El grupo paranoide

Chapter 23

Wellbeing

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Therapeutic effect

In this chapter of the book we will address a matter of undeniable interest. Paranoidization can act as a *treatment* for various mental disorders and states of psychological distress. However, in no case do these constitute definitive cures but rather symptomatic relief or remissions dependent on the paranoidization state itself. Instead, it provides the sensation of security and even and even euphoria.

The therapeutic delusion

There is a long tradition, dating back to Freud, that regards the delusion as the manifestation of a *defensive mechanism* —the *projection*— through which the psychological suffering that would result from the emergence into consciousness of certain unconscious impulses or conflicts is avoided. In this way the delusion would function as a kind of *analgesic*, which, even without eliminating the causes of the distress, would at least allow it to be reduced. For his part, Castilla del Pino (6) notes, from the standpoint of the psychology of the *self*, that the delusion fulfills the function of maintaining self-esteem by preventing collapse into depression. As this theoretical model allows one to anticipate, in clinical practice it is common for improvement in delusional activity to be followed by depressive episodes.

> Querulants. Clinical case
>
> When his delusional ideas decreased in intensity, he reacted with a depression that subsided without antidepressant medication (3).

And, conversely, it may happen that the improvement of the underlying malaise produces a decrease in compensatory delusional activity.

> Paranoia. Clinical case
>
> [...] She told me in an interview how her sensations that people were controlling her were much better at that moment than previously. I asked her why, and she responded that it was simple, that she no longer needed to be paranoid, given that she felt much better about herself (57).

The findings of the study by Lyon are consistent with this approach. The delusional patients were slightly more depressed than the controls according to the Beck scale. However, they

did not have the low self-esteem that would correspond to their depressive state but rather equal or even somewhat higher than the healthy controls.

> The hypothesis that persecutory delusions reflect a defensive attributional style that protects the individual from feelings of low self-esteem was broadly supported by the data collected in this study (38).

In the case of some faith healers, the instillation of paranoid beliefs plays a central role in their treatments, which would be effective for all kinds of ailments and mental disorders. The "delusional" ideas would be implanted in the patient *from outside*, but would produce the same subjective improvement.

> Faith healing. Clinical case
>
> Mr. C., a former bricklayer turned professional healer, owes his success to his ability to identify and resolve the true cause of the problems of the patients who come to him. He attributes symptoms to poisonings carried out by some woman. The poisonings are never carried out by men or by the female members of the family. The healer asks his patients to provide him with a list of the women in their neighborhood, with first name and first surname (nicknames will not do). The healer has the ability to identify, among the women appearing on the list, which one has been the cause of the affliction. He provides his patients with amulets and protective charms and, through his mental power, is capable of making all the evils caused by the malevolent woman turn against her. The patient heals by transferring his ailments to the one who caused them.

In this and other cases, the delusion or paranoid belief involves the initial identification of a *culprit* for the malaise, whether it be the neighbor woman or an eternal, impersonal cosmic law. Once the one responsible has been identified, it is possible to confront them and defeat them definitively. The healer or the cult guru know how.

> Nueva Acrópolis
>
> Any discomfort is considered to be due to bad *karma* that warns that one must follow the path set by the *guru* (46).

The following quote suggests that it is anger — one of the components of hostile behavior — to which the therapeutic effect might be attributed.

The paranoid relationship. Tizón

Both Mr. P and Mr. B suffered intense bouts of anxiety, with relational and somatic manifestations, whenever they had to remain in a group, whenever they had to collaborate with someone in work or social or occupational situations

[...] *'when I get angry because I catch the others trying to put one over on me, that's when I'm at my best* (58).

Therapeutic sectarianism

Sokagakkai

The majority of the several hundred members of the Soka Gakkai whom I interviewed over the past decade say that they were suffering from some physical or psychological problem or problems when they joined the Soka Gakkai. The usual sequence of events is that of a member of the Soka Gakkai who approaches a distressed person to tell them that the 'true Buddhism' of Nichiren can put an end to the pain. After considerable persuasion, the sufferer joins the movement. In time, the power of the 'true Buddhism' takes effect and the pain disappears (42).

The state of paranoidization induced by the APs seems to bring with it at least one beneficial consequence, namely: the possibility of a notable improvement in the mental disorders and psychological distress that the individual had previously suffered. This is suggested by the countless personal testimonies that appear in the publications of the cult groups, and is often reported by adherents who attend specialist consultations.

Sectarian-Leninist groupuscule. SLA

Fahizah said that Cin had saved her life when she was completely in the grip of drugs, living in misery and contemplating suicide. She had to struggle hard to overcome her own bourgeois upbringing. 'But it was worth it', she said (19).

Scattered *case reports* also appear in psychiatric journals.

Cult groups. Jehovah's Witnesses

> It seems that drugs and pharmaceuticals are necessary for Rafael when he can identify himself through them: 'I am a drug addict,' or 'I am drug-dependent.' When he achieves another identity: 'I am a Jehovah's Witness,' drugs cease to interest him (36)

The most relevant systematic research on the therapeutic effect of cult groups is, without doubt, that conducted by Marc Galanter, administering to the members of two different groups the *Neurotic Distress Scale*, a self-administered scale developed by himself in which some of the most common psychological disturbances were assessed (anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, ideas of self-reference…). In both studies, the members applied the scale to themselves by responding to how they were feeling at that precise moment, and were likewise asked to administer it to themselves by recalling how they had been feeling just before joining the group and shortly after entry. Acknowledging the evident methodological limitations of the work, the results obtained with both groups are as follows:

1) The vast majority experienced an improvement in their "neurotic distress."

> Cult groups. Moonies
> The majority of those surveyed (91%) gave responses indicating lower neurotic distress in the period immediately following conversion (16).

2) This improvement tended to be maintained over time…

> Cult groups. Moonies
> Continued militancy also seemed to favor a certain stability in the psychological state, due to the similarities in mean neurotic distress scores right after conversion and at the time of the study. After an average of nearly 3 years, the majority of subjects acknowledged a decreased level of distress (16).

3) (…) but not in all cases

> Sectarian groups. Moonies
> Some subjects reported an increase in distress over the course of their militancy [...] Members who had reported a greater improvement in their neurotic distress at the time of conversion tended to return to their previous level of distress throughout their militancy (16).

