

DEPRESSION

RADICAL HEALING

Through continuity of consciousness there is a radical healing that takes place within one's whole nature, and an authentic gain in self-respect. Like a person who late in life learns a new language and is thrilled that he can learn the alphabet and write his first sentence, so too any human at any age can so strengthen the antaskaranic connection with the Higher Self that life takes on a new depth of meaning and expression.

"The Eye of Shiva" *Hermes*, July 1982

Raghavan Iyer

ALL ARE BORN FOR A PURPOSE

Any human being who has a true wakefulness and thereby a sincere spirit of obeisance to the divine demiurgic intelligence in the universe, of which he is a trustee even while encased within the lethargic carcass of matter, can show that he is a man to the extent to which he exhibits divine manliness through profound gratitude, a constant recognition and continual awareness of the One Source. All the great Teachers of humanity point to a single source beyond themselves. Many are called but few are chosen by self-election. Spiritual Teachers always point upwards for each and every man and woman alive, not for just a few. They work not only in the visible realm for those immediately before them, but, as John reminds us, they come from above and work for all. They continually think of and love every being that lives and breathes, mirroring "the One that breathes breathless" in ceaseless contemplation, overbrooding the Golden Egg of the universe, the *Hiranyagarbha*.

Such beautiful ideas enshrined in magnificent myths are provocative to the ratiocinative mind and suggestive to the latent divine discernment of Buddhist intuition. The only way anyone can come closer to the Father in Heaven – let alone come closer to Him on earth Who is as He is in Heaven – is by that light to which John refers in the first chapter of the Gospel. It is the light that lighteth every man who cometh into the world, which the darkness comprehendeth not. Human beings are involved in the darkness of illusion, of self-forgetfulness, and forgetfulness of their divine ancestry. The whole of humanity may be regarded as a garden of gods but all men and women are fallen angels or gods tarnished by forgetfulness of their true eternal and universal mission.

Every man or woman is born for a purpose. Every person has a divine destiny. Every individual has a unique contribution to make, to enrich the lives of others, but no one can say what this is for anyone else. Each one has to find it, first by arousing and kindling and then by sustaining and nourishing the little lamp within the heart. There alone may be lit the true Akashic fire upon the altar in the hidden temple of the God which lives and breathes within. This is the sacred fire of true awareness which enables a man to come closer to the one universal divine consciousness which, in its very brooding upon manifestation, is the father-spirit. In the realm of matter it may be compared to the wind that bloweth where it listeth. Any human being could

become a self-conscious and living instrument of that universal divine consciousness of which he, as much as every other man or woman, is an effulgent ray.

“The Gospel According to St. John” *Hermes*, April, 1977

Raghavan Iyer

THE CHOICE OF DESTINIES

In a variety of ways, even if only fitfully and imperfectly, every person can receive help from internal conditions which can release the spiritual will. The greater the fidelity, the selflessness and self-assurance with which one cleaves to these inner promptings of the immortal soul, the more instantaneously they light up the immediate task at hand. Above all, the more they are heeded, the less the effort needed to sustain continuity. With the same certitude, the opposite consequences follow for those who foolishly ignore or flaunt this inner guidance for the sake of enhancing the delusive sense of personal self-importance. But even the most spiritually impoverished human beings are sheltered by the invisible protection of the Divine Prototype, and therefore even amidst the muddle and froth of psychic fantasy there is a concealed thread of truth. Wise and loving friends might be able to recognize and strengthen it. A true spiritual teacher could help to sift the wheat from the chaff, quicken the inward process of alchemical transmutation, and show the pathway to Divine Wisdom.

