

**IDEOLOGY AND
BUREAUCRACY AS
SOCIAL DEFENSES
AGAINST AGGRESSION**

Otto F. Kernberg, M.D.

Ideology and Bureaucracy as Social Defenses Against Aggression

Otto F. Kernberg, M.D.

e-Book 2016 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *The Inner World in the Outer World* Edward R. Shapiro, M.D.

Copyright © 1997 by Edward R. Shapiro, M.D.

All Rights Reserved

Created in the United States of America

Table of Contents

[Ideology and Bureaucracy as Social Defenses Against Aggression](#)

[REGRESSION AND DEFENSES AGAINST IT IN LARGE GROUPS](#)

[PARANOID REGRESSION IN INSTITUTIONS](#)

[BUREAUCRACY](#)

[IDEOLOGY](#)

[PSYCHOANALYTIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONVERGENCES](#)

[REFERENCES](#)

Ideology and Bureaucracy as Social Defenses Against Aggression

Otto F. Kernberg, M.D.

REGRESSION AND DEFENSES AGAINST IT IN LARGE GROUPS

In earlier work (1980, chapter 11), I proposed that Turquet's (1975) description of the loss of a sense of identity in large groups constitutes the basic situation against which both the idealization of the leader of the horde described by Freud (1921) and the small-group flight-fight, dependency, and pairing processes described by Bion (1961) are defending. I have suggested that, owing to the nature of the regression that occurs in groups, group processes pose a basic threat to the members' personal identity, linked to a proclivity in group situations for the activation of primitive object relations, primitive defensive operations, and primitive aggression with predominantly pregenital features. These processes, particularly the activation of primitive aggression, are dangerous to the survival of the individual in the group, as well as to any task the group needs to perform.

To blindly follow the idealized leader of the mob, as described by Freud, reconstitutes a sort of identity by identification with the leader, permits protection from intragroup aggression by this common identity' and the shared projection of aggression onto external enemies, and gratifies dependency needs by submission to the leader. The sense of power experienced by the individual identified with the mob of which he forms a part also gratifies primitive narcissistic needs. Paradoxically, the essentially irrational quality' of mobs provides better protection against the painful awareness of aggression than what obtains in large-group situations with undefined external enemies, or in small groups, where it is hard to avoid being aware that the "enemy" is in the midst of the group itself.

The study of large-group processes highlights the threat to individual identity' under social conditions in which ordinary role functions are suspended and various projective mechanisms are no longer effective. The relationships that exist among all individuals within a large-group situation replicate the multiplicity of primitive self- and object-representations that predominate as intrapsychic

structures of the individual before the consolidation of ego, superego, and id—and, therefore, before the consolidation of ego identity—and the regressive features of part-object relations that evolve when normal ego identity is not achieved or disintegrates. Large-group processes also highlight the intimate connection between threats to retaining one's identity and fear that primitive aggression and aggressively infiltrated sexuality will emerge. My observations from the study of individual patients, of small groups, and of group processes in organizational and institutional life confirm, I believe, the overwhelming nature of the aggression evoked in unstructured group situations.

The point is that an important part of nonintegrated and non-sublimated aggression is expressed in vicarious ways throughout group and organizational processes. When relatively well-structured group processes evolve in a task-oriented organization, aggression is channeled toward the decision-making process, particularly by evoking primitive leadership characteristics in people in positions of authority. Similarly, the exercise of power in organizational and institutional life constitutes an important channel for the expression of aggression in groups that would ordinarily be under control in dyadic or triadic relations. Aggression emerges more directly and much more intensely when group processes are relatively unstructured.

In contrast to the dominant group characteristics of the unstable, threatening, potentially violent, and identity-diffusion-fostering quality of the large group, small-group formation deals with the idealization- persecution dichotomy in the respective activation of Bion's dependency and fight-flight groups. The activation of the pairing assumption may be considered an ambivalent effort to escape from primitive conflicts around aggression, primitive object relations, and primitive defenses by ambivalent idealization of the selected sexual pair.

PARANOID REGRESSION IN INSTITUTIONS

The two most striking mechanisms by which the large group protects itself from the threat of impending aggression are the development of an ad hoc ideology and/or a process of bureaucratization. The development of a simplistic philosophy as a calming, reassuring doctrine that reduces all thinking to obvious clichés described by Turquet (1975), the primitive, narcissistic ego ideal characteristic of large-group processes described by Anzieu (1984), and the narcissistic ideology and idealization of a pseudo-

paternal leader as “promoter of illusions” described by Chasseguet-Smirgel (1984) all refer to the tendency toward a narcissistic regression into a primitive ideology that transforms the large group into what Canetti (1960) described as the typical “feasting crowd,” engaged, we might say, in dependent and narcissistic behavior and a corresponding search for a calming, narcissistic, reassuring mediocrity in its leader. Such leadership never fails to appear. I have described such regression as characteristic of the mass psychology of conventionality (1989), reflecting the type of ideology characteristic of a latency child’s superego and represented typically by mass entertainment.

