



BLAKE'S PHILOSOPHY IN COMPOSING POEMS WITH COMMON AND OPPOSITE TITLES IN SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

William Blake is a great pre-romantic poet as well as a painter and printer and one of the greatest engravers in English history. His writing combines a variety of styles. He is an artist, a lyric poet, a mystic and a visionary. His work has fascinated and bewildered readers ever since. His Songs of Innocence and of Experience proved to be the most popular of Blake's illuminated texts and is now regarded as a seminal work of English Romantic literature. Throughout the book of these Songs, there are many poems in Songs of Innocence which have counterparts in Songs of Experience, often, the relationship between these paired poems is being indicated either by common titles, as with the two Introductions, the two Chimney Sweepers, the two Holy Thursdays, the two Nurse's Songs, The Divine Image and A Divine Image, The Little Boy Lost and A Little Boy Lost or by opposite titles, as with The Lamb and The Tyger, Infant Joy and Infant Sorrow, The Divine Image and Human Abstract. This paper is a brief assessment for the main reasons that stand behind Blake's composing these paired poems with common and opposite titles in his book of Songs of Innocence and of Experience.

Keywords: Innocence, Experience, Contraries, Imagination, Reason.

INTRODUCTION

A little over two centuries ago, William Blake introduced to the English literary world his most famous work of poetry: the Songs of Innocence and of Experience. In his own day, he was widely believed to be quite mad. Some critics and poets talked about him referring to his works and the style he used in his writings. The poet Wordsworth, for example, commented that "there is no doubt that this poor man was mad, but there is something in his madness which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and

Walter Scott.” The 19th century scholar William Rossetti characterised Blake as “a glorious luminary, and as a man not forestalled by predecessors, or to be classed with contemporaries, or to be replaced by known or readily surmisable successors.” In the twentieth century, however, following W.B. Yeats’s three volume edition of his works, Blake has been recognized as a highly original and important poet, artist and writer, and as a member of an enduring tradition of visionary artists and philosophers, an individualist, a libertarian, and an uncompromising critic of orthodoxy and authoritarianism.

Blake produces most of his works in pair or in two separate sides that contrast one another. He begins his own canon with two prose "tractates", All Religions are One and There is No Natural Religion, which, as their titles indicate, form a logical and rhetorical pair. They are two parts of There is No Natural Religion, an (A) and (B). He published The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, a work which forms a pair of contrasting ideas and principles that end into the same one work. Among his early minor "prophetic book" _ America and Europe form a pair and the Song of los is divided into Africa and Asia. The Songs of Innocence and of Experience forms two combined sections of Songs. Although, Blake's Songs of Innocence were first engraved in 1789 and Songs of Experience in 1794, Blake also combined these two collections of Songs together and called the combined edition dated 1794, Songs of Innocence and of Experience; Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. Even throughout Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Blake composed all the poems of Songs of Experience to be paired with those of Songs of Innocence. Hence, within this work, we find many poems which fall in pairs, with common or opposite titles throughout the combined collection of Songs.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF BLAKE’S POETRY, PHILOSOPHY AND BELIEVES

Blake’s poetry is identified by T. S. Eliot as “the peculiar honesty”, he states, “the peculiarity is seen to be the peculiarity of all greet poetry...it is merely a peculiar honesty, which in a world too frightened to be honesty, is peculiarly terrifying.” Blake’s Poetry describes, as Peter Otto’s words, summarizes “a world forged in the tension between evil and good, chaos and the attempts of both temporal faculties of man and his transcendent powers to create a better world.” Moreover, his poetry is at once deeply personal and cosmic. It attacks the hypocrisy and falsehood of the soul and of the world. It is still relevant to our age. Blake is described by Alfred Kazin as “a peculiarly disturbed and disturbing prophet of the condition of modern man rather than a master-builder. From any conventional point of view he is too different in kind to be related easily to familiar conceptions of the nature of the individual and society.” He is as Mc Gann adds “a mystic without any mystical pattern and a Christian who opposes rituals. His visionary art is qualified to usher him in final stages of fallen man’s history.”

