Cultural Values

The subject of ideals

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Abstract. It is argued that ideals emerge in the course of the individuation-separation process, preserving the narcissism of primary Thingness. Ideals form an essential part of social structure, as opposed to communitas, where individuation is suspended. The anthropological distinction between social structure and communitas is reformulated in psychoanalytic terms. Structure and communitas are shown to correspond to two alternative organizations of narcissism. Ideals and myths figure among the manifestations of the narcissism of structure. In the last section, certain explanations of the discourse of ideals are drawn from the preceding account. While the premises of the following reflections are broadly Kleinian, Lacanian concepts are supplemented, not on the basis of any definite synthesis but towards a piecemeal reconciliation.

The concept of ideals plays a minor role in analytical moral philosophy. This neglect is indicative of some general shortcomings of this school of thought. While analytical philosophy lacks historical consciousness, ideals force us to reflect upon concrete historical processes and changing human aspirations. Ideals bridge the artificial boundaries – taken for granted by analytical philosophy – between 'popular' and philosophical morality and between politics and morality. Ideals also bridge the gap between the normative and the descriptive, since they permeate human self-conceptions. Such conceptions always involve idealization; the historical horizon, within which society's self-image is embedded, is suffused with idealizations.

The concept of ideals is fundamental for anthropology, as every culture has its own 'ideals of the noble'. It is fundamental for psychoanalysis because ideals provide a key to understanding the structure of the human subject. As Charles Taylor argues (1985), the self can articulate itself only in relation to what he calls 'strong evaluations', that is, goals 'outside' the self that are taken to be categorically superior. In his essay 'On the Necessity of Ideals' Harry Frankfurt argues that true autonomy and individuality, as opposed to abstract freedom, assume volitional necessity, the necessity of ideals. Ideals are at once forms of

love and 'reflexive evaluative attitudes' which constitute volitional necessity and true autonomy:

> A person ... is subject to a necessity that, in this sense, defines an absolute limit. And this necessity is unequivocally constitutive of his nature or essence as a volitional being ... If someone loves nothing, it follows that he has no ideals. Now an ideal is a limit. A person's ideals are concerns that he cannot bring himself to betray ... If someone has no ideals, there is nothing that he cannot bring himself to do. Moreover, since nothing is necessary to him, there is nothing that he can be said essentially to be. (Frankfurt, 1999, pp. 112, 114)

Like analytical moral philosophy, moral psychology has hardly dwelled on ideals. However, the concept of ideals may be as fundamental to moral psychology as the concept of guilt or of development towards the ability to universalize. Klein observed that a basic sense of goodness and badness antedates guilt. Even if guilt itself is situated at a very early stage, as it was by Klein, goodness and badness of self and other are experienced even earlier. Klein did not elaborate on the *ethical* significance of these fundamental senses of goodness and badness. However, they seem to underlie one's own, others' and the world's goodness and badness, which are expressed in different systems of ideals.

Taylor's 'strong evaluations', like Frankfurt's 'ideals', can never be fully realized. The subject is constituted in relation to a constitutive limit, a lack which may testify for a loss or a deprivation or a death. Names of the unachievable, ideals represent the constitutive limit that makes individuation and membership in social structure possible. (Individuation, which is a strenuous psychological achievement, can only be preserved in social structures. Social structures, for their part, depend on the availability of a sufficient quantity of well-individuated persons for their prosperity. Each occupant of a structural position preserves his/her own individuation by being related within structure to other well-individuated persons. Individuation is a collective achievement.) Ideals, which emerge in the process of individuation, count among the building blocks of social structure.

In the following section, the anthropological distinction between *structure* and *communitas* will be introduced. I propose to supplement Victor Turner's well-known formulation of this distinction with several points, including the earlier claim that ideals form an essential part of social structure while they are absent in *communitas*. It is impossible to understand ideals without understanding social structures. A *transcendent* – that is, *separate* and *absent* – realm of ideals is one of the building blocks of structure.

In the second section, I shall discuss the respective psychoanalytical foundations of structure and *communitas*. If ideals constitute an essential

part of structure, then the psychoanalytical foundations of structure underlie ideals. In the concluding section, I shall deal not with structures as a whole, but with the component of social structures which interests us most, namely, systems of ideals. The account of the psychoanalytical foundations of structure and ideals laid out in the second section will be invoked to illuminate typical movements of ideals. The discussion will remain on the general level of phenomena common to all ideals. Factors which determine the content of ideals, that is, their thematic *differentiation* and *opposition*, will not be discussed.

Structure and *Communitas*

Structures are systems of differentiated, mutually defining, concrete normative identities. As Mead writes in a Hegelian vein, ' … there is a social process out of which selves arise and within which further differentiation, further evolution, further organization, take place' (Mead, 1934, p.164). Structural individuation involves the composition of historical and personal narratives of action and responsibility, narratives that form the building blocks of personal identities. Through normative narratives – mythical and personal narratives that mirror each other – structure appropriates and dominates the body. Within structures, concrete normative identities are organized in relation to each other into systems of kinship, divided spheres of life (e.g. family – civil society – state), hierarchical orders and institutionalized rivalries.

Social structure, as a whole, is united by a common group identity. However, structures are articulate, divided. Opposition, struggle over hegemony, oscillation between mutual recognition and self-assertion, are inherent to structures. The situation of the 'mob', on the other hand, is according to Mead a 'degradation of social structure' involving suspension of all social friction and expansion of the self (Mead, 1934, pp. 213, 218). Structures always produce challenges, hardships and rivalries. No matter how complete the triumph of technology over nature may be, structure will always prevent, at any cost, a general, relaxed and equal satisfaction of needs, or rather, of needs that become desires that are then misrepresented as needs. Structure produces 'needs' and ideals to keep an ideal world beyond reach, transcendent/absent. In this way, ideals serve the imperatives of the structural regimentation and humanization of the body.

