

James Rovira

Blake and Kierkegaard

Creation and Anxiety

Continuum Literary Studies



Blake and Kierkegaard

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Blake and Kierkegaard: Creation and Anxiety

By
James Rovira



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11 York Road
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80 Maiden Lane
Suite 704, New York
NY 10038

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For Sheridan,
Thwarted goddess of commas.

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Introduction

The ongoing popularity of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* since its publication in 1818 underscores how much the possibility of an independently thinking, willing entity created by human technology has haunted the western creative imagination, spawning plays, novels, films, and a host of iconic images. From *R.U.R.* to *A.I.*, *Metropolis* to the *Matrix Trilogy*, not to mention the many film and television adaptations of *Frankenstein* itself, we seem enthralled by the myth that our creations might attain an independent consciousness and then turn upon us in an apocalyptic rage. The question, of course, is *why*? Why do we so persistently imagine that any independent being we might create will turn against us? Why do we keep returning to this narrative again and again? What is the source of our creation anxiety?

The Enlightenment and the rise of empirical science widened the imaginative scope of western technological possibilities and completely changed our conception of the universe and ourselves within it. Newton's mechanization of the universe and Locke's concept of the mind as *tabula rasa*—which to critics of the Enlightenment mechanized the human mind—were radical departures from centuries-old cosmologies and from classical models of a human being as a synthesis of body, soul, and spirit. Both William Blake (1757–1827) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) drew from classical models of personality to explain complex patterns of human psychological development. They used their psychological theories to confront Enlightenment conceptions of personality and to represent the new human being implied by these Enlightenment models. Kierkegaard called the most immature of his personality types “aesthetic” subjectivities, demonstrating (as we will see) that they are one product of Enlightenment models of personality. Blake's fallen creator, Urizen, is an aesthetic subjectivity in Kierkegaard's terms. Because Urizen embodies the creator-human as reconceived by the Enlightenment, Blake's creation anxiety narratives—and possibly all creation anxiety narratives in the West—use fears of what we may *create* to articulate Romantic anxieties about what we have *become*

because of the Enlightenment. The rebellious creature as a mirror image of its creator subsumes creation anxiety narratives under the category of mythopoesis. Rather than being creation myths, these are recreation myths, launching us from the known of an existing creation to the anxiety-inspiring unknown of a new configuration of the human.

The influence of classical models of personality upon Blake's thought led him to develop a mythological system that articulated creation anxiety for the first time. Kierkegaard's use of these models led him to create pseudonymous authors and to posit anxiety as the motive force driving existential development. Therefore, Blake's mythology represents the "creation" and Kierkegaard's philosophy the "anxiety" of creation anxiety. Their shared debt to the same classical tradition allows Kierkegaard's conceptual structures to help us understand Blake's mythology. After providing a brief outline of the classical tradition and each author's relationship to it in Chapter 2, I describe in detail in Chapter 3 how both drew from classical models a specific developmental pattern in which the human self grows through orientations toward the differing constituent parts of the self. In classical models of personality, the self can progress from a bodily-orientation (equivalent to Kierkegaard's aesthetic or Blake's innocent personality), to a soul-orientation (Kierkegaard's ethical or Blake's experience personality), to a spirit-orientation (Kierkegaard's religious or Blake's visionary personality). But none of these transitions are guaranteed. Personality is not fixed, stable, nor determined in Blake's and Kierkegaard's thought, but simultaneously given and chosen, anxiety ridden both internally and externally.

The anxieties that motivate each author's work were a response to specific cultural and political transitions described in Chapter 1 that were shared by both Blake's England and Kierkegaard's Denmark. Cultural tensions between monarchy and democracy, science and religion, and nature and artifice influenced both Blake's and Kierkegaard's perceptions of human personality and the internal and external pressures shaping it. Denmark's and England's shared, overlapping, and parallel histories embed these tensions in similar historical milieus, so that my comparison of Blake and Kierkegaard has a historical basis on which intellectual, social, and political history converge. And they do so on the same specific points, so that this study has the potential to bridge the divide between historical and conceptual approaches to Blake's work existing even prior to Frye's and Erdman's studies of the mid-twentieth century.

These cultural tensions motivated individual anxieties about the self in Blake's England and Kierkegaard's Denmark. Kierkegaard's pseudonym

Vigilius Haufniensis in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) defines anxiety as a “sympathetic anxiety and an antipathetic sympathy” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 42), explaining to his readers that our nature as a synthesis of body, soul, and spirit makes anxiety possible and that anxiety motivates the individual to transition from an orientation toward one aspect of the self to the next. Reading *The Concept of Anxiety* in tandem with Kierkegaard’s other pseudonymous works, especially *Either/Or*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and *The Sickness Unto Death*, reveals that Kierkegaardian development consists of a progressive and continual differentiation of self from environment, where the bodily personality is most completely determined by environment and the spiritual personality the least. Haufniensis uses the phrase “acquired originality” to describe this process (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 149). We do not start life as original personalities, but acquire originality as we rely less and less upon our immediate environment for our self-definition.

Bodily, ethical, and spiritual subjectivities have been identified over the course of a history spanning two millennia with specific hermeneutic strategies. From the time of the early church fathers, commentators believed that bodily personalities are limited to literal readings, soul-oriented personalities are capable of perceiving an ethical meaning within a text, while spiritual personalities are capable of grasping the allegorical meaning of texts. Therefore, Kierkegaard’s and Blake’s works, both strongly influenced by this tradition, have embedded within them the hermeneutic strategies that they intended their readers to bring to their texts, strategies that not only identify the nature of the characters inhabiting their works but also the character of their readers. The reading strategies I use in this study are derived from the authors’ own works, just as my comparison between the two authors is grounded in a shared intellectual and cultural history.

Their literature records the individual’s struggle to free herself from her environment and so engages each author’s cultural, political, and social milieu. Since their works are a record of psychological development and struggle, neither author is concerned with history as such but rather with the phenomenological profile that historical forces hold for the individual subject. This is especially the case with Blake, as his works should be read as phenomenological representations of historical forces rather than direct political commentary or historical fiction. Therefore, the first three chapters of this work, in which I describe Blake’s and Kierkegaard’s shared political and intellectual histories, do not merely provide background material for my ensuing argument about creation anxiety in Chapters 4 and 5 but constitute part of the argument itself.

This way of reading significantly engages contemporary debates surrounding literary interpretation, such as the essentialist/anti-essentialist debate and Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence. Even from my brief description of the classical model of personality and Blake's and Kierkegaard's use of it, the essentialist/anti-essentialist debate should seem inapplicable to these authors, perhaps inapplicable to the entire classical model of personality itself. Individuals are simultaneously given and chosen in both Blake and Kierkegaard, culturally determined yet spiritually individuated, so that both authors are simultaneously essentialist and anti-essentialist as the terms have been set by the current debate. Kierkegaard's notion of acquired individuality—a construct equally applicable to our understanding of Blake—asserts the possibility of an essential self, but not the given-ness of an essential self. An essential self is not what we begin with but what we strive for, what we hope to attain. Paradoxically, this essential self is present from the beginning, for in becoming who we are, we become the self we always were. However, the end product of this becoming process is not guaranteed, for our growth is not the product of unconscious processes. We do not grow like plants in sunshine, but rather through decisions that we may choose not to make. We may never grow.

Because anxiety involves a dual, contradictory movement, identifying instances of it in literary texts can resemble the practice of deconstruction. However, Kierkegaardian anxiety is not a textual movement but an emotional one, an individual experience registered in literature but embedded within historical, cultural, social, and personal particularities. In a Kierkegaardian reading, literary texts are simultaneously individual and cultural products, the creation of persons who have been and are being formed by a specific culture and history, and the creation of persons either consciously moving toward a differentiation of self from environment, culture, and history or in despair because they are not. So a Kierkegaardian reading does not "kill" authors by reducing their individualities to ciphers, channelling cultural influences beyond their control or reflection, but understands individuality to exist in a continual dialectic with history and society. It rehumanizes literature and recovers the metaphysics of presence without being bound to it, as the individual is engaged in a dialectical struggle with culturally given forms of the metaphysics of presence rather than simply reproducing them. This dialectic is especially apparent in the case of the sexual relationship, which we will see in Chapter 4 constitutes the beginning of the self and the end of innocence according to Blake's and Kierkegaard's critique of generation, a critique which will culminate in Chapter 5's explication of Urizen as Blake's creator-monarch and his

embodiment of Britain's cultural tensions. According to Joakim Garff, Kierkegaard believes that literature can aid in the diagnosis of "a symptom of an unresolved conflict in the poet, a sublimite of a crisis in his relation to his self" (2005, p. 377). This crisis originates in the individual's struggle to differentiate himself from his environment.

Kierkegaard's concepts were widely distributed across continental philosophy in the early decades of the twentieth century, but his religious orientation did not fit well with the modernist disillusionment with religion. As a result, Kierkegaard is both everywhere and nowhere in twentieth-century philosophy and literary criticism. Fully developed applications of Kierkegaard to Blake remain rare in Blake studies despite Kierkegaard's intense scrutiny of Romanticism. Reidar Thomte's introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety* briefly describes Kierkegaard's influence on Martin Heidegger, Paul Tillich, Rollo May, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Jean Paul Sartre. He could have added Theodor Adorno, who completed his *Habilitationsschrift* on Kierkegaard under the direction of Paul Tillich. In 1947, Frank O'Malley placed Blake and Kierkegaard together in a long list of painters and authors ranging from de Maistre to D. H. Lawrence, authors who "surged against the progress of the physical world and sought, in heaven and hell, the meaning and destiny of man-on-earth" (p. 184), including them both in a similar list in an article the following year comparing Kierkegaard to Léon Bloy. Northrop Frye mentions Kierkegaard's *Repetition* (1843) in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), which is almost as good as citing Kierkegaard in a study of Blake. Frye's reference to Kierkegaard demonstrates how important Kierkegaard has been to Blake studies however deeply he has been submerged. Steve Polansky in "A Family Romance—Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom: A Study of Critical Influence" (1981) identifies Kierkegaard's concept of repetition as the link between Bloom's and Frye's respective theories of influence. Hazard Adams's "The Dizziness of Freedom: Or Why I Read William Blake" (1986) appropriates Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety but does not explain it in significant detail or provide a full account of Kierkegaard's psychosocial development.

The first article-length study of Blake using Kierkegaard appears to be James R. Scrimgeour's "'The Great Example of Horror & Agony': A Comparison of Søren Kierkegaard's Demonically Despairing Individual with William Blake's Spectre of Urthona" (1975). In this brief essay, Scrimgeour develops an idea mentioned but not elaborated by Harold Bloom in *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (1965; later, *The Complete Poetry and Prose*) that "the Spectre [of Urthona] is the sickness unto death, the despair of the self at its own meaningless and repetitive existence"

(Erdman, 1982, p. 931). Bloom here makes clear reference to Kierkegaardian concepts of despair and repetition, expanding this sentence to about a paragraph in “Blake’s *Jerusalem: The Bard of Sensibility and the Form of Prophecy*” (1971), finding Kierkegaard’s notion of anxiety useful only after it has been combined with Freud’s. Scrimgeour’s development of Bloom’s idea asserts that the Spectre represents “a psychological state of being, which is parallel in many respects to the state of consciousness that Kierkegaard in *Sygdommen til Døden* [*The Sickness Unto Death*] calls demoniac despair” (1975, p. 36). Scrimgeour concludes that both Blake and Kierkegaard are engaged in the same project, one that illuminates “conflicts which are continually taking place within the mind of every existing human being in this world” (1975, p. 40) and affirms that Blake’s project is not a mystical exploration but a psychological one. Apart from Scrimgeour’s tendency to universalize the psychological conflicts found in Blake and Kierkegaard, my own study proceeds from the same basic assumptions as Scrimgeour’s, with the added element of historicizing these psychological conflicts.

One chapter of John Steven Baker’s Ph.D. thesis, “Blake and the Will” (1982), employs Kierkegaard’s notion of the leap to explain transitions between Blake’s states of the soul. The first and only other book-length study of Blake using Kierkegaard is Lorraine Clark’s *Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic* (1991) which, following Bloom, begins with Blake’s Spectre as a point of contact with Kierkegaard’s concept of dread (anxiety). This emphasis leads Clark to focus primarily on Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), *Either/Or* (1843), and *The Concept of Dread* [Anxiety] (1844) rather than *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849), all in Lowrie’s mid-twentieth century translations.¹ Clark argues that beginning with *The Four Zoas*, “Blake turns from a Hegelian ‘both-and’ dialectic of Orc and Urizen in his early works to something very like a Kierkegaardian ‘either-or’” (1991, p. 2). This either-or incorporates a third element into Blake’s previous dialectic, adding a negative to his two contraries, the negative working to reduce the absolutes represented by contraries to “mere relativities within a system” (1991, p. 4). This negative, Clark could observe, finds representation in Kierkegaard’s concept of the demonic in *The Concept of Anxiety*, but she does not develop this idea. Clark’s study offers insights useful to my own but asks questions very different from mine about these authors.

Matthew Schneider’s “The Anxiety of Innocence in Blake and Kierkegaard” (2005) covers in a short article the same ground I elaborate on in Chapter 4, establishing clear parallels between Kierkegaardian and Blakean innocence and making clear identifications of Kierkegaardian anxiety within some

of *The Songs of Innocence*. He argues in the end that innocence is a more complex state than experience, innocence being both the starting and the ending point of human development, an argument that perhaps does not distinguish sufficiently between innocence as a moral state and innocence as a psychological state. Blake's visionary personality and Kierkegaard's religious personalities are quite unlike their respective innocent personalities. The important dimension missing from all studies combining Blake and Kierkegaard until mine is a historical basis for a comparison of these two authors, one that is indispensable to understanding both these authors on their own terms. Both Blake and Kierkegaard wrestled with a painful awareness of the omnipresence of negative cultural and historical forces and of the culturally constructed nature of the self, developing their respective fictions for the sake of conscious self-reconstruction. Blake's articulation of creation anxiety in his counter-mythologies strived for the same goal as Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship. Both intend to bring to birth the single individual by choosing the pulsating, vital, organic exuberance of art over the cold, rationalist edifice of necessity. These acts of resistance, especially when they take the form of creation anxiety narratives, still carry a great deal of weight for us today, just as the nightmarish prospect of their failure still captures our imagination.

Chapter 1

Blake and Kierkegaard: Shared Contexts

The Sources of Kierkegaardian Anxiety and Creation Anxiety

Both Blake and Kierkegaard incorporated into their creative production a classical model of human personality with a long history, but not by merely accepting this tradition passively and uncritically. Instead, they modified this tradition to respond to specific cultural, historical, and political pressures. Both Blake and Kierkegaard experienced the rise of Enlightenment thought, coupled with agricultural reforms expanding the size and economic power of the middle class, as pressures toward further democratization at the expense of monarchical power. These pressures gave rise to a number of anxieties about the nature, origin, and status of the individual subject, anxieties which proceed from interrelated tensions between monarchy and democracy, science and religion, and nature and artifice.

Haufniensis's definition of anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety* as "*a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy*" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 42) meaningfully describes Blake's response to these social tensions. Haufniensis's concept of anxiety involves a double movement of attraction and repulsion, recognizing an element of attraction within anxiety's repulsion and an element of repulsion within anxiety's attraction. Furthermore, according to Haufniensis, anxiety is distinguished from fear in that fear refers "to something definite, whereas anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 42). While the phrase "possibility of possibility" seems redundant, it refers to the potential that one's life can be different than it has been without any clear conception of *how* it can be different.

Haufniensis describes two types of anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety*, "objective anxiety" and "subjective anxiety." "Subjective anxiety" is a product of our nature as a synthesis and will be described in Chapter 4. "Objective anxiety" is the "reflection of the sinfulness of the generation in the whole world,"

expanding the effects of Adam's sin even to "nonhuman existence" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 57). Haufniensis probably has in mind Paul's "earnest expectation of the creature" in the book of Romans (8:19)¹ as he argues that Adam's sin causes creation to be "placed in an entirely different light" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 58), a phrase implying both subjective (how we view creation) and objective (how creation is) features of the created order. Creation is placed in an "entirely different light" not only because the person observing it has become different, but also because creation itself has become different. Our social and natural environments are so conditioned by anxiety that anxiety bears down externally upon the individual from all quarters and internally due to her nature as a synthesis, so that anxiety is an inextricable facet of the very structure of existence.

Anxiety, therefore, is closely linked to our internal nature, our external environment, and to our ignorance of the future and of the changes that the future may bring, so that confronting unknown possibility can be like a dizzying abyss. Unknown possibility in Blake and Kierkegaard takes the form of a new conception of the human brought to birth by specific cultural tensions, creation anxiety the birth pangs of the new sense of the human. Creation anxiety narratives assume the monstrosity of the new human born from these tensions, an assumption held in reaction to social and cultural contexts that Blake and Kierkegaard had in common and as a jibe against Enlightenment conceptions of the human. Denmark's and England's closely intertwined history, one stretching back well over 1,000 years by the time Blake and Kierkegaard were born, meant that their shared cultural anxieties proceeded from similar social contexts. So after a brief reminder of some the pertinent features of Denmark's and England's shared histories, we will examine each of the cultural tensions, tensions that defined Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety and motivated Blake's creation myths.

Denmark's and England's Shared Histories

Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, both England and Denmark shared three sites of cultural tension: an impulse toward democracy in tension with the ideal of a caring, paternalist, apolitical monarch who is father over a united state; science in tension with religion; and nature in tension with the use-value, potential, and necessity of artifice. Scholars of English Romanticism already strongly emphasize the impact of these tensions upon Romantic literature, usually through

descriptions of the tension between organic and mechanical philosophies manifest in the interrelationships between science and religion and between nature and artifice. These tensions were generally present in varying forms to most people in both Kierkegaard's Denmark and Blake's England and were widely disseminated throughout the religious, literary, scientific, and political discourses of the time. As residents of London and of Copenhagen—Great Britain's and Denmark's political, economic, and cultural centers—both Blake and Kierkegaard undoubtedly found these tensions inescapable.

Denmark's and England's shared histories begin with the invasion of England by Germanic and Scandinavian tribes and the subsequent establishment of the Danelaw in England. These shared histories culminate in England's Romantic era with the British navy's bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807 during the war with Napoleonic France. Throughout their shared history, England's and Denmark's respective political developments appear to move in opposite directions, but this dual movement in fact establishes a fertile base for understanding significant mutual influence and for making meaningful comparisons between the two nations. Denmark's power reached its height under the Kalmar Union (1397–1521), a union combining the thrones of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden intended to counteract the economic strength of the Hanseatic League, a Germanic "trading alliance and merchant guild based in Lübeck" located on the Baltic coast of Germany near southern Denmark (Thomas and Oakley, 1998, p. 201). The Kalmar Union profited from its control of access to the Baltic Sea and its ability to require payment of sound dues by merchant ships traveling through the Baltic region.

The Kalmar Union ended during the war between Denmark and Sweden after Denmark's King Christian II "tried to eliminate opposition by executing 82 leading nobles, clergy and burghers in the so-called Stockholm Bloodbath" (Thomas and Oakley, 1998, p. 86). About 100 years later, Frederick III consolidated power by promising citizens of a Copenhagen under siege that they could decide how much in taxes they would pay and conceding to their requests to see the nobility taxed as well (W. G. Jones, 1970, p. 35). Believing the King to be more sympathetic to their interests than the nobility, Copenhagen citizens next demanded a hereditary monarchy, effectively putting "an end to the system of charters" (W. G. Jones, 1970, p. 35). Furthermore, Danish nobility no longer enjoyed exclusive access to public office, now having to "compete with clever sons of commoners for public office in the absolutist administration" (Jespersen, 2004, p. 44). When the new hereditary monarchy was confirmed in writing in 1661,

wording declared Frederick III an “absolute hereditary monarch” (W.G. Jones, 1970, p. 35). The 1665 Constitution reinforced King Frederick III’s status as an absolute ruler. Absolute monarchy remained in place until demonstrations in 1848 led to the constitutional monarchy of 1849. From 1661 to 1849, absolute monarchs governed Denmark’s state apparatus and Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Since the Danish law did not “try to extend its powers to cover the numerous traditional associations and means of interaction through which local societies functioned on a day to day basis” (Jespersen, 2004, p. 48), the “fundamental attitude of modern Danes [is] that the state is a friend and ally, not an adversary, a protector and not an enemy” (Jespersen, 2004, p. 47). This modern attitude originated in an absolutist state that presented itself as an ally of the people against the nobility. For this reason Bruce Kirmmse could claim that Danish society at the beginning of the nineteenth century was “apolitical” (1990, p. 2)—there were no parties vying for power, for there was only one power, concentrated in a single individual, to whom all (in theory, and to a degree in practice) equally answered. Absolutist Denmark shared some of these characteristics with Britain’s Parliament at the beginning of George III’s reign. J. Steven Watson observes that Parliament’s power “was not intended for everyday use. Parliament was thought of as the final umpire in a dispute between established groups if they should conflict, not as an active ruler . . . In practice England was not a unitary state but a collection of corporations and groups, each with a life of its own” (1960, p. 55). The relative distance and limitations of state power ameliorated its strength, allowing ideals of a paternal, absolute monarch to persist even when political and economic realities undermined these ideals.

Nevertheless, from an English standpoint, Denmark’s movement from an elected monarchy to absolutism seemed completely regressive. England’s 1660 restoration underscored mutual interdependence between the English monarchy and Parliament with the balance of power favoring Parliament. Denmark, Sweden, and Norway moved from union to disunion: Norway was taken from Denmark in 1809 to be joined to Sweden until it gained full independence in 1905. In contrast, England, Scotland, and Wales united into Great Britain through the 1707 Act of Union and remain united as of the early twenty-first century. Denmark’s continental and international influence and power were arguably on the decline after 1660, certainly after 1720, and were finally crushed by Britain in 1807. Britain’s international influence, on the other hand, began expanding in the eighteenth century and continued to expand throughout the nineteenth until it controlled up to “a quarter of the world’s landmass” (Dettmar and

Wicke, 2004, p. 452). By the 1890s, “one out of every four people on earth was a ‘subject’ of Queen Victoria” (Dettmar and Wicke, 2004, p. 453).

It is Frederick VI, Denmark’s last powerful, beloved king, whom Kierkegaard knew as his king for the majority of his life. To begin to understand the sources of Frederick’s popularity, however, some understanding of peasant conditions is necessary. According to Kirmmse,

Throughout the entire absolutist period Denmark remained an overwhelmingly rural and agrarian society, with 75 to 85 percent of the population living on the land. The commercial, professional, and bureaucratic groups which formed the active base of support for the absolutist regime never constituted more than six or seven percent of the population. This support base was almost exclusively urban and was, further, centered almost entirely in Copenhagen. (1990, p. 9)

Kirmmse also records that “Three-fourths of all agricultural land was incorporated in about 800 estates which, in turn, were owned by only a few hundred estate owners. Crown and church lands made up most of the remainder” (1990, p. 12). Two defining practices affecting the large, subservient peasant class include adscription and reforms very similar to enclosure in England. *Stavnsbaand* (adscription), instituted in 1733 to provide a stable supply of soldiers when necessary, tied farmers “to the estate on which they lived . . . to ensure a plentiful supply of labour for the landowners” from the ages of 14 to 36 (W.G. Jones, 1970, p. 40; see also Kirmmse, 1990, p. 10).

Agricultural reforms sponsored by the group associated with Frederick VI at the beginning of his regency laid the basis for revolutionary political reform within Kierkegaard’s lifetime. These reforms began with the abolition of adscription on June 20, 1788. From the monarchy’s point of view, abolition was just another step in the nobility’s decline. The state was now capable of conscripting military recruits so no longer needed to depend upon the estates for this service. The monarchy exploited this change, however, as a public-relations boon: “the Danish government succeeded in persuading the Danish people that this was in fact a major liberating reform . . . In the eyes of the population, the king—or rather the Crown Prince—became a popular, caring and well-intentioned paternal figure, who only wanted the best for his beloved subjects” (Jespersen, 2004, p. 56).

Agricultural reforms similarly benefited the peasantry. Until 1781 a strip farming system dominated Danish agriculture. This system consisted of “collective structures and a deliberate scattering of farms,” leaving much land uncultivated for common grazing (Jespersen, 2004, p. 54). Peasant

farmers could be held responsible for cultivating up to 80 widely distributed small parcels of land, a system designed to ensure that all farmers had relatively equal shares of good and poor lands. Under the new system, the land was parceled out, and individual tenants could work a single plot of land then eventually own it—a great incentive to maximize production. This process began with lands directly under Crown control and on “private estates of the members of the government” (Jespersen, 2004, p. 54), but eventually spread to lands controlled by the nobility as well. Agricultural innovations such as crop rotation, already practiced in England, began during this period, changes mapped on Kierkegaard’s imaginative landscape in “Rotation of Crops,” the eighth chapter of *Either/Or I*.

Increases in grain prices resulting from the American War of Independence and the wars following the French Revolution made agricultural reforms extremely profitable for Denmark, especially in conjunction with new agricultural practices that increased yield. Kirmmse claims that these reforms were successful because of “the fifty-percent rise of grain prices in the principal reform period of 1788 to 1805, owing particularly to demand from England” (1990, p. 12). The Danish government presented the first copyholds to farmers in 1788 (Jespersen, 2004, p. 54); these reforms were so effective that “by 1814 some 60 per cent of Danish farmers were once more independent owner-farmers” (W. G. Jones, 1970, p. 40; according to Kirmmse, Denmark reached this percentage by 1807, 1990, p. 17). All these reforms reflected positively on Frederick VI, so that as late as the 1830s, the last decade of his reign, “there was a stubborn, lingering loyalty to Frederick VI, even though [he] was by this time a far different and more conservative monarch, indisposed toward further reforms” (Kirmmse, 1990, p. 55).

Many parallels with Blake’s England immediately come to mind. As in Denmark, the “majority of the English subjects of George III were still employed in agriculture” (J. Watson, 1960, p. 13), especially in the early decades of his reign. England’s king was similarly interested in agriculture. George III was nicknamed “Farmer George” because of his fascination with new agricultural techniques on crown lands. Asa Briggs records that

George III himself led the fashion [in agricultural reform], organizing model farms on “Norfolk” and “Flemish” lines, interesting himself in both stockbreeding and corn-growing, and looking forward rhetorically to the dawn of an age “that shall pay more homage to the memory of a Prince that gave a ram to a farmer than for wielding a scepter obeyed alike on the Ganges and the Thames.” (2000, p. 33)

Agricultural reform began in England far earlier than in Denmark but took much the same form. Thomas Heyck asserts that “agricultural innovation in England began in the sixteenth century . . . By 1815, most of the English open-field and the equivalent Scottish systems were gone” (1992, p. 199).

Since in “1760 about half the parishes in England were still in open fields” (Hunt and Poole, 1969, p. 274), a significant percentage of England’s agricultural reform was initiated under George III. In the first 37 years of George III’s reign, “as many as 1,539 private enclosure acts were passed, and a general act was passed in 1801” (Hunt and Poole, 1969, p. 275). Furthermore, like his nephew Frederick VI, George III distinguished himself by criticism of the previous monarch and his surrounding ministers: “George did intend to make a significant change on his accession. He imagined that he would ride forth to kill dragons, the monsters of corruption and immorality” (J. Watson, 1960, p. 2). When he finally acceded to the throne, he was immensely popular.

Born in England, unlike George I or II, he could boast in his first speech to Parliament, “Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Britain” (qtd. in Wright, 2005, p. 24; misquoted by London newspapers and then often misremembered as “Briton”). Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, mother-in-law of George III’s tutor, confidante, and minister Bute, said of his early days, “It appears that all his subjects are enamoured of him. This is a spectacle I never thought to see in England. What a change! If nutmegs flowered in our fields, I could scarcely be more surprised” (qtd. in Wright, 2005, p. 24). But popularity was not without complications over the course of both George III’s and Frederick VI’s fairly long reigns (about 59 and 31 years respectively, disregarding regency periods), and these complications served as a source of defining tensions and potential sites of anxiety for many political subjects in both Denmark and England by the early nineteenth century.

Similarities between Denmark and England could be multiplied as both are small island nations economically dependent upon naval trade; both Great Britain and Denmark are composite nations comprised of small countries with separate yet interrelated histories; and at different points in their history, both were major European economic powers. Most of Denmark consists of a series of widely distributed islands with only one peninsular region—Jutland—attached to the European continent. These similarities underscore how much both Kierkegaard and Blake were enmeshed in similar and intertwining historical milieus, an interconnectedness that will only be reinforced by our examination of the following three predominant, shared cultural tensions widely felt in their respective nations.

Denmark's and England's Cultural Anxieties

Democracy vs. Monarchy in the Political Subject

The first of the three cultural tensions contributing to creation anxiety is a tension between monarchy and democracy within the individual subject's political identity. The long-term effects of Britain's 1807 bombardment of Copenhagen cannot be overestimated in terms of Danish political self-perception, being the final nail in Denmark's coffin as a significant European power. Designed to prevent Copenhagen's fleet from serving Napoleon's cause and to force Denmark out of its position of armed neutrality (with respect to trade with the warring parties), the bombardment motivated Denmark's soon to be King Frederick VI to side with Napoleon to the bitter end. The allied states punished Denmark after Napoleon's defeat: within seven years after the bombardment, Denmark went bankrupt and lost Norway. Denmark was never again to be a major European political or economic power, and Denmark's people at least temporarily lost faith in its government and king.

Smidt and Winge describe the two decades following 1807 as times of real suffering, disillusionment, and distrust: "People talked to each other about the 'despotism' of the King and his adjutants, but no one, or almost no one, said it aloud" (1996, p. 9). But agrarian reforms fostered a deeper ambivalence toward the monarchy. On the one hand, they served as successful propaganda for the crown to the lower and merchant classes, enabling Denmark's monarchy to further disenfranchise Denmark's nobility. On the other hand, they effectively created a large and economically powerful group who saw themselves as the new middle class, with the concurrent problem that dispossessed cottagers were reduced to the status of day laborers for landowning peasants—a situation also very similar to England's. This new middle class reasonably began to expect political empowerment appropriate to its new economic status. As a result, Denmark's absolutist government faced pressures from both Copenhagen's liberal elite and the increasingly powerful, newly landed peasant class in the direction of democratization.

These tensions existed in Blake's England as well. Margaret Somers argues in "Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere: Law, Community, and Political Culture in the Transition to Democracy" (1993) that

working communities in the rural pastoral regions of the eighteenth-century English countryside expressed national citizenship identities that

embraced civil, political, and social dimensions of citizenship rights. These claims to rights were expressed in the strong idiom of “modern” citizenship, i.e., their national identity as “freeborn Englishmen” entitled them not only to equality with respect to the universal rights and duties of the common law, but to *equal participation* in the lawmaking process. (1993, p. 593–4)

During this period, attitudes toward citizenship in the arable regions (green, open lands primarily in central England) differed significantly from attitudes in pastoral regions, which Somers defines as fens-forest lands characterized by “small farms, poor soil . . . and an absence of manorial control by landlords” (1993, p. 594). Farmers embraced “national citizenship identities” which served as the basis of their demands for increased political rights only in the pastoral regions. In the arable regions, Somers argues, people instead “feared the law as a form of social control” (1993, p. 594).

Farmers in Denmark, in which almost all farmlands fell under manorial control, crown control, or church control, reflected a similar division in attitudes in the form of rural distrust of urban Copenhagen’s elites. Denmark’s farmers distrusted Copenhagen liberals, a distrust which led to embarrassing results in early local elections despite their affinity in political goals. One particularly striking example is the case of H. N. Clausen. According to Bruce Kirmmse, “in the summer and fall of 1848 . . . every district of Denmark was engaged in electing delegates to the coming Constitutional assembly on the basis of universal (male) suffrage” (1990, p. 239). Clausen, one of Copenhagen’s liberal theological luminaries, ran for office in the district of Præstø. His opponent, Hans Hansen, was a weaver recently arrested on charges of theft. Though released without charges filed against him, Hansen remained under police surveillance. Despite Clausen’s “campaign of character assassination,” and even though Hansen was “preached against from the pulpits of parish churches,” Hansen won the election by a vote of 570 to 330 (Kirmmse, 1990, p. 239).

Liberal principles and urban liberalism clearly did not provide the basis of Danish peasant farmers’ political identity, which ultimately existed independently of any clearly articulated political philosophy. The fact remains that many of these farmers continued to be grateful to King Frederick to the end of his life, a gratitude which established a site of anxiety for Denmark’s agrarian middle class: they felt indebted to the king for reforms which led them to push for a reduction in his stature and political power—without wanting to directly face this aspect of their own increasing cultural and political power. This anxiety bears down upon Danish subjectivity as

members of the new middle class were simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by their identity as Frederick VI's subjects, repulsed by and attracted to their identity as independent subjects in a democratic state.

The English experienced these anxieties with somewhat different contours. That King George III as a new monarch enjoyed an initial honeymoon period that did, eventually, come to an end is hardly unusual. But the vacillations in his reign moved to extremes. He began with an initial popularity that allowed him to reign as a ruling king during North's administration. After the American Revolutionary War, he contemplated abdication, especially when confronted with the prospect of a coalition government consisting of Shelburne, Rockingham, and the hated Fox. During his illness, he became an object of sympathy, especially his 1788 illness, with the result that "the king was more popular since his insanity than at any other point in his reign" (J. Watson, 1960, p. 323). He finally became a national icon during the wars with France.

This progression finds a significant parallel in the progression of Blake's *Urizen*, long identified in Blake criticism with King George, who "changes by stages from an aged tyrant, soon to be overwhelmed, into a lost, pathetic old man, who in Night ix of *The Four Zoas* and *Milton* is finally redeemed" (Stevenson, 2005, p. 272). Blake's May 28, 1804 letter to William Hayley observes offhand that "the English [now adore] our poor George" (Erdman, 1982, p. 750). Gillray illustrated one permutation of this adoration ten years earlier—before it had turned into the pity Blake both felt and registered in 1804—in his *The French Invasion; or John Bull, Bombarding the Bum-Boats* (1793). Gillray superimposes George III's face and body over England and Wales, variously coloring Britain's counties to represent George III's clothing. Facing the European continent, George III defecates ships onto France's Norman coastline, the counties of Sussex and Hampshire given the inglorious honor of being England's/George III's sphincter.

Linda Colley's commentary on Gillray's drawing observes that the nations of England and Wales give George III "shape, but he gives them identity," adding that George III in Gillray's work is "in the most intimate sense possible entirely at one with England and Wales" (2005, p. 210). Colley observes that Scotland is not yet incorporated, but considering George III's close association with the Scottish Bute, Gillray's exclusion of Scotland as part of George's body is either representative of his own feelings or was artistically necessary to focus the portrait upon English/French interaction, as the exclusion of Scotland makes possible the English Channel's position of near center in the drawing. Gillray's drawing signals a radical shift in

English attitudes toward George III since 1775, when John Wesley observed that the “bulk of the people in every city, town, and village . . . heartily despise his Majesty, and hate him with a perfect hatred” (qtd. in Colley, 2005, p. 208).

So, from 1760 to 1775, the British people moved in large numbers from loving George to hating him, from 1775 to 1793 moved from hatred to identification, and by 1804 loved and pitied him. While of course these attitudes were not uniformly held, varying by geographic location, political pre-commitments, and demographics, they were widespread, and these radical shifts indicate that there was no settled conception of George III’s role in, or importance to, England. Apart from the more obvious sources of these changes in attitude such as wars and economic difficulties, the political climate surrounding an English monarch was very different from that of his Danish counterpart. England’s monarchy was not intended to be absolute, so ultimately “The limits upon the king’s freedom of choice were personal and fluctuating” (J. Watson, 1960, p. 1). The question at hand was not just whether the monarch would reign, but if he would also rule.

Henry St. John Bolingbroke’s *On the Idea of a Patriot King* is often cited as an early influence on George III’s political philosophy, who was concerned with ruling as well as reigning from his earliest days. First composed in 1738, it was published privately in 1744, widely in 1749, then reissued in 1775 with a dedication to Edmund Burke at the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. Bolingbroke’s ideals for the monarchy gained new currency and relevance as perceptions of the monarchy became increasingly negative. Watson claims that George probably never read it, describing it with some justification as containing “only the hackneyed clichés of eighteenth-century politics, what oft was thought but which no one else thought worth explicit attention” (1960, p. 6). But any articulation of “what oft was thought” serves valuable purposes: the more unoriginal, the better, if we seek to describe broadly disseminated political ideas. According to Bolingbroke, kings are subject to the law of man and the law of God. They have a divine right to govern, but only to “govern well” (1775, p. 79). And *Patriot King* insists that kings should govern as well as reign; most importantly, that they should “espouse no party, but to govern like the common father of his people” (Bolingbroke, 1775, p. 140). Significantly,

Its philosophical justification was the fallacy . . . that all good men must necessarily take the same view. If they do not, they are not only mistaken but also almost certainly corrupt, if not financially, then morally. In fact, this fitted well with the common eighteenth-century view that political

parties as such were bad, expressions of faction and personal ambition. (Wright, 2005, p. 34)

Of importance here is that Bolingbroke promoted an apolitical state as an ideal and that his work is cited, correctly or not, as a strong influence on the young King George. The two clearly shared similar ideas.

Bolingbroke articulates the organic ideal of state, law, and people united under a paternal king, believing that “The true image of a free people [. . . is one in which] the head and all the members are united by one common interest, and animated by one common spirit” (1775, p. 140). These attitudes persisted. In 1775, dissenting minister Caleb Evans described the British constitution in these words: “it unites the spirit, power, and splendor of an *Absolute monarchy* without its tyranny, the wisdom of an *Aristocracy* without its oppression, and the freedom of a *Democratic* government without its licentiousness and disorder” (qtd. in Rauser, 1998, p. 163). Blake included Bolingbroke in one of his lists of pernicious Natural Religionists in *Milton* because of this kind of thinking (Erdman, 1982, p. 141). Evans’s deliberate and clear articulation of democracy in conscious tension with absolute monarchy, probably provoked by the American Revolutionary War, indicates that the ideal of an absolute monarchy existed in England as well as in Denmark, but only as a political ideal. In both nations, the ideal of an absolute, apolitical monarchy stood in tension with the movement toward liberal democracy instituted in part by agricultural reforms.

This is not to say that George III’s early consolidation of power or later popularity simplifies England’s political situation even within that isolated, early period. John Wilkes provides a particular case in point with some interesting parallels to the Clausen-Hansen election. Wilkes became a controversial figure with the publication of *The North Briton*, which was designed to offset Crown propaganda disseminated by *The Briton*, and his attacks on the King and his administration pushed the boundaries of freedom of the press to the breaking point: he was arrested, and his papers were seized under a general warrant for the publishers and authors of *The North Briton* in April 1763 (J. Watson, 1960, p. 99). Despite repeated arrests and accusations of being a “blasphemer of his God and a libeler of his King” (J. Watson, 1960, p. 101), the Middlesex area voted Wilkes into Parliament twice—and Parliament invalidated the elections, twice. According to J. Watson, this was a sign that “the representatives of the people were opposed to the will of the people,” the question being, “Where was sovereignty to reside?” (1960, p. 103). That is the true question regarding English and Danish political identity. A desire for a strong monarch existed alongside the impulse for increased political

empowerment for many more of the English and Danish middle class. A desire for a society united as an organic whole existed alongside conflicting class, trade, and economic interests. These tensions serve as significant sources of anxiety for English and Danish political subjects, magnified into creation anxiety in their most dramatic representations.

