

Exuberance is Beauty

A Study of William Blake's Visionary Aesthetics

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by

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Contents

Thesis Abstract	II
List of illustrations	III
Acknowledgements	V
Abbreviations	VI
 Introduction	 pp. 1-7
 <i>Chapter 1</i>	
1.1. The Origins of Energy: Fire and Light	pp. 8-21
1.2. Energy, desire, and delight are the source of all life	22- 33
1.3. Energy and Urizen	34-59
 <i>Chapter 2</i>	
2.1. Energy and intellect as aesthetic components of Blake's 'Sublime Allegory'	60-92
2.2. Intellect as an aesthetic component of the 'Sublime of Imagination'	93-104
2.3. Corporeal Understanding and Intellectual Powers	105-121
 <i>Chapter 3</i>	
3.1. The Ancient Britons	122-148
3.2. <i>The Book of Thel</i> and female beauty's presentation as use-value	149-221
 <i>Chapter 4</i>	
4.1. The 'Sublime of Imagination' and Blake's Aesthetic Idealism	222-280
4.2. The Splendour of Imagination	281-310
4.3. Imagination, Nature and Natural Religion	311-343
 Conclusion	 344-350
 Bibliography	 351-371

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines William Blake's 'aesthetic theory' by referring to the basic aesthetic categories of the sublime, the beautiful and the ugly. The argument of the thesis is that William Blake's sublime is the human imagination which he identifies with Jesus. However, the Blakean sublime contains the concept of beauty which is found in pure energy and intellect. There are two different aspects of the Blakean sublime. The first is the 'Sublime of Imagination' and the other is the 'negative sublime' (as Weiskel, Thomas defined it). The 'Sublime of Imagination' is a positive worldview and the 'negative sublime', which is reason, represents the subversion of the prophetic vision. Reason, impure energy, intellectual inactivity, nature and the spectre are the components of the aesthetic category of the ugly. In *The Ancient Britons* Blake established his aesthetic theory by referring to three different types of men: The Strong man who represents the human sublime. The Beautiful man who represents the human pathetic and the Ugly man who represents the human reason. In *The Book of Thel*, he presents his views on the beauty of women. Blake describes imagination, the sublime, the beautiful and the ugly by drawing from his idea of true religion thus, creating his true art. Therefore, the thesis is an aesthetics of religion and art.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve, 50.7 x 38.2 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 2. Adam naming the beasts, 15.9 x 13.1cm. *Designs to A Series of Ballads*, William Hayley, 1802. Line-engravings. Henry E. Huntington. Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

Figure 3. The Death of The Good Old Man, 20.2 x 25.8 cm. The Grave, Robert Blair, 1808. Designed by Blake and engraved by Schiavonetti. Line-engravings. British Museum.

Figure 4. Death of the Strong Wicked Man, 20.8 x 25.9 cm. The Grave, Robert Blair, 1808. Designed by Blake and engraved by Schiavonetti. Line-engravings. British Museum.

Figure 5. Behemoth and Leviathan, 27.5 x 19.7 cm. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.

Figure 6. *The [First] Book of Urizen*, copy G, c. 1818 (Library of Congress) plate 9 (Bentley 7, Erdman 7, Keynes 7) blakearchive.org

Figure 7. *The [First] Book of Urizen*, copy A, 1794 (Yale Center for British Art) plate 14 (Bentley 11, Erdman 11, Keynes 11) blakearchive.org

Figure 8. The body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve, c 1826, 32.5 x 43.3 cm. Tate Gallery, London.

Figure 9. As if an Angel Dropped down from the Clouds, 1809, 23.1 x 17.3 cm. British Museum.

Figure 10. The Parable of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins, c. 1805, 35.9 x 33.1 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Figure 11. *The Book of Thel*, copy H, c. 1789 (Library of Congress) plate 7 (Bentley 7, Erdman 5, Keynes 5) blakearchive.org

Figure 12. *The Book of Thel*, copy F, c. 1795 (Library of Congress) plate 8 (Bentley 8, Erdman 6, Keynes 6) blakearchive.org

Figure 13. Christ descending to the Grave, 22.5 x 12.4 cm. The Grave, Robert Blair, 1808. Designed by Blake and engraved by Schiavonetti. Line-engravings. British Museum.

Figure 14. Lucifer and the Pope in Hell, c. 1795, 20.1 x 27.3 cm. Henry E. Huntington.
Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

Figure 15. The Judgment of Paris, 1811(?), 38.5 x 46 cm. British Museum.

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Abbreviations

E Erdman, David V. ed. Commentary by Harold Bloom. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1988.

UP University Press

UPs University Presses

In memory of

My mother Spiridoula Kastanidou - Dimitrakopoulou (1932 - 2000) and

Grandmother Maria Tiringi - Kastanidou (1912 - 1994)

For Los said: When the Individual appropriates Universality
He divides into Male & Female: & when the Male & Female,
Appropriate Individuality, they become an Eternal Death.
Hermaphroditic worshippers of a God of cruelty & law!
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 4, PLATE 90, ll. 52-5, E 250).

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Introduction

In the Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, London, 1798, Blake explicitly expressed his views about the prevalent aesthetics of his era:

<Burke's Treatise on the Sublime & Beautiful is founded on the Opinions of Newton & Locke on this Treatise Reynolds has grounded many of his assertions. in all his Discourses I read Burkes Treatise when very Young at the same time I read Locke on Human Understanding & Bacons Advancement of Learning on Every one of these Books I wrote my Opinions & on looking them over find that my Notes on Reynolds in this Book are exactly Similar. I felt the Same Contempt & Abhorrence then; that I do now. They mock Inspiration & Vision Inspiration & Vision was then & now is & I hope will always Remain my Element my Eternal Dwelling place. how can I then hear it Contemnd without returning Scorn for Scorn – > (E 660-1)

The reason that Blake despised empiricist aesthetics was due to its dependence on Bacon's, Newton's and Locke's scientific theories. The principles, for example of the subject-object division, on which empirical aesthetics was founded, were outdated. The thinkers of the Age of Reason adhered to an aesthetic perception of art whose origin was science, classicism and not true religion.

Blake formed a theory about true religion, and then he expanded it to his art. Therefore, he created the aesthetics of true art. He aspired to an inspirational and visionary, i.e. qualitative art whose source is human imagination and divinity. The thesis is an aesthetics of religion and art and examines Blake's sublime and beautiful. In order to explain Blake's sublime, it is necessary to analyse the basic categories of his aesthetics, which are: the sublime and beautiful, energy and use-value.

Blake assumed that Burke's treatise on the sublime and beautiful was incomplete because it was founded on empiricist aesthetics. According to Burke, the sublime is caused by a 'mode of terror or pain', and is contrasted with the beautiful (rather than being part of the beautiful). Kant also distinguished it as a separate category from beauty, making it apply properly only to the mind, not to the object, and giving it a peculiar moral effect in opposing 'the interests of sense.' The basis for one's response to beauty exists in the structure of one's mind. He (Kant) distinguished a mathematical sublime of extension in space or time, and a dynamic of power. He was concerned with judgments of taste and contended that objects are judged beautiful when they satisfy a disinterested desire. It follows from this that judgments of beauty are universal and not mere personal preferences. It is improbable of Blake's awareness of these ideas, yet the Blakean sublime and the beautiful are founded in imagination, pure energy and intellectual beauty respectively. As far as Plato is concerned, Blake was a Neoplatonist (Raine) in the sense that he gave far more importance to art and its religious origin than his predecessor.

