

WILLIAM BLAKE'S INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY: READING BLAKE AND KEN WILBER TOGETHER

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ABSTRACT: Both William Blake's poetry and Ken Wilber's Theory of Integral Psychology articulate a grand path of individual, interrelational, and collective awakening: moving beyond one-dimensional caverns of habit, convention, and defense; realizing the holy, multi-dimensional nature of self, others, and world; and responding with awareness, wisdom, love, and justice. Blake embraced this great existential challenge with immense artistic and spiritual integrity. Likewise, each of us is called to explore the path directly. Guided by Wilber's model, the article demonstrates that Blake created an integral ("all quadrant, all level") vision of existence and body of artwork. Blake sought to cultivate well-being in all levels of consciousness (body, mind, soul, and spirit) and in relationships with others, culture/society/community, and nature. By presenting an integral psychological interpretation of Blake's art and a Blake-inspired exploration of Wilber's theory, the present work endeavors to foster a deeper appreciation of both.

- "... man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (Blake, 1988, p. 39)
- "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite" (p. 39).
- "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God" (p. 3).
- "God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is" (p. 3).
- "... every Minute Particular is Holy" (p. 223).
- "He who would see the Divinity must see him in his Children . . . in friendship & love" (p. 251).

With this profound testimony William Blake depicts a grand path of human awakening and liberation. Addressing us across two centuries, Blake makes an inspired plea for individual, interrelational, and collective transformation. At stake here is nothing less than the evolution of consciousness and culture. Indeed, Blake summons us to move beyond our one-dimensional caverns of habit, convention, and defense; to realize the holy, multi-dimensional nature of self, others, and world; and to respond with awareness, wisdom, love, and justice. Discovering that such a path exists at all, obscure as it can be initially, and then choosing to follow it as consciously as we can, even when it becomes obscure again and again along the way: This an awesome existential calling.

Answering the call in his own extraordinary way, Blake traversed this path with immense integrity. Yet it was far from easy. Born in 1757 and residing in London for most of his 69 years, Blake worked as a poet, engraver, and painter. His artistic

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and spiritual gifts, however, were little appreciated at the time. He experienced episodes of depression and mania, and tales circulated that he was mad. Yet those who knew him well held him in great esteem. Unable to sell much of his work, he and his beloved wife often lived in material poverty. Nonetheless, Blake cultivated an unwavering openness to the intense, revelatory visions that guided his art and his quest for human liberation.

Through his poetry and visual art Blake addressed many of the key ideas that later emerged in the discipline of psychology. Psychoanalytic, Jungian, existential, humanistic, and transpersonal insights are all abundant in his work (Singer, 2000; Adams, 2006b). Blake anticipated Freud's (1957) foundational views on repression and the return of the repressed. Like Jung (1958), he revered the wisdom and creativity of the unconscious, and was attuned to the power of archetypal symbols. Consistent with the existentialists (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Laing, 1967), Winnicott (Winnicott, 1971; Adams, 2006b), and critical psychologists (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997), Blake warned of the dangers of excessive conformity to convention, of seeking (apparent) security and consolation while foreclosing individual freedom and collective social justice. Like Heidegger (1927/1962) and Becker (1973), he saw that by consciously confronting suffering and death we may be inspired to live more authentically. Like the Buddhist sages, Blake discovered the impermanence of phenomena and the suffering inherent in greed and aversion (Bercholz & Kohn, 1993). Like Maslow (1971), he emphasized the deeper potentials of human existence, including creativity, love, imagination, self-actualization, and self-transcendence. And joining wise teachers such as Jesus and the Buddha (and contemporary transpersonal theorists as well), Blake celebrated our spiritual nature and possibilities.

Psychology and literature share a kinship as mutually complementary disciplines devoted to illuminating the diverse manifestations of human existence. Psychology was not founded as a distinctive academic and clinical discipline until the mid to late 1800's, yet spiritual teachers and artists like Blake have long offered tremendously significant psychological insights. Thus art can serve as a source of wisdom regarding human psychology while, reciprocally, contemporary psychological perspectives may further our appreciation of great art.

Accordingly, in this article, I will explore Blake's poetic vision in light of Ken Wilber's (1996; 2000a; 2000b) theory of integral psychology, and Wilber's theory in light of Blake's art. In my experience, reading Blake deepens my understanding of Wilber and reading Wilber deepens my understanding of Blake. Thus this venture offers a collaborative view of these two great teachers. The early sections of the article will orient the reader within Wilber's theoretical model, and the later sections will delve into the integral nature of Blake's art and experience.

Grounded in a close textual reading, my approach consists of taking key insights and passages from each author and placing these into resonant dialogue with one another. For example, both men endeavor to honor the integrated wholeness of human existence while simultaneously respecting the multiplicity of its manifestation. Thus Blake (1988) is critical of anyone who "only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole" (p. 40). In contrast to this reductive, fragmentary, even dissociative approach, Blake holds together apparently conflicting aspects of existence,

appreciating each dimension of our being according to its own characteristics. As he asserts, “Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence” (p. 34). Similarly, Wilber takes an integral approach even (or especially) when considering authorities that seem quite divergent and contradictory. Freud and the Buddha would be a classic example. At his best, Wilber orients his research by welcoming the wisdom of each theorist in her or his area of specialty. How can each theorist be right? What are the distinctive (albeit partial) truths each has discovered? Then, going further, Wilber seeks to understand how these various perspectives cohere and complement one another, thereby cultivating an increasingly integral understanding.