Science vs. Religion in the Subject's Self-Understanding

The next widely disseminated cultural tension contributing to creation anxiety is a tension between science and religion. Frye provides the best starting point for a discussion of science in Blake, whose mythological works in Frye's reading suggest that the "value of science depends upon the mental attitude toward it, and the mental attitude of Bacon and Locke is wrong" (1969, p. 28). But we have our own barriers to overcome here as elsewhere. Any mention of the tension between science and religion threatens to invoke the Enlightenment myth that reason and science rose up to rescue western thought from the darkness and ignorance of religion. This myth is repeated, for example, in these opening lines from Abraham Wolf's 1938 history of science reprinted in 1952, 1961, 1968, and in facsimile edition in 1998:

All the intellectual and moral forces of the age were harnessed to the chariot of human progress as they had never been harnessed to it before. The actual achievements, it is unfortunately true, were not commensurate with the efforts made by the leaders of the humanistic movement. The forces of darkness and oppression were too well entrenched to be easily dislodged. (1961, p. 27)

Evelleen Richards in "‘Metaphorical Mystifications’: the Romantic Gestation of Nature in British Biology" (1990) argues that T. H. Huxley and other young Darwinians aggressively spread the myth of the triumph of science over religion in England during the 1860s, persistently opposing Romantic strains of science "that presupposed spiritual development and ideal plans in nature" (Cunningham and Jardin, 1990, p. 7). Huxley's narrative establishes as an ideal the "methodologically guaranteed ‘objectivity’ and purity of the Darwinian programme" according to Richards, establishing an ideal image of the young Darwinians as "plain, prosaic inquirer[s] into objective truth" (1990, p. 130). Romantic science, in contrast, is associated with the spiritual and the religious, so that all religion and religious

assumptions become identified with a Romanticism viewed as fundamentally irrational.²

Needless to say, Huxley's narrative persists to this day, but it is a caricature at best of developments in England leading up to the Romantic era, developments that properly begin with Bacon. Joanna Picciotto's "Scientific Investigations: Experimentalism and Paradisal Return" (2005) concisely summarizes the religion/science situation in England up to the early eighteenth century, beginning with Baconian thinkers who saw in prelapsarian Adam a proto-experimentalist unimpeded by sin. This model, according to Picciotto, legitimized "the mechanical arts" (practical or applied science) along with, and sometimes at the expense of, purely intellectual pursuits, abandoning Aristotelian models privileging the former over the latter to the point that Locke and Sprat could mock schoolmen who "embodied the intellectual deprivations sustained by aristocratic privilege" (2005, p. 41, 42). Significantly (to the study of Romanticism), Picciotto goes so far as to define Baconian experimentalism as "an exercise in applied pastoral," associated as it is with Adam's prelapsarian existence in an Edenic paradise and "simple herdsmen of pastoral who live in nature's bosom and have an insight into nature that their refined betters lack" (2005, p. 42). As early as 1602, Sturtevant described mechanical studies, as opposed to purely academic or textual study, as "the flourishing Universitie of Eden" (Picciotto, 2005, p. 44).

From this point, Picciotto's narrative naturally turns to Newton, undoubtedly the most important figure in English science from his time through the Romantic era, certainly until Darwin and possibly until Einstein. Picciotto records that Newton sat "for over 20 portraits and busts, of which thousands of copies were sold" so that "Newton became a brand" (2005, p. 48). Descriptions of Newton in literature such as John Hughes's "The Ecstasy" (1735) imagine "Newton's soul soaring through heaven, like Milton's Christ at the moment of creation," and, of course, Picciotto also reminds us of Alexander Pope's "famous epitaph: 'Nature, and Nature's Laws lay hid in night. / God said, *Let Newton Be!* And All was *light*'" (2005, p. 49). Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) records "an ingenious conjecture respecting Newton: that he was probably a being of superior order, accidentally caged in a human body" (2006, p. 295), while Wordsworth found inspiration in Newton's statue at Cambridge, at St. John's near "Trinity's loquacious clock" (1979, III.53). The figure of Newton is not out of place among Cambridge's Christian referents because to Wordsworth his face is "The marble index of a mind

for ever / Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone" (1979, III.62–3). Richard Bentley used Newton's theories to "provide an 'invincible Argument for the Being of God,'" calling gravity "the immediate Fiat & Finger of God" (qtd. in Picciotto, 2005, p. 50). Newton encouraged this use himself. In his letter to Bentley of December 10, 1692, Newton claimed that "When I wrote my treatise about our system, I had an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men for the belief of a Deity," and asserted that some elements of his observation (such as the relative composition of the sun and planets) must be ascribed "to the counsel and contrivance of a voluntary agent"—God (2004, p. 1348).

Newton's system had such a strong impact because it provided a demonstrably mathematic model accounting for the observable behavior of objects both on earth and in the night sky. Because his system described a set of fixed physical laws governing both terrestrial and celestial objects, the same rules worked for stars as well as apples. Newton's system stood opposed to the old Aristotelian system placing the earth and gross physical matter at one pole of existence and the Prime Mover at the other, with celestial spheres in between, so that presumably "a celestial body was more perfect the farther it was removed from the earth" (E. Grant, 1985, p. 138). Newton's universe was, therefore, far more democratic than Aristotle's, a boon for English self-identity immediately following the English Civil War and the Restoration, since Newtonian science could be contrasted with "the Cartesian scheme," which, "like the tyrannical French monarchy, subjected all motion to the dead hand of mechanical necessity" (Picciotto, 2005, p. 51).

Newton's system and methods, like Descartes's and Aristotle's (or the forms they had taken by Newton's day), came to be applied to fields as diverse as psychology, economics, and political science. Once Newton described gravity as God's invisible hand, many other invisible hands came to be postulated as well. Newton, like Aristotle and Descartes, presented cosmologies conducive to incorporation into a whole vision of life reflected in politics, ethics, theology, and other fields. The battle between religion and science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was therefore a battle between rival religious phenomenologies on the battlefield of science, not a battle between religion on one hand and empirical science on the other. We should instead contrast a mechanical-scientific religious phenomenology with a Romantic-organic religious phenomenology. Blake's passionate critique of Newton, or at least the Newtonianism of his day, reflects tensions between these rival scientific-religious phenomenologies, a critique deeply embedded in his creation myths so therefore an expression of creation anxiety.

Nature vs. Artifice in the Subject's Self-Representation

Tensions between nature and artifice extend the science/religion tensions and constitute the third cultural tension contributing to creation anxiety. Newton's description of a universe operating by fixed laws disseminated the model of a vast mechanical universe that reduces human beings to smaller machines within it. Boyd Hilton draws a stunning portrait of how widely disseminated a mechanical view of the cosmos and life within it had become by the Romantic era:

As one historian has written, "by 1800 the machine philosophy had deeply permeated the thinking of all who were literate," or as Thomas Carlyle more memorably put it, "men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand." This is not to say that Benthamites [whom Hilton describes above as thinking of the world "as a perfectly contrived machine"—JR] were mainly responsible for its dissemination. It derived in part from evangelical religion, which was notably mechanical in the way it conceived of sin and grace as forces pulling souls respectively downwards and upwards, of the Atonement as the "*hinge* of Christian truth," and of Heaven and Hell as cosmic goalposts. It derived ultimately from the Newtonian natural philosophy (physics and mathematics) on which the English Enlightenment was founded. It was also integral to natural theology, which pervaded most religious thought whether evangelical, High Church, latitudinarian, rational, or pantheistic. (2006, p. 313)

Contemporary to Boyd's description is Paley's vision from his 1802 *Natural Theology* of the universe as a gargantuan clock pointing to a transcendent clockmaker. Against this vision of the universe, Hilton posits Coleridge's thought in which the world "was thought of as a web, an organism, a fabric, or a jungle, and was impossible for mortals to comprehend" (2006, p. 314).

Newtonian, Aristotelian, and Cartesian models all assume the organic unity of any cosmology with all fields of human thought, an apparent contradiction of Hilton's contrast of the organic with the mechanical. These similarities emphasize the real nature of the difference between the Coleridgean and the Benthamite views of the world, which lies in the point of view apprehending these systems. The Benthamite system and Paley's natural theology assume a transcendent point of view for those holding it, presenting complete and fully understood systems using metaphors that imply a complete grasp of their subject. Paley's watch metaphor fosters the illusion that we see the universe entire, as if holding it in the palm of our hand, an impression also fostered by Newtonian, Cartesian, and Aristotelian systems. This impression probably contributed to the rhetorical deification

of Newton—surely only a semi-divine figure could possess so extensive a view of the cosmos. Coleridge’s metaphor of the universe as a “web” or a “jungle,” on the other hand, emphasizes human immanence: we do not stand outside the system comprehending it all, even imaginatively, but are contained within it, so human thought cannot fully encompass all existence. We are bound to the strings of the web, cut through the darkness of the jungle, and in both rather threatening metaphors, we face the prospect of anxiety in the form of the unknown. Transcendent natural philosophies attempt to circumvent anxiety by falsely positing the human observer as standing outside the universe as he or she views it through the system.

Recent Blake scholarship registers similar emphases in Blake’s own outlook. For example, Stuart Peterfreund’s *William Blake in a Newtonian World: Essays on Literature as Art and Science* (1998) argues that in Blake “pure unmediated being is not attainable in this life” so that “only by accepting one’s ontological situatedness and contingency . . . one lives forever and attains pure unmediated being and knowledge” (p. 10). In this view, Blake’s critique of Newton attacks the presumption that the physical sciences are “fully disinterested, inductive, impartial, and authoritative” (Peterfreund, 1998, p. 21). Similarly, Peter Otto in *Blake’s Critique of Transcendence* (2000) argues that “the sublime provides the model for a wide variety of cultural practices designed to achieve transcendence” while Blake’s poetry “invokes our desire for sublime transcendence in order to reveal the suffering body that is its ground” (p. 18), emphasizing that “our emotions, imaginations, and sense-making procedures are deeply implicated in the production of the fallen world” (p. 17). Our idealization of transcendence, in other words, is a response to the anxieties inherent in the actuality of our immanence.

Extensions of the mechanical model to the human mind and body were inevitable. Colley records the rationale of one *Edinburgh Review* (1804) contributor for preferring urban artisans to rural farmers for military service:

if the bodily strength of artisans is less than that of ploughmen, they possess, in a much greater degree, that manual dexterity and skill, so necessary in the evolutions, especially of modern war . . . Modern warfare consists in reducing men to a state of mechanical activity, and combining them as parts of a great machine. For this use, which of the two is most fitted by his previous habits—he who has been all his life acting the part of a mechanical implement in a combination of movements [urban artisan]—or he who has been constantly employed as a thinking, independent, separate, and insulated agent [ploughman]? (2005, p. 329–30)

The reviewer's vision of the mechanized urban worker responds to the mechanization and modernization of the cotton, iron, and coal industries from the 1780s onward,³ drawing from a picture of human beings as biological machines that established itself because of Newton's influence well before the 1780s. Samuel Holmes Vasbinder's chapter from *Scientific Attitudes in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1984), "The Literature on Artificial Humans Prior to 1818," spends relatively little time on artificial humans per se except for Shelley's Creature, arguing that Shelley's Creature is "far above any similar human simulacrum postulated prior to 1818—except the statue in Condillac's *Treatise on the Sensations*" (p. 39). Instead, he focuses most of his attention on artificial or mechanical descriptions of human beings, such as Hartley's *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* (1749).

Vasbinder's treatment of artificial humans prior to Shelley's Creature claims that the Creature is distinct from prior creations because,

- (1) no artificial human produced in whole or in part is as complex as Mary Shelley's artificial man;
- (2) the process of construction of all of these earlier artificial humans depends to some extent on supernatural means for animation; and
- (3) that the Being's ancestors can be generally divided into three groups—(a) the animated statue, (b) the homunculus, and (c) the automaton or robot. (1984, p. 45)

This last category is the most modern and is largely the product of the eighteenth century. Robots are the most like Victor Frankenstein's Creature in that there are no supernatural means employed in their creation, but unlike him in that the Creature is much more human in thought, behavior, and emotion than any robotic creation.

The significant tension under discussion here—the tension between nature and artifice—is found not only in the usual oppositions between the pastoral and the industrial, or between machine labor and human labor, but also between mechanical and organic self-representations of human beings themselves. Shelley's Creature in this sense embodies a self-alienation prompted by the human-as-machine model, not necessarily the incursion of machines into the human world, although the two are closely related. This opposition became increasingly apparent during England's Romantic era, and it is to this opposition the Romantics most strongly reacted. Returning to Picciotto's description of the thought of Thomas Sprat and the

experimentalists, their new pastoral assumed that “to see the ‘small letters’ of nature’s book one had to slice specimens open, pin them down, and observe them under various lighting conditions, gently coaxing the thing within ‘things themselves’ into visibility” (2005, p. 39). Lines from Wordsworth spring to mind: we murder to dissect. Blake’s contribution to Romantic critique of the mechanical philosophy is his linking Newtonian thought through Locke’s psychology to the church/state complex, a link that should be obvious even in the brief passage quoted from *The Edinburgh Review* quoted above reflecting upon what *workers* would make the best *soldiers*.

In many ways, Boyd Hilton’s discussion of the mechanical philosophy in *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?* (2006) expands upon and validates Carlyle’s observations of nearly 180 years before. Carlyle believed the mechanical philosophy intruded upon all areas of existence: not only in Romantic era cosmologies, but also in views of the human body as a machine and in the fields of economics, education, religion, psychology (so that human personality is understood solely as the inevitable product of environment), the trades and manufacturing, and so on. This widespread dissemination of Newtonian thought led Blake to understand the physical universe as a Urizenic creation. This is not to say that Blake’s Urizen is literally the creator of the material universe, but that Blake appropriated Gnostic myths of a fallen creator to represent the *phenomenological* status of nature in the England of his day. The point here is that the transition from mechanical to Romantic paradigms initially involved conflicts or tensions between competing religious phenomenologies, not between science and religion, over the sphere of nature and humanity’s place within it, expressed through a tension between the natural and the mechanical or artificial. These tensions about the nature of the physical universe reflect upon the creation of the physical universe and the nature of its creator, requiring that these tensions be taken into account in any discussion of creation anxiety.

Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Cultural Tensions

While the previous sections moved from historical contexts to descriptions of tensions between monarchy and democracy, science and religion, then nature and artifice, my ensuing analysis of Blake’s and Kierkegaard’s relationship to these cultural tensions will proceed in reverse order. Kierkegaard (through Haufniensis and Climacus) emphasizes inwardness, faith, truth,

and freedom, aligning them all in an understanding of systems as human products rather than articulations of objective truths. We will see below that he, with Blake, believed that our mechanization and objectification of ourselves—our re-creation of ourselves into a machine—occurs as we transform objective truths about the cosmos into subjectively defining myths.

Blake most clearly expresses this sentiment through the figure of Los in *Jerusalem*. His attitude toward the empirical sciences was usually negative, but at least by the time he wrote *Jerusalem*, he distinguished between good and bad, or true and false, or Spectrous, Urizenic, and redeemed uses of the physical sciences. By *Jerusalem* plate 77, Blake could call redeemed science one of the “labours of the Gospel” (Erdman, 1982, p. 232), but *Jerusalem*’s early narrative tells us that

Every Substance is clothed, they name them Good & Evil
 From them they make an Abstract, which is a Negation
 Not only of the Substance from which it is derived
 A murderer of its own Body: but also a murderer
 Of every Divine Member: it is the Reasoning Power
 An Abstract objecting power, that Negatives every thing
 This is the Spectre of Man: the Holy Reasoning Power
 And in its Holiness is closed the Abomination of Desolation (Erdman, 1982, p. 153)

“Objecting” should not be understood in the sense of “making objects out of,” as that would give the abstract reasoning power a positive, creative function when to Blake it is pure negation. “Objecting” is better understood as a form of negation: objecting to, disagreeing with, denying, which makes this passage a repetition of his critique of false religious consciousness in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where Blake asserts that the categories of good and evil are religious misunderstandings of contraries. Contraries in this passage in *Jerusalem* are good but “clothed”—hidden, covered up, fallen like Adam and Eve—then misnamed “good and evil” by a false religious consciousness.

Blake does not focus his critique upon the physical sciences but upon the “Reasoning Power / An Abstract objecting power, that Negatives every thing . . . the Holy Reasoning Power,” a reasoning power embodied in Blake’s Specter. To Blake, abstract reasoning power is murderous. Frye emphasizes this facet of Blake’s thinking in his discussion of Blake’s own principles: “The first point in Blake to get clear, then, is the infinite superiority of the distinct perception of things to the attempt of the memory to classify them

into general principles" (1969, p. 16), because classification is the ratio of all things. The dissecting activity of abstract reasoning power separates qualities from the things that have them and deduces general principles from this dissection. Of course Blake's judgment upon this activity is well known: to generalize is to be an idiot.

Since Blake believes that every existing thing is good in itself, he also believes that this abstract reasoning power is a good thing in itself and that its murderous activity is ultimately self-directed. The problem is one of a misrelation, so Los's resistance establishes a new relation through art to resist a present misrelation: "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans / I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create" (Erdman, 1982, p. 153).⁴ Los, representing the creative capacity itself, understands the created nature of systems of thought. As human creations, systems of thought offer an artificial transcendence at best. We only truly apprehend existence from within. Like Kierkegaard, Blake critiques the transformation of a scientific methodology into a ruling phenomenology, because systematizing as the activity of an immanent subjectivity cannot provide a transcendent point of view. Here is where Blake and Kierkegaard depart from their medieval models as post-Enlightenment thinkers. While the view of human beings as body, soul, and spirit was an unambiguous truth to the medieval mind, Blake's and Kierkegaard's adaptation of this tradition became for them a motivated adaptation, a system that they know they are recreating rather than an objective truth handed down to them.

As a process, however ironically held, Kierkegaard's thought follows evolutionary models, as does Blake's. Evolutionary development in Kierkegaard proceeds from decision and from struggle, a position consistent with Blake's visual icons representing struggle as well as the image of Los laboring at his furnace. And Kierkegaard does share Blake's demand for struggle. Section Four of Chapter II, Part II, of Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* emphasizes struggle in its very title: "Lessing has said: If God held all truth in his right hand and continual striving in his left, he would choose the latter" (1992, p. 106). Haufniensis's critique of Hegelian evolutionary models in *The Concept of Anxiety* is a critique of a mechanical evolutionary model in which quantitative change alone can produce a qualitative difference: "It is therefore a superstition when it is maintained in logic that through a continued quantification a new quality is brought forth" (1980a, p. 30). Only by a leap, by human agency and conscious decision—by a *struggle*—can a new quality be brought forth.⁵ Blake articulates this need for struggle in *Jerusalem*: "Let the Indefinite be explored. and

let every Man be Judged / By his own Works, Let all Indefinites be thrown into Demonstrations / To be pounded to dust & melted in the Furnaces of Affliction" (Erdman, 1982, p. 205).

However, tensions between science and religion in Kierkegaard's Denmark had contours somewhat different from their English equivalent. There were no Danish scientists of great stature potentially threatening old paradigms: Brahe and Ørsted, for all the value of their contributions, upset no one in Denmark, at least not with their scientific investigations. Brahe sought to reinforce and rehabilitate the Ptolemaic system, not overturn it. Instead, Hegel and Danish Hegelianism provided the phenomenological equivalent of England's mechanical philosophy in Kierkegaard's Denmark, coming to dominate Danish intellectual life, especially theology. Hegelianism seems an odd choice as a phenomenological equivalent to empirical sciences or the mechanical philosophy in England, as it has little directly in common with the empirical sciences and seems a poor equivalent to Newton, Descartes, or Aristotle. In fact, one scholar of Hegel asserts that Hegel's very value lies in his critique of the mechanical philosophers, confessing that he believes "Hegel's general criticism of philosophers such as Descartes, Leibniz or Locke to be powerful and insightful; this is one reason why we are Hegelians" (Houlgate, 1998, p. 125).

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel distinguished his own work from the empirical sciences, complaining that in "the present state of logic one can scarcely recognize even a trace of scientific method. It has roughly the form of an empirical science" (Miller, 1969, p. 53). Hegel's model was scientific but not empirical: scientific, first of all, in that it followed a methodology. Rather vaguely, Hegel goes on to say that "the true method of philosophical science falls within the treatment of logic itself; for the method is consciousness of the form of the inner self-movement of the content of logic" (Miller, 1969, p. 53), but as Hegel goes on, this "inner self-movement" clearly comes to be seen as his dialectic. Michael Forster's "Hegel's Dialectical Method" (1993) outlines four more criteria (in addition to following a method) that Hegel believed was necessary to qualify any system as "truly scientific": "It must constitute an entire system . . . Its account must demonstrably cover everything . . . It must in a certain sense demonstrate the necessity of everything . . . It must give to the subject matter of the existing empirical sciences . . . 'an *a priori* character'" (p. 137). It must, in short, be all-encompassing by rational necessity.

Climacus's critique of Hegelianism parallels the Romantic critique of transcendent systems at this point. Like the Romantics, Climacus emphasized immanence:

A system of existence [*Tilværelsens System*] cannot be given. Is there, then, not such a system? That is not at all the case. Neither is this implied in what has been said. Existence itself is a system—for God, but it cannot be a system for any existing [*existerende*] spirit. System and conclusiveness correspond to each other, but existence is the very opposite. (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 118)

Climacus's critique of transcendent systems follows from his critique of the objectification of the human in Hegelian paradigms—not just in Danish Hegelianism, but in Hegel—and with Los's response to systems and Romantic critiques of mechanical paradigms. To be human is to be subject to immanence and its limitations, limitations forgotten by both Hegelian and mechanical paradigms in Climacus's opinion and by Gnostic creators in Blake's.

Through Climacus, Kierkegaard reduces this facet of Hegelianism to the comic. Truth is endlessly deferred, yet the present generation is in a position to judge all previous generations without having the truth itself (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 33–4n). Climacus claims, “we have become so objective that even the wife of a civil servant argues from the whole, from the state, from the idea of society, from geographic scientificity to the single individual” (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 51). The humor of this situation for Kierkegaard probably lies in the fact that she reasons in this way about matters he considers trivial, those pertaining to household management. The speculative thinker—the follower of Hegel—ultimately speculates himself out of existence “because his task consists in going away from himself more and more and becoming objective and in that way disappearing from himself and becoming the gazing power of speculative thought” (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 56). When we make ourselves the subject of our study in this way, we go away from ourselves and disappear from ourselves in the very act of seeking to understand ourselves.

Again, the object of both Kierkegaardian and Romantic critique is not empirical science per se, but the transformation of scientific method into a ruling and self-defining phenomenology. Climacus consistently speaks highly of the work of the historian in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and he even speaks highly of historical objectivity:

The historian seeks to reach the greatest possible certainty, and the historian is not in any contradiction, because he is not in passion; at most he has the research scholar's objective passion, but he is not in subjective passion. As a research scholar, he belongs to a major endeavor from generation to generation; it is at all times objectively and scientifically

important for him to come as close to certainty as possible, but it is not subjectively important for him. (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 575)

Problems begin only when the research scholar makes himself an object of study within his own system and bases his subjective passion upon objective historical study.

What remains is to explain Blake's and Kierkegaard's relationship to the tension between monarchy and democracy, upon which a tension between the urban and agrarian has become superimposed. In both cases Kierkegaard is very intimately located within the interstices of these tensions. Joakim Garff locates the origin of the name "Kierkegaard" in the Jutland heath, the name stemming "from a couple of farms located next to the church in the village of Sædding" (2005, p. 3). Kierkegaard's father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, was born in that area to a tenant farmer in 1756. At the age of eleven he was apprenticed to his maternal uncle, a Copenhagen dry-goods seller. Michael Pedersen became a very successful Copenhagen businessman. Because of the nature of his investments, he became very rich while all of Denmark went bankrupt after the 1807 bombing of Copenhagen.

Michael Pedersen's first marriage was to the sister of his business partner but only lasted two years. She died of pneumonia without bearing him any children. Soon after his wife's death, he impregnated his serving maid, Ane Sørensdatter Lund. She was four months pregnant when he married her, and gave birth to their first child less than eighteen months after the death of his first wife. She had been the servant of Michael's business partner, who had moved to Copenhagen from Jutland and who went to work for Michael and his first wife upon their marriage. By the time of his marriage to Ane, Michael Pedersen had distanced himself from his rural identity enough to protect himself with a sophisticated pre-nuptial contract that stipulated precisely how much she and her children would receive upon either death or divorce, and that he would retain custody of all children in the event of a divorce. Joakim Garff records that Michael Pedersen's lawyer changed the original draft of the pre-nuptial to "a less niggardly version" (2005, p. 5), establishing his *lawyer* as the voice of decency and public morality in this debacle. All Michael's and Ane's children were born and raised in Copenhagen, including the youngest of their seven, Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard, like Blake, was primarily the product of and continually enmeshed in his nation's major urban center and capital. Denmark's division into urban and agrarian existed within the four walls of Kierkegaard's house, as both his father and mother were first generation residents of Copenhagen, and his father was a newly wealthy member of the merchant

class. Kierkegaard's family and family history was divided into his father's rural past and urban present, his father's upper class status as a wealthy merchant and his mother's rural simplicity and dependence.

Though Kierkegaard was a lifelong Copenhagener, the Jutland heath did make a direct and dramatic impression upon him at one point. Like Blake, he was a perennial urban dweller who made excursions into the countryside. After one trip he observed that

The moors must be particularly suited for the development of mighty spirits. Here everything lies naked and exposed to God, and here they do not have the many diversions, the many crannies and recesses, in which consciousness may hide away and from which earnestness so often has a difficult time rounding up one's scattered thoughts. Here consciousness must close in upon itself in firm and precise fashion. Here on the moor you may truly say, "Wither shall I flee from Thy presence?" (qtd. in Garff, 2005, p. 157)

Like the Edinburgh reviewer, Kierkegaard understood the relationship between the lone individual working on his farm and the growth of this farmer's conception of individuality, and understood that it greatly differed from urban subjectivity. Like Climacus's Religiousness *B* individual, Kierkegaard's ideal farmer stands naked and alone before God and himself. In Kierkegaard's case, this was not so much conjecture as the product of a deeply felt anxiety during his own walking tour on the heath: "Alone on the burning moor, surrounded on all sides by absolute sameness except for the tossing sea right in front of me, I became positively seasick . . . On the moor, precisely because one has such extensive vistas, one has no scale of measure" (qtd. in Garff, 2005, p. 157). Kierkegaard's rather visceral experience of 1840 seems to have contributed directly to his comparison of anxiety to the dizzying experience of standing before an infinite abyss, during which one must grab onto something finite and solid, something specific, for support. This dizziness was only possible because Kierkegaard, like Blake, had been a lifelong city-dweller. His dizziness was the reaction of a consciousness unused to the seemingly wide-open spaces of the heath.

Furthermore, Kierkegaard's household divisions brought with them "a tension in the religious life—and certainly in the social self-understanding as well—of the Kierkegaard family, a tension between rural and urban religion, between peasant pietism and Golden Age oratory" (Kirmmse, 1990, p. 260). Climacus reflects this division in his consideration of his audience:

What is developed here by no means pertains to the simple folk, whom the god will preserve in their lovable simplicity (although they sense the pressure of life another way), the simplicity that feels no great need for any other kind of understanding, or, insofar as it is felt, humbly becomes a sigh over the misery of this life, while this sigh humbly finds comfort in the thought that life's happiness does not consist in being a person of knowledge. (1992, p. 170–1n)

Climacus (and most likely Kierkegaard) did not consider the reflective complexity of his work to apply to Denmark's rural population, leveling his critique instead at urban Copenhageners who imbibed Danish Hegelianism from pulpits and periodicals so were alienated from their roots of rural simplicity. But Climacus's description of his audience is rife with tensions. At the same time that a simple faith is being idealized, it is treated condescendingly (as a "lovable simplicity"). Climacus's work—and perhaps all of Kierkegaard's work—both idealizes and condescends to simple faith. However, this dichotomy between urban and rural subjectivity is not the whole issue. Agreeing with A. G. Rudelbach's contention that the state church contributed to the rise of the modern proletariat, Kierkegaard takes his observations a bit further: "What is unchristian and ungodly is to base the state on a substratum of people whom one ignores totally, denying all kinship with them—even if on Sundays there are moving sermons about loving 'the neighbor'" (qtd. in Garff, 2005, p. 705). It is not difficult to see affinities with Blake's thought on these points, nor is it coincidental that Kierkegaard used the language of kinship in this passage, which was written the year of Denmark's transition to a Constitutional monarchy, as these divisions existed within the home of his birth.

This journal entry reveals something about ambivalences in Kierkegaard's political attitudes as well. On the one hand, the quoted passage indicates some sympathy with Denmark's working classes while, we have already observed, Kierkegaard could also sound patronizing toward them. Kierkegaard's attitude toward King Frederick VI was positive, overall, as was his attitude toward the monarchy in general. It is not difficult to see how an absolutist monarchy could foster the development of philosophical systems focused upon the growth of the single individual, should the individual model his or her subjectivity in part upon the political organization of the state. In contrast, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* calls democracy "the most tyrannical form of government," a sentiment reflected in Kierkegaard's journals: "of all tyrannies, a people's government is the most excruciating, the most spiritless, the absolute ruin of everything great and lofty . . .

A people's government is the true image of Hell" (qtd. in Garff, 2005, p. 487). Leveling provided the ultimate opportunity for group identity in Kierkegaard's opinion, producing a government that rules by anonymity.

Garff also records Kierkegaard's hope for the new democracy ushered into 1848–9 Denmark by mass demonstrations. Kierkegaard allowed himself to hope that leveling would separate individual identity from state identity with the rise of a faceless, bureaucratic state, encouraging each individual to become "an essentially human being in the full sense of equality. This is the idea of the religious" (qtd. in Garff, 2005, p. 491). Kierkegaard's simultaneous rejection of and hope for Denmark's new democratic state signals both a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy. Furthermore, Romantic political ideals locate the single individual on the throne, internalizing the king in Parliament and the God from whom his power derives. Milton's description of God the Father in *Paradise Lost* now becomes the standard for human personality and the trajectory of its development:

Though I uncircumscribed my self retire,
And put forth not my goodness, which is free
To act or not, necessity and chance
Approach not me, and what I will is fate. (VII.170–3)

The single individual is self-circumscribed, an image important to Blake's *The [First] Book of Urizen*, and is beyond fate in either the form of necessity or chance. The agency of the single individual now determines his or her fate. In Kierkegaard's thought, Denmark's new democracy therefore presented the Danish with yet another either/or: the individual could be lost in the "dizziness of abstract infinity" or saved "infinitely in the essentiality of the religious" (qtd. in Garff, 2005, p. 491). Kierkegaard, here as in his personal life, fully grasps both poles of Denmark's cultural tensions, writing from within the interstices between monarchy and democracy, science and religion, and nature and artifice, making Kierkegaard a supreme, indirect commentator on Blake and the English Romantics with whom he shared so much in common—and most importantly, he shared these qualities with them critically and reflectively.

Blake's own home life seems to have shared some features in common with Kierkegaard's, although what can be known about his own family is known in less detail and with less certainty. G. E. Bentley's biography of Blake says of Blake's parents, "So inconspicuous are they that we do not even know the dates and places of their birth, the names of their mothers, or whether they had siblings" (2001, p. 3). They were likely to have been

raised among the British merchant class, so that Blake's family was not new to London when he was born, both his parents coming from similar backgrounds. Blake's parents—haberdashers by trade—were likely raised in a dissenting home and provided one for their children. Blake was a lifelong Londoner, except for three years in Felpham near the southern coast of England, just as Kierkegaard was a lifelong resident of Copenhagen except for three years spent in Germany in study. But Bentley describes Blake as a great "rambler," explaining that Blake would walk "through the countryside south of the city of London . . . to the fertile verdant meads of Walton-Upon-Thames" (2001, p. 28). So while the dramatic divisions within Kierkegaard's home was not replicated in Blake's, the significant point of similarity remains: a contrast between each author's urban home and rural excursions, the artifice of their lived environment and the natural setting to which they escaped. They lived within that which was constructed and longed for that which was not. This inscribing of the rural upon the urban established tensions between nature and artifice replicated in Blake's pastoral and both his and Kierkegaard's conception of innocence, the starting point for the models of personality described in the next two chapters that give rise to creation anxiety.

Chapter 2

Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Socratic Tradition

Human Personality and the Socratic Tradition

Blake and Kierkegaard both drew from a centuries-old classical model of personality that defined human beings as body, soul, and spirit to provide a structure for their developmental models of personality. But their use of this tradition was critical and creative, for Enlightenment critique of medieval thought made uncritical acceptance of medieval models impossible. This chapter will describe Blake's and Kierkegaard's relationship to the classical tradition and the major features of their use of it, and in the process will uncover the structure of creation anxiety. Blake's debt to the classical tradition is perhaps less immediately apparent than Kierkegaard's and is perhaps overdetermined, as he drew from a number of sometimes conflicting traditions influenced by this model, but should be obvious after a survey of these classical models and an explanation of Kierkegaard's debt to them. A survey of the classical model from Plato to Kierkegaard will be followed by a description of Kierkegaard's and Blake's relationship to the classical tradition. The specific details of their use of the classical model of personality will be saved for Chapter 3.

A survey of the classical tradition of personality perhaps best begins with Plato's Seventh Letter because of its clarity and directness of expression. Plato felt compelled to revisit Sicily to instruct its ruler, Dionysius, in philosophy. He describes Dionysius as a vain character who "made it absolutely a point of honor that no one should ever suppose that I had a poor opinion of his natural gifts" (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 1586). Because of his character, Dionysius would not take no for an answer from Plato to his requests that Plato return to Sicily. Plato questions the motives behind Dionysius's desire for instruction in philosophy and comports himself accordingly, hoping to see if Dionysius truly loved philosophy or was instead

“stuffed with secondhand opinions,” having “only a superficial tinge of doctrine” (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 1588).

Plato’s account of Dionysius is hardly flattering, especially as he demeans Dionysius for composing a philosophical “handbook of his own” following Plato’s first visit (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 1588). In Plato’s opinion, those who do so have “no real acquaintance with the subject [of philosophy],” because the insights provided by philosophy cannot be communicated directly through language (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 1589). Only after “a long period of attendance on the subject” does acquaintance with philosophy’s insights alight “like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark [which] is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining” (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 1589). This is necessarily so, Plato argues, because of the fundamental difference between any reality and the words or images used to describe it. Direct instruction presents words and images to the learner but can never present the reality itself. At best, instruction can only be the occasion by which individuals perceive the truth for themselves after a long period of their own contemplation and reflection. Plato therefore idealizes a dialectical, dialogic philosophical method rather than a systematic, expository one. The dialog communicates philosophical truth indirectly by articulating several points of view without being exclusively devoted to any single one, prompting reflection and engagement on the part of the listener.

But perhaps the most significant aspect of Plato’s Seventh Letter is the way Plato defines Dionysius’s personality in terms of his relationship to a text: those who seek to produce systematic expositions are vain and shallow while those who inwardly contemplate are truly philosophical. Plato’s Seventh Letter develops ideas considered by Socrates in the *Phaedo*, in which Socrates defines the goal of philosophy as separation of the soul from the body, drawing a sharp distinction between those who “regard the body with the greatest indifference and spend their lives in philosophy” and those incapable of philosophy whose souls are “permeated by the corporeal, which fellowship and intercourse with the body will have ingrained in its very nature through constant association and long practice” (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, pp. 51, 64). Plato believes that Dionysius’s vanity drives his misunderstanding of philosophy. Dionysius’s thinking proceeds from a bodily incursion upon the soul rather than philosophically attained freedom from the body. The bodily person in Plato’s thought believes that truth lies in the text; the philosophical person finds truth within her soul. The text may prompt the philosopher’s discovery of soul truth but cannot instruct the soul directly.

By Origen's time (ca 185–254), the ideas circulating in Plato's dialogues and letters had developed into a system of personality types intimately associated with hermeneutic strategies, a development Origen reflects in Book IV of *On First Principles* (ca 215):

One must therefore pourtray [sic] the meaning of the sacred writings in a threefold way upon one's own soul, so that the simple man may be edified by what we may call the flesh of the scripture, this name being given to the obvious interpretation; while the man who has made some progress may be edified by its soul, as it were; and the man who is perfect . . . may be edified by the spiritual law. . . For just as man consists of body, soul and spirit, so in the same way does the scripture . . . (pp. 275–6)

According to Origen, just as human beings exist as body, soul, and spirit, so does Scripture, so that an interpreter's hermeneutics reflect the state of her soul. Socrates makes a similar, but less differentiated, judgment in the *Phaedrus*, advising Phaedrus to have a "discernment of the nature of the soul, discover the type of speech appropriate to each nature, and order and arrange your discourse accordingly, addressing a variegated soul in a variegated style that ranges over the whole gamut of tones, and a simple soul in a simple style" (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 523). More importantly, the body, soul, and spirit relationship in this tradition does not imply a fixed self, but rather makes possible different phenomenologies, some oriented toward the body, some toward soul, and some toward spirit. These phenomenologies give rise to potentially conflicting hermeneutics that are now distinct markers of one's spiritual development. Origen associates literal or obvious interpretations with the body and spiritual interpretations with spirit, placing between them a still somewhat vaguely defined "soulish" interpretation. As early as Origen, the hermeneutic we choose clearly reveals the type of person we are. Our hermeneutics are ourselves; who we are is how we read.

Origen's adaptation of the classical model carries forward uninterrupted to the present day, through Erasmus to the most recent catechism of the Catholic Church, but finds a complex restatement in Dante's *Convivio* and in his letter to Con Grande Della Scala. While the letter's authenticity has been questioned, it still presents a clear, concise restatement of the classical model nearly contemporary to Dante. The letter first separates literal from non-literal readings, then divides non-literal readings into three types, so that the scheme is now fourfold: the allegorical, expressive of elements of Christian theology; the moral, expressive of truths about the individual

moral life; and the anagogical, expressive of truths about states of the individual soul. This typology maintains essentially the same contours as Origen's model, dividing the act of interpretation into body, soul, and spirit, with two significant differences. Soulish readings have now come to be explicitly defined as moral or ethical, and spiritual readings are now either allegorical or anagogical. Individual self-knowledge has now become a marker of advanced spiritual development.

In the late eighteenth century, German Romantics appropriated and developed this tradition in a counter-Enlightenment move. Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (1959) provides a succinct summary:

It is one of the great romantic visions, clearly formulated by Schiller and Herder as early as 1793 and still vital in the systems of Hegel and Marx, that the history of mankind consists in a departure from a condition of undifferentiated primal unity with himself and with nature, an intermediate period in which man's powers are developed through differentiation and antagonism (alienation) with himself and with nature, and a final return to a unity on a higher level of harmony. (p. 86)

John D. Mullen's "The German Romantic Background to Kierkegaard's Psychology" (1978) explains that Schiller conceived of a three stage developmental process, the first stage being the "physical," the second an aesthetic stage characterized by "rational animality," and finally the "moral," consisting of a will to synthesize "the dialectically opposing elements of a person" (p. 653–4). Schiller preserved bodily and ethical subjectivities from earlier models but abandoned the spiritual, which had now gone out of vogue. A differentiation of philosophical development in Socrates became a differentiation of spiritual development throughout the medieval period and was then transformed into a developmental psychology by Schiller.

Kierkegaard and the Socratic Tradition

Kierkegaard came to the Socratic tradition and its variants through his own study of the German Romantics, of Socrates, and of a number of different traditions spanning from the early medieval period to his own day. He compares Socratic to Romantic irony in his dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony* (1841). Irony is not a mere trope in Kierkegaard's thinking but, at least potentially, an existential stance. According to Kierkegaard, Socratic irony

makes space for an individual self, one differentiated from her social environment but still oriented toward the good, while the Romantics used irony to avoid self-defining commitments completely. Starting with these two basic personality types, the Socratic-ethical and the Romantic, Kierkegaard published his most well-known philosophical works under pseudonyms representing a variety of personality types and points of view, each author quoting, engaging, and exceeding the next. Furthermore, he published signed works in the form of edifying discourses at the same time, so that his major philosophical works and his signed religious works comprise a vast dialog among his pseudonymous authors in which he himself is engaged. His debt to Hegel also appears within this dialog, for each author incorporates the insights of the previous one while going beyond him.

