

WHEN MYSTICS HAVE PROPHETS FOR DINNER: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHICAL  
ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S VISIONS USING ABRAHAM MASTLOW'S  
THEORIES OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND PEAK-EXPERIENCES

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When Mystics Have Prophets for Dinner: A Critical Biographical Analysis of William Blake's Visions Using Abraham Maslow's Theories of Self-Actualization and Peak-Experiences

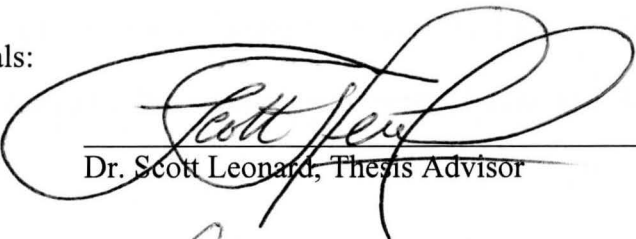
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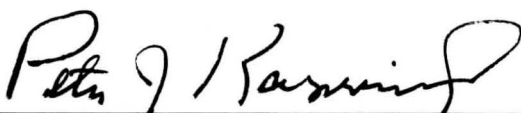
  
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## **Abstract**

William Blake is well-known as a visionary poet, but his visions have yet to be explained outside of being mystical or imaginative experiences. According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, people are able to reach self-actualization, or a level at which all of their needs are met. Self-actualizing people are simply high-functioning human beings, according to Maslow. A few characteristics of those functioning at this level include creativity, uniqueness, the need for justice, and most importantly, peak experiences. Peak-experiences were defined by Maslow as times when one feels deeply connected to everything and claims to see things as they truly are. I believe peak experiences to be the spaces from which Blake experienced his visions. I will be comparing Blake's visions and his personality traits to Maslow's definitions of peak-experiences and self-actualization in order to show that Blake's visions now have a category.

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## **Dedication**

I would first like to thank my committee members, Dr. Scott Leonard, Dr. Salvatore Attardo, and Dr. Christopher Bache. I feel honored to have had the chance to work with them and I appreciate their wisdom and support throughout this project. I am thankful for my encouraging family who have been very understanding throughout this process. I am also fortunate to have such a wonderful, inspiring son, Brenden Accettura, and a supportive fiancé who is also my best friend, Andrew Fabian. I am thankful for their love and encouragement throughout these two years. And most of all, I am thankful to those people, like Maslow and Blake, who are striving to be more fully human and not only embrace the mysteries of life but try to translate them into words everyone can understand.

## Preface

This thesis represents the combination of the two areas of study that have been influential and inspirational to me: Romantic Literature and Transpersonal Psychology. I never approached this project as a way to merely fulfill the requirements of the degree, but rather as a way to learn and grow. I am thankful that I can confidently say that that is exactly what has happened. When I began this project, I just had a vague notion that I wanted to work with Blake and Transpersonal theories. That vague notion took me down many paths, but once I discovered Abraham Maslow's theories of self-actualization and peak-experiences, I immediately realized how well they described William Blake's visions. Initially I imagined my thesis involving Blake's poetry and current transpersonal theories from scholars such as Stanislav Grof, Ken Ring, and Ken Wilber. While it is still possible to connect these two, I recognized that before those connections can make sense, they must be prefaced by an explanation of Blake and his visions as normal rather than pathological. Maslow's theories offered a way for Blake to be considered, not a madman, but an example of someone who was actualizing all of his potential. I plan to continue researching in these areas and I am thankful that I have had this opportunity to write a thesis of which I am proud.

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert that God spake to them; and whether they did not think at the time, that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition.

-William Blake

*A Memorable Fancy from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*



## Introduction

William Blake's sanity has been under question since he was a young boy. As biographer Alexander Gilchrist explains one day Blake was, "Sauntering along [. . .] looked up and saw a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars" (Gilchrist 6). This was one of Blake's early childhood memories and visions such as these became a common occurrence in his life. Blake's conviction of the authenticity of his visions convinced his parents that he was not lying and eventually convinced his close friends that his visions were at least real to him since they had not experienced such visions and they had no other way of explaining them. Scholars have come to the similar conclusion that Blake was probably crazy, but his sanity is no longer under critique, for if the visions were real to him, then we believe him and leave it at that. What was missing from this evaluation of Blake's sanity was also missing from psychology, according to psychologist Abraham Maslow: a focus on abnormality rather than on potential. The answer does not lie in questioning Blake's sanity, but rather in finding a category for his visions, so that we can stop avoiding such questions and see the potential and creative energy that these visions sparked. A category for the visions Blake was having does in fact exist through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow states that the highest functioning people are self-actualized and have higher instances of peak-experiences, or times of intense interconnectedness to the universe.

But, before this theory can be applied we must first untangle the web that has surrounded Blake and his visions as well as understand the tenets of Maslow's theory. By applying what is known about Blake and his visions, from descriptions in his own letters as well as the biography by Alexander Gilchrist, specifically to Maslow's theory of

peak-experiences, Blake's visions can be discussed not as fanciful denizens of his imagination, but rather as actual, natural experiences that exist and serve as motivation for his poems and art. Maslow believed that

it is very likely, indeed almost certain, that these older reports, phrased in terms of supernatural revelation, were, in fact, perfectly natural, human peak-experiences of the kind that can easily be examined today, which, however, were phrased in terms of whatever conceptual, cultural, and linguistic framework the particular seer had available in his time (1994:20).

For Blake, that "linguistic framework" came from the Bible and the tumultuous times in which he lived, which included effects from the French and American Revolutions. These influences can be seen in his prophetic poems, which were inspired from his visions. It is important to note that although Blake's poetry is inspired by his visions, his poetry is very different from the Romantic poetry of the time. Blake was writing about the times in which he lived, but believed that the origin of the chaos was not on earth, but in heaven. His poetry was difficult to understand because it was not only dealing with earth, but the spiritual realm as well. Archetypal imagery played a big role in Blake's poems because of the difficulty, or the "ineffability" as William James calls it, of translating visions of this type into everyday language (James 299).

For nearly 30 years after his death, Blake was barely considered at all. It took Alexander Gilchrist's interest in Blake not only as an odd man, but his interest in Blake as a poet and painter who he felt was worthy of a biography since he felt that Blake had been neglected by being left out of any collections or biographies. His book, *The Life of*

*William Blake*, was the very beginning of Blake studies. Nearly 100 years later, there was a resurgence of interest in Blake as a mystical poet. Today, there are many biographies of Blake that focus on things such as examinations of the books he read and how they affected his work to books examining the political climate of Blake's time. There have also been countless publications on Blake, and now there is even a publication devoted to Blake, called simply *The Blake Quarterly*. Theorist Northrop Frye explained that after having been called a madman, Blake decided to investigate the matter on his own. Frye explains that:

He was called mad so often that towards the end of his life he even became interested in insanity, struggled through part of a once famous book on the subject and made drawings of lunatic heads. But he never believed that there was much of creative value in morbidity, disease or insanity in themselves. The sources of art are enthusiasm and inspiration: if society mocks and derides these, it is society that is mad, not the artist [. . .] (13)

Blake wasn't interested in being considered a madman; instead he wanted to be considered as being an example of a true artist, a true poet. But, if Blake wasn't mad, how can we account for the visions he had throughout his entire life? In the past, scholars have looked at Blake's productivity and questioned whether it was possible to call someone that productive insane, but there has not been any way of explaining how someone who *seems* sane in most respects can also have visions. Maslow offers a framework for understand Blake's visions that doesn't dismiss him as insane – or even as abnormal on the usual pejorative sense.

In order to show correlations between Maslow's theory and Blake's visions, Chapter I will dissect Blake's life and present a rough portrait of the man and the major occurrences in his life. Chapter II will then look closely at Maslow's theory by explicating his hierarchy and how his definitions of self-actualization and peak-experiences fits into this theory. It is in Chapter III that Maslow's theories and Blake's visions will be analyzed together in order to show correlations between the two. Research for this project has come mainly from primary texts because interpretations of others are not necessary to make the correlation. I have used the well-known biographies of William Blake, by Alexander Gilchrist, Mona Wilson, Peter Ackroyd, and G.E. Bentley, to piece together Blake's life and visions. While Maslow has published many articles, he refined them and formed them into the following books: *Motivation and Personality*, *New Knowledge in Human Values*; *Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences*; and *Towards A Psychology of Being*. These have been the primary sources of Maslow's theories.

## Chapter I William Blake

### 1.1 Early Life

William Blake was born Nov. 28, 1757 to Catherine Hermitage and James Blake. James was a hosier and had a shop below the family's dwelling place on Broad Street. His parents were dissenters which means they disagreed with many of the religious assumptions of the established ruling class. As biographer Peter Ackroyd explains,

In this household of dissent he would have learned that the righteous must eventually triumph over those set in high places, that there is no abiding city upon this earth, that prophets and visionaries have an especial calling, that the older order will be utterly consumed at the moment of revelation. (Ackroyd 29)

Blake was the third of five children. He had three brothers, James, John, and Robert, and one sister, Catherine. Although Blake sporadically lived close to, and sometimes even with, members of his family, he did not speak of them often in his correspondence or in his poetry. The only member of his family he is known to have been close with was his younger brother Robert, with whom he enjoyed a deep connection. Blake loved the country and during his childhood would walk the short distance from his house in the city to such country settings as Peckham Rye, St. George's Fields, and Dulwich. Blake was known to take many walks, and on one such excursion at around the age of 8 or 10 he claims to have seen a vision of angels in a tree at Peckham Rye (Gilchrist 6). This was not the first vision nor the first one he shared with his parents. The first time he told his mother about a vision she beat him for lying. But, when his father threatened to beat him this time for lying, his mother interceded on

his behalf for she believed that Blake *believed* in what he was saying. Blake reportedly also saw angels walking among the haymakers one morning during another of his strolls, and these types of visions were to remain with him, as well as his conviction of their authenticity, for the rest of his life (Gilchrist 6).

Blake displayed a talent for drawing at a young age and so his father decided that Blake's education would best be left to artists. Blake had frequented the National Gallery with permission from his parents, but this was an unusual occurrence, and Gilchrist offers the explanation that, "The fact that such attendances were permitted, implies neither parent was disposed, as so often happens, to thwart the incipient artist's inclination; bad, even for a small tradesman's son, as at that time were an artist's outlooks, unless he were a portrait painter" (6-7). As small-time shopkeepers, Blake's parents needed the help of their children, but it might be possible to surmise that with his older brother's interest in the business, Blake was free to look to art. His parents' support of his artistic abilities is also witnessed by the fact that Blake was allowed to hang his poetry and drawings in his mother's bedroom as a child (Ackroyd 36). Blake was enrolled in Mr. Pars drawing school in 1767, which was considered a very good prep school. While at school, Blake learned to draw from plaster casts. Between the ages of 11 and 12 Blake began writing poetry, some of which was later printed when he was 26. At age 14, Blake was apprenticed to James Basire, an engraver. James Blake most likely realized that engraving would ensure a decent income while the training would not cost as much as an artist's training would, yet William would still be guaranteed at least some artistic training (Gilchrist 11). Blake considered the cost of an artist's training to be too much for his tradesman father to assume, and so in fairness to his brothers and sister, he chose

to become an apprentice (Ackroyd 40-41). A well-known story about this time in Blake's life relates how Blake's father had originally wanted to apprentice his son to William Wynne Ryland, who was then a famous engraver. The young Blake took one look at Ryland and told his father he would rather not work with this man for he had the face of someone who would be hanged. Twelve years later Ryland was indeed hanged, but there was no indication of that future event for at the time he had a very good reputation (Gilchrist 11). Gilchrist explains this may "have been a singular instance—if not of absolute prophetic gift or second sight—at all events of natural intuition into character and power of forecasting the future from it, such as is often the endowment of temperaments like his" (11). Thus, Blake was apprenticed to an older engraver, Basire, who taught an engraving style that used strong, thick lines and one that would soon wane in popularity.

Two years after Blake began his training two more apprentices began working under Basire. Blake did not get along with these new apprentices because he did not appreciate how much they fooled around. To ease tensions and to reward Blake's dedication to his instruction, Basire sent Blake to Westminster Abbey and other local churches to make drawings from the monuments, buildings, and statues. Gilchrist explains that

The solitary study of authentic English history in stone was far more to the studious lad's mind than the disorderly wrangling of mutinous comrades. It is significant of his character, even at this early date, for zeal, industry, and moral correctness, that he could be trusted month after month, year after year, unwatched, to do his duty by his master in so independent an employment. (14)

Sometimes while alone in these buildings Blake claimed to see visions of spirits, but as Gilchrist explained, “as we have seen, the visionary tendency, or faculty, as Blake more truly called it, had early shown itself” (15). At nearly the age of 22, in 1779, Blake’s apprenticeship with Basire ended and rather than join the Stationers’ Guild, “as the first step towards becoming a professional engraver,” (Ackroyd 61) he applied to the Royal Academy, a recently established art school created by King George III. Tuition was free for 25 selected students and Blake was lucky enough to be chosen for the Antique School or Plaster Academy (Ackroyd 63). While at the Royal Academy, Blake made lifelong acquaintances with fellow artists of similar interests. Thomas Stothard was one such friend who then introduced Blake to John Flaxman, son of a plaster-cast maker. Blake also met another aspiring artist, George Cumberland, at this time.

