil uncle (who according to his name was a minor edition of the righteous father), he was a constant reminder of a possible inherited curse which potentially could lead to proletarianization if there were any relaxation of watchfulness, any upsurge of self-indulgent impulse. Every clinician has seen over and over again how a parent's fear that his child may turn out to be just like a particular uncle or aunt can drive the child in that very direction, especially if the warning parent himself is not an especially good model. Luther's father became a model citizen, but at home he seems to have in-

dulged in a fateful two-facedness. He showed the greatest temper in his attempts to drive temper out of his children. Here, I think, is the origin of Martin's doubt that the father, when he punishes you, is really guided by love and justice rather than by arbitrariness and malice. This early doubt later was projected on the Father in heaven with such violence that Martin's monastic teachers could not help noticing it. "God does not hate you, you hate him," one of them said; and it was clear that Martin, searching so desperately for his own justification, was also seeking a formula of eternal justice which would justify God as a judge.

Peasants they were not. But miners are by no means released from soil, dirt, and earth. In fact, they attack the earth more directly and more deeply. They rape and rob it of its precious substance without cultivating its fertile cooperation through care, work and prayer. This rapacious activity, plus the constant danger of being crushed by a mere squeeze of the earth's insides, make miners prone to primitive superstition, for they are, at all times, exposed to individual chance, both lucky and disastrous. The miners of Thuringia thus are reported to have been even more superstitious than the peasants; and the Thuringian peasant to this day remains the most superstitious in Germany. Into this kind of miner's world Hans Luder was forced to go in his early twenties; the work-ideology and cosmology he acquired there dominated Martin's early years. The saying that all is not gold that glitters has a fateful meaning for the miner; it is his job to look for that which glitters, look for it with avaricious but disciplined attention which allows him to avoid wrong leads and recover quickly from disappointment. In those days, of course, the avarice which might make the miner look too eagerly and so doubly fail was attributed to the devil. "In the mines the devil vexes and fools people, and makes apparitions before their eyes so that they are quite sure they see a big pile of ore and of solid silver where there is nothing."⁴ The feeling that some glistening pile might turn out to be dirt or worse may have been such a basic and constant superstition that we may have to learn to recognize it in the father's general suspiciousness, and even in his later admonitions to his ordained son that in the most resplendent manifestations of divinity he had better be on the lookout for "ghosts." And Martin, having almost literally absorbed such super-

stitutions with his mother's milk (for the mother is said to have been the more superstitious parent, though she put greater emphasis on benevolent magic), may never have been able *not* to believe his father when he invoked the sinister wisdom of those who worked in the bowels of the earth. Even a few days before his death, Luther saw the devil sitting on a rainpipe outside of his window, exposing his behind to him. Such "reality" always existed for him alongside Aristotle and St. Augustine, St. Paul and the Scriptures.

Luther praised radical suspiciousness as a guarantor of a man's "work, sense, and reason." Ideological distortion is fraught with unfathomable danger; this, plus his background of the miner's constant fear of catastrophe, gave Luther's work an orientation toward sudden death, and thus a constant alertness toward the judgment which might have to be faced at any moment. Kierkegaard once said that Luther always spoke and acted as if lightning were about to strike behind him the next moment. He was referring, of course, to the mysterious thunderstorm considered the revelatory cause of Luther's decision to become a monk. Yet an excessive expectation of catastrophe, an all-too-anxious wish to be ready for the judgment, was part of Martin's world long before that thunderstorm, and it may have made that storm what it became.

Rather late in his life, Luther could say, "Many regions are inhabited by devils; Prussia is full of them"—one of his few contributions to the study of national character. The fact is that Luther, like all children of his time, was deeply imbued with the idea of the universal presence of spirits in concrete form. One may assume a certain *melée* of contending spirits on that social frontier on which he grew up: the frontier of transition from the agrarian preoccupation with mud, soil, and fertility to the miner's preoccupation with rock, dirt, and the chances of a haul; and beyond this, the mercantile aim of amassing metal and money, shiny and yet "dirty," and all subject to a new adventurous and boundless avarice which the Church tried to crush with all her might—and at the same time to monopolize.

In his childhood, strange noises made by wind and water, and strange sights seen in the traitorous twilight and in the dark, were as a matter of course taken as evidence of that population of demons sent by sorcerers and witches which were peaceable only as long as one kept an eye on them—that is, as long as one was cautious and

suspicious enough. The belief in demons permitted a persistent externalization of one's own unconscious thoughts and preconscious impulses of avarice and malice, as well as thoughts which one suspected one's neighbor of having. The externalization of a neighbor's thoughts probably more often than not involved a fusion of the subjective and the objective: if a neighbor, whose public personality and activities are known—although, of course, not his secret thoughts—seems intent on being harmful, it means that with the entirely unfair help of some spirits, he will find a way of doing to me those things which harmless I may only impotently *wish* to do to him. In all magic thinking, the unknown and the unconscious meet at a common frontier: murderous, adulterous, or avaricious wishes, or sudden moods of melancholy or friskiness are all forced upon me by evil-wishing neighbors. Sexual phantasies, too, can thus be treated as extraterritorial. Even sexual events, such as an all-too-vivid dream, or a neighbor in one's bed, can be blamed on the devil's sneaky habit of lying underneath sleeping men, or on top of sleeping women: *Unter oder oblegen*, in Luther's words; *succubus et incubus* in those of theology.

All this is quite handy if your conscience and your reason are primitive or foxy enough to let it pass. If they are too developed, the scruple appears which came to bother Luther: how could you know (once you were incautious enough to want to know) whether you had desired and abetted what thus afflicted you when you were not conscious—well, not quite conscious? Or, on the other hand, in those rare moments when you were quite conscious, fervently alert and full of good conscience, how did you ever know that this very excess of goodness was not a *Trugbild*, a mirage of the devil?

It is tempting to treat these superstitions as primitive obsessions, and to pity the people who did not know any better and who must have felt haunted. But we should not overlook the fact that within reason—that is, to the extent that the superstitions were not exploited by mass panic and neurotic anxiety—they were a form of collective mastery of the unknown. In a world full of dangers they may even have served as a source of security, for they make the unfamiliar familiar, and permit the individual to say to his fears and conflicts, "I see you! I recognize you!" He can even tell others what he saw and recognized while remaining reasonably free, by a contract

between like-minded, of the aspersion that he imagined things out of depravity or despair, or that he was the only one to be haunted. What else do we do today when we share our complexes, our coronaries, and our communists?

Nor was the world entirely left to evil spirits by any means. Corresponding to the population of demonic middlemen between man and the worldly underground was an ever-increasing number of mediators between him and heaven: the angels and the saints, the heavenly aunts and uncles, more human, more accessible, and more understandable than the forbidding Trinity. As every man had his angel, so every disease and misfortune had its saint who, strangely enough, was often assumed to create the very disease which he could cure—maybe in order to maintain himself in an increasingly competitive market, for all those saints had their separate altars where, for a price, their services could be solicited. The miners had one major and several ancillary saints. St. Anne, the mother of the mother of God, was Hans', as well as Martin's, *Abgott*—a strange term, for it means "idol," and indicates the persistent trend in Catholic communities to focus florid idolatry on a saint and a solid image in a solid church, and leave the rest of religion to the professionals. St. Anne watched over the miners' health, and protected them against sudden accidents; but she "is especially dear because she does not come with empty hands, brings mighty goods and money." We will hear of St. Anne in the hour of Martin's revelatory decision.

According to the characterology established in psychoanalysis, suspiciousness, obsessive scrupulosity, moral sadism, and a preoccupation with dirtying and infectious thoughts and substances go together. Luther had them all. One of Martin's earliest reported remarks (from his student days) was a classical obsessive statement: "the more you cleanse yourself, the dirtier you get." ⁵ On the other hand, we have already quoted his victoriously humorous treatment of the sow in her bed of manure. Some understanding of this part of his personality can be gained on the basis of a hypothesis I would like to offer, which is founded on work with obsessive patients and also on the study of preliterate societies. That the devil can be completely undone if you manage to fart into his nostrils is only one of those, shall we say homeopathic, remedies which Luther, un-

doubtedly on the basis of a homegrown demonology, advocated all of his life. His method is based on beating the devil with his own weapons; and it suggests the hypothesis, which cannot be substantiated at this point, that the devil and his home, and feces and the recesses of their origin, are all associated in a common underground of magic danger. To this common underground, then, we may assign both the bowels of the earth, where dirt can become precious metal (by means of a magic process which the alchemists tried to repeat experimentally in their laboratories above ground), and also that innermost self, that hidden "soul ground" (*Seelengrund*) where a mystical transformation of base passions can be effected.

In dealing with this layer of primitive thought, and also with the people among whom it has created a living folklore, it is necessary to re-evaluate the meanings of dirt in its mineral and vegetable forms. It is less necessary (although it helps) to study so-called primitives, or those among us who fall victim to our common but usually unconscious proclivity for equating dirt and preciousness which is expressed in many neurotic symptoms and in such colloquialisms as "paydirt." Anyone who has worked in mining areas or in coal- and steel-minded communities like Pittsburgh must be aware of the double evaluation of "smog" for instance; I am speaking of the honest productive black smog of concentrated industry, not the smog thrown off by automobile exhausts. The older Pittsburghers were originally east- and south-European peasants, and in their old country mud turned into ground, and ground into mud, and the process assured fertility. In this country smog, or at any rate, smoke, meant productivity; not only employment, but also the continuous manufacture by which the nation's steel was produced. The sky was blue and the rivers were clean only during shutdowns and strikes: the cleanliness was a reminder of a deadly vacuum and a possible final stoppage of production. Those modern Pittsburghers who undertook to make Pittsburgh clean had much support from applauding strangers who pitied Pittsburgh as a national Cinderella; they had little support from those immigrant families to whom smoke and grime had become an aspect of home.