The mystic works from the outside to the inside. He begins in the world and then has his overpowering intuition of a higher, spiritual experience, and systematically he rejects the world until he has isolated spirit from it. On the contrary, Blake is a mystic who retreats from factual life to his own mind nurturing dreamy visions in holy seclusion. He has as Alfred Kazin writes “the mystic’s tormented sense of the doubleness of life between reality and the ideal. But he tries to resolve it on earth, in the living person of man. Up to 1800

he also thought it could be resolved in society, under the inspiration of the American and French Revolutions.”

Blake is against everything that submits, mortifies, constricts and denies. He observes, “Mystics are absent-minded reactionaries; they accept indifferently everything in the world except the barriers that physical existence presents to the soul’s inner quest.”⁸ He is not only unmystical in the prime sense of being against the mystic’s immediate concerns but also he is against all accepted Christianity and against the Church:

Remove away that black’ning church;

Remove away that marriage hearse;

Remove away that place of blood;

You’ll quite remove the ancient curse.

Blake denies that man is born with any innate sense of morality—all moral codes are born of education—and thinks that education is a training in conformity. He is against all belief in sin. According to him, the tree in Eden is the gallows on which freedom-seeking man is hanged by dead-souled priests. He believes that all restraint in obedience to a moral code is against the spirit of life. Restraint in fact follows from the organized injustice and domination in society. He is against all forms of human exploitation and all rationalizations of it in human prejudice:

And all must love the human form,

In heathen, turk, or few;

Where Mercy, Love, & Pity dwell

There God is dwelling too.

Black did not hold with the doctrine of God as Lord, an entity separate from and superior to mankind. This is shown clearly in his words about Jesus Christ, “He is the only God ... and so am I, and so are you”. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake holds that “men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast”. For Blake God and man becomes one, and to this achievement, religious law can contribute nothing, the Bible is allegorical, and good and evil angels are merely states of mind. Although Blake’s attacks on conventional religion were shocking in his own day, his rejection of religiosity was not a rejection of religion per se. His view of orthodoxy is evident in several proverbs in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, amongst which are the following: “Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion. As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys”. Furthermore, he drew his religious wisdom from the same sources he drew his poetry and painting. He believes that the essence of all being, as set forth in the poem called *The Divine Image*, is the spirit of ‘Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love’, and later, he uses the terms ‘Poetic genius’ and ‘Imagination’ to express his conception of his

fundamental principle. He insists that the most vital activity of the mind is imagination because it is a divine representation of eternity. In A Vision of the Last Judgment, he says:

This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of Vegetated body. This world of Imagination is Infinite and Eternity, whereas the world of Generation or Vegetation is Finite and Temporal. There exist in that Eternal world the permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in the Vegetable Glass of nature. All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Savior, the True Vine of Eternity. The Human Imagination.

For Blake, imagination discloses reality, which is hidden and covered by visible things. He thinks that there is no reality, or even existence other than that in the mind or imagination. In A Vision of the Last Judgement, he wonders, “Where is the Existence Out of Mind or Thought? Where is it but in the Mind of Fool?” He looks at the universe from a human point of view in which Man is the holy centre of this world, and man through imagination catches the world. The imaginative universe of Blake undermines all forms and energies except the energies of human being. Blake’s universe, as John Beer understands, is “coloured and illuminated by the affirmation that here, rather than in abstract ideals of purity and reason... lies the true source of holiness. Therefore, the only holy thing is man, and his imagination and genius. Therefore, the only holy thing is man, and his imagination and genius.

Blake makes no distinction between poet, prophet, poetry and religious prophecy. Both present an intuition of the central form of life. According to Blake, religion and poetry are both prophetic. In All Religions are One, he says, “The Religions of all nations are derived from each nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is everywhere call'd the spirit of prophecy.” He believes that ‘Natural Religion’ is the conventional way of understanding religion. It is the reason behind the wheel of destruction and desolation. Imagination is human in its nature, and man, as Blake might believe, is in no need of supernatural powers; He is in need of his human imagination and of his being a man. One of Blake’s strongest objections to orthodox Christianity is that he felt it encouraged the suppression of natural desires and discouraged earthly joy. In A Vision of the Last Judgement, Blake says that:

Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed & govern'd their Passions or have No Passions, but because they have Cultivated their Understandings. The Treasures of Heaven are not Negations of Passion, but Realities of Intellect, from which all the Passions Emanate uncurbed in their Eternal Glory.

