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REGRESSION IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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The choice of good leaders is a major task for all organizations. Information regarding the prospective administrator's personality should complement questions regarding his previous experience, his general conceptual skills, his technical knowledge, and the specific skills in the area for which he is being selected. The growing psychoanalytic knowledge about the crucial importance of internal, in contrast to external, object relations, and about the mutual relationships of regression in individuals and in groups, constitutes an important practical tool for the selection of leaders.

In an earlier study (Kernberg, 1978) I described the effects of regressive pressures in psychiatric institutions on the administrators of these institutions. There, I pointed out that while crises in organizations often appear at first to be caused by personality problems of the leader, further analysis reveals a more complex situation. Quite frequently, a breakdown in work effectiveness stemming from various internal organizational factors and relationships between the organization and the environment induces regressive group processes first, and regression in the functioning of the leadership later. If these group processes remain undiagnosed, only their end product may be visible, in the form of what appears to be primitive, inadequate leadership and, more specifically, negative effects of the leader's personality on the organization. Thus, leadership problems are not always the real cause of the crisis. In what follows, I turn to the consideration of regressive pressures stemming from within the administrators themselves. At every step I will emphasize the importance of distinguishing between regressive organizational components and regression in the leader.

My approach is intermediate between two positions: (1) the traditional approach, according to which leadership is "inborn"—particularly "charismatic" leadership; (2) the opposite, more recent theoretical thinking, which considers leadership as derived mostly or exclusively from learned skills and understandings. My approach is based on the findings of various authors (Bion, 1961; Dalton et al., 1968; Emery and Trist, 1973; Hodgson et al., 1965; Levinson, 1968; Main, 1957; Miller and Rice, 1967; Rice,

1963, 1965, 1969; Rioch, 1970a,b; Sanford, 1956; and Stanton and Schwartz, 1954). This approach combines (1) a psychoanalytic focus on the personality features of the leader; (2) a psychoanalytic focus on the functions of regressive group processes in organizations, and (3) an open-systems-theory approach to organizational management. All three aspects interact dynamically, and the origin of failure or breakdown of functioning of individuals, groups, or the organization at large may lie in any one or several of these areas.

THE PSYCHOANALYTICALLY TRAINED CONSULTANT TO ORGANIZATIONS

Consultants are usually called at times of crisis, but the nature of their task is not always clear: an organization may use a consultant to escape from full awareness and resolution of a problem as much as to diagnose realistically the problem and its potential solutions (Rogers, 1973). The consultant's first task is to clarify the nature of his contract and to assure himself that the resources to carry it out are adequate. This means not only sufficient time and financial support, but necessary authority to examine problems at all levels of the organizational structure.

It goes almost without saying that support from the top leader of the organization is essential. The consultant needs to be sufficiently independent from the organization to be able to reach his conclusions without excessive fears of antagonizing the leader; therefore, he must not be too dependent on any one particular client.

One main question that needs to be formulated is whether a certain conflict within the organization represents a problem stemming from: (1) "personality issues"; (2) the nature of the task of the organization and its constraints; or (3) "morale"—that is, group processes within the organization. The nature of the problem is often described in such confused and confusing terms that a translation into these three domains is difficult.

It is helpful to focus first on the nature of the organizational tasks and their constraints, for only after task definition has been achieved, the respective constraints have been outlined, and priorities have been set up regarding primary and secondary tasks and constraints, is it possible to evaluate whether the administrative structure does, indeed, fit with the nature of the tasks, and if not, how it should be modified. This analysis requires the clarification of the organization's real tasks in contrast to its apparent ones. In one psychiatric hospital, the apparent task was to treat patients and to carry out research, but the real task seemed to be to provide the owners of the institution with an adequate return on their investment. In actuality, the interest in research represented wishes to obtain funding from external sources with which to cover part of staff salaries, and the treatment of patients constituted a constraint on the real task.

Once tasks and constraints have been defined, questions regarding the administrative structure required for task performance can be examined. Does the organization have effective control over its boundaries, and if not, what administrative compensating mechanisms can be established to

restore boundary control? One psychiatric organization depended on one institution for its administrative-support funding, and on another for its funding for professional staffing. Chronic fights between administrators and professionals throughout the entire organization reflected the lack of resolution of boundary control at the top. The consultant's recommendation that all funding be channeled into a central hospital administration, directed by a professional with administrative expertise, became acceptable to both funding institutions and to the staff at large, and provided the organizational solution to the "morale" problem that had prompted the request for consultation.

Once boundary control seems adequate, the nature of delegation of authority in the institution and each task system can be studied. Inadequate, fluctuating, ambiguous, or nonexistent delegation on the one hand, and excessive, chaotic delegation on the other, are problems that have to be solved as part of the redefinition of the administrative structure in terms of task requirements.

Having diagnosed the overall task and its constraints, and, it is hoped, corrected the respective administrative structures, it is possible to focus on the nature of the leadership, and more concretely, on the qualities of the leader himself. The consultant should attempt to diagnose the personality qualities of the administrator that influence the organizational functioning (which will be elaborated in the third section of this paper), the regressive pulls that the leader is subjected to from group processes in the organization, and his own contributions to such regressive group processes. What kind of intermediate management has the leader assembled? How much understanding in depth does he have for people, their assets and liabilities? How much tolerance of criticism, strength and yet warmth, flexibility and yet firmness and clarity, does he have in his relation to staff? The accuracy and quality of the leader's judgment of those around him is a crucial indicator, not only of his administrative skills, but of his personality as a whole. What are his reactions under stress? In which direction does his personality regress under critical conditions? The strength of his convictions, the presence or absence of his envy of staff, the extent of his moral integrity and courage—these are usually surprisingly well known throughout the organization.

