

Transcript ~ Individuation and Global Responsibility: The Subtle Magic of Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Mandela

A Lecture by Dr. James E. Tepfer
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I. Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by extending my gratitude to Tim Boyd our International President who works tirelessly for that noblest of all human Causes, universal brotherhood. Thank you, Tim and thank you too to Idarmis and Marja who are consistently helpful to all of us who contribute essays for publication or who attempt to prepare for conferences.

I would also like to offer the garland of gratitude to all those luminous teachers of the past who gave us soul-saving teachings and were such resplendent examples of the spiritual life: Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mahavira, Mohammed, Rumi and a constellation of other wise and compassionate teachers. Each one promulgated some facet of *Theosophia*, the Wisdom-religion. And every true devotee of these pristine religions contributes to and enriches the legacy of humanity as we move into the uncharted waters of the future. In this deeper sense, there is no such thing as a non-Theosophist. We are all seekers of spiritual truths and we are all brothers and sisters of the human family.

I would also like to offer my profoundest gratitude to both H.P. Blavatsky of the 1875 Cycle and Shri Raghavan Iyer and Nandini Iyer of the 1975 Cycle. As to H.P. Blavatsky, she was remarkable in every way. She was, *par excellence*, the courageous purveyor of the teachings of the Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas in the Nineteenth Century. She had no immediate predecessors nor successors commensurate with her occult stature. She continues to be the spiritual gold standard of that most precious of all virtues, fidelity to the Wisdom-Teachers behind the Theosophical Movement and to their iridescent teachings. She remains today an unwavering beacon light for all students of Wisdom and virtue across the globe.

The coming of the 1975 Cycle brought with it two remarkable souls: Shri Raghavan and Nandini Iyer. For those of us who had the privilege of knowing Nandini she was truly a marvel. She possessed the most acute and far-reaching philosophical intelligence that one had ever encountered. She was an Oxford don and a Theosophical teacher all in one. With respect to the former, one of her Oxford tutors referred to her in a letter of commendation as perhaps one of the finest philosophical mind that Oxford had ever produced. With respect to Theosophy, Nandini was so brilliant in her intuitive grasp of the Theosophical philosophy and its indissoluble bond with all the world's religions that one can easily imagine a Plato sitting at her feet in radiant admiration and gratitude. But beyond her mastery of all things conceptual, Nandini was, in a sense, Sita-come-again. She was spiritual royalty. Her heart was pure as the virgin snow and it seemed to be one of oceanic depths. She was unflinchingly loyal to H.P. Blavatsky and, like the latter, lived and breathed for the amelioration of the human race. She was indeed what her consort Shri Raghavan once said of her: "She is "a golden Kshatriya-- the embodiment of spiritual fearlessness, ethical probity, and humility."

Shri Raghavan Iyer was the sacrificial, Promethean forerunner of the universal civilizations yet to come. He was wisdom and magnanimity incarnate. In this respect, he exemplified a multitude of supernal Aquarian qualities. He was, in one sense, very Indian: he was spiritual, cultured, brilliant, and full of the graces that immediately remind one of ancient Aryavarta and of Golden Ages long past. He was also very English: he was confident, highly educated, extremely literate, and at ease with statesmen, scientists, educators, and royalty. He was also very American: he was a true and fearless rebel, innovative, resourceful, visionary, and the eternal friend of the common man. But, beyond all this, he was, in a much profounder sense, the Universal Man: original, *sui generis* and timeless. His sympathies were always compassionately inclusive and his repeated emphasis – from first to last – was to "draw the larger circle" through the magic of selfless action.

Speaking of magic, let us now turn to this evening's topic for consideration: "Individuation and Global Responsibility: the Subtle magic of Lincoln, Eisenhower and Mandela."

II. Individuation and Global Responsibility

Shri Raghavan Iyer, in his pioneering book, *Parapolitics: Toward the City of Man*, tells us that true statesmen are "dreamers of the dreams of men". He also intimates that the very greatest statesmen can be more than dreamers. They can be "magicians of the heart". A magician, we are told, can be seen as an awakener and a precipitator of the latent, unseen wisdom and goodness in human beings. In fact, a magician is one who can, by a conscious act of his rationally directed imagination, help turn the forces of evil to good. However, a true statesman can neither be a visionary nor a magician unless he or she has spiritually, intellectually and morally individuated to a high degree. To individuate is to expand the circumference of creative initiative for the good of all and to simultaneously deepen one's feeling of responsibility for the suffering of others. This is not easy. However, philosophical understanding of what it might mean to 'individuate' can be of great help.

Let me begin our exploration of the concept of 'individuation' and the connecting cord of responsibility with a question: "Would you, ladies and gentlemen, agree with me when I say that we are all – in some meaningful sense – 'self-determining individuals'?"

