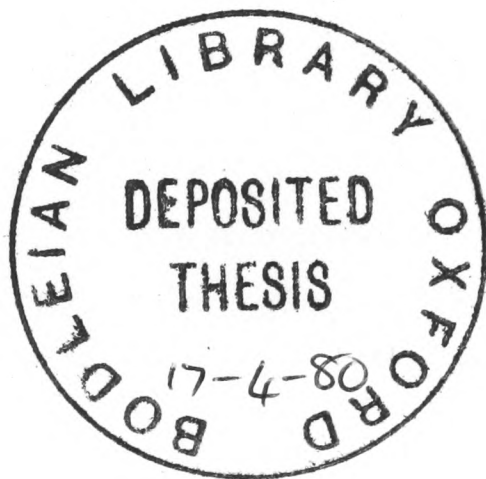


THE ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT AND MEANING OF
THE FIGURE URIZEN
IN THE POETRY, PROPHECIES AND GRAPHIC ART OF WILLIAM BLAKE



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September 1979 [re 1980] ⁴¹⁷

D.Phil. Thesis, English: 'The Origins, Development and Meaning of the Figure Urizen in the Poetry, Prophecies and Graphic Art of William Blake'.
By E.T. Larrissy, St. John's College, Oxford. Submitted Trinity Term, 1979.

ABSTRACT

The thesis examines Urizen in relation to Blake's intellectual, religious and artistic background.

The ideas of jealousy, possessiveness and the cruelties of Kings and Priests are already present in early Blake. These various kinds of restriction contribute to the notion of the 'bounded', the sources of which are traced to empirical philosophy, though it has a very wide reference in Blake. It is central to the meaning of Urizen, whose name probably derives from a Greek verb meaning 'to bound, limit'.

But Blake also believed in firm outline. Is this not a limit? The difference between the two notions of 'bound' is examined, with reference to the Neoplatonists: the contrast is very close to that between the 'mechanic' and the 'organic'.

Urizen develops in relationship with his antagonists, Orc and, more subtly, the Bard. Orc and Urizen are both described in terms of the serpent and Satanic imagery, which suggests that they are part of the same malaise. The Bard looks like Urizen, for the Priest derives from the Poet, as Blake would have learned from contemporary primitivist writers. Urizen, like the Priest, abstracts the Infinite from the world of Forms. The sources of this idea are to be found in Fludd and the Gnostics.

The Orc-cycle finds its fullest expression in Vala. Blake may have thought of Urizen and Orc as the opposed poles of the cycle of Melancholy and Mania: Urizen owes much to the iconography of Saturn and Melancholy.

It is this cycle of alternating and divided Reason and Energy which Blake now thinks the true evil: Satan the Selfhood. There are many alchemical sources for a divided Satan, such as we see in the guises of Urizen and Luvah in Illustrations of the Book of Job. But Blake also comes to value the qualities of a redeemed Urizen, who had always had the grandeur of the Creator about him. The Priest may become the Bard again, as in the Job illustrations; or to put it another way: the 'bounded' may become Living Form.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am happy to record my indebtedness to my supervisor, Dr. John Beer of Peterhouse, Cambridge: his erudition and astuteness were invaluable, and his encouragement of my interest in the sources of Blake's thought strengthened my sense of the worth of my studies. I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Roy Park, of University College, Oxford, for his interest and enthusiasm, during a term when he supervised me in Dr. Beer's absence.

I have profited from discussion with many people: I should like to mention particularly Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Dr. Andrew Lincoln, and Professor Richard Ellmann; the first for letting me examine his Blake collection, and the last two for the palpable influence their advice had on writing of parts of this thesis.

Time is valuable to one who writes on a narrow topic in a large field: I must therefore acknowledge the great benefit conferred on me by the President and Fellows of St. John's College, Oxford, when they awarded me a Senior Scholarship in 1975. Time was also made available to me through the efforts of my senior colleagues, Mr. V. Rosetti and Mr. L.G. Smith, of the Polytechnic of North London, who ensured a reduction in my teaching hours so that I could pursue my research more effectively.

I must also acknowledge the indispensable aid afforded by the staffs and librarians of the following institutions: the Ashmolean Library; the Bodleian Library; the

Cambridge University Library; the Fitzwilliam Museum; the Radcliffe Science Library; the Philosophy Library of the University of Oxford; and the Reading Room, Students' Room and Print Room of the British Museum.

E.T.L.

Holloway, 1979

TEXTUAL NOTES

I. Standard editions of Blake's writings:

- E refers to a page in The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, 4th. printing, with revisions (New York, 1970), or denotes the edn.
- K refers to a page in Blake, Complete Writings, 4th. printing, with corrections (London, 1972), or denotes the edn.

The text used and cited is that of E except in the case of 'An Island in the Moon', where K is used for the sake of clarity; and the Letters, because E does not have all of these. But the reader is also directed to E in the case of 'An Island'. He is always referred to K as well as E.

II. Abbreviations of works by Blake not obvious from context:

<u>ARO</u>	<u>All Religions Are One</u>
<u>BL</u>	<u>The Book of Los</u>
<u>BU</u>	<u>The Book of Urizen</u>
<u>Desc. Cata.</u>	<u>A Descriptive Catalogue</u>
<u>FZ</u>	<u>The Four Zoas</u>
<u>MHH</u>	<u>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</u>
N	Refers to a page in Blake's Notebook, according to the numbering in Erdman's edition (see <u>Notebook</u> in section III below).
<u>NNR (A)</u>	<u>There Is No Natural Religion, First Series</u>
<u>NNR (B)</u>	<u>There Is No Natural Religion, Second Series</u>
<u>SL</u>	<u>The Song of Los</u>
<u>VDA</u>	<u>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</u>

The usual method of citation is: plate or page number, colon, line number, followed by reference to E and K. But in the case of ARO and NNR the aphorisms are often referred to by their own numbers, to avoid confusion. When given in brief form, these are indicated by Roman numerals.

III. Other frequently cited works and publications:

- Bentley, Tiriel G.E. Bentley, Jr., William Blake: Tiriel (Oxford, 1967)
- Bindman David Bindman, Blake as an Artist (Oxford, 1977)
- BNYPL Bulletin of the New York Public Library
- BVFD David V. Erdman and John E. Grant, eds., Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic (Princeton, 1970)
- IB The Illuminated Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (London, 1975)
- M William Blake's Vala, ed. H.M. Margoliouth (Oxford, 1956)
- Notebook The Notebook of William Blake: A Photographic and Typographic Facsimile, ed. David V. Erdman (Oxford, 1973)
- NQ Notes and Queries
- Paley and Phillips Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips, eds., William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford, 1973)
- Prophet David V. Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire 2nd. revd. edn. (Princeton, 1969)
- Rosenfeld Alvin H. Rosenfeld., ed., William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon (Providence, 1969)
- Tate cata. Martin Butlin, William Blake: A Complete Catalogue of Works in the Tate Gallery (London, 1971)
- Tate Exhibn. Martin Butlin, William Blake: catalogue of an exhibition organized in the Tate Gallery in association with the William Blake Trust (London, 1978)

IV. Works of graphic art:

As so many designs are referred to these have their titles underlined rather than in quotation marks, following a common modern practice (e.g. in Bindman).

V. Style of quotation:

However long a quotation in the main body of the text, the second quotation mark comes before the full stop, and there is no ellipsis at beginning or end, provided that the quotation forms part of a wider sentence in the text. But quotations following a colon are treated as if they were separate sentences, even when incomplete, and thus ellipsis is given at the end.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- I. Michael Maierus, Atalanta Fugiens (Oppenheim, 1618),
Plate XXVIII, 'Rex Duenech'.

- II. Hans Holbein, Historiarum Veteris Testamenti Icones
(Lyons, 1543), illustration for Exodus 33.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing interest in the individual characters who appear in Blake's mythological poems.¹ Of these Los is the most frequently mentioned in his works, Albion the second most frequently, and Urizen the third.² But the reader may well agree that Albion is not as striking as the other two, and that Urizen is perhaps the most fascinating creation. Blake himself seems to have thought so: he is reported to have seen a vision of the 'Ancient of Days' at the top of the stairs in house in Lambeth; and three days before his death he is said to have spent some time touching and retouching the print called by the same name.³ It is hardly surprising that Blake should have been fascinated by this creation of his: for him, Urizen seems to have combined the grandeur of the Creator with the interest one has in a person one hates. The sublimity of the fontispiece to Europe itself suggests that Blake could not but entertain a certain admiration for Urizen: this Demiurge may have been a 'Bad Artist' (cf. Annotations to Reynolds, E634/K456); but he was an artist nevertheless.

Of course Blake knew and understood the ideas he

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1. See John Sutherland, 'Blake and Urizen', BVFD, pp. 244-62; George Quasha, 'Orc as a Fiery Paradigm of Poetic Torsion', BVFD, pp. 263-84; Edward J. Rose, 'Los, Pilgrim of Eternity', in Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., eds., Blake's Sublime Allegory (Madison, Wisconsin, and London, 1973), pp. 83-99.
 2. David V. Erdman, ed., A Concordance to the Writings of William Blake, (Ithaca, New York, 1967), 2 vols., Vol. II, p. 2181.
 3. G. E. Bentley, Jr., Blake Records (Oxford, 1969), pp. 54, 502.

disliked and which went into the meaning of Urizen. He often pressed the terminology and concepts of his philosophical and scientific opponents into new and unlikely service as part of his own system: it is important to remember this fact in the study of Blake.⁴ A well-known example of this tactic is his use of the word 'Vortex'. Vortices provided the Cartesian explanation for the movement and regularity of the celestial bodies before the Newtonian ideas of gravity and a void became part of the accepted model. But Blake uses the Vortex as an image of fallen perception in The Four Zoas (72:13, E342/K316), the link with Descartes being the idea of a reductive and mechanistic model of the universe.⁵ Many such 'negative sources', to use Martin K. Nurmi's phrase, enter into the meaning of Urizen; and this thesis will attempt to make use of them.

But the sublimity of which Urizen is capable is an important part of this study too. For if Blake did indeed admire Urizen this is not, we would maintain, merely a whim of his. We have suggested that he saw something of the artist in Urizen. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Plate 11 (E37/K153), he propounds a theory that priesthood began with the systematization of the spontaneous mythologies invented by poets who personified natural objects and phenomena. Urizen is 'the primeval Priest' (BU2:1, E69/K222). It is because the priest derives directly from the poet that the Bard in

4. Cf. Martin K. Nurmi, 'Negative Sources in Blake', in Rosenfeld, pp. 303-318.

5. Blake's 'Vortexes' are discussed by Hazard Adams, Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision (Ithaca, New York, 1955), pp. 104-110; and by Thomas R. Frosch, The Awakening of Albion (Ithaca, New York, and London, 1974), pp. 69-76. 'Vortexes' also appear in Milton 15:21-48 (E108/K497), not in a pejorative sense.

the illumination to 'The Voice of the Ancient Bard' (IB96) has such a marked resemblance to Urizen. Urizen represents the nadir of a cycle in the course of which vision declines and is then renewed. This cycle is depicted in Blake's great Illustrations of the Book of Job, where the image of God is clearly related to that of Urizen in the first few plates, but must be seen as the Poetic Genius in the other, later plates. Much of the last chapter of this study is devoted to the Job illustrations and the relevance they have to the study of Urizen.

The similarity of Urizen and the Bard, as far as their functions are concerned, consists in the fact that each gives form to things: the difference is that where Urizen imposes form, the Poetic Genius (or Los, or sometimes the Bard; Imagination in later Blake) is capable of creating a living form, which is not merely a mechanical imposition. This contrast gives rise to an ambiguity in Blake's use of the word 'bound', which for him corresponds to the outline of form. On the one hand we are told that 'The bounded is loathed by its possessor' (NNR(B):IV, E2/K97); on the other, that 'Truth has bounds. Error none' (BL4:30, E91/K258). Since an important part of the pun which goes to make up Urizen's name refers to the idea of limitation ('horizon'), and thus to the 'bounded' as restrictive, it is necessary to explicate the various ways in which Blake thought of form, bound and outline. For if anything does convincingly unite the strands of reference to be found in Urizen it is the notion of dead, external form from which the life has departed, and which limits life in others. This, much more than any criticism of rationalism,

is essential to Urizen.

The idea that the original poetic faculty is necessarily subject to decline as the arts, sciences and luxury grow was one of the tenets of contemporary primitivism: much good work has been done on the importance of this idea to contemporary literature, but not enough on Blake.⁶ Primitivist thinkers did not merely indicate that there had been a decline in poetry; they were also concerned to analyse the supposed qualities of primitive poetry. Among these was the liberal and daring use of exalted figures of speech, especially Proso-poeia. Many writers of the period would have agreed with Blake's description of the animating bard. And like him they tended to see the Hebrew prophets, rather than the Greeks, as the types of this kind of poet.⁷ This tendency finds its best-known expression in Coleridge, with his remarks on Greek Godkins and Goddesslings in his letter to Sotheby of 10 September 1802. He goes on to say that 'In the Hebrew poets each thing has a life of its own, and yet they are all our life'.⁸ The distinction between Hebrews and Greeks corresponds to Blake's two uses of the word 'bound': the Hebrews do not separate the animating faculty from its object, which is thus imbued with the vitality of the mind; the Greeks separate subject and object so that, as in an allegory, the

6. See esp. Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature (Baltimore, 1934); and M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (London and New York, 1953), pp.82-4, 104-105, 125.

7. Murray Roston, Prophet and Poet (London, 1965); Abrams, op.cit., pp.76, 82, 86, 187, 295.

8. Quoted in Abrams, op.cit., p.295. See discussion at this place.

personification, or God, seems to stand fixedly to one side of its meaning.

It goes without saying that Blake regarded himself as a primitive poet, in the best sense, and that he conceives of the characters in his mythology as the products of an animating, creative mind; and not as fixed terms in what he describes as 'Fable or Allegory' (E544/K604). This may explain why, as Peter Butter remarks,

Urizen cannot adequately be described by defining what he is thought to stand for; he is always an impressive, sometimes a terrible, sometimes a comic figure, sometimes a tragic one as he contemplates the ruins of his well-meant but deluded plans.⁹

This is well said.

The fact that Urizen is not a fixed element leaves him open to be affected by all the changes that are consequent on Blake's need to adapt and improve his myth. Perhaps the most striking change that comes about is the tendency for Urizen's errors to fall on the more ample shoulders of Satan: more ample, in particular, because not only is it said that 'Satan is Urizen' (Milton 10:1, E103/K490), but also that 'Luvah is named Satan, because he has entered that State' (Jerusalem 49:68, E197/K680). Blake thinks of Satan primarily in terms of a dangerous collusion between fallen reason and fallen energy, as becomes very clear in the Job illustrations. This idea of Satan is conveyed in terminology and images which owe much to Boehme, and to philosophical alchemy in general. After Blake has decided that the fault is too great to be

9. Peter Butter, 'Milton: The Final Plates', in Michael Phillips, ed., Interpreting Blake (Cambridge, 1978), p.147.

blamed on reason alone, Urizen becomes much less important, Satan much more so. Nevertheless, the depiction of Satan owes much to that of Urizen.

Mention of alchemy brings us up against questions about the nature of Blake's sources and what weight we should accord them. Writing of Jerusalem 91, Harold Bloom says:

Blake is rejecting all Hermeticism here even as he rejected Swedenborg, Behmen, and Paracelsus in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. No amount of insistence on this point is likely to stop the continuous flow of writings on Blake's relation to arcane traditions, yet it is hard to see how Blake himself could have been clearer, more emphatic, or more scornful on this subject. A lunatic fringe of enthusiastic occult Blakeans is likely to abide as the left wing of Blake studies until the veritable apocalypse, and all one can do is to counsel students and readers to ignore them.¹⁰

Perhaps this intemperate and arrogant outburst derives from a desire to impress those who fear that Blake is mad. But it is hardly the way to convert them. Anyone who has read The Marriage will know that Bloom's reference to Paracelsus and Boehme is deeply misleading. Blake himself claims six great influences on himself, and two of these are Paracelsus and Boehme.¹¹ What sense is there in ignoring the connection of much in Blake's writings with 'arcane traditions'? Presumably it helps those critics who believe that a text should only be, in some mysterious way, about itself. But only by some very purist notion of the work of art or the text can one ignore the Hermetic and Neoplatonic connections which Blake's works evoke. His relationship with

10. Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument (London, 1963), p.429.

11. Letter to John Flaxman, 12 September 1800, K799.

these traditions was critical and cavalier. Kathleen Raine (among others) does not allow for this sufficiently, and thus her reading of Blake is to some extent vitiated. But contempt for the 'arcane' is clearly an emotion Blake did not share in. And we moderns have no excuse for it either, at least since the publication of Frances Yates's Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, in which she shows the extensive influence of Hermetism, not only on Renaissance thought and art, but also in forming a climate for the acceptance of the hypothesis of heliocentricity.¹²

But Blake was not alive in the Renaissance. Is there, then, any coherent tradition to which he belongs -- one that can include alchemy, political radicalism, the writing of prophecies and religious antinomianism? E. P. Thompson says, near the beginning of The Making of the English Working Class, that 'Pilgrim's Progress is, with Rights of Man, one of the two foundation texts of the English working-class movement'.¹³ It would also be true to say that these two books together can conveniently stand for two contradictory strands in Blake's work, which does indeed lie at this confluence of rationalist political radicalism and antinomian Protestantism. Nevertheless, it is not accurate to say, as Thompson does, that Blake felt himself 'torn between a rational Deism and the spiritual values nurtured for a century in the "kingdom within" '.¹⁴

12. Frances A. Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (London, 1964), pp. 151-55.

13. E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, 2nd revd. edn. (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 34.

14. Ibid., p.57.

Rather, he accepted only the political prescriptions of the Jacobins and their allies, while rejecting the terms on which these prescriptions were based in favour of more venerable, millenarian Christian ideas. Blake could not, as Wordsworth did, turn his back on Godwin and the French Revolution in one easy movement, since he had never in the first place been a 'bigot' to the 'new Idolatry' of Godwinism, or to the 'open eye of Reason' (Prelude (1850), XII:77, 67). So his disillusionment with the course of the Revolution took a different form from that of the rationalists: he revised his religious notions and hoped still for the new Jerusalem. But the revision moved him away from a sense that a solution could be found within history. And he became more implacable in his life-long opposition to Deism: the fact that Bunyan and Paine do not mix became more obvious.

Blake's allegiance, then, is to Bunyan; or, more accurately, to that 'underground' tradition of antinomianism which, A. L. Morton suggests, survived from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century.¹⁵ The persistence of the Muggletonians, and the prophecies of Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcott, support this view. Very interesting, for our purposes, is the evidence that an interest in Paracelsus and Boehme was very common among the Protestant sects of the period of the English Revolution.¹⁶

15. A. L. Morton, 'The Everlasting Gospel: A Study in the Sources of William Blake' in his The Matter of Britain: Essays in a Living Culture (London, 1966), pp.83-121.

16. Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth, 1976), Ch. XIV, passim.

But Blake's artistic interests, and his occupation as a commercial engraver, bring him into contact with fashionable aesthetic theories. Hence his interest in the Sublime and the Ossianic: Blake's Milton is not only the Protestant prophet of Christian Liberty, then, but also the idol of the fashionable cult of the Sublime.

Blake was also, it seems, a great reader of antiquarians and religious writers, especially when they served to extend his interest in the original condition of humanity. Thus, as is well known, he praises Bryant in the Descriptive Catalogue for showing that all 'antiquities' were originally the same (E534/K578). And he also (we shall claim) became interested in the Hutchinsonians, the main school of anti-Newtonian thinkers in eighteenth-century England.¹⁷ The Hutchinsonians also had theories about the 'Cherubim'.¹⁸

If there is any worth in this study it resides not in any new understanding of the general nature of personification in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: rather, building on the work of previous scholars in this field, I hope that I shall shed new light on the way in which Blake's mind worked by looking at one such personification in detail, a thing not hitherto attempted, in the context of a clear and coherent view of Blake's intellectual and artistic background.

17. Robert E. Schofield, Mechanism and Materialism: British Natural Philosophy in an Age of Reason (Princeton, 1970), pp.122-28.

18. First noticed by Albert J. Kuhn, 'Blake on the Nature and Origins of Pagan Gods and Myths', Modern Language Notes, Vol.LXXII (December, 1957), pp.569-72, although he makes very little of the link: if he had looked more deeply into the Hutchinsonians he would have found many echoes in Blake.

CHAPTER TWOEARLY BLAKE1. Poetical Sketches (1783).

It has been customary to remark that Blake's Poetical Sketches (London, 1783) looks forward to his later symbolism: Northrop Frye says that it shows 'Blake's symbolic language in an emergent and transitional form'.¹ L.C. Knights disagrees with Mona Wilson's objections to reading 'too systematic and definite' foreshadowings into 'How sweet I roam'd'; and he goes on to propound what is, surely, a sensible view of such foreshadowings, based on a sensible understanding of artistic intention:

Poets, it seems, are not always fully conscious of what, looking back, we may properly see as their deeper intentions; and their poems, when they have made them, have to speak for themselves.²

One result of a crudely intentionalist approach would be to regard the poems in Poetical Sketches as isolated from the later symbolic poems, because there seems to be no prima facie case for linking them with these. Many probable inferences can be drawn from similarities, great and small, between Poetical Sketches and later poems and pictures. But on the intentionalist view these inferences are rendered wishfully absurd because there is no statement, and no show, of an intent to create anything like a symbolic system.

This view is fallacious because it is impossible

1. Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (Princeton, 1947), p.177.

2. L. C. Knights, 'Early Blake', Sewanee Review, Vol.LXXIX, No. 3 (Summer, 1971), pp.381, 387.

to separate fully conscious, semi-conscious and unconscious motions of the artist so simply; and at least difficult to set up a controlled test, based on reliable knowledge, which would answer the question: Did the artist mean to produce this effect? One is thrown back on the totality of the work of art; and, of course, on any ascertainable external knowledge which can be shown to be part of the context within which the work is speaking -- though such knowledge should never become a substitute for the meaning the text itself creates.

When it is a question, as now, of looking at the early works of a writer for hints as to his future conduct, the justification for our procedure is that we are dealing with the products of a developing mind, which it is perverse to assume we can treat as isolated.

Among the foreshadowings which have been noticed is that of Urizen. The most obvious example is 'To Winter'. Harold Bloom, for instance, says that 'it is more than accident that Winter's appearance should anticipate that of Urizen', though he is not quite clear what factor has thus easily ruled out accident.³ There are other poems which remind one of Urizen: Bernard Blackstone goes so far as to assert that 'Urizen we meet again in the figure of Gwin, King of Norway'.⁴ It may not be clear, as it should be, from such statements, that it is highly improbable that Blake had already conceived the idea of Urizen, or of any other member of his pantheon.

3. Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse (op.cit.), p.17. One good reason for linking Urizen with Winter might be the similarity of Urizen to the figure in Blake's Illustration to Cowper's 'Winter' (Geoffrey Keynes, The Tempera Paintings of William Blake (London, 1951), Pl.II), a point first made by Jean Hagstrum, William Blake: Poet and Painter (Chicago, 1964), p. 109n.

4. Bernard Blackstone, English Blake (Cambridge. 1949). p.11.

On the contrary, it is a question of showing that a gradual accumulation of linked themes and preoccupations coalesces in the figures of Blake's mythology. These figures themselves are also subject to change and growth.

One of the most suggestive studies of the early poems is in Stanley Gardner's Infinity on the Anvil.⁵ He concentrates on the kind of verbal associations Blake was even then making with certain ideas, and provides a modicum of clear evidence that these ideas may appear later with the same associations:

Thus in this poem To Winter we have a whole range of associations with the wintry sceptre -- darkness, doors, roofs, iron, silence, the sea, cliffs, caves, storms -- all of which, augmented and expanded, will provide the panoply of might against which Blake will direct his revolt...⁶

It is worth going into slightly more detail about these associations in 'To Winter', which follows:

O Winter! bar thine adamantine doors:
The north is thine; there has thou built thy dark
Deep-founded habitation. Shake not thy roofs,
Nor bend thy pillars with thine iron car.

He hears me not, but o'er the yawning deep
Rides heavy; his storms are unchain'd; sheathed
In ribbed steel, I dare not lift mine eyes;
For he hath reared his sceptre o'er the world.

Lo! now the direful monster, whose skin clings
To his strong bones, strides o'er the groaning rocks:
He withers all in silence, and in his hand
Unclothes the earth, and freezes up frail life.

He takes his seat upon the cliffs, the mariner
Cries in vain. Poor little wretch! that deal'st
With storms; till heaven smiles, and the monster
Is driv'n yelling to his caves beneath mount Hecla.
(E401-2/K2-3)

5. Stanley Gardner, Infinity on the Anvil (Oxford, 1954).

6. Ibid., p.20.

There are words in every line which very frequently recur in Blake's work in the context of Urizen, his works, his territory, or his relations; and very seldom in any other context. 'Adamantine', a word from Milton's hell, describes Urizen's scales of justice (FZ77:10, E346/K320); and the leaves of his book:

for such a journey none but iron pens
Can write And adamantine leaves receive
(FZ71(b):41-2, E342/K316)

Iron also are Urizen's laws (BU23:25-6, E80/K235); and his book may be iron too (Ahania3:64, E85/K252).

It is well known, of course, that Urizen's place (after the Fall) is 'in the north' (BU2:3, E69/K222). But perhaps insufficient attention has been paid to the merely geographical and meteorological implications of this fact. Urizen's weather is distinctively both cold and stormy:

the rolling of wheels,
As of swelling seas, sound in his clouds
In his hills of stor'd snows, in his mountains
Of hail & ice
(BU3:30-33, E70/K223)

Even the earlier figures of the 'starry king' in 'A Song of Liberty' (E43/K159) and 'Starry Jealousy' in Songs of Experience (E18/K211) derive some significance from mention of snow in one case, and cold in the other. The actions of freezing and withering are shared by Urizen and Winter: after Urizen gives his laws to the nations, the 'human race began to wither' (SL3:25, E66/K246). And he himself is withered within: 'For from within my witherd breast grown narrow with my woes/The Corn is turn'd to thistles & the apples into poison' (FZ119:41-2, E374/K360). Sometimes Urizen is almost a personification of Winter himself:

But Urizen slept in a stoned stupor in the nether Abyss
 A dreamful horrible State in tossings on his icy bed
 Freezing to solid all beneath.

(FZ52:20-22, E328/K302)

The life and energy of Spring and Summer are opposed to the negative qualities of Winter; but they are also what Urizen and Winter actively destroy.

This, at least, should serve to remind us that the seasonal poems cannot be properly considered in isolation from each other: the qualities of each season are contrasted but complementary, recalling (if only in this respect) Thomson's 'varied God'. Geoffrey Hartman, considering the seasonal poems as a closely linked sequence, sees them as an expression of the eighteenth-century 'Progress of Poesy' theme.⁷ It is true that Hartman overstates his case: there is no warrant for saying baldly that the sequence is 'about poetry', rather than that it is about the seasons.⁸ And it seems a trifle sophisticated to argue that 'On the literal level...it is the "voice of the bard" which adjures the seasons', since it is not clear how this formulation improves on a term like 'the speaker'.⁹

Nevertheless, Hartman's point is astute: the Progress of Poesy theme does contribute something to the sequence. There is only one mention of poetry as such: this is in the last stanza of 'To Summer':

7. Geoffrey Hartman, 'Blake and the "Progress of Poesy"'. in Rosenfeld, pp.57-58.

8. Ibid., p. 58.

9. Ibid., p. 57.

Our bards are fam'd who strike the silver wire:
 Our youth[s] are bolder than the southern swains:
 Our maidens fairer in the sprightly dance:
 We lack not songs, nor instruments of joy,
 Nor echoes sweet, nor waters clear as heaven,
 Nor laurel wreaths against the sultry heat.
 (E401/K2)

This is reminiscent of the worries about poetry in 'To the Muses', though that is quite pessimistic. It is not, however, Gray's 'Poetic Genius', nor Collin's 'Poetical Character', that is being invoked, but rather the season itself that is being fancifully tempted with the delights of British poetry. The influence of the Progress of Poesy theme in these poems is in the implied contrast with other kinds of poetry; in the sense that Spring is akin to a spirit of inspiration coming from the East ('let us taste/Thy morn and evening breath': E400/K1); and in the association of the seasons with points of the compass, and of Britain with the West. This last association reveals a certain anxiety about the decline of British poetry, as does his assertiveness in stating its claims in 'To Summer'. Blake takes from eighteenth-century primitivism not only an admiration for the original, animating bard, but also an anxiety lest the poetic faculty be unavoidably bound up in a cycle of decay: this idea, as much as any actual qualities possessed by Winter, contributes to the associations of Urizen, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter VI.

The function of the association of seasons and corners of the earth is to make the former more archetypal in feel: they teeter on the edge of becoming more than merely seasons, of being principles expressed both in time and in place, and this sense is enforced by the highly personalised

imaginative personification. The idea of powers appropriate to the four corners of the Earth is not novel, and may have been fed by the Progress of Poesy theme or by the contemporary Norse revival (both of which were facets of primitivism). T. J. Mathias's Runic Odes (1781) contains a poem called 'Twilight of the Gods' in which the birth of Ymir, father of the giants, is described:

FROM the chambers of the East,
In robes of terror grimly drest,
Ymir hath his course begun,
Rival of th'unwearied Sun.

10

(Compare line 1 with 'To the Muses': 'Or in the chambers of the East' (1.2, E408/K10).) The Prince of the 'Genii of Fire' has another origin:

From the regions of the South
Suntur bursts with fiery mouth...11

Elsewhere there is a reference to 'ye Rulers of the North/Spirits of exalted worth'.¹²

The sense, in 'To Winter', of a heartless, inhuman power, and its climatic counterpart, must have been fed by Blake's reading about Northern countries and mythologies. Iceland is described in Mallet's Northern Antiquities:

10. T. J. Mathias, Runic Odes Imitated from the Norse Tongue in the manner of Mr. Gray (London, 1781), p.2.

11. Ibid., p.4.

12. Ibid., p.27.

The whole island can only be considered as one vast mountain, interspersed with long and deep vallies, concealing in its bosom heaps of minerals, of vitrified and bituminous substances, and rising on all sides out of the ocean in the form of a short blunted one.

Earthquakes and volcanoes have thro' all ages laid waste this unhappy island. Hecla, the only one of these volcanoes, which is known by name to the rest of Europe, seems at present extinct; but the principles of fire, which lie concealed all over the island, often break out in other places.¹³

This sort of knowledge of an infernal power beneath Mount Hecla has understandably influenced the conception of Winter, and may even help to explain the Miltonic diction of the poem: significantly, though, Blake has rejected Hecla's 'principle of fire' in his poem, and has, instead, concentrated on associations of cold, thus anticipating the way in which Urizen's frigid appearance may conceal consuming fire.

Contraries are also present in the two songs, 'Fresh from the dewy hill...' and 'When early morn walks forth in sober grey...' (E407, 408/K9, 10). In the former a laurel-crowned young man goes to meet his 'maiden' amid such joy that 'Each field seems Eden, and each calm retreat;/Each vil- lage seems the haunt of holy feet' (5-6, E408/K9). The latter poem describes how he leaves the village at night:

To that sweet village, where my black ey'd maid
Doth drop a tear beneath the silent shade,
I turn my eyes; and, pensive as I go,
Curse my black stars, and bless my pleasing woe.
(6-10, E408/K10)

L.C. Knights remarks that in this second poem Blake is less

13. Paul Henri Mallet, Northern Antiquities, trans. Thomas Percy (London, 1770), 2 vols., Vol. I, pp. 15-16.

interested in indicating 'thwarting circumstances' than in 'defining a form of "pensive" love melancholy, cherishing itself and turning sour with fantasies of revenge'.¹⁴ Indeed, Blake is not interested in 'thwarting circumstances' but in the contrasting states which make the mind its own place. This kind of contrast may well have been suggested by 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso': there is a likeness in the 'ideal day' theme; and in the contrast of dewy pastoral with sober nocturne. And a comparable concern with the changed state of mind is commonplace in love poetry. But Blake seems unusually interested in the states of mind themselves, an interest conveyed by subtle substitutions of phrasing, in a technique that looks as far forward as Wallace Stevens's 'Sea Surface Full of Sun and Clouds'. But of course it is one of the chief engines of Songs of Innocence and of Experience. And in these two songs the effect is much the same as that in Innocence and Experience: it is almost as if jealousy and possessiveness had no cause but themselves, but that once they have entered in, all is changed.

The choice of jealousy and possessiveness as the blight of love's joy does not need stressing. Blake has already fastened on this theme, as is clear from 'How sweet I roam'd'. The idea of the 'golden cage', which occurs in this song, recurs in a Swiftian lyric in 'An Island in the Moon' (c.1784-5):

14. Knights, op. cit., p. 391.

"Then come ye maidens, come ye swains,
 "Come & be eased of all your pains
 "In Matrimony's Golden Cage."
 (K56/E451: all quotations from
 'An Island' are from Keynes)

It is not only in subject matter that Blake has already begun to kick against restraints. As far as versification is concerned he acts upon the dissatisfaction with contemporary poetry expressed in 'To the Muses'. W. K. Wimsatt points out that the volume is full of 'imitative exuberance'.¹⁵ But Blake's choice of styles to imitate is in various ways significant of an ancient liberty recovered. The influence of Chatterton and of Percy's Reliques is well known and fully documented.¹⁶ Ossian is discernible in the prose poems. But most interesting is the use of blank verse for lyrics, for instance in the seasonal poems. Geoffrey Hartman points out that this is quite unusual, and that before Blake unrhymed lyrics had only been used in imitations of the classics and paraphrases of the Psalms: he concludes that Blake was indeed recovering an ancient liberty, and was attempting to 'evoke the prophetic portions of both traditions'.¹⁷ Like Milton, Blake wished to be a prophet; but unlike Milton, Blake lived in a time when scholars were maintaining that the Hebrew prophets had never been prophets in the vulgar sense, but were inspired bards; and that the primitive poets of all countries had once uttered an inspired

15. W. K. Wimsatt, 'Imitation as Freedom -- 1717-1798', New Literary History, Vol. I, No. 2 (Winter, 1970), p. 234.

16. M. R. Lowery, Windows of the Morning (New Haven, 1940), pp. 160-74.

17. Hartman, op.cit., p. 58.

mixture of prophecy and poetry.¹⁸ Blake must have been thinking in terms of a choice between ancient liberty and modern bondage : the style of these poems is not simply the evocation of a prophetic tradition, but a consciously rebellious attitude towards common eighteenth-century practice, influenced by contemporary primitivism. The force of this rebellion may be gauged by a glance at the most popular poets' manual of the period, Edward Bysshe's The Art of English Poetry (1st edn., 1702). Blake is known to have possessed this book.¹⁹ In the section on 'Rules' he would have discovered that rhyme 'is a Likeness or Uniformity of Sound in the Terminations of two Words' and he would have known that rhymes were to be prized from the Preface, where they are called 'the Mechanick Tools of a Poet'.²⁰ He should also have known that the 'Construction or Sense should never end at a Syllable where the Pause ought not to be made; as at the 8th and 2d'.²¹ But this is a rule he breaks very conspicuously in the first poem in the volume:

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
 Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
 Thy golden crown upon her languish'd head...
 (E400/K1)

18. Cf. the influential Robert Lowth, Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, trans. G. Gregory (London, 1787), 2 vols.; originally published in Latin in 1759.

19. See G. E. Bentley, Jr., Blake Books, (Oxford, 1977), p.681.

20. Edward Bysshe, The Art of English Poetry, 4th edn. (London, 1710), pp. 18, (v).

21. *Ibid.*, p.5.

2. Tyranny and the Early History Paintings.

'Gwin, King of Norway' portrays a tyrant who bears a 'cruel sceptre', and each of whose chiefs is like 'an awful thunder cloud' (1.40). When the battle between Gwin and the liberating giant Gordred is at its height Blake remarks:

O what have Kings to answer for,
 Before that awful throne!
 When thousand deaths for vengeance cry,
 And ghosts accusing groan!
 (97-100, E411/K13)

Kings are held responsible for all the cruelties of despotism and the carnage of war. This fact is worth bearing in mind when considering the disputed meaning of 'King Edward the Third'. David V. Erdman has argued convincingly that 'Even as it stands the work yields to analysis a consistent pattern of variations on the theme of a contrast between words of peace and deeds of war'.²² The fact that such a contrast is overtly mentioned within the play, which is nevertheless full of patriotic sentiment, is a conclusive point in the argument that the play's patriotism is not of the kind that favours nationalistic war. The crucial scene is that in which William questions Dagworth about the motives of Edward and his nobles (KEIII, (4), E425-26/K28-29). When this scene is taken into account there is stronger reason for regarding some of the speeches in the play as ironic:

Thanks, noble Harcourt, for 'twas
 By your advice we landed here in Brittany --
 A country not yet sown with destruction,
 And where the fiery whirlwind of swift war
 Has not yet swept its desolating wing.
 (KEIII, (1), 45-49,
 E416/K18)

22. Prophet, pp.83-84.

About Kings it seems that Blake already sympathised with Paine, who wrote in Common Sense (1776):

A French bastard landing with an armed banditti, and establishing himself King of England, against the consent of the natives, is, in plain terms, a very paltry, rascally original. It certainly hath no divinity in it....The plain truth is, that the antiquity of English Monarchy will not bear looking into.²³

The series of early history paintings, on British historical subjects, which Blake executed between c.1779 and c.1787 is explicable as the work of one who subscribed not merely to what Christopher Hill has termed 'the Norman Yoke' theory, but to the idea that any monarchy is a yoke.²⁴ These designs were executed within the same period; and there is a list of titles substantially corresponding to the subjects of Blake's pictures on page 116 of the Notebook. David Bindman gives his own list of the subjects which can be regarded as part of the series; he includes also The Ordeal of Queen Emma and Edward and Elenor. The latter was engraved in 1793, but, says Bindman, it was 'obviously designed at a much earlier date'.²⁵ The series as a whole, if the Notebook list is examined, seems to have been intended to show the History of England from the 'Giants ancient inhabitants of England' to the Great Plague and the Fire of London (N116). Bindman suggests that Blake took subjects from Milton's History, which goes up to 1066, and thereafter from the popular History

23. Thomas Paine, Political and Miscellaneous Works, ed. R. Carlile (London, 1819 [i.e. 1820]), 2 vols., Vol. I, p.16.

24. Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution (London, 1958), pp.50-122.

25. Bindman, p.22. On this group of designs and their dating, see Bindman, pp.22-27 and David Bindman, 'Blake's "Gothicised Imagination" and the History of England' in Paley and Phillips, pp.29-49.

by Rapin.²⁶ He recalls that Blake said he believed 'with Milton, the ancient British History' (Descriptive Catalogue, E534/K578), unlike Rapin and other 'reasoning' historians. Since Blake's list includes 'The Landing of Brutus' and 'Corineus throws Gogmagog the Giant into the sea', subjects which Milton also discusses, he must have meant what he said. Blake may have been thinking of the beginning of Milton's book, where, though he admits to including many things that have 'bin long rejected for a Modern Fable', he goes on to plead that 'oft-times Relations heretofore accounted Fabulous, have bin after found to contain in them many foot-steps, and reliques of somthing true, as what we read in Poets of the Flood'.²⁷

Bindman feels that Blake's choice of anti-tyrannical subjects was not unusual, and that what is remarkable is his insistence on the 'anecdotal and mythological side of history'.²⁸ There is more to be said about the subject, however. The Ordeal of Queen Emma refers to a tradition recorded both in Milton and in Rapin: Edward the Confessor is said to have accused his mother of infidelity and forced her to walk barefoot over red-hot plough-shares. In choosing this tale Blake has chosen a story which shows the Anglo-Saxon period not as one of liberty brought to an end by the Norman Conquest, but as part of a series of incidents in both Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods depicting the tyranny of kings and resistance to foreign invaders. Another Anglo-Saxon subject, The Death

26. Bindman, 'Blake's "Gothecised Imagination"', pp.40-42.

27. John Milton, The History of England (London, 1677), p.7.

28. 'Gothicised Imagination', p.49.

of Earl Godwin, shows the earl choking to death, when he had prayed God that food he was eating should choke him if he had any hand in a murder which he had indeed connived at.

What is significant is that Blake should have chosen to include the Anglo-Saxon period in this way. For at this point in the Eighteenth Century the question, whether or not the Anglo-Saxon age was one of liberty, presented itself to all republicans and radicals. Many looked back to the pristine 'purity' of our ancestors, and sought Saxon precedent for constitutional innovation.²⁹ Blake, on the other hand, seems to have taken the more extreme view, most trenchantly expressed earlier in the century, by Defoe in his Jure Divino (1706), that the Saxons were as violent as the Normans:

And thus began the Royal Saxon Line;
In Robbery and Blood they fixed the Right Divine.

30

Unlike Blake, less radical historians still hankered for the supposedly more wholesome principles of the Saxon constitution.

In the list of historical subjects in the Notebook, one item is 'The Cruelties used by Kings & Priests' (E661/K209). Priests also appear among subjects designed in these years: Gregory the Great and the British Captives (Victoria and Albert Museum. Repro. Bindman, Pl.15) and St. Augustine Converting Ethelbert of Kent (Lady Melchett. Repro. Paley and Phillips, Pl.11) must represent the arts of priests, even though they do not appear in the Notebook list. And it is in these designs in particular that we begin to see a foreshadowing of the visual appearance of Urizen in the long white hair and beards

29. E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

30. Quoted in Hill, Puritanism, p.92.

of the priests. The two designs are related, of course, in that it was Gregory's interest in the Anglian captives that led him to send Augustine to Britain to convert the English. Blake is thus including in his work on the History of England a hostile comment on the conversion of the English to Roman Christianity. His feelings about Gregory are unlikely to have been much different from those expressed by Milton in his account of the legend, when he writes that Gregory sent others after Augustine:

...who what they were, may be guess't by the stuff which they brought with them, vessels and vestments for the Altar, Coaps, Reliques, and for the Arch-bishop Austin a Pall to say Mass in: to such a rank superstition that Age was grown...³¹

The captives in Blake's picture are not only captives of the Romans, but also of the Roman religion, represented by Gregory. They look youthful and vigorous by contrast, and their chains suggest that their vigour will be bound.

3. Conclusion

We have seen that the objects of Blake's criticism are already beginning to approximate to those of later years. The clearest ideas are those of tyranny, jealousy, and possessiveness in love; and the opposition of liberty and bondage. Equally noteworthy are the connotations of the figure Winter: the life-denying imagery of cold, dark and sterility connected with the Miltonic Satan's iron sceptre and adamant.

31. Milton, op. cit., p. 165.

More specifically, where tyranny is concerned, Blake already sees the problem in terms of both Priest and King, the Whore and the Beast of radical Protestant demonology: Urizen, as we shall see, draws his traits from each of these figures.

None of this means that Blake has already conceived of a symbol that would unite all these ideas. He may, however, have thought that they were connected -- at least, if the prose fragment 'then She bore pale desire...' is anything to go by (it is dated by Erdman 'probably of the early 1780s':E766). This narrative describes what seem to be the effects of a Fall and the genesis of 'the Gods which Came from fear' (E437/K40). These Gods include not only 'fabled hecate' (E438/K41) but also personified faculties of the mind: of these, 'Reason once fairer than the light till fould in Knowledges dark Prison house' (E438/K42) is the most interesting for our thesis. There are indications in 'An Island in the Moon', also, that Blake was already thinking in terms of a Fall which had brought the division and limitation of Man's faculties.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM 'AN ISLAND IN THE MOON' TO
THE TRACTATES

1. 'An Island in the Moon'

It is in no way surprising that Blake should have held typically dissenting views about the Priest and King: as A. L. Morton points out, Blake 'was born into the world of London dissenting radicalism.'¹ But it is important to remember that Blake's extreme type of Dissent did not share in the rationalism either of Liberal Dissenters; or in that of the Painite radicals who spoke in similar terms about Priest and King. We should expect then, even at this early stage, that Blake would mistrust the human reason, in accordance with his tradition. But the interesting question is: How far did Blake, at this stage, associate priestly and kingly tyranny with the victory of Reason? Some clues which indicate that Blake is beginning to connect the institutional and the psychological may be found in his prose satire 'An Island in the Moon' (c.1784-85). In this work is to be found one source for the name 'Urizen', in the phrase 'Your reason':

"Sir," said the Antiquarian, "according to my opinion the author is an errant blockhead."
"Your reason --Your reason?" said Inflammable Gass. "Why --why, I think it very abominable to call a man a blockhead that you know nothing of."
"Reason, Sir?" said the Antiquarian. "I'll give you an example for your reason. As I was walking along the street I saw a vast number of swallows on the ... rails of an old Gothic square. They

1. A. L. Morton, The Matter of Britain (op.cit.), p.83.

"seem'd to be going on their passage, as Pliny says. As I was looking up, a little outré fellow, pulling me by the sleeve, cries, 'Pray, Sir, who do all they belong to?' I turn'd myself about with great contempt. Said I, 'Go along, you fool!' 'Fool!' said he, 'who do you call fool? I only ask'd you a civil question.' ... I had a great mind to have thrash'd the fellow, only he was bigger than I."