4) A notable decrease in alcohol and drug consumption was likewise observed.

With regard to mGPs, these could exert the same healthy effect on psychological distress. Virtually all authors point, for example, to the low self-esteem of abusive men.

> Domestic tyranny
>
> Associated with all the characteristics and traits described, there is generally observed, although not in an evident and manifest way, the *low self-esteem* of battering men (9).

> Domestic tyranny
>
> [...] the lack of a personal experience of security is one of the salient characteristics of these men, which needs to be overcompensated through a firm, external, authoritarian attitude. The latter has as its objective to plug the internal weakness that at bottom exists (9).

The unlimited exercise of power and violence in their reduced domestic feuds at home would allow domestic tyrants to compensate for their low self-esteem. Its loss, on the contrary, plunges them into despair.

What improves

What are the mental disorders that improve with conversion and with militancy?

First of all, alcoholism.

> Sectarian groups in general
>
> There are several publications on remissions of alcohol abuse patterns [...] when individuals convert to a cult (15).

The crisis cults, which flourished among peoples subjected to processes of acculturation, had at least one positive facet: curbing a phenomenon, alcoholism, widely generalized as a response to the dissolution of traditional social and cultural systems.

> Crisis cults. Handsome Lake (18th century)
>
> The effect produced by Handsome Lake's teachings on the Seneca was profound and lasting. Indian traders were astonished to see how their rum was rejected and sugared barley water was requested in its place (29).

In addition to alcoholism, APs can also reduce the abuse of other types of substances.

Cult groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple

... he was thirty-six years old and introduced himself as a former drug addict from Detroit who had joined the People's Temple to free himself from his addiction, and who stayed until the very end (28).

Cult groups. Guru Maharaj-Ji

The group that responded most emphatically to the question 'Before you received the Knowledge, to what extent did drugs influence your life?' (34%), stated, in response to the question 'To what extent has receiving the Knowledge changed the role and use of drugs in your lives?', that 'It has changed it completely' (72%).

Propagandistic figures and methodological errors aside (which there are, and fundamental ones at that), this data —which must be measured in the sociological context of 1973— can give us pause to reflect on the momentarily de-habituating effect (not necessarily a rehabilitating one) of some intense cult dynamics (50).

Sokagakkai

Perhaps, an even more exemplary story is that of an athlete we will call BB, who was part of the Japanese gymnastics team at the Helsinki Olympics, but on that occasion he injured his Achilles tendon. The wound he suffered was so serious that he had to withdraw not only from the Olympic Games, but also abandon competition entirely. He had devoted his whole life to sport and this horrible accident made him lose all hope. He began to drink, and was constantly getting entangled with the ruffians he drank with. It was not long before he began to abuse the sleeping pills he was taking, and this addiction led him to a psychiatric hospital. He was discharged shortly afterwards, but immediately returned to the sleeping pills and had to be hospitalized again. This process repeated itself until BB discovered the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. He decided to seek support in Buddhism. Then, motivated by his new faith, he decided to give up his habit. He endured six days of the torture of withdrawal... (22).

Paranoid militancy is also effective on other addictive behaviors unrelated to toxic substances.

Sokagakkai

Gambling, I simply quit. I quit it (21).

In the same way, mood can improve with the paranoidization induced by APs.

> Sokagakkai
> When he sought guidance, Toda told Osabe that, while he had not succeeded much in life up to that point, he had not been defeated in faith, and that this was an important spiritual achievement. These words of encouragement allowed him to overcome the depression he felt as a result of his failure in business (23).

Just as reducing suicidal impulses…

> Sokagakkai
> From that day forward, a ray of hope began to shine in a life previously dominated by the desire to die. Pessimism and disappointment faded away as he practiced the new religion. Being a ship captain, he had all his time to invoke daimoku, hour after hour. He attended all the dialogue meetings and joined the others in propagation activities (23).

(…) or the psychopathic behaviors fading away.

> Sokagakkai
> A former convict with a history of extortion, robbery, drug use, and rape told the following story: 'My nickname was "The Bear." I was overcome by an urge to slash whoever I saw. I was cast out from the gang. All the tough guys, thugs, and gangsters fled from me.' After leaving prison and before joining the Gakkai, the man explained that neighbors avoided him and he was fired from several jobs. 'It is for this reason that I am so grateful to the Gakkai members. They are the only ones who treat me like a human being and do not concern themselves with my past record. Now I am a *chikubu-cho* [district chief]; where in the world would a position of such responsibility be given to a former convict like me who behaved like a wild animal? (60).

That males with unstable personalities may find balance by transforming into petty tyrants, is a possibility compatible with the therapeutic effect of paranoidization.

> Domestic tyranny. Clinical case
> - I had a disorganized life. I am grateful to her, because she helped me get organized, she was more put-together (9).

Not only could they serve –the paranoid contagion groups– to reduce the suffering caused by mental disorders, but they would also be of great help in the distress brought on by existential crises or extreme situations.

> Sokagakkai
>
> Separated from a tyrannical husband, she had to earn a living for herself and her four children. The death of her eldest son due to hemophilia plunged her into despair. Some friends told her about Nichiren Shoshu and she began attending dialogue meetings. Although she had no theoretical knowledge whatsoever, the teachings seemed reasonable to her and she soon joined the organization. Shortly after beginning to practice she felt that life had become more bearable (23).

> Cults in general
>
> ... Nicholi, for example, studied a series of relatively well-adjusted high school students who reported feelings of considerable existential despair before their conversion. He stated that he found an increased sense of purpose and an improvement in peer relationships after the conversion experiences (15).

Therapeutic paranoid contagion groups

The marked improvement that the induced paranoidization can bring about in individuals with mental disorders explains the existence of some paranoid contagion groups directed specifically at patients with psychiatric conditions. In our context, these are mainly associations specializing in the treatment of addictions. They are groups that, in every other respect, do not differ at all from other cults. They always endow themselves with a peculiar theory and relatively original therapeutic interventions. What they fail to realize is that the improvements they achieve depend not so much on their exclusive treatment methods as on their cult-paranoid character. Like other cults, they demand a lifelong commitment, a demand that in this case is reinforced by the evidence of the very high percentage of relapses that occur after leaving the group.

