El grupo paranoide

Chapter 16

Isolation

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The almost absolute confinement

> A paranoid schizophrenic male transformed his home into a besieged fortress where the family kept watch against the 'enemy' and training in the use of weapons was mandatory. A great deal of secrecy prevailed and no one could enter or leave without an examination of their credentials. A child who went out to make a purchase was interrogated upon his return (2).

> Cult groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple
> No one could leave there without a special permit, which was only granted to those who were absolutely trusted. We could not speak with the people of Guyana except in the fulfillment of a 'mission' (24).

If there is any place where the tendency toward isolation is clearly manifested, it is in those communities withdrawn from the world, lost in rural settings, in which contact with the outside can be reduced to a minimum, especially when they devote themselves to agriculture (which should allow them to depend on no one).

> Cult groups. Shiloh
> During those years Standford came to convince himself that the Tribulation had arrived and that if they were to take refuge on Mount Shiloh he needed to be self-sufficient. Shiloh was assimilated into the Kingdom of David. More properties were purchased, including livestock farms and crops. Only a self-sufficient community would be capable of weathering the Tribulation (11).

At present, and in our setting, rural communities are very characteristic of cults (evangelical or based on humanistic psychologies) specializing in the treatment of chemical addictions, given that they hold the comparative advantage, over other treatments, of making it impossible for the former addict to access their substance of consumption.

> Cult groups. El Patriarca

> The resident is removed from their environment of origin to protect them from possible relapses. A break with their surroundings that, logically, isolates them at the mercy of El Patriarca (40).

Some totalitarian societies of the last century organized camps, a kind of rural communities in which the stay was limited in time and in which rigid discipline and intensive indoctrination were practiced.

> Nazism
>
> ... The most characteristic form in which teacher training was carried out through the NSLB was the camp...
>
> In these camps, writes Rolf Eilers, each teacher, due to the type of accommodation and the daily program, was continuously in the company of all those who made up the camp; any isolation was impossible. The daily routine was subject to a strict program, which included, apart from sports training, collaborative work, lectures, communal camp duties, speeches, festivities and camaraderie gatherings. The participants were trained in a youthful way of life. They were subjected to all kinds of intellectual and emotional pressures, and, given their complete isolation from the outside world, the possibility for a critical disposition was very limited. The purpose of these camps was both the acceptance of certain doctrines and a general conversion, which was meant to change one's innermost outlook on life, to serve as a starting point for a voluntary and unconditional acceptance of National Socialism (53).

An interesting case was that of Mao's Red Guards, who, in payment for their services, were compelled to live for many years far from their places of origin, their families and their loved ones, in a kind of camps, in the countryside alongside the peasants, from whom they were supposedly to learn the revolutionary values preserved by the popular masses, yet at the same time separated from them and never truly coming to know them.

> Maoist Leninism

> The former Red Guards are fifty years old today. In the sixties they were adolescents raised from nursery school in the exclusive faith of Mao's image and the slogans of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party). Neither social control nor shared accommodation allowed for alternative moral frameworks or references — familial, personal, or religious. The range of written information was monochromatic, life was regimented and predictable, and movement was rarely permitted (41).

Sectarian groups, of course, also organize their own camps of intensive paranoid activation, with which to counteract the negative influence of contact with wider society.

> Sectarian groups. TFP
> Young cooperators and sympathizers of the Brazilian TFP who participate in a camp organized by the entity in São Paulo, Brazil (7).

A well-known sectarian group uses camps for the rapid seduction and mass immersion of curious onlookers and neophytes in the group context.

> Sectarian groups. Moonies
> Conversion usually took place during a series of work sessions organized by the church. For those who agreed to stay, a typical sequence might consist of a one-day workshop followed immediately by another two-day session and then a seven-day one. The one-day workshop runs from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and includes lectures and group discussions related to religious topics, as well as sports and entertainment that are sometimes related to religious themes. Virtually the entire day, including meals, is spent in the company of session attendees and church members (12).

An identical tendency toward isolation is evident in some IPs, who choose or aspire to pursue professions that allow them to withdraw from the human world, in the midst of nature. Or they opt for domestic seclusion.

> Querulous individuals. Clinical case
> After discharge, the patient returned to work but received a retirement pension in 1973. Since then he remained at home and had no further contact with any of the neighbors (3).

More often than not, cloistering stems from the IP's fear of being harmed or attacked, but there are other possible explanations.

> Delusion of dermatozoic infestation. Clinical case
>
> There was a grandiose quality to the complaint of another patient who shut herself in her home, gave up her home help, and believed that otherwise she would completely contaminate the city of Manchester (34).