Instead of such a static crowd, the large group may alternatively evolve into a dynamic mob characterized by predominantly paranoid features and selection of paranoid leadership, typically represented by the mass psychology of revolutionary mass formations. Conventionality, on the one hand, and violent, revolutionary movements with a totalitarian ideology, on the other, may be considered the corresponding mass psychological outcomes of idealization and persecution as basic group phenomena, and either the containment of aggression by denial and reaction formation or its expression by violent acting out.

Having outlined the release of aggression under conditions of regressed and unstructured group processes, I now wish to explore conditions under which the development of pathological aggression occurs in the context of institutional functioning and malfunctioning, and the vicissitudes of ideology and bureaucracy as protective and corrective measures against the outbreak of aggression.

In earlier work, following Elliot Jacques’s (1976) classification of social organizations into requisite (functional) and paranoia-genic (dysfunctional) ones, I explored the nature of paranoia-genic organizations (1993), expanding on Jacques’s description of them as characterized by the prevalence of suspicion, envy, hostile rivalry, and anxiety, with a breakdown of social relationships regardless of how much individual good will there might be. I suggested that institutional paranoia-genesis ranges along a broad spectrum from the psychopathic to the depressive. Under conditions of paranoia-genic regression in non-requisite functioning organizations, the psychopathic end of the spectrum is characterized by members who manifest patently deceptive, dishonest, antisocial behaviors that they would not evince in their daily lives outside the institution. And members who show antisocial tendencies throughout all their social interactions and who also manifest those tendencies in their organizational life are not only

accepted but are admired for getting away with their antisocial behavior.

The average members of the organizations led by such people evince, in contrast, markedly paranoid features in their institutional dealings that contrast with their normal personality characteristics outside organizational life. Paranoid behaviors constitute a middle range of the spectrum of paranoia-genic regression and are the most prevalent manifestations of the dysfunctional nature of the organization. Typically, the relationship of the staff or the employees to the supervisors and the leaders is characterized by fear, suspicion, and resentment, a sense of hyper-alertness and cautiousness, a search for subtle and hidden meanings and messages, and an effort to establish alliances with peers to defend against what are perceived as common dangers. These developments cause the leader to feel that paranoid members of the organization have begun to challenge his legitimate authority through defiant attacks implicitly condoned by a silent majority.

At the depressive end of the spectrum of an institution characterized by paranoia-genic regression, individual members typically feel lonely, isolated, unappreciated, and hypercritical about their own faults and shortcomings. They overreact to criticism, experiencing it as threats to their professional future in the organization. Their exaggerated self-criticism inhibits their work functions, thus creating self-perpetuating cycles that interfere with work performance and work satisfaction and lead to efforts to escape from the organization. Not surprisingly, the most mature members of the organization (those with the most integrated superegos) predominate among those with the depressive reaction. Normal people in paranoia-genic institutions become the most alienated from it. Schizoid withdrawal is another possible defense.

The causes of organizational paranoia-genesis include: (1) the breakdown of the task systems of organizations when their primary tasks become irrelevant or overwhelming or are paralyzed by unforeseen, undiagnosed, or mishandled constraints; (2) the activation of regressive group processes under conditions of institutional malfunctioning; and (3) the latent predisposition to paranoid regression that is a universal characteristic of individual psychology. Faulty organizational leadership may be the major cause of the breakdown of task performance, even when external reality would foster the successful carrying out of the organization's primary tasks and even when no major constraints to such primary tasks exist objectively. Faulty leadership may derive from the personality characteristics of

leaders in key administrative positions. Indeed, all breakdown in organizational functioning, with its consequent regression in the group processes throughout the organization, initially looks as if the troublesome personalities of key leaders were responsible. Only a careful organizational analysis may differentiate those cases in which the leader's psychopathology is actually the cause of the organizational breakdown from those in which his pathology is only a presenting symptom, reflecting regression in leadership that is secondary to organizational breakdown, rather than its cause.

The most frequent cause of paranoia in social organizations is the limitation, and particularly a reduction in, the resources available for carrying out the organizational tasks. At times of budgetary constraints, for example, waves of apprehension and objective anxiety are compounded by individual members' regression to primitive anxieties of being abandoned, rejected, discriminated against, and unfairly exploited. Insofar as promotions also imply competition for a diminishing number of positions as individual members ascend the administrative ladder, a struggle for limited resources occurs. When competition involves search committees, comparative judgments about the value of individual members for the organization, and a political process influencing such appointments, it is no longer simply a matter of distributing resources but of adding a new dimension, politics, to the conditions favoring paranoia.

The definition of politics viewed in terms of organizational functioning may be narrowed to behavior carried out by individuals or groups to influence other individuals or groups in the pursuit of their interests or goals. Masters' (1989) definition of institutional politics is most apt: "a form of rivalry to determine which humans are permitted to transmit 'authoritative' messages or commands to the rest of society." When political action derives from goals linked to an organization's primary tasks, it may be considered essentially functional and rationally related to organizational functioning. However, when political action is tangential or unrelated to functional institutional goals, it has negative effects on institutional task systems and task boundaries and may lead not only to significant distortions in institutional functioning but also to an increase in conditions favorable to paranoia.