There are also cases of groups whose central theme is not therapeutic (but rather religious, philosophical, etc.) that create "subsidiaries" specially dedicated to treatment. The patients are admitted to isolated houses in rural settings where, in addition to being materially unable to obtain their drug, they are subjected to the group's therapeutic practices and an intensive

indoctrination program. In this way, the therapeutic subsidiaries of the cults prove useful for proselytizing activity and, at the same time, serve as a supplementary source of income.

The majority of groups, evidently, have no therapeutic purpose whatsoever, nor do they create branches specializing in the rehabilitation of drug addicts, but even in this majority of paranoid contagion groups "non-therapeutic" there exists a clear awareness of their healing potential.

> Cults. Jehovah's Witnesses
>
> With all the problems people have these days, it is no wonder there are so many stress-related illnesses. A grandmother from Canada describes her situation and how she finds relief.
>
> 'I am raising an 11-year-old grandson, and recently took on the responsibility of caring for a 14-year-old granddaughter. I suffer from nerves, but I wanted you to know that when I feel depressed, I not only pray to Jehovah, but I also do something else that is very beneficial.
>
> I put aside what I am doing and lie down or sit down to listen to the Kingdom Melodies tapes.
>
> I close my eyes and, while I listen to the music, I clear my mind of other thoughts by trying to recall as much of the lyrics of the songs as I can. When I get up, I feel much better and can carry on again'.
>
> You too can benefit from these healthful and refreshing musical compositions. Each of the six cassettes, Kingdom Melodies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, costs only 300 ptas., and each recording lasts approximately one hour. Request the cassettes listed below by filling out the enclosed coupon and mailing it (48).

Improvements in mental problems during wars have also been described, surely in relation to the paranoidism transitory that these entail.

> Suicide rates [...] decrease when employment is high and during wars (25).

In any case, peoples unacquainted with epidemiological science already had knowledge of the healthful effects of wartime activities.

> Warriors
>
> In traditional societies, wars were sometimes declared with no other purpose than to overcome grief. The Kwakiutls of the Northwest Pacific Coast would often carry out raids to hunt heads after one of their own had died a natural death.

> It did not matter whether the relative had died of illness in their bed or at the hands of the enemy. Head hunting was called 'killing to dry one's eyes' and was a means of getting even by transferring the grief to another family (13).

One must not overlook a fact that limits the importance of the psychotherapeutic effect. The improvement is not definitive, and only it is maintained insofar as membership in the group and the state of induced paranoidization are prolonged. Paranoid contagion groups are not useful, in any case, as a *curative* treatment.

> Cult groups. El Patriarca
> And, of these young people, at least 64% relapsed into drug addiction after leaving the El Patriarca therapeutic community (50).

Security

The following effect is closely related to the therapeutic one: the IP claim to feel a great sense of *security*.

> Paranoia
> A symptom that regularly accompanies querulous mania is the considerable increase in self-confidence (27).

Indeed:

> Factor QIV of the 16PF test
> [...] secure… (26).

> Querulous individuals. Clinical case
> - The truth gave me the strength to say things.

> The paranoid relationship. Tizón

> *In the analytical situation, that relationship could be observed because, when he felt persecuted by me and defended himself against my 'persecution' by belittling me, wounding me, or threatening me, he could be seen to be truly 'secure', organized, master of a broad and elaborate language, with greater cognitive capacities...* (58).

The increase in confidence is also a characteristic of other pathologies of the paranoid spectrum. By their manners and their words, IP individuals project an enviable sense of composure and solidity. They show no hint of doubt. Their actions are the correct ones and their categorical assertions, accurate. They prefer to make their own decisions for themselves.

> Factor QIV of the 16PF test
> Self-sufficient, resourceful, prefers their own decisions (26).

In the same way, membership in AP entails a reinforced sense of security.

> Sectarian groups. TFP
> Members and cooperators of the TFP at the Basilica of Luján. Head held high, serene gaze, cheerful countenance; an attitude born of a vigorous Faith, of peace of conscience and of trust in the protection of the Most Holy Virgin (8).

> Nueva Acrópolis
> One feels safe in the group, with the strength that comes from uniting around a banner (46).

> Sectarian groups. TFP
> When I met the group I felt great respect. It was the first respect of my adolescence. They spoke with firmness, with confidence in God and in his power that I had never heard before from a priest (55).

Some leaders have a particularly developed capacity to make their followers feel safe.

> Nazism
> Always, when I hear this voice (Hitler's), I return home shaken. I am like one who has been able to see himself, as he ought to be and as he is. This voice awakens the conscience and guides it toward the good. It indicates to everyone not only the general objective, but the

> objective of each one. But this is not all; it gives courage for this objective, strengthens the will and gives it confidence in its own strength; it invigorates these strengths. It is a companion, a shield, a magnet, a bright star in the darkness" (Walfgang Brügge, quoted in 62).

But the presence of the charismatic leader is not indispensable.

> Sokagakkai
> Alongside material achievements, active members of the Gakkai find that the context of the zadankai alters their lives. Its enveloping atmosphere of intimacy, enthusiasm, and confidence, in which the participant shares their problems with other believers, generates a sense of security (60).

The main difference between the self-confidence of the IP and that of the AP follower lies in the fact that the latter feels secure only insofar as he is embraced and protected by the group, that is, to the extent that he is able to *fully trust* the group, to merge with and submit to an entity that he sees as grandiose and omnipotent. Sometimes, and not only during wars, it is veritable human tides that, losing their freedom, seem to find their security in totalitarianism.

> Nazism
> To have a goal in life, the conviction that life can have a meaning independent of revealed religion, which has disappointed us; this is the meaning that the Führer reveals with irresistible force of attraction... Such justification of one's own existence, just as the sense of moral worth that accompanies it, is also appealing to the masses... (62).

The AP indoctrinates its followers with the conviction that it is possible to feel fully satisfied and secure if they give themselves over entirely to the group: firstly, by adopting its beliefs, etc.

> Sokagakkai
> But self-confidence based solely on the support of the group is fleeting. Rather than a sense of security derived from the fact of being a member of a group, the individual needs a firm foundation that allows him to progress through the strength of his own beliefs even when he is completely alone. Where will he find this foundation? I am convinced that the answer

> lies in stabilizing one's thoughts and philosophy through a sincere and devoted study of the Buddhist teachings of Nichiren Daishonin (24).