The psychoanalytic exploration of group processes in the organization may become a crucial instrument for the evaluation of problems in both the administrative structure and the personality of the leader. The regressive nature of group processes in psychiatric organizations—"morale"—may reflect conflicts in the organizational structure, the impact of the leader's personality, the regressive pull directly induced by the pressure of patients' conflicts, or combinations of these factors. The closer the observed group processes are to the actual work with patients, the more the patients' conflicts will directly influence the development of regressive group processes within staff and the staff/patient community generally. The closer the observed staff groups are to the final decision-making authority at the top, the more the conflicts of top leadership and of organizational structure will dominate. However, it is impressive how the conflicts affecting the

total organization are reflected in actual group processes at all levels. Therefore, the careful observation of group processes at various administrative levels constitutes a kind of "organizational projective test battery," which may give the direct information needed to clarify problems at the levels of task definition and constraints, patients, administrative structure, and leadership, all in one stroke.

The accuracy of the diagnosis arrived at by the consultant can be tested when measures geared to restore a functional administrative structure to the organization are instituted. For example, the shift in functioning of the administrative leadership when there is a redefinition of primary tasks and constraints should improve morale throughout the organization in a relatively short period of time. The restoration of a functional structure—in contrast to an authoritarian structure brought about by distortions of the hierarchical network of power—may effect almost immediate positive changes.

For practical purposes, the consultant usually obtains most helpful information from the active participation of senior and intermediate management in a free and open discussion of issues, within a group atmosphere that permits some exploration of group processes as well as of the actual content of the administrative problems under examination. The consultant's diagnosis of the problems of top leadership and intermediate management should include an evaluation of the human resources in the organization. Because human resources are the primary potential assets of organizations, the degree of intactness of senior leadership has an important prognostic implication.

When the conclusion reached is that the leader's personality problems or his general incompetence resulting from lack of technical knowledge, conceptual limitations, or administrative inadequacies are involved, the question arises of whether he can be helped to change, or whether he should be helped to leave his job. There are no obvious answers to this question. Leaders may sometimes be helped to improve their functioning by reducing the regressive pulls on them stemming from group processes in the organization. Improvement in task definition, task performance, boundary controls, and the administrative structure as a whole, may all bring out the leader's positive assets and reduce the negative impact of his personality characteristics. Increase in gratification of his emotional needs (in the areas of aggression, sex, or dependency) outside of the organizational structure may sometimes help. At other times, the best solution seems to be to help him step down by either changing his professional functions or moving him geographically within the organization—if such alternatives are available.

Although such a recommendation—that he resign—is always a serious narcissistic blow, it often happens that deep down the administrator knows that he has not been able to do his job well, and he may feel relieved when someone from the outside confronts him with that reality. On the other hand, when the consultant arrives at the conclusion that the organization has a bad leader at the top, the consultant might discreetly withdraw (or be discreetly asked to withdraw).

The situation is different, of course, when the problem involves an administrator at some lower hierarchical level. When this is the case, top leadership needs to be helped in understanding that firmness in eliminating bad situations is indispensable for the health of the organization at large. To help a man who cannot do his job to leave may seem aggressive or even sadistic to his superior; but it is usually more sadistic to leave a bad leader in charge of an organizational structure than to ask him to change his functions. The suffering induced in staff by a bad leader should be a primary concern of the top leader. Optimal leadership sometimes implies hard decisions, and at times, unfortunately, the leader must be able to be very firm and decisive with somebody who may be a close personal friend.

There are times when the problem can be diagnosed but for some reason cannot be resolved. Some organizations function as if they were geared to self-destruction, unable and unwilling to accept positive change. This is a dramatic situation for a consultant and, of course, much more dramatic for the staff of the organization. One important use of an understanding of organizational structure and conflict may be the possibility for staff, particularly senior staff who are able to obtain an overview of the situation to diagnose the organizational conflicts and even their sources, and reach realistic conclusions about the prognosis and, therefore, their personal future.

There are certain situations that are so bad that the only solution is for self-respecting staff to leave; in other words, there is such a thing as a "poisonous" organizational environment that is bad for everybody in it. It is impressive how often staff developing within such a destructive environment deny to themselves the insoluble nature of the problems of the organization and obtain gratification of pathological dependency needs by denial and failure to admit the need to move on. Understanding organizations in depth can be painful; at times, awareness does not improve the effectiveness of staff members; but understanding always makes it possible to gain a more realistic, even if painful, grasp of what the future probably will be. The parallel to the painful learning about some aspects of one's unconscious in a psychoanalytic situation is implicit here: there are pathological defenses against becoming aware of what the reality is about the place where one works. At some point, the individual has a responsibility to himself that transcends that to the organization; and knowledge of organizational conflicts may permit him to reach more quickly an understanding of what that point is and where his personal boundaries are threatened by an organization from which he should withdraw.

Under less extreme circumstances, there is much that an educated, task-oriented staff can do to help its leadership correct or undo distorted administrative structures and reduce the effects of pathology of top leadership. The staff in positions of intermediate management may be of particular help to the organization and the top administrator in preserving functional administrative relationships by open sharing of communication and of analysis of the situation. In this regard, the responsibility of followers in not perpetuating and exacerbating the problems of the leader cannot be over-emphasized.