If authority is defined as the functional exercise of power within an institutional setting, the exercise of power as part of a political process that has no connection to institutional tasks cannot be called functional. And if the exercise of power is not functional, a spectrum of institutional dys-

functioning results, ranging from chaos when insufficient power is located at points of functional authority, to petrification when excessive power is located with institutional leaders, transforming authority' into authoritarianism.

In terms of group processes within an institution, politicizing always results in an increased dependence of all members on all others; the anonymous members of the organization all carry potential political decision-making power, a situation maximized under conditions of democratic decision making. To depend on all others when conditions are not objectively regulated by organizational structures immediately activates large-group functioning. The political process thus immediately activates the psychology' of large-group regression, with the consequent loss of personal identity on the part of all involved, a vague sense of threatened aggression and violence, feelings of impotence, a need to form subgroups so that aggression can be projected onto other groups, an effort to assert personal and small-group power over others, a fear of being victimized by the same process, a wish to escape from the situation, and a sense of paralysis and impotence as one disengages from the large group.

A lack of correspondence between an organization's objectives and its actual administrative structure is an important but often neglected source of conditions fostering paranoia. The most typical examples of those unrecognized discrepancies are institutions that officially exist to perform a social function for the common good, whereas the actual primary function is to provide jobs and satisfactions for their constituent bureaucracies. Other structural faults, distortions, or inadequacies include a lack of clear and stable boundary control on the part of managerial leadership, inadequate, ambiguous, or overlapping delegation of authority, and a discrepancy between the authority delegated to particular leaders and the actual power given to them. This last may derive from organizational problems or a failure in individual leaders. Incompetence in leaders not only has a devastating effect on organizational functioning but also is enormously paranoia-genic. Incompetent leaders, when protecting themselves against competent subordinates, become highly distrustful, defensive, and deceptive; they become authoritarian toward subordinates and subservient toward superiors, both of which activate paranoia-genic regression, particularly its paranoid and psychopathic aspects.

As a consequence of these processes and structural characteristics, regressive group processes and the corresponding activation of primitive aggression activate the latent disposition in members of the

organization for regression to preoedipal levels of intrapsychic organization. At those levels the projection of aggression onto parental figures, the re-introjection of such parental figures under the distorted consequences of projected aggression, and the consequent circular reaction of projection and introjection of aggression are dealt with by massive splitting mechanisms, leading to idealization, on the one hand, and to paranoid, persecutory tendencies, on the other hand. Those psychic operations, having their origin in the dyadic relationship with the mother, also resonate with triangular problems reflecting the oedipal situation and transform the disposition toward preoedipal transferences into the typical triangular oedipal ones that become dominant in the individual's relationship with authority.

The distortion of rational authority resulting from these projective processes leads to defensive activation of narcissistic affirmation and to regressive relationships with feared or idealized parental leaders. The process is completed by a general tendency to re-project the advanced aspects of superego functioning onto the total institution, in parallel to Freud's (1921) description of the characteristics of mass psychology. The projection of superego functions onto the institution at large increases the subjective dependence on the institution's evaluation of the member, decreases his or her capacity to rely on internalized value systems, and provides the direct trigger for the individual's contamination by ideological cross currents and rumors; regression into primitive depressive and persecutory anxieties occurs when objective feedback and reassurance in the organization fail. Under those conditions there is a threat of not only emotional and characterological regression but moral regression as well. The paranoid urge to betray (Jacobson, 1971) is a logical consequence of that regression.

BUREAUCRACY

The most important means by which organizations can protect themselves against producing paranoia and contain the aggression that may be activated in large-group processes is to establish a bureaucratic system. A bureaucracy, as Jacques (1976) has argued, can provide rationally determined hierarchies, public delineation of responsibility and accountability, stable delegation of authority, and an overall accountability of the organization to its social environment by both legal and political means and a parallel organization of employees and labor unions. Essential to optimal bureaucratic functioning is that the institution be accountable to or controlled by the state or by law. A well-functioning bureaucracy in a democratic system has the potential for being an ideal model of organizational structure.

Masters (1989) summarized the principal characteristics of the bureaucracy. First, it provides an element of coercion, which is necessary for large groups of people with conflicting interests if they are to function for the benefit of all. Second, by creating new ways of cooperation among constituent groups, the bureaucracy has the potential for increasing efficiency. Third, bureaucracies provide benefits for their members, thus enhancing their self-perpetuation.

Within bureaucratic organizations or institutions, internal conflicts can be diagnosed, controlled, and rationally resolved by standard mechanisms of bureaucratic functioning. Bureaucratic structure reduces the regression into large-group processes in organizations and, under ordinary circumstances, keeps paranoia-genic regression at a low level. Effective bureaucratic functioning may make for optimal task performance, maintain normal social exchange in an institution, and impose firm compliance with what is generally assumed to be the common good. Bureaucracies may use resources effectually, and the participants may find their work gratifying.

There are, however, important limitations to the ameliorating effects of bureaucratic functioning. Those limitations, I believe, arise from the unavoidable infiltration of aggression in the form of dissociated sadism into all group processes. That infiltration affects all institutional functioning, including the performance of functional tasks.