Wilber applies such an integral approach to diverse areas of study, including art and literary theory. Thus he remarks:

When I directly view, say, a great Van Gogh, I am reminded of what all superior art has in common: the capacity to simply take your breath away. To literally, actually, make you inwardly gasp, at least for that second or two when the art first hits you, or more accurately, first enters your being: you swoon a little bit, you are slightly stunned, you are open to perceptions that you had not seen before. Sometimes, of course, it is much quieter than that: the work seeps into your pores gently, and yet you are changed somehow, maybe just a little, maybe a lot; but you are changed. (Wilber, 1997, pp. 134–135)

In my view, Blake’s art is awesomely breathtaking. Indeed, it can be radically transformative when encountered with an open heart and mind. Knowing this, I would be happy if the present article served as an introduction to or reunion with Blake, encouraging readers to explore (or explore further) his profoundly revelatory work. Further, Wilber’s elegant theory is breathtaking in its own way. Indeed, his integral approach can reveal aspects of Blake’s art that might otherwise remain concealed. Correspondingly, the experiences Blake describes in his poetry can provide phenomenological grounding for some of Wilber’s most abstract theoretical insights. This, then, is the context for the present inquiry regarding the interface between Blake and Wilber.

WILBER’S INTEGRAL THEORY

In a series of profoundly significant works published in this journal and elsewhere, Wilber (1996; 1997; 2000a; 2000b) has been developing a theory of “integral psychology,” a wholistic approach and model that aspire to understand the unified interrelationship of all dimensions of human existence. Wilber’s work is extraordinarily subtle and complex. Within the scope of this paper I can only draw from the basic aspects of his theory. I trust that readers of this journal are familiar with Wilber’s model, and that a general outline will suffice to orient our discussion.

The “perennial philosophy” serves as the foundation of Wilber’s integral theory. The “Great Chain of Being” – a metaphor for the unified, multidimensional nature of reality, being, and consciousness – is the key to the perennial philosophy. As Wilber reminds us, The Great Chain may more appropriately be conceived as

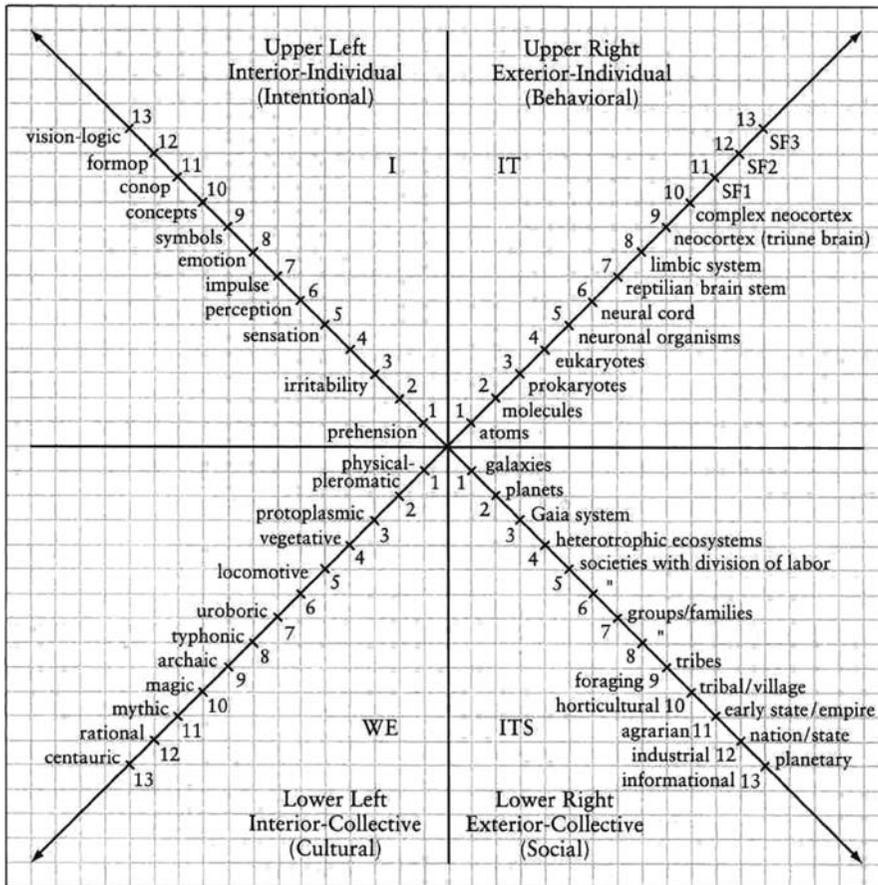


Figure 1. The four quadrants
 Source: Wilber (2000b). p. 198 as "Figure 5-1 Some Details of the Four Quadrants".

a Great Nest, a nested hierarchy of interrelated dimensions or levels of increasing depth: for example, matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit. This hierarchy, says Wilber, is a "holarchy" comprised of wholes within wholes within wholes, wherein each deeper level transcends and includes the previous level. Each level is a whole with its own distinctive characteristics, while being a part of the next level. Thus all living bodies necessarily include matter, but with the emergence of a new, deeper, more complex quality – namely, life! – such bodies also transcend matter. Following Wilber, just as atoms, molecules, cells, and organisms comprise a nested holarchy in the material and biological realms, so also do body, mind, soul, and spirit comprise a nested holarchy of consciousness, being, knowing, and interrelating. Therefore, these levels also appear as stages in individual human development. We are born as bodily-based beings; mind develops from body; and (potentially but not necessarily) soul develops from mind and spirit develops from soul. Importantly, for Wilber, Spirit is the all pervasive, non-dual ground of every level and stage of consciousness as well as the deepest/highest level and stage. From this perspective, Spirit is the ground and goal of human evolution.