But just as important as obedience or blind belief is the act of placing one's full trust in the group or in its leader.

> Sectarian groups. C.E.I.S
> ...trust in the guide must be total and nothing bad can happen to us (49).

> Maoist Leninism
> We must have confidence in the masses, we must have confidence in the Party. These are two fundamental principles. If we doubt them, we will be able to accomplish nothing (40).

The AP is seen as a kind of protective shield, behind which one finds oneself sheltered from the projectiles launched by the enemy. On the contrary, outside it the individual is defenseless.

> Sokagakkai
> ... the nation that slanders True Buddhism will be deprived of the protection of the guardian deities and will face disaster (23).

In this way, there is no reason to fear the future. The AP, without even genuinely committing to anything concrete, offers a diffuse guarantee that nothing will stand in the way of future well-being and happiness.

> Sokagakkai
> Most of you are still too young to have wealth, but you can be absolutely certain that you are wealthy people by virtue of the fact that destiny secured your future (24).

> Nazism
> ... Baldur von Schirach said: "Every *pimpf* already carries the marshal's baton in his backpack. It is not only the leadership positions in the Hitler Youth that are within his reach, the doors of the government and the party are also open to him. He who from his earliest days has fulfilled his obligations, has been diligent, loyal and brave, need not worry about the future." (Goebbels, cited in 59).

> Sokagakkai
>
> The ideal work is that which one enjoys, that which suits one, and that which does good for society. It will be easy for you to choose, since you can trust in the Gohonzon, the fundamental Law that will endow you with unlimited vitality to study and improve yourselves. If you are faithful and devout in the veneration of the Dai-Gohonzon, and if you study and fulfil your work without sparing efforts, one day you will surely find the right work (23).

The PA becomes, as we have already said, the armor protectory against the attack of other human beings…

> Nationalist utopia. The social contract
>
> The very life they have consecrated to the State is constantly protected, and when they expose it in its defense, what else do they do but give back to it what they have received from it? (51).

> Sokagakkai
>
> Try to recover everything you can, even though you may not manage to get anything back. But even so, do not think that invoking daimoku will be useless to you, even if you have lost your savings. I cannot know exactly how, but faith produces benefits. And you must feel the conviction that, since you were once capable of saving so much, one of these days you will receive this money from somewhere. Forget the savings; consider them lost. Carry on with your practice, with complete devotion. Work diligently, save. You will never be defrauded in this way again, and your new savings will remain intact (23).

(…) and in the face of the onslaughts of illness.

> Crisis cults. Lauliwasikaw (19th century)
>
> They were to have no more than a single dog per family, and the Creator would give them new medicines... (29).

In this way, the AP, detached from the real world and levitating in its own universe of idiosyncratic concerns, fosters a *carefree attitude toward material problems*.

> Sokagakkai

> Then, you will understand that tonight I was telling you the truth in Osaka. Do not fall into the obstacle of doubt. Accept this faith, and you will be able to stop worrying in the future (23).

> Sokagakkai
> But now let us return to the present. Each of us wishes to be understood, although at the same time each of us keeps something to himself. This is where I come in. I understand all of you better than anyone. Thanks to my understanding, you can devote yourselves to your religious duties without worry. It is my concern to ensure that your abilities and aptitudes are made the most of (23).

The adept displays behaviors lacking in good sense, and even reckless ones, which stem from a carelessness and an excessive self-confidence. Irresponsible behaviors are likewise characteristic of paranoiacs.

> Paranoia
> [...] lives beyond his means... (27).

The recklessness of the IPP leads him to simply abandon all his possessions…

> Crisis cults. Keekhwei: Ramkokamekra prophetess (20th century)
> Furthermore, she promised those most generous in their offerings future wealth. Trusting in these rewards, the indigenous people sold most of their possessions, mainly horses and firearms... (53).

> Delusion of grievance
> Their defective judgment and instability drives them to embark on reckless ventures, to squander their fortune, to become enthusiastic about chimerical projects or inventions (54).

> Sectarian groups. A Pentecostalist indigenous community in the Yucatan
> [...] the divine instruction to burn personal property (17).

> Crisis cults. The Melanesian cargo cult (20th century)

> [...] school and work would no longer be necessary. Such was his charisma that property and money were destroyed by those who had fully believed in his teachings (5).

(…), to reject jobs or to abandon their profession.

> *Folie à deux.* Clinical case
> The girl is offered a position as a governess in Poland; she turns it down because her absence would harm the success of the enterprise (31).

> Sectarian groups. Universal energy
> According to the account given by the family of an adept, he abandons work at his restaurant to shut himself away meditating in the bathroom for half an hour during peak customer hours.

> Crisis cults. Overá, Guaraní leader (16th century)
> These, believing in their prophecies, refused not only to work on behalf of the invaders, but also to cultivate their own plantations, in order to devote themselves exclusively to ritual dances and songs (53).

> Delusion of grievance
> [...] abandoning his profession, without concern for the future or for his true interests, wholly consumed by his thirst for revenge... (54).

Excessive self-confidence, recklessness, manifests itself not only in what the IPP leaves behind, but in the reckless actions he undertakes.

> Reformers
> [Referring to the 'premorbid' characteristics of these subjects] (…) the lack of foresight that blindly embarks on ventures that can lead to tragedy with little concern for the final outcome (11).

LPs also lend themselves to risky acts of folly…

> Messianic movements. The messiah of Yemen (12th century)
> His influence is such that it ends up unsettling the authorities. Classic script: he is arrested by the police and brought before the Arab king who rules Yemen. The sovereign asks him

whether he truly obeys the word of God. Our man, sure of himself, answers in the affirmative. Can he prove it by means of a sign? The messiah, without flinching, then pronounces these words: 'Cut off my head, and I will return to life!'.

It is not hard to imagine the Muslim king's astonishment. He nods and orders that his head be cut off. An executioner approaches, raises his saber… and decapitates the messiah of Yemen (4).

(…) whose consequences may be paid for by his followers.