As the One Law of spiritual evolution, Karma is more generous to each and every human soul in need of help than the niggardly thinking of the nihilistic can envisage. It is neither a doctrine that is so abstruse and remote that it cannot be related to the present moment, nor is it nearly as inflexible and hostile as claimed by those who have gratuitously declared a vote of no-confidence in themselves and in the human race. Far from precluding the idea that each human being has a unique and inherently significant mission on this earth, the law of Karma actually ordains that every single person has a divine dharma which he or she alone can and must fulfill. There is an authentic dignity and beauty, a profound meaning, to the uniqueness of the divine presence in and around every human soul. The sacredness of individual choice was affirmed as the basis of human solidarity by the inspired forerunners of the Aquarian Age, those luminaries who initiated the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in Europe. If the prospect has not yet smiled upon all, this is because too many have laboured under the deadweight of traditional theology and secular fatalism. Where there is the quickening of dharma, there is also the precipitation of past and present adharma.

Those who believe in Karma have to believe in destiny, which, from birth to death, every man is weaving thread by thread around himself, as a spider does his cobweb; and this destiny is guided either by the heavenly voice of the invisible prototype outside of us, or by our more intimate astral, or inner man, who is but too often the evil genius of the embodied entity called man.

The Secret Doctrine, i 639

The heavenly voice of the invisible Prototype is heard and felt, without any external tokens of empirical certitude. In the life of a good and simple person, who makes a mental image of Christ or Buddha, Shiva or Krishna, that voice may seem to come in a form engendered by the ecstatic

devotion of the individual who has purity of heart. Many thousands of people all over the world belong to the invisible fraternity of fortunate souls who, having made a fearless and compassionate invocation on behalf of a friend or relative in distress, suddenly heard a vibrant voice of authoritative assurance and sensed an aureole of light soon after. This voice may appear to come from outside oneself, and, paradoxically, that other voice, the voice of the intimate astral, all too often the evil genius of man, seems to originate within. When it speaks, it aggravates the confusions of the compulsive persona, urging the hapless listener to rush into mindless activity.

When the heavenly voice speaks to the depths of one's soul, it has a calming influence and allays the anxieties of kama manas. There is a natural soul-reticence to tell others about the heavenly voice, and a grateful concern to treasure its words in silence. However well-intentioned, anything that is allowed to pass through the matrix of the psychic nature risks distortion and generates a smoky obscuration that acts as a barrier to further guidance and profounder help from the Divine Prototype. What begins as unthinking indiscretion soon becomes delusive, and unless promptly checked, culminates in abject servitude to the astral shadow. Then, deceived by this simulacrum, the shadow of oneself outside the path of Dharma, one is drawn in a direction that may be contrary to one's true destiny. This abdication from the soul's self-chosen task in the course of evolution may initially be imperceptible, but the choice of destinies remains as long as the two voices can be heard.

“Karma and Destiny” *Hermes*, July 1981

Raghavan Iyer

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

The allegory begins with a graphic picture of the pathetic condition of the majority of mankind. We are like chained slaves living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den. Here we have been from our childhood, unable to move or to see beyond, being prevented by the chains from turning round our heads. Above and behind us a fire is blazing at a distance, but between the fire and ourselves there is a low wall like the screen which marionette players have in front of them to foster the illusion necessary for a puppet-show. We are like the strange prisoners in this den who see only their own shadows or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave. To them the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images, and they cannot distinguish the voices of one another from the echoes emanating from the surrounding darkness.

Given this allegory, we might think that if only the prisoners were released from their chains by some external agency, they would cease to mistake shadows for realities and would be automatically disabused of their former errors. The allegory points out that no such simple deliverance from illusions is possible. At first, when any of the prisoners is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains. Further, the glare will disturb him and he will be unable to see the realities he formerly identified with their mere shadows. If he is now told that what he saw before was an illusion and that now he is approaching real existence and has a clearer vision, he will be perplexed. He will continue to fancy that the shadows he saw for so long were truer than the objects which are now shown to him. If he is compelled to look straight at the light, the pain in his eyes will induce him to turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision that have acquired a

false but greater reality than the things which are now being shown to him. If he is dragged up a steep ascent and forced into the presence of the sun, his eyes will be dazzled and he will not be able to see anything at all.