What is the Blakean sublime, and what does the term 'Sublime of Imagination' indicate? Traditionally the sublime has been the name for objects inspiring awe, because of the magnitude of their size, height, depth (for example the ocean, Mt. Blanc) force (a storm) or transcendence (our idea of God). The foundation of Blakean aesthetics is the transcendental experience of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. The term 'Sublime of Imagination' is Paley's who considered imagination Blake's sublime. I also concur that imagination is the greatest force in Blake's aesthetics: '... Human Imagination ... is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus, ...' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 3, ll.3-4, E 96).

Blake's aesthetic idealism concerns imagination and it is expressed by the principles of self-annihilation, the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, and universal brotherhood. These are the constituents of true religion. They permeate art and culture, thus, defining Blake's secular 'Sublime of Imagination.' In order to break with tradition Blake reconsidered natural religion, reason and the art of his era. The 'Sublime of Imagination' replaced the natural sublime. The aesthetic category of the ugly, Blake's 'negative aesthetic', is made up by impurity, reason, natural religion, false art and the spectre. Reason is the agent of the prophetic vision's subversion and imagination's adversary. It is a negative pleasure, indicative of restriction and oppression. Through imagination Blake aims at human liberation from prejudices and restraints. He also aspires to spirituality because his ultimate purpose is to create true art.

Aesthetics is concerned with the essence and perception of beauty and ugliness. It also asks if there is a difference between the sublime and the beautiful. Traditionally the aesthetic category of the beautiful was variously defined and confused with the sublime. Beauty is the quality or a combination of qualities that delights the mind or aesthetic senses and it is associated with such properties as harmony of form or colour, excellence of artistry, truthfulness, and originality. The question that is attached to beauty is what 'having aesthetic value' amounts to. Philosophical aesthetics has tried to rescue beauty by regarding it the best name for aesthetic value. Beauty is aesthetic, moral, cognitive and utility value. Aesthetic value is recognized as distinct from moral value. Also, the cognitive and utility values attribute to beauty diverse meaning. Blake's dictum: 'For the Eye altering alters all' (*The Mental Traveller*, l. 62, E 485) answers the popular saying 'Beauty is in the eye of the

beholder.' Burke's ideas on beauty, his distinction between love, desire and lust did not find Blake concordant. There are points in Burke's aesthetic theory, which influenced Blake, but the latter was also sceptical on certain matters. For him, beauty is intellectual. Human intellect is separated into wisdom and reason. Intellectual beauty, freely expressed and unrestrained is wisdom. The human imagination is not the man of 'generation and vegetation' and 'single vision'. 'Reasoners' are not artists.

The concept of beauty has changed through time. Modern aesthetic theories proclaim the death of beauty. There are also theorists who assert that beauty and ugliness are not qualities of the works of art but qualities of the spirit expressed intuitively in these works of art. Also, when one takes pleasure in a thing the pleasure may be regarded as a quality of the thing itself. In addition, art has a practical or therapeutic use. It is seen as an emotive language without symbolic meaning, or as an expression of the individual freedom to choose. Nevertheless, Blake's beauty is pure energy and wisdom. The sublime contains it but imagination is the only aesthetic category which describes Blake's aesthetic vision.

Blake uses energy as the starting point of his aesthetic quest. In the process, he abandons energy in favour of imagination which identifies with divinity. Although creative energy can liberate humans from corporeal slavery early Blakean energy is evil, in the sense that impurity defines the human being. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, energy is attributed to human sexuality and it is expressed in two qualitative aspects: pure and impure. I identify pure energy with beauty, and impurity with ugliness: 'one giving life, the other giving death' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 19[21], l. 29, E 113). 'To Create a World of Generation from the World of Death' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 58, l. 18, E 207). Without refinement the hermaphroditic,

impure, satanic energy urges man to pursue a living death. If energy is released and used for the creation of art, man fulfils God's wish and becomes an artist who participates in the 'fourfold vision'. Energy is a creative force, which is potentially redemptive but because of its association with war and revolution it loses its dynamic to represent Blake's sublime.

There are also two arguments which prove that energy's sublimity must be reconsidered: Can Jesus, imagination incarnated be equal to sexual energy which is good and evil? Also, can energy be sublime if desires are not satisfied? The answer to the first question is negative because if energy is sublime (early Blake) and equals imagination (late Blake) the two collaborate together to produce true art. This contention asserts that imagination, which is Jesus, equals sexual energy. Therefore energy's sublimity is not an accurate claim. Energy, due to its duality is not an artistic idea. Thus, it cannot represent Jesus. Ungratified desires generate oppression. Thus, due to energy's dual definition and its restriction, also its association with war and revolution it cannot be considered Blake's sublime. Revolutionary energy is war and represents the Wrath of God. Blake does not consider war an aesthetic, artistic concept, and a sublime force. On the contrary art and war are conflicting pursuits. In late Blake, energy's waning and disappearance is another indication of energy's inability to represent the sublime. Orc (revolutionary energy) appears once in *Jerusalem*, and Fuzon (suffocated energy) appears twice in *The [First] Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*.

In the Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, (1788), Lavater claimed that the virtuous man of goodness, 'though possessed of energy', prefers inactivity, (even if it

appears weakness to others) to the invitation of acting the evil. Blake disagreed by stating: 'Noble But Mark Active Evil is better than Passive Good.' (E 592) Although this dictum is shocking indicates (early) Blake's belief in energy's liberal power from any personal and religious restraint.

In his book *Energy and the Imagination* (1970) Paley (referring to literary or eighteenth-century sources) uses the term 'Sublime of Imagination' to explain one of the two sublime forces in Blake's aesthetics. He considers that Blake started from the 'Sublime of Energy' (early Blake) and proceeded to the 'Sublime of Imagination' (late Blake) thus, completing his aesthetic vision. I assume that the 'Sublime of Imagination' is the only aesthetic category in Blakean aesthetics and consists of energy and intellect. On the other hand, Raine's claims describe Blake's religious sources that assisted him to create his aesthetics. Blake's idea of divinity, energy, reason and imagination are concepts which originate from religious sources. However, beauty and intellect are aesthetic notions which define the Blakean sublime.

Another important clarification concerns *The Book of Thel*. Recent criticism (Essick, Viscomi and Eaves) suggests that 'use' had a specific meaning in Swedenborg's doctrine and that *The Book of Thel* represents Blake's attempt to encounter with Swedenborgian creed. Femininity and female identity in the eighteenth-century was an important subject and concerned woman's role in society, also her relationship with men. In the patriarchal structure of the era, women should obey certain rules and perform their maternal tasks. They were useful as wives and mothers, i.e. possessions of their husbands. In *The Book of Thel* Blake expressed his scepticism about the female destiny and posited femininity under its aesthetic dimension. Female beauty is not an abstract concept. On the contrary, it acquires significance because Thel chooses

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death instead of victimization, exploitation, pretension and perversion. Blake presents woman's unfulfilled destiny by introducing the concept of beauty in its different values: the aesthetic, the moral and utility. Thel's beauty is not utility. She is aesthetically indifferent and her morality is impurity.