Scholars such as Wilber (1996; 2000a; 2000b), Huxley (1944), Smith (1976), and Schuon (1984) contend that the key aspects of this worldview have been shared perennially across cultures and eras by humanity's wisdom traditions. Recent scholarship by Ferrer (2002) and others (see Rothberg & Kelly, 1998) is contesting the universality of the perennial philosophy. Appreciating the diversity of humankind, such work is also raising concerns that many authentically spiritual ways of being (such as eco-centric spirituality) could be devalued if they are (mis)placed relatively low on the hierarchy. This important work is fostering generative dialogue in the field of transpersonal studies. Further research in comparative, cross-cultural psychology, religion, and philosophy is needed to clarify these issues. To cite just one example, we are only beginning to understand the similarities and differences between the primary aspirations and fruit of various contemplative practices both within and across psycho-spiritual traditions. Even with these significant caveats, however, the work of the scholars noted above provides extensive evidence that the perennial philosophy has been tremendously influential across spiritual traditions, cultures, and historical eras.

Continuing to develop his thinking over time, Wilber (1996; 2000a; 2000b) takes his model much further by integrating the perennial worldview (which first emerged in the premodern era) with the wisdom of modern and postmodern research. For example, he describes four interrelated "quadrants" of human existence, and indicates that each level of the Great Nest of Being manifests in each of the quadrants. See Figure 1 (Wilber, 2000b, p. 198, with permission).

The basic characteristics of the four quadrants may be summarized as follows: Upper Left (UL): interior, individual, subjective, intentional; Upper Right (UR): exterior, individual, objective, behavioral; Lower Left (LL): interior, collective, intersubjective, cultural; and Lower Right (LR): exterior, collective, objective, social (Wilber, 1996; 2000a; 2000b). In consonance with the history of humankind's wisdom traditions and contemporary psychology, Wilber offers various, interrelated descriptions of the four quadrants:

Since both the Upper-Right and Lower-Right quadrants are objective "its," they can be treated as one general domain, and this means that the four quadrants can be summarized as the "Big Three" of I, we, and it. Or the aesthetics of "I," the morals of "We," and the "its" of science. The Beautiful, the Good, and the True; first-person, second-person, and third-person accounts; self, culture, and nature; art, morals, and science. (Wilber, 2000a, p. 64)

Subjective truth (I), intersubjective truth (We), and objective truth (It) are further characteristics that Wilber discusses. All these descriptions are best taken as general orienting characterizations rather than precise, literal, or exclusionary facts.

Importantly, all four quadrants are intimately interrelated and indivisible. There is no separation between so-called interior and exterior, nor between individual (self) and collective (others). Instead, there is a continuous, mutually formative interaction between all quadrants. Wilber (2000a) adds even more detail to his integral map by differentiating stages of development, lines of development, states of consciousness, and personality types. And he acknowledges that the specific, life-world manifestations of phenomena mapped by his model depend significantly upon context.

Primarily, integral psychology is an approach informed by all quadrants and all levels of existence. (Wilber's theory is often called an "all quadrant, all level" approach, and this phrase implicitly includes stages, lines, states, and types.) The basic aspiration of integral psychology is to understand the ways in which all levels of the Great Nest of Being manifest in one's self and in one's interrelationships with others, culture/society/community, and nature, thereby cultivating individual, interrelational, and collective well-being. It is intriguing that Blake's art can be read as an "all quadrant, all level" exploration of human existence. Because Blake was an artist, not a theorist, he did not formally conceptualize things in this way. Nonetheless – and this is all the more significant since he worked experientially and not theoretically – all the basic constituents of an integral world-view may be found in his art.

Significantly, as an "all quadrant, all level" approach to human development, integral theory may be put into practice in everyday life through the cultivation of well-being in all levels of consciousness, knowing, and interrelating (body, mind, soul, and spirit) in the self and in the self's relationships with others, culture/society/community, and nature. Ideally, one would engage in a coherent set of complementary experiential practices – such as yoga, dream-work, meditation, community service, and ecological sensitivity – designed to address all levels of consciousness and all quadrants in a coherent way. This wholistic approach has been called "integral transformative practice" (Murphy & Leonard, 1995; Wilber, 2000a). Thus an integral approach can be taken up consciously as a path of development for individuals and cultures. This means that Blake's poetry and Wilber's model may serve as guides *not only in describing but in transforming self and world*. In fact, Blake's art and Wilber's theory are participatory, interpretative, co-creative manifestations of the dynamic world, rather than (supposedly) objective representations of a (supposedly) objective, pre-given world. Therefore, they are already transforming the world! Yet is up to each of us to carry the transformative process further in our own distinctive way.

