

Fragmented Ontology and the Production of Unity

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Abstract

In this article, I claim that capitalist exploitation derives its continued strength in the Idealized Image, which seeks to reproduce itself in the world. I use Althusser's notion of ideology as the foundation upon which I build the argument that the oppressed has an ontological division which produces a fragmented Self, one that is always divided by two distinct entities- the Self of the Idealized Image and the True Self. Furthermore, I argue that the True Self can never be fully abolished, meaning that it is tightly regulated by the Idealized Image through incorporation, leading to the production of unity. Lastly, I argue that it is only through the True Self that a new being can form, one that is truly liberated. It is only in this sense of being, I argue, that concepts like equality and justice have any authenticity at all.

Key words: Idealized Image, fragmented ontology, production of unity, ideology, ontology, incorporation, True Self.

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Introduction

Any philosophical investigation into ontology, once taken far enough, inevitably turns into an investigation of the Self. But very few topics in ontology match the level of presuppositions that has pervaded the notion of the Self, namely that it is a *suis generis* concept that cannot be reduced any further; thus placing the Self as the most fundamental unit of ontological and phenomenological analysis. However, unlike many other philosophical concepts that have not sustained the onslaught of postmodern critiques, the Self remains relatively intact. In fact, one could say that the Self maintains a continued hegemony upon which many of the most cherished, democratic values like equality and liberty rest.¹

Yet, the Self must be scrutinized, if only to uncover the mechanisms of ideological control that has masked itself as a unified and equal whole. This article will investigate the nature of current ontological conceptions of the Self, which I argue is pervaded- and ultimately structured and defined- by the Idealized Image. I will draw on Althusser and his notion of ideology as the foundation of an analysis in which I argue that there are, in fact, two different and separate Selves, both of which seek to be the sole source of the individual. There is the Self of the Idealized Image, propagated through language, and the True Self, which I argue is predicated in the Real. I claim that the current sense of Self is structured by the former rather than the latter, and is therefore fragmented rather than whole. However, this does not have to be so, and the last section of this study is dedicated to the concept of liberation, both of the Self and the institutions which sustain reality itself.

Althusser, Ideology, and the Self

Before any discussion on the ideological Self, it is imperative that the nature of such ideology is established. To this end, it is to Althusser

¹ Whether such a hegemony is, in turn, an effect of the maintenance and propagation of these values is another matter that is outside the purview of this article.

and his definition of ideology that remains most influential to the understanding of ontology of the Self.

Althusserian ideology remains a highly dynamic concept, expanding significantly on the traditional sense of ideology as stipulated by Marx. However, pertinent to this article is his claim that ideology, rather than reflecting reality in the traditional Marxist sense, instead represents reality itself. Althusser (1971) rejects previous interpretations of the classical conception of ideology in favor of his own:

[I]t is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the 'cause' which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. Or rather, to leave aside the language of causality it is necessary to advance the thesis that it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology (164).

The “imaginary nature” of the relation is itself based on the imaginary relation of ideology to the Real and is therefore always removed from it in a manner that obfuscates any possibility of an authentic reality. It should be noted that imaginary does not simply mean false or not real, but is based upon the Lacanian notion of the imaginary order. As John Roberts (2005) explains:

The ‘imaginary’ which is my focus here refers not, as in common sense, to what is imagined as in ‘I must be imagining this’, but to the ways that the subject is constituted through images and the identifications, real and imagined, that they offer. The ‘imaginary’ is by definition a difficult dimension to

write clearly about. It involves identification as a primitive form of relationship that Freud compared to eating in that it involves an incorporation within the self of an aspect of an object (621).

Althusser asserts that the Subject is always incorporating reality (ideology) within herself in such relations and is thus never free from it; one is always interpellated within it.

However, this imaginary relation is only a part of Althusserian ideology relevant to any investigation of the Self. Another hypothesis that is posited by Althusser makes a claim about the *material existence* of ideology stating that “I have already touched on this thesis by saying that the 'ideas' or 'representations', etc., which seem to make up ideology do not have an ideal or spiritual existence, but a material existence” (165).