Kierkegaard's use of a Hegelian model, combined with his attention to classical thought, leads his major philosophical works to present a series of developmental stages consisting of sequential differentiations of the self from her natural environment, her social environment ("the crowd"), and then facets of her mental environment produced by the first two. Kierkegaard calls these stages the aesthetic, the ethical (like Schiller), and the religious. He divides the aesthetic stage into immediate and reflective poles reminiscent of Schiller's "physical" and "aesthetic" stages, the immediate pole describing a childlike consciousness, and the reflective accommodating either the Romantic or the speculative thinker. The religious pole is divided into two parts like the aesthetic stage, Religiousness *A* and Religiousness *B*. Religiousness *A* encompasses speculative thought and eastern religions, while Religiousness *B* is Christianity properly defined. Religiousness *A* is the subjectivity of allegory, seeing through nature to the infinite beyond it, while Religiousness *B* is an anagogical subjectivity, the self standing alone before the Divine. These are existential stances, however, not simple classifications of religious thought or hermeneutic strategies: it is possible to identify oneself as a Christian in belief and upbringing but still be an aesthetic, ethical, or Religiousness *A* personality.

Should the scheme above be restated as a narrative dialog between very different characters, Kierkegaard's model of existential development begins when the author of *Either/Or I*, an aesthetic personality identified only as "A" within the text, suggests a developmental pattern within aesthetic personalities in an essay titled "The Immediate Erotic Stages." Clearly influenced by Hegelian and other German Idealist models, this is the essay which divides the aesthetic sphere of existence into "immediate" and "reflective" poles, the "immediate" pole further subdivided into three different types of desire: "dreaming," "seeking," and, "desiring." "A" illustrates each type of

desire with different characters from Mozart's operas. In effect, the immediate-aesthetic personality is the subject of Romantic fiction, while the reflective-aesthetic personality is the creator of either Romantic fiction or Hegelian philosophy. At the earliest stage, "dreaming desire," the self knows no distinction from its environment, and progression through the aesthetic sphere consists in the development of a self aware that it is distinct from the object of its desire.

"A's" reader, the ethical personality "B" or Judge Wilhelm, "reads" "A's" work and, in true Hegelian fashion, "goes beyond" him. *Either/Or II* (1843) is his response, in which he argues that there is something more than the aesthetic—the ethical. The ethical contains the aesthetic but is higher than it, as the Judge argues for the aesthetic validity of an ethical relationship, marriage. Following a pattern derived from Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the Judge sees the ethical as a synthesis comprised of the "negation of the first immediate," which in this case is the aesthetic. Sometime the following year, the pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis "read" *Either/Or*, like many other Copenhagen intellectuals, and felt the need to explain how a transition from the innocence of the aesthetic sphere to the guilt consciousness of the ethical sphere is possible. He "writes" *The Concept of Anxiety* in response and "publishes" it in 1844. Johannes Climacus, encompassing the insights of "A," "B," and Haufniensis in his reconsideration of one of his own previous works (and other pseudonymous works), completes the work they began in his own *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846) by adding a religious sphere, which he divides into *A* and *B*. At this point Kierkegaard believed the scheme was complete. He intended to quit writing philosophical works and become a pastor in the country (Kierkegaard, 1998, p. 86). It was not to be. In 1849 yet another pseudonym appears, Anti-Climacus (perhaps best understood as "ante" in a superlative sense), who reads these prior works, contemplates Haufniensis's consideration of prelapsarian anxiety and its postlapsarian developments, then writes an explicitly Christian, though still psychologically oriented, description of the primary characteristic of postlapsarian psychology—despair—entitled *The Sickness Unto Death*.

These stages are intimately linked with body, soul, and spirit throughout Kierkegaard's works, perhaps most strikingly in *The Concept of Anxiety*, in which they serve as an organizing principle. Vigilius Haufniensis—the watchman of the harbor or of Copenhagen—establishes himself in *The Concept of Anxiety* as one of Kierkegaard's supreme psychologists. Psychology had already achieved fledgling status as an independent discipline by the time of Kierkegaard's writing, taking its place alongside theology, ethics, and logic in Haufniensis's introduction. According to Haufniensis,

Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. That third is spirit. In innocence, man is not merely animal, for if he were at any moment of his life merely animal, he would never become man. So spirit is present, but as immediate, as dreaming. Inasmuch as it is now present, it is in a sense a hostile power, for it constantly disturbs the relation between soul and body, a relation that has persistence and yet does not have endurance, inasmuch as it first receives the latter by spirit. On the other hand, spirit is a friendly power, since it is precisely that which constitutes the relation. (Kierkegaard, 1980a, pp. 43–4)

In his description of the state of innocence, Haufniensis assumes the traditional tripartite view of human beings as body, soul, and spirit but appropriates Greek nomenclature to couch this view in philosophical/scientific language, describing the physical (body), the psychical (mind or soul), and the spiritual (which he elsewhere calls the pneumatic). He is concerned with a state of the soul (innocence), which gives his work an anagogical quality, but he defines this state of the soul in terms of the interrelation of body, soul, and spirit. Body and soul relate to one another via spirit. In a state of innocence, spirit is “dreaming,” disturbing a body-soul relationship unaware of spirit’s presence even while it makes this relation possible.

In a state of dreaming, spirit still acts because it is present, but because it is dreaming, it does not act intentionally. Haufniensis intends in this part of *The Concept of Anxiety* to explain how those in a traditionally Christian state of innocence can experience anxiety, but at the same time reveals significant characteristics of Kierkegaard’s notion of the self that is assumed by most of the pseudonymous authors. Because Kierkegaard aligns spirit with human volition, personality differences exist between those for whom spirit is dreaming and those for whom spirit is awake: the will is more actively engaged in self-creation in the latter than in the former. Since spirit is volitional and through its actions constitutes the nature of the self, the human self consists of a changing self-to-self and self-to-God relation rather than a stable and unchanging tripartite self. In Kierkegaard, the self consists not only of these relations but also in the way spirit consciously understands these relations—what we tell ourselves about ourselves—so that we contribute to our own self-creation through our own self-perception. If the self is grasped by the understanding, the self is also the hand grasping and the act of grasping itself. For this reason Kierkegaard’s philosophy strongly emphasizes decision—we begin with culturally given selves but end with deliberately

chosen selves—and for this reason distorted conceptions of the self can pose a serious threat to the structure of the self.

This last point is perhaps best supported from *The Sickness Unto Death*, subtitled “A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening.” While *The Concept of Anxiety* considers the nature of anxiety from a psychological standpoint, *The Sickness Unto Death* explores the psychology of despair from a devotional standpoint. Like Haufniensis, Anti-Climacus begins his inquiry with a description of what constitutes the self:

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation’s relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation’s relating itself to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self.

In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation; thus under the qualification of the psychical the relation between the psychical and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self. (Kierkegaard, 1980b, p. 13)

One is tempted to call Anti-Climacus’s convoluted prose the true “sickness unto death.” Kierkegaard himself validates this judgment, but the first and most obvious problem lies in the apparent contradiction between “the self is not the relation” in the first paragraph and “this relation is the positive third, and this is the self” in the following paragraph.

Anti-Climacus alleviates this difficulty by presenting the self not as a thing but as an activity, an activity differently understood and experienced by the different component parts of the self. The mind understands the body-soul relation simply as a relation. Spirit engages in the activity of the relation itself, initiating it, then defining itself through its constitution of the body-soul relationship, relating the relation to itself. When spirit actively determines the body-soul relation and relates that body-soul relationship to itself, the human being is a fully developed self. When spirit does not, the human being does not fully have a self but experiences despair, a condition in which the self exists in an improper relationship to itself: “The misrelation of despair is not a simple misrelation but a misrelation in a relation that relates itself to itself and has been established by another” (Kierkegaard,

1980b, p. 14; this “other” is God, the ground of all existence). The relation by itself is not the self—that is the point of the first paragraph.

Should we define the self in grammatical terms, spirit is simultaneously the subject and direct object of the sentence that is the human being, while the self is its verb. Spirit is the relation itself in the sense that we cannot separate the actor from her activity, the runner from his running, the singer from her song. Spirit actively and deliberately engaged in the activity of sustaining this relation then relating that relation to itself becomes the self while it is engaged in this activity. However, the Christian Anti-Climacus does not believe that we create ourselves: “If the human self had itself established itself, then there could be only one form [of despair]” (Kierkegaard, 1980b, p. 14). Instead, we are free from despair only when the self relates itself to itself, wills to be itself, and then “rests transparently in the power that established it” (Kierkegaard, 1980b, p. 14). In Kierkegaard’s thought, we are continually becoming, but we are continually becoming what we already are or running from who we are in despair, and our self-understanding guides this process of becoming.

At this point Kierkegaard appears to be violating the conditions of Plato’s Seventh Letter by presenting a direct exposition of the truth, but this misperception is a trap into which many commentators have fallen, most often by simplistically identifying Kierkegaard’s point of view with that of his pseudonyms. However, the pseudonymous nature of Kierkegaard’s authorship, especially in the case of those works describing a developmental pattern, keeps Kierkegaard from violating strictures against direct communication. Kierkegaard believed that his description of transitional stages from the aesthetic through the ethical to the religious could be useful for a reflective individual such as himself and designed his authorship to provoke these transitions, but he did not believe his model was a goal in itself. One complex feature of Kierkegaard’s thought, “indirect communication,” is an integral part of this design. Kierkegaard’s claim that his pseudonymous works are examples of indirect communication means that his pseudonyms are not simple masks concealing his identity as were the pen names of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English reviewers. He did not intend his pseudonymous authorship to speak on his behalf, but rather to reveal the type of personality who would conceive of these ideas. Kierkegaard wanted his readers to understand that the pseudonyms are characters he created and that their books are works written by these characters. To this end, Kierkegaard tries to create as much distance between himself and his pseudonyms as possible in his signed, unpaginated appendix to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* titled “A First and Last Declaration”:

My pseudonymity or polyonymity has not had an *accidental* basis in my *person* . . . , but an *essential* basis in the *production* itself, which, for the sake of the lines and of the psychologically varied differences of the individualities, poetically required an indiscriminateness with regard to good and evil, brokenheartedness and gaiety, despair and overconfidence, suffering and elation, etc., which is ideally limited only by psychological consistency, which no factually actual persons dares to allow himself or can want to allow himself in the moral limitations of actuality. (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. [625])

As mentioned above, Kierkegaard originally expected *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* to conclude his authorship, and if he sounds defensive, he may be particularly distancing himself from “A,” the notorious pseudonym behind *Either/Or I* associated with “The Seducer’s Diary.” The “Diary” is a series of diary entries narrating the seduction of a young, unmarried girl by a somewhat older man, who ruins her, then abandons her. Appended to the end of *Either/Or I*, the “Diary” was certainly Kierkegaard’s most popular work during his lifetime, winning him some notoriety in Copenhagen among those who understandably had some difficulty distinguishing between the narrative of the “Diary” and Kierkegaard’s own life. At the age of 27 he proposed to an 18-year-old Regine Olsen only to break off the engagement about a year later. Kierkegaard does more than create distance between himself and his pseudonyms, however. He specifically defines his relationship to them:

. . . for my relation [to the pseudonymous production] is even more remote than that of a poet, who *poeticizes* characters, and yet in the preface is *himself* the *author*. That is, I am impersonally or personally in the third person a *souffleur* [prompter] who has poetically produced the *authors*, whose *prefaces* in turn are their productions, as their *names* are also. Thus in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me. I have no opinion about them except as a reader, not the remotest private relation to them, since it is impossible to have that to a doubly reflected communication. (Kierkegaard, 1992, pp. [625–6])

He calls his pseudonymous works a “doubly reflected communication” because his first act of reflection created the characters, while his second act of reflection created the works that they would write. Or, perhaps, his two acts of reflection involve creating the characters through their writing; either way, doubly reflected communication is the communication of both

a fictional subjectivity and his work. While Kierkegaard insists in his Declaration that he accepts social and legal responsibility for the content of his pseudonymous works, he hopes that his readers avoid uncritically identifying a pseudonym's point of view with his own. He can agree or disagree as freely with his pseudonymous authors as he can with works written by any other author. It is not what we see of Kierkegaard in his work that is important, but what we see of ourselves in our reaction to his works.

Kierkegaard grounds the importance of our self-identification with different pseudonymous authors in the goals that his pseudonymous authorship is supposed to serve. By identifying with specific pseudonymous authors, we identify with a specific hermeneutic, a specific life-view, so identify ourselves. In the signed, posthumously published "The Point of View for My Work as an Author" (note the subtitle: "a direct communication, report to history"), Kierkegaard explains that his "esthetic" or pseudonymous authorship engages in the task of "deceiving people into what is true" (Kierkegaard, 1998, p. 53), a task he considers dialectical in nature. Haufniensis explains what it means to deceive people into the truth, describing the first responsibility of the psychologist to reject textual authority (in true Socratic fashion) for his own careful observation of real people:

The psychological observer ought to be more nimble than a tightrope dancer in order to incline and bend himself to other people and their attitudes, and his silence in the moment of confidence should be seductive and voluptuous, so that what is hidden may find satisfaction in slipping out to chat with itself in the artificially constructed nonobservance and silence. . . . To that end he initiates in himself every mood, every psychic state that he discovers in another. Thereupon he sees whether he can delude the other by the imitation and carry him along into the subsequent development. (Kierkegaard, 1980a, pp. 54–5)

Deceiving people into the truth by adopting their subjectivity as one's own not only serves the creation of literary characters but also serves the psychologist's task of understanding other people. Haufniensis, writing for an urbane, educated, and reflective Copenhagen audience, seeks to lead his audience on a reflective journey through their own minds, a journey so complex that they will learn the limitations of reflective thought in the process. Haufniensis's and Anti-Climacus's densely convoluted prose serves this purpose.

Kierkegaard's reduction of Haufniensis to a mouthpiece, coupled with the fact that he changed *The Concept of Anxiety* from a signed work to

a pseudonymous work at the last minute, suggests that understanding Kierkegaard's intent for the pseudonymous authorship does not always mean accepting it at face value. His ambivalence about owning *The Concept of Anxiety* as a signed work signals deep anxiety about his own dependence upon reflective thought. Ideally, however, the individual braves the danger inherent in reflection's "seductive coils" so that through reflection he can return to simplicity and to Christianity out of Christendom. The Seducer-aesthete at the beginning of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship and the great philosopher near the end, the author of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, are both named "Johannes" after Mozart's great aesthetic subjectivity, Don Giovanni, for they both engage in reflective-aesthetic activity. The Johannes of the *Postscript* knows it, and for that reason is Johannes Climacus. The climax of reflective thought is its awareness of its own artificiality and limitations.

For that reason, Climacus calls himself a "humorist" in his appendix to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* entitled "An Understanding with the Reader." He claims that his book is "superfluous" and that anyone "who appeals to it *eo ipso* has misunderstood it," and most importantly, "that everything is to be understood in such a way that it is revoked, that the book has not only an end but a revocation to boot" (Kierkegaard, 1992, pp. 617–19). In Kierkegaard's own words, "The process is this: a poetic and philosophic nature is set aside in order to become a Christian" (Kierkegaard, 1998, p. 77). Kierkegaard's thought has at its culmination the same rejection of reflective thought as *an existentially defining activity* found in Plato's Seventh Letter. The final stage of growth, according to Climacus, is initiated by a paradox resulting in "faith's crucifixion of the understanding" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 564). Once reflective thought has served its purpose, it is no longer necessary as a form of existentially defining activity.

Blake and the Socratic Tradition

Blake's indebtedness to the Socratic-medieval tradition most clearly surfaces in his anagogical study of innocence and experience as states of the human soul. Blake's innocence corresponds to Kierkegaard's aesthetic sphere, Blake's experience to Kierkegaard's ethical, and Blake's visionary subjectivity to features of Kierkegaard's Religiousness A and B. These correspondences will be examined in more detail in chapter three. But to better show how important the classical tradition was to Blake's thought, we will first examine the complex profile Plato has in Blake's authorship and

then turn to his affinities with the medieval manuscript tradition and the hermeneutics so closely bound to it. At times, Blake seems to validate Platonic idealism with few qualifications, as in "A Vision of the Last Judgment" (1810), which presents an explicit condemnation of nature as well as Blake's strongest affirmation of idealism: "This World <of Imagination> is Infinite & Eternal whereas the world of Generation or Vegetation is Finite & [*for a small moment*] Temporal There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature" (Erdman, 1982, p. 555). It is very easy to read a Platonic idealism into these words: everything has a dual existence, one in the world of vision perceived through imagination and the other in the world of generation in which all living things experience birth, growth, death, and decay. The "Eternal Image & Individuality" of a living thing never dies while its physical form does (Erdman, 1982, p. 555), requiring that imagination or vision serve as the capacities by which the artist sees everything in its eternal form.

In addition to his affinities with idealist thought, Blake seems to validate Plato's use of dialog in his letter to Trusler of August 23, 1799, saying that "The wisest of the Ancients considered what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction because it rouses the faculties to act. I name Moses Solomon Esop Homer Plato" (Erdman, 1982, p. 702). Like Plato, Blake is not so much concerned with a simple presentation of the truth as he is with rousing his readers to apprehend the truth for themselves. Blake's mythology, which takes the form of a series of narrative dialogs among subjectivities representative of components of human personality, has a great deal in common with both Plato's method and Kierkegaard's indirect communication. As S. Foster Damon explains, "Blake identified [the four Zoas] with the four fundamental aspects of man: his body (Tharmas—west); his reason (Urizen—south); his emotions (Luvah—east); and his imagination (Urthona—north)" (1988, p. 458). Blake's divisions represent body, soul, and spirit, emphasizing soul as emotion (on the east/west axis with body) and spirit as reason and imagination (occupying the north/south axis), mirroring the fourfold hermeneutic of the medieval period.

In his letter to Butts of July 6, 1803, Blake seems to identify his allegorizing with Plato's, saying (probably) of *Jerusalem* that he considers "it as the Grandest Poem that This World Contains. Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry. it is also somewhat in the same manner defin'd by Plato" (Erdman, 1982, p. 730). However, Blake qualifies his identification with allegory in Plato with the words "somewhat

in the same manner," which signals ambivalence toward Plato—Blake feels that his allegory shares some features in common with Plato's without identifying his work completely with it. But in "A Vision of the Last Judgment," Blake explicitly critiques Platonic allegory, associating the "Hebrew Bible & the Gospel of Jesus" with "Eternal Vision or Imagination of All that Exists" while associating Greek literature with an inferior "Fable or Allegory" that is really the product of memory (Erdman, 1982, p. 554). Blake, like Kierkegaard, emphasizes that Platonic knowledge is recollection and considers this knowledge inferior to the Christian or prophetic mode. Plato is particularly and repeatedly condemned for his rejection of poets and prophets and his support of the "Moral Virtues" (Erdman, 1982, p. 664). Blake juxtaposes Platonic idealism against apocalyptic convention in the vein of Ezekiel and Revelation, clearly and consistently associating himself with the latter in "A Vision of the Last Judgment" and elsewhere.¹ Blake associates "Eternal Forms" with "the Divine body of the Saviour," which is identical to "The Human Imagination," or "the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body" (Erdman, 1982, p. 555). Blake's world of ideal forms is a visceral one: a bosom, a Divine body. Blake wrote from the standpoint of a religious nominalism, one that assigns each individual object its own, particular ideal form in the mind of God.

A brief comparison of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic to Blake's mythological works may help illustrate the nature of Blake's religious nominalism, which might be called "apocalyptic idealism" to distinguish it from Platonic idealism. According to David Aune, "perhaps the most influential definition of the apocalypse genre is that proposed by J. J. Collins," who defines it as

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world. (qtd. in Aune, 1997, p. lxxviii)

Aune's overview of positions critical of Collins includes an addition by David Hellholm accounting for audience. Hellholm argues that Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature is "intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority" (qtd. in Aune, 1997, p. lxxix). Early to mid-twentieth-century scholarship emphasizes that an environment of persecution accounts for Revelation's cryptic imagery. P. K. Smith, for example, claims that John deliberately

veiled “his specific allusions to Rome, presumably in order to protect those who had copies from the charge of possessing subversive literature” (1957, p. 191). Aune concludes his discussion, however, by suggesting that Revelation’s inclusion of *parenesis*—a call to repent—links it to a prophetic tradition which “assumes that the wicked may repent and change their ways” in contrast to traditional apocalyptic “espoused by an oppressed minority that clearly distinguished the righteous from the wicked” (1997, p. xc).

With some modifications, most of Aune’s description of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic and the Book of Revelation seem applicable to Blake, who as a participant in London’s 1790s culture of dissent had reason to veil his critique of Britain’s church/state complex in mythological works. Wars with revolutionary France led the British government to become increasingly oppressive and intolerant of radical ideas during this period. Blake singled out the wars with France for the imposition of a unitary subjectivity upon the English. He complained that “since the French Revolution Englishmen are all Intermeasurable One by Another Certainly a happy state of Agreement to which I for One do not Agree” (Erdman, 1982, p. 783). Blake’s own inclusion of *parenesis* at the end of *Jerusalem*, however, indicates his desire to see the redemption of the “wicked.” He must, for the characters populating Blake’s mythological works are not the angelic or demonic beings of apocalyptic literature, but either human qualities magnified to apocalyptic proportions or historical personages who exemplify these qualities. Blake’s authority is “spiritual,” for it proceeds from the visionary imagination, which he believes is the basis of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic even if the authors of this literature would disagree.

A brief look at the book of Revelation can illuminate Blake’s use of apocalyptic conventions. Chapters 1 through 11 of the book of Revelation narrate a series of visions, beginning with a message of Christ to the seven churches, moving on to a vision of seven seals, and then to a vision of seven trumpets. John’s vision shifts dramatically in Chapter 12, however, to an image of a woman about to give birth. She is clothed with the sun, wearing a crown of twelve stars upon her head, and standing with the moon beneath her feet. A dragon whose tail cast down one-third of the stars from heaven to earth appears. It is ready to devour her child as soon as the child is born, but the woman delivers safely, giving birth to a male ruler who is caught up into heaven while the woman escapes into the wilderness. At this point Michael and his angels make war with the dragon and his angels (so that readers understand the stars to have been fallen angels) and Michael wins. The dragon is cast out of heaven to the earth, and a chorus of angels declares the triumph of Christ. The dragon, confined to earth, makes war against

the woman, but she escapes his attack, leaving the dragon to make war “with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17).

The narrative itself is simple enough but interpretation is not. The woman has been variously interpreted as Mary, the church, or the nation of Israel, with no clear reason why she cannot be all three. Her child is clearly supposed to be Christ and the dragon is clearly Satan, but Satan is not cast out of heaven until after Christ’s birth, which disturbs the temporal sequence of the vision. What would an unfallen Satan be doing tempting Eve in the Garden? The woman’s escape into the wilderness could be Israel’s wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, or Joseph and Mary’s escape into Egypt after the birth of Christ, or the church’s pilgrimage through a hostile world or, again, all three. Ambiguity about the image proceeds from its correspondence to a multiplicity of figures at once, rendering temporality and locality irrelevant to significance, perhaps the most important feature of apocalyptic literature. Revelation 13 goes on to describe the rise of the anti-christ as a development of Satan’s commitment to “make war” with the “remnant of [the woman’s] seed.” While the antichrist seems to be treated as a specific historical personage within the text of Revelation, the First Epistle of John refers to “the spirit of antichrist” already in the world.

Apocalyptic conventions establish correspondences between heavenly realities and earthly particulars in ways that define the role of these particulars in a salvation history. In apocalyptic literature, these heavenly realities are not abstract, ideal forms but motivated subjectivities engaged in a struggle within salvation history, a history played out on earth as well. These heavenly realities apply psychological and spiritual pressure to human, temporal agents, not deterministically but provocatively, motivating decision. John B. Pierce describes Blake’s use of Biblical typology in very similar language: “Typology, in its obsession with history, preserves the particularities of identity as they are manifest in time and space while still connecting these particularities with universal forms” (1993, p. 757). Mary Lynn Johnson’s “Emblem and Symbol in Blake” (1974) establishes a dichotomy between allegory in emblem books and the preference for symbols among Romantic authors. Allegory establishes “point for point correspondences” between “a visual and verbal conceit and an abstract idea” (M. Johnson, 1974, p. 151), while symbols are characterized by, in Coleridge’s words, “the translucence of the eternal in and through the temporal” (qtd. in M. Johnson, 1974, p. 151).

In both instances the image is completely eclipsed by a higher reality: the allegorical image corresponds to a divine reality, while the symbolic image

is only a window to a divine reality. In neither case does the image have its own validity. Johnson goes on to suggest that in Blake, images either occupy a borderland between the two or work simultaneously in both emblematic and symbolic modes. Images in Blake—to the extent that his mythological characters can be understood as “images”—have their own agency and validity even as they point beyond themselves. So while Platonic notions of ideal forms imply determinism, as do both purely emblematic and purely symbolic uses of images, Jewish and Christian apocalyptic emphasize agency,² both the agency of heavenly actors and the independent agency of their human counterparts, an agency maintained despite the influence of the former upon the latter. In apocalyptic literature, each particular entity has its own rather than a derivative existence, but the significance of earthly agents is defined in part by their relationship to heavenly realities and how those relationships define these agents’ own role in salvation history.

Blake’s grand forms act like motivated subjectivities—like Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms—who find expression in particular subjectivities throughout history but are best understood as personifications of elements of human psychology themselves. Blake is almost always concerned not with the thing itself but with its phenomenological profile, an assumption that is especially true of his historical material. Blake sought not to write historical narrative but to comment on the phenomenological sources of the painful social and political milieu in which he was embroiled and its effects. As a result, these figures transform when their relationships change, allowing Blake to be an idealist while still emphasizing “minute particulars” in his annotations to Reynolds: “To Generalize is to be an Idiot To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit” (Erdman, 1982, p. 641)—which, incidentally, is not a generalization but Blake’s judgment upon a specific aesthetic sensibility—and, “Minute Discrimination is Not Accidental All Sublimity is founded on Minute Discrimination” (Erdman, 1982, p. 643).

Perhaps the most revealing comment in Blake’s marginalia comes at a point where Blake agrees with Reynolds. In response to Reynolds’s suggestion that “a habit of drawing correctly what we see, will. . . give a proportionable power of drawing correctly what we imagine” Blake wrote, “This is Admirably Said. Why does he not always allow as much” (Erdman, 1982, p. 644). Reynolds’s and Blake’s clear distinction between what is seen with the physical or “vegetable” eye and what seen with the imagination—a distinction defending Blake’s sanity—requires fidelity to both. Blake is not hostile toward nature nor does he advocate its neglect. He would not, like Plato’s Socrates of the *Phaedo*, think that the philosophic life is lived toward death, for he believes that “every thing that lives is holy,” and in fact

critiques ideas like those expressed in the *Phaedo* as fallen Urizenic. His primary concern is to maintain proper relationships between the physical and the imaginative worlds, a relationship maintained or deformed phenomenologically.

To confine one's vision to minute particulars is a phenomenological distortion of the relationship between the physical and imaginative worlds. Those who do so adopt an unconsciously negative role in Blake's own version of salvation history, which is the history of psychological disintegration and reintegration. To be an artist, on the other hand, is to see both the minute particulars in their particularity and to see through them to the grand forms, to actively choose among the forces pressing down upon us: "We are in a World of Generation & death & this world we must cast off if we would be Painters Such as Rafa[e]l Mich Angelo & the Ancient Sculptors. if we do not cast off this world we shall be only Venetian Painters who will be cast off & Lost from Art" (Erdman, 1982, p. 562). Casting off nature here signifies independence from nature, not an absolute rejection of nature, as is evident in the last line of "A Vision of the Last Judgment": "I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it" (Erdman, 1982, p. 566). Blake's refusal to question nature takes on a double significance. He refuses to assign to nature and sense perception any authority, yet he does not doubt what he sees, just as we usually do not doubt that an image seen through a window would be unchanged should the window be opened or removed. Seeing clearly with the vegetable eye is a precondition for seeing clearly with the imaginative one.

While Blake's relationship to Plato is ambivalent at best, the material production of his illuminated books clearly signals a significant debt to his medieval sources. Most of Blake's visual work falls into four categories: his illuminated books such as the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789, 1794), for which he is best known and for which he conceived both text and image; book illustrations, for which Blake provided original illustrations after another author's text, such as Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797); commercial illustrations consisting of engravings after another author's illustrations or original, realistic drawings of very specific subjects such as Wentworth china; and original artwork drawn independently of any specific text, including his large color prints and visionary portraits such as "Ghost of a Flea."

While Blake is best known for his Illuminated Books, these do not make up the majority of his artistic output either in terms of time or quantity. Seeing that Blake devoted more time to commercial book illustrations is a matter of mere counting. Bindman's edition of *The Complete Illuminated*

Books (2000) reproduces 393 plates. In contrast, Blake produced 537 water color illustrations for *Night Thoughts*, 102 for Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1827), and 116 for Thomas Gray's poems, so that these three commissions alone comprise nearly double the creative output, though perhaps not the work hours, of the entire production of the Illuminated Books. Volume II of Roger Easson's and Robert Essick's catalog of Blake's book illustrations lists about 220 different works while Binyon's 1926 catalog of etchings adds another 153 drawings. Blake's labor of love, his Illuminated Books, should therefore be understood to comprise a significant minority of Blake's total artistic output, costing him much time and money but generating little return, leaving him continually bound to commercial work.

Blake's commercial work was sometimes economically unsuccessful, as was the case with his illustrations for *Night Thoughts*, or simple drudgery, as was much of his work for Hayley during the three years he spent under his patronage. When Blake vents to his Notebook that "What H—y finds out what you cannot do / That is the Very thing hell set you to" (Erdman, 1982, p. 506), he seems to validate Laurence Binyon's observation that most of Blake's engraved, as opposed to etched, work prior to his illustrations for the book of Job were half successful at best. According to Binyon, in too many instances "Blake adopted more of the conventions of his time than his admirers have been wont to admit" (1922, p. 4). A series of broken or strained relationships with Hayley, Cromek, and others led to a nine-year hiatus in Blake's commercial work from 1805 to 1814. This hiatus was anticipated by Blake's letter to Hayley of October 23, 1804, in which he claims that he has finally "reduced that spectrous Fiend to his station, whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labors for the last passed twenty years of my life" (Erdman, 1982, p. 756). Essick believes that Blake's spectrous fiend may be "the business of copy engraving itself" (1980, p. 174).

This dichotomy in Blake's artistic output encouraged in Blake's mind a dichotomy between Blake the commercial engraver and Blake the visionary artist, the former subject to the power of a spectrous fiend while the latter is emancipated and visionary. Most of his visionary work was executed in relief, in contrast to engraved commercial work, so that these two modes of production become synonymous with the spiritual and the corporeal, the sacred and the profane. These modes of production even become representative of Blake's visionary psychology and Locke's empirical psychology. Blake's visionary psychology burns away accretions to reveal the eternal message already written in his media and is carried out "by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid" (Erdman, 1982, p. 39).⁴ In contrast, Locke's empirical psychology etches

into the blank slate of the mind. Blake's attitude toward his commercial work extends to the commercial printing industry in general, while his attitude toward his work in relief—his Illuminated Books—represents his core commitments and sympathies, sympathies which indicate the depth and character of his opposition to the church/state complex of his day.

The relationship between artistic production and power structures in Blake's thinking begins with his Prospectus, which claims that his method of printing will free genius-inventors from a system which forbids them to "publish their own works," believing his new printing method more "ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered, while it produces works at less than one fourth of the expense" (Erdman, 1982, p. 692). These claims seem to proceed from a simple complaint about economic realities, but to Blake this complaint represented a serious moral indictment of England. He believed that "It is the Greatest of Crimes to Depress True Art" because "The Mockers of Art is the Mockers of Jesus" (Erdman, 1982, p. 767). Furthermore, the state of the arts is reflective of the health of any government, for "The Foundation of Empire is Art & Science Remove them or Degrade them & the Empire is No More—Empire follows Art & not Vice Versa as Englishmen suppose" (Erdman, 1982, p. 636). Blake wrote these words in the margins of his copy of *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1793). Reynolds was the inaugural President of Great Britain's Royal Academy of Arts, founded by an act of King George III in 1768—an act that in Blake's opinion should have been foundational to England's spiritual and political health but was instead detrimental to it.

To Blake, the practice of hermeneutics is as bound up in the church/state complex as the support and production of art, another signal of his debt to the medieval tradition. A brief look at pre-Reformation manuscript culture may help illustrate the relationship between Blake's mode of production, his hermeneutics, and the manner in which these contrast with the British church/state complex. Dan Knauss's succinct account of manuscript culture in "Theories of Interpretation from Manuscript to Print Culture: The Influence of the Material Condition of Scripture and the Hermeneutics of Augustine, Erasmus, and Luther" (2001)³ provides an account of the Bible as Augustine, Erasmus, and Luther "knew it as a material entity with its own history," and how that history affected the development of hermeneutics. He argues that Augustine and Erasmus represent a long tradition of Christian thought based upon "a metaphysical distinction between the literal, human text of scripture and the divine exemplar, spiritually apprehended only in faith by the Christian reader," while Luther represents a modern tradition which understands the spiritual sense of Scripture to be "the literal sense properly understood."

Knauss reminds his readers that the Manichean critique of Christian Scripture was very convincing to someone like Augustine, who was trained in the classical grammarian tradition. Manicheans asserted that the Christian Scriptures were inferior to Manichean sacred texts for three reasons:

[First,] Unlike the Manichaeon scriptures, the Christian scriptures were not written by Jesus or by others during his lifetime. [Next,] Unlike Mani's writings, the Christian scriptures were not stabilized or disseminated in a widely agreed-upon canon that was unified in codices. [Finally,] Unlike the Manichaeon texts, the Christian corpus was a composite of different [and] incompatible languages, religions, and cultures. (Knauss, 2001)

Augustine's previous textual training caused him to look upon Christianity with suspicion, so his introduction to Ambrose's notion of "spiritual interpretation" made possible his belief in Christianity. "Spiritual interpretation" is a mode of interpretation which became common practice among the church fathers, as we have seen, and which Erasmus inherited as a matter of course, being a son of a manuscript copyist. Knauss's description of Erasmus's own views places Erasmus firmly within this Augustinian tradition. In Knauss's words, Erasmus "recommended in *Ratio Verae Theologiae* (1518) that if a biblical text was unclear or morally offensive, or if it needed to be accommodated to an audience, then allegorical exegesis was permissible."

Luther developed his hermeneutics, however, from a culture of print rather than manuscript, one in which "concerns about the integrity of its texts [are] marginal and less visible compared to the situation of manuscript culture." Knauss argues that Luther's very different background from Erasmus led to very different attitudes toward the text of Scripture. In his words,

Luther's formative and lifelong reading centered on printed books; in fact, he never mentions reading the Bible or any other book in manuscript. Because of the material and technological innovation of print, Luther could emphasize and universalize the reader's personal, direct relation to God through scripture in way that was previously unthinkable. The Bible could also be viewed as a fairly stabilized text available in numerous, mechanically reproduced copies. (Knauss, 2001)

In short, for Luther the spiritual sense of Scripture is the literal sense properly understood. The Protestant British church/state complex, with its

reliance upon printed Bibles in the vernacular, followed hermeneutic principles similar to Luther's as evidenced in, for example, Bishop Watson's attack on Paine's *Age of Reason* (1794–5, 1807) titled *An Apology for the Bible* (1796). Blake very harshly annotated his copy of the Bishop's response to Paine, saying that Paine only attacked perversions of the words of Christ while Watson is defending them and, along with Locke, "laught at the Bible in his slieve" (Erdman, 1982, p. 613). Blake's reference to Locke is not coincidental. Luther's mechanically reproduced Bibles and the hermeneutics arising from them anticipate Enlightenment rationality dependent upon direct, literal language referencing discreet, preferably material, objects. Protestant hermeneutics also reject a medieval mindset ultimately derived from Plato's idealism which privileges allegory. Blake's sustained emphasis upon a visionary reading of both Scripture and the natural world stands in stark contrast to Luther's "direct relation to God" mediated through a translated text literally understood. Blake's emphasis on visionary readings of Scripture has much in common with medieval notions of the "spiritual sense" of Scripture developed out of the manuscript tradition.

Blake signals his affinity with a manuscript tradition both visually and poetically. For example, images of books in Blake's works tend to have negative connotations compared to images of manuscripts. Urizen with his books on plates 1 and 4 of *The [First] Book of Urizen* (1794), or the priest-like Urizen with his "brazen Book" on plate 12 of *Europe* (1794), can be compared to the scroll on plate 41 of *Jerusalem* (1805) that explains how Blake's readers can be released from their spectres, or to the devil figure on plate 10 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) reading Proverbs of Hell from a manuscript. Contrast this image with that of an angel writing in a book next to him. Plate 41 of *Jerusalem* presents a small figure of Blake himself writing on a scroll beneath one of his grand forms. Urizen, Blake's fallen lawgiver, consistently writes in books resembling the printed, vernacular Bibles used in Protestant churches while those who communicate spiritual vision write in manuscripts as the medievals did.

Manuscript conventions particularly apply to Blake's production of *The [First] Book of Urizen*. Blake probably printed six of the eight known copies of *The [First] Book of Urizen* in a single printing session (Worrall, 1995, p. 144). Yet no two copies follow the same order, and some even reverse the text order of other copies. What Blake produced is therefore very much like extant Biblical manuscripts, in which conflicting copies must be reconciled by a reader who has access to several of them at once. Jerome McGann and others argue that Blake deliberately printed *The [First] Book of Urizen* this way as a satire of the Bible, but McGann also suggests that Blake did so

in order to “rouze the faculties to act” (1986, p. 309). Rousing and satirical readings are, however, mutually exclusive, since satire is not conducive to visionary readings of the material satirized. Blake sought to lay the onus of textual uniformity, the construction of a coherent narrative, upon the visionary perceptivity of his readers. In Mark L. Barr’s words, he attempted to commit “authorial regicide” in favor of the democratically distributed authority of his readers (2006, p. 758).

However, one can simultaneously maintain both satirical and “rousing” intentions to Blake by maintaining a distinction between print Bibles and their manuscript sources. Blake’s *The [First] Book of Urizen* satirizes the King James Bible, or better, the Scriptures as conceived by Britain’s church/state complex embodied in the King James Bible. Blake signals a satire of the King James Bible by his use of a two-column format and paragraph numbering in imitation of printed King James Bibles but not in imitation of the Biblical manuscripts themselves,⁵ making Blake’s book a hybrid of manuscript and print conventions perhaps intended to make more transparent the manuscript tradition underlying print Bibles. Blake’s practice may be suggestive of something more—perhaps of his awareness that his own books are mass-produced from metal plates and that he is, therefore, complicit with modernity and its forces of production.

Barr’s “Prophecy, the Law of Insanity, and *The [First] Book of Urizen*” (2006) is certainly *a propos* to this context. In his words, “any assault on the political establishment also required a challenge to biblical hermeneutics” (Barr, 2006, p. 742), which, in Blake’s case, is an assault carried out by appealing to a hermeneutical tradition older than that guiding the British church/state complex. Barr’s assertions should be tempered with the awareness that fixed, vernacular texts were originally envisioned by Reformers to serve the purpose of democratizing Christianity, in their view freeing it from a Catholic hierarchy who used the foreignness and indeterminacy of Biblical texts as the basis of their control over an uneducated populace. As a result, neither fixed nor indeterminate texts inherently serve or combat hegemony but can serve either purpose depending upon the rhetoric used to support authoritarian structures.

