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# 7.

## **“ALL WE LIKE SHEEP--”**

### **[Isaiah 53:6]: Followers and Leaders**

*Margaret J. Rioch*

The full verse in the King James version of the Bible from which the title of this paper is taken is: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The passage might be interpreted and enlarged upon in more contemporary idiom something like this: “All of us are baffled in these troubled times and we don’t know which way to turn. Each one is doing his own thing; but that is not really as satisfying as being committed to a common goal or belonging to a stable community. Surely somewhere there is a good leader who knows the answer, but our actual leaders are bad and are responsible for all our ills and ailments.”

The Biblical image of sheep which have gone astray instead of following their shepherd is not very complimentary to man. The sheep is not generally thought of as intelligent like the fox or wise like the owl or strong like the lion, but rather as a mindless animal, requiring someone to think for him and protect him. To the extent that “all we like sheep have gone astray,” we do indeed long for a shepherd who will guide us into green and safe pastures. The trouble with this simile, when applied to human beings, is that the shepherd is another sheep. He may be dressed up in a long cloak and accompanied by a tall staff with a crook on the end of it or by other formidable symbols of high office. But underneath the cloak is one of the sheep, and not, alas, a member of a more intelligent and more far-seeing species. But the wish, and sometimes the need, for a leader is so strong that it is almost always possible for one of the sheep to play the role of shepherd of the flock.

“Leader” is a word which implies a relationship like father, son; mother, daughter, as opposed to words like “man” or “girl”, which can stand more independently. Just as the word “son” does not have any sense without a parental word like “father” or “mother” implied in it, so the word “leader” does not have any sense without a word like “follower” implied in it. The interrelationships of followers and leaders are among the most significant of human relationships. In fact most

relationships can be looked at as variations on the theme of leadership-follower-ship.

The relationship of teacher to student and of psychotherapist or counselor to patient or client are cases in point. The teacher-student relationship is at the heart of the educational process. It is worth noting that the word "educate" comes from the Latin *educere*, meaning to lead out, which suggests that this process has traditionally had something very important to do with leadership and follower-ship. This paper will focus upon follower-ship and leadership in the field of education.

In formal education most people learn some very practical things, namely reading, writing and arithmetic before they are 10. Aside from technical knowledge, people are likely to think of other important aspects of learning in school and college, if indeed there are any, in association with certain teachers to whom they looked as leaders. These teachers are frequently idealized in retrospect and also at the time. The student attends to something in them and in the relationship to them which is distinctly pleasurable, with an admixture of respect, occasionally even adoration, and also something erotic.

In Plato's *Phaedrus* there is a poetic description of this when Socrates, talking about the recollection of heavenly beauty when reawakened by the sight of the soul's earthly namesake, says:

*But he...who has been the spectator of many glories in the other world, is amazed when he sees any one having a godlike face or form, which is the expression of divine beauty; and at first a shudder runs through him, and again the old awe steals over him; then looking upon the face of his beloved as a god he reverences him, and if he were not afraid of being thought a downright madman, he would sacrifice to his beloved as to the image of god...During this process the whole soul is all in a state of ebullition and effervescence, which may be compared to the irritation and uneasiness in the gums at the time of cutting teeth. [pp.456-457]*

Growing pains are apparently similar whether of the baby cutting teeth or of the adult soul growing wings, the wing being, according to Socrates, "the corporeal element which is most akin to the divine" (p.452).

In this description which Plato gives us of Socrates' discourse on Eros or the "winged one", he speaks of the *attribution* to the beloved of qualities which really belong to the god and of the tendency to *imitate* these qualities. He also refers to the process as one of *educating* into the manner and nature of the god.

Of course, Socrates has not given an explanation of this particular kind of follower-leader phenomenon. But a poetic description or a myth often brings together elements which the more prosaic ones leave separated. This dialogue illuminates the nature of the follower-ship of a charismatic leader. It makes clear

that the charisma is not *in* the leader but is in the follower-leader or lover-beloved relationship. How frequently it happens, in encountering someone whom we have loved or followed years earlier, that we wonder how we could have attributed such extraordinary qualities to him. And yet we did, and something in that person made the attribution possible, as well as something in our own need to attribute.

The passage in the *Phaedrus* is concerned with a relationship in which the beloved or leader awakens in the lover or follower recollections of the sight of the divine truth or absolute reality which, according to the myth, the soul glimpses in an instant occurring only once in a thousand or ten thousand years, when the gods stand for a moment on the outside of heaven as the revolution of the sphere carries them around. Obviously such a recollection can have potential only for good. The soul who thus catches a vision of the truth is preserved from harm and her wing can be nourished. But there are charismatic leaders who, instead of awakening in the soul a recollection of divine truth, unleash all the viciousness of hell. Hitler was a charismatic leader of that sort, and there are other lesser ones, no doubt, closer to us.

When, like sheep, we have gone astray, we may in our urgent need for a shepherd, follow the wrong one. How shall we know when we are following a good shepherd and when we are being misled? A discussion of the student teacher relationship may help to clarify some of the problems of the more general follower-leader relationship.