The liberated prisoner will obviously require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. He will first see the shadows best, then the reflections of men and objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; and then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars by night. At last he will be able to see the sun. He will come to see that the sun is the guardian of all that is in the visible world and in a certain sense the cause of all that he and his fellows had been accustomed to behold. He would remember his old habitation and the delusions of his fellow prisoners, pity them and felicitate himself on the change in himself and in his position. He would no longer care for the honours conferred upon one another by the ignorant prisoners on the basis of who were the quickest to observe the passing shadows.

The first test that the liberated prisoner has to face is to get accustomed to his new condition and to forsake his long-cherished illusions. The second test is to see the unity of all things. The third is to show compassion towards his fellow prisoners and not merely revel in his own happiness. The fourth is to detach himself completely from the false valuations and hierarchical distinctions made by the men in the den. His fifth and much more difficult test comes if he is then made to re-enter the cave of darkness, for he would appear ridiculous to the prisoners who still cling to their former illusions centered on the shadows. They would say that he had become blind to realities since leaving the cave, that it is better not even to think of ascending, that they would be entitled to put to death anyone who tried to free another and lead him up to the light.

The allegory then explains that the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and the journey upwards is the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world. In the world of knowledge the archetypal idea of Good appears last of all and is seen only with an effort. It is only then inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, the lord of light in this visible world and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual world, the power upon which the eye must be fixed in private and public life in order to act rationally. It is not surprising, we are told, that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell. Those who do descend from divine contemplations to the underground den will not find it easy to deal with those who have never yet seen Absolute Good or Justice.

The bewilderments of the eyes, the bodily eye as well as the mind's eye, are of two kinds and arise either from coming out of the light or from going into the light. The plight of the soul as soon as it comes from darkness into the light is to be pitied, and there is no reason to laugh at the condition of the soul which has come out of the brighter life and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark. It is wrong to think that we can put sight into blind eyes or knowledge into the soul, which was not there before. The power and capacity of learning exist in the soul already, and just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too it is only by the movement of the whole soul that the instrument of knowledge can be turned from the world of Becoming into that of Being, and can learn by degrees to endure the sight of the good and the true. Whereas the other so-called virtues of the soul can be implanted by habit and exercise, the virtue of wisdom or of spiritual sight contains a divine element which is the identifying property or function of the soul. Sensual pleasures, like leaden weights, drag down the soul and turn its vision upon the things below, but if the soul is released from earthly impediments, the faculty of seeing the truth comes into full play.

Every detail of the allegory of the cave has been mentioned here because everything in it is significant. The entire allegory could be interpreted in several ways – mystically, psychologically or even politically. It was Plato's great genius that he could give us a parable, archetypal in meaning and full of occult truth, that is rich in its symbolism and suggestive of several profitable interpretations. His method was to descend from universals to particulars, to use his insight into the process of Becoming or of cosmic evolution to derive lessons for personal and social life. He exemplified the ancient maxim: "As above, so below." Recent interpreters have concentrated on the political moral to be drawn from the parable and some have wrongly regarded it as a poetic rationalization of a particular political outlook designed to make the philosopher acceptable in a *polis*. Plato explicitly states that the founders of the State must compel the best minds to continue to ascend until they arrive at the highest truth or ultimate good and then to make them descend again into the den and partake of honours and labours for which they do not care. They must become the benefactors of the entire community. They are not obliged to share in the toils of politics, but if they were deliberately encouraged in their quest for truth, they must share the fruits of their vision with their fellow men. Being Just Men, they will comply with the demands made upon them. The State in which the rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best.

