

El grupo paranoide

Chapter 15

Cohesion

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Huddling

A propensity shared by all paranoid contagion groups is that of organizing events in which followers gather together in a reduced physical space.

Crisis cults. The Puget Sound Shakers (19th century)

"There he promised to turn four women into angels by giving them wings, to resurrect the dead and perform other shamanic miracles if other tribes from the Skokomish reservation attended his sessions. The first assembly lasted an entire week. The meetings frequently went on from six in the morning until midnight" (44).

Necessarily, the duration of these meetings is brief, but, as a counterpart, they are usually given a periodicity so that they may be transformed into a routine.

Sectarian groups. TFP

"The 1st National Meeting of TFP Correspondents and Sympathizers is held in São Paulo. With a growing number of participants, these meetings will be repeated over the years" (14).

Following this same tendency, all nationalisms and Nation-States, probably without exception, establish festivities in which citizens are called upon to enjoy mass events.

Nazism

"...May 1st is declared by Hitler 'National Labor Holiday' and is celebrated with gigantic political demonstrations, the likes of which Germany had never seen. In Berlin, one and a half million people take part..." (87).

Although paranoid contagion groups tend to schedule and give periodicity to their sessions of collective huddling, on some occasions the behavior arises spontaneously, without any planning on the part of the leadership.

Nationalism

"Although the people of Great Britain had opposed participation in the war as a whole until it was declared, at that moment the impassioned crowds took to the streets and surrounded Buckingham Palace for days and days. In Berlin, the masses poured into the streets 'as if a human river had overflowed its banks and flooded the world'" (22).

Paranoid contagion groups place great importance on the number of people they concentrate at these events, and so they work hard to achieve the largest possible attendance. It is not uncommon for attendance to be mandatory.

Sokagakkai

"In the summer of 1974 we expect to gather some three hundred thousand people at the main temple Taiseki-ji" (38).

The huddling sessions of paranoid contagion groups are stimulating for followers, inducing states of euphoria and collective exaltation, and they typically serve as a reinforcement of militancy. They are also useful in fostering proselytizing activity. Attendance at these gatherings sometimes produces an impact on curious onlookers and neophytes that catalyzes their full integration into the group. In Hitler's words:

Nazism

"Assemblies of great crowds are necessary, for when the individual seized with the desire to enlist in a new movement, and fearful of finding himself alone, attends one of them, he receives there the first impression of a large community, which exerts an invigorating and stimulating effect on most people. They submit to the magical influence of what we call 'crowd suggestion.' The desires, the longings, and the vigor of thousands of human beings accumulate in the thought of each one of those present. A man who comes to one of these assemblies full of doubts and hesitation, leaves them inwardly strengthened; he has become a member of the community. No member of the National Socialist movement must ever lose sight of this" (33).

The two main variants of huddling sessions are the rally, in which leaders address the group from a stage, and marches.

Irish nationalism

"During 1827, when his movement grew, O'Connell decided to try it personally. The opportunity was a by-election in Clare the following year. For the first time O'Connell, as a candidate, was able to present himself publicly and legally as the leader of a mass movement. He began to address enormous assemblies that came, not only from all over the territory of Clare but from the rest of Catholic Ireland. Later, in the early 1840s, one of these rallies totaled more than one million men, women and children –the largest political gathering up to that moment in the history of the world–" (39).

The holding of military marches during great national holidays is an almost universal practice in Nation-States, which –despite the insistence on emphasizing their differences– resemble one another so closely. In states of more intense collective paranoid exaltation, civilians too are called upon to take part in mass marches, displaying their allegiance to the homeland or the leader in a disciplined manner.

Nazism

"... At the center of Germania there was to be an Adolf Hitlerplatz where, on the first day of every May, one million workers could march in parade..." (80).

Maoist Leninism

"[During the Cultural Revolution] Aided by the PLA and free transportation, furnished with the Little Red Book, countless groups of adolescents competed in the intensity of their ideological crimson and took communion in their devotion to the Great Helmsman. The apotheosis was the parades of millions of Red Guards in Tiananmen, under Mao's gaze, waving their book in unison and shouting their slogans" (65).

It is within the early fascist movement that there arose the strange theory that through marches and street disturbances the general will is expressed more authentically than through the election of representatives.

Fascism

"...fascism aspires to achieve intense popular involvement in politics, and its own political image is built upon various direct and mass forms of action, such as marches, demonstrations and street fights" (10).

For their part, some APs are also not resistant to the organization of marches.

Sectarian groups. TFP

"On the afternoon of January 3, 1992, the city center of São Paulo witnessed a spectacle that caused great impact: a parade with 2,300 participants, displaying the banners and capes characteristic of all the TFPs and a large number of signs and placards" (15).

In huddling sessions, music and the intensive use of identity visual symbols are usually lavished. Shouting is also common, sometimes in unison, sometimes anarchic.

Meetings, as we have already noted, are necessarily limited in time and cannot be too frequent. However, APs always set in motion the means that enable frequent encounters among their followers, even if in less well-attended meetings.

Sokagakkai

"Almost every day, various dialogue meetings were held in one part of the city or another" (37).

On the other hand, APs make intensive use of distance communication technology to compensate for the lack of physical closeness.

Sectarian groups. TF

"At least once a month, all Spanish followers hold a "general call"; they gather at a headquarters and establish telephone contact with the Founder, whom they listen to through loudspeakers" (62).

Sokagakkai

"At the second general assembly of SGI-USA held on January 27 at the 'World Peace Ikeda Auditorium' in Santa Monica, California, Soka Gakkai International president Daisaku Ikeda emphasized the importance of compassion in Buddhism and the spirit of protecting every person.

[...] The interventions were broadcast live via satellite to members at 62 locations, including the Universal Amphitheater in Los Angeles, where 6,000 members had gathered" (23).

In this way, through the media, attendance at meetings experiences, in a certain sense, a spectacular increase.

Personal and residential proximity

Patients with erotomaniac delusions aspire to enjoy the proximity constant presence of their loved one, with the misfortune, in this case, that the desire is not reciprocated.

Erotomania

"A permanent affective state drives these abnormal individuals to draw ceaselessly closer to the object of their passion, and it is in this sense that they have been considered persecutors; they are, indeed, but with an integral beatitude that prevents them from being persecuted. The patient we observed remained three years without declaring herself, but in the end it was stronger than her, her passion spoke and acted. Not content with going to confession to the priest she loved, she wrote him numerous letters inflamed with the most ardent love, she watches for his presence and attempts to draw close to him by every possible means, to chat with him.

She stations herself for entire hours in the places where he might pass, she waits for him with tireless patience near his home. As soon as someone comes to see him, she quickly rushes after him to see him and perhaps brush against him.

She then attempts to embrace him, to huddle against him; neither the outbursts of the man who is the object of her love nor his threats can stop her" (19).

The need for closeness, on the other hand, is reciprocated in *folie á deux*, which leads to unusual situations.

Folie à deux. Clinical case

"[...] has attended school rarely, has not been compelled into any kind of learning. The mother and daughter live in close relation on a small pension paid to them by a well-off relative; they live in the same room, sleep in the same bed and never part from each other" (47).

Just as the most paranoid *Hmong* refugees tended to reside in close proximity to other *Hmong* refugees, followers of APCs are inclined to fix their residence around the group's headquarters. Living so close to one another provides them with security, facilitates personal interactions and contributes to creating a universe separate from the broader social environment (even without physical barriers to demarcate it).

Moving up one more rung in this dynamic, the adherents of some APCs are housed in shared dwellings.

Sectarian groups. *Set Free Christian Fellowship*

"In *Set Free* the greatest emphasis was placed on the idea that everyone should live in community. However, at that precise moment my wife and I had sold our house and begun living in an apartment. Phil constantly pressured us to give up the apartment lease and move into the *Set Free* housing. At that time they had twelve buildings housing around two hundred people" (25).

Cult groups. Moonies

"When I was an adept, the common practice after this final program was to ask recruits to donate the money from their bank accounts, to move into the Moonies' house and to become full members" (30).

Cult groups. A Pentecostalist indigenous community in the Yucatán

"[...] An attempt at communal life was made, with women and children moving to the temple and settling in it" (28).

It is clear that what underlies this propensity to live together –beyond any possible pragmatic motives– is the need to group together, to not distance themselves from one another. This need is also manifested

to an extreme degree in paranoid contagion groups, where even temporary separations come to feel intolerable.

Folie à deux. Clinical case

"She refused to be placed on a different ward from her daughter and warned the staff that she would not cooperate if her request was not met" (17).

Folie à deux. Clinical case

"Mrs. A. believed that a mother and her son lived above them, identical in appearance but opposite in behavior. The couple had the same surname but spelled differently, and consequently were easily confused with one another. The imaginary mother was harsh and cruel, and the child very wicked; they were stealing their place. John accepted all these ideas and said that he had heard the couple shouting and that he had seen them and crossed paths with them on the staircase. He feared that they might cause problems for him or his mother, and he clung to his mother, not wanting to be separated from her" (29).

Folie à deux. Pauline and Leontine X

"[...] and the two were transferred to the Toulouse asylum. There it was impossible to separate them, as they fell into such a state of despair and agitation that it became necessary to leave them together" (73).