One of the psychiatrist's observations throws some light on the particular milieu in which Luther's basic infantile experiences took

place. "Luther's family," he writes, obviously on the basis of his background studies, "occupied a narrow dark house with a few small and low rooms, badly lighted and badly aired, in which parents and children were huddled together; it is also probable that all or most of the family, that is, of both sexes, slept together, naked, in one broad alcove."⁶ Reiter suggests that the boy Martin, already made sleepless by corporal punishment—a point which we will discuss presently—thus had ample opportunity to receive bodily stimulation and to witness sexual acts—and, we may add, birth, sickness, and death. Those who wish to belittle the contribution of infantile traumata to Luther's personality usually at this point invoke the statistical repudiation that this circumstance was typical for all similar households, and, therefore, is unspecific. Yet this observant and imaginative boy, inclined to rumination about the nature of things and God's justification in having arranged them thus, may well have suffered—call it neurotically, call it sensitively—under observations which leave (or, indeed, make) others dull. At any rate whatever happened in this boy's dreams and in his half-dreams, and was sensed and heard in sleep and half-sleep, became richly associated with the sinister dealings of demons and of the devil himself; while some of the observations made at night may have put the father's moralistic daytime armour into a strange sadistic light.

Some biographers state without hesitation that Luther's father beat into him that profound fear of authority and those pervading streaks of stubbornness and rebelliousness which allegedly caused Luther to be sickly and anxious as a boy, "sad" as a youth, scrupulous to a fault in the monastery, and beset with doubts and depressions in later life; and which finally made him pursue the question of God's justice to the point of unleashing a religious revolution. The professor will have none of this. To him, "prayer and work, discipline and the fear of God" are the four pillars of wisdom; and while Luther's father may have been a bit less discerning in the choice of means and a bit more hot-blooded than he might have been, his motives were those of Proverbs 13:24, and his aim the son's moral well-being, intellectual perfection, and civic advancement. *Wacker Gestrichen* is the professor's term for what we might call a lusty caning. He is right, of course, in pointing out that other boys were caned as Luther was; and, indeed, Luther himself seems to

emphasize the universality of such discipline when he frequently refers to the monotonous drumming of canes in his home and in school.

However, the professor's statistical approach to a given effect—the assertion that the cause was too common to have an uncommon effect on one individual—is neither clinically nor biographically valid. We must try to ascertain the relationship of caner and caned, and see if a unique element may have given the common event a specific meaning.

Two statements of Luther's are frequently quoted: "My father once whipped me so that I ran away and felt ugly toward him until he was at pains to win me back." "My mother caned me for stealing a nut until the blood came. Such strict discipline drove me to a monastery although she meant it well."⁷ In spite of this last remark, Bainton, whose translation is quoted, does not think that these whippings aroused more than a "flash of resentment." Many authorities on Luther, making no attempt at psychological thinking, judge this matter of punishment either to be of no importance, or on the contrary, to have made an emotional cripple of Martin. It seems best however, to outline a framework within which we may try to evaluate these data.

In my profession one learns to listen to exactly what people are saying; and Luther's utterances, even when they are reported secondhand, are often surprises in naïve clarification. The German text of Luther's reference to the whipping incidents of which I quoted Bainton's translation, adds, to the report of the whipping: "*dass ich ihn flobe und ward ihm gram, bis er mich wieder zu sich gewoehnte.*"⁸ These words are hard to render in another language, and Bainton, from his point of view, saw no reason to ponder them. He translated them into what an American boy might have said: "I ran away . . . I felt ugly." But a more literal translation would be, "I fled him and I became sadly resentful toward him, until he gradually got me accustomed (or habituated) to him again." Thus, "*ich ward ihm gram*" describes a less angry, sadder and more deeply felt hurt than "I felt ugly toward him." A child can feel ugly toward somebody for whom he does not specially care; but he feels sadly resentful toward somebody he loves. Similarly, a parent could be "at pains to win back" almost anybody, and for any number of reasons; but he would try to *reaccustom* somebody to himself only

for the purpose of restoring an intimate daily association. The personal quality of that one sentence thus reveals two trends which (I believe) characterized Hans' and Martin's relationship. Martin, even when mortally afraid, *could not really hate his father*, he could only be sad; and Hans, while he could not let the boy come close, and was *murderously angry at times, could not let him go for long*. They had a mutual and deep investment in each other which neither of them could or would abandon, although neither of them was able to bring it to any kind of fruition. (The reader may feel this interpretation places too big a burden on one sentence; but we will find further support in the whole story as we proceed.)

I know this kind of parent-child relationship all too well from my young patients. In the America of today it is usually the mother whose all-pervasive presence and brutal decisiveness of judgment—although her means may be the sweetest—precipitate the child into a fatal struggle for his own identity: the child wants to be blessed by the one important parent, not for what he does and accomplishes, but for what he *is*, and he often puts the parent to mortal tests. The parent, on the other hand, has selected this one child, because of an inner affinity paired with an insurmountable outer distance, as the particular child who must *justify the parent*. Thus the parent asks only: What have you *accomplished*? and what have you done for *me*? It is my contention that Luther's father played this role in Martin's life, and so jealously that the mother was eclipsed far more than can be accounted for by the mere pattern of German housewifeliness.

I said that Luther could not hate his father openly. This statement presumes that he did hate him underneath. Do we have any proof of this? Only the proof which lies in action delayed, and delayed so long that the final explosion hits nonparticipants. In later life Luther displayed an extraordinary ability to hate quickly and persistently, justifiably and unjustifiably, with pungent dignity and with utter vulgarity. This ability to hate, as well as an inability to forgive those who in his weaker years had, to his mind, hindered him, he shares with other great men. However, as we follow his tortured obediences and erratic disobediences in later life, we cannot help asking what made it impossible for him to at least evade this father (as another brutalized son and later emancipator, Lincoln, did, sadly yet firmly), and even within the paternalistic system of

those days eventually leave him aside, make compromises, and get his way. Erasmus, and Calvin, and many lesser people, met their crises in defying their father's wills, but settled them somehow without making their rebellion the very center of their self-justification.

I have so far mentioned two trends in the relationship between Hans and Martin: 1) the father's driving economic ambition, which was threatened by something (maybe even murder) done in the past, and by a feeling close to murder which he always carried inside; and 2) the concentration of the father's ambition on his oldest son, whom he treated with alternate periods of violent harshness and of habituating the son to himself in a manner which may well have been somewhat sentimental—a deadly combination.

I would add to these trends the father's display of righteousness. Hans seems to have considered himself the very conception, the *Inbegriff*, of justice. After all, he did not spare himself, and fought his own nature as ruthlessly as those of his children. But parents are dangerous who thus take revenge on their child for what circumstances and inner compulsion have done to them; who misuse one of the strongest forces in life—true indignation in the service of vital values—to justify their own small selves. Martin, however, seems to have sensed on more than one occasion that the father, behind his disciplined public identity, was possessed by an angry, and often alcoholic, impulsiveness which he loosed against his family (and would dare loose *only* against his family) under the pretense of being a hard taskmaster and righteous judge.

The fear of the father's anger, described as constant by some biographers, included the absolute injunction against any back-talk, any *Widerrede*. Here again the fact that only much later, and only after an attempt to screw down the lid with the rules of monastic silence, did Martin become one of the biggest and most effective back-talkers in history, forces us to ask what kept him silent for so long. But this was Martin: in Latin school he was caned for using the German language—and later he used that language with a vengeance! We can deduce from what burst forth later that which must have been forced to lie dormant in childhood; this may well have included some communality of experience with the mother, whose spontaneity and imagination are said to have suffered at the side of Hans Luder.

This much, I think, one can say about the paternal side of Martin's

childhood dilemma. Faced with a father who made questionable use of his brute superiority; a father who had at his disposal the techniques of making others feel morally inferior without being quite able to justify his own moral superiority; a father to whom he could not get close and from whom he could not get away—faced with such a father, how was he going to submit without being emasculated, or rebel without emasculating the father?

Millions of boys face these problems and solve them in some way or another—they live, as Captain Ahab says, with half of their heart and with only one of their lungs, and the world is the worse for it. Now and again, however, an individual is called upon (called by *whom*, only the theologians claim to know, and by *what*, only bad psychologists) to lift his individual patienthood to the level of a universal one and to try to solve for all what he could not solve for himself alone.

Luther's statement of the maltreatment received at the hands of his mother is more specific; however, whatever resentment he felt against her was never expressed as dramatically as was his father's, which took the form of a burning doubt of divine righteousness. The Madonna was more or less gently pushed out of the way. What lack in Martin and what void in religion were thus created, we will discuss later.

To return to the statement quoted, it says that the mother beat him "until the blood came"; that this was for "one nut" which he presumably stole; and that such discipline "drove him into the monastery." Actually, the German text of this statement does not say "into the monastery"—and, indeed, Luther never relinquished the conviction that it was God who made him go into the monastery. *In die Moencherei* literally means "into monkery," into the monk-business, so to speak, and refers to his exaggeration of the ascetic and the scrupulous. He implies strongly, then, that such treatment was responsible for the excessive, the neurotic side of the religionism of his early twenties. "Such discipline," however, also refers to the general disciplinary methods of his time, not just to those of his mother; while "for one nut" may well cover, although we must not make too much of it, a complaint with many ramifications: it is one of a whole series of incidents which he cited even into old age to support a certain undertone of grievance in his self-justification.