Today, the most familiar version of the distinction between structure and *communitas* is Turner's (1969). His distinction has many predecessors, such as the various theories of 'the masses' which were developed at the turn of the century and described crises in structure. The present exposition follows Turner's conceptualizations of structure and *communitas*, albeit with several additions: (a) structures rest on

mythical foundations, that is, myths (e.g., foundation myths) that originate in mythical, transitional, structureless periods. With the re-emergence of structure, these myths are codified and in their codified form support structure's normative system; (b) structures give rise to richly concrete traditional forms of life (*'zones of familiarity'*) and to differentiations between various *spheres of interaction* (e.g., family-market-state), both of which disappear in *communitas;* (c) structures are further distinguished by a separate, *transcendent* realm of ideals. In *communitas,* human existence is *immanent* and complete; there is no *absence* (of the Thing), *desire, ideal.* Turner's distinction between structure and *communitas* needs to be further augmented by a subdistinction between *normative* and *deviant communitas.* Every social structure institutionalizes temporary suspensions of the system of normative identities, such as festivals and rituals. 'Normative *communitas'* is a licensed and predictable suspension of structure while 'deviant *communitas'* aims permanently to collapse structure, not merely to overthrow the current hegemonic group (temporarily or permanently).

Structures are further characterized by a social organization of labour – something impossible in *communitas* – and by rational and traditional leadership, as opposed to purely charismatic leadership, to use Weber's distinctions. Individuation emerges through labour and depends on it for its maintenance. Labour was taken in the romantic thinking on *Bildung* as the driving force of individual development and emancipation. The individual process of individuation-through-labour is only possible as part of a general, social cycle of labour. As Adorno and Horkheimer noted in *The Dialectics of Enlightenment,* labour dictates the organization of public life and sustains social reason, cooperation and culture.

As opposed to structure, *communitas* houses a suspension of individuality and concrete identity. Consequently, social tensions between persons of different or similar status disappear, since status as such vanishes, causing an expansion of the self:

> Essentially, *communitas* is a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals. These individuals are not segmentalized into roles and statuses but confront one another rather in a manner of Martin Buber's 'I and Thou'. Along with this direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities, there tends to go a model of society as a homogeneous, unstructured *communitas,* whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species. (Turner, 1969, pp. 131-2)

Communitas precipitates the breakdown of ego boundaries and individuality. The individual is absorbed into the collective self. As a result of the suspension of identities, *communitas* 'involves the whole man in his relation to other whole men ... Relations between total beings
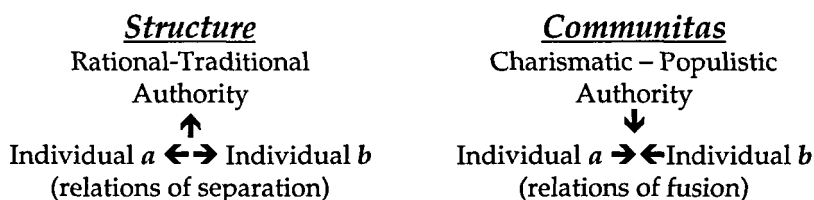
are generative of symbols and metaphors and comparisons; art and literature are their products rather than legal and political structures' (Turner, 1969, p. 127). Accordingly, populist movements aim to annihilate structure and to establish communication between total, 'unspecialized' human beings.[1] In *communitas*, normative roles and identities – including sexual identity – are reversed (Turner, 1969, pp. 95, 102). The decline of the cognitive functions of language and the profusion of symbols derive from the suspension of individuation and boundaries: 'The symbol ends by being confused with the thing it represents ...' (Silone, 1964, pp. 28, 113).[2]

Authoritarian aspirations to evade the burdens and responsibilities of structure and individuality are realized in *communitas*. The authoritarian personality aims towards the collapse of structure, because it is dominated by inner, misrecognizing, persecutory 'objects' that undermine its individuation-separation. Several writers on authoritarianism – notably Fromm - identified its sado-masochistic nature.[3] Fromm and Klein identified the sado-masochistic nature of (primary) relations of fusion, as opposed to relations between mutually recognizing separate individuals. In *communitas*, primary sado-masochistic fusion replaces individuation. In *communitas*, the persecutory rather than the benevolent aspect of the maternal imago is enacted.[4] While the sado-masochistic – in Klein's terms: schizoid-paranoid - order of ritual, is established by reemergence of the persecutory maternal imago, the legal-linguistic order of structure rests on maternal recognition that secures firm individuation.

While '... social structure is intimately connected with history' (Turner, 1969, p. 153), the time of *communitas* and ritual is mythical time, a time outside ordinary, continuous historical chronology and the chronology of deliberation and action (Eliade, 1954; Turner, 1985; Falassi, 1987). Mythical time is *pre-historical* in that society collapses back during *communitas* to its mythical, founding period, before its normative framework was laid down. Since both 'rational' and 'traditional' authorities assume historical consciousness, leadership in *communitas* is charismatic. Such leadership is anti-hegemonic, replacing the structural leadership modeled on authority – and recognition-relations within the traditional family. Luc de-Heusch (1987) distinguished between two paradigms of leadership: magical leadership, where authority rests on heroic exploit – such as slaughter of the predecessor – and leadership that derives its authority from succession. The former corresponds to *communitas*, the latter to structure. Under magical leadership, for example, in a fascist régime, the relationship between leader and group is modeled on the early sado-masochistic symbiosis. According to Anzieu (1984), the charismatic leader in such groups is identified on the fantasy level with the persecuting maternal imago. Where authority rests on succession, the leader guarantees normative separation and

transcendence of the Thing. His authority derives from the law and is bound by the law. The relations between rational authority and its subjects and between every two subjects under rational authority are based on firm separation-individuation.

Already on the descriptive, phenomenological level it can be observed that, in both structure and *communitas*, horizontal relations between individuals reproduce the relation between the group and its leader. The horizontal and the vertical axes mirror each other. In structure, there is firm separation between individuals as well as between the group and its leader. In *communitas*, non-separation between the group, as a whole, and its charismatic-populistic leader infects all interpersonal relations:

Structure	*Communitas*
Rational-Traditional	Charismatic – Populistic
Authority	Authority
↑	↓
Individual a ←→ Individual b	Individual a →←Individual b
(relations of separation)	(relations of fusion)

The mythical time of *communitas* is timelessness, permanent immediacy, a total time, like the total beings who experience it. Mythical time is self sufficient, careless, fearless of death and ignorant of past and future. It is a time of total actualization, of Thingness, of *jouissance*, of transcendence brought down to earth. In this sense, *communitas* lacks a transcendent mythical foundation – a transcendent narrative – that serves in structure as a constitutive frame for historical consciousness and for the normative system. Instead of resting on an existing codified mythology, *communitas* manufactures new mythologies. Time vanishes, revelation and salvation are immediate, not a distant promise. *Communitas* tolerates no lack, limit or clothing, and therefore no desire or ideal. The transcendent realm, death and *la Chose* are brought closer and made immediately present. If *communitas* longs for the end of desire, for the withdrawal of libido, it longs for death and self-destruction too. To use Lacan's distinction, *communitas* is not a time of pleasure but of *jouissance*, associated by Lacan with death and with a realm beyond desire.