However, the PI cannot isolate himself in his home as drastically as farming communities do.

> *Folie à deux.* Clinical case
>
> The food is insufficient; neither one nor the other decides to go out in search of provisions... (28).

> *Folie à famille*. Clinical case
>
> When two weeks later the father rejoined the family, he found the five members living in a single-room apartment, sharing the belief that they were accused of belonging to the communist party and that there was a conspiracy against them. They asked him to believe them or to leave, so he was forced to leave them and go live alone. For three years the family remained in said apartment except for some occasional outings, carried out by the mother and the youngest son, to go shopping (43).

Among domestic tyrants the tendency toward isolation becomes evident in the way they push their wives to shut themselves away in the home with arguments that, frequently, point to a distorted persecutory vision of their surroundings, a warped vision that is more or less introjected by the victim.

> Domestic tyranny
>
> Something similar happens with the family, and every time they go to visit a relative, the husband reproaches her that she is the fool of the family, since when she goes to see her parents she spends the whole day cleaning their house, cooking for them, or helping them organize their things, while her brothers and sisters are a bunch of pampered idlers who do nothing; the woman finds herself feeling increasingly uncomfortable in the face of her husband's criticism and gradually distances herself from her family. And with friends a similar

> situation arises; after having spent an evening in the company of some friends, the criticism begins: how so-and-so is a show-off who is always talking about the car he is going to buy and how much it costs, about where they are going on vacation, or about the restaurant where they had dinner the other night. The effect is the same: discomfort, estrangement, and rupture. The woman is confined to the home, a sad home where she suffers the abuse, but also where she receives small doses of affection, even if that affection comes poisoned (29).

In some cult groups, the confinement of the adept in a dwelling or room, completely isolated, constitutes a habitual punishment for those who fail to comply with the rules or waver in their commitment.

In contrast to the near-total isolation of the rural community, the camp, or domestic confinement — in which the IGP suppresses almost entirely any channel of contact with the outside world — there exist partial forms of isolation, far more frequent, and among which an infinite number of different combinations are possible in each case.

Territorial isolation

For the IGP, the question of the boundaries of *its* territories is of great importance.

> Nazism
> 3. Germanism throughout the world.
> a) The 'Jungmädel' must be able to draw, from memory, the approximate outline of the map of Germany.
> b) She must know the significance of the Treaty of Versailles and must know the zones we had to cede and to which States we had to hand them over..." (Political training program of the "Jungmädel", cited in 52)

It is advisable to clearly delimit the borders and, if possible, to barricade them so that they serve as a protective shield.

> Paranoia. Clinical case
> [...] a case in which the wife ordered her husband to bar the door and nail shut the windows of their apartment to protect her from the 'persecutors': the husband agreed... (43).

Sectarian groups. Mel Lyman

From 1968 onwards the community grows considerably. Mel, for his part, lives as a paranoid recluse in the Fort Hill house. One day, a somewhat disturbed Black man bursts into his room shouting that he is the one true god. Mel is left traumatized and orders the cult to build a stone wall around his house (6).

Paranoia

[...] one of these patients deliberately damaged property in order to attain the safety of prison (22).

It is perhaps in nationalism where the obsession with delimiting and making borders impermeable is most evident. For centuries, and until the emergence of the modern Nation-State, the idea that the roads of Europe might be abruptly cut off by State borders, with authorities able to demand documents, impose bureaucratic procedures, and even deny passage, would have been utterly inconceivable. But that is precisely what the modern Nation brought with it.

For nations, the question of the impermeability of territorial boundaries takes on even greater importance when what is at stake is the separation of ethnic groups, so that undesirable elements of other affiliations do not invade the territory, endangering the genetic, linguistic, or any other distinguishing characteristics that confer upon the national community the illusory sense of being something real.

Cambodian Leninism. Khmer Rouge

Reuter, Phnom Penh

The head of the UN peacekeeping forces in Cambodia, Yasuchi Akashi, has condemned the Maoist guerrilla group the *Khmer Rouge* for broadcasting radio calls inciting the population to kill Vietnamese people. Some 30,000 fishermen of this ethnic group fled their places of residence last May following a wave of murders perpetrated or instigated by the guerrilla that claimed at least 100 lives. Several thousand more are waiting in the Vietnamese border zone for the chance to return to fishing in the waters from which they have traditionally made their living (38).