The Hebrew religious tradition of passion and splendour (sublime and beautiful combined) produced Jesus. Blake's aesthetic theory is based on human imagination which he identified with Jesus; thus, creating the 'Sublime of Imagination.' He followed this model to produce inspirational art and was the only poet and artist who established imagination's sublime power by attributing to it creative and reformatory qualities. Imagination, which was the prevalent concept in Romantic era, permeated his perception of divinity, social structure and culture. Imagination was the force that fulfilled his vision for a liberal and regenerative society which is freed from all kinds of restraints.

Chapter 1

1.1. The Origins of Energy: Fire and Light

The first part of this chapter, which includes energy, desire, delight and reason, concerns energy. The analysis of Blake's visionary aesthetics begins from energy, the starting point of his aesthetic theory. The reason that I chose energy to develop Blake's aesthetics is because in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he presents energy's dual nature, i.e. its pure and impure form. Ironically, Blake exposes energy's impurity in order to prove the fallacious principle that concerns divinity's unique essence of purity. He also confirms energy's erotic, sexual nature.

The intention of this chapter is to present and clarify why energy is one of the constituent parts of Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination.' The presentation of energy's binary nature, which characterises divinity, proves why energy's purity, which is beauty (i.e. the aesthetic category of the beautiful), composes Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination.' I also explain why impure energy, as well as degraded intellect, which is reason, belong to Blake's negative aesthetic.

Energy's acceptance as a sublime force is accurate, in the sense that its release causes disorder and subversion. The purpose of this revolt is to establish a new and different order. The chapter is based on the argument that energy is not Blake's sublime because of its double nature and its relation with war and revolution. Because of these characteristics, sublimity is an unsuitable attribution to the concept. Energy's sublimity is generality and insufficiency because it does not explain the priority that Blake ascribed to human imagination. Impurity is Blake's negative aesthetic. If

energy's impurity is taken into consideration the plausible result is the 'negative sublime.' This assertion suggests that in Blake's aesthetics there are two aspects of the sublime. The positive 'Sublime of Imagination' and the 'negative sublime', which is reason, i.e. impure energy and degraded intellect.

Paley's assertions on the origins of Blake's sublime seem accurate enough to define its source. He considers energy sublime, i.e. an aesthetic category, thus accepting two aesthetic categories in his analysis of Blake's aesthetics. In my opinion, energy cannot be considered sublime. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is Blake's unique aesthetic category. Energy is one of the components of Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination.' The other is intellect. In their positive forms they constitute the aesthetic category of the 'Sublime of Imagination', which is composed by pure energy, which is beauty, and wisdom, intellect's transcendental ability. Even if one accepts energy as a sublime force and that 'Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse. not from rules' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 43), also that 'The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword. are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Proverbs of Hell, PLATE 8, E 36), the assertion that energy is one of Blake's aesthetic categories, which might explain his aesthetic vision, is ineffective.

The idea that energy is the foundation of Blake's aesthetic theory is presented in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. This text is used in order to describe and explain energy's binary nature. Blake's energy consists of two basic components, heat and motion, and its manifestation in the fallen world relates to the wrathful God. At first,

Blake considers energy to be the only origin of true life and he uses it as an aesthetic idea in his poetry and art, believing that it will lead his vision to its ultimate fulfilment. His belief in God's wrath and its revolutionary expression was the necessary action to be undertaken for the subversion of oppression, slavery and the material world of reality: "The American Revolution begins when Orc (revolutionary energy) rapes the shadowy daughter of Urthona, and it culminates with 'the females naked and glowing with the lusts of youth' " ¹ (i.e. sexual energy). Energy's principal purpose was the subversion of order. Thus, in its first expression it is wrath and not love. It is wrath because it is the first reaction against tyranny and against whatever the intellect perceives as oppressive and destructive against life's continuity. It is the Father, the Fire that has the wrathful property in its essence. He releases it and the result is revolution. It is also an internal revolution after oppression's self-realisation.

The analysis of the basic argument concerning energy's dual nature establishes the separation of Blake's 'negative sublime', and the 'Sublime of Imagination.' His aesthetic idealism and realism are based on the distinction between impure and pure energy respectively. The conclusion is that by exposing energy's negative aspect Blake's aesthetics acquire significant clarification. Therefore, the explanation of the contrary energies in man describes how Blake formed his aesthetic theory. In the process, energy's attributes, which is desire and delight, will elucidate more the foundations of the 'Sublime of Imagination.'

¹ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 10.

Blake's first thoughts about energy appear in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1789) and take the form of answers to the pre-existing notions of natural religion and the beliefs that erroneously had prevailed until that time. Blake's conception of energy is dissociated from the scientific or philosophical notions of eighteenth century terminologies. The scientists of the era wanted to ascribe to it divine qualities, while at the same time defining it scientifically in order to explain the natural laws of motion.¹ In Blake's work, the use of the term is aesthetic and visionary. Energy is the implement that he uses to disclose the fourfold vision and the man of imagination. Imagination is the only means against the 'reasoning power', which is vision's greatest enemy. Division and contrariety of good and evil is resolved by pure energy's expression and free intellect's exertion. The struggle for redemption starts with the liberation and expression of vital, creative energy. When it is repressed it generates impurity, which is a negative. It is the venomous, evil and murderous force. Impurity is self's killer and the fourfold vision's destroyer. Expressed energy leads to eternity whereas repressed energy to a false perception of reality.

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion,
Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human
existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil.
Good is the passive that obeys Reason [.] Evil is the active
springing from Energy.

Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*,
PLATE 3, E 34)

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following
Errors:

¹ For more information about the scientific use of the term See: Ault, D. *Visionary Physics. Blake's Response to Newton*. (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 9-10.

1. That Man has two real existing principles: Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy. calld Evil, is alone from the Body. & that Reason. calld Good. is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True

- 1 Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses. the chief inlets of Soul in this age
2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
- 3 Energy is Eternal Delight (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34).

Paley contends that Blake in *The Marriage* conceives of energy as erotic in origin and as revolutionary in expression.¹ This is an argument that is also assumed by Schorer who states that: 'The various forms of restraint Blake defines in appropriate varieties of imagery, but under them all, and dominating them all, is the imagery of sexual restraint, because he (Blake) has chosen to present sex as the mainspring of all energy.'²

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, energy's origin is divine and is defined as sexual, psychic human power. Blake ascribes to energy, divine and bodily, corporeal signification differentiating it from the scientific notions and the confused ideas that

¹ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 10.

² Schorer, Mark. *William Blake: The Politics of Vision.* (New York: Henry Holt and Company Inc., 1959), 261.