Not infrequently a teacher wields an important and subtle influence over his students, especially if he is capable of a dramatic classroom performance which put his students under a kind of spell. Occasionally, a teacher or a teacher-substitute may thoroughly destroy the preconceptions, assumptions and values formerly held by his students or followers. The vacuum thus created is abhorred by most young people. Something usually rushes in to fill it. As Pascal put it, "It is natural for the mind to believe, and for the will to love; so that, for want of true objects, they must attach themselves to false" (p.24, No. 81). The false object to which the mind and the will attach themselves is often the *person* of the charismatic leader.

Whereas in Plato's description in the *Phaedrus*, the lover is imitating heavenly *qualities*, such as truth, beauty, virtue, which he merely *attributes* to his beloved and which really belong to the god; in the murkier regions which have the smell of hell about them, the follower is not imitating divine attributes, but is giving over something of himself—to use Pascal's terminology, his mind or his will—to the leader.

The power and strength of the leader are based on the weakness and helplessness of the follower. To quote Pascal once more, "The power of kings is founded on the reason and on the folly of the people and especially on their folly. The greatest and most important thing in the world has weakness for its

foundation, and this foundation is wonderfully sure; for there is nothing more sure than this, that the people will be weak" (p. 93, No. 330). It is by no means sure that students will be weak. But to the extent that their own strength and intelligence are burdensome to them, they will try to get rid of them and to give them over to the teacher or to whomever they find as a leader in the teacher's place. The teacher or teacher-substitute who consciously or unconsciously seeks and enjoys the exercise of power for its own sake (and who does *not*, to some degree?) places his person at the disposal of the student as a receptacle for the student's unwanted will, which may also be called his competence, strength or intelligence.

The person of the charismatic leader then becomes the object of the follower's devotion. If the follower is a student, his enthusiasm is not for the ideas, the methods, the principles, for which the teacher stands, or for the knowledge and understanding which can be gained through his teaching, but for the teacher as an individual. It may be something like this that Isaiah was referring to when he said that "we have turned everyone to his own way." The cult of personality and doing one's own thing have much in common. When, as the prophet put it, "we have turned everyone to his own way," we are easy game for any teacher or any leader who wants to take us over. For there seems to be a tendency in human beings, which becomes aggravated when they are isolated or faced with unfamiliar situations, to find the exercise of their own powers to mind and will extremely burdensome. Many people hotly deny this tendency in themselves, but it is much more widespread and much more insidious than even sophisticated observers of human nature usually imagine. In the extreme it is the phenomenon which we observe in hypnosis.

One of the best treatises on the subject is in the form of a short story by Thomas Mann called "Mario and The Magician." The story culminates in an account of the public performance of an extraordinarily skillful hypnotist which takes place in an Italian seaside resort and which is billed as entertainment for children as well as adults. The evening turns out to be far from entertaining in the conventional sense. It ends, in fact, in tragedy. As the hypnotist, Cipolla, proceeds to demonstrate more and more dramatically his extraordinary powers over his audience, the interplay between subjugation and freedom of the individuals concerned becomes more and more intricate and the difference between the two less and less clear. What begins as freedom turns into subjugation and vice versa. The audience's admiration for the hypnotist's performance evolves into uneasiness and finally into murderous hatred when Cipolla gives to a young waiter, named Mario, the suggestion that he, Cipolla, an ugly, repulsive hunchback, is the beautiful girl whom Mario loves unrequitedly, for the girl is interested in another. In

rapture, believing that she has now at last turned her favor to him, Mario follows the hypnotist's commands and publicly kisses him. Awakening from his trance, he becomes aware of his humiliation, draws his pistol and shoots Cipolla on the stage as the final act of this very serious psychological melodrama.

The reader who is also fascinated with Cipolla's performance looks back at the end of the story with a shudder, not so much at the denouement, as at the framework in which this final event is set. The framework concerns not just the two characters in the last scene, the hypnotist and the hypnotized, but all of us. The story is told from the point of view of a nice German family, a couple with two young children, who are vacationing in the little Italian resort town. The time is obviously the period after Mussolini's accession to power and before Hitler had taken over the reins in Germany. Small unpleasantnesses occur to the Germans, such as a fine imposed by the police because their little girl took off her bathing suit on the beach. As events like this pile up, the narrator, who is the father of the family, comments with increasing frequency that they should have left the place the first time something like that happened. But they didn't. On the last evening of their stay they attend the performance of the hypnotist, who is announced as a magician, for the sake of the children who want to see the magic, and just for something to do.

At the performance the narrator comments similarly over and over that they should have gone home earlier. The evening drags on to a shockingly late hour for the young children, who, when they are not falling asleep, beg not to be taken home. The narrator is painfully aware that the excuses he gives himself, for not insisting that they leave, are weak and untenable. He himself draws the analogy between staying glued to their seats at the performance and staying in the resort town, even though the atmosphere was unhealthy and the treatment they were receiving from the authorities was very shabby.

Thomas Mann makes clear that this passive toleration of minor ill treatment and injustice is akin to the hypnotizability of the audience by the sadistic hypnotist, Cipolla. Mann does not point a moral, but he paints a picture, which leads the reader to see the clear line of a continuum running from the minor snubs suffered by the German family, through the humiliation of Mario at the hands of Cipolla, to the large political scene in which the population of Italy suffered its tyrant, if not gladly, then with the same uneasy combination of subjugation and freedom. It is not difficult, of course, to see the shadow looming ahead, of the even greater tragedy which befell when the Germans also sat glued to their chairs by the hypnotist Hitler, and neither threw him out nor left the audience.