We may add that if he was being punished for a breach of property rights, he may well have found the severity puzzling. Many children through the ages, like the juvenile delinquents of today have found incomprehensible the absolutism of an adult conscience that insists that a little theft, if not pounced upon with the whole weight of society's wrath, will breed many big ones. Criminals are thus often made; since the world treats such small matters as a sure sign of potential criminality, the children may feel confirmed in one of those negative identity fragments which under adverse circumstances can become the dominant identity element. Luther all his life felt like some sort of criminal, and had to keep on justifying himself even after his revelation of the universal justification through faith had led him to strength, peace, and leadership.

"Until the blood came" (often translated as "flowed") has become a biographical stereotype which, in reading, one passes over as lightly as news about a widespread famine in China, or the casualties of an air raid. However, in regard to these larger news items, one would, if one stopped to think, detect some subliminal horror in oneself; but in regard to the blood thus exacted from children there seems to exist a widespread ambivalence. Some readers feel a slight revulsion in reading about it, others (and so the users of the stereotype seem to know), suspect it of being one of those factors which *made* the victim a sturdy personality worthy of a biography. Actually, in Martin's case, the German text only says that "afterwards there was blood," which at least takes out of the story that element of determined bloodthirstiness which the stereotype implies by the intentional "until." This whole disciplinary issue calls for a more general discussion before we send Martin to school and to further beatings.

The caning and whipping of children was as typical of Martin's time as the public torture of criminals. But since we are not making a zoological survey of human behavior, we are not obliged to accept what everybody does as natural. Nor do we have to agree with those hardy souls who, looking us straight in the eye, assure us that a good caning never did them any harm, quite the contrary. Since they could not escape the punishment when they were children, and can not undo it now, their statement only indicates their capacity to make the best of what cannot be helped. Whether or not it did them any harm is another question, to answer which may call

for more information about the role they have come to play in adult human affairs.

It is well to remember that the majority of men have never invented the device of beating children into submission. Some of the American Plains Indian tribes were (as I had an opportunity to relate and to discuss twenty years ago⁹) deeply shocked when they first saw white people beat their children. In their bewilderment they could only explain such behavior as part of an over-all missionary scheme—an explanation also supported by the white people's method of letting their babies cry themselves blue in the face. It all must mean, so they thought, a well-calculated wish to impress white children with the idea that this world is not a good place to linger in, and that it is better to look to the other world where perfect happiness is to be had at the price of having sacrificed this world. This is an ideological interpretation, and a shrewd one: it interprets a single typical act not on the basis of its being a possible cause of a limited effect, but as part of a world view. And indeed, we now beat our children less, but we are still harrying them through this imperfect world, not so much to get them to the next one as to make them hurry from one good moment to better ones, to climb, improve, advance, progress.

It takes a particular view of man's place on this earth, and of the place of childhood within man's total scheme, to invent devices for terrifying children into submission, either by magic, or by mental and corporeal terror. When these terrors are associated with collective and ritual observances, they can be assumed to contain some inner corrective which keeps the individual child from facing life all by himself; they may even offer some compensation of belongingness and identification. Special concepts of property (including the idea that a man can ruin his own property if he wishes) underlie the idea that it is entirely up to the discretion of an individual father when he should raise the morality of his children by beating their bodies. It is clear that the concept of children as property opens the door to those misalliances of impulsivity and compulsivity, of arbitrariness and moral logic, of brutality and haughtiness, which make men crueler and more licentious than creatures not fired with the divine spark. The device of beating children down—by superior force, by contrived logic, or by vicious sweetness—makes it unnecessary for the adult to become adult. He need not develop that

true inner superiority which is naturally persuasive. Instead, he is authorized to remain significantly inconsistent and arbitrary, or in other words, childish, while beating into the child the desirability of growing up. The child, forced out of fear to pretend that he is better when seen than when unseen, is left to anticipate the day when he will have the brute power to make others more moral than he ever intends to be himself.

Historically, the increasing relevance of the Roman concepts of law in Luder's time helped to extend the concept of property so that fatherhood took on the connotation of an ownership of wife and children. The double role of the mother as one of the powerless victims of the father's brutality and also as one of his dutiful assistants in meting out punishment to the children may well account for a peculiar split in the mother image. The mother was perhaps cruel only because she had to be, but the father because he wanted to be. From the ideology inherent in such an arrangement there is—as we will see in Luther's punitive turn against the peasant rebels—only one psychological and a few political steps to those large-scale misalliances among righteousness, logic, and brutality that we find in inquisitions, concentration camps, and punitive wars.

The question, then, whether Martin's fears of the judgment day and his doubts in the justice then to be administered were caused by his father's greater viciousness, or by his own greater sensitivity, or both, pales before the general problem of man's exploitability in childhood, which makes him the victim not only of overt cruelty, but also of all kinds of covert emotional relief, of devious vengefulness, or sensual self-indulgence, and of sly righteousness—all on the part of those on whom he is physically and morally dependent. Some day, maybe, there will exist a well-informed, well-considered, and yet fervent public conviction that the most deadly of all possible sins is the mutilation of a child's spirit; for such mutilation undercuts the life principle of trust, without which every human act, may it feel ever so good and seem ever so right, is prone to perversion by destructive forms of conscientiousness.

For the sake of the instructive illustration with which Luther's life may provide us, it is necessary to keep away from all-too-simple causal alternatives such as whether or not, in Luther's case, a brutal father beat a sickly or unstable son into such a state of anxiety and rebellion that God and even Christ became for him revengers only—

Stockmeister und Henker—and not redeemers. As Luther puts it: "From childhood on, I knew I had to turn pale and be terror-stricken when I heard the name of Christ; for I was taught only to perceive him as a strict and wrathful judge."¹⁰ The psychiatrist and the priest—each for reasons of his own approach—consider this statement the quirk of an excessively gifted but unstable individual; and they bolster their contention with references to dozens of theologians of the time, none of whom exclusively emphasizes Christ's role as a revenger. And it is obvious that Luther's statement is most personal, influenced as it was by his upbringing and by his later decision to tackle that aspect of the disciplinary and religious atmosphere of his day which had almost crushed him, and which he felt was enslaving, not, of course, the professional religionists, but the common people of whom God had made so many.

We will hear more about the father; we have now all but exhausted the available references to the mother. We had better prepare ourselves, right here, for an almost exclusively masculine story: Kierkegaard's comment that Luther invented a religion for the adult man states the limitation as well as the true extent of Luther's theological creation. Luther provided new elements for the Western male's identity, and created for him new roles; but he contributed only one new feminine identity, the parson's wife—and this solely perhaps because his wife, Katherine of Bora, created it with the same determined unself-consciousness with which she made the great Doktor marry her. Otherwise, the Lutheran revolution only created ideals for women who wanted to be like parsons if they couldn't be like parsons' wives.

And in spite of Katherine and her children, wherever Luther's influence was felt, the Mother of God (that focus of women's natural religion-by-being-and-letting-be) was dethroned. Luther refers to her almost sneeringly as one of the female saints who might induce a man to "hang on their necks," or "hold on to their skirts": "And because we could never do enough penance and holy works, and in spite of it all remained full of fear and terror of [God's] anger, they told us to look to the saints in heaven who should be the mediators between Christ and us; and they taught us to pray to the dear mother of Christ and reminded us of the breasts which she had given to her son so that she might ask him to go easy with his

wrath toward us, and make sure of his grace." ¹¹ The sneer, it is true, is not for Mary but for those who suggested that he speak through her to Him to whom he "wanted to speak directly."

All of this comes to mind as one scans the thousands of pages of the literature on Luther; one comes to ask, over and over again, didn't the man have a mother?

Obviously, not much to speak of. The books repeat: of Luther's mother we know little. Didn't she stand between the father and the son whom she had suckled? Whose agent was she when she beat him "for one nut"? Did she disavow him on her own when he became a monk—a disavowal responsible for her one rather sandwiched mention in the *Documents of Luther's Development*: "I became a monk," Luther is quoted as saying, "against the wishes of my father, of my mother, of God, and of the Devil." ¹² And what did she feel when she bore and lost so many children that their number and their names are forgotten? Luther does mention that some of her children "cried themselves to death," which may have been one of his after-dinner exaggerations; and at any rate, what he was talking about then was only that his mother had considered these children to have been bewitched by a neighbor woman. And yet, a friend of Luther's who visited her in her old age reported that Luther was her "spit and image."

The father seems to have been standoffish and suspicious toward the universe; the mother, it is said, was more interested in the imaginative aspects of superstition. It may well be, then, that from his mother Luther received a more pleasurable and more sensual attitude toward nature, and a more simply integrated kind of mysticism, such as he later found described by certain mystics. It has been surmised that the mother suffered under the father's personality, and gradually became embittered; and there is also a suggestion that a certain sad isolation which characterized young Luther was to be found also in his mother, who is said to have sung to him a ditty: "For me and you nobody cares. That is our common fault." ¹³

A big gap exists here, which only conjecture could fill. But instead of conjecturing half-heartedly, I will state, as a clinician's judgment, that nobody could speak and sing as Luther later did if his mother's voice had not sung to him of some heaven; that nobody could be as torn between his masculine and his feminine sides, nor have such

a range of both, who did not at one time feel that he was like his mother; but also, that nobody would discuss women and marriage in the way he often did who had not been deeply disappointed by his mother—and had become loath to succumb the way she did to the father, to fate. And if the soul is man's most bisexual part, then we will be prepared to find in Luther both some horror of mystic succumbing and some spiritual search for it, and to recognize in this alternative some emotional and spiritual derivatives of little Martin's "pre-historic" relation to his mother.