Blake has much to say to our day as well as his own. Man’s natural energy and imagination cannot be suppressed without damage to the individual and the society. Life cannot be rich unless man develops his imaginative powers, his awareness of forces greater than himself, and learns to practise love and forgiveness rather than the domination and exploitation of his fellows and his environment. No doubt, Blake is the most inspired English poet. He is a visionary whose ideas came to him in the form of clearly visualized encounters with angels, Prophets or other symbolic characters. The first of these visions may have occurred as early as the age of four when, according to one anecdote, the young artist “saw God when God put his head to the window” 20, causing Blake to break into screaming.

Blake claimed to experience visions throughout his life. They were often associated with beautiful religious themes and imagery, and therefore may have inspired him further with spiritual works and pursuits. Certainly, religious concepts and imagery figure centrally in Blake's works. God and Christianity constituted the intellectual centre of his writings, from which he drew inspiration. In addition, Blake believed that he was personally instructed and encouraged by Archangels to create his artistic works. In a letter to Thomas Butts, dated April 25, 1803, Blake writes:

Now I may say to you, what perhaps I should not dare to say to anyone else: That I can alone carry on my visionary studies in London unannoy'd, & that I may converse with my friends in Eternity, See Visions, Dream Dreams & prophecy & speak Parables unobserv'd & at liberty from the Doubts of other Mortals; perhaps Doubts proceeding from Kindness, but Doubts are always pernicious, Especially when we Doubt our Friends.

Blake defends himself in so many secret ways that when he speaks of himself, at abrupt moments, his utterances have the heart-breaking appeal of someone who cries out. He states, "I am really different from what you know!" To a Reverend Trusler, for example, who complained after commissioning some drawings that inspiration had led Blake too far, he replies:

I feel that a man may be happy in This World. And I know that This World is a World of Imagination & Vision. I see Everything I paint in This world, but Everybody does not see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is far more beautiful than the Sun... Some see Nature all Ridicule & Deformity, and by these I shall not regulate my proportions; & some scarce see Nature at all. But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. You certainly mistake when you say that the visions of fancy are not to be found in this world. To me this world is all continuous vision of fancy or imagination, and I feel flatter'd when I am told so.

Blake insisted that vision was the central fact of his experience. The denial of vision was the denial of Art, and the denial of art was the denial of Jesus. Frye prefers to call Blake a 'visionary' rather than a 'mystic'. The visionary lives in a higher world in which perceptions are charged with implications that are more intensive.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE

Songs of Innocence and of Experience is a series of illustrated lyrics. The production of these Songs took place over a period of thirty-five years, with Blake acting as his own publisher. The first section of Blake's text, Songs of Innocence was first issued as a separate work, in 1789. Blake later combined these poems with a second section entitled Songs of Experience and called the combined edition, dated 1794, Songs of Innocence and of Experience; Shewing the Two Contrary States of Human Soul. He also created a new illustration for the title page of the combined book of these Songs.

In the combined volume of these Songs there are forty-six poems in all. All of them are short, but some are very short indeed. All are written in an apparently simple style, and the most usual verse form is the rhymed

quatrain. Blake is unique among major poets in English before the 20th century in not using the most convention line, the pentameter which was common to poets from Shakespeare and Milton through to Pope and beyond. The lines Blake uses in the Songs are shorter, typically the tetrameter, as he found it in the popular forms of his day hymns and nursery rhymes, and also the ballad, which had a very significant influence on Blake. The following is a complete copy (copy V) of the Songs; it has been taken from Blake's Archive available on the Web.

MAJOR THEMES OF SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Songs of Innocence at first glance these poems and their decorations appear to be for and about young children. The Introduction poem to this section announces the work as a book for children. Many verses of this section are today included in anthologies for younger readers. Blake was a mature poet, however, and in his simple lines he expressed some of his deepest thoughts about mankind, God, and their relationship. Along with its later companion collection Songs of Experience, Songs of Innocence represents Blake's most famous work and his third example of illuminated printing.

By 'Innocence', Blake means not so much the state of childhood itself as the condition that the idea of childhood invokes sweetness, simplicity, unrestrained love, and the ability to accept life in all its aspects as a source of joy. Blake's 'Innocence', according to Christian belief, is the innocence of the Garden of Eden before the fall. It is the condition of the human soul before the fall and as it will be in Eternity. He believes, indeed, that there is some unhappiness in Eternity, but no real evil. Eternity may be the Garden of Eden without the serpent. Children may be lost and frightened, but their fears are overcome; even the exploitation of the weak by the cruel is made bearable by faith in God's love, which suggests that Eternity can be found before death in this life.