Blake did exhibit a couple of pieces at the Academy, but he was in need of income to help support his parents so he turned to engraving. Blake was also discouraged by the popularity of landscape and portrait painting, which was another reason he chose a job in engraving rather than in art. His disagreement with the popular artists of the day made it impossible for Blake to make it through some of his classes without allowing his anger to grow. Ackroyd says of Blake that, “once he had found art, he had no taste for nature. In fact he found life drawing ‘hateful’ and of ‘looking more like death, or smelling of mortality’” (65). Also, Sir Joshua Reynolds, fashionable artist and president of the Academy at the time of Blake’s attendance, angered Blake because of a comment he made about Blake’s reticence to use oil. Reynolds also believed in simplicity and less extravagance, something Blake avoided in his own work since his inspiration were artists like Raphael and Michelangelo. Blake also disagreed with the tastes of his other



teachers, and Ackroyd explains that in the “commercial world of printselling” that “he was implicitly the subsidiary part of the creative process” (78). Blake’s talent was not recognized, and since “He was part of the first great period of commercialism and mass manufacture in English history [. . .] he was one of its first casualties” (Ackroyd 79). Ackroyd seems to suggest that Blake’s individuality was not appreciated; if he could not produce what sold, then he was not necessary to their system. Engraving allowed Blake to keep in touch with the art world, but also provided him with a way to pay his bills, with a small amount of time left over to continue his own artistic interests.

## **1.2 Adult Life**

In 1781 Blake was visiting the family of some relatives, “at the home of a Battersea market-gardener named Boucher” (Wilson 18) and happened to be complaining about how he was cuckolded by a recent girlfriend. Their daughter Catherine was visibly alarmed by the situation. It is rumored that Blake asked her if she pitied him. After she responded that she did indeed pity him, Blake proposed marriage on the spot. “Mrs. Blake was wont to relate that when her mother spoke of marriage she used to answer that she had not yet seen the man, but when she first was William Blake the conviction that this was he so overwhelmed her that she nearly fainted” (Wilson 19). They did indeed get married a year later, on Aug. 18, 1782, after Blake had saved enough money to support them in spite of the fact that Blake’s father reportedly disapproved of the marriage (Wilson 19). After getting married they moved to Leicester Fields. Although it appears that Catherine was perfectly suited for Blake, the marriage produced no children. Instead, this was a relationship that was productive in work and creativity.

Blake continued engraving and began attending the Bluestocking parties of the Reverend Anthony Stephen Mathew and his wife Harriet. Blake attended these gatherings of the influential artists and writers of the time presumably because of the Mathews' affiliation with Flaxman. Blake reportedly sang his poetry at these parties and the Mathews were so engaged by Blake's poetry that Mrs. Mathew convinced her husband to help Flaxman publish some of his poems. In 1783, the poetry that Blake had been writing since he was a teenager was compiled with some drawings in a book titled, *Poetical Sketches*. In the preface, Mathew seems to apologize for the artwork, saying, "The following sketches were the production of an untutored youth, commenced in his twelfth, and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year" (Wilson 22). Blake's popularity at the Bluestocking parties quickly waned apparently due to his "firmness of opinion" (Gilchrist 43). The tension might have been amplified by the way his talents were viewed by the group, since even though he was considered a novelty, his talents were not taken seriously. The fact that Mathew felt the need to apologize for Blake's underdeveloped talent shows how he might have been considered a less serious contributor to the Bluestocking meetings.

In 1784, Blake resumes exhibiting at the Academy, but tensions soon mounted between Blake and Stothard and Blake and Flaxman. Although there is no solid indication of the origin of these tensions, he stopped working with Stothard and later accused Flaxman of "blasting my character as an Artist," which Ackroyd believes might have been due to Blake's sensitivity (Ackroyd 96). But, because Blake was straying from the fashionable path of landscape and portrait painting, he might simply not have had any reason to continue working with these men. In the summer of that year

Blake's father died and was buried in the Dissenter's graveyard at Bunhill Fields (Ackroyd 98). Blake never wrote much about his family and after the death of Blake's father he rarely appeared in Blake's writing again (Ackroyd 98). After his father's death, Blake moved next door to his mother on Broad Street and set up a printing and engraving shop with partner James Parker. Blake's favorite brother, Robert, moved in and received tutoring in engraving and in art from Blake. Blake's brother James took over his father's business and his brother John opened up a bakery in a house opposite the family home (Ackroyd 98).

Robert died in 1787 of a protracted illness, most likely tuberculosis. This was a difficult time for Blake and he was reportedly at Robert's side during his death at which point he said he "saw Robert's soul leaving his body, "clapping its hands and singing [. . .] Though Blake's brother Robert had ceased to be with him in the body, he was seldom far absent from the faithful visionary in spirit" (Gilchrist 51-59). In this same year Blake's partnership with Parker dissolved and the shop was closed. This is also the year that Blake met artist Henry Fuseli. In 1788, Blake finished his compilation of poems called *Songs of Innocence*; and, after having visions from his brother, Blake was inspired to publish his own work (Gilchrist 60). Blake knew that his limited income would not allow him to pay to print *Songs* on his own. Bothered by this, Blake was reportedly visited by his dead brother, who shared with him a way to print his own work based on relief etching, or when "the letter or image was raised from the surrounding metal rather than being etched or engraved into it" (Ackroyd 112). The result was an entirely new printing process. Blake wrote and illustrated his book directly on copper plates, dipping a quill into an oil-and-wax mixture and applying it directly onto the metal's surface. He

would then wash the plates with an acid mixture which bit into the copper everywhere but beneath the oil-and-wax lines. Finally, Blake inked the plates and pressed them onto a sheet of paper which he (and occasionally Catherine) would paint with watercolors. For the words and images to appear correctly on the page, Blake taught himself to write and draw backwards.

Blake used the only money he and his wife had left to purchase the necessary materials, and then he began experimenting. Blake's idea was to merge art and poetry, nothing new since illustrations have been used in concordance with text throughout history, but Blake's goal was more symbolic. "Blake had invented a method that allowed him to deploy the full range of his genius for painting, poetry and engraving; by combining these several arts he managed to create a wholly new kind of art that proclaimed the unity of human vision" (Ackroyd 115). This meant that, "he had produced, for the first time, a complete statement in which words and images are unified" and he continued this process until the end of his life, many times re-printing from the same plates. Although Blake did repeatedly use the same plates, he did color each differently, which added to the unique impression and interpretation, dark or light, he intended for each copy. Blake also wrote a lot of poetry during this time that he eventually published himself, including the following works: *The Book of Thel*, *Tiriel*, *All Religions Are One*, *There Is No Natural Religion*, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

At the end of the 1790s, the Blakes moved to Poland Street across the river from Lambeth. In 1791 Joseph Johnson published Blake's *The French Revolution*, minus Blake's name or his illustrations. It is supposed that with the tumultuous times as a backdrop, Blake would have had political trouble had his name been included. But, like

all of Blake's previous publications, this did not get any notice either. Blake, however, did earn some money doing engravings of some illustrations for Johnson.

In 1792, Blake's mother died and, in 1793, Blake moved to Lambeth, where he lived for 7 very productive years. *America*, the first of Blake's "prophetic" books, appeared in 1793 with Lambeth on the title page (Wilson 100). Also printed in Lambeth were *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *America: A Prophecy*. Around this time Blake's friends from his time at the Royal Academy were coming back to London with success and good reputations after spending time in Europe. This was difficult for Blake to deal with since he was still barely making ends meet as a tradesman while his friends were becoming celebrated artists. Even so, Blake met the wealthy and enthusiastic patron of the arts, Thomas Butts, in the late 1790s. Butts became Blake's most steady supporter and customer over their 30 year friendship. He was the only large buyer of Blake's work and commissioned him to do many engravings.

In 1794 Blake published *The Songs of Experience* with *The Songs of Innocence* as well as *Europe: A Prophecy*. The last of the symbolic books was finished by 1795 and *Vala*, the long mystical poem he alluded to in letters, was probably begun at about this time (Wilson 116). One project that Blake was known for during his lifetime was his illustrations for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, which was published in 1797. The success that Blake was hoping to gain from this was crushed when less than one-fourth of his original engravings were used as illustrations.

About 1800, Flaxman recommended Blake to William Hayley, "'poet,' country gentleman, friend and future biographer of Cowper" (Gilchrist 122). After doing some

engravings for Hayley, he was invited to leave his house in Lambeth and join Hayley by the sea in Felpham. Hayley originally wanted Blake to illustrate his biography of artist and eccentric, William Cowper, but instead employed him in various tasks over the years he lived in Felpham. After about three years of working for Hayley, Blake began to feel stifled. Little bits of Blake's restlessness leaked through in letters to his London friends. Blake wanted to be famous for his own work, not as someone who painted portraits or engraved odd jobs. Blake even began to fear losing his visionary capacity if he stayed in Felpham (Gilchrist 161). As Gilchrist explained,

This residence at Felpham, under poet Hayley's protection, might have proved a turning-point in his life. Had he complied with Hayley's evident wishes, and set himself, as a miniature painter, to please patrons, he *might* have climbed to fortune and fame. It was a 'choice of Hercules' for him once again. But he had made his choice in boyhood, and adhered to it in age. Few are so perseveringly brave. (160)

Blake planned on leaving Felpham and Hayley in the summer of 1803, but was delayed by an incident with a soldier who was in Blake's garden talking to the gardener. Blake, not knowing why the soldier was in his yard, had asked the soldier to leave and when the soldier refused, Blake pushed him out of his yard. The soldier became incensed at this and tried to hit Blake, but Blake only responded by holding the soldier's arms and pushing him down the street to the tavern where he was staying. Upset by this, the soldier charged Blake with sedition. Although the ensuing trial cost Blake valuable time and money, he was eventually found innocent in 1805 since it was apparent that the charges were fabricated by this soldier who had a less than savory reputation. By this

time, Blake was already back in London, living on South Moulton Street and seeking an audience for his work. In 1805 Blake was commissioned to illustrate Robert Blair's *The Grave* by Robert Hartley Cromek, an engraver/artist turned bookseller and art dealer who was interested in making money and who would later cause an upheaval in Blake's life. Ackroyd explains that this poem was "one of the most popular works in the 'graveyard school' of mid-eighteenth-century English poetry and, as such, would already have been of some interest to Blake" (265). Blake used his grand artistic style to illustrate this poem, but Cromek did not approve and so he commissioned his friend Louis Schiavonetti to engrave illustrations based on Blake's designs, a high-handed dismissal that Blake considered an act of betrayal. Around this time Cumberland introduced Blake to the Reverend John Trusler, an author, in order to possibly get Blake some illustration work (Wilson 91). Trusler was not pleased with Blake's illustrations, either.

A few years later, in 1808 Blake exhibited his works at the Royal Academy for the first time in 9 years. It would prove to be his last exhibition at the Academy. In May of 1809, perhaps in angry reaction to the chilly reception his work had received from the artistic establishment during his Royal Academy exhibition, Blake opened up his own exhibition in the first floor of his brother James' hosiery business on Broad Street from May until September. Gilchrist explains that

The exhibition comprised of sixteen 'Poetical and Historical Inventions,' as he designed them—eleven frescos, seven drawings: a collection singularly remote from ordinary sympathies, or even ordinary apprehension. Bent on a violent effort towards justifying his ways to men and critics, he drew up and had printed

*A Descriptive Catalog* of these works, in which he interprets them, and expounds at large his own canons of art. (Gilchrist 242)

One item that was mentioned in the catalog was Blake's rendition of the Canterbury pilgrims, a work that was not very popular during his time. Blake had discussed doing a full-sized version of this piece with Cromek. Apparently Cromek agreed that this piece would be a good idea but that he would prefer a more famous artist do it. He didn't share this information with Blake or with Blake's friend, Stothard, who he eventually commissioned to do the piece. Blake and Stothard were both in the dark about the situation. Unfortunately, at first Blake believed that Stothard had had a hand in this deception and spoke ill against him to his friends. This caused a rift in their relationship that was never repaired. Even later in life when Blake ran into Stothard and offered his hand, Stothard refused. Another time Blake had called on Stothard when he was ill, and still he refused to see Blake. The misunderstanding, although sad, is not the focus. What is important is the fact that Blake was willing to admit that he was wrong and attempt at least a social friendship with Stothard. Whether Blake found out the truth or not does not matter; Blake was willing to swallow his pride and approach Stothard. But, at the time of his exhibition, Blake was upset and bent on sharing this with the public. He sent out his leaflet "with the following message: 'The ignorant Insults of Individuals will not hinder me from doing my duty to my Art [. . .] those who have been told that my Works are but an unscientific and irregular Eccentricity, a Madman's Scrawls, I demand of them to do me the justice to examine before they decide'" (Ackroyd 285). After this, Blake compared himself to Michelangelo and Raphael, something that is understandable in his wounded state, but was interpreted by his friends and the public in general as only



affirming his status as a madman. Although he was called mad, Blake was dedicated to what he perceived as his duty to share his art and prophecies.