Preserved Smith (as pointed out, not a psychoanalyst) introduced the Oedipus complex into the literature on Luther. The psychiatrist picks it up, not without (quite figuratively speaking) crossing himself before the clinical world: "Maybe an orthodox psychoanalyst will phantasy into Luther's life the trivial outline of a deep and firmly anchored Oedipus complex which was aroused by a forceful and libidinal attachment to the vivacious and, as far as we know, gifted and imaginative mother, and accentuated by the sinister harshness of the father toward him, toward the siblings and maybe also to the mother." ¹⁴ To this, we would reply that most certainly we would ascribe to Luther an Oedipus complex, and not a trivial one at that. We would not wish to see any boy—much less an imaginative and forceful one—face the struggles of his youth and manhood without having experienced as a child the love and the hate which are encompassed in this complex: love for the maternal person who awakens his senses and his sensuality with her ministrations, and deep and angry rivalry with the male possessor of this maternal person. We would also wish him with their help to succeed, in his boyhood, in turning resolutely away from the protection of women to assume the fearless initiative of men.

Only a boy with a precocious, sensitive, and intense conscience would *care* about pleasing his father as much as Martin did, or would subject himself to a scrupulous and relentless form of self-criticism instead of balancing the outer pressure with inventive deviousness and defiance. Martin's reactions to his father's pressure are the beginnings of Luther's preoccupation with matters of individual conscience, a preoccupation which went far beyond the requirements of religion as then practised and formulated. Martin took unto himself the ideological structure of his parents' con-

sciences: he incorporated his father's suspicious severity, his mother's fear of sorcery, and their mutual concern about catastrophes to be avoided and high goals to be met. Later he rebelled: first against his father, to join the monastery; then against the Church, to found his own church—at which point, he succumbed to many of his father's original values. We can only surmise to what extent this outcome was prepared for in childhood by a cumulative rebelliousness and by an ever-so-clandestine hate (for our conscience, like the medieval God, knows everything and registers and counts everything).

This biographical problem overlaps an historical one: Did Luther have a right to claim that his own fear, and his feeling of being oppressed by the image of an avenging God, were shared by others? Was his attitude representative of a pervasive religious atmosphere, at least in his corner of Christendom? The psychiatrist and the priest answer definitely not; the professor can dispense with this historical discussion altogether, since for him, God chose the moment of his word to Martin.

These questions can only be answered by a survey like the one Huizinga made of the waning middle ages in France and the Netherlands, in which he described the disintegration of the medieval identity and the emergence of the new burgher identity on evidence derived from literature and documentary art. In a general way, Huizinga's description must also apply to Martin's time and place:

At the close of the Middle Ages, a sombre melancholy weighs on people's souls. Whether we read a chronicle, a poem, a sermon, a legal document even, the same impression of immense sadness is produced by them all. It would sometimes seem as if this period had been particularly unhappy, as if it had left behind only the memory of violence, of covetousness and mortal hatred, as if it had known no other enjoyment but that of intemperance, of pride and of cruelty.

In the records of all periods misfortune has left more traces than happiness. Great evils form the ground-work of history. We are perhaps inclined to assume without much evidence that, roughly speaking, and notwithstanding all calamities, the sum of happiness can have hardly changed from one period to another. But in the fifteenth century, as in the epoch of romanticism, it was, so to say, bad form to praise the world and life openly. It was fashionable to see only its suffering and misery, to discover everywhere signs of decadence and of the near end—in short, to condemn the times or to despise them.¹⁵

No other epoch has laid so much stress as the expiring Middle Ages on the thought of death. An everlasting call of *memento mori* resounds through life.¹⁶

In earlier times, too, religion had insisted on the constant thought of death, but the pious treatises of these ages only reached those who had already turned away from the world. Since the thirteenth century, the popular preaching of the mendicant orders had made the eternal admonition to remember death swell into a sombre chorus ringing throughout the world. Towards the fifteenth century, a new means of inculcating the awful thought into all minds was added to the words of the preacher, namely the popular woodcut. Now these two means of expression, sermons and woodcuts, both addressing themselves to the multitude and limited to crude effects, could only represent death in a simple and striking form.¹⁷

In the evaluation of the dominant moods of any historical period it is important to hold fast to the fact that there are always islands of self-sufficient order—on farms and in castles, in homes, studies, and cloisters—where sensible people manage to live relatively lusty and decent lives: as moral as they must be, as free as they may be, and as masterly as they can be. If we only knew it, this elusive arrangement is happiness. But men, especially in periods of change, are swayed by alternating world moods which seem to be artificially created by the monopolists and manipulators of an era's opinions, and yet could not exist without the highly exploitable mood cycles inherent in man's psychological structure. The two most basic alternating moods are those of carnival and atonement: the first gives license and leeway to sensual enjoyment, to relief and release at all cost; the second surrenders to the negative conscience which constricts, depresses, and enjoins man for what he has left unsolved, uncared for, unatoned. Especially in a seemingly rational and informed period like our own, it is obvious how blithely such moods overshadow universally available sets of information, finding support for luxurious thoughtlessness at one time, for panicky self-criticism at another. Thus we may say that beside and beyond a period's verifiable facts and official doctrines, the world image "breathes." It tends to expand and to contract in its perspectives, and to gain or lose solidity and coherence. In each careless period latent panic only waits for catastrophe—famines, pests and depressions, overpopulation and migration, sudden shifts in technology or in leadership—to cause a shrinkage in the world image, a kind of chill attacking the sense of identity of large masses.

We briefly outlined above the expansion of earthly space in Luther's times. But every expanding opens frontiers, every conquest exposes flanks. Gun powder and the printing press could be used against their users; voyages revealed a world of disquieting cultural relativities; wider social contacts increased the chances of ideological contamination and of further inroads of plague and syphilis. The impact of all these Pyrrhic victories, and of the spiritual decline of the papacy and the fragmentation of the empire, produced both a shrinkage of that official perspective which was oriented toward eventual salvation, and an increase in the crudity and cruelty of the means employed to defend what remained of the Church's power of persuasion. Thus it is probable that in Martin's childhood and youth there lurked in the ideological perspective of his world, perhaps just because the great theologians were so engrossed in scholasticism, a world image of man as inescapably sinful, with a soul incapable of finding any true identity in its perishable body. This world-image implied only one hope: at an uncertain (and maybe immediately impending) moment, an end would come which might guarantee an individual the chance (to be denied to millions of others) of finding pity before the only true Identity, the only true Reality, which was Divine Wrath.

Among the increasing upper urban classes, among the patricians, merchants, and masters who were the town fathers of the ever more important cities, the reaction was developing which eventually became the northern Renaissance. These upper classes no more wanted to be the emperor's then growing economic proletariat than they wished to end on the day of judgment as God's proletariat who (as they could see in the paintings which they commissioned) were to be herded into oblivion by fiery angels, mostly of Italian extraction. This attitude reflected the discrepancy between the era of unlimited initiative then dawning and the era coming to an end which subordinated man's identity on earth to a super-identity in heaven. But these two eras, all too simply set off against each other as the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, corresponded, in fact, to two inner world moods; their very conflictedness corresponded to man's conflicted inner structure.

We are far ahead of ourselves. Yet, we must face the fact that when little Martin left the house of his parents, he was heavily

weighed down by an overweening superego, which would give him the leeway of a sense of identity only in the obedient employment of his superior gifts, and only as long as he was more Martin than Luther, more son than man, more follower than leader.

Hans Luder in all his more basic characteristics belonged to the narrow, suspicious, primitive-religious, catastrophe-minded people. He was determined to join the growing class of burghers, masters, and town fathers—but there is always a lag in education. Hans beat into Martin what was characteristic of his own past, even while he meant to prepare him for a future better than his own present. This conflictedness of Martin's early education, which was *in* and *behind* him when he entered the world of school and college, corresponded to the conflicts inherent in the ideological-historical universe which lay *around* and *ahead* of him. The theological problems which he tackled as a young adult of course reflected the peculiarly tenacious problem of the domestic relationship to his own father; but this was true to a large extent because both problems, the domestic and the universal, were part of one ideological crisis: a crisis about the theory and practice, the power and responsibility, of the moral authority invested in fathers: on earth and in heaven; at home, in the market-place, and in politics; in the castles, the capitals, and in Rome. But it undoubtedly took a father and a son of tenacious sincerity and almost criminal egotism to make the most of this crisis, and to initiate a struggle in which were combined elements of the drama of King Oedipus and the passion of Golgotha, with an admixture of cussedness made in Saxony.

2

At about the seventh year, says Aristotle, man can differentiate between good and bad. Conscience, ego, and cognition, we would say, are by then sufficiently developed to make it probable that a child, given half a chance, will be able and eager to concentrate on tasks transcending play. He will watch and join others in the techniques of his society, and develop an eagerness for completing tasks fitted for his own age in some craftsmanlike way. All this, and not less, is implied when we say that a child has reached the "stage of industry."