Folie à six. The case of the Austrian hairdresser

"[...] resisted separation to the point of physical confrontation" (20).

Since closeness is a matter involving more than one person, the member of the paranoid contagion group not only draws near to the other members, but also tries to get them to do the same and not to move away. A demand that can take on violent overtones.

Domestic tyranny. Rachel's case

"During the following months, Fred began to change. Confidence turned into anxiety attacks and blind dependency. He couldn't let me out of his sight. Our businesses and investments depended on my expertise and constant supervision, but his demands on my time and attention led to their ultimate ruin. His fondness for drink increased, and he had difficulty getting out of bed in the morning and going to the office. He didn't want me to leave his side. Any suggestion, question, or attempt at independence on my part provoked his sudden and fearful fits of rage. His ability to shatter my nerves with his fury, cruelty, and way with words left me paralyzed" (78).

Spirit of unity

Nazism

"The official photo of the Führer... was to appear in all schools, offices and public departments of the Reich. Its text reads: One people, one Reich, one Führer!" (87).

The paranoid contagion group sees itself as a compact mass, without fissures, unbreakable, and that maintains its monolithism against the onslaught of any disintegrating force.

Fascism

"Referring to fascism, Breuille writes: '...society ceased to be regarded as a fragmented group of private interests, united only by the State, and was seen rather as a unity...' (10).

Sokagakkai

"[...] our organization, which, although it is made up of many different people, is one in its spirit" (38).

Nazism

"The political unity of the present State is the unity of three members: State, Movement, People.

[...] Each of the three words: State, Movement, People, can be used alone to define the totality of the political unit. However, each of them also designates a particular aspect and a specific element of this totality. Thus, the State can be considered in the strict sense as the static political part; the Movement as the dynamic political element, and the People as the apolitical side, which prospers under the direction and in the shadow of political decisions.

[...] Especially the Movement is both State and People, and neither the current State nor the German People of today would therefore be conceivable without the Movement" (70).

Why is group unity so important? The main reason that paranoid thinking adduces is effectiveness, for example, in the struggle against the external enemy or in proselytizing activity.

Maoist Leninism

"Only with the unity of the Communist Party can the unity of the entire (working) class and of the entire nation be achieved; only with the unity of the entire class and of the entire nation can the enemy be defeated and the national and democratic revolution be brought to completion" (51).

Nazism

"Against international capital there is only one means: national unity" (Adolf Hitler, in a conference delivered on April 27, 1920).

Sokagakkai

"If we all strive together in unity, our capacity multiplies collectively and we are capable of achieving unthinkable challenges. Let us unite from now on, and let us immediately set ourselves the goal of converting two hundred new families this month" (37).

But there are other reasons. The experience of forming part of a solid and indivisible mass is, for many, a comforting experience.

Sectarian groups. El Patriarca

"We have already shed our tears of rage while thinking ourselves powerless in the face of such inhumanity, but you see, today we are happy, we are united, we have the example of all our friends who have given their lives..." (11).

The complete unity of the group is both a perception that it has of itself and a goal to be achieved, which is why the leaders exhort their followers to strive to attain it.

Sokagakkai

"I appeal to all of you to strengthen the bonds of faith that unite us and so that with a new sense of unity..." (38).

Sectarian-Leninist groupuscule. SLA

"Teko again stressed that he, Yolanda, and I had to be the very image of unity and solidarity for everyone on the outside" (31).

And, indeed, they frequently succeed in achieving this goal, so that unity is maintained even a) in the face of the most flagrant internal contradictions, or b) when the group undergoes transformation and drastically changes its principles or its way of acting. Let us look at an example of each:

Cult groups. Jehovah's Witnesses

"In the judicial records of the proceedings against Jehovah's Witnesses (Douglas Walsh case, Scotland, 1954), the interrogation of Hayden C. Covington, legal counsel of the cult, is transcribed in the following terms:

- If a member of Jehovah's Witnesses realized on his own that that prophecy (the second coming of the Lord in 1974) was wrong and said so, was he to be disfellowshipped?, the cult's attorney was asked.
- Yes, if he said so –Covington replied, confidently– and continued to persist in creating disorder, because if the entire organization believes something, even if it is wrong, and someone else begins, on his own, to try to impose his ideas, then there is disunity and disorder... Our purpose is that there be unity." (63).

Cult groups. The community

"When, years later, the activity of La Comunidad became very difficult due to the accusations of cultism to which it was subject, and taking advantage of a change in social trends, the group had no qualms whatsoever about abandoning the apoliticism they had championed from within La Comunidad, in order to, from the end of 1983 onward, transform itself into the Humanist Party and, lulling the former to sleep, reconvert its ranks into political activists" (63).

In both cases, the followers prefer to remain in the group rather than abandon it, even at the cost of sacrificing their own consistency.

Monolithic unity requires that there be no differences of opinion among the members of the PCG, that is, that everyone thinks the same thing.

Nazism

"Only one truth must be transmitted, one mood, one virtue" (18).

Maoist Leninism

"The new campaign [1955, to eliminate hidden counter-revolutionaries] had been unleashed as Mao's reaction to the behavior of some communist writers, especially the celebrated literary figure Hu Feng. It was not that these individuals were necessarily in disagreement with Mao from an ideological point of view, but they conveyed an element of independence and a capacity for individual thought that the leader found unacceptable. He feared that any kind of independent reflection could lead to a situation of non-absolute obedience to his doctrine. He insisted permanently that the new China had to act and think as a single entity, and that it was necessary to adopt rigorous measures to maintain the unity of the country and prevent its possible disintegration" (40).

However, it is not enough for the members of the group not to defect or think for themselves. For the unity of the group to be prolonged over time, it is necessary that dissensions and internal confrontations be reduced to a minimum. This, then, appears to be the consequence of group paranoidization.

Nationalism

"... National movements enable the relaxation of internal tensions thanks to the idea of common national interests [...] ('We are all in the same boat,' reads a Slovak slogan...)" (55).

In nations, patriotic exaltation reduces internal tensions, which becomes even more evident in armed confrontations against other nations. It is a facet of nationalism well known. Group paranoidization produces that same pacifying effect in smaller-sized groups.

Crisis cults. Keekhwei: ramkokamekra prophetess (20th c.)

"Enthused, the ramkokamekra hastened to spread the news throughout the various villages of the tribe. All old disputes were forgotten..." (69).

Crisis cults. The Ghost Dance (19th c.)

"The movement spread rapidly across the plains between 1889 and 1891, creating a millenarian excitement among many tribes. At the height of the movement, thousands of Indians from previously hostile tribes came together in the dance grounds, dancing together for days or even weeks" (26).

Nevertheless, the threat of disunion never disappears entirely and so the paranoid contagion group fosters an attitude of permanent vigilance against that danger which comes from within the group itself. Any crack that opens up must be repaired promptly.

Nazism

"One of the main concerns that the organization must have consists in ensuring that no motive for disunion capable of provoking divisions that weaken its work is introduced into the solidarity of the movement..." (33).

The unity of the group is founded on the acceptance of a single centralized authority, a single thinking head whose decisions and ideas are obeyed and believed without question, following chains of command delimited with precision.

On the contrary, the appearance of cliques or autonomous centers of power constitutes a serious threat to monolithism. To prevent their emergence, nothing serves better than prudent prophylaxis.

Sokagakkai

"Possibly in an effort to anticipate the appearance of groups at middle organizational levels that could evolve into sources of competing interests, aims, or even power, the Gakkai looks unfavorably upon spontaneous horizontal meetings of leaders at any level, in the Komeito as well as in the Society. There seems to be a conscious policy of disapproval of any meeting not held under higher Gakkai auspices and thus within official control [...]" (82).

Obviously, totalitarian societies will tend to reject the system of political parties and electoral contests, viewed as a harmful source of dissension and disunion. It is neither admissible nor coherent for the leaders and citizens of a perfect society to confront one another, either verbally or physically. Single-party rule and single command seem preferable for preserving unity.

Fascism

"Antiliberal. Fascists oppose the idea of the State united by law and politics organized in a pluralist manner through Parliament... Party politics seems to them divisive and petty, undermining the strength and unity of the nation" (10).

Soviet Leninism

"But it soon became clear that the Bolsheviks did not want to share power with another party. When the Left SRs [the clear winners of the 1917 elections] opposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, under which Lenin withdrew from the war at an enormous price, and renounced participation in the government, the Bolsheviks heaved a sigh of relief, and on July 6 and 7, 1918, they annulled them as a party, proceeding to carry out mass arrests and deportations, sending them to prison and concentration camps" (81).

French Nationalism

"The Brumaire coup took place in response to a desire for effective authority. The propaganda of the victorious Bonapartists attacked the elected assemblies and praised undivided authority. The inevitable consequence this brought about was a profound transformation in the concept of representation. The expression of popular sovereignty through the right to vote, already battered and manipulated under the Directory, was reduced under Napoleon to the symbolism of plebiscites and the few indirect elections by a suffrage limited to the wealthy and educated. Elected representatives were stripped of all legislative authority, and were only convened for consultative purposes during brief periods" (85).

For SPs, the risk of disunity does not come solely from political parties, but from the aggregate of associations and entities that make up a modern society. It is advisable to limit their independence so that these elements do not function as fully autonomous entities, but rather as well-meshed pieces of a

single machinery. Companies, associative entities, religious organizations... all must be integrated into their corresponding place within that stony whole that is to be the Nation-State.

