

Fifth Article of a Series . . .

The Freudian Hero

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The purpose of this fifth article in this series on leadership is to explore from the psychoanalytic viewpoint the meaning of leadership. We shall attempt to provide this description in this and the succeeding sixth article. The seventh article will be the summary and concluding article of the series.

The situational approach offers striking contrast to the psychoanalytic viewpoint. It assumes that for leadership to exist there must be a group with a common task or objective and at least one member must have responsibilities which differ from those of the other members. If all members perform exactly the same duties in exactly the same way there is no leadership. A leader then is a person who becomes differentiated from other members in terms of the influence he exerts upon the goal setting and goal achievement activities of the organization. In short, leadership can not emerge unless the members of the group assume different responsibilities. Implied in this assumption is that a group comes together because of the advantages derived from organized effort. Leadership then is explicable in terms of organization. The latter presumably gives rise to the former. In the third article in this series we discussed how the situational approach was derived as a result of the failure of the trait approach (second

article) to explain sufficiently leadership phenomena.

From the psychoanalytic point of view it is difficult to pass over the motives that in the first place propelled the group to form and take advantage of organization. It is difficult to see the validity of explaining group leadership if the problems of personality and of individual motivation are omitted. The training director must face the problems of human motivation whether he wants to or not. If he does not acquire an adequate theory, he will explicitly adopt a series of ad hoc ideas which are no less crucial because they are exempted from critical analysis.

The problem that exists in the situational thesis is that it presupposes the existence of an organization which, because of its differentiation, gives rise to leadership. This, indeed, would be a rational way for leadership to arise. However, this reasoning is not psychoanalytically justified. Both group formation and leadership are also irrational responses. Neither is organization as rationally determined as it appears to be. The benefit of psychoanalysis is that one is able to penetrate the rationalizations that the ego throws up of which one may be the situational approach.

Early in Freud's treatise on group psychology he makes the observation that if individuals in the group are com-

bined into a unity, there must be something to unite them. "This bond might be precisely the thing that is characteristic of a group." This observation was forged out of consideration of the sociological writings of the day which manifested preoccupation with crowd phenomena. He was particularly impressed by LeBon's description of child behavior because it fitted so well with his own psychology in that it emphasized unconscious mental life. In elaborating on unconscious phenomena he suggested that the dissimilarities that individuals show are the result of the development of the conscious mental superstructure. The group removes this so that the unconscious foundations which are similar in everyone stand exposed to view. The individual is brought under conditions which allow him to throw off the repression of his unconscious instincts (drives).

He disagrees with LeBon's group mind thesis insofar as he does not believe it necessary to consider that the group displays new characteristics in individuals that were not there before. The new is merely the unconscious manifesting itself under favorable group circumstances. Freud's major argument with LeBon is that the latter does not provide a satisfactory explanation of the role of the leader as well as the nature and causes of group cohesion. Freud sees no underlying principle except merely that a herd of animals or a collection of human beings merely place themselves instinctively under the authority of a chief.

Whereas LeBon was primarily interested in temporary crowd phenomena, McDougall stressed in particular the stable groups or associations—the distinc-

tion being primarily in the higher degree of organization. McDougall listed five principal conditions which characterized the more stable groups. Freud was particularly taken in by the fifth characteristic, namely, organization. Because of a higher degree of organization, the stable groups do not have psychological disadvantages of crowds. "The collective lowering of intellectual ability is avoided by withdrawing the performance of intellectual tasks from the group and reserving them for individual members of it." Although Freud saw no basic disagreement with McDougall's formulation, he attempted to explain the "organization of a group" in a different manner. "The problem exists how to procure for the group precisely those features which were characteristic of the individual and which are extinguished in him by the formation of the group."

Freud reasoned that a crowd took the individual out of organized relationships and released him from his own particular functions, position, traditions and custom. "Owing to his entry into an 'unorganized group' he lost his distinctiveness for a time." From this reasoning he concluded that the more "organized" a group is the greater the control of individual unconscious drives.