Nazism

The situation could not have been more anguishing for Germany on the morning of that April 21, 1945. In the East, from the Baltic to the Balkans, they had to face five groups of Soviet armies. No fewer than five million men pressing along a front of 3,000 kilometers. From the West, the Allies were sweeping aside everything standing in the way of their advance toward the Elbe with more than two million soldiers. In Italy, with the Gothic Line broken, the capitulation of the Axis was imminent. Germany was not only fighting at a human disadvantage of one to three, but the shortage of weaponry, fuel, and ammunition was growing ever more dire, and, above all, the Allies held absolute mastery of the air. In that situation, the only coherent course of action would have been to capitulate, but Hitler was not, precisely, a sensible man.

On April 20 he had turned 56, and from those days there remains the description of a General Staff colonel: 'Aged, stooped, with a puffy face of a sickly pinkish color, but his gaze was as clear and calm as ever, though perhaps harder than I remembered. His voice remained rough and steady…'.

Indeed, Hitler was a human wreck who dragged his feet when he walked, grew so fatigued that he lost his breath climbing five steps, and suffered terrible tremors in his left arm and even in his leg on that same side, yet he continued to trust in his destiny, in the providentialism that had always guided his decisions. The war would change course, the new weapons that would decide the victory would arrive, and for that to happen, all that was needed was to buy time. That is why he ordered Numantine resistance and senselessly refused to withdraw troops from isolated positions: they would have to stay there, in Norway, in Denmark, or in Courland, to support the victorious counterattack that would soon take place.

And, in case it was necessary to gain a little more time, on his birthday he sent most of his collaborators to the Bavarian and Austrian Alps to accelerate the preparations for the

alpine fortress, the 'impregnable redoubt' in which they would hold out until the new weapons arrived that would deliver victory (56).

Exaltation

Erotomania. Clinical case

When asked whether she 'would like to marry him', she denies it, but appears radiant, as she objects that it would merely be a matter of studying his character before saying yes, and that, moreover, it is not the woman who must declare herself first (7).

Delusion of grievance

Frequently, their exaltation, their attachment to utopias that they seek to bring about by all means, makes them dangerous (fanatics of every kind, mystics, anarchists, regicides and tyrannicides) (54).

The literature on APs, and the autobiographical accounts of adherents and former adherents, suggest that militancy is often associated with a pleasurable elevation of mood. There are sectarian groups in which an air of beatitude seems to permeate the atmosphere, the followers wear perennial smiles and give every sign of the most perfect happiness. As the Canadian psychiatrist Levine reminds us (33), the attitude toward the examiner of the most typical cult adherent is one of distrust or open hostility. A second group of adherents use the interview as an opportunity to proselytize their ideas, display propaganda leaflets, etc., which cannot but prove disconcerting. But there would be a third group, the one that interests us here, in which an attitude of excessive closeness predominates — beatific, with hypomanic undertones, though without the characteristic infectiousness of the bipolar patient. This exaltation is nothing other than the group correlate of the hyperthymic states that Kraepelin had already observed in paranoia.

In the psychiatric literature, paranoid exaltation was linked by some authors to the disturbance that characterizes the expansive phases of bipolar disorder, that is, to mania and hypomania.

Erotomania. Clinical case

Although reticent, appears as slightly hypomanic; this is also a common trait (7).

Delusion of grievance

The anomalies in their behavior have another cause: 'their thoughts and feelings are activated by a manic force' says Schüle, and that is also Magnan's opinion. Their need for dispute is one of the driving forces behind their actions. Intellectual excitement remains more or less immovable in them, with paroxysmal episodes; moments of calm or depression are occasional (54).

Although classical authors also highlighted some differences.

Querulants

There is a certain *intellectual excitement* which is not clearly a flight of ideas, but something approaching it, to such a degree that some of our masters have been able to speak in this regard of intellectual mania (11).

Paranoid character

[...] one can observe, in situations that do not always appear reactive, moments of mood exaltation, with hyperactivity, psychomotor overexcitement, but without playfulness, nor flight of ideas... (30).

Indeed, paranoid discourse can be exalted, verbose and hyperbolic, but it does not reach the point of disintegrating in the manner of manic discourse; here is an example:

Italian Fascism

In its beginnings, fascism was not a chapel, but an arena; not a party, but an agitation. Today it is a party, a group, a militia, a corporation. And that is not enough, for it must also be a new way of life. At present, there must be Italians of fascism, just as during the Renaissance there were Italians of humanism and Italians of Latinity. Only by creating a new way of life shall we pass on to posterity as a page of history, and not as the leaf of a newsletter.
And what is that way of life? First and foremost, it is courage, intrepidity, love of danger, repugnance for comfortable 'bread-and-butter thinking' and for cowardly pacifism. It is being always ready to dare, both in individual life and in collective life. It is abhorring all that is sedentary and all that is routine. It is having, in human relations, the utmost frankness. It is

direct, clear, straightforward conversation, as opposed to clandestine, vile and anonymous clamoring" (Benito Mussolini, quoted in 20).

Paranoid writings also reveal the same exaltation.

Persecuted-persecutors

Not only do they write many letters, lengthy memoranda, endless complaints to all authorities, pamphlets against their enemies which they often have printed to distribute or even post up, but these writings, numerous, diffuse and of inordinate length, contain the statement of the same facts and the same details repeated incessantly [...] The words are written in large or small letters, upper or lower case, often underlined, in whole or in part, adorned with figures, with varied signs or with arabesques colored in red or blue ink, surrounded by quotation marks or enclosed in parentheses, often separated by series of dots, or followed by question marks or exclamation marks (47).

Terminology and subjective experience

The subjective experience of exaltation/euphoria is expressed in a set of terms that appear repeatedly in clinical descriptions and in the literature on paranoid contagion groups. Let us examine what these are.

1) "Enthusiasm".

Nazism

... German men and women! We are experiencing the most enthusiastic rebirth of the German people under the sign of the swastika" (Peter Schmidt, cited in 20).

Italian Fascism

We have created a myth; the myth is a belief, a sincere enthusiasm that, in order to exist, needs no reality whatsoever, for it is mere impulse, a hope, faith, spirit" (Benito Mussolini, cited in 41).

Sokagakkai

It was a warm and rainy day, and the event had begun shortly after the hour when most young people got off work. Thus, among those present one could see all manner of dress, but each and every one of them displayed the same enthusiasm (23).

Maoist Leninism

What he feared was that the enthusiasm of the masses that had driven the great leap forward would cool (12).