HUMAN SCIENCE AND THE INTERPRETATIVE APPROACH

As a matter of clarification, Wilber locates "science" in the exterior quadrants (UR and LR). He thereby uses this broad term to refer to the natural sciences with their quantitative, experimental approaches. In contrast, the human sciences or *interpretative sciences* focus especially on the interior quadrants (UL and LL), and do so by way of their various qualitative, hermeneutic approaches (see Wilber, 1996, p. 86). Of course, the interpretative sciences also include corresponding phenomena in the exterior quadrants, for example by their interest in behavior (UR) and social structures (LR). Psychoanalytic, phenomenological, existential, humanistic, transpersonal, deconstructionist, and critical psychology are distinctive examples of the larger human science approach within psychology. Both Wilber's work and the present study emerge from this broad interpretative tradition of inquiry.

Joining with a host of post-positivist theorists, Wilber (2000b) draws attention to the danger of privileging positivist (objective, quantitative, exterior quadrant) epistemology and methodology as the sole access to knowledge and truth (as the natural sciences often, but not necessarily, do). Such an uncritical, reductionistic, and exclusionary ("flatland") approach devalues the distinctive, revelatory power of the human sciences and humanities. These are the very disciplines whose expertise is

ideally suited for exploring the interior quadrants. Aware of these very limitations, Wilber emphasizes the crucial importance of developing an integral approach. Interestingly, Blake shares a similar concern.

Blake (1988) thus criticizes the reductive effects of modern society's idolatry of natural science and instrumental rationality: "the Spectre like a hoar frost & a Mildew rose . . . Saying, I am God O Sons of Men! I am your Rational Power! Am I not Bacon & Newton & Locke . . ." (p. 203). As Damon (1979) explains (in his illuminating *A Blake Dictionary*),

Blake recognized Newton's genius, and therefore attacked his error, which was the triumph of materialism. Newton, and Bacon, the inventor of experimentalism, and Locke, the author of the philosophy of the five senses, constitute an infernal trinity . . . According to Blake, the trouble with Newton's universe was that it left out God, man, life and all the values which make life worth living. The songs of the swallow and sparrow are enough to confute it. (p. 298)

Fighting his era's superficial materialism, and affirming ever deeper visions of self and world, Blake (1988) offers the following prayer:

Now I a fourfold vision see
And a fourfold vision is given to me
Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
And three fold in soft Beulahs night
And twofold Always. May God us keep
From Single vision & Newton's sleep (p. 722)

(Note that Blake often uses idiosyncratic spelling, punctuation, and phrasing, with missing apostrophes and letters for example.) In the spirit of an integral approach, Blake urges a renewed openness to the depth dimensions of existence. In today's world, pervaded as we are by crises of consciousness and culture, we would be wise to heed Blake's plea. In my view, a similar ethos guides the various all quadrant, all level approaches.

The present work focuses primarily on Blake's evocation of Wilber's Upper Left quadrant, that is, the levels of the Great Nest appearing in and through individual consciousness. Evidence from Blake's writings will illustrate how individual consciousness (UL) may manifest as behavior (UR) at the levels of body, mind, soul, and spirit. Following Wilber, it will be assumed that such consciousness functions in parallel with physiological brain structures and functions (UR), although this cannot be demonstrated here. Blake's sensitivity to the collective, socio-cultural quadrants (LL and LR) will also be noted.

Blake's lived experience (as articulated in his poetry) serves as the empirical evidence or data for the present study. My integral interpretation is based upon this phenomenological evidence. It should be clear that I use empiricism in a sense vastly different from that of positivism. Far from reducing empirical evidence to experimental measurements, this post-positivist empiricism affirms a hermeneutic which emerges from and remains grounded in nascently meaningful evidence that is open for interpretation and re-interpretation. From this perspective, valid evidence can be

qualitative or quantitative, depending on the nature of the phenomenon being studied. Blake's poetry – here the qualitative evidence given for our consideration – conveys profound insights regarding human existence. Yet, like so many important things in our lives, it often appears quite obscure or bewildering upon first encounter. Thus these writings call for engaged, participatory interpretation, and this study is one such endeavor.

In this interpretative process, let us keep in mind that so-called levels and quadrants are simply ways of conceiving different aspects of our unified human existence in the shared life-world. Thus, it may be useful to think of Wilber's integral theory as a map that may reveal some things while overlooking or even concealing others. While appreciating that existence is infinitely more complex and deep than any theory, and that other theories would disclose (and obscure) other meanings, this integral map (when used critically) can serve as a valuable guide to participating with awareness, wisdom, and compassion in this mysterious life and world. In the context of the spectrum of consciousness within the interior individual quadrant (UL), Wilber describes four distinct yet interrelated dimensions or levels: body, mind, soul, and spirit. The following discussion considers each of these in turn.