Blake’s critique of Scripture’s less acceptable accounts proceeded, he himself believed, from his own Christianity, a signal of his willingness to reject the literal sense of Scripture when necessary, unlike his more thoroughly Protestant contemporaries. This willingness is especially evident in his annotations to Watson. In Blake’s words, “To me who believe the Bible & profess myself a Christian a defense of the wickedness of the Israelites in murdering so many thousands under pretence of a command from God is

altogether Abominable & Blasphemous" (Erdman, 1982, p. 614), murders which Watson defended on the principle that the spiritual sense of Scripture is the literal sense properly understood. Watson pits God's command to destroy the Canaanites against Paine's belief in nature as the true book of God, arguing that by Paine's reasoning, natural disasters that kill infants should make his God of nature just as repugnant to him as the Biblical God. This response by itself simply demonstrates a logical inconsistency in Paine's reasoning, and one that Blake in fact affirms, but Watson concludes that in both cases, "The word of God is in perfect harmony with his work: crying or smiling infants are subjected to death in both" (1857, p. 19), affirming that God administers the laws of nature "for the general happiness of his creatures, whether we can, on every occasion, discern the end or not" (1857, p. 20). This reasoning horrified Blake. Watson's problem, Blake explains, is his reading of the "<Peculiar> Word of God, Exclusive of Conscience or the Word of God Universal" (Erdman, 1982, p. 615).

By saying so, Blake repeats Erasmus's conviction expressed two centuries earlier, but this reading practice is much older. To return to Origen's *On First Principles*, Origen complains that because of literal interpretations, "even the simpler of those who claim to belong to the Church, while believing indeed that there is none greater than the Creator . . . yet believe such things about him as would not be believed of the most savage and unjust of men" (p. 271). Blake follows Origen's reasoning in his criticism of the phenomenological status accorded the Bible by Britain's church/state complex and of the modern tradition guiding church/state hermeneutics, a status reinforced and maintained by a print culture which had more in common with Luther's deviation from almost 1300 years of preceding Christian history than with any previous tradition itself. Blake's manuscript production, therefore, is designed to encourage a medieval hermeneutic for the purpose of undermining a widely disseminated Protestant one. This Protestant hermeneutic served not only of the British church/state complex but also of the mass of state monitored commercial book publishers from which Blake struggled to distance himself. Blake's affinity with medieval thought extends to the visible features of his Illuminated Books, their mode of production, and his hermeneutics, hermeneutics which are reflective of medieval models of personality that form the core of his narratives of creation anxiety. So Blake's and Kierkegaard's debt to the Socratic tradition and medieval appropriations of it is both extensive and deep, guiding the very structure of their authorship. The details of Blake's and Kierkegaard's affinity with medieval models of personality will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Classical Model of Personality

Kierkegaard's Aesthetic Stage and Blake's Innocence

The medieval view of human beings as a synthesis of body, soul, and spirit supported a view of human growth as successive orientations toward each, the most immature individuals being bodily oriented while the most mature are spiritually oriented. This model carries forward in western thought from Socrates to the Romantic era, each manifestation of this tradition in Greek, medieval, and Romantic sources influencing Kierkegaard's own conception of aesthetic, ethical, and religious personalities.¹ Each of these personality types will now be described in more detail in a comparison of Kierkegaard's and Blake's theories of personality. This comparison will lay the foundation for a Kierkegaardian reading of Blake and demonstrate Blake's own debt to classical models of personality, as Blake's innocent, experienced, and visionary personalities meaningfully correspond to Kierkegaard's aesthetic, ethical, and religious personalities.

Furthermore, the process of innocence collapsing into generation—or in other words, the transition from the aesthetic to the ethical, from innocence to experience—lays the groundwork for Blake's articulation of creation anxiety. Creation anxiety narratives signal a derailment from a process that normally begins with procreation (or bodily creation), proceeds through the development of the soul (through the creation of institutions designed to foster this growth), to spiritual creation, the quality of a personality who stands by herself before God. Human beings start as environmentally determined individuals, grow into socially defined individuals, to finally become spiritually and individually defined individuals. Within this framework, the possibility of the human creation of an independent consciousness—and the way in which that act of creation redefines the human as understood by this developmental process—is a terrible displacement of the human from her proper sphere. Romantic creation anxiety narratives

are therefore possible because the classical developmental model is assumed, a model that begins with aesthetic personalities.

Of the three personality types, aesthetic personalities are the most important for a study of creation anxiety, for as Chapter 5 demonstrates, Blake's fallen creator is an aesthetic personality. So my exposition of Kierkegaard's aesthetic sphere of existence will be more detailed than that of the ethical or religious stages. Judge Wilhelm or "B," Kierkegaard's ethicist, concisely sums up the primary characteristics of both the aesthetic and the ethical stages of existence from his point of view in *Either/Or II*:

In choosing itself, the personality chooses itself ethically and absolutely excludes the esthetic; but since he nevertheless chooses himself and does not become another being by choosing himself but becomes himself, all the esthetic returns in its relativity . . . But what does it mean to live esthetically, and what does it mean to live ethically? What is the esthetic in a person, and what is the ethical? To that I would respond: the esthetic in a person is that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is; the ethical is that by which he becomes what he becomes. The person who lives in and by and from and for the esthetic that is in him, that person lives esthetically. (1987, pp. 177–8)

The key to this passage rests in the phrase, "the esthetic in a person is that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is." By the words "immediate" or "immediacy," "B" means the material world as we experience it now: our sense impressions, feelings, moods, desires. The aesthetic personality exists within immediate sensual impressions and phenomenological states. Being unselfconscious, the aesthetic personality exists within the immediacy of mood and sense impression *by default*. In short, the aesthetic personality is a bodily personality.

Furthermore, by defining the ethical stage of existence in terms of choice, Judge Wilhelm emphasizes that those in the aesthetic stage of existence refuse to choose. Aesthetic personalities have not chosen themselves in any meaningful sense, so they remain trapped in static *being* at the expense of *becoming*. The aesthetic self undergoes continual but directionless change, undoing any progress in one direction for new beginnings. So despite continual change, the aesthetic sphere is one of static being and the ethical one of becoming, the sphere in which the self "becomes what it becomes" because change follows a chosen trajectory. The aesthetic personality, though it can be reflective, has not yet consciously become a self. Judge Wilhelm chides "A" for living "only in the moment" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 179) because he

believes the immediate-aesthetic self is the self that it is moment by moment, without any significant sense of personal history or continuity between past and future selves.

Kierkegaard's identification of stasis with aesthetic personalities and growth with ethical personalities has significant ramifications for our understanding of creation anxiety narratives. The God of classical thought in both its Greek and Christian incarnations is a fixed being, the spiritual center of the universe. Any subordinate creature who attempts to become a creator attempts to become like this fixed, static being, choosing stasis over growth, a fixed nature over ethical becoming, and quite naturally, for God has no further need to grow. The implications of this division between being and becoming bear upon every facet of creation anxiety. To understand the phenomenology of aesthetic, ethical, and visionary personalities is to understand the experience of creation anxiety and the point of view from which these subordinate creators are criticized.

Kierkegaard believes there are at least two ways to reduce oneself to static being, through varieties of desire or through varieties of reflective thought, both of which are characteristic of the aesthetic sphere of existence. The author of *Either/Or I*, "A," divides the aesthetic stage into two poles, the immediate and the reflective, then further subdivides the pole of the immediate aesthetic into three distinct stages, describing them in "The Immediate Erotic Stages" as dreaming, seeking, and desiring desire (Kierkegaard, 1987, pp. 80–1). In the first stage of the immediate aesthetic, "dreaming" desire, the aesthetic self does not perceive a distinction between itself and the object of its desire:

The inconsistency in this stage seems to be suggested by this contradiction: the desire is so vague, the object so little separated from it, that what is desired rests androgynously in the desire, just as in plant life the male and female are in one blossom. The desire and the desired are joined in this unity, that they both are *neutrius generis* [of neuter gender]. (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 77)

In the second stage of the immediate aesthetic, "seeking" desire, desire separates from its object: "Desire awakens, and just as we always realize that we have dreamed only in the moment we awaken, so also here—the dream is over. The awakening in which desire awakens, this jolt, separates desire and its object, gives desire an object" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 79). Desire's separation from its object makes possible a differentiated self. Although the objects of "seeking desire" may be multiple, diffuse, and separated from the

desiring one, this self remains both unknown to itself and unchosen by itself. Desire, having become vaguely aware of itself by separation from its object, remains unaware of itself and its object in any specificity. The self is best understood as implied without being consciously grasped.

"A" speculates in the fashion of a Hegelian dialectic that the third stage, "desiring desire," both "intensively and extensively" consists of the "immediate unity of the two previous stages" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 85). In this stage, "desire has its absolute object; it desires the particular absolutely" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 85). Desiring desire is desire separated from its object, a desire that knows itself as desire and a desire that knows its own particular object. Significantly, "A" associates desiring desire with *Don Giovanni*, whose title character embodies "the elemental originality of the sensuous" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 85). According to "A," the Don "stands in essential relation to the Middle Ages," because the Middle Ages reflected upon the "discord between flesh and spirit that Christianity brought into the world" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 88). While a "discord between flesh and spirit" clearly predates Christianity, the more important observation is that desire progresses from the androgynous to the sexual, so that desiring desire finds itself embodied in seducers. As a result, both Blake's and Kierkegaard's extensive critique of generation begins with an examination of the state of innocence from which the sexual and generative springs. Don Juan himself represents "the incarnation of the flesh" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 88). A question arises at this point: Is Don Juan a human being or simply an allegorical character representing sensuality? Kierkegaard did suggest a certain unreality to his most extreme figures in his appendix to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, but for most of his characters, Kierkegaard's answer could be "both."

Unreflective and centered in desire, the immediate erotic stages are the spheres of unfreedom, because the immediate aesthetic personality is led by desire rather than leading it. No autonomous self pursues a consciously chosen desire. Desire leads so completely that this self represents the embodiment of desire. This state changes in the transition to the reflective pole of the aesthetic, but while the immediate-aesthetic personality advances by attaining reflective thought, Kierkegaard is deeply ambivalent about such an advance. Even within his signed authorship, he makes reference to the "coils and seductive uncertainty of reflection" (Kierkegaard, 1962, p. 34), yet also describes reflection as a necessary precondition to becoming a Christian: "This, in 'Christendom,' is *Christianly* the movement of reflection; one does not reflect oneself into Christianity but reflects oneself out of something else and becomes more and more simple, a Christian"

(Kierkegaard, 1998, p. 7). Kierkegaard hopes that the complex process of reflection provided by his authorship will lead his readers out of reflection, into simplicity, and into Christianity.

The image of “seductive coils” effectively describes the danger inherent in reflection: one may become trapped in infinite reflection, reflection without decision. Immediacy, therefore, neither reflects nor decides, while the aesthetic-reflective individual thinks and considers but still does not decide. Kierkegaard’s works tend to associate both German Romanticism and Hegelian speculative philosophy with the reflective pole of the aesthetic. In the case of speculative philosophy, decision is postponed by never-ending speculation, by the endless consideration of possibility. Reflection also entertains infinite possibility in the service of art, which in turn serves immediacy. In this view, art reproduces an immediate, emotional-visceral effect, as per Wordsworth’s preface and many others who thought the same way. Art (e.g., the creative production of German Romanticism, hence “A’s” reference to the Middle Ages above) delays decision by a continual, but indecisive, consideration of possibilities.

However “A” actually lived—assuming a sole author for *Either/Or I*, which we cannot, as there are no safe assumptions about the authorship of *Either/Or I*—he was certainly able to conceive of a reflectively aesthetic life, at least able to think outside the moment. His consideration of different possibilities for Don Juan in “The Immediate Erotic Stages” illustrates differences between the immediate and reflective poles of the aesthetic sphere:

The musical [immediate] Don Juan enjoys the satisfaction; the reflective Don Juan enjoys the deception, enjoys the craftiness. The immediate pleasure is past, and reflection on the enjoyment is enjoyed more. Therefore, Byron’s *Don Juan* must be regarded as a failure because it stretches out epically. The immediate Don Juan must seduce 1,003; the reflective Don Juan needs to seduce only one, and how he does it is what occupies us. The reflective Don Juan’s seduction is a tour de force in which every particular little episode has its special significance; the musical Don Juan’s seduction is a turn of the hand, a matter of a moment, more quickly done than said. (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 108)

“A’s” critique of Byron’s *Don Juan* focuses upon the length and episodic nature of his work. In “A’s” opinion, Byron’s Don Juan is musical rather than reflective, so “every particular little episode” lacks special significance—yet we have so many particular little episodes that *Don Juan* approaches epic proportions. While the reader is entertained by Byron’s

commentary throughout *Don Juan* on romantic love, the orient, war, shipwreck, human nature, Greece, Russia, poetry, and England, the poem works as entertainment only because the *same* character moves through all these.

There is no natural trajectory for Byron's story to follow because his Don Juan has no internal trajectory beyond the moment. To Byron's credit, the poem self-mockingly and self-reflectively alludes to this quality and then presses on, saying in Canto XII of the XVI Byron completed before his death, after nearly four-hundred pages in the Modern Library edition:

But now I will begin my poem. 'Tis
 Perhaps a little strange, if not quite new,
 That from the first of Cantos up to this
 I've not begun what we have to go through.
 The first twelve books are merely flourishes,
 Preludios, trying just a string or two
 Upon my lyre, or making the pegs sure;
 And when so, you shall have the overture. (XII. liv)

Consistent with a truly aesthetic work, the poem goes on and on and on and then begins again. "Married or in Hell" may be the judgment of finite common sense upon a non-reflective character, but not the internal trajectory of Byron's Don Juan, for he has no reflectively interior life to which direction can be given.

"More quickly done than said" negates the linguistic for the active. In contrast, the reflective Don Juan figure in "The Seducer's Diary" (similarly named Johannes) anticipates and *articulates* every move of his seduction.² "A" tells his readers that "Language has its element in time; all other media have space as their element. Only music also occurs in time. But its occurrence in time is in turn a negation of the feelings dependent upon the senses. . . Music does not exist except in the moment it is performed" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 68). Language, having a unique relationship to time—introducing the self to time, in fact—also introduces the self to *possibility*, to the conception of past, present, and future selves, and by extension to consideration of the possibility of different future selves. Selves remaining in possibility are aesthetic selves, but once a possibility is chosen, the leap into the ethical has been made. Until then the self is potential, not actual; possible, but not chosen. Only decision—and with decision the transition to the ethical stage—makes selfhood actual. What makes this leap possible is the anxiety of innocence that Haufniensis dissects in *The Concept of Anxiety*.

Kierkegaard, Sin, and Innocence

Both Blake and Kierkegaard assume a beginning in innocence followed by a lapse into a fall. Haufniensis in *The Concept of Anxiety* attempts to demonstrate that anxiety is the middle term between innocence and the fall, or sin, while Blake's creation myth suggests that a fall is inherent in the act of creation itself, the fundamental assumption underlying all narratives of creation anxiety. Consequently, more detail about Kierkegaardian anxiety will prove beneficial prior to linking the progress from innocence to fall to creation in Blake. Haufniensis establishes Adam and Eve as his paradigm for the leap from innocence to sin, so that what is true of Adam and Eve is also true of everyone else, since "man is *individuum* and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race, and in such a way that the whole race participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 27). This beginning establishes a shared symbolic context with Blake's own treatment of sin and innocence, since Blake's cover illustration for the combined *Songs* depicts Adam and Eve cast from the Garden, flames from the angel's sword filling the background.

While Haufniensis does not distinguish between Adam and Eve and any other human being in nature or *quality*, he does assert *quantitative* differences between the first couple and the rest of the human race. He dismisses the Hegelian-evolutionary idea that quantitative developments alone can produce a qualitative change. The first sin, Haufniensis argues, "constitutes the nature of the quality" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 30). Qualitatively, the first sin is like all other sins. No matter how many other sins follow, sin's fundamental quality remains the same. Sin came into the world solely and only by a sin, and a sin qualitatively the same as all others. Furthermore, sin came into the world suddenly, by a leap: it appeared literally out of nowhere. The image of the leap from states of innocence to sin, or from the aesthetic to the ethical, requires Kierkegaard's readers to understand that a transition between states is the result of an *act* proceeding from a *decision*. But Haufniensis is concerned with accounting for sin in Adam specifically, so he changes this formulation to, "by the first sin, sinfulness came into Adam" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 33), reducing hereditary sin to "only that first sin" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 33). All subsequent sins have the same quality: sin exists in all people only by their own first sin. Physical descent by itself is "incapable of bringing forth an individual," and only an individual can sin (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 34). Haufniensis's main problem is answering the question, "Why do the innocent sin?" He finds his answer in the "ignorance of innocence."

Innocence is ignorance according to Haufniensis's reading of the Genesis account. Just as innocence never knows itself as innocence until innocence is lost, ignorance does not know itself as ignorance until knowledge is gained. Haufniensis's association of innocence with ignorance may make quantitative differences in human sinfulness from Adam's time to ours significant as knowledge continually accumulates, but in his thinking, quantitative differences by themselves cannot produce qualitative change, and the leap out of innocence into guilt is a qualitative change. The problem remains to resolve the contradiction of sinfulness coming from sin, which has now become a problem of explaining how one makes the leap from a state of innocence into a state of guilt. His solution to the problem of sin's origin is the concept of anxiety. Again, to Haufniensis, anxiety is a product of the structure of the self as a synthesis: "Man is a synthesis of the psychical [soul or mind]³ and the physical [body]; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 43). Because human beings exist as a synthesis of body and soul united by spirit, we are capable of experiencing anxiety, an anxiety that proceeds from innocent spirit's state of dreaming.

In Haufniensis's hands, however, the relationship among the physical, psychical, and pneumatic is not static but changing. In a state of *being*, body, mind, and spirit continually relate the same way, while in the process of *becoming*, these interrelationships change. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, a person in the aesthetic stage of existence cannot occupy a state of becoming because spirit maintains a static relationship to mind and body. Haufniensis consistently defines states of the self in terms of differently configured interrelationships among these constituent parts. This concept is crucial, so he needs to be quoted at some length here:

In innocence, man is not qualified as spirit but is psychically [phenomenologically] qualified in immediate unity with his natural condition. The spirit in man is dreaming . . . In this state there is peace and repose, but there is simultaneously something else that is not contention and strife, for there is indeed nothing against which to strive [there cannot be because of innocence's "immediate unity with his natural condition"]. What then is it [this something else]? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that it is at the same time anxiety. Dreamily the spirit projects its own actuality, but this actuality is nothing, and innocence always sees this nothing outside itself.

Anxiety is a qualification of dreaming spirit, and as such it has its place in psychology. Awake, the difference between myself and my other is

posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it is an intimated nothing. (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 41–2, my brackets)

Parallels in language between “A’s” description of “dreaming desire” (including his association of this state with anxiety) and Haufniensis’s account above justify identifying innocence with the immediate pole of the aesthetic, especially dreaming desire,⁴ all the more since Haufniensis encourages his readers to “consult *Either/Or*” just a little later within this context (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 43n).

Recall that in the state of dreaming desire, desire knows no separation from its object, so it does not consciously understand itself as desire. This state of dreaming desire provokes a double movement: “Desire possesses what will become the object of its desire but possesses it without having desired it so does not possess it” (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 76). As a result, “when desire has not awakened, that which is desired fascinates and captivates—indeed, almost causes anxiety” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 76). Applying this movement to the passage from *The Concept of Anxiety* quoted above, what spirit dreamily and vaguely desires is knowledge of itself, a knowledge that it seeks outside itself since it does not perceive a difference between the self and its environment. Since spirit is looking outside itself for itself, it finds nothing. This nothingness “begets anxiety” in the form of a vague feeling of lack.

Haufniensis goes on to affirm that anxiety functions as a tension between spirit and the sensuous. The more spirit, the more anxiety; the less spirit, the less anxiety. Animals do not experience anxiety, and human beings in their most animal-like states experience it the least. This observation underlies his formal definition of anxiety: “Anxiety is a *sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy*” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 42). Anxiety can be “a pleasing anxiety, a pleasing anxiousness . . . a strange anxiety, a bashful anxiety, etc.” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 42). Anxiety can be found in the soul-wrenching terror of the prospect of significant loss or in the moments of anticipation before we reach the top of a rollercoaster, in the fear of getting caught, or in the fear experienced when watching a good horror movie. In all instances, anxiety is a simultaneous attraction (with a component of repulsion) and repulsion (with a component of attraction). While spirit dreams, anxiety’s simultaneous attraction and repulsion can only be directed toward the self’s environment, which it identifies with itself (attraction) but vaguely suspects is not itself (repulsion). Anxiety in innocence is neither guilt nor, necessarily, a terrible burden; in the most perceptive of children, it manifests itself as “a seeking for the adventurous, the monstrous, and the enigmatic” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 42).⁵

Anxiety describes spirit's mood as it actively constitutes the self, because spirit constantly disturbs the body/mind relation even while making it possible. Haufniensis explains why spirit experiences anxiety in a state of innocence: "does spirit relate itself [as spirit] to itself [as mind and body] and to its conditionality? It relates itself as anxiety. Do away with itself, the spirit cannot; lay hold of itself, it cannot, as long as it has itself outside itself" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 44). Again, a dual movement, a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy, characterizes innocence. Since innocence is ignorance, "the whole actuality of knowledge projects itself in anxiety as the enormous nothing of ignorance" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 44). Haufniensis establishes the prohibition to eat from the fruit of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil* as context for his discussion of innocence as ignorance. How could Adam possibly understand this command? Without knowledge of good and evil, he cannot understand the purpose or effects of that knowledge or, by extension, the point of the prohibition.

What Adam does have, implicit in the command, is freedom. Freedom, unlike innocence, is something we have once we think we have it, so *to be able* to do something that one is not doing—this possibility—is uniquely "freedom's possibility" (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 44). Moreover, freedom's possibility is now associated with the forbidden fruit. Adam can understand being able to eat the fruit—eating is a daily activity—so the possibility of eating a forbidden fruit promising knowledge is a particularly significant instance of "to be able." Adam and Eve cannot (of course) distinguish between good and evil, nor can they understand the threat of punishment: the day you eat the fruit you shall surely die. Haufniensis emphasizes that Adam and Eve do not understand this threat because they do not understand death. This deterrent (and it is here that the terror associated with anxiety begins), being an unknown, becomes another facet of Adam and Eve's anxiety.

An unknown self anxiously confronts unknown possibility in the form of the forbidden fruit, a fruit promising knowledge, thus making its appeal seemingly irresistible. Despite this attraction, there is still the prohibition, which the innocent self knows just as vaguely that it should follow. Thus the command against eating the fruit, in its promise of *knowledge* through a *forbidden* activity, motivates Adam and Eve to eat the fruit by provoking further anxiety about the self's ignorance of itself. The fruit itself has become an external, finite, and concrete focal point for anxiety's simultaneous attraction and repulsion, the attraction within the repulsion and repulsion within the attraction. At this point the innocent person has been brought all the way up to the moment of the fall: "In this way, innocence is brought to its uttermost. In anxiety it is related to the forbidden and to punishment.

Innocence is not guilty, yet there is anxiety as though it were lost. Further than this, psychology cannot go" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 45). Psychology has reached its limit because its examination has reached the moment of decision, the domain of spirit.

Haufniensis concludes his survey of the anxiety of innocence with a brief account of Genesis in the terms he has just set out, but he cannot account for the snake. Haufniensis acknowledges his difficulty with the serpent as an external source of temptation in the Genesis account: "I freely admit my inability to connect any definite thought with the subject" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 48). The serpent could conceivably serve as a source of objective anxiety for Adam and Eve, modeling fallen psychology for them, but should Haufniensis take his argument about the origin of sin in this direction, he would then have to turn away from a discussion of human psychology to ludicrous speculations about angelic or serpentine psychology. Instead, Haufniensis focuses upon human psychology, upon an internal movement, so he cannot conceive of any proper place for an external source of temptation for Adam and Eve. However, Haufniensis did say that in the case of the command against eating the fruit, "the speaker is language, and also that it is Adam himself who speaks" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 47). Since the snake relies exclusively upon language to seduce Eve, the account of the fall may be an account of Adam's seduction of Eve or of Eve's self-seduction: in the latter case, the snake is an embodiment of Eve's internal dialog. Articulation itself, as a form of knowledge, implies the serpentine, the fallen, a movement toward *experience*.

Robert Essick's consideration of Blake and language in *William Blake and the Language of Adam* (1989) closely parallels Haufniensis's reasoning about the snake and language. In his discussion of the "key role" that language plays "in the temptation and fall" (1989, p. 14), Essick suggests that "the notion that the birth of human language is also its fall is well within the conceptual parameters of Blake's art in 1810" (1989, p. 14), tracing a thematic trajectory from *The [First] Book of Urizen* through *Jerusalem*. Even more strikingly, Essick argues that in *The [First] Book of Urizen* and its narration of the creation that is a fall, "where the speaking 'I' posits itself as the source of language, it is equally true that language creates that 'I' by itself seven times through Urizen" (1989, p. 151). Blake's idea of "the poet as a channel through which language speaks" anticipates much twentieth-century thought in Essick's opinion (1989, p. 189), especially as influenced by Martin Heidegger. Given Heidegger's now widely recognized though barely-acknowledged dependence upon *The Concept of Anxiety*, Essick's observation also serves as a link between Blake and Kierkegaard as well as between

Blake and twentieth-century thought.⁶ However, Haufniensis associates “language itself speaking” with the snake in the garden, a very negative association absent in Heidegger—which in Kierkegaard’s case would be an equivalent to acts of reflection carried out only for their own sake. In Blake, language itself speaking also carries negative connotations, which will become apparent in my ensuing discussion of Blake’s innocence.

Blake’s Innocence and the Immediate Erotic Stages

The various developmental stages Blake commentators have long detected in Blake’s work always begin in innocence, innocence being the stage preceding generation, so also preceding creation anxiety. Commentators often define these stages as a progression from innocence to experience to a higher or organized innocence, but in Blake’s mythology, the stage after experience is perhaps best understood as the attainment of a visionary consciousness.⁷ The “Introduction” to *Innocence* suggests that the Piper undergoes a developmental process, one we can now understand as differentiations within innocence itself that are not usually registered in readings of Blake.⁸ All movement in the “Introduction” is a movement within innocence, specifically between two of the three immediate erotic stages ending with a transition to the reflective pole of the aesthetic. In the “Introduction,” readers meet a Piper who, like all those in the immediate erotic stages, is a musical figure: “Piping down the valleys wild / piping songs of pleasant glee” (Erdman, 1982, p. 7).⁹ Voiceless and one with his immediate environment, the Piper at this point illustrates dreaming desire.¹⁰ He stands in contrast to the Bard of the “Introduction” to the *Songs of Experience*, who is instead a reflective, ethico-religious, and linguistic figure.

Innocent figures identify with their immediate environments throughout the *Songs of Innocence*. The child of “The Lamb” identifies himself with the lamb through Christ, so that his religious consciousness supports an immediate identification of self with environment. Normally, “The Lamb’s” counterpart in experience is taken to be “The Tyger,” because both poems ask questions about the lamb’s and tyger’s respective Creator(s), but at the specific point of identification with one’s external environment, the experience counterpart to “The Lamb” is “The Fly.” Despite the diversity of readings inflicted upon “The Fly,” its first point is that identifying with one’s environment in experience is identifying with indifference and mortality. The effects of experience subjectivities upon their environment motivate a series of negative identifications: I carelessly killed the fly, so like the fly, life will carelessly brush me away, and life is as indifferent to that fact as I am to

the death of the fly. The contrast between innocence and experience on this point is between Christ's care for the lamb and the child against the Christless indifference of experience.

The first two lines of the "Introduction" present the musical state of dreaming desire; the next two lines describe a child upon a cloud. As a child, this figure represents innocence; as a child upon a cloud, he represents disembodied innocence, the aesthetic impulse itself separated from its home in the Piper's mind, like a Greek muse. This impulse is the first speaking voice in the narrative. Of course the Piper himself is the poem's narrator, the voice speaking and then writing the poem, making the poem itself a reflective, retrospective product. In the moment narrated, the child's is the only speaking voice, in this case the voice of seeking desire, as the movement of the poem is from one object of desire to the next: from a song piped about a lamb, to a song sung, to a song written. The child in the cloud, like many children on earth, desires only the repetition of the laughing pleasure evoked by the Piper's piping, but repetition of the same pleasure demands novelty, so the form of the Piper's song must change with each request.

With each progression in the Piper's song, the child's response becomes more and more intense—the child in the cloud, being a true aesthete, seeks to control immediacy for an emotional effect. The child laughs, then weeps, then weeps with joy. The second stage of erotic desire, seeking desire, sees a differentiation of the self from its object of desire, illustrated in the poem by the Piper being given a subject when he is asked to pipe a "song about a lamb" (Erdman, 1982, p. 7). This request might resemble the final stage of erotic desire, desiring desire, in which desire has found its particular object, but the Piper of the frontispiece to *Innocence* is surrounded by lambs and given a request for a song about *a* lamb, not any particular one. Lambs have no individual existence to either the Piper or the child but exist only as a group. As in seeking desire, desire is outwardly oriented but diffuse, not focused upon any particular object. Even if we more precisely define the poem itself as the object of desire, the request is for *a* poem. The child only wants the replication of an effect with novelty. Not knowing what precisely will produce the effect is part of the effect itself and identifies the request with seeking desire.

In the poem's transitional middle stanza (the third of five), the Piper ceases to be a musical character, taking on language: "Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe / sing thy songs of happy cheer" (Erdman, 1982, p. 7). By doing so, the Piper enters the reflective pole of the aesthetic stage. Artistic expression still focuses, initially, upon immediacy—"sing thy songs of happy cheer"—but by this point the next step is not hard to anticipate: "Piper sit

thee down and write / In a book that all may read—" (Erdman, 1982, p. 7). The step from speech to writing is a short one for the reflective aesthete. The curious dash at the end of "read" implies that the child's voice is cut off at the very moment the Piper conceives of his art in fixed form. A disembodied figure no longer represents the reflective-aesthetic impulse, as it no longer acts as an external agent upon the poet. In Blake's representation of the reflective aesthetic, the aesthetic impulse is now internalized and controlled. While an external agent, the child appears in the form of one of the Greek muses.¹¹ Thinking along similar lines, Haufeniensus, speaking in "world historical" terms (Climacus mockingly refers to "world historical" as a Hegelian designation for western and especially German philosophy), associates Greek culture and thought with the aesthetic stage, Jewish with the ethical, and Christian with the religious.

Internalization and control, however, introduce a note of corruption: "And I pluck'd a hollow reed . . . / And I stain'd the water clear" (Erdman, 1982, p. 7). The Piper's plucking of the reed and staining of the water refer to Blake's own watercolors, reinforcing the readers' growing understanding that the poem's own creation is the poem's subject. Self-referentiality is as much a characteristic of Blake's reflective aesthetic as it is a characteristic of Kierkegaard's German Romantic models. Furthermore, the reflective aesthete in Blake, as in Kierkegaard's "The Seducer's Diary," must destroy and corrupt to create. The reed is plucked and broken, perhaps trimmed at the edge, and the waters stained, all actions necessary for the Piper's songs to be reproduced in easily disseminated, fixed form. The Piper is no longer a Piper but a poet; no longer happy and piping or singing but sedate, focused, intent, suppressing his own immediate pleasure for the future pleasure of others, controlling and directing immediacy in himself so that future readers can experience the pleasures of immediacy in his poems.

The "Introduction" to *Innocence* does not represent a transition from seeking to desiring desire. The protagonists of *The Book of Thel* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* illustrate desiring desire, the first running from desiring desire, the next embracing it. Brian Wilkie's *Blake's Thel and Oothoon* (1990) illuminates several pitfalls that critics succumb to when comparing these two figures, such as simplistic identifications of Thel with innocence and Oothoon with experience, a tendency to compare them then dismiss one or both, or an inclination to raise questions related to the status of these works in the Blake canon (are they part of the Albion-Zoas myth or separate from it?). Anca Munteanu's "Visionary and Artistic Transformations in Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*" (2006)

confirms that a critical emphasis upon judging or exonerating Oothoon has not changed since Wilkie's evaluation 16 years earlier.

In Thel's case, critical discussions tend to gravitate toward treating Thel as a human woman facing the prospect of sexual initiation, as an allegorical figure representing desire, or in deconstructive readings such as James E. Swearingen's "Will and Desire in Blake's *Thel*" (1989–90), neither. Marjorie Levinson's "'The Book of Thel' by William Blake" (1980) represents perhaps the best kind of allegorical reading in which Thel is not a woman but desire itself, so that the text narrates the progression of desire. Desire, at the end, faces death in the form of its satisfaction and proper use in the world of adult sexuality, the world of generation, a prospect from which desire flees in order to maintain its existence. Michael Ferber's "In Defense of Clods" (2002), his response to Levinson, effectively dismisses her etymological identifications of the Blake name "Thel" with any Greek word for "desire," more accurately associating "Thel" with a Greek root "meaning 'female' and 'gentle'" (p. 61).

Levinson's argument is not dependent upon etymology despite her unfortunate resort to it. Her reading is well supported by the text of *Thel*, whose protagonist worries that she will live "without a use" (Erdman, 1982, p. 5), a use clearly identified as sexual by the voice of the grave: "Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy! / Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?" (Erdman, 1982, p. 6). A string of associations identifying "Thel" with "female" and "desire" fits well with "A's" description of aesthetic subjectivities and Haufniensis's notion that "woman is more sensuous than man," but readers are not limited to allegorical or literal readings or neither. Our earlier discussion of Blake's apocalyptic idealism suggests that we should choose both allegorical and literal readings. Choosing both permits the benefits of allegorical readings without restricting ourselves to them, opening up readings to the multifaceted social ramifications that both Kierkegaard's and Blake's texts engage, extending the range of the allegory.

These critical responses to Thel and Oothoon illustrate the utility of applying Kierkegaard's discussion of the aesthetic to Blake's innocence. Kierkegaard's aesthetic corresponds to Blake's innocence with sufficient complexity to uncover differentiations within Blake's innocence that are not evident otherwise. Thel and Oothoon can both be seen as innocent subjectivities without being identified with one another given the existence of stages within innocence. Furthermore, understanding these characters does not require judging between them, because the subjectivities that Blake presents are valuable in their own right. As aesthetic figures, their

plight is commentary on the environment that shaped them. Aers's argument that Blake's concept of the Female Will is designed to cast out "the vestiges of optimistic delusions about consciousness free from all the effects of the system against which they are struggling" is more to the point (1977, p. 505). Critical judgments or exonerations of either of these aesthetic-innocent characters can be legitimate acts of self-definition for the critic but otherwise obscure the social dimensions of Blake's critique.

Oothoon of the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, unlike Thel, deliberately embraces desiring desire, but she resembles Thel in that she experiences anxiety: "I trembled in my virgin fears / And I hid in Leutha's vale" (Erdman, 1982, p. 45). Oothoon, however, responds to anxiety through choice, grasping the finite in the form of a chosen lover, Theotormon. *Vision's* narrative begins with Oothoon in the stage of seeking desire. Her desire, symbolized by the flowers around her, is diffused throughout her immediate environment. Therefore, her decision to pick one flower and press it to her breast represents a self-defining moment of choice, specifically her choice of Theotormon. Like prelapsarian Adam and Eve, she is naked and unashamed, particularly of her love for Theotormon. Aware of the symbolic significance of choosing a single flower to pluck and hold against her breast, when she does so she turns her "face to where [her] whole soul seeks" (Erdman, 1982, p. 46)—Theotormon, her own single plucked flower. Seeking desire has fully transformed into desiring desire; Oothoon differentiates herself from the object of her desire, an object now isolated, distinct, and identified.

Oothoon's problem is not with herself but with choosing an excessively passive male, then being raped by an excessively aggressive one before she could reach her chosen partner. Her desire remains faithful to Theotormon regardless of his or Bromion's faults, and that is the source of her tragedy. The experience range of male responses to innocent, uninhibited female desire is bounded by excessive passivity on one end and excessive aggression on the other. In contrast, some feminist criticism interprets Oothoon's plight as Blake's critique of women. Susan Fox, for example, argued in 1977 that Oothoon reinforces negative stereotypes of women by demonstrating yet again how "feminine will is not powerful enough to free her from the impositions of male authority" (p. 512), leaving Blake's women "trapped in a reality which recognizes no female power but evil female power" (p. 512). Fox is correct in her last statement, but Blake critiques the reality in which the female finds herself at this point, not the female herself. The feminine in Blake is certainly, in Fox's words, "a comment on the society. . . which he addressed" (1977, p. 519), but a deliberate rather than an accidental one.

Thel, however, is another matter. The first two lines of "Thel's Motto" explain the nature of Thel's aesthetic consciousness. Her bodily and external environment determines the nature of her subjectivity and the limitations of its knowledge. Ask the Mole what is in the pit, not the Eagle. This assumption finds expression throughout Blake's work. *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* asks, "have not the mouse & frog / Eyes and ears and sense of touch? yet are their habitations. / And their pursuits, as different as their forms and as their joys" (Erdman, 1982, p. 47). Similarly, in "The Clod and the Pebble," Clodish subjectivity, consistent with the Clod's physical nature, is pliant and yielding, while Pebblish subjectivity is hard and unyielding. Both determine the nature of their reactions to their respective and very different external environments, environments that have quite literally shaped them. Such a physically and externally determined personality fits Kierkegaard's description of the aesthetic-innocent personality completely, a match reinforced by Thel's reference to "the voice / Of him that walketh in the garden in the evening time," locating her in a prelapsarian, Edenic environment (Erdman, 1982, p. 3).¹²

Thel's attempts at self-definition proceed from an already externally oriented self. She compares herself to a "watry bow," "parting cloud," "reflection in a glass," "shadows in the water," "dreams of infants," "a smile upon an infants face," "doves voice," "transient day," and "music in the air" (Erdman, 1982, p. 3), excluding few elements of her immediate environment as points of identification. These identifications in fact motivate Thel to seek answers to her questions through interviews. Being an externally oriented self, she asks questions of the physically and environmentally determined personalities surrounding her. These questions are literary representations of the nothingness of anxiety, of the innocence that is ignorance. Since the answers Thel receives are predetermined by the nature of the entity asked, one might assume that choosing whom to interview would be a conscious, self-defining activity. For Thel it is not. In her external search for self-definition, she begins with the first personality she meets—the "Lilly of the valley"—and is subsequently led from one to the next. The "Lilly of the valley" directs Thel to the cloud, the cloud to the worm, the worm to the clod of clay, the clod of clay to the grave. Thel's clod of clay, like the clod of "The Clod and the Pebble," affirms that "we live not for ourselves" (Erdman, 1982, p. 5).

Thel, like Oothoon, suffers from the anxiety of innocence and seeks to grasp finitude to quell the sense of vertigo that attends possibility for those without a sense of conscious self-definition. Her questions simply interrogate the different forms of finitude available to her. Thel progresses, however, and in her progression finds that she is not the Lilly, the cloud, the

worm, nor the clod of clay. This differentiation pushes her to the very boundary of desiring desire; the apophatic progression of Thel's desire reveals the inadequacies of seeking desire as Thel's desire pursues an increasingly specific object. In the process, a process of which she is still unaware, Thel begins to differentiate herself from her environment, becoming increasingly reflective. This progression fits Haufniensis's expectations, since in the anxiety of innocence, innocent ones seek self-definition externally to find themselves confronted with nothingness.