French Nationalism

"After the fierce persecutions by the Terror in France and by the counter-revolutionaries in all other countries, Freemasonry reemerged, with its various cults, during the Directory. Under Napoleon, Freemasonry was absorbed into the official structures and, like the rest of the state organizations, was authoritatively centralized under a single rite: the deist and rationalist obedience to the Grand Orient" (85).

Moreover, revolutionary France compelled each and every one of the official religions to organize themselves into departments superimposed upon those of the public administration. However, the "administrative placement," so to speak, within the organizational structure of the State is not the only thing at issue, nor even the most important. What really counts is the obligation of religious organizations to work in coordination with the rest of the nation toward the achievement of the latter's objectives, especially in critical moments.

Nationalism

"Nationalism takes on more openly religious overtones in times of war or the threat of war [...] On the other hand, religious authorities generally lend themselves to supporting the war effort and contribute to its sacralization. During the feverish stage of enthusiasm unleashed by the Great War, the Bishop of London exhorted the English thus..." (22).

In smaller groups, the risk of disunity will stem less from associations than from individuals. It is upon them that the responsibility falls to avoid internal conflicts.

Sectarian groups. TFP

"The group imposes "chivalrous treatment" among its members. No allusions to personal flaws, arguments, or shouting are permitted. Physical aggression results in immediate expulsion" (62).

Sokagakkai

"A third problematic area concerns the idea known as *onshitsu*. Any negative expression, murmuring, or complaint about the NSA organization or its other members is called *onshitsu*, hatred and envy. Notable is the little murmuring or backstabbing that exists among NSA members, given the human propensity for such activities. Even members who have left the NSA have often refused to complain about it or, with few exceptions, have moderated their

criticism. The NSA regards the limitation of *onshitsu* as a necessary discipline for building the unity of the organization" (36).

Sokagakkai

"This year there will be more large-scale changes of those in charge. I want everyone to understand that whatever we do will be for the good of kosen-rufu. The time has come for us to rise up. I expect total devotion from you. In our organization there is no place for grudges or jealousy arising from promotions in positions" (37).

Love

Nazism

"The young man who, through an innate national sensitivity, loves his land and his Homeland, and who, through that love and his sensitivity to our common language, feels an unconscious bond with those of his same tribe, with his people, is no less a national German than the grown man who has used that same feeling as a guide for his conduct" (60).

An essential component of the high cohesion of the paranoid contagion group is the emotional one. The member experiences very intense affiliative feelings that are expressed with the term *love*, and that are sometimes described with a certain lyricism by those involved.

Sokagakkai

"As I often say, I wish that all the members of our organization would feel not so much that they are part of the Soka Gakkai as that the Soka Gakkai is within each one of them" (38).

This is an emotional experience of great intensity, directed toward the group as such, toward the rest of the followers and toward the leader. These intense feelings are also expressed by jealous husbands...

Jealous ones

"The beloved is desired and valued in the consciousness of the jealous individual" (13).

(...) and by their wives, often mistreated.

Domestic tyranny. Clinical case

"When someone one day asked [the mistreated woman] why she did not leave him, she was offended and came to her husband's defense with arguments of love, feelings and responsibility" (49).

The PCG places capital importance on maintaining this intense love for the group, without which the achievement of its goals does not seem to be possible.

Sokagakkai

"Without a doubt, great adversities lie ahead on our path. That is why I want you to venerate the Dai-Gohonzon, love the Soka Gakkai and develop your youthful energy in order to face these adversities with courage" (37).

The absence of affiliative feelings is simply inconceivable.

Nazism

"I wonder if our bourgeoisie does not often feel overcome by outbursts of indignation when it hears from the lips of some wretched vagrant that it makes no difference to him whether he is German or not..." (33).

And therefore the group will make an effort to instill them.

Maoist Leninism

"It is necessary to teach every comrade to love the popular masses and to listen to them attentively..." (51).

In sectarian groups more inclined toward the practice of the cult of the leader, loving feelings are directed predominantly toward him.

Unspecified sectarian group

"While I was a disciple, I had been educated to direct all my emotional feelings toward him. No emotion toward any other person or thing was tolerated. I had been conditioned to suppress any type of feeling that was not approved" (78).

Love, in the paranoid contagion group, does not flow in an upward direction only. The LPs also express strong feelings of love toward their group and followers.

Nazism

"Even then I noticed the deductions that flowed from all this: deep love for my Austro-German homeland..." (33).

Sokagakkai

"Despite the tendency they have to be disobedient, temperamental, greedy and not very intelligent, I love them all as if they were my own children. Their sincerity truly moves me" (37).

Nazism

"Hitler addresses his words to 140,000 political leaders beneath an enormous luminous 'dome': 'We are all filled with wonder before this great gathering. Not all of you can see me, and I cannot see each one of you either, but we feel one another because we are very closely united'" (87).

For its part, in the specific case of nationalism, love *for the land* plays a relevant role (a vague term that includes the soil, the plant cover, the rivers and mountains, as well as the crops, the peasants clinging to Neolithic techniques, the cows and sheep that graze across the meadows tended by attentive shepherds, the castles and temples, as well as the saints and virgins or the pagan gods that dwell in each land...).

Nazism

"For the first time, politics entered our lives... We heard a great deal about the Homeland, about camaraderie, about the community of the Nation, about love for one's native land. All of this made an impression on us, and we listened with enthusiasm whenever we heard someone speak of these things, at school or in the street. Because we loved our country very much: the forests, the great river, and the old grey retaining walls that rise on the steep slopes, among little groves of fruit trees and vineyards. When we thought of our Homeland we recalled the smell of moss, of soft earth, and of the tasty apples. And every square metre of our native land was known and dear to us" (71).

This land, beloved by the patriot, has moreover become inextricably bound to its people by mythical ties stretching back to a remote past.

Nationalism

"Land is vital to ethnic separatists, but not exclusively for its political and economic utility. They are equally interested in its historical and cultural dimensions. What they need is a 'usable' past and a 'rooted culture'. Ethnic nationalists are not interested in just any land; they desire only the land of their putative ancestors and the sacred places where their heroes and sages lived, fought, and taught. What they desire is their 'historic or ancestral homeland', which they consider exclusively 'theirs' by virtue of the bonds that exist between their 'people' and the events and figures of previous generations. In other words, the territory in question must become an 'ethno-landscape', a poetic landscape that is nothing other than the expression

and extension of the character of the ethnic community, and as such is celebrated in poems and songs" (75).

Family

Sokagakkai

"We know that we are his disciples and that for all eternity we will belong to the family of Nichiren Daishonin" (37).

Sectarian-Leninist groupuscule. SLA

"The SLA was his entire life, for the SLA comrades were now his true family" (31).

Cult groups. Moonies

"When I expressed my desire to become a teacher, I was informed that 'the family', which is what the members of the movement call themselves..." (30).

And not only by proclaiming themselves as such but also by acting accordingly, cult groups often substitute for the biological family in roles or functions that normally belong to the latter.

Cult groups. The Patriarch

"From now on, each of my Christmases is a great celebration. In a family that thanks to example and will, offers Christmases of joy and happiness to a rediscovered youth" (86).

The family institution has a universal character; it is the primary framework of socialization and the environment of community inclusion to which the great majority of persons attach greater importance. The fact that belonging to the paranoid contagion group is equated with belonging to a large family implies, above all, that militancy must be placed ahead of any other loyalty.

Nationalism

"[...] modern nationalisms, which habitually (at least in their more combative phases) treated it [religion] with considerable reserve, as a force that could threaten the claim of 'the nation' to monopolize the loyalty of its members" (35).

In keeping with this conception of the group as family, the leader is recognized as *father* in the majority of paranoid contagion groups.

Sectarian groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple

"The preacher's name was Jim Jones, but his flock invoked him as 'Father' (43).

Although the paternal vocation can overflow the borders of the group itself.

Sectarian groups. Moonies

"[...] Sun Myung Moon and Hak Ja Han, the self-proclaimed 'True Parents' of all creation" (30).

The psychological repercussion of this mutation through which the adept comes to consider –and to feel– that his *true* parents are others, different from those who cared for him and educated him during his childhood, is enormous.

Sectarian groups. Moonies

"At every moment they reminded me that I had to be a little Sun Myung Moon. As my new identity was affirmed, I wanted to think like him, feel like him, act like him" (30).

It is quite striking that the *homeland* (from *pater*) should be called *mother*, so that the hermaphroditic character of the nation allows both types of filial feelings to be directed toward it.

For their part, the adepts will be seen as *children*, either of the group (of the cult, of the homeland), ...

Sokagakkai

"People who lack the determination and willingness to actively practice their faith cannot carry out this task nor can they be brave warriors in the second chapter of our movement. These people are not the steadfast children of the true Soka Gakkai" (38).
(...) good of the leader.

Sokagakkai

"The leaders of the Male and Female Youth Divisions swore to deploy the struggle for kosen-rufu as children of Toda, despite all the obstacles that might arise along the way" (37).

Sectarian groups. Moonies

"The history of the 'children of Moon' seems, nevertheless, clear. Their entry into the Family –that is the term they use among themselves– has occurred without abruptness" (9).