(K44-45/E441: from the Keynes edn., with editor's punctuation, for ease of reading, as in all citations of 'An Island'.)

'An Island in the Moon' repays careful study, not merely as a clue to Blake's acquaintance, but as a literary work in its own right.² The swallows are in an old Gothic square, but to the Antiquarian they recall Pliny. Here, then, is a suggestion of the Gothic versus the Classical, which enters into the meaning of the passage. And it is in this Gothic square that the 'little outré fellow' pops up and asks the outrageous question: Who owns the swallows? This is a Blakean question, answered differently by different people; and some, like the Antiquarian, will regard the question as ridiculous. The right answer would be something to the effect that our Heavenly Father cared for each sparrow, as in the parable, and thus for each swallow. The Antiquarian's conception of God is withered and deistical. If he were pressed to answer the question he might well conceive of God as the proprietor of the swallows.

The Antiquarian adduces his encounter with the little fellow as an excuse for calling Voltaire a blockhead. His mind is closed: he is a rationalist who cannot give reasons. The way Blake uses the idea of the swallows here

2. See William Royce Campbell, 'The Aesthetic Integrity of Blake's Island in the Moon', Blake Studies, Vol.III, No.2 (Spring, 1971), pp.137-47.

already carries a suggestion of 'immense worlds of delight', closed by the five senses of the Antiquarian. The little fellow has more spiritual stature than he. We are amused to find that the little fellow turns out to be bigger than the Antiquarian whose 'contempt' and use of the word 'little' are in reality an automatic reflex of unthinking self-esteem.

The quarrel about Voltaire is really a quarrel between rationalists and empiricists: Obtuse Angle objects to Voltaire because he 'understood nothing of the Mathematics' (K45/E441) and the Antiquarian because 'Voltaire was immersed in matter, & seems to have understood very little but what he saw before his eyes, like the Animal upon the Pythagorean's lap, always playing with its own tail' (K45-46'/E441-2). This is a reference to the kind of thinking which is neatly summed up in Voltaire's The Ignorant Philosopher, a mischievous and extreme popularisation of Lockean empiricism, which Blake had probably read.³ At the beginning of that work Voltaire issues this invitation:

In this narrow circle by which we are circumscribed, let us see what we are condemned to be ignorant of, and what we gain a little knowledge of.⁴

But the tone of Blake's satire indicates that he already thinks of both Rationalists and Empiricists as rationalists 'with a small r': both are immersed in the classical problem of knowledge -- the confrontation of reason and brute matter, which, by Voltaire's admission, gives rise to the conviction that reason is short-sighted. The idea of short-sightedness

3. Prophet, p.108.

4. Voltaire, The Ignorant Philosopher (London, 1767), p.16.

recurs in the little verse about Johnson:

"Lo the Bat with Leathern wing,
 "Winking & blinking,
 "Winking and blinking,
 "Winking and blinking,
 "Like Doctor Johnson."
 (K54/E448)

Reynolds had painted five portraits of Johnson, who complained that the second made him look like 'blinking Sam'.⁵ Blake has taken this remark to reinforce his point about the narrowness of reason. The verse also refers to Collins's 'Ode to Evening':

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat,
 With short shrill shrieks flits by on leathern wing.

The bat, like the Owl of Minerva, flies when the sun of life is setting: reason is myopic, and associated with the decline of energy.

We can now see the point of the pun on Locke's name in the well-known reference to the Essay concerning Human Understanding: 'An Easy of Huming Understanding, by John Lookye... Gent.' (E447/K52) Locke, like Voltaire, understands very little but what he sees before his eyes.⁶

'An Island in the Moon', as Erdman shows (Prophet, pp.92-114), is about the aspirations to genius of those who lack it, and who lack the selfless and honourable devotion to art and intellect that attends it:

Then the Cynic sung --
 "Honour & Genius is all I ask,
 "And I ask the Gods no more.
 "No more, No more,) the three Philo-
 "No more, No more.") sopers bear Chorus
 (K47/E443)

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5. Timothy Griffiths, Anthony Clifford, Martin Royalton-Kisch, Gainsborough and Reynolds. Catalogue of an exhibition in the British Museum (London, 1978), No.11.
 6. Cf. T.O.Mabbott, 'William Blake's "Urizen"', NQ, Vol.188 (Oct. 20, 1945), pp.161-62. The author claims that 'Urizen' is derived from 'Your eyes on'.

The phrase 'I ask the Gods no more' recurs three more times (K55/E449, 450) like a kind of refrain to the satire itself. It is easy to see that the philosophers and their friends lack genius. And their notion of honour is equivalent to respectability: 'I don't think it's prophane to say "Hang Pharaoh?"' Mrs. Nannicantipot avers. ('Since when was genius found respectable?' as Mrs. Browning asked in Aurora Leigh.)

The question, What constitutes genius? is raised indirectly when Obtuse Angle is asked who Phoebus was:

"He was the God of Physic, Painting, Perspective, Geometry, Geography, Astronomy, Cookery, Chymistry . . . Mechanics, Tactics, Pathology, Phraseology, Theology, Mythology, Astrology, Osteology, Somatology -- in short, every art & science adorn'd him as beads round his neck."

Here Aradobo look 'd Astonish'd & ask'd if he understood Engraving. (K46/E442)

The list of sciences is a parody of the requirements for history-painting given in Jonathan Richardson's Theory of Painting (London, 1715): a history painter must be 'a good historian', 'a good poet', and 'absolutely' must understand 'anatomy, osteology, geometry, perspective, architecture and many other sciences'.⁷ Aradobo's question implies that genius in an art cannot be attained by the mastery of a list of compartmentalized disciplines.

Aradobo is the ingenuous devil's advocate: a little later he asks a question which clearly recalls his earlier one: 'Pray . . . is Chatterton a Mathematician?' (K48/E444). Chatterton, the very type of a genius, is now linked to, and contrasted with, Voltaire and Phoebus. If Voltaire was a fool because he was not a mathematician, was Chatterton a

7. Quoted in Prophet, p.102n.

fool for the same reason? But if genius requires as many accomplishments as Phoebus had, surely Chatterton must have been a mathematician. Or so it seems to the foolish Aradobo, who unconsciously reveals the folly of his company:

Then Aradobo began, "In the first place I think, I think in the first place that Chatterton was clever at Fissic, Fology, Pistinology, Aridology, Arography, Transmography, Phizography, Hatomy, & hall that, but, in the first place, he eat wery little, wickly -- that is, he slept very little, which he brought into a consunsion; & what was that he took?...Fissic or somethink, -- & so died!" (K49/E444)

Genius is indivisible, and its products do not bear the mark of division. The contemporary reader will be convinced that this is Blake's point when he comes to the end of the satire, where Quid the Cynic is discussing a method of Illuminated Printing -- 'Illuminating the Manuscript' (K62/E456) -- which was surely the method Blake was to use in most of his works. Though the matter is not discussed, we know from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that Blake's 'infernal method' was intended to 'expunge' the notion 'that man has a body distinct from his soul'; and that it was intended to display the 'infinite'. We also know from his practice in the illuminated books that the division of Poetry and Painting was to be broken down, and we may infer that this was part of the task of displaying the infinite.

The end of 'An Island in the Moon' reveals that Blake was already interested in overcoming the divisions between the arts; the earlier passages we have examined show that he thought ill of the division of artistic accomplishment into mechanical disciplines. And Blake's myth of the Fall and Division of Man is already present, in ovo, in 'An Island in the Moon'. The idea of Chatterton's death by

'Fissic' is swiftly followed by a discussion of Jack Tearguts' skill in anatomy (picking up Aradobo's 'Hatomy') and then by the song 'When old corruption first begun', which presents a grotesque theory of the genesis of 'anatomy':

1

When old curruption first begun,
 Adorn'd in yellow vest,
 He committed on flesh a whoredom --
 O, what a wicked beast!

2

From them a callow babe did spring,
 And old corruption smil'd
 To think his race should never end.
 For now he had a child.

3

He call'd him surgery, & fed
 The babe with his own milk,
 For flesh & he could ne'er agree,
 She would not let him suck.

4

And this he always kept in mind,
 And form'd a crooked knife,
 And ran about with bloody hands
 To seek his mother's life.

5

And as he ran to seek his mother
 He met with a dead woman,
 He fell in love & married her,
 A deed which is not common.

6

She soon grew pregnant & brought forth
 Scurvy & spott'd fever.
 The father grin'd & skipt about,
 And said, 'I'm made for ever!

7

'For now I have procur'd these imps
 'I'll try experiments.'
 With that he tied poor scurvy down
 & stopt up all its vents.

8

And when the child began to swell,
 He shouted out aloud,
 'I've found the dropsy out, & soon
 'Shall do the world more good.'

9

He took up fever by the neck
 And cut out all its spots,
 And thro' the holes which he had made
 He first discover'd guts.
 (K50-51/E445-46)

Martha W. England points out that the literary background to this song is Book II of Paradise Lost, in 'the genealogy of Sin, Death, and the hell hounds.'⁸ But it also looks forward to Blake's later myth of the Fall of Man and Urizen's usurpation. Old Corruption certainly recalls Urizen in that he stands for an original fault, and gives rise to 'cures' which are parasites of the original disease. It is interesting to compare 'The Human Abstract' with 'Old Corruption': here too there is a progressive Fall, and disease and cure are interdependent:

And mutual fear brings peace;
 Till the selfish loves increase.
 Then Cruelty knits a snare,
 And spreads his baits with care.
 (5-9, E27/K217)

At the beginning of this poem we learn that poverty breeds 'Pity' in much the same way that Old Corruption breeds 'surgery', or Aradobo's Chatterton is killed by the Fissic in which he is supposed to be such an expert.

In 'An Island in the Moon' we already have the idea of a Fall associated with the victory of a narrowly defined Reason, and the division of Man. The Philosophers' endeavour 'to incorporate their souls with their bodies' (K45/E441) will always seem impossible to them. But it is a task which Blake will recommend on far other tenets -- tenets which, it is maintained, he already held. He him-

8. Martha W. England, 'Apprenticeship at the Haymarket?', BVFD, p. 19.

self dates his interest in 'Paracelsus & Behmen' (K799) from before the beginning of the American War (1775). The idea of a spiritual body that might be attained in this life, and the attack on reason, would not have been strange to him. An interest in philosophical alchemy might be expected in extreme dissenting Protestants, as we have seen, and he may even have been influenced by the Muggletonian insistence that there was no soul apart from the body. At any rate, there are many hints of Blake's later views in 'An Island', and this fact has some relevance in the years immediately following. It also affects a reading of the Songs of Innocence, if only because it suggests that the notion that Blake underwent a change of heart between Innocence and Experience is an overstatement.

2. 'An Island in the Moon' to the Tractates.

The years 1783 to 1785 bring several designs about kings.⁹ The Witch of Endor (1783. New York Public Library) is based on I Samuel 28, where Saul goes in disguise to the

9. Apart from Saul and the Witch of Endor and Macbeth and the Ghost of Banquo, discussed below, there are The King of Babylon in Hell (c.1780-85. Windsor Castle, Royal Collection) and The Counsellor, King, Warrior, Mother and Child (c.1780-85. Scotland, private collection). The King of Babylon comes from Isaiah 14: 9, where he is told that Hell 'stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations'.

The other picture contains, in a dark cloud above the main figures, the figure of Death throwing darts. The Urizenic Counsellor, and warlike King and Warrior are subject to Death, but with them die their victims, the Mother and Child.

witch of Endor, asking her to summon up Samuel, who prophesies Saul's defeat at the hands of the Philistines, and his death. The story, then, is of a king who has offended God. As Samuel says: 'Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?' (I Sam. 28:16). The subject is, of course, 'sublime', and already had been painted by Benjamin West (1777. Hartford, Connecticut, Wadsworth Atheneum). However, Blake's treatment of the 'sublime' subjects of the Bible always goes beyond the dictates of fashion: it has its roots in that 'enthusiastic' antinomian tradition to which avant-garde critical theories were at last becoming congenial. How would Blake have interpreted the subject? One clue may be gained from the work of that pseudo-Bunyan, George Larkin, which was long thought to be by Bunyan himself. In The Visions of John Bunyan, which went through many editions throughout the eighteenth, and into the nineteenth, century, the reprobate hero says:

I went to my false Friend, to see what Comfort he could administer to me; (which was like Saul's going to the Witch of Endor, when GOD had forsaken him)...10

Saul's going to the Witch is in itself a sign that he is still lost. As for the appearance of Samuel, Blake would take it to be a vision reflecting the state of Saul's mind. Muggleton himself wrote a book about the Witch of Endor. In this he says that ghosts are visions arising out of the

10. [George Larkin], The Visions of John Bunyan: Being his Last Remains: Giving an Account of the Glories of Heaven, The Terrors of Hell, And of the World to Come (London, ?1750), pp.2-3.

imagination:

So is it with Witches, they do raise Shapes and Voices out of themselves, and those Voices they hear, they are no other but motional Voices in themselves; and the ignorant People that believes in them is Partakers of those motional Voices also with the Witch.¹¹

Not that Visions are intrinsically untrustworthy: there are evil visions proceeding from Reason, and good from Faith ('Revelation') :

So likewise the Seed of Faith in Man, is the Womb or Mother for the Revelation of Faith... answerable as the Imagination doth out of the Seed of Reason.¹²

The 'Imagination of Reason', 'the Devil', believes that 'Spirits may be raised without Bodies'.¹³ What Saul sees is a projection of his own guilt caused by his fear that he has offended his own tyrannical deity. The Ghost of Samuel has some stern things to say on behalf of that deity, and it is interesting to see that Samuel is every inch an Urizenic figure.

Macbeth and the Ghost of Banquo (c.1785. Private collection, England. Repro. Tate Exhibn. No.34) shows another king haunted by a spectre born of guilt. Martin Butlin remarks that 'Blake seems to have identified himself as Banquo, whose profile is remarkably like his own'.¹⁴ Whether or not this is true, Blake would certainly have identified himself with

11. Lodowick Muggleton, A True Interpretation of the Witch of Endor (London, 1724), p.6.

12. Ibid., p.10.

13. Ibid., p.1.

14. Tate Exhibn., No. 34, p.40.

all who opposed the tyranny of kings or uncovered their bloody misdeeds. The closeness of these designs in time and subject matter shows that Blake is already thinking syncretically, and making symbolic links between the Bible and non-Biblical writers.

From about 1785-86 dates the pen and wash drawing of Job, His Wife and His Friends (Tate Gallery. Repro. Tate cata. No.5). This is among Blake's first Job designs. There is no need here to labour the well-known fact that Job was considered one of the most 'sublime' subjects of the Bible.¹⁵ There is, however, a fitness in Blake's choosing to draw this subject (preparatory to his two great line engravings (c.1786; 1793) of the same subject): the massive, chiaroscuro style of these engravings is heavily influenced by the style of his friend James Barry, who singled out Lear and The Book of Job as examples of 'general and perfect' nature.¹⁶ Blake had already done a pen and watercolour drawing of Lear and Cordelia in Prison -- (c.1779. Tate Gallery. Repro. Tate cata., No.1).

The Job drawing is another example of a fashionably sublime subject which also shows evidence of Blake's religious antecedents. For the Book of Job was also singled out by Muggleton, in his book on the Witch of Endor, as an example of visions which are really a reflection of the moral life of a character: Job's encounters with God happen in his own mind.¹⁷ This is precisely the conception conveyed by Blake's

15. Cf. Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin of our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful, 2nd edn. (London, 1759), p.108.

16. Cited in Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, Blake's Human Form Divine (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974), p.105.

17. Muggleton, op. cit., pp.41-2.

own Illustrations of the Book of Job (1825) so many years later.

Though the image of God does not enter into these early Job designs, they show that Blake is already attempting to convey the sublime terror of the divine. The second state of the engraving (1793) is inscribed: 'What is Man That thou shouldest Try him Every Moment? Job viic 17 & 18v'. Why does God send these trials, and, in particular, why does he send them to the just? Illustrations of the Book of Job, X, shows the equivalent scene. There the Comforters are seen as the three Accusers, each pointing the finger at Job. Underneath, Blake has inscribed, 'The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn' (Job 12:4). But the question of justice should not arise at all. Blake does not believe that righteousness can save man. The terror of Experience is a portion of the divine: separated from love and imagination it becomes an imposition. But the man who has a sense of his own righteousness cannot feel love or possess imagination.

The question raised by The Complaint of Job is already the same as that raised at the end of Thel: 'Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright' (Thel 6:18). Why the terror of Experience? At a wider level of symbolic generality it is the question of 'The Tyger': 'Did he who made the Lamb make thee?' There are three possible responses to the problem of Experience: to flee back into an artificial and static Innocence, away from the terrifying energies of Experience; to live solely by those energies, but thus be separated from Love and Innocence; or to recognise that God is compounded of Love and Wrath.

It may seem that too much of Blake's later thought is being read back into these early works. However, in this particular case it is important to compare The Complaint of Job with another engraving, The Death of Ezekiel's Wife. The only known state of this is dated 1794. But it is stylistically identical to the Job and is roughly the same size. As Martin Butlin points out (Tate Exhibn., p.40) there was probably an earlier state (c.1786) corresponding to that of the Job, especially as there are preparatory drawings (Private collection, U.S.A.; Philadelphia Museum) which are similar to those for the Job.

Ezekiel had been commanded by God not to weep on the death of his wife, and that same day God took her away from him (Ezekiel 24:15-18). The subject --the afflictions sent by God -- recalls that of the Job. The anguished, long-suffereing expression on Ezekiel's face is almost identical to that of Job. And indeed Ezekiel's general appearance is exactly the same as Job's. Blake has deliberately chosen self-righteous limitations of the Old Dispensation.¹⁸ We may surmise that the God of Ezekiel and Job is made in their image, in which case he would share their aged and long-suffering appearance, just as Urizen does. At any rate, these two designs, with the Macbeth and The Witch of Endor, show that Blake has become interested in showing the imaginative projections men make on the basis of moral notions and behaviour with which he strongly disagreed: he is beginning to think of religious and political oppression as products

18. Since the influence of Barry's Lear (1786-8) is often described in these engravings it is interesting to note that Lear, though a sublime character, had ever but slenderly known himself.

of a state of mind.

Education -- the subjection of youthful inspiration to dead, systematic book-learning -- seemed useless to Blake.¹⁹ It is a characteristically Urizenic activity of limitation. The theme appears in the watercolour Age Teaching Youth (c.1785-90. Tate Gallery). The old man in this picture holds out an open book, with an almost admonitory gesture, to a child, who, though reading, points to the sky, as if to indicate another source of wisdom. A boy in the foreground is bent over a book: he wears a garment decorated with a foliate pattern, similar to one in Har Blessing Tiriel (Repro. Bentley, Tiriel, Pl.VIII). This suggests that Age Teaching Youth belongs to the period c.1789. If this be so, then the garment of the reading boy associates him with a restricted kind of innocence which has become bound to the world of Nature. ('Nature' is already used pejoratively in the Annotations (c.1789) to Swedenborg's Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom (E596/K94).) In the Tiriel illustrations this kind of foliate pattern is clearly associated with a stultified innocence which cannot see beyond Nature.

The theme of Education appears also in 'The Argument' (Pl.3) of There is No Natural Religion, (A) (c.1788):²⁰

Man has no notion of moral fitness but from Education. Naturally he is only a natural organ subject to Sense. (E1/K97)

19. Edith J. Morley, ed. Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers (London, 1938), 3 vols., Vol.1, p.329.

20. In the illustration (Repro. IB, p.28) a sitting woman seems to be holding a tablet, and a girl standing reading a book.

This is the first in a series of aphorisms which propound the doctrines of the Natural Man as they are expressed in a simplified version of Locke's psychology and epistemology. In the second series Blake counters these views with his own prophetic beliefs. The idea that man has no innate moral sense is rejected, and along with it both the argument that he must be educated first through the senses, and the idea that he needs moral education at all.

'The Argument' is a truncated statement of fashionable Rousseauian views on education, views which Blake did not hold. In particular he has in mind Mary Wollstonecraft's Original Stories From Real Life (1788) published in the same year as No Natural Religion. The pertinent passage comes from her introduction:

The way to render instruction most useful cannot always be adopted; knowledge should be gradually imparted, and flow more from example than teaching: example directly addresses the senses, the first inlets to the heart; and the improvement of those instruments of the understanding is the object education should have constantly in view, and over which we have most power.

(My emphasis.) 21

In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Blake actually refers to the senses as 'inlets', as Wollstonecraft does here, when he says:

Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age

(MHH4, E34/K149) 22

21. Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories from Real Life; With Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness 2nd edn. (London, 1791), pp. iv-v.
22. Of course, there are other places where the word 'inlet' occurs in this context: see John Beer, 'Influence and Independence', in Phillips, ed. cit., pp. 223-25.

The combination of the subjects of sensory experience and education in both Original Stories and No Natural Religion, together with the fact that Blake uses the word 'inlet' in The Marriage, make it very likely that he had read and pondered the passage from Wollstonecraft, even before he illustrated the second edition of her book in 1791. Mary Wollstonecraft was an habituée of Joseph Johnson's bookshop from 1787;²³ Original Stories was published by Johnson from whom Blake had received work since 1779.

But it might seem that the idea of repressive book-learning has little to do with the emphasis on the 'senses' which Wollstonecraft promotes. Why, for instance, does Blake depict a harmful bookishness in his illustration to the 'Argument' of No Natural Religion (A), when the aphorism itself is the beginning of an argument against education through the senses?

The answer lies partly in the kind of modified Rousseauianism which Wollstonecraft in fact represented. In her book Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1786) her tone fluctuates, as Claire Tomalin observes,

...in a way that suggests there may have been some conflict in her own mind as to whether she represented the Dissenting tradition or the school of Rousseau and Day. On the one hand she adopted a deliberately severe pose over such matters as cosmetics, hair powder, card-playing and the theatre....On the other, she held forth against the bad effects of teaching by rote, and premature Bible-reading: better to read animal stories, she said...²⁴

23. Claire Tomalin, The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft (London, 1974), p.69.

24. Ibid., p.40. 'Day' is Thomas Day, author of Sandford and Merton.

It will be recalled that Rousseau was quite extreme in his proposals for change in education. There was only one book in Emile's library -- Robinson Crusoe.²⁵

Reading is a vexation to children, and yet it is the only occupation they are usually employed in. Emilius will hardly know what a book is at twelve years of age: but you will say, he ought surely to learn to read, at least. Yes, he shall learn to read when reading will be of any use to him; till then it is good for nothing but to disgust and fatigue him.²⁶

By contrast Wollstonecraft recommends that 'A relish for reading, or any of the fine arts, should be cultivated very early in life !'.²⁷ Her programme is to supplement and palliate the basis of traditional education with Rousseauian education through the 'senses', the chief purpose of which is moral training: she attempts 'to cure those faults by reason, which ought never to have taken root in the infant mind'.²⁸ What D.G. Gillham says of Salzmann's Elements of Morality (which Mary Wollstonecraft translated, and for which Blake etched the illustrations²⁹ is equally relevant to the above remark, and to Original Stories in general:

Salzmann's stories...implant the notion of jealousy in order to encourage the idea of the control of jealousy. Its [sic] teachings are negative (repress this, don't do that) and

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25. J. J. Rousseau, Emilius and Sophia; Or, A New System of Education, trans. W. Kenrick, (London, 1783), 4 vols., Vol.II, p. 51.
26. Ibid., Vol.I, pp.179-98.
27. Mary Wollstonecraft, Thoughts On The Education of Daughters, (London, 1787), p.48.
28. Wollstonecraft, Original Stories, p.iii.
29. C.G. Salzmann, Elements of Morality For The Use Of Children, With An Introductory Address to Parents, (London, 1790), 2 vols.

so, in effect, it makes the assumption of positive evil tendencies in the child.³⁰

Wollstonecraft's 'liberal' ideas on education thus presuppose that the child is self-interested, and that its mind is a tabula rasa, to be inscribed through the senses. Though the child has no innate ideas, it has an innate tendency to self-love, and an innate capacity to perceive Reason, which is universal. The whole system depends on Reason: it is Reason which perceives human self-love, and Reason which shows the means of moderating it. Thus Salzmann says that Reason shows that 'we love what affords us pleasure, and hate what gives us uneasiness'.³¹ But the Curate who figures in his stories remarks:

But believe me, my dear child, that even joy, when it is too strong, does as much harm as violent fear. It disturbs the operations of the understanding to such a degree, that a man is no longer directed by reason...³²

A joy without pain and a solid without fluctuation. The book in Blake's designs refers to his belief that we learn nothing through the senses, unless it be to remain within the closed system of universal Reason and Self-love.

Blake's illustrations to Original Stories (done c.1790) show a typical tendency to subvert the sentiments of the book, for those in the know. Thus the illustration 'Oeconomy & Self-Denial are Necessary' shows a family sunk in poverty and despair: Mrs. Mason and her two daughters have come on a charitable visit: Mrs. Mason's expression shows

30. D.G. Gillham, Blake's Contrary States: The Songs of Innocence and of Experience as Dramatic Poems (Cambridge, 1966), p.102.

31. Salzmann, op. cit., Vol.I, p.vii.

32. Ibid., p.29.

that she is conscious of her generous condescension.³³ In the text we learn that Caroline, one of her daughters, has bought toys for the poor family. Mrs. Mason upbraids her for the inutility of the presents: the economy and self-denial referred to mean that we must not encourage the poor to expect things which are not strictly necessary: the full title of the picture is 'Oeconomy & Self-denial are necessary, in every station, to enable us to be generous'. But Mrs. Mason is also referring to the need not to indulge sentiment when giving. Finally she approves her other daughter's gift of a neckerchief. Such is the moral education enjoined by Mary Wollstonecraft. Blake would see it as based on calculation, and inimical to true generosity. The very title of the illustration recalls 'Pity would be no more/ If we did not make somebody Poor', and the lines from The Four Zoas:

If you would make the poor live with temper,
With pomp give every crust of bread you give with gracious cunning
Magnify small gifts

(FZ 80:14-16, E348/K323)

Though Blake had no sympathy for Wollstonecraft's ideas on education, he probably had some for Rousseau's more radical notions.³⁴ Certainly, Rousseau's belief in the child's innate goodness, his attack on the tyranny of parents, and his ingrained mistrust of the book and the letter, would have appealed to Blake.³⁵ His friend Fuseli was an enthusiast for

33. Wollstonecraft, Original Stories, Plate VI. Repro. David Bindman, The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake (London, 1978), No. 114.

34. Prophet, pp. 139-41, 143.

35. Cf. Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore and London, 1976), passim, on Rousseau's mistrust of the book and the letter.

Rousseau, as well.³⁶ On the other hand he could never have accepted the premises of universal Nature and Reason on which Rousseau's ideas were based. If all this be true, we have yet another case of Blake's rejecting the basis of Enlightenment thought, while accepting its more libertarian expressions in the spirit of English antinomianism: the Rousseauian attack on the book is equated in Blake's mind, I should claim, with the antinomian preference of the spirit to the letter.³⁷ Urizen's Book of Brass was produced, as it were, by Rousseau out of Boehme.

We began the discussion of Education with an aphorism from the tractate There is No Natural Religion, (A). But the three tractates, All Religions are One and There is No Natural Religion, (A) and (B) (1788) are far more than a discussion of Education: they are an attack on the foundations of empiricism and rationalism, in particular on the narrow concept of reason as a passive faculty which builds up complex ideas from simple sensory impressions: 'Man by his reasoning power can only compare & judge of what he has already perciev'd' (NNR, (A), II, E1/K97). Reason is now described as 'The bounded'

36. See Frederick Antal, Fuseli Studies (London, 1956), p.6; Henry Fuseli, Remarks On The Writings and Conduct Of J. J. Rousseau (London, 1767): there is a facsimile reprint of this book, ed. Karl S. Guthke (Los Angeles, 1960), and in its time it was quite influential: Eudo C. Mason records that Hamann and Herder procured and admired it (The Mind of Henry Fuseli London, 1951, p.32).

37. "...the like Things, because they are Spiritual...must be Spiritually discerned.' The Works of Jacob Behmen, ed. William Law (London, 1764-81) 4 vols., Vol.II, Bk.4, p.30. Cf. Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job (1825), 111.I, marginal text: 'The Letter Killeth/The Spirit giveth Life/It is Spiritually Discerned' (2 Cor.3:6; 1 Cor. 2:14).

(NNR, (B) , IV , E2/K97). This is pertinent to our theme, since the idea of 'bound' or limitation is essential to the meaning of Urizen. It is even part of the meaning of his name, as has long been recognized, for the term Urizen derives from the Greek *ὀρίζεσθαι*.³⁸ But the 'bounded' is a concept that allows Blake to unite the apparently disparate forms of limitation he dislikes: it is not just Reason but any restriction, especially those encouraged by Kings and Priests.

38. See Dorothy Plowman's note in William Blake, The Book of Urizen. Facsimile. With a note by Dorothy Plowman (London and Toronto, 1929), p.17. The Greek is misspelt here.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE 'BOUNDED'

1. Natural Religion

Religious liberalism in the eighteenth century comprised many shades of opinion. What was common to most forms of non-atheist thought was the belief that the universe gives evidence of creation to a rational mind. Natural religion must not be confused with natural theology: the latter is an ambitious description of the attributes of the deity and an explication of various proofs of his existence from reason alone, though much in revelation remains incomprehensible to reason. Natural religion, on the other hand, at least as professed by Christians, found nothing 'unreasonable' in revelation; and in the matter of proof it always leant entirely on the 'evidence' of the argument from design. The infirm simplicity of this position is well summarized in John Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious, (London, 1695), which is an example of moderate, clearly Christian, deism:

... the Question is not, whether we could discover all the Objects of our Faith by Ratiocination: I have prov'd on the contrary, that no Matter of Fact can be known without Revelation. But I assert, that what is once reveal'd we must as well understand as any other Matter in the World, Revelation being only of use to enform us, whilst the Evidence of its Subject perswades us.¹

1. John Toland, Christianity Not Mysterious (London, 1695), p.146.

This simplicity was the property of universal reason; and thus it seemed, to the more thorough-going thinkers of the Enlightenment, a veritably marvellous reduction of the diversity of religious custom, Christian and non-Christian, to one valid principle - the only valid principle. Reason sloughed off the richness of religious diversity ('superstition') and the pretensions of theological debate at the same time. So it seemed to Voltaire:

Let not the trifling difference between the vestments that cover our weak bodies, between our defective languages, our ridiculous customs, our numerous imperfect laws, our idle opinions, our several conditions, so disproportionate in our eyes, and so equal in thine; let not the little shades of rank or party, which distinguish the several atoms called men, be the signals of hatred and persecution! May those who celebrate thy name by wax light at noon-day, tolerate such as are content with the light of the sun. Let not those who put on a white linen surplice to tell us we must love thee, hold in detestation such as preach the same doctrine in a cloak of black woollen. May it be the same thing to adore thee in a jargon taken from an ancient language, as in a similar jargon formed on a modern one.²

Similar sentiments, not always so fervidly expressed, can be found throughout Voltaire's works. Blake's assaults on Natural Religion are directed against this particular strain of Deism. And indeed, the term 'Natural Religion' is most aptly referred to the beliefs of those Enlightenment thinkers who were most sceptical of the uniqueness of Christianity and the reliability of its revelation. They it was who 'reduced' all religions to the 'evidence' of a residue of natural, rational and therefore universal belief. This analytical reduction of the diversity of world religions

2. Voltaire, A Treatise on Religious Toleration (London, 1764), pp.224-25.

echoes more general scientific and philosophical procedures encouraged by the Enlightenment: the 'discursive form of knowledge always resembles a reduction; it proceeds from the complex to the simple, from apparent diversity to its basic identity'.³ This identity has one guarantee, which Cassirer proceeds to describe in a way which is particularly suggestive of Blake's own views:

All knowledge, no matter what its content, is 'natural' so long as it springs from human reason alone and does not rely on other foundations of certainty. 'Nature' therefore does not so much signify a given group of objects as a certain 'horizon' of knowledge, of the comprehension of reality.⁴

Such a reduced religion both agreed with the philosophical infrastructure of empiricist reasoning and provided an essential part of the system elaborated upon it: the Designer. For the Deity's part was both very necessary and impoverished in function. As Roland Stromberg observes:

It was not merely that the orderliness of Newton's universe implied a Designer; Newton's laws seemed to show not only the omnipotent but the omnipresent God.⁵

And he concludes:

The 'force' of gravitation, left unexplained, was evidently something sustained by God; thus the very imperfection of Newtonian physics left a convenient function for the Deity.⁶

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3. Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, trans. F.C.A. Koelln and J.P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 1951), p.23.
 4. Ibid., p. 39.
 5. Roland Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England (London, 1954), p.21.
 6. Ibid. Cf. Lucien Goldmann, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, trans. Henry Maas (London, 1973), p.33.

2. There Is No Natural Religion

Blake also proclaims that 'All Religions are One'. But he does so on the basis of his peculiar Euhemerism. The unity of religions consists in their being 'derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy'. (E2/K98). But this is a unity which cannot but ensure the diversity of religious forms. When Blake writes about the 'patriarchates of Asia' it is always with a sense of a richness and vitality lost; lost to imagination as much as to religion:

The two Pictures of Nelson and Pitt are compositions of a mythological cast, similar to those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo, and Egyptian Antiquity, which are still preserved on rude monuments, being copies from some stupendous originals now lost or perhaps buried till some happier age.
(A Descriptive Catalogue (1809), E521/K565)

The function of Persians and Hindoos is very different in the polemics of the Enlightenment.

Blake's tractates There Is No Natural Religion, (A) and (B), are intended to prove the necessity of Imagination (the Poetic Genius) to any kind of knowledge. He regards imagination as the true cognitive faculty. It brings about all advances in knowledge, including scientific knowledge: such is Blake's answer to Newton's arrogant and misleading Hypotheses non fingo.⁷ He does not think of knowledge as

7. Modern philosophers of science, like Popper, would reject Newton's idea of himself, and the eighteenth-century idea of him. Particularly apposite here is Jonathan Rée, Descartes (London, 1974), pp.151-157, where the author shows how important Descartes's work was in the development of hypotheses which could be fruitfully tested, and indeed rejected, by Newton.

something essentially uniform and immutable which has to be unveiled, but as part of the historical process: 'Reason or the ratio of all we have already known. is not the same that it shall be when we know more'. (E2/K97)⁸

Clearly, these tractates attack in a fundamental and not obvious way: they start from the philosophical premises of Natural Religion in empiricism, make a sortie into the popular Newtonian world picture, and arrive by this route at the basis of true religion, the 'Poetic Genius'. This term conflates the religious and the poetic; and, in a reversal of the deist procedure, subordinates even scientific knowledge to its operation.

3. Empiricism and the Five Senses

The first series of There Is No Natural Religion concentrates on the limitations of the 'natural' man. Blake accepts the Pauline doctrine that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit' (Cor. 2: 14); and it is plain from his annotations of Swedenborg that he also accepts the latter's elaboration of this theme. Thus: 'Observe the distinction here between Natural & Spiritual as seen by Man... Man may comprehend [the Divine]. but not the natural or external man' (E592/K90). However, Blake goes far beyond

8. Cf. Annotations to Reynolds (E649/K475): Blake uses nearly the same words to reply to the soundly neo-classical premises of taste: 'We will take it for granted, that reason is something invariable and fixed in the nature of things'.

this acceptance in extending the application of the term 'natural' to empiricist thinking: some such extension may be legitimate if one argues for any kind of apriority of mental or spiritual activity: Blake's specifically Christian terms allow him to handle his subject with great concision and power of suggestion.

His first tactic is to accept a thorough-going empiricism for the natural man. It is as if Blake should say: 'I accept your conclusions as to the foundations of human knowledge; but only for that small portion of man I call "natural".' Thus:

I Man cannot naturally Percieve. but through his natural or bodily organs.

II Man by his reasoning power. can only compare & judge of what he has already perciev'd.
(NNR (A), E1/K97)

The second aphorism speaks directly to Locke's concise definition of knowledge:

Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge; and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge.

(Locke, Essay, IV.i.2: 18th.edn.(London, 1788), 2 vols., Vol.II, p.151)

There is also a reference to Bacon's scientific method of accumulating data for comparison (Novum Organum) of which Locke's definition is, among other things, a refined theoretical justification.

The third aphorism is particularly interesting:

'From a perception of only 3 senses or 3 elements none could

deduce a fourth or fifth' (E1/K97). This refers to a tradition of speculation on the senses initiated by William Molyneux (1656-98) of Trinity College, Dublin. What came to be known as 'Molyneux's problem' gained celebrity from its use by Locke in his chapter 'Of Perception' (Essay, II.ix.8) Molyneux's question (there quoted in full) was: Would a man born blind be at once able to distinguish by sight the forms of, for instance, a cube and a sphere if he were given his sight in adulthood; granted that he had learnt to distinguish them by touch? His answer was, No: the blind man would have to learn to interpret visual sense-data by experience of the agreement of sight and touch. Locke is of the same opinion.

It was left to Berkeley to express the full implication of this conclusion in the Essay towards a New Theory of Vision (1709) where he says it is certain that 'the ideas intromitted by each sense are widely different, and distinct from each other' (NTV XLVI). And in an extreme expression of the doctrine he avers that 'the ideas which constitute the tangible earth and man, are entirely different from those which constitute the visible earth and man' (NTV CII). The senses tended by some to be regarded as an almost arbitrary assortment of isolated and distinct 'windows' on the world: thus Fontenelle, in A Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds (First French edn. Paris, 1686; this trans. London, 1777) is driven to fantastic speculation of this kind:

Here, it is thought we want a sixth sense, that would teach us many things, of which we are now ignorant; this sixth sense is apparently in another world, where they want one of the five which we enjoy; nay, perhaps there is a much greater number of senses, but in the partition which we have made of them with the inhabitants of the other planets,

dressed in red. Not one of them was wearing red.¹² More quarrels ensued; the sighted ridiculed the blind. At last toleration was introduced. Voltaire adds:

A deaf man, reading this little history, allowed that these people being blind, were to blame in pretending to judge of colours; but he remained steady to his own opinion, that those persons who were deaf, were the only proper judges of music.¹³

Clearly, Blake's aphorism does not speculate on the possibility that the Poetic Genius would reveal a putative sixth or seventh sense, or their perceptions: that would be an absurdly literal interpretation. Rather is he emphasizing the limitations of the senses, and, in effect, answering the intent of Voltaire's little satire. Blake implies that the Poetic Genius is equivalent to many other senses: he does this by extending the meaning of perception. The purpose of this is pointed up by a remark of Hazlitt's in the 'Lectures on English Philosophy'. Discussing Locke, he remarks:

The great defect with which the 'Essay on the Human Understanding' is chargeable is, that there is not really a word about the nature of the understanding in it, nor any attempt to show what it is or whether it is or is not any thing, distinct from the faculty of simple perception. The operations of thinking, comparing, discerning, reasoning, willing, and the like, which Mr. Locke ascribes to it, are the operations of nothing, or of I know not what.¹⁴

Blake sets out to prove that we perceive more than is given in sense: in other words, he starts with the concepts of Locke and Hume and subverts them by extending the use of the term perception. Then he introduces his own theory of the understanding. 'Mans perceptions are not bounded by organs of

12. Ibid., p.77.

13. Ibid.

14. P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt (London and Toronto, 1930-34), 21 vols., Vol. II, p.146.

perception. he percieves more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover.' (NNR (B), I, E2/K97)

4. Newton, the 'Infinite', and the 'Ratio'

The 'Conclusion' of the First Series of There Is No Natural Religion is the first statement in these tractates of Blake's answer to 'Bacon & Newton & Locke':

If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again

(NNR (A), E1/K97)

The Second Series, it seems likely, answers the First, and elaborates upon that conclusion.

Reason is something, as we have seen, that changes 'when we know more'. The cause of our knowing more is the 'Poetic or Prophetic character' which exhibits itself as a kind of divine restlessness, an endless desire for more: 'The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round even of a univer[s]e would soon become a mill with complicated wheels.' (NNR (B), IV, E2/K97) There is a striking analogy, in this and other statements of Blake, with the feelings of the young Goethe and his friends about the Encyclopaedists. They felt as if

... they were walking among countless moving spools and looms in a great factory where the bewilderment produced by the machinery, the incomprehensibility of the complicated interlocking process, and the consideration of all that goes into the production of a piece of cloth, caused them to grow disgusted with the very coats they had on.¹⁵

15. Quoted in Cassirer, op. cit., p.73.

It is not simply the mechanistic model of the universe and its parts that occasions the loathing; but far more the infection of imagination with the sense of things as mechanism. The world is not only described mechanistically for the purpose of science; it is experienced thus.

It is this usurpation of the realm of the Poetic Genius by a reductive model which most exercises Blake. As far as their religious, and even their scientific and philosophical, opinions are concerned, Bacon, Newton and Locke can hardly be comprehended by Blake's triple monster. Nevertheless, this monster is a real entity: the symbol, to the eighteenth century, of Enlightenment and a new world view. Gerd Buchdahl makes this point well in The Image of Newton and Locke in the Age of Reason:

Of course, relevant here were not so much the details of Newton's and Locke's achievements (often technical, abstruse, even incoherent as they appeared to the ordinary man), but rather the 'image' that the eighteenth century was making for itself of these figures.¹⁶

The 'image' was equally that of the world these figures were thought to have unveiled.