There are multiple mechanisms by which a bureaucratic structure may lend itself to express the aggression that is generated but cannot be acknowledged by all members of an organization. Inadequate leaders of a bureaucratic structure, particularly a leader with severely narcissistic and/or paranoid tendencies, may transform a bureaucratic system into a social nightmare. Such leaders expect and foster subservient behaviors from their subordinates, reward the idealization of the leadership, and are prone to persecute those whom they sense to be critical of them.

Mechanisms at the periphery of bureaucratic systems tend to increase the size and scope of operations beyond what is functionally warranted, and they gradually deteriorate. As Masters (1989) pointed out, equal justice for all implies that any particular person may feel dehumanized and neglected by bureaucracies. In fact, those negative aspects of bureaucratic systems may be the first effects on the lives of persons who enter the organization, leading to efforts to beat the system and to escape from its

rigidities, which in turn leads to a paranoid reaction by the bureaucrats to catch the cheaters. Efforts to humanize the system and to do somebody a good turn may, however, lead to favoritism—particularly to nepotism—and may bring about the corruption of the system.

The gradual expansion of a bureaucratic system to protect itself further against actual or potential cheaters may lead to a bureaucratic overgrowth that affects not only individuals but the entire institution. Functional administrative leaders may have to find ways to cut through intolerable bureaucratic rigidities for optimal task performance. In short, the dangers of rigidification, and/or chaotic breakdown (as corruption gains the upper hand), constitute the major limits to the potentially corrective effects that bureaucratic systems may have in preventing the developing of paranoia.

When bureaucracies grow to such an extent that they dominate the society of which they are a part, their self-serving functions become manifest: the bureaucrats become a privileged class who use the payoff to placate the underprivileged they “serve.” The bureaucracy is no longer functional; its petrified and chaotic features serve its own interests. Here paranoia seems a justified response by all concerned, both inside and outside the bureaucracy. As I pointed out in earlier work (Kernberg, 1994), the economic breakdown of the Soviet Union found its most dramatic expression in the development of a parasitic bureaucracy that combined rigidity with widespread corruption and contributed to the high level of paranoia in that society even as political terror itself decreased.

A less apparent, subtle, and yet prevalent deterioration in bureaucratic organizations stems from the assignment of particular members as gatekeepers or inspectors to protect the common good against potentially unjustified demands, expectations, appointments, or privileges. Inspectors of municipal, state, or federal regulatory agencies and the chairpersons of committees deciding on the selection of personnel, the adequacy of the documentation of various requests, the distribution of resources of any kind, the authorization for various permits, and the evaluation of people inside and outside the bureaucratic structure are unconsciously invested with the dissociated sadism that is prevalent throughout the total organization. In other words, all the narcissistic and paranoid tendencies that in ordinary social interactions are controlled by means of the bureaucratic structure are perversely placed onto the guardians of the gate. Those guardians, under the guise of objective justice, are frequently victims of that role suction and become grandiose (narcissistic), sadistic, and suspicious (paranoid)

arbiters of human destiny- The impotence of persons ordinarily restricted in their scope of autonomous decision making by an immense bureaucratic system may foster in them an explosion of narcissistic needs when such opportunities for power are made available; the arbitrariness and the sadism with which individual bureaucrats—particularly those in subordinate positions—may treat the public is proverbial.

Those of us who have had to deal with such emissaries from overarching bureaucratic systems as part of our leadership functions in health delivery systems can offer numerous examples of such a massive outburst of sadistic behavior on the part of inspectors, surveyors, and site visitors. One major—and on a social scale devastating—effect of the bureaucracy's need to justify and expand its own functions is the generation of essentially nonfunctional, redundant work, thus adding enormous although almost invisible costs to the functioning of social organizations. The New York Hospital Association has calculated that 25 percent of the total expense budget of hospitals is consumed by the need to respond to bureaucratic requests of one kind or another (McCarthy, 1978).

Even without any particular ideological underpinnings, the rationale and justification of bureaucratic rigidities usually include one of three proverbial statements: "We have always done it this way," "We have never done it this way," or "If we do this, everybody will be able to come and get (away with) it." When, in addition, bureaucratic requirements are justified or infiltrated by an ideological system, the sadistic, moralistic, and punitive effects of bureaucratic action may assume objectively persecutory features.

The terrible consequences of the effective functioning of bureaucracies in totalitarian states, such as Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, on the ordinary lives of large segments of the population requires no spelling out. To a limited degree, similar types of ideological infiltration of well-functioning bureaucracies may be encountered within democratic states as well. In the United States, it is probably within the regulatory systems affecting health, education, welfare, immigration, and, particularly, justice that ideological infiltration on bureaucratic control systems may have a maximum effect of reducing efficiency, generating parasitic work, and restricting individual freedom and ordinary social interactions while increasing the paranoia-genic, persecutory regulation of the social system. It is probably because of the immediate visibility of cost increases in the private sector of industry that its bureaucratic regulations are constrained in a dynamic equilibrium with the pressure for efficiency.