In countries governed by Leninism, encapsulation reached even greater heights. Borders were meant not only to prevent the entry of foreign elements, but also to make it impossible

for the regime's own subjects to leave, as would likewise occur in Reverend Jim Jones's Guyanese community. In both cases, very few individuals were authorized to cross the borders in either direction. In accordance with Lenin's apocalyptic worldview, if any massive movement of people was ever to be expected, it would be solely that of soldiers, either coming from the enemy sector or directed against it. Fear of attack from the West and the opposing desire to push the iron curtain toward the Atlantic accompanied the Soviet regime at every turn.

However, the territorial emphasis is by no means exclusive to nationalisms or Leninisms, but also permeates paranoid contagion groups of a smaller size. Thus, in the plethora of urban headquarters of cult groups, it is common to observe how a zone open to the public and devoted to proselytizing is clearly delineated from a restricted zone to which access is strictly forbidden. Some political parties with cult-like profiles display similar attitudes.

> Basque nationalism
>
> Of course, 'entry into the premises of the Association [Euskaldun Batzokija, founded by Sabino Arana] is strictly prohibited to foreigners who profess another religion or who come from a nation that is an enemy of Bizkaya [Spain, by definition] (art. 27 of the chapter on 'private regulations') (48).

Interpersonal Isolation

Despite the great importance that the IGP places on the boundaries of its territories, the truth is that interpersonal isolation occurs equally in the absence of obstacles to the free movement of bodies. The IP longs for solitude and flees from others, equally avoiding relationships laden with affectivity and those in which he finds himself exposed to a situation of dependency.

> Paranoid character. Clinical case
>
> [...] suffering from a toothache, instead of going to the dentist, he writes in his diary: 'Research dentistry' (13).

Every clinician has been able to verify to what extent the IP, even while immersed in the society around him, undergoes a process of impoverishment of his social network. Some

quantitative research has likewise shown that there is a correlation between paranoidism and the loss of —at least some— interpersonal relationships.

> Paranoidism in general. SCL-90
>
> [...] 8-10 years after arrival, the 38 subjects who had had some contact with their sponsor in the United States in the previous year had a mean paranoid ideation score of 0.71 (SD = 0.68), compared with 1.14 (SD = 0.82) among the 54 who maintained no contact (*t* = 2.66, 90 *df*, two-tailed P less than 0.01) (50).

The impoverishment of social networks also occurs in mGPs.

> *Folie à famille*. Case of supernatural healers
>
> The son and daughter were in their twenties but showed no signs of wanting to leave home. In their childhood, they had been greatly troubled by other children, they never had close friendships, and their relationships with their work colleagues were superficial (31).

The victims of some domestic tyrants are compelled to break ties with their social environment.

> Domestic tyranny. Clinical case
>
> - He did not allow me to associate with anyone, I have had no friends, he has driven away any person who might feel any affection toward me..

> Domestic tyranny. Clinical case
>
> - My husband and my mother-in-law made me read letters aloud until one day he told me that I was a married woman and that the correspondence was over. He burned all my letters and postcards.

And, in the same way, it is well known that the cult adherent tends to break or diminish the ties with their previous social circle.

> Cult groups. Moonies
>
> At the request of a more senior member, I undertook a forty-day 'condition,' an exercise in self-penance: I abandoned my friends and family for forty days, without seeing them or communicating with them in any way (14).

In the majority of cases, however, it is a somewhat more gradual and unnoticed process.

> Sokagakkai
>
> The socialization process of the Society in all its aspects — social, religious, and political — seems to lead to a decrease in real attachment to the non-Gakkai environment. The data presented regarding political mobilization and the interruption of social and communicative contacts with secular society over time, all suggest that the experience within the Society tends to separate the individual member from their non-Gakkai context (51).

A research study (47) revealed that joining cult groups produces an increase on the schizophrenia scale of the Minnesota test, which would reverse after leaving the group. Among other things, the elevation of this scale reflects a tendency to avoid contact with others and to take refuge in one's own fantasies.

> Paranoia
>
> 'God is my father and the church is my mother,' said a patient who, through frequent fasting, attempted to rid himself of all earthly feelings within him and thereby achieve an intimate relationship with God. Immediately after, he withdraws from his relatives, becomes harsh and distant with them, seeks solitude to quietly immerse himself in his own thoughts, occupies himself with inappropriate reading materials that he does not understand (23).

Just as important as the impact on the quantity of social relationships is the qualitative deterioration of those same relationships. The IP practices a relational style — to which we will return later — that attaches great importance to correctness of form, that centers conversations on impersonal matters and especially on certain favored topics, and that omits the verbal and non-verbal communication of emotions and feelings, particularly positive ones.

> Domestic tyranny. Clinical case
>
> - Since we were going to move far away, a cousin of mine came to say goodbye to us and gave me a kiss. Then, upon going out into the street, he slapped me in front of my own nephew.