Trotter's concept of innate gregariousness (herd instinct) finds the least receptivity by Freud. Instead of seeing gregariousness as innate, Freud believes it is the result of learning. But the real opposition to the "herd instinct" is that it leaves no room at all for the leader. "He is merely thrown in along with the herd, almost by chance; and follows too . . . the herd is without a herdsman." Freud then ventures to correct Trotter's

pronouncement that man is a herd animal and asserts that he is rather a horde animal. "An individual creature in a horde led by a chief."

Freud represents a synthesis and a dynamic reinterpretation of some of the major points that he was able to glean from these men. Accepting LeBon's description of the masses as being largely deindividualized, irrational, easily influenced, prone to vile action and altogether of a regressive nature, he, however, criticized LeBon's magic word, suggestion, as an explanation. The bond which cemented individuals into mass was of a libidinal nature. McDougall had slightly touched upon this when he noted that the disturbing of individuals' emotions to a pitch provoked a pleasurable experience for those who were concerned to surrender themselves unreservedly to their passions. Freud goes beyond such observations by explaining the coherence of groups altogether in terms of the pleasure principle—that is to say, the actual or vicarious gratifications the individuals obtain from surrendering to a group.

For Freud, the tie that bound the group together was libidinal (love) and what accounted for suggestibility was that the individual feels the need of being in harmony with the group rather than in opposition to them. So that perhaps after all he does it for the love of them.

Libidinal (love) attachment sufficed to explain the complexity and variety of groupings in society.

This calls for distinguishing between two major kinds of libidinal (love) relationships in groups. These are identifications and object ties. The former occurred primarily among the members of

a group (that has a leader), while the latter characterized the tie of each individual to the leader of the group.

Where the libidinal attachment is most characteristic of groups is where there is a leader and not too much "organization." His formula reads, "A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego." Later he amended this formula so that a common group ideal or even any interests in common might take the place of the leader and thus precipitate psychological group formation.

His now amended formulation is illustrated as follows. "It is obvious that a soldier takes his superior, that is, really, the leader of the army, as his ideal, while he identifies himself with his equals, and derives from this community of their egos the obligations for giving mutual help and for sharing possessions which comradeship implies. But he becomes ridiculous if he tries to identify himself with the general." The reason why is understood if we refer to the "familial situation." We see that the group leader represents to each group member a parental figure, while the other group members come to have the emotional significance of siblings. Thus, in more organized groups with a leader, the members treat each other as brothers and the leader as their father. This is illustrated as follows: "When one encounters the male who leads and protects the group, what shall one call him? 'Father,' of course; and this is what every parish priest is called. And by what terms is an assemblage of celibate men devoted to another-worldly

purpose known one to another? As 'brothers,' of course. How about women similarly consecrated? 'Sister.' And who is the protecting and dominant woman? The 'mother superior.' Similarly, the army officer is really a 'father' to his men — 'Papa.' The final bond of a soldier's loyalty emerges in such expressions of family experience as 'my buddy' (brother)."

In more stable groups with more organization, such as yours in business and industry, there is less possibility that the libidinal attachment would be as overtly expressed. Organization brings institutionalization. But even so, these relationships differ only in degree. In the case of leaderless groups Freud suggested that group code might take the place of the leader and be substituted for the individual's conscience or even share this role with a "secondary leader."

The degree of organization is crucial to the understanding of the nature of the libidinal (love) ties. Freud frequently uses the term organization preceded by the term culture or civilization. In this regard civilization is the social environment insofar as it is organized. In protecting himself better from nature and in better distribution of goods and resources, man has acquired better organization. The price has been a commensurate restriction of his libido (love) and aggression (hate) drives. Because these drives become increasingly dammed up, a collection of people has always the potential of becoming a crowd that seeks to escape from inhibitions placed upon it by cultural organization. The ironical thing about a crowd is that it becomes an organization if it is to last.

However, it is not the kind of organization that preserves independent thought and judgment. The individual gives himself up—completely. He escapes from the responsibilities of society. The leader takes over the function of his superego. The crowd's purpose becomes a surrogate for the individual's ego and the pleasure principle reigns supreme. If the crowd acquires any tenure, it is because a psychic energy stemming from the released libido drives is channeled by the leader in ways that successfully thwart the inimical social environment that threatens to subdue the crowd; destroy it or else be destroyed by it. As long as the leader is able to maintain this hypnotic hold on his people, they are not conscious of themselves as individuals.