Good. I agree. Now, let me ask you another question: "Aren't we all members of a particular community which community has needs that its members must responsibly satisfy? Good. I concur. So, we are all, in some sense, self-determining individuals with compelling obligations to the society into which we are born.

These two truths seem to be in constant tension with each other. How does one harmonize freely chosen actions with meeting the multi-leveled needs of our community? Without a moral hyphen that integrates self-determination and social obligations, we get unwholesome extremes. Thus, to over-stress individual liberty usually results in the dilution of social values and the incremental retrogression of

society into anarchy. However, if we stress the primacy of community cohesion and civil law over individual freedom, we create a boring uniformity, individual lethargy, and social stagnation. Fortunately, from the standpoint of individuation, the bridging concept between individual liberty and meeting our social responsibilities is the notion of *dharma*, or voluntary compliance with our personal and social obligations. In this respect, India has something to teach the world, since *Dharma* or self-sustaining family and community duties has always been its strength.

However, to simply meet our civic duties to our respective communities is not necessarily to “individuate” or self-actualize in a higher sense. Personal and community responsibilities performed in a quasi-unthinking manner can actually be a form of intellectual and moral passivity. That is, one might be an upright citizen but one might never really “think for oneself”; one might never pause; one might never reflect; and therefore, one might never intellectually enrich one’s beliefs or show moral courage when one’s society needs it the most. In other words, one might never really activate one’s full intellectual, moral, and spiritual potential such that it intelligently elevates social consciousness and makes a Promethean contribution to the future of the human family. Sadly, the unbounded, multi-dimensional spirit in man is rarely activated to any significant degree in modern civilization. We are, in a Socratic sense, “sleep walking” through life. Yet, in moments of crippling social crisis, the spirit in man often wakes up and inspires us to act with resolve and daring. When it does, it can leave us in a state of amazement and wonder. To our delight, we rediscover that individual human beings can be surprisingly self-surpassing, courageous, and compassionate.

Given that there is truly an indomitable spirit that dwells in the heart of each man and woman, how, then, should we characterize human beings? How might we conceive of that most complex, baffling, ridiculous, and yet, the most exalted of all creatures -- man? There are clearly many ways of defining man. Those ways span the spectrum of human qualities from the divine to the demoniac. Man has been characterized as: a rational and moral agent, an incorrigible sinner, a fallen angel, a social animal, a sophisticated supercomputer, and, finally, a creature consumed with passions and self-interest. All of

these views embody some spark of truth about human beings at certain times in history and at certain moments over the span of an individual's lifetime. However, the most comprehensive way of characterizing man is to say that he is a "self-surpassing, self-aware, rational and moral agent." This very expansive, philosophical way of viewing man is, I believe, compatible with the Wisdom of the ages or *Theosophia*. It is also the only way we can come to understand the concrete reality of a Lincoln, an Eisenhower, a Gandhi, or a Mandela. It is also the only way we can begin to edge toward a minimum grasp of a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, or a Sage.

This inclusive and exalted view of man, by the way, is exquisitely expressed by Shakespeare when he has Hamlet say:

"What a piece of work is a man! How Noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and motion how express and admirable! In action, how like an Angel. In apprehension, how like a God!"

Clearly, Shakespeare's tribute to human nature at its best is an ideal toward which we may all aspire. However, we can only approximate the ideal by degrees. Individual moral and spiritual perfection must be won, it must be earned. To sculpt ourselves into the *divine imago*, we must courageously and skillfully conquer our passions, ambitions, and self-interests. We can only do this by consciously vowing to serve others.

Now, if we are willing to see man in this morally and psychologically more comprehensive and complex way, how then should we conceive of society? Society, like man, has been conceived in a variety of ways. It has been seen as a nurturer of virtues but also as an unavoidable oppressor of the human spirit. Both are true –at times. At its very root, however, society is a moral community. It is, ideally, a *polis*. It is a living, dynamic matrix of principled relationships confirmed by formal laws and cultural codes. Fundamentally, society is all about meeting basement-level needs and, simultaneously, fostering human excellences that reside in the cupola of human consciousness. For these dual purposes, every culture or society evolves what have been termed 'civilizing centers' – centers that affect its citizens for good or for ill. These 'civilizing centers' are

called family, school, employment, religious institutions, and government. All such seminal orbits of influence attempt to inculcate the best cultural qualities and behaviors in each of us. In a word, the cultural excellences that these primary institutions nurture and the opportunities they afford for meeting elementary human needs affect our ability to individuate, to mature, to self-actualize. To put it another way, all societies, whether closed or open, necessarily 'socialize' their citizens to some degree. This is understandable and fulfills a vital Vishnu function. It preserves and forwards a society's quintessential beliefs and practices into futurity. But if we do not go beyond cultural shibboleths at times, we easily enter into the slip stream of conventional thought and practice.