The verses of these Songs are simple, musical and tender. Meters are borrowed from ballads, from singing games, and from nursery rhymes; images from meadows, pastures and playgrounds. The decorations are delicate, painted in light colours, and filled with flowers and leafy vines, dancing children, lambs, and tiny angels. The deeper significance of some of these poems is hidden in certain symbols. A lamb, or Lamb, usually represents Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes the sins of the world. Night is the world of Experience, this mortal world in which nature is often harsh and man cruel to his fellows.

MAJOR THEMES OF SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Five years after the appearance of Songs of Innocence, Blake completed another small series of plates of decorated verses, using the same simple meters, but in an entirely different mood. According to Christian belief, Blake intended the terms 'Innocence' to describe man's state before the Fall and 'Experience' man's

condition after the Fall. So, the world of 'Experience' is a world of disillusionment in which the child-like soul of Innocence meets the harshness of nature and the cruelty of man, and of man's institutions.

Many of these Songs are bitter; the decorations are often bleak, dark, filled with dead trees, wilting flowers, dead or dying figures, graves and tombstones. In these poems, symbols become both more important and more obscure, and they reflect Blake's own disillusionment with the turn of events. If we look deeply into the different situations and time in which Blake had produced these two volumes of songs, we can find that Blake's Songs of Innocence represents the outlook of his early youth and his early happy years of his marriage. They reflect his happy excitement in having found someone who could share his fantasy-world with him and help him to relate it to human realities. But as he grew older he became painfully aware of the shortcomings of the life surrounding him—poverty, cruelty, injustice, oppression which were the order of the day. Also, his idealistic message was falling flat. Songs of Experience, therefore, in seeing every single joy paralleled by sorrow reflects Blake's own state of mind and own disillusionment with the turn of events at that time.

It was during the period between the appearance of Songs of Innocence and to engraving of Songs of Experience that Blake's poetry moves to maturity. In this period, Blake also worked on The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The Book of Thel, The Daughters of Albion, America, as well as the small book of emblems, The Gates of Paradise. There are clear thematic relationships between some of the 'Experience' poems and these books. Blake's ironical reference to God & his priest & king show a new outspokenness in Blake's work, a new drive to expose the social consequences of error, which was no doubt prompted by the political turmoil in England. In reading the 'Experience' poems, one can trace, as Michael Philips says: the vision of experience becoming sharper, more penetrating and more uncompromising with each stage. But Blake's concern with social and religious tyranny here is an extension of his interest in the habits of thought that imprison individuals in the same dull round.

THE SONGS AND THE TWO CONTRARY STATES OF THE HUMAN SOUL

The poems of 'Innocence' and the poems of 'Experience' are meant to convey two different views of human life. In the state of Innocence, we look at things freshly; we look at natural objects and wonder at them, finding in them a child's simple apprehension of beauty. In the state of Experience, this vision is darkened by adult's fears and anxieties; we begin to ask questions about whether what we see is actually the case, about how there can be evil in a good God's creation, about the causes of human suffering. In the state of Experience, we might say we begin to feel the effects of alienation; this may mean we see the world more deeply, but it also means that we see it more painfully. One can think how he himself, as he passes from childhood into adulthood, is coming to recognize how complicated and uncertain the world actually is.

The State of Innocence

In fact, the story of Songs of Innocence and of Experience begins with an inquiry into Songs of Innocence alone, and then into Blake's concept of innocence itself- about the same time that Keynes has Blake assembling the poems that were to eventually make up Songs of Innocence. In this piece, Blake argues that the 'outward form of man' is derived from something called the 'Poetic Genius', and that each particular religion is but a portion of this one, perfect universal. This concept is not distant from Blake scholar David Lindsay's description of innocence, "As a state in which the human faculties are perfectly integrated, in which no being can refuse full sympathy to another, and in which the harmony of Man, God and Nature is too complete to allow a non-human conception of divinity or matter".