For example, within the bureaucratic hypertrophy of the judicial system, Salvador Menuchin (personal communication, 1994) has pointed to the disastrous effects of standard bureaucratic policies in the court system in dealing with child neglect and child abuse. The appointment of independent legal counsel to the child and to the parent, in addition to the authority of the judge, and the treatment of each neglected child within a dysfunctional family as a separate court case, all combine to siphon an enormous amount of resources into legal proceedings, limit the authority of health system agencies concerned with the child and the entire family, and increase family conflicts by injecting into them a legal adversary system.

The expression of envy, within large-group psychology, toward individuals whose capacity for independent thinking and autonomous functioning is resented within such a regressive group situation, is replicated in the bureaucratic suspicion of innovative solutions to a particular problem connected with the realm of authority of that bureaucracy. The manifest resentment of such original solutions on the part of the bureaucrats finds a troubling, yet not surprising, resonance within the disaffected membership of a regressed institution that resents the creative task performance of its own leadership. The proverbial anonymous letters of disgruntled employees sent to regulating agencies are more often than not part of this psychology. Less frequently, they may reflect an outburst of impotence from the healthy subordinates at the periphery of a paranoia-genic organization.

IDEOLOGY

Bureaucratic hypertrophy may also relate to ideology in more complex though equally destructive ways. Ideology refers to a system

of beliefs that a group, a mass, or a society share regarding the origin and functions of their common social life and the cultural and ethical demands and expectations they aspire to. Here I wish to point to the existence of significant discrepancies between a society's ideological commitments and the financial means to fulfill such commitments. Bureaucratic requirements mandating services that society cannot afford or is not willing to pay for may reflect an unconscious compromise formation between ideological commitment and practical considerations. The destructive effects of bureaucratic persecution of agencies such as hospitals, which are supposed to produce services without adequate financial coverage, leads to

a worsening of the financial crisis by the nonfunctional work generated through these additional bureaucratic pressures.

Underlying these contradictions lies the relationship, in our democratic society, between the ideological aspirations of liberty, equality, and justice for all. These are geared to contain aggression at a social level but may become instrumental in the very acting out of that aggression. A humanistic ideology that has at its center the respect for the individual and individual rights and the aspiration for equal opportunity and equality' before the law—an ideology embedded in a democratic system of government—may support the social controls that protect the functioning of organizational structures, guarding organizations against the corruption of leaders and the paranoia-genic deterioration derived from the misuse of power.

However, the same ideology may be subverted by the regressive atmosphere created in the context of large-group processes. Individual rights may be perverted within a litigious culture that artificially inflates grievances. Paranoid grandiosity becomes rationalized as individual rights. The quest for equality may be a rationalization of unconscious envy generated under conditions of regressive group processes. Zinoviev (1984) pointed to the importance of an egalitarian ideology as part of Soviet Marxism in fostering the group's envy of anybody who would assume leadership, and the unconscious self-assurance derived from the selection of mediocrities to leadership functions as a way to assuage such ideologically reinforced envy. I have already referred to the selection of narcissistic mediocrities as a central aspect of the transformation of the large-group situation into a static satisfied group that depends on the narcissistic leader.

In this regard, social ideologies tangential to institutional functioning often have a destructive effect on that functioning, particularly through the skillful misuse of the ideology by individual members of the institution—a painful side effect of well-intentioned efforts for the socially mandated and protected redress of grievances. The very ideal of a democratic system of government may misfire when this ideal inspires another major mechanism to control the development of paranoia, namely, a democratic process of decision making. Such a democratic process includes the open discussion of issues that affect everybody; the assurance of equal rights for open communication at all levels of the hierarchy; the public, stable, and socially sanctioned distribution of authority on a functional basis; and the full participation of

all followers in the selection of their leaders.

Here, unfortunately, paranoia-genic effects may result from two major causes: the nature of political processes and a generally shared confusion between democratic and functional mechanisms of decision making. Democracy is a political system of government that, in essence, is optimally geared to social regulation in open societies (or, in systems terms, in open systems with an infinite number of boundaries). In contrast, limited social organizations such as schools, hospital, factories—that is, open systems with a limited number of boundaries and specific tasks that have to be carried out to assure the survival of that organization—require functional leadership that corresponds to the task systems that enable the organization to carry out its mission. This distinction between functional and democratic decision making is absolutely crucial in social organizations with concrete tasks and functional management.

Functional decision making, however, involves participatory management—that is, the possibility of group discussions and joint decision making among leaders at any particular hierarchical level. If participatory management coincides with a clear and stable delegation of authority' to each group involved in such collective decision making and if the individual authority of leaders is commensurate with their responsibilities—authority may be delegated but the responsibility cannot—such a functional organization may appear to be democratic, but it corresponds, rather, to the functional principles of social organization.

Returning once more to a humanistic ideology that puts respect for the individual at the center of its concerns, an apparently simple, sometimes highly effective, but also easily subvertible mechanism of reducing the development of paranoia is represented by well-motivated persons with integrity, concern for the organization and the human values enacted in it, who reach across organizational boundaries and task systems to help somebody in trouble. This can be accomplished by bringing together two adversaries to straighten out their conflict or talking extensively with one person caught up in a paranoid, self-perpetuating web of misconception. Gathering a significant group of peers to present to their superiors the problems that they are ignoring or mismanaging can be helpful. Individual courage, the normal sense of commitment to values, and altruistic drive can move individual members to transcend paranoia-genic regression. Such an approach to institutional management can broaden the

awareness of paranoia, its universal nature, and the importance of activating corrective measures to deal with it.