But all of the preceding does not ensure that individuals will individuate beyond their culture and tap their unknown, intellectual, moral, and spiritual potential. They will not necessarily awaken their intuitive intelligence nor appeal to the latent intelligence and goodness in others. To individuate in a deeper sense is to go beyond being a good citizen and a responsible model. It is the capacity to creatively transcend self and society when it is most needed, when it is most helpful. It is, in some sense, to rise inwardly to the plane of the universal, the para- cultural.

Let me illustrate the notion of responsibly "transcending ego and society" by citing an example from ancient history. We have the true story of courageous individuation as told by the eminent Greek historian, Edith Hamilton. It is the tale of a Spartan soldier who engaged in an act that was both wise and unexpectedly compassionate for a citizen of Sparta. It is an especially remarkable story because ancient Sparta, in contrast to ancient Athens, was a highly structured, militaristic city-state which allowed little room for individual creativity in thought and morals and resisted social change of any sort. The tale goes like this:

A young Spartan officer, responsible for entertaining the Spartan generals on the eve of the destruction of Athens, took courage in both hands and decided to read out a soliloquy on the importance of loyalty – a prime Spartan virtue. After voicing the eloquent monologue on the various forms of loyalty, the Spartan officer went quiet. The

silence lasted a long time but finally the chief Spartan general asked the young officer what Spartan wrote such a magnificent piece of literature. The critical moment had come, and with a cool assurance that he was doing the right thing, the officer responded that it had been written by an Athenian playwright, Sophocles. A much longer silence charged the night air. Finally, the chief general said, "Fellow generals, it would seem that we must revise our thinking about the destruction of Athens. A city-state that produces a Sophocles deserves some form of mercy. Let it be known to all your officers and men that the Athenians most treasured cultural site, the Acropolis, is not to be touched. We will leave them their art and their architecture, their tribute to their gods." The circle of generals all nodded with one accord and the intrepid Spartan officer-of-entertainment breathed a sign of satisfaction. He had visited Athens and admired their tribute to their gods and was relieved by the decisions of the Spartan commander.

Now, what is interesting about this historical example and about our emerging concept of "the individual", is that we have edged into the heady domain of the metaphysical and the meta-psychological. How so? Well, once we acknowledge the potential for each individual to transcend both ego and culture, we have engaged in a quantum shift in thought and in perspective. We are admitting that we are not only self-aware, rational and responsible agents but we are also self-surpassing beings. We are capable of transcending our personality and our culture. We are capable of consciously setting aside our name-and-form self; our limiting personal experiences, our mental habits, and our cultural mores. More importantly, we are acknowledging the fact that we are able to affect others for the greater good; that others, by virtue of our insightful actions, are able to rise above themselves and their culture and thereby change for the better – even if it's only for a moment. This we might say is "minor magic", but magic, nonetheless.

What seems to be the deeper dynamics of any form of human magic -- minor or otherwise? It is this. When we individuate or feel more universally responsible and open to the potential in each and all for spiritual and intellectual growth, we progressively awaken our own inner, spiritual powers of perception. To individuate intellectually and morally is to begin the mysterious process of assimilating the immortal self within us.

Theosophically speaking, this immortal self is a boundless center of consciousness. It is dimensionless. It is capable of infinite expansion and that is why we are able to perpetually expand our sense of self (of who we are) to include more and more people of diverse qualities and adverse conditions. The immortal self is all-knowing, replete with creative powers, completely fearless, and unconditionally compassionate. Furthermore, the immortal self sloughs off its mortal vestures periodically only to reassume new ones on its great return pilgrimage to the source of all life. So, when we consciously strive to think more comprehensively and with greater depth, we expand the circle of the embodied self as well as intensify our felt responsibility for others. This invisible process can culminate in a “second birth”, a mental incarnation of our higher creative and intuitive faculties. This, in turn, releases a divine efflux that elevates those individuals within the radius of our increasingly refined consciousness.

To put all this another way, individuation requires us to cross the threshold of Plato’s divided line and enter into the wonder world of pure thought, i.e., pure contemplation of abstract principles, archetypal models, and enduring values. We are able to think more universally and more trans-culturally. We are not afraid to question our culture, our religion, our political ideology, or our values. The signature of being human is our willingness to question. I am not saying that we are doubting the wisdom of our beloved teachers or doubting our noble religion itself or even doubting our political allegiances. Our questioning is necessary for us to have credibility with ourselves as well as with others. We question so that we may understand more deeply; so that we may expand the perimeter of creative interpretation and so that we may increase the range of creative applications of those beliefs that we most cherish. It also helps us to see where reform is needed and to take suitable action when and where we can. Individuation is really the process of becoming more universal in thought, feeling, and action. The more universal, the more we merge our mind with the divine, immortal man within. Furthermore, the more universal we become, the more we are able to focus on particular individuals and proposed actions with greater insight and sympathy. We do not see people in terms of limiting categories but as immortal souls with unknown and untapped potential.