BODY: "ENERGY IS ETERNAL DELIGHT"

Wilber describes the body as the site of the biophysical energies of our existence. At the same time, the body is always permeated with (or even *as*) nascent consciousness from conception, and becomes increasingly conscious as development deepens. Blake loves the vital existence of the lived body. In many ecstatic passages he celebrates a fully energized and incarnate human life. "Energy is Eternal Delight," he sings (Blake, 1988, p. 34). "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (p. 34). "Exuberance is beauty" (p. 38). Similarly Blake declares "the genitals Beauty" (p. 37) and says "The nakedness of woman is the work of God" (p. 36). According to Blake and Wilber (following the perennial philosophy), sexuality can be fully embodied and fully spiritual at the same time.

While joyously affirming incarnate existence, Blake (like Wilber) sees the soul as encompassing the body and pervading it. Mind and soul transcend and include the body, as Wilber would say. Further, Blake (1988) remarks that "Man has no body distinct from his Soul for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses" (p. 34). Here he subverts the (supposed) Cartesian separation of body and mind/soul, a critique that later became central in philosophy and psychology. Blake's perspective is especially interesting in light of Wilber's work on the holarchical nature of consciousness.

As with all the levels, body and mind blur into and ceaselessly inform one another. Thus Blake's views on the body are elucidated further when seen in relationship with his views on the mind. Appreciating the deeper dimensions of human existence – levels of mind, soul, and spirit – Blake encourages us to realize that far more exists than is immediately apparent in the (merely) physical body and material world. (More precisely, there is no such thing as a merely physical body, pervaded as it is

with life, meaning, and spirit.) Thus he says, “Man’s perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he perceives more than sense (tho’ ever so acute) can discover” (Blake, 1988, p. 2). Responding to strict materialists who attacked his visionary perspective, he remarked: “I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it” (p. 566). Thus does Blake honor our embodiment while affirming dimensions that transcend (and encompass) the body.

MIND: “IS HE HONEST WHO RESISTS HIS GENIUS . . . ?”

For Wilber, the level of mind is comprised of several sublevels. I will focus on two of the most important. Let us first consider the emergence of a relatively differentiated, coherent, stable ego: a clear sense of one’s individual personal identity and agency, with its rational cognitive abilities and conventional, conformist values, desires, and world view. Later we will explore Blake’s advocacy for more mature manifestations of mind in post-conventional ways of being.

Wilber has shown that as further levels of our being emerge and become stabilized, such deeper consciousness may witness and influence preceding levels. Thus, as an observing ego (mind) emerges it may guide (but not control) our bodily-based being. Likewise, Blake’s reverence for the energetic body did not lead him to a naive endorsement of immature, narcissistic, impulsive bodily-based action uninformed by mind, soul, or spirit. “The most sublime act is to set another before you” (Blake, 1988, p. 36). Our bodily-based urges may grant access to heaven on earth, thus benefiting others and the larger society. But to do so such energies must be informed by deeper levels of our consciousness rather than being enacted unconsciously or willfully suppressed. Blake proclaims that “Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed & governd their Passions but because they have cultivated their Understandings” (p. 564). This is similar to the psychoanalytic theory of sublimating primitive instinctual urges, but not identical with it. The difference is that, according to Blake and Wilber, bodily passions are inherently divine and thus already sublime. Both suggest that the challenge is to deepen our awareness so as to realize this directly.

Blake was intensely concerned with the pathological tendency in his era (like in Freud’s) for conventional rationality and morality to suppress our vitality. As Freud and Wilber show, because our mind transcends our body, we often use our mind to repress, dissociate, or excessively constrict our bodily life. Speaking of reason’s quest to restrain desire, Blake says, “being restrained it [desire] by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire” (1988, p. 34). Note that Blake associates repressed desire with “the shadow,” long before Jung described disowned aspects of our being in these terms. As we will explore below, Blake also knew that socio-cultural conventions and powers (LL and LR) often work to enforce rationality’s oppressive tendencies.

Let us turn now to another aspect of mind explored by Blake. Like existential and humanistic psychologists, Blake was profoundly sensitive to the uniqueness of each individual. Our distinctively individual, personal self-sense and ways of being first

emerge, and then gradually mature, at the level (and stage) of mind. He often criticized society's (LL and LR) normative leveling of individuality:

Every body does not see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea [gold coin] is more beautiful than the Sun . . . The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way . . . As a man is So he Sees. (Blake, 1988, p. 702)

Thus Blake urged a deep appreciation of the whole range of direct experience, including one's bodily desires and creative imagination.

Both Blake and Wilber emphasize the possibilities for further developing this personal sense of self. Following thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Winnicott, Kohlberg, and Gilligan, Wilber demonstrates that mature manifestations of the mind involve going beyond conventional ways of being into more authentic, post-conventional (but not yet transpersonal) modes. Similarly, Blake repeatedly challenges our tendency to comply uncritically with unjust and oppressive forces in society. Correspondingly, he encourages each of us to take responsibility for the meaning and purpose of our life, to discover and create our own distinctive way of being (beyond the dictates of conventional norms). "The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow, nor the lion the horse; how he shall take his prey" (Blake, 1988, p. 37).