Disruption of functional administration always brings about regression to "basic group assumptions." I refer here to Bion's (1959) "basic assumptions" groups: "dependency," "fight-flight," and "pairing," which become activated when groups—and organizations—do not function adequately. Such regressive phenomena in groups involving intermediate leadership and staff at large may reinforce the personality difficulties of individual staff members and reduce their awareness of the need for change or their willingness to fight for it. If individual staff members courageously spell out what the situation is, it may have a positive therapeutic effect in increasing rational behavior throughout the organization; in such instances, helpfulness emerges from a functional attitude of criticism based not upon "fight-flight" assumptions but upon a genuine interest in helping the leader and staff generally to improve their understanding and functioning in the organization. Open communication among the intermediate management group may also help reduce their mutual suspicion and distrust and their fear of speaking up. An alliance for the sake of the functional needs of the organization is a good example of political struggle in terms of the task, rather than in terms of perpetuating the distortions in the distribution of authority and power.

For the top administrator, particularly at a time of crisis when uncertainty is increased for him and everyone else, the availability of senior staff who are willing to speak up openly and responsibly, without excessive distortion by fear or anger, can be very reassuring. A mutual reinforcement between staff who are able and willing to provide new information to the leader and a leader who encourages such staff action may strengthen the task group throughout.

"Participatory management" as a general principle is an important protection against regressive effects of the leader's personality on the administrative structure. A variety of factors affect the general question of what degree of participatory management, or what degree of centralized decision-making is required. When a distortion of the administrative structure has occurred under the impact of regressive pulls on top leadership, from whatever source, increasing participative management is indicated. Such an emphasis on participatory decision-making does not mean a replacement of a functional by a "democratic" structure. Flexibility is necessary regarding the extent to which the organization shifts back and forth from centralized to participatory management; at periods of rapid environmental change, of crisis or "turbulence" in the external environment, there may be a need for increased centralized decision-making. At times of external stability, increased decentralization and participatory management may be helpful. Internal change often requires participatory management, especially in the preparatory or early stages of change. A centralized, simplified administrative structure may become functional in times of internal consolidation or stability.

AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY AND AUTHORITARIAN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Adorno and his co-workers (1950) have described the "authoritarian personality" as follows: He tends to be overconventional, rigidly adhering to middle-class values, and oversensitive to external social pressures; he is inappropriately submissive to conventional authority, and at the same time, extremely punitive to those who oppose such authority and to those under him; he is generally opposed to feelings, fantasies, and introspection, and tends to shift responsibility from the individual onto outside forces; he is stereotyped, thinking rigidly and simplistically in terms of black and white; he tends to exercise power for its own sake and admires power in others; he is destructive and cynical, rationalizing his aggression toward others; he tends to project onto others—particularly "out-groups"—his own unacceptable impulses; and finally, he is rigid with regard to sexual morality.

While Adorno and his co-workers applied psychoanalytic concepts to study the metapsychological determinants of such a personality structure, in their methods and clinical analyses they combined both personality and sociological criteria: their authoritarian personality structure seems to me a composite formation, which reflects various types of character pathology exacerbated by authoritarian pressures exerted by social, political, and cultural systems. In my view, within the restricted frame of reference of the study of leadership of psychiatric institutions, the social, cultural, and political issues may be relatively less important than the mutual reinforcement of authoritarian pressures derived from the institutional structure and from various types of character pathology that contribute to authoritarian leadership behavior. In what follows, I explore the pathological contributions of specific personality characteristics of the leader to the development of authoritarian pressures throughout the organizational structure. However, I wish to emphasize again that a leader's authoritarian behavior may stem from features of the organizational structure, and not necessarily from his personality.

Sanford (1956) has pointed out the necessity to distinguish between authoritarian behavior in leadership roles and authoritarianism in the personality, and that the two do not necessarily go together. An authoritarian administrative structure is one that is invested with more power than is necessary to carry out its functions, whereas a functional structure is one where persons and groups in position of authority are invested with adequate—but not excessive—power.

The adequate power invested in the leadership in a functional structure usually receives reinforcement from social and/or legal sanctions. Authoritarian behavior that exceeds functional needs must be differentiated from authoritative behavior that represents functionally adequate or necessary exercise of authority. In practice, authority—the right and capacity to carry out task leadership—stems from various sources (Rogers, 1973). Managerial authority refers to that part of the leader's authority that has been delegated to him by the institution he works in. Leadership authority

refers to that aspect of his authority derived from the recognition his followers have of his capacity to carry out the task. Managerial and leadership authority reinforce each other; both are, in turn, dependent upon other sources of authority, such as the leader's technical knowledge, his personality characteristics, his human skills, and social tasks and responsibilities he assumes outside and beyond the institution. The administrator is responsible not only to his institution but also to his staff, to his professional and ethical values, to the community, and to society at large: responsibility and accountability represent the reciprocal function of the administrator to the sources of his delegated authority. In addition, because of his personality characteristics, or because he belongs to special groups or to political structures that invest him with power unrelated to his strictly technical functions, the leader may accumulate power beyond that required by his functional authority—the excessive power that constitutes the basis for an authoritarian structure.