In *communitas*, there is no longer a need for the surrogate satisfactions, consolations and compensations that abound in structure. Here, the joys of concrete forms of everyday life seem faint and naive. *Zones of familiarity* and consolation place participants in the midst of long traditions and mobilize daily efforts towards the preservation of these traditions. Rituals, in contrast, are dissociated from history and daily labour and infuse participants with self-sufficient, effortless omnipotence.

Structures place their participants within a system of limits and spheres of interaction, a system of differentiated social bodies. This is the point in the present interpretation of structure most relevant to the discussion of ideals. There are various spheres of interaction *within* structure (family - civil society - state), a clear distinction between structure's inside and outside, a realm of objective classificatory categories constructing the subject's identity from 'outside the subject', a realm of sacred objects and events (licensed manifestations of sacredness interspersed in structure) and a transcendent politico-religious realm: the political theatre of the sovereign collective body. *Ideals,* both secular and religious, reside in a transcendent realm – a historically variable articulation of the collective sacred body – that makes human endeavors and human life in social structure meaningful. Anti-structural, authoritarian ideals, too, are only possible within social structures. In *communitas,* the distance between the immediate and the transcendent dissolves.

In *communitas,* the *Sacred* is no longer distant. While religion assumes institutionalization (a Church), a system of normative social roles and identities, the separation of the individual from the sacred and acceptance of the burdens of normativity, in magic (*communitas*) – in ceremony or in ritual – separation is suspended and replaced by each participant's participation in sacredness. *In religion, the sacred remains transcendent and absent, it is only represented; in magic, representation is replaced by immediate presence.* Religion is an ongoing theatre of representation, magic – a fleeting, intense, ecstatic presence of the sacred in ritual or ceremony. It is hardly surprising, then, that magic is usually conceived of as anti-normative and arouses religion's suspicion. Religion exists in the routine of social structure, a routine in which a distance is maintained between everyday life and the well-delimited sacred sphere. This distance disappears in ceremonies and rituals when every participant partakes in sacredness. Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss claimed that magic differs from religion by being non-institutionalized, private and anti-normative. While magic is indeed anti-normative and non-institutionalized, it may sometimes be endorsed by the community as a whole during ecstatic, collective suspensions of normativity. Like religion, ideals belong in social structure and assume the renunciation of magic.

The normative order is usually understood to be at war with desire. This aspect of the relations between norms and desire seemed central, though in different ways, to thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault. On a certain level this assumption may be valid. However, the normative order seems built into desire and not only opposed to it. Desire emerges in an individual confined to the boundaries of the normative system of structure. This is a widely held view that Lacan heralded and which should be integrated into the theory of structure:

structures contain law – a normative system – as well as desires and ideals. Lacan writes: 'The dialectical relationship between desire and the law causes our desire to flare up only in relation to the Law, through which it becomes the desire for death. It is only because of the law that sin – which in Greek means lack and non participation in the Thing – takes on an excessive, hyperbolic character' (1992, p. 84).[5]

Ideals represent a lost primary bond.[6] It is this Absolute bond as a whole, rather than the separateness and Otherness of the Father, of death or of the signifier, that is the origin and prototype of transcendence/absence. This transcendent Other is represented in structure in myths, ideals, hegemonic institutions and politico-theological concepts of sovereignty. It is staged in society's political center, the theatre of power and hegemony. The omnipresent Father is the anchor of separation, and, as such, admired and aggrandized. However, the big Other looms large behind the Father. An identification of the Thing with the mother can be found in Lacan.[7] Lacan also suggests, in line with general psychoanalytic theory, that it is the subject itself, not only the Thing, who dies, lost to itself with separation and the entrance into the symbolic order. According to Lacan, the symbolic as well as the imaginary phallus is also forever deprived. Whether or not the conclusions Lacan draws from symbolic castration/privation are correct, the latter should be distinguished from the absence of the Thing more clearly than it is distinguished by Lacan (due to the lack of clarity of the category of the Real). It is precisely the absence of the Thing that is fundamental to the understanding of ideals.

Individuation-separation involves a brutal extraction from primary Thingness. Every regression from structure to *communitas* marks a temporary triumph of the longing to revert to primary Thingness. Because the divided subject exists 'outside himself' – (according to Lacanians, the subject is placed outside himself both on the *symbolic* and *imaginary* levels) – he exists in constant suspense and dependence on the mirroring of others and of the big Other. Structure creates parameters of social identity, norms and obstacles to keep the subject 'outside' himself. Under conditions of division, ideals represent lost fullness, linking symbiosis with individuation.

The view that ideals represent the lost primary bond chimes with a Kleinian approach to ethics. Whereas Freud's psychology implies a conception of post-Oedipal guilt as the essence of ethics and morality, Klein's theory assumes a much wider conception of value. Morality cannot be reduced to introjected paternal commands and guilt – to their violation. Moral judgements reflect above all the structure of the 'object world' and 'object relations'. One's most basic senses of goodness and badness are built into the object world – the sum of one's benevolent and malevolent internalized objects of identification. The extent and nature of the internalization of social norms (namely, Freudian super-

ego) depend on the structure of the object world, i.e., on whether the good or the bad self is dominant, whether one's objects of identification support or assault one's ego. The ethical standards legislated by agents of socialization with which the infant will identify are superimposed onto an already existing object-world that involves general evaluations of oneself and others, of goodness and badness.