However, that corrective process, with the best intention in the world, may also be subverted destructively. Individual decency and high moral values may be corrupted by being combined with naiveté, that is, with an unconscious denial of the aggressive and sadistic temptations of members in group functioning. In open institutions where feedback is encouraged and a functional organization prevails, persons with antisocial tendencies are able to circulate false information that acquires weight precisely because of the mutual respect of all involved. The emergence in leadership positions of those with strong paranoid, narcissistic, or antisocial characteristics may in itself indicate the degree of regression of the group processes in the organization: the degree of prominence of paranoid persons in the group process at any particular time may be considered an indirect indicator of the extent to which a paranoia-genic atmosphere prevails.

Let us examine some of the characteristics of ideological systems. Some of these counteract the regressive pull that occurs in unstructured groups. Others may foster a regressive enactment of aggression in groups leading to the “return of the repressed,” the enactment of aggression in the form of violence, sadistic power, and constraint of individual liberties.

From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, one characteristic is the extent to which an ideological system includes a world view that, by definition, excludes all those who do not share that view, declares them to be enemies who must be controlled or eliminated, and aspires to dominate all aspects of social behavior. This characteristic, which may be called the paranoid pole of ideologies, is found in totalitarian societies, fundamentalist religious movements, and certain cults. The division of all human beings into either loyal adherents or dangerous enemies may also be found in some racist and nationalist ideologies. A second characteristic of such ideologies is their invasiveness of family and intimate relationships, including their supraordinate control over the relationships of the couple, typically matched by an intolerance toward sexuality as described by Freud (1921). Family and sexual intimacy threaten the individual’s complete identification with a totalitarian ideology. A third general characteristic of such totalitarian ideologies is usually a remarkable conventional and conformist set of moral principles regulating individual behavior, reminiscent of the superego of the latency years. Fundamentalist religious groups focus this morality

most specifically on the sexual behavior of the individual—in effect mounting a massive defense against individual freedom in integrating eroticism and tenderness.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of ideological regression—what may be called the narcissistic pole of ideologies—we find the transformation of ideologies into social, political, and religious clichés that maintain their function of socialization within the community but have remarkably little effect on the daily functioning of the individual, the couple, and the community. I am referring here, for example, to the ritualized participation in official, national, religious, or ethnic celebrations, maintaining form rather than commitment to a particular ideology, all of which may include both benign ritualization of social interactions and a reflection of a historical, racial, or religious tradition. A particular type of such formalistic and essentially empty ideology is what may pervade a totalitarian society, the reality of the daily life of which is in striking contradiction to the corresponding ideological system. A cliché-ridden adherence to the ideology illustrates the loss of individual liberties as well as the split between a dishonest public life and a grim private life. Kolakowski (1978), Voslensky (1983), Sinyavsky (1988), and Malia (1994) have described these characteristics of Soviet Russia as typical of its social structures during the thirty years before its collapse.

Intermediate between these two extremes of ideology formation we might place ideological systems characterized by the following features or having evolved to these characteristics at some stage of their history. Here the ideology is typically based on a general humanistic value system within which the individual's rights and responsibilities are stressed, the responsibilities linked to moral demands expressed in his or her relationship to the community, and the individual's internal set of ethical values, potential differences among individuals, and the right of privacy in decisions regarding family and couple relationships are respected. Within these kinds of ideologies, equality of rights is stressed, assured by equality before and access to the law, with a tolerance for differences of lifestyle, that is, without an imposition of an ideological egalitarianism that would significantly restrict individual freedom of decision making.

I must stress that such a spectrum of ideologies, ranging from cliché-ridden rituals, at one extreme, to violent, restrictive totalitarianism, at the other, with a humanistic central domain, may include the same theoretical system, the same ideology operating at different levels of regression. Thus, for example,

the cliché-ridden “pseudo-Marxism” characteristic of the Soviet Union and its satellite states may be considered the counterpart to the paranoid ideologies of Marxist terrorist groups in

Germany, Peru, Cambodia, and the Middle East, and the intermediate “Marxism with a human face” reflected in the ideology of some reform Communist movements in Eastern and Western Europe. Similar observations may be made regarding religious systems that range throughout this entire spectrum in their various manifestations. The general implication of this description of ideological polarities is that the paranoid ideologies act out the aggression against which the ideology emerged as a defense: the combination of paranoid ideologies and well-functioning bureaucracies may be extremely dangerous to human survival. The effective bureaucracy, under these circumstances, may transform an open society into a political state.

Now we may explore the individual’s contribution to the level of ideological maturity or regression that he or she adopts as a consequence of the development of individual superego functions. Here we also have a spectrum ranging from the primitive, sadistic, conventional morality of the classical “authoritarian personality,” at one extreme, to the cynical manipulation of socially accepted belief systems of the individual with severe antisocial tendencies, at the other, the individual with a mature superego occupying the central domain of this spectrum.