Mann does not paint Cipolla as a likable character, but he does arouse in the reader a degree of reluctant sympathy and admiration for the tremendous, even though perverted, effort

which was required for him to accomplish the work of imposing his will upon the audience. The so-called imposition of Cipolla's will is experienced by his subjects as freeing them from subjugation to their own wills. They can now do what they wanted to do all along.

Cipolla knows his trade well for along with the masterful commands, always underlined by swishing his riding whip, he also speaks seductively. "Dance," he says, urging a particularly reluctant gentleman to give in to his hypnotic command, "who wants to torture himself this way? Do you call that freedom; this kind of forced submission of yourself?...How good it will feel finally to let go of your will. There, you're dancing already. Now it's no longer a struggle; it's really a pleasure" (p.121).

The description in "Mario and the Magician" and the one in the *Phaedrus* exemplify extremes of a leader-followership relationship in which the leader is felt to be charismatic. In the former, the follower is responding to the person of the leader; in the latter the follower is responding to that for which the leader stands—his ideas, his vision, his values, or his work. Most of the time in actual life we encounter mixtures with a predominance of the former or the latter kind of relationship. It may be possible to distinguish which of the two kinds is dominant by asking whether the follower continues to follow and to develop further in the way the leader has shown even if the leader himself is no longer present. If the follower continues and develops further in the leader's path after the leader's death or disappearance from the scene, it means that the former has integrated the latter's ideas, has made them part of himself and now acts on the basis of a theory, a set of convictions, or values, even if they are very primitive, but not on the basis of personal attachment and loyalty. If we are essentially following a person rather than his ideas and his philosophy, we need not understand the ideas and the philosophy, even though we mouth them. Our followership consists of a kind of hypnosis, of giving over our will to the other and losing thereby that terrible burden which we carry so reluctantly: responsibility for our own acts.

The student, or any person, who is looking for a leader will be fortunate if he finds one closer to Plato's model than to Cipolla. And the educator who is responsible for leading his students into green pastures, not into barren ground or over a cliff, and who finds himself in a charismatic relationship with his students, will do well not to misuse his gift as Cipolla did in the case of Mario. Since psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, and counselors in the mental health field can be thought of as educators even when they are also doctors, the problem applies to them as well as to classroom teachers.

With or without charisma the teacher or teacher-substitute has a role to perform as a leader of his students. Traditionally he performs several functions: (1) He transmits facts and theories discovered or developed in the past. (2) He tells students what to

do in order to develop skills such as penmanship, drawing, tennis, and the like. (3) He presents himself as a model for imitation—for example, in performing a surgical operation.

There is also another function, more important, more generally neglected. I wish to devote the main portion of this paper to a description of a particular teaching situation that exemplifies it. The function, whose nature will emerge in the course of the description, occupies a central position in the methods developed in the Centre for Applied Social Research of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations of London. These methods were developed primarily by the late Dr. A. Kenneth Rice and institutionalized in the Group Relations Conferences held at the University of Leicester in England.

Kenneth Rice used to indicate his way of viewing a situation by a large gesture describing a semicircle. It was a gesture of inclusion, indicating that it would be well to lift up one's eyes from a particular problem or a particular individual and include a larger field. In this larger field he always sought to identify the critical factors, since it is obviously impossible to consider all factors operating even in a smaller field. The approach is particularly congenial to those of us who had come under Harry Stack Sullivan's influence. It is, of course, related to field theory and systems theory. Dr. Rice developed a set of concepts about organizations which facilitated the practice of this approach in education, in management, and in group life generally.

In 1965 the Washington School of Psychiatry and Yale University Department of Psychiatry began the process of transplanting Rice's educational methods to the United States. When the conferences first began, the emphasis was on the study of the small group of about 10 people. Over the years Kenneth Rice's gesture of inclusion grew larger. Some conferences have now been run without any exercise for the study of small groups at all. The emphasis has shifted to the study of larger groups of up to 60 and 70 people sitting together in the same room, and even more to intergroup studies. It was Rice's contention that all group processes are intergroup processes. He included in this statement whatever occurs within a single person since he conceived of the individual as made up of a number of different parts which one can call id, ego, etc., or the various roles or personae who at different times speak from the same mouth. Rice thought of the ego as performing a leadership function for the individual, as a shepherd performs a leadership function for the flock, deciding which way it shall go, how it shall and shall not behave, and what shall be allowed to come in and go out. Within the flock and within the individual there may be smoldering or open rebellion about these decisions, but somebody wins out and the flock turns either right or left as the individual performs or does not perform a particular act, either with internal harmony or in spite of internal conflict. As psychotherapists know, the study of such individual acts or

non-acts is a complex matter. In a conference of around 50 members the study is obviously much more complex. No one claims to have mastered this field. The conferences simply offer an opportunity to study the phenomena of group and intergroup processes as they are going on.