Klein elucidates the basic, rudimentary, meaning of goodness and badness that antedates guilt: goodness and badness of the self, of the object and of the object-relation. The very structure of the ego and the object world is permeated with and partly shaped by basic evaluations which underlie all future object-relations, ideals and ethical judgements and concerns. From a Kleinian perspective, all ideals seem to share the same basic sense of goodness, the goodness of the primary, blissful symbiotic encounter with the good object. Erikson notes that '[t]he oral stages then, form in the infant the springs of the *basic sense of trust* and the basic sense of evil which remain the source of primal anxiety and of primal hope throughout life' (1950, p. 75). A mature, well established super-ego already assumes an entire system of supporting values and identifications, firm and consistent recognition, a rich matrix of reliable relationships. Such a super-ego is not a simple, isolated introjection of rational paternal authority. Freud's accounts of guilt and the super-ego are misguided insofar as they rest on a narrow conception of human values and ideals. Freud did not sufficiently relate the super-ego to the totality of the ego's identifications and models, and narrowed morality to the field of the post-Oedipal, exacting super-ego.

In addition, Klein offers revisions of Freud's moral psychology which remain *within* the theory of guilt and the super-ego. Klein broadens Freud's view of the super-ego. The father is no longer seen as the sole source of the super-ego; the mother makes at least an equal contribution. Furthermore, according to Klein, the super-ego is not only harsh and exacting but is also the source of self love, a sort of fusion of Freud's super-ego and ego-ideal (though Klein disagrees with Freud's conception of the narcissistic origin of the ego-ideal). 'These two [good and bad] aspects of the mother's breast are introjected and form the core of the super-ego' (Klein, 1988, p. 70). Even though Freud (1930) acknowledges the existence of guilt before the super-ego, he conceives of guilt as the inner voice of command upon the occasion of transgression. For Klein, guilt is much more basic. It is inseparable from the very presence of the other and from the basic evaluations of goodness and badness. Already in the primary paranoid-schizoid position guilt appears in moments of integration (Klein, 1988, pp. 25-43) and is internal to all relations between integrated, separate persons. 'The synthesis between the loved and hated aspects of the complete object gives rise to feelings of mourning and guilt which imply vital advances in the infant's emotional and intellectual life' (Klein, 1986, p.178).

To reiterate, all ideals share the same fundamental sense of goodness: the goodness of the symbiotic bond. They are all variations on this one theme. According to Klein, the primary schizoid-paranoid position is not only good, but predominantly persecutory. Lacan insightfully suggests that the subject can face neither the Thing's real, extreme goodness nor its extreme badness. The subject conceives of the Thing as impeccably good, but this is an illusory goodness. As Lacan writes, '... *das Ding* is not distinguished as bad. The subject makes no approach at all to the bad object. He cannot stand the extreme good that *das Ding* may bring him, which is all the more reason why he cannot locate himself in relation to the bad' (Lacan, 1992, p. 73; see a different statement on p. 63). Evil ideals are also oriented toward the goodness of the primary bond. After all, this goodness is illusory. Evil ideals reflect a painful and persecutory early bond that brought about a predominance of bad, retaliating inner objects. Evil ideals of the 'bad self' long to reverse formative rejections and to regain love and recognition. Winnicott (1984) interprets 'anti-social' behaviour precisely in these terms: as an attempt to regain deprived love and approval, as an appeal to retrace a course that suddenly took a wrong turn.

Varieties of narcissistic experience

The distinction between structure and *communitas* should be grounded in a psychoanalytic distinction between two ontological modalities of the social bond. One way to formulate this psychoanalytic distinction is as a distinction between two forms of organization of narcissism. There is a distinct narcissism of structure and a distinct narcissism of *communitas*. Ideals form part of the organization of narcissism underlying structure. To repeat, ideals belong in social structure, structure and *communitas* correspond to two narcissistic organizations, the narcissistic organization that comprises 'ideals' conditions all structural phenomena.

What is the narcissism of *communitas*? The suspension of identity in rituals and in other forms of *communitas* responds to primary narcissistic aspirations that structure frustrates. The individuation-separation process that conditions structure involves narcissistic wounds. It enjoins renunciation of early omnipotence, acceptance of a variety of substitutes, and recognition of clear normative boundaries. *Communitas* aims to revive the archaic symbiotic bond and to refuse the narcissistic wounds inflicted in the course of separation-individuation. By suspending the constraints imposed by individuation as such and by particular normative orders, primary narcissistic fantasies of effortless omnipotence, exhibitionistic ecstasy, self-sufficiency and opulence are fulfilled. The structural system of cultural substitutes and sublimations

collapses. Such narcissism differs from the narcissistic realm of highly individuated personalities. Ritual narcissism results precisely from the regression of the narcissism of structure. When the narcissistic basis that underpins normative structural identities disintegrates, regression to ritual narcissism is imminent. In rites of passage, the narcissism that underlies structural identity is mortally wounded. This is so because in order for the novices to assume a new identity their previous identity needs to be denied. A more elaborate account of the *narcissism of ritual* would show how this type of narcissism places existing psychoanalytic concepts – such as Lacan's *jouissance* and Herbert Rosenfeld's (1971) 'negative narcissism' – in a clear anthropological context.

In ritual narcissism, a fusion of ego and ego-ideal takes place. Ideals are absent from *communitas*; in ritual, transcendence and the unachievable – the distance between the ego and the ego-ideal – break down. Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel's account of perverse ideals captures the nature of ritual narcissism and of authoritarian ideals:

> Models, in so far as there are any, would be distant and abstract. When they are personified it would not be in someone representing an idealized father substitute but in someone, precisely, who had himself succeeded in avoiding introjective conflicts and in conferring upon himself a magic, autonomous phallus or someone who promises this to his followers whilst sparing them the painful process of development ... As I have said, the 'ideological' leader is someone who can make the illusion – the promise of a coming together of ego and ideal – sparkle. (1984, p. 114)

As Claude Lefort (1986) observes, the 'logic of totalitarianism' is a logic of identity of leader and people.