This formal coldness may be limited to those who are identified as enemies…

> *Folie à deux*

> Together, mother and daughter decided that the substitution of her son by the double must have occurred in 1983, when the 'bad behavior' first began... [following admission] both patients agreed to see the son but showed no positive feelings when he visited them (9).

(…) or are perceived as dangerous…

Maoist Leninism

> [After the agreements signed with Nixon, Mao decided to promote the study of English and, so that his students could practice, he eased the absolute prohibition weighing on the generality of Chinese people against speaking with any foreigner. In some southern ports, students would be able to practice in encounters with sailors from foreign ships] There were strict rules about how we were supposed to address the sailors. We were not allowed to speak with them alone beyond a few phrases exchanged over the counter of the Friendship Store. If they asked for our name and address, under no circumstances could we give them our real ones. After each conversation we had to write a detailed report of everything that had been said (standard practice for all those who had contact with foreigners). We were warned again and again of the importance of observing 'discipline in contacts with foreigners' (*she wai ji-lu*). Otherwise, we were told, not only would we face serious problems but more students would be prohibited from coming.
>
> [...] By then, our political assemblies included an examination of the way in which each person observed discipline in contacts with foreigners. It was said that I had violated said discipline because I seemed 'too interested', 'smiled too much' and 'opened my mouth too wide' while doing so. I was also criticized for gesturing with my hands while speaking: female students were supposed to keep their hands under the table and remain still (20).

(…) or it may manifest itself, indiscriminately, toward the outside world in general.

Domestic tyranny

> Among the authors who define this trait, Sonkin and Durphy (1982) make a great contribution. They argue that many of the men who seek consultation regarding the problem of domestic violence find themselves isolated. This *isolation* does not refer to the absence of contact with other people, although it is true that some reach that extreme. Men who batter tend to converse about trivial matters, about work or sports, but they cannot engage when it comes to the violence in which they play a leading role.

> Jorge Corsi (1991), when describing the *emotional isolation* of aggressors, states that 'it is a type of social isolation, linked to the affective realm'. The fact of interacting with many people or having many acquaintances does not determine the existence of a bond in which they can exchange their own problems and the conflicts that afflict them. Violent husbands do not maintain a relationship of privacy with any of the individuals with whom they interact. *Social isolation* and *emotional isolation* are found to be an 'almost constant factor' in violent husbands (8).

It must be clarified that the same forces that act to promote the detachment of the paranoid contagion group member from their previous environment also hinder the establishment of new bonds outside the group, which, obviously, perpetuates the isolation from the outside world. Let us now examine the different areas in which the deterioration of interpersonal relationships occurs.

Family of origin

> Cult groups. The Sullivanians
>
> My therapist frequently asked me about my childhood and encouraged me to talk about events that I found painful. She told me that it seemed as though my parents had not really loved me, or that perhaps they had been incapable of loving me because their parents had been incapable of loving them. She told me it would be better for my treatment if I did not see my parents for a while, just until I could understand my history better. She encouraged me to share my personal experience with my friends and to listen to theirs. My painful childhood memories were always met with applause, while the happy ones were dismissed. I came to convince myself that I had truly had an unhappy childhood and it seemed to me that my new friends were the only ones who could understand me, since their lives with their families had been just as unhappy as mine (45).

One of the facets that popular wisdom — rightly — associates with cults is that of separating those they manage to attract from their families of origin. This estrangement is usually grounded in psychological arguments (as in this quotation), religious ones (the devil acting through the family), or practical ones (the need to devote oneself body and soul to one great mission or another leaves no time to attend to anything else). But beyond the arguments, and this is a point of great interest, I have been able to verify on several occasions how the

deterioration of coexistence and emotional estrangement also occur in groups that, from the standpoint of their principles, defend the family as an institution as well as the maintenance of pre-existing family bonds. Be that as it may, the estrangement occurs, and may even reach the point of complete or near-complete severance of any contact.

> Cult groups. Children of God
>
> Margaret Rogers had been a member of the Children of God (Niños de Dios), a cult led by Moses David Berg (currently known as the Family of Love), for about ten years. Throughout that time, her two sisters and her brother had received no more than half a dozen letters from her (14).

Partner and own family

In the case of adult subjects who have already formed their own family, the encapsulating dynamic affects their relationship with it in a similar way, in the sense of a progressive dissolution of that relationship.

> Cult groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple
>
> Harris had never joined the Temple. But he did not object when his ex-wife, Linda, and his daughter Liane did so ten years earlier. As he told me, he began to worry a couple of years ago, when he noticed that Liane was growing increasingly distant from him and felt increasingly integrated into the Temple (24).