Maoist Leninism

What we need is an enthusiastic yet serene state of mind... (40).

Crisis cults. Keekhwei: Ramkokamekra prophetess (20th century)

On the day the girl was born, the hero would return to restore justice on earth. Excited, the Ramkokamekra hastened to spread the news through the various villages of the tribe... (53).

2) "Passion", "ardor" …

Paranoia

Although they do not usually show any conspicuous mood disorder, they are immediately seized by a state of passionate excitement when discussing their judgments... (27).

Falangism

Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las J.O.N.S. wants a new order, set forth in the preceding principles [...] Its style will prefer the direct, ardent and combative" (Primo de Rivera, José Antonio. "Norma Programática del Movimiento", cited in 20).

Sokagakkai

Of course, I place great hope in the contributions that those individuals who, acting in many and different fields, have trained their eyes to see the truth may make toward securing world peace and happiness, individuals who burn with the fire of faith (24).

Sokagakkai

Referring to the study of Daishonin's writings, the second President of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, gave the following guidance: 'When I read Daishonin's writings, instead of trying

to understand each word and phrase, I try to feel a great compassion like the Buddha's, his splendid conviction, his passionate spirit to save and protect people, and his noble and ceaseless effort to achieve kosen-rufu. When I read the Gosho, his spirit penetrates my heart like a blazing midday summer sun. A vehement passion like red-hot iron begins to emerge from my chest. At times I feel as though a spring were boiling within me, or as though a resounding waterfall were flooding my being (61).

3) "Energy", "vitality" …

Sokagakkai

- Following Toda's guidance, despite the bleak outlook, I performed gongyo with complete devotion morning, afternoon, and even at midnight, and I participated in all the activities I could. Soon I felt a great vitality rising within me. Then, to my surprise, I received an advantageous order to manufacture a monthly batch of spare parts with a profitable profit margin (23).

Paranoid personality

[...] who at the same time are energetic... (1).

4) Joy…

Sectarian groups. The Patriarch.

"... Hallelujah, Glory to the day,

Of this immense joy

[...]

Lucien is with us,

He guides us in our life" (44).

5) Happiness…

Nature fanatics. Clinical case

Our patient is, manifestly, a libertarian, but his naturism bursts forth with fervor amid his resentments. He spends hours of delicious happiness when, having reached the summit of a mountain, he turns around and sees amid the valleys the blossoming nature bathed in light; he

has intense visions of the places through which he has passed, and his capacity for recollection and evocation are proof of his powerful admiration. He does not feel comfortable in cities where, he says, 'the human effort of those who built the palaces weighs heavily upon him'. He was nonetheless greatly impressed by the Colosseum, but it is the vast open spaces, the fresh air, the charm of a beautiful shaded path where one breathes deeply in the light of a sunny morning, that our *agoraphilic* prefers (11).

Querulants. Clinical case

He described himself as 'never happier than when I am attacked, as it gives me a purpose in life' (52).

Sokagakkai

A strong member experiences the sensation of finding himself 'in rhythm' with the world. I began to sing not for material things but for truly great changes within myself. Consequently, it took me a long time at first to see the benefits. But after six months of singing, I made a decision that was truly central to me. Afterward, in a consistent way, I have been obtaining those great things every day of my life. It does not always seem as though it will be for the best, but in some way I have learned how to face my situations and be truly happy whatever happens to me. My most recent benefit is that of rhythm. When you sing you enter into a real rhythm. Things seem to happen at the right moment (21).

Nazism

Our camp community was a tiny model of what I imagined as the People's Community. It was a perfect model. Never, before or after, have I lived in any other similar community... We all strove to be altruistic and generous. Living that model of a popular community, with such an intense feeling of happiness, caused an optimism to form within me to which I clung obstinately until 1945. Based on these experiences, I believed that the example of our camp would one day be allowed to expand to infinity. If not in the current generation, surely in one of the future generations" (Melita Maschmann, cited in 62).

Cult groups. Children of God

> [...] But we are happy and we are always laughing, singing and even dancing as we praise the Lord!... And it is this same joy, happiness and obviously loving fellowship, which is so attractive to others (43).

In fact, APs show themselves convinced that they and only they can provide happiness. This certainty accompanies the adepts throughout their militancy, often against all empirical evidence. The abundant literature of APs never tires of reminding adepts and potential proselytes how happy they are.

> Sokagakkai
> -Happiness is absolutely assured for those who abandon false religions and accept True Buddhism (23).

> Sokagakkai
> The scholars chosen by NHK may have studied the doctrines of the so-called established religions, and may have been influenced by 'London Buddhism,' as Toda used to say, but almost certainlythey were unaware of the vivid happiness experienced by the members ofthe Soka Gakkai who applied the teachings of True Buddhism to everyday life. For Toda, the broadcast program would be a kind of shakubuku (23).

> Cult groups. Jehovah's Witnesses
> How do we attain happiness through the book of Revelation? We do so by unraveling the meaning of its vivid signs or symbols, and acting in harmony with what we have learned (2).

Now then, to unravel the Apocalypse one need only know how to listen to the authentic interpretation that has been revealed solely to its Witnesses directly by Jehovah. Therefore, the happiness that the book provides can only be enjoyed upon prior admission into the JW church.

Contagious joy can also spread within large populations, as happened during the prelude to the Great Leap Forward and in its early stages, before the famine dampened spirits.

> Maoist Leninism
> The popular masses have never been as animated as they are now and so full of audacity and combativeness (40).

It is quite inexplicable that some abused women report being happy, yet this is what happens.

> Domestic tyranny. Clinical case
>
> Some days she would arrive at the market later than usual, with heavier makeup than normal that hinted at several bruises, and a pair of sunglasses through which she gazed upon her stormy life. And yet even so, she said she was happy. That her husband was a good father, even though he had a bit of a bad temper, like the one in the song about the little bunch of violets, but it was because he loved her very much (37).

6) "Ecstasy" ...

Taken to its fullest expression, enthusiasm transforms into ecstasy. Traditionally, *ecstasy* is a term with predominantly religious connotations and refers to the state of rapture experienced by the mystic in the presence of the ineffable.