While it is clear why and how ritual is narcissistic, can normative identity possess a positive narcissistic value? Authors of different convictions, such as Béla Grunberger and Heinz Kohut, refute the common assumption according to which narcissism is necessarily regressive and replaced by object love. Normative identities must have a positive narcissistic value to make structure possible. 'We see a movement from archaic to mature narcissism, side by side and intertwined with a movement from archaic to mature object love; we do not see an abandonment of self love and its replacement by the love of others' (Kohut, 1984, p. 208). Mature narcissism involves an easy sense of structural identity and love of the clothed body. Kohut claims that only when mothering is deficient and fails to perform *selfobject* functions ('mirroring', 'idealization' and 'twinship') does a fixation on the archaic, grandiose, *selfobject* take place. Such a fixation produces a weak personality organization, one that is not properly individuated and that is hostile to structure, hoping to spread and entrench the archaic

narcissism of ritual.[8] Let us consider two aspects of the narcissism of structural, normative identities:

(a) *Mature identification as a narcissistic incorporation of the loved and admired object.* Individuation-separation involves the emergence of concrete identity through mature identifications. The normative identities, whose interrelationships make up structures, originate in such identifications. Thus, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud treats identification with the slaughtered primal father as the starting point of social structure, law and religion. Identifications inscribe lineage membership, archetypal characteristics and, according to classical psychoanalysis, a 'normative order' in the crystallizing personality. Through their objects of identification, individuals become what they are and come to know who they are. Structures, as systems of concrete identities, are reproduced by identifications. The narcissistic incorporation involved in every identification suggests itself as the source of structural narcissism. With individuation, the primary *selfobject* splits into an introjected object-world, a narcissistic envelope and a transcendent/absent, benevolent big Other. The installations of the good object after firm individuation – namely, its introjection and transcendent projection – are suspended in the ritual celebration of death.

Identification should be understood as a failed attempt to return to fusion. Identification is the result of the narcissistic attempt to incorporate the object's omnipotence under conditions of separation-individuation. The return to fusion is impossible because separation has already been established. When fusion with the primary object, or with what is known in psychoanalytic theory as the 'ego ideal', is impossible, identification remains a second-best, possible option. As an incorporation of the object of identification, identification is perhaps the closest possible relation after fusion. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud famously depicts identification as narcissistic regression. 'When it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object, there quite often ensues an alternation of his ego which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego ... the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes ... When the ego assumes the features of the object, it is forcing itself, so to speak, upon the id as a love-object and is trying to make good the id's loss by saying: "Look, you can love me too – I am so like the object"'. According to Freud, through oral incorporation love is turned from object to self and the powers and privileges of the external object are ascribed to self by implication.

Action and effort can be recruited and mobilized within structure only through the formulation of ideals and on the basis of the narcissistic seductiveness of ideals. The narcissism of identification is the source of social cohesion in structure and the principle of religion and politics as collections of vast collective mirrors; politics and religion are theatres of collective narcissistic identifications. According to Freud

(1913, 1921), social solidarity is based on the homosexual narcissistic libido that circulates within social structure through the mediation of the figure of the leader, the collective object of identification. Freud's group psychology thus suggests how ideals function as codes of group and kin membership. From a Kleinian perspective this collective narcissism can be seen as having maternal rather than paternal roots.

Authorities and traditions may set challenges and limits, but at the same time they breed and nourish the narcissism of structure. They breed narcissism by recognizing their followers as their extensions and by infusing them with their power, wisdom and grace. Authorities and traditions bestow the powers of descent: legitimacy and membership, and consequent economic, political and religious powers. They could not impose demands without flattering narcissism by producing narcissistic self-images of themselves and, by extension, of their participants. Ideals are such self images. Ideals mark the distance between identifications that were already accomplished and impossible fusion. Ideals are someone's ideals insofar as they are anchored in accomplished incorporations. They are beyond human possession insofar as they represent impossible fusion. Ideals substitute impossible fusion while repeatedly evoking its (illusory) goodness and thereby keeping it distant. The complex mechanisms of the reversal of practice in its idealized representations derive partly from the need to separate the real and the ideal, to fabricate an externality that is both a mirror and an Other. As narcissistic substitutes of fusion, ideals are longings that uphold structural renunciations. The ideals of well-individuated persons, in particular, glorify the trials and exertions of individuation.

Ideals are not simply transmitted from the object of identification to the subject of identification. They are rediscovered by each subject, reflecting the particular (idealized) worldview and the basic ethical attitudes of self-love and trust, or hatred of world and self, that result from the sum of one's identifications, that is, from the overall structure of one's 'object world'. When identifications are firm and the object world supportive, ideals reflect the values of individuation. When persecutory objects dominate the object world, symbols of fusion are celebrated. Even though ideals are not learned by way of repetition and imitation but are discovered or rediscovered, they still express the narcissism of continuity and descent. The emergence of a deviant ideal within a certain school of thought – ideals universally tend to ramify into different ideologies – has the symbolic meaning of segmentation of a kinship group.

(b) The persisting narcissistic aura. Alongside the imaginary incorporation of a loved object in identification, mature narcissism consists of a narcissistic realm of Absolute, undivided being. This is the realm of omnipotent wholeness that originates in early attachments and which remains indispensable to structure in the forms of myths, group-

identities and traditions. This narcissistic realm is the realm of permanent self-expansion that represents and substitutes total being after individuation-separation has been established. Mature identifications do not entirely replace primary attachments. They depend on the persisting goodness, vitality and wholeness of such attachments and on their narcissistic inputs. In asserting the goodness of the primary bond, ideals narcissistically cherish the love that was once poured upon the self and *keep* this flow of love running.

Ideals offer narcissistic representations of total boundless being for the subject in structure, confined in the boundaries imposed by the normative system. Durkheim captures this point by tracing ideals to the omnipotent boundlessness of *communitas*, which ideals continue to represent with the reestablishment of structure:

> Thus the formation of an ideal is by no means an irreducible datum that eludes science. It rests on conditions that can be uncovered through observation. It is a natural product of social life. If society is to be able to become conscious of itself and keep the sense it has of itself at the required intensity, it must assemble and concentrate. This concentration brings about an uplifting of moral life that is expressed by a set of ideal conceptions in which the new life thus awakened is depicted. These ideal conceptions correspond to the onrush of psychic forces added at that moment to those we have at our disposal for the everyday tasks of life. A society can neither create nor recreate itself without creating some kind of ideal by the same stroke. This creation is not a sort of optional extra step by which society, being already made, merely adds finishing touches; it is the act by which society makes itself, and remakes itself, periodically. (Durkheim, 1995, p. 425)