“The Allegory of the Cave” *Hermes*, February 1975

Raghavan Iyer

CHOOSING OUR THOUGHTS

Suffering arises out of exaggerated involvement in a world of colour, forms and objects, maintained by a false sense of personal identity. As long as people persist in this pseudo-continuum of existence, they necessarily forfeit the exercise of their inner creative capacities and cannot fully seize the opportunities of self-conscious evolution. Human beings produce a false sense of self out of a series of intense particularizations of will, thought and feeling, all of which become the tokens of selfhood. As a result, in the very process of fragmenting oneself into a diversity of desires and conflicting and colliding aims, or of limiting oneself by conceptions which must be concretized in some narrow programme in space and time, suffering is built into one's life. All exaggerations of the void and illusory ego, all failures to recognize the over-arching One, all attempts to live as if one were the centre of the world and without any self-conscious awareness of the beyond, mean that one can only gain happiness, pleasure or fulfillment at a cost. An obscuring shadow follows all pleasure – a compulsive feedback, a necessary negation, an unavoidable depression. When people do not detach themselves and negate excessive involvement in advance of every thought, the negation must come from outside, and after a point people lose their hold over the central thread of unifying or synthesizing awareness.

Suffering is the obscuration of the light of universal understanding. As long as we live in terms of narrow conceptions of ourselves, shrunken conceptions of space and of time, and with an exaggerated intensity that will necessarily be followed by an external negation, suffering is built into our life... One must wake up and be unafraid of the divine inheritance that belongs to every man. This, however, can never be done collectively. Individuals can only do this by choosing to strike out on their own. We have an excellent definition given in the very first essay of H.P. Blavatsky on "What is Theosophy?": The true Theosophist is one who independently strikes out and Godward finds a path....

We are at a new point in history where persons cannot, as in older days, merely go by labels. Individuals have become much more sophisticated and a significant increase in self-consciousness, in regard to the eclecticism of the human mind, has emerged. The moment of choice takes a variety of forms, but in the end all the choices come back to one basic choice: living in terms of a false conception of psychic identity caught passively in a series of events happening to oneself, or living self-consciously with awareness as a noetic being. Put in a starkly simple way, one is either going to be a psychic being and behave more childishly as one grows older, or one is going to be noetic and actually grow up. To behave noetically is to reawaken something of the pristine, beautiful awareness of a baby but while one is grown up. One may be in one's forties or fifties and still have self-consciously something of the thrill found in a baby's face looking out on the world with eyes of complete truth, accepting the wonder of life.

This must be deliberately and individually chosen.

The insidious legacy of vicarious atonement makes people think that this can happen to them without their having to do anything, simply by being on the side of the correct doctrine or on the side of God. The Buddha came to destroy the false idea that simply by making one dramatic and tearful choice, all the rest will automatically happen. No doubt there is much wisdom in what Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all else will be added unto you but to seek the kingdom of God is to seize the critical moment of choice. "Whom choose ye this day, God or Mammon?" This formulation by itself is too narrow because its interpretations limit the magnitude of the choice to the sphere of the false self. In the presence of the light one either has to build in and for the light or one has to live like a vampire in fear of the light. Human beings have to become self-conscious, creative beings who can continuously release creativity, the light of understanding, and true sympathy, and who can thereby gain contentment and joy in a more collective sense of human welfare and a more universal sense of progress. Otherwise, they must lapse back into their habits and then, lacking responsibility, they cannot help plunging into a pattern which is one of vampirization or mere mechanical, automaton-like living....

Functionally, the definition of an enlightened being, of an Initiate, is a being who chooses every thought. Things do not happen to Initiates; thoughts do not come to them. They choose them. To be able to get to the ultimate capacity not only to choose every thought but to make it a living reality by mastering the power of *Kriyashakti*, totally purified creative imagination, is an exalted ideal truly inspiring and relevant to every human being. By renewing one's sense of the reality of this ideal, one can reach a point where one can give up altogether the false notion of personal or individual spiritual progress. It is replaced by a beautiful awareness that whatever happens is a kind of resignation to the universal flow of light working through one self-consciously. It is like swimming on the ocean....It is a matter of choosing consciously the divine harmony and saying that whatever eventually comes is not merely what I deserve but what I desire.