In his seventh year Martin was sent to a school which would teach him Latin—then the principal tool of the technology of liter-

acy. Obviously only parents with higher aspirations for their children would send them to such a school, the license to conduct which was leased out by the town, in the same way the town mill was leased to the miller and left to him to run. Magister and miller may have differed in their preparatory training, and in the product they processed, but their economic problems were not dissimilar, and their labor policies were both directed at driving hard bargains. Halfway-qualified teachers were available to schools like these only when they could get no other work—while they were still young, or when they were no longer employable. In either case they were apt to express their impatience with life in their treatment of the children, which was very similar to the treatment that the town miller's men gave their donkeys. The teachers rarely relied, and therefore could not rely, on conscience, ego, or cognition; instead they used the old and universal method of *Pauken*, "drumming" facts and habits into the growing minds by relentless mechanical repetition. They also drummed the children themselves *mit Ruten in die Aeßtern*, on the behind, other body parts being exempt.

According to the professor, an occasional "lustly caning" did not harm Martin any more than it did the other children: but the professor and his school must present Martin as entirely intact and unweakened by any ordinary or special childhood event, so that the divine event, the catastrophe, which later concluded his academic education so unexpectedly, appears as divine interference. The priest and the psychiatrist, however, make the most of Luther's statement, made in middle age, that the hell of school years can make a child fearful for life. In retrospect, Luther found that the gains in learning were in no way commensurate with the "inner torture." At the most, he felt, such teaching prepared a man to be a priest of low caliber, a *Pfaff*; otherwise he was not taught enough to "either cackle or lay an egg." Medically-minded biographers may go a bit too far in saying that Luther's nervous system was undermined in those days. It is certain, however, that the disciplinary climate of home and school, and the religious climate in community and church, were lumped together in his mind as decidedly more oppressive than inspiring; and that, to him, this seemed a damned and unnecessary shame. He blamed his atmosphere for his special monkishness, his intensity of monastic "scrupulosity," his obsessional preoccupation with the question of how on earth one

may do enough to please the various agencies of judgment—teacher, father, superior, and most of all, one's conscience. But remember, he said all this after he had taken his vow and broken it in disgust.

School children, Luther reports, were caned on the behind; it is probable that home discipline was concentrated on the same body area. To those people who believe in corporal punishment, this seems to take the sting out of the matter, and even to make it rather funny. We grant that the buttocks can take a lot of pressure, and lend themselves to bawdy jokes; but we cannot ignore the fact, brought out by the researchers of psychoanalysis, that the anal zone which is guarded and fortified by the buttocks can, under selective and intense treatment of special kinds, become the seat of sensitive and sensual, defiant and stubborn, associations. The devil according to Luther, expresses his scorn by exposing his rear parts; man can beat him to it by employing anal weapons, and by telling him where his kiss is welcome. The importance of these ideas in Luther's imagery and vocabulary has been indicated; we will return to them.

In medieval schools the institution of the company spy or the office informer—today part of our adult life—was systematically developed among the children. One boy (you surely did not think girls learned Latin?) was secretly appointed *lupus* by the teacher. He marked down the names of those who spoke German, swore, or otherwise acted against the rules. At the end of the week the teacher applied one stroke for each point of bad behavior. Luther says he once received fifteen. Note the over-all injunction against verbal freedom: against speaking impulsively, or in German, or in the vernacular; and note also the occurrence of a judgment day at the end of each week when there was hell to pay for sins recorded on a secret ledger, sins committed so far in the past one might not even remember them. This temporal and relentless accumulation of known, half-known, or unrecognized sins was a sore subject in all of Luther's later life. He apparently associated it with another experience with temporal qualities—the experience of learning that nothing was ever good enough for teacher or father, and that any chance to please them seemed always remote, always removed by one more graduation in one more, one better, school.

We should mention in passing what Luther later did not find worth commenting on, namely, that in school he also learned choir singing

and read some Latin authors. The students of Latin were required to sing in church and there can be little doubt that despite the clouds of mistrust which Luther preferred to remember so exclusively, there must have been moments and performances which permitted his inner treasure of vocabulary and melody to flower.

At fourteen Martin was sent to Magdeburg; he never cared to specify what school he attended there. Magdeburg must have impressed him: a city of about fifteen thousand inhabitants, bustling with continental commerce; clerical life there flourished quietly, except for occasional festivals and processions of combined patrician and churchly splendor. Martin spent only one year in Magdeburg; then his father sent him to Eisenach, further up the academic ladder and further out into the world of big city burghers.

But before the youngster left Magdeburg he had come in contact with those poorest of clerics, men who lived their religion, the *Nullbrueder*. Their name means Zero Brothers, and symbolizes the rockbottom which they were determined not to forget. These Brothers of the Common Life, as they were also called, did not teach children ordinary subjects. Rather, they had the permission of town and teachers to visit with or be visited by the children for purposes of *conversio*, for lessons in the *devotio moderna*. They seem to have given these children a pretty accurate taste of the kind of exhortation and introspection which characterizes monastic education; for they spoke to them of the tests of pure love, of the proper vigilance against sin, of the real turning away from this world. Most of all, as pietists they underscored the depth and purity of personal religious involvement, using such terms as *Gottinnigkeit* and *Herzgruendlichkeit*, which denote the mystical feeling of an innermost unity with God, down in the "bottom of your heart." These men, who in preceding years had had to struggle for permission to preach in Magdeburg, as if they were missionaries in a foreign land, seemed to know what they were talking about.

And in the middle of Magdeburg's proud Broadstreet, Martin also encountered one of the few thoroughly Catholic phenomena which in later years he spoke of with respect and reverence: "I saw with my own eyes a prince of Anhalt, a brother of the Bishop of Merseburg, walk and beg for bread on Broadstreet, with the skull-

cap of the order of the Barefeet, carrying like a donkey on his back a sack so heavy it bent him to the ground. He had so castigated himself by going without food and sleep that he looked like the picture of death, nothing but skin and bones. And, indeed, he died soon thereafter. . . . Whoever saw him could not help smacking his lips with reverence (*schmatzt vor Andacht*) and could not help being ashamed of his own worldly condition."¹⁸

No reason was ever given for Martin's transfer to Eisenach; Margareta Luder had family there, but this circumstance apparently proved quite irrelevant for Martin's social life in that city. But perhaps Martin's interest in the monastic phenomena encountered in Magdeburg was reason enough for his anxious father to send him into a more "healthy" milieu. Certainly Martin found this milieu in Eisenach. He came to know and to live in the home of some modest patricians, a family of Italian extraction named Cotta, and to be well acquainted with the Schalbe family. Legend has it that he found in Ursula Cotta a matronly friend who appreciated his musicality and piety, took pity on his homeless condition (for his relatives had not taken him in), and bestowed on him quite an active motherly interest, and maybe another kind of womanly feeling. To this purpose legend disposes of her husband, who, however, was well and about, and friendly to Martin. It is, at any rate, interesting to note this attempt to provide Martin with a second mother who is supposed to have recognized in the lonely boy the imaginative and musical capacities which he probably had been able to share with his embittered real mother, when he was only a small child. This legend also provides that immortal picture of the young Martin earning his bread by singing in the streets. But singing in the streets was for that era what working in the summer is for students in the United States today. Most do it, although only some really need it, and only a few of these desperately; some think it is a good thing for them to act as if they need it, and some come to like it as a historical ritual, a bow to the days of the pioneers. For others it is the only way out of spending the summer with their families. Whether or not Martin needed it more than others, he sang alongside those who needed it less, and he probably enjoyed it more. "Crumb-seekers," these students were called. As for their allegedly captive audience, a famous account has these "nervous" children

disperse in terror at the sudden grunt in the dark of a manly voice; but the man who belonged to the voice was approaching with a gift of sausages.

At any rate, in the house of the Cottas Luther became acquainted with the life led by modest, pious, and musical patricians. In Eisenach, also, he met and became devoted to Vicar Brown, in whose house the cultivation of music joined with the humor and rhetoric of the Humanist tradition. When Martin was ordained as a priest a few years later, he invited Vicar Brown to the ceremony; in his letter (the earliest of his extant correspondence) he judged it too forward of him to invite the Cottas and the Schalbes: yet it is clear that he wished the Vicar would transmit the news. Whether or not any of the Eisenachers came is not known; and at any rate, Hans Luder monopolized the show.

Next we find Martin in college in Erfurt, at the age of seventeen. Needless to say, he had been a good student throughout his school years. What kind of boy was he, by then? This depends on what you intend to make of the sudden "conversion" which abruptly halted his academic career. It depends on how you have learned to simplify the extraordinary.

The Latin-schoolboy had a special status in the world of children. He wore a uniform which marked him as a future magistrate, academician, cleric, or privy-counselor—at any rate, one of the literate class who knows how things hang together in the stars and in the books. In his uniform (and neither schoolboy nor university student was permitted to appear in public in anything but a uniform), he naturally abstained from throwing snowballs; even ice-skating was not for him. It was a good uniform with which to express (and to hide) a precocious conscience. Beyond this, how much Martin was or was not one of those boys with thick hides who can adjust to any system, make the most of whatever status the system provides, and otherwise live by what they can get away with in the present and what they can hope to do to others in the future, is not known. Except for the one measly nut he had stolen earlier, we have no record that he indulged in those small physical, verbal, and moral explosions without which strictly-kept children rot inside. Rather, he was one of the best students all the way through; and there are indications that he did rot in a slow way, often sinking into a kind

of sadness. This does not mean, however, that he did not maintain, up to the very gates of the monastery, the role of *guter Geselle*, a "good fellow," with its active good will in social and musical affairs.