It should be evident from all that has been said that genuine magic calls for highly individuated individuals who are both creative and responsive to the needs of others. Furthermore, the magic they bring about is not the magic of the Las Vegas illusionist; he deceives our senses in order to entertain us. It is not the magic of those who possess and display psychic powers such as telepathy, telekinesis, and the like. The latter amaze us perhaps and awaken an unhealthy curiosity about psychic powers but they do not affect our hearts or inspire us to engage in self-sacrificial action for the benefit of others. Nor are we speaking here of the magic of physical healing such as performed by Jesus or Apollonius. One engaged in spiritual magic, is one who awakens the deeper heart quality within us—the innate will to serve and engage the world courageously and creatively. Since the heart has several layers (ranging from passions to aspirations), let us call the deeper layer that the magician touches the “alpha dimension” of the heart. It is that heart center that is benevolent, transformative and makes spiritual, moral and intellectual growth possible. The true magician, then, has the soul wisdom to help fertilize this invisible center in the hidden chamber of the heart. And when this is done, it is up to us to make wise use of the karmic opportunity given us by any and every Magus Teacher.

III. Statesmen as Magicians of the Heart

We are now going to invoke the blessings of the raja rishis of ancient times; the king-initiates referred to by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* when he points to the *guruparampara*, the sacred, spiritual lineage of enlightened teachers of which the *raja rishis* are an integral part. The King-Initiates of ancient epochs exemplified the divinity as well as the dignity of true royalty, of enlightened rulership for the welfare of all. These eminent Kshatriyas exemplified all the sublime virtues and cultural graces which we yearn for in our turbulent times. Despite our authentic longings, we might easily doubt that such selfless individuals could actually exist untarnished in the political realm. Is it possible, we wonder, for even the most sincere politician to be both a wise witness and a just participant in the complex world of modern politics? Yes, it is possible as we will see.

Each of the three exemplary leaders that I have selected for our consideration this evening (Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Mandela) seem to qualify as statesmen who

intellectually and morally individuated to such a remarkable degree that they became unconscious magicians in their own right. While they made no claims of being wise – much less of being magicians -- they met many of the qualifications or preconditions for having a heart-transforming effect on the lives of others.

All three were unconditionally committed to a compelling vision of a better world. And their respective visions became the “thrice sacred flame” that illuminated and guided them over the arc of their extraordinary lives. Lincoln, for example, saw America as a living experiment in democracy and was wholeheartedly pledged to extending the principles enunciated in its forgotten “Declaration of Independence”: namely, the propositions of liberty and – most especially -- of equality. Eisenhower foresaw the emergence of “a new global order of the ages” in which the yoke of colonialism was to be cast aside and the United Nations was to become the primary civilizing agency for universal justice between nations. Mandela was committed to racial reconciliation and he consciously risked alienating both Black Africans and white Africanas in his conscientious efforts to bring about racial accord in South Africa.

All three leaders were humble before their respective visions and all cared for the common man deeply. All three were selfless when it was most needed and all were -- at all times -- fearless. Finally, what former president Nixon said of Eisenhower can equally be said of Lincoln and Mandela. When asked to specify the quintessential quality of Eisenhower, former Vice President under Eisenhower said: “It’s simple. Ike loved everybody. And, with rare exceptions, everybody loved Ike.”

Lincoln

Let us turn to President Lincoln first. As we know, Lincoln – and the brave white and colored soldiers of the Union Army -- freed six million slaves from lives of misery and degradation. But what is very little known, is that Lincoln was more than a man of political action; he was also a gifted thinker. He was that rare breed -- a moral thinker in the realm of politics. By the time he assumed the mantle of the presidency, he had individuated to a high moral and intellectual degree. He believed fervently in the

“politics of responsibility”, of objective idealism. As he once told a friend, “I clarified my ethical principles by studying the teachings of Jesus, strengthened my ability to reason clearly by studying Euclid’s geometrical propositions, and improved my understanding of politics from a careful reading of Shakespeare’s tragedies.”

It is evident to the perceptive student of Lincoln, that he had not only an alpha heart but an alpha intellect as well. Therefore, it should not be surprising that his focused compassion, when syncopated with his versatile intelligence, could indeed be magical in its transforming effect on others. His magic, his alchemy, often manifested itself through the art of timely storytelling and not only through acts of political self-transcendence. His stories, witticisms, and perceptive accounts of imagined and actual life-incidents were numerous and diverse. Sometimes humorous stories or incidents were told to diffuse an atmosphere of hostility. For example, Lincoln handled the charge by his opponent, Senator Douglas, that he was two-faced by resorting to self-deprecating humor. With a serious look on his face Lincoln turned to the somewhat truculent crowd and asked them: “Ladies and gentlemen, if I really did have two faces, would I be wearing this one?”