Blake's answer is to reverse the process: he boldly transposes scientific terms into his own system and wrenches them into the function of symbols for the imaginative life. This is true of the Cartesian vortices, Blake's vortexes; of the 'limits' of opacity and contraction; and of the Infinite and the Ratio in the 'Application' of There Is No Natural Religion: 'He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only'. (NNR (B), E2/K98)

16. Gerd Buchdahl, The Image of Newton and Locke in the Age of Reason (London and New York, 1961), p.2.

The terms 'Infinite' and 'Ratio' appear elsewhere in Blake's work: they exhibit all his taste for the widely suggestive pun. The Infinite and the Divine are closely related terms; but the former conveys release from the Newtonian absolute time and space. Voltaire professed ignorance of the Infinity of God.¹⁷ Locke had denied that we have any 'positive idea' of infinity, either of space or duration. (Essay, II. xvii. 13-22) But he admits an abstract idea of it for both space and duration, and its usefulness in mathematics. Such a use is to be found in Newton's Calculus ('Fluxions'). It is a limited use, for the infinite appears only as that which eludes measurement when a quantity is either reduced in infinitum, or continually augmented to infinity. Between these infinites, to which 'all quantities that begin and cease to be' are always tending, Newton's method allows for an unprecedented exactness in the measurement of motion. For he builds the recognition that motion is in fact indivisible into his theory.¹⁸

The units of the measurement of motion are called ratios: and the prime and ultimate ratios, those ratios with which quantities begin and cease to be, are also called limits.¹⁹ The aphorism in question is an ironic transposition of Newtonian fluxional terms into a context where they are made to function as prophetic. Blake's Infinite conveys not only

17. Works, vol. and book cited, p.19.

18. Donald Ault, Visionary Physics (Chicago, 1974), p.78.

19. Isaac Newton, Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, trans. Robert Thorp (London, 1777), Vol. I (only one published), pp.53, 72, 73.

what lies beyond the limits of Newtonian philosophy, but also the elusive vitality of motion, of which the ratio is both a reduction and an improper image. Such vitality is change in history; in individuals, energy. It escapes the 'horizon' of universal reason. As Urizen complains:

I have sought for a joy without pain,
 For a solid without fluctuation
 Why will you die O Eternals?
 Why live in unquenchable burnings?
 (BU 4: 10-13, E70/K224)

5. The Compasses

The same aphorism is illustrated, as Erdman describes, with 'A bearded man on hands and knees' who is 'drawing, on the ground, a triangle which mirrors the shape of his compasses'.²⁰ The picture has many similarities to the large colour print of Newton in the Tate Gallery.²¹ The compasses in iconography are the symbol of Mathematics; and a pair of compasses, with or without the allegorical figure of Mathematics, often appears in works on the subject of Newton. For instance, the Valerianis' Allegorical Monument to Sir Issac Newton has the figure of Mathematics on a pedestal, holding a pair of compasses, at the very centre of the picture.²² The dedicatory

20. Repro. and commentary: IB 32.

21. Tate cata. Repro. p.36 (No. 17), text p. 37.

22. The European Fame of Isaac Newton, Catalogue of an exhibition in the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, 22 November 1973 - 6 January 1974, (?Cambridge, ?1973), editor(s) unnamed, commentary pp.4-7: (No. 1). Repro. of engraving on cover.

poem to Voltaire's Elements of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy gives prominence to the compasses as symbol of Newton's discoveries:

That Soul of Nature, that all-moving Spring,
Lay long conceal'd, an unregarded Thing;
'Till Newton's Compass, moving thro' the Space
Measures all Matter, all discover'd Place;
Find's Motion's Cause, Philosophy unleavens,
Lifts up the Veil, and open'd are the Heavens.²³

The compasses provide Voltaire with an essential image of Reason: 'When we cannot utilize the compass of mathematics or the torch of experience and physics, it is certain that we cannot take a single step forward.'²⁴ But compasses may be seen as limiting, not just measuring: the 'Ratio' of the aphorism may be a limit as well as a proportion. The limit is that of 'bounded' thought, that 'Nature' which Cassirer compares to a 'horizon' of knowledge: the idea may also be expressed by another meaning of 'compass', as when Locke speaks of 'the compass of human understanding' (Essay, IV. vi.2) Or more appositely:

So that before we have done, we shall see, that nobody need be afraid, he shall not have scope and compass enough for his thoughts to range in, though they be, as I pretend, confined only to simple ideas received from sensation or reflection, and their several combinations.

(II.xxii.9: 18th edn., Vol. I, p.295)

Another type of horizon, another pair of compasses, are associated with a part of geometry undoubtedly well known to Blake: perspective. A popular treatise on painting, loved by Romney, was Count Algarotti's Essay on Painting.²⁵

23. Voltaire, The Elements of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy, trans. J. Hanna (London, 1738), p.v.

24. Quoted in Cassirer, op. cit., p.12.

25. Count Algarotti, An Essay on Painting (London, 1764).

Algarotti has not gone far before he pronounces: 'Nor must He ever expect to have the compasses in his eye, who has not first had them for a long time in his hand.'²⁶ The most influential eighteenth-century treatise on perspective itself was Brook Taylor's Linear Perspective, (London, 1715). On the first page, above, is an engraved illustration of a Cupidon with compasses and set-square, devising triangles.²⁷ In 1754 Joshua Kirby brought out Dr. Brook Taylor's Method of Perspective Made Easy. He stipulates the necessary mathematical instruments, including 'A Sector': this is the so-called compass of proportion, a refined instrument, superior to the dividers in many respects, especially in the measurement of proportions or ratios.²⁸ And again, on the first page of Joseph Priestley's A Familiar Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Perspective, published by Joseph Johnson and J. Payne in 1770, it is laid down that:

A person who proposes to practice the art of drawing in perspective must provide himself with a drawing board and square, and a case of mathematical instruments, consisting of a pair of compasses, a set of scales, a sector, a protractor, and a drawing pen.²⁹

Of course, the compasses themselves were no more intimately connected with perspective than were the other instruments mentioned; perspective is a branch of geometry, requiring

26. Ibid., p.8.

27. Brook Taylor, Linear Perspective (London, 1715), p.1.

28. Joshua Kirby, Dr. Brook Taylor's Method of Perspective Made Easy, (London, 1768), pp.1-3. 'Third' edn. (really 2nd.).

29. Joseph Priestley, A Familiar Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Perspective (London, 1770), p.1.

measurement by geometrical means. The point is that compasses were used as a metonymic sign for perspective, as they were for geometry proper and for mathematics in general.

No one trained, as Blake was, in drawing, could have escaped a thorough grounding in perspective. But he can only have regarded it as an obstruction to vision. Such is the hint in Blake's one reference to perspective, in 'An Island in the Moon' when Aradobo asks who Phebus is:

Obtuse Angle answer'd quickly, "He was the God
"of Physic, Painting, Perspective, Geometry,
"Geography, Astronomy, Cookery, Chymistry...
"Mechanics, Tactics, Pathology, Phraseology,
"Theology, Mythology, Astrology, Osteology,
"Somatology -- in short, every art & science
"adorn'd him as beads round his neck."

Here Aradobo look'd Astonish'd & ask'd if he
understood Engraving.

(K46/E442)

The question at the end is entirely meaningless unless it is understood in the light of the only fact which is able to give it meaning: Blake's profession as an engraver. The hint of doubt as to whether Phebus 'understood Engraving' suggests a debilitating facility in Phebus's accomplishments: Engraving may be more than the kind of art or science where excellence can be attained by the learning of rules, as with perspective.

Blake's probable thoughts about perspective hardly need articulation, for this science was the chief imitative part of painting and drawing, a pernicious attempt to 'Copy Nature' (E563/K594). As Priestley remarked, of all the 'imitative arts' perspective had been brought nearest to perfection because it was entirely in the sphere of 'mathematical science'.³⁰

30. Ibid., pp.iv-v.

The importance of perspective for correct imitation was held to be all the greater for its supposed improvement of every other part of painting: Algarotti avers that painters 'without the assistance of perspective, cannot, in rigour, expect to make any progress, nay, not so much as delineate a simple contour'.³¹ Blake would also dislike the fact that the rigorous use of perspective was an entirely mathematical procedure. The attempt to copy Nature allows 'Mathematic Proportion' to usurp 'Living Proportion' (cf. Milton 5:44, E98/K485). Such an effect in art is analogous to that of Newton's fluxions in the measurement of motion.

What does perspective have to do with Natural Religion? Very little, it might seem; and there is only one shred of concrete evidence as to Blake's opinion of this science. Yet he can grasp the most distant implications and suggestions of his ostensible subject. And the result is often a kind of extended verbal and visual pun - Plate 10 of There Is No Natural Religion (B), which we have been discussing, is a good example of this, in text and illustration. Nevertheless, any cogency for our discussion of perspective must rest largely in an interpretation of the name Urizen as compounding a pun on the Greek *ὀρίζειν* ('to bound, limit') and its English derivative, 'horizon'. Perspective can then be seen as a probable contributor to this pun. For the bound of vision in the optical sense, 'horizon', is a technical term in perspective. (Also 'horizontal line': cf. 'bounding line'). The word would therefore, given Blake's likely

31. Algarotti, op. cit., p.27.

opinion of perspective, be suitable for the bound of 'vision' in the imaginative sense as well. And the perspectivist's compasses would be an idea contributing to Urizen's compasses. And assuredly, the former are the only kind of compasses Blake is certain to have wielded, at Pars's drawing school.

But is 'Urizen' derived from the Greek, as Dorothy Plowman suggests?³² S. Foster Damon objects that 'it is not certain that Blake knew Greek as early as 1793, when he first used Urizen's name'.³³ But there is no reason to suppose that he did. He may have leafed through a lexicon such as the Hutchinsonian John Parkhurst's Lexicon To The New Testament, which was very popular, and went through several editions.³⁴ It also agrees well with Blake's interests. There he might have read the entry on *ὀρίζω* (the first person singular of *ὀρίζεσθαι*, the infinitive):

I. To bound, limit....
 II. To determine, decree, appoint, set, because what is determined or decreed is, as it were, limited and confined by certain bounds
 ἩΜΕΡΑΝ ὈΡΙΖΕΙΝ is a phrase used likewise by the Greek writers.³⁵

A few pages later comes the entry on Uranus, God of the Sky or Heaven; eldest of the Pantheon; and father of Kronos:

32. Plowman, ed. cit., p.17.

33. S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary (Providence, 1965), p.419.

34. John Parkhurst, A Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament, 2nd. edn. (London, 1794).

35. Ibid., p.499.

The early tractates, like the figure of Urizen they foreshadow, constitute a wide-ranging attack on this philosophy, and not at all a direct rebuttal of the religious views of any particular Deist.

But, of course, the idea of 'the bounded' signifies an acute paradox in Blake's work. For various inflexions of the word 'bound' may be used entirely approvingly, as well as entirely pejoratively, depending on their context. We have seen that 'The bounded is loathed by its possessor'; but 'Truth has bounds. Error none' (BL4:30, E91/K258) is an equally characteristic expression of Blake's philosophy. There is no evidence that the two senses we shall examine essentially correspond to different phases in Blake's life: the emphases change, but that is all: we shall, therefore, depart from chronology.

Whitman boasted that he was large enough to contain contradictions; but Blake would not have so prided himself — at least, not in Whitman's sense. Apparent contradictions in Blake can usually be resolved either as provocatively misleading aids to vision, or as parts of a difficult but profound paradox. Blake's use of 'bound' is an example of the latter.

6. Outline

Blake's preference for clear, 'firm and determinate outline' - as he calls it in a very pertinent passage of A Descriptive Catalogue (E540/K585) - may have its source in his apprenticeship to James Basire, who, according to

Gilchrist, 'was an engraver well grounded in drawing, of dry, hard, monotonous, but painstaking, conscientious style; the lingering representative of a school already getting old-fashioned, but not without staunch admirers, for its "firm and correct outline," among antiquaries'.³⁷ Blake (who respected antiquaries) was also an admirer of this style, as is clear from his story about a disagreement with the Keeper of the Royal Academy:

I was once looking over the Prints from Rafael & Michael Angelo. in the Library of the Royal Academy Moser came to me & said You should not Study these old Hard Stiff & Dry Unfinishd Works of Art, Stay a little & I will shew you what you should Study. He then went & took down Le Bruns & Rubens's Galleries How I did secretly Rage. I also spoke my Mind... I said to Moser, These things that you call Finishd are not Even Begun how can they then, be Finishd? The Man who does not know The Beginning, never can know the End of Art
(Annotations to Reynolds, E628/K449)

The 'beginning' or basis of art is outline, and Anne Kostelanetz Mellor points out that the prints Blake would have seen in the Royal Academy stress outline at the expense of other important elements in the originals:

Adamo Ghisi's widely distributed engravings of the Sistine Chapel ignudi, for instance, consistently reduce the torsion and tension of Michelangelo's dynamic nudes to static, two-dimensional outlines. Michelangelo's powerfully bulging muscles here become spider webs of linear rhythms, as in Ghisi's rendering of the nude at the left above the Cumaen [sic] Sibyl.³⁸

37. Alexander Gilchrist, The Life of William Blake 4th. edn., ed. Ruthven Todd (London, 1942), p.12.

38. Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, op. cit., p.130.

We can see in these prints the germ of Blake's 'Michel-angelesque'.

Gilchrist is a little misleading, however, when he refers to Basire's style as 'old-fashioned', for the fashionable Neo-classical school was at that time advocating clear outline as the basis, and indeed the perfection, of fine art; so that the virtues naturally specific to an old-fashioned engraver were now becoming the creed of many graphic artists of all kinds. Flaxman, the best-known and most extreme exponent of the Neo-classical style in engraving, was a friend of Blake's, as was Henry Fuseli, who translated a work which helped to found the style: Winckelmann's Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks (1756. Trans. 1765).

Winckelmann asserted that Nature

... never could bestow the precision of Contour, that characteristic distinction of the ancients.

The noblest Contour unites or circumscribes every part of the most perfect Nature, and the ideal beauties of the Greeks; or rather, contains them both.³⁹

The Platonic tone of this is worth noting, for though the Classical aesthetic theory of the early and middle eighteenth century proposed an 'ideal', this was the beauty of what Samuel Johnson called, in a phrase discussed by Walter Jackson Bate, 'General Nature'.⁴⁰ This is 'ideal' in the

39. [Johann Joachim] Winckelmann, Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks, trans. Henry Fuseli (London, 1765), p.22. Translated from Gedanken Uber die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke, etc. (Dresden and Leipzig, 1756). Blake owned Fuseli's translation (Bentley, Blake Books (op. cit.), p.700).

40. Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), pp.59-92.

sense that it is a generalisation or abstraction from the particulars of experience: the procedure is empiricist, the norms which guide it derived from a strict adherence to what was understood as classical precept.

But from Winckelmann's somewhat confused formulation two things, perhaps, are clear: that Nature is not to be imitated, because it cannot provide precision of outline; and that 'the ideal beauties of the Greeks' are in some sense non-natural.

Another work which would have nourished Blake's prejudice in favour of outline is George Cumberland's Thoughts on Outline (1796) for which he executed eight plates from Cumberland's design. Cumberland was a friend both of Blake and of Thomas Taylor the Platonist. But, within the context of broad agreement on the primacy of outline, Blake dissents from Cumberland's views on its proper nature and purpose: his discussion of outline in a Descriptive Catalogue is a direct rebuttal of Cumberland's prescriptions: the contrast of views allows us to take the full measure of Blake's idea of the significance of outline. Thus Cumberland asserts that the best kind of outline is 'that which is fine, firm, floating, and faint' and objects to lines which are 'hard and wiry'.⁴¹ As if with these precise words in mind Blake

41. George Cumberland, Thoughts on Outline (London, 1796), pp.19,21. Blake was a lifelong friend of Cumberland's; and indeed he wrote to him saying that he thought the book beautiful (K791); but these are not good enough reasons for denying the application of Blake's later comments on outline.

maintains that 'The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling' (E540/K585). Cumberland was probably too reticent, for Blake's taste, in his espousal of clear outline; he gives too much weight to the fact that we 'see figure without Outline' as a reason for being unemphatic in its use: 'we ought, in fact, to dismiss it, if possible, from our minds, and consider only the form it surrounds.'⁴² He therefore feels justified in recommending a 'faint', unobtrusive outline. Blake, on the other hand, admits in advance that 'Nature has no outline' and declares that we can only perceive the forms of things by, as it were, postulating outline in the act of perception:

The want of this determinate and bounding form evidences the want of idea in the artist's mind, and the pretence of the plagiarist in all its branches. How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox, but by the bounding outline? How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding line and its infinite inflexions and movements?

(Desc. Cata., E540/K585)

Perception, for Blake, is itself creative; or, in the term of modern Phenomenology, 'intentional'. And further: it is not easy to see him adopting Coleridge's distinction between an essentially unconscious 'primary Imagination', or perception, and a 'secondary' imagination, the source of creative thought and action which is 'co-existing with the conscious will'.⁴³ Perception itself seemed to Blake an act of

42. Ibid., p.15.

43. S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), 2 vols., Vol.I., p.202.

conscious imagination, though without any sense of conscious exertion. 'Erkennen ist mythologisieren' describes Blake's claim quite exactly, though he would say that what he perceived (through, not with, the eye) were Eternal Forms (Notebook, pp.69-70, E545/K605).

It is clear that Blake and Cumberland were differing within the framework of conceptions which may broadly be called Neoplatonic: it is not always realised how far the revival of interest in Platonism went hand in hand with the Neo-classical movement.⁴⁴ Cumberland was influenced by Taylor: two of the engravings (Plates 10, 11) in Thoughts on Outline are illustrations to poems from Taylor's Hymns of Orpheus (1787). He recommends Greek art to 'those who wish to imbue their souls with the traces of great and noble forms'.⁴⁵ And, assuming the Neoplatonic arrogance, he concludes with a slight to the profanum vulgus: 'THE PROFANE, WHO DESPISE WHAT THEY WILL NOT EXERT THEIR ORGANS TO UNDERSTAND OR ENJOY'.⁴⁶ This is redolent not only of Taylor, but of Blake, with his contention that 'What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men'.⁴⁷

But we must now ask, to what extent Blake really did subscribe to the ramified Neoplatonic doctrines concerning Forms and Bounds; and, whether he did or not, how the positive sense of Form squares with the negative concept of 'the bounded'; for contraries in Blake must be understood by

44. See Dora and Erwin Panofsky, Pandora's Box, 2nd. revd. edn. (New York, 1962), p.85.

45. Cumberland, op. cit., p.40.

46. Ibid., p.45. Cf. Thomas Taylor, The Metaphysics of Aristotle (London, 1801), p.iv.

47. Letter to Dr. Trusler, 23 August 1799. K793.

reference to each other: if Urizen stands for 'the bounded', we must understand its contrary.

7. The Theory of Forms

Plato's Ideas or Forms were designed to provide a neat, inclusive answer to several problems: that of universals or general concepts; that of the status of ethical and aesthetic norms; and that of the nature of the realm of Being and its relation to that of Becoming. The Forms are perceived conceptually: they are not visual ideas or images, despite the Greek word.

But there are many points, as R.T. Wallis observes in his scholarly and acute survey of Neoplatonism, on which 'Plato is silent'.⁴⁸ And he shows how Neoplatonism developed at those points, in a few sentences which serve as a good introduction to the subject:

... the theory of Forms ... had been designed to answer both the logical problem of universals -- justifying, for instance, the use of the common term 'beautiful' by the assumption that all particulars legitimately so designated 'imitate' or 'participate in' the eternal Form of Beauty - and the need for ideal standards in ethics and aesthetics; finally in the Timaeus they had provided the model on which the mysterious Divine Craftsman (or 'demiurge') shapes the sensible world. That the requirements of the theory's various aspects conflict had been seen by Plato himself; thus the logical theory requires Forms wherever a common term is used (Rep. 596A) and hence of such things as hair, mud and dirt, which are absurd on the aesthetic theory (Parm. 130C-D). The Neoplatonists' answer was to concentrate on the Forms' aesthetic and cosmological functions at the expense of their role as universals and to jettison Forms that conflicted with these aspects of the theory.⁴⁹

48. R.T. Wallis, Neoplatonism (London, 1972), p.20.

49. Ibid., p.18.

This change of emphasis gives scope to the visual imagination, even though, in my opinion, this is not intended. Consider the 'golden world' of the Neoplatonists, well described by W.R. Inge:

The doctrine of Plotinus is that so far as every thought in Spirit is also an eternal Form of being, all the thoughts of Spirit are Ideas. Spirit embraces all the Ideas, as the whole its parts. Each Idea is Spirit, and Spirit is the totality of the Ideas. The Kingdom of the Ideas is the true reality, the true beauty There are as many Ideas Yonder as there are Forms Here. The only objects Here which are not represented Yonder are such as are 'contrary to nature.' There is no Idea of deformity, or of any vie manquée.⁵⁰

R.T. Wallis observes that Intellect is a better term than Spirit for the Greek nous, which denotes neither mere discursive reason nor an entirely ineffable spiritual existence, but a kind of higher or intuitive Reason.⁵¹ Intellect is the term used by Thomas Taylor: he refers it to 'those regions of mind, where all things are bounded in intellectual measure; where every thing is permanent and beautiful, eternal and divine'.⁵² This idea of bound is essential to all Neoplatonic ideas of Form: the material world attains its highest perfection - as a dim copy of the intellectual world - only by means of the 'supervening irradiations of form', to which the underlying stuff of matter (hylē) is nevertheless averse.⁵³

50. W.R. Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus, 3rd. edn. (London, 1929), 2 vols., Vol. II, p.56.

51. Wallis, op. cit., p.53.

52. Plotinus, An Essay on the Beautiful, [trans. Thomas Taylor] (London, 1792), p.ix.

53. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

For Form 'in bodies' is 'at strife with matter, binding and vanquishing its contrary nature'.⁵⁴

But we should not confuse the two kinds of bound: that which gives form to the material world is measurable by physical means; but 'intellectual measure' exists in a mode of infinity, and therefore, obviously, is not strictly comparable with the form that binds matter. The idea of Magnitude does not itself literally possess any Magnitude. Or as Wallis puts it, 'true Greatness consists in freedom from spatial restrictions' and is really a 'matter of power'.⁵⁵ Swedenborg expresses the distinction thus:

That the Divine or God is not in Space, although he is omnipresent, and present with every Man in the World...and every Spirit under Heaven, cannot be comprehended by any merely natural Idea, but it may by a spiritual Idea: The Reason why it cannot be comprehended by a natural Idea, is, because in that Idea there is Space; for it is formed of such Things as are in the material World, in all and every one of which, that are seen with the Eyes, there is Space ... 56

Swedenborg's 'Ideas', unlike the Neoplatonic ones, are overtly visual in the sense that they can be seen in visions, and yet he insists on their having nothing to do with space. This is also Blake's conviction: he approvingly annotated this and succeeding passages (E592/K89).

54. Ibid., p.15.

55. Wallis, op. cit., p.49.

56. Emmanuel Swedenborg, The Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom (London, 1788), pp.6-7.

There is another important difference between Intelligible Forms and the forms of the material world: in the former there is not any internal division - no matter to strive with: they are, so to speak, the forms of themselves, and not an imposition upon a recalcitrant substance. This notion is similar to Blake's 'Identity', as in 'The Infinite alone resides in Definite & Determinate Identity' (Jerusalem 55:64, E203/K687).

This co-existence of the bounded and the infinite arises from what Wallis aptly characterizes as the problem 'of reconciling the mystical desire to transcend form and limit with the Classical Greek view of these as the essence of perfection'.⁵⁷ And he goes on to point out that 'Where Plotinus decisively breaks with traditional Greek ideas is in regarding the very fact that Intelligence has limits as disqualifying its claim to be the highest reality'.⁵⁸ In Plotinus The One or The Good constitutes this reality: it can only be spoken of negatively, for words mislead: 'When therefore you pronounce the good, you should be careful to add nothing else in your intellectual conceptions; for if you add any thing, you immediately declare that the nature to which you have added something is destitute....'⁵⁹ Its infinity is such that it is incomprehensible save by means

57. Wallis, op. cit., p.6.

58. Ibid., p.57.

59. Thomas Taylor, trans., Five Books of Plotinus (London, 1794), p.242.

of a discipline in which the mind withdraws from the world:

Indeed it is no one of the natures of which it is the principle; and it is such that nothing can be predicated of its nature, neither being, nor essence, nor life; for it is incomprehensibly raised above these. But if by taking away being you are able to apprehend this ineffable nature, you will immediately be filled with astonishment, and directing yourself towards him, and pursuing his latent retreats till you repose in his solitary deity, you will now behold him by a vision perfectly simple and one... 60

The One,

....though immense, is not measured by any magnitude, nor limited by any circumscribing figure, but is every where immeasurable, as being greater than every measure, and more excellent than every quantity.⁶¹

It is often compared, by Plotinus, to a fountain: an image which conveys the fact that it diffuses its power through a series of emanations; but which also, I feel, suggests the living, unforced completeness of the eternal Forms which depend directly on The One; such a fountain as, like Yeats's

... rains down life until the basin spills,
And mounts more dizzy high the more it rains
As though to choose whatever shape it wills
And never stoop to a mechanical
Or servile shape, at others' beck and call.
(*'Meditations in Time of Civil War'*)

But such a comparison is only appropriate to the non-visionary Intelligible World of the Neoplatonists or to Blake's visionary Intellect: The One has no place in Blake's philosophy, which is utterly inimical to the idea of ineffability. The Neoplatonists see a logical necessity in separating Infinity from the Forms of which it is the source in the last analysis:

60. Ibid., p.240.

61. Plotinus, On the Beautiful, pp. 42-43.

Blake is happy to describe his bounded, visionary Forms as Infinite, without positing any prior source. There is no logical hierarchy in Blake: there is one kind of true vision - Imagination. And what is imagined is not ineffable.

The artist who truly perceives the Forms, according to Blake, creates 'Living Form', the 'Gothic', opposed to the 'Mathematic Form' of the 'Grecian'.⁶² It is a little ironic that a similar distinction should have been described by Coleridge in terms abhorrent to Blake: Coleridge's distinction of organic and mechanic form is nevertheless not only the same in essence, but designed (under the influence of Schlegel) to controvert the same restrictive view of form:

The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material, as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such is the life, such the form. Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms.⁶³

Of course, the connotations are very different from those of Blake's formulation. Blake would never have accepted Nature in any sense as the prime genial artist, as his annotations to Wordsworth show: he sees what is good in Wordsworth, and then rudely attributes it to Imagination. This is not to be understood as a condemnation of what is known as natural

62. On Virgil (c. 1820), E267/K778.

63. T. Middleton Raysor, ed., Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, (London, 1930), 2 vols., Vol. I, p. 224.

beauty. But we can only see a heaven in a wild flower with the eye of Imagination: the Heaven is not there without the Imagination to perceive it: 'Where man is not nature is barren;' (MHH 10, E37/K152) Coleridge on the other hand, with a biologist's knowledge of natural processes, and an interest in German theories about them, is concerned to contrast the workings of Nature and those of the Machine: the workings and growth of Mind and those of Nature are ultimately the same, with the same dynamic. The distinction is perhaps best talked about in terms which transcend those of either Blake or Coleridge.

The essential similarity of the two formulations extends quite far however. Both men see 'individuality' expressed in the Form, in relation to it. Thus Coleridge:

If we look at the growth of trees, for instance, we shall observe that trees of the same kind vary considerably, according to the circumstances of soil, air, or position; yet we are able to decide at once whether they are oaks, elms or poplars.⁶⁴

For Blake 'General Forms have their vitality in Particulars' (Jerusalem 91:29, E249/K738).

But what of the equation of Living Form with the Gothic? Blake had long been interested in the mediaeval, and in Gothic art in particular: the plates of There Is No Natural Religion contain designs of Gothic architecture in a context where they connote true, as opposed to Natural, Religion.⁶⁵ And his illuminated books were almost certainly

64. Ibid., Vol. II, p.170.

65. NNR, 1st. series, Plate I; 2nd. series, Plates 1 and 2. Repro. IB, 28, 30.

inspired by mediaeval illuminated manuscripts, which he may well have come across when he was working in Westminster Abbey, sketching tombs for Basire's illustrations to Richard Gough's Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain (1786). Gough was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, for which the book was produced, and which was notable for its interest in the mediaeval. Its official draughtsman, Jacob Schnebbelie (1760-1792) produced a lavishly illustrated collection of designs copied from mediaeval manuscripts, wall-paintings, sculpture, most of which are boldly but fluently linear in style, and some brightly coloured.⁶⁶ Such an interest, however, was also current among artists in the Neo-classical style. Fuseli, like Blake, drew inspiration from mediaeval subjects, as did Flaxman who was a pioneer in the study and criticism of Gothic art, and encouraged some respect for it, though always in slightly patronizing tones.⁶⁷ But Flaxman does not draw Blake's distinction between the Gothic and the 'Grecian'. He is interested in Gothic art for its linearity, its expressiveness, and its inventiveness. But he describes its limitations in these terms:

... the sculptor could not be instructed in Anatomy, for there were no Anatomists. Some knowledge of Optics, and a glimmering of Perspective, were reserved for the researches of so sublime a genius as Roger Bacon, some years afterwards. A small knowledge of Geometry and Mechanics was exclusively confined to two or three learned Monks.⁶⁸

66. Jacob Schnebbelie, The Antiquaries Museum (London, 1791).

67. John Flaxman, Lectures on Sculpture (London, 1829), pp. 13-31.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

In other words, mediaeval art lacked 'Mathematic Form': we may infer that Blake saw it as the best example known to him, outside literature, of art that did not stoop to the imitation of nature.

It must be realised, however, that the distinction between Grecian and Gothic Form, so defined, is a feature only of Blake's later work. His first known references to Greek art, which are in the letters, are enthusiastic. He writes to Dr. Trusler saying that 'the purpose for which alone I live' is 'to renew the lost Art of the Greeks' (16 August 1799. K792). And to Cumberland he wishes 'an immense flood of Grecian light and glory' (2 July 1800. K797). But it is quite illegitimate to infer from these rare comments that Blake was attached to Neoplatonic doctrines. The references are to art; and we may well suppose, rather, that Blake did not as yet associate Greek art with that abstraction which he nevertheless already hated, and already associated with Greek philosophy in general. Thus, in The Song of Los (1795) we learn that 'To Trismegistus. Palamabron gave an abstract Law:/ To Pythagoras Socrates & Plato.' (3:18-19, E66/K246) They were in error; and this is written at a time when, if we are to believe George Mills Harper, Blake was in the middle of a twenty years' 'Grecian period'.⁶⁹ The substantial part of Harper's thesis, however, like that of Kathleen Raine, rests on the real similarity or identity of Blake's terms and

69. George Mills Harper, The Neoplatonism of William Blake (Chapel Hill, N. Carolina, and London, 1961), p. 35.

those of the Neoplatonists: it is therefore very persuasive.⁷⁰ But there are very salient differences between Blake's thought and that of any Neoplatonist, which we must now explore, with particular regard to the concept of Form.

8. Blake's idea of Form

Blake took such advantage of the scope for visual imagination offered by the Neoplatonic descriptions of Forms, that his conception constitutes, at the very least, a revision. For the Forms of, say, Plotinus are not, in my opinion, primarily intended, if at all, to be visual, or visionary in Blake's sense. When Plotinus speaks of 'the objects of mental vision', he is speaking of the Forms of the Intelligible World: he is thus surely speaking of a conceptual faculty.⁷¹ Blake on the other hand uses the term Vision to denote a faculty which always comprises visual imagery.

It is true, of course, that Blake also uses the term Intellect; but this is often indistinguishable, in his usage, from Vision. Insofar as it is used separately it seems to mean, that which informs Vision with meaning, its rationale. But here we come close to the essence of Blake's thought: for though the meaning of these two terms may be analytically separable, they are never in practice distinct.

70. Ibid., Chapters V-VI, pp. 61-109.

71. Plotinus, On the Beautiful, pp. 22-24.

Such a fusion of Intellect and Visionary Imagination is given literary expression in Blake's 'Sublime Allegory' which is 'address'd to the Intellectual powers' (Letter to Butts, 6 July 1803. K825). He is referring to the same fusion when he says that he is 'drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pencil or graver into my hand'.⁷²

Blake also insists, in his later works, on the particularity of 'General Forms', as we have noted. And speaking of 'The Combats of Good & Evil' and of 'Truth & Error' he says these 'are not only Universal but Particular. Each are Personified There is not an Error but it has a Man for its ... Agent that is it is a Man' (Notebook, p.86, E553/K615). Here again is the complete unity of the idea and of forms capable of being perceived in 'Vision'.

The Neoplatonic treatment of particulars is very different:

... the science of universals, permanent and fixt, must be superior to the knowledge of particulars, fleeting and frail. Where is a sensible object to be found, which abides for a moment the same.⁷³

The term 'sensible object' serves to remind us that we are actually dealing with a different set of relations: Taylor is opposing the world of general concepts to that of particular sensibilia; whereas Blake is not only fusing the universal and the particular, but is doing so within the sphere of Vision: he rejects errors to either side of this fusion,

72. Letter to Hayley, 23 October 1804. K852. This is the letter in which Blake refers to his experience of 'the light I enjoyed in my youth' at the Truchsessian Gallery. He associates this experience with the rejection of Jupiter, 'the ruiner of ancient Greece'.

73. On the Beautiful, pp.vii-viii. From Taylor's Introduction.

whether towards belief in separate sensible objects, or belief in fixed and permanent 'abstract' general ideas. Blake is as thoroughgoing in his 'reduction' of thought to the principle of Imagination as the Enlightenment philosophers to that of Reason.

It is not only in Blake's later work, however, that we find this insistence on the concrete and particular unity of the forms of Imagination with their meaning. Blake develops a terminology for these ideas after about 1803-4, but they are no less important earlier on for being less clearly and deliberately expressed, as the slighting references to abstraction show. Nor can we doubt the import of Blake's visionary interviews with Isaiah and Ezekiel, or the idea that 'Truth has bounds'.

Blake's Form, then, is neither an abstract general concept, nor the bounding contour of a sensible object in itself: it encompasses the irreducible unity of image and meaning in those things, and only those things, that are perceived by the Imagination. As Pater says in his essay on Winckelmann: 'The mind begins and ends with the finite image, yet loses no part of the spiritual motive. That motive is not loosely or lightly attached to the sensuous form ... but saturates and is identical with it.' (The Renaissance (New York, 1959), pp.139-40.)

It is interesting to compare Blake's ideas on abstraction and imagination with those of Berkeley, especially as he annotated the latter's somewhat Platonic Siris. Blake believes that abstract ideas cannot in the strict sense be known because they are not capable of being distinctly imagined: Berkeley, for the same reason, believes that they

do not exist; or, more accurately, they are the name people give to confused thinking: abstract ideas have lost contact with the particulars they originally denoted. Blake, too, associates abstraction with indefiniteness throughout his work.

Berkeley attempts to show that material substance is Spirit (Principles of Human Knowledge, 135-136), and that the accidents ('ideas') we perceive are caused by the will of God, and perceived by Him in the same fashion as we perceive the creatures of our own imaginations. The 'ideas of sense' display more regularity than the ideas of our imagination: this testifies to God's wisdom. Our name for that regularity is the 'Laws of Nature' (Principles, 30). Siris is a different work from the earlier ones to the extent that it does not deduce our knowledge from sense entirely: we are possessed of innate ideas, but these are 'in need of sensible occasions', a theory which Blake rejects (E653/K775). But he is plainly attracted by the place accorded to Imagination in Siris, even though it is now subordinate to the innate (rational) ideas. For Berkeley goes so far as to call natural phenomena 'the children of imagination grafted upon sense' (Sect. 292, E652/K773). He refers to them as 'forms' (Sect. 310, E654/K775). He does not really mean by this that they are ideal archetypes in the Platonic sense. Nor does he regard them as affected by the human imagination: Blake does not seem to be aware of the priority accorded to sensibles in Berkeley: these may be referred to as 'the children of imagination' but it is the imagination and will of an inflexible God, not of man, which fathers them. To man (and Berkeley is insistent

on this) they exhibit all the solid intractability Dr. Johnson believed to be a refutation of the theory. There is no hint in Berkeley that the sun could be 'an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host'.

A much nearer approximation of Blake's ideas is to be found in Hazlitt, who says that 'The Ideal' is 'filling up the outline of truth or beauty existing in the mind, so as to leave nothing wanting or to desire farther'.⁷⁴ He points out that the term has been used for 'an abstraction of general nature' but rejects this view, insisting that 'A thing is not more perfect by becoming something else, but by being more itself'.⁷⁵ Here we have the same concept of the particularity of the Ideal that we find in Blake. For otherwise the Ideal, according to Hazlitt, would be a 'negative', because to 'propose to embody an abstraction is a contradiction in terms'.⁷⁶ The comparison is also instructive for the way in which the word 'Ideal' is used: Hazlitt's term is unequivocally aesthetic. The same must be said, in an ultimate sense, of Blake's Forms. It is true that they have a cosmological function: but this is deduced from their nature as objects of Imagination. Because Imagination is Blake's firm point of departure there is no room for abstraction, and no room for an ineffable deity. He seems to be quite content with the complete and final identity of 'the Infinite' with a

74. Works, Vol. XX, p.302.

75. Ibid., p. 303.

76. Ibid.

world of 'bounded' imaginative Forms: on the Neoplatonic principles, 'boundedness' and 'Infinity' were, in the last analysis, incompatible: this necessitated the distinction of the One and the Intelligible World.

For these reasons, if we are to speak strictly, Blake is not a Neoplatonist, though we may well compare him with those Romantics who speak Platonically of the ideal which they always see realised in the concrete and particular.

Blake's notion of Form finds many other echoes in the succeeding century: Nietzsche too subsumes the ethical under the aesthetic. For Nietzsche nobility has nothing to do with the constraints of morality: these are the 'sign-language of the emotions' (Beyond Good and Evil: V:187)⁷⁷

But the noble man will find his own form in accordance with the Will to Power. In the context of a discussion of nineteenth-century literature in general, Robert Langbaum observes that Blake's symbolism is romantic rather than traditional:

... not only because it is directed against Newton, Locke and the neoclassicists but also because its theory and practice could hardly have been conceived, much less understood, before the Enlightenment made it necessary to put together a world split between fact and value. Blake heals the breach by treating truth as a quality and intensity of perception rather than as the thing that is perceived.⁷⁸

Blake has often been accused of losing that intensity in his later works. But the charge begs some questions about what

77. Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 92.

78. Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience repr. of 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth, 1974) p.63.

Blake in fact perceived intensely. In any case, his works are never reducible to that kind of allegory which he so often condemns. The meaning of any figure in them is never given whole, and has to be understood from context: the meaning of, say, 'Urizen' is 'overdetermined': it is a knot which we can only partially unravel at any time, tangling in the process some other strand. Blake's later works are not, whatever else they may be, a lapse into that abstract system-building which Roy Park sees all the Romantics as reacting against.⁷⁹ Los's remark about his need to create a system must be read with circumspection: Blake's other uses of the word 'system' are all pejorative, and he clearly associates it with abstraction. But in Los's remark (Jerusalem 10:20-21, E151/K629) the emphasis is revealed by the second line: 'I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create'. It would not be betraying Blake's meaning too far if we were to rephrase the remark as the reversal of a familiar Enlightenment contrast: 'I must create a System according to the esprit de système, or be enslaved by another man's according to the esprit systématique.'

The systematic spirit was credited to Newton, and Blake would credit it to Urizen, who, as the Divine Craftsman of Plato's Timaeus, is the artist who creates Fable or Allegory:⁸⁰ his creations do not find their own bounds: he imposes bounds upon them, in the sense that Imagination is

79. Roy Park, Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age (Oxford, 1971), pp. 235-36.

80. Blake's conception of the Demiurge as an evil being owes much to the Gnostic conception, and little to the Neoplatonic.

limited in them. Thus in a landscape painting, according to Blake, the indefiniteness is caused by an improper limitation of the Imagination, which is unable to perceive - what? Precisely the bounded Forms of the Eternal. Urizen is 'The Bad Artist' who 'Seems to Copy a Great Deal' (E634/K456); and the Material World, the separate existence of which it is his very fault to imagine, is his most formidable creation.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GROWTH OF URIZEN

1. 'Tiriel' and the Law of Priest and King.

To return to our survey: we have reached the time (c.1789) when Blake wrote his first known extended symbolic poem: 'Tiriel'. So far we have seen adumbrations of the idea of a Fall from unity into division; some criticism of jealousy and possessiveness; the attack on Priest and King; a mistrust of self-righteousness and the codification of experience (the Book); and an assault on Enlightenment concepts of Reason. But these themes are not clearly linked, though it is highly probable that the idea of the 'bounded' is an attempt to join them. In Urizen they are united, just as in Blake's mature work as a whole the institutional and the psychological are linked. In his preface to the 1832 edition of Caleb Williams, Godwin says:

It is now known to philosophers that the spirit and character of the Government intrudes itself into every rank of society.¹

This is another Enlightenment idea which Blake was able to appropriate in the spirit of the prophet -- it lent new support to the traditional role of popular prophecy.

It is in 'Tiriel' that Blake first suggests a conformity between the personal and the institutional, and begins to draw together the various threads of those inimical

1. Quoted by Walter Allen in William Godwin, The Adventures of Caleb Williams, ed. Herbert Van Thal, intro. Walter Allen (London, 1966), p.xi.

ideas we have been examining: the malaise in the social fabric begins to take on the features of unity. And it is a malaise which seems to have its roots in the distant past of humanity -- a fact symbolized by the outlandish names and 'primitive' architecture of 'Tiriel's' setting.

Tiriel, the chief character of the book, is portrayed in the designs as an old man with, as the text says, a 'shriveld' beard (2:33, E275/K101, Erdman line numbering). For by comparison, Har's beard is luxuriant. The designs thus support the text's identification of Tiriel with a desiccated authoritarianism. But Har, Tiriel's father and father of all men, also gives laws: at the end of the poem Tiriel addresses him:

He said. O weak mistaken father of a lawless race
 Thy laws O Har & Tiriels wisdom end together in a curse
 Why is one law given to the lion & the patient Ox
 (8:7-9, E281/K109. Between lines 8 and 9 is
 the deleted line: 'Thy God of love thy heaven
 of joy': E736/K109)

Har may be identified with Adam; his consort is Heva, whose name is the Hebrew form of Eve. Har has given laws consonant with the belief in an omnipotent God of Love and has expected, in his conviction that all men are alike, that his sons shall keep them. But Blake represents the differences in the 'lawless race' of men by 'the lion & the patient Ox'; Har's sons have left him, unable to keep his laws, and Tiriel in turn gives laws to his own children: this is the blessing that his children interpret as a curse: 'His blessing was a cruel curse. His curse may be a blessing' (1:17, E273/K99). Tiriel has cursed his children at the beginning of the poem for a reason that is not at first clear. A fair and highly

probable inference is that they had disobeyed his laws. Miss Kathleen Raine thinks that 'Tiriel' has such a direct relationship to the Oedipus story that it seems unexceptionable to her to say: 'to himself [Blake] it was perfectly clear; it is the curse which lay upon the house of Cadmus, condemning Oedipus to the murder of his father and a marriage with his own mother, from which were born the sons whom he himself curses with such terrible passion before his death....'² Now 'Tiriel' does have resemblances to the story of Oedipus, as Miss Raine shows. But these are rather in the nature of resemblances in the characters and some of their actions, than of a whole-hearted adoption of the Greek narrative and its setting. 'Tiriel' already has far more to do with Blake's personal obsessions: the curse is surely the one mentioned in the lines quoted above, and is the indirect result of giving one law to beings whose nature is held to be alien to it, whose individuality is not reflected in a code of laws uniformly applied. That Blake should not state firmly that this was so is in no way uncharacteristic of his indirect methods. On the other hand he makes no mention of a marriage of Tiriel to his mother, either, nor of his having killed his own father. For Tiriel could only be taken not to be the son of Har if his words to Har on the subject are taken seriously. But Blake points out that Tiriel's words are dissembling at this part (2:43).

If Tiriel's curse is indeed caused by the law and by his 'wisdom', then he and Har are both comparable to

2. Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition (London, 1969), 2 vols., Vol.I, p.36.

Urizen and to figures like him elsewhere in Blake's work. The presentation of Har in the designs, with flowing white beard and hair, supports this interpretation. That Har also has resemblances to Adam does not contradict this, since Blake had not evolved his myth of the Four Zoas and their fall. Har is a fallen Adam, like Urizen in so far as he gives laws. The original man, according to Blake, was a maker of mythologies: 'the Poetic Genius is the true Man'. (ARO I, E2/K98). In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790-93), Plate 11, Blake describes how the myths of the true man were gradually perverted into belief in transcendent deities:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

...Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood.

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things.

(E37/K153)

Har, being comparable to both Adam and Urizen, represents the Poetic Genius, the 'true Man', when he has fallen into the error of making the deities that reside in the human breast into Gods above who give laws to men below. The deleted line 'Thy God of love thy heaven of joy', in Tiriel's speech to Har, refers to this error.

From the text alone so much can be gleaned. But the designs enlarge our sense of Har. Har and Heva Bathing³ is not related to any line in the text. It shows the aged

3. Repro. Bentley, Tiriel, Plate II.

couple nestling in senile innocence against one another under the staring gaze of their nurse Mnetha, whose name is partly traceable to the Greek Mnemosyne, memory: the innocent perception of divinity in Man and the things of Nature has become a distorted memory.