The State of Experience

If Blake's concept of 'Poetic Genius' therefore does much to inform and establish his sensibility of innocence in the first book of the Songs, as a primal, innate and total unity, then it is equally likely that his later view of experience evolves from a deep questioning of this ideal. Lindsay suggests this when he opines that "the impetus for the Experience poems began when Blake's desire for poems which reflected the celebration of Innocence began to modulate into a more explicit questioning of intellectual error and social injustice." He notes further that:

the profound and complex changes which took place in Blake's mind and vision during the early 1790s had religious, political and sexual dimensions, and that in this context the writing of additional lyrics for Songs of Innocence led naturally to the formulation of plans for a new engraved book in which the voices of Innocence would be answered by contrasting views expressive of resentment, delusion, and prophetic indignation.

Thus, the implication is that, in tracing the evolution of Songs of Innocence into Songs of Experience, one is also tracing the growth of Blake's widening opinion on these two concepts as well. Blake would have acknowledged that there was greater freedom in writing about the varieties of human experience; while his poems of Songs of Experience are much more fragmented and less perfectly unified, they are also much more expressive and reflect greater ranges of mood as well. Such evidence points to Blake's conception of experience not only as a mere dissolution of innocent harmony, but also as a complication, even enrichment, of a one-note state of innocence. For this reason, he went on to integrate his poems of 'Experience' into Songs of Innocence, oftentimes using works from the earlier book as thematic or stylistic templates for later poems.

The most important mystical influences on Blake were Christianity, Swedenborg and Boehme. Based on Boehme's doctrine of contraries, Blake sub-titles his Songs of Innocence and of Experience as Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. The word 'Contrary' had a very specific important meaning for Blake. Like almost all great Poets, he was an enemy of dualism. For two thousand five hundred years Western thought has been intensely dualistic, seeing everything as composed of warring opposites, head and

heart, body and spirit, male and female, human and non-human, life and death, innocence and experience, good and evil, heaven and hell, as though the split between the hemispheres of the human brain were projecting itself on everything perceived by that brain. Even worse than dualism itself is the tendency consequent upon it in Western culture to make absolute judgments between the contraries, accepting, praising, empowering one, rejecting, suppressing, attempting to exterminate the other. If we praise spirit, it has to be at the expense of body. The rebel goes to the opposite extreme and praises body at the expense of spirit.

In fact, Blake thought dialectically that contraries for him were generative or creative. Dualism, polarity, and dichotomy – these modes of perceiving and organizing human experience not only appear throughout the major literary productions of Blake, but also in most of his great work both poems and prose. By his combination of Song of Innocence and of Experience together as a single book and at the same time subtitle them by the description of that they show Two Contrary States of Human Soul, Blake wants to heighten the readers' awareness of the two 'Contrary States of Human Soul' by playing them off against each other.

Throughout the combined work, Blake emphasizes the difference between the contrary states by composing Songs of Experience for the purpose of parading of Songs of Innocence. In many cases, the corresponding verses of these Songs bear identical, or obviously contrasting titles, in others, the links are made apparent by similarity of the subject, of verse form, or of the apparent decoration. Equally, many of the individual poems in each collection show an awareness of the contrary state, i.e. some poems in Songs of Innocence hint at the perils of Experience, while some poems in Songs of Experience resonate with a sense of the absence of Innocence, a sense of loss.

POEMS WITH COMMON TITLES

In the combined collection of the Songs, Blake's obvious parallels are limited to comparatively few of the poems; the two Chimney Sweepers, the two Holy Thursdays, the two Nurses Songs, the two Introductions, The Divine Image and A Divine Image and The Little Boy Lost and A Little Boy Lost.

Poems with Opposite Titles

Poems with contrasting titles are very limited to few poems: The Lamb, is to be paired with The Tyger, Infant Joy with Infant Sorrow and The Divine Image with The Human Abstract. Other poems in the book as mentioned earlier show the contrast by the similarity of the subject, of verse form, or of the apparent decoration and beyond this, there are other possible and more subtle couplings, the reader may make his own conjectures because Blake was not mechanically systematic.