Sometimes stories and tales were told by Lincoln to release the accelerating tension of disagreement; sometimes as a substitute for the logic of argument; and, sometimes, to restore sanity when it could so easily have been lost during the most depressing periods of the Civil War – of which there were many.

Lincoln’s timely storytelling can be seen as “magic” of a democratic kind. Magic that all of us do at times – especially with dear friends and in moments of soul serenity . Lincoln’s instructive stories and witty tales were especially magical because they were often so unexpectedly revelatory and even life-changing at times to his listeners. As noted, story-telling succeeded where logical reasoning and argument would most likely have had little effect on people’s willingness to change moral direction. For example, several prominent supporters of Lincoln approached him in his office with a host of demands as well as unsought advice on to how to handle certain politically sensitive

issues. After listening to their often contradictory advice and admonitions, Lincoln asked all to cease talking. He then said the following:

“Gentlemen, suppose all the property you were worth was in gold and this you had placed in the hands of one man to carry across the Niagara River on a rope. Would you shake the cable and keep shouting at him: ‘stand up a little straighter; stoop a little more, go a little faster, go a little slower, lean a little more to the south?’ No, you would hold your breath, as well as your tongue, and keep your hands off until he got safely over.

The Government is carrying an enormous weight. Untold treasure is in their hands. Don’t badger them. Keep silent and we will get you safely across.”

(Lincoln on Leadership, by Donald T. Phillips, pg. 91)

All five gentlemen nodded their heads in recognition of the cogency of Lincoln’s advice and apt tale and all left the oval office a little humbler and with more human understanding of the real situation that Lincoln and his executive branch faced.

Beyond his gift for tale-telling, Lincoln engaged in a subtler magic, that of purifying prejudices embedded in the public mind, i.e., all Southerners are evil due to the ‘Cain-mark’ of slavery. On one particular, historic occasion, Lincoln was able to use inspired “word-magic” to transmute the attitude of Northerners toward their Southern brothers and sisters. The specific transformative moment was when Union supporters gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the Union Army’s turning-point victory over the Confederate Army on the battlefield at Gettysburg. The brief commemorative that Lincoln finished writing on his way to Gettysburg and delivered amidst the controlled chaos of that festive occasion no doubt had little immediate impact on his bustling audience. However, when it was later read by multitudes in the comforts of leisure and the quiet of solitude, the reverential tone of the Gettysburg Address’, its invocation of pristine principles, and its universal sentiments enlightened the hearts and purified the minds of many – then, and thereafter. The ten sentences that make up Lincoln’s two minute “Gettysburg Address” are truly mantramic; like the verses of Shelley’s poetry or

the meter of Shakespeare's Tempest. Lincoln's address was intuitively expressed in a cadence and rhythm that seemed to faithfully mirror healing celestial harmonies.

Indeed, Lincoln's eloquent peroration of the Gettysburg battlefield is truly a humble consecration, an offering to the "gods" of reconciliation, a eulogy to the nobility of all those soldiers who sacrificed for the Cause in which each fervently believed. (Heaven, by the way, is completely indifferent to the color of the soldiers' uniforms. It celebrates their valorous human spirit not their personal allegiances.) It is noteworthy that when Lincoln's tribute is read out loud today, we are so moved by its unexpected reverence, poignancy, and compassionate embrace of soldiers from both sides of the conflict that our painful images of Civil War battles momentarily subside and, strangely perhaps, we feel cleansed and uplifted by those unknown soldiers on both sides who each gave "the last full measure of devotion".

Eisenhower

Dwight David Eisenhower, too, did his own magic both as the Supreme Allied Commander of allied forces in WW II and as a two-term President of America. Eisenhower drew out the best from the common man as well as elicited more than the best from the very best when it was most needed. There are numerous testimonials to the peculiar magnetic effect that many felt while being in the immediate orbit of Eisenhower's pulsating presence. Many noted an energy emanating from him that was almost palpable. Fortunately, his etheric efflux was not charismatic, seductive, or domineering in its effect. It was benign, warm, and welcoming. When he turned his full mental attention to you and spontaneously gave you his incandescent smile, it was simultaneously charming and disarming. But, more than all this, Eisenhower had the true magician's ability to immediately win over your trust. He was easy to trust because he was so willing to give you his full, open-ended, sympathetic attention. Furthermore, he was unusual in that he was able to suspend the complex colorations of previous interactions and listen to you afresh. It was like a perpetual first meeting. Past judgements were suspended and prior disagreements were of no real consequence either. Every encounter was, in some sense, an original. At the moment of personal

engagement, a bridge was welcomingly extended across the spaces between you both and he was already crossing it to sit with you a while and discuss matters trivial or troublesome. Temperamentally speaking, the supple light of dawn was almost always within and around Eisenhower. It was rarely nighttime. He was fundamentally an optimist who sloughed off moments of discouragement with relative ease. His inner luminosity drew friends a little closer and made enemies less distant and more receptive. He was, in a Buddhist and Socratic sense, that rarest of individuals; he was one who was “morally and spiritually awake”; not only to conscience and to principles, but to the hopes, aspirations and felt-needs of the diverse peoples he met and served.