In order to think about these processes some integrating concept or concepts are necessary. Rice's book about the conferences is called *Learning for Leadership*. More recently the primary task of the conferences has been described as the study of the nature of authority. The concepts of leadership and authority have been defined and differentiated elsewhere. It will suffice for the purposes of this paper if they are taken according to any dictionary definition. The essential point here is that they are integrating, unifying principles with the help of which it is possible to consider complex phenomena, just as the concept *forest* helps us to consider a large number of trees without getting lost in them. Without such integrating concepts, the study of group processes, while they are going on, returns, of necessity, to the study of particular individuals with the group as a background. This may, indeed, have merits. It may be exactly what is indicated in therapy groups, for example; but it is not the same thing as the study of groups as integrated systems.

The Group Relations Conferences, as they were developed in England and more recently in the United States, are for most people a period of stress and anxiety. The situation is strange; familiar landmarks and routines are obliterated. An opportunity is offered to learn new ways of relating to the world. It is not that new ways are delineated or prescribed, but the situation itself tends to be mutative. Metaphorically speaking, one is pushed swiftly to the edge of a chasm and carried by the forward impulse in a long leap across the abyss to new and undiscovered country on the other side—unless, of course, one falls back into the old country or into the depths. Clearly this process of letting go of old ways of behaving involves a risk. People who are already under stress or who are subject to a great deal of chronic anxiety should be discouraged from taking this kind of risk. They are, in fact, discouraged from attendance at these conferences. The statement is underlined that the conferences are not designed as therapeutic events, but are intended for mature adults capable of absorbing considerable stress.

The conferences vary in length: the longest so far is of two weeks duration; the shortest one which includes all the exercises, four days. The first ones held in this country were all residential. This has the advantage of creating a cultural island so that members can immerse themselves in the experience. However, nonresidential conferences have also taken place and have their value.

The conferences usually open with an introduction by the director who outlines the task, sets the tone of the conference, and makes clear the sources, the extent, and the limits of his

authority as well as that of the other staff members. He also introduces the staff, who sit in a row in the front of the room facing the members.

The program or schedule is printed in the brochure announcing the conference and changes are made in it only if there are very urgent reasons. The design is carefully thought through by the director and his advisers and the sequence of events is decided upon, on the basis of experience and the best predictions that can be made about the way learning is most likely to take place. Each session is an hour and a half long.

There are four major exercises, or events, as they are now called. The first event following the introduction is traditionally the study of the small group, which continues for one or more sessions each day, but stops before the last day of the conference. The second event usually also begins on the first day. This is the study of the large group, which includes all conference members. On the second day the formal study of intergroup events begins.

Toward the end of the conference small discussion groups are scheduled for the purpose of applying conference learning to the work which members do at home. They also try to examine unresolved conference problems and assist people in making the transition from the "cultural island" of the conference to their situations outside. They are conducted in a familiar manner with the consultant taking a role like that of the traditional seminar instructor. This exercise is not concerned with the "here and now" but looks backward and forward in time.

In the "here and now" Small Group Event about 10 members with their consultant sit in a circle. The major characteristics which distinguish the Tavistock small groups from others, such as encounter groups and sensitivity training, are the nature of the task and the role of the consultant. The task is to study the processes going on in the group as a *whole* while they are going on, especially the covert processes, with a particular focus, which is at present upon the nature of authority and the problems encountered in its exercise. The role of the consultant is to provide opportunities for the study. The role requires of the consultant a high degree of self-discipline. He is to intervene only when he can facilitate the study of the ongoing processes and at no other time and in no other way. His role prescribes further that he will do this for the period set aside for the exercise in the space provided for it. Thus he begins and ends precisely on time and does not leave the assigned room except for an emergency. He rarely addresses one individual and he concerns himself with individuals only as they represent some aspect of the total group life. It often happens that questions are addressed to him which he does not answer if he thinks that a direct answer would not be in the interest of the self-study of the group. As in most new situations there is an initial uneasiness about who everyone is and what may take place.

People hope that their self-esteem will be enhanced, but they fear it may be damaged.

The consultant does nothing to try to make the group members feel more comfortable. Their uneasiness often increases when the consultant points out the maneuvers in which members engage to cover up or to get around their painful uncertainty, such as introducing themselves, making small talk, moving chairs, or attacking someone who sticks his neck out. The consultant does this, not for the sake of making people uncomfortable, but for the sake of the task of learning. He simply comments, to the best of his ability, on what he sees going on and tries to make sense of it. However, it is hard for members to believe this. They tend to think that the increased uneasiness which they feel was intended by the consultant as a part of a manipulative plan. This is the beginning of the paranoia which is a frequent phenomenon in the conferences. The assumption is that if something happens, someone must have planned it — if not for a good reason, then for a bad one. Since people are reluctant to blame their discomfort on God, the "management" must be responsible. The extent to which sane, "normal" people engage in paranoid thinking of this kind is astonishing to themselves when they become aware of it.

Even in today's outspoken culture there is usually a good deal of reluctance about confronting directly the authority personified by the consultant. Since all the conference members are adults who have presumably come voluntarily with the avowed purpose of studying the problems of authority in and among groups, they do attempt to fulfill the purpose and to join with the consultant in the common task of understanding the processes in the group as they are occurring. But as Wilfred Bion pointed out, there is present in every group, along with the intelligent, task-oriented activity, another side of group life, which he called the basic assumption aspects. The consultant in conference groups, as indeed the leader in any group, is always subject to pulls and tugs of enormous strength on the part of the members to give up his role and his task. The power of these pulls and tugs is, of course, not weaker because it is to a large extent outside awareness.