EXECUTION OF CONTRARINESS IN THE SONGS

Innocence vs. Experience

The most important contrary relationship in the Songs is between 'Innocence' and 'Experience'. According to Blake, Innocence was largely associated with childhood, and Experience with adulthood but these

associations are not absolute. We see elements of the jaded cynicism and world-weariness that Blake associates with experience in the Songs of Innocence and elements of joyful play in the Songs of Experience. As Nicholas Marsh notes:

It would be wrong to think of 'Experience' as any wiser than "Innocence" or any more cynical or world-weary; it would be equally wrong to think of Innocence as more joyful or playful. There are elements of both in each. For Blake, these mind-states, with portals from one to the other appearing in either world. And it was not the road to or from one or the other that concerned Blake, but rather the road between them which eventually led beyond all dualities. For Blake it appears that the route towards wholeness and a 'true' vision lies through combination of the two, not rejection of either of them.

The Body vs. the Soul

Another important contrary relationship in the Songs is between the body and the soul. As with the split between Innocence and Experience, in the Songs the wall between body and soul is quite porous, and there is much intercourse between the two. For Blake, the body, including the sexual body, was not the enemy, but rather the locus of enjoyment and enlightenment. Blake writes, "all creation will be consumed, and appear infinite and holy.... by an improvement of sensual enjoyment."

The true enemy consisted of the forces arrayed against sensual and sexual enjoyment—puritanical church institutions and the anti-sex God they represented, which Blake mocks in *The Garden of Love*. The soul is not the enemy either, though it needed to be redeemed from the forces that would repress the pleasures of the body. According to Blake, there was a Fall and an expulsion from Paradise, but this Fall was not occasioned by sexual sin, but rather its repression. As W. J. T. Mitchell explains, "For Blake, in the final analysis the body and the imagination or souls are separable principles only in a fallen world of limited perception; the business of Blake's art is to dramatize their unification." We need redemption not from the body or the soul, but from the false division between them. Thus, it is the imagination's role to effect such reconciliation.

Imagination vs. Reason

Imagination has a contrary as well as reason. Blake holds that reason is the cause of the division of the world into contraries. For Blake, reason as an enemy was the scientific mind-set, and it needed to be rejected as a principle of organizing meaning—as opposed to knowledge—in the world. Liberation, Blake believed, comes not from reason but imagination, as it is expressed through art, and this is Blake's mission. Unlike the synthesis that Blake advocates when representing other contraries in the Songs, the integration he advocates for reason and imagination is lopsided in favour of imagination. There is no hard-won co-existence here, no spiral dance of dualities, but rather an 'apocalyptic' subsuming of reason into imagination.

Other Contraries in the Songs

Some other contraries found in the Songs such as night and day, winter and spring, wilderness and Eden, even left and right political orientation as well as left and right cognitive orientation. It is the integration of such contraries that form the dialectical contrast between the Songs. W. J. T. Mitchell writes “dialogue and dialectic of contraries constitute the master code of Blake’s text.”

BALANCE OF OPPOSITES

The contrast of different states of the human mind is the main concern of William Blake in his work of Songs of Innocence and of Experience, ‘Innocence’ and ‘Experience’ are, for Blake, two complementary but also conflicting states of the human soul, and states within all of Creation; neither is ‘better’ than the other, and both are necessary to the other. Keith Sagar writes:

by describing at the outset innocence and experience as “contrary states of Human Soul” Blake is warning us that we are not being invited to choose between them, that no such choice is possible or desirable, and that we are not simply going to be offered here the truism that innocent joy is preferable to the sorrows of experience.

Behind this rather vague and abstract perspective is an essentially archetypal vision of human life – ‘Innocence’ and ‘Experience’ are not abstract qualities or concepts, but active forces, persons, even gods, which manifest themselves in all human, natural and supernatural life. Thus, in looking at the interrelationships of these lyrics as dialectical, the reader may be helped by Northrop Frye’s observation, “The Songs of Experience are satires, but one thing they satirize is the State of InnocenceConversely, the Songs of Innocence satirize the State of Experience Hence the two sets of lyrics show two contrary State of the Soul, and in their opposition theme is a double edged Irony.” Eben Bass adds, “The total effect of Innocence and Experience is one of balanced opposites, each fulfilling and completing the other.”