The litmus test of Eisenhower’s natural magic was his series of private meetings with Stalin at the end of WWII. Stalin, the most suspicious and paranoid of men, was notably struck with Eisenhower’s character and conduct during the war and, after the defeat of the Nazis, Stalin invited Eisenhower to visit Moscow. Eisenhower accepted the invitation and flew to Moscow with General Zhukov -- the brilliant Russian general whom Eisenhower felt was the primary reason the Allies defeated the Germans. Eisenhower spent a week in Moscow and, in addition to private conversations with Stalin, was feted by the dictator in public. In fact, during a parade in Moscow, Stalin insisted that Eisenhower stand on Lenin’s tomb, a privilege no non-Communist or foreigner had ever been accorded. When Eisenhower left Moscow later that week, Stalin told Avril Harriman, the U.S. Ambassador:

“General Eisenhower is a very great man, not only because of his military accomplishments but because of his human, friendly, kind and frank nature. He is not a coarse, brusque man like most military.”

(Eisenhower: Soldier and President, Stephen E. Ambrose, pg. 218)

Clearly, there was magic in Eisenhower’s way of relating to Stalin. Eisenhower’s inner radiance, his trust, and his ability to instill trust – even in the most distrustful of men – was extraordinary. And, most importantly, Eisenhower’s ability to suspend judgment and treat Stalin as a human being who was just as much interested in peace as he was,

made Stalin relax and confess to Eisenhower how much Russia needed the help of America after the war – not only monetarily but in terms of the assistance of American scientists and technicians. Eisenhower was sympathetic and put Stalin at ease as very few could. For a magical moment, the two leaders became “co-conspirators for the good” -- of the world as well as of Mother Russia.

Mandela

Nelson Mandela was a great admirer of President Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi. He studied both their lives meticulously. Like Gandhi, Mandela affected a revolutionary change of heart in the soul of a nation. In his case, it was a simultaneous transformation in the attitudes of both the black South African and the white Africana. Mandela successfully exorcised the self-pitying demon of revenge in blacks and non-violently slayed the hydra-headed snake of fear in whites.

Interestingly enough, Mandela unwittingly laid the basis for his future “soul magic” while in prison. Several years before he was released from Robben Island prison, he decided to study and master the Africana language. He wished to better understand Africanas, learn their history and, if possible, communicate with them in their native tongue. As he entered into the complicated mind-set and history of the white minority, he realized that he had to understand – of all things – the white rulers passion for rugby! Rugby, as he discovered, could be a relatively easy means of engaging in non-political, non-confrontational conversation prior to discussing volatile political issues such as the black vote and the inevitable dismantling of apartheid in the years ahead. So, accordingly, Mandela studied the history of rugby, learned its rules, and memorized all the names of past legendary as well as current team players.

The South African rugby team was called the “Springboks” and they were revered by the white Africana. Understandably, they were hated with a passion by black South Africans who continually rooted against them whenever they were able to attend rugby games. Not only did the average black citizen disparage the team, but the African National Congress party in South Africa managed to get the Springboks disqualified

from participating in international competition. As a result, the Springboks could not compete for any world rugby title.

Mandela's occasion for creative magic did not form clearly in his mind until shortly after he was elected president. But, from that point on, he began to consciously visualize, carefully think through, and progressively assemble all the characters necessary for his "Great Play"; it would be a deep drama of the human spirit, one worthy of an Aeschylus or a Shakespeare. And, like the latter with "The Tempest", Mandela was intent on bringing about a convergence of events that could conceivably transmute the lead of mutual hatred and distrust into the gold of respect and understanding. He wanted to awaken the conscience of the nation in different senses, and bring about, racial harmony and active civil tolerance.

In brief, President Mandela managed to get the Springboks rugby team re-instated and eligible for international competition. He then managed to convince World Rugby to let South Africa host the next world cup in Johannesburg, South Africa. Just as importantly, Mandela, by degrees, won over the Springbok team. In particular, he won the affection and admiration of the Springbok's captain, Francois Pienaar. He did so by telling him with uttermost sincerity that his team was representing the whole nation and that the entire country was behind he and his fellow Springboks. Mandela also raised a question for Pienaar to ponder (the same one he said that he pondered every day): "How do we get the loyal people around us to exceed their own expectations of what they can do?" In other words, how do we elicit the extraordinary from others?" Pienaar and Mandela were able to do just that – each in his own way. Slowly, thoughtfully and with great respect for each member of the team, Mandela earned the trust of the Springboks. In time, as journalist John Carlin reported, "He (Mandela) had won their hearts." And, to the surprise of the rugby world, the Springboks earned their way to the World Rugby finals, held in Johannesburg.