As if anticipating Maslow's (1971) explication of the "Jonah complex" (pp. 35–40), Blake criticizes our willingness to submit to (societal and intrapersonal) pressures which entice us to turn away from our greatest potentials and to settle for less in our lives. Thus he asks, "is he honest who resists his genius or conscience. only for the sake of present ease or gratification?" (Blake, 1988, p. 39). The Biblical Jonah is an excellent example, but this tendency is so prevalent we need look no further than ourselves and our neighbors (as both Blake and Maslow emphasize). Rather than fearing our highest possibilities, Blake proclaims that "No bird soars too high. if he soars with his own wings" (p. 36)

R.D. Laing greatly admired Blake's vision and courage. Like Laing (1967), Blake railed against the tendency to pathologize eccentricity and creativity, and denounced efforts to control such differences with force. Unjustly deemed mad himself, he saw a kind of insanity in so-called normal society and, in contrast, a sanity in the depths of creative visionary imagination. Thus he observes: "there are probably men shut up as mad in Bedlam, who are not so: . . . possibly the madmen outside have shut up the sane people" (Gilchrist, 1880/1969, p. 369).

All these examples portray Blake's concern with justice in the socio-cultural quadrants (LL and LR) of existence. Critical of oppressive uses of power in British society, he addressed this crisis in the realms of politics, economics, religion, class, and ecology. With passionate fury he asks:

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty! (Blake, 1988, p. 19)

Blake often criticized conventional society's efforts (LL and LR) to constrain our (UL and UR) spontaneous vitality (grounded in the body) and authenticity (emerging from the mind). For example, although a profoundly spiritual man, he spoke forcefully against oppressive practices often instituted in the name of religion.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut
And Thou shalt not writ over the door . . .
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.
(Blake, 1988, p. 26)

Blake was also concerned with a parallel form of oppression in our relationships with the other-than-human natural world. Attacking the political and economic systems (LL and LR) of his era, Blake (1988) proclaims:

A Robin Red breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage . . .
A dog starved at his Masters Gate
Predicts the ruin of the State . . .
Each outcry from the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear (p. 490)

Blake's insights here prefigure the work of radical ecologists such as ecopsychologists, ecofeminists, and social ecologists. These approaches critique authoritarian, socio-cultural structures that seek to dominate and exploit nature just as they seek to dominate human beings deemed "other" (according to race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, psychological characteristics, etc.) (Zimmerman, 1994; Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Adams, 2005, 2006a).

SOUL: "ANNIHILATE THE SELFHOOD IN ME, BE THOU ALL MY LIFE!"

Following Wilber, the soul is the first transpersonal level of our being. This way of being emerges as we begin to realize that who we are goes far beyond our supposedly separate ego. Soul involves cultivating deeper awareness, wisdom, compassion, and love beyond our conventional egoic self-sense, living from this deeper source, and thereby serving the well-being of others.

While appreciating diversity, Blake celebrated the transpersonal unity of humankind: "all men are alike (tho' infinitely various)" (p. 2). In visionary states of consciousness, Blake would hold conversations with great artists, philosophers, or prophets. At times in this context he would temporarily identify with such figures. An early biographer observes that one "of Blake's favourite fancies was that he could be, for the time, the historical person into whose character he projected himself . . . 'I am Socrates,' or 'Moses,' or 'the prophet Isaiah,' . . ." (Gilchrist, I, 113). Here we see Blake's transpersonal identification with some of his spiritual heroes.

Blake's poetry and paintings emerged from intense, transpersonal, visionary experiences. Writing to a confidante after a difficult time living away from London – and, we might note, demonstrating a keen critical awareness that defies allegations of madness – Blake (1988) happily reports:

Now I may say to you what perhaps I should not dare say to anyone else. That I can alone carry on my visionary studies in London unannoyd & that I may converse with my friends in Eternity. See Visions, Dream Dreams, & prophecy & speak Parables unobserv'd & at liberty from the Doubts of other Mortals. (p. 728)

Blake would consciously open himself for such revelations, yet most of what came to him in these visionary states of consciousness was far beyond his rational, ego-centered control. In the same letter, describing the process of poetic composition and situating his creativity in a larger spiritual context, Blake (1988) remarks, “I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time without Premeditation & even against my Will . . . I mention this to shew you what I think the Grand Reason of my being brought down here” (pp. 728–729). Similarly, he says, “I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary; the Authors are in Eternity” (Ackroyd, 1995, p. 238). This open receptivity to revelations from transpersonal and transrational depths of his being is the source of his astonishing art, and he encourages each of us to explore for ourselves the depths of consciousness: “You have the same faculty as I (the visionary), only you do not trust or cultivate it” (Gilchrist, 1880/1969, p. 364).

In Wilber's integral model, such altered (or *alternate*) states of consciousness are important because they provide temporary access to deeper ways of being, knowing, and interrelating. Wilber emphasizes the developmental challenge of integrating such situated and passing realizations into our stable way of being, of transforming “altered states” of consciousness into “altered traits of character,” self, and being (to quote Huston Smith's felicitous phrase [Snell, 1997, p. 43]). With great courage and genius, Blake was able to craft visionary states into enduring works of art (UR and LR) and into traits of self as expressed in his daily relationships with others (UR and LR) (see Ackroyd, 1995; Bentley, 2001).