We must come to that point in life where we are ready for everything and anything, and see the whole of life as being on the side of that in us which alone is capable of surviving. Then we shall be happy to let go that which cannot be supported by a living person who is willing self-consciously to die. At the same time we shall be assured, in a cool, relaxed and totally conscious way, of the universal currents of divine harmony within us. Then we could say that we are human beings who have chosen rightly and fundamentally. This is not once-and-for-all. We shall have to reinforce and renew it many times a day, not in the old sense of ritual but simply by becoming aware of our thinking processes. One day it could have meaning for us to say that we actually choose our thoughts and life-atoms, that we have not one reaction which is not submitted by us to

the process of deliberation. Then many more shall be worthy of the most sacred of all titles in collective evolution, of being what Emerson called Man Thinking, a *manasaputra*, a trustee of the sacred fire of individual and universal self-consciousness, with "the priceless boon of learning truth, the right perception of existing things, the knowledge of the non-existent."

"Continuity, Creativity and Choice" *Hermes*, October 1977

Raghavan Iyer

DRUGS, DEPRESSION AND ELEMENTALS

An authentic approach to the doctrine of elementals must be motivated by a desire to regenerate oneself on behalf of all. Both wisdom and compassion are needed if one would master the ways in which a human being may work upon elementals and also be acted upon by them. In practice, this is an extremely intimate and detailed enquiry involving all the most basic activities of daily life. The real nature of home and possessions, of eating and sleeping, and of every other aspect of life is bound up with elementals. Naturally, this includes questions of physical and psychological disease and health, with all the fads and fancies, popular and private, that accompany them. Problems of drugs and depression, along with the other ailments of the age for which there are no available remedies, are bound up with the interactions of the human and elemental worlds. No amount of mechanistic manipulation by doctors, therapists, specialists or religious counselors will be of any avail in curing these ills of individuals and society; all ignore the fundamental nature of human malaise.

"Elementals" *Hermes*, April, 1987

Raghavan Iyer

HEALING DEPRESSED ELEMENTALS

If individuals who are faced with numerous stresses and are affected by the surrounding atmosphere of breakdown, gloom and doom would begin to reflect deeply upon these Teachings, they would soon see that there is no trick they can use to avoid depression. No drug or pill, potion or panacea, will help. Instead, they must come to see the central meaning of the Zero Principle for their lives; everything they need already exists in abundance within their own sphere of light, and no external aids are needed. There is nothing which one does not already have, if one can centre oneself. Thus the moment one grasps an adventitious aid, one is running away from the problem. External aids may work temporarily as a palliative, but they will not, as the best doctors and psychologists know, effect a cure. Instead, one must look calmly at what one is depressed about, and consider the plight of beings worse off than oneself. One should think through what one proposes to do about the problem – and the less one passes it on to others, the better.

Depressed elementals that have come into one's vestures must be welcomed and treated with compassion. They must be told that they are taking themselves too seriously. They should not be ridiculed, but should be put in place and sent off, cleansed, out into the world. This can be done by sitting calmly in a chair and facing the problem honestly. Anything that prevents one from

taking responsibility will never get one out of the woods, but will only plunge one much more deeply into difficulty after death. Anyone who sees this clearly will want to take responsibility promptly, without depending upon external aids. This is not to say that one cannot use common sense. If one has a lot of bad habits, one can improve them or replace them with better ones. If one has eaten a lot of junk, one can find an herb shop and get some good herbs. In the end, however, one must not depend upon what is outside. Even if one takes a healing herb, one's mental relation to it, one's faith in it and one's love and gratitude towards it make all the difference in the world. Unless one breathes these subjectively from within without into the herb, it will not release its healing essence.

Nothing, in fact, works automatically or mechanically in living Nature.