By sound logic, the adherents see one another as siblings.

Sokagakkai

"We are all comrades, friends and brothers of the same family. Moreover, we are men who work together, united by spirit, dedication and fervor, men who work to make Soka Gakkai the most beautiful organization in the world" (38).

As a curiosity, I have known some APs in which the members identified the biological brothers and sisters of the leader as uncles and aunts, directing affectionate feelings toward them as if they truly were such.

Joining the AP entails a commitment that, like membership in a family, is supposed to be *for life*.

Sokagakkai

"*Gojukai* (conversion ceremony) literally means the act of receiving the precept. In concrete terms, it is the ceremony in which the new convert makes vows to embrace the Gohonzon for their entire life" (41).

This is a lifelong commitment that is often formalized in solemn and emotional ceremonies; ceremonies that, on occasion, are revealingly similar to a wedding. In this way, the cult member's commitment to their group takes on matrimonial overtones.

Sectarian-Leninist groupuscule. SLA

"Here," she said, holding my hand and dropping the ring into it. "Welcome to the SLA, sister. It is not gold. But it is better. It is the symbol of the people's love." I then remembered that the other girls wore similar rings. So I slipped the ring onto the ring finger of my left hand. Cin was very pleased" (31).

It must be emphasized that entry into the new family takes place at the cost of a partial or total detachment from one's own *blood* family, with whom, in the most drastic cases, the member breaks off all contact. The members of some groups use circumlocutions to refer to their family, in order to convey that it has ceased to be so (or that it has ceased to be the *true* family).

Sectarian groups. TFP

"The TFP adept has only one family. He must regard the Founder as his father. The family of origin receives a peculiar designation: FMR (fuente de mi revolución — source of my revolution)" (62).

It is also worth highlighting the open hostility toward the family institution shown by some of the Leninist regimes, especially the Asian ones. Placing loyalty to the family above loyalty to the Party was interpreted as an intolerable bourgeois and counterrevolutionary sin, a Confucianist deadweight deserving of punishment.

A theme related to that of the family, and which reflects the same dynamic, is that of the *people*. In reality, a people is made up of a small community of families living close to one another and who know each other personally. To encompass within a single *people* an excessively large number of individuals, living at points very far removed from one another, who will never know each other and will never even see each other, amounts to nothing less than a fallacy characteristic of nationalist thinking — a mode of thought that has forced notable semantic distortions now fully entrenched.

Nationalism

"It is not that men and women —with the exception of some nomadic peoples or those of the diaspora— were not deeply rooted in a place they called 'homeland', especially considering that for most of history the great majority of the population belonged to the most deeply rooted sector of all humanity, those who lived from agriculture. But that 'home territory' bore no resemblance whatsoever to the territory of the modern nation. The 'homeland' was the center of a *real* community of human beings with social relations among themselves, not the imaginary community created by a certain type of bond between members of a population of tens —nowadays even hundreds— of millions. The vocabulary itself demonstrates this fact. In Spanish, the term *patria* was not synonymous with *España* until the end of the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century it meant only the place or village in which a person was born. *Paese* in Italian ("country") and *pueblo* in Spanish mean both village and the national territory of its inhabitants. Nationalism and the State applied the associated concepts of family, neighbor, and native soil to territories and populations of such size and scale that they turned those concepts into mere metaphors" (34).

Body

PCGs enjoy seeing themselves as a single body. In the speeches of cult leaders, explanations abound in which the group is compared to a living organism, in which each follower is nothing more than a cell, or an organ, or one of its members. Perhaps more unsettling is the image used by the Soka, which sees its followers as having their own bodies... but with a shared brain.

Sokagakkai

"[...] all members of the NSA have united with the glorious spirit of *itai doshin* (many bodies and a single mind) [...]" (84).

This organic conception of the group is also present in the thinking of some of the earliest nationalist thinkers.

Nationalism

"For thinkers such as Hegel and other more overtly nationalist authors who followed him, the nation was a living being; it was that 'organism' to which Anderson refers, but its being was not merely sociological, but rather possessed a kind of hidden life of its own" (22).

For the JW, the *body* constituted by the group's members is, at the same time, the body of Jesus. Jesus and his witnesses form a single entity that, even being ethereal, seems to acquire a material consistency. Any criticism or attack on the organization is seen as an attack on Jesus himself, whose body would be, metaphorically, "pierced".

Other biological metaphors also allude to the unity of the group's members, or to their unity with their imaginary *broad we*.

Maoist Leninism

"Communists are like the seed and the people like the earth" (51).

The importance attributed to the union between the people and their land, so characteristic of nationalism, would end up making –in Nazi thought– a quasischizophrenic leap from the symbolic realm to that of the concrete.

Nazism

"These ideas were inspired by Darré, the agricultural expert of the NSDAP, who in his 'Blood and Soil' linked the blood of the German farmer with the land he worked. Darré developed a 'theory' of the 'cycle of eternal blood', which held that the farmer who worked the land should be buried in that same land. In this way, the farmer's daily bread would, in fact, be the blood of his ancestors. German blood would pass from generation to generation through the land..." (80).

Myths

Cohesion also leads to seeking or inventing common origins for all members of the group. The members of the PCG need to feel that they are part of a living being whose existence stretches back to a distant past.

Nationalism

"In small and marginal countries, nationalism finds expression in poems, not only popular ones, but of archaeological recreation, referring back to remote times" (56).

Nationalism

"What makes these values, memories, symbols and myths so attractive and powerful is the invocation of a common lineage and the bonds generated by residency as the basis for the authenticity of the community's unique cultural values. From this point of view, the ethnic community resembles an extended family or a 'family of families' that stretches across time and space to encompass many generations and many districts of a specific territory" (75).

For their part, the Italian fascists established an exciting bond between their Italy and Imperial Rome, overlooking the fact that –beyond the geographical location– their corporate state had little or nothing to do with an city-state of Antiquity that had evolved into an imperial power.

Italian Fascism

"By 1922 two new myths had already emerged in fascist thought: the myth of ancient Rome rising into a new Rome, always cherished by Italian nationalists, and the idea of the *Stato nuovo* ('new State'), that is, the crystallization of the new Rome into a new type of nationalist State that would play a central role in the revitalization of the nation" (57).

Without a doubt, the most obvious way to bind together the members of a community consists in attributing to them common ancestors. The members of the PCG become the descendants of shared great-great-grandparents (they are, consequently, *cousins*).

German nationalism

"[throughout the nineteenth century] [...] German nationalists, in the absence of political unity, propose an ideological definition of the nation and speak of a common tribal origin" (83).

Greek nationalism

"Kedourie considers that the early expression of Greek nationalism that emerged at the hands of Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), the Greek Enlightenment figure belonging to the Greek Orthodox community of Smyrna, is prototypical. Korais had steeped himself in Western ideas and languages under the auspices of a Dutch clergyman and resided in Holland for several years during the 1770s. After returning to his homeland on a brief visit, he spent the rest of his life in France. There, under the influence of the growing radicalism of the French Revolution, Korais began to reinterpret the situation of his native Greece in Western terms, lamenting its decline and expressing (in a lecture he gave in 1803) the traditional appeal of its glorious past, a sign of an even more glorious future and sufficient justification for subverting existing institutions in the present. In his conclusion, Korais noted that modern Greeks were

the descendants of the ancient Greeks and that, as such, they ought to be worthy of them: only by accepting this would the regeneration of Greece be possible" (75).

To declare that the inhabitants of present-day Greece descend primarily from those who populated those same lands more than two thousand years ago is little short of stating the obvious. As obvious as the fact that since then there have always been movements of populations and individuals, as well as marriages and pairings with individuals of other origins, with the consequent genetic mixing. But deriving from this vague nexus of blood continuity a cultural continuity is a fallacious step. Ideas move freely across the planet, sometimes disappearing only to return centuries later, but they never adhere to any particular gene. As if that were not enough, the link that nationalist thought establishes between the present and the past is solely with a small sector of the population: that of the men free from the obligation to work thanks to their armies of slaves, from whom, to a far greater extent, today's Greeks descend.

On some occasions the relationship of filiation with the men and heroes of the past is merely spiritual, producing a kind of *adoptive filiation* with full awareness that it is not a matter of genuine biological descent.

Warriors

"Elite warriors have tended to see themselves as elements of a long, unbroken tradition that unites fathers and sons and, in a more general sense, men of arms from different eras. According to their way of thinking, together they all compose a kind of lineage stretching back thousands of years...

[...] When tradition is historically imprecise or not edifying enough, imagination supplies what is missing. The Prussians of the 19th century, for example, considered themselves successors of the Spartans and the Assyrians, or else traced their origins back to the Middle Ages and sometimes called themselves 'crusaders'.

Medieval knights, for their part, sought their roots in antiquity through a genre of 12th-century romances that described the heroes of the Trojan War as if they were medieval knights, complete with armor" (22).

On other occasions, crossing already into the territory of delusion, the existence of a lineage in the strict sense of the word is literally believed by the members of the group, despite being implausible and contrary to any historical evidence.