> Cult groups. Jehovah's Witnesses
>
> In the majority of couples in which only one of the spouses becomes a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses (notably when it is the woman, which is most common), judging by the many testimonies available to us, their emotional life becomes frozen and their habitual sexual activity (that which they had carried on prior to the cult episode) is visibly damaged by the cult's interference (39).

In this evolution, dialogue is replaced by arguments or by silence.

> Paranoia. Clinical case
>
> - At home I withdraw into myself and do not speak; I am unbearable.

> Paranoid personality
> [...] a clearly hostile silent distancing… (1).

And, naturally, divorce is the usual final result of *only one* of the spouses joining a cult group. A divorce that some IPs seem to arrive at by a very similar path.

> Querulants
> He continued working as a truck driver but spent all his free time at the library studying law. The injustice he had suffered and its legal implications became the sole objective of his life. Mr. A. distanced himself from his family, became isolated, and finally divorced and left at the age of 50 (30).

The IP's predisposition to divorce, which is clinical evidence, appears to have some quantitative support.

> Paranoidism in general. SCL-90
> The published literature shows that around two thirds of patients with paranoid psychosis have been married, although many are divorced, separated or widowed. This is similar to this small group of refugees with paranoid psychosis, who (with one exception) were married at the onset of their disturbance. However, in the course of the disorder 4 of the 9 ultimately ended up divorcing, as has been observed in other groups (50).

Disengagement from one's own children or the relinquishment of custody is also not uncommon.

> Domestic tyranny. Rachel's case
> He would not tolerate anything or anyone that could take me away from his side. Before we moved house, Fred wanted to force me to hand my children over to their father, Keith, as a kind of test… (45).

During the long years of civil strife, and most especially during the Long March, it was common practice among Communist women militants who became pregnant to hand their newborn children over to peasant families; Mao's own wife did so. But even after the war, the Party encouraged *irresponsible parenthood*. The demand for officials' dedication to their work was such that they were compelled to hire peasant girls to look after their children, whom they barely saw. The same behavior can be observed among the leaders of sectarian

groups who, before becoming such, devoted themselves fanatically and tirelessly to a cause to the detriment of their personal relationships with their spouses and children. And as for the IP,

> Paranoia. The Aimée Case
>
> She is married to an employee of the same company, who holds a position in P., in the Paris region. But the patient has held her position in Paris for 6 years, where she lives alone. She has a son who is being raised by her husband. She visits them more or less periodically. This situation has come about by the patient's own will; she was originally employed in the same office as her husband, and requested her transfer following her reinstatement after a period of sick leave (26).

With regard to single adults — who cannot divorce — membership in a paranoid contagion group operates in the sense of preventing the formation of stable partnerships with persons who do not belong to the group.

> Crisis cults. Lauliwasikaw (19th century)
>
> ... marriages with white people were forbidden... (25).

> Nazism
>
> I am certainly not of the opinion that requests made by our soldiers to marry foreign women should be granted favorably (except on an exceptional basis). The circumstances make such a situation entirely understandable, but despite this we must refuse to give our approval... I cannot believe in the lasting nature of such loves (16).

There are other reasons, of a pseudoscientific nature, that led Hitler to advise such disapproval.

> Nazism
>
> The loss of racial purity forever frustrates the purity of a race, whose decline within the concert of humanity occurs in an increasingly alarming manner... (17).

> Nazism

> However, as time passes, the conquerors sin against the principle of preserving the purity of blood... by beginning to mix with the primitive inhabitants whom they had subjugated, they bring about the end of their own existence as a distinct people... (17).

With great consistency, Nazism did everything possible from the very beginning to prevent this risk.

> Nazism
> It must be clarified with the Party and the Police what is to be done against the indignity of German girls who frequent contact with students of foreign races (5).

Within the paranoid contagion groups, endogamous unions within the group are permissible. But in the paranoid individual (who may be conceptualized as a *paranoid group of a single person*) only one option would remain.

> Paranoia
> [...] clear prevalence of celibacy, especially among delusional paranoiacs (27).

It is worth emphasizing once more that while in many cases the paranoid contagion group imposes certain behaviors by force (as in Nazism), on other occasions those same behaviors arise without any explicit instruction to that effect, or in response solely to veiled insinuations. The following quotations show us an invitation, concealed between the lines, to endogamous marriage and exogamous divorce.

> Sectarian groups. Hermetic Philosophical Institute
> Certainly, at the level of higher values, a loveless marriage constitutes a significant moral failing, but even more serious is procreating children under such circumstances, since they will be the ones to physically embody the disharmony of their progenitors, thus fulfilling the biblical prophecy that 'the sins of the fathers shall fall upon the children' (4).