Another important event in Blake's life was his meeting John Varley, who was a well-known water-colorist and landscape painter. He was also an astrologer who had compiled Blake's natal chart. Varley was very interested in Blake's visions and encouraged Blake to draw them. This encouragement led to the drawing of many portraits of the subjects of Blake's visions which have collectively become known as "The Visionary Heads." In 1819, Blake would walk to Varley's house at around 9 p.m. and stay there until 3 or 4 a.m. while he sketched visions of the dead he saw during the night. Some of the visions included Richard Coeur de Lion, King Saul, and Edward III (Ackroyd 330).

In 1818, Blake made friends with a group of younger artists through his friends Cumberland and Varley. Blake met John Linnell through Cumberland's son, and through Varley, he met a group of artists who referred to themselves as the "Young Ancients." This group—Samuel Palmer, Edward Calvert, George Richmond, Francis Finch, Frederick Tatham, and John Giles—believed that the, "ancient man was somehow superior to his modern counterpart" (Ackroyd 338). They were in their early twenties and all impressed with Blake. Varley had introduced the young men to Blake, and Ackroyd explains, "it is clear that in the presence of the young he felt unconstrained, at liberty to speak about his life and art in an atmosphere in which he knew he would not be criticized or judged" (Ackroyd 340). These young men were careful to record many of the stories that Blake shared with them. Blake, although very much involved with his

thick lined engraving style, was also able to learn from his younger friend Linnell about some different engraving techniques. After this revelation, Blake modified his style a bit.

In 1820, Blake's landlord sold their property on South Moulton Street, so the Blakes moved to Fountain Court (Ackroyd 337). In this same year, Blake completed some illustrations for Dr. Thornton's edition of "Virgil's Pastorals" which was to be used in schools. Blake tried his hand at woodcutting, but this proved to be unsuccessful and other artists were called in to remedy his work. Also, many of Blake's designs were cut down to fit the pages. Linnell was aware of Blake's poverty, but also his pride, so he commissioned Blake to do a variety of engravings and reprints of older work in order to find a way to give him money for survival. In 1821 Blake was asked by Linnell to engrave the water-color drawings illustrating the *Book of Job*. Blake also began to engrave Dante's *Divine Comedy* in 1824 for Linnell and even taught himself Italian for the job. Blake never finished this job.

In 1825 Blake met Henry Crabb Robinson, "journalist and barrister-at-law" (Wilson 326). When Flaxman died in 1826, Robinson brought Blake the news. Blake's reaction was to say, "I cannot think of death as more than the going out of one room into another" (Wilson 357). Blake died on Aug. 12 1827 at 6 p.m. in his room on Fountain Court. It is reported that Blake burst into song just before he died.

### 1.3 Life As A Poet

Blake was an artist by trade, but he is also well-known as a poet. The poetry he composed was known by him as prophecies and included *The Book of Urizen*, *Milton*,

*Jerusalem, Vala* or *The Four Zoas*, and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.

Inspiration for this poetry often came to Blake from his visions, and sometimes they seemed to come as direct dictation (see Chapter III). Ackroyd tells of conversations Blake had with Crabb Robinson where Blake said “he wrote only when commanded to do so by angels, ‘and the moment I have written I see the words fly about the room in all directions’” (342). After his first book of published poetry, *Songs*, did not sell well, Blake had a hard time getting anything published or having enough money to publish his work himself. After creating his “infernal” printing method, Blake was free to publish his own work, as long as he had enough money for paper, copper plates, and ink as well as enough time left over after spending the day working for survival. So, by the time Blake had enough time and money to print his poems, many years had past. For instance, records show that as early as 1807 there are accounts of Blake working on printing *Jerusalem*, but it wasn’t until 1820 that he had actually finished printing it (Ackroyd 295). Ackroyd explains that for Blake,

the connection between poetry and painting was a much more intense and serious one. He saw them as aspects of the same vision, which must be reunited in order to raise the perceptions of fallen man [. . .] He was concerned to evoke the sense of the sacred within both arts, at a time when the pressures of specialization and commercialism were reducing both to the status of a standardised <sup>1</sup>and secularized activity. (189)

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<sup>1</sup> Ackroyd’s spelling.

But, as Ackroyd points out, it wasn't popular to mesh poetry and painting, so Blake's creative method never caught on. Although Blake did publish some of his poems himself, they were never well-received by the public during his time, and weren't studied seriously as worthy poetry until the mid-1900s.

### **Conclusion**

Blake showed signs of artistic genius at a young age, which convinced his father to refrain from putting Blake in a traditional school setting and allow him to apprentice as an engraver. From an early age, Blake saw visions and continued to do so throughout his life. Blake's visions included the aforementioned angels as well as visions of prophets like Elijah, a fairy's funeral, one vision of Satan, visions of famous leaders like King Edward, a vision of the ghost of a flea and last, but not limited to, visions from his dead younger brother who shared with him a new method of printing and who he conversed with almost daily (Keynes 15).

But, Blake's promise as an artist was deeply overshadowed by his claims of visions. His friend Robinson explained, "this belief of our artist's in the intercourse which, like Swedenborg, he enjoys with the spiritual world has more than anything else injured his reputation" (Bentley 160). Likewise, the obituary printed in the *Literary Chronicle* after Blake's death affirms, "That he *believed* to have *seen* and *conversed* with those whom he pretended acquaintance, we no more doubt than that he is now incorporated with those incorporeal beings with whom he was so familiar" (Bentley 167). Blake's reputation was shaky during his time and there has not been any conclusive agreement amongst modern theorists as to the origin of his visions.

## Chapter II Abraham Maslow

### 2.1 Maslow's Life

Abraham H. Maslow was born in 1908 in Brooklyn, NY. He received his Bachelor's Degree from City College of New York and then received his Master's and Doctorate Degrees from the University of Wisconsin. Maslow taught for 14 years at Brooklyn College in New York and began teaching at Brandeis College in 1951 where he became Chair of the Department of Psychology. Maslow was also President of the American Psychological Association from 1967-1968. He wrote more than 20 books and published nearly 100 articles. He was the co-founder of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, both of which are still in print today. Maslow began as a little known psychologist, receiving minor acknowledgement from his doctoral dissertation study about primate dominance. It wasn't until Maslow published two papers in 1943 about human motivation that he began to shake the foundation of the field. Although Maslow died in 1970, his ideas continue to shape the field of psychology.

#### 2.1.1 Maslow's Influences

Maslow observed that during his time psychology had basically two main areas of focus: Freud's psychoanalysis and behaviorism. He explained that, "Psychology today is torn and riven, and may in fact be said to be three (or more) separate, noncommunicating sciences or groups of scientists. First is the behavioristic, objectivistic, mechanistic, positivistic group. Second is the whole cluster of psychologies that originated in Freud and psychoanalysis" (1982:4). He felt that psychology was more interested in the

psychoanalysis of abnormal cases or in merely observing behavior in a detached, scientific manner. Maslow offered a third option, one he called the third force, or Humanistic Psychology, (Maslow would later introduce a fourth force called Transpersonal Psychology.) Maslow did not want to discredit the first and second forces, which is how he referred to psychoanalysis and behaviorism, for he already saw how dichotomizing psychology had done nothing for the at-large field. Instead, Maslow decided to embrace all three fields in his theory of humanistic psychology. He invented the words “epi-behavioristic” and “epi-Freudian” to explain how his third force incorporated ideas from the first two forces because Maslow explained, “I am Freudian and I am behavioristic and I am humanistic” (1982:4). Integrating previous theories with humanistic psychology was important to Maslow because he felt that, “experiencing is only the beginning of knowledge (necessary but not sufficient)” (1982:4) to explain everything.

What originally motivated Maslow to outline his theory was neither his psychological training, nor his clinical experience, but rather his mentors Ruth Benedict and Max Wertheimer. He looked at them as extra-human examples of the species because of their impressive qualities. Amazed by them, he critically analyzed their behavior and began to notice that their basic motivations were similar. Maslow began to notice that he, “was talking about a kind of person, not about two noncomparable individuals” (1982:41). From this observation, Maslow determined to study the highest functioning humans for he felt that they embodied “humanness” and the direction our race is striving towards. Maslow used his theories of needs and values to support his claim mainly because he was against the idea of a science without values. He claimed,

“that the value-free, value-neutral, value-avoiding model of science that we inherited from physics, chemistry, and astronomy, where it was necessary and desirable to keep the data clean and also to keep the church out of scientific affairs, is quite unsuitable for the scientific study of life” (1982:5). He had become disheartened by psychology’s scientific quantification of behaviors and its infatuation with the abnormal. His theory was that by studying the highest functioning humans, “we can now see not only what humans are, but also what they may become. That is to say we can see not only surface, not only the actualities, but the potentials as well” (1987:115).

## **2.2 Needs and Values**

Maslow categorized needs as either Deficiency Needs (D-needs) or Being Needs (B-needs). D-needs are inborn, motivated by instinct and which, therefore, Maslow considered lower than B-needs. D-needs include basic physiological needs, safety needs, the need for a sense of belonging, the need for love, and the need for respect and self esteem. These needs are deficiencies, or voids that need to be filled and will continue to color a person’s world view until fulfilled, causing D-cognition. For instance, if someone were suffering from extreme hunger, getting food—filling that deficiency—would be the utmost thing on their mind. In this hungry state it would be difficult, for example, to take a test. Thus, D-needs are selfish because the world is only seen in terms of satisfying one’s personal needs. D-love, for instance—love in the realm of deficiency—looks at intimacy only in terms of what the individual gets out a relationship and is largely blind to what the relationship means to and provides for another. This is called conditional love, or “I love you only if you are giving me what I need.” Humor is another example of a quality that can exist in the realm of deficiency. D-humor is cruel humor that

condescends or ridicules others, and manifests, for example, in racial jokes because the person is motivated to find pleasure but does not consider how the joke will affect another person (1987:141-142). D-motivation, it follows, is being concerned with the fulfillment of the basic, lower needs.

B-cognition occurs when the mind can see clearly and is not over-shadowed by D-needs. In this state people are more concerned with the truth and beauty of the world because their perceptual and mental processes work on a higher level. People who function at the level of Being have similar human values, such as truth and justice. An example of this is B-love, which is considered unselfish and unconditional, focusing on the potentials of the loved one and not on how he/she can fulfill personal needs B-humor “may also be called the humor of the real because it consist in large part in poking fun at human beings in general when they are foolish, or forget their place in the universe [ . . . ]. this can take the form of poking fun at themselves” (1987:141), which contrasts the scathing humor motivated by deficiency. B-motivation is not fueled by deficiencies, but instead by being and existing in order to give back to others.

### **2.2.1 Values**

Maslow believed that needs and values are intertwined. The physiological needs of a person are usually shared within a species, yet each individual has unique values. Maslow explained that, “Capacities clamor to be used, and cease their clamor only when they *are* used sufficiently. That is to say, capacities are needs, and therefore are intrinsic values as well. To the extent that capacities differ, so will values also differ” (1959:122). Maslow introduced the idea that aside from physiological needs, people also have values



that also act as needs. Maslow calls these new needs values because they can be different for each person. For instance, someone with a capacity for playing music will find this value clamoring for use, as if it were a need. These values are higher functioning needs and will only tend to be found at the self-actualization level (see section 2.5).

### **2.3 Motivation**

Maslow believed that motivation is dictated by present needs. Maslow accounted for multi-motivated behavior, and explained that it is possible to analyze, “a single act of an individual and see in it the expression of physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization” (1987:29). This definition of motivation provides us with a language to describe people who literally “feed” their lack of esteem or love with food. This one to one ratio of pairing an act with a motivation, Maslow said, does not account for the many reasons why a person is behaving in a certain manner. For instance, if Person A is starving and sees Person B throw half of a sandwich carelessly into a pond, Person A’s physical attack on Person B cannot be labeled as merely an act of aggression. This act would be aggression, but this aggression would most likely be categorized as being motivated out of desperation and hunger.