Thel's confrontation with nothingness reaches its apex in the voice of the grave, a voice closely replicating Thel's own point of view—as we should expect, since Thel is concerned with death. However, Thel expresses her concern externally while the grave redirects Thel's attention to herself in very physical, sensory terms: "Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction? / Or the glistening Eye to the poison of a smile!" (Erdman, 1982, p. 6). The grave's questions return Thel to herself for her self-definition, for her answers. The grave doesn't answer Thel's questions, but through questions leads her to question herself. Thel, being visually oriented, pays significantly more attention to her vision than to her other senses, but the grave refers to all senses in its response to Thel, directing Thel to move toward self-awareness by becoming consciously aware of her sense perception. Thel, until this point, could not speak of "her sight," for example, as something separate from herself. She simply sees. Most importantly, while all previous respondents gave Thel their own very individual answers, the grave's questions not only confront Thel with the possibility of desiring desire but push her through the reflective process to the very boundary of experience. The progression of desire, therefore, consists in desire becoming aware of itself as desire, or perhaps simply becoming aware of *itself*. Before meeting the grave, Thel had been confronted with "lamb" subjectivities, which like "The Lamb" in the *Songs of Innocence*, give simple answers to simple questions. Now she is confronted with "The Tyger" and its series of questions without answers, all of which direct her away from the external to the internal.

A brief excursion into "The Tyger" can emphasize one important difference between innocence and experience subjectivities. The poem visualizes the tyger's "fearful symmetry" in the first stanza and sees the fire of its eyes in the second, but the tyger's creation does not begin until the third stanza when the "immortal hand" of its creator twists the sinews of the tyger's heart, which begins to beat by the end of that stanza. The fourth stanza continues the creative process as the creator heats the tyger's brain in a furnace then beats it into shape upon an anvil. The suffering implied by

this image accounts, perhaps, for the tyger's ferocity. The point here is that the tyger of experience is created *from the inside out*, while Thel in her innocence seeks to define herself *from the outside in*. The grave begins to break Thel's outside-in existence by forcing Thel to pay conscious attention to her sense perceptions rather than simply accept them as a given: why can't the ear be closed to its own destruction? It cannot because Thel is an aesthetic-immediate personality, an immediacy the grave's questions would annul through the development of self-consciousness.

Most importantly, the grave's questions imply that the grave itself lies at the end of a long process beginning with experience and everything associated with it: sexuality, a young boy's desire (which means having to account for the desire of others rather than just one's own), and generation. In this brief moment, Thel perceives the decision that she must make in order to define herself and answer the question of her mortality. As anxiety overwhelms the virgin Thel, she runs back to the vales of Har, abandoning reflection for immediacy. Oothoon, in contrast, joyfully embraces this decision by choosing a partner. Perhaps Thel's introduction to so much so quickly accounts for the difference between her and Oothoon—Thel began in a state of dreaming desire and in the course of a few conversations found herself at the edge of experience. *Visions* introduces Oothoon at the moment of transition to desiring desire, but she never imagines the entire cycle of generation from birth to sexuality to the grave, at least not at the initial moment of decision. Once raped, Oothoon finds herself completely within the world of experience and the cycle of generation, a world and cycle akin to Kierkegaard's ethical stage of existence.

Kierkegaard's Ethical Stage and Blake's Experience

Kierkegaard's developmental psychology moves from the aesthetic through the ethical to the religious stages of existence, from a bodily consciousness to a soulish consciousness to a spiritual consciousness, from physical to spiritual creation. As a result, the ethical stage—a phenomenology oriented toward the soul, as the aesthetic stage is oriented toward the body—is only transitionally important. However, the ethical stage represents a vital transition because, with the leap into the ethical stage, the aesthetic individual attains a self. While Kierkegaard does not divide the ethical into two poles, as he does the aesthetic and the religious spheres, his presentation of the ethical does seem to fall into two parts: an initial period soon after the individual has passed into the ethical stage characterized by hope and

resolve, and a later period after the person has faced continual ethical failure characterized by guilt, which can lead to despair or to insanity or can provoke the transition to Religiousness A. These poles might be called the ethical oriented toward innocence, and the ethical oriented toward despair, or the innocent and the despairing poles of the ethical stage.

The same passage used to introduce the aesthetic stage of existence also serves as an effective introduction to the early phase of the ethical stage:

In choosing itself, the personality chooses itself ethically and absolutely excludes the esthetic; but since he nevertheless chooses himself and does not become another being by choosing himself but becomes himself, all the esthetic returns in its relativity. . . . But what does it mean to live esthetically, and what does it mean to live ethically? What is the esthetic in a person, and what is the ethical? To that I would respond: the esthetic in a person is that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is; the ethical is that by which he becomes what he becomes. The person who lives in and by and from and for the esthetic that is in him, that person lives esthetically. (1987, pp. 177–8)

In the ethical sphere, the self has consciously chosen himself, and in this choice becomes himself—not in a final, static sense, but in a sense in which the self starts on the path of “becoming what he becomes.” The ethical self begins to walk down the path of becoming in a twofold process: first by taking hold of the self he has been (actual self), and then by directing that self to what he should be (ideal self). Every step forward is taken by an act of choice. With the leap into the ethical, the aesthetic is “absolutely excluded” yet “returns in its relativity”; the ethical has become the individual’s primary existential orientation. Of course, desire and the world of sense impression—the immediate—vanishes neither ontologically nor as an object of consciousness, remaining as a nexus of experience that impacts upon the self without defining it, only influencing the ethical individual to the extent that he chooses to allow desire or the immediate to define himself. Furthermore, as in the reflective pole of the aesthetic, the individual still conceives of possibilities through imagination, but now these possibilities are considered as potential objects of choice rather than valued as an endless stream of opportunities to defer decision.

Within the context of *Either/Or*, differences between the aesthetic and the ethical are defined in terms of heterosexual male desire, specifically in terms of how both aesthetic and ethical individuals relate to women. “A,” the aesthete, sees the immediate beauty of woman in her youth and

seduces her but does not marry her, because the long-term commitment inherent in marriage offends any sensibility focused upon the mood at the moment. “B,” the ethical individual, argues instead for “the esthetic validity of marriage” in a section carrying that title and, of course, rather than seducing either one woman or 1003, marries one woman and sees her beauty increasing with age. These differences are as banal and familiar as the differences between young people who see all dates as potential conquests and adults who are committed to their partners.

The self is neither a passive object of observation nor self-created out of nothing in the ethical stage.¹³ The self comes into *conscious* existence when chosen, so in that sense did not exist until it was chosen, yet since it is chosen, it must have already existed: “The choice here makes two dialectical movements simultaneously—that which is chosen does not exist and comes into existence through the choice—and that which is chosen exists; otherwise it was not a choice” (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 215). In the ethical stage, an ontologically yet unconsciously existing self is consciously and existentially chosen. Therefore, through decision, an ontologically pre-existent self is existentially brought into being.

How is this self created? “I myself as immediate personality am created from nothing” (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 215)—created by God *ex nihilo*, along with material nature—but also created existentially by social and historical forces:

Now he discovers that the self he chooses has a boundless multiplicity within itself inasmuch as it has a history, a history in which he acknowledges identity with himself. This history is of a different kind, for in this history he stands in relation to other individuals in the race [the human race, JR] and to the whole race, and this history contains painful things, and yet he is the person he is only through this history. (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 216)

History, like the self, is simultaneously pre-existent *and* chosen. The immediately aesthetic self is unaware of its history, the reflectively aesthetic self disregards its history even as it exists within it, while the ethical self acknowledges its history as a fundamental component of the self and takes responsibility for it. This facet of Kierkegaardian existential development keeps Kierkegaard from solipsism, absolute individualism, idealist essentialism, or strict anti-essentialism, and by doing so renders debates among these positions irrelevant. The self is both historically and culturally given and chosen in Kierkegaardian development. It is through responsibility and

volition, through choice, that the individual self comes into being, but even these choices are limited by the self's historical situatedness.

By acquiring a history, the individual acquires not only a self but also an identity in relationship to the entire human race and its history. The ethical self exists in relationship with others, not in isolation from others. The demonic individual, not the ethical individual, isolates himself from the human race, as we will see in chapter five. For this reason, "it takes courage to choose oneself" (Kierkegaard 1987, p. 216), for one is suddenly bound up with all of humanity. And the ethical self must choose fully her own and the race's history:

He can give up nothing of all this, not the most painful, not the hardest, and yet the expression for this struggle, for this acquiring, is—repentance. He repents himself back into himself, back into the family, back into the race, until he finds himself in God. Only on this condition can he choose himself. And this is the only condition he wants, for only in this way can he choose himself absolutely. (Kierkegaard 1987, p. 216)

The concentric circles of repentance in the ethical sphere expand outwardly, expansively, and retrogressively from the self, to the family, to the race, and then to God, but note its *outward* and *retrogressive* natures. The ethical self not only chooses the self that it has been and takes responsibility for it, but by taking responsibility for it accepts responsibility to conform the self to an ethical ideal:

The self the individual knows is simultaneously the actual self and the ideal self, which the individual has outside himself as the image in whose likeness he is to form himself, and which on the other hand he has within himself, since it is he himself. Only within himself does the individual have the objective toward which he is to strive, and yet he has this objective outside himself as he strives toward it. (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 259)

As mentioned above, the ethical self, not the aesthetic self, exists in a state of becoming. For this reason "B" can chide "A" that he "always remain[s] the same and never become[s] wiser" (1987, p. 13). Ethical becoming, in contrast, follows a well-defined trajectory, a trajectory determined by the individual's conception of her ideal self, a conception held inwardly but which the individual relates to as an outward goal toward which she strives.

How does the ethical individual discover her conception of the ideal self? Is it arbitrarily chosen? Kierkegaard's ethical is egalitarian but not diverse, for the ethical is the universal. The outwardly moving concentric circles of repentance move from "the family" to "the race" without any intermediary national or ethnic distinctions. It is tempting to place Kierkegaard within an Enlightenment tradition that simply mistakes European presuppositions for universal ones, but Climacus exhibits awareness of this fault in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, chiding "speculative thought" for over-representing German scholarship in its talk of the "world-historical" yet unable to meaningfully incorporate China into its system: "The method admits only one Chinese, but not a single German assistant professor is excluded" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 150n). The world of the speculative world-historical is a small world after all. The ethical does not define the universal through a scholarly ability to encompass all human existence within systematic thought, but by the self's outward trajectory toward God, who is the source of ethical requirements. The ethical considers itself actualized when

the individual himself is the universal . . . This is the secret that lies in the conscience; this is the secret the individual life has with itself—that simultaneously it is an individual life and also the universal. . . The person who views life ethically sees the universal, and the person who lives ethically expresses the universal in his life. (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 255–6)

The ethical self grows dialectically. It grows inwardly, toward the conscience, the individual, the actual, and outwardly to the universal, the ideal, toward God. Kierkegaard's debt to Kant's categorical imperative should be apparent here. He drew upon Kant and Hegel for his model of the ethical as he drew upon German Romanticism for his model for the aesthetic.¹⁴

These features of the ethical sphere foreground the maieutic function of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship, "maieutic" understood simultaneously in its Socratic and midwifery senses. In the ethical sphere, "through the individual's intercourse with himself the individual is made pregnant by himself and gives birth to himself" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 259). Ronald Green supports this point very clearly from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: "the medium of the poet is imagination, is *being* but not *becoming*, or at most becoming in a very much foreshortened perspective . . . Ethics does not have the medium of *being*, but the medium of *becoming*" (1985, p. 70, his emphasis). This language supports Bellinger's assertion that the Kierkegaardian self becomes an Other to itself and can therefore become a site of anxiety.¹⁵ With this overarching concern for the self, the weakness

and fissures of the ethical stage come into view. To both Kant and “B,” the fact of an ethical requirement presupposes the ability to carry it out. The ethical personality assumes that “ought implies can” (Green, 1992, p. 97). Haufniensis is perhaps the most explicit:

Ethics proposes to bring ideality into actuality. On the other hand, it is not the nature of its movement to raise actuality into ideality. Ethics points to ideality as a task and assumes that every man possesses the requisite conditions. Thus ethics develops a contradiction, inasmuch as it makes clear both the difficulty and the impossibility. (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 16)

The outward ideal towards which the individual strives is always approximated but never attained, and being ethically oriented, she takes responsibility for her failure. Quite naturally, because she works from the assumption that ought implies can. Continued failure reminds the ethical individual of the difficulty of her endeavor, until failure finally convinces her of the impossibility of attaining her ideal. The ethical individual first wears irony as her incognito in recognition of the distance between her ideality and actuality, and then develops a sense of guilt. Irony is worn “incognito” as it does not represent the existential commitment that it does in the aesthetic stage or the transitional movement out of it. Since the ethical individual makes meaningful, self-defining choices, possibilities are always considered as potential actualities, as opportunities for decision.

Guilt is not necessarily a negative thing in Kierkegaard’s thought, assuming that one does not remain trapped within it, the horrible consequences of which are described in *The Concept of Anxiety*. Furthermore, in the ethical sphere, guilt stands Janus-faced toward both the past and the future. Upon the transition to the ethical sphere, the newly born individuality acquires a history, takes responsibility for his past self, and in doing so acknowledges guilt in relationship to his past behavior along with his commitment to future conformity to the requirements of the ethical. As he attempts to live out that commitment, he experiences guilt in relationship to his current failure to do so. . . and comes to see his future in terms of future ethical failures. To the individual progressing through the stages, guilt is a sign of progress: “guilt is the strongest self-assertion of existence, and it is, after all, an *existing person* who is supposed to relate himself to an eternal happiness” (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 528, his emphasis). The association of guilt with one’s very existence involves a contradiction. The guilty person, on the one hand, accepts responsibility for his guilt, yet on the other hand, since guilt has become a quality inherent in existence, guilt can be “shoved onto the

one who placed him in existence" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 528), so that the ethical individual alleviates his sense of guilt by blaming God, who is the source of his existence.

What should be observed here is that through a sense of guilt, the individual takes a significant step in her trajectory toward God as she faces God as the one before whom she is guilty, while at the same time holding God responsible for her guilty existence.¹⁶ When this happens, guilt transforms not into a feeling associated with a particular act, but into the nature of the person herself: "When the conception of God is included, the category of guilt changes to a category of quality" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 530). The individual begins to relate herself to her "eternal happiness" but, because of an immanent sense of guilt, she defines this relation negatively. She is aware of the misrelation between herself and her eternal happiness, and this awareness is the substance of her relation to her eternal happiness. This consciousness broaches the sphere of Religiousness A.¹⁷

The ethical individual's awareness of her inability to live up to ideality proceeds from the fact that the ethical individual is primarily concerned with herself and her attainment of her ethical ideals, for this concern is consistently frustrated. At this point another facet of the ethical in relationship to God comes into play. The assumption that "ought implies can" means that "the component of dependence on God, as the constituting and sustaining power, is not calculated sufficiently in the equation of selfhood" (Taylor, 1975, p. 233). In the ethical sphere, God is present outwardly as the source of ideality but not sufficiently considered inwardly. Again, as in Kant, the existence of God is necessary *ethically*, but not existentially, logically, or ontologically, so that in Kierkegaard's presentation of God in the ethical stage of existence, "God is identified with the ethical order" (Taylor, 1975, p. 242).

With the introduction of an immanent sense of guilt, God begins to loom inescapably large before the ethical self. It is no coincidence that "B," the ethicist of *Either/Or II*, concludes his letters to the aesthete "A" not with his own words but with a sermon entitled, "The Upbuilding That Lies in the Thought That in Relation to God We Are Always in the Wrong." The ethical individual's immanent sense of guilt is a source of suffering, so in Climacus's view, with the introduction of this immanent, all encompassing sense of guilt, the category of the religious has been broached, and the transition has been made to Religiousness A: "In the religious sphere, the positive is distinguished by the negative; the relation to an eternal happiness is distinguished by suffering" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 532).

Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* represent both innocent-ethical and disillusioned-ethical phenomenologies, which become increasingly

related to a developing understanding of sexual relationships. The division into sexes is a significant psychological moment in Blake's mythological works that describe the forces leading up to and motivating our awareness of ourselves as sexually differentiated beings. The relationship between sexual awareness and the transition from innocence to experience in Blake's and Kierkegaard's treatment of generation will be explained below. At present, the "The Little Black Boy" and "The Chimney Sweeper" will serve as examples of innocent-ethical and disillusioned-ethical phenomenologies within Blake's poetry.

"The Little Black Boy" has as its controlling trope the sun as God, so that proximity to the sun is proximity to God. The little black boy begins with self-rejection, internalizing widely disseminated oppositions between "black" and "white," dark and light, good and evil, purity and impurity, knowledge and ignorance, holiness and depravity, then applying these oppositions to consciousness of his own skin color: "And I am black, but O! my soul is white; / White as an angel is the English child: / But I am black as if bereaved of light" (Erdman, 1982, p. 9). In response, his mother teaches him that his body is like a cloud intervening between God, who is the sun, and his human soul, which must learn to bear the beams of God's love. Those who have learned to bear the beams of God's love may see their clouds dissipate, allowing them to enjoy the presence of God. The little black boy then reasons on his own that his blackness is a sign of his closer proximity to God than the little white boy's—his black body and "sun-burnt face" have been darkened because he lives closer to God's light.

As the little black boy assumes a spiritual superiority to the little white boy, he also assumes an ethical responsibility to him, a "black man's burden." The little white boy cannot bear God's light as well as the little black boy, so the little black boy believes that he has an ethical duty to shield the little white boy from excess exposure to the light of God. The mind reels with the complexity of Blake's engagement of skin-color racism and the social relationships surrounding it, as the innocent little black boy simultaneously justifies and condemns skin-color racism while holding himself primarily responsible for its defeat. He justifies skin-color racism by suggesting that since the little white boy cannot help being white, he cannot help being more distant from God and more limited in his ethical consciousness, a justification reinforced in the poem's last line, which reveals that the little black boy knows that the little white boy does not love him.

In a series of contradictory movements, the little black boy condemns skin-color racism with its justification, for he is the one closer to God. In Copy W of the *Songs*,¹⁸ both the little black boy and the little white boy

stand before Christ, still in possession of racially differentiated bodies, but the little white boy stands closest to Christ as the little black boy stands behind him, stroking his hair. The illustration seems to subvert the little black boy's hopes for eternity but does accurately represent his present consciousness. He places the little white boy ahead of himself by his ethical care for him. Still again, the entire scenario enables the continuation of skin-color racism in the present, as the little black boy's thinking both lends him comfort—by the end of the poem he has been saved from the despair he felt at the beginning—and prevents him from confronting and rejecting the evil he faces daily, as that is the very thing that he cannot do while shielding the little white boy from the light of God. This choice may be a deliberate expression of ethical care, as the little black boy may be shielding the little white boy from full awareness of his own depraved moral state by intervening between God's light and the little white boy, the little black boy's intervention simultaneously constituting his tacit complicity with, and condemnation of, an unacceptable state of affairs.¹⁹

Ultimately, since the little black boy's mother teaches him beneath a tree, she offers him the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil through her teachings. The little black boy's newly formed ethical consciousness is a sign that he is fallen though not yet disillusioned, a sign of his connection with family, his race, and his God, and a sign that his ethical consciousness is just as socially given as it is for Kierkegaard's early ethical personality. The poem is the little black boy's negotiation of his newly acquired ethical knowledge, documenting the reasoning of an innocent-ethical consciousness characterized by hope for the future and resolve in the present. This same resolve and hope can be found in "The Chimney Sweeper" of the *Songs of Innocence*, who similarly begins in despair over his condition, is granted hope for the future, and then ends resolved to do his "duty." His final resolution comprises his innocent-ethical complicity with a situation that is literally, and quite unjustly, killing him, even though he awakens "happy & warm," knowing that "if all do their duty, they need not fear harm" (Erdman, 1982, p. 10).

"The Chimney Sweeper" of the *Songs of Experience* represents the disillusioned ethical consciousness of another little black boy—really, a little white boy made black with soot from London's chimneys—who is painfully aware of the bitterness of his condition without a hint of hope for his future. Consistent with Kierkegaard's disillusioned ethical consciousness, this little black boy blames God for his existence: "And because I am happy, & dance & sing, / They think they have done me no injury: / And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King / Who make up a heaven of our misery" (Erdman,

1982, p. 23). God himself is as complicit in turning the experience chimney sweep's misery into his own heaven as is God's priest and king. Consciousness now is not consciousness of a future happy state, but of suffering in the present, as God and priest and king make up a heaven of the chimney sweeper's misery. Just as the torments of Kierkegaard's ethical stage anticipate the leap into Religiousness A, so do the torments of Blake's experience anticipate his visionary consciousness.

Kierkegaard's Religiousness A and B and Blake's Visionary Personality

As the aesthetic stage describes a bodily-oriented subjectivity, and the ethical stage a soul-oriented subjectivity, the religious stage describes subjectivities oriented toward spirit. Progression out of each stage entails an increasing differentiation of self from environment as the locus of the self moves inward. Aesthetic subjectivities are environmentally determined through their bodily existence and ethical subjectivities through their ethical ideals, which move the ethical individual toward the universal but have their immediate origin in social mores. Orientation toward spirit constitutes a further differentiation of self from environment, as both our bodily existence and our ethical existence become relative in relationship to the absolute that is spirit. The religious stage, however, is only important to creation anxiety as the ideal point of view from which these narratives are written, so will not be covered in as much detail as the aesthetic and ethical stages.

In Religiousness A, God now begins to be clearly differentiated from the world, the consciously known self, and the individual's ethical ideals. As Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes de Silentio explains in *Fear and Trembling* (1843),

there is an absolute duty to God, for in this relationship of duty the individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute, [. . . and if the duty to love God] is absolute, then the ethical is reduced to the relative. From this it does not follow that the ethical should be invalidated . . . This ethical relation is reduced to the relative in contradiction to the absolute duty to God. (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 70–1)

Johannes de Silentio—another Johannes—emphasizes that transitions do not abandon previous stages but establish a new absolute relation, allowing

elements of previous stages to return in relativity. In the case of the transition to Religiousness A, the ethical “is reduced to the relative” while the new absolute relation is to God.²⁰ Climacus describes Religiousness A as a purely negative relation. The individual in Religiousness A is aware of how far he is from his eternal happiness, and that this distance is a defining characteristic of his very subjectivity, a characteristic that inheres in his very self. In this negative relation, the subjective individual of Religiousness A begins to be exclusively concerned with the self before God alone.

Consistent with the final state of the ethical individual, this self continues to be seen as the very problem of the self. Since the Religiousness A personality understands distance from an eternal happiness as the self’s defining characteristic, the movement in Religiousness A is away from the self (in its finite sense):

The upbuilding element in the sphere of Religiousness A is that of immanence, is the annihilation in which the individual sets himself aside in order to find God, since it is the individual himself who is the hindrance. Here the upbuilding is quite properly distinguishable by the negative, by the self-annihilation that finds the relationship with God within itself, that suffering-through sinks into the relationship with God, finds its ground in it, because God is in the ground only when everything that is in the way is cleared out, every finitude, and first and foremost the individual himself in his finitude, in his cavilling against God. (Kierkegaard, 1992, pp. 560–1)

The individual moves toward God as the ground of the self by annihilating the self, so the movement of self-annihilation, of clearing out of the way every finitude, including the self, is an inward movement toward God.

All of the “finite,” including the finitude of the self, is cleared away because the self’s “real” existence is now understood to be eternal rather than temporal. In the self’s own existence in time, the self relates negatively to the eternal (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 570). The individual in Religiousness A, having grown in subjectivity, is concerned with her actuality, therefore with her existence in time, so understands the eternal to be “[everywhere and nowhere] but hidden by the actuality of existence” (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 571). Because the eternal is hidden by actuality, the individual in Religiousness A relates negatively to both the eternal and to actuality. Having come to understand the eternal nature of her existence, and gaining this understanding within time, the Religiousness A individual understands her existence within time to be a contradiction of her real, eternal

identity. Guilt no longer focuses on failure to live up to an ethical ideal, but is understood as an expression of the individual's weakness and finitude.²¹ In Religiousness A, immortality is a fact of the self's existence unaffected by the self's decisions, so the communion of the self before God is hindered only by the inherent limitations of a finite self. In Religiousness A, there is therefore a "guilt consciousness" but not yet a "sin consciousness." For this reason, Religiousness A's attitude toward both suffering and moral failure is humor, for our eternal nature remains untouched by either.

While Climacus is not explicit about what motivates the transition from Religiousness A to B, his understanding of his audience implies a motive for this transition. He consistently assumes an audience that already considers itself Christian, but a "[cheap] edition of a Christian" who "is baptized, has received a copy of the Bible and a hymnbook as a gift" and therefore might ask, "is he not, then, a Christian, an Evangelical Lutheran Christian?" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 557). Furthermore, Climacus assumes this Christian is the more thoughtful type, the one who has fallen into reflection:

On the other hand, it [Climacus's work, JR] does pertain to the person who considers himself to have the opportunity for deeper inquiry, and it pertains to him in such a way that he does not settle thoughtlessly down to world history but first of all calls to mind that being an existing human being is such a strenuous and yet natural task for every human being that one naturally chooses it first and in this strenuous effort most likely finds enough for a lifetime. (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 170–1n)

Climacus's intended audience consists of members of an educated class whose Christianity is largely cultural, who are trapped within reflection and within Christendom and therefore excluded from Christianity.

The individual who makes the transition from Religiousness A to B does so because Christianity is her cultural background, and being a thinking individual, she reconsiders the Christian truth presented to her all her life in the light of her new subjectivity in Religiousness A. This motive for the transition from Religiousness A to B becomes evident as Climacus finds himself at pains to argue for the absolute necessity of entering Religiousness A before making the leap to Religiousness B: "In other words, if Religiousness A does not enter in as the *terminus a quo* [point from which] for the paradoxical religiousness [Religiousness B, JR], then Religiousness A is higher than B" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 558). Why? "Because in immanence God is neither a something, but everything, and is infinitely everything, nor outside the individual, because the upbuilding consists in his being within

the individual" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 561n). Religiousness A's emphasis on immanence, on a finitude that must be negated to see God in everything,²² one described by Climacus in this same context as an "apparently esthetic relationship" because of its similarities to pantheism, makes the paradoxes that characterize Religiousness B possible.

Climacus emphasizes the importance of Religiousness A's negation of finitude to an understanding of the importance of paradox to Religiousness B. Religiousness A seeks the eternal, so negates the temporal, the finite. Its apophysis proceeds from the insight that the eternal is in absolute juxtaposition with the temporal, a temporal signified by the individual's experience of immediacy, by history (as an object of documentary study or in the form of memory), and by a conception of the future. This juxtaposition between the temporal and the eternal remains in Religiousness B and makes possible the paradox that characterizes Religiousness B: "the eternal has come into existence at a moment of time [and the individual in Religiousness B, JR] *in time* comes to relate himself to the eternal *in time*" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 570). In another place Climacus asserts, "the god [*Guden*], the eternal, has come into existence at a specific moment in time as an individual human being" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 578). Climacus's reference to the eternal coming "into existence at a moment of time" refers, of course, to both Protestant and Catholic formulations of the doctrine of the incarnation, that Christ was simultaneously fully God (a monotheistic, transcendent God) and fully human. Since Climacus follows the Lutheran formulation of the incarnation, he assumes hypostatic union—that Christ's human nature was forever united with his Divine nature at conception.

Climacus's presentation of the incarnation carefully distinguishes it from pantheism and paganism. Pantheism claims that Christ uniquely *understood* his divine nature, not uniquely *possessed* it, emphasizing gnosis rather than hypostatic union, while paganism supplies stories in which the gods take human form—in a manner recognizable to a perceptive eye. According to Climacus, Christ's divinity is such that he is *fully human*, so he is not recognizable as the Divine (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 600). He understands both pantheist and pagan formulations as varieties of aesthetic religiousness. Furthermore, those in Religiousness B not only believe that the eternal has come into existence at a moment in time, but also that they relate themselves in time to the eternal. The individual in Religiousness B abandons the apophatic movement of Religiousness A. In Religiousness A, the individual related herself to a negatively present eternal by attempting to annihilate her existence in time. In Religiousness B, the individual relates herself positively to the eternal and does so in time. Since time and eternity stand

in absolute opposition to one another, the individual in Religiousness *B* embraces a paradox, believes the absurd, and in doing so crucifies her understanding (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 564).

Turning now to William Blake, Blake's visionary consciousness seems to move back and forth between Religiousness *A* and *B* but is most strongly identified with Religiousness *A*. The phrase "self-annihilation" first appears in *The Four Zoas*, used by Urthona's Spectre as he explains to Los that "Till / Thou art united with thy Spectre Consummating by pains & labours / That mortal body & by Self annihilation back returning / To Life Eternal be assur'd I am thy real Self" (Erdman, 1982, p. 368). As advice from one of Blake's Spectres it is suspect, all the more so since Los answers furiously, responding negatively to the Spectre's negation, religion as self-denial rather than openness and love. But in the end, Los embraces "Enitharmon & the Spectre" as he seems to follow the Spectre's advice for his own reasons (Erdman, 1982, p. 368). The phrase "self-annihilation" seems to be used positively and in Kierkegaard's sense in Milton's dialog with Satan in Book the Second of *Milton*. Satanic religious consciousness characterized by "Trembling & fear, terror, constriction; abject selfishness" (Erdman, 1982, p. 139) is opposed by Milton's own consciousness, in which "Selfish Natural Virtue" is "put off / In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone" (Erdman, 1982, p. 139), an almost perfect expression of Kierkegaard's Religiousness *A*.

When the Fairy of Blake's *Europe* describes human sense perception as "Five windows [which] light the cavern'd Man" (Erdman, 1982, p. 60), he does so assuming that the annihilation of finitude (in the form of sense perception) grants a vision of eternity, and he does so in a tone mocking human limitations. This general annihilation of finitude, linked to a view of sense perception as windows in a cavern, appears often and consistently in Blake, but perhaps most explicitly in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. "Printing by corrosives" is a "salutary and medicinal" process that melts "apparent surfaces away, and display[s] the infinite which was hid" (Erdman, 1982, p. 39). Blake is an idealist, but as explained above, he is an apocalyptic idealist rather than a Platonic one, so that all created things are windows to and from the infinite and eternal, windows through which we may see once we annihilate a phenomenology dominated by finitude.

Blake's apocalyptic idealism draws him closest to Religiousness *B*. His criticism of the world of "generation and death" (Erdman, 1982, p. 543) signals a consciousness yearning to break with immanence. Kierkegaard may give us ideas for different readings of the end of *There is No Natural Religion* (*b*), as what seems like a non sequitur may indicate a progression:

"He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is" (Erdman, 1982, p. 3). "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God" could be the voice of a Religiousness *A* consciousness who has moved past seeing "himself only," characteristic of either an aesthetic or ethical consciousness, and anticipates a Religiousness *B* existential apprehension of God becoming man so that we may be like God. The Religiousness *B* individual is capable of a break with immanence—a break with environmental determination—which makes it possible for her to avoid repeating "the same dull round over again" (Erdman, 1982, p. 3). Seeing beyond material nature in a Newtonian environment requires the embrace of a paradox.

The preceding intellectual history identifies the tradition from which Blake and Kierkegaard drew in order to confront Enlightenment psychologies that mechanize human beings. A human being who is a synthesis of body, soul, and spirit can develop from a bodily-aesthetic consciousness, to a soulish-ethical consciousness, to a spiritual-religious consciousness, and most importantly, can break with immanence as she does so. For this reason, this developmental pattern directly confronts Enlightenment models which assume the priority of immanence and environment. Romantic narratives that use rebellious human creations to embody the result of Enlightenment models that presuppose environmentally determined psychological growth are the focal point of creation anxiety. Since human creation begins with procreation, however, Blake's and Kierkegaard's extensive critique of "generation"—in other words, the life cycle—is a key element in understanding the sources of creation anxiety and is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Innocence, Generation, and the Fall in Blake and Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard and the Problem of Generation

Within the classical model, consideration of human creativity begins with procreation, our basic creative act. Procreation is the benchmark for human creative activity, the one means by which almost all human beings can equally participate in the creation of an independent life. Subsequent forms of human creation, therefore, have come to be understood as types of birth: the birth of a republic, a novelist pregnant with his book, an artist with her painting. But procreation is the one form of human creation in which we are most aware of our subservience to nature, during either intercourse or childbirth. So it is not surprising that creating life apart from natural processes has become our highest scientific ambition, nor coincidental that Victor Frankenstein was forced to choose between devotion to his monstrous creation or to his future wife, Elizabeth. Creation anxiety narratives understand the human creation of an independent life apart from procreation to be a monstrous act because it subverts nature altogether, not only producing a monstrous creation but making a monstrosity out of its creator as well. However, the association of procreation with all human creative activity has a long history, one that also begins with Plato, and one that Blake and Kierkegaard incorporated into their critique of generation.

In Plato's *Symposium*, a woman named Diotima suggests to Socrates that generation, or the life cycle of birth, growth, maturity, sexual desire, procreation, child rearing, aging, and then death is "the one deathless and eternal element in our mortality," that through generation, "the mortal does all it can to put on immortality" (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 559). The principle of organic life, argues Diotima, is the principle of becoming, a continual process from birth to death. She extends her argument to the life of the spirit, however, affirming that there are those "whose procreancy is of the body" and those "of the spirit rather than the flesh [who] conceive

and bear the things of the spirit" (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, p. 560). This principle extends to those who seek fame, poetic creation, and wisdom—all are seeking to procreate in different ways and to gain eternity by doing so. Procreation begins with desire and ends with creation, either the creation of human life, of wisdom, or of art, so that procreative acts begin with the body and end with the spirit.

Diotima's argument for a progression of desire establishes a hierarchy of desire, one moving from lower desires for bodily procreation to higher desires engendered by the soul. Outgrowing attraction only to lovely bodies to become attracted to the loveliness of souls, higher subjectivities seek to engender beautiful souls through discourse, taking the next step to love those laws and institutions that aid in the development of noble natures. From here, the procreative one moves higher and higher as if climbing a ladder, seeking the beauty of philosophy until she rests in "the one single form of knowledge." Diotima describes a Religiousness A consciousness that perceives the "universal beauty" subsisting "of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness," one that is part of an "inviolable whole" that is the "very soul of beauty" (Hamilton and Cairns, 1961, pp. 562–3). This tradition interprets generation and procreation in terms of developmental stages from body, to soul, to spirit, but this tradition in effect relegates sexual development and the procreative, bodily life cycle to an immature and somewhat misguided search for eternity, a search that is only truly resolved when the soul perceives universal beauty and devotes herself to it through a virtuous life. Therefore, generation is bound to be a frustrated effort, though it comprises a necessary beginning, one upon which we embark when we lose innocence, notice sexual difference, experience desire, then seek sexual fulfillment. Generation—and sexual desire—is our first misguided step in our quest for eternity.

The *Symposium* serves as background to Blake's and Kierkegaard's critique of generation and is the starting point for Haufniensis's overview of the anxiety of innocence—subjective anxiety—in *The Concept of Anxiety*. A review of Kierkegaard's critique of generation can shed much light upon Blake's treatment of the subject. Haufniensis, in his discussion of the anxiety of innocence, takes his readers up to the moment of the fall. He cannot trace the movement of the leap from innocence to guilt, since that is the domain of dogmatics and a movement of the human spirit inexplicable to psychology, but he can meet his readers on the other side of the leap to examine postlapsarian psychology. The double consequences of the fall are "that sin came into the world and that sexuality was posited: the one is to be inseparable from the other" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 48). Sexual difference existed

as a biological fact but not as a fact of Adam and Eve's psychology. Haufniensis here makes a reference to Adam and Eve being naked and unashamed before the fall but clothing themselves in leaves afterwards. Sexuality arises from the fall because human existence is a synthesis of mind and body qualified by spirit. Once spirit attains knowledge of itself in the fall, "it posits the [body/soul] synthesis, but in order to posit the synthesis it must first pervade it differentiatingly, and the ultimate point of the sensuous is precisely the sexual" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 49). In this paradigm, the human body is not sexual through a fluke of nature, nor does the body maintain a distant or tangential relationship to its sexuality. The very reason for the existence of the human body itself is found in its sexual nature and reproductive function. We exist as bodies so that we can reproduce.

When spirit becomes aware of itself, it becomes aware of its difference from mind and body and of the difference between mind and body. Knowledge of this difference makes sensuousness possible. With sensuousness, sexuality is possible and, by extension, procreation. Haufniensis is careful to affirm that "sinfulness is by no means sensuousness," but at the same time, "without sin there is no sexuality, and with no sexuality, no history" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 49). With knowledge of sexuality comes the knowledge of generation, which allows for the concept of the individual: knowing that I came from my father and mother, who came from their father and mother and so on, both gives me a history as well as a number of other selves from whom I can distinguish myself yet with whom I am bound. So what function does anxiety serve? Anxiety serves as the middle term between innocence and guilt, between possibility and actuality. Anxiety is, according to Haufniensis, "entangled freedom, where freedom is not free itself but entangled, not by necessity but in itself" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 49). Freedom in innocence trips over its own feet in the face of unknown possibility. Anxiety is always an expression of freedom. It does not make the leap into guilt inevitable but simply exists as the condition in which it is possible. Any leap is made when a self, existing in freedom, makes a choice among known possibilities.

After outlining the anxiety of innocence, Haufniensis further describes the consequences of this leap out of innocence progressively. One of the consequences already mentioned is the fact of an individual history. Every individual subsequent to Adam has to deal not only with his or her anxiety in innocence, but also with the quantitative accumulation of the sinfulness of the human race. Because of this quantitative accumulation of human sinfulness, "Sin entered in anxiety, but sin in turn brought anxiety with it . . . Hence one will even encounter the phenomenon that a person seems

to have become guilty merely through anxiety about himself, something that could not have happened in the case of Adam" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 53). Haufniensis seriously qualifies his claims about Adam's identity with the rest of the human race, but to keep this qualification from "confusing everything," he continues to remind his readers that quantitative accumulation alone is not enough to force a qualitative leap, however much it may pressure a person to make one decision or another.

Haufniensis's discussion of subjective anxiety keeps this historical, objective background in mind, because his subjects are not yet meaningfully individuated. Their identity is still significantly invested in their environment. He begins his discussion of subjective anxiety by describing anxiety as a form of dizziness:

anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness. Further than this, psychology cannot and will not go. In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises, sees that it is guilty. (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 61)

But Haufniensis has taken us quite far if he has taken us to the point where "freedom succumbs"; he has taken us to the very moment of the leap. Freedom succumbs, freedom vanishes in the moment of the leap, freedom reappears—to find out that it is guilty. Why dizziness? Why the abyss? Because in anxiety, "there is the selfish infinity of possibility, which does not tempt like a choice but ensnaringly disquiets [*ængster*] with its sweet anxiousness [*Beængstelse*]" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 61). The moment described here is the moment of freedom's vision into the infinite abyss of possibility, a vision so dizzying for freedom that it reaches out for the finite in the form of some concrete choice: a forbidden fruit, a forbidden lover, it does not matter—something that concretely, finitely, particularly defines the self, something that we *know* and that can be known because it is finite. This reaching out is the moment of decision. Recalling the previous discussion of the aesthetic as a stage characterized by the consideration of infinite possibility without decision, Haufniensis describes here the moment of the leap from the aesthetic to the ethical stage, a leap into guilt, but also a leap into self-defining choice.

Haufniensis accounts for subjective anxiety two ways: first by the problem of generation, and then by the related problem of our existence in history. In both cases, Haufniensis attempts to describe subjective anxiety as it is

experienced by the individual today and throughout history, subjective anxiety in individuals produced generatively—in contrast to being directly created by God, as Adam and Eve were. His account of subjective anxiety begins with the basic problem of generation from Eve to all women and men born since Adam and Eve, the problem of our existence as derived beings. Anxiety in derived beings becomes more *like* a specific something without *being* a specific something. Anxiety for generated persons is, in Haufniensis's words, "a complex of presentiments" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 61). A presentiment is very much a psychological "something" but not a concrete "something" relating directly to the self. A presentiment is an expectation, a feeling, but of what, the self in innocence does not exactly know.