> Sectarian groups. Hermetic Philosophical Institute
> A sexual relationship without love, produced solely by libidinous desire, will give rise to a child in whom the highest qualities of the species will hardly manifest (4).

> Sectarian groups. Hermetic Philosophical Institute

If we make the decision to bring a child into this world, we must take full responsibility for this fact, understanding what our action truly involves.
It is undeniable, however, that this requires a self-discipline that only a select few possess (4).

Sectarian groups. Hermetic Philosophical Institute

If we acknowledge that, despite all of the above, there exists a certain number of conscious and more evolved individuals than the common person, it must be understood that if any of them divorces, this will not have a negative impact on their family or their children, nor will their separation be a cause of hatred or disharmony between the spouses, but rather a matter of mutual agreement (4).

Sectarian groups. Hermetic Philosophical Institute

The truth is that, in the case of an individual of little moral stature, neither the matrimonial contract will be favorable, nor the option of divorce, nor simple cohabitation, since in all cases the family will be equally harmed or diminished in its possibilities (4).

Friendship

Social relationships based neither on marriage nor on kinship but on friendship tend equally to be limited to those persons who are found within the paranoid contagion group.

Nazism

For us the Jew was, is, and will be our enemy, whose way of being, on account of his racial composition, obliges him to be an enemy and who cannot, by his own free will, become our friend. For us there are no 'decent' Jews, that is to say, Jews who are so bad at being Jews that they can almost be compared to Aryans, for a person cannot deny his race (42).

Nazism

He who deserves our sympathy is the front-line soldier as well as the inventor who works honestly surrounded by the greatest difficulties. I will add that, even in these cases, our sympathy must naturally be limited to members of our national community (16).

Maoist Leninism

> My mother was asked to 'draw a dividing line' between herself and her friends. 'Drawing a line' between people constituted a key mechanism introduced by the communists to widen the gulf that existed between those who were 'inside' and those who had been left 'outside'. Nothing — not even personal relationships — was left to chance, nor was anything permitted to follow a fluid course" ()

In any case, contact with the outside world should be merely formal, and devoid of excessive intimacies.

> Sectarian groups. The Otto Muehl commune
> Muehl insists that the members of the commune have sexual relations with whomever they wish and whenever they wish, provided it is within the commune (45).

Formation of a global society

The isolation from the outside world and the tendency toward the exclusive establishment of endogamous bonds mean that APs constitute small *sub-societies* that allow members to live partially on the margins of the wider society in which they find themselves.

> Sectarian groups. The Sullivanians
> A short time later, I was being invited to parties held in New York, very fun parties where people danced and chatted and seemed to be having a great time. I went out with many men: for dinner, to the theater, on bicycle trips, to late-night parties. Suddenly I was enjoying an active social life in New York. My therapist suggested I live in the city to be closer to my new friends. In the waiting room of the practice there was a bulletin board with the addresses of people looking for roommates. I soon found myself living with a family connected to the group, although I was still not fully aware of this or of what it meant. I knew it was a social group: people to go out with, people with similar political leanings (somewhat radical but not quite revolutionary), people who wanted to change the world and who were experimenting with new ways of living (45).

These social networks serve at once as a highly useful instrument for proselytism and as emotional support for members who have already joined the group.

> Sokagakkai

> At the district level, NSA members form strong bonds with one another, often spending their leisure time together in addition to meeting at weekly gatherings. The NSA solves for its members the urban psychological problem of isolation. The NSA can be a substitute extended family, a small village where everyone knows you in the midst of an impersonal city (18).

Sokagakkai

> On an informal level, the bonds formed at meetings tend to carry over into daily life. Members call each other on the phone, attend activities together, eat together, and help one another during major life events such as a move or a wedding. Available to all members is a vital NSA-oriented social network in which they can take part. Of course, not everyone participates to the same degree, but a large number are quite active (18).

Isolation in these *societies within society* is reinforced by the insistence on organizing a large number of activities that leave little room for the hypothetical initiation and maintenance of other social relationships outside the group.

Sokagakkai

> The father's parents joined the Soka Gakkai in its early days and have remained faithful to this day. All their children are also avid members of the Gakkai movement. The father met his wife, also a member of the Soka Gakkai, at the company where both were employed. Both remain deeply committed to the Soka Gakkai and dedicate most of their free time to Soka Gakkai activities. The wife is a member of the Women's Division and is one of the leaders in her district. The father belongs to several Soka Gakkai organizations and often gives lectures on the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu at meetings. In the apartment, a gohonzon occupies the place of greatest honor. The family actively involves itself in every aspect of a member's daily life as described above and socializes primarily with other Gakkai members (32).