## 2.4 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

**Table 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

<b>B-Cognition</b>	Self-Actualization ↑
<b>D-Cognition</b>	Esteem Needs ↑ Belonging/Love Needs ↑ Safety Needs ↑ Basic Physiological Needs

Maslow's famous Hierarchy of Needs begins with physiological needs, moves on to safety needs, progresses on to the need for love and a sense of belonging as well as the esteem needs and ends in self-actualization (see table 1). Basically, all of these needs, excluding self-actualization, are expressed as deficiencies, or D-needs, in the person. It is when these basic needs are met that we can become fully "human" and function at the level of self-actualization.

Maslow's hierarchy combines his theory of motivation with his theory of needs to create a hierarchal scheme. Maslow's hierarchy of needs explains people's actions as motivated by their deficiencies, not as Freudian psychology does by claiming that actions are rooted in the base nature of all human beings. He was not ignoring the negative

actions of his fellow humans, but instead explained these behaviors in terms of their underlying motivations.

Maslow based his hierarchy on something he called “prepotency” which means that those needs that take biological precedence will demand more attention than those that do not. But, as soon as one need is fulfilled, another begs to be afforded the same attention. Maslow was realistic, for he did not say that a need had to be 100 percent fulfilled in order to be satisfied. Instead he explained that a need had to be mostly satisfied in order for a person to continue up the hierarchy. He also explained that gratification of a need is a gradual process and not something that occurs spontaneously. The goal of Maslow’s hierarchy was to show that these motivations and needs do not appear randomly, but rather that they have a pattern. This theory allowed for higher-level functioning motives such as the desire for beauty or justice which was something that the definition of motivation and needs at the time did not account for.

#### **2.4.1 “The Dangers of Being”<sup>2</sup>**

Maslow was able to see the theoretical “dangers,” as he called them, of Being, for the act of Being implies no action, just existing and noticing. Maslow explains that these types of, “expressive behaviors tend to occur when people are being themselves, developing, growing, maturing, not going anywhere (in the sense, e.g., of social climbing), not striving in the ordinary sense of striving and trying for a state of affairs other than that in which they are” (1987: 70). Unlike Deficiency, where one is motivated

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<sup>2</sup> This is a section title similar to one used in Maslow 1999.

to get the deficiency fulfilled, Being only allows for the act of observing the outside world and contemplating it. Maslow even warns that a pure state of Being would indeed inhibit someone from even teaching, writing, or reaching out to anyone else. Also, by assuming that everything is already perfect, then one will undoubtedly have a tainted view of the world. These instances only help to emphasize the importance of integrating both the higher and lower needs. This also reveals a weakness in the idea of pure Being, without motivation. Apparently purely Being cannot occur in the human experience because D-Needs always exist in some form no matter how highly functioning the person is.

## **2.5 Self-Actualization**

Maslow borrowed the term self-actualization from psychiatrist Kurt Goldstein (1939) who used this term in relation to brain-injured patients and their ability to adapt and compensate after the injury. Maslow modified the term based on a composite list of qualities he developed to describe highly functioning people. Identifying self-actualized people became a personal mission for Maslow, and throughout his life he conducted informal studies. While some have critiqued his observations for lacking scientific rigor, Maslow justifies these studies noting, "I consider the problem of psychological health to be so pressing that *any* suggestions, *any* bits of data, however moot, are endowed with great heuristic value" (1987:125).

Maslow's research subjects came from his own personal acquaintances, friends, public figures, and historically significant people. Originally, Maslow began by screening 3,000 college students, but he said he found only one usable subject and about

a dozen subjects that he suspected would be usable in the future (1987:126).

He, E. Raskin and D. Freedman then began searching for what Maslow called “*relatively* healthy college students.” Their search lasted for two years before it was interrupted without being completed.

Maslow explained that they used negative and positive criterion to identify self-actualized subjects. To satisfy the negative criterion, subjects could display no evidence of neurosis, psychopathology, psychosis, or strong tendencies in these directions. In the beginning, Maslow and his colleagues sometimes used Rorschach tests to establish psychological health, but Maslow and his colleagues discovered that the inkblots were better at indicating neurosis rather than health. To satisfy the positive criterion, subjects would have to exhibit qualities that Maslow had already determined were characteristic of self-actualized people based on previous observations of his mentors, his family and friends, and public figures. Maslow was searching for those who were using their talents, capacities, and potentials fully while at the same time he felt that their basic needs had been met. Maslow used a technique of selection called “iteration,” which he said

consists briefly in starting with the personal or cultural nontechnical state of belief, collating the various extant usages and definitions of the syndrome, and then defining it more carefully, still in terms of actual usage [. . .] with, however, the elimination of the logical and factual inconsistencies customarily found in folk definitions (1987:127).

Maslow was basically asking his subjects to reveal traits about which he in turn used to refine his definition. Maslow then applied this refined definition to a group

possessing many of these qualities and a group possessing few of these qualities so that the definition could be further fine-tuned. This definition was tested for a second time on the same group, minus subjects that no longer appeared to fit this definition with the addition of some new subjects that appeared to better fit this refined definition. So, with this in mind, Maslow conducted his experiments and tried to compile a portrait of self-actualized people. Table 2 outlines the basic qualities that Maslow assigned to self-actualizing individuals after his experiment.

**Table 2: Maslow's Characteristics of Self-Actualized Individuals (1987:128-149)**

1. Increase in problem-centering as opposed to ego-centered. He/she is concerned with helping others and doing things for the greater good of all.
2. Increased acceptance of self, of others, and of nature.
3. Superior perception of reality and a level of comfort with reality
4. Certain changes in the value system that do not include cultural or religious values, but include values of the human race, such as kinship and acceptance of each other and the nature of reality.
5. Increased detachment and desire for privacy. Increased autonomy, solitude, and resistance to enculturation.
6. Sees the flaws in dichotomies and realizes that they don't truly exist.
7. B-Humor is more frequent and is focused more on laughing at the human condition at not at others.
8. Higher frequency of peak-experiences.
9. Increased identification with the human species and a more democratic character structure
10. Changed or improved interpersonal relations.
11. Greatly increased creativity and increased spontaneity.
12. Greater freshness of appreciation, and richness of emotional reaction.

Maslow also found that the motivation and needs of self-actualizers are drastically different than the average person's, for he/she no longer perceives needs as a focus, but rather as a sidenote or something that occasionally needs attention. Such people find the act of fulfilling their needs as fulfilling in its own right. Maslow was careful to distinguish between the creativity present in self-actualizers and creative people who were not healthy, such as Van Gogh. He realized that more than just creativity or talent was needed for someone to be considered self-actualized. Maslow believed that for self-actualizers, creativity can manifest in things as simple as housework, social service, or cabinet making (Maslow's examples 1999:151-160). Maslow was not claiming that self-actualizing people are superhuman but that they are the best example of what being human is. He asserted that, "Certainly it seems more and more clear that what we call 'normal' in psychology is really a psychopathology of the average, so undramatic and so widely spread that we don't even notice it ordinarily" (Maslow 1999:21). What we see as normal is not normal at all, but rather what we settle for and agree to accept as common. Part of humanness, Maslow asserted, was indeed the integration of both higher and lower aspects of existence.

After the experiment, Maslow realized that even though he had compiled a list of self-actualizing people, he could not divulge the names of the living people that he studied. So, instead he looked at public and historical figures to find self-actualized subjects by performing a biographical analysis on each. The list of people he uncovered included Lincoln in his last years and Thomas Jefferson as two examples of "fairly sure historical figures" and the following seven people as "highly probable public and

historical figures”: Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, James Addams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Aldous Huxley, and Benedict Spinoza (Maslow 1987:128).

### **2.5.1 Integration of B-Needs and D-Needs in Self-Actualized Individuals**

Maslow did not believe that once a person functions at the level of self-actualization that all of his/her lower needs just disappear. Instead, he said that both needs “integrate.” Those on the self-actualized path are not above having deficiencies, yet they have found a way to manage them in order to move higher along the hierarchy. Self-actualizers are integrating their B- and D-needs so that a higher level of functioning can begin. Maslow believed that by integrating these needs, self-actualizers function at the ultimate level of humanness, not on a superhuman level. Put another way, self-actualizers—those who have integrated their D- and B-needs—are fully human; all others are “deficient”. So, self-actualized people are not exempt from bad days, from actually *being* in this world, “And yet it is unwise to forget that frequently the problems and the conflicts of the growth-motivated person are solved by himself by turning inward in a meditative way, i.e., self-searching, rather than seeking for help from someone” (Maslow 1999:43). In other words, the motivation of self-actualized people manifests itself differently because, “For them motivation is just character growth, character expression, maturation, and development; in a word self-actualization” (1987:133).

### **2.6 Peak-Experiences**

The qualities of self-actualized individuals are familiar, for they embody the qualities and values our society holds in esteem, except for one. People who are self-actualized tend to have a higher instance of peak-experiences. Through his research,



Maslow was also able to provide a composite description of the extraordinary states that he called peak-experiences. His research consisted of personal interviews with about 80 individuals, and written responses compiled from 190 college students who were all picked because he/she appeared to be self-actualized. In addition, Maslow included 50 unsolicited written letters from people who had read his work and a broad sampling of readings about mysticism, religion, art, creativity, and love (1999). Maslow asked his subjects to respond to the following statement<sup>3</sup>:

I would like you to think of the most wonderful experience or experiences of your life; happiest moments, ecstatic moments, moments of rapture, perhaps from being in love, or from listening to music or suddenly 'being hit' by a book or a painting, or from some great creative moment. First list these. And then try to tell me how you feel in such acute moments, how you feel *differently* from the way you feel at other times, how you are at the moment a different person in some ways. [With other subjects the questioning asked rather about the ways in which the world looked different] (1999:83).

Ultimately, Maslow defined the peak-experience as a transient moment of intense interconnectedness, of bliss, rapture, ecstasy, or joy. They can occur during a variety of

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<sup>3</sup> In his book, *Motivation and Personality*, specifically, as well as in his other works, Maslow explained the possible holes in his study, and offered that, "only composite impressions can be offered for whatever they may be worth" (1987:128). For instance, Maslow basically chose people he thought were self-actualized and asked for ecstatic moments and not the opposite, which means that negative peak-experiences may in fact exist, especially in light of current research on the use of holotropic breath work and psychedelic drugs (see Grof 1990, 1998 and 2000). Indeed these are all limitations, yet they are not strong enough to cancel out all of correlating information that he did discover.

circumstances, including sexual encounters, pleasurable pastimes, and transcendental, mythical, or religious experiences. Such experiences have been reported by a variety of people, from St. Theresa to William James.

Maslow said that peak-experiences were subject to the available language of the culture. So, for many, peak-experiences end up described in the language associated with their religion. Maslow explains that, "Practically everything that happens in the peak-experiences, naturalistic though they are, could be listed under the heading of religious happenings, or indeed have been in the past considered only religious experiences" (1994:91). Much of what happens in a peak-experience is related to self-actualization and B-cognition. What is different about a peak-experience is that it is a concentrated experience with certain characteristics rather than just a random mental mishap. Although during a peak-experience the person may be aware of a sense of unusual concentration to the point that he/she feels detached from the idea of time while simultaneously feeling passive, as if he/she is only a receiver, this experience does not last. These intermittent moments may make a person feel as if he/she has experienced universality and eternity. During the peak-experience many people report a feeling of detachment from human concerns, particularly from their own selfish concerns. This detachment is referred to as ego-transcendence where a person becomes unselfish, yet at the same time has a feeling of self-validation. Such moments are perceived as full of importance and value. This explains why some mystics have had only a few, or maybe even just one, peak-experiences, yet he/she ruminates about them for the rest of his/her life. These instances give meaning to life for the world seems then imbued with beauty, goodness, and great worth. People who have had these peak-experiences tend to embody

B-values, or the intrinsic values of Being, rather than existing with Deficiency.

People are filled with wonder and awe, humility and reverence for the experience. As Maslow explains, "Peak-experiences can be so wonderful that they can parallel the experience of dying, that is of an eager and happy dying" (1987:65). Fear and anxiety fall by the way, if only transiently. A person during a peak will feel as if he/she is closer to his/her real self, while at the same time being part of the entire universe, where everything appears a part of the divine. Such ecstatic moments have been defined by some as heaven because they possess no other vocabulary with which to describe their experiences. People feel at times as if they have had such an amazing experience that there is no possibility of it being an earthly phenomenon. Some peakers report immediate positive after-effects after such experiences while others might need years of reflection to realize the full benefit of their experiences. This fact also adds to the religious language commonly used to describe these experiences.

Through such experiences, Maslow argues, people move away from deficiency-motivated behavior and toward self-actualization. People who have had these experiences become less self-centered and feel lucky and "blessed" for the opportunity. They become, in Maslovian terms, less like an object and more like a person. This doesn't mean that the humility associated with a peak-experience removes all pride. Rather, as Maslow puts it, "Such people resolve the dichotomy between pride and humility by fusing them into a single complex, superordinate unity that is being proud (in a certain sense) and also humble (in a certain sense). Pride (fused with humility) is not hubris nor is it paranoia; humility (fused with pride) is not masochism" (1987:68). One

feels confident about the experience because it feels like he/she has had a glimpse into the nature of the way the world really works.