Within structure, early life-giving attachments turn into fusion with consoling and empowering concrete traditions and forms of life. Participants in a traditional form of life are still *fused* with their concrete forms of life after individuation occurs. Myths, ideals, concrete traditions and forms of life are extensions of the personality that enable the individual to reach beyond ego-boundaries. Individuating identifications imply both firm boundaries and expansion into mythical, archetypal, prototypes which are embedded in tradition. Ideals are embodied in concrete traditions and forms of life, permeate, animate and symbolize them. Ideals are as much alive as are their proponents. Jung's description of myths equally applies to ideals: 'Myth is not fiction: it consists of facts that are continually repeated and can be observed over and over again. It is something that happens to man, and men have mythical fates just as much as the Greek heroes do' (Jung, 1952, p. 75). In this way, as lived narcissistic images embedded in concrete forms of life and totally unrealizable, ideals are always already fully realized. Ideals are, incompatibly, mirrors, parts (objects

continuous with the embodied self), and grand, separate residents of a transcendent realm. They express, paradoxically, both the strength of ego boundaries and their being absorbed in something bigger.

Kohut has suggested that ideals perform narcissistic functions. The aim of the present discussion is to locate the narcissism of ideals in the same organization underlying social structure. According to Kohut, the perfection of primary narcissism is mainly substituted by the 'idealized parental imago' (partly narcissistic and partly object oriented) and the 'narcissistic self'. Kohut conceives of ideals as representations of the 'idealized parental imago': '[T]he preconscious correlates of the narcissistic self and of the ego ideal are experienced by us as our ambitions and ideals ... Our ideals are our internal leaders; we love them and are longing to reach them. Ideals are capable of absorbing a great deal of transformed narcissistic libido and thus of diminishing narcissistic tensions and narcissistic vulnerability' (Kohut, 1985, p. 105).[9] While this is not the place to consider Kohut's notions of 'idealized paternal imago' and 'narcissistic self' at length, I wish to point out that the narcissistic function of ideals is not merely to echo the voice of an idealized parental imago. Ideals reflect the overall combination of one's identifications and do not simply correspond to discrete imagoes. Furthermore, ideals derive their narcissistic value not only from internalized imagoes, but from occupying the narcissistic envelope as well. To use Kohut's own expression, ideals are 'cultural selfobjects'.

To sum up, with structural individuation, the primary object splits into three sources of self-love: an incorporated object, a narcissistic envelope and transcendent/absent, benevolent big Other. Through the concrete objects of their secondary/mature identifications (father, mother), members of social structures identify with the big Other (Father, Mother, absent Leader) and jurally acquire social membership and territory. Structural narcissism consists in the construction of the big Other through incorporation and elevation of the primary bond onto a transcenden realm.

Meanings and Uses of Ideals

Ideals share features imposed by their common origin. Nietzsche writes in fragment 343 of The Will to Power:

> An ideal that wants to prevail or assert itself seeks to support itself (a) by a spurious origin, (b) by a pretended relationship with powerful ideals already existing, (c) by the thrill of mystery, as if a power that cannot be questioned spoke through it, (d) by defamation of ideals that oppose it, (e) by a mendacious doctrine of the advantages it brings with it ... (Nietzsche, 1968, 343).

(a) Ideals' 'spurious origin'. Nietzsche's opening phrase is not less significant than the items he lists. Ideals want to 'prevail or assert' themselves. As Durkheim states: 'In fact, the man who has a genuine faith feels an irrepressible need to spread it. To do so, he comes out of his isolation, he approaches others, he seeks to convince them, and it is the ardor of the convictions he brings about that in turn reinforces his own. That ardor would speedily dissipate if left alone' (1995, p. 427). The aim of this urge to spread ideals is to establish either the solidarity of *communitas* or structural hegemony. For knights of a new faith living in a formative, mythical time the distance between structure and *communitas* has not yet opened up.

The 'spurious origins' of ideals trace them back to powerful mythical figures that personify tradition.[10] As John Henderson writes in his study of orthodoxy and heresy, every orthodoxy attributes to itself 'certain qualities, particularly *primacy* (or originality), a *true transmission* from the founder to the present day, *unity, catholicity*, and a conception of orthodoxy as a *middle way* between heretical extremes' (1988, p. 85). Freud (1913, 1921) showed how group members are united through such mythical ancestors and their changing human incarnations. This social bond nourishes the narcissism of structure. Anthropology discovered such general principles concerning kin activities as: 'those who sacrifice together must be kin', 'marriage takes place only between kin', and so on. It seems that *those who share the same ideal must also be, symbolically, kin and worship the same ancestral authors of ideals*. Indeed, Freud had anticipated some of these principles when he interpreted sacrificial practices and social cohesion in terms of a common primal Father. From a Kleinian perspective, the collective imago underlying social cohesion and common ideals – the collective ego-ideal – can be seen as a maternal, rather than paternal, totem. Sharing an ideal implies sharing the same origin and the same sacred Thing, the transcendent/absent foundation of structure. Ideals, as transformations of early archetypal/mythical attachments, are codes of membership and common extraction. In fact, one's imaginary heritage itself *is* ideal, the epitome of goodness. It *is* a familiar phenomenon that lineages trace themselves to 'spurious origins':

> [I]t is a common experience to find an informant who refuses to admit that his lineage or even his branch of a greater lineage did not at one time exist. Myth and legend, believed, naturally, to be true history, are quickly cited to prove the contrary. But investigation shows that the stretch of time, or rather of duration, with which perpetuity is equated varies according to the count of generations needed to conceptualize the internal structure of the lineage and link it on to an absolute, usually mythological origin for the whole social system in a first founder. (Fortes, 1971, p. 264)

(b) Ideals' claim to continuity and hegemony (*'powerful ideals already existing'*). Here, again, Nietzsche marks continuity as a condition for authority (*'already existing'*). The continuity in question is descent, narcissistically coded and worshipped in the form of group-ideals. Society's hegemonic centre – its system of 'strong evaluations' and normative order – rests on its historical identity and narratives of descent. Secular 'civil religions' depend on the heritage of 'historical' religions and on their implicit support. In the case of revolutions such as the French Revolution or the communist revolution in Russia, the breakdown of hegemonic normative order had to be compensated by the construction of a new dogma and the brutal implementation of new standards of right and wrong. Revolutions teach us that a reactionary retreat to mythical authorities follows the revolutionary period. A link with some ancient mythical authorities must be reestablished.