With only this information, anybody can sketch his own Martin, and I have already indicated some of the sketches which have been made. Here is my version. I could not conceive of a young great man in the years before he becomes a great young man without assuming that inwardly he harbors a quite inarticulate stubbornness, a secret furious inviolacy, a gathering of impressions for eventual use within some as yet dormant new configuration of thought—that he is tenaciously waiting it out for a day of vengeance when the semideliberate straggler will suddenly be found at the helm, and he who took so much will reveal the whole extent of his potential mastery. The counterpart of this waiting, however, is often a fear of an early death which would keep the vengeance from ripening into leadership; yet the young man often shows signs of precocious aging, of a melancholy wish for an early end, as if the anticipation of prospective deeds tired him. Premonitions of death occur throughout Luther's career, but I think it would be too simple to ascribe them to a mere fear of death. A young genius has an implicit life plan to complete; caught by death before his time, he would be only a pathetic human fragment.

A good fellow tries to live to the full in historical reality, and to accept as his ideology the boisterous and snobbish ways of youth. Martin tried, but he did not succeed. He became burdened with that premature sense of judgment which wishes to receive and to render a total accounting of life before it is lived; one might say that he refused to begin life with an identity of his own before some judgment had been rendered on everything past which might prejudice his coming identity.

Like many an inhibited and deep-down sad youth, Martin utilized his musical gifts, his lute-playing and singing, to remain a welcome good fellow among a circle of friends. But he soon acquired the nickname of *Philosophus*. The professor thinks this was because Luther was so good in disputation; the psychiatrist, because he was so morbid in it. It is probable that the nickname referred to Martin's uncommon and probably heavy sincerity and his wish to find certainty in formulation—an attitude which was foreign to the elegant and logical scholastic attempts to reconcile Aristotelian physics and

the Last Judgment. He was probably too much of a peasant in his intellectual heaviness, and also too much of a poet, for whom meaning and form and feeling must coincide.

I think that Martin was nicknamed *Philosophus* because the students felt, some with scorn, some with admiration, that here was one who meant it.

Erfordia Turrita was a walled city of about twenty thousand, Germany's most populous, situated at an important crossing of international tradeways. Except for the patrician solidity of its center, it was undeveloped as far as city-planning goes; but it boasted a university with the largest student body in Germany, and with an academic standing rivaling Prague's. The best of its faculties was the School of Law. Hans Luder's fondest dream was that Martin should graduate from it.

In the university of Erfurt Martin continued to lead a rather regimented life. He made one or two good and life-long friends among his classmates, but otherwise in all probability he remained remote from the young people who led the free life, with its "scent of wine, beer, and wenches," as the psychiatrist puts it. Legend will have it that in Erfurt Luther joined the circle of freethinkers around Mutianus Rufus, the New Humanists; Mutianus is said to have influenced him greatly. However, the professor proves that this famous circle did not yet exist in Luther's student days. He plucks each petal of this alleged circle by showing that each of its future members was elsewhere at the time, and then disposes of the center by quoting a letter in which Mutianus asks a friend, ten years after Martin had left the college in Erfurt, who that fiery preacher in Wittenberg by the name of Luther was, anyway. At best (or at worst), then, Luther in his college days was exposed to unsystematic Humanist influences, especially through his highly gifted friend, Crotus Rubeanus. He may have found support for his musical gifts and for his interest in poetry; he did take Virgil and Plautus with him when he later entered the monastery. But if at this time this group believed in free love, in some unsystematic way, and if the belief happened to touch the student Martin, it could only have bewildered him; an invitation to sexual freedom can only aggravate an already present identity conflict. The New Humanism, then, at best reinforced Martin's avocations. It did not free in him either

faith or rebellion; at the most, it contributed to his wish to seek silence.

To attend the university Martin was obliged to live in a "burse"—this means he lived in crowded quarters and under a discipline borrowed from the monastery. The students wore dignified uniforms of a semi-clerical design (albeit with a rapier on the side) and were strictly supervised; up at 4:00 a.m., to bed at 8:00 p.m. Lectures, seminars, and disputations were compulsory, and started at 6:00 a.m. in the summer and 7:00 a.m. in the winter. The food was good (Professor Scheel has found the menus)¹⁹ and there was a light beer.

At the time of matriculation, each burse held a "deposition," a kind of initiation rite, during which the novice was dressed up as the beast that henceforth he was not to be. Pigs' teeth were stuck in the corners of his mouth and a hat with long ears and horns put on his head. This creature was demolished, not without roughness, and with it the novice's moral corruptibility. Dousing completed the "baptism." Then the academic identity was put on. In medieval ceremonialism, every estate had its uniform, which involved a definite status, not only in earthly functions, but in the whole divine system, from the center of which, in fact, emanated the only true identity-giving power. So there was fun in these initiations, and the usual awe-increasing cruelty; but there was also a sense of taking a step up in the divine scale. Here is what Luther himself said when, some years later, it was his turn to make deposition speeches. He made a play on "deposition," which means a turning away from, a renouncing of old ways, and the verb *deponere*, which equals our "taking somebody down": "Humble yourselves and learn patience, for you will be 'taken down' for the rest of your lives (*Ihr werdet Ewer Lebenlang deponiert werden*) by the town dwellers and by the country folk, by the noblemen and by your wives. . . . I started my deposition in Wittenberg [one of Luther's frequent retrospective mistakes] when I was young [*adolescens*]; now that I am heavier [*gravior*] I also suffer heavier depositions [*graviores depositiones*]. Thus, your deposition is only a symbol of human life.²⁰ . . . Therefore, obey your monitors [*momentibus*] and your praeceptors, honor the magistrates and the female sex, and *non in propatulo minguentes*—and those who do not piss in public."²¹

When Martin applied for the bachelor's degree a year and a half later, he swore to extensive reading in the following fields: gram-

mar, logic, rhetoric, natural philosophy, spheric astronomy, philosophy, physics, and (last and least) psychology. The main authors were Priscian, Petrus Hispanus, and Aristotle and Aristotle and Aristotle: *Parva Logicalia, Priorum, Posteriorum, Elencorum, Physicorum, De Anima, Spera Materialis*.²²

Two years later, Martin was ready for his Master's, having read, studied, and discussed more specialized works on the heavens (*De Caelo*), on growth and decay (*De Generatione et Corruptione*), on meteorology (*Meteororum*) and smaller works of Aristotle. To complete the seven free arts, Euclid's mathematics was added, as well as arithmetic (*De Muris*), the theory of music (an elective), and planimetry. A Master's sweep of subjects also included moral philosophy, metaphysics, "politics," and economics (*Yconomorum*). At one time or another, Martin had also become more or less acquainted with Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Averroes, Avicenna, Alfragan, and Sacrobosco.

So, young Luther knew a lot; he remained an Aristotelian for life, although as time went on he had fewer and fewer opportunities to refer to natural science. He began his teaching career as a "moral philosopher," and taught Aristotle for a whole year; this may surprise some readers as much as it surprises students of psychoanalysis when they hear of Freud's extensive publications in physiology, written before he turned to psychology. Physics, to Luther, continued to deal with the "motion of things," and philosophy with the laws deduced from *visibilibus et apparentibus*. But it is clear that in the world of Catholic dogma, as well as in Martin's superstitious mind, there was much, indeed, that was neither visible nor in any way apparent. In every seat of learning in Christendom the tenor of academic teaching depended on the kind of connection which the dominant philosophers cared to make, or were forced to make, between the scientific and the theological. Official teaching in Erfurt was pervaded with a particular academic ideology, the so-called Occamist version of Aristotelianism; and if we remember that Aristotle, before he fell into the hands of Occam, had already made the long trek from ancient Greece to and through the Islamic seats of learning, to and through the orbit of the Roman Church, we will not expect that his philosophy could contribute the unified world view, nor the unity of spiritual attitude that Martin sorely needed.

William Occam had been a rebel within the Church. He had dared to contradict the Pope on a matter always embarrassingly vital, which was kept alive by the memory of St. Francis and by the order of the Franciscans, of which Occam had been a member: he had supported the *Fraticelli*, men who claimed that St. Francis, and Christ before him, had denied private property to a Christian. Occam went to jail for his opinion, but found protection with a German prince, to whom he is supposed to have said, "You defend me with your sword and I will defend you with my pen." Thus there is much in Occam, more than would be appropriate to list at this point, that predicts Luther, although Occam never denied that divine truth was instituted in the Roman Church. His personality as well as his teachings have made it easy for Catholic detractors, who consider Occam the low point in medieval philosophy, to call Lutheranism nothing but a degeneration of Occamism. The fact is that a form of Occamism was dominant, not only in the university, but also in the Augustinian monastery of Erfurt.

There is no need at this point to discuss the place of Occamism in the broad development of Catholic theology and philosophy. It is important, however, to understand that it was the first academic-theological ism which engulfed Luther, and that this happened before he had the necessary intellectual equipment to see its relativities and interdependencies in the history of thought. Martin was then, as he remained later, a provincial in a grand style. He was apt to identify completely with a small human circle and with a vital set of local problems. When he later burst into universality, it was not on the basis of an extensive knowledge of the state of universal questions, but rather because he was able to experience what was immediately about him in new ways. By the same token, his immediate surroundings could increase his sadness and his wrath, as if they had been devised for his personal suffering. It is therefore necessary to try to understand the world image which was presented to Luther in Erfurt, and to understand what import this world image had for a young man who, because of his temperament and age, was in desperate need of deriving from what he was taught a meaning superior to the conflicting moods of living. At Erfurt he learned to master logic and rhetoric; he was also presented with certain basic facts of natural science, for some of the Occamists, especially

in Paris, had done fundamental work in physics. But as far as an ideological unification between the nature of physical things and the nature of the supernatural was concerned, Martin was faced with the famous Occamist deadlock—the doctrine of the absolute mutual exclusion of knowledge and belief, philosophy and theology.