As Wilber's theory and Blake's work demonstrate, soul and spirit are not merely phenomena of the Upper Left quadrant. Living from these levels of consciousness/being involves giving form to transpersonal realization in one's practical engagement with others and society. For example, one brings awareness and wisdom into just and loving action, and allows such engagement to evoke even deeper realizations and further engaged participation. Along with creating tangible works of art, Blake provides many other examples of depthful intersubjective participation with others and with the socio-cultural world. He emphasizes that “He who would do good to another, must do it in Minute Particulars. General Good is the plea of scoundrel hypocrite & flatterer (Blake, 1988, p. 205). And “He who would see the Divinity must see him in his Children . . . in friendship & love . . . so he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole Must see it in its Minute Particulars” (p. 251). With these teachings regarding “Minute Particulars” – such a strange yet vividly descriptive phrase – Blake subverts the notion of a spirituality that is exclusively individual-interior (UL) or exclusively ascending (other-worldly and/or

disembodied). Minute particulars are specific other people and specific socio-cultural circumstances (LL and LR). And correspondingly, minute particulars are one's situated, incarnate behavioral interrelationships and interactions (UR) with these distinctive others in ordinary daily life. Blake would agree that if we want to foster well-being and justice in the world, we must act with engaged awareness in our daily interrelationships in our local community and the surrounding natural world. Using imagery similar to Blake, Mother Teresa once said, "In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love" (quoted in Kornfield, 1993, p. 14).

Akin to great spiritual teachers and contemporary psychologists, Blake (1988) encourages us to participate in the relationships of everyday life with as much selfless wisdom and compassion as we can bring forth:

Labour well the Minute Particulars, attend to the Little-ones:
And those who are in misery cannot remain so long
If we do but our duty: labor well the teeming Earth. (p. 205)

For Blake (and Wilber too), soul and spirit involve the transcendence of our habitual narcissism, and the devotion to serving others beyond our egoic self. Describing this movement beyond self-centered concern, Blake (1988) says simply,

Love seeketh not Itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care;
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hells despair. (p. 19)

Calling for cultivation of transpersonal modes of being, Blake makes the powerful claim that we actually preclude our full humanity by remaining attached to an exclusively ego-centered identity. Blake equates "Selfhood" with immature selfishness and narcissistic pride, and also with exclusively instrumental, logical-rationalistic consciousness. From this perspective Blake (1988) deplors "the Great Selfhood Satan, Worshipd as God" (p. 175). Attacking this "Spectre" of egoic and rationalistic idolatry, Blake proclaims:

Each Man is in his Spectres power
Untill the arrival of that hour
When his Humanity awake
And cast his own Spectre into the lake
And there to Eternity aspire
The selfhood in a flame of fire (p. 810)

Blake is describing the evolutionary movement from a personal, egoic self-sense and way of being (within the level of mind) to a transpersonal mode of existence (within the levels of soul and spirit). Wilber's theoretical work provides an in-depth map of this developmental path. Attuned to the "great task" of consciousness transformation, the task of transcending his ego-centered stance and opening to Spirit, Blake (1988) prays passionately:

I rest not from my great task!
To open to the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity

Ever expanding in the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination
O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:
Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life! (p. 147)

Continuing our focus on the soul, still another characteristic of this level of being is the development of transpersonal witnessing consciousness. When identified with our personal ego (at the level of mind), we typically believe that happiness or fulfillment depends upon the gratification of egocentric wishes. But since the world is infinitely more vast than our ego and its wishes, we are inevitably frustrated when living egoically. Lived merely from the perspective of the ego, life is filled with suffering: we don't always get what we want; or we do get what we don't want; or we get what we want and it doesn't last, or it actually turns out not to be such a good thing; and so forth. In contrast, when we identify with soul or spirit – when we “annihilate”/transcend our ego-centered “selfhood” – we witness with increasing equanimity both the gratification and disappointment of egoic desire. (We also open to trans-egoic desires such as the aspiration to assist all beings.) Beyond attachment to pleasure or aversion to pain (be it physical or psychological), beyond dependence on specific experiences or outcomes, fulfillment can be available in the midst of whatever is occurring in our lives. Blake (1988) puts it so clearly:

It is right it should be so
Man was made for Joy & Woe
And when this we rightly know
Thro the World we safely go
Joy & Woe are woven fine
A Clothing for the soul divine (p. 491)

Emphasizing the intrinsic impermanence of all phenomena, the Buddha demonstrated that attachment, thirst, or clinging is the source of suffering; and that letting go of attachment is the path of awakening, liberation, and fulfillment (Rahula, 1974). In a beautiful poem, Blake (1988) echoes this great teaching:

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sun rise. (p. 470)

In these passages, Blake shows that it is not only what happens to us that brings suffering or happiness, but our awareness of and response to what happens. Blake endured tremendous pain in his life, often living in poverty and rarely being appreciated for the great genius of his art. Nonetheless, in his art and life, he realized a deeper fulfillment not dependent on good fortune or the avoidance of hindrances. At the very same time, Blake knew well that socio-cultural circumstances such as poverty, war, and racial or class discrimination can be so extreme that individual resources and resiliency may not be sufficient to create well-being. Therefore, crucially, Blake worked with great devotion to transform injustice and oppression in the social/political/economic sphere. Blake's poetry and life thus demonstrate that individual (upper quadrant) and social (lower quadrant) transformation are mutually complementary, an integral message directly relevant for our troubled and troubling world.