The setting for this scene of fallen innocence is pastoral, as for so many of the Songs of Innocence. But Har's fallen nature makes him strikingly similar to 'the Father of the ancient men' in 'Earth's Answer', one of two related poems introductory to Songs of Experience (1789-94). Here the Earth has been imprisoned by the laws of 'the Father': she refers to him thus:

Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous selfish fear

'The Father' appears first in the 'Introduction', where he attempts to regain the 'lapsed Soul' of nature:

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk'd among the ancient trees.
(E18/K210)

These lines identify the Father with the fallen 'Poetic Genius' and thus with Har. And this interpretation is aided, though it be slightly, by an illustration which expands the sense of Har to be taken from the words alone.

Another design helps to enlarge our notion of the poem: Tiriel Supporting Myratana. This contains things not described in the poem: Tiriel's palace, and its background, a treeless expanse with a featureless, white pyramid in the distance. One is reminded of the Neo-classical architects' regression to the use of the simple Doric order, and even to

the 'natural' order that some thought had come before the Doric. A few sought the essential beauty of the cube, pyramid, cylinder, sphere and cone.⁴ In this search Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806) and Etienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99) were very advanced.⁵ It was Boullée who designed a gigantic, plain, hollow globe (c.1780-90) to be a monument to Newton. The point of such experiments was partly in their connotations of the natural, primitive, rational society which late eighteenth-century thinkers believed they could see in pre-history; and partly in the related belief that geometry would provide the basic structural notions of a rational architecture.

Blake thought that such a rational standard constricted the imagination. He probably already thought that an order like the Doric represented what he was later to call 'Mathematic Form'. His opinions about Egypt were constantly unsympathetic, being derived from his reading of the Bible. His opinions about Egyptian Art, in particular, may well have been influenced by his friend Barry, who considered that the Egyptians, 'much as they had practised in the art, yet never rose to any perfection above that of practical mechanical conduct....Their figures appear neither to act nor think, and have more the appearances of dead than of animated nature'.⁶

And so to the pyramid in the illustrations of Tiriel Supporting Myratana: the setting places Tiriel's king-

4. Hugh Honour, Neo-classicism (Harmondsworth, 1968), p.127.

5. Robert Rosenblum, Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art (Princeton, 1967), pp.149-51.

6. James Barry, Lectures delivered in the Royal Academy (London, 1831), pp.345-46. The lectures were delivered much earlier than this date, however: Barry began lecturing in 1784 (though appointed Professor in 1782):D.N.B.

dom after the corruption of the art of the Patriarchs of Asia and pre-Biblical Egypt.⁷ It is a kingdom of rational materialism, and evidences the effects of Har's laws. For these reasons Tiriel himself is, as it were, a later version of Har: the father of a later, more corrupt age.

These connotations of one design add considerably to our sense of the things that Tiriel stands for. There are, then, two mistaken patriarchal figures in 'Tiriel', and Blake attempts to show that the different errors of each are closely connected. Har has given laws in ignorance of the energy to which they would be fetters: though he may seem benevolent, the stultified 'innocence' which prevents him from seeing that all men are not alike is dangerous. Tiriel, unlike Har, lives in the world, and must act upon the laws which Har has invented. He is forced into violence and is therefore peculiarly fitted to see that Har's laws are mistaken.

The respective attributes of Har and Tiriel are united, to a high degree, in Urizen.⁸ Urizen is very much this combination of the violent and tyrannical, with the pitying, law-giver, who cannot understand the torments of energy. The combination of these attributes is also to be found in Songs of Experience, some first versions of which date from 1792, at the latest.⁹ Thus, in 'Earth's Answer', the 'Starry

7. Cf. Nancy Bogen, 'A New Look at Blake's Tiriel', BNYPL, Vol. LXXIV, No.3 (March, 1970), pp.153-65; and Mary S. Hall, 'Blake's Tiriel: A Visionary Form Pedantic', Ibid., pp.166-76.

8. It is interesting to note that Tiriel's name stands for the intelligence of mercury, the element which, I shall claim, in good company, belongs also to Urizen: see John Beer, 'Influence and Independence', pp.251, 256.

9. In the Notebook. See Erdman, Notebook, p.7 for dating.

'Jealousy' who has imprisoned Earth is said to be 'Cold and hoar/Weeping o'er' -- an aspect of jealousy we encounter again in 'A Little Girl Lost': the girl returns to her 'father white' :

But his loving look,
Like the holy book,
All her tender limbs with terror shook.

Ona! pale and weak!
To thy father speak:
O the trembling fear!
O the dismal care!
That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair
(E29-30/K219)

Since 'Starry Jealousy' is referred to as 'the Father of the ancient men' we may conclude that, like Har, he is a 'weak mistaken father', a fallen Adam. Certainly 'Jealousy' inherits Har's maundering incomprehension of energy, though now this seems a more sinister attribute, since it consorts, in the same character, with overt tyranny: the connection of Tiriel and Har is embodied. 'Jealousy' directly anticipates the Urizen who says, in bewilderment at the fires of energy,

I have sought for a joy without pain,
For a solid without fluctuation
Why will you die O Eternals?
Why live in unquenchable burnings?
(BU4:10-13, E70/K224)

And, like Har, Urizen formulates

Laws of peace, of love, of unity:
Of pity, compassion, forgiveness.
Let each chuse one habitation:
His ancient infinite mansion:
One command, one joy, one desire,
One curse, one weight, one measure
One King, one God, one Law.
(BU4:34-40, E71/K224)

Ernst Cassirer points out that 'One king, one law, one faith' was the motto of the Enlightenment epoch.¹⁰ By the time of

10. Cassirer, op. cit., p.23.

writing of 'Tiriel' Blake has already grasped the principle, in Enlightenment thinking, of the reduction of phenomena to simple unities. Tiriel, when he has finally been enlightened, asks, 'Why is one law given to the lion & the patient Ox?', an idea for which Blake did a pencil study;¹¹ and which is repeated at the bottom of Plate 24 of The Marriage (E43/K158). The reference is to Isaiah 11:7 and 65:25: 'The lion shall eat straw like the ox.' This phrase occurs in the middle of a well-known passage which was traditionally interpreted as a vision of paradise:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; the young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

(Isaiah 11:6-7)

This, then, is the 'heaven of joy' which Tiriel refers to slightly in the deleted line which comes just before his mention of the lion and the ox: Blake implies that contraries cannot be reconciled simply by reducing them to one principle, that of enforced innocence.

In Plate 24 of The Marriage Nebuchadnezzar is shown crawling on his hands and knees above the motto 'One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression' (IB 121, E43/K158). This plate must date from 1790-93, and there is an early version in the Notebook (N44). It will be recalled that Nebuchadnezzar 'did eat grass as oxen' (Daniel 4: 32-33)

11. Why is one law given to the lion & the patient Ox (c.1788. Prof. C.A. Ryskamp, Princeton, N.J.). Repro. in Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Drawings of William Blake: 92 Pencil Studies (New York, 1970), Pl.5.

when he was driven from men by God. Blake is making an oblique link with the idea of the lion eating straw like the ox. I think it would be wrong to identify Nebuchadnezzar with the lion's energy: on the contrary, I think that Blake is attempting to imply that Nebuchadnezzar is a tyrant in the same way that Tiriel was, and has come to feel the ill effects of the laws he himself has promoted.

In the pencil drawing, which dates from around the time of 'Tiriel', there are not only a lion and an ox, but an old man with long white hair and beard holding a crook or a crozier, with two children at his knees. Geoffrey Keynes identifies the figure as Tiriel with a whip, and the two children as Har and Heva, claiming that the drawing is 'clearly' intended for 'Tiriel'.¹² However, the bearded figure, if it is any personage from 'Tiriel', is surely Har: he does not look in the least like Tiriel; nor are Har and Heva portrayed as children anywhere in the 'Tiriel' designs. The object in the old man's hands is surely a shepherd's crook. The drawing shows, yet again, that Blake associated the growth of the law with the attempt to remain in a state of innocence when faced with the terrifying power of energy for creation and destruction. The picture evokes a sense of the pastoral for the same reason that Har and Heva are said, though old, to behave like this: 'Playing with flowers, & running after birds they spent the day / And in the night like infants slept delighted with infant dreams' ('Tiriel' 2:8-9, E274/K100). The imagery recalls Songs of Innocence. But Har and Heva have outlived the time when

12. Ibid., facing page.

they should have put away the reliance on this kind of innocence.

The idea of One Law is closely related to that of the 'bounded' which restrains Energy and Genius: It arises from fear and incomprehension -- the same fear and incomprehension which drive Thel to run shrieking from the vision of Experience back into the vales of Har. The question is: How precisely is Blake using the term 'Law' at the time of the writing of 'Tiriel'? In The Book of Urizen the term clearly refers to several types of law which Blake wishes to link: when he writes 'One King, one God, one Law' he is referring to his belief that the laws of Priest and King are closely related, and have the same object: oppression on both personal and social levels. It also refers to his belief that eighteenth-century thought was consolidating, rather than relieving, this oppression, by reducing so many diverse phenomena to the principle of unity. Law, for instance, as 'Natural Law', was now firmly based in universal Reason: its dictates were uniform and immutable and grasped by the Reason of Mahometan and Turk no less than of Jew or Red Indian. In religion, Socinianism was merely the forceful expression of what had always been central to Deism.

In An Essay on Man Pope avers that

Each individual seeks a sev'ral goal;
 But HEAV'N'S great view is One, and that the Whole...
 (II:238-39)

Blake's image of the Lion and the Ox is intended to counter just such a view: the Deist (and Blake would certainly have thought Pope a Deist), who wishes to reduce everything to one principle, discourages the individual genius. But Blake

defends the 'sev'ral goal': the Lion is not the Ox: 'How can one joy absorb another? are not different joys/Holy, eternal, infinite!' (VDA 5: 5-6, E47/K192)

For Pope's editor, Warburton, Church and State existed to perfect man's ability to live according to the Natural Law: Church and State are

...ordained to one end, to perfect Man's nature; yet, as they pursue it by different means, they must act in conjunction, lest the diversity of the means should retard or defeat the attainment of the concurrent end.¹³

Warburton proposes a 'politic ALLIANCE' of Church and State.¹⁴ For Blake both Church and State are corrupt institutions which take their common source from an undivided Poetic Genius, of which Religion and Legislation are, as we shall see, systematizations. 'Tiriel' concerns the period after the Fall of the Poetic Genius. Har, with his God of Love and Heavens of Joy, corresponds to Warburton's 'RELIGION'; and Tiriel, king of the west, to his 'GOVERNMENT'.¹⁵

Warburton is not claimed to be the necessary source of Blake's allegory in 'Tiriel': rather his Alliance Between Church and State is taken as the most striking example of a kind of thinking which was very common in the eighteenth century (for instance in Montesquieu). But State and Church for Blake are 'The Beast & the Whore'.

We are now in a position to answer the question, What is Blake saying about the Law at the time of the writing of 'Tiriel'? It is clear that he already uses the term with

13. W. Warburton, The Alliance between Church and State: or, the Necessity and Equity of an Established Religion and a Test Law Demonstrated in Three Books (London, 1748), pp. iii-iv.

14. Ibid., p. iv.

15. Ibid., p. iii.

the same implications that it has in Urizen, of the constriction of Energy and individual Genius, born of the fear of these; acting on the level of the political and religious, but internalised by the individual. Priesthood, Legislation, Kingship are, like 'Fable or Allegory', corruptions of what was originally one, undivided function, the 'Poetic Genius', as we shall see more clearly in Chapter VI.

To say that 'Law', systems, limitation in general are derived from a fear of Energy may not sound very interesting. The interest in what Blake is saying may be more apparent if the assertion is phrased in a positive way: system-building begins as the need for security, almost for tidiness, in the face of the unpredictability of Energy.

2. The Priestly Serpent and the Satanic Orc.

The Alliance of Religion and Government may also be seen in The French Revolution (1791), where the Duke of Burgundy expresses his concern about the results of the revolution in these terms:

Till the power and dominion is rent from the pole,
 sword and scepter from sun and moon,
 The law and gospel from fire and air, and eternal reason
 and science
 From the deep and the solid....

(94-96, E287/K138)

In Burgundy's mind the law and gospel go together, and are part of a system which includes the dominion of kings. Reason and science are eternal and immutable, whereas Blake thinks they will not be the same when we know more. Law, Gospel, Reason and Science, as conceived by Burgundy, inhere

in the four elements: it is easy to see that these are fallen elements. And indeed, at around the time when he was writing The French Revolution, Blake was designing in the Notebook the four emblems of the elements which eventually found their way into The Gates of Paradise in 1793, where they refer to the alchemical doctrine that Creation resulted in a 'separation of the elements'.¹⁶

The Archbishop of Paris is able to describe the God who presides over the fallen world:

An aged form, white as snow, hov'ring in mist, weeping
 in the uncertain light,
 Dim the form almost faded, tears fell down the shady
 cheeks; at his feet many cloth'd
 In white robes, strewn in air censers and harps,
 silent they lay prostrated;
 Beneath, in the awful void, myriads descending and
 weeping thro' dismal winds,
 Endless the shady train shiv'ring descended, from the
 gloom where the aged form wept.
 At length, trembling, the vision sighing, in a low
 voice, like the voice of the grasshopper whisper'd:
 'My groaning is heard in the abbeys, and God, so long
 worshipp'd, departs as a lamp
 'Without oil; for a curse is heard hoarse thro' the
 land, from a godless race
 'Descending to beasts; they look downward and labour
 and forget my holy law;
 'The sound of prayer fails from lips of flesh, and the
 holy hymn from thicken'd tongues:
 'For the bars of Chaos are burst; her millions prepare
 their fiery way
 'Thro' the orb'd abode of the holy dead, to root up
 and pull down and remove,
 'And Nobles and Clergy shall fail from before me, and
 my cloud and vision be no more;
 'The mitre become black, the crown vanish, and the
 secepter and ivory staff
 'Of the ruler wither among bones of death; they shall
 consume from the thistly field,
 'And the sound of the bell, and voice of the sabbath,
 and singing of the holy choir,
 'Is turn'd into songs of the harlot in day, and cries
 of the virgin in night.

16. Cf. Walter Pagel, Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance (Basel and New York, 1958), pp.91-92.

'They shall drop at the plow and faint at the harrow,
 unredeem'd, unconfess'd, unpardon'd;
 'The priest rot in his surplice by the lawless lover,
 the holy beside the accursed,
 'The King, frowning in purple, beside the grey plowman,
 and their worms embrace together.'
 (131-50, E288-89/K140-41)

The decrepitude of the 'aged form' in the 'cloud and vision'
 echoes that of the King of France himself: we are told as much
 in the first lines of the poem:

The dead brood over Europe, the cloud and vision descends
 over chearful France;
 O cloud well appointed! Sick, sick: the Prince on his
 couch, wreath'd in dim
 And appalling mist...
 (1-3, E282/K134)

These passages provide a striking example of Blake's symboliz-
 ing the idea that God the Father is a reflection of the fallen
 state of mind. It is interesting to compare them with the
 first version of God Judging Adam (Pen and watercolour.c.1790-
 93. Private collection, England).¹⁷ In this (unlike in the
 later 1795 Colour Print) God and Adam are almost comically
 alike: each has long white hair and a voluminous long white
 beard. Unlike in the Colour Print, God's chariot is surrounded
 by grey clouds, which, as in The French Revolution, convey
 the idea of hazy or weakened vision, while at the same time
 representing the conception of an external deity above the
 clouds. The rebellious people in the Archbishop's monologue
 have no such conception: they seem to have acquired the belief
 that soul and body are one. To the 'aged form' this means
 that they are 'Descending to beasts' and he refers to their
 'lips of flesh' and 'thicken'd tongues'. They are a 'godless

17. Repro. Tate Exhibn., No.90.

race' and forget the 'holy law' of the aged form, like the 'lawless race' of Har. The absence of Law seems to the aged form like 'Chaos'. But Blake suggests that mankind is about to take on the organic form of a united soul and body: the 'bars of Chaos' are, to him, the doors of the infinite.

It should be noted that the Archbishop of Paris is described in terms of Satanic imagery:

...risen from beneath the Archbishop of Paris arose,
In the rushing of scales and hissing of flames and
rolling of sulphurous smoke.
(126-7, E288/K139-40)

This is the first example we come across of Blake's ambiguous use of Satanic imagery. It can cause confusion. The problem is best stated quite crudely: in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell there is much that encourages the idea that Blake simply reversed the values of God and Satan: God bad, Satan good. One problem with this is, as David Wagenknecht points out, that there is no conclusive evidence that Orc was 'originally benign', though I should add the caveat: 'if we ignore The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.'¹⁸ But John Beer sees Blake's attitude to 'Milton's Satan' as implying criticism.¹⁹ I think, granted that there is ambivalence towards Orc in the early Lambeth books, that the tone of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is overwhelmingly in favour of what Morton D. Paley calls 'the Sublime of Energy'.²⁰ Therefore the passage on Paradise Lost must be read in the light of

18. David Wagenknecht, Blake's Night: William Blake and the Idea of Pastoral (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp.295-96.

19. John Beer, Blake's Humanism (Manchester, 1968), p.25.

20. Morton D. Paley, Energy and the Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought (Oxford, 1970), Ch.I, pp.1-29.

this fact. Though Blake pays lip-service, as it were, to the idea of the complementarity of the contraries, and their viciousness in isolation from each other, he is really of the Devil's party in The Marriage.

This is not to deny that Blake must have given intellectual assent to the idea that Energy was vitiated in the Fallen world. But at the time of The Marriage he seems to have thought that Energy would ensure a necessary purging of a world dominated by Reason. Thus, if Blake's works of 1790-94 give grounds for conflicting interpretations of Orc and 'Milton's' Satan it may be because the problems were not focussed in Blake's mind as yet. There is much to be said for the traditional view that disillusionment with the course of the French Revolution concentrated his mind in this regard.

As for The Marriage, if some critics have supposed that a reversal of values takes place there, that is surely because such a reversal does take place. The idea of a World Turned Upside Down would be quite familiar to an anti-nomian, as Graham Pechey points out.²¹ People were still writing in these terms in the eighteenth century:

If a poor man to the market goes
To buy a bushel of wheat,
Money and hat must be hand,
Submission to the great....

.....

Beelzebub, grand Prince of Hell,
To whom these slaves are bound,
He'll call them home and scourge them well,
O the World's turn'd Upside-Down.²²

21. Graham Pechey, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: A Text and its Conjuncture', The Oxford Literary Review, Vol.III, No.3 (Spring, 1979), p.53.

22. Anon., The World Turn'd Upside-Down. Broadside (17--?).

'Milton's Messiah' on Plates 5 and 6 of The Marriage (E34-5/K149-50). But there is also the series of drawings in the Notebook which appears to be for Paradise Lost: some of them definitely are.²³ There is also the figure of 'Fire' from The Gates of Paradise (1793) which derives from the Notebook (N91). And there is the use of allusions to Milton in the early prophetic books, such as The French Revolution.

The passage from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, though very well known, is worth bearing in mind here:

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.

And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire.

The history of this is written in Paradise Lost. & the Governor or Reason is call'd Messiah.

And the original Archangel or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is call'd the Devil or Satan and his children are call'd Sin & Death

But in the Book of Job Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan.

For this history has been adopted by both parties

It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out, but the Devils' account is, that the Messiah fell. & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss

This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on, the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he, who dwells in flaming fire. Know that after Christ's death, he became Jehovah.

But in Milton; the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses. & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!

Note. The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it

As John Beer points out, the acuteness of this passage has often been praised, but usually for the remark that Milton was 'of the Devils' party without knowing it'.²⁴ Helen Gardner is another exception to this rule: she says: 'contraria sunt

23. See Erdman, Notebook, pp. 47-48.

24. Beer, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

aequalia, and Satan and the Son seem balanced against each other, as Blake saw them to be [in Paradise Lost]. . . .'²⁵ She also notes that because Satan and Hell precede Christ and Heaven in Paradise Lost, the latter are likely to seem like a 'parody' of the former.²⁶ I would add that Blake has noticed that it is only after Satan has fallen that Christ is raised to the status of Messiah. The Messiah, then, may seem to have replaced Lucifer. And thus, given Blake's reversal of values, Messiah will look like an usurper. The remark that 'in the Book of Job Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan' shows the precise nature of Blake's objection to Milton's Christ. For the Job Satan is concerned to test righteousness, conceived of as adherence to a moral standard:

Doth Job fear God for nothing? . . . Thou hast blessed the work of his hands . . . But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.
(Job 1:9-11)

The same would be true of Milton's Messiah from Blake's point of view:

Happy for man, [grace] so coming; he her aid
Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost;
Atonement for himself or offering meet,
Indebted and undone, hath none to bring.
(PLIII: 232-35)²⁷

And in Book VI of Paradise Lost God refers to Messiah who 'by right of merit reigns' and to the law of 'right reason' (423). The Job Satan and 'Milton's Messiah' both adhere to a rationally apprehensible abstract moral standard -- to the idea of Natural Law.

25. Helen Gardner, A Reading of Paradise Lost (Oxford, 1965), p.119.

26. Ibid.

27. All quotations are from Milton: Poetical Works, ed. Douglas Bush (London, 1969).

Messiah, 'the Governor or Reason' (so-called because of Swedenborg's description of 'the great Governor of heaven and hell')²⁸ has usurped Lucifer's Titanic Energy. So much would be evident to Blake from the fact that Lucifer is indeed the original 'possessor of the command of the heavenly host' and the Son is only exalted, puncto temporis, in Book III: as the Father says to Him:

All power
I give thee; reign for ever, and assume
Thy merits; under thee as Head supreme
Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions, I reduce.
All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
In heaven, or earth, or under earth in hell....
(PL III: 317-22)

And in Book V we hear of 'The great Messiah, and his new commands (691; my emphasis).

Blake's sense of this usurpation is conveyed in the powerful sketch on pp.110 and 111 of the Notebook where we see, as Erdman says, 'God the Father giving directions to the Son to save mankind from Satan, who hovers over the abyss or (as we take note of the web of lines around him) struggles like a trapped fly'.²⁹ The web of lines, which draws these figures into a unity, also indicates that God the Father, the Son, and Satan are more closely related than Heaven might admit. It is worth noting the gloomy expression and rigid (almost tense) posture of the seated Father, clearly Urizenic; the

28. Emmanuel Swedenborg, A Treatise concerning Heaven and Hell containing a Relation of many Wonderful Things therein, as heard and seen by the Author (London, 1778), p.372. This work is not, however, the only object of parody in The Marriage, for Blake clearly has George Larkin's Visions of John Bunyan... The Glories of Heaven, The Terrors of Hell (op.cit) in mind. Indeed, Blake's style in The Marriage is much closer to this work than to Swedenborg's abstractions. Consider, at least, the conversation with the Angel and with Elijah, and Elijah's conception of the risen body in Larkin, pp. 16, 22-36.

29. Erdman, Notebook, facing N110.

mEEK and submissive attitude of the Son; and the muscular vigour of the naked Satan, who seems to be but recently fallen.

In fact the sketch might just as well serve as an illustration to Klopstock's Messiah: Blake was thinking about Klopstock at this time.³⁰ Klopstock's Messiah says:

O my FATHER, I know that thou wilt reward my ready submission to thy will, and that miriads of applauding angels will witness and hail my triumph before the eternal throne.

Thus spake JESUS, and arose. In his countenance shone sublimity, filial love, and resignation.³¹

Klopstock was not, even unconsciously, of the Devil's party. His work, Blake implies in the Notebook (N1), gives unequivocal aid and comfort to Nobodaddy.

Nobodaddy, a figure who never emerges from the Notebook, is the clearest precursor of Urizen so far. In 'To Nobodaddy' he hides himself in clouds and he is dark and obscure; he is not the product of clear vision but of abstract

30. There is no evidence for the date (c.1797-1800) assigned to the Notebook poem 'When Klopstock England defied' by Erdman (Erdman, Notebook, pp.6, 12; N1). An argument advanced by Rodney G. Dennis and W.H. Stevenson is that Blake may have seen the August 1800 issue of The German Museum, which made disparaging comparisons of Milton with Klopstock (see The Poems of William Blake, ed. W. H. Stevenson, text by David V. Erdman (London, 1791), p.467). But the idea of Klopstock's defying England is sufficiently clear from the Translator's Preface to the English translation of The Messiah (1763): Klopstock was esteemed 'the MILTON of Germany' and as having 'completed what the favourite son of the British muse had left unfinished' The Messiah (London, 1963), p.x.

There are no reasons for dissenting from Keynes's dating of c.1793 (K186-87), particularly as this has the merit of making the poem contemporary with the other Nobodaddy poem, 'To Nobodaddy'. The poem 'Let the Brothels of Paris be opened', which also contains lines about Nobodaddy, must be 25 Oct. 1792 or not too long after for reasons of historical reference.

Blake may well have read Klopstock because of Fuseli's influence (see Antal, op. cit., pp.12-13).

31. Klopstock, op. cit., p.10.

systematizing. He is Nobody because 'abstraction of mental deities' has created him. However, abstract systems are the basis for the Law: hence Nobodaddy is also the 'Father of Jealousy'. Jealousy causes war: Nobodaddy loves 'hanging & drawing & quartering/Every bit as well as war & slaughtering' (E490/K185). But he is also, in line with the ambiguous Satanic imagery we have been discussing, the 'wily serpent'. In this avatar he can be related to the 'sneaking serpent' whose 'mild humility' is scorned in 'The Argument' to The Marriage. The two aspects of Nobodaddy are also the differing qualities of Tiriel and Har, or of King and Priest -- hanging and quartering on the one hand, and sneaking humility on the other. The connection of these two traits is much clearer now, however: each has its roots in the jealous denial of Energy. As far as Paradise Lost is concerned, Blake's sketch of Father, Son, and Satan in the Notebook suggests that he associates the orthodox conception of Christ with hypocritical humility, and the Father with tyranny. In his own myth-making, however, both traits are subsumed under Nobodaddy, or Urizen. In the same way, Blake's description of Milton's Trinity in The Marriage cannot be neatly assimilated to his later systems: 'the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses. & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!' In the symbolic poems these predicates can all be coupled with Urizen himself: leaving aside the philosophical and scientific references, both Destiny and the Ratio are kinds of limitation applied, as it were, 'because there is nothing to be restrained' ('Vacuum'). For Blake, this is the real Satan.

Another example of the reversal of the values of Paradise Lost can be found in those sections of America and Europe which, like The French Revolution, contain elements of a parody of Pandaemonium. The truth is that before he wrote either America or Europe Blake was writing at least a fragment which would show the reaction of the English King and Parliament to the American Revolution much as The French Revolution had treated the French King and Parliament. This can be seen from a careful examination of the texts of America and Europe, and of the cancelled plates of America. Dr. Andrew Lincoln has pointed out in a clever note in Notes and Queries (1978), that in copy a (B.M. proof copy) of Europe Enitharmon's dream is not present (Pls.9-13 inc., in the numbering on which Keynes now agrees with Erdman); and he suggests that they were not part of the original conception of the poem.³² This means that the original version (which would also, like the proof copy, lack Plate iii, about the Fairy and the tulip) was largely a song of Enitharmon's triumph, without the historical allegory of Albion's Angel contained in Plates 9-13. These plates were added later. But that does not mean that they all contain newer material. The opposite is my contention: the subject of Albion's Angel recalls America, and the reason is that those parts of Enitharmon's dream which concern him originally went with the text on certain cancelled and uncanceled plates of America. Thus:

1. America cancelled Pls. a, b.
2. Europe Pl.9:14-16; Pl.10.
- (?3. America Pl.4:2-11 (more conjectural); Pls.5-8.)

For a reconstruction of the text, see Appendix.

32. A.W.J. Lincoln, 'Blake's "Europe": An Early Version?', NQ, N.S. Vol.XXV, No.3 (June, 1978), p.213.

Note that the argument is not based on plates, but on the idea of an original text. There can, I think, be no doubt that there was a fragment closely resembling the text that results from the collation of the above sections of America and Europe: the connection between items 1. and 2. above is particularly striking. My only doubt concerns the specific nature of the material that originally followed these 'items'. But in general outline it must have been close to the subject matter of 3.

The fragment established gives a clear, consecutive narrative involving Albion's Angel: Washington looks across the Atlantic; Albion's Prince is in his dragon form; he takes on his angel form, and becomes Albion's Angel in the 'hall of counsel' built when Urizen called the stars around his feet; Sotha, the outbreak of war, causes the hall and the 'Angelic seats' to collapse; the Angels lie 'buried beneath the ruins of that hall' for one hour (Europe 9:14, E62/K241); then they arise in pain and follow Albion's Angel to his serpent temple at Verulam; they discover the Stone of Night; Orc appears; Albion's Angel stands beside the Stone, sees Orc, and begins to converse with him.

Apart from its consecutiveness, this ordering explains the sudden appearance of the 'temple' in Plate 5 of America: in fact, the temple had already been described in the material which finally ended up in Europe Plate 10. The same argument explains the appearance of the Stone of Night.

But the most striking feature of the text thus produced, at least from our point of view, is that, at some

time from 1790-1793 Blake should be trying to write a poem, which alludes to Book II of Paradise Lost, in which each of the opposing figures is described in the same Satanic terms: Albion's Angel, the reactionary force, is 'The fiery King' and his temple is 'serpent-form'd' (Eur.10:2, E62/K241) like Orc, who is 'a Human fire fierce glowing' (Am. 4:8, E52/K197). Blake seems to have been disturbed by this similarity in what were supposed to be opposing forces. In America cancelled Plate c all phrases suggestive of fire and heat are deleted where they apply to Albion's Angel, and are replaced by phrases redolent of coldness.

...silent stood the King breathing
 [with flames del.][hoar frosts del.] damp mists,
 And on his [shining del.] aged limbs they clasp'd
 the armour of terrible gold.
 Infinite London's awful spires cast a dreadful
 [gleam del.] cold...
 (Am. c:5-7; K205. From Keynes, for
 clarity's sake, but see E724-25.)

Nevertheless, in the final version of America, Albion's Angel remains fiery. But in the original version there was an attempt to show that Albion's Angel was a venerable-seeming disguise, with 'snowy beard' and 'white garments' adopted by the real character 'Albions fiery Prince', who subsisted beneath the disguise.

This vacillation in Blake's use of symbolism reflects the fact that both Albion's Angel and Orc are subject to the laws of Urizen's universe: if the latter is constrained to the closed form of a serpent, the former is the instrument of that constraint.

Such vacillation, however, can hardly be adduced to show that Orc is definitely a malignant figure in America.

But it is even harder to evaluate the use of imagery one would customarily associate with Orc to describe the Urizenic Albion's Angel. Some clues to this problem can be found in For Children: The Gates of Paradise (issued 1793). This little emblem-book was in preparation in the Notebook during the years when The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and, presumably, the ur-America were being composed. Plates 2-5 of The Gates (Erdman numbering: IB) are emblems of the four elements. The last element is Fire. The Notebook sketch for this plate (N91) shows that Blake identified Fire with Milton's Satan: Blake subscribes to it the motto, 'Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool/His mighty stature' (Paradise Lost I, 221-22).

The complete series is about the Progress of the Soul: a fact which is obvious in itself, but which is emphasized by a motto for one of the Notebook emblems (N85) which did not get into the final series: it is from Donne's The Progresse of the Soule. The idea of the emblems of the four elements is that the soul must progress through submission to Nature, symbolized by the elements themselves. Fire, the term of the series, is the means of breaking free of the power of Nature: here Fire represents Energy as the positive force of The Marriage. For this reason it is followed by the emblem 'At length for hatching ripe he breaks the shell', which shows another alchemical symbol, the Philosophers' Egg or Mundane Egg: the soul breaks the shell of Nature. Much of the meaning of this sequence is contained in another poem by Donne, which draws on alchemical imagery, the second Anniversary of An Anatomie of the World, 'Of the Progresse of the Soule':

This to thy Soule allow,
 Thinke thy shell broke, think thy Soule hatch'd but now.
 And think this slow-pac'd soule, which late did cleave
 To'a body, and went but by the bodies leave,
 Twenty, perchance, or thirty mile a day,
 Dispatches in a minute all the way
 Twixt heaven, and earth; she staves not in the ayre,
 To looke what Meteors there themselves prepare;
 She carries no desire to know, nor sense,
 Whether th'ayres middle region be intense;
 For th'element of fire, she doth not know,
 Whether she past by such a place or no;
 She baits not at the Moone, nor cares to trie
 Whether in that new world, men live, and die.³³
 (183-86)

According to Donne we must think that we are 'enfranchis'd' by Death (179), Blake's Natural World. And Blake chooses to regard the Element of Fire as the first step on the way to this end. The figure of Fire, then, is the Miltonic Satan of The Marriage -- or primordial Energy.

But the other elements also have mottoes in the Notebook:

1. Water: 'O that the Everlasting had not fix'd
 his canon gainst Self slaughter'
 (Hamlet I, ii, 131-32; N95)
2. Earth: Rest Rest perturbed Spirit
 (Hamlet I, v, 182; N93)
3. Air: 'Thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God'
 (Ezekiel 28:6; N94)

Blake was certainly meditating on the meaning of the various passages from which he culled mottoes. And when we add the Milton quotation for 'Fire' to those of the other elements, we can see that he is interested in passages which involve the notion of usurpation: Claudius's usurpation in Hamlet; the attempted usurpation by the Covering Cherub (traditionally identified with Lucifer) in Ezekiel; and the feeling of Milton's

33. From the edition of Sir Herbert Grierson, Donne: Poetical Works (London, 1933), p.232.

Satan that his place has been usurped by Messiah. Indeed, The Gates of Paradise as a whole has strong Oedipal overtones: consider the emblem of David and Absalom (No.8) and that of 'Aged Ignorance' (No.11). The reason for all this is that these emblems refer to the same myth as does The Marriage: that of Reason as usurper.

But in that case, why is Reason present merely as one of the struggling elements ('Air', No.4) in The Gates? This is because the emblems are seen in the Microcosm, from the point of view of the progress of the soul: Reason must not be shown as a fixed entity. As Frank M. Parisi says of the emblems of the elements, 'Each plate can be seen as simply a different view of the same melancholy affliction'.³⁴ The fact that Blake was thinking about the condition of Melancholy is suggested by the later version of The Gates (For the Sexes; c.1818) where, in 'The Keys', Blake refers to Earth as 'Struggling thro Earths Melancholy' (E265/K770). Although the association of Earth and Melancholy is well established, it is clear that Blake saw the other elements as equally afflicted, as Parisi demonstrates. Hamlet's suicidal remark, for instance, is given to Water: there is no more typical melancholiac than Hamlet, nor any remark of his more indicative of his type. As with all the mottoes it is worth following the lead and looking at the passage from which Blake took the quotation:

O! that this too^{too} solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;

34. Frank M. Parisi, 'Emblems of Melancholy: For Children: The Gates of Paradise', Phillips, ed.cit., p.81.

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
 How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
 Seem to me all the uses of this world.
 Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely.³⁵ (Hamlet I, ii, 129-37)

Blake interprets this as expressing a melancholy that goes with life in the natural world. The 'unweeded garden' appears in Emblem 1, which shows a woman plucking children from beneath a tree.³⁶ In the Notebook this is glossed by the motto 'I found him beneath a tree in the Garden' (N63). Our natural part has grown in the garden of Nature, and is afflicted with the melancholy which is consequent on the Fall. The constraints of the 'solid flesh' will ultimately be melted away by Fire -- or 'vaporized', in alchemical parlance.

'Rest Rest perturbed Spirit', the Notebook motto to Earth, comes, of course, from the Ghost scene in Hamlet. The Ghost of Hamlet's father works 'i'the earth' like 'A worthy pioner' (II, v, 162-63). Earlier in the scene the Ghost states that his hour is 'almost come,/When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames/Must render up myself....Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature/Are burnt and purg'd away' (II, v, 2-4; 12-13). Blake would interpret this, too, allegorically: it is the part of Fire to burn away the dross of Nature.

The figure of Air is clearly melancholy, as his expression and posture indicate. The emblem is associated with

35. Quotations from Shakespeare: Complete Works, ed. W.J. Craig (London, 1945).

36. The children grow like mandrakes, and, as Erdman points out, 'Donne's "The Progresse of the Soule"...'defines "a living buried man" as a "quiet mandrake" (stanza 16)'. .

Reason. It is an error to identify oneself with the rational principle, to set one's heart as the heart of God. But this Covering Cherub is not necessarily the same figure as the one mentioned in the later works. The impulse to rebel against the fallen condition of humanity is indicated in the Notebook motto, and by the context of the emblem itself.

The figure of Fire, though representing a partial liberation, is no less afflicted by Melancholy, as we can see if we look at the speech Satan delivers after he has reared himself off the fiery pool:

'Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,'
Said then the lost Archangel, 'this the seat
That we must change for heav'n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light?'....
...Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells!'

(PL I: 242-50)

The passage about Satan flying from the fiery pool itself provides striking evidence that Blake was reading his sources in the light of philosophical alchemy:

Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
He lights, if it were land that ever burned
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,
Adn such appeared in hue; as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
Of thund'ring Etna, whose combustible
And fueled entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singèd bottom all involved
With stench and smoke....

(PL I: 225-37; my emphasis)

Milton is referring to alchemy when he uses the word 'Sublimed', which means 'vaporized': sublimation was an important part of the Great Work, and there is no doubt that Blake would have thought this passage of alchemical significance. Even more

would he have thought the confusion of elements out of which Satan rears himself an apt description of the Bath of the Philosophers: indeed 'liquid fire' is very much the sort of language the alchemists themselves used. It is interesting to reflect that Milton was acquainted with the works of Boehme, though this does not necessarily affect the question of Blake's interpretation of Milton's works.³⁷

At the point before it was about to be putrefied, the alchemical amalgam of elements was said to pass through a 'nigredo' or melancholy stage.³⁸ For this reason the mixture was thought to be under the influence of Saturn, and was sometimes symbolized by the figure of Saturn.³⁹ It is highly relevant to an interpretation of The Gates, then, that Dryden's version of The Knight's Tale, which provides the motto for Emblem 6 of The Gates, contains the following description of the rule of Saturn, noticed by Frank M. Parisi:

Mine is the Shipwreck in a Watry Sign;
 And in an Earthy, the dark Dungeon mine.
 Cold shivering Agues, melancholy Care,
 And bitter blasting Winds, and poison'd Air,
 Are mine, and wilful Death, resulting from Despair.

.
 When Churls rebel against their Native Prince,
 I arm their Hands, and furnish the Pretence!⁴⁰

(Fables III, 397-419)

Saturn, then, rules all the elements. But apart from these,

37. Margaret Lewis Bailey, Milton and Jakob Boehme (New York, 1914).

38. C.G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy (London, 1953), p.36. Being Vol.XII of The Collected Works of C.G. Jung (London, 1953-71).

39. E.G. in Daniel Stolcius de Stolcenberg, Hortulus Hermeticus (Frankfurt, 1627), p.157.

40. Quoted and discussed in Parisi, 'Emblems of Melancholy', p.82.

the last two lines remind one of Blake's Orc and of his conception of Milton's Satan. But even rebels are subject to Saturn and will soon learn that his influence is not to be evaded by rebellion in this world.

What is the relevance of all this to Urizen? That the world is subject to the rule of Saturn and Melancholy goes a long way towards explaining Urizen's notably Saturnine appearance, and Blake's use of the traditional iconography of Saturn for the figures of Time and Death in the Night Thoughts illustrations. Parisi points out that The Gates of Paradise Emblem No.8 ('My Son! my Son!'), though ostensibly about David and Absalom, makes use of many motifs derived from 'traditional depictions of melancholy and of Saturn' in its portrayal of King David: these include the drooping head, the clenched fist, and the appearance of resignation.⁴¹ And I myself would add the more obvious facts of the long white hair and beard, which are clearly relevant to the iconography of Urizen. This design also alludes to the fact that Saturn was dethroned by his son Jupiter, indicating that Blake is once more thinking syncretically about myths, and trying to find universal images for the idea of rebellion against the conditions of the fallen world. This emblem, and its placing after the hopeful emblem of Fire, indicates that Blake was, indeed, already beginning to think pessimistically about the role of Energy in the fallen world.

It is also interesting to note that Blake's mind turns as naturally to Hamlet as to Milton's Satan for an

41. Ibid., pp.83-4.

image of the melancholy Traveller. He must be thinking of Milton's Satan as akin to a tragic character: he would presumably have agreed with Helen Gardner that Milton, writing of Satan, was 'a tragic artist'.⁴² When he has become hostile to Energy, Blake sees the tragic hero in a different light: he begins to draw on Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet and Milton's Satan in order to describe Urizen: this is what happens in Vala. Helen Gardner says:

If we can say of a speech of Satan's that it fails to be roaring farce only because it spells agony, we can say the same of Macbeth, complaining at the close of a career of murderous egoism that he has no friends... 43

Blake comes to see Reason and Energy as mutually dependent, and, as we shall see the tendency for Satanic imagery to be associated with each of these faculties remains pronounced.

But in the years 1790-94 the confusion is the product of the rather subtle view of Energy which sees it as necessary though limited purgative. This position, however, renders the differences between the Urizenic and the Orc-like Satanic figures difficult to convey, with the result that there is evidence of indecision in Blake's composition of the material which went to the making of America and Europe. For if Energy is limited, it is Reason that has limited it:

'Thought chang'd the infinite to a serpent; that which pitieth:/
To a devouring flame....' (Europe 10:16-17, E62/K241) Uri-
zen is associated with the limited aspect of the serpent;
Orc with the serpent as a partial image of the Infinite.

42. Gardner, op. cit., p.115.

43. Ibid., p.114.

From this ambivalent relationship it is a small step to the sense of the positive collusion of these powers.

3. Urizen and the Bard.

The sneaking serpent of The Marriage does not actually appear in Songs of Experience. But he does appear in those Notebook poems from which the completed series evolved, and is clearly one of the associations Blake had with the cunning of weak minds. Thus the first version of 'Infant Sorrow' has the infant's desires blighted by a priest who is also a serpent (N113). The priest takes over where the parents, with their 'swadling bands', leave off:

Like a serpent in the night
He embracd my mirtle bright
Like a serpent in the day
Underneath my vine he lay

(Reconstruction at E 720. But see K167.)

This version gives the complete history of the successful repression of an individual from cradle to grave: society continues the work of the family:

So I smote him & his gore
Staind the roots my mirtle bore
But the time of youth is fled
And grey hairs are on my head

(E720)

But the ideas which go into the making of Urizen find a more unexpected expression in the 'Introduction' to Experience. None of the many commentators on this poem is prepared to allow any criticism of the Bard. One of the most sophisticated readings is that of Robert F. Gleckner, who is very conscious

of the 'ambiguity' of the poem.⁴⁴ He puts this down to Blake's 'apparently chaotic punctuation', but wisely implies that this, to some degree, serves Blake's purpose:

Blake himself hints at the correct reading immediately by means of the ambiguity of the first stanza. There are actually two voices in the poem, the Bard's ('Hear the voice of the Bard'), and the Holy Word's ('Calling the lapsed Soul'); and the second stanza, because of its apparently chaotic punctuation, must be read as modifying both voices. The last two stanzas are the words of both voices, perfectly in context when the dual purpose of the poem is recognized. Only in this way can the poem be seen for what it is, an introduction to the state and the songs of experience, in which the Holy Word of Jehovah is hypocritical, selfish, and jealous, thinking and acting in terms of the physical phenomena of day and night and the earthly morality of rewards and punishments. The Bard, mortal but prophetically imaginative, thinks and acts by eternal time and according to eternal values.⁴⁵

This has many merits, but it fails to explain the relationship between the two voices; in particular, it fails to explain why, if the Bard is so 'prophetically imaginative', he should be reporting, however indirectly, sentiments which can be attributed to a tyrannical deity. In fact, as we shall demonstrate, the notion that the Bard, simply because he is a Bard, must be an approved figure, is an unwarranted assumption. Consider first the poem:

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk'd among the ancient trees.

44. Robert F. Gleckner, 'Point of View and Context in Blake's Songs', BNYPL, Vol. LXI, No.11 (November 1957), p.535. See also the longer, but not essentially different, discussion in his The Piper and the Bard: A Study of William Blake (Detroit, 1959), pp.231-39.