In contrasting an authoritarian administrative structure with a functional administrative structure, I am emphasizing the opposition between authoritarian and functional structure, not that between authoritarian and democratic structure. This point is important from both theoretical and practical viewpoints. A tendency exists in some professional institutions—and psychiatric institutions are no exception—to attempt to modify, correct, or resolve by means of democratic political processes problems created by an authoritarian structure. Attempts are made to arrive at corrective decisions in a participatory or representative decision-making process. Insofar as those involved in actual tasks should, indeed, participate in the decision-making process, such “democratization” is helpful; but where decision-making veers toward being determined on a political rather than on a task-oriented basis, distortions of the task structure and of the entire administrative structure may occur. These are extremely detrimental to the work being carried out, and eventually may even reinforce the authoritarian structure they are intended to correct. In addition, the attempt to correct authoritarian distortions by political means leads to the neglect of a functional analysis of the problem. This is certainly a temptation for top leadership: by means of political management or manipulation, they may be able to dominate the negotiations across task boundaries. If so, they may come to rely more and more on the exercise of political power, eventually focusing almost exclusively on the increment or protection of their power base and neglecting the functional interests of the institution.

SOME FREQUENT PATHOLOGICAL CHARACTER STRUCTURES IN THE ADMINISTRATOR

Schizoid Personality Features

Schizoid personality features may, in themselves, protect the leader against excessive regression—his emotional isolation makes him less pervious to regressive group processes. However, the proliferation of distorted fantasies about him is hard to correct because of his distance and unavail-

ability. An excessively schizoid leader may also frustrate the appropriate dependency needs of his staff; usually, however, schizoid leadership at the top tends to be compensated by the warmth and extroversion of managerial figures at the intermediate level.

A very schizoid head of one department of psychiatry conveyed the impression that "no one was running the place"; most authority for daily operations had been delegated to the director of clinical services, who was seen as the actual leader of staff, and who, because of his excellent capacity for carrying out the boundary functions between the department head and the staff, did indeed fulfill important leadership functions. However, the needs of the senior staff for mutual support, warmth, and understanding were not met, and the atmosphere of each being on his own was transmitted throughout the entire institution. Although this department was considered a place with ample room for independent, autonomous growth of staff "if one had it within oneself," a considerable number of staff members were not able to work in this relative human isolation and decided to leave.

In another institution, a markedly schizoid hospital director was insufficiently explicit and direct in the decision-making process, and this created ambiguity with regard to delegation of authority. Nobody knew for sure how much authority was vested in any particular person, and nobody cared to commit himself to anything without repeated consultations with the director. This produced excessive cautiousness, hypersensitivity, and politicization about making decisions throughout the organization. Eventually, the message was conveyed that one had to become a very skilled and tactful manipulator to get ahead in that department, and that direct emotional expression was very risky. Thus, the leader's personality characteristics, through group interactions, filtered down and became characteristic of the entire organization.

Obsessive Personality Features

Obsessive personality features in top leadership are quite frequent. On the positive side, the focus on orderliness, precision, clarity, and control may foster good, stable delegation of authority and clarity in the decision-making process. Contrary to what one would expect, there is usually very little doubtfulness in obsessive personalities in leadership positions; severely obsessive personalities usually don't reach top positions when excessive doubt and hesitation are their predominant characteristics. Chronic indecisiveness in the administrator may have obsessive origins; however, chronic indecisiveness at the top is most frequently really a consequence of the leader's narcissistic problems. Obsessive personalities, then, usually function rather efficiently from an organizational viewpoint. Their clear stand on issues and commitment to values have important creative functions for the institution at large.

On the negative side, some dangers are the leader's excessive need for order and precision, his need to be in control, and the expression of the sadistic components that often go with an obsessive personality. An inordinate need for orderliness and control may reinforce the bureaucratic

components of the organization—that is, encourage decision-making on the basis of rules and regulations and rather mechanized practices, all of which may interfere with the creativeness of staff and with appropriate autonomy in the decision-making process at points of rapid change or crises. Excessive bureaucratization may at times protect the organization from political struggle, but it reinforces passive resistance in the negotiations across boundaries and fosters misuse of resources.

Because pathological defensive mechanisms and, particularly, pathological character traits of the leader tend to be activated in times of stress, an increase in obsessive perfectionism and pedantic style may characterize the obsessive leader at critical moments. This may create additional stress for the organization at a time when rapid and effective decision-making is required. An educated awareness in the staff that under such conditions it is necessary to protect the security system of the leader in order to get the work done may be very helpful. This, of course, is true for the effects of pathological character features of any kind in the leader, and to know how to help him in times of crises is a basic skill demanded of intermediate management.

A major problem created by some obsessive personalities in leadership positions is that of severe, unresolved sadism. The need to sadistically control subordinates may have devastating effects on the functional structure of the organization. Whenever there is strong opposition among staff to a certain move by the administrator, he may become obstinate and controlling, revengefully “rubbing the message in,” and forcing his “opponents” again and again into submission. Such behavior reinforces irrational fears of authority and the distortion of role-perception in the staff; it also fosters a submissiveness to hierarchical superiors, which reduces effective feedback and creative participation from the entire staff.

The end result may be the development of chronic passivity, a pseudodependency derived from fear of authority rather than from an authentic “dependent” group, and a transmission of authoritarian, dictatorial ways of dealing with staff and patients in the whole institution. In one department of psychiatry, the appointment of an obsessive and sadistic director drove the most creative members of the senior professional leadership away from the institution within a year and brought about consolidation around the leader of a group of rather weak, inhibited, or mediocre professionals who were willing to pay the price of sacrificing their autonomous professional development for the security and stability afforded them by submission to the leader. The repetition of these conflicts approximately a year later at the next lower level of organizational hierarchy, however, created such a combination of general “fight-flight” grouping and overall breakdown in carrying out organizational tasks that the administrator was finally removed by the combined efforts of staff at large.