In fact, the individual’s fixation at a level of a primitive superego reflects both severe character pathology and a remarkable consonance with the characteristics of fundamentalist ideologies. An individual with this fixation divides values into “all good” and “all bad,” aspires for an individual “justice” that reflects a system of rationalized envy and hatred of others’ rights and belongings, and adopts a sexual morality with an absolute split between tender and erotic relations. The point is that, while social, cultural, historical, and economic conditions may determine the level of ideological commitments sweeping a culture, the individual’s psychopathology or maturity of superego functions will determine if and where such an individual enters the historical current.

PSYCHOANALYTIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONVERGENCES

In the final part of this chapter, I shall summarize some of the conclusions derived from the

proceeding ideas and relate them to corresponding views derived from the classical sociological tradition. I have proposed that the psychology of small groups, large groups, mobs, and mass movements includes the expression, under conditions of unstructured social interactions, of primitive aggression and defenses against it that are ordinarily under control in the restricted dyadic and triadic relationships of individuals, couples, and, to some extent, families. The relationships within ordinary social networks that characterize communities also reflect in large part the dyadic and triadic relationships within which both primitive aggression and defenses against it are under control.

In contrast, in response to the liberation of primitive aggression in the group situations referred to, a tendency also exists toward the activation of regressive narcissistic and paranoid developments. Narcissistic developments predominate in the static, gratifying, although also simplifying and at times stultifying enjoyment of group regression and the corresponding relationship to narcissistic, primitive, cliché-ridden leadership. Paranoid regression, on the other hand, is characterized by the dynamic mob, mass movement, and the corresponding liberation of violence and elimination of ordinary' moral constraints described by Freud (1921). Under conditions of paranoid regression, leadership with paranoid characteristics is in ascendance and provides direction, rationalization, and encouragement for the expression of destructiveness.

I have suggested that, in addition to ordinary task orientation—the structural transformation of groups into organized task or work groups within institutions—two major alternative defensive operations against the activation of aggression are represented by bureaucratic control and ideology formation. Bureaucratic control develops a structure of a kind, protects the individual, the group, and the organization against regressive effects of paranoid developments, and, at a broader social level, may protect individual rights as well as equality before the law. An ideological development that unifies the unstructured group or mass movement in terms of a relatively simple set of moral prescriptions also provides a defense against paranoid regression and the outbreak of violence.

Both bureaucratic development and ideology, however, may be infiltrated by the very aggression that they are geared to defend against. Bureaucratic control may acquire regressive sadistic qualities; ideological systems can develop the rationalization of violence and totalitarian control. Thus, major defenses against aggression may actually become infiltrated by it and reinforce the enactment of

aggression. Ideology⁷ and bureaucracy may reinforce each other at both regressive and advanced levels. An ideology⁷ of egalitarianism may foster a hypertrophic bureaucracy to ensure that egalitarianism, paradoxically creating a privileged bureaucratic class and reducing individual freedoms. A libertarian ideology of individual rights may explode into a legalistic bureaucracy that transforms the defense of individual rights into a litigious and querulous relationship between individuals and the social system. While it is easy to assert that restriction of bureaucratic development and protection of humanistic ideology⁷ may together protect social life from the dangerous excesses of bureaucratic and ideological developments, it would be extremely naive to assume that this is an easy task. In fact, I believe that this dilemma presented by human aggression at a social level probably requires constant alertness rather than any particular permanent solution.

The positive aspect both of bureaucratic development and ideological commitments have to be kept in mind. The mass demonstrations and spontaneous uprisings in Eastern Europe against Communist totalitarianism and the spontaneous mobilization of the British people in response to the massive bombardments in the early stages of the Second World War are illustrations of mass movements combining a humanistic ideology with collective courage. Here the positive aspects of ideological commitment have produced positive historical change and stemmed the effects of destructive aggression at a social, national, and international level. Similarly, the support provided by bureaucratic structures for individuals by setting up avenues for redress of grievances, and the possibility of optimal functioning of task systems within and across social institutions are an essential aspect of the social organization of human work.

But the ever present dangers of ideological regression and bureaucratic sadism cannot be overestimated. Within our own society, the relationship between a humanistic ideology of personal freedom and equality, on the one hand, and a hypertrophic tendency toward litigious interactions and restrictive "political correctness," on the other, indicate the problem referred to at the level of ideology formation. The vast, largely undiagnosed, hypertrophic bureaucratic restrictions in the area of health care are a typical expression of the evident contradiction between egalitarian aspirations and growing economic constraints derived from the very development of scientific knowledge and effectiveness of health care procedures.

Tocqueville (1835-40) first pointed to the danger that democracy could become a plebicitarian tyranny, under the effect of the transformation of public opinion into despotic laws and bureaucratic structures. He clearly foresaw the risk that the aspirations for equality can eventually reduce individual freedoms, although he had strong confidence in the social checks and balances he found in the United States, such as the independence of the judiciary, the separation of religion and state, the autonomy and high status of the professions, the authority of local community, and regional diversity (Nesbit, 1993).

This view was in dramatic contrast to that of Marxist theory, which assumed that the dictatorship of the proletariat, in bringing about the destruction of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist system, would by itself “disappear” and give rise to universal freedom (Kolakowski, 1978). The development within the Soviet system of a totalitarian and corrupt bureaucracy (the *Nomenklatura*) (Voslensky, 1983) illustrates both a fatal flaw in Marxist thinking and the danger of bureaucratization affecting both the socialist and democratic systems.