Ever the materialist, Althusser goes so far as to claim that “...the ideal and spiritual existence of 'ideas' arises exclusively in an ideology of the 'idea' and of ideology...” (165). Yet, if ideology has a material existence, then it must exist in some apparatus:

While discussing the ideological State apparatuses and their practices, I said that each of them was the realization of an ideology (the unity of these different regional ideologies -- religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc. -- being assured by their subjection to the ruling ideology). I now return to this thesis: an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. (166).

But this claim itself begs a rather obvious question: what exactly is this apparatus? In what does ideology exist? Althusser claims that this apparatus lies in the actions that are performed by those within ideology, and it is ideology that manifests itself in these acts. These acts are then converted into practices which develop into traditions, norms, and the like. These *regulatory* practices are crucial in policing willing

individuals by making them willing subjects of their own subjection (182).

However, this is where I take leave of Althusser's analysis of ideology. This apparatus- composed of practices- leaves far too little to be said of the continued influence of capitalism in all institutions of reality. It certainly is true that practices that establish themselves in a sociocultural context can exert considerable ideological authority. However, this says nothing about the continued *source* of ideology in reality; from what do practices maintain their ascendancy and continue to exert domination? Althusser claims that ideology is "eternal, exactly like the unconscious" (161) and depends only upon itself for its own material existence. In doing so, however, Althusser admits that this closed system is independent of consciousness and therefore unable to produce a *competing* consciousness that is itself ideological. However, this does not mean that the notion of consciousness and ideology cannot be synthesized effectively. As Kyong Deock Kang (2018) writes, "As a reviewer...rightly points out, Althusser's approach also raises a question concerning whether 'a theory of the unconscious can double as a theory of ideology'" (69).

For Althusser then, it would seem that he did not go far enough in stating that the practices themselves- as manifestations of ideology- maintain their power by becoming "natural" and therefore unquestioned as to their existence. It would seem, however, that this naturalness involves some form of participation from consciousness; at the very least, it would seem that this form would involve the inability to determine which things in reality are genuine or not. But, if this is the case, then it would also seem that the ability to counter and overthrow ideology becomes a merely theoretical obsession that can never translate to the actual defeating of it. This argument further begs the question: are *all* practices ideological? By claiming that practices are the means by which ideology perpetuates itself, Althusser commits to a structurally universal claim in which practices in general are problematic. And, if it is the case that certain practices do not sustain ideology, then what are we to call these practices? Neutral? Should they even be referred to as practices at all? I will argue later that certain

practices have crucial roles that refute this universalized claim of practices.

Furthermore, the apparatus in which Althusserian ideology exists ultimately omits the role of *history* within the nature of its very operation. As Althusser states:

This ideology talks of actions: I shall talk of actions inserted into practices. And I shall point out that these practices are governed by the rituals in which these practices are inscribed, within the material existence of an ideological apparatus, be it only a small part of that apparatus: a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports' club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc. (168)

Thus, these practices are inscribed so that they *historically develop* into well-established institutions of ideology. However, that being said, this would also seem to indicate that the practices, and the subsequent rituals, are ahistorical in that they can form *independent* of capitalism's past and subsequent legacy. In other words, crudely put, these practices develop historically simply due to the need for ideology to perpetuate itself and continue the existence of capitalist exploitation. Thus, while institutions draw their legitimacy and strength through historical development, they themselves imply a *separate and separated existence* from that very history that caused them into being. While history changes the practices, there is no sense of history being *within* such practices themselves. In doing so, institutions are often freed of the ontological baggage that could only develop over the course of history, including imperialism and colonization, and seen as mere concepts like democracy that deceptively shed their historical past in favor of a more "neutral" and ahistorical definition.

Idealized Image

This historical criticism of Althusserian ideology and its practices cannot be solved through purely materialist means, despite his insistence on the contrary. Capitalism is pervaded by a Spirit- the

forever-present *socio-historical context in which and in whom* capitalism first manifested itself and expanded thus since- that continues to influence the very reality we live in today. I call this Spirit the *Idealized Image*, and it is the crucial foundation for ideology itself; for ideology is never historically neutral, but always paying tribute to its origins. It does this through its continued influence of institutions that are structured according to this Idealized Image.