To Haufniensis, the problem of generation is the problem of human sexuality. He reasserts that it has now become associated with sinfulness, even though in this section, as throughout *The Concept of Anxiety*, he emphasizes that sexuality and the sensuous are not inherently sinful. Generation as a problem for subjective anxiety has to do with sexuality's relationship to spirit, for spirit ultimately has nothing to do with sexuality fully realized at the moments of conception and childbirth. At the beginning and end of procreation, "spirit is furthest away" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 72). Haufniensis seems to be thinking in terms of a simple horizontal spectrum of spirit's involvement with human existence. At the end of the spectrum closest to spirit, "there is no difference between man and woman" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 70), a view probably drawn from Christ's teaching that the dead are "as the angels in heaven" who neither "marry, nor are given in marriage" (Matt. 22:30), or from Paul's dictum in Galatians, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28). The pole of spirit brushes aside all physical differences. Haufniensis associates the opposite pole, the absence of spirit, with procreation. Procreation functions as the biological basis of essential differences between men and women according to Haufniensis, who asserts that since spirit withdraws during intercourse and childbirth, the difference between man and woman exists at those times to the greatest degree.

Haufniensis argues that procreation as a possibility particularly for *woman* especially qualifies—or determines—her existence in time. While both woman and man share in the beginning of the procreative act, woman is alone at the end, in childbirth, and for this reason Haufniensis believes "woman is more sensuous than man" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 64). Female sensuousness finds aesthetic expression through a valuation of female beauty and ethical expression through an insistence on procreation as the

culmination of female sexuality (Kierkegaard, 1980a, pp. 65–6)¹—both male and female sensuality is excluded from the religious, because Christianity’s emphasis on spirit eclipses differences between the sexes as far as Haufniensis is concerned. This exclusion can be extended to Climacus and his description of Religiousness A as an annihilation of finitude. Female sensuousness is not an inherent negative to Haufniensis. Greater sensuousness means a greater potential for anxiety and, therefore, a greater individuality; in this context, it serves as a “prophecy of the greatness of the perfection” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 64).

Howard Kainz lucidly explains male-female difference in *The Concept of Anxiety* in terms of male-female reciprocity:

the difference of emphasis in man and woman, respectively, sets up a dialectical movement in each to counterbalance their “onesidedness,” and thus the reciprocity between the immediacy of sensuousness of woman and the strength of spirit of man—a condition which impels each sex to search out its appropriate counterbalance. (1969, p. 8)

While Kainz accurately perceives the opposition of spirit and the sensuous in this section of *Concept of Anxiety*, he misses that Haufniensis limits his comments to sexual intercourse and childbirth. Despite these limitations, this is one area where contemporary thought quite predictably has a difficult time appropriating Kierkegaard’s work. The fundamental point of cultural difference between Haufniensis and modern readers, whether commentators emphasize it or not, is the indivisibility of procreation from sexuality in Haufniensis’s thought and, by extension, the indivisibility of *our human physical existence* from sexuality and procreation. Haufniensis’s belief that sexual reproduction is the reason for our physical existence itself, not just our physical existence as sexual creatures, is the root of Haufniensis’s observations about differences between man and woman.

Thus Haufniensis concludes that at the moment of childbirth spirit, which to him is the locus of freedom and decision, withdraws because what happens *within* woman during childbirth is simultaneously something happening *to* her, something over which she has no control. The withdrawal of her decision-making capacity inevitably signals the withdrawal of spirit. Since there is no place for freedom or decision during childbirth, spirit “does not have its task” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 72). Bridgit Bertung’s statement of the obvious, “the birth proceeds whether the woman wills it or no—not even the strongest personality can stop it” (1997, p. 61), is necessary

to respond to those who would mistake Haufniensis's biological argument for a spiritual-essentialist one, and Haufniensis does appear to be constructing a bio-psychological argument: "Physiology has its explanation, and psychology must also have its explanation" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 72). "Woman is more sensuous than man" is not, to Haufniensis, a mystery of her spirit, but an imposition of her biology upon her spirit, and by extension upon her psychology, which otherwise is qualitatively the same as man's. The chief weakness of Haufniensis's argument on its own terms is its failure to recognize a significant range of differences among men and women during either intercourse or childbirth.

Most importantly, *Haufniensis* is aware that he is speaking of historical contingencies, of the effect of the self's location in history upon the self's qualities. For this reason, in her discussion of *The Sickness unto Death*, Bertung observes, "Kierkegaard's differentiation between what is absolutely inevitable in woman, and what is only relative or contingent (e.g., culturally determined), is very important" (1997, p. 59). In *The Concept of Anxiety*, this differentiation follows from a general rule applicable to both men and women: "The procreated individual is more sensuous than the original" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 72). "At the maximum," this rule leads us to the "dreadful fact that *anxiety about sin produces sin*" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 73). Haufniensis's contingent assertions about the nature of sexual difference between men and women also lends some direction about what to emphasize in Blake.

Irene Tayler's "The Woman Scaly" (1979) understands Blake's negative comments about the female to be driven by social contingencies as well: "The jealousy, selfishness, and ruthless will to power that grows in the heart of the possessed object is 'female' because in our culture it is especially the females who have been treated as commodities; and with that position has come a sharpened awareness of ways to achieve power without force" (p. 545). On this point Blake can be located well within wide-ranging feminist critiques of women's education by late-eighteenth-century women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Wheeler, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and, perhaps less directly, Jane Austen. All of these authors are critical of what women *have become* because of what they have been *educated to be*, on the basis of social and historical contingencies rather than innate nature. Any of these authors may be essentialist on other points, but not on this one.

Because of the influence of social contingencies upon subjectivity, an understanding of "The Consequence of the Historical Relationship" is necessary to better understand subjective anxiety (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 73),

the closing section of Chapter 3 of *The Concept of Anxiety*. Haufniensis sums up the importance of history to the individual in the word “more.” Increasing sinfulness in the self’s immediate environment produces an “obscure knowledge” of sinfulness (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 73), for we do not have concrete knowledge of sin until we ourselves have sinned. More people surrounding and preceding the self means that the self’s identification with its external environment excludes “the originality of the individual” to the point that “the individual forthwith confounds himself with the race and with history” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 73). The “more” means that the identification of sensuousness with sinfulness is not a vague possibility but a concrete reality external to the innocent self; hence, the “more” is more anxiety as well, and all the more so in the Christian era, which, according to Haufniensis, juxtaposes the sensuous against the spiritual far more than in any pre-Christian era. The “more” of our immediate environment includes more people, whose regard also constitutes the self when the self is not fully differentiated from its environment, so that the one who experiences anxiety “*about being regarded as guilty, becomes guilty*” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 75). Again, to the innocent, these external realities are alien to their own internal states, so the individual can freely choose—but forgets this.

The “more” of the historical is ultimately “the power of the example” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 75). Again, Haufniensis does not represent the fall from innocence as “a simple quantitative process” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 76), which would entail a denial of individuality. He believes that honest observation acknowledges that children react differently to similar situations, becoming either guilty or innocent within both positive and negative environments, so that environmental influence alone is not enough to account for character. Middle terms between self and environment are needed, and those terms are anxiety and decision. From here, Haufniensis begins to critique other accounts of sin, specifically Kant’s and Hegel’s, which identify sin as selfishness. While he believes that this idea is fundamentally correct, it seems to him that there is no clear conception of the self at work. Self-knowledge does not exist until the leap has been made. This means that Kant and others can only assert that sin is selfishness by ignoring the fact that a self does not exist (existentially) until sin is present, so by extension, selfishness cannot exist until after one has sinned. Sin, therefore, appears only in a qualitative leap, seemingly out of nowhere, and we are vulnerable to it because of our nature as a synthesis and the nature of our social environments. These rather abstract conceptions find a more concrete expression in Blake’s work.

Generation in Blake

Blake's and Haufniensis's treatment of and concern for generation have a great deal in common, and parallel considerations of the issue throughout Christian Europe, as is apparent from Edward Ruestow's "Piety and the Defense of Natural Order: Swammerdam on Generation" (1985),

Bizarre as it now seems, the belief that all living things had existed invisibly small since the Biblical Creation exercised a powerful appeal in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It has been argued persuasively of late that this appeal rested on a perception of nature as barren mechanism, a perception that agreed nicely with a pious insistence on God's monopoly of all creative power. Indeed, such a union of mechanism and piety would have constituted a compelling synthesis that renders the broad and enduring grip of the doctrine of preexistence more comprehensible. (p. 217)

Ruestow finds Jan Swammerdam particularly important because he published in 1669, making him "the first to have proposed the idea of preexistence in print" (p. 217).² Belief in preexistence (preformation) itself is only of secondary importance. Ruestow suggests that Swammerdam was aware of the problems inherent in his thesis, and more powerful magnification instruments would soon prove his thesis wrong. More importantly, Swammerdam's belief in preexistence meant that "no generation took place at all, and what one saw in nature was no more than a propagation and growth of parts" (Ruestow, 1985, p. 218).

While preexistence in Swammerdam's terms was not a credible thesis by Blake's time, Blake similarly insisted on nature's barrenness. He linked this insistence on the barrenness of nature to his own version of a belief in preexistence specifically suited to a critique of Locke's theory of *tabula rasa*. For example, in his annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Blake asserted, "Reynolds Thinks that Man Learns all that he Knows I say on the Contrary That Man Brings All that he has or Can have Into the World with him. Man is Born Like a Garden ready Planted & Sown This World is too poor to produce one Seed" (Erdman, 1982, p. 656). Blake's doctrine of preexistence may account for the proliferation of very small, yet still seemingly adult figures in many of his illustrations and may also arise from the need to preserve some version of "God's monopoly of all creative power" in a mechanistic universe. While Blake did not necessarily endorse preexistence—Tristanne J. Connolly suggests that *The [First] Book of Urizen* plays

“with both concepts” in its narration of Urizen’s development (2002, p. 81)—the problem of generation is a particularly fertile site for literary expressions of the tension between nature and artifice and expressions of creation anxiety. Any introduction of generation into a mechanized universe must be carefully negotiated as a task fraught with anxieties, as a self-generating, mechanized universe potentially had no conceptual or otherwise innate need for an immanent God.

Because Blake addresses the theme of generation most directly and fully in his illuminated books, it is important to consider here some principles guiding the interpretation of his art. Blake’s illustrations for *The Divine Comedy* are particularly revealing of Blake’s view of his own art, revealing how for him art and text were at all times part of a continuous whole. Several of Blake’s less finished illustrations for Dante’s epic have text written within and around them never intended for inclusion in the finished design. Bindman describes these bits of text as “angrily scribbled notes of complaint on some of the least finished drawings, telling juxtapositions of designs, and the highlighting of motifs against the grain of the text” (2000b, p. 4). These notes were to be colored over as Blake completed his illustrations. Drawings 7 and 22 are the most striking examples, but others are like drawing 2, in which perhaps two lines of text remain barely visible above God’s shoulders, nearly obscured by the drawing, and others are like drawing 102, in which the text briefly reminds Blake about design elements he intended to include in his drawing. Most unfinished drawings have no text at all.

The exceptions, drawings 7 and 22, dramatically illustrate how very much Blake thought simultaneously in word and image. Image was a form of speech for Blake, text a form of drawing. Blake’s writing process seems to have been eminently visual. Joseph Viscomi suggests that “Writing backward a text already known is drawing words: words cease to be symbols or names and become forms, marks, lines, design” (1989, p. 71). Crabb Robinson recorded in his diary that Blake claimed, “When I am commanded by the Spirits then I write, And the moment I have written, I see the Words fly about the room in all directions[.] It is then published[.]—The Spirits can read and my MS: is of no further use[.]—I have been tempted to burn my MS, but my wife wont not let me” (Bentley, 1969, p. 647). While we cannot be sure when Blake spoke seriously to Robinson or when he exaggerated—further complicating matters is that Robinson honestly confessed his own inability to follow Blake at times—this account does reveal something about Blake’s view of his writing, because it does have some explanatory power.

If Blake's physical transference of words to paper at times released a visualization of the words flying "about the room in all directions"—and if Blake called that release into visualization "publication"—then of course upon "publication," his physical manuscript is of no further use. The next obvious question is, "How much of the text did Blake have to write before seeing the entire text before him visually?" If he only had to write some of his text to see all of it eventually, this certainly explains how Blake could claim in the same conversation that he had written "more than Rousseau or Voltaire—Six or Seven Epic poems as long as Homer And 20 Tragedies as long as Macbeth" (Bentley, 1969, p. 547). It also explains why *Milton* is said to be in twelve books when only two were engraved, and why *The French Revolution* is said to be in seven books when Blake seems to have written only one. An author fully visualizing his or her work at the outset is hardly as strange as Blake's language makes it sound. Coleridge describes the inception of "Kubla Khan" in these words: "all the images rose up before me as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort" (614).³ Coleridge made this claim even without sharing Blake's predisposition toward visual art.

Blake's highly visual mind identified conception and execution of a work in a manner similar to his identification of "execution" and "organization" of a visual image in his annotations to Reynolds's *Works* (Erdman, 1982, p. 637). Applying this principle to his art, drawing is execution since in Blake's mind, line is everything (Erdman, 1982, p. 582)—and to Blake "drawing" was as visual-mental an activity as his "publishing." This reading unfortunately risks contradicting Viscomi's explanation in *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (1993) that Blake identifies conception with execution because Blake composed most of his illuminated books directly upon copper plates with no prior drafts. Viscomi's explanation has the virtues of clarity, simplicity, and common sense, virtues from which Blake seems to have been gloriously free. Identifying conception with execution because they are both *mental* acts, rather than identifying the two in terms of the material execution of Blake's art, maintains Blake's phenomenological emphasis and his desire to rise above the bonds of mere physical matter, to "rise from Generation free," an emphasis he maintained even in his composition process when he described his works as "published" once he saw in his mind's eye their words flying about the room.

In Blake's language, what differs is the degree to which a work is "finished," as is evident in several letters to Hayley describing some works as "highly finished" (Erdman, 1982, p. 748, 752, 758), and others as "unfinished" (Erdman, 1982, p. 748; about a painting by Romney), "finishing"

understood in the normal sense of the extent to which a work's detail realizes in media the artist's mental conception. While the word "finishing" is normally associated with "execution," Blake's highly visual imagination identified the mental act of "conception" with "execution." While there has been significant displeasure with the assumption that each copy of the *Songs* "is an independent work of art" (Leader, 1981, p. xxii), neither should the opposite be assumed. Since Blake seemed to finish more completely works for which he was being paid more, it is perhaps unwise to lend equal weight to the visual properties of all versions of *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Blake paid closer attention to color and detail in more carefully finished copies, including the later copies of the *Songs*. Robert Essick emphasizes this important methodological point in "William Blake, William Hamilton, and the Materials of Graphic Meaning" (1985), in which he rejects approaches that assume "each impression [of a plate] is the transparent expression of different meanings" (p. 851). Instead, Essick suggests that commentators should recognize that the "precise visual characteristics" that change from one version of a plate to the next were "necessarily determined by forces. . . extrinsic to Blake's intentions"—e.g., that because Blake manufactured his own books from beginning to end, short of binding them, he could not perfectly control the outcome of every detail of the production process. Therefore, "each impression is the embodiment of a meaning that does not wholly preexist its material production but evolves through it" (Essick, 1985, p. 851–2). Later, more carefully and thoroughly executed works deserve a different kind of attention.

Essick's gesture toward the deconstructive turn criticism had taken in the 1980s—an influence he defends at the end of his essay—is undermined by his careful, meticulous, and detailed attention to the physicality of Blake's work, ultimately an affirmation of the metaphysics of presence subverting any deconstructive gloss he may have imposed upon his work at the time. Essick's basic point that some elements of Blake's work were somewhat beyond his conscious control remains, but the most that can be said about intentionality in some of the cases Essick mentions is not that it was definitely absent or present but simply that it cannot be known—as is the case with almost all intentional arguments. Perhaps the most useful starting point comes from Essick: "[Blake] tended to use the same basic range of colors and styles across several different illuminated books in any given period" (2002, p. 28). In practice, Blake began with a simple palette, which he embellished as time went on. Later copies of most of his illuminated books tend to employ a broader palette and have greater nuance of color and line than earlier copies.

Rather than thinking that Blake began with an ur-text of the *Songs* or any of his other works, perhaps he spent his life working toward that ur-text, moving toward the fullest and most satisfactory realization of his vision, so that his art existed in a continual state of becoming. In practical terms and for the sake of this study, later copies of any of Blake's works will be privileged over earlier ones. In the case of the *Songs*, while color schemes and patterns vary widely even among productions of the *Songs* dating from 1825 and 1826, Copy W used in this study of the *Songs* occupies a special place in Blake's oeuvre, being "Blake's own copy," the King's College copy on which "he seems to have spared no expense. . . either of time or materials" (Lincoln, 1991, p. 21), making this copy one of his most fully realized, deliberate productions. It is likely that his personal attachment to this copy is evidence that he achieved an ideal in the finishing of this copy that he had not in other ones. So in readings of any poem in the illuminated books, we should privilege the later copies over earlier ones, particularly Copy W of the *Songs*, understand the visual elements themselves to embody a text, and understand the text itself as a visual element.

Text itself as a visual element is perhaps most strongly evident in the most pointed critique of generation in the *Songs*, the experience poem "To Tirzah." While Blake treats generation most extensively in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, sexuality and generation-related themes surface with some intensity in the Rossetti manuscript (1793), including early drafts of "The Sick Rose," "The Garden of Love," "Cradle Song," "Infant Sorrow," and other poems such as "I asked a thief to steal me a peach. . ." "To Tirzah" of the *Songs of Experience* is, however, Blake's clearest and most compact statement about generation. Its thematic similarities to *Milton*, style of lettering, and status as a late addition to *Songs of Experience* lead Erdman and other commentators to date it about 1803 with the Pickering manuscript poems, but "it is included in copy L, which has '1799/JS' inscribed on the recto of plate 2. . . And it appears in Copy O, which may have been bound in 1797" (Lincoln, 1991, p. 18). Viscomi asserts that "it appears in copies of copies of *Songs* printed circa 1795" (1995, p. 301), adding that it could have been written as early as 1789–90 but offering no material evidence for this dating. "To Tirzah" may have been among Blake's earliest direct treatments of the theme of generation. At the least, Blake drafted it in conjunction with *The Four Zoas* and its revisions, the period of Blake's consolidation of the theme of generation.

Since Blake's writing was as visual an experience for him as his art, readings of "To Tirzah" should encourage the impression that the text literally "draws" the reader into the scene. It is not necessary to allegorize

"To Tirzah's" four figures or to establish name associations, which have been well annotated since at least Damon's 1924 treatment of the poem and are explained in great detail in Lincoln's commentary for the series *William Blake: The Illuminated Books*. I choose to focus instead on the interrelationships among visual elements within the drawing itself. Two women stand left of center. Bent over, they hold a male corpse up in a sitting position. The corpse's legs seem to disappear into the ground to the viewer's right from the knees down, perhaps into one end of an open grave. A man with long hair and beard, dressed in yellow robes, stands in the right area of the drawing and faces left, leaning over the corpse tilting a pitcher as if to begin washing the body. Many commentators assume that this figure is an old man, perhaps a Urizenic figure, but in Copy W, the man's hair and beard have a light yellow tint matching the younger women's hair rather than the standard Urizenic hoary frost (as in Copy Z: Leader makes a great deal of this facet of the visual design in his reading of the poem), so the standing male figure may be a younger one compared to Urizen and more positive—all the more so since on the man's robes are written the words, "It is Raised a Spiritual Body," a quotation from Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians.

Andrew Lincoln's concise and useful summary of critical opinion up to the time of his writing suggests that the standing male is a Urizenic figure signifying "a God who baptises us into death" (1991, p. 201). Seeing an image of baptism in the man about to wash the corpse's body seems accurate enough, especially given the reference to Paul's discussion of Christian death and resurrection in the quotation from 1 Corinthians 15:44 on the man's robes. Relevant Biblical context needs to be expanded to Paul's discussion of baptism in 1 Corinthians 10, in which baptism is a symbol of Christian identification with Christ, Moses, and the Hebrews in the wilderness, and to Paul's teaching about baptism: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Baptism is always a death image. Immersion in water is a symbol of burial, coming back up a symbol of resurrection, the subject of Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 15. The Christian is always baptized into death, for that is what immersion in baptismal waters means. Reference to baptismal imagery after someone has died emphasizes, therefore, a future resurrection in which the dead "rise from Generation free." The poem probably does not direct its bitter tone of complaint toward these elements of the drawing.

Following the line of the man's back from right to left, the yellow of the man's robe fills the sunset in the western sky (assuming that the reader is

facing north), sunset reinforcing the poem's death theme. The text's yellow/orange coloring creates the impression that the text is the voice of the setting sun, a voice superimposing itself upon the blues of encroaching darkness to the right or eastern side of the drawing. The text of "To Tirzah" may be very much like that written around Blake's illustrations to Dante, which in this case Blake allowed to appear through his finished visual as if allowing readers to see the entire content of his vision at once, Blake's corrosives burning away the surface of the natural setting to reveal a speaking voice beneath it. The corpse's head tilts back, looking upward toward the text, so that the text may be the voice or, better, the embodiment of the corpse's disembodied spirit, the voice of one who has passed through the entire cycle of generation—birth, growth, sexuality, parenting, old age, and death—and has been freed from it. As David M. Baulch suggests, the "verbal text above the figures is the raised spiritual body" (1997, p. 350). The poem's speaking voice speaks, seemingly, with the voice of Christ: "Then what have I to do with thee?"⁴ (Erdman, 1982, p. 30).

Significantly, Christ's words to his mother during the wedding at Cana were quoted by "To Tirzah's" speaker to rebuke his "Mother of my Mortal part" for giving him a physical body (Erdman, 1982, p. 30). Christ, however, addressed his mother's concerns by performing the miracle of turning water into wine. The disembodied spirit of "To Tirzah" understands its enclosure in a physical body as an act of cruelty on his mother's part, whose tears of joy at childbirth are "false self-deceiving tears" (Erdman, 1982, p. 30), because from spirit's point of view, enclosure in a mortal body is hardly a moment to rejoice. Division into sexes "sprung from" the "shame and pride" associated with sexual intercourse from spirit's perspective (Erdman, 1982, p. 30). In Blake, as in Kierkegaard, pure spirit is absent in the procreative act. Christ's mercy changes "Death into Sleep" (Erdman, 1982, p. 30), but the poem's speaking voice forgets that Christ needed to take on a physical body to show this mercy. So far, Blake's associations with generation are consistent with Kierkegaard's and with those of the Platonic tradition, but this much is to be expected—the life cycle is the life cycle, and the Genesis story implicates sex and death in the fall. As in Kierkegaard, generation presupposes human community because attendants surround the corpse, and the disembodied voice rebukes his mother.

The more important element of the poem is the bitter, complaining tone registered above the figures combined with the poem's location in experience. If we understand the voice of "To Tirzah" to be the voice of the corpse's disembodied spirit, we can read the poem as a dramatization of Haufniensis's principle that spirit and flesh stand at opposing poles, so that

the growth of the one signals a diminishing of the other. This principle can also be found in Blake's other works. "Where man is not nature is barren," say the creative-artistic denizens of Blake's hell (Erdman, 1982, p. 38). It is not inconsistent with Blake's presentation of the physical world as a Urizenic creation either, a point at which Blake is clearly drawing from Gnostic or esoteric sources which consistently understand the creation of the material world to be a ploy by a lesser deity to trap the primary deity.⁵ Nor is it inconsistent with any Platonically-inflected versions of Christianity influenced by the *Phaedo*: "We are in fact convinced that if we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything, we must get rid of the body and contemplate things by themselves with the soul by itself [so that the philosopher trains] himself throughout his life to live in a state as close as possible to death" (Hamilton and Cairns, 1985, pp. 49, 50).⁶

The poem's location in experience calls all these associations into question. At the point of an absolute opposition between flesh and spirit, the poem turns critical, satirical, perhaps even self-satirical. Spirit's complaint about enclosure in a body is mocked by the Biblical passage on the older man's robes. "It is raised a spiritual body" reminds Blake's readers that spirit is never divorced from some form of a body and that generation exists for the sake of regeneration, as Blake emphasizes in *Milton*: "Till Generation is swallowed up in Regeneration" (Erdman, 1982, p. 143). Leader's insistence that this quotation suggests "the conventional body/soul dichotomy" rather than "a more Blakean fusion" of the two seems forced and out of place given the actual words on the robe—"a *spiritual body*"—and their Biblical context (1981, p. 201). The object of satire here is not the Biblical passage but rather disembodied spirit's attitude toward flesh. Elements of Blake's works that seem to support spirit's rejection of flesh need to be kept within their proper contexts. The relevant proverbs of Hell articulate the point of view of the creative artist working at odds with the moralizing tendencies of Blake's day, but not objective truths. Matter as Urizenic creation is an element of Blake's mythology and as such narrates interior or psychological realities in external form.

Harold Bloom's early resistance to understanding Blake as a Gnostic thinker may be helpful here,⁷ as is Stuart Curran's useful discussion of Blake and Gnosticism in "Blake and the Gnostic Hyle: A Double Negative" (1972), as Gnostic thought is often associated with a rejection of material nature. Curran argues that Blake appropriated Gnostic myths to undermine them and that this resistance preserves Blake's central concerns, so that Blake's problem is not with physical matter itself but with its phenomenological profile. The Urizenic myths are not concerned with Blake's beliefs about

the real origins of the physical universe, but articulate his commentary on the relationship between self and nature to one whose thinking is bound by the ratio, by his "organs of perception," and by any conceptual scheme based solely upon sense organs (Erdman, 1982, p. 2). As Daniel Stemple succinctly puts it, Blake declares "independence from all that is merely 'natural': natural philosophy, natural religion, natural history, and *l'homme naturel*" (1975, p. 74). Blake rejects mechanical philosophy's phenomenological reconstruction of the natural.

When Blake speaks in his own voice, as he does on plate 3 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he asserts the importance of contraries. The voice of the Devil on plate 4, the creative artist's appropriation of Blake's dictum, identifies body and soul as interdependent contraries, affirming that "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses" (Erdman, 1982, p. 34). Generation in itself cannot be evil if "everything that lives is holy," a line that Blake repeats in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *America: A Prophecy*, and *The Four Zoas*, and that summarizes the attitude underlying the "Auguries of Innocence." Critique of generation in Blake's poetry, therefore, signals an experience point of view and its limitations, spirit's initial differentiation of itself from mind and body and its immediate sense of revulsion, but not Blake's rejection of nature itself.

Barbara Lefcowitz's perceptive "Blake and the Natural World" (1974) asserts that "to read the world of natural objects out of Blake is tantamount to reading the clay or bronze out of a piece of sculpture and reducing it to a confluence of spatial vectors" (p. 121), arguing that "the only valid generalization one can make about Blake's overall attitude toward nature is that he almost never treats it outside a human context" (p. 121). Blake never treats nature outside of a human context because his concern is not with nature but with competing phenomenologies of nature.⁸ For example, Blake complains on design 7 of his illustration of *The Divine Comedy* that "Every thing in Dantes Comedia shews That for Tyrannical Purposes he has made This World the Foundation of All & the Goddess Nature & not the Holy Ghost as poor Churchill said Nature thou art my Goddess" (Erdman, 1982, p. 689). Blake complains of nature rather than visionary imagination being the "Foundation of All" but not of the pernicious qualities of nature itself. The problem, we see, is of a misrelation between the individual and nature.

Generation is, therefore, a necessary and good part of existence so long as it remains subject to imaginative vision, a judgment strengthened when we realize that "The Ecchoing Green" is an innocence treatment of

generation. The obvious surface of the poem is its progression from sunrise to evening, establishing an implicit parallel between the life cycle and the cycle of the day. The playing children correspond to sunrise, and "Old John with white hair" corresponds to evening. This *Innocence* poem elides the afternoon, however, that which comes between sunrise and sunset, childhood and old age: mature adulthood, sexuality, and reproduction, the very elements of generation Thel feared facing the most. Adult sexuality appears only in a single line in the form of the laps of the mothers to which the children return at the end of the day, possibly an oblique reference to genital sexuality marking the end of childhood play. The poem's acceptance of the day and life cycle and its representation of the end of the day and life cycle as one of joyful memory carry with them an implicit acceptance of death critical of "To Tirzah," challenging its tone of bitter complaint. Blake's emphasis upon the negative aspects of generation proceeds from his assessment of London's psycho-spiritual condition. Few saw with their minds, most only with their eye.

With these principles in mind, we can turn to Blake's treatment of fallen generation, a theme ranging so profusely across Blake's works from the *Songs of Experience* to *Jerusalem* that we should understand it as one of Blake's primary concerns, perhaps even his central one. In this, he is like Kierkegaard. Consistent with apocalyptic patterns, Blake's treatment of fallen generation is important as a theme in itself, important for its meaning to everyday life, and important for what it points to beyond itself. Oothoon's plight—being trapped between a hyper-aggressive male to whom she is bound and a hyper-passive male by whom she is bound—identifies her as Blake's Job, subject to Job's vindication and Job's frailties. *Visions*'s narrative structure even imitates the book of Job. Both narratives begin with an initial catastrophe: Job loses his family, and Oothoon is raped. This catastrophe is followed by a period of inarticulate mourning. Job is silent for seven days after his friends arrive, while Oothoon howls "incessant writhing her soft snowy limbs" before calling "Theotormons Eagles to prey upon her flesh" (Erdman, 1982, p. 46). After a period of silence, both Job and Oothoon issue their respective laments. Both narratives consist exclusively of dialog from the beginning of their protagonists' complaint to the end. God responds to Job with a series of questions; Oothoon receives the same kind of response from Theotormon, who in *Visions* may not only be the God-tormented one, but a representative of the tormenting God, who asks questions as Job's God did, but unlike Job's God, is himself a source of Oothoon's ongoing suffering.

D. G. Gillham's "Blake: Visions of the Daughters of Albion" (1968) identifies Bromion and Theotormon as "two parts of a single psyche" (qtd. in Wilkie, 1990, p. 109), which Wilkie believes explains "why Oothoon does not abandon Theotormon" (1990, p. 110). This plausible reading follows Blake's overall pattern of fallenness into division. If fallenness is division, then in Blake's opinion, female sexual agency—particularly innocent female sexual agency, not the evil Female Will of Blake's other works—divides the passive and aggressive aspects of male personality, setting them at odds with one another and in a state of anxiety toward the woman herself. Given *Vision's* narrative sympathy with Oothoon, this male response to female sexual agency is Blake's critique of English male subjectivity rather than of female desire. *Visions* provides a narrative demonstration of Haufniensis's principle that "woman is more sensuous than man," along with a description of the negative ramifications of this state of affairs within Blake's social context. The dialogic narrative that is *Visions*, then, presents Oothoon on the one hand pressuring Theotormon toward reintegration (which would make possible Theotormon's acceptance of Oothoon), and Theotormon/Bromion articulating the forces resisting this pressure.

Consistent with an experience drama, each character answers the other with a series of questions, some of them not entirely rhetorical. Oothoon's questions rhetorically affirm meaningful distinctions: e.g., "Does he who contemns poverty, and he who turns with abhorrence / From usury: feel the same passion or are they moved alike?" (Erdman, 1982, p. 48). Bromion's questions assert essential identifications: "And is there not one law for both the lion and the ox?" (Erdman, 1982, p. 48). Theotormon's questions focus upon the individual subject, specifically himself: "Tell me what is the night or day to one o'erflowed with woe?" (Erdman, 1982, p. 47). Bromion's and Oothoon's questions implicitly demand positive responses, but Theotormon's questions affirm only a series of denials. There is no day or night to one overflowed with woe; there is no substance to thought; sorrows swim in no river, and so on. Oothoon, however, has the last word, condemning both Bromion and Theotormon as two sides of the same Urizenic impulse—"Can that be Love, that drinks another as a sponge drinks water? [Bromion] / That clouds with jealousy his nights, with weepings all the day [Theotormon]" (Erdman, 1982, p. 50)—but offers a way out to Theotormon through other lovers.

Oothoon makes this offer because Theotormon's sexuality has turned masturbatory. Shutting himself up from the joys of Oothoon's womb, he forgets "to generate," instead creating "an amorous image / In the shadows

of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow" [which are ultimately . . .] "The self enjoyings of self denial" (Erdman, 1982, p. 50). Oothoon's desire to recover innocent, freely given sexuality leads her to condemn Theotormon's *refusal to participate in generation*. Oothoon's willingness to offer him other women without jealousy proceeds from her hope to lead him out of himself, but Theotormon, ultimately a demonic, self-enclosed character by Haufniensis's standards (described in Chapter 5), prefers to sit "Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire" (Erdman, 1982, p. 51). These are the principle elements of Blake's critique of fallen generation: it divides the self; it alienates feminine, sensual joy through both male aggression and male introversion; and it alienates both of these from each other, so that male sexuality finds its only expression through the aggressive impulse signified by Bromion.

This pattern repeats itself across Blake's other works engaging fallen generation. The Preludium to *America: A Prophecy* begins with a chained Orc freeing himself to violently seize the shadowy daughter of Urthona. In his commentary for the Illuminated Books series, Dörrbecker refuses to see this event as anything other than a rape, but ignores significant textual evidence to the contrary. Blake's introduction to the shadowy female teaches us that she is "Invulnerable tho' naked" (Erdman, 1982, p. 51), that she is armed with a quiver and bow, and that she is hidden from Orc's sight by clouds—her hiddenness and armor constituting her invulnerability. When "Round the terrific loins he seiz'd the panting struggling womb" the womb "joy'd" and, most importantly at that moment, "she put aside her clouds & smiled her first-born smile" (Erdman, 1982, p. 52). Because the virgin was invulnerable, Orc could not have had her until she willingly set aside her clouds. Interestingly, it is the virgin who cries afterwards, "I know thee, I have found thee, & I will not let thee go" (Erdman, 1982, p. 52), not Orc. This daughter of Urthona received the response from Orc that Oothoon wanted from Theotormon—he pursued her aggressively. This reading does not invalidate Dörrbecker's fundamental disgust with the violence of the act, but allows Orc's ravishing of the Shadowy Female to function as part of Blake's critique of fallen generation.

The Four Zoas, Blake's project of the late 1790s, is his last and fullest treatment of generation in the 1790s. Like previous works treating this theme, *Zoas* narrates, according to the subtitle, "The torments of Love & Jealousy in The Death and Judgment of Albion the Ancient Man" (Erdman, 1982, p. 300). By this point at the latest, Blake had conceived of "Four Mighty Ones . . . in every Man" (Erdman, 1982, p. 300) and Los as "the fourth immortal starry one" (Erdman, 1982, p. 301). The poem narrates "His fall

into Division & his Resurrection to Unity / His fall into the Generation of Decay & Death & his Regeneration / by the Resurrection from the dead" (Erdman, 1982, p. 301). It begins with Tharmas lamenting the loss of his emanations to Enion, who out of jealousy took away Jerusalem from Tharmas's "inmost Soul" (Erdman, 1982, p. 301). Enion's response registers the dominance of Bromion-like religiosity and aggression in her own psychology, for she looks into "the secret soul of him I lov'd / And in the Dark recesses found Sin & cannot return" (Erdman, 1982, p. 301).

Tharmas responds with a complaint about Enion's hypervigilance, agreeing with her judgment but implying that there is something unnatural about Enion's close examination of "every little fibre of my soul" (Erdman, 1982, p. 302). Enion responds with a reciprocal desire to "hide from [Tharmas's] searching eyes" and weaves a tabernacle for Jerusalem out of sinewy threads from her bosom (Erdman, 1982, p. 302): the creation of yet another shadowy female. Tharmas dies, and his corpse sinks down into the sea, but Enion draws his Spectre out of his feet. Enion then draws out Tharmas's every nerve to build "Her woof of terror" (Erdman, 1982, p. 302). This weaving takes nine days and nights—the nine nights of the poem—and as she works her woof, it begins to take on a life and "will / Of its own perverse & wayward" (Erdman, 1982, p. 302). When her work is complete, she finds herself "Terrified in her own Creation" (Erdman, 1982, p. 303). Enion's woof dominates the drama's psychological landscape and symbolizes one female response to male unfaithfulness—bitter hiding, the shadowy female's cloud.

Blake's treatment of generation in *The Four Zoas* is a significant departure from his earlier treatments. The Creator figure is the female Enion, not the male Urizen, and the male principle is weaker than and the victim of the female, perhaps finding some slight parallel in Diotima's indoctrination of Socrates into the meaning of love. Blake's treatment of 1790s sexual politics develops to the point that his critique of generation becomes an explicit articulation of creation anxiety. When the *Zoas* narrative describes Enion as "Terrified in her own Creation," Blake's critique of generation becomes a trope for all forms of human self-creation, just as Diotima placed procreation on a continuum with all creative acts. When the social and political ramifications of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* associated with its critique of generation are taken into account, creation anxiety in Blake encompasses tensions between monarchy and democracy (Oothoon is the "soft soul of America") and science and religion (Bromion represents the "world of economic, religious, and sexual oppression"; Eaves, Essick, and Viscomi, 1993, p. 227). The *Zoas* myth and the earlier Urizenic myths encompass nature vs. artifice. All of these tensions are first developed in the earlier Urizenic creation myths.

Urizen the Reflective-Aesthetic King

Blake's critique of generation has taken us up to his clearest articulation of creation anxiety in *The Four Zoas*. From this point we need to return to Blake's first treatment of creation anxiety, found in *The [First] Book of Urizen*.⁹ Urizen in *The [First] Book of Urizen* appears in the form of a white-haired patriarchal figure as he does elsewhere. On the cover page, he is squatting in front of a pair of blank stone tablets set between a pair of trees, his right foot oddly crossing over the front of his body so that he can use his big toe to follow lines of text in a book lying open in front of him. Most commentators believe that his eyes are closed, but the eyes of anyone holding their head erect while looking down to read always appear closed. His head is oriented directly forward rather than even slightly turned toward the text, creating the impression for some readers that he is praying. Both hands are resting upon open books, one on each side, as Urizen is apparently copying text from the book in front of him onto two other books. One hand is clearly holding a quill while another is holding an instrument many critics identify as an engraving tool. Urizen's appearance as a patriarchal, white-haired lawgiver identifies him as Blake's embodiment of the complex psychological forces underlying England's idealization of a patriarchal, unifying monarchy. As such, he represents an element of Blake's response to tensions between monarchy and democracy, Blake's embodiment of one pole of that tension.

But Urizen first appears in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. Oothoon's lament after a day and a night of silence introduces Urizen to Blake's mythological works:

Then Oothoon waited silent all the day, and all the night,
 But when morn arose, her lamentation renewd,
 The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs.
 O Urizen! Creator of men! mistaken Demon of heaven:
 Thy joys are tears! thy labour vain, to form men to thine image. (Erdman, 1982, p. 48)

Urizen appears in *Visions* literally out of nowhere. With no introduction or subsequent development, Oothoon names him the "creator of men," identifying him as the origin of Bromion's aggression and Theotormon's passivity. Enitharmon similarly invokes Urizen in *The Four Zoas*, answering the Spectre of Tharmas "with a dropping tear & frowning / Dark" (Erdman, 1982, p. 305) that "The Fallen Man takes his repose: Urizen sleeps in the

porch" (Erdman, 1982, p. 305). Enitharmon, in her "Scorn & Indignation" at Los, calls upon Urizen to descend "with horse & chariots," angrily commanding Los to "Threaten not me O visionary thine the punishment" (Erdman, 1982, p. 306). The cold, controlling rationality of the Urizenic impulse arises from fallen generation and its characteristic division between the sexes and is named into being by the female pole of this division. Within Blake's corpus, the Urizenic and all associated with it is a response to the threatened anger of the female, a female who understands the Urizenic for what it is.