Although Maslow found that most self-actualized people do indeed have peak-experiences, he acknowledged that not all self-actualized people have them. But, Maslow believed that

it is very likely, indeed almost certain, that these older reports, phrased in terms of supernatural revelation, were, in fact, perfectly natural, human peak-experiences of the kind that can easily be examined today, which, however, were phrased in terms of whatever conceptual, cultural, and linguistic framework the particular seer had available in his time. (1994:20)

At first, due to the fact that people do not speak of peak-experiences openly, Maslow believed that there was a difference between people and that some simply could not have a peak-experience. He then modified this idea upon further reflection and said that it was possible for anyone to have a peak-experience, and that the experience may vary in intensity from person to person. Because Maslow believed that anyone could have a peak-experience, he said that those who did not have them simply chose to deny the experience. But, according to Maslow, peak-experiences happen of their own accord and cannot be conjured up. He believed that during a peak-experience a person, "becomes in these episodes more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human" (1999:106). In other words, the peak-experience moves him toward B-needs and B-cognition and away from the influence of D-needs and D-cognition. Maslow believed that peak-experiences

indeed did exist in this world, that they were a part of this world and served as a way of looking at this world in its true, untainted light. He said

This falling of the veils can be a valid perception of what has not been consciously perceived before. This all seems very obvious and very simple. Why has there then been such flat rejection of this path to knowledge? Partly I suppose the answer is that this kind of revelation-knowledge does not make four apples visible where there were only three before, nor do the apples change into bananas. No! It is more a shift in attention, in the organization of perception, in noticing or realizing that occurs. In peak-experiences, several kinds of attention-change can lead to new knowledge (1987:77-78).

Maslow uses as support the fact that those having peak-experiences who appear to be normal in all other facets of his/her life would lead us to believe that even in peak-experiences, he/she is still functioning normally. Maslow wanted to prove that peak-experiences were in fact part of this world and that those having these experiences and that are self-actualized

can and do perceive reality more efficiently, fully and with less motivational contamination than we others do, then we may possibly use them as biological essays. Through *their* greater sensitivity and perception, we may get a better report of what reality is like, than through our own eyes, just as canaries can be used to detect gas in mines before less sensitive creatures can (1999:109).

In support of his argument that we can benefit from taking seriously the perceptions and behaviors of self-actualized people, Maslow cites an experiment in which

chickens were given a variety of food options. Certain chickens consistently made good choices and therefore grew bigger and stronger, while other chickens made poor choices and weakened. When the “poor choosers” were put on the same diet as the “good choosers” then they too grew stronger, but never as large as the “good choosers” (1959:121). Maslow cautions that animal experiments, “can be of great use, but only when they are used cautiously and wisely” (1987:9), but this specific experiment reinforces Maslow’s theory that better choosers exist and if we follow the same path as the better choosers, then we too may share in the same success. Maslow believed that the “better choosers” of the human race were self-actualized.

### **2.6.1 Effects of Peak-Experiences**

Maslow found that peak-experiences were so powerful that they inevitably changed a person’s world view. He outlines nearly 20 effects that a peak-experience may have on one’s perception of reality. In general, peak-experiences cause people to perceive

- reality as simple, just, beautiful, and good;
- themselves to be complete, whole, and perfect;
- the universe as interconnected;
- the melting away of dichotomies and perceiving the essential unity of such opposites as good and evil, male and female, and life and death;
- the intense uniqueness and novelty of themselves and of everything in the universe;

- a feeling of being totally alive and fully-functioning to the point of feeling that he/she has attained a state of perfection where nothing is lacking;
- a feeling of necessity, to the point of seeing that there is a need for the existence of good as well as evil;
- a necessary order of things and that everything feels effortless, everything just seems to fall into place;
- this effortlessness is connected with playfulness, amusement, fun and joy;
- a feeling of self-sufficiency that does not cancel out his/her feeling of connection with everyone and everything, but heightens the awareness of his/her identity and uniqueness;
- that he/she is no longer looking to others to fulfill his/her D-needs, so now he/she has time to enjoy the experience of being around people (1987:91-94).

Peak-experiences allow a person to feel more self-integrated, closer to the world, at the peak of his/her powers and therefore able to be more creative. Maslow says that a person who has had peak-experiences will also look

that way to the observer, for instance, becoming more decisive, looking more strong, more single-minded, more apt to scorn or overcome opposition, more grimly sure of himself, more apt to give the impression that it would be useless to

try and stop him. It is as if now he had no doubts about his worth or about his ability to do whatever he decided to do. (Maslow 1999:118)

This confidence eliminates inhibitions and he/she is then able to be more expressive, spontaneous, and able to function in the here and now. "He acts now totally and without deficiency [ . . . ] His behavior and experience becomes *per se*, and self-validating, end-behavior and end-experience, rather than means-behavior or means-experience" (1999:121). In this state Maslow calls people "godlike" because the gods have no wants, have nothing missing. People who have had peak-experiences also have reported similar after-effects. As a person is functioning at the level of B-cognition, he/she begins to see himself/herself and others in a healthier manner. Life, no matter how dull or ungratifying it seems from the perspective of D-cognition, appears worthwhile functioning in the realm of B-cognition.

### **2.6.2 Religion and Peak-Experiences**

Maslow suspected that due to a lack of a better category, peak-experiences were often connected to religious experiences. But, he did believe that these so called "religious" experiences could be categorized as peak-experiences by comparing them to the definition of peak-experiences he had assembled. Just as Maslow was disheartened by the separation of values and science, he was likewise perturbed by the unhealthy dichotomy arising from the strict separation of science and religion. As Maslow succinctly put it, "dichotomizing pathologizes (and pathology dichotomizes)" (1994:12). For Maslow, not allowing religions to be challenged on any scientific basis, has caused them to stagnate. Similarly, by not allowing values into science, then ideal goals and



goals relating to the “purpose of life,” are left out. He asserted that, “it is increasingly clear that the religious questions themselves [ . . . ] are perfectly respectable scientifically, that they are rooted deep in human nature, that they can be studied, described, examined in a scientific way [ . . . ] (Maslow 1994:18). Maslow’s attempt at defining self-actualization and peak-experiences was his way of reuniting the fields of science and religion in order to allow for further study. Maslow believed that religions had originally been based on one person’s peak-experience, but through the translation of that experience and the passage of time, the original message had been watered down and distorted. Maslow believed that the true essence of spirituality was revealed in peak-experiences, not unlike what has already been described of William Blake.

### **Conclusion**

What Maslow created was a theory, a way of explaining and studying exceptional people and the unique experiences these types of people have. Just as he realized that the language available for peak-experiencers colored the description of his/her experiences, Maslow was aware that the definitions he provided were just as tangled in his culture and language. Maslow did not implement a quantifiable, scientific study<sup>4</sup>; instead, Maslow had created an opportunity to study the characteristics and experiences of the best examples of what “being human” means. By identifying peak-experiences as valid and positive, he created a space from which they can be discussed, which has enabled further study of these experiences and has been instrumental in establishing a new field called

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<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Paul Shostrom created a personality test based on Maslow’s theory, the so-called Personal Orientation Inventory or POI (1968).

Transpersonal Psychology, or the fourth force. Maslow understood that his theory could be challenged on the scientific level, but his argument was that without values science was useless. Even though he could not discover an explanation as to why or how peak-experiences happen, Maslow did not feel that was enough of a reason to discredit their occurrence. He saw that self-actualized people did indeed function above the norm that is generally accepted and they usually had peak-experiences, which, to him, was enough to validate their significance.

## Chapter III Blake and Maslow

### 1 Introduction

No proper examination of William Blake's art and poetry can ignore his claim to having received his inspiration through visions and conversations with otherworldly entities. But what explains such visions? Was Blake, as many of his contemporaries believed, mad? Or was he a liar, hoping to lend some sort of spiritual cachet to his work by claiming the mantle of an Ezekiel or Isaiah? If Blake was mad, what other evidence besides his claim to having seen visions do we have for such a diagnosis? Blake worked incessantly, which would not coincide with the debilitating effects of most mental illness. Had Blake fabricated these visions in his youth, it is hard to believe that he would have maintained that façade his entire life, risking the chance ever to be a famous, well-fed artist. If Blake suffered from manic-depressive phases, it is doubtful that he would have worked so diligently and consistently his entire life, nor would he have had the ability to maintain good relationships with his wife and friends, all things he did in fact do.

It is clear that Blake did not act like most of his peers, but just because he was different does not mean that he was mad. The basis for the assumption of Blake's insanity appears to originate with his claims of having visions. Because of Maslow's theories I will not only be able to show that Blake's visions were in all probability natural occurrences, but that he also was a high-functioning human being. I will argue that Blake's life and visions are best understood through Maslow's theories about B-level function and peak-experiences. In order to understand how similar Blake's visions are to Maslow's theory of peak-experiences, I will first explain a portion of Maslow's theory

and then offer a biographical example from Blake's life that corresponds with each part of the theory. This type of structure will also be applied to Maslow's theory of self-actualization. This type of comparison will only strengthen the fact that Blake's visions can be considered natural and healthy rather than unnatural and pathological. First, Blake's visions will be compared to Maslow's list of descriptive factors of peak-experiences. These factors are very similar to B-values but they are, according to Maslow, "seen as aspects of reality, should be distinguished from the attitudes or emotions of the B-cognizer toward this cognized reality and its attributes" (1994:94). In other words, during peak-experiences, people see the world as if they were imbued with B-values. Maslow asserts that after having a peak-experience, there are lasting effects on one's personality, to the point that they may move towards self-actualization. In the final sections, more biographical examples from Blake's life will be compared to the descriptions of the after-effects of peak-experiences and self-actualization as proposed by Maslow.

For lack of better categories, Blake has been called a mystic, a prophet, a visionary, an artist, a poet, and a madman. He is a person, a composite of many things, but most distinctively, he was able to have visions. These experiences are hard to name, but Maslow's theory of peak-experiences offers a way of explaining these experiences within this world and not as some supernatural occurrence or some form of delusion. As Maslow explained, visions are not gigantic leaps, but rather small steps in noticing. He said, "This falling of the veils can be a valid perception of what has not been consciously perceived before," for Maslow explains that people are looking for neon flashing signs when, "It is more a shift in attention, in the organization of perception, in noticing or

realizing that occurs. In peak-experiences, several kinds of attention-change can lead to new knowledge (1970:77-78). Blake also had a similar description of how his visionary faculties worked. Blake believed that he had fourfold vision, where, according to Wilson's description, "Single vision is purely material perception: in twofold vision an intellectual value is added, in threefold emotional, and in fourfold a spiritual. But the earthly man can know eternity only through, *through*, be it noted, not *with*, the senses . . . ." (Wilson 67). Blake believed vision to be accessible, but only to those who were willing to use fourfold vision and incorporate more than just intellectual, and emotional value into the way they perceive the world. Those willing to make a spiritual connection would see the true nature of the world revealed and would have the ability to have visions.

Gilchrist's chapter concerning Blake's madness is often criticized today for its assumptions, yet he has an important section describing friends and their reactions to Blake. The general consensus is that Blake was not mad. Gilchrist comes to the conclusion that, "Mad people try to conceal *their* crazes, and in the long run cannot succeed". Gilchrist asserts that Blake, "could throw aside his visionary mood and his paradoxes when he liked" (320-21). Gilchrist also says,

So far as I am concerned, I would infinitely rather be mad with William Blake than sane with nine-tenths of the world. When, indeed, such men are nicknamed 'mad,' one is brought in contact with the difficult problem 'What is madness?' Who is *not* mad—in some other person's sense, himself, perhaps, not the *noblest* of created mortals? Who, in certain abstruse cases, is to be the judge? Does not prophet or hero always seem 'mad' to the respectable mob, and to published men

of the world, the motives of feeling and action being so alien and incomprehensible? (122-23).

Gilchrist is just beginning to touch on the complexity of Blake, for no single definition suits him. He was more than just a poet, a madman, a visionary, or a mystic; Blake was a person who displayed many more characteristics of a self-actualized individual. This chapter will investigate how all of this combines to form a man.

## **2 Peak-Experiences**

In Chapter II, the definition of a peak-experience was explained as a transient moment of intense interconnectedness, of bliss, rapture, ecstasy or joy which could occur during a variety of situations. Maslow said that peak-experiences were subject to the available language of the culture. So, for many, peak-experiences are described in the language associated with their religion or culture. Peak-experiences offer a glimpse of self-actualization and B-cognition, but this period does not last long. What is different about a peak-experience from any other is that it is a concentrated experience with certain characteristics rather than just a random mental mishap.

