

# The power of our self-image

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*A psychological fact is that personal development means change in the personal self-concept. Each of us, whether we realize it or not, has a self-image. We see ourselves in some way - smart, slow, kindly, well-intentioned, lazy, misunderstood, meticulous, or shrewd; we all can pick adjectives that describe ourselves.*

*This is the "I" behind the face in the mirror, the 'I' that thinks, dreams, talks, feels, and believes, the 'I' that no one knows fully. In this chapter we will explore the meaning of the self-image, particularly in relation to changing behavior in growing persons, and how changes in self concept come about.*

*One reason this self-concept is crucial is that it has a great deal to do with personal development - with being a growing person and eventually realizing one's self-potential. Note the term personal development rather than management development; the purpose of such development is to help individual persons to grow. After all, they have to do most of the job themselves.*

*As a member of a firm of multidisciplinary consultants to management, I can report that fact from experience - and add*

*the further observation that no one can tell people exactly how to grow in their personal lives. Rather, the most one can do is to help people understand themselves in their own situations, and then trust them to find the best directions themselves.*

### **Filters for Reality**

In the first place, the self-concept is important because everything we do or say, everything we hear, feel, or otherwise perceive, is influenced by how we see ourselves.

For example:

A businessman, who had traveled in many parts of the world, was incorrigibly curious about the customs, speech, local places of interest, history, and traditions of any place he visited. However, on a one-week visit to Delhi - his first - on a delicate mission for his company, he might just as well have been in Pakistan for all he learned of Indian ways of life. Being on a business trip, he saw himself as a businessman, and actually perceived little of what was around him. But as a vacationer in Delhi he would have seen India in depth, because he would have seen himself coming to Delhi for that purpose.

Photographers often slip a reddish filter over the lens when snapping pictures of clouds on black and white film. The filter prevents some of the light rays from reaching the film, so that the final picture shows much darker skies and more sharply whitened clouds. The self-concept is like a filter that

screens out what we do not want to hear and see, passes through what we do want to see and hear. In the reverse direction, it gives an idiosyncratic flavor to our behavior. Don't we all usually pick our name out of a jumble of words on a page?

Or hear our name announced at an airport amidst all of the other announcements that we fail to hear? This is called selective listening, and it is a function of our self-concept. Thus, how we see ourselves determines generally what we react to, what we perceive, and, in broad terms, how we behave in general.

And this shows up in business situations too. Imagine two executives, A and B, in identical situations. Each calls in a subordinate and delegates an assignment. The italicized words below give partial indications of their self-concepts.

Executive A says:

"Francis, I am *concerned* about our relations with the ABC Company. Its *purchases* from us have fallen off lately and *rather abruptly*. You know our history with it. *Will you investigate* and find out the cause of the reduced volume? *Let me know* if you run into anything you do not understand."

Executive A is confident of her ability to handle the situation. She sees herself as unthreatened, able to cope with whatever Francis's investigation discloses, and willing to delay action until the facts are gathered and studied

Executive B, on the other hand, says:

"Carine, the ABC Company has cut back its purchases from us for the third month in a row. *We have got to get on this and quick. Now, you go visit it. I wish I could but I am tied down here.* Talk to the purchasing agent -uh, what is her name again? Uh..... (shuffling papers) . . . here it is . . . Freedy, *See Freedy* Oh . . . and you would better see the chief engineer, a nice guy . . . named . . . uh . . . his name slips me *for the moment* . . . *you* can get it from Freedy. But do not go near Gregory. Awful-he will cover up whatever's happening anyway, and might use your visit as a sign we are scared of old ABC. *I have got to have some answers on this one, Carine.* The boss is on my neck but good. So. . . ."

Executive B is obviously less confident. He feels threatened by the situation. He does not trust Carine to use her own common sense - as indicated by his explicit "do"s and "don't"s - probably because he himself lacks confidence.

