

I Create Therefore I Am: Q.E.D

In 1954, Abraham Maslow – a behavioural scientist and contemporary of Fredrick Herzberg – first published his much debated treatise, "Motivation and Personality," which introduced the world to his theory on how (and why) people satisfy personal needs in the context of their work.

Maslow postulated that there is - inherent in the human condition - a general and observational pattern of needs recognition and satisfaction, that people are genetically predisposed to follow.

He also theorized that a person would be unable to actively pursue a higher need (in the hierarchy of needs) until his or her current need is partially or completely satisfied.

In other words, the prepotency of the underlying 'need' would prevent an individual from perusing what might perhaps be deemed to be an 'active want'.

According to Maslow, Mans' basic needs are (in order of importance):

(1) PHYSIOLOGICAL.

Thirst, sleep, hunger, etc. Things without which our bodies would cease to function. Only when these most basic of human needs are satisfied, can they be replaced by the also primitive / animalistic need for:

(2) SAFETY

Which is our overwhelming requirement for a life free of fear. When satisfied, this in turn is replaced by:

(3) BELONGING.

Which may be viewed as our innate need for love, companionship and a sense of unity. This in turn is supplanted by:

(4) SELF-ESTEEM.

Our desire as human beings for appreciation and recognition. And finally:

(5) SELF-ACTUALIZATION.

The individual desire for self-fulfilment and the creative pursuit of Art.



Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Human Needs', it may be fair to say, does in fact catalogue the 'need sequence' of the vast majority of human beings on this planet. It may inherently be seen to encompass (if I may generalise) the Accountants, the Clerks,

the Miners, the Politicians and the Used Car Salesmen who walk among us. But does it, I wonder, catalogue the 'need sequence' fundamental to the life of the Artist? Or, is perhaps the Artist in deed and thought, a creature of paradox, who's hierarchical needs are somehow inverted and out of sequence with his fellow Man?

As Maslow himself ironically pointed out, "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be at ultimate peace with himself. What a man *can* be, he *must* be. He must be true to his own nature".

How then do we explain why the Artist is not bound by the same 'need sequence' as his neighbour? When even the most fundamental of human needs are oft put aside in his quest for artistic expression and the pursuit of 'The Dream'?

In layman's terms: 'Why does the Artist allow himself to be tortured so, when the requirements for his own societal integration – and supposed, salvation - are all too self-evident'?

Grow up. Buckle down. Get a job. Get married. Raise a family. Grow old. Die.

Take the example of the Actor barely scraping by, working a 'day job' he hates. Be it as a waiter, or telemarketer, or cabbie, he begrudgingly punches the time clock day-in, day-out, while vainly questing for that 'big break' that will catapult him beyond the mediocrity of his existence, and brand his name in neon across the boulevards and multi-plexes of the world.

This man is very good at what he does. He has studied his craft full time for three years and can immerse himself in the psychological ramifications of the Stanislavskian Method, or the pre-disposed Actions and Objectives of Laban. And – if the truth be know - he has a resume that others would be proud of...but, for 9 months of the year, he is a waiter. Or telemarketer. Or cabbie.

And his life suffers because of this.

Girlfriends come and girlfriends go. Each new face excited by the 'glamour of showbiz' and the 'stories of gigs long since past'. Each old face wearying of the man who's future is uncertain. Whose present is precarious. And whose past is glorified.

And so they leave him. They always leave him. Maslow's third Need being unfulfilled, they move on. Uncomfortable in their discovery that the Artist has little room in his soul for anything other than 'The Dream' and his burning desire 'To Be'.

His friends support him, as friends are want to do. They dutifully turn up for the sporadic co-op production that he appears in. They cheer and applaud, and tell him he was 'wonderful...as always!'.

But, it is his friends who leave the theatre and get into their new cars with their loving partners, and drive back to a home they own, and a pay-cheque they can bank on.

And it is he that catches the last train out of Town Hall, to his cramped little room in a share-house in Newtown, and the knowledge that, come the end of the week, he is back waiting tables. Or telemarketing. Or driving a cab.

And it is he that wakes up alone. Save for 'The Dream', and the hope that tomorrow could be better and everything could change.

Why then does this man not take action to rectify what he knows are the inadequacies of his life? Why do his needs for Self-Actualisation and Self-Esteem take precedent over the more fundamental and basic human needs of Belonging, Safety and even – as history has shown with so many artists – Physiological fulfilment?

I would postulate that the true Artist simply has NO CHOICE in this matter. He creates therefore he is. To take away his artistic expression and his pursuit of 'The Dream', would be to deprive himself of everything that fundamentally defines him. And doing so would cause the building blocks of his own psyche to crumble, and the man he was, would cease to be.

To deprive himself of this would be the death of him. As surely as if a sword were plunged through his heart. For the true Artist can never join the ranks of the walking dead. Can never cram himself into the 8 am commuter train that encompasses the corpses like a mass grave. Can never chain himself to a desk, in a cubical, in an office, like a lab-rat in a maze.

The true Artist is a creature who may look like his neighbour and sound like his neighbour, but who will never be, his neighbour. And no amount of explanation can make his neighbour understand this. Because the paradox of the Artist is a question long since tabled. And yet unanswered.

Be he Actor, Musician, Painter, Poet, Filmmaker, Writer, Sculptor, Dancer or any of the myriad of artistic expressions that Man has been blessed with...an Artist simply MUST create.

That, is answer enough.

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