45. Gleckner, 'Point of View', pp.535-37.

Calling the lapsed Soul
 And weeping in the evening dew;
 That might controll,
 The starry pole;
 And fallen fallen light renew!

O Earth O Earth return!
 Arise from out the dewy grass;
 Night is worn,
 And the morn
 Rises from the slumberous mass.

Turn away no more:
 Why wilt thou turn away
 The starry floor
 The watry shore
 Is giv'n thee till the break of day.
 (E18/K210)

To say that there are two voices in this poem is a handy formulation, but it remains open to misunderstanding. It is better to say that most of the lines in the poem are ambiguous, not merely those in the last two stanzas. For example, we are told that the Bard sees 'Present, Past, & Future'. This refers to his prophetic faculty; but it could mean that he is the kind of prophet who divides and measures time. The Bard has given ear to 'The Holy Word': this could mean that he is a passive recipient of the words of a law-giving deity; or else that he is inspired.

When the Bard, reporting what the Holy Word has imparted, or else what he has been inspired to say, promises that the Soul 'might controll,/ The starry pole' this could mean that she can regain control over Destiny; or else that she herself may exercise the dominion of the tyrannical stars.

The lines 'Night is worn,/ And the morn/Rises from the slumberous mass' seem unambiguously hopeful. But this is not so. For, as Gleckner notices, they can be understood to be deferring joy until some promised future. Earth herself (the Soul) asks, correctly, 'Can delight/Chain'd in night/The

virgins of youth and morning bear' ('Earth's Answer' 13-15, E18-19/K211). For the Bard has said that 'The starry floor/
The watry shore/ Is giv'n thee till break of day'. The world of Time and Space is offered for want of better. But is it offered with a sense of its inferiority, or with the sense that it is a gift?

But, of course, the answer is 'both'. Some years later Blake would write 'Time is the mercy of Eternity' (Milton 24:72, E120/K150). But the 'Introduction' to Experience already addresses this problem. And problem it was: Blake never gives decisive grounds for thinking that time is a large or a small mercy. Los is Time in its creative aspect. But the Los of the Lambeth books is infected with the limitations of the fallen world: he it is, after all, who gives birth to the Chain of Jealousy (BU20:24, E79/K233). Los, as the Eternal Prophet, is clearly related to the prophetic Bard. We may therefore be justified in thinking that Earth, in her answer, is addressing the Bard as 'Starry Jealousy'.

Most commentators assume that she is addressing the Holy Word, or 'Jehovah'. Gleckner himself reminds us of the 'obvious reference' in 'Introduction' stanza 1 to 'Genesis iii' where Jehovah appears.⁴⁶ But Blake was aware, as we shall see, that the Creator is called 'Elohim' in Genesis I, but that the God who appears to Adam and Eve in the Garden is Jehovah. Elohim is the invisible deity of abstraction, Jehovah the misguided inspiration of the Hebrew prophets. We shall go more deeply into these matters in Chapter VII. For the moment suffice it to say that the Bard is made in the

46. Ibid., p.535.

image of Jehovah, a misguided Spirit of Prophecy.

But is there any justification elsewhere in Blake for this pessimistic view of the Bard? Indeed there is. In his illustrations to Gray's 'The Bard' the title-page design shows an old man with a long white beard, holding a harp and standing by the shore ('The watry shore'?) wearing a dark blue gown covered with stars.⁴⁷ The subject of the poem is the revenge wished on Edward I's race by the Bard: in other words, the corruption of the bardic (and, of course, prophetic) impulse by its adoption of the state of mind that leads to tyranny. In the final illustration to this poem (numbered '13') we see the Bard, now in a typically Urizenic white gown, plunging into the sea. Blake is referring to such notions of the Bard when he describes 'the last of the Bards who were capable of attending warlike deeds...seen falling' (Desc. Cata., E536/K58C). We know from The Marriage (11) that Priesthood has its source in 'poetic tales'. If the Bard falls far enough he becomes Urizen; and indeed the two figures always look alike.

The intellectual context within which Blake worked out this conception of the decline of poetry into religious system will be described in the ensuing chapter. But, for the moment, we can conclude that the idea of Urizen was evolved very much in conjunction with those characters who represented opposed ideas. There is already the sense that

47. Repro. in Geoffrey Keynes, ed., William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray (London, 1972), 3 vols., Vol.II, 'The Bard', No.1.

the limitations of Urizen and Orc are closely bound up with each other, a sense that will lead, in Vala, to the idea of their positive collusion. There is also the implication that Urizen is a fallen form of the Bard: a Bard, if you like, for whom 'bound' has become a limit.

Nevertheless, by the time he wrote Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1793) there were the rudiments, if not the flesh, of a character who could successfully combine all the various associations we have been discussing. Urizen is ultimately to blame for the Philosophy of the Five Senses, and this is now explicitly linked with the One Law, another form of the same spirit of restriction:

But knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
To gratify senses unknown?

.....

...is there not one law for both the lion and the ox?
(4:14-22, E47/K192)

These words come from Bromion's lamentation, in which he appears to repudiate, in some agony, his own knowledge that there is more than the One Law and more than the five senses.

And Urizen is already, in this poem, both the fussy well-intentioned fool ('mistaken Demon of heaven', 5:3, E47/K192: my emphasis) and the monstrous tyrant who flies, in the title-page illumination, (Repro. IB127) in pursuit of Oothoon -- a design which has found its way there from among several drawings of flying, bearded monsters on pages 15 to 17 of the Notebook.

CHAPTER SIXPRIMITIVE BARDS AND THE DECLINE OF POETRY

In our discussion of Poetical Sketches we referred the song 'To the Muses', following Geoffrey Hartman, to current eighteenth-century speculation about ¹ the decline or development of poetry since ancient times. Such theories also inform Gray's ode on the 'Progress of Poesy' or Collins's 'On the Poetical Character'. But few eighteenth-century people, least of all Blake, were able to keep such theories separate from ideas about the origin and progress of religion, law, philosophy, or political institutions. Blake's 'Poetical Genius' was the 'true faculty of knowing' and the source of 'The Religions of all Nations' and 'all sects of Philosophy' (ARO, Argument, V, III, E2/K98). In the following pages I intend to illuminate Blake's distinction between spontaneous poetic vision and moribund systems of belief by reference to eighteenth century primitivist literature; and to relate that distinction to the analagous one between living and mechanic Form. This will strengthen the suggestion that Urizen is in large measure the personification of the process of abstraction and of the state of abstraction itself; where abstraction is taken, in Blake's sense, to mean that which extracts, from the living products of genius, general forms and ideas. This survey will involve another departure from chronology, as Blake was always a primitivist.

1. Hartman, op. cit.

1. Primitive Poetry

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (Plate 11) gives Blake's clearest account of the derivation of organised religion from poetic mythology. In the present context it is worth quoting once again, this time in full:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could percieve.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country. placing it under its mental deity.

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood.

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronouncd that the Gods had orderd such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

(E37/K153)

If it were looked at in isolation from Blake's other works, this passage would seem like the merest reiteration of the common eighteenth-century theme of the origin of idolatry or superstition. But in fact the word 'system' has characteristic, if ambiguous, connotations for Blake: 'I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans' (Jerusalem 10:20, E151/K629). And the same ambiguity is present in The Marriage: it is hard to say whether the poets are to be blamed for creating the system in the first place, or the priests for abstracting from it. There is no easy way out of this ambiguity: the poet and the priest, system as creative

and system as regulative, will always oppose each other in the fallen world. But the error does seem to lie in 'abstraction' rather than in system.

The statement that 'All deities reside in the human breast' also has roots deeper than the soil of eighteenth-century controversy, in the remnants of antinomian Protestant tradition which provided Blake with some of his basic religious notions.²

But though it is especially foolish to reduce Blake to this or that source, there is, of course, much to be gained from examining contemporary writings. Who, for instance, are 'the ancient Poets'? It might seem easy to skim over the phrase without according it its proper weight; for the 'ancient Poets' or 'ancient Bards' were a distinct species in contemporary literature. Richard Eastcott, for example, devotes a chapter of his book on them to quotations 'collected for the purpose of explaining the CHARACTER of an ancient bard more fully.'³

It is worth quoting a passage from a book which may possibly have been in Blake's mind when he wrote the section of Marriage above; for it sums up many of the topics which we shall be dealing with. It is in George Richards' Essay on the Characteristic Differences between Ancient and Modern Poetry (1789). After asserting that genius is found in 'all ages and countries', but that it differs according

2. Morton, op. cit., p.83.

3. Richard Eastcott, Sketches of the Origin, Progress and Effects of Music, with an Account of the Ancient Bards and Minstrels (Bath 1793), p.111.

4

to 'time and place' Richards goes on to give the following account of the growth of religious systems:

The mythology of Greece and Rome is formed upon the external appearance of nature, and the internal passions of man. The virtues and vices of the human mind were invested with a bodily form, and endowed with life and action by the creative pen of the poet. The trees, rivers, and mountains, were possessed with their guardian deities, whose attributes and employments were beautifully appropriated to the scenery over which they presided. While the greater divinities were formed upon the more exalted and royal personages of humanity: the grateful simplicity of a rude and superstitious age, in the extravagance of admiration, deified their first heroes and benefactors; and assigned to them in the regions of the dead, and through the palaces of heaven, the same illustrious employments which had signalized and ennobled their mortal character.

In opposition to this simple and interesting mythology, modern nations have brought forward various systems of religious machinery. The fairies and genii.... Later ages have advanced still further, and peopled the air and elements with imaginary and spiritual inhabitants....

But the system of Gothic mythology presents a more gloomy and tremendous appearance. The inhabitants of the north, living under a dark and stormy sky, amidst dreary and extensive woods and forests, had filled their imaginations with ideas of the most wild and terrific spectres. They assimilated their conceptions of superior beings to the countries in which they resided, and produced a system of religious machinery congenial with the horrors of their soil...⁵

Richards admires the Gothic, which to his mind 'resembles the castles of enchantment, not built by mortal hands, nor reducible to the rules of a human architect', and modern poetry, he thinks, has been improved by 'the system of the Christian religion'.⁶ Richards' taste is not always

4. George Richards, An Essay on the Characteristic Differences between Ancient and Modern Poetry, The Oxford English Prize Essays 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1836), 5 vols., Vol. I, p. 241.

5. Ibid., pp. 267-69. 6. Ibid., p.269.

Blake's: he objects to the 'admission of heathen gods into Gothic tales' because it destroys 'probability', though on the other hand Blake would probably have agreed that the 'introduction of fables and allegories amid the awful revelations of our holy religion, is vicious in the extreme'.⁷ He would also have agreed that 'The spirit of poetic genius did not exhaust itself' with Homer.⁸

These views are typical of eighteenth-century speculation in every respect: the theory of climatic effects on human nature; the contrast of Gothic and Classical; the mythologizing poet as the source of religion; and the Euhemerist theory of great men becoming gods, present in Blake, for instance, when he describes the 'stories of Arthur' as the 'acts of Albion, applied to a Prince of the fifth century' (Desc. Cata., E534/K578). All these matters have been discussed from various aspects by other writers.⁹ But it is illuminating to rehearse them in their present pertinence to the study of Blake.

The first extended primitivist theory of the origins and progress of poetry is that of Thomas Blackwell in his Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer. We need not concern ourselves here with his concomitant theory of linguistic

7. Ibid., p. 270.

8. Ibid., p. 272.

9. See Hartman, *op. cit.*; Abrams, *loc. cit.*; Frank E. Manuel, The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods (Cambridge, Mass., 1959; Roston, *op.cit.*

origins, influential as it was, for this kind of speculation seems to have held little interest for Blake. We may surmise that a theory which states that language began with certain 'rude accidental Sounds' would not be congenial to him.¹⁰

Blackwell, describing Homer as a 'blind strolling Bard', proceeds to expound the ancient idea the 'Poetry was before Prose'; he is able to deduce this from his theory that primitive language is 'expressive ... of the highest Passions, and most striking Objects that present themselves in solitary savage Life'.¹¹ The ancients spoke musically because linguistic origins were emotive.¹²

In his detailed characterization of early poetry, he makes much use of a fact that will be much repeated: that the first Greek writings, 'as Oracles, Laws, Spells, Prophecies, were in Verse; and yet they got the simple Name of ... Words or Sayings'.¹³ Such verses are intensely metaphorical, because primitive language is intensely metaphorical.¹⁴ Homer lived at that propitious moment when the Greek language 'was brought to express all the best and bravest of the human Feelings, and retained a sufficient Quantity of its Original, amazing, metaphorick Tincture'.¹⁵ At the same time, then, 'their Theology

10. Thomas Blackwell, An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (London, 1735), p. 38.

11. Ibid., pp. 5, 38, 40.

12. Ibid., p. 38.

13. Ibid., p. 40.

14. Ibid., p. 41.

15. Ibid., p. 46.

was a Fable, and their moral Instructions an allegorical Tale'.¹⁶ The specific elements of Greek religion were derived from Egypt, whence Homer and Hesiod probably brought the 'entire System'.¹⁷ The Egyptians, true to type, are credited here with the invention of priesthood and superstition, though Blackwell's attitude to this is ambivalent where Blake's would be condemnatory:

[The Egyptians] ... early observed the Curbs of the human Passions, and the Methods of governing a large Society. They saw the general Bent of Mankind, to admire what they do not understand, and to stand in awe of unknown Powers...¹⁸

Therefore they 'made their Rites mysterious, and delivered their allegorical Doctrines under great Ties of profound and pious Secrecy.'¹⁹ Blake could not fail to be impressed by the similarity between Egyptian priests, Roman Catholic priests, and Druids; a similarity made explicit from a deistical point of view by John Toland, for example. But the idea that had the strongest repercussions in primitivist literature was that of the ancient union in poetry of all those capacities later directed into different departments of the Arts and Sciences. As Blackwell says:

'TIS TRUE, there was as yet no Separation of Wisdom: The Philosopher and the Divine, the Legislator and the Poet, were all united in the same Person. Such was Orpheus ... 20

16. Ibid. p. 48.

17. Ibid., p. 98.

18. Ibid., p. 50.

19. ~~Ibid.~~

20. Ibid., p. 84

A book which is very explicit about the breadth of powers possessed by the ancient bard is John Brown's Dissertation on the Rise, Union, and Power, the Progressions, Separations, and Corruptions, of Poetry and Music (1763). The 'barbarous Legislators or Bards', he says, sing songs 'of a legislative Cast; and being drawn chiefly from the Fables or History of their own Country, would contain the essential Parts of their religious, moral, and political Systems.'²¹

Eastcott, more prosaically, says that 'The laws of the ancient Germans were written in verse, and the stanzas in which they were composed were generally sung.'²² Not only this, for we also find that at this period 'music, and the spirit of prophecy, were united in the same persons'.²³ And Adam Ferguson, in his Essay on the History of Civil Society, describes the poet as 'the first to offer the fruits of his genius, and to lead in the career of those arts by which the mind is destined to exhibit the imaginations, and to express its passions'.²⁴ And he concludes:

The early history of all nations is uniform in this particular. Priests, statesmen, and philosophers, in the first ages of Greece, delivered their instructions in poetry, and mixed with the dealers in music and heroic fable.²⁵

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21. John Brown, A Dissertation on the Rise, Union, and Power, the Progressions, Separations, and Corruptions, of Poetry and Music (London, 1763), p. 39.
22. Eastcott, op. cit., p. 31.
23. Ibid., p. 14
24. Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society, 6th. edn. (London, 1793), p. 288.
25. Ibid., p. 290.

Of special interest to us is the notion that prophecy and poetry were originally not distinguished from one another: it was Robert Lowth's Praelectiones de Sacra Poesi Habraeorum (1753) which made this notion an axiom among later primitivist writers. These lectures were a 'milestone', as Murray Roston puts it, for the particular reason that they showed even the Hebrew prophets to be poets inspired in the most fervid fashion.²⁶ Indeed, it is poetry which is dependent on the prophetic faculty, understood in the widest sense:

Is it not probable, that the first effort of rude and unpolished verse would display itself in the praise of the Creator, and flow almost involuntarily from the enraptured mind?²⁷

Something of the scandalous effect of Lowth's remarks may be gauged from many passages which show that his conception of poetry is very far from the neo-classical:

... as some of these writings exceed in antiquity the fabulous age of Greece, in sublimity they are superior to the most finished productions of that polished people. Thus if the actual origin of Poetry be inquired after, it must of necessity be referred to Religion... it must be wholly attributed to the more violent affections of the heart, the nature of which is to express themselves in an animated and lofty tone, with a vehemence of expression far remote from vulgar use.²⁸

26. Roston, op. cit., p. 21.

27. Robert Lowth, Lectures (op. cit.), Vol. I., p. 38.

28. Ibid., p. 37.

In fact, 'sacred Poetry ... is far superior to both nature and art', for art 'deduces its origin from the works of genius' and genius has not been 'formed or directed by art'.²⁹ The coincidence that 'bards ... were supposed to be endowed with a prophetic spirit', though it tended to detract from the uniqueness of the Hebrew prophets, also strengthened the belief that 'in the sacred writings the only specimens of the primeval and genuine poetry are to be found'.³⁰

It is not surprising that Blake is thought to have been acquainted with Lowth's writings, probably in Gregory's translation (1787).³¹ But his reception of those ideas would not, of course, be that of an antiquarian: he was interested in recreating the original, primitive poetry.

By the middle of the eighteenth century there is a wide scholarly agreement that there once existed a primitive, sublime kind of poetry, which was intensely metaphorical, was not fettered by 'rules', and of which Hebrew poetry, preëminently the Book of Job, is the finest example. Primitive poetry was not only synonymous with prophecy when it existed, but also comprised all of what were to become the separate branches of learning. There is a growing tendency to depreciate Greek and Roman poets, including Homer and Virgil,

29. Ibid., pp. 44, 45.

30. Eastcott, op.cit., p. 122; Lowth, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 50.

31. See., e.g. Morton D. Paley, op. cit., pp. 20-21, 46-7, 50.

by comparison with primitive models of various kinds: Greek and Roman poetry are seen as a falling off, or a lifeless imitation of older forms which were the direct product of genius. Conversely, the similarities between Homer, 'the strolling bard', and Lowth's unrestrained prophets tend to diminish the specifically religious function of the Hebrews, and give all primitive bards a common status as prophet-poets. Macpherson's Ossian poems (admired by Blake - E655/K783) gave a powerful impetus to all these notions; and the Celtic Bard plays a major part in writing after 1762.

Hugh Blair summarises all these tendencies: he acknowledges his debt to Lowth in his lecture on 'The Poetry of the Hebrew' (1783); he implies that the
 32
 Greeks and Romans are comparatively lacking in sublimity; and he maintains that the characteristics of Hebrew poetry are common to the poetry of all ancient nations:

Most of the ancient original Poets of all nations are simple and concise. The superfluities and excrescences of Style were the result of imitation in after-times; when Composition passed into inferior hands, and flowed from art and study, more than from native genius.³³

32. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres ed. Thomas Dale (London, 1845), p. 491.

33. Ibid.

Hebrew poetry is very metaphorical, and frequently allegorical:

Of Parables, which form a species of Allegory, the Prophetical writings are full: and if to us they sometimes appear obscure, we must remember, that in those early times, it was universally the mode throughout all the eastern nations, to convey sacred truths under mysterious figures and representations.³⁴

This is reminiscent of Blake's 'Sublime Allegory', since 'What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men' (Letters, K825, 793).

Blair also wrote an influential Critical Dissertation on Ossian. In this he rehearses the customary theories about the origins of poetry, using the speech of North American Indians as an example.³⁵ All 'human genius' descends originally from 'one spring', poetry, and that of the most unfettered kind; for these reasons it is probable 'that an extensive search would discover a certain degree of resemblance among all the most ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded'; and he adds that 'oriental poetry' is 'characteristical of an age rather than a country'; of this, 'the works of Ossian seem to furnish remarkable proof'.³⁶

Contemporaries of Blake continue and develop all these themes: Richard Eascott's 'Ancient Bards', for instance,

34. Ibid., p. 495.

35. [Hugh Blair], A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal (London, 1763), p.2.

36. Ibid., p.4.

are a universal phenomenon: we have already mentioned the title of the eighth chapter of his Sketches, which is devoted to quotations from the most diverse sources, including 'Ossian' and the Old Testament, 'collected for the purpose of explaining the CHARACTER of an ancient bard more fully'.³⁷ He even attaches great importance to the fact that peoples of the Southern Hemisphere have musical instruments similar to those 'used by the Egyptians, Hebrews, and Greeks'.³⁸ The effect of Eastcott's syncretism is to suggest that the venerable, harp-playing and prophesying bard is the original source of wisdom in every land whatsoever. If this theory is combined with that of patriarchal Christianity, it helps to support Blake's most ambitious claims for the Poetic Genius.

2. Patriarchal Religion

Blake clearly believed that the religion of the patriarchs was Christian - in his own peculiar sense: he himself claims that this has been proved by 'antiquaries' (Desc. Cata., E534/K578). Of course, he owed nothing to the marked deistic strain in writings about the patriarchs which maintained that Christianity was essentially Natural Religion and was therefore the religion of the ancients. Rather he made use of various supposed connections between religions, and supposed facts about them, in such fashion that they served as potent symbols for his own system:

37. Eastcott, op. cit. p. 111.

38. Ibid., p. 245.

the Druid trilithon, for instance, does not function in Blake's work as a mere reference to John Toland's unfavourable History of the Druids (1726): it also enters a new symbolic order in Blake's opposition of living and geometric form.

Blake seems to have read Stukeley's Abury (1743), whence he derived his symbol of the serpent-temple, 'image of infinite/Shut up in finite revolutions' (Europe 10: 21-22, E62/K241). Stukeley believed that Avebury was a temple of the Druids and that 'the religion profess'd in these places was the first, simple, patriarchal religion'.³⁹ However, it is clear that Blake followed Toland in thinking that Druidism was the 'complete History of Priestcraft'.⁴⁰ From his remarks at the beginning of the second chapter of Jerusalem we may safely conclude that he achieved a synthesis of these two positions: there Abraham and Noah are said to be Druids. Blake seems to have believed that there was an early, true Druidism, and a later, corrupt variety.⁴¹

Another book about Druids furnishes some clues about the content of the true Druidism: William Cooke's Enquiry into the Patriarchal and Druidical Religion is an ingeniously eclectic selection of plagiarisms, mostly culled

39. William Stukeley, Abury, a Temple of the British Druids (London, 1743), marked as Vol. II, but only one published, p.i.

40. John Toland, The History of the Druids, 2nd. edn., ed. K. Huddleston (Montrose 1814), p. 56.

41. See John Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe (Manchester, 1969), p. 18.

from Stukeley's pages. Explaining the name 'Abury', Cooke maintains that 'such as were the ABIRI worshiped in Britain; such also originally were the CABIRI worshiped in the East'.⁴² He agrees with the opinion that 'the Cabari were the Gods of the Phoenicians' and says, arguing from Hebrew and Arabic, that 'Cabiri in the plural are THE GREAT or MIGHTY ONES'.⁴³ Later he mentions in a footnote that Old Testament places of worship are described as 'before the Presence of GOD exhibited in the Cherubim to the Eastward of Paradise'.⁴⁴ He uses John Hutchinson (1647-1737) to explain this description.

Now Hutchinson's Cherubim have much in common with Cooke's Cabiri. One of Hutchinson's main doctrines was that the term Cherubim had not been properly understood; there had, in fact, been a 'Covenant of the Cherubim' which was the same as the Christian 'New Covenant', and of which the so-called Jewish Covenant was a perversion. We may surmise that Blake's 'Cherubim of Phoenicia' are derived from Hutchinson's Cherubim and from Cooke's 'Cabiri' and 'Abiri'.

Hutchinson's basic claim is this:

As the ... Cherubim, was a similitude of the

42. William Cooke, An Enquiry into the Patriarchal and Druidical Religion, Temples, & c. (London, 1754), p. 53.

43. Ibid., p. 54.

44. Ibid., p. 65n.

Divinity, and of man taken into the Essence, and becoming ... one Mighty to save; so the supreme [rbym, i.e. 'rubim'] are the Great ones, of whom we are allowed to take ideas from ... the names, or the heavens. They, ere the world began, became confederates under the bond of an oath, and so [alnym, i.e., 'Elohim']⁴⁵

Hutchinson's Cherubim are, then, like Cooke's Phoenician Cabiri, 'Great ones'. We may now make sense of the relevant passages in Blake's Descriptive Catalogue.

Visions of these eternal principles or characters of human life appear to poets, in all ages; the Grecian gods were the ancient Cherubim of Phoenicia; but the Greeks, and since them the Moderns, have neglected to subdue the gods of Priam. These Gods are visions of the eternal attributes, or divine names, which, when erected into gods, become destructive to humanity. (Desc. Cata., E527/K571; my emphasis.)

Hutchinson held that the Cherubim were emblems of aspects of God. These became the object of idolatrous worship:

The human head and body, the wings, hands, corona, and other insignia of the Cherubim, appear so frequently among the idolatrous symbols of worship, that a very small attention may serve to convince one, by comparing particulars, that the whole heathen cultus had a plain resemblance to the sacred institutions, from which it was originally stolen.⁴⁶

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45. Anon., An Abstract from the Works of John Hutchinson (Edinburgh, 1753), p. 221. This work is cited frequently because there is evidence, given below, that Blake had read it; its formulations are also more concise than those in Hutchinson's own works, and lend themselves more readily to selective quotation. Hebrew is transliterated in square brackets according to the conventional notation: I am grateful to Mr. Richard Judd, recently of Keble College, Oxford, for helping me with this.
46. Ibid. p 229.

In modern times, according to Hutchinson,

... the cause of Christianity is betray'd, revelation disbelieved, and men trust to their own merit, morality, repentance, &c. to intitile them to the joys of another world: youth have their heads early filled with heathen authors, mythology &c. but are never taught to understand them by a comparison with the perfect original from whence they are stolen and perverted ... 47 (My emphasis.)

Blake, using the same words, stated that 'the Poetry of the Heathen' was 'Stolen & Perverted from the Bible' (Notes on Dante Ills., E668/K785). As for modern philosophy, Hutchinson says (in what may be an allusion to his hatred of Newton) that it is 'made up of senseless Words for Non-Entities, instead of the Agents, their Powers and Actions, described in the Bible'.⁴⁸

The 'oath' or 'covenant' referred to above is that of 'JEHOVAH ALEIM' (i.e., Jehovah Elohim).⁴⁹ The covenant is that Jehovah Aleim will become a man, Christ the Messiah, and redeem men by forgiveness of sins. This goes a long way towards explaining certain obscure passages of Blake's The Ghost of Abel. Thus Hutchinson says:

The heathens were never so stupid as to think their crimes could be blotted out, unless their ALEIM were propitiated: and so they could listen to

47. Ibid., p. 244.

48. J.H. [John Hutchinson], The Religion of Satan, or Antichrist, Delineated (London, 1736), p. 114.

49. Absract from Hutchinson, p. 136.

our Almighty Saviour without prejudice, when he declared his merciful intentions, that himself was as ready as able to forgive sins ...⁵⁰

In The Ghost of Abel Satan says:

I will have Human Blood & not the blood of Bulls or Goats
And no Atonement O Jehovah the Elohim live on Sacrifice
Of Men: hence I am God of Men ...
(E269/K780)

But Jehovah says that Satan must go to Eternal Death.

And then a Chorus of Angels enters, singing:

The Elohim of the Heathen Swore Venegance for Sin!
Then Thou stoodst
Forth O Elohim Jehovah! in the midst of the darkness
of the Oath! All Clothed
In Thy Covenant of the Forgiveness of Sins ...
(E 270/K781)

The correspondences are very close, even to the distinction between Elohim Jehovah on the one hand and the 'Elohim of the Heathen' on the other.

'The Emblem of this grand adjuration between the ALEIM,' says Hutchinson, 'was ... an oak-tree': it signified peace: and he adds that 'This memorial was not lost even among the latter heathens'.⁵¹ He quotes Homer,

50. Ibid., p. 124.

51. Ibid., p. 222.

where Hector signifies the lack of peace between himself and Achilles by saying,

"There's no way from th'oak, or from the rock,
"To hold discourse with him." 52

And he goes on to say that Maximus Tyrius observes of the Druids, that they worshipped Jupiter under the form of a tall oak'.⁵³ This is the oak as object of idolatry, where it was once merely an emblem of the Covenant. These two types of oak are to be found in Blake: thus at the introduction to Chapter Two of Jerusalem he addresses the Jews:

Your Ancestors derived their origin from
Abraham, Heber, Shem, and Noah, who were Druids:
as the Druid Temples (which are the Patriarchal
Pallars & Oak Groves) over the whole Earth
witness to this day.
(E169/K649)

But on the other hand in The Ghost of Abel Satan promises to crucify Christ 'By the Rock & Oak of the Druid' (E269/K781): this refers to that period of fallen Druidism when the Elohim have become external gods, and the Divine Humanity is sacrificed on the Tree of Mystery. The Rock and the Oak become the 'serpent temple' at Avebury; the Cherubim become 'Abiri'.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., pp. 222-23.

The difference between the square trilitha of the Druid temples and the glories of the 'Cherubim of Phoenicia' may have been partly suggested by another of Stukeley's works. In his Palaeographica Sacra (1763) he describes the workmanship of Solomon's temple: 'vegetable productions furnish out the materials, and the forms of architecture'.⁵⁴ He says that 'all was carv'd with hexagonal network, like that of a honey comb; every cell filled with cherubim, fruits, and flowers, disposed in the most elegant taste Thus we see fruits and flowers introduc'd as fit concomitants to the heavenly inhabitants, the cherubim! and all these overlaid in the most exquisite manner, with purest gold'.⁵⁵ It might seem that Stukeley's 'glorys of the vegetable world' would render these Cherubim abhorrent to Blake.⁵⁶ But the emphasis of this passage, whether intended or not, rests on the transformation and organization of the vegetable world by art: it thus provides an analogy with Blake's Gothic or living Form: the contrast with the stones of Avebury is acute.

We must now enquire how this decline in vision came about, though we shall return to Hutchinson's writings in the next chapter.

3. The Decline of Poetry

We have discussed the theory that all knowledge was

54. William Stukeley, Palaeographica Sacra (London, 1763), p.7. This is not the same work as that of the same name by the same author published in 1736.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., p.9.

once united in poetry: a corollary of this was that a separation had ensued, changing the nature of poetry and of its offspring in a fashion that was sometimes described as a decline, sometimes as a progress. The change was often attributed to more fundamental changes in social or economic organization.

Blake believed there had been a decline: the systematization of thought; the growth of a system of laws in particular; the development of an organized religion and priesthood, and of abstract philosophy; and a movement in poetry and philosophy from the particular to the general, and from inspiration to method and rule. Urizen at one time or another encompasses all these tendencies: they are summed up in his fall and his creation of the material world.

Orpheus can stand as an example of the ancient poet who has turned towards abstraction and allegory-- one, moreover, who fathered the philosophy of the Greeks. Blackwell, we saw, thought of him in this light. Blake may very well have read Thomas Taylor's account of the 'Thracian bard'.⁵⁷ One passage is especially notable, because here Orpheus appears to be in a state half-way between the corrupt poet's and that of the true, 'animating' bard:

57. [Thomas Taylor], The Hymns of Orpheus (London, 1792), p.7.

Orpheus ... was the founder of theology, among the Greeks; the institutor of their life and morals; the first of prophets, and the prince of poets; himself the offspring of a Muse; who taught the Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perpetual and abundant fountain, the divine muse of Homer, and the philosophy of Pythagoras, and Plato, flowed; and, lastly, who by the melody of his lyre, drew rocks, woods, and wild beasts, stopt rivers in their course, and even moved the inexorable king of hell... 58

Blake, when he read this, or similar accounts of the original character of poetry, such as we examined above, would certainly not have felt bound to accept all the terms used or attitudes expressed: the notion of the original legislative character of poetry, for instance, would seem to him either an ex post facto moralistic misreading; or else the first stage in the decline. For Blake there is no clear division into moral, philosophical, legal and political within the unity of the Imagination. The most one could say is that these were aspects of that unity.

But the manner in which the corruption of poetry takes place according to these writers is much the same as that suggested by Blake. John Brown puts it thus:

In the Course of Time, and the Progress of Polity and Arts, a Separation of the several Parts or Branches of Music (in its extended Sense) would naturally arise. Till a certain Period of Civilization, Letters, and Art, the several Kinds

would of course lie confused, in a Sort of undistinguished Mass, and be mingled in the same Composition, as Inclination, Enthusiasm, or other Incidents might impel. But repeated Trial and Experiment would naturally produce a more artificial Manner; and thus, by Degrees, the several Kinds of Poem would assume their legitimate Forms.⁵⁹

Blake attempts to reverse this process in his prophecies:

Kinds are unnecessary to 'a true Orator':

Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place: the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts - the mild & gentle, for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic, for inferior parts: all are necessary to each other. Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race! Nations are Destroy'd, or Flourish, in proportion as Their Poetry Painting and Music, are Destroy'd or Flourish! The Primeval State of Man, was Wisdom, Art, and Science.
(Jerusalem 3, 'To the Public', E144/K621)

Blake believed what Brown says: that the songs of the Hebrew prophets were 'of that mixed Species which naturally ariseth first, before any Separations take Place, or produce the several Species of Composition'.⁶⁰ Since Blake mentions 'a true Orator' in the quoted passage it is possible that he had in mind the argument of Anselm Bayly's Alliance of Musick, Poetry and Oratory (1789). Bayly is typical of this kind of writer, again, in taking Hebrew

59. John Brown, op. cit., p. 40.

60. Ibid., p. 176.

poetry as his guide; in his case it leads him to conflate the epic and the dramatic.⁶¹ Indeed, he admires 'variety' of styles, claiming that 'Variety only by mixed numbers and diverse pauses, can adapt sounds to sense, and please the ear with continuance of musical delight'.⁶² And of 'Oratory' he says:

From this suitableness of language to every subject in nature ariseth the propriety of style, divided into the plain or familiar, the elegant or middle, and the sublime.

The sublime is introduced on certain occasions only, to add dignity, and to attract admiration.⁶³

Bayly's ideas on the decline of poetry from this condition are very reminiscent of Blake's. He believes that 'The Christian Religion... was and is, the Patriarchal and Mosaick; Idolatry was the Patriarchal imitated, mistaken, and abused'.⁶⁴

What happens is this:

Instead of God the Creator and Father of all, and of one Faith and Form of Worship, every nation chose its own lords many, and gods many, above and below; every city, mountain and hill, the vallies, fountains, rivers, and seas, had their resident deities, and each individual his peculiar genius, or guardian angel.⁶⁵

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61. Anselm Bayly, The Alliance of Musick, Poetry and Oratory (London 1789), pp. 123-24.
 62. Ibid., p. 298.
 63. Ibid., p. 322.
 64. Ibid., p. 214.
 65. Ibid., pp. 244-45.

The Gods used to have a 'superior' meaning; but 'men began to look upon the emblems as realities'.⁶⁶ When this happens, God 'comes forth himself, present as it were in the system, and taking the reins of government into his own hands'.⁶⁷

... the νεφεληγερετη Ζευς, gathereth clouds from the ends of the earth, sendeth fire, thunder, rain; the air is the breath of his nostrils, the winds are his angels, and flaming fire his ministers; he rideth upon the heavens, walketh upon the wings of the wind; the Lord is now a man of war; the Lord of Sabaoth, hosts; the God of the armies of all the earth ... 68

Bayly is not very clear as to precisely what mechanism is at work here: are we to assume that idolatry is a sufficient, as well as necessary, condition for the emergence of the idea of God as 'a tyrant crown'd' (Europe 10:23)? It seems that this is so; and it is certainly thus for Blake. This is what the saying 'God out of Christ is a Consuming Fire' means to him: when God is seen as a force external to man he is naturally conceived of as a terrible and alien being for whom the terror and unpredictability of the storm are a fitting metaphor (words from Blake's Hervey's Meditations).

And for Bayly, as for Blake, the power of earthly kings is deduced from the existence of such a religion, rather than the other way around: Homer and Virgil, says Bayly, were 'steady friends to monarchy, by making Jupiter the source of power and obedience, derived from

66. Ibid., pp. 247, 248.

67. Ibid., p. 249.

68. Ibid.. p. 250.

him to kings, and those in authority under them'.⁶⁹
 This then is the same Jupiter of the Greeks, elsewhere
 called Urizen, who was an 'iron-hearted tyrant, the ruiner
 of ancient Greece' (Letter to Hayley, 23 October 1804.
 K852).

The decline of poetry is also seen - by Blair -
 as a movement from the use of particular to that of general
 terms. Writing on Ossian he claims that these poems
 possess

... one of the most genuine and decisive
 characters of antiquity, that very few
 general terms or abstract ideas, are to be met with in the
 whole collection of Ossian's works. The ideas
 of men at first, were all particular. They
 had not words to express general conceptions.⁷⁰

This is an important reason for the sublimity and general
 excellence of ancient poetry, for as Blair points out,
 in a passage that sounds strikingly like Blake, 'No description
 that rests in generals can possibly be good; it can convey no
 lively idea; for it is of particulars only that we have a distinct
 conception'.⁷¹ Compare with this Blake's Annotations to
 Reynolds: 'All Knowledge is Particular' (E637/K459),
 and 'Distinctness is Particular Not General' (E638/K461).
 Of course there were many ways in which Blake could have
 picked up this idea, but it seems very likely that his confidence

69. Ibid., p. 232.

70. Blair, Critical Dissertation, p. 19.

71. Ibid., p. 47.

in the particularity of true art (which for him is almost synonymous with 'ancient art') found support in primitivist writings.

Along with the separation of Arts and Sciences, then, goes a movement towards general ideas. Adam Ferguson gives a very clear account of the process by which, simultaneously, poetry becomes more abstract and the 'Arts and Professions' separate from one another:

... men become interested by what was real in past transactions. They build on this foundation the reflections and reasonings they apply to present affairs, and wish to receive information on the subject of different pursuits, and of projects in which they begin to be engaged Mere ingenuity, justness of sentiment, and correct representation, though conveyed in ordinary language, are understood to constitute literary merit, and by applying to reason more than to the imagination and passions, meet with a reception that is due to the instruction they bring.⁷²

In these circumstances 'a system of learning' may arise.⁷³
And, as Blair puts it, 'Human nature is pruned according to method and rule'.⁷⁴

We have already noted that the beneficiaries of the decline are thought to be the priesthood which rises on the ashes of expiring Poetic Genius. The most frequent example of priesthood in Blake's writings is the Druidic religion.

72. Ferguson, op. cit., p. 294.

73. Ibid., p. 296.

74. Blair, Critical Diss., p.3.

Blake's peculiar relation to deistic and rationalist ideas has been mentioned: there is no better example of it than his aversion from Priesthood and Mystery. The latter term, used to describe a property of organized religion, is characteristically deist, as in John Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious (1696). Toland is one of the earliest proponents in English of a specifically deistic 'growth of superstition' theory, which we have already alluded to in our discussion of Blackwell on the Egyptian priesthood. The theory states that a group of clever or cunning men used the device of allegory, and the invention of gods, to mystify and enslave their fellows, thereby obscuring the perspicuous truths of Natural Religion. Blake substitutes Poetic Genius for Natural Religion. But he is able to go along with the deists in the rest of their account. Thus he supports Paine on many specific matters in the controversy with Bishop Watson (see Annotations to Watson's Apology, E601/K383) though he is not doing so within Paine's frame of reference.

Blake had either read, or knew the argument of, Toland's other well-known book, The History of the Druids (1726). In this the Druids are used as an example of the growth of a priesthood that fostered superstition. At first the learned people, 'not daring openly to explode anything wherein the priests found their account, explain'd it away by emblems and allegories importing a reasonable meaning... [using personification for] elements and qualities of matter'.

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75. Toland, History, p.88.

The result was that 'the common sort immediately took them for so many persons in good earnest, and render'd 'em divine worship under such forms as the priests judg'd fittest to represent them'.⁷⁶

Toland, like all the other writers on Druidism, is clear about the distinction between Druids and Bards, which is implicit in many places in Blake's works. He would naturally infer from the extant writings that the Druids took over the religious and legislative role that had once, after a fashion, been the Bards':

... the king was ever to have a Druid about his person; to pray and sacrifice, as well as to be a judge for determining emergent controversies ... 77

Druidism, separated from the Poetic Genius, becomes 'druidical bloodyness, and a priest-ridden state'.⁷⁸

Blake looked also for the regeneration of Society; and like all his contemporaries he regarded the fate of art and that of nations to be inseparably linked: the question is, which is the more powerful determining factor in their fates: art or society? Blake opts for either solution at different times, though later in his life he seems to plump for art: 'Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., P. 100

78. Ibid., p. 104.

'Race!' On the other hand in the 'Public Address' (c.1810) he talks of 'The wretched State of the Arts in this Country & in Europe originating in the wretched State of Political Science which is the Science of Sciences' (E569/K600). This is the implication of Blake's earlier, more politically hopeful works: the doors of perception will be cleansed when liberty is won, or rather regained: for government and rule have grown up together in society and art. Paine says, of society and government respectively, that 'the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affectations, the latter negatively by ⁷⁹restraining our vices'. If this dictum is applied to art it furnishes, mutatis mutandis, a neat description of Blake's opposition of living and geometric form.

79. Thomas Paine, Common Sense, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth, 1976), p.1 of 2nd. pagination.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BOOK OF URIZEN

'Of the primeval Priests assum'd power' is the first line of the Preludium to The Book of Urizen. We are immediately made aware that this work is to continue the theme of the origin of Priesthood, and the idea that the faculty of abstraction has usurped the position of some more vital power. On reading the book we discover that this theme is treated almost entirely in the macrocosm; that we are reading the original myth of usurpation, the first book of Blake's promised Bible of Hell. This is clear from the very form of the poem: the columns of verse, divided into chapters and numbered sections, are intended to look like a sacred scripture. More specifically, they are intended to look like a late eighteenth-century notion of the original poetic form of Biblical prophecy. This becomes clearer when one looks at one of Robert Lowth's translations from the Bible, which tried to convey the true nature of Hebrew 'Sacred Poetry'. Consider the beginning of his Isaiah:

- 2 HEAR, O ye heavens; and give ear, O earth!
For it is JEHCVAH that speaketh.
I have nourished children, and brought them up;
And even they have revolted from me.
- 3 The ox knoweth his possessor;
And the ass the crib of his lord:
But Israel knoweth not Me;
Neither doth my people consider.¹

This is the kind of resuscitation of Hebrew sacred poetry that

1. Robert Lowth, Isaiah: A New Translation (London, 1791), p.95.

Blake is imitating, both in rhythm and in arrangement on the page. Murray Roston contrasts this learned primitivism with a translation of the same passage by a contemporary neo-classical poet, William Langhorne:

Jehovah speaks -- let all creation hear!
 Thou Earth attend! ye rolling Heavens give Ear!
 Reared by my Care and fostered by my Hand
 My rebel sons against their Father stand.²

But there is an ambiguity in Blake's use of what is basically unrhymed anapaestic trimeter.³ On the one hand, as Alicia Ostriker observes: 'Its greatest virtue is its power. A sense of resistless momentum appropriately informs poems dealing with a cosmic fall....'⁴ On the other hand, one feels that the power is harsh and stark: limited both in rhythmic subtlety and in richness of imagery and diction. This sense of limitation is also conveyed by the cramped columns into which the verse is squeezed -- the columns are double, after the fashion of the printing of Bibles. The verse is infected with the limitations of the Fall it describes: its appearance on the page is that of poetry congealing into scripture.

The form of the verse is thus imitative of its subject-matter in the same way that the form of the illuminations is. Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, for instance, notes that 'the designs for the poem fall into rigorously closed, tectonic forms'.⁵ Furthermore, the designs are separated from the text

2. Quoted in Roston, *op. cit.*, p.136.

3. Cf. Alicia Ostriker, Vision and Verse in William Blake (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), p.164. Not, as Harold Bloom thinks, 'a four-beat verse' (Blake's Apocalypse, p.164), though the poem occasionally slips into tetrameter.

4. Ostriker, p.165.

5. Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, *op.cit.*, p.89.

more clearly than ⁱⁿ/almost any of Blake's illuminations hitherto, suggesting the separation of Word and Vision. And yet they depict sublime visions.

