

# Purpose as a Psychological Factor in Management<sup>1</sup>

A Discussion of the Methods by Which an Integration of Group Purposes Can Be Effected in Industry

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THIS discussion, however abstract it may seem at times, has a practical intention. A well-known industrial manager recently remarked, "Industry has been on a war basis. We must try to place it on a peace basis." It is the intention of this paper to consider what line can be followed by managers to get industry upon a basis where good-will is manifested, where cooperation between groups is willing and not enforced, where conflict is a creative and not a destructive force.

I am concerned in the first instance with the conduct of managers both because of their influence and because the activities many of them are now embarked upon indicate that they are concerned to find a better way of confronting industrial conflicts. I do not at all mean to imply that other groups have not equal responsibilities in the same direction.

Much stress has all along been laid upon technique, upon the methods and procedures of executives and of the production they direct. I am here maintaining that the purposes and motives which actuate managers in their work are as important to its true success as their methods. Only when purpose and procedure look in the same direction is the outcome fruitful. In fact, the problem of relations among the several groups in industry—and especially that between managers and the rank and file—will make little progress toward amity unless and until managers consciously strive to change conditions and methods so that the individuals in these several groups can share in and work for the same purposes. Only as the whole complex of policies and practices in industry enables these groups naturally to espouse the same objectives can the possibility of destructive conflict be avoided.

I have thus two related points to emphasize. One is that the character of the purposes of managers is vital to the effectiveness of their behavior. The other is that the purposes of managers—and of all the other groups in industry—change only as all the surrounding conditions allow and require them to change. And this process by which purposes are modified is one of the pivotal points to grasp if managerial behavior is to be affected.

In order to establish the full implications of my thesis, it is necessary to answer a number of questions:

I. What is a purpose; and what effect have purposes on conduct?

II. Where do the individual's purposes come from; and how do they come to be what they are?

III. How do group purposes differ from individual purposes?

IV. What groups participate in the conduct of industry today; and what group purposes are seen manifested in their behavior?

V. Are these group purposes in conflict; and if so,

VI. What is the possibility of establishing and giving effect to purposes which can be shared in and worked for by the different groups participating in industry?

And if there is such a possibility,—

VII. Do any principle and any method suggest themselves from this analysis which will help managers to bring to pass a greater agreement among groups or integration of group purposes in industry than exists today?

Each of these questions will be discussed in turn.

## I. Purposes Defined

*What is a purpose; and what effect have purposes on conduct?* Purposes are of two kinds. There are those which are fundamental and per-

manent. There are those which are specific and more immediate. The former arise out of basic, unlearned needs and desires of the individual; and the fundamental purposes of all persons are therefore qualitatively much the same. And the differences of specific purposes which are found in individuals and groups are those which the surrounding conditions have in part created and fostered. A purpose in either sense is an aim or objective which consciously or unconsciously controls behavior in its direction. A conditioning factor in all purposes is obviously the environment in which action is taking place. Purposes are never without a bearing upon and relation to the conditions at the time—they are, in fact, only intelligible in connection with them. And one element in these conditions which must never be lost sight of is the purposes of those individuals or groups by whom one is surrounded.

The specific things human beings are really striving for are often called their desires. They might also be called their purposes. Desires and purposes may or may not be known for what they are by the individual himself. Often, indeed, the account of the individual as to what he wants is rationalized rather than truly reasoned; and then one only discovers the effective purpose by examination of the kind of conduct which goes forward.

Human purposes are influential—they do direct action which has any element of choice in it. Yet they do not direct it in any independent or arbitrary way. They function in close relation to all the surrounding circumstances of the individual. And the more specific the purpose, the more likely is it to be molded and redirected by these circumstances.

The purposes which motivate human beings thus bear a close relation to the demands which individuals make upon life and to the restrictions which the whole environment puts upon those individuals. Where purposes come from and why they are what they are are thus pertinent questions for further inquiry in any discussion aiming to show the place and importance of purposes in an understanding of the behavior of managers today.

## II. The Origin of Purposes

*Where do purposes come from; and how do they come to be what they are?* Briefly stated, purposes

come from (1) the impulsion to satisfy fundamental, unlearned, human tendencies; (2) the impulsion to carry out habits which have been built up out of experience; (3) the pressure and dictation of the social environment; and (4) an imagined conception of some near or remote good which the individual has formulated or has learned and is enthusiastic about (often referred to as an ideal).

Human beings are typically impelled to conduct along one or another of the following lines: (1) they demand a measure of economic security, which means assured provision of food, shelter and clothing, or access to the means thereto; (2) they demand the opportunity for approval at the hands of those with whom they come constantly in contact; (3) they demand opportunity for the building up of some domestic organization which is controlled more or less by affection and which provides a medium for the upbringing of children; (4) they demand that the activities upon which they are creatively engaged shall be reasonably well harmonized with their capacities, aptitudes and interests; and (5) they demand that the disposition of their leisure time be a matter of self-determination and that its content be satisfying to them.

Habits thus come to be purposes in the sense that by often-repeated experience people find that what they want very much in all sorts of directions is "more of the same." This is probably a more frequently correct explanation of human purposes and desires than any other.

Purposes come also from social pressure, in the sense that what people want to do is built up out of repeated discoveries of "what is expected of them."

And purposes come sometimes from the glamour of a new idea caught from some strong personality, from reading, from imagining some new combination of human elements in experience, that is, some "ideal."

To ask how the individual's purposes come to be what they are is in effect to inquire what his total experience has been; that is, what has been his ability to realize upon the impulsions which make him the center of continuing activity. His purposes come to be what they are by virtue of the total complex of factors which contribute to forming his personality.

Clearly, then, from this entire discussion the idea is implicit that specific purposes do change and

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