Sectarian groups. Islam Nation

"Be that as it may, the solitary Wallace is not content with selling beautiful fabrics. He preaches to astonished Black people a new religion of Islamic inspiration. The silk merchant's basic idea is that the Bible is a book written by and for white people. Its content is false. The

true book of the Black nation is the Quran. Black Americans are, in fact, direct descendants of the ancient tribe of the shabbaz, from Mecca, which was reduced to slavery by white traffickers" (8).

And what can be said of those cases in which it is not that the lineage relationship with the ancestor is implausible, but rather that the very existence of the ancestor is hardly credible.

Warriors

"[...] But the imagination has never gone as far as in the German nationalist science of 'aryanology', which sought the ethnic and spiritual origins of Weimar millennia back, in the prehistoric Indo-European band of armed men, or *Männerbund*" (22).

The Aryans would have been a people of mounted warriors whose existence was hypothesized from certain archaeological findings, but to whom an unquestionable reality was soon attributed, especially in occultist literature. The opinion today held by the majority of anthropologists is that it is a myth.

Generosity, protection, self-giving

The PI does not always confront others but rather, with some people in particular, may, on the contrary, prove to be particularly solicitous, supportive and even overprotective.

Erotomania

"De Clérambault also identified secondary common themes such as that [...] the patient secretly watches over and protects him" (72).

Folie à six. Case of the Austrian hairdresser

"She characterized Mrs. A as an impatient and possessive person who wanted to dominate her surroundings, especially her family, but who was also protective and gave everything for them" (20).

The need to protect is explained, at least in part, by the existence of a hostile environment.

Paranoia. The Aimée Case

"A second pregnancy brings back a depressive state, anxiety, analogous interpretations. In July of the following year (the patient was thirty years old), the patient gave birth to a boy. She devoted herself to him with passionate ardor; no one but her could care for him until the age of five months. She breastfed him until 15 months. During breastfeeding, she became increasingly interpretive, hostile to everyone, querulous. Everyone threatens her child. She

provokes an incident with motorists who had passed too close to her son's pram. Multiple scandals break out with the neighbors. She wants to take the matter to court" (45).

The devotion, the friendship, also characterizes the relationships among the members of the PCGs...

Sectarian groups. Moonies

"They were beautiful days, in the warmth of friendship, prayer and the search for truth" (68).
(...) those who pride themselves on the fact that solidarity, camaraderie, love, and fellowship reign within their ranks, etc..

Nazism

"We are inseparable comrades. Together we form what is called Greater Germany. For instance, I, who hold a baccalaureate, have been hauling rails today alongside the lathe operator..." (87).

Sectarian groups. El Patriarca

"The former drug addict learns to help others, learns solidarity, critical thinking and dialogue..." (24).

Furthermore, the paranoid contagion groups believe that these attitudes only arise within their midst. *Outside*, the opposite prevails: selfishness.

Although solidarity may unfold automatically (as a consequence of paranoidization), it does not hurt to promote it.

Nazism

"If Germany were to be educated in this sense, and first and foremost its youth, to instill in them the notion of a fanatical solidarity among compatriots and of each one of them with respect to the State..." (32).

Nazism

"The primary task of the 'Hitler Youth' is to implant the concept of national comradeship, that national socialism, in the hearts of German youth..." (60).

For this purpose, an important instrument is exhortation.

Nazism

"[...] The only values loyalty and enthusiasm. Therefore, it desires that in your ranks the great camaraderie that must strengthen the union among all German youth may germinate and be realized.

'Show yourselves worthy of these National Socialist ideals, of their flag and of Adolf Hitler, by remaining united, for thus the Führer wills it as good comrades. In our ranks no one is lonely and abandoned. Millions of young Germans declare themselves in solidarity with your wishes and ambitions. One helps the other, and all of us obey only one..." (Baldur von Schirak cited in 87).

Sokagakkai

"Only by practicing within the organization can we develop a faith like the current of water, encouraging one another and helping each other and advancing together along the path of correct practice" (84).

Maoist Leninism

"Our cadres must care for every soldier, and all those who make up the revolutionary ranks must look after one another, hold affection for one another, and help one another" (51).

Maoist Leninism

"[...] we must be kind and unite with our own, with the people, the comrades, our superiors and subordinates" (51).

The adept as the object of love and solidarity

Since the activation of paranoidism runs its course with an increase in loving feelings and solidary behaviors, in the member of the PCG there will be produced the possibility of being no longer the active subject of these but rather their passive object, equally of loving feelings...

Sectarian groups. El Patriarca

"Here I have known love. The selfless love that does not fade and has no pretension, true love [...] Those who carry the virus are clinically followed up at the Association and at the hospital, but unlike a common clinic we have one more remedy, love and friendship" (66).

Sectarian groups. El Patriarca

"... I have felt full of human warmth, 24 hours a day by young people who are above all friends. There is a warmth, a love and an attention that are very important. It is the first thing

that stands out. Furthermore, this allows me to continue in my activity and to be able to carry on with the treatments" (48).

[...] than of solidarity and mutual aid.

Sokagakkai

"His words were imbued with the determination to endure any trial that might befall the Soka Gakkai and to protect its members in their pursuit of happiness, even at the cost of his own life. Some members were moved to tears by his remarks" (37).

Cult groups. El Patriarca

"In turn, She too rediscovers life, the Little Princess finally sees the light of day, a parcel of humanity springs forth thanks to all those who help tirelessly..." (50).

The neophyte's perception of this climate of love and solidarity, as well as the experience of being the object of it, determines in many cases the decision to join and, afterwards, to remain in the group.

Cult groups. Moonies

"I had some misgivings and thought that at any moment they would try to get me to buy some product or pay an entrance fee or something of that sort. But imagine my surprise when not only did they attempt none of that, but extremely kind young men and women offered tea, coffee and biscuits to me and the other guests... The following day in the mid-afternoon, having nothing to do, remembering the pleasant atmosphere I chose to stop by to see what it was all about" (68).

It is, moreover, a novel experience that contrasts with everything known up to that point.

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 another community like it. Among us there were peasant women, students, factory workers, saleswomen, hairdressers, office clerks, etc. The camp was led by the daughter of an East Prussian peasant, who had never left her homeland. Although she never uttered a word unknown to us, it would never have occurred to anyone to laugh at her had she done so. She managed to make us all accept one another after having come to know each other's weaknesses and strengths. We all strove to be altruistic and generous..." (Melita Machmann, *Fazit*. I am not trying to justify myself, cited in 87).

Selectivity

Collective paranoidization demands that love and generosity be reserved for members of one's own group. Any expression of affection or care toward others will provoke an angry reaction. In domestic tyrannies, quite frequently, the failure to comply with this maxim constitutes one of the arguments used to justify punishment beatings.

Jealous. Clinical case

–He says I love my grandchildren more than I love him...

In this, as in other respects, Nazism was quite consistent in converting the natural paranoid tendencies into explicit instructions.

Nazism

"... All SS members must always bear this principle in mind: we must be honest, decent, faithful and comradely with members of our own blood; with no one else" (Himmler's speech before SS officers, 1943, cited in 87).

Difficulty of Leaving

Sokagakkai

"No matter how many difficulties arise on the path of kosen-rufu, I ask you to believe in the absolute Dai-Gohonzon, and to never abandon the faith. My only wish, my only admonition, is that each one of you attains Buddhahood, the supreme happiness, and lives with joy" (37).

Few things dilute more the cohesive image that the AP has of itself than the abandonment of its adherents, especially when those who jump ship do so en masse. Consequently, desertions produce genuine horror in the leader and his followers, who regard them as one of the worst crimes.

Sectarian groups. *Community Chapel*

"[...] you cannot simply go to a church and think you are safe. God will not value it. He called you here and I am your pastor, no one else. You must follow me or you will answer to God" (25).

To prevent and hinder departures, a set of disparate forces appears to act in unison. The sum of these forces contributes to the strong cohesion of the APs. Of course, leaving the group is always possible, and in fact many adherents take that step. However, it tends to be a decision not without its difficulties,

and often, the truth is that members cling to their APs even though these impose upon them a lifestyle full of deprivations, demands, and even contradictions that are hardly acceptable.

Warriors

"The experience of battle alters some men to such a degree that they never again feel comfortable in the ordinary social world, also inhabited by women. And so they become permanent warriors; like the crusaders who, upon returning from the Holy Land, devoted themselves to fighting against the heretics of Europe; like the English knights who refused to lay down their arms during the truces of the Hundred Years' War and remained in France engaged in banditry; like the veterans of the Civil War who, upon leaving the battlefields of eastern North America, went to fight against the Indians in the west; like the German officers who, once the First World War had ended, led the reactionary *Freikorps* that terrorized the German working class... and from which Hitler's SA, or storm troopers, would emerge" (22).

Let us observe that, in all these cases, it was not merely the decision to continue exercising violence as an *activity*, but to do so alongside old comrades in arms, maintaining bonds of loyalty, while changing enemies.

The difficulty that the member of the PA has in leaving their group depends as much on the existence of forces that draw them toward it as on dynamics that obstruct any attempt to leave.

Attraction

The states of exaltation and even of euphoria produced by paranoidization, emotions that the adept resists giving up, act as a factor of attraction to the PA. Also the possibility of participating in future glories or privileges, solely on the condition of not stepping away.