However, such an entity is not necessarily an actual image, although it is certainly embodied in that way. This Idealized Image does indeed have an associated image- the “straight, white male”. However, it cannot be emphasized enough that this image is merely one aspect of the Idealized Image, and a crude and highly misleading one at that. The Idealized Image certainly *contains* the “straight, white male” as an symbolized form, but to leave it there would be to ignore the many manifestations the concept embodies. For the Idealized Image always carries with it the subtle but clear *symbols* of its past which is always exuding a normativity on institutions which prevents them from deviating too far from the racist, patriarchal, and Christian reproduction of itself.² Thus, a better definition of the Idealized Image- although this has limitations as well- *is the symbolized embodiment of the historically constant Progenitor or Spirit of capitalism that always seeks to structure reality through the mirrored reproduction of itself in and through institutions.*

Thus, the Idealized Image provides the necessary apparatus for ideology, and is therefore not only foundational for the material existence of ideology, but also the imaginary relations one has to others and institutions within reality. Institutions in this sense come to mean all those entities and concepts that exist purely to perpetuate the Idealized Image and continue to facilitate its existence in reality. Ideology manifests the Idealized Image in many different forms in reality (itself represented by ideology) through the structuring of institutions to reflect the Idealized Image. These institutions, in turn, operate synergistically to produce everyday normalcy.

² By Christian, I do not mean the religion itself but the institution which has manifested as the official “representative” of faith as the Church.

It should be noted that the power of ideology lies in the *normativity* of the Idealized Image, and all institutions themselves embody and reflect the Idealized Image within their ontological representations in relation to the Self. Thus, institutions are not ontologically separate from the Self, but are instead different manifestations of the Idealized Image. The normative nature of the Idealized Image is inherent to any oppressive institution, for it is such normativity that structures the institutions that facilitate this oppression at the outset. The normativity of the Idealized Image also influences the structuring of the Self, and thus is the source of a constant alienation.

The Idealized Image and the Nature of the Self

As mentioned previously, the Idealized Image manifests itself in the structures of all institutions. The purpose of institutions is similar to Althusser's notion of "Ideological State Apparatuses", in which they "...contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation" (154). Yet, once again, Althusser does not take into consideration the totalizing nature of institutions as he makes "Ideological State Apparatuses" the means by which the Subject becomes truly "interpellated", or brought into being in ideology. In making this distinction, the Subject is separate from the Apparatuses that influence her.

It is in the rejection of this distinction upon which the term institution becomes meaningful. For the most important of all institutions is the *Self*. The Self, as an institution, becomes representative of the Idealized Image and thus the basis for normative attributes on what the Self ought to be. The continuation of ideology depends upon the purposeful obfuscation of the Self through the *equating of the ontological and political notion of Self as the same thing*. This narrative gained incredible intellectual strength from the Enlightenment, where the concept of *equality* became the dominant focus of study for European philosophers. But whereas the concept of ontological equality initially served as a rallying cry to liberate many still

under the rule of monarchs and despots centuries ago, it now serves purely as an assertion that lacks much of its initial liberatory luster.

Equality thus becomes the most pernicious of institutions, for it implies (and demands) the *universal* application of the Self of the Idealized Image onto all Subjects, including those who are not inherently included in the embodiment of the Idealized Image. These Subjects- who I refer to as the *Others*- are placed in the contradictory position of “being” what they can never be.

Furthermore, the normativity of the Self means that those not conducive to the narrative portrayed by the Idealized Image are left with a continuous sense of *alienation from their own Self*. This state of being serves as the foundation for double consciousness to arise. As W.E.B. Du Bois (1997) powerfully puts it:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (38).

Whereas double consciousness arises in a sociocultural context, the Self is strictly in the realm of the ontological. Yet, this concept of “two-ness” is highly relevant to this discussion, for it helps explain how fragmentation is the inevitable result.