### **Continuing Changes**

Although the self-concept is important in understanding human behavior *generally*, it becomes critically so in understanding *personal development*, where changes in behavior are the objective. As a matter of cold, hard, psychological fact, a change in behavior on the job or in a relation, for better or worse means a change in self-concept. Thus, we are dealing with an immensely and immediately practical consideration.

Human beings constantly change their behavior, as we see if we examine ourselves (and others) critically enough. It is a superficial observation to say that so-and-so is the same person she was five years ago. Technically, she is not exactly the same today as she was even yesterday. For one thing, she is one day older.

She has learned something new, however negligible, that becomes incorporated in her apperceptive mass. As a result, her perception of today's events is different, however slightly and undetectably, from what it was yesterday. She may have had nothing "significant" happen to her -no promotion, no accident, no soul-searching upset - but she will be different, even though only a person with Solomon's wisdom would know it. Change in behavior is constant.

The difficulties people have in thinking about changes in behavior come from their inability to detect change, and from fuzzy thinking behind such comforting, though fallacious, notions as, "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks," "He was born that way," or "She is been like that ever since I have known her." On the other hand, sometimes superficial behavior changes are erroneously thought to be basic. For example, consider the simplest level of change in behavior, which is brought about by increased knowledge or skill:

The newly appointed technical man learns his new duties, wears a white shirt, delegates jobs he used to do himself, and

learns to participate in his superintendent's meetings. His company provides him with instruction through manuals, books, conferences, sessions with his boss, and management training courses. He joins the National Technicians Association, attends lectures, and may even be sent to a two-week seminar at the local university.

He learns much and becomes suitably skillful in discharging his new functions. This new way of life changes the technical man's behavior, of course; but only peripherally, just as living in a new house does not basically alter the marriage relation. He knows more, sees more, and has more and better skills.

If companies do want such "simple-level" changes, and only these, then management training is called for. The new local manager learns the policy manual, and the new vice president of manufacturing learns how the company's controller figures costs. These specific learnings are the objectives of training, and can become changes in behavior produced by training.

### **Foundation for Growth**

If, however, a company wants growth in the *deeper* sense, then something more subtle and basic in its impact is called for in the personal and manager development effort. Such deeper growth is, of course, a change in self-concept. Managers who once were unreliable in their judgment or who lacked drive *grow* toward reliability in judgment or toward stronger drive. Growth in this sense brings observable changes in outward

behavior, because each person is now inwardly different-different, for example, in self-perception, in attitude toward job and company as both relate to his or her own life, or in a feeling of responsibility for others.

But experience shows that such growth is as difficult to achieve as it is desirable. It demands the full-fledged participation of the manager. Actually the trite expression, "Management development is self-development," is psychologically sound. Growing managers change because they want to and because they have to in response to new insights and understandings gained on the job. They do not change because they are told to, exhorted to, or because it is the thing to do.

Such growth implies changes within people-in how they use their knowledge, in the ends to which they apply their skills, and, in short, in their view of themselves. The point is clear that growing people examine themselves; and as they do so, they emerge with new depths of motivation, a sharper sense of direction, and a more vital awareness of how they want to live on the job. Growth in this sense is personalized and vital. And such growth in self-concept is at the heart of a real manager development effort. But growth in self-concept is not always simple and clear.

### **Conflicts in Self-concept**

Each human being is several selves, living comfortably in the role of father or mother, husband or wife, business person, president, golfer, tennis player, and so on. But if there are conflicts among

any of these roles, then discomfort arises. And such conflict brings with it such dynamics as tension, guilt feelings, and compensation.

Let us illustrate with a familiar example:

A person sees him - or herself both as a good parent and a good business person. As a parent, he or she spends time with the children; but as a business person, the time demands can be overwhelming. Now what can be done? It obviously is not possible to be home most evenings with the family and also be out of town on necessary business trips. Both self-concepts cannot be realized simultaneously. So what happens? The business gets the time Monday through Friday, and the family gets the weekends.