Now, although adherents tend to create their own exclusive social network, the truth is that the fulfillment of various needs (such as earning a living or education, and even leisure) can force the adherent to retrace their steps and return to broader society.

This problem is resolved, in larger APs with sufficient economic and organizational resources, by erecting their own network of educational institutions, businesses, and even leisure centers. In this way it is possible to create the conditions that allow a child born into a family belonging to a particular group to attend, when the time comes, a school belonging

to the same group, which also offers recreational alternatives, with the possibility that the child may even end up working for a company within the group. In this way, an isolation from the rest of society is produced that resembles that of a camp.

> Sokagakkai
> The opening ceremony of the Soka Kindergarten in Singapore was held on January 17 at the school in Pasir Panjang, a western district of Singapore, attended by 46 children enrolled in the inaugural class, as well as parents, teachers, and guests.
> ... The kindergarten's advisor, Mr. Kohn Kian Boon, Director General of the Soka Association in Japan, said that a network of value-creating educational institutions is being established in various countries under the Soka school system. He expressed his satisfaction that an educational environment such as the Soka Kindergarten has been established in Singapore (35).

> Sokagakkai
> The current tendency toward marriage within the Gakkai has already been mentioned, as well as the inclination (which apparently varies with activism and length of membership) to view the Gakkai as the social reference group. And although the growing role of the family as a general agent of Gakkai socialization and the possible function of the Soka Schools and Soka University are difficult to estimate, it is to be expected that these institutions will lead to greater social, kinship, and geographical ties among members (51).

Nurseries, schools, and other educational centers serve purposes beyond isolation, as they allow the indoctrination of young people born within the paranoid contagion group, as well as attracting, under the guise of education, unaffiliated youths who are potential targets of a proselytism carried out, in this case, under advantageous conditions.

A common practice is the organization of parties, outings, and recreational activities by and for group members, preferably held at the group's own headquarters or private residences.

The establishment of businesses linked to the paranoid apparatus — and well-known examples exist in our own environment — while fostering the encapsulation of members, also places in the hands of those businesses a docile and industrious workforce. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for the paranoid dynamic itself to generate dysfunctions or internal

contradictions, and contradictions with the surrounding environment, that ultimately bring about the downfall of such firms.

Finally, in the event of illness, members will be expected to and/or will prefer to turn to the group's own doctors or hospitals, if any exist.

Evidently, neither the paranoid contagion groups nor the small-sized paranoid apparatuses — the vast majority — have the possibility of forming global societies such as those discussed here, as they lack the necessary *critical mass*.

Informational isolation

> Nationalist utopia. The social contract
>
> When [Rousseau] writes his *Considerations on the Government of Poland* he does not hesitate to affirm that one of the most important means of increasing patriotism is national education: 'Upon awakening to life —he writes with great forcefulness— the child must see the homeland, and until his death must see no other. Every true republican imbibes, with his mother's milk, the love of his homeland, that is to say, of laws and of liberty' (36).

The flow of information is likewise subject to limitations. The paranoid contagion group prevents the transfer of ideas between the outside world and its adherents, who find themselves deprived of access to any knowledge other than that which the group itself provides them.

> Soviet Leninism
>
> ... Isolated from the world, we were unaware of the debates taking place outside, we did not know Antonio Gramsci, Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Bloch, or Georg Lukács, to say nothing of the other spiritual families. This did not prevent the Stalinist ideologues from claiming their undeniable superiority over the rest of the world's revolutionaries, nor from believing themselves to be the socialist 'masters of thought' (21).

Books being the preeminent vehicle of information par excellence (at least until now), a manifestation common to all totalitarianisms has been the prohibition and persecution of pernicious books, deemed worthy of the same treatment as witches: the purifying fire.

> German nationalism

> ... 'Father Jahn,' the organizer of gymnastic societies and student groups (*Burschenschaften*). He wished to be the educator of a unified Germany, beyond the reach of foreign corruption, in which literature, directed by strict censorship and purified by the flames of bonfires, would disseminate only national themes (10).

Films can be equally subject to censorship.

> Nazism
> Mr. Fangauf receives the commission to permanently withdraw American films from all cinemas in Germany (5).

Sectarian cults do not have comparable means to prevent the free circulation of books, nor can they prevent them from falling into the hands of their followers, so they have no other option but to prohibit their reading or discourage it.