> Mystical delirium. Clinical case
>
> Every Friday she joyfully submits to a prayer that lasts three hours —the three hours of agony! — during which she feels all the sufferings of Christ crucified; but her sufferings soon transform into an infinite beatitude.
>
> Everything becomes happiness in her mystical rapture; she never feels scruples or anxiety; she feels the euphoria of the certainty given to her by her perpetual love (11).

But the truth is that experiences of extreme joy are not a territory reserved either for the mystic or for religion. Some secular LPs are capable of awakening those very same states among their followers.

> Nazism

> The French ambassador to Germany, Robert Coulondre, describes in the following way the success of Hitler, of Baldur von Schirach and of all the others with their appeals to youth: 'Tens of thousands of boys and girls, in their brown and white uniforms, are spread across the steps of the gigantic Olympic Stadium in Berlin... Necks crane, eyes shine. One can feel the inner emotion that stirs these young people, the religious passion that overwhelms them. Baldur von Schirach announces the Führer as John the Baptist announced the Messiah. When Hitler appears —late, as always— a kind of mystical ecstasy stirs the crowd, and the first cries that are heard, before he pronounces his creed, sound like sobs. This fanatical youth will attack us on the Maas (62).

True ecstasy, that in which the experience of happiness surpasses the highest levels, runs its course with a certain *disconnection from one's surroundings*.

> Reformers. Assassins of heads of state
> Assassins of heads of state never seem to be improvisers, but when they read their works or recite them from memory, they experience a beatitude close to ecstasy, and Guiteau, of whom Cullere speaks, at the time of his trial had come to completely abstract himself from the environment in which he found himself in order to attain the rapture he enjoyed while declaiming his oration on the apostle Saint Paul (11).

7) Other terms.

> Sokagakkai
> They had been designated leaders of the philosophy of life capable of bringing happiness to humanity: the young people trembled with dignity and pride, and the sense of mission made them vibrate (23).

> J.O.N.S
> The pages of Ramiro Ledesma –wrote on an anniversary the late writer Celso Collazo– are that precious, straightening, illuminating message that young people always require and yearn for, the one that makes them see, the one that boisterously opens their consciousness, the one that galvanizes their hearts (32).

As often happens with emotions in general, the adept of the paranoid contagion group finds it difficult to speak of their intense experiences of exaltation, euphoria or ecstasy, and may attempt to do so through poetry.

> Sokagakkai
> At two in the morning on July 9th, the day after the elections, I was flooded with such a powerful emotion about the future of Soka Gakkai that I had to express it in a poem: ... (23).

In poems such as this one:

> Nazism
> We drank your name in secret
> exchanging, hidden, hurried words.
> For us it was like young dry wine,
> that only gladdens, without intoxicating" (Mirko Jelusich, cited in 62).

War

It is completely contrary to common sense that war can unleash —among those who take part in it— experiences of euphoria and ecstasy, given its deadly and devastating effects. But this is what happens.

> Nazism
> In any case, what is undeniable is that war was for Hitler an experience of religious intensity. In *Mein Kampf* he claimed to have felt 'swept away by an ecstatic enthusiasm' when the war broke out (13).

> Nationalism
> Shortly after the end of the conflict [referring to World War I], the American psychologist G.E. Partridge observed that in war, despite its acknowledged horrors, an 'ecstatic' mood had dominated. Drawing on the work of early twentieth-century German psychologists, Partridge enumerated, in a manner that today cannot help but seem quaint, the various 'ecstatic' aspects of war: heroism, the enthusiasm of 'participation in great events,' or the intoxication of victory (*Ksiegestrunkenheit*), the 'joy of overcoming the pain of death,' and, as a summation of all those overwhelming emotions, 'social intoxication, the individual feeling of being part of an

> organism and the sensation of losing oneself in a superior whole.' The excitement of being part of an enormous crowd, of abandoning everyday responsibilities to take to the streets, of witnessing 'great events' such as the declaration of war; all of this was a fine source of 'ecstasy' for millions of people who would never come to see the fighting (13).

Even those people least predisposed, *a priori*, to the ardors of war would end up finding themselves swelling with warlike enthusiasm.

> Nationalism in general
> Almost no one managed to maintain their composure in the face of the nascent hostilities. Rainer Maria Rilke felt the need to write a series of poems extolling the war; Anatole France volunteered to enlist at the age of seventy; Isadora Duncan recalled having been 'all aflame' with the war. Socialists rallied under their various national flags, forgetting, overnight, the 'international working class.' Many feminists, such as the English Isabella Pankhurst, abandoned the struggle for suffrage to devote themselves to militant jingoism, contenting themselves with organizing women in support of the war effort. 'The war is terribly exciting, but I cannot go on living through it,' wrote a British suffragist. 'It is like being drunk all day.' Even some pacifists, such as the German novelist Stefan Zweig, felt the temptation to set aside their scruples and join the great 'awakening of the masses' brought about by the war. In India, the young Gandhi urged his compatriots to enlist in the British Army; and even Freud briefly lost his perspective on the situation, as has already been noted, and 'surrendered all his libido to Austria-Hungary' (13).

This instinctive, reflexive response to the certain catastrophe that a war always represents is probably mediated by the collective paranoidization arising from the perception of a serious and imminent threat.

By definition, war is a matter of nations and states, and an individual cannot be in a state of war. But there are parallels. The PI tends to establish a hostile relationship toward individuals or groups in their environment with whom only two major responses are possible: flight or attack, the equivalent of war. Well then, as Tizón reminds us with his psychoanalytic terminology:

> The paranoid relationship. Tizón

> It is very important *to manage to insert one's feces / persecutors into others,* a conscious and unconscious objective that, if achieved, often makes one feel a hypomanic emotion of *triumph ("I've screwed you")*… (58).

Hyperactivity

If we now direct our interest from the area of emotions to behavior, the most striking feature, which to a large extent also reminds us of mania, is *hyperactivity*.

> Querulants
> The intense and tireless struggle in pursuit of truth, the apparently unlimited energy and the often heightened self-importance may resemble a manic state, consequently creating problems of differential diagnosis (39).

> Factor QIV of the 16PF test
> [...] vigorous, strong-willed, headstrong… (26).

We have already discussed paranoid hyperactivity in the chapter on hyperhierarchization, so we will not dwell on it further here. In any case, it should be remembered that this hyperactivity differs from the manic kind in that it is directed toward a clearly defined goal.