What happened next is best expressed by Richard Stengel in his biography, Mandela's Way:

“In his most famous gesture of reconciliation, Mandela wore the Springbok jersey and cap to the rugby finals at Johannesburg’s Park Stadium in 1995. When he strode out before the game to greet the team captain, the mostly white crowd began to chant, “Nelson, Nel-son!” It was one of the most electrifying moments in the history of sport and politics. Tokyo Sexwale, who had been imprisoned with Mandela on Robben Island, told (the journalist) Carlin, “That was the moment when I understood more clearly than ever before that the liberation struggle was not so much about liberating blacks from bondage, as it was about liberating white people from fear.”

Mandela had attempted the seemingly absurd in order to achieve the almost impossible. He had affected a change in the soul perceptions of both blacks and whites. They each began to see each other in a more accepting light, and, in so doing, they unconsciously expanded and enriched their own sense of selfhood.

IV. The Buddha’s Magic: the Conversion of Angulimala

One of the most paradigmatic occasions in recorded history of high human magic (of accelerated mind transformation) is that of the Buddha’s conversion of the robber and assassin, Angulimala. The epic confrontation between the Magus-Teacher, Buddha, and the merciless bandit, Angulimala, goes as follows:

Angulimala, the brigand, was biding his time outside the town of Savatthi, ruled by Maharaja Pasenadi. Angulimala was intent on attacking the small town early the next day. He had been terrorizing this section of North India for two decades and he inwardly savored the thought that his fearsome presence seemed to spark a conflagration of fears which reduced to ashes all heroic resolves to defeat him in battle.

The Buddha and his spiritual retinue happened upon Savatthi where he met and spoke with the maharaja. The Buddha was stunned to discover that so many people lived in abject fear due to the actions of one, lone robber. So, without hesitation or fanfare, the Buddha sought out the bandit in the nearby jungle. When Angulimala encountered the Buddha, he found himself in the presence of one who completely baffled him. The Buddha showed no fear, was calm and sweet. But more than that, the Buddha challenged

Angulimala and told him that it was time for him to take on a much greater challenge than merely terrorizing villagers and slaying soldiers. The Buddha pointed to the Path of enlightenment through self-conquest. After an intense dialogue that ranged from ridicule to awe on Angulimala's part and from kind to frank truths on Buddha's part, the former finally yielded to the selfless magic of the latter.

Angulimala eventually took the initial vow that all monks take and entered the sanctuary of the sangha. The monks as well as King Pasenadi were initially stunned but did not dare contravene the Buddha's magic that seemed to bring about a radical transformation in Angulimala. However, the townspeople were not so forgiving and Angulimala was beaten and, as a result, became blind in one eye. By the end of his life, Angulimala's conversion and exemplary conduct won him many admirers and was a living testimony of the potential in all men and women to affect a permanent change in their lives for the good.

In this dramatic historical encounter between the Buddha and a robber, we can readily discern the two opposite poles of human potentiality – the Self-enlightened and the self-deluded. The Sage (Buddha) is beyond even our most exalted conceptions of "individuation". He is para-individuated; a cosmic intelligence. He is suffused with transcendent wisdom and unconditional compassion while the deluded Angulimala is steeped in spiritual ignorance, rampant passion, and over-flowing arrogance. The Buddha's mind is as luminous as a thousand suns while Angulimala's mind is defiled, lunar, and destined for states of woe. Fortunately for Angulimala, he came into personal contact with the Buddha; an individual who had conquered the ego myriad lifetimes ago and could instantly understand the degraded condition of the disfigured and depraved Angulimala. The robber was suffering from acute "soul sickness". As a consummate spiritual physician, Gautama Buddha saw the medicine needed and the self-transmutation required. If Angulimala took the medicine offered by the Buddha, then self-regeneration was possible but was by no means guaranteed.

At the end of their extraordinary dialogue in the jungle, Angulimala, chastised and humbled, came to see that he must attempt the seemingly impossible. He must attempt

to visualize the possibility of enlightenment while inhabiting a debased mind . He must, somehow, see beyond himself. His initial act of self-transcendence was to place his trust in the Buddha and to be humble before the Teaching. But he must also awaken his mind, he must arouse his rational and moral awareness. How could Angulimala do this? How could he overcome the inertia of lives of self-indulgent passions and of mental sloth? It is not enough that the Buddha's compassion was at work on the inner planes, fertilizing the seed of intuitive intelligence within Angulimala. More was needed. Angulimala's mind must, in some way, be stimulated, challenged, and inspired. This is where the confrontational dialogue between the Buddha and Angulimala proved pivotal. Angulimala could not initiate a spiritual conversation with himself. The Buddha knew this and so he initiated a dialogue between them by giving Angulimala a vision of a battle more glorious than all other battles. That battle was for spiritual freedom. Through Angulimala's initial ego-centered questions and Buddha's frank but encouraging answers, Angulimala became more authentically focused and sincere about the path of transfiguration. Interestingly enough, Angulimala's and Buddha's "dialogue in the jungle" is surprisingly Platonic because it is so existentially genuine. Each is in dead earnest. Their intense, pointed dialogue is spiritual engagement at a high level. Each questions the other. However, unlike Angulimala, the Buddha's speech is surcharged with logic light. It is illuminating, healing, and purifying. He points Angulimala toward spiritual North and challenges him to undertake the perilous quest. Accordingly, Angulimala is inspired to do so and, on the spot, takes the vows of a Buddhist monk.