Paranoid Personalities

Paranoid personalities always present a serious potential danger for the functional relationships that administrators must establish with their staff.

The development of “fight-flight” conditions in the group processes throughout the organization—a development that may occur even in the most efficiently functioning organization from time to time—may propel into the foreground a “leader of the opposition.” With the silent tolerance or unconscious collusion of the majority of staff, a violent attack on the administration by this opposition leader may induce the top leader to regress into paranoid attitudes, even if he does not have any particularly paranoid traits. In other words, there is always a potential—particularly in large organizations with several levels of hierarchy—for suspiciousness, for temptations to exert sadistic control, and for the projection of the administrator’s rage onto staff. When the administrator also has strong paranoid character features, the danger of paranoid reactions to “fight-flight” conditions is intensified, and he may perceive even ordinary discussions or minor opposition as dangerous rebelliousness and potential hidden attacks. The need to suppress and control the opposition, which we saw in the obsessive leader with sadistic trends, becomes paramount in the paranoid leader. Because of the ease with which the leader may interpret what “they say” as lack of respect, mistreatment, and hidden hostility toward him, staff now may become afraid of speaking up. Staff’s fearfulness, in turn, may increase the administrator’s suspiciousness, thus generating a vicious circle.

Because paranoid personalities are particularly suitable to take on the leadership of basic-assumption groups in a “fight-flight” position, the “leader of the opposition” is often a person with strong paranoid tendencies. This does not mean that all leaders of revolutions are paranoid personalities, but that because of the nature of their psychopathology, paranoid personalities may function much more appropriately under such revolutionary conditions. The fighting “in-group” that they represent becomes “all good,” and the external groups or the general environment they fight becomes “all bad.” The successful projection of all aggression outside the boundaries of the group he controls permits the paranoid oppositional leader to function more effectively within the boundaries of his group, even though at the cost of an important degree of distortion of perception of external reality. But when such a paranoid leader takes over control of the organization, the very characteristics that helped him gain leadership of the “fight-flight” group may become very damaging to the institution. The tendency to project all hostility outside—that is, to see the inside of the institution as good and the environment as bad—may temporarily help to protect the good relations between the leader and his followers; in the long run, however, the price paid for this is institutionalization of paranoid distortions of perceptions of external reality, distortions in the boundary negotiations between the institution and its environment, and the possibility that the leader’s capacity to carry out his organizational tasks will break down. Within the organization, the revengeful persecution of those the paranoid leader suspects of being potential enemies may eliminate creative criticism to a much larger extent than in the case of obsessive personalities with sadistic features.

The director of one psychiatric institution that functioned closely with several other psychiatric institutions felt chronically endangered by what he saw as the power plays of the directors of the other institutions against him. At first he appealed to his own staff for help and support, and temporarily morale improved as they all felt united against the external enemy. Eventually, however, by constantly antagonizing leaders and representatives of the other institutions, the director became less able to carry out his functions in representation of his own institution, and started to blame subordinates within his own system for his difficulties in obtaining the necessary space, staff, funding, and community influence. He began to suspect some of the members of intermediate management of his own institution of having "sold out to the enemy," further reducing the effectiveness of his institution vis-a-vis its professional environment. The situation reached a final equilibrium by a protective transformation of the boundaries of the institution into a true barrier, behind which it isolated itself from the local community and redefined its task in terms of a regional chain of institutions to which it belonged.

The following example, in contrast, illustrates the resolution of paranoid regression induced by "fight-flight" conditions in an organizational leader without paranoid personality characteristics. The director of one hospital was very suspicious and upset over a senior member of his staff, Dr. B, who seemed to challenge him at all professional meetings. The director saw Dr. B as a severely paranoid character whose group behavior was splitting staff and potentially damaging the organization, and who perhaps should not continue on the staff. He nevertheless accepted other staff members' judgment that Dr. B was a good clinician and was providing valuable services to the hospital. A consultant recommended to the director that he meet privately with Dr. B and discuss his group behavior. The director did so and discovered that Dr. B was much more open and flexible in individual meetings than in group situations. But the challenging behavior continued in groups and the director now concluded that regardless of the personality characteristics of the "leader of the opposition," a group process must be fostering his contentious behavior and that a study of this particular organizational area was indicated. In the course of the ensuing study, it became apparent that there were serious conflicts within the institution that had reduced the effectiveness of the professional group to which Dr. B belonged, so that "fight-flight" assumptions chronically predominated among them and induced Dr. B into the role of their leader. Analysis of the organizational problem involved led to resolution of the conflicts concerning the entire professional group; Dr. B, finding himself no longer supported by the "silent consensus" and actively discouraged by the group itself, finally stopped dominating group discussions.

Narcissistic Personality Features

Of the dangers to institutions stemming from the leader's character pathology, narcissistic personality features are perhaps the most serious of all. I must stress that I am using the concept of narcissistic personality in

a restrictive sense, referring to persons whose interpersonal relations are characterized by excessive self-reference and self-centeredness; whose grandiosity and overvaluation of themselves exist together with feelings of inferiority; who are overdependent on external admiration, emotionally shallow, intensely envious, and both depreciatory and exploitative in their relations with others (Kernberg, 1970, 1974).