Blake intended for his reader to come into a space where he/she could encounter the two contraries in dialogue, within the imagination, and come to a sense of resolution. He wanted his reader to hold both contraries in view in a kind of double-vision. As he wrote in a letter to Thomas Butts:

For double the vision my Eyes do see

And a double vision is always with me,

Blake did suggest looking towards the body or the soul to the exclusion of the other, but to allow them to remain, in fruitful contest, within the imagination. We must keep in the mind Blake’s own lines from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, “Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence”. Just as opposition might be the truest friend, allowing the play of contraries might be the truest path to wisdom. No poet has understood and exploited this idea more successfully than Blake, and this was solely due to his mysticism, the fact that his doors of perception were cleansed. In the Songs of Innocence and of Experience, we are apparently presented with

two different worlds, narrated by two different narrators. A more careful reading will present several interesting correspondences between the two worlds. As a mystic, Blake had progressed in perceiving reality beyond duality or in his own words; he achieved a condition where “everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.”

INNOCENCE, EXPERIENCE AND HIGHER INNOCENCE

William Blake believed that all human beings are born into a state of Innocence. For young children, everything around them is beautiful and true. This Innocence is not the same as Ignorance, i.e. being too young to know that the world can be a dark, threatening place. Their ‘Innocence’ is more like the innocence of Adam and Eve before they ate of the forbidden fruit and were expelled from the Garden of Eden.

As we grow up and leave childhood behind us, ‘Experience’ teach us that the world not only has beauty and truth, but also has a darker side, and that people can be tainted with hate, envy, jealousy, fear, poverty, and despair. For Blake, it is the state of Experience. Blake felt that we all, as adults, must accept that the world of Experience exists, but that we can get back to the vision of Innocence that we had in our childhood.

We can regain our Innocence by the use of our Imagination. We can use our Creative Imagination to remember what the world of Innocence is like, and that is the world we should try to live in. All our actions and behaviour and thoughts should reflect the kind of Innocence we want to regain – we should be kind and helpful and gracious and loving and considerate.

It is a fact that Blake’s Songs of Experience show how familiar he was with the harsh realities of life, while his Songs of Innocence show the kind of world we would like to build in order to experience the joys of Higher Innocence. This central idea of ‘Innocence, Experience, and Higher Innocence’ is reflected in Blake’s poetry, and it is enlightening to study them in pairs.

CONCLUSION

Based on his philosophy and believes, Blake produces most of his works in pair or in two separate sides that contrast one another. In his book of Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Blake wrote many poems with common and opposite titles. These poems highlight and show two contrary states of human soul. Blake composes these poems this way to present a contradiction between the states of innocence and experience, two phases through which all people must pass. According to Blake, these poems represent the world as it is envisioned by what he calls the “two contrary states of human soul.”³⁹ Common and opposite titles reinforce and highlight the contrast between these poems for showing further how each relies upon the other to benefit the progression of humanity.

In fact, understanding the difference between the ‘two contrary states,’ of ‘Innocence’ and ‘Experience’, is fundamental to understanding Blake’s purpose in composing these poems with common or opposite titles in Songs of Innocence and of Experience. Blake believes that before birth, the soul lives in a state of enlightenment where opposites are all one. Birth into this earthly world results in separation. As a result of

these beliefs, his poems appear in two separate sides that contrast one another. Songs of Innocence and of Experience are quite obviously based on his belief that the soul has two contrary states, one of Innocence, and one of Experience.

Both 'Innocence' and 'Experience' are necessary 'states' in the development of the human spirit. We are all born innocent, but when we begin to recognize evil, and are inevitably tempted by it, we pass into a state of experience. So, in our lives, we re-enact the myth of the Fall of Man described in the Book of Genesis in the Bible. Without fall, without experience, we cannot realize the state of higher innocence.

Blake was an enemy of dualism. He thought dialectically – that is, contraries for him were generative or creative. Dualism, polarity and dichotomy – these modes of perceiving and organizing human experience appear throughout his works. By composing poems with common and opposite titles in Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Blake wants his readers to hold both contraries in these poems, in view in a kind of double-vision.

Such contrasts between 'Innocence' and 'Experience' work to balance the individual. Innocence brings hope and faith and experience works to educate the individual in dealing with despair and ambiguity. The Lamb and The Tyger are two poems with opposite titles both question the reality of a Divine Creator, whether knowing the answer or not, demonstrate the common characteristics between the two and the possibility of an alliance to benefit mankind. However, because both are consequences of dualism, they tend to concentrate on a single portion rather than the whole, what Blake referred to as 'single vision'.

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