generations and become alienated. In either case, our psychic lives have become deeply attached to the Dream.

REINTERPRETING THE DREAM

Grief is not complete until we reinterpret the essential meaning of the past so as to integrate it into our future. In this way we can preserve a sense of integrity in our personal and family biographies. To do less is to invite upon ourselves a sense of having been cheated by the past. To be sure, the anger of that can produce change—change as in conversion, with the past totally denied and a completely different future embraced. But that sort of change leads to inordinate dependency, with no remembered gratitude to give distance from and perspective upon our immediate meanings. If personal freedom and dignity are what we seek, then the self’s sense of its own integrity must not be shredded.

What would such a reinterpretation of America’s basic promises look like? The essential meaning of the Dream is its promise of personal dignity. It was this promise that appealed to millions of the Old World’s inhabitants. Yet once in the New World they found that promise not easy to realize.

There has always been another story to America besides upward mobility and individual success. It is the story of pilgrims grinding out a meager existence from a punishing wilderness in the name of religious liberty. It is the story of successive waves of immigrants discovering not open frontiers but the closed realities of religious, ethnic and racial discrimination, powerful limits imposed by robber barons and bought politicians and laws that worked for the benefit of the few. Today, it is the story of millions of working-class families whose average income remains below $9,000 a year with little in the way of job security.

This other America is the story of shared shelter more than of individual success and escape. It is the story of extended families living by the help of one another, of urban neighborhoods seeking a common decency. Equal opportunity’s ideal of personal achievement and advance has always been balanced by this other emphasis upon loyalty and mutual sacrifice. A sense of place and belonging, of being somebody with family and neighbors, has modified the panic of having to become.

This story offers a different way of remembering ourselves as a people. It is not Horatio Alger so much as The Grapes of Wrath or A Tree Grows in Brooklyn that evokes for most of us the symbols of our past. This memory provides, I believe, a way of moving into our national future with a sense of continuity. The new economic situation of required sacrifice is not new. We’ve been here before.

Moreover, we’ve learned by experience that the way to live peacefully within austere limits is by a fair sharing of the burdens and benefits of the community. This idea of fair sharing sets the basic guideline we need for social policy today. Questions of distributive justice can no longer be