The inordinate self-centeredness and grandiosity of these persons is in dramatic contrast to their chronic potential for envy of others. Their inability to evaluate themselves and others in depth brings about a lack of capacity for empathy and for sophisticated discrimination of other people, all of which may become very damaging when they occupy leadership positions. In addition, when external gratifications fail to come forth, or under conditions of severe frustration or failure, they may develop paranoid trends, rather than depression and a sense of personal failure. Such paranoid tendencies reinforce even further the damaging impact on the organization of the leader's narcissistic character structure.

Because narcissistic personalities are often driven by intense needs for power and prestige to assume positions of authority and leadership, individuals with such characteristics are found frequently in top leadership positions. They are often men of high intelligence, hard-working and eminently talented or capable in their field, but with narcissistic needs that dramatically neutralize or destroy their creative potential for the organization.

Pathologically narcissistic people aspire to positions of leadership more for their power and prestige—as a source of admiration and narcissistic gratification from staff and from the external environment—than because of commitment to a certain task or ideal represented by the functions carried out by the institution. As a consequence, they may neglect the functional requirements of leadership, the human needs and constraints involved in the work, and the value systems that constitute one of the important boundaries against which administrative and technical responsibilities have to be measured. Leaders with narcissistic personalities are unaware of a variety of pathological human relations that they foster around themselves and throughout the entire organization as their personalities affect administrative structures and functions at large.

In contrast to leaders with pathological obsessive and paranoid features, the narcissistic leader not only requires submission from staff, but also wants to be loved by them. He not only fosters but artificially increases the staff's normal tendency to depend on and idealize the leader; as staff become aware how important it is for the administrator to receive their unconditional, repetitive expression or demonstration of love and admiration, adulation and flattery become constant features of the process of communication with him.

Before proceeding further, it must be emphasized that the negative influence of pathological narcissism has to be differentiated from the normal narcissistic manifestations that are part of the gratifications of any position of responsibility and leadership, gratifications that may be the source of increased effectiveness in leadership as well as a compensation

for administrative frustrations. I have examined the differences between normal and pathological narcissism in earlier works (Kernberg, 1970, 1974) and will limit myself to outlining some of these differences as they apply to the person in the leadership position.

Administration and leadership positions in general provide many sources of gratification for narcissistic needs for success, power, prestige, and admiration. Under optimal circumstances these needs have been integrated into mature ego-goals and the need to live up to a mature ego-ideal and superego standards. Normal narcissistic gratifications have mature qualities; for example, the nature of normal self-love is enlightened and deep, in contrast to childlike and shallow self-aggrandizement; normal self-love goes hand in hand with commitments to ideals and values and the capacity for love of and investment in others.

Under optimal circumstances, the leader of a psychiatric institution may obtain normal narcissistic gratification from being able to develop an ideal department or hospital, opportunities for professional growth and development of staff, scientific progress, organizational and administrative effectiveness, and above all, the best possible treatment for the patients in the institution's care. Narcissistic gratifications also come from the administrator's awareness that he can help to provide gratification with their work for the people involved in his institution, which fosters their self-respect, and can contribute to broad goals representing social and cultural value systems. In other words, striving for a position of leadership may involve idealism and altruism intimately linked with normal narcissism.

With pathological narcissism, in contrast, the narcissistic leader's aspirations center around primitive power over others, inordinate reception of admiration and awe, and the wishes to be admired for personal attractiveness, charm, and brilliance, rather than for mature human qualities, moral integrity, and creativity in providing task-oriented, professional and administrative leadership. Under conditions of pathological narcissism, the leader's tolerance for the normal, unavoidable frustrations that go with his position is low, and a number of pathological developments take place within him, in his interactions with staff, and throughout the entire organizational structure.

Above all, the preeminence of unconscious and conscious envy has very detrimental consequences for the relations between him and his staff. Insofar as he cannot tolerate the success and gratification that others obtain from their work, and cannot accept professional success of others that he sees as overshadowing or threatening his own, the narcissistic administrator may become very resentful of the most creative of his staff. Narcissistic personalities may often be very helpful to trainees or junior members of the staff, whose development they foster because they unconsciously represent extensions of the leader's own grandiose self. When these younger colleagues reach a point in their development in which they become autonomous and independent, however, the leader's previous support may shift into devaluation and relentless undermining of their work.

For example, a narcissistic mental health professional who assumes administrative functions that interfere with his clinical or research interests

may envy those of his colleagues who continue developing their clinical identity. One solution in such instances—which are fairly common—is for the senior administrator to obtain his narcissistic gratification from developing administration as his theoretical or practical specialized expertise, or to have some professional area other than his administrative work where he can continue doing creative work on his own.

It is part of normal narcissism to be able to enjoy the happiness and triumph of those one has helped to develop; enjoyment of the work and success of others—a general characteristic of the normal overcoming of infantile envy and jealousy—is an important function that is missing in the narcissistic personality. The narcissistic administrator may also envy some on his staff for the strength of their professional convictions; it is one of the tragedies of narcissistic personalities that their very lack of human values in depth brings about a chronic deterioration of those value systems and convictions that they do have.