The Book of Urizen, considered as a piece of composite art, suggests in its form the moment at which poetry (the 'Holy Word' of the prophet-poet) solidifies into scripture (the 'Holy Word of the 'primeval Priest'). This is also the moment when the arts are separated. Thus the book could be said to be hesitating between vision and limitation of vision. In an analogous way it creates uncertainty as to whether it deals with a Fall or a Creation. And the role of Los is ambiguous in that, though he is the prophet-poet, he seems to be necessary to the creation of Urizen's universe. If Urizen is to be understood, so must these ambiguities.

1. Urizen and Hermetism

The first lines of the Preludium leave us unsure whether Urizen has decided to usurp a place that is not his, or has been given a place by the Eternals because they wish to dispose of him:

Of the primeval Priests assum'd power,
When Eternals spurn'd back his religion;
And gave him a place in the north,
Obscure, shadowy, void, solitary. (BU2:1-4, E69/K222)

One thing is clear though: a separation has occurred, and it is Urizen who has been separated. This idea is expanded at the beginning of Chapter I:

Lo, a shadow of horror is risen
In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific!
Self-closed, all repelling: what Demon
Hath form'd this abominable void
This soul-shudd'ring vacuum?--Some said
"It is Urizen", But unknown, abstracted
Brooding secret, the dark power hid. (BU:3:1-7, E69/K222)

Urizen is 'unprolific': that is to say, he is a Devourer: lacking Energy, he must subsist on that of others. This notion now consorts with ideas of contraction: Urizen is 'Self-clos'd, all repelling'. Just as 'Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained' (MHH5), Urizen contracts because there is nothing in him that could expand: he is a 'vacuum'. This contraction removes Urizen from sight: he lacks the Energy to make himself manifest. To put it another way, the divine no longer animates all things, as it did for the Poetic Genius: it has withdrawn above the clouds, become an abstract deity.

The idea that the creation of the material world was really a Fall caused by the contraction of the deity is nowhere so closely paralleled as it is in the Lurianic Kabbalah and in those, like the Gnostics, who were influenced by it. As Gershom G. Scholem describes it, Luria's theory is based on the doctrine of 'Tsimtsum', meaning 'concentration' or 'contraction', though he adds that this is best understood as 'withdrawal' or 'retreat': 'the existence of the universe is made possible by a process of shrinkage in God.'⁶ Thus, 'The first act of all is not an act of revelation but one of limitation'.⁷ This act is performed by the stern side of God: Din, or Judgment:

...the essence of the Divine Being, before the Tsimtsum took place, contained not only the qualities of love and mercy, but also that of Divine Sternness which the Kabbalists call Din or Judgment. But Din was not recognizable as such; it was as

6. Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 2nd revd. edn., (New York, 1946), p.260.

7. Ibid., p. 261.

it were dissolved in the great ocean of God's compassion, like a grain of salt in the sea....In the act of Tsimtsum, however, it crystallized and became clearly defined, for inasmuch as Tsimtsum signifies an act of negation and limitation it is also an act of judgment. It must be remembered that to the Kabbalist, judgment means the imposition of limits and the correct determination of things. According to Cordovero the quality of judgment is inherent in everything insofar as everything wishes to remain what it is, to stay within its boundaries.⁸

The similarity to the activities of Urizen is clear.

When God has withdrawn the world of manifestation appears, as it were, in the space He has left. This world takes the form of ten Sephiroth, or spheres: three of these are manifest aspects of God; the lower seven, parts of the world. The number seven derives from the seven days of Creation in Genesis.⁹

But the quality of judgment, responsible for the original contraction, causes the spheres to be provided with 'vessels', so that they may have bounds. This quality becomes evil when it tears itself away from the opposing one of mercy.¹⁰ The vessels become like 'husks', or 'shells', on the bark of the cosmic tree.¹¹ In order to give 'a real existence and separate identity to the power of evil' which has thus been created, divine light rushes into the vessels, and they are shattered: evil remains, separate, as the broken husks of what were once the natural boundaries of the spheres.¹²

8. Ibid., p.263.

9. Ibid., pp.265-68.

10. Ibid., p.237.

11. Ibid., p.239.

12. Ibid., p.266.

It is most likely that Blake encountered these ideas in the work of the seventeenth-century Hermetist, Robert Fludd.¹³ Fludd states that the divinity works by 'Concentration' or 'Dilatation'.¹⁴ 'Separation' is effected by 'Elohim' in the six active days of Creation.¹⁵ For Fludd, Elohim is the rigorous, stern side of the Godhead; and, as in the Lurianic Kabbalah, it is this aspect which is responsible for the original contraction. When the divine sapience 'retracted' thus into the abyss, it was called 'Nothing', which is the same as 'Voidness'.¹⁶ Thus God, when 'retracted in the abyse of darknesse' is 'Nothing, or non-entity'.¹⁷

In the ensuing world of manifestation,

...the attribute ELOHIM, doth send down into the starre, or Planet of Saturn, the fruits of his chill and frozen effects...by the name, or Attribute ELOHIM, come severe punishments and Stratagems, and the Angells which are his Ministers to effect his will are called BEN-ELOHIM, that is to say, the sons of ELOHIM: ELOHIM therefore signifieth terror and fear: And for this cause the Northern quarter of the world, from whence cometh all evill, is assigned unto this property....

By [Elohim] therefore, the Spirit of God in his prudence did tie and hang the heavens, as it were lincks in a chain of gold together, and did bear up the elements in their places, and sucked or contracted the grosser part of the waters, from the circumference unto the center, and there did confirm and fix them in a dark and gross manner....[Elohim's] magazin or treasure-house in the starry heaven, is the globe of Saturn, whose property for this reason is cold and dry, astrictive, contractive, attractive...

18

A stern, Saturnine, melancholy, northern deity; whose faculty

13. Raine, Blake and Tradition, Vol.II, p.77.

14. Robert Fludd, Mosaicall Philosophy, trans. from Latin (London, 1659), p.35.

15. Ibid., p.44.

16. Ibid., pp.53, 51.

17. Ibid., p.137.

18. Ibid., pp.193, 204.

is judgment and the determination of limits; who withdraws into a void and becomes 'non-entity', and then creates the limits of the material world; whose seat is a globe of attraction (cf. BU3:36, E70/K223) -- Fludd's Elohim is a clear source for Blake's Urizen, and this fact helps to explain the pejorative connotations of the word Elohim in Blake's work.

It is also worth looking at the way in which Fludd pictured the creation of the material world, as Désirée Hirst has shown.¹⁹ Fludd, like the Kabbalists, conceives of the seven days of Creation as analogous to the seven planetary spheres; but he also follows the Neoplatonists in conceiving the harmony of the spheres in Pythagorean terms: thus he represents the seven spheres in terms of the arithmetical relations which express the seven discrete notes in the octave. These arithmetical relations form a progression which is often represented by the Neoplatonists on a pair of dividers; and so Fludd represents them.²⁰ Such are the dividers that Urizen wields in the frontispiece to Europe: they represent the creation of the material world as an entity both divided in itself and separated from the divine. Dividers, or compasses, are not mentioned in The Book of Urizen; but Urizen 'divided, & measur'd' time and space (BU3:8, E69/K222). The seven days are present as the seven 'Ages' in Chapter IV. Los's role in the shaping of these Ages we shall leave to one side for the moment.

19. Désirée Hirst, Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake (London, 1964), pp.29ff.

20. Ibid., p.152. Repro. in Hirst, Fig.11, p.127.

It is one thing to see evil as caused by the rigorous aspect of Judgment in the Godhead, quite another to point an accusing finger at Elohim, as Blake did. But even here there is precedent, in the Gnostics. As Hans Jonas describes their doctrines:

The world is the work of lowly powers which though they may mediately be descended from Him do not know the true God and obstruct the knowledge of Him in the cosmos over which they rule.²¹

Sometimes

...this role is reserved for their leader, who then has the name of demiurge (the world-artificer in Plato's Timaeus) and is often painted with the distorted features of the Old Testament God.²²

It was Crabb Robinson who first detected the Gnosticism in Blake's thought:

On my obtaining from him the declaration that the Bible was the Word of God, I referred to the commencement of Genesis 'In the Beginning God created the Heavens & the Earth.' But I gained nothing by this, for I was triumphantly told that this God was not Jehovah, but the Elohim; & the doctrine of the Gnostics repeated with sufficient consistency to silence one so unlearned as myself.²³

The detailed similarities between Blake's Gnosticism and that of ancient times are convincing enough for us to take Crabb Robinson at his word. This is not to deny originality to Blake, but merely to indicate part of the tradition within which he was working, and to which he made alterations.

21. Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the beginnings of Christianity (Boston, Mass., 1958), p.42.

22. Ibid., pp.43-4.

23. Edith J. Morley, ed., Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb, Etc. being Selections from the Remains of Henry Crabb Robinson (Manchester, 1922), p.23.

Blake could easily have come across the rudiments of the Gnostic creed in the works of Priestley, who summarises 'The Doctrine of the Gnostics concerning the Maker of the World' in his History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ:

...the supreme being, the Father of Jesus Christ, was not the maker of the world, or the author of the Jewish dispensation; for that these were derived from some inferior and malevolent being....

According to the Gnostics, the god of the Jews was so far from being a good being, or in any respect subservient to the designs of the supreme being, that he was at open variance with him... 24

If Blake had also read Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History he would have found corroboration for his ideas, in even stronger terms than those of Priestley: the Demiurge created the world by separating the elements;²⁵ the God of the Jews is the 'most arrogant and turbulent' of the inferior spirits;²⁶ he had begun to imagine himself

...to be God alone, or, at least, was desirous that mankind should consider him as such. For this purpose, he sent forth prophets to the Jewish nation to declare his claim to the honour that is due to the supreme being.²⁷

Christ's purpose in coming into the world was to chastise this arrogance.²⁸ Despite what Bloom says elsewhere about 'occultism', his own valuable commentary on The Book of Urizen gives a neat

24. Joseph Priestley, An History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ (Birmingham, 1786), 4 vols., Vol.I, pp.166, 167.

25. J.L. Mosheim, An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern, trans. Archibald Maclaine, (London, 1765), 2 vols., Vol.I, p.115.

26. Ibid., p.113 and n.

27. Ibid., p.115.

28. Ibid., p.116.

summary of the Gnostic sentiment therein:

That Urizen should be both the orthodox God and the genuine Satan is almost the central point of Blake's satire in this poem, a point he develops from Plates 5-6 of The Marriage.

(E820)

Gnostic ideas provided Blake with the rationale for his reversal of the roles of God and Satan.

But Blake was no mere interpreter of the Hermetic tradition. His originality is apparent in his conception of the Fall; and in his description of the role of Los in the Creation.

2. The Nature of the Fall

First the Fall: the alchemist Croll neatly sums up the traditional Hermetic view of the Creation (to Blake also the Fall) which we have already expounded from Fludd:

...all things in the first Creation were produced out of the DIVINE NOTHING, or invisible Cabalistical Poynt, into something... 29

But neither to Fludd, nor to most other Hermetists, was there anything suspect in the idea of a 'Divine Nothing' (the Kabbalists' 'En Sof').³⁰ In fact most would say, with Fludd, that the conception of Nothingness was really a function of our ignorance: God had withdrawn beyond our capacity to conceive of Him -- the familiar Deus absconditus.³¹

29. Oswald Crollius and A. Bombast von Hohenheim (Paracelsus), Philosophy Reformed and Improved in Four Profound Tractates, trans. H. Pinnell (London, 1657), p.70.

30. Though Hirst (p.12) refers to a letter from the Rev. Jacob Duché to Paine speaking of the absurdities of 'a world created out of nothing and a wrathfull God'.

31. Fludd, p.137.

It is obvious that the visionary Blake would profoundly dislike such a notion. Blake sees Eternity in the world of Forms, not in an unknowable Nothingness from which they proceed. We have seen above (in Chapter IV) that he conceived of these Forms as immanent within this world; but that is not the issue here: the issue is the opposition of the manifest and the unmanifest, the Many and the One, the 'something' or the 'Nothing'. Blake believes that the union of the divine and the world of manifestation alone is real: the 'Nothing' is precisely nothing, or at least an illusion. This is why he says, in the Annotations to Swedenborg's Divine Love and Divine Wisdom,

Think of a white cloud. as being holy you cannot love it but think of a holy man within the cloud love springs up in your thought.
(E593/K90)

Blake would find encouragement for his views not only in Swedenborg, but also in his master, Boehme:

...Boehme's break with Neoplatonism is clear. He accepts emanation from the One. But he denies that return is regeneration. If the many were to return to the One salvation would be partial, for death would not have been overcome. Salvation is no retreat back into the primal ground of being, no escape back to Nirvana, thus dodging corporeal existence's meonic limitations, but it is, rather full redemption by surmounting these limitations. His goal was individual form in which meonic trends have been destroyed.³²

But, unlike Boehme, Blake does not accept emanation from the One, either: at least, not in any sense hitherto understood. He does not conceive of the primal unity as some undistinguished plenum, nor as an unmanifest void. In The Book of Urizen the

32. John Joseph Stoudt, Sunrise to Eternity: A Study in Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought (Philadelphia and London, 1957), p.231.

idea of the 'Eternals' represents the original unity. Since we know that Urizen is a vacuum it must be that the Eternals live in a world of Forms, of manifestation: we are forced to this conclusion, despite the vagueness of the text, by the reference to their 'all flexible senses' (BU3: 38, E70/K223).

This conclusion makes it much easier to understand what Urizen's activity is: it is the very act of withdrawing the divine from the world of Forms, and then making these Forms into static entities which exist in their own right (Blake's material world). From this point of view Urizen constitutes the line that separates the Forms from the divine, that abstracts 'mental deities from their objects' (MHH11). It is striking, therefore, that the name given to this line (for so it was conceived) by Hermetists of all kinds was the 'Horizon of Eternity' (Horizon Aeternitatis). This can be seen depicted on the diagram of the Sephirotic Tree in Athanasius Kircher's Oedipi Aegyptiaci (Rome, 1653) which is reproduced by Désirée Hirst: above, the unknowable God; beneath, the world of manifestation in ten spheres.³³ Croll, a philosophical alchemist, says of this boundary:

God is to be seen beyond the horizon of Eternity & on the other side the wall of Paradise... 34

The same term can be found at various places in Paracelsus.³⁵ It is surprising that no Blake scholar has noticed the high probability that this is a notion which contributes to the very name 'Urizen'.

33. Hirst, Pl.I, facing page 48.

34. Croll and von Hohenheim (Paracelsus), op.cit., p.212, marginalium.

35. E.g. [A. Bombast von Hohenheim (Paracelsus)], Paracelsus his Aurora, & Treasure of the Philosophers. As also the Water-Stone of the Wise Men, trans. J.H. (London, 1659), p.11.

3. Los's Role.

The other matter in which Blake's Hermetism is peculiarly his own is in his introduction of a second Demiurge, working alongside Urizen: Los.

We first encounter the Los of The Book of Urizen when he

round the dark globe of Urizen,
Kept watch for Eternals to confine,
The obscure separation alone;
For Eternity stood wide apart
(5:38-41, E72/K226)

Los attempts to heal the separation but does not succeed (7:3-4). Urizen, though 'Unorganiz'd' (6:8) and 'featureless' (7:5), is 'Rifted with direful changes' (7:6). It is true, of course, as Easson and Easson point out, that

Los does not create these changes, despite the usual critical allegation that he does. Los only throws nets around the changes, binds the changes 'with rivets of iron & brass,' and forges chains for Urizen until Urizen's 'eternal mind' is 'locked up.'³⁶

Nevertheless, Los ensures that the changes are true changes, and not merely a chaotic seething. He it is who produces such form as the fallen world possesses. Another way of putting it is that, if what we see in this world is merely a reflection of 'Permanent Realities' (the Eternal Forms) to adopt Blake's later parlance ('A Vision of the Last Judgment', N69, E545/K605), it is Los who is responsible for the fact that the fallen world reflects Eternal Forms at all. For without his activity the world of Urizen would have remained utterly inchoate. This, however, seems a poor recompense in The Book of Urizen: the language used to describe the form Los

36. Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson, eds., William Blake: The Book of Urizen (London, 1979), p.76.

imposes on Urizen suggests harsh bondage and limitation. If one were to study the book in complete ignorance of the long prophecies he would find no reason to suspect Los of being a particularly benign figure: he seems to be very much implicated in the creation of the fallen world in its harshest aspect.

I think it possible that Blake is indulging in parody again. If he had read Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity he would have encountered the description of the Demiurge as the Logos, and noted that St. John the Evangelist was influenced by Platonism in phrasing the first part of the first chapter of his Gospel.³⁷ Whether or not he had read this passage, we are reminded that St. John's Gospel contains another version of Genesis, and thus would be a likely influence on The Book of Urizen. And such is surely the case; in both Urizen and St. John there are two main figures: a hidden God, and a Creator:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

(John I:18)

Los is a parody of John's Logos, 'the Word'.

But St. John is not the only account of the Creation which gives grounds for thinking two aspects of God were involved: the other is Genesis itself. It was well known by Blake's time that the God of Genesis I:1-10 is called 'Elohim' in the Hebrew, but in the rest of Genesis 'Jehovah Elohim'. Christians commonly interpreted the two as God the Father and Logos respectively. Thus in the Notes to his New English Translation of Genesis, Abraham Dawson says:

37. Joseph Priestley, An History of the Corruptions of Christianity (Birmingham, 1782), 2 vols., Vol.I, pp.11-29.

"Jehovah God" -- So, or rather perhaps...Jehovah of God -- will Jeoue Aleim be better translated both here and elsewhere than in Engl. -- Lord God...Now this Jehovah seems to be that High Personage who in the Beginning of his existence...was with God, by whom the Great God and Father of all made the heaven and the earth, and who was employed as God's Viceregent in his communications with man, and on this account called, God's Jehovah...The First visible appearance of the Great God by his Jehovah -- his High Minister or Representative... was when He took Adam and put him into the garden.³⁸

Jehovah is the visible God and artificer, Elohim the invisible God. Knowledge of this distinction was by no means confined to scholars, and might be gleaned from the notes to popular editions of the Bible, including that very Royal University Family Bible for which Blake executed some engravings.³⁹ Here we find in the notes to Genesis 1:3 the conjecture that the Spirit of God may be the Messiah (i.e. the Logos), and in those to Genesis 2:4 a comment on the difference between 'Jehovah' and 'Elohim'.⁴⁰ If we are right in thinking that Blake was acquainted with Hutchinsonian literature, he would probably have come across the idea that,

In a special manner CHRIST was JEHOVAH; for in him were united JAH the Essence, and HOVAH the powers and faculties of the human soul in perfection.⁴¹

These passages, and that from Fludd, quoted earlier, tend to give credibility to each other as sources for Blake. They also, to my mind, explain why he says in The Marriage that that 'the Jehovah of the Bible' is 'no other than he, who dwells in flaming fire. Know that after Christs death, he

38. Abraham Dawson, A New English Translation from the Original Hebrew of the Three First Chapters of Genesis (London, 1763), p.19

39. Bentley, Blake Books, p.514.

40. The Royal Universal Family Bible (London, 1781, 1785), 2 vols., Vol.I, Genesis, notes to verses cited.

41. Abstract (op. cit.), pp.224-25.

became Jehovah.' (MHH 6) For in this passage Blake is talking about his own, and not Milton's, version of these figures: the fire is that of Energy.

To return to The Book of Urizen: there are good grounds for supporting the unusual assertion of Leslie Warren Tannenbaum that Los is modelled on Jehovah.⁴² His account seems to be based on an intuition of similarities in function. But, although he does not support his conclusion from eighteenth-century writings, such evidence, as we have shown, does exist.

Blake's originality lies in his making Los a principle to some extent opposed to Urizen, even while he is engaged in the work of Creation. He recoils from his task, but performs it as a necessary one. For while Urizen is a void, Los is 'the Word', the Eternal Prophet. There is a suggestion of creativity in Los's 'tongs' (10:16) which compares favourably with the dividers, even though these are of similar shape: the tongs create, the dividers measure what already exists. Urizen needs Los if he is to have anything to divide and measure. For if 'What is now proved was once, only imagin'd' (MHH8, E36/K151) it follows, for Blake if not for the logician, that all knowledge is produced by Imagination or the Poetic Genius. If 'Nature is a Vision of the Science of the Elohim' (Milton 29:65, E127/K518), it is nevertheless a vision, and Imagination, however tainted, went into its creation, or it could not exist: Los has given it such form as it possesses.

42. Leslie Warren Tannenbaum, 'Dark Visions of Torment: Symbol and Structure in William Blake's The Book of Urizen', unpublished doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Wisconsin, 1972, pp.112-17.

7

For Los is already, in *The Book of Urizen*, the alchemists' 'Archaeus' or 'Vulcan': his attributes are like Vulcan's, and Martin Butlin points out that Plate 21 recalls 'the common Renaissance subject of "Venus, Vulcan and Cupid at the Forge"'.⁴³ This Archaeus is, like the Logos, the spirit of God:⁴⁴

The Archaeus...or Vulcan, is...an immaterial principle, a kind of world-soul which generates and rules everything, causes the development of plants and animals, and is an 'alchemist' of Nature.... By a 'vulcanic digestion' the human body is formed from the elements and chaos.⁴⁵

The elements, and chaos, are certainly present in *Urizen*, and from these Los gives form to *Urizen's* body. And indeed, Blake drew for this on contemporary accounts of the development of the foetus in the womb, as Carmen S. Kreiter has shown: the embryological development of the foetus was thought to be in seven stages, like the seven 'Ages' in *Urizen*, in Harvey's theory, which was taken up by John Hunter.⁴⁶

That the Archaeus was also thought of as the Logos can be seen very clearly from Croll's work.⁴⁷ The similarity is obvious; and in fact alchemy was heavily influenced

43. Tate Exhibn., No.83.

44. J.R. Partington, A History of Chemistry (London, 1961-70), 4 vols., Vol.II (1961), p.129.

45. Ibid., p.130.

46. Carmen S. Kreiter, 'Evolution and William Blake', Studies in Romanticism, Vol.IV, No.2 (Winter, 1965), pp.110-18. John Hunter, the famous surgeon, is the Jack Tearguts of 'An Island in the Moon', and it seems certain that Blake knew him (Kreiter, p.112).

47. Croll and Bombast von Hohenheim, op. cit., pp.5,9,33,70,85-6.

by Gnosticism in ancient times, and the effect persisted.⁴⁸ Not that Blake would have known this, but it does emphasize the validity of any connection he might have perceived.

One can sum up all this quite neatly by saying that Urizen causes the creation of 'bound' as limit, while Los creates true form. But we feel a certain ambivalence about Los when we read the poem -- the same feeling, it is claimed, that a correct reading of the 'Introduction' to Experience elicits towards the Bard. Los's gift of creation is a saving grace, but he is implicated in Urizen's errors and even gives birth to the Chain of Jealousy. Blake is attempting to account for the fact that, although the Fall was a decline from Vision, it was, in fact, visionaries and poets who fell. If the creations of poets are tainted with error, how are we to regard even the loveliest forms we perceive?

Hence the ambiguity of the illuminations to Urizen: is this Genesis or Apocalypse? The question becomes quite pressing when we look at Plate 8 (Repro. IB 190). This has a design of what, from its position, could be a foetal skeleton, such as Blake might have encountered in Philip Boehmer's celebrated Institutiones Osteologicae.⁴⁹ From this point of view the plate emphasizes the idea of Creation as an horrific gestation. But the skull is proportionately too small for the body to be that of a foetus. Seen with this in mind the plate suggests a grisly interment,

48. H.J. Sheppard, 'Gnosticism and Alchemy', Ambix, Vol.VI, No.2 (December, 1957), pp.86-101.

49. Philip Adolphus Boehmer, Institutiones Osteologicae in usum Praelectionum (Madgeburg, 1749), passim.

in the manner of the skeleton of one who, long since buried alive, is still fixed in a cowering gesture.

In Plate 6 (Repr.IB188), the falling figures, wound about with serpents, may be seen as falling from Eternity into Nature. But they also recall the falling figures at the bottom of Michelangelo's Last Judgment, and the figure of Minos in Hell at the bottom left, wrapped around with a serpent.⁵⁰

But the depiction of the figure separating clouds on Plate 13 (Repro.IB195) and the designs of Urizen, with short hair, touching globes (Plates 23, 27, Repro. IB205, 209) all allude to the Creation as illustrated by Raphael in the Vatican Loggie.⁵¹ In Raphael's depiction of God separating light from darkness the deity rests his hands, with arms outstretched, on clouds to either side, as if these were solid, just as the figure in Blake's design does. Blake uses this motif to reinforce the theme of the separation of the elements of an original unity, already suggested on the title-page of Urizen (Plate 1, Repro.IB183). Here Urizen holds a quill in his right hand and a burin in his left, representing the separation of Picture and Poetry, Word and Vision, and Good and Evil.

The Book of Urizen, then, wavers between two views of the Creation: from one point of view it is a disaster which produces Urizen's 'unprolific' chaos, and his neurotic and life-denying parody of form. From another point of view the disaster is mitigated by Los's creation

50. It is well known that Blake was familiar with the Sistine Chapel designs from the engravings of Adamo (not Giorgio) Ghisi.

51. Which Blake may have known, for instance, from the engravings of G. Volpato, much admired in his own day.

of true form. But since the Creation is indeed a Fall, Los's activities take on some of the repressive qualities of Urizen's. Lurking behind these conceptions is that of a cycle in which poetry declines into system, though the exigencies of writing a Creation narrative with relatively definite personages has obscured this concern. Nevertheless, The Book of Urizen betrays Blake's anxiety about the activity of making form in a fallen world: his ambivalent feelings are inscribed in the ambiguous form of the text and illuminations themselves.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DEVELOPING MYTH

1. The nature of the cyclical decline of Energy and Vision

If the relations of the Bard, or Los, with Urizen suggest a cycle in which Vision declines, The Book of Ahania (1795) makes explicit the idea of a cycle in which the decline is that of Energy. Throughout the Lambeth books there is a strain of pessimism about the fate of Energy in the fallen world, but in Ahania this feeling becomes more acute. It is well known that, in this book, by 'creating an authoritarian revolutionary order, Fuzon [an Orc-like figure] has succumbed to Urizen's repressive law'.¹ What needs stressing is that the 'solidification' of Energy is not easy to distinguish from that of Vision: these faculties have distinct personifications, but the ideas they represent are closely related. Thus, in The Marriage, we are told that 'to the devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole' (16, E39/K155). In the context of The Marriage this seems to refer to those who lack, and those who possess, Energy. But when one remembers Blake's attack on the Philosophy of the Five Senses, one realises that the 'devourer' is taking the limited world of the senses and fancying that the whole, whereas it has been produced from

1. Paley, op. cit., p. 83.

the infinite perceptions of the 'Poetic or Prophetic character'. Thus the 'producer' is both Energy and the Poetic Genius.

Of course, as we have seen, Los is infected with 'jealousy' in the Lambeth books, and chains Orc. The problem for Blake is: How do either Energy or the Poetic Genius escape the limitations of the fallen world? In The Book of Urizen there is an oscillation between the view of form represented by Urizen and that represented by Los. In The Book of Ahania there is a cycle, rather than an oscillation, between Energy and repression. Thus, though Los and Orc must not be reduced to each other, Blake is finding different expressions in his myth for the idea that Energy and the Poetic Genius are closely linked, and that Urizen represents the decline of each. We have seen how this idea is influenced by contemporary primitivism. But it is most succinctly expressed in the later poem 'The Mental Traveller' (c. 1803). A 'Babe' is born, we are told, who at first is bound down by 'a Woman Old', and then 'rends up his Manacles/And binds her down for his delight' (5, 23-4, E475/K424-25). In this respect he is like Orc, and she like the Shadowy Daughter of Urthona in America or Vala in The Four Zoas, Night III. But then:

He plants himself in all her Nerves
 Just as a Husbandman his mould
 And she becomes his dwelling place
 And Garden fruitful seventy fold
(25-8, E476/K425)

Here the youth has some of the characteristics of the redemptive Orc of America, but is also reminiscent of Los, in that he is a successful husbandman and gardener: that is, a

creative artist.

Because of the close relationship of Energy and Vision we can at least suggest the hypothesis that Los comes between Orc and Urizen in the Orc-cycle. When hypostasized in Blake's myth, Los is the artist torn between the life-giving claims of Energy and the need to create form, form which is always in danger of becoming the dead 'outward Ceremony' of Urizen. If this were true, it would reinforce the analogy of Los with Jehovah. Jehovah is both the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets, the apparent God; and at the same time the agent of Elohim and His Law.

2. The 1795 Colour Prints

Anne Kostelanetz Mellor states one way of seeing Blake's uncertainties about form, especially the human form:

Man is born into a corrupting physical body; his imaginative vision is impaired by the mind-forged manacles of reason, a repressive conscience, and a conviction of the necessity of law; his hope for salvation is frustrated by his corporeal nature and his inability to believe wholly in a spiritual life.²

This view of Blake, as is well known, finds support in the work of Kathleen Raine. The trouble is that it too readily assumes that the slighting account Blake gives of the creation of the physical body can be equated with a traditional mistrust of it. But there is no evidence in Blake's work of the Lambeth period that his work need be understood in this way.

2. Mellor, op. cit., p. 165.

It is equally permissible to regard him as adhering to the views expressed in The Marriage: 'that call'd Body is a portior of the Soul discern'd, by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age' (MMH 4, E34/K149). It is a fair inference from this that the idea of the separate existence of the body is an evil illusion, but that what are known as bodily energies are good, because they are in fact the energies of 'the Soul'. There is no evidence that Blake, by 1795, thought that the redemption of 'Body' by 'Soul' was impossible.

For this reason it is surely right to regard the Colour Print Christ Appearing to the Apostles as the culmination of Blake's great series of Colour Prints (c. 1795): this print is a vindication to the idea that the spiritual body can exist in the midst of the fallen world. Clearly, though, Blake's mythology as it has developed so far, does not convey the exact means by which this redemption comes about. The impression one gains from the Lambeth books is one of anxiety about the fate of Energy and the 'Poetic or Prophetic character' in the fallen world. In the same way, though the 1795 Colour Prints culminate with Christ Appearing, this is the only note of optimism in the series, and seems more like the expression of a wish than an integral part of the process of redemption.

These prints have been well discussed as an account of the Fall and its results by Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, and there is no need to qualify this description.³ But one

3. Anne T. Kostelanetz (now Mellor), 'Blake's 1795 Colour Prints: An Interpretation', in Rosenfeld, pp. 124-30.

interesting thing about this series is that it shows that Blake was widening the basis of his myth. Elohim Creating Adam, of course, shows the creation of the body, or the illusion of its separate existence, in a way that is closely analogous to the account given in Urizen.⁴ And God Judging Adam shows Jehovah ('he, who dwells in flaming fire') exercising His jurisdiction according to the laws of Elohim: here Jehovah is the corrupted principle of Energy turned into a consuming fire.

But Newton is now given pride of place, in the print of that name. This suggests that Blake now sees him not only as an example of the rational principle bounded by the five senses, but as the very type of the vision of the fallen world. There is every reason for a Behmenist to mistrust the Newtonian world view. But if Blake went anywhere for corroboration of his opinion of Newton among eighteenth-century thinkers it would have been to John Hutchinson and his followers.⁵ Many of the remarks the Hutchinsonians make about Newton have a distinctly Blakean ring:

Prodigious fabricator! who wanted only an air-pump to make a vacuum, and a pendulum or swing to prove it; a loadstone, a bit of amber or jet,

4. Elohim Creating Adam is the true title. Although it is listed in Blake's account with Thomas Butts on 3 March 1806 as 'God Creating Adam' (Tate cata., No. 14) the title with 'Elohim' is inscribed in the margin of the work (see Butlin, 'Blake's "God Judging Adam" rediscovered', The Burlington Magazine, Vol. CVII, No. 743 (February, 1965), p. 89).

5. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 122-28.

to form a philosophy; a spyglass, and a pair of compasses, to find out infinite worlds... 6

It will be recalled that the 'Application' of No Natural Religion (B) reads 'He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only'. And the illumination for this aphorism is of a bearded man on hands and knees drawing a triangle with the aid of a pair of compasses. The Hutchinsonian description of Newton contains much the same sense of a ludicrous disparity between ends and means.

But, as we have observed, Blake is now treating Newton as a kind of second Demiurge: this, too, might have been suggested by the Hutchinsonians:

But to return to Sir Isaac, and his coadjutors; as his encomiasts are ingenuous enough to own, "Divinity remote from the sciences for which he was distinguished," so the Deus, foisted afterwards into his book, seems to be the workmanship of another hand: for, in 1705, Dr. Samuel Clark published his Demonstration of the being and attributes of God, whom he proves to be the same with the heathen Jupiter, as near as he could guess by citations from Ocellus Lucanus, &c. &c. and brings in gravitation and a vacuum for evidence.⁷

Here 'the heathen Jupiter' is also the God of the Deists, who tended to regard Newton as confirming their view. And in Blake's print, Newton, we are shown a natural philosopher who reinforces the visionless state of fallen man in an act analogous to that of Urizen, Blake's God of the fallen world. Newton has taken on a new importance as one who, after the original Fall, tightens the mental manacles. We are shown

6. Abstract, p. 157.

7. Ibid., p. 165.

that Newton's error is a consolidation of Urizen's: Blake is drawing the threads of his myth together; at the same time he is extending the range of reference of his myth: Newton is no longer merely an example of a philosopher of the five senses: he is one who provides an example of Urizenic thought.

It is instructive to compare this print with Blake's watercolour design No. 73 for Night Thoughts (c. 1795-97. British Museum, Dept. of Prints and Drawings). Here Death, a gigantic Urizenic figure, hovers over, and looks down angrily at, a smaller Urizenic figure, which clearly represents a man on his death-bed: Death points upwards with the index finger of his right hand to where a small, hunched figure sits on the box containing the text, looking downwards, like Newton, but holding up a pair of compasses. This figure bears a striking facial resemblance to Newton in the 1795 Colour Print. Among the lines illustrated are 'Heaven waits not the last moment, owns her Friends/On this Side Death; and points them out to men'.⁸ If Blake was indeed thinking of Newton when he did this watercolour, he may have considered him a friend of 'Heaven'.

3. Urizen and the iconography of the Night Thoughts designs

But although Blake was extending the reference of his myth, he was nowhere nearer giving a passable account of

8. Quoting here from the text of the Dodsley edn. of Night Thoughts (1742) around which Blake executed the watercolours. The design brings out the association of Death and Heaven which is latent in the text.

how Energy and Vision could subsist in the fallen world. His illustrations to Night Thoughts, though they can help us to understand Urizen better, tend to confirm the idea of a cycle of declining Energy and Vision. In these illustrations he drew heavily on the iconography of the emblem books, and, particularly for the figures of Time and Death, on that of the classical gods.

Dorothy Plowman was the first to link the names of Urizen and Uranus in her note to a facsimile of The Book of Urizen in 1929:

Taking [Urizen] (as we are entitled to in the absence of proof that Blake intended otherwise) as derived from the Greek word οὐρίζειν [sic = Ionian form of ὀρίζειν], meaning 'to bound' or 'limit', with the cognate form 'Uranus,' signifying the Lord of the Firmament, or that first self-imposed setter of bounds whose rule became a tyranny that his own sons were impelled to break and supplant....⁹

The hint has not been taken, perhaps because information about Uranus is scarce. He does not even appear in many of the mythological manuals, the Iconologies and the emblem books. Even Montfaucon is driven to admit that 'I know of no particular Symbol for Coelus'.¹⁰ And he leaves it at that. But the field is not entirely barren: there is the crudely Euhemerist Historical Account Of The Heathen Gods (1761) by William King, LL.D. The first words of the book are: 'COELUS, whom the Greeks call Uranus, was the son of Aether and Dies, as Cicero tells us'.¹¹ Naturally, he also refers to Hesiod's

9. Plowman, loc. cit.

10. Bernard de Montfaucon, Antiquity Explained, trans. David Humphreys (London, 1721-25), 5 Vols. I, p. 12.

11. William King, An Historical Account of the Heathen Gods and Heroes (London, 1761), p. 1.

version, that Earth 'brought forth Uranus, or the Starry Firmament, equal to herself, that she might every Way be covered and surrounded by it, and that it might be a firm and stable Mansion for the Gods'.¹² This account certainly contains ideas which are closely associated with Urizen: the stars, the idea of the heavens as a solid concavity like the Mundane Shell, which is also Urizen's palace (FZ 32:15).

The etymology of the word *Οὐρανός* would also have suited Blake's purpose: we have noted that in John Parkhurst's Lexicon To The New Testament he might have come across 'ΟΥΡΑΝΟΣ quite near the word "ΟΠΙΖΕΙΝ' ('to bound'), with which it is congnate: 'ΟΥΡΑΝΟΣ.... Aristotle, De Mund, says... 'Οὐρανός is so called from being the boundary of things above'.¹³ Apart from the etymological accuracy of Aristotle's remark, it is interesting as linking the eldest of the gods with Urizen's characteristic function.

Beyond these observations it is difficult to go. They are intended to indicate the sort of knowledge about Uranus that was available to Blake, but it seems impossible to identify even a probable source.

The extent of the influence of the iconography of Saturn on that of Urizen is easier to assess; the problem is eased by the comparative definiteness of Saturn's attributes (despite some variety in them); and by clear references in Blake's illustrations of Young's Night Thoughts to the related and overlapping figure sometimes known as 'Father

12. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

13. Parkhurst, loc. cit.

Time'. Here Time is given the conventional emblem-book accoutrements: the wings, scythe, and forelock of Occasio; and the hourglass is sometimes seen. Naturally, he is shown aged with a long white beard.¹⁴ It is impossible to try to separate the idea of Saturn from that of Time in this figure, which is really quite simply the traditional figure of Time, composed in the Middle Ages out of the figures of Saturn and Death.¹⁵ It is unlikely that Blake had Saturn, as distinct from Time, clearly in mind. If he had, he would probably have exploited the 'ideal', classical figure of Saturn referred to by the authors of Saturn and Melancholy as typical of the Renaissance Humanist conception of this god.¹⁶ Such a figure would be like the one in the first volume of Montfaucon's L'Antiquite expliquée, showing a Saturn of melancholy but handsome and venerable aspect, accompanied by the usual scythe, and by a serpent wound about a tree-trunk.¹⁷ A similar noble conception is to be seen in Raphael's Chigi Chapel designs.¹⁸ But Blake's figure belongs to the more grotesque tradition of the emblem books and popular lore.

14. See Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, Emblemata (Stuttgart, 1967), columns 1813-16: the figures are classified here under 'Chronos', but there is the usual uncertainty as to whether many individual figures represent the god (Kronos) or the personification (Time).

See also, e.g., Geoffrey Whitney, A Choice of Emblemes (Leyden, 1586), p. 199; and Francis Quarles, Emblems and Hieroglyphics of the Life of Mam [sic, i.e. 'Man'] (London, 1766), pp. 28, 96 (one of very many editions).

15. Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, 2nd. edn. (New York and Evanston, 1962), pp. 70-78.

16. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, Saturn and Melancholy (London, 1964), p. 209.

17. Montfaucon, op. cit., Vol. I, Pl. 5.

18. Chigi Chapel, S. Maria del Popolo, Rome. Repro. A.P. Oppé, Raphael (New York, 1970), Pl. 206 (upper right).

What is interesting for the study of Urizen is that in the Night Thoughts illustrations Blake is compelled by the exigencies of his subject to distinguish between Time and Death. As I shall show, in Blake's own mythology Death and the fallen perception of Time are subsumed under the figure of Urizen.

Blake's use of the two figures of Time and Death is both conveniently and fully illustrated in the title-page to *Night the Second*, 'On Time, Death, And Friendship'.¹⁹ Here Death is seen with a dart, about to strike down the diminutive figures representing friendship, who are in the lap of Time. Death is a figure in every respect the same as Blake's Urizen. And indeed, the same figure is used to illustrate 'teaching' on page 35; and (for surely it is he) 'reason' on page 46.²⁰

In this title-page Time is attempting to restrain Death from using his dart on the figures of friendship. This is explained in the 'Explanation of the Engravings': 'Time endeavouring to avert the arrow of Death from two friends'.²¹ The iconography of this design becomes clear in the light of the emblem books; and the most illustrative example is in Quarles's Hieroglyphics of the Life of Man, 'Hieroglyphike VI', which is reproduced as the frontispiece to Freeman's

19. Robert Essick and Jenijoy La Belle, eds., Night Thoughts or The Complaint and the Consolation: Illustrated by William Blake (New York, 1975), p. 17: a facsimile of the edn. published by Richard Edwards in 1797.

20. Op. cit.

21. Quoted in Essick and La Belle, ed. cit., p.viii.

English Emblem Books, and discussed by her.²² This design shows the conventional Time restraining the conventional Death from snuffing out Life's candle. Death has a dart, but he is a skeleton, in keeping with tradition.²³ There is no precedent that I know for illustrating Death in the way Blake chooses to do. On the other hand the dart is entirely conventional. And the idea of the Blake design is essentially the same as that of Quarles, whose Time attempts to prevent Death's suddenness with this argument:

[Motto]

Death, why so fast? pray stop your Hand,
 And let my Glass run out its sand:
 As neither Death nor Time will stay,
 Let us improve the present Day. (p. 172)

Time and Death

Time is ever on the Wing,
 Death awaits us ev'ry Hour;
 Can we laugh and play and sing,
 Subject to so dread a Pow'r?
 Time and Death for none will stay,
 Not perhaps another Day.

But tho' Death must have his Will
 Yet old Time prolongs the Date,
 'Till the Measure we shall fill
 That's allotted [sic] us by Fate:
 When that's done, then Time and Death
 Both agree to take our Breath. (p. 173)

The 'REFLEXION' notes that 'Nature is regular in ev'ry part' and this is given as the reason why Time may be relied on (p. 173). Essick and La Belle remark, in their edition of the

22. Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books (London, 1948), frontispiece and pp. 122-23; and Quarles, op. cit., p. 172.

23. See Henkel and Schöne, op. cit., passim, and esp. columns 1581-84.

engraved designs, that Blake's Time has, in the engraving discussed,

...ceased his usual flight and reveals himself to be, at least for the moment, a beneficent power. The scythe cuts down, but it is at the same time an instrument of life-giving harvest. The wreath of flowers intertwined about Time's head suggests mutability, but also his victory over Death and the gentle union of the young men holding hands.²⁴

This interpretation is a little facile, although it does include proper recognition of a vital element in the portrayal of Time. But Time has certainly not ceased his usual flight. Rather there is emphasis on his slow corrosive power as part of nature. 'We censure Nature for a span too short', Young observes.²⁵ Essick and La Belle have themselves been deceived by

... man's false opticks, from his folly false,
Time, in advance, behind him hides his wings,
And seems to creep decrepit with his age:
Behold him, when past by; what then is seen,
But his broad pinions swifter than the winds?²⁶

Blake is depicting a false or 'Ulro' vision of Time, bearing in mind a distinction made in Milton:

Los is by mortals nam'd Time Enitharmon is nam'd
Space
But they depict him bald & aged who is in eternal
youth
All powerful and his locks flourish like the brows
of morning
He is the Spirit of Prophecy the ever apparent
Elias
Time is the mercy of Eternity; without Times
swiftness
Which is the swiftest of all things: all were
eternal torment
(Milton 24: 68-73, E120/K509-10)

24. Essick and La Belle, ed. cit., pp. viii-ix.

25. Ibid., p. 23.

26. Ibid., p. 24.

And in 'A Vision of the Last Judgment' the same distinction is drawn:

The Greeks represent Chronos or Time as a very Aged Man this is Fable but the Real Vision of Time is in Eternal Youth I have however somewhat accomodated my Figure of Time to the Common opinion as I myself am also infected with it & my Visions also infected & I see Time Aged also too much so

(E553/K614)

To Morton D. Paley the Aged Time in Night Thoughts has an effect which is 'not on the whole successful'; and he suggests that this is because Blake is 'portraying not his own conception of Time but what he regards as a common misconception'.²⁷ But Blake draws misconceptions all the time, guided by the belief that 'What seems to Be :Is :To those to whom/It seems to Be, & is productive of the most dreadful/Consequences to those to whom it seems to Be' (Jerusalem 32:51-53, E177/K663: K has Pl. 36). This gives a clear indication of the way in which Blake would regard Young's passage on 'man's false opticks'. It is true that some of the designs are awkward, but not for the reason Paley suggests (he does not fully support it): that Blake is portraying a misconception he does not believe in. He is certainly doing that; but that does not mean he cannot and must not 'envision' or use it. And it would be hard to maintain that the proportion of failure to success is any greater in the portrayal of Time than in that of any other figure in the Night Thoughts illustrations.