When Blake wrote, he was undoubtedly connected to the political climate of the time which provided many of the characters in his writing. Blake also used examples from his time when explaining his visions, like seeing the heads of past, well-known kings. Also, Blake was a poet and a painter, so his mode of transmission was also affected. In other words, his talents were affected by his visions and his visions also affected his talents. In the following sections, the core elements of peak-experiences will be explained and compared to examples of Blake's visions.

## 2.1 Peak-Experiences and Blake's Visions

Maslow said that peak-experiences are often considered religious experiences, even though he argues that they are perfectly natural experiences that are part of this world. Maslow speculated that, "Much theology, much verbal religion through history and throughout the world, can be considered to be the more or less vain efforts to put into communicable words and formulate [. . .] the original mystical experience of the original prophets" (1994:24). Similarly, there were quite a few instances where Blake complained of his inability to paint from memory. In July of 1803, Blake writes to his friends Butts:

Then, I am determined that Mrs. Butts shall have a good likeness of You, if I have hands and eyes left; for I am become a likeness taker and succeed admirably well; but this is not to be achiev'd without the original sitting before you for Every touch, all likeness from memory being necessarily very, very defective; but Nature and Fancy are Two Things and can Never be join'd; neither ought any one to attempt it, for it is Idolatry and destroys the Soul. (Gilchrist 163)

Essentially Blake explains the artist's difficulty in relying on memory in order to produce a life-like portrait. Blake even goes as far as to say that memory is "defective" for it is like "fancy" and not the true object. Since Blake finds it challenging to paint from memory or fancy, then it is easier to believe that when he claims to be painting from his visions that he is indeed seeing what he claims to be seeing. Blake *was* trained as an engraver, and although he did have artistic talent, he was not trained in creating but rather in copying. This training served him well when presented with the opportunity of

copying his visions into his work. The paintings of his visionary heads, for example, would be considered “defective” or originating in pure “fancy” to Blake had they not been inspired by the presence of the subjects.

This line of reasoning must be reinforced by an explanation of the language that Blake used in relation to his visions. When Blake was explaining a vision of a statue he had seen in a field to a woman, she was excited to know exactly where he had seen this so that she could take her children to see it as well. Blake explained that this vision was in his mind and he pointed to his forehead. Gilchrist explains that

The reply brings us to the point of view from which Blake himself regarded his visions. It was by no means the mad view those ignorant of the man have fancied. He would candidly confess they were not literal matters of fact; but phenomena seen by his imagination: *realities* none the less for that, but transacted within the realm of mind. A distinction which widely separates such visions from the hallucinations of madness, or of the victims of ghostly or tableturning delusions. (Gilchrist 317-18)

Gilchrist is not willing to believe in these visions himself, but he is more than willing to allow for Blake’s sanity in relation to these visions. Instead of being valued as something existing in this world, Gilchrist grants Blake’s visions the status of imagined things. Gilchrist quotes Mr. Smetham saying “What he *thought*, he *saw*, to all intents and purposes; and it was this sudden and sharp crystallization of inward notions into outward and visible signs which produced the impression on many beholders that reason was unseated.” Gilchrist goes on to say that “According to his own explanation, Blake saw



spiritual appearances by the exercise of a special faculty—that of imagination—using the word in the then unusual, but true sense, of a faculty which busies itself with the subtler realities, *not* with fictions” (318). Blake’s definition of imagination must be considered for all of this to make sense. Blake “said the things imagination saw were as much realities as were gross and tangible facts” (Gilchrist 318). Blake valued imagination as something tangible. It wasn’t fanciful, but rather fact, truth, and worth paying attention to.

Although Maslow did not intend to insinuate that only creative people have peak-experiences, Maslow did believe that peak-experiences awakened creative energy in the sense of productivity. Blake displays creativity in the sense of productivity, since he engraved about 580 plates in his lifetime (Ackroyd 78). Also, Blake had a private showing of his work which was accompanied by a lengthy description of all of his works as well as some of his beliefs concerning his visions and art. One such passage in his *A Descriptive Catalogue* explained that

The prophets describe what they saw in Vision as real and existing men, whom they saw with their imaginative and immortal organs; the Apostles the same; the clearer the organ the more distinct the object. A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour, or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing, mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all. The painter of this work asserts that all his imaginations appear to him

infinitely more perfect and more minutely organized than anything seen by his mortal eye. Spirits are organized men. (Wilson 73)

Blake is addressing quite a few ideas in this passage. Not only is he asserting that his visions are of prophetic status, but that visions are not ghosts or vapors. Blake believed that there was a distinct difference between visions and seeing ghosts. Visions and the visionary heads that Blake saw were different to him than ghosts. Blake felt that, "a ghost was a thing seen by the gross bodily eye, a vision by the mental" (Wilson 74). The only ghost he ever claims to have seen was a scaly thing upstairs while living in Lambeth. It was coming downstairs towards him and he was so frightened he ran out of the house. But, Blake had many visions. These visions were not unordered vapors but distinct, organized experiences. Blake was also comfortable with making public his visions, which was dangerous since he risked being called a madman.

Another element of peak-experiences that Maslow identified is the feeling of detachment from time. Maslow explained that, "In the peak-experience there is a very characteristic disorientation in time and space, or even the lack of consciousness of time and space. Phrased positively, this is like experiencing universality and eternity" (1994:63). There is also an element of "tremendous concentration of a kind which does not normally occur" according to Maslow (1994:60). Blake had a similar description of his visions, for, according to Wilson,

He believed that he, and others who chose to cultivate the power, could have visionary intercourse with the spirits of the dead, because he believed in the timeless union of all things in the Divine Mind, and hence that the living could

command the world memory to a greater or lesser extent. He visualized and drew the heads just as many people can visualize and draw a well-known face or landscape. (Wilson 312)

Blake believed that he could tap into this timeless union, but when he did so, he was no longer participating in this world. G.E. Bentley chronicles in his detailed reference work, *Blake Records*, an account written by an anonymous author about one night of Blake's visions. The anonymous author explained that

One night, while we were engaged in criticizing his own extravagant, yet occasionally sublime illustrations of the book of Job, engraved by himself, he suddenly exclaimed, "Good God! here's Edward the Third!" "Where?" "On the other side of the table; *you* can't see him, but I do; it's his first visit." "How do you know him?" "My spirit knows him—how I cannot tell." "How does he look?" "Stern, calm, implacable; yet still happy" [. . .] "Can you ask him a question?" "Of course I can; we have been talking all this time, some undefined, some telegraphic organ; we look and we are understood. Language to spirits is useless." (298)

This passage represents only one of many written accounts describing Blake as partially occupying another world, somewhat detached from conventional reality while he was experiencing one of his visions—even with someone in the same room. Blake makes it clear that he is part of a deeper aspect of this world, as Wilson notes when she shares a comment Catherine Blake confided to Butts, "I have very little of Mr. Blake's company; he is always in Paradise" (Wilson 267).

Blake also believed that somehow his visions were merely transcriptions from the spiritual world. Maslow accounts for this feeling by explaining that during a peak-experience one is, "much more passive and receptive, much more humble, than normal perception is. It is much more ready to listen and much more able to hear" (1994:65). Similarly Blake himself reveals to Butts that one of his recent works was written as if he were a passive transcriber. Blake explains,

I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without Premeditation & even against my Will; the Time it has take in writing was render'd Non Existent, & an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of a long life, all produc'd without Labour or Study. I mention this to shew you what I think the Grand Reason of my being brought down here. (Keynes 55)

Blake is again explaining that his visions were not mere fancies of his mind, for they produced volumes of work that would otherwise be unexplainable and he is also addressing the lack of awareness of time, another aspect of peak-experiences previously discussed. Later, in July of 1803, Blake writes to Butts, he speaks of a poem he is working on, saying

Thus I hope that all our three years' trouble Ends in Good Luck at last and shall be forgot by my affections and only remembered by my understanding; to be a Memento in time to come, and to speak to future generations by a Sublime Allegory, which is now perfectly completed into a Grand Poem. I may praise it,

since I dare not pretend to be any other than Secretary; the Authors are  
in Eternity. (Gilchrist 163-64)

Putting this experience in Maslow's terms, Blake is expressing the time-compression, humility, and "passivity" characteristic of peak-experiences. Blake probably chose poetry as a way of expressing his experience because, as Maslow explains, it is difficult to find a way to translate such experiences into language: "Expression and communication in the peak-experiences tend often to become poetic, mythical and rhapsodic, as if this were the natural kind of language to express such states of being" (1999:122).

Maslow's theory points to the fact that peak-experiences are intermittent and they do end; they are intense moments where one feels that they have entered a state of heaven or perfection, a state that "exists all the time all around us, always available to step into for a little while at least" (1994:66). Although Maslow also agrees that peak-experiences are rare occurrences, moments that occur occasionally, and sometimes only once a lifetime, he explained that those who are self-actualized have more instances of—and more intense—peak-experiences. For Blake, visions came quite often, but there were apparently periods in his life during which his visions were not as abundant as at other times. Blake did have frequent peak-experiences, yet he was not constantly in this state. In a letter to Hayley in October of 1804 Blake writes:

O the distress I have undergone, and my poor wife with me. Incessantly labouring and incessantly spoiling what I had done well. Every one of my friends was astonished at my faults, and could not assign a reason; they knew my industry

and abstinence from every pleasure for the sake of study, and yet—and yet—and yet there wanted to proofs of industry in my works. I thank God with entire confidence that it shall be so no longer—he is become my servant who domineered over me, he is even as a brother who was my enemy. Dear Sir, excuse my enthusiasm or rather madness, for I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take up a pencil or graver into my hand, even as I had used to be in my youth, and as I have not been for twenty dark, but very profitable, years. I thank God that I courageously pursued my course through darkness. (Gilchrist 190)

Critics have used this example as support for the possibility that Blake suffered from bipolar disorder, but ironically Blake was by no means unproductive during those twenty years. In fact, the twenty dark years Blake refers to is certainly an exaggeration on Blake's part. Quoting S. Foster Damon, Wilson states that this time of "sterility" to have lasted only about nine years (Wilson 208). Even then, Wilson acknowledges that

Blake is not speaking of a period of sterility, if indeed the years during which he wrote *Vala*, and at least conceived the idea of *Milton*, can fairly be called sterile; on the contrary he calls those years 'very profitable' though darkened by conflict and division. He respected the process of his own development, however painful the process might have been, and he knew what he had gained by it. (Wilson 209)

During this time Blake was living at Felpham and he might have felt underappreciated by Hayley, but he in no way remained unproductive. His visions might not have been as intense as in his youth, but he was still experiencing them. This coincides with Maslow's

finding that those who experience peak-experiences do not do so on a consistent basis. Blake indeed had breaks from his connection to eternity, which more strongly suggests his disappointment with this separation from his visions rather than suggesting mental instability.

Another connection between Maslow and Blake arises out of Maslow's explanation that, "Peak-experiences can be so wonderful that they can parallel the experience of dying, that is of an eager and happy dying" (1970:65). Blake also seems to compare his visions to death when he adds to his signature the line "William Blake, born 1765, has died several times since!!!" (Bentley 353). Blake would have been eight years old in 1765, so this day of his supposed "birth" may be a reference to the day of his first vision on Peckham Rye. Blake's reference to his subsequent visions as "deaths" should not be interpreted as negative experiences, but should be viewed as deaths in a positive sense for they serve as his inspiration. Blake may have used the term "death" to explain how he was allowed to see more than just the material world, so in essence a part of him had to change in order to be able to accept the immensity of true reality.

Another aspect of peak-experiences, according to Maslow, is that "The world is accepted. People will say that they understand it. Most important of all for comparison with religious thinking is that somehow they become reconciled to evil. Evil itself is accepted and understood and seen in its proper place in the whole [. . .]" (1994:63). When Blake was talking about his painting of *The Last Judgment* in his notes he said, *The Last Judgment* is one of these Stupendous Visions. I have represented it as I saw it; to different People it appears differently as everything else does; for tho' on Earth things seem Permanent, they are less permanent than a Shadow, as we all know too well"

(Wilson 263). Blake believed that in his visions he was seeing things as they really are and that earth is just a temporary situation. This is similar to the feeling that Maslow describes when a person feels that they are looking at the true nature of the world.