This seems like an easy resolution. What, then, is the problem? The person in our example has had to modify both self-concepts and may feel deeply dissatisfied with such a necessity. So the dissatisfaction, the psychological discomfort, the basic conflict in self-concepts, may show in his or her behavior being unduly critical of business associates (or subordinates) who will not follow this example and give up their family life during the week; resenting the children, who blithely go about their own activities on the weekend, ignoring their parents.

And if by chance the teenage child develops any emotional problems which are ascribed to "parental neglect," our person really hits the ceiling! "Neglect? How can that be? Have

not I given my children every weekend?" In the deeper sense, conflicts lie behind many self-concepts, but it is beyond our scope to explore them. In an individual case, this is a matter for professional study and expert handling. By definition, effective, consistent behavior is integrated behavior, while unintegrated behavior is the behavior of conflict.

### **Unrealism in Self- concept**

In addition to conflicts between self-concepts as a cause of ineffective behavior, there is the crucial matter of disparity between "how I see myself" and "how others see me." Unrealistic self-appraisal has cost many a manager his or her job. Think of people you know who have been fired, eased out, or moved laterally because they no longer "seemed up to the job." Has there not been in many such cases the subtle flavor of unadaptability, of a rigid inability in a manager to adjust his or her sights to a new role as times have changed?

Most familiar are the unnecessarily tragic cases of those who cannot grow old gracefully. Next are those uncounted misfits who fail through lack of realistic insight into their true worth. For example, take the good vice president who flunks as president because he never realized his inability to endure the rigors of being top person. There are endless instances of failures owing to a disparity between "who I am" and "who I think I am."

Unfortunately, not only outright failure may come from disparities in self-concept; more insidious is the effect of

partial or fuzzy self-appraisal. In fact, if the proposition is right that realism in the individual's self-view has a one-to-one relationship with effectiveness on the job, then it surely follows that all of us can improve our effectiveness by the simple expedient of developing a more realistic, more accurate self-concept!

In short, the more realistic one's view of oneself, the more guaranteed is personal effectiveness. Here is an example that underscores this point: Micheal H., the vice president of sales for a 50 million Francs company with a staff of 150 sales and service people, was in serious organizational trouble. The group had increased in size so rapidly that it had long since outgrown its organizational pattern.

There were constant complaints such as: "Whom do I work for?" "Nobody knows whether I am doing well or poorly." "We have not any system to follow in service to customers." The executives under Micheal tried valiantly to do twice and three times as much as they had always done. The situation was, frankly, a mess.

Micheal as a person was well liked and respected. He was democratic, attentive to others, soft-spoken, unlikely to "order," always likely to "suggest," and unsure of himself as an administrator. In general he was a person who saw himself as a stimulator and coordinator of his people, an excellent personal salesperson, but not a supervisor. Somehow he had completely missed sensing that his people waited for

directions from him. He felt that a sensible district sales manager should know what to do. His own perception of himself and his people's perception of him as vice president of sales were poles apart.

The impasse was breached when an outsider on whom Micheal relied heavily (and who also had the confidence of the top people in the department) finally told him bluntly, "Micheal, your people are waiting for you to clear the air. They will follow any organizational plan you want them to. This step only you can take. They respect you and want your leadership. They value you. Do not ask them; tell them, for goodness' sake, how you are going to organize their activities."

Micheal tried to integrate this new dimension into his self-concept. At first, he swung to one extreme and "got tough": He made explicit, directive demands; he swore; he told everybody, in effect, "I want what I want when I want it-and that's right now!" But soon he abandoned his pretense and absorbed into his self-concept the new "take-charge" aspect of his functioning. He defined an organizational plan, set up policies and procedures which sorted out sales and service duties, discussed them fully with all involved, and said, in effect, "This is it. Let's go."