No: Blake is drawing the misconception as such deliberately. It is one that can be taken from many places, including Night Thoughts. His own conception of the true

27. Morton D. Paley, 'Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World' in Rosenfeld, p. 145.

image of Time is certainly different. It is akin to the notion of kairos described by Panofsky as the 'brief decisive moment' which the Greeks depicted as a young man in fleeting movement.²⁸ Blake's Time, not always subsumed under the figure of Los, gives access to Eternity. With such a conception one may find the 'Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find / Nor can his Watch Fiends find it' (Milton 35:42-3, E135/K526). Such is the moment found by him 'who kisses the joy as it flies' and 'Lives in Eternitys sun rise' (N99, E465/K184). As surely as the Infinite is incapable of measurement by the Newtonian Ratio, so this notion of time evades measurement in terms of Newtonian Absolute Time, though it must not be confused with the Infinite itself.

Blake's notion of the misconception of Time conflates the idea of clock or hourglass time, which governs the world of Generation, with the idea of the decay and destruction inherent in that world. The concept of 'measure' is persuasively associated with slowness, slowness with old age, old age with decay. For these reasons Blake draws on the conventional figure of Chronos and Death.²⁹

As to the figure of Death in Blake's illustrations to Night Thoughts, it is this, not Time which is identical with that of Urizen. Are we then justified in looking at both figures in relation to Urizen, rather than at Death alone? I think so: for Night Thoughts is the only work in which these two figures played such a part that a clear

28. E. Panofsky, op.cit., p. 71.

29. Ibid., pp. 75-7.

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distinction had to be drawn. But in fact even there the distinction between two emblems so closely related anyhow is not rigidly maintained. On page 13 the figure of Death is used to illustrate the line 'The present moment terminates our sight'. The whole passage is a discussion of Time and its recalcitrance to understanding and prophecy. Analysis of the relation of illustration to text reveals that the figure elsewhere used to portray Death here stands for some such notion as 'the fleeting moment destroying a fair idea'. In Blake's own work the 'Ulro' view of Time is either easily related to Urizen, or is a property of Urizen himself. Thus, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 'The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock, but of wisdom :no clock can measure' (7, E35/K151). 'Folly' and 'wisdom' in Blake constitute an opposition whose normal sense has been inverted, as with 'angel' and 'devil'. 'Folly' is the property of 'angels' and is roughly synonymous with 'moral hypocrisy', 'reasoning' and the suppression of energy and desire. These are qualities characteristically embodied by Urizen, and his hours are 'measur'd by the clock'. In the Book of Urizen (3) 'Times on times he divided & measur'd'. Blake's symbol of 'wheels' is characteristically multivalent: one strand of meaning refers to measurement by the wheels of the mechanism of a clock or watch.

To what extent then does any idea of either Saturn or 'Father Time' contribute to the depiction of Urizen? To the extent that Urizen and Saturn are the figures of old men associated in Blake's work with a view of Time natural to the 'Generation of decay & death', to that extent the icono-

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graphy of Urizen as old man is in a general way influenced by that of Saturn. Our warrant for believing at least this is Blake's remark about the 'Common opinion' of Chronos; the association of Urizen with a view of Time that conforms to this opinion; and the uncertainty in the distinction made by Blake between his Urizenic Death and his Father Time in the Night Thoughts illustrations.

There is another very specific link, however, in the serpent which was almost always associated with Saturn, either wound about a tree or biting its own tail. Thus Vincenzo Cartari's Imagini delli Dei de gl'Antichi shows an aged Saturn surrounded by stars, with long white hair and beard, holding a snake which is biting its own tail.³⁰ The illustration in Montfaucon shows a snake winding around a tree-trunk.³¹ 'Tooke's' Pantheon again shows the god holding a snake which is biting its tail.³² William King remarks on this and says that it refers to Time's 'impairing, destroying, and devouring all Things, still consuming, and yet renewing itself by a perpetual Circulation'.³³

This conception is essentially the same as Blake's when he uses the image of the serpent: it is his 'image of infinite/Shut up in finite revolutions' and among the concomitant events 'man became an Angel;/Heaven a mighty circle turning; God a tyrant crown'd' (Europe 10:21-23). It was

30. Vincenzo Cartari, Imagini delli Dei de gl'Antichi (Venice, 1674), p. 15. First published with different illustrations in 1556.

31. Montfaucon, op. cit., Vol. I, Pl. 5.

32. Andrew Tooke, The Pantheon (London, 1781), Pl. 11. In fact translated from the French work of François Pomey (1694); first edn. of this translation 1698.

33. King, op. cit., p. 16.

'Thought' which 'chang'd the infinite to a serpent', and thought here is Urizenic 'ratiocination', 'the same dull round over again'. In an altered title-page of Europe Urizen is actually seen, with the tablets of the law, surrounded by the circular length of the serpent: this seems to be most directly relatable to the lines from the text itself quoted above (Repro. IB 396). In the Tate Gallery Colour Print Elohim Creating Adam, the Urizenic figure creates man and the binding serpent together (Tate cata., No. 15).

It may be objected that Orc or Luvah is associated with the serpent: this is true; in fact he is identified with it. But the relationship of Orc and Urizen with each other is in a quite strict sense dialectical. Orc's serpentine existence and Urizen's 'Thought' are born together, mutually dependent and mutually antagonistic. Though Orc is the 'Serpent form augmenting times on times' he is still 'a Serpent wondrous among the Constellations of Urizen' (FZ 101a:5, 8, E358/K342). From another point of view Orc is the youth and beginning of a serpentine cycle, Urizen its decay and old age. Urizen's attitude towards the serpent, at once fearful and tyrannous, is suggested by the iconography of Saturn and the serpent, where the latter always plays a subservient role.

We observed above that the figure of Death in the Night Thoughts illustrations was conventional in bearing a dart, but unconventional in that it is a vigorous old man with flowing white hair and beard, rather than a skeleton. Such a figure may be found, however, in the 'Jupiter Fulgerator'. This was the deity's most familiar aspect, in

which he is shown holding, and often hurling with arm stretched behind his head, a thunderbolt. This is normally either a collection of undulant golden flames, or a rod (or flames) surrounded by two lightning-shaped arrows. There is a whole plate of Montfaucon devoted largely to medals depicting Jupiter hurling the latter type of thunderbolt.³⁴ But the portrayal was common. The figure of death in the Night Thoughts illustrations appears to be a composite of the Jupiter Fulgerator and the emblem-book figure's straight dart. This suggests that Blake had Jupiter in mind, as well, when he created Urizen.

This view is supported by the presence of the hovering god in the sky in the background of The Fertilization of Egypt, an illustration designed by Fuseli and engraved by Blake for Erasmus Darwin's Botanical Garden (1791).³⁵ And here again it is the figure of Jupiter that has influenced the design, in this case the Jupiter Pluvius illustrated in Montfaucon and in later editions of Cartari's Imagini, in a section dealing with the 'Egyptian Jove'.³⁶

A picture of Urizen appears on the title-page of Visions of the Daughters of Albion which has been influenced by the Jupiter Pluvius idea (Repro. IB 127). But the most striking reminiscence is in the House of Death Colour Print in the Tate Gallery, where the figure of a Urizenic God is

34. Montfaucon, op. cit., Vol. I, Pl. 8.

35. Repro. Paley and Phillips, Pl. 61

36. Cartari, op. cit., p. 67.

essentially the same as the Jupiter Pluvius, even down to a detail like the downward extending palms of the hands (Repro. Tate cata., No. 22). Though the figure is clearly a god the picture is ostensibly illustrating the lines from Paradise Lost XI:491-92 in which 'triumphant Death his Dart/Shook, but delayed to strike'. This picture provides firm corroboration of our view that Blake makes Urizen the nexus of associations drawn from Jupiter and from Death, by means of an ingenious ambiguity in his use of the thunderbolt and the dart. There is no doubt, in view of the evidence, that Jupiter does participate in the making of Urizen. As William King says, the power of 'darting Thunder and Lightning was generally said to be only in the Hands of Jupiter'.³⁷

But these were also in the power of the Old Testament deity, as Blake was wellaware. This should be enough to remind us of the limitations of a method which merely documents iconographical relationships without enquiring into Blake's purpose, his opinion of the nature of myth, and the kind and range of sources open to him. Cartari's book he probably knew, for instance, at least in the edition in the Library of the Royal Academy (though this is not the one that contains the 'Jupiter Pluvius').³⁸ Seznec points out that this book is eclectic in its sources.³⁹ Interestingly, he chooses Cartari's discussion of Jupiter as an example of this. He looks at an odd engraving of Jupiter in the 1571 edition (Plate 48), where the god is shown dressed in a

37. King, op. cit., p. 35.

38. A Catalogue of the Library of the Royal Academy of Arts, London (London, 1864), p. 43.

39. Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods, trans. B. Sessions (New York, 1953), p. 233.

white mantle covered with stars, holding a nine-stringed lyre and two globes. 'Who,' asks Seznec, 'would recognize Jupiter with these accouterments?'⁴⁰ But Cartari has taken this description from Martianus Capella: it is Jupiter at the nuptials of Mercury and Philology.⁴¹ Seznec remarks that 'our mythographers sum up and continue a syncretistic tradition; they turn for information above all to the last adherents of paganism - that is, to a period when all the cults were being merged and all the gods amalgamated'.⁴² And he goes on to point out that in the Renaissance manuals 'divinities of the Oriental cults are given extraordinary prominence, especially in Cartari: he cites Cartari's use of the Egyptian Jupiter.'⁴³

The point is that Cartari's book, and Renaissance and post-Renaissance manuals in general, agreed with Blake's theories about myth. That is to say, not only did he accept from Bryant 'and all antiquaries' that religions and mythologies had a common source, but also he would have found in the manuals to hand sufficient confirmation of his belief. A glance at Cartari, in any edition, is sufficient to show that Seznec merely states the obvious about it. Montfaucon is nearly as catholic as Cartari, though less eclectic in his use of materials for illustrations. But the same syncretist tendency is latent in the eighteenth-century English manuals. Thus William King observes that 'a hundred Persons' in different places have borne the name Jupiter and have pretended to

40. Ibid., p. 237.

41. Ibid., pp. 237-38.

42. Ibid., p. 238.

43. Ibid.

divinity.⁴⁴ He subscribes to a Euhemerist theory in this, and later combines it with a typical 'growth of superstition' theory of polytheism. But the effect of the book would be to smooth the path of syncretism none the less: evidence is gathered from a wide variety of sources, and seems to be admissible if it merely refers to the name of the god in question. The effect of this kind of treatment of mythology is not only to break down the differences between similar deities within different cults, but also to blur the differences between similar gods within the same tradition. The similarity in behaviour and appearance between Saturn and Jupiter, say, is rather emphasized than the reverse by a collection of pictures which show them in so many different guises. What is left is a kind of common denominator in which each turns out to be similar to the other.

With such 'data' and such theories Blake may well have been intrigued by the likeness of the Old Testament God to the unnamed God who 'disembroils the Chaos' and creates men in Ovid's Metamorphoses (I), especially as portrayed in Picart's illustrations to a Latin-English edition which was in the Library of the Royal Academy.⁴⁵ Jupiter is also portrayed as looking strikingly like this god, though with his usual thunderbolt.⁴⁶ Another source suggesting this likeness would be Raphael's design for the Chigi Chapel,

44. King, op. cit., A5v-A6r (foliation given for lack of pagination).

45. Ovid's Metamorphoses in Latin and English, various translators (Amsterdam, 1732), pp. 1, 3.

46. Ibid., p. 12.

where portraits of the pagan gods surround that of Jehovah. Jupiter and Jehovah look startlingly alike; and Saturn is not unlike either of them.

What Blake found in the pagan tradition for use in the figure of Urizen is first: several important symbols, as for instance the serpent associated with an old man representing Time as decay; and second, an important and distinct impression of the struggle of patriarchy in Heaven. Hesiod, Ovid and the Renaissance and post-Renaissance mythographers all give prominence, with various emphases, to the struggle of Saturn with his father Uranus, and of Jupiter in turn with his father Saturn. The first chapters in the pagan theogony present a cyclical struggle of father and son for supreme power, conducted with ruthless savagery, involving fetters and castration. Jupiter deposed Saturn 'by the Counsel of Prometheus bound him in Fetters of Wool, and threw him into Tartarus ... and there castrated Saturn, after the same Manner as he had done to Coelus'.⁴⁷ There are few better precedents for the relations of Fuzon and Orc with Urizen. And the iconography of Saturn, associated with the serpent, probably seemed to Blake like a confirmation of the Orc-cycle.

4. Urizen and Vala

The figure of the veiled woman in the Night Thoughts illustrations (for instance No. 64 of the water-colours, engraved at p. 35 of the published edition) reminds

47. King, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

us that Blake was beginning to introduce a new and powerful representative of the Female Will into his work in about 1795-96. Hecate (c. 1795), one of the so-called 1795 Colour Prints, is the only use of the triple goddess in Blake's work apart from the early reference in 'then She bore Pale desire...':

Hate Meager hag Sets Envy on unable to do ought
herself. but Worn away a Bloodless Demon The Gods
all Serve her at her will so great her Power is
[.] like. fabled hecate She doth bind them to her
law. For in a Direful Cave She lives unseen Cload
from the Eye of Day. to the hard Rock transfixt
by fate and here She works her witcheries....
(MS fragment, c. 1780, E438/K41)

Here Hecate is associated with 'Hate', a restrictive law, 'fate', and hidden obscurity: this is hardly surprising. But the fact that Blake chooses to do a colour print of Hecate in c. 1795 again suggests that he is trying to expand his myth. He may indeed be doing so in the spirit of 'then She bore Pale desire...', for apart from the reference to 'Reason once fairer than the light till fould in Knowledges dark Prison house' (E438/K42) the myth of the Fall in that early work is quite ramified and contains every passion and faculty one could imagine. Is it possible that Blake was drawing on this work for inspiration, or even quoting a lost fragment of it, when he wrote these lines at the beginning of The Book of Los (1795), a work which is probably contemporary with Hecate?

3: 0 Times remote!
When Love & Joy were adoration:
And none impure were deem'd.
Not Eyeless Covet
Nor Thin-lip'd Envy
Nor Bristled Wrath
Nor Curled Wantonness

4: But Covet was poured full:
 Envy fed with fat of lambs:
 Wrath with lions gore:
 Wantonness lulld to sleep
 With the virgins lute,
 Or sated with her love.

5: Till Covet broke his locks & bars,
 And slept with open doors:
 Envy sung at the rich mans feast:
 Wrath was follow'd up and down
 By a little ewe lamb
 And Wantonness on his own true love
 Begot a giantrace

(BL 3:7-26, E89-90/K256)

The metre of this is strikingly unlike the usual anapaestic, and the curt dimeter of lines 10-13 occurs nowhere else in the Lambeth books. Nor, of course, does the simple personification of the passions, which is directly reminiscent of 'then She bore Pale desire...', where 'Covet' and 'Envy' also appear.

Blake, in 1795, is thinking in terms of a psychomachia (as Morton Paley describes Vala (Energy and the Imagination, p. 94)) that will account for more of human experience than the apparently transcendent and relatively simple myth of Urizen: he wants something that will convey more accurately the notion that the Gods exist in the mind of man. In doing so he seems to have looked over his shoulder at the crude psychomachia of 'then She bore Pale desire...'.
 Hecate can be equated with the Nature goddesses of Vala: Vala herself and the three daughters of Urizen in particular. This colour print is a sign that Blake is beginning to give the Female Will a yet more radical importance than it had in Europe, with Enitharmon. It must be about 1795, or even earlier, that Blake composed the fragment on page 141 of the Four Zoas manuscript, of which this is the

beginning:

Beneath the veil of Vala rose Tharmas from dewy
 The eternal man bowd his bright head & Urizen ^{tears}
 Astonishd lookd from his bright portals. Luvah ^{prince of light}
 Awakend Vala. Ariston ran forth with bright Onana ^{king of Love}
 And dark Urthona rouzd his shady bride from her ^{deep den}
 Pitying they viewd the new born demon. for they ^{could not love}
 Male formd the demon mild athletic force his ^{shoulders spread}
 And his bright feet firm as a brazen altar. but. ^{the parts}
 To love devoted. female, all astonishd stood the ^{hosts}
 Of heaven, while Tharmas with wingd speed flew to ^{the sandy shore}

(Selected from the reconstruction at
 E763-64. See also K380.)

Ariston only appears in two other places, in each case
 receiving only a brief mention - in America Plate 10 (10,
 E54/K200) and in The Song of Los Plate 3 (4, E65/K245).
 Both of these are works of 1795.

This fragment is clearly a first attempt at a new
 myth of the Fall, in which the consorts Luvah and Vala were
 to have importance, and where the Female Will of the latter
 was to be responsible for the birth of an hermaphroditic
 Tharmas. Blake may have been contemplating a figure like
 Vala for a long time before 1795, however; Margoliouth notices
 the resemblance of The Book of Thel to the passage in Night
 IX of The Four Zoas where Vala is purified:

Alas I am but as a flower then will I sit me down
 Then will I weep then Ill compain & sigh for
 And chide my maker thee O Sun that raisedst me to ^{immortality}
 fall
 So saying she sat down & wept beneath the apple
 trees

O be thou blotted out thou Sun that raisedst me
 That gavest me a heart to crave & raisedst me thy
 To feel thy heat & see thy light & wander here
 Hopeless if I am like the grass & so shall pass
 to trouble
 phantom
 alone
 away

Rise sluggish Soul why sitst thou here why dost
 Yon Sun shall wax old & decay but thou shalt ever
 The fruit shall ripen & fall down & the flowers
 But thou shalt still survive arise O dry thy dewy
 thou sit & weep
 flourish
 consume away
 tears

(FZ, 127:16-27, E381/K368)

Vala, unlike Thel, enters 'the pleasant gates of sleep,
 (FZ 128:34, E382/K369). And indeed this may reflect a
 previous happy ending to Thel itself. When Vala is redeemed
 she sees Luvah 'like a spirit stand in the bright air/Round
 him stood spirits like me who reard me a bright house' (FZ,
 128, 35-6, E382/K369). A similar scene with Thel may, perhaps,
 be depicted in a sketch which never found its way into The
Book of Thel itself (Two sketches for The Book of Thel, c.
 1789. Private collection. Repro. Tate Exhibn., No. 49).
 Here we see a female figure, most definitely emerging from
 a house with arms raised and outspread: above are spirits in
 flight.

If the passage about Vala is indeed a reflection
 of an earlier ending to Thel, then we know roughly what was
 replaced by the added Plate 6 of Thel, which now stands at
 the end. This is the plate in which Thel flees back to the
 vales of Har, afraid of the denial of self which Vala turns
 out to be capable of. But this pessimistic ending is also
 relevant to the development of Vala. Thel's last question

is, 'Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?' (The1 6:20, E6/K130). This curtain, the hymen, can be equated with the veil of Vala: each is a limitation of Energy and Vision. The1 is horrified by this characteristic of the curtain of flesh, but acts in such a way that she will preserve it.

Which brings us back to Urizen: the hymen and the veil perform the same function as the horizon: all are types of barrier. That Blake saw Vala and Urizen as fulfilling similar functions is clear from the Night Thoughts drawings Nos. 52 and 53. No. 52 shows 'Conscience' wearing a veil and noting the sins of a dissipated drinker onto a tablet. No. 53, on the next page, shows Death (who looks exactly like Urizen) reading the sins that Conscience has indited to the 'pale Delinquent' from a book covered with incoherent blotches, like that in Urizen, Copy D, Plate 5.⁴⁸ This implies that the sense of sin encouraged by a belief in the separate existence of the body (Nature) is codified by Death (here the same as the recording angel, which is Urizen's role on the title-page of The Book of Urizen).

Again, on page 27 of the Four Zoas manuscript there is a sketch of Urizen reclining and being enticed by a naked and merry Vala.⁴⁹ Urizen appears reluctant, perhaps partly

48. The watercolour drawings for Night Thoughts were transformed into engravings around the edition of that work published by Richard Edwards (London, 1797): only the first four Nights were published. Watercolour No. 52 appears in the engraved version on p. 27 of the published edn. - see Essick and La Belle. No. 53 was not engraved: a fate shared by most of the other watercolours.

49. William Blake, 'The Four Zoas' (1797 [-1808?]), BM Add. MSS 39764. The whole ms is reproduced in photographic fascimile by G.E. Bentley, Jr., ed., Vala, or the Four Zoas (Oxford, 1963). The titles of Vala and The Four Zoas are underlined in the text.

because of Vala's teasing expression; the design, however, shows that he is in reality subordinate to the mysteries of Nature and the Female Will.

If Blake had wanted to seek information about veiled goddesses, he might have turned to the translation of Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride by Samuel Squire (1744). There he would have found a discussion of the lines engraved on the statue of Minerva, who was regarded as the same as Isis:

"I am every thing that has been, that is, and that shall be: nor has any mortal ever yet been able to discover what is under my veil". In the like manner the word Amoun, (or as 'tis expressed in the greek language Ammon) which is generally looked upon as the proper name of the Egyptian Jupiter, is interpreted by Manetho the Sebenite to signify concealment, or something which is hidden.⁵⁰

At the same place Plutarch goes on to remark that the Egyptians suppose Jupiter, the Supreme Being, to be hidden in Nature. If Blake had read him, he would have received strong support for his association of Urizen and Vala.

The triple structure of 'every thing that has been, that is, and that shall be' probably derives from an interpretation of the threefold nature of the great goddess, and is a possible link with Hecate. Blake himself would have thought of Hecate as the Goddess of Destiny, the restrictive sense of Time in the fallen world. As he says of the weird sisters in Macbeth:

50. Samuel Squire, ed. and trans., Πλουταρχου Περι Ισιδος και Οσιριδος (Cambridge, 1744), p. 11.

Those who dress them for the stage, consider them as wretched old women, and not as Shakespeare intended, the Goddesses of Destiny....
(Desc. Cata., E526/K569)

From Fludd Blake may have known that

The three Parcae or Sisters of Destiny, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, which were born with Pan, do signify the three orders of time, namely the time present, the time past, and the time to come.⁵¹

But Destiny is also associated with Urizen and Urizenic figures: the most obvious example is the figure of Destiny himself, on page 85 of the Notebook. The motto is 'Whose changeless brow/Neer smiles nor frowns', taken from Donne's The Progresse of the Soule, st. IV, which is about 'Destiny'. Blake's figure is that of the seated figure of an old man with a beard.

There are other similarities between the presentation of Urizen and that of Vala, as Judith Wardle has shown.⁵² But it should be sufficiently clear that, in Vala, Blake has created a figure who in many respects duplicates Urizen's functions of obstructing Vision and restricting Energy. The root cause is his desire to show that the 'Gods' are in the mind of man: the usefulness of Vala was that she could be made to suggest a flaw in man's relationship with

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51. Fludd, op. cit., p. 140. This passage throws more light on the 'Introduction' to Experience ('Who Present, Past, & Future sees') lending support to the idea that the Bard's is a vision of fallen time.
52. Judith Wardle, 'Blake and Iconography: Analogues of Urizen and Vala' Colby Library Quarterly, Vol. XIV, No. 3 (September, 1973), pp. 125-65.

his environment: hence that other important innovation in Vala: 'the Ancient Man'. To have the Ancient Man as the first term of the myth seemed far less theological than to have the 'Eternals'. It also removed the impression of arbitrariness in the fall of Urizen: if man had first become subordinate to Nature it is easy to see that he might next submit to a narrow and corrupt form of Reason.

On the other hand the new solution only pushed the problem one stage further back: why should man succumb to Nature? Blake gives various differing accounts of the Fall in Vala, but none is conclusive. In his attempt to solve this problem he evolves a more subtle depiction of the mind, drawing on traditional psychology.⁵³ In the process, Urizen and the other 'Zoas', to use Blake's later term, come to seem strangely alike, while Urizen himself gradually becomes less central to the myth. In the end Blake shifted the blame for the Fall to Satan, the 'Self-hood'.

5. Urizen's role in Vala

With Vala, the first version of The Four Zoas, we are still in a world dominated by Urizen.⁵⁴ But of course

53. Paley, Energy and the Imagination, pp.91-6.

54. Of The Four Zoas manuscript Erdman says: 'The complexities of the ms, in short, continue to defy analysis and all assertions about meaningful physical groupings or chronologically definable layers of composition or inscription must be understood to rest on partial and ambiguous evidence.' (E739) This remark applies as much to William Blake's Vala, ed. H.M. Margoliouth (Oxford,

Vala herself has decisive importance, as appears in Enitharmon's account of the Fall in Night VIIa:

Among the Flowers of Beulah walkd the Eternal Man
 & saw
 Vala the lilly of the desart. melting in high noon
 Upon her bosom in sweet bliss he fainted Wonder
 siezd
 All heaven they saw him dark. they built a golden
 wall
 Round Beulah There he reveld in delight among
 the Flowers
 Vala was pregnant & brought forth Urizen Prince
 of Light
 First born of Generation. Then behold a wonder to
 the Eyes
 Of the now fallen Man a double form Vala appeard.
 a Male
 And female shuddring pale the Fallen Man recoild
 From the Enormity & calld them Luvah & Vala.
 (42R, 7-14: M43)

Vala here begins as the desire for passivity and inaction in man. As 'One of the Eternals' expresses it in Night IX:
 'Man is a Worm wearied with joy he seeks the caves of sleep'
 (67R, 10: M66). From the union of Vala and the Man come Urizen, and Vala and Luvah conceived of as separate entities: external Nature and alienated Passion.

(Footnote cont'd. from previous page)

1956) as to any other attempt to define a chronological layer: for Margoliouth intends to present the text 'before erasures, deletions, additions, and changes of order had brought it to the state in which we know it today as The Four Zoas' (p.xi). But it is doubtful whether the text thus produced, from what is thought to be the first layer on each page, ever constituted a unit at any particular point in time. But Margoliouth's edition is useful in that it does isolate a text which forms a unity in terms of its concepts and texture: except in the last two Nights there are no Seven Eyes of God, no Winepress of Los, no Selfhood, nothing about the descent of Jesus in Luvah's robes of blood, no doctrine of States. Margoliouth's version will therefore be used as a convenient and available means of isolating the period of writing during which Urizen's importance was at its height (1797-c.1800). After c. 1803 at the latest Urizen looms less large in Blake's writings.

But

within its arches all
The heavens were closed & [spirits mournd their
bondage night & day]
(16V, 12-13: M6)

There is a salutary element, nevertheless, in Urizen's activity:

Thus were the stars of heaven created like a
golden chain
To bind the body of Man to heaven from falling
into the abyss
(17R, 15-16: M7)

And indeed the tone of these passages from Vala, and their explicit emphasis on the beauty of Urizen's world, almost overpowers Blake's mistrust of 'mathematic motion wondrous' (17R, 33: M7). In The Book of Urizen Urizen created out of a fear of the chaos which he himself had caused, and there is something despicable in his fear. In Vala Night II much more is allowed for the fact that, however misguided, this Creation is an avoidance of chaos - a chaos caused by the sleep of the Eternal Man.

This is part of a general change in the character of Urizen: he has become more sublime. The Book of Urizen, especially in its illuminations, tended to make him look ridiculous, particularly because of the hypocritical benevolence which masked his desire for power. In Vala Urizen is much more the 'King of Light'. It is almost as though he feels he is fulfilling a duty to the Eternal Man to preserve order while the latter sleeps: 'I am set here a King of trouble' (19V, 4: M10). When Urizen wishes to be hypocritical in Vala he is quite open about what he is doing:

Compell the poor to live upon a Crust of bread by
 Smile when they frown frown when they smile & when
 With labour & abstinence say he looks healthy &
 soft mild arts
 a man looks pale
 happy
 (40V, 2-4: M40)

But in The Book of Urizen he seemed to believe that his 'Laws of peace, of love, of unity' were genuine (BU 4:34, E71/K224). There is much grandeur in the new Urizen, and this demands that he be a conscious, Machiavellian hypocrite, rather than an unconscious one.

The reason for this change is that Urizen is no longer the original culprit. Thus his attempt to avoid chaos is, though misguided in character, laudable: his attempt to prevent Man from falling into the abyss is even reminiscent of Los's merciful creation of form - a fact which underlines their similarity as artists.

But Urizen is incapable of sustaining his initial creation. When he casts out Ahanian in Night III he rejects all that is best in the principle of his own creativity. Ahanian, his own intellectual delight, has complained of things that he has been doing:

till these dens thy wisdom framd
 Golden & beautiful but O how unlike those sweet
 fields of bliss
 Where liberty was justice & eternal science was
 mercy
 (20R, 10-12: M11)

Urizen casts out the best part of himself because it cannot but revolt against the inadequacy of his recent creations. But in doing this he is destroying the very basis on which he has acted hitherto. He falls, and at the same time,

Urizen employs the same means to subdue all things as he had used in his first Creation, but now the emphasis is on ensuring that 'none should dare oppose his will'. This phase corresponds with the creation of the Moral Law: the Ten Commandments. For Urizen's problem now is to ensure not only that he create a world in his own image, but also that there will be no internal opposition'. He therefore makes 'the Web of Urizen' (37R, 31: M35), a web of religion and law.

In recasting the myth of Urizen in terms of a double Fall, Blake is not passively reflecting current opinions about the Flood. He wishes to emphasize Urizen's inner emptiness, which even he admits to Ahanian, who, he says, is 'Reflecting all my indolence my weakness & my death' (22R, 18: M13). Urizen only disguises his lack of Energy with difficulty, by the imposition of Mathematic Form. When his first world lies in ruins, Blake gives him words that imply that his world is a reflection of him: 'now like me partaking desolate thy master's lot' (36V, 37: M35). The Flood and its aftermath serve to show that Reason, as a faculty of 'comparing and judging' is subservient to the senses, even though it may seem otherwise.

6. Urizen and Orc

Throughout this time Urizen has feared, with reason, the coming of one who will usurp his place: Luvah, or Orc:

Luvah was cast into the Furnaces of affliction &
 And Vala fed in cruel delight, the furnaces with
 Stern Urizen beheld urg'd by necessity to keep
 The evil day afar, & if perchance with iron power
 He might avert his own despair

(13R, 10-14: M4)

Urizen here reveals an anxious suspicion that he cannot repress Energy for ever. And indeed it seems that he has heard a prophecy that he will be usurped by Orc:

O bright Ahanian, a Boy is born of the dark Ocean
 Whom Urizen doth serve, with Light replenishing
 I am set here a King of trouble commanded here to
 And do my ministry to those who eat of my wide
 All this is mine yet I must serve & that Prophetic
 Must grow up to command his Prince & all my Kingly

(19V, 2-7: M10)

Harold Bloom correctly points out that 'The fears of Urizen follow the pattern of Pharaoh's in Exodus I, and of Herod's in Matthew 2, and of Zeus in the Promethean myth' (E871). Not only that: they can be compared with the fears of the Gnostics' evil Demiurge on discovering that Christ is to be sent; with Saturn's fear of Jupiter; with the fears of Milton's Satan on hearing about Messiah; and with Macbeth's fears about Malcolm (Macbeth has also influenced the meeting of Urizen with his three daughters at the beginning of Night VI).

But the fact that Urizen is now a grand and slightly tragic tyrant, and Orc an incipient one, only serves to make them similar. And despite the fact that Urizen fears Orc there is the constant suggestion that they are in alliance.

... melancholic patients, especially if their Disorder is inveterate, easily fall into Madness, which, when removed, the Melancholy again discovers itself, though the Madness afterwards returns at certain periods.⁵⁸

He is insistent on the point that Mania and Melancholy are two facets of the same disorder:

There is an absolute Necessity for reducing Melancholy and Madness to one species of Disorder...⁵⁹

Melancholic patients, like Blake's 'Questioner who sits so sly' ('Auguries of Innocence', E485/K433) ask 'a Reason for the most trifling and inconsiderable Occurrences'.⁶⁰ The cause of the malady is 'an excessive Congestion of the Blood in the Brain'.⁶¹ Blake is probably thinking in terms of this kind of psychology when he says that Luvah and Vala 'flew up from the Human Heart/Into the Brain' (5V, 9-10: M78).

Blake comes to associate both Urizen and Luvah very closely with a concept that he was to evolve during the Felpham period: that of Satan the Selfhood. Each of them enters this state and can be redeemed from it. It permits Blake to symbolize the error that all the 'Zoas' had in common: Selfhood. The notion is already hinted at in Vala, for Urizen's regeneration consists in an abrogation of the desire for power: 'Rage Orc Rage Tharmas Urizen no longer curbs your rage' (61R, 26: M55). And Vala's regeneration

58. Robert James, A Medicinal Dictionary (London, 1743-45), 3 vols., Vol, II, 'Mania' (unpaginated).

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

comes about through entering the 'gates of sleep' (64V, 34: M62).

With the concept of Satan Blake seems to feel that he has found the cause and condition of error. By definition Satan is associated with the Fall, and the separation of the Zoas; and Blake chooses to make him a symbol of that dead version of form which was once the distinguishing characteristic of Urizen. Nevertheless, Blake continues to be concerned with the opposition of Reason and Energy; and the particular association of Urizen and Luvah with Satan is a source of confusion in, for instance, Milton and, I should say, the Illustrations of the Book of Job. Much of this confusion can be cleared up by recourse to the alchemical ideas and iconography on which Blake was drawing.

CHAPTER NINE

URIZEN, SATAN, AND ALCHEMY

F. Sherwood Taylor summarises the ideas of the alchemist in this fashion:

The combination of two bodies he saw as a marriage, the loss of their characteristic activity as death, the production of something new, as a birth, the rising up of vapours, as a spirit leaving the corpse, the formation of a volatile solid, as the making of a spiritual body.¹

The similarity of these terms to certain of Blake's is evident. And indeed his debt to philosophical alchemy is well-known.

It is the intention of this chapter to show the relevance of philosophical alchemy to the description of Urizen. But we shall also attempt to take seriously Blake's claim to have been influenced specifically by 'Paracelsus & Behmen', because it is important to keep in mind the particular tradition within which he is working.

1. F. Sherwood Taylor, The Alchemists, (St. Alban's, 1976), p. 114.

1. Alchemy in the Eighteenth Century

Interest in alchemy in general, both speculative and practical, was still current in the eighteenth century, and in Blake's own time. Thus the anti-Newtonian philosopher Robert Greene (one of the main opponents of Newton who might be called scientific) believed that the transmutation of base metals into gold was possible.² The other main school of pseudo-scientific anti-Newtonians were the Hutchinsonians. Of these, William Jones of Nayland believed not only in the doctrine of the four elements, but also in the alchemical idea that two of these were active and two passive.³ Berkeley's Siris, which Blake annotated, shows an alchemical conception of matter (so to speak); and indeed, it has been suggested that he thought of his tar-water as the elixir.⁴ We should not like to adjudicate in this. However, Kathleen Raine believes that the Hermetic philosophy was 'among the more important sources of Berkeley's philosophic answers to Newton and Locke'.⁵ In Blake's own time there is the curious case of James Price, M.D., F.R.S., (1752-83) who claimed to

2. Robert E. Schofield, op. cit., p. 121.

3. Ibid, p. 127.

4. E.A.H. [Hitchcock], Remarks upon Alchemy and the Alchemists (Boston, Mass., 1857), p.106.

5. Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 272.

have performed the great work.⁶ Price committed suicide in front of a team of inspectors from the Royal Society.⁷ But this was not before the fellows had become concerned at the need to dissuade others from following his example in alchemy.⁸

Why concern ourselves with the survivals of practical alchemy? First, I think, because of what J.H.S. Green says of the Royal Society's concern to combat Price's ideas: 'That this was necessary at so late a date shows how small an impact 18th-century science had made outside a narrow circle.'⁹ This must be of interest to any Blake scholar. And the second reason is related to the first: it is too easy to assume that Blake's imaginative interpretation of various scientific and antiquarian data can be automatically prescindend from the data themselves. But though Blake's critique of the eighteenth-century world-view is hardly rigorous in a scientific sense, nevertheless it seems to be true that he was interested in scientific controversies. And his description of the universe in Milton (29: 5-20, E126/K516) is strikingly reminiscent of that offered as scientific by a Muggletonian who wrote against the

6. James Price, M.D., F.R.S., An Account of Some Experiments on Mercury, Silver and Gold (London, 1782). 2nd. edn. in 1783.

7. J.H.S. Green, 'The Last Alchemist', Discovery, Vol. XXII, No. 1, (Jan., 1961), p. 19.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

9. *Ibid.*

Newtonian system as late as 1846.¹⁰ We may at least suspect that the primacy Blake accorded to vision did not entail the complete ignoring of questions that we should think of as being about 'fact'.

Of course there is no evidence whatsoever that Blake had any interest in the transmutation of metals. We may disagree with Milton O. Percival when he says that 'By the end of the eighteenth century alchemy had run its course'. But he is right to say that Blake's interest in it was 'purely speculative'.¹¹

We may therefore turn for enlightenment to those eighteenth-century writers who were interested in 'philosophical alchemy'. But one soon learns that the separation of 'philosophical' from 'practical' alchemy, even at this late date, is, though useful, somewhat artificial. Thus, as Robert E. Schofield points out, the Behmenist John Byrom was interested in Robert Greene's philosophy.¹² He was also, we should add,

10. Isaac Frost, Two Systems of Astronomy, the Newtonian and the System in Accordance with the Holy Scriptures (London, 1846). On earlier Muggletonian beliefs about astronomy and astrology see Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England (London, 1971), p. 378.

11. Milton O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny (New York, 1938), p. 197.

12. Schofield, op. cit., p. 99. See The Private Journal and Literary Remains of John Byrom, ed., Richard Parkinson, D.D., F.S.A., 2 vols. in 2 parts each (being Vols. XXXII, XXXIV, XL and XLIV of Remains Historical and Literary Connected with the Palantine Counties of Lancaster and Chester, published by the Chetham Society (Manchester, 1854, 1855, 1856 and 1857), Vol. I, pp. 397, 403, 405, 443.

interested in Hutchinson, though he did not like his system;¹³ and he coresponded with the Hutchinsonian Jones of Nayland.¹⁴ Byrom reports that William Law told him that Newton's 'attraction and the three first laws of motion were from Behmen'.¹⁵

Richard Clarke is another Behmenist whose work Blake very probably knew, according to Désirée Hirst.¹⁶ And he too was interested in alchemy.¹⁷

It is now clear that radical Protestantism and Hermetism were closely allied, and that the alliance lasted at least until the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ The most pertinent example of this connection has been discovered by S. Foster Damon: De Brahm, an American alchemist, was also the author of the antinomian Voice of the Everlasting Gospel (Philadelphia, 1792); read Boehme and George Fox; and inveighed against 'Reasoning' and its 'Harlot Church'.¹⁹

13. Private Journal ... of John Byrom, Vol. II, pp. 23, 26, 131.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 573-578.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

16. Désirée Hirst, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

18. See also: Keith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 271; Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, Ch. 14, *passim*; Henry J. Cadbury, 'Early Quakerism and Uncanonical Lore'. Harvard Theological Review, Vol. XL, No. 3, (1947), pp. 204-5.

19. S. Foster Damon, 'De Brahm: Alchemist', Ambix, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, (July, 1977), pp. 78, 80, 81, 82.

2. The Alchemical Teaching

'Reasoning' is decried both in the tradition of Paracelsus and Boehme and in the tradition of antinomian Pretestantism: correspondingly, both traditions stress the spirit, rather than the letter, of Holy Scripture. The insistent derogation of 'outward Reason' in the Paracelsus-Behmenist tradition contributes to Blake's conception of Reason and Urizen. We shall show that an understanding of the alchemical symbolism associated with the tria prima and the great work is essential to the description of the iconography and meaning of Urizen and his relations with Orc/Luvah and Satan.

Work on this topic is needed: even Percival, who most clearly links Blake's symbolism with alchemy (unlike Kathleen Raine, who is more concerned with Hermetism in general) concentrates on aspects of alchemical symbolism which do not relate to Urizen - although he does mention the important fact that the true tria prima in their material forms are Blake's 'triple Elohim'.²⁰

Such omissions are perfectly understandable: the symbolism of alchemy is so confusing, self-contradictory and obscure that, as Jung (a reliable authority in this field) points out:

20. Percival, op. cit., p. 211.

... one must not imagine for a moment that the alchemists always understood one another. They themselves complain about the obscurity of the texts, and occasionally betray their inability to understand even their own symbols and symbolic figures.²¹

Jung records his opinion that 'it is quite hopeless to try to establish any kind of order in the infinite chaos of substances and procedures'.²² This is a little exaggerated; if it were true Jung's work would have been impossible. The ramifications of alchemical symbolism seem completely otiose from a functional point of view. And perhaps they are. But behind the 'obscenely luxuriant growth of arcane imagery',²³ lies the basic system of amalgamating philosopher's mercury and sulphur in 'salt', which gives a body to the others, and then 'putrefying' or 'mortifying' the mixture.²⁴ The resultant is then 'vivified' or 'regenerated'.²⁵ Sir Isaac Newton was of the opinion that it was essentially this process which was repeated in all the so-called seven steps of transmutation;²⁶ though in fact each of the seven steps was given a different name.²⁷ Newton's view is probably correct: the

21. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 276.

22. Ibid.

23. Richard S. Westfall, 'Alchemy in Newton's Career', in Reason, Experiment and Mysticism in the Scientific Revolution, M.L. Righini Bonelli and W.R. Shea, eds. (London and Basingstoke, 1975), p. 198.

24. See J.R. Partington, op. cit., Vol. II, (1961), pp. 142-148.

25. Cf. Jonson, The Alchemist, II, 5: Subtle: And When comes Viuification? Face: After Mortification.

26. Richard S. Westfall, op. cit., pp. 201-2.

27. Partington, op. cit., p. 137.

different names of the seven steps seem to refer to the supposed effects of the repeated distillations. This fact accounts for the effect of repetitiveness in diversity given by alchemical symbolism. Désirée Hirst's summary of the basic process is succinct and useful for our purpose:

... the general pattern of alchemic teaching never varies. It asserts the union of spirit, symbolized by the eagle, or by mercury, with the serpent or sulphur.... This union forms the dragon, or winged serpent out of a conflict between opposites. The 'mortification', or death, of the dragon was necessary before that resurrection could take place which alone produces the 'philosophers' [sic] stone.²⁸

Mercury is spirit, 'sulphur is soul; they are united, or 'married', in the dragon by salt, or body.²⁹

3. Blake and Alchemy

The eagle and serpent are the subject of the illumination at the bottom of plate 15 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (Repro. IB 112). They represent the Marriage itself, with spirit and soul interpreted as Reason and Energy. However, at

28. Hirst, op. cit., p. 124. Miss Hirst identifies sulphur with body. But this is not the conception of the Paracelsian-Behmenist tradition which influenced Blake: 'Hermes says that mercury is spirit, sulphur is soul, and salt is body; metals are between spirit and body.' (Partington, op. cit., p. 144, writing on Paracelsus).