> Delusion of grievance
> [...] There is no fundamental difference in this regard between a bitter legal battle to obtain redress for a denial of justice, whether real or imagined, or such a seeker of the philosopher's stone who squanders his energy and fortune in the vain pursuit of laboratory work, or such a dreamy sociologist whose combativeness is employed in spreading his theories and pursuing their realization (54).

In sectarian groups, one of the objectives toward which members tend to strive tirelessly is proselytism. As a matter of curiosity, mention should be made of the *sexual hyperactivity* so common in jealous husbands, which they frequently impose or attempt to impose upon their wives.

> Jealous ones
> The desire to harm often coexists with an increase in sexual desire... (14).

The hypersexuality of the jealous person stems from the need to prove his manhood. The jealous person would lend to his sexual acts that component of *duty* (the duty of the male) that other forms of paranoid hyperactivity possess.

Euphoric contagion

The emotional exaltation of the member of the paranoid contagion group has a notably contagious character, and thus increases especially during group meetings, all the more so the more well-attended these are. All paranoid contagion groups make efforts to periodically gather their followers, and whoever does not participate ceases to belong, *de facto*, to the group.

> Sokagakkai
>
> In the same article the then-President Ikeda states, 'Discussion meetings are successful only when people feel so stimulated that they leave the meeting with a feeling of enthusiasm (21).

> Sectarian groups. Moonies
>
> A world where people treat one another with love and respect,' I thought to myself: 'How idealistic these people are!'.
>
> I enjoyed the stimulating conversations and the atmosphere of enthusiasm of the meeting (18).

Sometimes one might think that the inducer of euphoric experiences is a particular technique or activity, rather than emotional contagion.

> Sokagakkai
>
> I thought the group was somewhat strange, but I agreed to try the chanting. They managed to carry me to the highest heights. I bought a gohozen, married Nancy and remained in the group for more than five years (18).

Totalitarian movements studied and also applied techniques aimed at provoking states of mass euphoria and ecstasy.

> Fascism
>
> The unprecedented atmosphere of fascist meetings impressed many observers in the nineteen twenties and thirties. All mass movements used symbols and various means to arouse

> emotions, and it might be difficult to establish that the symbolic structure of fascist meetings was entirely different from that of other revolutionary groups. What seemed clearly different, however, was the great importance given to meetings, rallies, parades, visual symbols and ceremonial or liturgical rites, which in fascist activity had a central character and a function that went beyond what was found in left-wing revolutionary movements. Their aim was to envelop participants in a mystique and a community of rites that appealed to the aesthetic and the spiritual as much as the merely political (45).

> Fascism
>
> Typological description of fascism
>
> [...] Importance of the aesthetic structure of meetings, of symbols and of political liturgy, insisting on the mystical and emotional aspects (45).

> Nazism
>
> Flags, cheers, brass bands, marching columns, mass demonstrations at the sports palace, in Nuremberg and Bückeberg, bonfires, torches, banners and dazzling lights, the entire arsenal of these 'stimulants for provoking states of mass ecstasy', formed the basis of their propaganda (62).

Now, chants, torches, and rituals produce -by themselves- little or no euphoric effect when performed by a single individual; the group must gather for contagion to occur and spirits to rise.

In the generation of states of collective enthusiasm, the LP also plays a central role, endowed with a charisma that allows him to act as a genuine *emitting source* of euphoric contagion.

> Nazism
>
> At first he spoke hesitantly and timidly, as if searching for the right words to formulate his ambiguous thoughts. Then, suddenly, his speech gained momentum. I was awestruck. I listened. People began to stir. I felt, alternately, cold and hot. A flame pierced through me. It was a command. In that moment I was reborn. I knew which path to take!" (Goebbels, cited in 59).

The charisma of the LP does not operate solely through his speeches or words; his actions can produce the same impact.

Sectarian groups. Baba and his Family

In fact, surrender to Baba became the central spiritual goal of the Family's members. Devotees said they experienced ecstasy when struck by the guru (10).

The euphoria of the follower overlaps with the feelings of love and solidarity we have already discussed in previous pages. But these comforting bonds of solidarity, associated with the exaltation of the spirit, do not go hand in hand with any personal relationship, and they even occur between perfect strangers. They are authentic *emotional mirages* that vanish as soon as the paranoid euphoria subsides.

Nazism

Although I am very tired, I cannot fall asleep. The events that have taken place during the day have stirred me with such enthusiasm that, despite the lateness of the hour, I cannot help but take up my diary to write down what has so profoundly affected me...

We were surrounded by a magnificent panorama as we entered the city. The streets were a veritable forest of flags. In every house the proud standards of Germany were flying. Garlands and a profusion of flowers decorated the streets. There was joy everywhere...

Toward the end Hermann Goering rose again to deliver a passionate speech to us. His call for the freedom of Germany rang out like a prayer for the redemption of our people from any foreign despotism... After singing the national anthem, we all sat around the fire and sang our songs. Goering entered the circle and stood upright. It was a glorious sight, with the hero surrounded by the solstice fires. His face was plunged somewhat into darkness, as the flames did not reach him from the front. I was fortunate enough to find myself seated directly behind him. With sudden resolve I leapt toward him and held my torch above his head, illuminating his radiant face. A great moment then came for me: he turned and thanked me. My happiness was complete...

Meanwhile I noticed that an SA man had positioned himself at my side... He looked at me with a joyful expression and bright approval of my enthusiasm... I will never forget those hours. His eyes penetrated to the very depths of my being, his gaze was powerful, piercing, but in no way intrusive. I felt the path of his eyes in the very depths of my heart, and I believe it would have been impossible for me to keep secret anything he might have wished to know about me..." (Gudrum Streiter, cited in 20).

To conclude we will say first of all that, as with heroin, the euphoric effect is characteristic mainly of the early stages of membership and tends to diminish with the passage of time.

The American humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow placed the *peak experiences* at the pinnacle of human motivations, encouraging the development of a countless number of therapeutic-spiritual techniques and movements that combined the achievement of "personal growth" with the provocation of *peak experiences*. It was Lifton who noted that such experiences could have a less brilliant side.

> Ideological totalitarianism itself can offer man an intense peak experience (34).

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