The accusation which is so often made of the consultant that he is grim, unsmiling, and severe, has more than a grain of truth in it. It is scarcely possible to enter into this activity lightheartedly. From past experience it can be assumed that there is going to be a struggle. This may be invigorating; it may in the end be satisfying and fulfilling. But it is grim because it reaches into the depths of human nature. One needs scarcely more than a glance at every morning's newspaper to see that our present human society resembles an old-fashioned madhouse more than Utopia where lion and lamb lie down together. It is therefore not surprising that phenomena familiar in society and in the old madhouse emerge in the microcosm of the conference. It often

becomes clear that the elements in our society which produce crime, insanity, riots, wars, and the manifold injustices which we deplore, are present in the conference, in each group of nice, intelligent individuals who come full of the best intentions.

Some of the same things which occur in the Small Group also hold true in the Large Group Exercise, which has as its task the study of the processes in a Large Group as they occur, again with the focus on the problems of authority. All 50-60 members of the conference with consultants participate in this. The sessions are usually held one a day through most of the conference period.

Whereas in a small group each person can and often does become important to all others and distinguishable by all others, this is manifestly impossible in a large group, especially over a short period of time. It is, of course, *completely* impossible in groups larger than conference groups, such as the population of a city, or a government agency. This relative anonymity is very painful and exerts a pull upon the more aggressive members to make themselves known at whatever cost. The quieter ones tend to become still quieter and some never speak at all in the Large Group.

The concentration upon the group as a whole, whether large or small, with the focus on the concept of authority, is felt by the members to be impersonal and lacking in warmth. In an important sense it is just that. "Warmth" is usually experienced as something one individual feels for another or a very few others. It does, of course, happen in a Tavistock group that a consultant feels warmly toward an individual in his group. If he allows himself to remain in this happy feeling or to give voice to it without further reflection, he has obviously been caught off balance. His job is to see how this feeling of warmth for an individual arose in the group, how the seduction (not necessarily at all a conscious seduction) fitted into the life of the total group. It happens occasionally that the group is quite happy to see one member, particularly a female member in a group with a male consultant, occupy the consultant's attention and engage with him in a pairing relationship even though jealousy is present at the same time. This happy interlude seems to augur well for the release of positive feelings generally in the group. The consultant is then sorely tempted to rest in the enjoyment of the peace and warmth engendered in the pairing relationship which is being smiled upon, temporarily, by the others. But his job is not to rest and enjoy the situation, any more than it is to enjoy the situation of openly expressed anger and resentment. His job is to try to comprehend the meaning of this relationship in the context of the whole. The girl in question has probably thought of herself simply as an individual who is attracted by the good looking consultant. She is delighted that at least for the moment she can see that the attraction is reciprocated. Happy at having captured the consultant, she basks in her success. She is

unaware and is usually quite resistant to becoming aware that she is one strand in the texture of the whole, that the others were willing, more than willing, to have her play this role; in fact, they needed her for it. Otherwise she could not have played it. She would have been drowned out by other concerns. The consultant's job is to understand her as a wave carried on the surface of the deep current of the group stream, and to help the group to perceive her and themselves in this same way. This view does not suppose a group mind operating in some mysterious way. It does suppose a system which is a set of interrelated events. A change in any part means a change in all the interrelationships in the system.

When a person in a group becomes aware of himself in this way, the awareness is often accompanied by a weird feeling of being no longer one's old familiar self. The sense of having a will of one's own, of being free to make one's own choice, disappears, and the individual experiences himself as a marionette pulled by the strings of the group or as being a channel through which the group pours its energy and expresses itself. On one occasion a woman, who happened to be the only woman in a particular small group, found herself crying without knowing why and even without feeling that she wanted to cry, but as if, so she said, the group were crying through her. She felt this as strange and uncanny.

People enter groups with certain tendencies developed through their past experiences and pressed upon them by tradition. Thus it is not surprising that it was the woman in the group who found herself "elected" to cry for the group. In the beginning phases of a group it is the readily recognizable, stereotyped tendencies of each member that are used to represent the various aspects of the group's life. There are one or two "aggressive guys" who do the fighting, a "funny man" who cracks the jokes, a "wise" person, a peacemaker, a motherly one, a sexy one, a shy quiet one, and so on. Later, especially if a group works well together, people can shift out of their stereotypes and find that they express richer and more many-sided aspects of themselves.

The converse of the marionette phenomenon also occurs, especially in large groups, when an individual experiences himself as able to do anything with the group that he likes, sometimes so much so that he believes he *is* the group. This is often accompanied by a pseudo-religious fervor which carries the individual away into a grandiose sense of power. And this too is uncanny. An individual in this state with relation to the group does wield an enormous influence. The members are fascinated with him and find themselves unable to put their attention on anything else.

These two experiences, the sense of being all-powerful and the feeling of being a marionette, although they appear to be opposite, are essentially two sides of the same coin. They feel

uncanny because an aspect of our lives is revealed in them to which we are usually blind, namely the unity of the individual with the whole.