Another consequence of pathological narcissism stems from the encouragement of submissiveness in staff. Since narcissistic leaders tend to surround themselves with “yes men” and shrewd manipulators who play into their narcissistic needs, more honest and therefore occasionally critical members of the staff are pushed onto the periphery and eventually may constitute a relatively silent, but dissatisfied and critical opposition. The dependent group of admirers further corrodes the administrator’s self-awareness and fosters in him additional narcissistic deterioration.

The narcissistic leader might depreciate those he perceives as adulating him, but he cannot do without them; and his respect for the integrity of those who criticize him gradually erodes into paranoid fears. In terms of internalized object relations, it is as if the narcissistic leader induces in the human network of the organization a replication of his internal world of objects populated only by devalued, shadowy images of others and by images of dangerous potential enemies.

The narcissistic leader’s inability to judge people in depth is a consequence of his pathology of internalized object relations. It stems both from the narcissistic personality’s tendencies to achieve “part object” rather than “total object” relations (Kernberg, 1967, 1970) and from his lack of commitment to professional values and to value systems in general. The narcissistic administrator therefore tends to judge people by superficial impressions of their behavior, in terms of their past “prestige” or out of political considerations, rather than by a mature judgment of the nature of the task, the nature of the person required to carry it out, and the personality and knowledge of the one involved. The inability to judge people in depth and the reliance on people who play into the administrator’s needs for admiration reinforce each other and bring about the danger that eventually the narcissistic leader will be surrounded by people similar to himself, people suffering from serious behavior disorders or cynically exploiting their awareness of his psychological needs.

Paradoxically, in large institutions the worse the distortion of the administrative structure by the leader’s narcissistic pathology, the more compensating mechanisms may develop in the form of breakdown of boundary

control and boundary negotiations, so that some institutional functions may actually go "underground," or in more general terms, become split off from the rest of the organization. It is as if a parallel existed here to what happens in some cases of severe psychopathology, when generalized splitting or primitive dissociation of the ego permits the patient to maintain some semblance of adaptation to external reality at the price of fragmentation of his ego identity. However, the general thesis still stands that the overall creativity of the organization suffers severely under such excessively narcissistic leadership. Although in the short run the grandiosity and expensiveness of the narcissistic leader may transmit itself throughout the organization as a pressure to work or as "charismatic" excitement and bring about a spurt of productivity, in the long run the deteriorating effects of pathological narcissism predominate. They tend to drown creativity in sweeping dependency or in the cynicism that develops among those in the organization with the greatest knowledge and strongest convictions.

When the institution directed by a narcissistic leader is small, the negative effects may be overwhelming from the beginning, for everybody is directly affected by the leader's problems. The development of understanding is hampered by the leader's constant doubts and uncertainty over everything—doubts derived from unconscious envy, devaluation, and lack of conviction—and by his need to change constantly his interests as he loses the enthusiasm for what is no longer new and exciting. The narcissistic leader's incapacity to provide gratification of realistic dependency needs of staff—in the simplest terms, his incapacity really to listen—frustrates staff's basic emotional needs and at the same time strengthens the negative consequences of the distortions in group processes: the submissive and dependent in-group and the depressed and angry out-group mentioned before.

Severely narcissistic leaders whose ambition is frustrated by the external reality of the organization may require so much additional support from their staff that most energy is spent in attempts to restore the leader's emotional equilibrium. In one department of psychiatry, the chairman had reached this position at an early stage of his career, when he seemingly was one of the promising members of his generation; however, he had progressively lost his professional leadership functions and had become chronically embittered and depressed. After a number of years, those senior staff members who remained saw it as their principal organizational task to protect the leader from unnecessary stress and narcissistic lesions, and to stimulate his capacities by ongoing applause and rewards. As a result, the general productivity of the department decreased noticeably.

At times, it is amazing and really encouraging to observe how staff members of institutions directed by a narcissistic leader may keep up their personal integrity, autonomy, and independence in spite of the corrupting influence of their immediate environment. These isolated members may provide an outside consultant with the most meaningful information about the organization's "hidden agendas" and preserve the hope for change in the midst of general dependency. It is as if the social situation of the institution were reflecting the intrapsychic life of narcissistic personali-

ties—with fragments of healthy ego floating in the midst of a sea of deteriorated internalized object relations.

Although narcissistic leaders often irradiate a quality of personal prominence and of messianic suggestibility, and have the capacity to stimulate the group's identification with the leader's confidence in himself, not all narcissistic leaders are charismatic and not all charismatic leaders are narcissistic. Personal charisma may stem from a combination of various personality traits and may be imbedded in strength of technical, moral, and human convictions. Sometimes staff accuse a strong and committed leader of being "narcissistic" when in reality they are projecting onto him their own frustrated narcissistic aims and expressing envy of the successful man. The "consensus" leader—whom Zaleznik (1974) has contrasted with the "charismatic" one—may also present either severe narcissistic or normal personality characteristics. One has to differentiate the mature "consensus" leader, who has the capacity to explore the thinking of his staff and to use creatively the understanding and skills of his administrative group for carrying out the task, from the power-oriented, smoothly functioning, politically opportunistic, narcissistic "consensus" leader, who shrewdly exploits group phenomena for his narcissistic aims.