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philosophers and scholars of his era attributed to its meaning.¹ Energy's origin is the body. He annuls the body and soul dualism, in the same way that he rejects the dichotomy of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Thus, energy appears as a substance of the body, which produces the contradictory states of existence. Its potential purity and / or its impurity defines human existence and the visionary or material perception of the individual. The indeterminacy of the terms good and evil enabled Blake to form and elaborate on energy, as a bodily property that is not separated from the soul. Energy is man, in the same way that 'The Spectre is the Man.' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the First, PAGE 12, E 307). Energy's erotic and sexual nature is also the basis of my assumption which accepts energy's corporeal origin and its divine source as a mixture of purity and / or impurity. In its initial stage energy appears an amorphous, unformed substance of heat and motion which struggles to be liberated from its impure heredity.

Blake talks about both forms of energy. That is, expressed energy, as one of the constituents of his 'Sublime of Imagination.' Reason, suppressed energy and the spectre i.e. the reasoning power, compose the aesthetic category of the ugly. Impure energy, reason and the spectre are parts of his 'negative sublime', which culminates with Ulro. These are inimical to Blake's aesthetic idealism. Energy and intellect are the constituent parts of his 'Sublime of Imagination' and compose his visionary aesthetics. Both their negative and positive qualities are included in his aesthetics. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is a synthesis of pure energy, which is beauty, and intellect.

¹ Paley extensively refers to the various meanings that had been attributed to the term, as well as Blake's possible influences from several sources. See: Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 5-10.

Was Blake the first to attribute the term energy to the body? Paley does not clarify this. As Raine claims:

This philosophy of energy as “the only life” that is “from the Body” was certainly no invention of Blake’s. Boehme’s Father and his seven nature spirits is nothing less than the energy of nature and of the body: For here you must understand, that there are two wills in one Being, and they cause *two Principles*: One is the Love and the other is the Anger or the Source of Wrath. The *first* will is not called God, but Nature: the second Will is called A and Ω, the beginning and the End, from Eternity to Eternity: and in the first Will, Nature could be manifest, the second Will maketh Nature manifest ... and the one would be *nothing* without the other.”¹

It seems that Blake was influenced by Priestley’s beliefs, but the latter was not as explicit as Blake. Energy’s attribution to the body was a unique conception in the eighteenth century. Blake radically altered the traditional theology in which the soul was the manifestation of God. But energy’s indeterminate context did not satisfy his visionary approach to divinity. Energy is from the body and it is evil. Romanticism revived the view that evil is something positive and even magnificent. However, Blake’s energy, although evil, is not determinately satanic. It is potentially redemptive. The Age of Reason had excluded energy’s power to do work, as well as its ability to create works of art. Its substance was useless and its utility unknown. Blake attributes to energy the power to do work, a contention that Thomas Young perhaps influenced Blake. The acceptance and the exploration of energy’s force in the human body, which is the negative drive towards death, was a challenge to the people

¹ Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. V.1. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 364.

of the pre-capitalist world, at the end of the eighteenth century, to release their creative force, to liberate themselves and throw off the yoke of individual and social slavery. Energy's release followed its discovery. Its erotic source and its revolutionary expression is the manifestation of the divine on earth.

The question that arises in this assertion concerns energy's hereditary impurity. If the first principle is benevolent and pure, this means that all energy is pure, because of its benign, divine nature. There is no error and falsity in pure energy. However, man because of his / her fallen nature is the bearer of evil and he / she has inherited the propensity to vice and sin. Raine mentions an important argument about energy's impurity, stating that: 'No psychic energy, or mood of the soul, is merely good or merely evil; the face turned depends upon circumstances.'¹ Actually, the assertion that energy's significance depends upon circumstances is not acceptable because the expression of pure or impure energy is not an issue of human adversities. Blake talks about states through which the human soul passes trying to realize life's significance in order to achieve eternity: 'These States Exist now Man Passes on but States remain for Ever he passes thro them *like a traveller* who may as well suppose that the places he has passed thro exist no more as a Man may suppose that the States he has passd thro exist no more Every Thing is Eternal >' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 556). (emphasis added). Impurity is a changeable state and purity is a desirable state. As Damon claims: 'Everybody is born into the state of Satan; ... But all do not escape.'² Impurity or purity is defined by the intellectual states of men. Human intellect is very important in understanding the states that humans are in. There is an apparent stability of pure or impure energy, which defines human beings' consciousness. It was Blake's

¹ Raine, Kathleen. *William Blake 156 Illustrations 28 in colour* (London: Thames and Hundson, 1970), 56.

² Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988) , 356.

belief in intellect and his assertion that men are capable of realising the states they are in, and change the course of their lives. Intellect is the means that men must use to turn impure energy into pure and change their states of existence.

In Blake's visionary aesthetics energy's substance is identified with Fire and Light. These two different energies are essentially the same and define divinity. These form Blake's two contrary principles, the Devourer and the Prolific. God in his essence is a double substance i.e. Fire and Light, and He has two wills, Wrath and Mercy, equally united in one nature, which is divine. From the same divine nature springs energy, which in the human body is evil. As Raine states: Blake's hell "evil or energy", originated with Boehme:

The fires of the Father, ... are the abyss of hell, and the light of the Son is heaven; yet the two are one, springing from a single root: "For the God of the holy World, and the God of the Dark World, are *not two* Gods; there is but *one* only God. He himself is the only Being; he is Evil and Good, Heaven and Hell; Light and Darkness; Eternity and Time; Beginning and End. Where his Love is *hid* in any Thing, there his Anger is *manifest*. In many a Thing Love and Anger are in equal Measure and Weight; as is to be understood in this outward World's Essence." Boehme's fires are, as Blake also calls hell, "evil or energy"; and without this energy there is no life possible.¹

Paley also states that 'One of the seminal ideas that Blake derived from Boehme is that God manifests Himself in two contrary principles: Wrath and Love, Fire and

¹ Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. V.1. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 363.

Light, Father and Son. These principles are not dualistically opposed: they are contraries in an unending dialectic whose synthesis is the Godhead.¹

There are numerous correlations of Fire and Light with Good and Evil, of the Fire Who dwells in the fiery essence, and of the Light that shines out of the shadow. All the devils inhabit in the fire and poison all the creatures of the universe. However, without this poison life is impossible. Mobility and life depends on the eternal strife between creation and dissolution. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake's 'devils' are active and constructive agents whose purpose is the disclosure and destruction of every false structure. Their work is creative because it aims at the abolition of old structure to redefine and establish a different order.

God is the Fire and Jesus is the Light. God the Father is limitless, whereas Jesus the Son is the limit. His death on the cross expressed the limit of earthly Light. Jesus is the incarnation and representation of Fire. Yet, apart from their union, Fire and Light are two different qualities contained in each other. In Boehme's theological system they are presented as ideally united and cooperative principles. These principles become explicit in Blake, where they acquire an aesthetic meaning. In his visionary aesthetics, God the Fire is an abstraction. Blake's theology is based on pragmatic principles. Jesus, the Light, is 'the Human Form Divine' (*Milton*: Book the Second, PLATE 32 [35], l. 13, E 131) i.e. imagination incarnated. He believes that Son's Light is the human reality, which can be manifested in works of art. The spirit proceeding from the Heat is impure energy (wrath), whereas the spirit proceeding from Light is pure energy (mercy). It is eternal liberty without or beyond nature. This last assertion is very important because in Blake's aesthetics nature is assumed to have negative and

¹ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 42-3.