It is possible to argue interminably, as people have done, about whether the true power in a group lies with the leader or with the masses who permit the leader to lead; whether the true responsibility lies with the individual who commits an act, for example a criminal act, or with the society which brought the individual forth. Looking at these questions as "either-or" alternatives ignores the fundamental unity of the individual and the whole. Tolstoy in *War and Peace*, speaking of the Napoleonic invasion of Russia had this to say:

*Had Napoleon not taken offense at the demand that he should withdraw beyond the Vistula, and not ordered his troops to advance, there would have been no war; but had all his sergeants objected to serving a second term then also there could have been no war. Nor could there have been a war had there been no English intrigues and no Duke of Oldenburg, and had Alexander not felt insulted, and had there not been an autocratic government in Russia, or a Revolution in France and a subsequent dictatorship and Empire, or all the things that produced the French Revolution, and so on. Without each of these causes nothing could have happened...In order that the will of Napoleon and Alexander [on whom the event seemed to depend] should be carried out, the concurrence of innumerable circumstances was needed without any one of which the event could not have taken place.*

*Man lives consciously for himself, but is an unconscious instrument in the attainment of the historic, universal aims of humanity....[pp. 669-670]*

These comments of Tolstoy seem to me to illuminate the interplay between leader and followers, or to put it another way, between the individual and the group, which is always a subject of discussion in the conferences. The theoretical conclusion seems inescapable, that responsibility within a system, if it is anywhere, is everywhere. In practice, what occurs is that many people leave the conferences with an increased ability to behave in a thoughtful, reliable way in their own institutions, with increased ability to take reasonable action when they might formerly have sat helplessly, apathetically glued to their seats; and this in spite of a clear realization that their behavior is determined by the groups to which they belong and have belonged. The paradox was expressed poignantly by one member toward the end of a conference. "When I look for the group," he said, "I find myself. When I look for myself, I find the group."

The relationship of the individual to the group in which he finds himself continues to be studied in the third conference exercise, which focuses on intergroup relations. Concentration upon intergroup events highlights other aspects of the same problem and permits the relationship to the authority of the staff

as a managing body to come into the foreground. This exercise has a number of different forms which are used separately or together in various conferences. The exercise usually starts in plenary session like the beginning of the conference, with members sitting in rows as at a lecture and the staff in the front of the room facing the members. The director introduces the exercise. In his introductory remarks he states the task of the exercise and indicates the space that is available, sometimes listing the rooms by numbers, and suggesting that the members can divide up in any way they wish. Consultants are available to facilitate the task of studying intergroup relations as they happen. In one form of the exercise, the staff group leaves the plenary room immediately following the introduction and takes up its position as a group within the exercise in a territory of its own.

At a typical recent conference, many people then got up and immediately left the room. Some had made plans prior to the conference, having heard from colleagues what these events are like. Some simply wanted to get out as fast as possible from a situation which was too much like the Large Group for comfort. Some interpreted the opening remarks as a directive to go somewhere. This last is a very frequent occurrence. The listing of available rooms and the withdrawal of the staff are taken as heaven-sent guide lines of what to do, and people accordingly scramble to get to a room before they can be left out.

One group formed on the basis of wanting to be independent of the staff and subsequently became known as the rebel group. One group wanted to be thought cooperative and tried to be free of organizational restraints. One group wanted to devise a different schedule and negotiate with the staff to put it into effect. Most of the groups which formed did not hold with any great persistence to the avowed purposes with which they formed. They found enormous difficulty in getting together to do anything, and in allowing anyone to assume authority for the group. The problem of representation which exists in all intergroup activity became clearly visible.

If a group is to take any action as a whole in negotiating with or relating to another group, it means that each member has to give up something of his own autonomy to the person designated as spokesman for his group. The spokesman himself is limited in *his* autonomy by the degree of authority which the group confers upon him. If he oversteps the limits or if his groups thinks he has not adhered to its policy, he may be disowned. Many a person has come back to his room in this exercise full of what he has accomplished with representatives of other groups only to find either that his group had disbanded and disintegrated, or that it had changed course so that his accomplishment was as nothing. It is not easy for a representative to remain in touch with his group, to remain loyal to them, and to retain their confidence while he is away from home base, as members of United Nations

can no doubt testify. The difficulties which spring from group members' reluctance to give over some authority to a representative are matched only by those which spring from the opposite tendency: namely the abdication of responsibility on the part of group members when they allow themselves to be taken over by a dictatorial leader. When this happens, the self-appointed dictator can lead the group by the nose whenever he chooses, but he gets no real support from his followers, for they are simply allowing him to do their work for them. They have given up their responsibility along with their authority and have placed it all in one person. He is thus in the unenviable position of being in charge of a group of zombies. It sometimes happens that, carried away by his power, he commits his group in a way which really goes too far. Perhaps he forms an alliance with another group to make a revolution to depose the staff and run the conference. But when the cost of this proceeding becomes clear, when his followers realize that they have not bargained for the kind of fight *and* work that would be involved, they may revolt against him and *he* may be deposed. If a consultant gets an opportunity at a time like this, he tries to point out that the dictator's acts were made possible only by the apathy of the group, which had happily let him do all the work until it turned out that they were going to have to pay a price for their inaction.