Fragmented Ontology of two Selves

By the Self, I mean that which is connected inherently to the Idealized Image through its structuring by it, and it is this Self that seeks to universalize itself as the only Self. This Self of the Idealized Image, however, is not the only Self inherent to the Subject. If this was the case, those outside of the narrative of the Idealized Image, would never be able to tell that they were, in fact, not a part of the narrative. In other words, these Subjects, whose Self is embodied in the Idealized Image, would have no barriers in becoming a part of the narrative by eschewing that which makes them separate from the Idealized Image and, in fact, would simply *be* the Self of the Idealized Image. However, this certainly is not the case- the Other has *knowledge* that their Self is not their own. This *self-awareness* is what posits the existence of another Self- one that is not simply a manifestation of the Idealized Image.

Self-awareness has been the subject of considerable philosophical interest since Descartes' exposition in *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In a later piece, *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes (1985) writes:

There remains sensations, emotions and appetites. These may be clearly perceived provided we take great care in our judgments concerning them to include no more than what is strictly contained in our perception—no more than that of which we have *inner awareness*. But this is a very difficult rule to observe, at least with regard to sensations (216).

This assertion that the Self that is aware of its own existence is founded upon Descartes' foundational argument that all one can know for certain is that she exists- the famous *cogito ergo sum*.

In rejecting- and even imagining to be false- everything that we can in any way doubt, it is easy for us to suppose that there is no God and no heaven, and that there are no bodies, and even that we ourselves have no hands and feet, or indeed any body at all. But we cannot for all that suppose that we, who are

having such thoughts, are nothing. For it is a contradiction to suppose that what thinks does not, at the very time when it is thinking, exist. Accordingly, this piece of knowledge- *I am thinking, therefore I exist*- is the first and most certain of all to occur to anyone who philosophizes in an orderly way (194-195).

Thus, Descartes is asserting that the Self can be known because it manifests itself directly through *consciousness*- we know that we exist, and that this relation rests as the fundamental foundation for reality.

This Self- what I refer to as the *True Self*- does not exist in the same ontological manner or level as the Self of the Idealized Image. The ontology of the Self of the Idealized Image lies purely in language through the *totalizing-Us*. For example, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2008) states that “*Everyone* [italics mine] has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (2008). But what and who exactly is this “everyone” meant to signify? It contains no mention of the wholly different being and experiences that exist between the oppressor and the oppressed. It attempts to hide such fundamental ontological differences through the concept that it embodies. However, in doing so, this word loses any sense of “neutrality” and instead becomes the very means by which the oppressed are subsumed as the Self of the Idealized Image. This subsumption is what is meant by the totalizing-Us: by obfuscating the differences in the ontologies of the True Self and the Self of the Idealized Image, any alternative that can act as a counter to the Idealized Image becomes effectively concealed. Language in this case becomes the means of this subsumption. Concepts like equality- both in the political as well as the aforementioned ontological sense- can only have meaning if they are *applied indiscriminately to an entire class of beings*. It is in this manner then that the Self of the Idealized Image comes to be universalized and applied in such an indiscriminate manner to all people without any regard to the ontological status of

oppressed beings. Thus, two things are achieved simultaneously: the Idealized Image maintains its status as the default measure of perceiving and engaging reality and those who lie outside the Idealized Image have no means of ontologically refuting it.

However much the Idealized Image comes to dominate reality through the totalizing-Us, the nature by which it does so can never *replace* the True Self. It is this Self, from which consciousness emanates, that produces the inherent tension whereby one comes to know that she is not representative of- and represented by- the Idealized Image; she is the Others. This tension leads to a fragmentation of ontology, an illusory “two-ness” whereby two ontological Selves simultaneously attempt to emerge as the *only* means through which consciousness can take form. And although this fragmented ontology manifests itself in a variety of ways (double consciousness being the most obvious one), it is important to note that this fragmentation is irrevocably false due to the erroneous ontological equivalency of the Self of the Idealized Image and the True Self.

However, if the ontology of the Self of the Idealized Image rests in language, then what is the ontological composition of the True Self? As mentioned previously, the True Self precedes the Self of the Idealized Image through self-awareness and therefore acts as the foundation for a counternarrative to the Idealized Image. However, this also means that the True Self exists outside of the Idealized Image and all of its ideological manifestations. Thus, although the Idealized Image may distort the True Self, *it lacks any genuine power to abolish it.*

The ontological outsideness of the True Self implies its existence in something similar to the Lacanian Real. As Dino Felluga (2021) state:

This concept marks the state of nature from which we have been forever severed by our entrance into language. As far as humans are concerned, however, “the real is impossible,” as Lacan was fond of saying. It is impossible in so far as we cannot express it in language because the very entrance into language marks our irrevocable separation from the real. Still,

the real continues to exert its influence throughout our adult lives since it is the rock against which all our fantasies and linguistic structures ultimately fail (2021).