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evil properties. Therefore, he excludes from his aesthetic vision two significant principles: God who is an abstraction, and nature which he considers evil. Until his time God and nature were identified. In the place of the sublime he posits Jesus, the human imagination, and depends on energy and intellect to form his aesthetic vision, thus revealing his theological sublime.

In the fallen world of reality pure energy's manifestation is freedom. In fact, energy as it originates from the first principle contains both qualities of purity and impurity. Energy, as it was manifested in Jesus, was completely pure. Jesus is not only sublime, but also pure energy. Jesus is all purity, whereas energy in its hereditary form is impure, and in its existence and manifestation in the human soul is both pure and impure. Both its expressions are included in Blake's apprehension of the divine, in the same way as the 'Body is a portion of Soul.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34). Blake's energy, in its expressed form is purity and exuberance; He attributes it to Jesus, who is beauty personified. In its suppressed form it is the enemy of vision tied to Ulro.

Human nature is impure energy because after man's fall and the loss of innocence, energy was perverted and distorted, and its creative power diminished. In the world of experience, energy, deprived of its original purity, defines the fallen existence, which humans must confront. Pure and impure energy is life's struggle versus death. Although creation is a manifestation of divine love, the situation produced by the fall is far from being a happy one. The Fall produced only generation and death. As Blake himself claims: '... Corporeal <& Mortal> Body that originated with the Fall & was call'd Death & cannot be removed but by a Last judgment... in the world of

Mortality we Must Suffer' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 564).

Energy is sexual and, as such, it operates in his aesthetic vision. The reason that Blake's energy is sexual is because it is from the body. Actually, energy is the body, its vitality and beauty. The body as 'a portion of Soul' is also impure. Since the Fall body's energy does not have the purity of its first essence. It contains heat's wrath as well as light's mercy. Energy, the body's human substance, is the soul's amorphous state. Blake's age of innocence is the infantile stage of development where energy is unshaped and unrefined. In adulthood, energy's expression becomes multifarious, and ultimately explicit.

Blake contended that the doctrine of Original Sin contained faults, but what he had accepted and rejected as antinomian is not clear. For him all energy, including sexual lust, is positive and is 'Eternal Delight.' Blake's sexual energy is not a sin. Consequently, man is not born into a state of sin, in the sense that man is not a bearer of an inherited moral evil, and the human condition is redeemable. His apprehension of sexual energy correlates with concupiscence, and lust exists in the human body-soul in an impure but potentially positive and redeemable state. Because of lust, there is propensity to evil, but this does not mean that sexual energy is in itself evil. Negative energy must be transformed into positive, creative and vital energy. Traditional theology depended for this transformation on divine grace. For Blake, this transformation was achieved through the redemptive power of human imagination, the fourfold vision, the earthly paradise, the creation of the city of art. All energy, even lust is positive: 'For every thing that lives is Holy' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Chorus, E 45), as he proclaimed. Energy is positive but also impure. Schorer's

assertion 'for all energy is pure'¹ cannot be accepted either theologically, as the unshaped substance possessing qualities of both life and death, or psychologically since like the Freudian *id* or the Jungian *libido*, it is instinctive. Impure energy is the murderous death impulse and it has no other dimension: 'Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually & must continually be changed into his direct Contrary.' (*Jerusalem: To the Deists*, E 200). After the Fall, the instinct was perverted through the knowledge of the tree of mystery. The dormant energy of the infant, i.e. its impure heredity awakes through sexual intercourse, which is Blake's world of experience, and assumes the states of the 'devourer' and the 'prolific'. The creation of moral evil, relates to the expression of negative or positive energy, i.e. the states of the devourer and the prolific.

Paley has pointed out that 'Blake's Lambeth books involve "a sort of involuntary dualism, a myth with implications that in some ways conflicted with his own beliefs. Blake's intuition of the goodness of the body in general and of sexual love in particular had not weakened ... but ... the Lambeth myth seems to imply that physical life is inherently evil."' ²

Energy's impurity does not condemn humans eternally. It must be transformed, and becomes a source of Eternal Delight only if it is positively expressed in artistic creation. If it emerges impure from the body, in its unrefined form, it becomes the source of human despair, and leads to self-destruction. Blake's energy dwells in hell, but in a redeemable 'hell.' If energy remains there, suffocated, it destroys the human being. Imagination, the fourfold perception of perfection can redeem the individual.

¹ Schorer, Mark. *William Blake: The Politics of Vision*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company Inc., 1959), 191.

² Ostriker, Alicia. "Desire Gratified and Ungratified: William Blake and Sexuality." *Blake An Illustrated Quarterly*, (Winter 1982 - 83): 101.

Aesthetically it is meaningful in its expressed form, but Blake also develops it in its suppressed form, when he talks about the spectre, i.e. perverted energy, which is institutionalized in society by religion, state laws and self-righteous morality.

Blake talks about the human effort of struggling against reason. He believes that imagination can bring about desirable change, where expressed pure energy will define and redeem the human soul from the slavery to an internal hell and all the misery that is contained in human reality. Energy's release and human liberation from any kind of oppression and tyranny can achieve this transformation which is not just a matter of exercising human imagination. Presumably pure energy's expression presupposes a death, the annihilation of the ego which is associated with self's impurity. Purity presupposes conscious awareness of the self and truth's realisation concerning the psyche. Intellect is the regulator, the co-ordinator of a future human life. It can seriously contribute to the expression of pure energy. Blake talks about the submission of the spectre, Jung about the reconciliation of the ego with the shadow, but I contend that impurity must be 'burned up'. How is this attainable? The struggle towards impurity's annihilation suggests human strength and maturity but mostly realization and understanding of impurity's sources and human circumstances. Pure energy is the means for art's creation and the artist's only evidence.

1.2. Energy, desire, and delight are the source of all life

What is energy? It is desire and delight in their different expressions. This part's purpose is to support the argument about energy's duality in order to disclose how Blake formed the aesthetic categories of the beautiful and the ugly. Heat and motion, desire and delight synthesize energy. If expressed and fulfilled, gratified desires are the source of all life. Energy defines the prolific and devourer. The basic argument of this part is that delight is shared by both prolifics and devourers because they satisfy their desires according to their energies' needs. In so doing, they supply their conscious selves with either corporeal or spiritual nourishment. The prolific and the devouring are portions of being but also classes of men upon earth. The notions of the prolific and devourer are found in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Blake assumes that gratified desires generate purity and ungratified desires nurse impurity. He refers to 'states' and 'mental delights' which reveal the human aesthetic. By referring to 'mental delights', he introduces intellect which is the other component of the 'Sublime of Imagination.'

