

EMERGENCE OF LEADERS AND GROUP IDENTITY

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HOW DOES SOMEONE EMERGE FROM A CROWD AND BECOME A LEADER?

A few weeks back I experienced this phenomenon when a man took the power over a room full of psychoanalysts and fanaticized them with a discourse full of hatred; frenetic applauds proved that five hundred people were fascinated by the "art" of this leader, thereby approving a call for hate. But how did he manage to become so "close" to these people, and to create an illusionary "us" when speaking of himself and his own ideas? Three matters are particularly important when analyzing a leader and his/her effect on groups and group identity: character, language, and motivation.

WHO IS A LEADER: LEADERSHIP AND POWER?

Were leaders born leaders? Are there specific characteristics with which leaders are born; or are leadership the result of one's history? Both. There is an unconscious transmission of power from parents to children, which I named the "Unconscious' Laws of Sexual Transmission" (or predetermination), that may give some people a greater ability to dominate and to lead. Yet, personal history plays a major role in a leader's determination. More specifically, one's affective history, or history of fundamental suffering and non-acceptance of failure, is what may motivate someone to lead and to project their suffering on groups of people.

LEADERSHIP AND LANGUAGE

Leaders use language to take the power, so that others identify to them and transfer their ideal of power. Through language, a leader can make people adhere to ideologies that they may reject if they were presented differently, by numbing the conscious and speaking directly to the people's individual and collective unconscious, by appealing to their emotions and unconscious lacks and needs. This is manipulation's way of functioning.

LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION

Leaders can be either positive or negative, and can have either a positive or negative impact on people, depending on what they want, what their fundamental motivation is: to empower people to develop personally and achieve their own goals; or to use people to satisfy their own ambition. Leaders of love and peace help develop our desire to become stronger. Leaders of hate emphasize the value of suffering and violence.

LEADERSHIP AND GROUP IDENTITY

In groups, someone always becomes the leader and draws the group's attention to him/her and to what he/she wants. This is how leaders create a group identity based on their own ideas and goals. This influence can be either positive or negative depending on the leader's qualities and motivation. Similarly, in group therapy, the leader—therapist—can be either positive or negative for the patient(s). As there are good and bad leaders, there are also good and bad therapists. To go even farther in the comparison, we could ask, can all leaders be considered therapists?