The Real is the realm prior to language and thus incapable of being described or defined. Herein lies the existence of the True Self, where inseparability defines the relation between consciousness and the True Self.

The situation of the True Self in the Real is not, as some will undoubtedly argue, a means of “copping out” by placing the True Self in a realm that is indescribable. Rather, it is the only viable option, as it lies outside the domain of the Idealized Image. And, as stated in an earlier section, the ontological basis for the Idealized Image lies in language. Thus, the True Self can only exist prior to and outside of language itself, and therefore incapable of corruption or being anything other than the True Self.

Incorporation and The Production of Unity

The fact that the True Self cannot be abolished presents an existential threat to the Idealized Image, for it forever threatens to will itself into reality through acts that are the direct expression of this consciousness. Thus, the continued existence of the Idealized Image depends upon its ability to prevent the actualization of such acts in reality. Central to this prophylactic measure is *incorporation*. As Stuart Hall (1983) writes:

“[T]he dominant culture need not destroy the apparent resistance. It simply needs to include it within its own space, along with all the other alternatives and possibilities...The notion of *incorporation* [emphasis added] points to the extremely important idea that the dominant ideology often responds to opposition, not by attempting to stamp it out, but rather by allowing it to exist within the places that it assigns...but only within the terms of a process which deprives it of any real or effective oppositional forces” (50).

Although in this quote Stuart is referring specifically to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, this concept can be inclusive of the institutions defined in this article. In this case, incorporation means *the control and regulation of the Others through the various institutions with which they must engage in reality*. As these institutions are structured by and according to the Idealized Image, the necessary engagement and participation with these institutions means that the Others are themselves, in effect, incorporated into the Idealized Image. Thus, while the Others can never *be* the Idealized Image, they can always be regulated *within* it. It is this constant engagement with institutions through incorporation that leads to the Idealized Image being normalized, so much so that it is seen to be natural and therefore not a threat.

Furthermore, this imaginary relation is reciprocal, for as the Idealized Image can incorporate and regulate the Others, so too do the Others incorporate the Idealized Image within themselves. Incorporation is crucial in the misrepresentation of ideology in that it internalizes the Idealized Image within the Others at the ontological level, meaning that the Idealized Image is, in a sense, inseparable from the identity of- and identifying with- the Self. Through the incorporation, the Others cease to become the Others, and instead become an "individual" in which they become indistinguishable from those whose Self is already whole. This reciprocity is what allows for the universalization of concepts like equality mentioned previously, for it is only when the Others look and feel a part of the Idealized Image can universalities exist in the first place.

The incorporation of the Others into the Idealized Image and vice versa more or less "solves" the problem of fragmented ontology, not by actually dissolving the contradiction of two Selves but by producing a reality that tightly regulates and minimizes the emergence of consciousness of the True Self. Much like the mere covering of a festering wound with bandages, incorporation does not "treat" the underlying condition, for it lacks that capability. What results is an ideological reality in which the Others engage with it through a Self that is detached from their own true consciousness but is nevertheless

claimed as their own. This *production of unity*, in which the Others participate in reality through the Self of the Idealized Image, is crucial in protecting the existence of the Idealized Image from the True Self. Through incorporation, the Others are always produced and reproduced as unified individuals and thus are capable of participating in the very reality that fragments them in the first place.

True acts and Liberation- the Realm of the Political

Incorporation is only one of two methods in collapsing contradictions inherent to fragmented ontology. The other is significantly radical in that it seeks to reject the Idealized Image. Unlike actions produced by incorporation, acts willed into being by a consciousness of the True Self are inherently incapable of being influenced by the Idealized Image *because they are not part of the reality that produced them.*

For these acts are not dependent on reality or the Idealized Image but on their being willed into existence consciously by the True Self of the Others. These *true acts*, as the undeniable expression of the True Self, brings into being a counternarrative that refutes the ingrained “truth” that the Idealized Image and its various manifestations are necessary. In doing so, true acts upset the firmly established ideology that constantly seeks to reproduce itself.