Threats to the female manifest themselves in Blake's mythological works in the form of Bromion's aggression or Enion's and then Enitharmon's jealousy. The point is not to identify the origin of the division between the sexes but to see how each sex can potentially blame the other for "starting it" once a moral code has imposed itself upon the sexual relationship, a moral code that makes mutual recrimination possible. This reading is not intended to reduce Blake's mythology to a simple representation of everyday lovers' spats but rather to observe how Blake magnifies the everyday until it illuminates our interior lives and the social contexts defining them. *The Four Zoas'* claim that it is about the torments of love and jealousy should perhaps be taken more seriously.¹⁰ These torments, however, go a long way toward constituting the self, hence their contribution to Blake's critique of generation and its role in creation anxiety.

Significant verbal parallels in later mythological works reinforce associations among Bromion, Theotormon, and Urizen. Bromion's "And is there not one law for both the lion and the ox?" (Erdman, 1982, p. 48) finds a direct verbal parallel in Urizen's "One King, one God, one Law" (Erdman, 1982, p. 72) of *The [First] Book of Urizen*, while Theotormon's passivity finds a direct narrative parallel in Urizen's fall into "a stony sleep" (Erdman, 1982, p. 74). Note that Theotormon, the passive character, binds and controls both Bromion and Oothoon back to back, so that male passivity, once brought into being, stifles both male aggression and ideals for innocent sexuality associated with the female in Blake. Therefore, Blake's critique of the Urizenic proceeds from and originates within his contemplation of female oppression and the web of significations associated with it, including the possibility of innocent sexuality and unfallen generation. The Urizenic impulse subverts and defeats hope for a sustained and generated innocence, an impulse first conceived in opposition to this hope and originating in the female, so that in Blake the oppression of the female signifies the oppression of generated innocence. In this way, Blake explains the origin of a problem that Haufniensis could only pose.

Urizen's obsession with moral codes and laws superficially aligns him with Kierkegaard's conception of the ethical personality. However, for Urizen, these codes and laws are only significant insofar as they can be imposed upon others. Urizen's fall as narrated in *The [First] Book of Urizen* begins with his attempt to impose his law upon the Eternals. When they resist, he separates from them in order to create a world upon which he can impose his laws: "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" (Erdman, 1982, p. 70). For this reason, he despairs when he finds that the race he created cannot follow his laws: "He in darkness clos'd, view'd all his race / And his soul sicken'd! he curs'd / Both sons & daughters; for he saw / That no flesh nor spirit could keep / His iron laws one moment" (Erdman, 1982, p. 81). Moral law as a system to be imposed upon others rather than a vehicle of self-definition is not the approach of the Kierkegaardian ethical, since Kierkegaard's ethical subjectivity primarily understands ethical requirements as requirements imposed upon the self. To quote once again "B" from *Either/Or II*, "In choosing itself, the personality chooses itself ethically" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 177).

Since there is little indication anywhere in Blake's mythology that Urizen understands the moral law except as a system of external requirements to be imposed upon others, a Kierkegaardian reading understands that Urizen has not yet chosen himself. Because Urizen relates to ethical requirements as an *external* system, he is best understood as an aesthetic rather than an ethical personality; because he constructs morality into a *system*, he is a reflective-aesthetic personality. As a result, Blake's critique of fallen reason converges with Kierkegaard's at this point, and in ways that will be more obvious after a comparison between Blake's and Kierkegaard's concept of the imagination and of irony. Kierkegaard's concept of the imagination helps illuminate Urizen's nature as a creator, while Kierkegaard's concept of irony helps illuminate Blake's notion of the self being created.

Reason and Imagination in Blake and Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard developed his concept of the imagination largely in response to his study of German Romanticism. Gouwens sums up Kierkegaard's critique of role of the imagination in German Romanticism with this quotation critical of Schlegel's *Lucinde* from Kierkegaard's *On the Concept of Irony*:

This (letting fantasy alone prevail) is repeated throughout *Lucinde*. Who would be so inhuman as not to be able to enjoy the free play of fantasy,

but that does not imply that all of life should be abandoned to imaginative intuition. When fantasy alone gains the upper hand in this way, it exhausts and anesthetizes the soul, robs it of all moral tension, makes life a dream. But this is essentially what *Lucinde* attempts to promote. (1989, p. 292n)

Note that Kierkegaard is not critical of “the free play of fantasy” itself but rather the free play of fantasy governing all of life and thought. Kierkegaard requires that the aesthetic impulse always be given a place. Like Blake, Kierkegaard does not critique the impulse itself, but specific misrelations in which it is involved. In Gouwens’s opinion, Kierkegaard especially attacked German Romanticism’s belief that through the imagination the individual is “even able to find union with the infinite” (1989, p. 16). To quote Schlegel, “The understanding, says the author of *Speeches on Religion*, knows only the universe; let the imagination rule, and you have a God. Quite right. The imagination is man’s organ for the Godhead” (qtd. in Gouwens, 1989, p. 31). The imagination serves a vital role in all stages of Kierkegaardian existential development as the capacity *instar omnium*, but the imagination is to serve, not displace, other human capabilities. Kierkegaard would not, with Keats, say that the “Imagination may be compared to Adam’s dream—he awoke and found it truth” (Keats, 2007, p. 69). He instead consistently maintained an “infinite qualitative difference” between God and humanity in opposition to Romantic semi-panteisms.¹¹ The imagination by itself does not transform possibility into actuality or unite the individual with God. Possibility transforms into actuality only through decision, which is provoked by the imagination but is not to be identified with it.

On some of these specific points, Kierkegaard’s concept of the imagination seems to be at odds with Blake’s, for whom the imagination is a Divine-human capacity. Blake’s most extensive discussions of the imagination are found in “A Vision of the Last Judgment” and in his letter to Trusler of August 23rd, 1799. The former emphasizes that through the imagination, individuals converse with “Eternal Realities” that are “the Permanent Realities of Every Thing” in contrast to the “World of Generation & death” (Erdman, 1982, p. 555, 562). Blake’s letter to Trusler emphasizes the individual nature of the human imagination, explaining that “Every body does not see alike” (Erdman, 1982, p. 702). The content of imagination is, in fact, that which defines a person: “As a man is So he Sees” (Erdman, 1982, p. 702). As Frye explains, in Blake the “imaginative mind, therefore, is the one which has realized its own freedom and understood that perception is self-development” (1969, p. 23). Frye’s contrast of Blake’s imagination with Locke’s notion of common sense—Blake understanding common sense in

Locke as the uniformity of sense perception within a passively receptive mind—identifies the Blakean imagination as the means by which the individual differentiates herself from her environment, engaging in active decision rather than merely passive reception. Milton's "The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself" (Erdman, 1982, p. 132), therefore, encompasses Kierkegaard's understanding of the imagination as the capacity *instar omnium* in addition to its function in a developmental process consisting of a differentiation of self from environment. The main differences between Kierkegaard and Blake on the imagination are polemic. Blake was not concerned with the misuse of imagination as Kierkegaard was, but with its absolute neglect.

Kierkegaard also subjects German Romantic irony to critique, irony being closely associated with the imagination by the Romantics. Romantic irony involves "a distancing of the self from the given world of experience" (Gouwens, 1989, p. 31). Following Hegel, Kierkegaard defines Romantic irony in *On the Concept of Irony* as "infinite absolute negativity":

It is negativity, because it only negates; it is infinite, because it does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute, because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not. The irony establishes nothing, because that which is to be established lies behind it. (1989, p. 261)

Romantic irony as infinite absolute negativity affirms nothing, consistently negates everything, and does so from a non-position. Romantic irony is not even positive in relation to something else but is absolutely negative. In *On the Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard locates the birth of subjectivity in irony and argues that Socratic irony is the historical precursor to Romantic irony. In German Romantic irony, "[The ironic subject] is free from the constraint in which the given actuality holds the subject, but he is negatively free and as such is suspended, because there is nothing that holds him" (1989, p. 262). This suspension in possibility is a state of refusal to decide. Through irony the aesthetic—the Romantic—individual imagines numerous possibilities for the self while negating all possibilities as actualities to be chosen, but an unchosen self still remains lurking behind these possibilities, considering them. This self that has not been freely chosen is the "higher something that still is not," "that which is to be established" lying behind Romantic irony.

In "Living Poetically: Kierkegaard and German Romanticism" (1995), Sylvia Walsh emphasizes that to Kierkegaard, Romantic irony goes far beyond Socrates, who "negated only the given actuality or established order

of his time, not actuality as such"; instead, "romantic ironists find the whole of existence to be inadequate, meaningless, and boring" (p. 190). She continues, "Thus they seek to free themselves from the historical realm and to set in its place a self-created actuality springing from the imagination" (Walsh, 1995, p. 190). This freedom "from the historical realm" is a significant, positive movement in that it is the beginning of a differentiation of self from environment. Walsh demonstrates that Kierkegaard's concept of irony is at least partially derived from Hegel's introduction to his *Aesthetics*. Gouwens qualifies Walsh's observation, similarly observing that in "many ways Kierkegaard's critique of Romantic irony is informed by Hegel's criticisms," but he also asserts that Kierkegaard believes that "Hegel distorts Socrates by discounting the latter's irony, seeing him simply as the founder of morality" (1989, p. 56). Common to Gouwens's and Walsh's readings is the observation that the artistically or poetically lived life is only lived when, in Hegel's words, it "remains for me a mere show and assumes a shape wholly in my power" (qtd. in Walsh, 1995, p. 190). Gouwens further adds that Kierkegaard's presentation of Socratic irony distinguishes it from Romantic irony by emphasizing its ethical component. Socratic irony is "infinite absolute negativity" in relationship to the human social world, but positively (ethically) oriented toward the good, while Romantic irony as infinite absolute negativity "loses both the ideal and the actual" (Gouwens, 1989, p. 59), the ideal constituting the ethical component of Socratic irony.

John D. Mullen adds that "the ironic stance provides no foundations for moral restrictions," graphically illustrating his point from Johannes's seduction of Cordelia in "The Seducer's Diary": "And so Johannes prepares Cordelia as one would marinate a steak" (1978, p. 658). Like Gouwens, Mullen emphasizes Romantic irony's lack of an ethical component, a lack distinguishing it from Socratic irony. If the ironist can make of himself whatever he wants, and if there are no moral restrictions, then he can also make of others whatever he wants. Johannes the reflective aesthete, the seducer, makes Cordelia his carefully crafted work of art, one so carefully crafted, in fact, that as he records his progress, every "particular little episode" has its significance. Unlike Byron's Don Juan, Johannes is a reflective character.

Irony enthalls postmodernism to the point of being, perhaps, its centrally defining feature. Irony is theorized as perspectivalism, which underlies German Romanticism's own emphases upon fragmentation, indeterminacy, hybridization, performance-participation, constructionism, and immanence.¹² If German Romanticism is Medievalism after the Enlightenment, Postmodernism is Romanticism after Modernism. However, many

postmodern critics miss the critique of irony in Blake and Kierkegaard, misunderstanding a view of irony more sophisticated and nuanced than postmodernism's as a mere anticipation of postmodern thought. One such misreading can be found in Saree Makdisi's *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (2003). Makdisi's generally useful, enlightening study consistently and mistakenly emphasizes that in Blake, freedom is also "freedom from confinement into a singular selfhood (organism)" (2003, p. 98), mistaken at least as he defines these terms. Makdisi's understanding of freedom leads him to celebrate Oothoon's willingness to catch other lovers for Theotormon at the end of *Visions*. However, Makdisi forgets that this offer is Oothoon's desperate reaction to her rape, imprisonment, and ongoing rejection by Theotormon, not the position from which she started. Blake's reflective-aesthetic personalities, like Kierkegaard's, are infamous for their damaging mistreatment of women.

Furthermore, when Makdisi reads "one law for the lion and the ox is oppression," he reads critique not only of the lion being treated like an ox, but also critique of the lion remaining "a lion and the ox an ox" (2003, p. 180). While, as Makdisi points out, Blake would reject the thought of all "lions" being treated interchangeably, in Blake it is the lion's essential "lion-ness" that requires it to be treated differently from the ox. Blake openly and repeatedly affirmed the ideal of a unitary being: "Innate Ideas. are in Every Man Born with him. they are <truly> Himself" (Erdman, 1982, p. 648). *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* narrates the "fall into Division" and "Resurrection to Unity," asserting that "Four Mighty ones are in Every man; / a Perfect Unity" (Erdman, 1982, p. 301, 300), while *Milton's* language is perhaps the most explicit of all: "Individual Identities never change nor cease" (Erdman, 1982, p. 132). Blake's ideal, like Kierkegaard's, is of a synthetic unitary being, but one achieved through a process of becoming which is initiated by individual decision rather than through a single, externally imposed law. That law is the product of a fragmentary, Urizenic consciousness.

Understanding "creation" in creation anxiety is to understand it in relationship to a continuum of all human creative acts, ranging from procreation to the growth of the human spirit. Against the background of the classical developmental model, artificial human creations are as monstrous as their creators, not only because they subvert procreation, but also because they embody their creators' worst characteristics: jealousy, fear, weakness, and aggression—all the characteristics of the state of fallen generation in which their creators find themselves. Urizen, the subject of the next chapter, embodies this fallen creator's consciousness and is the meeting point of all of England's self-defining cultural tensions.

Chapter 5

Creation Anxiety and *The [First] Book of Urizen*

Urizen the Creator-Monarch

Blake's chief creator, Urizen, embodies both creation anxiety and its sources in the tensions between monarchy and democracy, science and religion, and nature and artifice. Urizen, as Blake's fallen creator, is the site of a convergence between two rival creation narratives that strongly influenced Blake: Christian and Gnostic. Some grasp of the nature of each of these traditions and their differences from one another is necessary in order to understand the complexity of Blake's engagement with both of these traditions, so we will spend some time discussing Gnosticism and its profile in Blake's work. In the end, we will see that Blake used a Gnostic narrative structure to describe Urizen as a Gnostic sub-deity who has trapped and usurped the true God—the God of Blake's visionary Christianity—within a phenomenology of material nature derived from (or given to) Bacon, Newton, and Locke. Furthermore, we will see that as a fallen sub-deity, Urizen is a Satanic or demonic character, and that Haufniensis's concept of the demonic in *The Concept of Anxiety* can help us understand the characteristics of Blake's demon-creator Urizen, by extension helping us understand the deformations of consciousness within the creator figure anticipated and feared by narratives of creation anxiety.¹

Blake's idealization of a unitary being of which Urizen is a part renders his critique of Urizenic false religious consciousness consistent with Augustine's discussion of the nature of evil in Chapter 7 of the *Confessions*, in which "whatsoever is, is good . . . each by itself is good, and the sum of all of them is very good, for our God made all things very good" (1955, p. 148).² Evil is not a thing in itself but a misrelation between good things initiated by a misdirection of the will. Everything that exists participates in the goodness of existence, or, as Blake would say, "every thing that lives is holy." Urizen is therefore not irredeemably evil, unlike the traditional Christian

Satan, but fallen, and the evils that he commits, as well as his own state of being fallen, are tragic misdirections of a good impulse. Blake's critique of Urizenic consciousness is not a critique of "traditional Christianity," as if it was only one thing, but rather affirms one strain within it against another.

It is a mistake to read Blake's critique of Anglican Christianity as a critique of Christianity as a whole, because the Anglican church does not encompass the entire range of Christian orthodoxy. For example, Donald Ault's review (2000) of Peterfreund's *Selfhood and Redemption in Blake's Songs* (1998) accurately registers Blake's critique of what the Trinity *becomes* in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but too easily assumes from this critique that Blake has adopted an anti-Trinitarian position. Blake's critique of what the Trinity becomes in Milton may, in fact, be an affirmation of the Trinity properly understood, especially since it is hardly clear that Milton himself was an orthodox Trinitarian. While Blake may have held anti-Trinitarian beliefs, Blake's critique of Milton in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* cannot be used to support either this assumption or its opposite, and by extension, to define his relationship to a too-generically defined "orthodox Christianity."

Jon Mee's otherwise excellent *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (1992) falls into similar errors. Mee presents a convincing, important case for intimately associating Blake with "the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s" but too easily and too persistently identifies the British church/state complex with a generically understood "traditional Christianity" or "orthodox Christianity" against which he contrasts Blake's attitude. Britain's and Denmark's respective church/state complexes, in which the monarch was also the head of the church, was radically different from the church/state complex of Catholic countries in which the local head of state was not identical to the head of the church, who existed at some remove both geographically and politically. This arrangement in Catholic nations created a greater potential for tensions between state-sponsored faith and political governance, tensions that existed in England long before England's break with Catholicism—usually over the payments of tithes and the appointment of bishops. William Rufus's (1087–1100) treatment of Anselm, or King John's (1199–1216) conflicts with Rome over the appointment of a new archbishop of Canterbury, which culminated in England being placed under interdiction, are particularly notable examples of these tensions.³

This fault weakens Mee's discussion of *The [First] Book of Urizen*, especially his argument that

in *The Book of Urizen* Blake offers an account of the stultifying power of the abstract mystification vilified by Priestley which subverts orthodox accounts of the Creation.

At the very heart of this subversion is the way Blake profanes scripture by identifying its God with his arch adversary Satan. Urizen's Creation is simultaneously his Fall from Eternity. Recognition of this mixed role is reinforced by a number of references which link Urizen to Milton's Satan. (p. 178)

In this context, Mee accurately identifies the God of the English church/state complex with the God of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but loses sight of the many varieties of Christian orthodoxy and, therefore, fails to consider the possibility that Blake may be appropriating a rival Christian tradition. This series of identifications leads him to read *The [First] Book of Urizen* as an account of the creation of the physical universe so, by extension, as critique of a nonspecific, generically "Christian" conception of God. Mee can only assume these identifications by ignoring specific content both in Blake and orthodox Christian traditions distinct and very different from the Anglican church (which is hardly a homogeneous body itself). To maintain this reading, Mee elides Blake's own juxtaposition of the Bible against Milton's *Paradise Lost* in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

One specific line from the well-known passage in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* about Milton and *Paradise Lost* especially stands out: "But in the Book of Job Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan" (Erdman, 1982, p. 34). Blake asserts here that the character of Satan in the Book of Job is equivalent to the character of the Messiah in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.⁴ Again, Blake emphasizes phenomenological equivalencies developed from a shared literary tradition, as it hardly makes sense to claim that the author of Job was responding to John Milton. Blake, who is more concerned with the imaginative or phenomenological profiles of the Messiah and Satan than with specific points of doctrine within various Christian traditions, treats the two as literary characters, who temporally and spatially coexist within the minds of his contemporaries. Satan in the Book of Job is the accuser, the prosecuting attorney condemning Job. The God of the Book of Job expresses unqualified confidence in Job, however. It was God who said that Job was "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 2:8), while Satan suggested that Job only served God because of his material blessings: "put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Job 2:11). This passage from Blake's *Marriage*, therefore, registers an observed difference between the God of the Book of Job, who believes in humanity, and the God of the English church/state complex and of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, who condemns humanity. Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasms* misses the possibility that Blake pits the Bible against the English church/state complex, or more accurately, one Biblical tradition against another.

One credible response might be that Blake's understanding of Scripture is simply non-traditional or, better, visionary. Blake's reading is, in other words, unique to Blake, so that he opposes his own original reading of the Bible against "traditional" readings of the Bible. However, we have seen how both Blake and Kierkegaard had close affinities to pre-Reformation traditions of Christian thought that allowed them to engage modern traditions represented by their respective church/state complexes.⁵ The influence of medieval-era thought on William Blake has long been taken for granted. The work of Northrop Frye, whose *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) . . . with its 'Four Essays' and its four-fold system of interpretation . . . borrowed in part from medieval theories of polysemy" (N. M. Williams, 2006, p. 17), especially as they were adapted by Blake, is perhaps the most influential explication of medieval influences upon Blake. This influence was taken for granted in Blake scholarship in the decades prior to Frye, so that Anthony Blunt could say in 1938, "Blake's method of illumination has always been regarded as in some sense an attempt to adapt the methods of printing in order to achieve the results obtained by mediaeval illuminators" (1973, p. 73). Blake's adaptation of medieval artistic conventions—itsself very dependent upon the Christian-Hellenic tradition—extends as we have seen to the material production of Blake's manuscripts themselves, and to Blake's view of texts and how they should be interpreted.

Insufficient attention to the medieval tradition and its influences upon Blake also leads to misunderstandings of the nature of Gnostic influences on Blake. Gnosticism has been widely, uncritically, and too generically identified in Blake criticism with "rebellion against tradition," so that Blake's use of Gnostic sources becomes consonant with the view that Blake rebelled against "orthodox Christianity." To this thinking, Blake is a Gnostic, and his Urizen myth a literal creation account. What is needed at this juncture is a clearer view of what Gnosticism is, how Blake used it, and how Blake's thought differed from Gnostic thought. The influence, direct or indirect, of Gnostic source material upon Blake is very difficult to deny, especially in *The [First] Book of Urizen*. Hans Jonas's *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (1963) identifies many themes in Gnostic religions that readers of Blake can readily identify and has been an important work within Blake criticism and beyond. Jonas contrasts Gnosticism with the Ciceronian tradition and claims that the Stoic habit of attributing order to the universe, praised in the Ciceronian tradition, is treated with "opprobrium" in Gnostic religions (1963, p. 241). Jonas goes on: "Order and law is the cosmos here too, but rigid and inimical order, tyrannical and evil law, devoid of meaning and goodness, alien to the

purposes of man and to his inner essence" (1963, p. 250). Jonas even begins to use—deliberately or consciously(?)—Blakean language: "God and world, God and nature, spirit and nature, become [in Gnostic religions] divorced, alien to each other, even contraries" (1963, p. 251). Jonas's work provides the ground for many critics' association of Gnosticism with resistance to authority because of statements such as these, but reading this emphasis into Jonas's work misses the point. Jonas juxtaposes Gnosticism's rejection of the material cosmos against Stoic and Christian acceptance of it. Because Gnostic thought rejects material nature, it also rejects the orderliness of material nature, but not order in itself.

Jonas accounts for Gnostic rejection of material nature through his explanation of Gnostic religions' controlling narrative, in which physical matter was created by one or several emanation(s) of the primary deity for the purpose of trapping the primary deity within it, allowing the emanation(s) to take the primary deity's place. This attempt is only partially successful, however. Some of the primary deity remains unbound and some was bound, human beings being sparks of the primary deity trapped within the prison house of matter, trying to escape and return to our source, the primary deity. As a result, "the world is the creation not of God but of some inferior principle, whose inferiority is a perversion of the divine, and whose main traits are dominion and power" (Jonas, 1963, p. 252), a narrative reminiscent of *The [First] Book of Urizen*. This division between God and the physical universe is not merely a passive quality of the cosmos but an active one. The physical universe actively and willfully posits itself as "a *force alienating* from God" (Jonas, 1963, p. 252, his emphasis), again very similar to Blake's critique of generation. Since Gnostic religions resist the world and the "all-too-pervading completeness" of its order (1963, p. 253), Jonas presents Gnosticism as "unorthodox and subversive" in relationship to the "*classical-pagan*" tradition against which it set itself (1963, p. 239, his emphasis), a classical-pagan tradition appropriated by Christianity by the second century and carried forward.

However, recent scholarship has questioned Jonas's account of Gnosticism. An example of more recent work on Gnosticism and Jonas's place within contemporary scholarship on Gnosticism is Michael Waldstein's "Hans Jonas' Construct 'Gnosticism': Analysis and Critique" (2000). According to Waldstein, Jonas's initial work on Gnosticism was heavily influenced by "Spengler's account of 'Arabian culture' [in *Decline of the West*] and . . . the normative understanding of de-objectivated [*Entweltlichung*] existence in the early philosophy of Heidegger" (2000, p. 341). Jonas was a former student of Heidegger, Heidegger being the supervisor of Jonas's doctoral

dissertation on Gnostic movements, “Der Begriff der Gnosis” (Waldstein, 2000, p. 361). Jonas drew from Spengler’s account of Arabian culture an apocalyptic emphasis that perceives space and time as “‘Cave’ or ‘Cavern’ . . . a limited dark space in which persons are confined, a space penetrated from the outside by mysterious light” (Waldstein, 2000, p. 350 n31). Such an image should resonate with any reader of Blake. Spengler derived his notion of “cultures as organisms. . . ultimately from Schelling” (Waldstein, 2000, p. 348), developing an organic-Romantic view of cultures that resonates with Kierkegaard’s presentation of the development of culture from the Greek (aesthetic, body) through the Hebrew (ethical, soul) to the Christian (religious, spirit) in *The Concept of Anxiety*. Furthermore, Jonas’s early work argues that in Gnosticism, the subject, “having symbolized itself by projecting itself in objectivations,” forces “human existence. . . [to] return through these objectivations to itself in order to interpret itself” (Waldstein, 2000, p. 358)—virtually a description of Kierkegaard’s and Blake’s methodology, the chief difference being that in Blake and Kierkegaard, these “objectivations” are deliberate fictions.

Jonas’s presentation of Gnosticism is already a deliberately, though indirectly, post-Romantic presentation of Gnosticism, perhaps almost Kierkegaardian—all the more so for the influence of Schelling through Spengler. Jonas’s post-Romantic heritage makes his work very appealing to Romanticists as it exhibits familiar patterns. Existentialism—which, given our study of Kierkegaard, should appear to be a late development of Romanticism—was a key to unlocking Gnostic sources in the early phases of Jonas’s work. Later in his life, after World War II and the Holocaust, after Heidegger’s support of National Socialism, Jonas reversed his position, believing instead that Gnosticism was the key to understanding twentieth-century Existentialism, asserting persuasively that both are examples of “metaphysical anti-Semitism” (qtd. in Waldstein, 2000, p. 345). Jonas’s *The Gnostic Religion* is, therefore, a later work reflecting this change in opinion but maintains his consistent belief that both Existentialism and Gnosticism are similar, mutually enlightening phenomena. Despite Jonas’s appeal to Romantic studies, recent scholarship on Gnosticism “shake[s] the two main pillars upon which Jonas’s construct rests” (Waldstein, 2000, p. 370) and seems to be following Michael Allen Williams’s *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (1996) in its rejection of past characterizations of Gnostic religions.

Jonas’s language and his widely disseminated presentation of Gnosticism have led Blake scholars to romanticize both Gnosticism and Blake’s appropriation of this tradition. For example, Clark Emery, whose Introduction

to *William Blake: The Book of Urizen* (1966) cites Jonas as one of his sources on Gnosticism, associates Blake with a generic Gnostic tradition that he mined for “alternative doctrines” (p. 4). He defines Gnosticism as resistance to all “traditions” so thoroughly that even “Humanism, Scientism, and Reformationism” (and elsewhere Neo-Platonism) are indebted to, or forms of, Gnosticism (p. 7). Blake, with the Gnostics, is on the side of the “heretics” rather than “the authoritarians,” and his work is an “original contribution to the literature of the Other Orthodoxy” (Emery, 1966, pp. 21, 20). Christian orthodoxy in Emery’s presentation is perpetuated by “crude realists, literalizers, and historicizers” within authoritarian hierarchies which are set in opposition to “the dynamic and flexible teachings of the Gnosis” (1966, p. 4).

In a more sophisticated presentation, Stuart Peterfreund’s *William Blake in a Newtonian World: Essays on Literature as Art and Science* (1998) similarly romanticizes Gnostic religions, positing a “Gnostic moment” opposing “the establishment of structures of authority in the name of a dominant ideology” (pp. 88–90) and any “reified structure of patriarchal authority” (p. 88). Peterfreund associates dominant ideologies with views of language that assume a “totalizing metonymy capable of perfect and complete substitutive ‘naming’ to attain those ends” (1998, p. 87). Gnostics were apparently proto-English dissenters in Peterfreund’s view, producing a document that “lends itself to a radical program of social reform, even leveling” (1998, p. 94), heroically resisting movements that exclude pluralism and valorize dogma (1998, p. 102), as if Gnostic religions had no dogma of their own. In Peterfreund’s view, Blake “publicly embraced Gnosticism” (1998, p. 96). His evidence is Robinson’s record of a single private conversation between him and Blake. In Peterfreund’s presentation of Gnosticism, the word “Gnosticism” has become “a ‘sick sign,’ that has come to mean too much, and therefore perhaps very little” (M. A. Williams, 1996, p. 4).

Peterfreund’s description of Gnostic religions exaggerates Jonas’s presentation. Both Emery and Peterfreund fail to distinguish between Gnostic material in its own social context and the uses to which eighteenth-century writers, including Blake, put Gnostic material—a difference that must be maintained in order to properly understand any instance of the latter. The very Christian orthodoxy that opposed Gnosticism also privileged metaphoric over metonymic readings of Scripture, and it was Gnostic movements such as Manichaeism that idealized fixed, perfect texts, not the Christian tradition. Like later Catholicism, the Manichaean community was characterized by a strict hierarchy, being comprised “of two classes: the Elect, who consisted of Mani’s [sole] successor, 12 apostles, 72 bishops, and

360 presbyters; and the Hearers" (Hoffecker, 1984, p. 683). Only the upper groups were "sealed," while the Hearers had to hope for a better reincarnation (Hoffecker, 1984, p. 683). Nevertheless, in terms of its teaching, Manichaeism can be said to demonstrate the same democratic tendencies that other Gnostic religions do. Frankly, reasoning from the primary ethical teachings and metaphysics of any one religion to the nature of the religion itself is roughly equivalent to making assumptions about the real history of Christianity from an isolated reading of the Sermon on the Mount. Manichaeism was a dominant religion at one time across much of the area now known as the Middle East: Persian priests, not Christian Fathers, persecuted Mani after his protector, Sharpur I, died (Hoffecker, 1984, p. 682). Blake was not a Gnostic himself but appropriated Gnostic narratives to represent the relationship between the British church/state complex and visionary Christianity.

Early Christian leaders leveled intense rhetoric against Gnostic religions because Gnosticism posed a serious threat to Christianity's existence. This is not a simple matter of the winners getting to write the history. John Glyndwr Harris's presentation, in contrast, describes Mani as founding an "alternative Christian church" (1999, p. 72) that enjoyed state protection courtesy of Sharpur I during most of Mani's life. Manichaeism may not be representative of all Gnosticism on these points, but it was one widespread Gnostic religion having a high profile within Christian polemic that does not fit Romantic presentations of Gnosticism current in Blake scholarship and elsewhere. Contemporary scholarship on Gnosticism tends to emphasize heterogeneity among the Gnostic religions. Even John Harris's very basic presentation of Gnostic religions begins with the affirmation, "if we were to write a history of Gnosticism it would have to account for its numerous forms and manifestations" (1999, p. 1). Michael Williams's *Rethinking "Gnosticism"* is among the most significant work along these lines so far, arguing against the view that "the only essentially 'Gnostic' thing . . . was to 'revolt' in some way or another" (1996, p. 263), demonstrating "how misleading and inappropriate this kind of picture is as a general description of the group of sources customarily classified as 'Gnostic'" (1996, p. 264). Williams believes the term "Gnostic" itself has outlived its usefulness and needs to be replaced.

What is important, therefore, is to understand the uses and purposes to which Blake put his Gnostic material rather than simply to identify Blake as a Gnostic author because he clearly borrowed from Gnostic sources at either first or second hand. Blake's use of Gnostic material, like his use of other material, was both critical and creative, as more responsible Blake

scholarship tends to emphasize. This process begins with abandoning notions that *The [First] Book of Urizen* is “Blake’s account of the creation of man and his universe in its present form” (M. Marks, 1975, p. 580). Readings of the Urizen myth as the creation of the physical universe inevitably lead back to simple identifications between Blake and Gnosticism or are, as in the case of Mollyanne Marks, asserted and then ignored for the benefit of a consistently psychological reading. More historically centered scholarship such as Mee’s tends to develop full readings based upon this mistake, however. Jonas himself can be helpful in this regard, asserting that “Gnostics are aware of their disastrous bondage to their world. Yet, by objectifying this awareness in myths, they fall again into bondage to a world, their own mythic world” (Waldstein, 2000, p. 364). On these points, it is not Blake who was a Gnostic, but Urizen, against whom Blake leveled his critique of the Gnostic church/state complex of his own day. Urizen, a fallen demiurge, a Gnostic god, creates his own mythic world in which he finds himself trapped. Urizen’s creation is not of the physical world but of a phenomenology limited to the physical senses and a morality limited to restrictive rules upon which Newtonian science and Britain’s church/state religious complex converge.⁶ The religious consciousness that Blake opposes is a Gnostic one that expresses itself not only within both religion and science, but simultaneously in a closely interrelated religion and science.

Science and Religion in the Urizen Books

Blake unites creator and monarch in the figure of Urizen as the fallen deity of a Gnostic myth. He insists that the god of the English church/state complex has in an act of mental usurpation replaced the true God, whose presence can still be found within the individual, perceptible through a human imaginative capacity blunted by the church/state complex. However, the English church/state complex cannot plausibly be understood to be the creator of material nature, so Urizen’s acts of creation must be understood, as I have been emphasizing, as phenomenological constructions rather than physical ones. The Urizenic consciousness described in Blake’s mythological works is, therefore, engaged in acts of *mental* creation. These mental acts comprise Blake’s commentary on social negotiations of cultural tensions between monarchy and democracy, science and religion, and nature and artifice.

Blake’s critique of science—directed mainly toward Bacon, Newton, and Locke—is well known to be intimately associated with his critique of the

Urizenic, and can now be understood in part as a reaction to the rhetorical deification of Newton described above. Mary Wollstonecraft's description of Newton as a god mistakenly trapped in matter is a clear description of a Gnostic deity. In addition to obvious associations with the physical sciences, Blake often uses "science" in a generic sense to refer to the study of any subject. For example, in "A Descriptive Catalog," he describes a class of artists "whose whole art and science is fabricated for the purpose of destroying art" (Erdman, 1982, p. 538). In this sense "science" or study can be either good or bad, depending on the use to which it is put. But in the sense in which it refers to the physical sciences, Blake reveals an anxiety, a simultaneous attraction and repulsion.

The only use of the word "science" in *The [First] Book of Urizen* most likely reflects both of Blake's senses of the word and expresses a pointed anxiety toward the physical sciences. *The [First] Book of Urizen* begins with Urizen's separation from the other Eternals and exile to "a place in the north" (Erdman, 1982, p. 70), where he creates a dark void in which he attempts to hide himself. Within this void, hidden from the other Eternals, Urizen begins to create—deserts, forests, cliffs, but all in darkness, and he himself is consumed by fire. Blake associates this fire with "howlings & pangs & fierce madness" (Erdman, 1982, p. 73), so that the features of Urizen's external landscape serve as analogs for his emotional state. Urizen experiences his emotional state in the form of an external landscape of suffering, denoting his identification of self and environment, signifying that because of his act of creation Urizen has retrogressed from the reflective pole of the aesthetic stage to the immediate erotic stage of dreaming desire. Urizen's "long periods" of creative labor leave him "hoary, and age-broke, and aged / In despair" (Erdman, 1982, p. 73). To alleviate his despair, Urizen raises a womblike "roof vast petrific around," down which rivers of blood pour to cool the fires of Urizen's rage (Erdman, 1982, p. 73). Like Mary Shelley's fallen creator Victor Frankenstein, Urizen unnaturally takes upon himself female procreative power. From the Eternals' point of view, this vast roof appears to be a "human heart struggling and beating" (Erdman, 1982, p. 73). What the Urizenic reifies as an enclosing creation, the Eternals understand to be the core of human subjectivity.

Among all the Eternals, Los is the most intimately connected to Urizen, who was "rent from his side" when Urizen separated from the other Eternals (Erdman, 1982, p. 74). As a result, Los watches Urizen closely from outside the womb/roof. The Eternals at this point are distantly separated from Urizen—only Los keeps a close watch, seeing Urizen trapped in his creation, "laid in a stony sleep" because of his separation from the Eternals,

a sleep which the Eternals understand to be death (Erdman, 1982, p. 74). Interestingly, they refer to Urizen as a “clod of clay” (Erdman, 1982, p. 74), establishing a series of identifications among the fallen Urizen, the clod of “The Clod and the Pebble,” and the clod in *The Book of Thel*. All three figures symbolize aesthetic subjectivities whose pliant character represents an aesthetic Christianity and its morality. Michael Ferber’s “In Defense of Clods” (2002) reminds readers that within Christian morality, selflessness is good, and that we should recall this judgment in our readings of these poems. However, both Blake and Kierkegaard assume that the same moral positions can be affirmed by different subjectivities for different reasons. In the cases of the clods of *Experience*, *Thel*, and *Urizen*, it is possible that pliant self-giving does not proceed from subjectively appropriated ethical commitments, but instead from a failure to have any sense of self at all. Blake’s judgment is not upon the moral virtue of selflessness but upon the appropriation of it by clods.

Los’s reaction to Urizen’s plight is to begin his own creation, for he is “affrighted / At the formless unmeasurable death” in which he sees Urizen trapped (Erdman, 1982, p. 74). Los’s perspective enters Urizen’s world as the narrative begins to describe Urizen’s transformations, which Los binds “With rivets of iron & brass” (Erdman, 1982, p. 74). These transformations lead to the forging of a physical body around Urizen, but Chapter IV serves as a transition between Los’s anguish at Urizen’s plight and the formation of Urizen’s body. Urizen’s “dark secresy hiding” within the chaotic fires of his creation finds a counterpoint during this transition in Los the “eternal Prophet’s” activities, most of which are continual attempts to bind every change with “rivets of iron and brass” (Erdman, 1982, p. 75). This plate has received a great deal of attention in recent Blake criticism, as many readers see references to Blake’s etching of copper plates with acid in lines such as, “In dark secresy hiding in surging / Sulphureous fluids,” and “Eddies of wrath ceaseless round & round / And the sulphureous foam surging thick / Settled, a lake, bright & shining clear / White as snow on the mountains cold” (Erdman, 1982, p. 75).

If so, then Blake’s artistic production comprises the transition between Los’s anguish and the formation of Urizen’s body. Art is Blake’s mediation between imaginative activity and the sleep of reason to create a world in which both can live. Kierkegaardian patterns emerge once again. The imagination works to awaken reason in decision, and Los’s ensuing work can be understood as a grasping of finitude in response to anxiety—in this case, in the form of a phenomenology based upon the physical senses. In Blake’s terms, Los’s continual activity is not without effect. Urizen’s embodiment

begins with the creation of his head, a "roof shaggy wild inclos'd / In an orb, his fountain of thought" (Erdman, 1982, p. 75). His subsequent creation proceeds, like the Tyger's, from the inside out, beginning with the head and spine then branching out into the physical senses. Note also that the language of Los's creation mirrors the language of the Tyger's creation, for both creators forge like blacksmiths, working in fire and iron. Los's activity moves Urizen out of the immediate pole of the aesthetic sphere, beyond the stage of dreaming desire, for upon the completion of Urizen's physical body, "his eternal life / Like a dream was obliterated" (Erdman, 1982, p. 77). If eternity is Urizen's dream—diffuse, unspecific, unknown—his embodiment moves him toward the point where he can desire eternity specifically and particularly once again. *Urizen's* narrative, of course, no more describes the physical creation of Urizen's body any more than it describes the physical creation of the universe. Blake is concerned with a phenomenology of sense perception here as elsewhere. As in "There is No Natural Religion," despair awaits those who believe that "Man cannot naturally Percieve. but through his natural or bodily organs" (Erdman, 1982, p. 2).