“The Healing of Elementals” *Hermes*, December 1987

Raghavan Iyer

MASLOW’S SELF-ACTUALIZING MAN (OR WOMAN)

Maslow makes a simple but crucial distinction between deficiency needs and being needs. Human beings function a great deal of the time out of a sense of inadequacy. They seek to supply what they think they lack from the external world. This sense of incompleteness will be intensified by the experience of frustration in repeated attempts to repair the initial feeling of deficiency. But there is also in all men a sense of having something within them which seeks to express itself, which is fulfilled when it finds appropriate articulation. One of the important features of this distinction between deficiency needs and being needs is that the same need could function at different times as an expression of a sense of deficiency or of a sense of being. It is in his manner of coping with both his sense of deficiency and his sense of being that a self-actualizing man reveals his enormous capacity for self-dependence. Maslow tries to give an exhaustive list of characteristics of the self-actualizing man. We shall mention only a few, those that seem particularly significant in the context of our consideration of the subject.

An essential mark of the self-actualizing man is his capacity for acceptance. He accepts himself and the world. Although he may reject certain elements of the world around him, he has sufficient reasons for accepting the world with its unacceptable elements. The world he accepts includes the world of society and extends into the world of nature. It includes an acceptance of particular persons. This wide-ranging acceptance of the world is possible for a self-actualizing man because he has accepted himself. His knowledge of himself may be incomplete, and there may be elements in himself which he dislikes or wishes to discard. And yet there is meaning to a fundamental act of acceptance of oneself with all one's limitations. If the act of acceptance is real, it will be strong enough to withstand all the threats from the external world. The self-actualizing man is aware of particular and partial rejections from external sources, but he can never give up on himself or on others. His essential acceptance enables him to see reality more clearly. He sees human nature as it is, not as he would prefer it to be. He will not shut out portions of the world that are unpleasant to him or that are not consonant with his own preferences and predilections. He is willing to see those aspects of reality that remain hidden to other men to the extent to which they conflict with their own prejudices. His fundamental act of acceptance also involves negation. He negates the distortion implicit in our immediate sensory responses to the world and in the exaggerated inferences derived from such immediate responses.

A second characteristic of the self-actualizing man is his spontaneity. Having made his fundamental act of acceptance, he is simple and direct and spontaneous in his responses. He is not burdened by the anxiety of calculation or by the fatigue of tortuous rationalization. He can make an appropriate yet spontaneous response in many a context, not all the time but often enough to see beyond conventionalities. In everyday human encounters, many opportunities are forfeited because of the habit of mutual suspicion. The self-actualizing man is able to negate conventional signs and symbols because he is not obsessed with social acceptance. He is not trapped by the totemistic worship of token gestures that restrict meaningful involvement. He is thereby less vulnerable to collective modes of manipulation. Consequently, he loses his sense of striving. He continues to grow through his mistakes and failures, but he grows without anxiety and without an oppressive awareness of the opinions of others or the crude criteria of success and failure. A real sense of freedom is released by his fundamental act of acceptance and by the spontaneity of his responses to the world.

A third characteristic of the self-actualizing man is his transcendence of self-concern. He centers his attention on non-personal issues that cannot be grasped at the level of egotistic encounters. He is aware of the needs that must be met in the lives of others, in interpersonal relations and in society. He does not view the problems of human beings in terms of the mere interaction of egotistic wills. He is not exempt from the tendency to ego assertion, but he refuses to participate in the collective reinforcement of ego sickness. This form of sickness arises when the ever-lengthening shadow of the ego provides a substitute world of wish fulfillment, leaving a man with no sense of the breadth or depth of reality or of having a grip on the suprapersonal core of human problems. By seeing beyond personal egos, the self-actualizing man gives himself opportunities to extend his mental horizon and re-create his picture of the world. He can move freely between larger and more limited perspectives, thereby attaining a clearer perception in relation to any problem of what is essential and what is not.