Weber's (1904-05) analysis of bureaucracy saw the rational organization of government and the economy as expressed in bureaucracy as a form of rational domination, a mode of hierarchy that supplants patrimonial, charismatic, and/or traditional authority by means of principles of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, governed by laws or administrative regulations. He foresaw potential conflicts between democracy and bureaucracy, with bureaucracy subverting the moral objectives of democracy. Michels (1911) suggested, in his description of bureaucracy: “The bureaucratic spirit corrupts character and engenders moral poverty. In every bureaucracy we may observe place-hunting, a mania for promotion, an obsequiousness toward those on whom promotion depends; there is arrogance toward inferiors and civility toward superiors. . . . We may even say that the more conspicuously a bureaucracy is distinguished by its zeal, by its sense of duty, and by its devotion, the more also will it show itself to be petty, narrow, rigid, and illiberal” (p. 189).

Durkheim (1893, 192 5) concluded that only moral systems linking the individual to his immediate community could protect the individual from the destructive effects of authoritarian bureaucracies depending upon the state; he saw the potential of mutual corrective influences in the protection of individual freedom by the role of the individual, his moral systems linking him with the community and the state. As Nesbit (1993) points out, Tönnies' (1887) analysis of the distinction

between community and society underlies all the sociologists' analysis referred to so far (with the exception of Marx). Tönnies conceived of the dangers that community, with its specific moral systems, might be supplanted by society, that is, by a vast, atomized transformation of the relations of individuals among each other, related to the democratic system of government. This puts at risk the moral systems of the community by the impersonal transformation of society at large. Kolakowski (1978) traced the contradictions in the Soviet system back to a paradox in the ideals of the French revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity. He pointed to the fact that absolute liberty' denies equality, while absolute equality cannot but deny liberty; the conflict between these two ideals destroys fraternity as well.

I started from a psychoanalytic perspective of group psychology, which led me to the functional and dysfunctional aspects of ideology and bureaucracy; obviously, sociological analysis had explored the corresponding paradoxes a long time ago. I hope that our understanding of the mechanisms of individual psychology that feed into and codetermine aggressive conflicts at the social level of interactions may contribute to the understanding, and perhaps even to reducing the destructive impact, of human aggression in our social systems.

REFERENCES

- Anzieu, D. (1984). *The Group and the Unconscious*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experiences in Groups*. New York: Basic Books.
- Canetti, E. (1960). *Crowds and Power*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Chasseguet-Smirgel, J. (1984). *The Ego Ideal*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Durkheim, E. (1893). *The Division of Labor in Society*. George Simpson, trans. New York: Macmillan. 1933.
- . (1925). *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education*. Everett K. Silson and Herman Schnurer, trans. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe. 1961.
- Freud, S. (1921). Group psychology and the analysis of the ego. *S.E.*, 18:65-143.
- Jacobson, E. (1971). *Depression*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Jacques, E. (1976). *A General Theory of Bureaucracy*. New York: Halsted.
- Kernberg, O. F. (1980). *Internal World and External Reality: Object Relations Theory Applied*. New York: Jason Aronson.

- . (1989). The temptations of conventionality. *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 16:191-205.
- . (1993). Paranoia-genesis in organizations. In *Comprehensive Textbook of Group Psychotherapy*. 3rd ed. H. Kaplan and B. J. Sadock, eds. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, pp. 47-57-
- . (1994). Mass psychology through the analytic lens. In *The Spectrum of Psychoanalysis: Essays in Honor of Martin Bergmann*. A. K. Richards and A. D. Richards, eds. Madison, Conn.: International Universities Press, pp. 257-281.
- Kolakowski, L. (1978). *Main Currents of Marxism: 3. The Breakdown*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Malia, M. (1994). *The Soviet Tragedy*. New York: Free Press.
- Masters, R. D. (1989). *The Nature of Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McCarthy, C. M. (1978). *Report of the Task Force on Regulation on the Cost of Regulation*. Hospital Association of New York State.
- Michels, R. (1911). *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies in Modern Democracy*. Eden and Cedar Paul, trans. New York: Free Press. 1949.
- Nesbit, R. (1993). *The Sociological Tradition*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction.
- Sinyavsky, A. (1988). *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*. New York: Arcade.
- Tocqueville, A. de. (1835-40). *Democracy in America*. Philips Bradley, ed. New York: Alfred Knopf. 1945.
- Tönnies, F. (1887). *Community and Society*. Charles Loomis, trans. and ed. New York: Harper Torchbooks. 1963.
- Turquet, P. (1975). Threats to identity in the large group. In *The Large Group: Dynamics and Therapy*. L. Kreeger, ed. London: Constable, pp. 87-144.
- Voslensky, M. (1983). *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class—An Insider's Report*. New York: Doubleday.
- Weber, M. (1904-05). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Talcott Parsons, trans. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1958.
- Zinoviev, A. (1984). *The Reality of Communism*. New York: Schocken Books.