The universe taught to Martin by his teachers Usingen and Trutvetter in Erfurt, looked like this:

All is motion, for only through alteration by motion do potentialities become realities. The universe moves in ten orbits: the seven planetary orbits, the firmament of stars, the crystalline sky, the sphere of prime motion. Only the home of God, above it all, does not move.

The earth is in the center of this universe; but, alas, it is minute, not more than a point. It thus exists in a paradox as tantalizing as man's: although central, it is negligible; and man, seemingly so frightfully important to God, remains quite expendable.

All bodies are subject to irreversible laws of *Generatio* and *Corruptio*—but not God. He can resurrect what has died, and can, at less than a moment's notice, bring to an end all that lives.

Man, like all bodies, even angels, lives in a prison circumscribed by the laws of space and time. But God has a "repletive presence"; He exists wholly in one place and time, and equally wholly in all others. He can will Christ's total presence in any number of spaces, and at different times; this explains why the body of Christ is present in all hosts.

What can man will, then? Oh, everything—within the physical world. He realizes his *liberum arbitrium* in free decisions and in the vigorous development of his capacities. By making correct choices he acquires an inner habitus which disposes him toward good works and even to acts of love, and makes him recognize and like such works and acts. Yet all of this nowhere affects his status in the eyes of God. Through baptism and confession he can become pleasing to God and potentially acceptable; but God retains the *potentia absoluta*, the right to remain arbitrary in bestowing grace, and free not to honor the grace which he has already bestowed.

Thus God has created reason, and Aristotle. He even has made reason capable of recognizing its own limits and pitfalls. But reason can never hope to understand God; and Aristotle, while he knew everything, also knew nothing, for he knew not revelation. Whether

or not God himself is reasonable, then, and whether he chooses to be lenient, or wishes to be reliable, are matters of belief and of obedience to faith; they will not be known until the end of the world, the moment when one comes to be judged.

In the age-old conflict between realism and nominalism, Occam had formulated a moderate nominalism. He taught that concepts are only symbols of things and exist only in the act of giving meaning, *in significando*; while things exist by themselves. This scepticism, however, was limited by the assurance that the intellect, if it could create things out of itself, would create a world just like the real one: for both ideas and things come from God and there is an exact correspondence between the number of ideas which God put in man's head and the number of things out of which he made the physical universe. Thus Aristotle could have his physical universe, and Plato his ideas, and God could have them both, mirroring each others' works—an ideal solution for the budding scientific mind which wished to experiment with things, but not a convincing solution for young minds who desperately wish to know how things and ideas, specifics and universals, earth and heaven, hang together. In other words, a very reasonable solution, but not an emotionally convincing one, especially for a young person in whom justification had become the core-problem: how to *know* when God justifies—and why.

Rationally speaking, one can well see why many honest minds were rather relieved to find declared as unthinkable that which could not be thought to a conclusion, and to have described as unapproachable a God whom previous philosophers had endowed with a most tortuous logic and a most ignoble willingness to make deals with clever sinners. This kind of candidness Luther later continued to maintain; in this regard he called Occam his master. On the other hand, the jigsaw puzzle of Aristotelian and Augustinian pieces which Luther received in college was incomplete and uncompletable. It permitted the new rationalists to have free reign with things; but it recommended blind faith to those who were seeking emotional and credal certainty. No wonder that one of Erfurt's most prominent teachers, Usingen, later concluded his academic career by entering the Augustinian monastery to which, by then, his pupil Luther had preceded him.

Some of Luther's detractors claim that Occamism is all that he

learned in college, and that little else was added in the monastery. Luther was, they say, a pious Occamist in his docile years and not more than an anti-Occamist in his rebellion. But later as we will see, when Luther began to rebel, philosophical and theological concepts were to him only old baskets for new bread, the hot, crisp bread of original experience.

Nevertheless, it is true that the first discipline encountered by a young man is the one he must somehow identify with unless he chooses to remain unidentified in his years of need. The discipline he happens to encounter, however, may turn out to be poor ideological fare; poor in view of what, as an individual, he has not yet derived from his childhood problems, and poor in view of the irreversible decisions which begin to crowd in on him. Occamism was all that Martin had; those who mistrust the divine origin of the subsequent crisis in his life say it was bad for him. On the other hand, one can always say that anything that helped to make a great man was good for him and for the world. But perhaps history has abused this blank check.

3

In February, 1505, Martin had become *Magister Artium*, a Master of Arts; the second best student of seventeen. He later gratefully acknowledged the torchlight ceremonies which marked the occasion: "I still claim that no temporal worldly joy could equal it." Academically speaking, he could now join the faculty, lead disputations, become the master of a bourse, and eventually a dean. Most important, he was now free to embark on his father's dream, the study of the law in the best of law schools. His father presented him with a copy of the *Codex Juris Civilis*, and began to address him with the respectful *Ihr* (you) instead of the intimate *Du* (thou). (*Sie* was not as yet in use.) The father also lost no time in looking around for a suitable bride, "honorable" enough, and "of means." From the end of April to the end of May, when the law semester started, Martin had several weeks of waiting on his hands. During this time something happened to him: his sadness reached a degree which called for some kind of decision. Some biographers have explained it by citing the death of a good friend by violence; others have said that the plague killed two of his brothers during this period. But the friend was not a close one, and he died from an illness; and

the brothers died later, though at an equally significant time. Once again, however, the legends contain a truth: Martin seems to have brooded over the question of death and the last judgment. It is quite likely that his ruminations were intensified by sexual temptations in this period of lessened pressure of work.

There is nothing to indicate, however, that Martin did not apply himself fully to his studies when the semester started. Yet in the middle of it he asked for the quite unusual permission to take a short leave. He went home. Nobody seems to know what happened there. But it stands to reason that Hans demanded an accounting. Some think that Martin objected to the study of law, and may even have mentioned the monastery as a possible career. Others deny this, because it would negate the assumption that the subsequent decision to enter the monastery came as if from without and suddenly, by way of a divine "catastrophe." Luther, years later, reminded Hans of some remarks, made at an unspecified time, to the effect that the father had declared his son not to be cut out for monastic life.²³ I cannot find a better time when this could have been said than on the occasion of that impulsive visit home, and particularly in connection with the father's plans for the son's early and prosperous marriage. If Martin was already thinking or talking of the monastery, then there would have been an open clash of wills, which would provide a simple explanation for the break which was to occur. On the other hand, Martin must be assumed to have been at the time in the throes of a conflict which (as we will explain in the next chapter) must have made the idea of a marital commitment repugnant to the point of open panic. Again, we do not know whether this feeling was transmitted to the father; but we do know that the son, when he did marry twenty years later, having in the meantime taken the vows of celibacy, broken with the Church, and set fire to the world around him, publicly proclaimed as his first and foremost reason for taking a wife that it would please his father.

At the end of June Martin set out to wander back to college. On July 2nd, only a few hours from Erfurt, near the village of Stotternheim, he was surprised by a severe thunderstorm. A bolt of lightning struck the ground near him, perhaps threw him to the ground, and caused him to be seized by a severe, some say convulsive, state of terror. He felt, as he put it later, *terrore et agonis mortis subitae circumvallatus*:²⁴ as if completely walled in by the painful fear of

a sudden death. Before he knew it, he had called out, "Help me, St. Anne . . . I want to become a monk." On his return to Erfurt, he told his friends that he felt committed to enter a monastery. He did not inform his father.

Nobody, of course, had heard him say the fateful words. He himself had experienced them as imposed on him (*drungen und gezwungen, coactum et necessarium*).²⁵ In fact, he had felt immediately afterwards that he did not really want to become a monk (*Ich bin nicht gern ein münch Geworden*).²⁶ Yet he felt bound by what he considered to be a vow and began to think of the experience as a frightful call from heaven: *de caelo terroribus*. As for his automatic response, if indeed it was a vow at all, it was a highly ambivalent one. For he had called on his father's patron saint, with the intent to disobey his father; to the saint who prevents sudden death, with a promise to enter the profession which prepares for death; to the saint who makes one rich, with a wish for lifelong poverty. These and many more ambivalences crowded into this moment. According to his own report it is even questionable that his declaration of intent or wish really amounted to a vow to become a monk; he simply told St. Anne that he wanted to become one, and asked for her help. Was it his idea that she might intercede with the father? In the moment of supreme terror, did he indulge in an appeal to a motherly mediator?

Martin debated the matter with some friends, who were divided in their opinions about the binding quality of his experience. On July 17, 1505, he knocked on the door of the Augustinian Eremites in Erfurt and asked for admission. This was granted, as usual, for a provisional period. Only from behind the walls of the monastery did he write to his father.

Was this thunderstorm necessary? The professor believes that it was God's way of calling Martin away (*abgerufen*) from a glamorous career which the young man had every reason to desire. The psychiatrist assumes that the event was only the climax of an agitated depressive state which gradually had ruined the perspective of that career. The priest, however, sees the experience as a somewhat phony device to muscle into the monastic profession; the Augustinians should have known better than to fall for it.