Sectarian groups. Jehovah's Witnesses

"[...] A great multitude of humans –from all nations– will survive the culmination of divine judgment at Armageddon. Christ Jesus will then shepherd and guide these people to eternal life on a paradisiacal Earth. Would you not wish to find yourself among them?" (2).

Fear

As for the forces that oppose leaving the PC, the most difficult to overcome is fear.

Sectarian groups. Children of God

"- In my heart I think I should return to the United States, but I think I cannot.

I felt as if a hundred-kilo weight had been lifted from my chest, but I tried to hide my enthusiasm. Her sisters burst into tears.

- What is it that stops you? - I asked.

She let out a sigh and reflected for a long while. Then she answered:

- I am afraid" (30).

In PCs, this experience of fear at leaving the group is a general trait and appears to constitute an almost universal experience. In contrast, we find great differences with regard to the object of fear. What is feared differs from one group to another; not so the fear itself.

Some PCs instill the idea that traitors who desert the group will be punished. The executor of the punishment is, on occasion, God himself.

Unspecified sectarian group

"Members would often describe a feeling of terror when they attempted to leave the group. The decision to leave was generally precipitated by disenchantment with the Guru. One informant who left the group after fourteen years suffered a severe vascular accident that, unfortunately, left him a quadriplegic. The Guru gave a talk to several hundred disciples that week, claiming that 'that accident is God's way of punishing him for having turned his back on the community'(42).

Sectarian cults. TFP

"Whoever leaves the TFP is an apostate who faces eternal damnation. But furthermore, having renounced the vocation for which he had been created, he can expect nothing but suffering in this life as well: remorse, insomnia, accidents, family misfortunes. It is said that some, in their dreams, hear Gregorian chants" (62).

Sectarian cults. Maranatha Christian Ministries

"While flying to her parents' home, Karen fully expected the plane to crash. The wrath of the Lord, according to her pastors at MCM, would fall upon her" (25).

For those who leave the group, there exists a punishment even more severe than the death penalty: eternal suffering.

Sectarian cults. TFP

"The fate of any apostate is the suffering of eternal fire, conceived literally. Other times it is said of them that they will end up in the mouth of the devil, also in its literal sense,

alongside the great enemies of the Church. These images of perpetual combustion, fueled through repetition, produce genuine dread in the followers. The end of every "apostate" is to end up in hell. Without remission" (62).

But the group's own followers may also take it upon themselves to inflict the punishments.

Cult groups. TFP

"It may seem foolish to be afraid of four-year-olds, but those who think so first have to live with these fanatics, get to know the faces of the 'sentinels of the West,' and then they can answer me" (74).

Cult groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple

"He maintained with full conviction and firmness that the punishment that desertion deserved was death. The fact that severe corporal punishment was common practice lent the threats a terrifying ring of realism" (43).

As regards the type of punishment, the alternatives are numerous, with the death penalty being the most severe.

Cult groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple

"1976. October. Bob Houston, a member of the cult, announces his intention to leave the People's Temple. That very night he is found dismembered on the rails of the San Francisco railway line" (43).

The loss of the group's magical protective effect means that the former devotee is seen as an individual far more vulnerable to enemies, catastrophes, or illness, which in the long run may also lead to their death.

Sokagakkai

"The first report from Niigata reached Tokyo after midday. The fire had already been brought under control, and not a single member of the Soka Gakkai had suffered any harm, even though, as the police themselves reported, hundreds of homes had burned down. That morning a delegation from the Mukojima chapter, on which Niigata depended, had set out for the area, and it was not long before reports arrived corroborating the earlier ones. The city center lay in ruins, but the surrounding areas, where most of the Soka Gakkai members lived, had come through unscathed. The reports later issued by the police estimated that the homes destroyed numbered 1,200, and that the displaced victims numbered around 4,500 people, out of a total of 265,719 inhabitants.

But then a far more astonishing piece of news would reach headquarters — a definitive real-life proof of the law of cause and effect. Mr. Osabe, the person responsible for the Niigata district, reported that those who had practiced the faith with devotion had suffered virtually no harm, whereas those who had renounced the faith or rejected True Buddhism had fallen victim to the fire. The members of Niigata were astonished, breathless, as they witnessed how their own real-life proof coincided with the declaration of the *Gosho*: "The good fortune of the believer is not burned by fire nor swept away by water" (37).

Guilt

Megalomaniacal thinking can lead one to believe that abandoning the group will bring about catastrophes on a planetary scale. Now, it is no longer a matter of saving oneself, or one's family or neighbors, as we saw in this example, but of saving humanity.

Sectarian groups. Moonies

"He claimed that the final world war would pit communism against democracy, and that it would occur within the next three years (at that time, around 1977), and that if the movement's members did not work with sufficient dedication [which also implies not leaving the group], terrible suffering would be unleashed" (30).

Vulnerability

In those cases where shared delusions of persecution exist, associated with the belief —also delusional— that protection can only be obtained within the PCG, breaking away from the group can be a truly arduous task, an almost suicidal act of heroism.

Sectarian groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple

"And so he convinced the people of color in the Temple that, if they did not follow him to Guyana, they would end up in concentration camps where they would be exterminated. As for the white members, he led them to believe that their names were inscribed on a secret list of enemies of the State, which was in the hands of the CIA, and that they would be persecuted, tortured, and imprisoned before dying if they did not accompany him to the former colony" (43).

Sectarian-Leninist splinter group. SLA

"I believed that my parents had given me up for lost forever, and that they did not even want to see me again. I was convinced that there was no longer any way out, without being shot by the police or the FBI as they had done with the others" (31).

Blackmail

The use of blackmail as a means of preventing departures occurs in some of the more extremist groups.

Sectarian groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple

"The reverend had already hinted at a strategy by asserting that defectors were all a bunch of liars. He would call them thieves and bring to light documents in which the very individuals concerned admitted to having committed criminal acts or aberrations of every kind. None of those involved had ever retracted such falsehoods; on the contrary, they had affixed their signature to the confessions as a token of trust toward the Temple" (43).

Sectarian groups. Reverend Jones's People's Temple

"I wrote letters in which I said I hated my children, that I had sexually abused them when they were small and that I would kill them if it came to it, because I loathed them. Who would believe me after reading those letters?"(43).

Loneliness

The fear of distress, emptiness, and loneliness that the adept feels every time they imagine themselves outside the paranoid contagion group, anticipating the painful experiences they will in all likelihood have to go through if they decide to cut ties with the group, also does not help them take the step of leaving. The following quote, which could perfectly well have been endorsed by the adept of some cult, makes this circumstance abundantly clear.

Basque nationalism

"The full text of the letter from HB leader Joxé Agustín Arrieta is as follows:

'Even if it is from a moving train. I am stepping back, or that is my wish, at least. Because it may also be that I crack my skull in this forced disembarkation. It would not be the first time, nor the last. It would be tremendously hard for me to bear myself *outside of*. The internal contradictions, political and experiential, will probably tear me apart. It is not the fear of what people will say, of the cold and contemptuous looks of my comrades, that will grip me. It will be, as always, in harmony with my deepest self, the feeling of self-blame, the doubts,

the daily anguish of not being able to identify myself (to find peace) with any collective reference, that will probably lead me to self-annihilation" (4).

Relapses

When conversion and militancy in the AP have made possible the abandonment of drug use, or of a psychopathic pattern of behavior, or the overcoming of an unwanted personal situation, the fear of relapse also holds back the initiation of any movement toward autonomy.

Sokagakkai

"Keiko was around forty years old at the time, and looking back on her own life of sadness, she finally felt that behind all her unhappiness there had been the wrong religions" (37).

Sokagakkai

"It is also taught that the cleansing of karma (human revolution) is a slow, gradual process. Not chanting or doing proselytism even after years of practice can lead to the return of problems or to the onset of new ones" (52).

Betrayal

In a paranoid universe, in which the concept of loyalty plays such an important role, the breaking of that commitment of loyalty that was once sealed cannot but constitute an act of *betrayal* for which one feels guilty.

Cult groups. Moonies

"Although it may be hard to believe, my first impulse was to try to escape by breaking my father's neck. I thought it was better to kill him than to betray the Messiah. As a member, I had been told on repeated occasions that it was better to die or to kill than to leave the Church" (30).

As if that were not enough, oaths of eternal loyalty are a common practice in numerous paranoid personalities.

Sokagakkai

"In the song of the Male Youth Division, you sing:

Even when our comrades fall

We shall not forget our oath

We will not forget our oath to the revolution" (38).

Sokagakkai

"And furthermore, we swear never to betray our companions in faith" (37).

Cult groups. Moonies

"... this is a very important ceremony that members practice every first Sunday of the month and on the four sacred days that the group observes... Members make three bows until their face touches the ground, before an altar bearing a portrait of Sun Myung Moon, and recite a six-point oath by which they commit to being faithful to God, to Moon, and to the mother country... Korea" (30).

Contempt

The AP instills a value system in which leaving the group is a contemptible, cowardly, or unworthy act. The former adept must face at once the disdain of their former companions and the attitudes of rejection that they have themselves introjected.

Cult groups. TFP

"[...] even facing the isolations and the cowardly abandonments" (14).

Cult groups. El Patriarca

"Now -the witness continues- the group is prioritized to the detriment of the individual... Then, reintegration is a failure. Lucien despises those who reintegrate" (64).