At first, due to the fact that people do not speak of peak-experiences openly, Maslow believed that there was a difference between people and that some simply could not have a peak-experience. He then changed his mind and said that it was possible for anyone to have a peak-experience, and that the experience may vary in intensity from person to person. Because Maslow believed that anyone could have peak-experiences, he said that those who did not have them must simply choose to deny the experience, which seems to have been a view that Blake also subscribed to. But, peak-experiences happen on their own accord and cannot be conjured up, according to Maslow. This idea resonates with a story found in *The Blake Records*, which include a biography by Allan Cunningham written in 1830 for the *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, probably because Cunningham claims to have known Blake. In one section Cunningham explains that, "Visions, such as are said to arise in the sight of those who indulge in opium, were frequently present to Blake, nevertheless he sometimes desired to see a spirit in vain. 'For many years,' said he, 'I longed to see Satan'" (Bentley 498). The story ends with Blake seeing Satan outside of his window and he quickly drew the fiendish picture. This vision of Satan frightened Blake for he did not imagine that Satan looked so frightening, but was expecting rather a grand "classic spirit" (Bentley 498). Blake could not conjure up his coveted vision of Satan, but rather had to wait until it came to him. Blake would also explain that he felt everyone had the



same ability to see visions. “He would tell his artist friends: ‘You have the same faculty as I (the visionary), only you do not trust or cultivate it. You can see what I do, *if you choose*’” (Gilchrist 318). Both Maslow and Blake agree that peak-experiences or visions are not available for a few people, but instead they are accessible by everyone.

On a similar note, in the aforementioned letter to his acquaintance, Dr. Trusler, Blake also explains that,

I see Every thing I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike [. . .]  
 As a man is, So he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. You  
 certainly Mistake, when you say that the Visions of Fancy are not to be found in  
 This World. To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or  
 Imagination, & I feel Flatter’d when I am told so. (Keynes 9)

It is important to remember that, for Blake, imagination was inspiration from the spiritual world, not only a world that he was convinced that he had tapped in to, but one that anyone could tap into. Blake does believe that he has a window into the spiritual realm, but he never claims to be special, to be the only one who can do such a thing. Rather, because Blake believes in this realm, because he as “shifted his perception” to include its existence, then he is able to access the knowledge, as Maslow says, from this realm.

### **2.3 After-Effects of Peak-Experiences**

Maslow found that peak-experiences were so powerful that they inevitably ended up changing a person’s world view. Maslow explains that, “Peak-experiences sometimes have immediate effects or after-effects upon the person. Sometimes their aftereffects are

so profound and so great as to remind us of the profound religious conversions which forever after changed the person” (1994:66). He was able to outline the effects a peak-experience has on one’s reality through nearly 20 descriptive factors. The actual peak-experience allows a person to function at the level of Being, where, as was outlined in Chapter II, “The cognition of being (B-cognition) that occurs in peak-experiences tends to perceive external objects, the world, and individual people as more detached from human concerns” (1994:61). Peak-experiences allow a person to feel more self-integrated, closer to the world, at the peak of his/her powers and therefore able to be more active in creating. People notice someone who has had a peak-experience “becoming more decisive, looking more strong, more single-minded, more apt to scorn or overcome opposition, more grimly sure of himself, more apt to give the impression that it would be useless to try and stop him. It is as if now he had no doubts about his worth or about his ability to do whatever he decided to do” (Maslow 1994:118). This confidence eliminates inhibitions and he/she is then able to be more expressive, spontaneous, and able to function in the here and now. This confidence also removes inhibitions about sharing these views, as Blake wrote in a letter to Butts:

The thing I have most at Heart—more than life, or all that seems to make life comfortable without—Is the Interest of True Religion and Science, and whenever any thing appears to affect that Interest [. . .] It gives me the greatest of torments. I am not ashamed, afraid, or averse to tell you what Ought to be Told: That I am under the direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily and Nightly; but the nature of such things is not, as some suppose, without trouble or care. Temptations are

on the right hand and left; behind, the sea of time and space roars and follows swiftly; he who keeps not right onward is lost. (Wilson 161)

Blake undoubtedly also displays this firmness of will in other ways, for he quits the possibility of a safe income to pursue his interests many times in his life, most notably when he leaves Felpham and the comfort of a job with William Hayley in 1803 because Blake felt that his visions were being inhibited and not being taken seriously (Gilchrist 150). His absence of success has not been attributed to his "lack of talent," but rather to the fact that, "The imaginative man needed friends; for his gifts were not of the bread-winning sort. He was one of those whose genius is in far higher ratio than their talents: and it is talent which commands worldly success" (Gilchrist 28). Blake repeatedly gave up the possibility of conventional success because his visions and his art and poetry were more important to him and he was confident of their worth.

This state of Being that Maslow explains is present in a peak-experience is the level at which Maslow calls people godlike for the simple reason that gods have no wants, for them nothing is missing, which is similar to human beings in this state. Also, peak-experiences allow a person to be god-like in the sense that they have

universal understanding [and] would never blame or condemn or be disappointed or shocked. Our only possible emotions would be pity, kindness, perhaps sadness or amusement. But this is precisely the way in which self-actualized people do at times react to the world, and in which all of us react in our peak-experiences. (1994:64)

After experiencing this feeling of functioning at the level of B-cognition, he/she begins to see himself/herself and others in a healthier manner. Life, no matter how dull or ungratifying, now appears worthwhile. As a person has more peak-experiences, he/she will become exposed to a state of Being more often, which eventually has an effect on his/her personality. This can cause him/her to slowly adopt more characteristics of self-actualization, or someone functioning at a state of Being. Looking closer at Blake, we find characteristics of his own personality revealed in his correspondence that support the assertion that he was moving towards self-actualization.

### **3 Self-Actualization**

There is no identifiable dividing line between B- and D-cognition. As Maslow explains, "What seems to distinguish those individuals I have called self-actualizing people is that in them these episodes [of peak-experiences] seem to come far more frequently, and intensely and perfectly than in average people. This makes self-actualization a matter of degree and of frequency rather than an all-or-none affair" (1999:106). Maslow also believed that in peak-experiences a person, "becomes in these episodes more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human" (1999:106). Maslow believed that peak-experiences indeed did exist in this world, that they were a part of this world and served as a way of looking at this world in its true, untainted light. Maslow uses as support the fact that those having peak-experiences appear to be normal in all other facets of their lives, which lead us to believe that even in peak-experiences, they still function normally.

Maslow

suggested the principle that if self-actualizing people can and do perceive reality more efficiently, fully and with less motivational contamination than we others do, then we may possibly use them as biological essays. Through *their* greater sensitivity and perception, we may get a better report of what reality is like, than through our own eyes. (1999:109)

As it was explained in Chapter II, Maslow's theory states that if there are in fact better choosers and if we follow the same path as these better choosers, then we too have similar experiences. Maslow believed that the "better choosers" of the human race were self-actualized. Peak-experiences are themselves moments of Being existence as opposed to Deficiency existence, and this feeling can be so powerful that it can begin to change the peak-experiencer permanently. Blake had had so many peak-experiences that the connection between those experiences and his personality has links that could be considered examples of a person either on the road to or already at the state of self-actualization.

As theorist Northrop Frye<sup>5</sup> explains,

The function of the prophet is not to point out what is inevitable, but to show what can be built up out of an inevitable development [. . .] Blake, therefore, must come forward to insist that "Empire follows Art & Not Vice Versa as Englishmen suppose." He will use his canon as a new testament for English culture. He will

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<sup>5</sup> Frye, a New Critic, was not interested in Blake's biographical information; instead, he was interested in proving Blake's worth as a poet. Although his perspective is different from this paper's, he has done a commendable job of arguing in favor of Blake and allowing for him to be worthy of academic study.

teach the English how to use their imaginations, how to develop the immense reserves of power that they are leaving untapped. (407)

Blake could see no other outlet for his visions than to use them to better humanity. It is no doubt that the character of Blake's personality, indeed his entire motivation for working, was driven by inspiration derived from his visions. He considers himself a "better chooser" who could provide a more fruitful path for the people of England.

Maslow likewise saw that people become closer to unmotivated behavior in the sense of deficiency motivation by having these experiences. These people are losing selfishness and becoming less of an object and more a person living a higher life. People who have had these experiences feel lucky and "blessed" for the opportunity. This doesn't mean that the humble feeling that is attached to a peak-experience removes all pride, but rather, as was explained in Chapter II, "Such people resolve the dichotomy between pride and humility by fusing them into a single complex, superordinate unity" (1970:68). He/she feels confident about the experience he/she has had for he/she feels that he/she has had a glimpse into the nature of the way the world really works.

To friend John Flaxman in a letter Blake again explains that, "I am more famed in Heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my Brain are studies & Chambers fill'd with books & pictures of old which I wrote & painted in ages of Eternity before my mortal life; & those works are the delight & Study of Archangels. Why, then, should I be anxious about the riches or fame of mortality?" (Keynes 23). Here Blake illustrates his pride, his confidence in the validity of his visions, yet he also displays a humble acceptance of his life as it is. For Blake, the visions are enough to keep him happy. As

Frye explains, "The public's contemptuous neglect of Blake was wrong and foolish as it could be, but nevertheless Blake owes much of his integrity to his isolation" (413).

So, even though Blake suffers from obscurity, he is not suffering in vain; he is allowed to have his visions untainted by popularity or riches. Blake enjoys his visions for what they are, not what they bring him in the material world. Later, as an old man, Blake reveals to friend George Cumberland in a letter that, "I have been very near the Gates of Death & have returned very weak & an Old Man feeble & tottering, but not in Spirit & Life, not in The Real Man The Imagination which Liveth for Ever. In that I am stronger & stronger as this Foolish Body decays" (Keynes 168). This idea has infiltrated Blake's poetry, including one poem titled "Years of Neglect" where he says: "I have Mental Joy & Mental Health/ And Mental Friends & Mental Wealth;/ I've a Wife I love & that loves me;/ I've all But Riches Bodily./ I am in God's presence night & day,/ And he never turns his face away" (Wilson 265).

Cumberland introduced Blake to Trusler hoping to get Blake some illustration work (Wilson 91). But, Trusler was not pleased with Blake's illustrations. In response to Trusler's obvious distaste for Blake's work, he wrote:

Fun I love, but too much Fun is of all things the most loathsome. Mirth is better than Fun, and Happiness is better than Mirth. I feel that a Man may be happy in This World. And I know that This World is a World of imagination and Vision. I see Every thing I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike (Wilson 92-93).

This defense of his work also points out how he places importance on happiness. Another aspect of a self-actualized individual is “that their sense of humor is not of the ordinary type [. . .] they do not laugh at hostile humor.” Instead, their humor “consists in large part in poking fun at human beings in general [. . .] poking fun at themselves” (1987:141). Maslow also identified a quality of playfulness in self-actualizers, characterized as “happy joy, or gay exuberance or delight” (1999:123). Ackroyd explains that Blake “possessed a sense of humor and a capacity for astringent irony” (174) while Gilchrist reports that Blake would poke fun at the shape and largeness of his forehead and blame that for his reason for supporting the Republicans and revolution (80).

As Blake had more peak-experiences, he became even more sure of his need to be a visionary artist and poet. This compares to what Maslow calls a “Greatly increased creativeness” in the sense that Blake felt committed to continually create to the point of creating a way for him to print his own works. As Gilchrist said, “There was no pause or hiatus in the lifelong wedding of spiritual and earthly things in his daily course; no giving of the reins to imagination at one time more than other” (128). Blake began to display, according to Maslow’s elements of self-actualization, an “Increased autonomy, and resistance to enculturation” as well as an “Increased detachment and desire for privacy” (1999:32). In a letter to Butts in September of 1801 Blake wrote:

I labor incessantly and accomplish not one half of what I intend, because my Abstract folly hurries me often away while I am at work, carrying me over Mountains and Valleys which are not Real, in a Land of Abstraction where Spectres of the Dead wander. This I endeavor to prevent and with my whole



might Chain my feet to the world of Duty and Reality; but in vain! the faster I bind, the better is the Ballast, for I, so far from being bound down, take the world with me in my flights, and often it seems lighter than a ball of Wool rolled by the Wind. (Gilchrist 145)

Blake was not interested in anything but creating and sharing his message. It mattered not whether he was recognized by his peers, for, according to Gilchrist, Robinson said,

The Spirits said to him “Blake, be an artist”—His eye glistened while he spoke of the joy of devoting himself to *divine art* alone [. . .] Of fame he said “I should be sorry if I had any earthly fame, for whatever natural glory a man has is so much detracted from his spiritual glory—I wish to do nothing for profit I want nothing—I am quite happy”—This was confirmed to me on my subsequent interviews with him—His distinction between the Natural and Spiritual worlds was very confused. (Gilchrist 334)

As Maslow explained,

Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are devoted, working at something, something which is very precious to them—some calling it vocation in the old sense, the priestly sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy in them disappears. (1982:42)

Instead of seeing his work as preventing fame, Blake believed his work was his life. Blake saw his poetry as his calling in life and did not even perceive it as work, but as something he was meant to do. Gilchrist explains that,

Blake, who had a natural aptitude for acquiring knowledge, little cultivated in youth, was always willing to apply himself to the vocabulary of a language, for the purpose of reading a great original author. He would declare that he learnt French, sufficient to read it, in a few weeks. By and by, at over sixty years of age, he will set to learning Italian, in order to read Dante. (Gilchrist 151)

Blake was self-taught and, although he was poor, he was well-read. In 1803, at the age of 46, Blake was teaching himself Greek and Latin and found it easy to learn these languages. He began translating the Bible (Wilson 169). Ackroyd quotes Blake as saying, "I have a great ambition to know everything" (56), and it seems that Blake was indeed hoping to accomplish this feat. Similarly, Maslow explained that, "Self-actualization means working to do well the thing one wants to do" (1982:46). In order to be a good poet, Blake had to be able to make allusions to other great poets' works. In order to understand these great poets, Blake decided to learn their original languages in order to read the originals. He wanted to know as much as he could so that he could understand what his visions meant and how they related to the visions of others.