This example is, of course, an oversimplification; it highlights the fact that disparity in perception can reduce managerial effectiveness. What Micheal saw himself to be in the office of

vice president of sales precluded his seeing the needs of his people. And this blind spot nearly cost him prolonged chaos, if not the loss of his job. Finally, it is manifestly clear that change in self-concept as a function of executive growth has a payoff. Recall situations where a critical appointment has to be made. Who gets the nod? Usually it is the one who *as a person is* thought to have potential and who is able to make a contribution to the "mix" of key executives.

Consequently, many companies, in selecting their handpicked future executives, feed in "trainees" with liberal arts degrees. They are looking for the *people*, not their knowledge or special skills. By the same token, as the young people grow, it is their self-concept that will change and come more into line with what they are becoming-in relation to their potential. It is on the basis of their self-concept that young people emerge as top executives. To twist an old adage, it is not what you know that finally counts; it is who *you are*.

### **Natural Resistance**

But there is still one big question to answer. If changes in the self-concept of the executive are desirable, just what brings them about? In fact, are changes in self-concept possible? Of course changes are possible, but there is one obvious block to growth. Even when executives want to change, the lurking suspicion that such effort is futile tends to vitiate the process of change. Faint mutterings of self-discontent tend to get quashed by the notion that "an old dog cannot learn new tricks."

And the basic comfort of the status quo seems to outweigh the value of the new mode of behavior. One reason for such feelings of resistance is that, psychologically, the mature person resists change. By definition, the self-concept is an organization or patterning of attitudes, habits, knowledge, drives, and the like.

And also, by definition, the fact of organization means a cementing together of all these complex components. For example, people who for many years have been highly and aggressively competitive cannot, except with difficulty, either suddenly or gradually become insightfully cooperative; they will still tend to see themselves as needing to surpass others. They retain a pattern, a consistency, and basic characteristics; and in this sense resist change. Indeed, this is a good thing, or we still would all be going through the throes of "finding ourselves" as we did as adolescents.

When mature people change, therefore, they do so against a natural resistance; but whether this resistance is a deeply stabilizing influence that helps them to retain their basic direction and character, or whether it is a cocoon that makes them unreachable, is a moot question. Resistance, though built in, may thus be either a roadblock or a gyroscope. We have noted that changes in the self-concept of executives are "soul-level," not peripheral.

They are changes in perception and attitude and understanding, not changes in knowledge or experience or skills. So our

exploration of how change occurs must include those factors which seem to operate more deeply within the individual and which polarize new directions and behaviors. We are looking for those basic vital factors which, as they operate, really change people beyond their power of dissimulation or pretense. This is change in the fundamental makeup of people, not change in their apparel. When such changes occur, the person is different.

## **Steps to Maturity**

Let us be clear about one point. Growth does not proceed in clear-cut, discrete, logical steps. Sometimes it occurs in inexplicable spurts; at other times, with agonizing slowness. There are cases where real learning is so deeply unconscious that no overt behavior change shows up for a long time.

Even regressions will occur, as when an adolescent, perhaps troubled by a day's activities, will sleep with a special blanket as he or she did at age six. The process of growth is a nebulous, multifactored, fluid, dynamic process, often astounding, and usually only partially controllable.

But for the sake of discussion, and understanding, we can postulate a sequence of steps.

## **Self-examination**

If we were to attempt a systematic analysis of what happens

when growth in persons occurs, we would need to begin with self-examination. For here individuals first know that they *do not know* or first get an inkling that they wish their behavior were different in some respect. They are forced, either by circumstance or their own conscious introspection, to look at themselves critically.

This is what happens when tennis players see movies of their shots, or when a parent scolds a child by saying, "Just look at yourself-all dirty." Or when the supervisor's thickly veiled anger over a subordinate's sloppy work finally becomes known. People see themselves every time they look in the mirror, but do they really examine what they see? Do they appraise and evaluate and study what manner of people they are?

The function of self-examination is to lay the groundwork for insight, without which no growth can occur. Insight is the "oh, I see now" feeling which must, consciously or unconsciously, precede change in behavior. Insights-real, genuine glimpses of ourselves as we really are-are reached only with difficulty and sometimes with real psychic pain. But they are the building blocks of growth. Thus self - examination is a preparation for insight, a groundbreaking for the seeds of self-understanding which gradually bloom into changed behavior.