Energy, (desire and delight) cannot form the 'Sublime of Imagination' without intellect's intervention. The intellect, if used, can change the path of life. Wisdom is humanity revealed. If energy is repressed and intellect is silenced by reason, human imagination is inactive and the spectre becomes imminent. The conclusion of this part is that desire and delight, which compose energy, contribute to the formation of the aesthetic categories of the beautiful and ugly. The analysis of energy's attributes elucidates the human aesthetic, 'the Human Form Divine.' (*Milton*: Book the Second, PLATE 32 [35], l. 13, E 131)

Blake's energy is 'Eternal Delight' and emerges from the body. This does not mean that the body has any affiliation with matter. Raine supports the view that: 'The real existing principle is not matter but life.'¹ Pure sexual energy is life, which impregnates the soul, uniting it with the supreme principle. Energy's power depends on desire and delight. The theme of desire, its gratification and fulfilment as well as the delight that it offers is much related to energy's expression. Desire is hunger and thirst and it originates from the Father who, according to Boehme, is fire, nature, and hell:

Nature was kindled in the wrath - fire, which fire is now called Wrath of God, or the Burning Hell. But he is also with another of the attributes of Blake's hell - "desire."² ... for "the Desire is the Father's Property ... and the Wisdom, is the Son's Property". It is from the Father alone that the energies of creation originate, "the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he who dwells in flaming fire."³

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake analyses the theme of desire immediately after he wrote about energy, where he clearly states:

This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter, or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on, the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he, who dwells in flaming fire. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 5, E 35).
He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence (E 35).
Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires (E 38).

¹ Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. V.1. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 364.

² Ibid., 366.

³ Ibid., 367.

Blake returns to divinity's four principal properties, heat and motion, wrath and mercy, to explain desire's origin. His thought always functions in creative oppositions that effectively confirm the formation of his vision. Desire's origin is hell and it relates to both energy and delight. Desire and delight are used as energy's components. Energy is evil, desire is hell and both are eternal delight.

At this point, Blake introduces irony to prove the opposite of his assertions. Desire originates from hell, but it is also individual positive and negative expression. Frye usefully remarks that the Swinburnean error in interpretation 'ignores the fact that Blake attaches two meanings to the word 'hell', one real and the other ironic.'¹ The real hell is in the fearful obsessions of the Selfhood; the ironic one is that just quoted from the *Marriage*: an upsurge of desire whose energetic appearance frightens the Selfhood into the conviction that such intensity must stem from an external hell.'² In Blake's theology hell has not a literal meaning. He does not believe in hell's existence. Rather, it is a negative state of mind: 'to hell till he behaves better. mark that I do not believe there is such a thing literally. but hell is the being shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man for *all life is holy*' (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, E 590).

When he claims 'Evil is the active springing from Energy', he uses the term evil ironically. He identifies evil with activity and energy but literally evil is inertia and idleness. Actually, he talks about good which is the prolific. The form of the sentence, especially its first and last word, suggests that he considers energy evil. Active energy is a vital force for goodness, only when it is expressed to create art.

¹ Bloom, Harold. *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument*. (London: Gollancz, 1963), 77.

² Ibid.

A significant argument by Bloom subverts Raine's assertions 'that Blake read little with any care besides the Bible and Milton; he is not likely to have derived anything really central to him from ancient philosophy, or from the theosophy of the Cabala or Boehme.'¹ This is a valid assertion because Blake's visions were products of his prophetic imagination where hell's domain - the corporeal nature, is desire's place, energy's release. A closer look at the concept of desire attests how he uses it as energy's attribute to form his 'Sublime of Imagination.' In fact, desire like energy operate in a similar way. In the early years of his career, Blake uses energy to support his aesthetic vision. Later he senses that energy undergoes restriction and desire wanes. Corporeal dependence is less significant in relation to spiritual perception.

Unlike Boehme, Blake regards desire as The Son's attribute. The divine substance is purity. Jesus dwells in creative flaming fire. His corporeal existence was pure energy that is beauty. Although Jesus's energy was pure, the human corporeal existence is impurity. Human nature is fallen due to loss of innocence. Desires derive from impurity but their expression and gratification leads to blissful existence. Blake believes that desires must be expressed and satisfied because if they remain secret and repressed they destroy the soul. Free expression of desire is energy's release. Repressed desires equal death. Nursing 'unacted desires' is mental and psychic torture. Life's progress is hindered. Continuous repression of desires is self-destruction, an act which does not differ from the murder of an infant because it is suicide. Why do ungratified desires cause self-destruction? Although in the world of experience desires are not gratified, Blake insists that their fulfilment is of crucial importance for human psychic health and the transformation of impure energy into

¹Ibid.

pure. Human desires are numerous and their gratification is ambiguous, as the following quotations illustrate:

Mans desires are limited by his perceptions. none can desire what he has not perceiv'd (*There is no Natural Religion* [a]E 2).

The desires & perceptions of man untaught by any thing but organs of sense, must be limited to objects of sense. ([a]E 2)

If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing, despair must be his eternal lot. (*There is no Natural Religion* [b]E 2).

The desire of Man being Infinite the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite ([b]E 3).

As an aesthetic concept pure energy is beauty. Desire is energy's quality and it is associated with sense and possession. Desire is defined and limited by man's perception, which as sense, belongs to the sphere of the prophetic vision. Desires' accomplishment depends on perception. Perception, desire and possession also define the human limits. Desire relates to the sense of perception, and its accomplishment leads to fulfilment. Expressed and gratified desires lead to personal realization, to consciousness. Eternity is the future domain of desires' earthly fulfilment. Desire is not will. It is delivered from selfhood's orders. Its aim is the soul's satisfaction. Blake identifies body and soul and renders satisfaction sexual. Although desire's origin is sexual its essence is spiritual beauty. He stresses the importance of gratified desire for the purpose of spiritual elevation. Bodily gratification is the starting point of intellectual fulfilment. Spiritual desire is not a personal aspiration but a universal need of the infinite actuated by the Poetic Genius:

I then asked Ezekiel. why he eat dung, & lay so long on his right & left side? he answerd. 'the desire of raising other men

into a perception of the infinite: this the North American tribes practise. & is he honest who resists his genius or conscience. only for the sake of present ease or gratification?
(*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 12, E 39).

Impure energy is the soul's sickness. Ungratified desires provoke frustration. Restriction leads to self-denial and generates the spectre which direct us to evil. In Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination', beauty is substantiated through energy and desire, which are both sexually determined. Beauty is disclosed by energy's expression and desire's gratification. In fact, Blake's vision is beauty's realisation through the sexual desire's gratification, which operates as the instigator of energy's expression. Desire like energy, springs from hell but without implications of evil origin. In its expressed form it is sexual gratified desire, which contributes to energy's free manifestation. Desire's sexual origin renders energy eternal delight. Its essence is spiritual but its content sexual. Desire is the source of life, and, without its gratification, infinity and eternity's vision is impossible. Thus, Blake writes:

The moment of desire! The moment of desire! The virgin
That pines for man; shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
(*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, E 50).

Abstinence sows sand all over / The ruddy limbs & flaming
hair / But Desire Gratified / Plants fruits of life & *beauty*
there. (*Songs and Ballads, Day*, E 474). (emphasis added).