A student of motivation cannot well ask what motivates God to

do something extraordinary; yet he may wonder what, in Martin's world, would at that moment call for an un-Aristotelian thunderstorm. The monastic profession was not an uncommon career; it was even (especially for a man of Luther's academic training) a respectable way of becoming a scholar and of eventually rejoining academic work. There must have been nearly as many priests, monks, and nuns in Erfurt as there were professors and students. The city area included, besides the Augustinians, a Benedictine, a Dominican, a Carthusian, and a Cistercian monastery. To join, Martin had only to walk a block or two from the burse of St. George where he then lived and knock on a garden door. The Augustinian was an order which sought to combine strict monastic observances with geographic closeness to centers of educational and of philanthropic need. Academically, the Augustinian monks were highly regarded; socially, they were representative of the upper and middle classes. God, it would seem, would not have had to use extraordinary means to get a monastic career launched under such conditions.

St. Paul's conversion, to which Luther's was soon to be compared, was a different matter. He was anything but a young and provincial person. Of cosmopolitan origin, he was in public life. He was not a Christian. In fact, as deputy prosecutor for the high priest's office, he was actively engaged (and engaged fully: "breathing out threatenings and slaughter") in the mission of arresting the Damascene followers of Christ. His conversion on the way to Damascus was not only immediately certified as being of apostolic dimension by God's independent message to Ananias; it also immediately became equivalent to a political act, for Paul, the prosecutor, took sides with the defendants whom he was committed to bring to justice. It was a heroic conversion.

The "conversion" of the young man in sober Saxony was anything but heroic. It committed him to being *monos*, a professional monk among many, in an honored and thriving institution. The promises of celibacy and obedience made at that time in his life can be said to have relieved him of burdens which he was not ready to assume. The one act of heroism possible in his life-situation was, in fact, circumvented: he did not go and face his father.

There is one similarity between Luther's experience and St. Paul's which can be formulated only by somewhat stretching a point. The two men, at the time of their conversions, were both engaged in

the law, one as an advanced functionary responsible to the high priest, the other as a student owing obedience to the father. Both, through their conversion, received the message that there is a higher obedience than "the law," in either of these connotations, and that this obedience brooks no delay. (This broadened interpretation of the term "law" will make more sense when we discuss the theological connotation of law as against faith in the teachings of both men.)

The dissimilarities of their conversions, however, are more significant. Both men were shaken by an attack involving both body and psyche; they were, in fact, "thrown to the ground" in more or less pathological states. Paul's reported symptoms definitely suggest the syndrome of epilepsy. They both claimed that by a kind of shock therapy, God had "changed their minds."²⁷ In Paul's attack, which was witnessed by others, Christ himself spoke, implying that, at least unconsciously, Paul had been prepared for a change of mind: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"; in Paul's case it is clear by recorded testimony what the witnesses did and did not see or hear (Acts, 9:7 and 22:9). For Martin, however, the spiritual part of the experience was an intra-psychic one. Not only were there no witnesses; but, most important, Luther himself never claimed to have seen or heard anything supernatural. He only records that *something in him* made him pronounce a vow before the rest of him knew what he was saying. His friends' conviction that he was acting under God's guidance was based on nothing but their impressions of the genuineness of his inner life. We must say, therefore, that while Paul's experience must remain in the twilight of biblical psychology, Martin can claim for his conversion only ordinary psychological attributes, except for his professed conviction that it was God who had directed an otherwise ordinary thunderstorm straight toward him. We are not in the least emphasizing the purely psychological character of the matter in order to belittle it: Martin's limited claims, coupled with a conviction which he carried to the bitter end, show him to be an honest member of a different era.

There remains one motive which God and Martin shared at this time: the need for God to match Hans, within Martin, so that Martin would be able to disobey Hans and shift the whole matter of obedience and disavowal to a higher, and historically significant, plane. It was necessary that an experience occur which would con-

vincingly qualify as being both exterior and superior, so that either Hans would feel compelled to let his son go (and that, remember, he never could and never would do) or that the son would be able to forswear the father and fatherhood. For the final vow would imply both that Martin was another Father's servant, and that he would never become the father of Hans' grandsons. Ordination would bestow on the son the ceremonial functions of a spiritual father, a guardian of souls and a guide to eternity, and relegate the natural father to a merely physical and legal status. But as we will see—and this disrespectful phrase is entirely in order here—all hell broke loose after that ordination.

Hans, of course, sensed all this and refused to be matched. Let us be blunt and say he was not going to be cheated out of his dearest investment; for he already represented that capitalistic trend in Germany which was beginning to doubt that the Church's monopoly on the other world justified her voracity about fertile lands, rich taxes, and gifted people. He could not foresee that his son would one day take leadership in these matters and arrange for the Wittenberg tea party.

The father refused permission even for that one year of probation, which is all the Augustinian order bargained for at first. He went almost mad (*wolte toll werden*) and refused all fatherly good will (*allen Gonst und Väterlichen Willen*). The mother, too, and her family, obediently swore the son off. This was gruesome enough. But then, "pestilence came to Martin's help," as the theological biographers put it. Two of Martin's brothers died. Martin's friends used this circumstance, with somewhat horrible logic, to convince Hans that he should give his oldest son to God as well. What the mother said at that point is not recorded. So Hans consented—which the professor thinks, "could suffice" for Martin.²⁸ But Martin was not one to take half a yes for an answer. He knew well enough that the father had consented in a state of mourning (with *ein unwilligen traurigen Willen*) and certainly without that total good will (that *gantzen Willen*) which was to become such a fateful concept in Martin's scruples and ruminations, and eventually also in his theological thought. The father did not mean it; and for better or for worse, Martin later became the man who gave conscience that new dimension of credal explicitness, of "meaning it."

But did Martin, at this point, really mean it himself? Some biographers believe Luther to have been theologically sincere in this experience; others believe him to have been sincerely deluded; again, others think, with Hans, that there was an element of insincerity, or, at any rate, of rebellious impulsiveness in it all—for this is what Hans must have had in mind when he later said that that bolt of lightning may have emanated from a "*Gespenst*," a ghost. I would agree a little with each of these formulations, and entirely with none. I think of the young Sioux Indians who went out into the prairie for a vision quest, dreamed in a state of ascetic trance the kind of dream which they knew was required, and after having convinced their tribal experts of the genuineness of the dream lived out with full assurance whatever career the dream had ordered them to follow—even if this career called for severe self-humiliation, or on occasion, suicide. Were they sincere? I think of the old Yurok woman who gave me the account, reported in *Childhood and Society*, of her call at the age of seventeen to the profession of shaman. She had a series of deeply disconcerting and obviously hysterical upsets and frightening dreams, all of a prescribed content, destining her against her wish and conscious will to become an honored and effective tribal doctor. Was she sincere? But what are we to think of the sincerity of the young Chinese men and women of today—heirs of an old ideology of ancestor worship—who must publicly and convincingly denounce their fathers as reactionaries, after a course of indoctrination during which their sincerity is constantly challenged and narrowed down to the proper criteria for really meaning their new devotion to "The People's Will"?²⁹ Are they sincere?

These and other questions concerning conversions and indoctrinations in young adulthood call for a special, an intermediary chapter in which we can formulate our psychological stand. All these experiences are at least convincing in their total psychological involvement—whether one calls it inspiration or temporarily abnormal behavior—in that they give a decisive inner push to a young person's search for an identity within a given cultural system, which provides a strong ideological pull in the same direction.

We are asking questions for which we are not yet ready. Nevertheless, it is possible to place Luther's experience in a sociological context. A struggle between God and a father for the son's allegiance

was to some extent a typical event in Martin's day. Erasmus, Luther's cosmopolitan counterplayer, defied his father. And Calvin (in some ways Luther's Paul) reports his struggle thus: "My father had destined me for theology when I was still a small boy. But when he saw that legal knowledge everywhere enriched those who cultivated it, he was induced by this hope suddenly to change his intentions. Thus it was brought about that I was recalled from the study of philosophy to the learning of law; but although in obedience to my father I tried to give it my faithful attention, God guided my course by the secret bridle of his providence in another direction."³⁰

For the present, let us conclude with the summary account which Luther, years later, gave of his conversion: "When I was a young magister in Erfurt, verily, I used to go around in sadness, oppressed by the *tentatio tristitiae*. But God acted in a miraculous way and drove me on, innocent as I was; and He alone, then, can be said to have come a long way [in bringing it about] that there can be no dealing between the Pope and me."³¹ Here all the elements of the experience are condensed in two sentences: a special mental state bordering on the pathological; the juxtaposition of God's deliberate interference and Martin's innocent passivity; and the whole extent of God's plan which, theologically and teleologically speaking, made the thunderstorm necessary, that is, the rift between Luther and the Pope. The conversion was necessary so that Martin could give all his power of obedience to God, and turn all his venom of defiance against the Pope. For this purpose, then, a moratorium was also necessary to provide time and a seemingly wrong direction, so that Martin (as Luther put it later) could really learn to know his true historical enemy, and learn to hate him effectively. *From Luther*

We must concede entirely that Luther, when he entered the monastery, had no inkling of the particular role which he was to play in religious history. On the one hand, he was in search of a highest good. As Nietzsche put it: "Luther wanted to speak to God directly, speak as himself, and without embarrassment."³² But in theology he also found that great and shiny evil which was powerful enough (as only the white whale was shiny and powerful enough for Captain Ahab) to draw upon itself the wrath that was in this mutilated soul. That evil was the Roman papacy.