### **Self-expectation**

As individuals raise their sights for themselves, as they get insights into the direction in which they want to grow, as

they "see" themselves in a particular respect they do not like, then they are changing their self-expectations. (This is the next step.) New demands on themselves are set up, not by anyone else, just by themselves.

This is another way of saying what the theologians insist on, namely, that a conviction of sin precedes salvation. Or, as the psychologists put it, first accept the fact that *you* have the problem - not anyone else-and then you are ready to find a solution. Here are two cases that illustrate the importance of self-expectation through insight:

Dorothy S. was a chronic complainer. Nothing was ever her fault. She frequently and self-pityingly inveighed against her boss, her subordinates, her peers, and the competition. She was capable, knowledgeable, a hard worker, critical. And never once, when she sang the old refrain, "Why does this always happen to me?" did an inner voice whisper back, "It is no different for you, old girl, than for anyone else. It is just the way you take it."

Efforts by her boss and her friends to develop some insight in Dorothy seemed wasted. Logical explanations, patiently made, were of course futile. Anger toward her only proved to her she was picked on. Gentle tolerance only gave her a bigger pool to wallow in. One day in a meeting of executives to find answers to a particular crisis that had bit everyone (an unexpected price slash by a major competitor), she held forth at length on the uselessness of market research, on the futility of

keeping a "pipeline" on the competitor's situation, on how her department (sales) could not be blamed for not anticipating the vagaries of the competition's pricing policy, and so on. She finally stopped. And, as though by prearrangement, the whole group, perhaps in complete disgust at her immaturity and irrelevance, sat in stony silence.

At length the silence became so oppressive that it suddenly dawned on the complainer that she was just that - an immature complainer. She recalled the words of her colleagues and her own dim awareness that she did complain a lot. Insight finally occurred. At long last she was ready to begin to grow out of her immaturity. She saw (and disliked) herself at this point. Now her growth could become self-directed; she could easily find many opportunities to quash feelings of self-pity and to face reality in a more stateswoman like fashion, because now she expected more stateswoman like attitudes of herself.

Cesar V., age 58, was vice president of engineering of a company that made fine-quality capital goods equipment. He had been with his company 35 years. He was a good engineer, who knew the product inside out; and through the years he had learned to know the customers, too. He felt proud of and personally involved in each installation of the product. It was not unusual to see him on an evening, coatless and with his tie loose, perched on a stool before a drafting board, surrounded by young engineers, digging at a tough installation problem.

While some thought Cesar did too much himself, others felt that with him on the job the customer would be satisfied.

About four years ago, however, the president, whose family owned the company, sold it to a large corporation, and the company became a wholly owned subsidiary. One allied product line was acquired, then another. Finally Cesar's department was asked to do the engineering work for several subsidiaries that were not set up to do their own.

Now Cesar's job had changed, subtly but surely, and trouble began to brew for Cesar because he could not seem to change with the situation. Psychologically, Cesar saw himself as a one-person department (with assistants as trainees) who personally engineered the product for the customer, his friend. He resisted the impersonality of working on engineering problems of "sister companies" whose customers and products he barely knew and cared less about. The new fangled system of a "home office" engineering vice president who was "staff" seemed to him just another unnecessary complication.

Nothing worked the way it used to. He saw himself bypassed by progress and change. So, unconsciously, he began to resist and to fight. His yearning for the "good old days" subconsciously forced him to run faster and faster in order to know more customers and more product lines; to work more evenings; to press new systems into the form of old procedures. And, of course, he began to slip, and badly. Gradually, Cesar was viewed by his superiors as "good old

Cesar, but let us not get him in on this matter or he will have to take it over himself and we will get bogged down," and by his subordinates as a fine fellow, but stodgy and old-fashioned.