With an enlarged perspective there emerges a capacity for cool detachment and an enjoyment of privacy. A man cannot attain to true freedom if he is incapable of enjoying his own company. Many people today have become cringingly dependent on the need to interact with others, to the point of psychic exhaustion. Men are so involved in their projections of themselves in familiar surroundings that they are unable to stand back and view their activities free of egocentricism. The self-actualizing man appreciates the need for self-examination. He knows that in order to meet this need he must provide space within his time for solitude, privacy, and quiet reflection. He thus enhances his sense of self-respect and maintains it even when he finds himself in undignified surroundings or in demeaning conditions. He places his valuation of being human in a fundamental ground of being that goes beyond the levels at which he interacts with others.

The attaining of a high level of authentic impersonality strengthens in a man his independence of culture and environment. A fourth characteristic of the self-actualizing man is his very real enjoyment of a sense of autonomy. The notion of autonomy is a part of our inheritance from the Socratic concept of the individual, and it has been transmitted since the seventeenth century in modern presuppositions concerning man as a rational moral agent. But although this notion is embedded in the vocabulary of liberal, democratic theory, it has been considerably undermined by the prevailing tendency to see men as intersubstitutable, to view most acts as predictable, and to explain most human responses mechanistically in terms of instinctual drives or the functioning of systems and subsystems. It is therefore against very great odds that the self-actualizing man gives existential authenticity to the abstract notion of individual autonomy as an agent, a knower,

and an actor. He fully enjoys the activity of being a spectator, a knower, an actor, and a moral agent.

He has a sharp sense of his own individuality and of the boundaries of himself. Having boundaries is essential to the notion of self-actualization, but these boundaries will not coincide with the contours of selfhood reflected in the totality of culture-bound responses. The self-actualizing man may choose to express his individuality in the language and symbols provided by his cultural and social context, but these modes of expression will not obscure his sense of transcendence of his environment. This sense of inner space enables him to recognize more alternatives than appear on the surface and to feel himself capable of choosing meaningfully among them. He is aware of an open texture within his mind and his personality that helps him to be open to the world outside him. This awareness will take the form of a freshness that he brings to bear on his appreciation of persons and situations and of particular moments. This quality of freshness is all too rare in our everyday encounters. Particularly in our highly individualistic and competitive society, men are starved from a lack of authentic and generous appreciation of each other. The self-actualizing man would distinguish himself by his constant readiness to give unqualified appreciation and praise to other people. This does not mean that he is not capable of discrimination. The more he discovers some new and subtle facet of life that draws out his rich and free-ranging appreciation, the more he is able to bring freshness and joy to every situation. The enthusiasm that goes with freshness generates a sense of self-expansion that goes with what Freud called the oceanic feeling and what Maslow calls a peak experience. It is a sense of losing oneself in the vastness and richness of the world around us.

The self-actualizing man is, paradoxically, so secure in his efforts to find himself that he is also able to forget himself. He becomes a universal man who emancipates himself from the prison house of his personality and enters into the kingdom of mankind. The more he actualizes himself, the more he can transcend himself. In place of the sense of being "acculturated" in the stifling way associated with the localization of one's allegiances, the self-actualizing man experiences the exhilaration, the grandeur, and the nobility of being truly human. He embodies the spirit captured by Whitman in his poem "Song of the Open Road." He becomes an "encloser of continents." This will have a profound bearing on all his relationships. He will be able to relate to many different types of persons and react to a wide variety of situations with humour and compassion. He will show a shrewd perception of the relation between means and ends. His creativity will enable him to recognize opportunities for growth where other men see only limitations. He is so absorbed in what has yet to be tried and yet to be accomplished that he will have no time to brood over his past achievements and failures. He lives in that dimension of the present which points to the future.

All of this may seem rather Utopian and irrelevant to our contemporary situation, although we can see little increments of the qualities of a self-actualizing man in certain moments in our lives, and we know only too well the effects of the opposite kinds of attitudes in our daily experience.