There is a special kind of narcissistic leader whose gratifications come mostly from keeping himself in the center of everybody's love, and at the same time in the center of the decision-making process, while he coolly sacrifices any considerations regarding value systems or the organization's functional needs to what is politically expedient. The typical example is the leader who is a "nice guy" with no enemies, who seems slightly insecure and easily changeable, and who at the time is extremely expert in turning all conflicts among his staff into fights that do not involve himself. The general narcissistic qualities of shallowness, inability to judge people sensitively, inability to commit oneself to any values, are dramatically evident in his case, but what seems to be missing is the direct expression of grandiosity and the need to obtain immediate gratification from other people's admiration. At times this kind of leader obtains the gratification from his position by using it as a source of power and prestige beyond the organization itself. He may let the organization run its own course, trying to keep things smooth, so long as his power base is stable.

A somewhat similar outcome may stem from a different type of personality structure—namely, that of individuals with strong reaction formations against primitive sadistic trends. In this case, the direct friendliness of the leader in his relations with his immediate subordinates is in contrast to violent conflicts within the level below that of his immediate administrative group. Still another type of consensus leader has achieved his position on the basis of his technical or professional skills, and has been willing to accept the position without ever fully assuming the responsibilities it entails. This is one of the conditions leading to an essentially leaderless organization: the man at the top is really more interested in a particular work of his own than in developing authentic leadership, and for that reason stays away from the painful process of making hard de-

cisions. In summary, both charismatic and consensus leadership may stem from various normal and pathological sources.

One major question that can be affected by pathological narcissism is the perennial one of when to compromise and when to stick to one's convictions in any particular conflict. At one extreme, the rigid, self-righteous person who has to have his own way and cannot accept any compromise may reflect pathological narcissism; at the other extreme, the person willing to sell his convictions—and his staff—down the river for any opportunistic reason may equally reflect severe pathological narcissism. Somewhere in between are the realistic compromises by which the leader's essential convictions are respected and effective boundary negotiation is carried out in achieving a creative balance among conflicting priorities, tasks, and constraints. In other words, intelligent political maneuvering may protect the task and distinguish between what is essential and what is not. Sometimes it takes very long-range vision indeed to separate the immediate political implications of a certain move from its value in terms of the overall, long-range organizational tasks and goals. Pathological narcissism dramatically interferes with the leadership function that differentiates the expedient from the constructive.

THE CHOICE OF A NEW LEADER

When choosing a leader for an organization, it is necessary to explore intensively the broad area of human or interpersonal skills so that those skills are not inferred from what may be only surface adaptability and social charm. As we have seen, skill in judging immediate situations, skill in negotiating conflicts on a short-term basis, the fact of "not ever having had any enemies," and driving ambition are not necessarily good indicators for high quality leadership. The following are some illustrative questions that should be formulated at times of selection of leadership.

How much creativity has the candidate shown in his area in the past? How much investment does he have in a professional source of gratification that would continue to be available to him in addition to his administrative functions? How much gratification will he obtain from actual creativity as an administrator, in contrast to the need for external applause and admiration? Implied here is the depth of identification of the prospective administrator with professional values and with value systems in administrative theory, and his capacity to identify with the goals of the organization. As a general rule, if the future administrator is judged capable of giving up his new administrative functions without a major loss of his professional self-esteem, he has an important source of security that would be an asset in his position.

A major issue is the extent to which the administrator is aware of and invested in basic professional values, in contrast to an opportunistic involvement with issues that are fashionable to bring about short-term returns. Particularly during times of rapid change, a number of basically uncreative and even mediocre professionals rise to the fore because they quickly shift to publishing or working in the areas of growing interest.

Another question is to what extent the candidate has shown the courage to fight openly for his convictions, in contrast to giving evidence of skills in manipulation of conflicts in terms of power and prestige. The courage to stand up for his beliefs, to fight for his staff, to challenge the established powers—obviously in terms of the task, rather than in terms of immature emotional rebelliousness—is an important asset. One has to differentiate here courage stemming from strength of conviction from that representing paranoid querulousness, obsessive stubbornness, or narcissistic ruthlessness, but in practice it is not too difficult to make that distinction. Strength and decisiveness are of course crucial for the painful decision-making process that is the main task of the administrator.

The extent to which the candidate obtains authentic enjoyment from the growth and development of other people is one more important consideration in the selection of leadership. The implication is that the creativity and success of those who will work under him should not be threatened by excessive conflicts around envy in the leader.

Those in charge of evaluating potential leaders are usually aware of the importance of the leader's moral integrity, in addition to purely professional skills and assets; my stress has been on the additional importance of the leader's relations in depth with values—including professional values—and with internal as well as external objects.

I mentioned earlier that there are normal narcissistic gratifications in leadership functions that realistically should contribute to the prevention of pathological regressions in the administrator's personality and help to compensate for the regressive pulls that may be coming from group processes throughout the organization. In addition, an adequate resolution of his oedipal conflicts may permit the leader to protect himself from regressive group processes and may contribute to his ability to take the position of leadership, to enjoy success, to triumph over rivals, and to combine assertiveness with tolerance and humanity—all important aspects of administrative work. Similarly, sufficient gratification of his sexual and dependent needs outside the organizational structure will also help the leader to resist regressive group pressures. However, I am not saying that these issues are practical considerations that should enter the selective process for leadership. Regardless of its important role in his functioning, the administrator's personal and intrapsychic life, in contrast to his behavior, should be protected by boundaries of privacy. His character structure and moral integrity are part of his public domain.

Finally, under the best of circumstances there will be certain built-in organizational constraints related to the "human condition" of social organizations, to the limitations of the personalities of all the individuals involved; some battles need to be fought over and over again, endlessly so. The "ideal" administrator, like the "ideal" organization or the "ideal" group, reflects regressive fantasies of groups and individuals.