29. See the previous note. The orthodox Christian use of the eagle-serpent symbolism is not the same as the alchemical: Christ came to be identified with the eagle and Satan with the serpent which has to be destroyed. In alchemical symbolism it is the amalgam of eagle and serpent which is destroyed and reborn in a new 'spiritual' form. Cf. Rudolf Wittkower, Allegory and the Migration of Symbols (London, 1977), pp. 31-32.

this stage in Blake's work there is a marked inequality in the status of the two terms. He has understood from Boehme 'the Contrariety and Combat in the Being of all Beings, how that one does oppose, poison and kill another'.³⁰ And his statement that 'Without Contraries is no progression' (MHH3, E34/K149) seems to indicate that he has also understood

... the Cure, how the one heals another, and brings it to Health; and if this were not, there were no Nature, but an eternal Stillness, and no Will; for the contrary Will makes the Motion, and the Original of the Seeking, that the opposite Sound seeks the Rest ... 31

Blake is thus following the Behmenist interpretation of the alchemical opposites.

But though Blake pays lip-service in The Marriage to the idea of the complementarity of the contraries, the spirit of that book is to support that claims of Energy and reduce the role of Reason to that of Energy's servant: 'Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.' (MHH4, E34/K149) But Blake's simple advocacy of energy had ceased by 1795. Instead he evolves a more orthodox alchemical conception in which the contraries of Reason and Energy (personified by Urizen and Luvah) are united in the Great Dragon, which appears in Blake as the 'triple Elohim', whose motives are wings and

30. Works, Vol. IV, Bk. 1, p. 12.

31. Ibid.

seprent; as the 'dark Hermaphrodite'; and as Satan, the Selfhood. These figures are phenomena of the same essence, the dual nature of which is exposed by the collusion of God and the biblical Satan in the Job illustrations, where figures are opposed but complementary aspects of Blake's Satanic Selfhood, who is revealed in Job's dream (Job, III. XI).

The change in Blake's view of energy is well illustrated by the different appearance of the figure of Fire in the two versions of The Gates of Paradise (1793 and c. 1818). Part of this is an alchemical emblem-book.³² Plates 2-5 in both versions show the four elements. They represent creation as 'the separation of the elements', in alchemical phrase.³³ In the first version, however, Fire, as Energy, suggests the means of escape from the restrictions of the fallen world. The figure of Fire appears in the Notebook (91) where the motto associates it with Milton's Satan: at this stage, then, it represents the positive 'Messiah or Satan or Tempter' of The Marriage (17, E39/K177). The meaning of the sequence of four elements in The Gates is thus highly compressed: creation is seen as a fall through separation, but at the same time Blake wishes to suggest the means by which the restrictions of Reason can be overcome by Energy: that is why the emblem of the cupid hatching from an egg follows the emblem of Fire. The egg is the traditional symbol of the

32. See Gerard Heym, 'Some Alchemical Picture Books', Ambix, Vol. I, No. 1, (May, 1937), pp. 69-75, for a survey of some Renaissance emblem-books. I have not been able to find any alchemical emblem-books in the eighteenth century.

33. Cf. Walter Pagel, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

alchemical retort, which is seen as a microcosm:³⁴ the Neoplatonic 'Mundane Egg', Blake's 'Mundane Shell'.

But in the second version of The Gates 'Fire' is portrayed with horns and scales. He is identified as 'A dark Hermaphrodite':

Blind in Fire with shield & spear
 Two Horn'd Reasoning Cloven Fiction
 In Doubt which is Self contradiction
 A dark Hermaphrodite We stood
 Rational Truth Root of Evil & Good.
 ('The Keys to the Gates', 12-15, E265/K770,
 taking the later version of 1.13)

To those nourished on the early symbolism of Orc and Urizen it may seem strange that Reason here should be associated with the expected attributes of Orc/Luvah. However, the word 'Hermaphrodite' gives the clue that 'Fire' stands here for all the elements - 'We stood' (emphasis added). But the sense in which the elements are thus represented is complex.

The Hermaphrodite, or 'Rebis', is a compound of Mercury and Sulphur. This is because, according to one train of alchemical symbolism, Mercury is feminine and Sulphur masculine: they were sometimes known as the Red Man and his White Wife.³⁵ The Hermaphrodite is thus another name for that amalgam, also known as the 'dragon', which has to be 'mortified' or 'putrefied' in order that the Philosopher's Stone may be produced. The Hermaphrodite may be seen, for

34. Cf. H.J. Sheppard, 'Egg Symbolism in Alchemy', Ambix, Vol. VI, No. 3, (August, 1958), pp. 140-148.

35. Lapidus [Stephen Skinner], In Pursuit of Gold: Alchemy in Theory and Practice (London, 1976), p. 26.

instance, in Plates XXXIII and XXXVIII of Michael Maier's celebrated alchemical emblem-book, Atalanta Fugiens. In Plate XXXIII the youthful Hermaphrodite is seen 'lying in the shadows' on a trestle cooking over a fire: 'Hermaphroditus mortuo similis, in tenebris jacens, igne indiget'.³⁶ This is Blake's 'dark' Hermaphrodite, 'Blind in Fire'.

But why does Blake make the Hermaphrodite stand for the four elements, rather than the two principles of Mercury and Sulphur? In fact the two principles are very much there: they are the reason for the Hermaphrodite's 'Self contradiction'. (The third principle, salt, is here understood, rather than expressed, since it merely holds the other two together.) The horns which Blake added to the later emblem emphasize the dual nature of the Hermaphrodite, torn between fallen Reason and fallen Energy, 'Good and Evil'. It is the very principle of this separation which is wrong, the very knowledge of good and evil: the blind destructiveness of fallen Energy and the repressive rule of Reason are the two salient characteristics of Blake's Satan.

But the four fallen elements are also, as we have seen, part of the Hermaphrodite. The point is that the four elements appear as the three principles in the Hermaphrodite.³⁷ Or as Boehme expresses it in the Clavis:

36. Michael Maierus, Atalanta Fugiens, hoc est Emblemata Nova de Secretis Naturae Chymica (Oppenheim, 1618), Plate XXXIII, and Plate XXXVIII, ———— And cf. Satan in the Tate tempera, (c.1826), Satan smiting Job with sore Boils, with the winged hermaphrodite in Daniel Stolcius de Stolcenberg, Hortulus Hermeticus (op. cit. ———), p. 109, or that, also winged, shown in Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 109.

37. Partington, op. cit., p. 204.

The ancient wise men have called these three properties Sulphur, Mercurius, and Sal, as to their Materials which were produced thereby in the four Elements, into which this Spirit does coagulate, or make itself Substantial.

The four Elements lie also in this ground, and are nothing different or separate from it... 38

Except in the notion of 'the triple Elohim' Blake does not pay much attention to the fact that the principles are three. In this he is following the tendency of most alchemical symbolism, especially in the emblem-books. He is more interested, early and late, in the fundamental duality of Mercury and Sulphur, his Reason and Energy. Though the four Zoas are crucial to the rationale of Blake's developed mythology, they somehow seem less integral to his vision than the opposition of Urizen and Luvah, which is itself opposed to an authentic third term, Los, who, as is known, is closely related to the alchemical 'Archaeus' or 'Vulcan'.³⁹

The change which has occurred between the first and second versions of The Gates of Paradise is from a fairly narrow use of alchemical sources to a wide and, so to speak, erudite use of them. The change corresponds to Blake's ambivalent attitude towards Energy after about 1795, and with his evolution of a new use of the term Satan. The idea of the Hermaphrodite composed of two opposing principles which must be burnt permits Blake to find a symbolic language which is both a continuation of his earlier themes and a good vehicle for his sense that Urizen and Luvah are mutually

38. Works, Vol. II, Bk. 4, p. 21.

39. Percival, op. cit., p. 204.

dependent parts of the same Satan. It is in the illuminations, however, that the emblems may seem over-worked unless the reader has a knowledge of the alchemical background; even if he does, they may seem to be overloaded; but in this they follow the tradition of alchemical symbolism.

4. Urizen and Alchemical Ideas

We have mentioned that Urizen takes the place of the alchemical Mercury or 'spirit'; but we have also seen that in the Hermaphrodite Mercury is conceived of as female. The apparent contradiction is merely a consequence of the luxuriant proliferation of alchemical symbolism. Mercury was considered to be passive with respect to sulphur, and was therefore sometimes portrayed as female - for instance, as Luna.

But Mercury could also, of course, be portrayed as masculine, the obvious example being Hermes. What concerns us here is his portrayal as an old man - 'Mercurius Senex'. This figure represents the same amalgam as the Hermaphrodite, considered under the aspect of Mercury, which was often thought to be the most important principle in the work.

At the stage where the matter is putrefied it may be envisaged as an old bearded man, often a king, who is sickening and finally killed by the action of the alchemist's fire.⁴⁰ This is the stage in which the matter blackens- the nigredo, or the melancholy stage: the old man is sometimes depicted as

40. de Stolcenberg, op. cit., p. 105; and Jung, op. cit., Fig XII, p. 57.

Saturn because of the association with melancholy.⁴¹ Since the three principles are reflections of the Holy Trinity, and Mercury corresponds to the Father;⁴² and since we have already seen that both Urizen and Luvah participate in the Hermaphrodite, it is a fair inference that Urizen is Mercurius Senex, the alchemist's Saturn, and the fallen image of Jehovah (Blake's Elohim).

But Blake's Satanic Selfhood can also be seen as an old man, indistinguishable from Urizen. Because Satan contains both Urizen and Luvah, Blake portrays him in either guise. Thus the figure with the tablets of the Law on Milton 18 is identifiable as Urizen (IB 234). But he is also Satan, for Milton is striding forward to grapple with him, and beneath the design are the words 'To Annihilate the Selfhood of Deceit & False Forgiveness'. The Satan of Job's evil dream has the characteristics of Urizen, in that he possesses the long white hair and beard, and is pointing to the tablets of the law. The sepia drawing known as Christ Trampling upon Urizen (c.1808. National Museum of Wales) might equally well, then, be known as Christ Trampling upon Satan, for it draws on the tradition of Christ trampling upon the serpent.

The serpent was another word for the alchemical dragon. And in Boehme the serpent both stands for the three

41. de Stolcenberg, op. cit., p. 157. Cf. Maierus, op. cit, Plate CXXXIV.

42. Paracelsus His Aurora, & Treasure of the Philosophers. As also The Water-Stone of the Wise Men (London, 1659), pp. 125, 161, 164.

principles as represented in matter, and for Satan, the opposer of Christ. Christ is known by Boehme and his followers as 'the Treader upon the Serpent'.⁴³ The Serpent in Boehme is the 'Self-hood'.⁴⁴ The 'Self-hood' is the cause of the desire of the knowledge of good and evil: in The Epistles of Jacob Behmen it is said that man has brought the will of the serpent into himself and each 'property' has entered into 'its selfe-hood ... whence the lust, and Imagination to good and evill did arise in him'.⁴⁵ We should not, the letter continues, eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The iconography and meaning of Blake's Christ and Satan, then, is profoundly Behmenist. This is obvious from the work of the eighteenth-century English Behmenist, John Byrom, whom we have already mentioned as being interested in anti-Newtonian philosophers:

Here Christ, the Serpent-bruiser, stands in Man,
 Storming the Devil's hellish, self-built Plan;
 And hence the Strife within the human Soul;
Satan's to kill and Christ's to make it whole;
 As by Experience, in so great Degree,
 God, in his Goodness, causes you to see.

.....

Still in its Self-hood [the soul] wou'd seek to shine,
 And, as its own, possess the Light divine.

.....

43. Works, Vol. I. Bk. 2, p. 222.

44. Ibid., Vol. IV, Bk. 1, p. 74.

45. The Epistles of Jacob Behmen, trans. J.E. [Ecliston] (London, 1649), p. 112.

Mov'd too by outward Reason, which is blind,
And, of itself, sees nothing of this Kind.

.....

The own Self-will must die away, and shine,
Rising thro' Death, in saving Will divine...

('A Poetical Version of a Letter from Jacob Behmen')⁴⁶

The material forms of the three principles were created by
Lucifer, 'the Great Prince out of the Center of Nature':⁴⁷

For the Center [of Eternity] was Sulphur, Mercurius,
and Sal, and it [the Center] was but a Spirit, but
in the stern Fiat (in the stern fierce attraction)
it came to be such hard Stones, Metals, and Earth,
all according to the Forms of the Essences: It is
all become material... 48

It is this infernal Trinity which Blake usually treats as a
duality. It must go to 'Eternal Death' - a Behmenist term
for mortification.⁴⁹ The bodily, or external, is then put off,
and that which is not destroyed in the fire of Eternal Death
is the 'raised Heavenly Spiritual Body'.⁵⁰ All these terms -
'Self-hood', 'Eternal Death', 'Spiritual Body' - are used by

46. John Byrom, Miscellaneous Poems, 2 vols., (Manchester,
1773), Vol. II, pp. 160-62.

47. Works, Vol. II, Bk. I, p. 53.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., p. 78.

50. Works, Vol. IV., Bk. 3, p. 58.

Blake. It should be clear that the borrowing is by no means superficial (where it might be claimed that his borrowing of Neoplatonic terms was superficial, or at least high-handed.)

As we have seen, it was really the duality of Urizen and Orc/Luvah which interested Blake in the formation of his notion of Satan. (I should say the shadowy figure of Tharmas was associated with the third principle of salt or body.) In Blake's earlier work the duality is conceived of as an energetic principle on the one hand and a repressive principle on the other. But in the later work it is the principle of division itself which is wrong, and which vitiates them both. Urizen had always stood for the division himself: his dividers stand for the division between the instantaneous perception of the 'divine Nothing', and the time-bound process of creation. But Blake's organicist conception of consciousness becomes more profound in the later work, where he seeks a more representative embodiment of division in itself, and where Energy cannot escape the consequences of the subsequent repression.

The division comes from the human soul. Blake would have found an illustration of the divided soul in Plato's Timaeus, which he would have interpreted as showing the three principles. Here is the rational soul:

But with respect to the most principal and excellent species of the soul, we should conceive as follows: that divinity assigned this to each of us as a daemon; and that it resides in the very summit of the body, elevating us from earth to an

alliance with the heavens; as we are not terrestrial plants, but blossoms of heaven.... In him therefore who vehemently labours to satisfy the cravings of desire and ambition, all the conceptions of his soul must be necessarily mortal... 51

Hermes Trismegistus refers to the 'Strife and Dissension' which ensue if the animal and vegetable souls disobey the rational.⁵² This is the 'Doubt' and Self contradiction' which the organic ('visionary') consciousness dispels.

51. The Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides and Timaeus of Plato, trans. Thomas Taylor (London, 1793), pp. 550-51.

52. Hermes Mercurius Trismegistrus, His Divine Pymander In Seventeen Books. Together with his Second Book Called Asclepius, trans. J. Everard (London, 1657), p.3.

CHAPTER TEN

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB, c. 1805-25

The Satanic Selfhood permitted Blake to show all the Zoas in their fallen condition as having entered that State. But in our examination of Blake's use of alchemy we reached the conclusion that he particularly associated Urizen and Luvah with Satan. Thus at Milton 10:1 we are told that 'Los & Enitharmon knew that Satan is Urizen' (E103/K490) and at Jerusalem 49:68 that 'Luvah is named Satan, because he has entered that State' (E197/K680). It would be perfectly understandable if Blake had said 'Tharmas is called Satan'. But he does not, even though it is an unavoidable inference from the fact that Albion, the whole man, is in the state of Satan. The reason is that Blake's main interest was still in the division of Reason and Energy, and it is the very principle of that division which Blake is now concerned to criticize. To have Urizen as the only culprit somehow suggested that Energy, even when fallen, was more trustworthy than that which repressed it. After about 1795 Blake was unwilling to give Energy the benefit of the doubt. In Vala Urizen and Luvah collude over the body of the Eternal Man. But when, c. 1803-05, in the Four Zoas manuscript and in Milton, Blake evolved the idea of Satan, he was at last able to represent the essence of the division consequent on the Fall, and the means of redemption by Eternal Death of Satan. But it is one thing to indicate the importance of

these concepts with extracts culled from here and there; it is quite another to show the way in which they function, in detail, in Blake's works. The best, because most succinct, depiction of these ideas is to be found in the sets of illustrations for The Book of Job which Blake executed from about 1805 until 1825.¹ These dates suggest another relevant fact: Blake began working on the Job illustrations at, or just after, the time when the idea of Satan was being added to the Four Zoas manuscript, and when he was writing Milton (E727-28, Textual Notes); he completed the final engraved version of the Job illustrations at the same time as he was printing copy F of Jerusalem (E730).

1. Blake's attitude to The Book of Job

Blake dismisses Burke along with Newton and Locke: he had read Burke's Enquiry 'when very Young', at the same time as he read Locke and Bacon: he felt the 'Same Contempt & Abhorrence then; that I do now. They mock Inspiration & Vision' (E650/K476-77). Morton Paley is surely right to say that 'It is Burke's reductive theory, not the concept of the sublime itself, to which Blake is hostile'.² Blake

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1. Agreeing with Butlin's dating of the Butts watercolour set (i.e., c. 1805), now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (Tate Exhibn., p. 98). There is also the Linnell set, painted over tracings made from the first series, all but two of which are now in the Fogg Art Museum; a series of drawings in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; some sketches in pencil and watercolour; and the final engraved series dated '1825' but probably not published until the following year. For reproductions see Laurence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes, eds., Illustrations of The Book of Job by William Blake (New York, 1935).
 2. Paley, Energy and the Imagination, p. 19.

employs the term often. In a letter to Butts (6 July 1803) it becomes a term of the highest critical approval: Blake is to 'speak to future generations by a Sublime Allegory, which is now perfectly completed into a Grand Poem Allegory address'd to the Intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding, is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry' (K825). Blake accepts the idea that the Sublime is a proper attribute of a grand poem.

Writers on the Sublime agree that it is associated with power, size, terror, and a certain obscurity. Obscurity was not always commended by Blake. But he did say that 'What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men' (Letter to Trusler, 23 August 1799, K793). The Bible, and in particular the Old Testament, seemed the best example of these qualities to eighteenth-century writers: 'That high degree of sublimity to which the Psalmist rises upon such occasions, is only to be attained by the Hebrew Muse.'³ So Robert Lowth. Pope thinks that Job 'with regard both to sublimity of thought, and morality, exceeds beyond all comparison the most noble parts of Homer'.⁴ Burke also prefers Job, which he uses principally as an example of 'power'.⁵

We already know that Blake is not alone in thinking that the Bible is 'Poetry & that poetry inspired', or in thinking of 'the Sublime of the Bible'.⁶ But from the

3. Lowth, Lectures, II, pp. 237-8.

4. Alexander Pope, The Odyssey of Homer: Books XIII-XXIV, ed. Maynard Mack, p. 131n: Vol. X of The Poems of Alexander Pope (London and New Haven, 1939-67), 10 vols. General editor: John Butt.

5. Enquiry, ed. cit., pp. 108-17.

6. Annotations to Watson's Apology, E607/K392; Preface to Milton, E94/K480.

number of designs he executed for The Book of Job it seems likely that he also agreed with his contemporaries in thinking this the most sublime book of the Bible.

But for Blake to think this was not the same as for anyone else to think it. He had once said that the whole Bible was 'An original derivation from the Poetic Genius' (ARO, Principle VI). From this it follows that the Bible is poetry in the same sense that Blake intended when he said that his 'Grand Poem' was a 'Sublime Allegory'. As such it was not to be understood in the 'literal sense' - which is, indeed the only sense the reasoning power is able to make out of poetic figures:

I cannot concieve the Divinity of the books in the Bible to consist either in who they were written by or at what time or in the historical evidence which may be all false in the eyes of one man & true in the eyes of another but in the Sentiments & Examples which whether true or Parabolic are Equally useful

(Annotations to Watson's Apology, E607/
K393)

So Blake read the scriptures in what he once ironically called the 'infernal or diabolical sense'. He would not use this terminology in 1825, but when he says that his version of Job is 'Spiritually Discerned', as he reminds us in the margin of the first illustration (1825), he means much the same thing.⁷ And above this text he places another: 'The

7. For readily available reproductions of the final engraved series, which has the marginal texts and designs, see Andrew Wright, Blake's Job: A Commentary (Oxford, 1972). For the source of the phrase in question see 'Behmen', Works, Vol. II, Bk. 4, p. 32: 'the like Things, because they are Spiritual ... must be Spiritually discerned'.

Letter Killeth/The Spirit giveth Life'. This contrasts not only two possible ways of reading the Bible - and therefore The Book of Job - but also two opposed ways of life: Job moves from one to the other. This opposition is thus thoroughly incorporated into Blake's version of Job: as the dynamic of the movement of the series towards regeneration; and as the motive behind Blake's very selective treatment of the Bible narrative. All Blake's leading ideas are bound up with his thought about art: Job moves from being a believer in dead, outward form to being an inspired Bard, and this change is a moral one, to which Blake's aesthetics are essential at the same time.

Despite Blake's censure of literalism he did pay attention to what 'antiquaries' said, so he probably shared the common view that Job was the most ancient of 'all human records'.⁸ The authorship was generally ascribed to Moses. John Mason Good writes in 1812:

I have ventured to assert, that the writer of this poem must, in his style, have been equally master of the simple and the sublime; that he must have been minutely and elaborately acquainted with the astronomy, natural history, and general science of his age; that he must have been a Hebrew by birth and native language, and an Arabian by long residence and local study; and, finally, that he must have flourished, and composed the work, before the Egyptian exody. Now it is obvious, that every one of these features is consummated in Moses...⁹

He concludes that the book is

... a DEPOSITORY OF PATRIARCHAL RELIGION, the best and fullest depository in the world, and drawn up by that very pen which was most competent to do justice to it.¹⁰

8. John Mason Good, The Book of Job Literally Translated from the Original Hebrew (London, 1812), p. ii.

9. Ibid., pp. liv-lv.

10. Ibid., pp. lxiv.

Blake would surely have agreed with this, if only because he would have thought Job the oldest known human record. And if he had encountered the idea that Moses wrote it before leaving Egypt, this would only have confirmed the impression that it contained the elements of the patriarchal religion. For it was only in Sinai that Moses became corrupted by the Law.

Blake thought the patriarchal religion was the true one. But again, he entertained this idea in his own special sense: he invokes Jacob Bryant and all 'antiquaries' to prove that 'All had originally one language, and one religion, this was the religion of Jesus, the everlasting Gospel!' (Desc. Cata., E534/K579) He would therefore read Job as the most incorrupt example of the everlasting Gospel of Jesus in the Old Testament. This conclusion is supported by Blake's liberal use of quotations from the New Testament in the margins of the '1825' version of the illustrations.

The everlasting Gospel was quite unlike the orthodox reading of Job. Thomas Gent's verse translation, cheaply produced for a wide audience, is called The Pattern of Piety: or, Tryals of Patience (Scarborough, 1734). Job was read as a series of trials of patience, from which its hero emerged relatively unscathed, after his initial discontent with providence:

The moral of such a poem, formed on the plan of discontent with the measures of Providence, and the issue of that discontent in submission to them, is too obvious to stand in want of explanation. ¹¹

11. Thomas Scott, The Book of Job in English Verse (London, 1771), pp. v-vi.

An inscrutable Providence, a man's submission to it, the virtues of patience and piety - none of these would have endeared itself to Blake. How unlike were his Job and the orthodox one may be fully appreciated from Thomas Scott's translation into heroic couplets:

There liv'd an Arab, of distinguish'd fame,
In Idumean Uz; and Job his name:
Of spotless manners, with a soul sincere,
Evil his hate, and God alone his fear.¹²

Blake's idea of Job's original condition was that such conscious virtue was at the root of his troubles: such is the everlasting Gospel: 'Was Jesus Humble', 'Was Jesus Chaste' (E510, 512/K750, 753).¹³ Since Blake would have seen The Book of Job as the distilled essence of this Gospel we can be sure that whatever he found there has the greatest importance for his thought.

2. Blake's various treatments of The Book of Job

Blake was designing illustrations to Job long before he began the Butts set of watercolours (c. 1805). Bo Lindberg is probably right to put the watercolour Job and his Family at the head of his chronological list.¹⁴ He refers

12. Ibid., p. 1.

13. The Everlasting Gospel, c. 1818. It is difficult to see how the opinion that Blake came to despise the body in any sense to be understood by the orthodox can survive a reading of this late and trenchantly antinomian work.

14. Bo Lindberg, William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job (Åbo, 1973), p. 10, Repro. Fig. 11; this work being Vol. XLVI of Series A, Acta Academiae Aboensis.

to its 'classicizing drawing', and the massive forms are certainly reminiscent of the 'Tiriel' designs. But the line is fussier than in these, and that must put it back, in my opinion, nearer in time to The Death of Earl Godwin (1779-80 . British Museum). So when Lindberg says that it 'was probably executed before 1788, perhaps as early as 1784' his observation is accurate; and the earlier date is probably better.¹⁵

After this Blake executed a series of related designs based on the story of Job, of which the first is the pen-and-wash sketch in the Tate Gallery called Job, his Wife and Friends (Repro. Tate cata., No. 5). This has been assigned to around the year 1785 by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, although he leaves his reasons implicit.¹⁶ They must be its style, which is massive, and in accordance with the style of these years; and the fact that it appears to be a study for the engraving sometimes called The Complaint of Job, the first state of which is usually assigned to 1786.¹⁷

In all these versions Job's expression indicates that he feels an injustice is being done to him: I am sure that Blake already felt that the expectation of a reward for righteousness was vicious.

In later years come many designs either of events in The Book of Job, or of visions which owe something to its

15. Ibid., p. 10.

16. Geoffrey Keynes, Blake Studies, 2nd . revd. edn. (Oxford, 1971), p. 176.

17. Bo Lindberg (op. cit., pp. 11-13) disagrees with this dating of Job, his Wife and Friends, but his reasons are patently inconclusive.

symbolism.¹⁸ There are allusions to it in the symbolic books.¹⁹ And it is expressly mentioned in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (5) where Blake says that 'in the Book of Job Miltons Messiah is call'd Satan', by which he means that each believes in putting the Law of the Father into practice, albeit in different ways. It is interesting to compare the idea of 'Miltons Messiah' with the presentation of the Biblical Satan in the illustrations for Job.

From all this it emerges that Job was often in Blake's mind, over a period of many years, and that he saw those elements of the story which struck him most as useful in adding to the allusions made by his own myth. Since we have also seen that it is highly likely that he would have regarded The Book of Job as enshrining the 'everlasting Gospel' in a particularly distinct form, we may think it probable also that the series of illustrations begun about 1805 (the Butts watercolours), and the other sets, would contain allusions to his own mythology, especially to the illuminations and other designs. Such is the case.

3. Illustrations of the Book of Job (1825)

Commentaries have been swift to detach themselves from too great a concern with similarities between figures

18. See Lindberg, pp. 9-36.

19. The sublime interrogations at the end of 'Tiriel' and of Thel; Visions of the Daughters, Plate 3.

in the Job illustrations and those in other works by Blake.²⁰

Wicksteed notices these similarities and says that

... this gave a momentary hope that their use as illustrations of a generally intelligible work like the Book of Job, might throw light upon their meaning in Blake's own dark writings.

This did not prove to be the case.²¹

He says no more, gives no reasons. The implication is marked that, by the same token, the illuminations to Blake's writings cannot throw any light on Illustrations of the Book of Job. In fact the light goes both ways. Even so, in a recent edition, Andrew Wright claims that Blake's myth is not 'centrally relevant to a study of the Job Illustrations'.²² This would be very strange if it were true.

It is worthwhile to indicate the main, clear similarities between the figures in the Job and those in Blake's other, often earlier, works.

First there is the resemblance of the Job God to Urizen and earlier Urizenic figures at all stages in the narrative. From the beginning he is seen reading from a large book of laws (Illustration II) as Urizen does on the title-page to The Book of Urizen. The design for Job's evil dream, Illustration XI, is reminiscent of the 1795 Colour Print, Elohim Creating Adam, where the limiting function of Elohim is expressed in the serpent wound above Adam's body.

20. Not the same thing as hunting for arcane sources for the Job, of which there has been much (see Wright, op. cit., p. xviii).

21. Joseph H. Wicksteed, Blake's Vision of the Book of Job (London, 1910), p. 15. The 2nd. revd. edn. (London, 1924) does not contain these words.

22. Wright, op. cit., p. xviii.

In Job the Satanic God is entwined with a serpent which emphasizes his Satanic nature. In Illustration XIV, which shows the act of Creation, God is an exact repetition in every essential of the figure of Urizen on America Plate 8 (Repro. IB 146). In the design of Behemoth and Leviathan (XV) God thrusts his left arm down, towards the globe containing the two beasts, in a gesture as of creation ('Behold now Behemoth which I made with thee' is subscribed to the design). This gesture is reminiscent of Urizen's on the frontispiece to Europe, and even more of one of the Eternal's in Urizen, Plate 15 (Repro. IB 197).

Job himself, since he strongly resembles God the Father in appearance, is also like Urizen, especially when, in Illustration I, he is seen holding a book, with a weary expression. But in the last plate, So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning (Illustration XXI), he holds a long triangular harp. Here he looks very much like the Ancient Bard in 'The Voice of the Ancient Bard', which is put at the end of Songs of Experience more often than in any other particular position (IB 96). But we know that the Bard and Urizen are related as opposite ends of the cycle of Vision and its decline.

The most confused echoes are evoked by the representation of Satan in the Illustrations. He appears, as Andrew Wright says, 'in sheets of flame - youthful and full of energy'.²³ In this design (II) he repeats the running figure at the bottom right of The Marriage, Plate 3 (Repro. IB 100);

23. Wright, op. cit., p. 9.

and he resembles even more closely a figure running in flames at the top of Urizen, Plate 3 (Repro. IB 185). The latter figure illustrates the line 'Death was not, but eternal life sprung', for Urizen later says 'Why will you die O Eternals?/ Why live in unquenchable burnings? (BU 4: 12-13, E70/K224). The fires of Energy look like death to him, whereas in reality they are a sign of life. This echo points to the possibility of some relationship between the Satan of Job and the figure of Orc and the later Luvah.

The second Illustration is further complicated by the text in the upper margin: 'The Angel of the Divine Presence'. Blake identifies this figure in his notes on A Vision of the Last Judgment:

The Aged Figure with Wings having a writing tablet & taking account of the numbers who arise is That Angel of the Divine Presence mentiond in Exodus XIVc 19v & in other Places this Angel is frequently calld by the Name of Jehovah Elohim
The I Am of the Oaks of Albion

(E549/K610)

The Job text refers to God. But the Angel of the Divine Presence is clearly Satanic, as is very plain from a reading of The Everlasting Gospel (c. 1818):

To be Good only is to be
A Devil or else a Pharisee
Thou Angel of the Presence Divine
That didst create this Body of Mine
Wherefore hast thou writ these Laws
And Created Hells dark jaws

(27-32, E513/K754)

There can be no doubt that the Angel of the Divine Presence is evil, nor that he looks like Urizen. But he is clearly both the orthodox idea of God and in Blake's eyes Satanic. But we seem to have one Satan already. Is he approved of

by Blake, as a representation of Energy, in the manner of The Marriage? Hardly. In Illustration VI he is seen as an Hermaphrodite, covered in dragon-scales, smiting Job with boils.²⁴ In his appearance he is exactly like the figure of Fire in the second version of The Gates of Paradise (c. 1818):

Two Horn'd Reasoning Cloven Fiction
 In Doubt which is Self contradiction
 A dark Hermaphrodite We stood
 Rational Truth Root of Evil & Good
 (13-16, E265/K770)

We have suggested, on the basis of philosophical alchemy, that Urizen and Luvah were particularly associated in Blake's mind with the State of Satan. And in The Gates of Paradise Satan is 'Worshipd by the Names Divine/Of Jesus & Jehovah ([Epilogue], 5-6, E266/K771). It is this composite of a parody of Jesus and a parody of Jehovah that constitutes Blake's Satanic Selfhood.

But why should the Job Satan be a parody of Christ? It is because Christ was in fact a representative of unperv-erted Energy, which, in the fallen world is turned into a spectral parody of itself. In Illustration VI Satan has a halo around his head and his arms outstretched, in the same way that Albion has, in a gesture of generosity, in the so-called Glad Day engraving (1780). From Jerusalem 76 we can see that Blake associated this open-armed attitude with Christ and the annihilation of Selfhood, for here Albion unites himself in this position with the crucified Christ

24. Note that in the tempera painting of Satan smiting Job (C. 1826. Tate Gallery, Repro. Tate cata., No. 55) Satan has the dragon wings so characteristic of the Hermaphrodite in alchemy (see above, Chapter IX, note 36).

Paradise Lost, Christ Offers to Redeem Man (two versions: 1807, Huntington Library; 1808, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). It is this Satan who is portrayed as Luvah in The Rout of the Rebel Angels (1807, 1808; Huntington, Boston). And it is this Satan who is 'The Great Red Dragon' of Apocalypse in The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea (c. 1805. National Gallery of Art, Washington).

It is clear that Blake read this mature version of his myth into everything. And he may have been helped to do so by his reading of the Bible and his knowledge of its traditional iconography. Thus Moses was an Orc-like figure who rebelled against the Pharaoh, but later became the instrument of God's Law. He was traditionally thought to have two horns, as in Michelangelo's sculpture. He can be seen two-horned, colluding with God on Mount Sinai, in many illustrations to the Old Testament, for instance that to be found in Holbein's Historiarum Veteris Testamenti Icones.²⁵ It was also Moses who bound the brazen serpent to a pole (Numbers 21:7) at God's command: a picture of this episode can also be found in Holbein's Icones.²⁶ God's permitting Adam and Eve to be tempted by the serpent in Genesis; Moses' collusion with God in Exodus and Numbers; and the conspiracy of God and Satan in Job; all these probably seemed to be telling the same story in Blake's eyes - that of the two-horned, divided Satanic Selfhood. But does this leave Urizen as merely one side of a divided Satan?

25. Hans Holbein, Historiarum Veteris Testamenti Icones (Lyons, 1543), Exodus 33: The idea of the two horns is a standard part of the Christian iconography of O.T., based on a Vulgate mistranslation. See ILLUSTRATION II.

26. Ibid., Numbers 21.

4. The fate of Urizen

The fact that Urizen when fallen is in the State of Satan means that he, like the other Zoas, is not essentially to blame for the Fall. It is clear that, by the time of writing of the end of Jerusalem Blake feels much admiration for Urizen in his unfallen form: for the idea, if you like, of a higher Reason. Thus the line 'Bacon & Newton & Locke, & Milton & Shakespear & Chaucer' (Jerusalem 98:9, E254/K745) stands for a union of Reason and Imagination, not for 'the alliance of emotion and imagination which a reader of only the early poems might have expected'.²⁷ This is why Urizen is 'called first' by Albion at the end of Jerusalem.²⁸

But the same admiration for Urizen is obvious from the Job illustrations. There, the figure of God creating the universe is, as we have pointed out, a repetition of the figure of Urizen on America, Plate 8. The only difference is that in the Job God has the pointing fingers that indicate he is a creator, whereas in America Urizen's fingers are slackly down-turned, resting on a cloud. The Job God represents the union of Imagination and Reason, the true form of the Poetic Genius in Blake's later work. This interpretation is aided by the fact that the same figure appears as the 'Poetic Genius' itself on All Religions are One, Plate 4 (Repro. IB 24).

27. Sutherland, 'Blake and Urizen', p. 262.

28. *Ibid.*

The fact that the same figure can be used for Urizen and for the Poetic Genius or Imagination at different times reminds us that we have suggested that Urizen must be seen as the fallen form of the Bard. This suggestion is strengthened by the depiction of Job playing the harp at the end of the series of Illustrations. Although the evidence is perhaps slender, I think it shows that Blake now sees the unfallen Urizen as the true representative of the activity of giving form when he is united in one person with the Imagination.

CONCLUSION

A mythology is, perforce, a system. The development of Urizen cannot be separated from that of figures representing powers opposed to him: Orc and the Bard, Luvah and Los. Urizen begins as that which restricts Energy, whether by obscuring Vision, mystifying poetry, or repressing desire: he is the 'bound', the 'horizon', that which takes on the shape given to it by Energy, believing it to be all: the parallel figure of Vala shows how important these ideas are for Blake. Since Urizen represents these things he must be shown in opposition to Orc.

But the sneaking serpent of the Priest and the serpent of Energy are, it seems, near allied. Blake comes to think that fallen energy and fallen Reason are evils that are necessary to each other: they are the two poles of the Satanic Selfhood, which is divided, 'Two Horn'd', self-contradictory. He draws on the terms and imagery of alchemy to depict this notion.

A divided Satan suits Blake's purpose well, for division in the soul corresponds to the divided, inorganic, 'Mathematic' form. But the weight of the responsibility for the Fall has now been removed from Urizen's shoulders. He had always been an artist of a kind, the Priest who was once a Bard (the 'bounded' that was once the 'bounding line'). In Illustrations of the Book of Job images that had once been used to depict Urizen now represent both Satan and the Poetic

Genius, at different times: the aged figure is capable of becoming a Bard once more. And at the end of Jerusalem Blake suggests that the union of Imagination and Reason is the true way to conceive of creative intellect.

Such an outcome is not, in retrospect, surprising. Blake had always been anxious about form: was it necessarily a limitation, or was it an image of the infinite? Is there not grandeur in Urizen? And is not Los also jealous and repressive? An anxious obsession with the necessity for formal restrictions, even in the most inspired art, may explain the peculiar phenomenon of tight-fitting clothes in Blake. Blake himself, for instance, is shown in Milton 32 (copy C) naked except for a pair of diaphanous, tight-fitting under-pants; Elihu, in Job XII wears a continuous, tight-fitting garment, like a leotard. These garments express the shape of the body, and thus constitute a metaphor for organic form. But they also imply that there is no art in walking naked.

Blake, like so many modern artists, depicts the trials of art. Urizen stands for his indecision about whether to regard form as limiting or expressive.

APPENDIX

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A TEXT WHICH
 PRECEDES THE COMPOSITION OF AMERICA AND EUROPE

There was at one time a piece of consecutive writing concerning Albion's Angel which found its way into the plates of America and Europe. It does not conform to any ordering of plates now known. Parts of this text now appear on cancelled plates of America, and parts on Europe, Plates 9 and 10. The order of this text is: America, cancelled plates a and b; and Europe, Plates 9 and 10. Since America, cancelled plate a is almost identical with the extant Plate 3, we shall omit it here. In fact, we shall merely reproduce those lines of the putative text which are sufficient to suggest the strong probability of a join between these parts of America and Europe. The text is simply taken from the Erdman edition, since no point is being made about the minutiae of its wording:

- (1) To this deep valley situated by the flowing Thames;
 Where George the third holds council. & his Lords &
 Commons meet:
 Shut out from mortal sight the Angel came; the vale
 was dark
 With clouds of smoke from the Atlantic, that in
 volumes roll'd
 Between the mountains, dismal visions mope around the
 house.
- On chairs of iron, canopied with mystic ornaments
 Of life by magic power condens'd; infernal forms
 art-bound
 The council sat; all rose before the aged apparition;
 His snowy beard that streams like lambent flames
 down his wide breast
 Wetting with tears, & his white garments cast a wintry
 light.

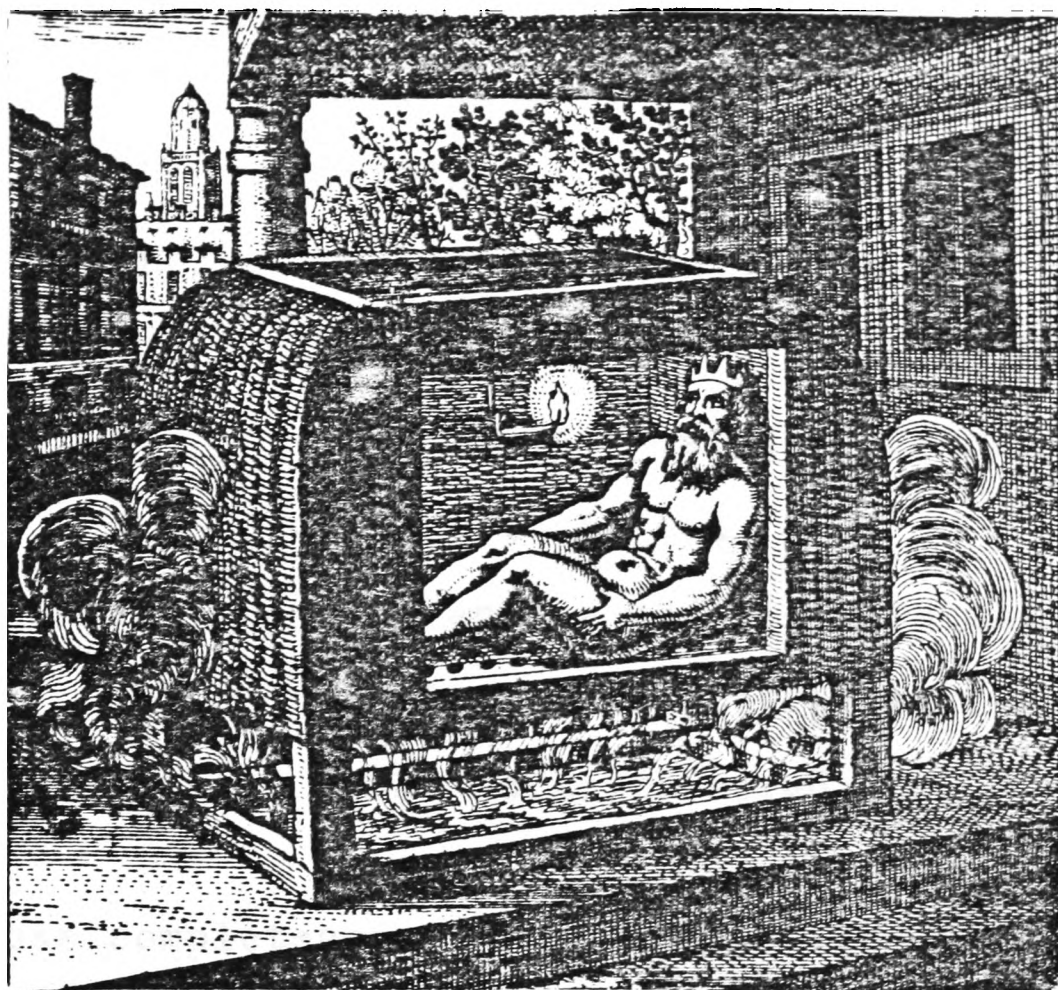
Then as arm'd clouds arise terrific round the
 northern drum;
 The world is silent at the flapping of the folding
 banners;
 So still terrors rent the house: as when the
 solemn globe
 Launch'd to the unknown shore, while Sotha held the
 northern helm,
 Till to that void it came & fell; so the dark
 house was rent,
 The valley mov'd beneath; its shining pillars split in
 twain,
 And its roofs crack across down falling onth' Angelic
 seats.

(2) One hour they lay buried beneath the ruins of that
 hall;
 But as the stars rise from the salt lake they
 arise in pain,
 In troubled mists o'erclouded by the terrors of
 struggling times.

(3) In thought perturb'd, they rose from the bright ruins
 silent following
 The fiery King, who sought his ancient temple
 serpent-form'd

(1) is America, Plate b:8-24; (2) Europe 9:14-16; and

(3) Europe 10:1-2; (E57/K204; E62/K241). The text was intended
 to show the English Parliament in the light of Paradise Lost
 Book II in the same way that the French Estates had been
 depicted in The French Revolution.

ILLUSTRATIONSILLUSTRATION I

The alchemists' Mercurius Senex, or Saturn.

ILLUSTRATION II

The two-horned Moses and God on Sinai.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The entries are arranged as follows:

- I. Manuscripts.
- II. Drawings.
- III. Works published separately.
- IV. Editions of the written works.
- V. Blake Bibliographies, Catalogues, Collections, etc.
- VI. Biographies and Biographical Material.
- VII. Criticism and Interpretation.
- VIII. Other works referred to.

An otiose completeness has not been aimed at: those works mentioned have either been cited in the text or were indispensable to its composition. The place of publication, unless it is London, is given after the title, unless editor and translator appear in that place, in which case it follows these. The title is short, unless this is misleading or the long title is especially informative. Original-language titles of translations are not given; nor is bibliographical information about earlier editions, etc., of a work, except where this might be deemed significant of something, when it is given in summary form.

Section II and III are arranged chronologically; sections V-VIII alphabetically. Major authors are listed first in an entry, even where their works have been edited and annotated by others.

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