The situation of a working group in which the leader really represents a policy, thought out, understood, supported, and collaboratively carried out by the whole group turns out to be an exceedingly hard thing to accomplish, and one which rarely obtains for long stretches of time. Groups, like individuals, do not consistently function at their best. Either everyone is so involved in wanting his own way that a common task can be developed only with difficulty, and once developed, is not supported; or everyone is so indifferent to the stated task that the group either falls apart or falls into the hands of a dictator. The former case is the one referred to by Isaiah: "We have turned everyone to his own way." The latter case brings us back to Mario and the hypnotist, Cipolla, when the audience allowed itself to be led wherever Cipolla wanted it to go until Mario took revenge for all of them in his act of murderous outrage. An effective working group requires a task or goal which seems accomplishable and about which there is some reasonable consensus on the part of the members. The task is not always clearly formulated and consciously spelled out, but the members' interest must be invested in it if the group is to function.

During the conference as a whole, and most clearly demonstrated in the intergroup exercise, members pull and tug at the consultants to tell them what to do, to be leaders in the traditional sense of shepherds who guide their flocks up hill or down dale wherever they will find the greenest grass. At the same time members fight angrily against the staff because they

resent feeling like sheep or school children. One member reported after a recent conference that he responded to this feeling by "behaving in a helpless manner, becoming overly dependent on others to provide for basic needs, saying, in essence, 'Where do we sleep? Where do we eat? What's next on the schedule?' " He added that it was the same experience he had had in military service, where everything seemed "planned for you so you don't have to think for yourself. If you think for yourself you may get into trouble. I am told that travelers in foreign countries often react this way to their guided tours."

It is striking how easily, not to say distortedly, this attitude of helpless dependency with accompanying resentment is generated. The member quoted above speaks for many, many others. It is not hard to see how the associations to three situations of great dependency—school, the military, the guided tour—are called up. As far as school is concerned, the conferences are announced as education institutions. Whenever possible they are held in a college or school in order to underline the message that this is a *learning* situation. As far as the military is concerned, the strict discipline of the staff, their formal use of last names and titles, sitting in a row in front of the room, adherence to time boundaries, and clear lines of authority can well evoke military images. The guided tour in a foreign country is an excellent symbol for the unfamiliar situation in which practical matters are well provided so that no one has to give thought as to where he will sleep or what he will eat, but where one is bombarded by new and strange sights and sounds challenging to prejudices and preconceptions.

It is striking that the dependency associated with these three situations occurs routinely and immediately in the conferences in spite of the fact that the written and spoken words introducing the events refer again and again to the fact that the teaching will not be carried on in the traditional manner, that how members learn and what they do is up to them, that staff members do not know and have not planned what will occur, that members are free in every sense of the word to come or go, learn or not learn what and as they please.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this consistent occurrence of dependent reactions: first, that the content of the spoken and written word is not as powerful as the behavior which evokes the associations of school, the military, and the guided tour; and second, that there is a tremendous readiness on the part of mature, intelligent adults, not to mention children and adolescents, to fall into this pattern.

It is this readiness of which Cipolla took advantage. It is this readiness which permits the conception to arise that we attribute to Isaiah when he says that the Lord hath laid on *him* the iniquity of us all. How easily we give over our wills and our minds if someone will take our sins upon him and free us from the terrible burden of responsibility for the choices we make. This can be

seen very clearly in the conference situation. Members behave strikingly like sheep, and sometimes like goats. With great docility they do what they believe the staff would like them to do; or with terrible locking of horns they refuse to do what they believe is required of them. In either case they place the authority for their behavior outside themselves and in the staff with predictable regularity. The staff, for its part, is over and over again outraged at the way in which members behave like dependent children, as if the staff and its behavior had nothing whatever to do with it. The tendency in all of us is to think the iniquity is out there; it is laid on *him* or on them. This, of course, makes it possible to believe that salvation will also come from out there, from *him* or them. The tenacity of this belief has been demonstrated, so far, in every conference.

The staff sweats and bleeds and works for members to give up the fallacious struggle in which they are engaged; fallacious because the staff does not wish to humiliate, put down, vanquish, or tell members what to do. The staff does wish to collaborate and assist in learning, but will not collaborate in the fiction that it should or does make decisions and choices for the members.

As a conference director I have frequently experienced a phenomenon toward the end which is like a kinesthetic perception inside my skin. It is as if the membership made a 180-degree turn in giving up the fallacious struggle. Not every person does this, but enough people do, so that it can fairly be called a group phenomenon. A metaphor from the work of the French philosopher Dr. Hubert Benoit expresses it most clearly. It is as if the members had been staring out of a small barred window, straining every nerve and muscle to stretch and see out of it as far as possible, trying to see the light according to the outside authority, shaking violently at the bars which may bend but do not break. Behind them at the other end of the room is an open door. They have only to turn around to walk out of their prison. But before they can let go their cramped hold on the bars and be willing to turn away from the precious bit of light which they perceive through the small window, they have to comprehend clearly that they really are—and have been from the beginning—free. They have to comprehend that the power and authority which they had ascribed to the staff belong not to anyone outside themselves but to them, to each person who is his own authority.