Fortunately, before the situation compelled a major organizational shift, Cesar took stock of his situation, and really saw himself as he was. He got the insight that his self-image of a kind of personal engineer was no longer applicable to the corporation's greatly expanded needs. And right then, with this new glimpse of himself (and the courage and self-honesty to face it), he began to change.

He started by focusing on how his years of experience could be applied to the coaching of his subordinates. He put himself in the shoes of the staff vice president and could then see how to mesh gears better. Then he stopped resisting the new fangled data processing and automation procedures. His growth began with a new self - expectation.

### **Change in Self-expectation**

How do people get a new self-demand, a new self-expectation? How do they find out that their self-concept is inadequate? How do people know not only that they can be different but should be as well? Unfortunately for those who like recipes or formulas, such questions are perennially bothersome because there is no one best way.

What can be done to stimulate change in self-expectation besides honest, realistic, self-appraising introspection? In the business context, the constructive pointing up of executives'

needs for growth by their superiors is a tremendous source of insight. The emphasis, of course, is on the word *constructive*, which means helpful, insightful ideas from the superior and not, as so often happens, a ceremonial, judgmental, "I will tell you what I think about you" appraisal.

A further source of insight is husbands and wives the perceptive ones, that is. Perceptive ones have unique ways of jerking spouses up short when their self-images become distorted. In fact, anything which enables people to get a new perception-reading, observing, studying, going to conferences, attending meetings, and participating in clubs - can provide insight into themselves. *Out of insight comes change in self-expectation.*

And, of course, life situations which are kaleidoscopic always enable perceptive people to see themselves in a new light. Here is another example: Virginia W. was acutely self-critical, often to the point where her fear of failure immobilized her. She delayed decisions, fussed endlessly with details, and generally strained to be perfect.

In time her relation with the psychologist, who genuinely accepted her without criticism, praise, blame, or hostility, enabled her to "see" how her self-critical attitudes really stemmed from her self-pride. She felt she had to be perfect because it was "safer" to be free from criticism and failure. But she finally "rejoined the human race" and demanded of herself only that she do her best. The insight that she was

human after all freed her to change her self-expectations.

### **Self-direction**

People are masters of their own destiny in the sense that they take charge of their own development if they want to grow. Nothing can be done to them to make them grow; they grow only as they want to and as their own insights enable them to.

The changes in self-concept that people undergo must continue primarily through their own self-direction. It is clear that many development programs miss their mark badly at this point. They make the naive assumption that exposure to experiences or people or books or courses are enough to produce growth. Not so. They effect change in the participants only as they reach out and appropriate something - a bit of wisdom, a new idea, or a new concept-that stretches them, and gives them answers to their own self-generated problem.

Put another way, we might say that, just as learning is impossible without motivation, so real personal development is impossible unless people seek it. Furthermore, the strength of their desire is infinitely stronger if they seek development because they want to develop than if they are merely trying to please their bosses or do what is expected of them. As any teacher knows, the pupils who listen and learn merely in order to pass the course are far poorer learners than those who want to learn.

Fundamentally, this is the age-old problem of motivation, of keeping steam up in the boiler. The maintenance of a growing edge, as people emerge from insight to insight to realize their potential, is a consequence of intrinsic motivation. They are driven toward unrealized objectives, perhaps toward unrealizable goals.

After developing insight into themselves *in relation to what they want to be*, the power that keeps peoples growing is the veritable necessity of doing things that to them are intrinsically, basically, and lastingly worthwhile. Growing people are so because they derive their strength and desire and drive from inner, unachieved goals; and their satisfactions from self-realization. This is intrinsic motivation as it relates to self-concept.

### **Broadened perceptions**

The dynamics of this factor of growth are very clear: people must see themselves in relation to their environment, both personal and impersonal, and must develop their image of themselves partly in response to what they see around them. So if they see a very small world (as a child does), their concept of themselves must necessarily be narrow; if they seem themselves as citizens of the world (as a world traveler might), their self-concept embraces the world. This is the difference between the real provincial, such as a hillbilly, and the true sophisticate.