This also brings up another significant aspect of these acts- that they are inherently *political*. The attempt to actualize true acts in the world becomes synonymous with the attempt to wrest control of the narrative; to wrest control of a reality that is free of ideology and the Idealized Image. True acts can be performed by individuals individually, but they derive significantly more power by the collective and coordinated actions of a united group. Whether they be protests, formal petitions, reforms, or even revolutions, true acts by a cumulative and concerted force cause a tear in the ideology that works ever harder to produce a coherent reality and expose the hidden machinations of the Idealized Image.

Of course, such a firmly connected and intertwined ideology will predictably attempt to repel true acts through predictable means. Institutions that depend on the Idealized Image for any sense of

structure and meaning- the media, police forces, law-making bodies, etc.- will often coalesce into a single entity that seeks to refute the emergence of true acts through its insistence that these acts are *not normal and therefore are dangerous to society in general*. These reactions can range from ridicule to denial to the use of deadly force so that order- the continuation of the Idealized Image- may be maintained.

Furthermore, true acts are “upsetting” in their effects on institutions. The farther an institution is pruned away from the Idealized Image, the greater the possibility and need for a new definition of that institution. In other words, if the meaning and importance of the institution provided by the Idealized Image becomes detached from it, there exists a need to replace the Idealized Image with something else. Not just any substitute will do- the only thing that is capable of replacing the Idealized Image is the True Self. And, as the True Self is the source of genuine human liberation and expression, this form carries with it the *humanization* of institutions, which ultimately become inseparable from the people that they serve.

Furthermore, as institutions become imbued with new meanings, the Idealized Image loses the ability to manifest itself in the world, and ideology becomes incapable of sustaining itself as a result. The truth of the existence of the True Self leads invariably to a state of restlessness in which the Others- enervated, disaffected and alienated from their own being- are nevertheless pushed by an indescribable desire for a reality in which there is no manifestations or derivations of the Idealized Image. This is what is meant by the pursuit of justice for a *genuine* equality in which all sense of being is rooted in the True Self.

Conclusion

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a black man, was murdered in Minneapolis by a police officer, who knelt on Floyd’s neck for over nine minutes. As an article published at the time states:

“I can’t breathe,” Floyd said near the beginning of the video, as he sobbed. “What do you want?” an officer said. “I can’t breathe!” Floyd responded. At that point Floyd began crying

out, “Mama,” pleading, “My stomach hurts, my neck hurts, everything hurts.” He asked for water. The officers didn’t audibly respond to his pleas (Ockerman 2020).

The death of Floyd led to mass protests as people around the world voiced their anger and frustration at a racist system and society that refused to respect or even acknowledge basic human dignity and worth. Protesters held signs that held statements like “Black lives matter” and “Equal rights should be given, not fought for.” (Jeon 2020) and protests lasted for a considerable amount of time afterwards.

Throughout this time, I- like much of the country- was horrified and saddened by yet another death of a black person by an authorized representative of the state; yet I also contemplated what protesters meant by words like “equality” and “justice”. I found that these words can only have meaning if the underlying assumption- that individuals are already ontologically equal- is rejected and replaced. I began with Althusserian ideology in order to truly understand the Idealized Image and its many manifestations. From there, I discuss the fragmentation of ontology with the “two-ness” of Selves- the Self of the Idealized Image and the True Self. I determined that the True Self is the only means to genuine liberation, and as a result is constantly policed and regulated through incorporation, resulting in the production of unity. Lastly, through the refutation of the Idealized Image, I assert that the True Self and its manifestations- true acts- are the foundation upon which a new society can be truly called equal through the severing of ties between the Idealized Image and institutions. Whether or not the Idealized Image can be fully eradicated is a question that can only be answered with a future replete with political agitation through activism. Yet, we should be optimistic, for it is only through this that the future would ever be worth having in the first place.

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