What is it men in women do require? / The lineaments of
Gratified Desire. / What is it women in men do require? / The
lineaments of Gratified Desire. (*Songs and Ballads, Several
Questions Answerd*, E 474-5).

In the fallen world desire, like energy is restrained by reason. Restriction cannot accomplish art's vision. Blake considers desire natural and corporeal and he places it at the bottom of life's circle in *Jerusalem*, (Ch. 3, PLATE 54, E 203), beneath reason, which is above This World of Pity and Wrath. Reason's restrictive power diminishes and destroys spirituality. Like energy, desire cannot be considered sublime because it is confined and controlled by reason. Inhibitions accumulate frustrations when desires are ungratified. Desires' satisfaction nourish energy, rendering it pure, beauty itself.

Bodily and spiritual liberty is expressed energy and gratified desire. But the prophetic vision is hindered by reason and desires are not gratified. Religion, moral law, social institutions, personal aspirations, loss of perception, misfortune and many other external obstacles will suppress desire, causing misery and enclosure into conventional reality due to lack of outlets. Besides, surrender to reason's power for the sake of life's preservation is a human necessity:

And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.
(*Songs of Experience, The Garden of Love*, E 26)
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?
(*The Book of Thel*, E 6).

Blake believes that life without desire is no life at all. It is the world of 'single vision' or the 'twofold vision', where humans function as animals and objects. The world of Beulah, the 'threefold vision', is the world of feelings, the place where desires are born to be fulfilled in the world of imagination, the 'fourfold vision.' 'The Sexual is Threefold: the Human is Fourfold.' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 4, l. 5, E 97). The Fourfold man is a spiritual entity. Expressed, pure energy and gratified desires define

the spiritual, fourfold man in whom the corporeal is subsumed into the spiritual. Desire is natural, corporeal; it is a bodily attribute but if it remains in the body generates the 'single vision.' By claiming that: '... if we refuse to do Spiritual Acts. because of Natural Fears or Natural Desires!' (*The Letters*, 24 [To] M^r Butts, *Great Marlborough Street, Oxford Street, London*, E 724), Blake emphasises the importance of the spiritual over the corporeal. Besides, desire without feeling belongs to the world of hell, desire's origin. When it is fulfilled it becomes the source of life. The 'fourfold vision' is realised and the conscious self exists in eternal bliss. This is the 'prolific's' power, psyche's internal delight and the fourfold vision. The 'devourer's' power is the 'single vision', the world of Ulro, and psyche's internal delight.

Energy's other quality apart from desire is delight. 'Energy is Eternal Delight' (E 34) only when desires are expressed, acted out and fulfilled. The concept of delight is associated with the creation of 'states' through pure or impure energy. Paradoxically, delight is neither pure nor impure. The same is true for both prolifics and devourers. All that changes is the manner of satisfaction. Both pure and impure energies dwell in delight. Swedenborg has given an account of the concept of delight, which is the common substance of satisfaction for both the prolific and the devourer, differentiated by pure or impure energy. As Raine argues:

Delight he discovers, is the universal constituent of heaven, and the universal constituent of hell. ... Good and Evil both dwell in their own particular Delight. ... everyone is allowed the Enjoyment of his Delight, even the most unclean as they call it. ... Blake takes for his own the essence of this wisdom of hell: love is the *esse* of a man's life; delight is the energy that

inspires all action; ... The contraries of good and evil are established by reason; but energy is life itself, arising from beyond all contraries and all reason. ... but delight, Blake understood, transcends good and evil. This is the “infernial wisdom...” Every living creature is a “world of delight,” for delight is the *esse* of life.¹

I assume that desire and delight are homogeneous ideas. They are energy's components. Delight is the common predicament for both prolifics and devourers. Evil derives satisfaction from the wrongdoings, considering only its own gratification. This is the proof of its ‘strength’, a false perception and distortion of truth. Its delight is insatiable and its impure nature needs continuous approval. The ‘prolific’, on the contrary, delights in justice. The prolific's actions are impulsive, the devourer's calculated and both delights emanate from energy. The prolific's pure energy delights in usefulness. The devourer's impure energy is ‘hellish’, does not satisfy anyone apart from itself. Impure energy is constant poisonous, murderous psychic substance. It is perverted, distorted and delusive beauty. It feeds in distress, sorrow and disaster. It takes pleasure in destruction. Delight is the essence of life and satisfies both states of being. Raine's belief that Blake's delight transcends good and evil is accurate, because delight cannot be restrained. It exists in the action itself, in its pure or impure sense. It cannot be separated into pure and impure delight, as energy is. Prolifics and devourers delights are dissimilar. The ‘devourer’ lives on the ‘prolific's’ delights:

But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the
Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights.
(*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 16, E 40).

¹ Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. V.1. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 368.

Love seeketh only Self to please, / To bind another to Its
delight: / Joys in anothers loss of ease, / And builds a Hell in
Heavens despite. (*Songs of Experience, The Clod & the
Pebble*, ll. 9-12, E 19).

In Blake's aesthetics, delight operates like desire, both as energy's constituent parts. The prolific's delight is also beauty, the way true desire and pure energy is. Desires can be restricted by reason but delight will be expressed revealing the human aesthetic. Energy defines the essence of the prolific that is purity and the devourer that is impurity, but both 'states' wallow in a similar delight. Delight derives from hell and refers to pure and impure energy. Blake considers it corporeal like desire, but he also believes in its mental expression, which transcends good and evil.

Delight, as pure energy's essence is considered beauty. In this sense, it is dissociated from the senses and their impure origin. Delight shapes and transforms energy. Corporeal delights cannot be defined as aesthetic, when they are dissociated from mental pursuits. Delight cannot create art, if it is only dependent on the corporeal. Spiritual delights transform the limited, natural perception into Art.

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is
an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?
(*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 5, E 35)

The Temple stands on the Mount of God from it flows on
each side the River of Life on whose banks Grows the tree of
Life among whose branches temples & Pinnacles tents &
pavilions Gardens & Groves Display Paradise with its
Inhabitants walking up & down in Conversations concerning
Mental Delights (emphasis added). (*A Vision of The Last
Judgment*, [PAGE 85], E 562).

Here they are no longer talking of what is Good & Evil or of what is Right or Wrong & puzzling themselves in Satans [Maze] Labyrinth But are conversing with Eternal Realities as they Exist in the Human Imagination We are in a World of Generation & death & this world we must cast off if we would be Painters (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [PAGE 90], E 562).

In Blake's aesthetic vision, delight's sexual nature and its prolific satisfaction establish the aesthetic category of the beautiful. Delight is associated with sexual gratification and the androgynous unions where beauty abounds: 'Let Mans delight be Love; but Womans delight be Pride.' (*Jerusalem*, C4, PLATE 87, l.6, E 246). Delight, as pure energy's component leads to the fourfold vision and indicates the holiness of life. The devourer's delight is death, poisonous food for the defiled soul; but pure energy's sweet delight is the artistic life.