French Nationalism

"Nothing better illustrates the autonomy and rank gained by the French citizen-soldier than Napoleón's attitude toward desertion. In the Prussian army, classically precise and obsessively trained, desertion was prevented 'by avoiding camping near forests; by frequently going to see the men in their tents; by organizing patrols of [mounted] hussars around the camp [...] not allowing soldiers to break ranks [...] deploying hussar patrols on the flanks when the infantry crossed a wooded area.' That is, Prussian soldiers received from their own officers more or less the same treatment as prisoners of war. In contrast, Napoleon instructed his officers to rely on pressure exerted by comrades:

The commanders urged soldiers to think that those men [the deserters] had fallen into disgrace, for the greatest punishment inflicted in the French army for having failed to share in the dangers and the victories was the reproach of their comrades" (22).

New Acropolis

"Anyone who leaves is considered a despicable traitor [...] they are judged as a deserter, called unworthy and subjected to such a series of epithets that those on the inside have no desire to leave the group" (58).

Let us not forget that what the person who leaves the group loses is their *status* as an elite. They will never again be part of the exclusive club of the chosen ones and superior beings to which they once belonged.

Sokagakkai

"If one departs from the state achieved through faith in the Gohonzon and through the invocation of the Daimoku, the state of Buddha is immediately lost. Even when that state has been laboriously attained through years of devotion by a person who holds a high position in our organization, in the very minute that person departs from the Gohonzon or ceases to invoke the Daimoku, the state of Buddha ceases, just as the electric current ceases to flow when we interrupt it with the switch" (38).

Surveillance

The importance of avoiding dropouts is such that the AP develops a special capacity for the early detection of those cases in which the adept begins to show signs of doubt, thus being able to apply *early interventions* of intensive indoctrination to halt the process that would ultimately lead to disengagement from the group.

Cultic groups. TFP

"When an adept shows signs of "slackening" (minor displays of lack of enthusiasm, of insufficient obedience, excessive questions or disagreements...) those in charge tend to relocate them. Of the individual who changes headquarters frequently, everyone senses that they have "problems." If the problem is serious or remains unresolved despite the changes, the adept is sent to the central headquarters in Brazil" (62).

Cultic groups. TFP

"Some people are especially sensitive in detecting the first symptoms of distancing. The reaction tends to always be the same. To Brazil" (62).

Cultic groups. Moonies

"If they cannot bear the pressure and begin to question the authority of their leaders or stray from the group, they are accused of being under the influence of Satanás and are subjected to even greater pressures in re-indoctrination programs" (30).

Harassment

There are likewise late-*stage* interventions with those individuals who have already left the group. The former adept is contacted, approached, and harassed in a desperate attempt to make them return. It must be borne in mind that the people with whom they must now contend had for some time constituted their entire limited relational horizon, and that throughout their militancy in the PC they had been required to avoid any form of assertion of their autonomy.

As for fascist and Leninist totalitarian societies, these have more resources at their disposal to pressure the traitor, who finds it impossible to distance themselves from their paranoid environment. Social ostracism, marginalization, and discrimination are a threat that discourages those who seek to leave the PCG.

Maoist Leninism

"He told my father that she could never satisfy the revolution no matter how hard she tried: all she managed to receive was criticism. 'I had better leave,' she said. 'You must not do that!—my father replied anxiously—. They will interpret it as a sign that you are fleeing from calamities and hardships. They will consider you a deserter and you will have no future whatsoever. Even if the university accepts you, you will never be able to find a good job. You will be discriminated against for the rest of your life'" (40).

This set of forces that make it difficult to leave cultic groups leads adepts to persevere in a way of life that is, by all accounts, harmful to them, limiting their margins of freedom and independence, subjecting them to various forms of exploitation, and compelling them to make great sacrifices and renunciations.

Difficulty of leaving paranoid microgroups

Especially worthy of mention are the dyads formed by jealous husbands and their abused wives, who endure the most implausible mistreatment and exploitation, and in which the same dynamics as in cult groups become apparent: the fear of punishment and even homicide, the fear of emptiness and loneliness, the conviction that separation would give rise to catastrophic situations for themselves and for third parties, the guilt over relinquishing their commitments and responsibilities... All of this prevents separation from the husband. But jealous husbands are also highly dependent and suffer from the same inability to separate.

Domestic tyranny

"These men are markedly sensitive to the possibility of loss or abandonment. They become desperate if the woman leaves the home" (16).

Domestic tyranny

"He cannot act autonomously because that means emptiness, lack, a hole in his being" (16).

The same dependent dynamic is associated with induced psychotic disorder.

Folie à deux

"The dominant member was an obsessive, stubborn, and finicky 54-year-old widow, but also sociable and warm, mother of two children, with a family history of depression, who began to be delusional in 1971, shortly after the death of her husband, which she attributed to poisoning. She continued to express similar ideas, particularly in relation to her neighbors and relatives.

The submissive party was her daughter, a compliant 24-year-old law student, gentle, of good appearance, loyal and obedient, with limited social interactions. She was closely bound to and was closely dependent on her mother" (17).

Folie à famille

"There seem to be six typical characteristics of families that develop a *folie à famille*: [...] 2) family relationships tend to be mutually dependent and ambivalent..." (27).

A dependency that can be equally reflected in clinical descriptions and in psychometric tests

Folie à famille. The Iranian family

"All family members had been intimately associated throughout their lives. Symptoms in all other cases began gradually one year after the death of the son/brother, on whom they all depended greatly. After that, they shared a symbiotic relationship and established an unhealthy bond with the first case and with each other. The family showed signs of growing isolation from the social network of neighbors and relatives" (54).

Folie à famille. The Iranian family

"All patients were examined using Psychological tests such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) [...] showed no specific pathology [...] except for some dependent personality traits in all induced cases..." (54).

Probably, the same dependency that Spero (76) found in the projective tests of the members of cult groups.

Mobilization

The high cohesion of the paranoid contagion group is also evident in its capacity to *act* as a compact block, as if it were a single person who makes the decisions and carries them out. The group's members as a whole carry out a coordinated activity that is coherent with the aims that the group sets at any given moment. In its strictest sense, the term *mobilization* relates primarily to war.

"The set of measures that put the armed forces on a war footing and adapt the economic and administrative structure of the country to the needs of a conflict" (46).

I use the term in a metaphorical sense; any human group possesses a certain capacity to *mobilize* its members (or some of them) in pursuit of a common objective. But it is plain to see that there are significant quantitative differences between some groups and others with regard to the proportion of their members they are capable of mobilizing, as well as in the *intensity and degree of involvement* with which each of the individuals is willing to do so.

"... the Republic came at the wrong time in a Europe where communism and fascism had come to be the only forces capable of stirring and moving people" (5).

The ultimate ideal of the paranoid contagion group amounts to such a degree of coupling that *all* its members do *the same thing* at any given moment, so that the activity of all its members becomes synchronized to the rhythm set by the group.

Japanese nationalism

"The novelty of the Shinto State was the *synchronization* and the centralization of ritual, for everyone performed the same ceremonies at the same time, from the Emperor in an important temple to the peasant in his *yohaisho* or 'place for worshipping from afar'. Not even being Christian or Buddhist exempted anyone..." (22).

The insistence of some cults on synchronizing the schedules of their members reflects the same tendency.

However, more important than achieving that all members of the paranoid contagion group act *at the same time*, is that they act *in the same direction and with the same immediate objectives*. The availability of adherents in this regard allows paranoid contagion groups to achieve remarkable goals for their size and for the resources available.

Sectarian groups. TFP

"**January** - A congress of a distinctly communist orientation is announced by CUTAL (Central Única de los Trabajadores de América Latina) in Belo Horizonte. Inspired by TFP, university students, secondary school students, merchants, and workers from that city, some of whom are already members or cooperators of the organization, collect 30,000 signatures in two days in support of a document opposing the holding of the aforementioned congress in Belo Horizonte, or in '*any corner of Brazil*'. Unable to meet in Belo Horizonte, CUTAL is forced to relocate to Brasilia. The campaign spreads to Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba, where an additional 32,000 signatures are collected. University students organize a car caravan to the country's capital, where the petition is delivered at the Government Palace. Faced with general repudiation, the congress ends up taking place, amid emptiness and silence, at the Hotel Nacional in Brasilia" (14).

In Spain, the same group, despite its minuscule size, was capable of mounting a campaign –against a television program with sexual content– that received widespread media coverage.

Sectarian groups. TFP

"In January, S.O.S. Familia sent a letter to Ricardo Visado, then deputy director of Antena 3, raising some questions about the highly pornographic content of the program and requesting certain measures to safeguard public morality. This letter received no response.

Faced with the network's lack of cooperation, S.O.S. Familia launched the boycott campaign in February. Using the modern system of *mass mailing*, letters were sent to tens of thousands of supporters. They were asked to join the boycott and to put pressure on the companies sponsoring the program. In less than a month, more than five thousand protest letters were gathered and delivered to the management of Antena 3" (12).

The common objectives for which all members work are not determined democratically but are instead established by the leadership. The hyper-hierarchization of the PCG means that they are embraced by all, without any criticism, even when they are ill-advised or counterproductive, which, given the paranoid megalomania, occurs frequently.

