



Maturity and Growth, Part 3.

Characteristics of the Self-Actualized Individual

In this part of the series, I want to take a look at what some of the traits are of a person operating from the top of Maslow's triangle. This seems like a worthwhile pursuit: As we look at each, we can put to good use our intellect and the strength of our feelings to accept or reject the trait. For the layman, our prior experiences should be a good guide. For those with a less subjective orientation and who enjoy math and statistics, it appears fully in the Carl Rogers scientific research, and also currently through the expert work of Drs. Deci and Ryan, and their team at the University of Rochester.

As some of you are aware, I am actively involved on the board with the Carl Rogers "Center for the Studies of the Person" in La Jolla, California. Allow me to share with you Roger's view of some traits of the "Fully Functioning Person", along with some personal comments.

With respect to maturity, I believe that I am operating from a psychologically mature state when:

1. I have increased trust in the directions of my life that I am drawn to. Through an unencumbered process of my own trial and error, I detect what I love to do, and the way I like to do it. I trust all of my organismic "self" in all my capacities, and the orientation that I take. In doing so, I find the time flies by, as I am fully engaged, creative, and excited. I have actualized what I was destined to become.
2. I have increased openness to my own experience. When I am truly open, I expose my full self to what comes to me from within myself, from my environment, and from others. I am in tune with my surroundings, and me. I am fully aware. I maintain objectivity, without undue coloring, judging, or avoiding. Through openness, I allow myself to be affected and grow. As a result, I find myself to be different today than I was yesterday.
3. I increase living in the moment, in the here and now. Instead of predicting, calculating, and manipulating my social environment, I trust in myself to interact, cope, and grow with what comes to me without fear. As I begin to trust in all of who I am, as opposed to living out of a part of myself, I can access all of my capabilities and emotions to assimilate and grow, in each moment of my existence. Through discovery, recovery, and integration of more and more of myself, more options become available to me as I continue to experience and develop.
4. As I spend more time engaging deeply with others, and less time with material trappings and things, I naturally become more accepting and loving of others, their imperfections and frailties, as human beings. As a result, I ultimately find this same acceptance of myself.



5. I exist more in being who I truly am, rather than seeming to be. As I don't fear threats to my basic needs, and feel safe in this regard, I no longer need to expend energy manipulating other people by seeming to be something that I am not. I am comfortable in being different, being who I am. And I am as I am, as opposed to being what others want me to be. Social conditioning; the "oughts" and "shoulds" of others less affect me. I move away from acting strictly to please others, being like them, or meeting their expectations of me.

In part 4 of "Maturity and Growth", I want to discuss the optimal conditions for bringing about the mature and growing state that has been described, for ourselves, and for others that we care deeply about.