

## Ideals

Ideals and ideas are closely related. An idea is a projection in mind toward a meaningful cross section of reality. 'That's a very good idea, to take the trolley into town.' 'I like your idea, it makes perfect sense.' What then is an ideal? It is still a kind of cognitive mapping, like an idea, but it is an idea transposed into an ethical-personal category. 'My ideal is a crisp, humorous suitor, who sweeps you off your feet.' We all know what a charming suitor is, that is we *get the idea*, but for only a sub set of us is this kind of suitor an ideal.

Ideals can exercise executive power. Organizations like teams and interest groups, as well as global factors like states or countries are likely to top off their credentials with choice ideals or phrases, which might be thought to epitomize the institution in question. *E pluribus unum* expresses both the hope and the self-analysis of the fathers of the new American nation. *Vox clamantis in deserto* identifies the Pauline call to which the founders of Dartmouth College directed their idealistic fealty. Such idealistic self-dedication bespeaks commitments which think together both the ideal and the idea.

The ladder of intelligibility, ascending through mere materiality into the idea, and above that into the ideal, traces here little more than an ascensional drift in consciousness. Nothing grand, like a Plotinian upward ballast, a high in the way things are made, is in question here, but the inner logic of meaning, even at its rawest a potential for being known and known better.