> Sokagakkai
> There is a great danger that a person who orally professes loyalty to Nichiren Shoshu may mentally be influenced by Tendai teachings. As Nikko Shonin, founder of Taiseki-ji, says in his 'Twenty-Six Articles of Warning': 'Without an absolute understanding of the teachings, do not study the doctrines of Tendai' (19).

When a sufficient degree of paranoidization exists, this is a relatively easy objective to achieve, given that the fanatical followers feel no interest in any material other than that which the paranoid contagion group gladly provides them.

> Sokagakkai
> Thus the Gakkai's influence over its members should be relatively significant, especially over the more senior and activist ones, who according to the study data strongly identify with and limit their sources of information to Gakkai materials (51).

Followers suppress any reading that does not come from the paranoid contagion group to such a degree that, frequently, among the obstacles they experience when reintegrating into wider society are the difficulties in adequately understanding the written word.

> Sectarian cults. Moonies

> I read for months. For me, the most worrying question was knowing how the Moonies had managed to convert and indoctrinate me to such a degree that I could no longer think for myself. I read everything I could get my hands on. At first, the very act of reading was tremendously difficult. For years I had only read Moonie literature. I found it hard to concentrate, and there were moments when my mind went completely blank, without understanding what I was reading (14).

Reading the press can be just as dangerous as reading books.

> Nazism
> 23.b. That foreign newspapers require special permission from the Government in order to be published. They must not be edited in German" (from the NSDAP program, February 1920).

> Cuban Leninism
> As he lacks information —for example, what truly happened in Chernobyl has still not been reported here— the man tries to find out the reasons for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian war by reading old history books about the region and drawing conclusions (46).

Other mass media, being also transmitters of information, must be monitored with the same zeal.

> Sectarian groups. The Otto Muehl commune
> Among the activities *verboten* is watching television (44).

> Nazism
> Whoever listened to voices other than those he permitted was a 'radio criminal' and could end up in prison simply for listening to foreign broadcasts (5).

Economic isolation

> Paranoid personality
> [...] they have an excessive need to be self-sufficient… (1).

The paranoid personality's need to isolate itself leads them to aspire to complete *economic independence*, which would allow them to meet their own needs without resorting to others. In this way, the paranoid personality would not feel compelled to relate to anyone out of strict necessity.

However, the inherently social nature of human beings and the specialization of labor make the cost of this ideal excessive, with only a minority being willing to carry it to its ultimate consequences.

> Paranoid character. Clinical case
>
> E…, stands out for his extravagant appearance. His employers compel him to attend the consultation.
>
> He presents himself in dirty clothes and half-naked, with the appearance of a bushman.
>
> He states that they want to get rid of him, to catch him out, but that he is in a perfect state of health. He flatly denies being a drinker.
>
> He says he is embittered by family misfortunes. He leads a singular way of life: he lives in the forest on the outskirts of Paris, raising chickens and rabbits, gathering mushrooms which he eats raw, tending to himself if he has an accident.
>
> [...] Our patient says he is a 'naturian'. He wears his hair long, falling over his shoulders.
>
> From one problem to the next, he ended up building himself a shack in the forest, to which he withdrew with his family. He prides himself on being able to do without society because he is capable of doing everything on his own.
>
> - I made my daughters' clothes, when my watch breaks I don't go to the watchmaker. Thanks to this I can free myself from society. I don't need it and I demand that it leave me in peace (13).

Economic isolation is somewhat more viable in sectarian rural communities, which in some cases manage to be relatively self-sufficient.

> Cult groups. The Patriarch
>
> Self-sufficiency is always one of the milestones that The Patriarch always keeps in mind when expanding his structure (39).

Transposed to great nations, self-sufficiency is often called autarky, a goal that States attempted to achieve by imposing tariff barriers on foreign goods.

> German nationalism
>
> Very soon nationalist ideas also manifested themselves in Germany in the economic sphere, and from the nineteenth century onwards different systems conceived a national and autarkic socialism.
>
> From 1800 onwards, Fichte, in *The Closed Commercial State*, held that national independence could only be achieved if the nation were economically self-sufficient. Breaking with Adam Smith's free trade doctrine, he idealized absolute protectionism. The economy would be planned and no one could practice a trade without state authorization. Any private commerce with foreign countries would be prohibited... (10).

The autarkic ideal expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century hand in hand with nationalism, and set in motion a harmful cycle of economic isolation among States that would reach its fullest expression in Nazi-fascism and would not begin to be corrected until the second half of the twentieth century.

> Nazism
>
> The concept of autarky refers to a national economy that is largely independent of foreign countries... (49).

The primary objective of autarky, more than the hypothetical increase in general welfare it might bring about, was… not to depend on or have to relate to others.

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