A most common complaint of superiors is that subordinates are too narrow in their outlooks. For example, the sales manager promoted to vice president of sales irritates her peers in manufacturing or research by having "only a salesperson's point of view." The former production supervisor, now a vice president, is derided by the people in sales for his attitude of "We will make it at low cost; it is up to you to sell it, and do not bother me with special runs for special customers or model changes -sell 'them." Both people suffer from constraint of the self-concept: they perceive their jobs (and themselves) too narrowly.

For instance:

A vice president of sales was brought in from outside the company to gear up the effort of merchandising a new line of products. He did a magnificent job, old pro that he was, of shaping up and vitalizing a sales force. Volume of sales picked up excellently, and he was the hero of the hour. But after a year, when he felt on top of his job, some of his attitudes and habits reasserted themselves, annoying others and stalling progress. For instance, he persisted in making frequent references to his former (and larger) company.

He climbed on manufacturing for delivery delays, and on research and engineering for perfectionism before releasing the specifications for what he felt were needed product changes. The time it took to explain to him, pacify him, and argue with him was ill - spent and futile. He was rapidly becoming a block in the path of progress.

One day the president approached him directly. "Henry," said the president, "what's your title?"

"Why," said Henry, puzzled, "vice president of sales."

"Right. And what does *vice president* mean to you?"

Henry paused. What was the president getting at? "Well," he said, "it means a lot of things, I guess. Responsibility for sales, building a...."

"Stop right there," interrupted the president. "Responsibility for sales, you say. True in a way. But sales managers also have this responsibility, do not they?"

"Well, yes."

"Then what do the words *vice president mean* in your title?"

"Oh, I see... Well, I guess they mean seeing or having responsibility for the sales function of the company from the point of view of the company... that part of your office."

"You got my point before I mentioned it, Henry," said the president. "Vice presidents speak from the company point of view, not just of their departments. They try to keep the overall good of the company in mind."

Henry thought this conversation over. He got the point. He realized the narrowness of his own view. He had been thinking of himself as "on loan" from his former employer to straighten things out here. As he pondered the president's comments, he broadened his perception of job-and of himself. And sometime later he began to act as an office of the total company.

## **Self-realization Power**

It is not enough, however, just to see ourselves as we are now. Such understanding is a necessary starting point, or basis on which to build. But we must also see what our real selves *could* be, and grow into that.

The strong people of history have had one psychological characteristic in common: they seem always to have been themselves as persons

. . . Beethoven, continuing to compose after he became deaf;  
. . . Milton, who did not allow blindness to interfere with his writing;  
. . . Keller, becoming a lecturer on opportunities for the handicapped despite being both deaf and blind.

Such people have given meaning to the phrase, "fulfilling one's destiny." In less dramatic form, strong people fulfill themselves as they live lives that are an unfolding of their potential. They must be themselves. In this sense, the self-concept of the strong executive is a constantly evolving, changing thing as they continuously realize themselves. This is, indeed, genuine growth and the kind that continues until senescence sets in.

Can all people aspire to be this strong - to accomplish such a self-realization? Of course not. But growing people (by definition) have unrealized power if their self-concept, their self-expectation, their self-direction, and their constantly

broadening perceptions (wisdom) allow them to find it. The difference between a strong person and a weak person may not be a difference in ability, for many office workers have keen intelligence; or in drive, for many ambitious people get nowhere; or in opportunity, for somehow, strong people *make* opportunity.

No, the difference lies in self-concept. How much do I value my life? What do I want to do with it? What must I do to be myself? Strong people have emerged with clear-cut answers to such questions; weak ones equivocate and temporize and never dare.

Thus growth, finally, is the evolvment of personal goals and the sense of venture in pursuing them. This is the meaning of dedicated people. Their personal goals, their company goals, and their job goals have coincidence to a great extent; and their personal power is directed single-mindedly toward seeing themselves in relation to the fulfillment of their executive potential.