By the end of his long life, Angulimala is recognized by members of the Sangha as a saint and it is said that two verses in the *Dhammapada* were spoken by the Buddha as a tribute to him:

"Whosoever by a good deed covers the evil done brightens this world like the moon freed from clouds."

"This world is wrapped in darkness; few there be who can see therein. Only few are those who go to realms of bliss like birds escaping from a net."

(D, Canto 13, "The World", verses 7 and 8)

V. Closing Thoughts

Magic is ubiquitous. It is in Nature and in man. It occurs wherever and whenever spirit and matter creatively coalesce through the agency of a purified intelligence. If this is true, then isn't it a wonderful thought my friends to think that at this very moment in time there are literally hundreds of millions of benevolent magicians on our good globe? Who are they, you ask? They are the babies of every culture. Every baby is a natural, unconscious, white magician. Babies are pure vehicles of the light of the immanent spirit, of the *Atman*. Their personal mind is incipient and cannot impede the undulating flow of the spirit. Babies radiate the sweet efflux of *Buddhi* through their spontaneous laughter, their delightful curiosity, and their sympathetic responses to their mother happiness and sorrows. Babies breathe purity and goodness.

And what of the child between the ages of three and seven, before the higher faculties begin to incarnate and long before the onset of puberty and its disorienting effects? The growing child is engaged in the holy activity of learning and the power that comes from knowledge. Think of it. To the young boy or girl, the world has just been created. To the young, inquisitive mind, *Fiat Lux* or "Let there be Light" is today and every day. Each discovery is an original to the young child. The growing learner cares not for history or for ego. It is full of love and trust and possesses an unblemished imagination. Parents and teachers are held in awe. What is more, young children freely and willingly embrace diverse legends and stories of human bravery and self-sacrifice. They live in a Golden Age for a while and wise parents do their best to help them carry that attitude forward when they enter formal education. All in all, to young children, magic is existentially real. It doesn't need any explanation.

And what of adults? We are more blessed than we often realize. The Great Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas (the greatest of compassionate magicians) are ever at work in multiple orbits across the globe. In addition, there are secular hotris among us as well. There are unknown Lincolns, Eisenhowers, Mandelas, and Gandhis hidden in plain sight. And like the reborn Odysseus of Plato's Myth of Er, they are content to live their lives in ordinary roles this time and quietly go about their sublime *dharma* unnoticed. If we look with an open mind and a heart untainted by cynicism, we will see them.

There is another class of adults whose very *bhakti* or devotion alchemizes the mind. What do I mean? What I mean is that enlightened minds can awaken other minds and inspire other hearts across cultures and historical epochs; but, only when devotion is present. Time and geography can be *mayavic* or deceptive; but not to those who revere great Teachers. For example, when the true devotee of Jesus turns daily to the New Testament to replenish his spirit and purify his mind, he is unconsciously declaring that Jesus is living, vital and present in the words and images of his teachings. Such an earnest devotee is not only rising above time and culture, but, more importantly, he is rising above the gravitational pull of his own mind-set. It is an act of pure communion with the spirit of his Teacher. For a while, he or she is bringing the hidden Jesus forward into the present moment, into his or her own mental world and letting Jesus' teachings shed their revelatory light on the complex labyrinth of his daily duties. Millions of dedicated devotees of the world's diverse religions experience this daily even though they might not consciously think of it as magic. But it is magic because it transforms the mind and regenerates the heart.

Beyond these millions of *bhaktis* across the globe, there are those innocents among us who are inexperienced in the perverted and torturous ways of the world. They are spiritually vaccinated and are immune to the cynicism and dystopian thinking of the worldly wise and politically ambitious. They are patient and trust that the best is yet to be. They look forward not backward and they look beyond the miasma of the present too.

Let me say in closing, that I believe in human magic. Human magic is real and omnipresent. The Bodhisattva's magical emanations are spontaneous, benevolent, and uplifting. They touch the hearts of the ready, the reverential, and the receptive at every level of life and in every condition whatsoever.

I wish you all the very best for the coming year and for the decades ahead as we enter more fully into the Aquarian Age.

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