This is the case of Mao's harebrained decision, during the period of the Great Leap Forward, to transform China into a world power in steel production. With that objective, the entire country, overnight, filled up with mini-steelworks (from the most remote agricultural community and the humblest of schools to the residences of high-ranking Party officials), in which steel of the lowest quality was produced, completely useless, at the cost of a genuine ecological catastrophe, the abandonment of agricultural tasks and the consequent famine, considered the most devastating in the history of humanity. But the fact is that the Chinese landscape became populated with countless furnaces in a very brief period of time. Following the nationalist whims of the leader, more concerned with heading the *ranking* international standings in

an indicator of the degree of industrialization than with the well-being of his subjects, the entire country *mobilized* behind a preposterous objective.

Maoist Leninism

"Perhaps the psychologists of mass behavior can explain what went wrong in China at the end of the summer of 1958. China was in the grip of a collective hysteria fostered by Mao, of which he himself also began to be a victim. We returned to Beijing in time for the October 1st celebrations. Mao began to believe the slogans, setting aside the most elementary prudence. In Zhongnanhai [the residence of Mao and his court] small steel foundries began to be built, so that at night the entire compound was a sea of red lights. The idea had originated in the central escort office and Mao had not opposed it; thus, everyone began to find themselves feeding the furnaces: militants, secretaries, office workers, doctors, nurses, and myself. The few voices calling for caution were being ignored and everyone was letting themselves be swept along by the current" (21).

Setting in motion an entire country toward the achievement of the objectives he himself had set, Mao made reality what in other IPs goes no further than the realm of fantasy.

Reformers. The Case of Edward V

"His social theories were interesting: he proclaimed the necessity of regular armies but without a warlike purpose: they should serve for the execution of public works; he was angered by the wealth abandoned in the soil, against the deserts left unproductive, against the lack of great works destined to protect public health" (19).

Denial of individuality

The dynamics of *cohesion*, characteristic of collective paranoidization, cause individuals to neither see, feel, nor behave as individual persons, but rather as mere parts (or particles) of a whole that transcends them, and within whose bosom—and only within that bosom— life holds meaning.

Folie à six. Case of the Austrian hairdresser

"With regard to their marriage, Mr. A explained that he and his wife had a very harmonious relationship and often acted like twins" (20).

That is to say, more like a single person than like what they truly were: two. In this way, members of the paranoid contagion group relate to the rest of the world with a unified discourse. Although several individuals may in fact be speaking, it would seem as though they act as a single interlocutor.

Folie à six. Case of the Austrian hairdresser

"During the conversation, one would begin to speak while the other finished the sentence or cheerfully nodded her head and added remarks to her words" (20).

The SPs likewise tend to dissolve the subject into the group, to annihilate their individuality, and to grant them no value beyond that derived from their belonging to a *something* that transcends them.

Fascism

"The great originality of fascism consists in achieving the fusion of two great tendencies, nationalism and socialism, which in the nineteenth century constituted the first anti-individualist realization of the European nations" (79).

Anti-individualism takes shape in a system of values that, while admitting a countless number of possibilities in its concrete expression, affirms the supremacy of the group, the leader, and the great objectives with respect to the individual. The adherent is nothing, the group is everything. The protagonist of decisions and actions is the group, and the sole obligation of the individual is to understand that he is nothing more than a cell of that organism, destined to fulfill the task that has been entrusted to him for the proper functioning of that superior reality.

Sokagakkai

"[...] The second president of the lay organization, Josei Toda, our respected master, went so far as to declare: 'The lay organization of Nichiren Shoshu is more important than my own life,' because without it, it would be impossible to propagate this teaching widely" (84).

Enlightenment thought was concerned above all with the independence of the individual, in the face of the power of the absolute monarch, in the face of the hereditary privileges of the aristocracy and the weight of an inescapable tradition. However, nationalism –that by-product of Enlightenment thought– marked a drift that returned the citizen to square one, annulling him now before a new all-powerful sovereign: the Nation.

German Nationalism

"For a long time, however, the individualism of the eighteenth century survived for those who viewed the state as a necessary evil. But national withdrawal, autarky projects, gradually led to the opposition of individual reason by reason of state, and to conceiving of the state as an instrument of salvation. Very soon the boundary between the liberals of the Fichte-Arndt line and conservatives such as Müller or Hegel ceased to exist. Adam Müller thought that, once the national state had been realized, the citizen should be totally absorbed, abandoning his private life and even his concern for religion. For Hegel, the state is 'the reality of the moral

idea,' 'the sole condition that will allow the individual to fulfill his end and attain his good'; the state is properly 'the divine will'" (18).

One might have expected that variants of nationalism would emerge that, descending from the realm of philosophical speculation to that of facts, would end up openly denying any right of the individual against the State.

Nazism

"As judges, I need men who are deeply convinced that the Law must not protect the individual against the State and that their duty consists, first and foremost, in ensuring that Germany does not perish" (32).

This anti-individualist orientation, which was already evident in some of the main currents of late nineteenth-century thought and in the fascisms of the first half of the last century, would reach its clearest and most visceral expression in Nazism.

Nazism

"10. German student: your existence is not necessary, but it is, however, that you fulfill your duty to the people! Whatever you are, only as a German!" (Ten laws for student education, September 9, 1937, cited in 87).

Nazism

"We could not help but return to our homes with the brutal intention of rallying the entire nation around us, and of teaching each one that the greatness of the nation depends on the will of the individual to stand alongside it, and then telling them: your fate is indissolubly bound to the fate of our people, to the fate and greatness of our nation" (75).

The individual is always secondary, valuable only insofar as they are part of a collective and contribute to shared objectives. The follower of the paranoid contagion group receives the message that they are valuable only as an adept, a disciple, and an active worker toward a glorious common goal. In return, sometimes, an illusory reward.

Nationalism

"Even the patriot of less philosophical inclinations understands the nation as something that 'lives', at least in the sense that it will 'outlive' them. Hence the willingness or even the ambition of the patriot to die for their homeland: if the nation is an immortal being and they are part of it, by dying in its defense they are partaking in that immortality" (22).

Even at the moment of their own death, the member of the paranoid contagion group remains aware of their scant value as an individual.

Soviet Leninism

"I have been out of diapers long enough to understand that great plans, great ideas and great interests are what matter most, and it would be petty to place the question of one's own life on the same level as the global historical tasks that fall, fundamentally [oh, Stalin], upon your shoulders" (from Bukharin's letter to Stalin, before being executed, published in 67).

The denial of individuality has a profound impact on the daily life of the adept. Indeed, they must renounce their past life and everything of value that they may have treasured up to that point.

Leninist-sectarian groupuscule. SLA

"My study of art history was a clear example of consumption and a waste of my life, when I should have been spending that time helping the people. They had abandoned their past bourgeois lives to take up arms and fight for the people as proof of their love" (31).

But this renunciation is not in order to have a new life *of one's own*, but rather to surrender oneself to a discipline and to ideals that are, at their core, *alien to them*.

Maoist Leninism

"The communist must be sincere and frank, loyal and active, consider the interests of the revolution as his own life and subordinate his personal interests to those of the revolution" (51).

Falangism

"We believe in the supreme reality of Spain. Strengthening, elevating, and aggrandizing it is the pressing collective task of all Spaniards. The interests of individuals, of groups and of classes, shall inexorably bend to the fulfillment of this task" (from the 26 points of Falangism).

There is no doubt that this ethic of altruism and unlimited devotion exerts an irresistible attraction for many.

Maoist Leninism

"What kind of society did Mao intend to build, and in part succeeded in building, albeit for a brief time? The answer is long, very long (or extremely brief: the antipodes of present-day China), and in so little space it is only possible to offer a few brushstrokes:

1) A solidarity-based society, where money and fame were no longer the driving force of human behavior, and where the slogan "Serve the people" (as opposed to our own 'Succeed in life') was instilled from primary schools all the way to the major propaganda outlets" (59).

However, the rhetoric of the *voluntary and unconditional devotion* of the individual to great ideals often conceals *subjugation* and *absolute docility* in the face of mistreatment and exploitation.

Domestic tyranny. Rachel's case

"When I accepted his apparent superiority over me and the alleged gift of his spiritual knowledge, we ceased to be equals. I became his maidservant, his lover, and his partner in numerous investments and business ventures" (78).

It is nothing short of curious that some of the few therapists who have explored therapy for the abusive male speak, precisely, of the *recovery of his individuality*.

Domestic tyranny

"Sonkin and Durphy (1982) in their work highlight the question of visualizing and respecting differences. This consists in the aggressors being able to identify themselves as subjects distinct from their partner and in their working out the complementarity of individualities. The objective is to ensure that these men accept differences, so that both members of the couple can build a positive image of themselves and greater self-esteem, avoiding being an appendage of the other" (16).

One final note. Despite the fact that they frequently enjoy luxuries, privileges, and are deified and idolized by their followers, LPs do not escape the obligation to place great ideals ahead of themselves. Or at least that is what they believe.

Leninism. Shining Path. President Gonzalo

"I do not represent what you call Shining Path. I am only one more combatant, perhaps with more years of struggle and more experience than others, but I am not the leader or representative of our movement. I am one more voice, one more thought, one more weapon that joins the thousands of comrades who fight so that in Peru..." (6).

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