Nietzsche notes that ideals strive to be associated with existing *power* (*'powerful* ideals'). The power of ideals is the power of traditions and of the empowering Absolute Other postulated by each tradition as its own. It is the power of participants in traditions since ideals and traditions are *selfobjects* and are not separate from their participants. Ideals strive first and foremost, not to realize any reforms, but to be hegemonic, to return to their adherents triumphant mirror-reflections, to assert the superiority of certain traditions and their authoritative spokesmen. Every system of ideals – even ostensibly ascetic ones – primarily strives to seize mundane rule, as much as any supreme mundane power cannot do without legal-metaphysical justifications. Hegemony consists in this marriage of power and legitimacy. As Louis Marin (1988, 1997) demonstrated, the discourse of justice without power as well as the discourse of unjust power is impossible. Meaningful discourse must conform to the hegemonic system of representation, a system within which one must speak in the name of a ruling justice. A further implication is that, from a psychoanalytical point of view, conceptions of justice primarily aim to secure one's position within one's political arena, and only secondarily to have universal application. Ideals always stand for both historically concrete causes and universalized claims.

Ideals cannot be oblivious to the existing relations of power. They either oppose power or identify with it. At any rate, ideals participate in the structural game of struggle over hegemony. The power for which ideals fight is, primarily, symbolic. Ideals aim to be staged and vouched for on the centralized (and centralizing) theatre of power. By claiming relation to existing ideals, new ideals do not only secure 'continuity' but associate themselves with the existing theatre and language of power on whose stability everyday life depends. As a result, every ideal can pose an implicit threat: subscribe to me if you want central power to allow for your existence and that of the goods and environment essential for you.

(c) Ideals' thrill of mystery ('...*as if a power that cannot be questioned spoke through it*'). Above all, the *mystical* moment of ideals is the moment during which the wish to return to fusion steps forward, a wish that is at the root of all mystical experience. The mystery infused into ideals reveals how ideals operate as codes of membership in a sacred communion that is beyond explanation or criticism. Furthermore, mystery protects ideals from being exposed as fictitious products of idealization, if not total inversion of truth. As Barthes emphasized, inversion of culture into nature is omnipresent in mythical representations. Mystery makes the group unaccountable, limitless, and reveals the symbiotic, Thing-like aspect and source of group membership.

(d) Defamation of rival ideals. Ideals are always oppositional. Ideals claim the superiority of certain traditions over rival traditions that are symbolized by other ideals. Essentially, within the articulation of structure, different ideals signify and correspond to different, rival groups. Ideals become codes of kin membership (e.g. nationality), and kin groups are hostile to each other, competing over hegemony. Proponents of an ideal consider rival ideals as shameful aberrations from everything dignified and worthwhile in the social and cultural heritage, since rival ideals do not share their fundamental sense of what is good, human, fertile, pure. Rival ideals do not share the same origin, the same Thing.

For modern society in particular, with its 'organic' solidarity, the division between different systems of ideals is constitutive. '... we are not able to work out our own political institutions without introducing the hostilities of parties' (Mead, 1934, p. 220).[11] The persistence of political conflict cannot be accounted for by structural inequalities or man's aggressive nature, to which Carl Schmitt referred in trying to explain why politics is war. Schmitt is right, however, to doubt the possibility of rational dialogue in politics and to take the enemy-friend dichotomy as the foundation of political action. Orthodoxy depends on the construction of heresy for its existence (Henderson, 1998). The struggle for hegemony and the reproduction of misrecognition in modern society reproduce and entrench the conflict of ideals. This conflict comes to perform essential social functions, such as the institutionalization and release of aggression, and social articulation and diversification which are essential to structure, whose greatest enemy is uniformity.

(e) Lastly, ideals' promises of success (salvation). Nietzsche notes how all ideals promise a better *future*. This observation calls for a brief summary on the temporality of ideals. The *forward-looking* promises of ideals are rooted in a *past and bygone* paradise, the illusory bliss of early attachment. These utopian, redemptive (*forward looking*) promises are at the same time *nostalgic* invocations of a *past* paradise, or rather of a

mythical paradise external to chronological time, a paradise at once *past*, *present* and *future*. The communist ideal of an equal society, for example, explicitly conjures up a blissful exit from historical temporality.

Ideals contain a moment of assertion of the *present* order, insofar as the attachments they express are objectified in one's present form of life. Ideals and conceptions of the *present* social world are not clearly distinguishable. The language of ideals is built into everyday practices. Everyday, as well as theoretical, conceptions of the social order are always partly idealized, a collective *persona*. The real and concrete forms of life to which we are attached are the horizons within which 'the good' is meaningful, realised, and ethical attachments objectified. This is Hegel's conception of 'ethical life'. Every 'ideal' must refer to the 'real' (Hegel, 1942, p. 10, 185 R), to the existing and empowering social order whose relation to the ideal social order is a relation of mutual-constitution. Political programmes, such as Plato's *Republic*, should never be considered exclusively 'utopian'. Ideals portraying the distant world of the beyond indicate, according to Hegel, contradiction and existential predicament (see, for example, Hegel's account in 1977, p. 121 and Foucault's Hegelian account of stoicism in Foucault, 1990, pp. 81-97; and see references to Marin above). Durkheim, whose conception of religion and ideals in general follows Hegel in important ways, writes similarly on the anchor of ideals in the present:

> Thus, when we set the ideal society in opposition to the real society, like two antagonists supposingly leading us in different directions, we are reifying and opposing abstractions. The ideal society is not outside the real one but is part of it. Far from our being divided between them as though between two poles that repel one another, we cannot hold to the one without holding to the other. A society is not constituted simply by the mass of individuals who comprise it, the ground they occupy, the things they use, or the movements they make, but above all by the idea it has of itself. (1995, p. 425)

In the language of Chinese philosophy, the milestones of the *Way* are placed in the institutions of our concrete forms of life, leading towards a projected idealized horizon. 'For while the Way is rooted deeply within the Mandate of Heaven, it actually operates in the midst of daily life' (Sommer, 1995, p. 198; see also Luke 17, 20-21). Ideals assert the present primarily in the sense that ideals assert 'us' – 'our present' – and not 'theirs'.[12] Without 'them' the present would be better. Similarly, the past and future that ideals assert are *our* past and future.