SPIRIT: "EVERY MINUTE PARTICULAR IS HOLY"

Since all levels of the Great Nest of Being infuse, interpermeate, inform, and interact with one another, distinctions between body and mind or mind and soul are not precise. Such distinctions are especially difficult to make between soul and spirit, since both are transpersonal levels of being. With that acknowledgement, it is clear that for Blake and Wilber the spiritual dimension is the deepest level and stage of human existence, a dimension thoroughly immanent in and *as* this very world while simultaneously transcending this world.

About a year before he died, Blake (1825/1946) remarked, "I cannot think of death as more than the going out of one room into another" (p. 692). Citing original letters and accounts of Blake's life, biographer Peter Ackroyd (1995) reports that, when facing his last moments alive, Blake actually died singing beautiful "songs of joy and Triumph" (p. 367). Of these verses, he said tenderly to his wife, "My beloved, they are not mine . . . no – they are not mine" (Ackroyd, p. 367). Here Blake honors the transpersonal – and he would say "Divine" – source of his inspiration. A neighbor woman who witnessed his passing declared, "I have been at the death, not of a man, but of a blessed angel" (Ackroyd, p. 367). Yet, even with his faith in an eternal spiritual existence, Blake passionately affirms the spiritual reality of this life and this world. He joyously unites the apparent contraries of transcendence and immanence. Thus he proclaims, "Eternity is in love with the productions of time" (Blake, 1988, p. 36). This beautiful perspective resonates with the great realization of Mahayana Buddhism, as conveyed in the Heart Sutra (1993): "Emptiness is no other than form, form is no other than emptiness" (p. 155). And with the understanding that *nirvana* and *samsara* are one. And with the Hindu appreciation that this very world is *lila*, the divine play of *Brahman*: everyday existence is the divine play of God. So also with central Christian teachings: "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) (*The New English Bible*, 1971, p. 111; and "the Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth" (Gospel of Thomas, 1977, p. 130).

In one of his most famous poems, Blake (1988) celebrates the spiritual depths of ordinary daily life:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour (p. 490)

Likewise, regarding nature, he proclaims: "The pride of the peacock is the glory of God" (p. 36); and "To create a little flower is the labour of ages" (p. 37). Indeed, Blake discovered spirit in and as all that exists. Thus he famously affirms, "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite" (p. 39). And Blake is clear about the spiritual significance of this realization: "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God" (p. 3).

Wilber (2000b) shows that many contemplative traditions describe two complementary movements of Spirit: Spirit's *involution* into this world of shared earthly existence and Spirit's *evolution* (or Self-realization) via the development of

consciousness across the lifespan of individuals. (Wilber [2000b] also explores Spirit's Self-realization via the collective socio-cultural evolution of species). Similarly, Blake (1988) describes his own experience of this involutory/evolutionary process: "God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is" (p. 3). Further, in consonance with the perennial philosophy, Blake affirms that our supreme identity or ultimate nature is Spirit or God (by whatever name). Most importantly, he teaches that we each may realize this via direct experience. The Hindu tradition states it so clearly: "An invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is Reality. That is Truth. THOU ART THAT" (800-400 B.C./1965, p. 118). As does the Buddhist tradition: all things have Buddha nature, or more precisely *are* Buddha nature. And the Christian: "My Father and I are one" (*The New English Bible*, p. 126). So also, correspondingly, in the words of Blake: "God is Man & exists in us & we in him" (p. 664).

Saints, sages, and mystics spanning the world's wisdom traditions have participated in various versions of such direct realization. Through his revelatory experiences, Blake joins company with this great community of spiritual practitioners. Conversing with a friend, Blake offers what may be the most vivid articulation of his spiritual awareness. He first proclaims: "We are all coexistent with God; members of the Divine body, and partakers of the Divine nature" (Blake, 1825/1946, p. 680). Carrying his testimony even deeper, when his friend inquired about "the imputed Divinity of Jesus Christ. He answered: 'He is the only God' – but then he added – 'And so am I and so are you.'" (p. 680).

"Minute Particulars" – while referring to our situated, engaged interrelationships in daily existence – also signify every specific manifestation of the Kosmos: each of "the ten thousand things," to use a Taoist expression. Thus, seeing through the eye of Spirit, bringing his spiritual realization (UL) into ordinary life (UR and LR), integrating heaven and earth, ascent and descent, transcendence and immanence, Blake (1988) beautifully attests to the sacred nature of this shared everyday world: "every Minute Particular is Holy" (p. 223). Yet, as glorious as this is, it is only one part of the story. The other part (depending upon the depth of our consciousness) involves our appreciative involvement with these holy and ever present manifestations:

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noon day ...
And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love (p. 9)

To consciously cultivate a responsive interrelationship with these beams of divine love: This truly is an awesome calling.

Through their integral visions, Blake and Wilber offer profound insights into individual, interrelational, and collective well-being. There is so much to contemplate here, to think critically about, to be inspired and even transformed by, and to carry further in our own distinctive ways. In this spirit, the present article is an invitation. Through body, mind, soul, and spirit – participating intimately with

others, culture/society/community, and nature – may we cleanse our doors of perception; discover the divine love that is always already beaming through every thing and every being; realize the holiness of all that is; and bring awareness, wisdom, compassion, and justice to the minute particulars of our daily relationships.

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