Although they are automatons, quite on the contrary, they feel powerful and free—above social evaluation. Their leader is great, as a god who reigns above them. And he is little, as one of them who walks among them. He is a "great little man."

We see that the crowd that severs its organized relationships to society at large, becomes itself organized, so much so that it acts as though one individual. What is the power that holds this group together? Freud answered, "To what power could this feat be better ascribed than to Eros (love), who holds together everything in the world?" What causes the members to be so suggestible that they give up their individuality? We repeat for clarity purposes Freud's answer: They do it because of the need of being in harmony with each other rather than in opposition. So that perhaps after all they do it for love of each other. In short, the Freudian hero makes

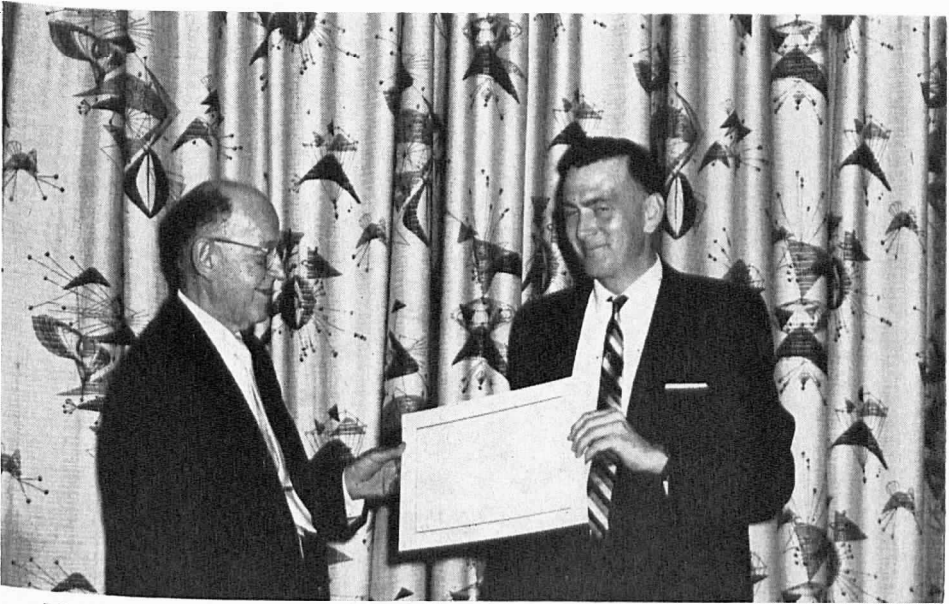
his people feel as sons and daughters to him and as brothers and sisters to each other. This is the bond that unites them. We shall in the sixth article give illustrations as to how we find this irrational basis of leadership in business and industry. Needless to say many of you have probably worked in organizations where the superior took a fatherly attitude to-

ward his people and his people in turn took a brotherly attitude toward each other.

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The sixth and seventh articles of this series will appear in subsequent issues of the Journal.

Mid-South Chapter Charter



The Mid-South Chapter of ASTD held its Charter Presentation Meeting, March 2, 1959, at the Hotel Chisca, Memphis, Tennessee. Mr. E. J. Honenberger, Jr., Vice-President (right), presided at a dinner meeting of wives, husbands, and bosses. Mr. J. E. Gallagher, Vice-President (left), Region 7, ASTD, was the after-dinner speaker and presented the charter. The Chapter has nineteen members and has been meeting since October, 1958. The Chapter Officers are: President: Dr. Calvin M. Street, Director, Evening Division, Memphis State University; Vice-President: Mr. E. J. Honenberger, Jr., Regional Training Officer, U.S. Post Office Department; Treasurer: Mr. William G. Davis, National Cotton Council; Secretary: Mr. Alvin J. Rogers, Supervisor, Vocational Education, Memphis City Schools.

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