To reiterate, ideals assert the future, past and present of a certain tradition that claims hegemony, and at the same time reside in a different order of temporality – timelessness – in which there is no past, present or future. Ideals are at once nostalgic and utopian/redemptive, and, to a certain extent, always 'presently fulfilled'. Timelessness is the

realm of mythical archetypes where ideals function as narcissistic mirrors/doubles in an eternal present. Within social structure, ideals, and the absent-empty sacred realm as a whole, as opposed to the presence of the sacred in magic/communitas, are timeless, infiltrated with mute, two-dimensional images of timeless ancestors. This timelessness belongs originally to the Thing, the ultimate and absent source of life and meaning.

Notes

1. 'Individuals in [simple] societies are competent to fill many roles: they are "many-faceted", and therefore various, realized and integral personalities' (MacRae, 1969, p. 159).
2. This is Hanna Segal's conception of 'symbolic equation'.
3. In the absence of maternal recognition that allows for individuation, sado-masochism is a form of self-assertion over the persecutor. It originates in identification with a bad object, an extreme illustration of the defense mechanism known as 'identification with the aggressor'. Masochism has been interpreted as a *reversed* form of control over the persecutor – nonetheless a form of control – and of seduction, appeasement and appeal for mercy (Freud, 1919; Bak, 1946; Berliner, 1958). Masochistic identification internalizes misrecognition and (self) hate. '[A] sense of guilt is invariably the factor that transforms sadism into masochism'. ['A child is being beaten' (1919, p.189). Later, Freud (1920) believed that masochism could be primary.] Individuality, though servile and distorted, is fought for and achieved through compliance; only a distorted erotic experience in the form of libidinized violence is possible. ['This being beaten is now a convergence of the sense of guilt and sexual love. *It is not only the punishment for the forbidden genital relation, but also the regressive substitute for that relation ...*'(Freud, 1919, p.189).] Freud further suggests that masochism is a way of coping with anxiety of an anticipated punishment by inflicting the punishment on oneself in advance. In addition, sado-masochism is a form of control over one's own provoked and unmitigated aggression in that one identifies with it and ostensibly integrates it.
4. Sado-masochistic elements are prominent in body art and performance art, which are forms of anti-hegemonic ritual, in contrast to both 'bourgeois' theater and the established avant-garde, which remains within the hegemonic system of representation. See, for example, the masochistic elements in performances of Chris Burden, Stelarc and Marina Abramovitch (Schimmel, 1998).

5. Lacan's remark on Greek etymology is probably groundless. Desires, like ideals, are in fact, transcendent and unrealizable. While needs, according to Lacan, can be fulfilled, desire is never exhausted and constitutes the subject in constant dependence. Desires represent an eternal quest that is built into the dynamic constitution of the subject in structure, existing 'outside himself'. For an unusual other approach, see: Deleuze et Parnet: 'Les trois contresens sur le désir sont: le mettre en rapport avec le manque ou la loi; avec une réalité naturelle ou spontanée; avec le plaisir ou, même et surtout, la fête' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977, p. 125). See Deleuze (1991, pp. 81-91) for his view of the law.

6. See Frankfurt's analogy between having an ideal and being in love (1999).

7. 'The desire for the mother cannot be satisfied because it is the end, the terminal point, the abolition of the whole world of demand, which is the one that at its deepest level structures man's unconscious. It is to the extent that the function of the pleasure principle is to make man always search for what he has to find again, but which he never will attain, that one reaches the essence, namely, that sphere of relationship which is known as the law of the prohibition of incest' (Lacan, 1992, p. 68).

8. Kohut describes the alternative potential processes as follows: 'Under favorable circumstances the neutralized forces emanating from the narcissistic self (the narcissistic needs of the personality and its ambitions) become gradually integrated into the web of our ego as a healthy enjoyment of our own activities and successes and as an adaptively useful sense of disappointment tinged with anger and shame over our failures and shortcomings. And, similarly, the ego ideal (the internalized image of perfection which we admire and to which we are looking up) may come to form a continuum with the ego, as a focus for our ego-syntonic values, as a healthy sense of direction and beacon for our activities and pursuits, and as an adaptively useful object of longing disappointment, when we cannot reach it. A firmly cathected, strongly idealized super-ego absorbs considerable amounts of narcissistic energy, a fact which lessens the personality's propensity towards narcissistic imbalance. Shame, on the other hand, arises when the ego is unable to provide a proper discharge for the exhibitionistic demands of the narcissistic self' (1985, p. 107).

9. Kohut continues: 'If the ego's instinctual investment of the superego remains insufficiently desexualized (or becomes resexualized), moral masochism is the result, a condition in which the ego may wallow in a state of humiliation when it fails to live up to its ideals. In general, however, the ego does not specifically experience a feeling of being narcissistically wounded when it cannot reach the ideals; rather it experiences an emotion akin to longing.

Our ambitions, too, although derived from a system of infantile grandiose fantasies may become optimally restrained, merge with the structure of the ego's goals, and achieve autonomy. Yet here too, a characteristic, genetically determined psychological flavor can be discerned. We are driven by our ambitions, we do not love them. And if we cannot realize them, narcissistic-exhibitionistic tensions remain undischarged, become dammed up, and the emotion of disappointment with the ego experiences always contains an admixture of shame. If the grandiosity of the narcissistic self, however, has been insufficiently modified because traumatic onslaughts on the child's self esteem have driven the grandiose fantasies into repression, then the adult

ego will tend to vacillate between an irrational overestimation of the self and feelings of inferiority and will react with narcissistic mortification to the thwarting of its ambitions'.

10. This is, of course, Durkheim's view of the sacred totem as the embodiment of society's sacred collective consciousness.

11. This idea recalls Hegel's notion that individual freedom is possible only under conditions of social articulation, though Mead has in mind a more confrontational self assertion.

12. On the general separation between 'us' and 'they' and its basis in a fundamental opposition between kin and strangers, see Fortes' (1969) illuminating discussion of the principle of amity.

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