Self-actualized individuals also display and "Increased identification with the human species" and a "More democratic character structure" (1999:32). Blake noticed a sickly looking young man passing his house every day carrying a portfolio and instead of just watching this young man, he decided to befriend him. The Blakes introduced

themselves to the boy and visited him daily during the long illness before his death, "supplying money, wine, and other necessities" (Wilson 84). Blake's kindness manifests in other stories about him being quite generous. Blake reportedly loaned 40 pounds to a "free-thinker and treatise-writer, who complained that his children were dinnerless" without requesting repayment, even though it was later found out that this man was not in need of the money (Wilson 47). This amount of money must have been a lot to Blake, for he and Catherine barely made enough to survive themselves. Blake also showed his displeasure with unfair treatment to people when he saw a boy across the way who had a log tied to his leg as some sort of punishment. Blake walked over to the house and demanded that the boy not be treated in that manner. Eventually, the neighbor agreed with Blake and the log was removed (Wilson 47-8). Such incidents support Maslow's point that self-actualized people are spontaneous and in moments where they feel that a person is not being treated fairly, they feel an overwhelming obligation to intercede (1987:133). A letter to Butts in January of 1802 reinforces Blake's commitment to cherishing the human form. Blake writes, "But what you tell me about your sight afflicted me not a little, and that about your health, in another part of your letter, makes me entreat you to take due care of both; it is a part of our duty to God and man to take due care of his Gifts; and tho' we ought not [to] think more highly of ourselves, yet we ought to think As highly of ourselves as immortals ought to think" (Gilchrist 149). Once again Blake's language is framed in religious language, but his essential message is that it is important to take care of the human form. This concern extended beyond his close friends and included humanity. For example, in a letter to Flaxman in Oct. of 1801 Blake wrote, "Now I hope to see the Great Works, as they are so near to Felpham, Paris being scarce further off than London. But I hope that France

and England will henceforth be as One Country and their Arts One, and that you will Ere long be erecting Monuments In Paris—Emblems of Peace” (Wilson 157). Blake knew about the tumultuous times in France and was hoping that imagination would win and peace would prevail.

Swinburne also relates a story about Blake’s strong response to wrong-doing when he wrote about Blake interfering between a husband beating his wife on the street. He quickly walked up, hit the husband away from his wife, and left. Blake reportedly told a bystander, “that the very devil himself had flown upon him in defense of the woman” (Wilson 268). Similarly, Maslow explains that spontaneity can cause, “emotions bubbling up from within them [ . . . ] that it seems almost sacrilegious to suppress them” (1987:133). Blake was so overcome with emotion and a feeling that justice was necessary, that he spontaneously ran to this woman’s defense.

It is easy to begin to see someone as godlike or saintlike, especially when such a long list of positive attributes are compiled, but this is hardly the point of such a biographical analysis. Blake did have faults, but even these faults were within the spectrum of a self-actualized individual. As Gilchrist writes:

In society, people would disbelieve and exasperate him, would set upon the gentle yet fiery-hearted mystic, and stir him up into being extravagant, out of a mere spirit of opposition. Then he would say things on purpose to startle, and make people stare. In the excitement of conversation he would exaggerate his peculiarities of opinions and doctrine, would express a floating notion or fancy in an extreme way, without the explanation or qualification he was, in reality, well

aware it needed; taking a secret pleasure in the surprise and opposition such views aroused. (Gilchrist 324)

Even though Blake was known to get easily excited, he refrained from imposing his beliefs on his friends. Blake's willingness to share what he believed to be the truth is in fact a different situation. Blake was not willing to quiet his opinion, but he did not force anyone to wholly subscribe to his belief system, since that in itself would go against Blake's belief in each person had the right to pursue his/her unique way<sup>6</sup>. Gilchrist shares another anecdote:

[A]s Mr. Kirkup reports, Blake would on occasion, waive, with true courtesy, "the question of his spiritual life, if the subject seemed at all incomprehensible or offensive to the friend with him: he would no more obtrude than suppress his faith, and would practically accept and act upon the dissent or distaste of his companions without visible vexation or the rudeness of a thwarted fanatic". (Gilchrist 325)

Again, it is apparent that Blake realized the sacred nature of spiritual experiences and felt it was not necessary to persuade anyone to his beliefs.

One final, interesting aspect of self-actualizing people is "that they attract at least some admirers, friends, or even disciples or worshippers" (Maslow 1987:140). This

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<sup>6</sup> In Blake's *Proverbs of Hell*, he writes, "The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow, nor the lion. the horse; how he shall take his prey" (Erdman 37). He also says, "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's. I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create" in his poem *Jerusalem*.

certainly rings true for Blake, who had made friends who did their best to keep Blake in work and in public favor, like Linnell, as well as the group of young followers, The Ancients. Samuel Palmer, one of The Ancients, reportedly kissed the bell handle of Blake's home before entering it (Ackroyd 340). Ackroyd explains that Blake "was never grand or difficult" when meeting with these young men, instead he shared bits about his life, his visions, and the difficult times he encountered (340). Blake did not look at these young men as followers or disciples, nor would he have accepted handouts. Instead, he looked at the young men as friends and looked forward to their meetings, taking their youthful energy with good humor (Gilchrist 299-300).

### **Conclusion**

Even Blake's biographers have been guilty of judging Blake for not being more popular during his time. Wilson has commented that

it may be said that Blake, though supreme in genius, is deficient in talent.

Without the mediation of talent which facilitates contact with the minds of others, genius stands aloof, difficult to approach. Talent tides over the inevitable shallows where inspiration has failed, and Blake's deficiency is accountable for the marked unevenness of his work both as poet and artist. Genius, self-absorbed, lacks the power of detached criticism supplied by talent. (62)

Wilson was not looking at Blake as a visionary poet, but rather only as a poet. Her criticism of his work centers around his lack of talent, his lack of being critical of his own work. This reveals more about the prejudices of the critic rather than the inadequacies of Blake. Blake was not trying to merely be a poet; his motivation was to remain true to his

visions. Blake was ultimately aware of his position outside of the popular literary and artistic circles of his time and would have preferred to remain that way if it meant risking his higher purpose, being a visionary poet and artist. Obscurity was a small risk to Blake when he was dealing with eternity. There is no way to separate Blake's work from its spiritual inspiration. Blake was neither self-absorbed, nor lacking in talent, he was simply doing his best to translate his peak-experiences into words and images. Wilson's accusation of Blake's lack of talent because his poems are hard to understand would have probably been met with a similar remark written by Blake to Trusler that said, "That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care" (Ackroyd 209). Wilson is not the only guilty person. Without a way to categorize Blake's visions, there isn't much else a critic *could* say. If these visions are ignored or dismissed, then there is no way to fully appreciate the complexity of Blake's unique work. But, armed with Maslow's theories of peak-experiences, a critic could not only avoid calling Blake a "mad genius", but he/she could also feel secure in knowing that Blake was not writing to attain fame, but instead to do justice to his peak-experiences.

## Conclusion

Through this paper, I have attempted to show that William Blake's visions are indeed not vaporous hallucinations nor supernatural phenomena but natural, human experiences which everyone is potentially able to share. I am not proposing that Blake is the authority on visions; rather, he is one of many who have been brave enough to trust in his visions. This is the lesson I think Blake intended his audiences to receive. And even though it has taken about 200 years, we have finally developed a language for discussing Blake's visions and a way of incorporating them into critical discussion of his work without fear of being considered crazy. Maslow theorized what Blake sang in his poetry and wrote in his letters, and finally the two have been connected.

Maslow's hierarchy explains that there is a way for people to transcend being motivated by their deficits and exist on a higher level of humanness. This level, termed self-actualization, is where peak-experiences exist. By having a peak-experience, one is able to glimpse self-actualization. Eventually, peak-experiences will begin to affect a person, usually altering his/her personality so that he/she is closer to self-actualization. By using Maslow's theories, there is now a space, grounded in this world, from which scholars and students can discuss Blake's visions. There is really no way of scientifically validating Blake's experiences, but Maslow was aware that there is really no way of scientifically validating any peak-experience. If you want to understand thought, imagination, art, and peak-experiences, then you must rely on different tools than would be needed to scientifically validate a hypothesis. What can be validated, and monitored, are the similar ways in which those who have had peak-experiences describe their experiences and the effects they have on their lives. When a solid body of reports can be



corroborated, then there must be some validity to the reports. Maslow set out to combine these similarities and build a theory from their base.

Maslow believed that the true essence of spirituality was revealed in peak-experiences, not so unlike William Blake. “For Blake, the dualistic world of mind and body, time and space, is an illusion which must not be imitated, but which must be dispelled by the processes of his art” (Mitchell 68). Blake was against the scientific world of Bacon and Locke, who he felt were ruining people’s ability to think by covering up the importance of imagination. Maslow believed that what science was missing was values, while Blake, fighting for the same thing, was calling values art and imagination. Essentially, both Maslow and Blake agree that science is not enough to explain existence, that faith is also necessary, for there are things that exist in this world that are considered natural, visions for example, that cannot be scientifically proven, but indeed still exist. Maslow was able to prove this by compiling information and finding that peak-experiences are qualitatively described, if not quantifiable yet. In the forward to Maslow’s book *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* by Henry Geiger, Geiger says that Maslow speaks about

a difficulty in remembering where his ideas came from, wondering, perhaps, if his delight in them, his working them over and developing their correlates, had somehow displaced recollection of their origin. Sometimes between 1966 and 1968—the letter is undated—he wrote: ‘I’m still vulnerable to my idiotic memory. Once it frightened me—I had some of the characteristics of brain tumor, but finally I thought I’d accepted it . . . I live so much in my private world of Platonic essences, having all sorts of conversations with Plato &

Socrates and trying to convince Spinoza and Bergson of things, & getting mad at Locke and Hobbes, that I only appear to others to be living in the world. I've had so much trouble . . . because I seem to mimic being conscious & interpersonal, I even carry on conversations and look intellectual. But then there is absolute and complete amnesia—and then I'm in trouble with my family!

(xxi)

Similarly, Blake revealed to his friend Robinson, "I was Socrates . . . a sort of brother. I must have had conversations with him. So I had with Jesus Christ. I have an obscure recollection of having been with both of them" (Ackroyd 341). It appears that the reason why Blake fits into Maslow's theory so well is that they both have a similar way of explaining their interpretations of their life-changing experiences.

If we only look at Blake in relation to his peers, we can easily surmise that he was potentially mad, but if we look at Blake through the lens of Maslow's theory, we get a different impression. Frye agrees that a poet must be studied in relation to his historical situation, but that study can be exhausted. Frye says, "What makes the poet worth studying at all is his ability to communicate beyond his context in time and space: we therefore are the present custodians of his meaning, and the profundity of his appeal is relative to our own outlook" (420). Blake still appeals today for he was brave enough to speak about his visions. He was more than just a poet, though, which is probably why he still appeals to audiences today. Maslow explained that, "Making an honest statement involves daring to be different, unpopular, nonconformist" (1982:46). Blake was willing to speak the truth he had found and wasn't afraid of being unpopular for that. Or as Maslow puts it:

From the point of view of the peak-experiencer, each person has his own private religion, which he develops out of his own private revelations in which are revealed to him his own private myths and symbols, rituals and ceremonies, which may be of the profoundest meaning to him personally and yet completely idiosyncratic, i.e., of no meaning to anyone else. (1994:28)

Blake would undoubtedly have agreed with this. Blake used his prophetic poetry as a way of translating his visions into language. His poetry is riddled with archetypal images and symbolic, mythical language. But, most importantly, Blake's poetry does not proselytize. Instead, Blake tells his readers in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that, "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (Erdman 44). Blake did not believe in following another's path to the end; he believed in creating one's own path, a path that suits each person individually. Blake would most likely laugh at the vast amount of critical work that has been published about his poetry and art because the critics are spending time analyzing his way rather than forming their own way. I like to think that he would make an exception for this piece and support it for I am attempting not to dissect his poetry or artistic images, but instead to show how his visions are natural occurrences that anyone can experience. I am not trying to show that Blake's visions are the only way to peak-experiences; instead, they beautifully illustrate one man's way without imposing on the other infinite possible ways to experience a state of Being.

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