But not all movement is forward. Upon the completion of his work, Los falls into a state of inactivity similar to Urizen's. When Los perceives "how [Urizen's] eternal life / Like a dream was obliterated" and how Urizen's vision is confined to his "little orbs," he freezes in terror (Erdman, 1982, p. 77). Blake's language approaches Haufniensis's description of the most terrible forms of anxiety as he describes Los's reaction to "the space undivided by existence"—it "struck horror into his soul" (Erdman, 1982, p. 77), a terror inspired by confrontation with an abyss, as in Haufniensis. Los pities Urizen's state, implying that Los's pity for Urizen is in part a reaction to his terror at his environment. Los's pity for Urizen has already begun to produce "a round globe of blood" (Erdman, 1982, p. 77); soon this globe of blood will tremble, branch "out into roots," then produce a "female form trembling and pale" (Erdman, 1982, p. 78). Pity's division of the soul, consistent with a narrative externalizing the internal, produces a female separate from Los and independent of him. Pity in Blake seems to represent inner anguish directed toward an external object. It "divides the soul" by projecting the soul outward toward the object of its pity, an outward projection embodied in a female body because Blake views pity as a feminine attribute.

The Eternals react in terror at the appearance of the new female, Enitharmon. The Eternals, now alienated from both Urizen and Los, quite possibly see in the female the potential for generation and respond to it negatively, as does the voice of the disembodied spirit of "To Tirzah." The separation of the female as a phenomenological event signifies sexual

awakening and a newborn awareness of sexual difference with the corresponding identification of the self as male or female or, in other words, the loss of sexual innocence. Human existence as a synthesis, Haufniensis argues, makes sensuality possible—the equivalent in Blake being the separation of reason and imagination from Eternity as a result of a perceived differentiation between the sexes. In terms of “A’s” immediate erotic stages, *Urizen’s* narrative is once again seen to be consistent with desiring desire. Desire has selected its particular object, signified by Los’s procreative embrace of Enitharmon. But the Eternals’ response to Enitharmon’s appearance returns us to the problem of generation. The Eternals, seeking to “no more behold” Los and Enitharmon, pitch a tent around the Void, the fabric of the tent called “Science” (Erdman, 1982, p. 78). Empirical science in Blake’s England was spirit’s fearful withdrawal from human sexuality.

That the unfallen Eternals pitch a tent called science appears to be a serious deviation from the relationship between Urizen and science in Blake’s other mythological works. In the closely related *The Song of Los*, for example,

Thus the terrible race of Los & Enitharmon gave
Laws & Religions to the sons of Har binding them more
And more to Earth: closing and restraining:
Till a Philosophy of Five Senses was complete
Urizen wept & gave it into the hands of Newton & Locke (Erdman,
1982, p. 68)

Since these acts are carried out by Los and Enitharmon’s “terrible race,” the “Philosophy of Five Senses” occurs after the creation of Urizen’s senses in *The [First] Book of Urizen*. But Urizen hands this philosophy of the senses over to Newton and Locke, associating it with the practice of empirical science itself—which was established by the Eternals prior to Urizen’s awakening in *The [First] Book of Urizen*. The simplest way to account for this difference is in terms of differences of point of view. The tent of science, standing as a barrier between eternity on the one hand and Los’s and Urizen’s creation on the other, is a shared barrier, so that *The Song of Los*, dictated by Los, accounts for science from his fallen point of view while *The [First] Book of Urizen*, dictated by the Eternals, accounts for it from the perspective of eternity, or disembodied spirit.

However, the erection of the Tent of Science by the Eternals requires further explanation. The Eternals, though unfallen, are still involved in a

misrelation among themselves, Los, and Urizen, for Los and Urizen represent human capacities to which they are bound and upon which they are dependent. The Zoas are all elements of the one man, Adam, so what one does, all do. While the Eternals are not necessarily “fallen,” for they are not trapped within sense perception, they still participate in a self-to-self misrelation, like the disembodied spirit of “To Tirzah.” In Blake’s view, it is the alienation of reason and imagination from eternity that is responsible not only for differentiation between the sexes but also for spiritual repulsion toward human sexuality, this insight being the kernel of Blake’s critique of generation. Newtonian science was one omnipresent expression of this misrelation in Blake’s day, but the Eternals’ establishment of science does not allow for an entirely negative view of it. Science proceeds from unfallen capacities involved in a misrelation and in a reaction to that misrelation, so that Blake views empirical science as a site of anxiety rather than an object of unambiguous moral repulsion. Viewed from Urizen’s world outwards, the sexual relation is now alienated from all human capacities but reason and the imagination. Both are symbolized either by Bromion (Urizen’s aggressive attempts at imposition upon and then separation from the Eternals) or by Theotormon (Los’s passivity and Urizen’s sleep), while the state of alienation is maintained by the Tent of Science itself.

Two additional elements of *The [First] Book of Urizen* still need to be addressed in more detail: the relationship to eternity implied in *Urizen’s* narrative representation of a misrelation to eternity, and Urizen’s fall into sleep and death. Both of these need to be explained in some detail by *The Concept of Anxiety* before accounting for Blake’s response to the tension between nature and artifice that is at the center of creation anxiety.

Haufniensis, the Demonic, and Spiritlessness

In *Europe* and *America*, Orc is Blake’s demonic character, but elsewhere Urizen is his demon. Oothoon’s lament in which Urizen is first named identifies him as the “mistaken Demon of heaven” (Erdman, 1982, p. 48). He is also referred to as a demon in *The Book of Ahania* (Erdman, 1982, p. 84). In *The Book of Los*, Urizen is called a demon in a narrative account of Los binding Urizen in chains very similar to *The [First] Book of Urizen* (Erdman, 1982, p. 94). Several characters are identified as demons in *The Four Zoas*, but in a scene in which Los binds Urizen, Urizen is referred to as “the dark Demon” (Erdman, 1982, p. 336). This consistent association of Los’s binding of Urizen with descriptions of Urizen as a demon finds its

fullest development in *The [First] Book of Urizen*. That Blake and Kierkegaard choose to associate their most deeply fallen characters with the demonic might be coincidental, but their understanding of the demonic also runs parallel on the level of specific detail.

Haufniensis devotes nearly a third of *The Concept of Anxiety* to his discussion of the demonic: 46 pages of the 155 (excluding front matter and notes) that make up Thomte's translation of *The Concept of Anxiety* are devoted to this topic alone. A significant portion of Haufniensis's description of the demonic involves a discussion of its positive opposite by way of contrast: earnestness. The demonic as defined by Haufniensis is "anxiety about the good"—it is the inverse of anxiety about evil. The person in anxiety about evil fears further contact with evil, and so has an orientation toward the good, but the person in anxiety about the good fears contact with good, so has an orientation toward evil. Since both are states of persistent sinfulness, sinfulness alone does not constitute the demonic.

After reviewing different conceptions of the demonic current in his day, Haufniensis uses this diversity of opinion to illustrate the complexity of the demonic as a phenomenon and to point out that since a human being is a synthesis of mind and body sustained by spirit, "a disorganization in one shows itself in the others" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 122). At the same time, since the demonic is in danger of signifying too much, "it seems best to define the concept a little" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 122). Psychologically considered, the demonic is a state and, therefore, stands in relation to possibility, because to be in one state is to be able to transition into another. The demonic stands in an inverse relationship to innocence. The innocent exist in freedom but understand freedom in terms of possibility, and as possibility, freedom provokes anxiety. The demonic also experiences anxiety at the consideration of freedom's possibility but from a position of unfreedom. Innocence is disposed toward freedom, while the demonic is disposed against it. The demonic is "unfreedom that wants to close itself off" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 123), especially from the good. But it is impossible to spend one's life in complete isolation, especially in complete isolation from the good, so this impossibility is the source of demonic anxiety. Taking all these elements of the demonic into account, Haufniensis suggests the following definition for the demonic: "The demonic is *inclosing reserve [det Indesluttede]* and the *unfreely disclosed*" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 123). The demonic both fears and desires self-disclosure and contact with others, but its strongest desire is for isolation.

Blake filled *The [First] Book of Urizen* with isolation imagery in language almost identical to Kierkegaard's. Urizen raises or is "a shadow of horror"

(Erdman, 1982, p. 70), and the predominant imagery associated with him is “dark” or “darkness,” these words making a combined appearance of thirty times within the text of *Urizen*. The next word occurring with as much frequency is “fire” and its variants (fifteen times), but even amid the proliferation of fire imagery, Blake emphasizes Urizen’s darkness: “But no light from the fires. all was darkness / In the flames of Eternal fury” (Erdman, 1982, p. 73). Urizen’s darkness serves the specific purpose of maintaining his status as “Unknown, unprolific! / Self-closed, all-repelling” (Erdman, 1982, p. 70), so that “Brooding secret, the dark power hid” (Erdman, 1982, p. 70). Variants of the word “closed” and “hid” appear five and six times within *Urizen* respectively. Urizen’s self-enclosure and resultant hiddenness—specifically from Eternity, which in Kierkegaard is associated with the “good” from which the demonic hides—establishes him as a Kierkegaardian demon as much as it does a Blakean one.

Since the demonic is the hidden, the demonic is also the mute, so that when the demonic expresses itself, it does so “contrary to its will” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 123). As such, it would be saved by language (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 124). Haufniensis wants to be careful to distinguish the demonic from other forms of enclosure, however. In the cases of Brutus and Henry V, both drawn from Shakespeare, “there never was an individuality more beautiful and noble than one who is inclosed in the womb of a great idea” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 123). However, these are “inclosed-with”: they are in the womb of a great idea, so that their enclosure is a form of expansiveness. One can never be enclosed with God or with the good, for that is the most expansive of content, and though isolated from all other people, the one enclosed with God is the most expansive of all.⁷ The demonic are “inclosed-without,” closing “itself up within itself” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 124). Freedom communicates in its transparency, while the prison of unfreedom is silent, impenetrable. One model of the demonic from Shakespeare might be Iago, especially at the end of *Othello*, when he swears that he will never speak. According to Haufniensis, only a higher demon or the good can constrain such a demoniac to speak. Urizen is of course also a silent figure at times: “Dark revolving in silent activity” (Erdman, 1982, p. 71). Like him, the cold horrors of his creation are silent (Erdman, 1982, p. 71). Furthermore, Urizen does not speak in *The [First] Book of Urizen* except on Plate 4a, which Blake excluded from most copies of this work.⁸

Ronald Hall observes that the demoniac’s silence need not be literal. The important thing is that demoniac speech does not disclose the demoniac’s self. According to Hall, “In demoniac speech . . . the speaker does not

speak as himself" (1985, p. 162); there is no "*integrity* of expression and behavior and of the outward and the inward" (1985, p. 158). This is not to say that the enclosed one's ambivalence toward his or her enclosure cannot include *wishing for* disclosure to be forced from the outside, like a criminal who wants to be caught. Or, the demonic may desire only partial or anonymous disclosure. Others are a curious and rare mix of the pure and impure. Specific expressions of spiritual states are "more numerous than those of flowers" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 127), but Haufniensis is concerned here with the principle. The will may be divided, but the will to concealment is always stronger, and for this reason, the demonic exists in an absence of truth, in an untruth consisting of deceit through silence.

The first characteristic Haufniensis assigns to the enclosed reserve is the *sudden*, which is the demonic understood in relationship to time: "At one moment it is there, in the next moment it is gone, and no sooner is it gone than it is there again, wholly and completely" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 130). The demonic lacks continuity with "the rest of human life" because it seeks to close itself off from others (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 130). Since it cannot do so completely, it seems to appear and disappear like a billboard painted on rotating slats. The sudden can be either terrible or comic, but in all cases it is an expression of weakness, as the will is directed toward a non-disclosure that cannot be consistently maintained (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 130–1). Again, Haufniensis's description has a great deal in common with Blake's description of Urizen's abyss in *The [First] Book of Urizen*, which to Eternity appears alternately as "now seen, now obscur'd, to the eyes / Of Eternals" (Erdman, 1982, p. 78).

Furthermore, the demonic is "*the contentless, the boring*" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 132). "Boredom, extinction," Haufniensis claims, "is precisely a continuity in nothingness" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 133), so that overall, the demonic's form is "inclosing reserve," its content is "nothing," and it relates to existence in time by the "sudden." True sight of a demonic individual is, therefore, very much like looking at an animated corpse. There is a body there but nothing is in it. Suddenly the eyes snap open and the body speaks; then it appears lifeless again. "In terms of the most recent philosophy," Haufniensis suggests, "the demonic is the negative and is a nothing, like the elf maid who is hollow when seen from the back" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 134). But Haufniensis wants to be clear that the negative here does not exist in relation to something else that has been negated, as in Hegel. The negative of black is white, but black is a something. The negative has content in Hegel. In the case of the demonic, we are dealing with a true negative whose content is nothingness.

Haufniensis moves on to further differentiate between demonic states in terms of how freedom is lost. His two categories are “freedom lost somatically-psychically and freedom lost pneumatically” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 135–6), but Haufniensis is clearly far more concerned about freedom lost pneumatically, because in this section Haufniensis describes formations of the demonic that define themselves in relationship to religious practice and belief. Haufniensis illustrates his conception of an integrated religious self by making a reference to Karl Rosenkranz’s definition of “disposition” in his *Psychologie* (1837) as a “unity of feeling and self-consciousness” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 148). Self-consciousness leads one to claim one’s feelings as one’s own. Rosenkranz had earlier defined feeling as the “immediate unity of its sentience and its consciousness” and sentience as “unity with the immediate determinants of nature” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 148). Sentience is a conception of the material self as a whole self, consciousness an awareness of this conception, feeling an awareness of the whole self conceiving itself, and self-consciousness an awareness of one’s awareness of a self as a self—each of these, progressively folded into the other, is disposition, an idea which Haufniensis feels is a fairly complete “conception of a concrete personality” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 148). Haufniensis embodies his ideal for a concrete consciousness in a person who not only understands what he is saying, but also understands “himself in what is said” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 142)—similar to Blake, thought and being find union in a being self-consciously synthesized from multiple capacities.

Earnestness is simultaneously the deepest expression of disposition and a higher one. It is “the acquired originality of disposition,” a means by which we recognize ourselves as distinct, unique selves who have become so over time (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 149). Individuals are therefore *original*, but this originality is *acquired*. This sense of acquired originality is, needless to say, absolutely essential to a Kierkegaardian philosophy that places the fullest differentiation of self from environmentally imposed not-self at the apex of human development. Earnestness is, in a very real sense, what makes us ourselves, being the “personality itself” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 149). Because earnestness is so closely tied to personal identity, to be earnest about anything short of the absolute and eternal is to trivialize the self, to make oneself a comic figure. For this reason, earnestness (and by extension, inwardness and certitude) is only properly directed toward religious categories. To direct it anywhere else is to finitize the spirit (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 151), to pervert the eternal and infinite within us into a thing.

If certitude, inwardness, and truth increase in one direction, in a movement toward the religious, then they decrease when moving away from the

religious toward the demonic. Intense efforts to rationally prove or disprove the existence of God are equally expressions of the demonic in Haufniensis's opinion, both proceeding from a lack of certitude. The rigidly orthodox believer who cannot bear to hear a different formulation of his beliefs than his own is trapped in a demonic state—not unlike Urizen's "One command, one joy, one desire, / One curse, one weight, one measure / One King, one God, one Law" (Erdman, 1982, p. 72)—as is the atheist obsessed with arguing against the existence of God. About atheists, Haufniensis observes that "there are perhaps few who are as vain and touchy about the applause of the moment as the mocker" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 140), so those who mock religious belief are similarly lacking certitude, as demonstrated by their need for external validation. Contrast these subjectivities with Haufniensis's image of the one who has grasped God's existence in inwardness, for whom God is omnipresent in an almost embarrassingly intimate way that dogmatic formulations cannot quite capture.

Lack of inwardness, Haufniensis claims, "is a category of reflection" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 141). Demonic formations of thought and personality flee from the concrete self-understanding described above because the demonic is in anxiety about self-knowledge through inwardness. Reflection serves as a thought barrier shielding the demonic from inwardness, a barrier that Haufniensis schematizes as forms of either "activity-passivity" or "passivity-activity" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 142). Haufniensis's final survey of the demonic considers its various relationships to the eternal; again, with a great deal of similarity to Blake. The demonic may either accept or reject a conception of the eternal, so the manner of this acceptance or rejection characterizes the demonic as a state. Some of those who deny the eternal do so because if the eternal is posited, "the present becomes something different" from what they want it to be (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 152). In this case, the eternal, or conceptions of the eternal, are related to as a government relates to "restless disturbers" (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 152). Some conceive of the eternal as sheer abstraction, as the outer boundary of time, so that it never enters time in the moment, and by doing so keep it at arm's length—or, to use Blake's words, in this configuration of the demonic, the Holy Ghost is a vacuum.

A similar misrelation to eternity developed by Haufniensis is his concept of spiritlessness. The anxiety of spiritlessness is Christendom's anxiety, an anxiety unique to a Christian culture. Though Haufniensis believes that spiritlessness is paganism within Christianity, pre-Christian paganism is superior to this condition because while the pre-Christian pagan lacks reference to spirit, he is oriented toward spirit, toward that which he lacks.

On the other hand, the spiritless (pagan) Christian is surrounded by the discourse of spirit, may even parrot it, but disregards spirit, is oriented away from it. The spiritless Christian is continually presented spirit but never chooses it. As a result, spiritlessness is

neither guilty nor not guilty. It really knows no difference between the present, the past, the future, and the eternal. Its life and its history go on crabbedly like the writing in ancient manuscripts, without any punctuation marks, one word, one sentence after the other. . . Spiritlessness can say exactly the same thing that the richest spirit has said but it does not say it by virtue of spirit. Man qualified as spiritless has become a talking machine, and there is nothing to prevent him from repeating by rote a philosophical rigmarole, a confession of faith, or a political recitation. (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 94–5)

The spiritless as “talking machines” speaks a great deal to the mechanization of the human critiqued in this study. Without spirit there is no anxiety, so the spiritless are happy—they have no tasks before them. Anxiety is “kept waiting” in this state, “hidden and disguised,” as a function of spirit waiting to assert itself (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 96)—which makes anxiety appear all the more terrible, all the more monstrous because it is not appearing as itself, Blake’s Urizen being one specific example of this phenomenon. Though the spiritless are guilty of sin from the standpoint of spirit, they have made no existentially significant choices, and so are not conscious of sin. When contacted by spirit, the spiritless begin “to twitch like a galvanized frog” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 95). As a result, in its political and religious life, spiritlessness “is a perfect idol worshipper. It worships a dunce and a hero with equal veneration, but above anything else its real fetish is a charlatan” (Kierkegaard, 1980a, p. 95). Revivalists, kings, dictators, populist presidents, and fascists find their political fields ripe for harvest in a culture of spiritlessness.⁹

Blake represents Urizenic spiritlessness with pervasive sleep imagery in *The [First] Book of Urizen*. Urizen is “laid in a stony sleep / Unorganiz’d, rent from Eternity” (Erdman, 1982, p. 74) following his despair and separation from Los, and for the same reason, those in Kierkegaard are spiritless: despair separates reason from the imagination. It is this sleep of spiritual death, this spiritlessness, which motivates Los’s work and drives “the changes of Urizen” (Erdman, 1982, p. 74). From the perspective of eternity, the creation of a phenomenology based upon sense perception proceeds not from Urizen but from Los. This phenomenology is designed, however,

to serve the needs of a demonic, self-enclosed subjectivity who has lapsed into spiritlessness. The proximity of Los's and Urizen's changes to etching imagery in *Urizen* indicates that Blake also understood his own work in these terms, acknowledging his implication in fallenness in both the imaginative and physical materials with which he worked.

Conclusion: Nature, Artifice, and Creation Anxiety in William Blake

Blake's commentary on tensions between nature and artifice in late eighteenth-century London is, by extension, his commentary on creation anxiety. If nature is characterized by organic unity, artifice by its very existence must be fallen, an appendage to organic unity, the misplacement of the external as the internal. The systems we create to keep from being enslaved by another man's can only be safely created when understood as deliberate fictions. No one will mistake Blake's Urizen and Los, Enitharmon and Enion, Oothoon and Bromion for real persons in the world. Kierkegaard believed the same was true of his pseudonyms: no one could really be like them. However, Newtonian science and any religious phenomenology dependent upon it, though equally mythological in Blake's mind, in contrast present themselves as objective truths and by so doing become mythological constructs within which the mythologizer has been trapped. The mythologizer in this case does not understand his mythology as "*my* system which *I* created," but as "that truth out there about the world in which I live, to which I and all others are subject." The self in this case is not being considered in what is said, but unknowingly subject to it.

Like Victor Frankenstein, these mythologizers deny responsibility for their own creation. They do so, however, by presenting their schemes as self-defining objective truths, and for that reason, their creations are to be feared, not loved, and feared most by the fallen creators themselves. This narrative does not deny the objective truth of the findings of empirical science, but instead affirms that human personality is deformed when external, objective truths are related to as individually defining, subjective truths. In the intense period of struggle and change into which England was plunged in the 1790s, tensions between monarchy and democracy, science and religion, and nature and artifice converged in ways that transformed England's internal struggle toward democracy into a simultaneously fought external struggle with a politically radical foe. England, in its struggle with revolutionary France, found itself turned against itself in the form of its best

impulses. The ideal of the free, rational, scientific (rather than superstitious) Englishman was taken to its logical conclusion by revolutionary France in ways repulsive to “Church and King” English subjects, leaving them in the unenviable position of fighting against an ideal to which it had to appeal in order to engage this struggle.

In the face of this impossible paradox, reason sleeps, and imagination obsessively continues in a dubious yet redemptive enterprise: the creation of a new subjectivity, one incorporating the human into a fully organized, mechanized creation imaginatively embodied in human creations that think and live on their own. Thinking they were merely describing nature, the mechanical philosophers unintentionally recreated themselves and all who listened to them. Therefore, from the standpoint of Blake’s ideality—from the standpoint of eternity—human systematizing is a negative expression of human re-creation. Blake’s creation mythologies externalize these internal struggles through narrative both by identifying the agents engaged in the struggle and by identifying the struggle itself, the creation anxiety with which England confronted one of the most self-defining and threatening eras of its history. Blake’s letter to Cumberland of August 12, 1827 drives home the point:

I know too well that a great majority of Englishmen are fond of The Indefinite which they Measure by Newtons Doctrine of the Fluxions of an Atom. A Thing that does not Exist. These are Politicians & think that Republican Art is Inimical to their Atom. For a Line or Lineament is not formed by Chance a Line is a Line in its Minutest Subdivision[s] Strait or Crooked It is Itself & Not Intermeasurable with or by any Thing Else Such is Job but since the French Revolution Englishmen are all Intermeasurable One by Another Certainly a happy state of Agreement to which I for One do not Agree. God keep me from the Divinity of Yes & No too The Yea Nay Creeping Jesus from supposing Up & Down to be the same Thing as all Experimentalists must suppose. (Erdman, 1982, p. 783)

Blake’s letter to Cumberland helps explain the one obvious difference between Blake and Kierkegaard despite their deep and far-ranging similarities: Kierkegaard did not write creation mythologies. But Kierkegaard did not confront a phenomenology of nature imposed upon human subjectivity through the physical sciences as Blake did. Blake’s complaint in this letter about “the indefinite” by which all the English become “Intermeasurable by one another” begins with “Newtons Doctrine of the Fluxions of the Atom.” Kierkegaard complained about the same intermeasurability among

Danes but laid the blame for this state of affairs at the feet of Denmark's complacently cultural Christendom and Danish Hegelianism. In Blake's England, the tent of science stands between fallen reason and fallen imagination on the one hand and Eternity on the other in ways that it did not in Kierkegaard's Denmark, even though in both Blake's England and Kierkegaard's Denmark, the schematizer responsible for these gross misrelations among reason, imagination, and eternity was equally alive, well, and active. This schematizer is active today in debates within the United States between creation and evolution, which should, by now, seem more like debates between Enlightenment religion (dependent upon literal readings of the Bible) and Enlightenment science for the rights to a defining myth, rather than a true debate between science and religion. Pope Pius XII's publication of *Humani generis* in 1950 demonstrates that for those using medieval models of Biblical interpretation and thought, no such tension between empirical science and religion exists. The schematizer still frightens and still inspires, haunting films such as *The Matrix* and *I, Robot* in which a computer intelligence takes human logic to its natural conclusion, turning upon the entire human race in an apocalyptic rage. If any narrative externalizes a misrelation within the self, it is this one. Creation anxiety narratives remind us that we will forever be haunted by the spectre of our own creative intelligence until we subdue the Spectre within, until we attain an integrated self that balances reason with imagination, mind with body, feeling with thought, so that our creations proceed from an integrated self.

Notes

Introduction

¹ The Hong's translation of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, published in 1992, was unavailable to Clark, but it is unfortunate that she did not use Reidar Thomte's translation of *The Concept of Anxiety* (1980) for the usefulness of its critical apparatus.

Chapter 1

¹ All Biblical citations will be from the Authorized Version.

² This narrative clearly locates Freud in the post-Huxley division between the empirical sciences and religion, as is evident from Freud's own polemic against religious belief. Adaptations and applications of Freud's and similar depth psychologies to pre-1860 literature, therefore, either reifies them as empirical sciences (which they are not) or uses them as a mythology; hence, a means of self-expression through literary criticism. Recent scholarship such as Joel Faflak's *Romantic Psychoanalysis: The Burden of the Mystery* (2008) emphasizes the continuity between Romantic psychology and psychoanalytic theory. My Chapter 2 should make obvious that Freud's structure of the mind is itself another modification of the classical model of human personality, not only following its basic pattern but incorporating specific detail. Body and its influence corresponds to Freud's Id, Superego with the ethical, Ego a synthesis of the two.

³ See Briggs, 2000, pp. 17–30.

⁴ Unless noted otherwise, emphasis and idiosyncrasies of spelling and punctuation will always be the author's, and brackets and other special characters always the editor's or translator's, in all quotations of Blake's and Kierkegaard's works.

⁵ Haufniensis's critique of Hegel allows us to understand that Darwinian evolution synthesizes Romantic evolutionary paradigms emphasizing struggle with mechanical ones emphasizing the operation of blind mechanical forces. In terms of this history Darwinian biological evolution eclipses human agency (at least in terms of evolutionary development leading up to the present) by making it a function of environment. But Darwinian and Kierkegaardian evolution ultimately describe two different objects: the evolution of biological life and the evolution of consciousness, respectively. The latter is subject to decision and the former is not. Kierkegaard's critique of Hegelian evolutionary thought only becomes applicable to Darwinian evolutionary thought when the latter is elevated from a scientific theory to a subjectively defining myth.

Chapter 2

- ¹ See, for example, Bernard Blackstone's *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* (1961).
- ² Contemporary scholarship places the Book of Revelation within the tradition of Jewish apocalyptic, following its conventions, and assumes it to have been written by a Jewish Christian.
- ³ Dan Knauss delivered this unpublished paper in the panel "The Authority and Influence of Print" at The Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference (Denver, CO, Oct. 25–28 2001). He discusses similar issues in his "Christian Humanism, Past and Present" (2006) published in Issue Two for that year of *The New Pantagruel*.
- ⁴ See Phillips 2000, pp. 29–30.
- ⁵ Stephen C. Behrendt's "Blake's Bible of Hell: Prophecy as Political Program" (1998) seems to strike a middle position between my own and that of (for example) Jon Mee's, as he acknowledges Blake's goal was not to abandon Scripture but to critique specific views and uses of it. However, he doesn't consider Christian traditions outside either the Anglican or the antinomian. Blake drew from the major currents of British Protestantism but did not limit himself to Protestant thought.

Chapter 3

- ¹ Kierkegaard's thesis, *On the Concept of Irony*, is a critique of German Romantic appropriations of Socratic tradition models.
- ² Mark C. Taylor draws from *Johannes Climacus or, De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* to emphasize the role of language in displacing immediacy: "The most important point to notice is that Kierkegaard argues that immediacy is annulled by the capacity to use language: 'That which annuls immediacy is language'" (1975, p. 157). Through language the self learns to distinguish itself from its immediate environment and from its immediate self. The "distinction of the self from itself" introduces the relationship between language and time (Taylor, 1975, p. 158).
- ³ Commentators differ about the translation of "psyche" into either "mind" or "soul." I prefer "mind" because "soul" is too easily confused with "spirit" in contemporary English, and "mind" more clearly denotes human cognitive facility. In my opinion, a more complete picture would include the association of emotion as well as cognition with psyche.
- ⁴ See also John J. Davenport's "'Entangled Freedom'—Ethical Authority, Original Sin, and Choice in Kierkegaard's *Concept of Anxiety*" (2000). Davenport's reading of *The Concept of Anxiety* closely resembles my own.
- ⁵ Consider fruitful applications to Gothic and Romantic literature of the monstrous.
- ⁶ See, for example, Dan Magurshak's "The Concept of Anxiety: The Keystone of the Kierkegaard-Heidegger Relationship" (1985).
- ⁷ Harold Pagliaro's *Selfhood and Redemption in Blake's Songs* (1987) and Thomas R. Froesch's "The Borderline of Innocence and Experience" (1989) share several features in common with my own reading. They too understand Blake as engaged primarily in explicating a psychological theory. To both critics, Blake's characters begin in a state of selfhood and do not clearly differentiate themselves from their

environment: "Innocence is a condition of unself-conscious identification with the world and the people outside one" (Pagliaro, 1987, p. 9). According to Pagliaro, Blake's characters grow toward a "transforming moment from Selfhood to individual identity" (1987, p. 124), while Frosch believes that *Experience* poems focus "on a particular kind of recognition that forces us out of Innocence once and for all" (1989, p. 77). Pagliaro suggests the existence of stages within Blake's innocence without describing them.

⁸ For example, Matthew Schneider in "The Anxiety of Innocence in Blake and Kierkegaard" (2005) suggests a Rousseauian transformation of language in the "Introduction" to *Innocence* (p. 354); Maureen McClane in "Ballads and Bards" (2001) asserts that the poem's "transformations . . . appear in sequence as a kind of unfolding hierarchy of technologies and arts" (p. 428); Thomas R. Frosch in "The Borderline of Innocence and Experience" (1989) sees the child's maturation in the progression from music to words to books, and claims that the child disappears when the songs are written because written words are beyond his ability and that the poem leads up to a transitional, transformational moment; Stanley Gardner's *Blake's 'Innocence and Experience' Retraced* (1986) detects movement "from the open country towards the congenial, inhabited locality" (p. 19); Jerry Caris Godard's *Mental Forms Creating: William Blake Anticipates Freud, Jung, and Rank* (1985) sees in the "Introduction" a progression to organized innocence; while E. D. Hirsch in *Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake* (1964) sees a development from secular to Christian pastoral (pp. 27 ff). Along with Frosch, Wicksteed's reading in *Blake's Innocence and Experience* (1928) most closely resembles my own, as he believes the child in the cloud to be a muse later internalized by the Piper, but doesn't so much see development in the poem as amplification. I see an amplification in effect made possible by development in the Piper. Kierkegaardian categories of the aesthetic unite these elements into a coherent, fully conceptualized experience.

⁹ All citations of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* will be from Erdman but cross-referenced with Copy W as reproduced by *The Illuminated Books Series*, Vol. 2, The William Blake Trust/Princeton University Press, ed. Andrew Lincoln (1991).

¹⁰ Some Blake critics describe the Piper as being in a state of immediacy whose loss is traced by the poem's narrative development. Nicholas Williams's *Ideology and Utopia* describes W. J. T. Mitchell's reading of the "Introduction" to *Innocence* using the language of immediacy, an identification Harold Bloom makes in *Blake's Apocalypse* (1963) but does not develop: "The Introduction, 'Piping down the valleys wild,' is a poem of immediate knowledge, and evidently celebrates a kind of unsought natural harmony" (p. 39), perhaps another unacknowledged debt to Kierkegaard. Williams himself seeks to identify elements of experience within innocence, which would be the natural product of any dialectical progression and is encompassed by Kierkegaard's developmental model as well. In the ethical sphere, for example, according to "B" of *Either/Or II* the aesthetic "returns in its relativity" (Kierkegaard, 1987, p. 177). But this is only visible to an ethical subjectivity looking back upon innocence. Williams's intelligent reading of Blake employs a very odd and much reduced definition of "experience" to the usual

sense of “something that happens to us” rather than Blake’s “state of the human soul.” This usual sense of the word “experience” should more often be considered in readings of Blake’s poems, but Blake’s use of the word exceeds this usual definition.

¹¹ See Phillips, “Blake’s Early Poetry” pp. 27-8 (1973).

¹² See Gen. 3:8.

¹³ Mark C. Taylor points out that with the ethical stage, Kierkegaard steers “a middle course between the knowledge of oneself (know thyself) and the creation of oneself (create thyself). Neither of these alternatives is correct: the former is too little, and the latter is too much” (1975, p. 188).

¹⁴ See Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant* (1992)

¹⁵ See also Mark C. Taylor’s “Self in/as Other” (1984).

¹⁶ Consider the possibilities of this dialectic as commentary on *Frankenstein*, particularly the Creature’s psychology.

¹⁷ At this point, Anne Mellor’s emphasis on Coleridge’s sense of guilt in *English Romantic Irony* (1980) becomes productive. She juxtaposes Coleridge’s use of Romantic irony against its use by an “authentic romantic ironist” (Mellor, 1980, p. 137), saying that in Coleridge’s and Carroll’s hands Romantic irony “becomes something else” (Mellor, 1980, p. vii). For Mellor, Romantic irony’s expression in Coleridge is modified by his desperate desire “to believe in the absolute validity of an ordered Christian universe” (1980, p. 137), a belief constantly threatened by Coleridge’s honest perception of “the existence of an underlying chaos” (1980, p. 137). To resolve the tension provided by an orderly Christian universe characterized by an underlying chaos, Coleridge juxtaposed Romantic irony’s conception of the “Free Life” against “Confining Form” (1980, p. 137), “Confining Form” being the distinctively Christian modification (or perversion) of an otherwise pure Romantic irony.

Coleridge’s form/freedom dialectic, however, finds expression in many philosophies, some of them specifically hostile to Christianity (such as we find in Nietzsche’s dialectic between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in *The Birth of Tragedy*), or even in Mellor’s own presentation of Schlegel’s alternation between “system” and “chaos,” which she seems to have forgotten by the time she starts writing about Coleridge. I think Kierkegaard provides tools better than those provided by Schlegelian irony to understand a writer like Coleridge. A reading of Coleridge through Kierkegaard’s description of the ethical would agree with Mellor’s observation that Coleridge is an ironist and with her observation that Coleridge isn’t quite the same kind of ironist as Keats or Byron. But it would explain this difference by saying that Coleridge has made the leap into the ethical stage and is now wearing irony as his incognito: that irony is a surface expression of his inner awareness of the disjunction between his ethical ideals and his lived reality (guilt), and that his guilt proceeds from his decision to commit to an ethical ideal to begin with.

¹⁸ I explain my choice to use of Copy W as my base text of *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in Chapter 4.

¹⁹ It may be useful to consider Blake’s “The Little Black Boy” in the light of Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* (1993).

- ²⁰ Perhaps this finds expression in Blake's "humble toward God but proud toward man"?
- ²¹ Mark C. Taylor sums up Climacus's thought in these terms:

The manner in which Kierkegaard expresses this for religion A is by saying that the self retains a knowledge of the Eternal or of eternal truth that is a function of the relationship to the Eternal prior to the self's temporal existence. Although coming to be in the temporal world obscures this knowledge and weakens the relationship, it never causes the severance of the connection between the Eternal God and the immortal soul. The bond remains and need only be made explicit. (1975, p. 254)

Climacus sounds reminiscent of Wordsworth at this point:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
 The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
 Hath elsewhere its setting
 and cometh from afar.
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God who is our home. (Wordsworth, 1984, p. 299)

- ²² Consider Blake's "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour," in this context.

Chapter 4

- ¹ See Book 1, Chapter 27 of Bede's *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* for an expression of almost identical tensions between sexuality as good and natural, yet almost sinful for being bodily oriented, and for an equally emphatic emphasis upon sex for the purpose of procreation rather than pleasure.
- ² Accounts of the propagation of the gods in Ovid and Hesiod imply preexistence by allowing male seed to produce offspring separately from a woman's womb.
- ³ See Robert Essick's *William Blake and the Language of Adam* (1989) for a similar comparison between Blake and Coleridge's preface to "Kubla Khan." Essick uses this comparison to illustrate how in Blake "figures of speech . . . are literalized back into the referential" (1989, p. 226), one of his chief points about Blake and language.
- ⁴ Almost an exact quotation from the Authorized Version text of John 2:4: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"
- ⁵ See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religions* (1963).
- ⁶ E. P. Thompson takes note of these associations in *Witness Against the Beast* (1993), associating this poem with "the imagery of the feminine principle (the womb) clothing, enclosing and binding the spirit in a way which Mugglestonians as well

as neo-Platonists would have understood" (p. 81). However, he oddly cannot locate Blake's source for an "androgynous resurrection," saying that he may have borrowed it from Boehme (1993, p. 84) but missing the more obvious Biblical reference to Christ's teaching that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30). Spirit's mistake here consists of assuming freedom from generation is freedom from physicality.

⁷ At least during the period of *Blake's Apocalypse* (1963) and his commentary for Erdman's *Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (1965, 1982).

⁸ This reading stands in opposition to Hirsch's and Pagliaro's in that they seem to miss the poem's bitter tone of complaint and fail to take seriously its location in *Experience*; Hirsch, in fact, reads the poem as a rejection of experience subjectivity. Berninghausen's reading is generally competent and uses name associations to link "To Tirzah" with the theme of generation via the *Song of Solomon*. He similarly concludes that "the young man of 'To Tirzah' is equally bound to the physical and the spiritual" but goes on to affirm that "in order to transcend 'Experience' [the young man] must seek a balance of the two" (Berninghausen, 1984, p. 198). It is not clear, however, how a corpse is supposed to seek this balance.

⁹ In my ensuing discussion of *The [First] Book of Urizen*, Copy G presented in The William Blake Archive will be referenced for the reasons described above: Copy G, produced in 1818, was Blake's final and most detailed realization of *The [First] Book of Urizen*.

¹⁰ Which, in essence, may just be a complex representation of everyday lovers' spats.

¹¹ By "semi-pantheisms," I mean among other things panentheism, as opposed to the more internally consistent pantheism of, for example, the *Upanishads*.

¹² See, for example, Hassan, 1992, p. 197, and David Foster Wallace, 1993.

Chapter 5

¹ *The [First] Book of Urizen* (1794) occupies the middle position of Blake's seven mythological works of the early 1790s beginning with *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) and ending with *The Song of Los* (1795). I treat *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the *Songs of Experience*, and the works in the Rossetti notebook as proto-mythological works from this period introducing related themes. Attention to narrative development alone—to the extent that it is possible—requires that *The [First] Book of Urizen* be placed first, however, as it describes Urizen's alienation from the other Eternals and his fall, an alienation presupposed by all other mythological works.

² See, for example, Ostriker, 1965, p. 149.

³ See Hollister, 1992, pp. 124–6, 171–3.

⁴ See also J. Roberts, 2007, p. 48.

⁵ See, for example, Morton Paley's *Energy and the Imagination: The Development of Blake's Thought* (1970) and his reference to Dante's letter to the Can Grande della Scalla as suggesting interpretive principles relevant to Blake (p. 62).

- ⁶ Note Essick's claim that Blake sees "these newer sciences as a continuation of a basic biaxial and reductive paradigm common to both" hermeticism and Newtonian science (1989, p. 209).
- ⁷ Kierkegaard develops this thought in his signed *Works of Love* (1962).
- ⁸ Word counts include Plate 4a.
- ⁹ A comparison to Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964) might be fruitful at this point.

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