In most of our schools, in spite of the influence of John Dewey and many other educators, students *take* courses *given* by instructors. The words *take* and *give* are significant. The model seems to be not even sheep with a shepherd, but a nest of little birds with their mouths open waiting to be fed. In recent years the food brought to the nest has become unpalatable and the little birds have become large birds with huge claws and sharp

beaks who attack those who try to feed them. It seems to me that the model is inappropriate. It is true that a teacher sometimes needs to transmit facts and theories from the past, to tell students what to do in order to develop skills, and to present a model for imitation. But much more importantly his function is to insist that the students take unto themselves the authority which tends to be foisted on the teacher. This can be done if the teacher refuses steadfastly to accept the authority. He will probably find that the students, the rebellious ones as well as the docile ones, will try in a thousand ways to force him or seduce him to accept it.

There is a sense in which the authority in the Tavistock conferences and in educational institutions generally can not be taken over by each member or student for himself. This has to do with the authority to manage the institution, that is, the right to perform the function of setting up the necessary practical arrangements, of designing the exercises, acting as consultants, and doing whatever needs to be done to provide optimal learning opportunities. This responsibility lies with the whole staff and particularly with its leader. In the conferences it is derived from the sponsoring institution or institutions which confer upon the director and through him upon the staff the authority to perform these functions. By coming to the conference and paying the required fee, members implicitly confirm this authority and agree to allow the staff to perform its function. For the exercise of such authority some power is necessary. The power lies in large part in the competence of the staff. It can be used and also misused. It must be placed in the service of the task, for power not in the service of an honorable task becomes corrupt. Commenting on a concert she had just heard, Dr. Frieda Fromm-Reichmann once said: "It was not only great music, it was the perfect performance of a service." Competence and talent, whether in music or in interpersonal relations or in anything else are marvelous sources of gratification to the person who exercises them. The dissatisfaction which so many people feel in their working lives often stems from not finding a way to put their talents, large or small, in the service of a task.

The task of conducting the Tavistock-Washington School of Psychiatry conferences is felt by the staff to be very arduous work requiring great self-discipline, entailing a great amount of anxiety, and paying a small amount of money. Yet being on the staff is a coveted prize. Many would say it is the most important and gratifying work that they do. It is clear that this is not in spite of its being so arduous and requiring so much commitment of oneself, but exactly because of this. This is not to preach a moral but to state a fact. Human beings are never more fulfilled than when they are united to a whole. The mystics speak of this in terms of the cosmos. Perhaps it is a small inkling of this total union which makes the experience in a working group committed to a common task so fulfilling. It is not possible really to do this

unless the phenomenon referred to as the 180-degree turn has taken place. The individual must know that he himself, on his own authority, has made the commitment to put his competence in the service of the common task.

To return to Isaiah, the passage seems to say that there can be no human society so long as each one turns to his own way. A group cannot function so long as each one insists upon his own autonomy. But paradoxically neither can a group function if each individual abdicates his autonomy. Resolution of this apparent contradiction requires two things. First, that the individual should perceive clearly his freedom to belong or not to belong. To be sure, the choice in extreme cases may mean death or imprisonment, but there remains an essential freedom which Socrates demonstrated when he chose to drink the hemlock rather than to emigrate. And second, that the individual should see the essential unity of himself and his group.

The leader of a group does, as Isaiah says, bear the iniquity and also the virtue of the group, since he, more than any other member represents the task of the whole group. This passage and many like it are commonly interpreted to mean that the leader *alone* carries the sins and the redemption of the group. This interpretation leads to the idea that if the leader does it, the others do not need to. But another way to interpret the passage is that since the leader does it, the others can do it too.

In the field of education, whether in psychotherapy or in the classroom, the teacher has as his function the training of future leaders. His students may become leaders only in their own families; or they may become leaders of nations. In either case the problem of putting one's power in the service of the group task remains essentially the same. There can scarcely be a more central problem for any teacher.



# part three

## APPLICATION

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The group relations and organizational theories presented in this volume are based on a systems approach and are task-oriented, making applications possible on different levels in many fields. While the membership at conferences has always been drawn from a variety of organizations, the staff are predominantly mental health professionals. It is not surprising, therefore, that most applications have been in the field of mental health. As interest and demand have grown, regional affiliates of the A.K. Rice Institute have undertaken training programs and are beginning to provide qualified consultants with different professional backgrounds. As this progress continues, the number and variety of applications will grow as well.

At no time has the need for rationalizing decision making by including the effects of covert alliances and unconscious processes, been more important than it is now. Our technologies have tremendous power and our sciences can explore any number of areas, but the size of human populations, resource depletion and the potentially dangerous consequences of some of our discoveries are fast bringing us to the point where we cannot afford mistakes or false starts. We have to address the right problems and perform the tasks well in dealing with them.

For the purposes of this volume the papers are organized into three main areas in which most work has been done: clinical, educational, and organizational analysis and consultation. The section on education includes some experimental applications in professional training, because the introduction of this knowledge directly into the different professions will encourage practitioners and researchers in those fields to develop and use the model to meet specific needs. A fourth, more specialized category of application, in architecture and planning, is added to show some of the potential uses of the theory in a previously unexplored and seemingly unlikely area. In fact the field of environmental design and planning is extremely important because it affects many people and has ecological significance. These examples illustrating the way that irrational, unconscious processes can affect and even control methods thought to be rational and technical, provide some impetus for exploring and further developing group relations concepts in policy planning at different levels of our society.

