

## ON LEADERSHIP

ALFRED ADLER

If the life tendencies of an individual coincide completely or almost completely with the direction of a social movement, if the yearning of the group is represented in him, if he can lend his voice and his arm to the inarticulate and obscure striving of his people or his group, he is a chosen leader of men.

All great achievements of humanity originate in the social genius of individuals. The questions of an age reach out for an answer, and find it in a man. In him mankind's struggle for salvation is re-enacted, only with a greater clarity and intensity than in other men. The very essence of his being is this struggle, and therefore he cannot fit himself into the inherited forms of life. They cramp him, and he tries to burst them. In order to adjust himself to existence, he has to reorganize it.

But he can succeed only if his endeavor coincides with a social current and serves to promote and to elevate the group. The power of the individual leader, of the "great man," is limited by the preparation of the group, by their capacity to fall in line with him.

What are the personal requirements of such leadership? A strongly developed social interest is the first of all. By social interest or social feeling, we understand something different from that which other authors understand. When we say it is a feeling, we are certainly justified in doing so. But it is more than a feeling; it is an evaluative attitude toward life. We are not in a position to define it quite unequivocally, but we have found in an English author a phrase which clearly expresses what we could contribute to an explanation: "To see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another."

An optimistic outlook and sufficient self-confidence are just as necessary. The leader must be endowed with the capacity for quick action; he must not be a dreamer or an onlooker, he must have ease in making contact with people; and he must possess tact so as not to frustrate the assent of others. His preparation and training must be above the average. He must, in a word, be a real human being who possesses courage and skills. In him becomes realized what other men dream about.

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<sup>1</sup>Reprinted from *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*. New York: Basic Books, 1956. Pp. 450 & 135. By permission of the publisher.