Another flower shall spring, because the soul of sweet delight
Can never pass away. (*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*,
PLATE 1, l. 10, E 46)

Open to joy and to delight, where ever beauty appears (*Visions
of the Daughters of Albion*, PLATE 6, l. 22, E 50)

Oothoon shall view his dear delight, nor e'er with jealous cloud
Come in the heaven of generous love; nor selfish blightings
bring. (*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, PLATE 7, ll. 28-9, E
50).

For every thing that lives is holy, life delights in life; / Because
the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd. (*America a
Prophecy*, PLATE 8, ll. 13-4, E 54).

Desire and delight are energy's constituents, conducive to Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination'. He refers to pure energy's expression as beauty and the prolific. Energy's restricted and suppressed form generates the spectre which is imagination's greatest enemy. If reason usurps imagination's place, vision is subverted and man is excluded from the true world of art. If this occurs it brings about intellect's seclusion in corporeal, material interests that hinder artistic production and direct man to despair.

1.3. Energy and Urizen

The third part of the first chapter concerns the contrast between energy and reason. Personified in Urizen, the human reason is false consciousness and derives from impure energy. Blake's ideas about human error, false consciousness and its aftermaths are presented in *The Book of Urizen*. The book is an exposition of man's slavery to a false God and miscommunication with divinity. Miscommunication is the result of reason's interpolation, suppressed desires and illusory delight. Los is the false prophet who must acquire true consciousness and humane identity. The basic argument of 'Energy and Urizen' part is that Art, which is communication, is distorted by the human urizenic, false identity. Reason is unable to shape life artistically because Urizen is a false God. Urizen represents inartistic ugliness. It is the representation of error, the devourer and degraded intellect. Urizen is considered Blake's negative aesthetic and represents the aesthetic category of the ugly. It is also Blake's aesthetic realism, the 'negative sublime' of his aesthetic vision and stands in juxtaposition with his aesthetic idealism. Thus, in Blake's aesthetics there are two different aspects of the sublime, its negative and positive forms. Art is an internal discourse of active communication which is based on pure energy and intellectual beauty. Urizen has no position in this discourse because it disrupts the artistic vision and produces false art. This part's conclusion is that Urizen being Blake's negative aesthetic, is a separate category which juxtaposes with the 'Sublime of Imagination' and completes his aesthetic vision. Although aesthetic realism is necessary to offer a complete depiction of Blake's sublime, it is not the vision of beauty and spirituality. Nevertheless it is essential to supplement Blake's aesthetics.

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In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 5, Blake presents the prophetic vision's greatest enemy. Reason is suppressed energy, the killer of desire, and the creator of cruel delight, Satan, the evil incarnated in human nature.

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling. And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 34).

It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out. but the Devil's account is, that the Messi[PL 6]ah fell & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 34-5).

His prolific delight obscurd more & more (*The Book of Urizen*, PLATE 10, Ch. IV. [b] l. 12, E 75).

In perverse and cruel delight (*The Book of Urizen*, PLATE 19, Ch. VI, l. 12, E 79).

Blake's energy, as Raine correctly states, correlates with life and not with matter. 'Matter, solid matter, is Urizen.'¹ Throughout his work, Blake's beliefs concerning reason's restrictive power have confused critics about the validity that he grants to the most threatening form of repression in human life. In the Age of Reason the dualism of body and soul had divided human thought in natural religion's ideas of good and evil. Blake sensed the inadequacy of rationalistic beliefs, which did not allow any space for human freedom and expression. Human freedom is not reason's product. Reason is liberty's adversary. Therefore, Blake makes clear that, the human body and soul being one, flesh and spirit united, a unified being is the nucleus of energy's expression, desire's gratification and delight's fulfilment. Although energy comes from the body and reason is degraded intellect, the unified entity is the man of

¹Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. V. I. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 364.

imagination. Reason and imagination are contraries but they are also considered indispensable constituents of human existence albeit the urizenic man is the human form deprived of imaginative perception. 'The Human Form Divine' is the 'Sublime of Imagination'. Reason is self-imposed restriction and derives from impurity. It is the 'ratio' which limits or silences imagination, promoting selfishness and conventional morality. Dualistic systems of thought are reason's products. The 'reasoner' sins without realizing error. He / she is the creator of soulless bodies. When reason rules spiritual existence is absent. Life is bleak and miserable because man is deprived of spiritual vision. Reason is falsehood's producer. Division and error is combined in urizenic thinking. When reason rules, imagination is silent and man is reduced to 'single vision's' perception, and 'sleeps in Ulro'.

In Blake's true religion the dualism of good and evil, which tortured his thought throughout his life, was never resolved. The reconciliation of contraries seemed an ideal conception. He was neither a dualist nor a monist. For him, the dualistic contrariety between good and evil is unacceptable. In fact, it is a delusion. His aesthetic vision is a constant oscillation between objective reality, and imagination, the prophetic vision. Urizen represents his aesthetic realism, which is the personification of the evil mental state of being, and imagination represents his aesthetic idealism, which is the fourfold vision. He exposes Urizen's power by acknowledging its use and realizing that his [Blake's] prophetic vision can be subverted by the restrictions that reason imposes on energy and desire. Reason perverts delight and causes spiritual alienation. Imagination is Blake's positive sublime but reason cannot be categorized as such because he is imagination's enemy and the prophetic vision's subversive agent. If imagination represents 'the Human

Form Divine', the supreme good quality, Urizen is Satan and represents the contrary; that is whatever the man of imagination is capable of achieving, namely freedom, creation and art.

'Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34). The statement suggests that reason is the limit and not necessarily energy's total enclosure and absolute barrier. However, it can become so. If energy is not expressed and desire is restricted it becomes a 'state' of self-righteousness which defines human entity and individual identity. Man becomes the limit of his / her own existence by imposing restrictions and boundaries which circumscribe his / her delusive life.

Blake is never explicit about reason's necessity, but he definitely prioritises freedom and energy's expression, which presuppose the breaking of the limits that reason sets. His aesthetic realism places Urizen in a position of power, where reason is the guardian of life's preservation. Energy's fire, if is left to burn unrestrained, can devour the soul. Urizen protects the individual from the uncontrolled and irrational impure energy's desires. However, human predicament arises with reason's usurpation of imagination. Reason blurs and darkens the mind and soul directing life to destruction. Fallen humans are persuaded by the reasoning power that the only life is the rational life because it perpetuates corporeal existence and guarantees life's continuity.

Another problem is intellect's inability to realize true desires, the divine will and distinguish between those desires that are instigated by impurity and cause

destruction. Blake believes that to 'know thyself' is also to know divine will. Therefore, he favours energy's expression, as the only life, no matter the material circumstances of existence. Life's preservation by self-restriction, conformity and conventional religious moral laws proves faulty and erroneous. Nevertheless, Blake emphasizes reason's necessity to provide the corporeal in an attempt to reconcile the contraries. Yet their resolution is ineffective. Consequently, imagination must prevail reason. Otherwise man experiences self-imprisonment and inhumanity. Reason is unable to shape life artistically.

Blake's belief in Urizen's necessity directed critics to assume that he was 'of Urizen's party without knowing it', such as Milton was 'of the Devil's party without knowing it.' In his article "Labouring at the Resolute Anvil: Blake's Response to Locke", Steve Clark supports this view.¹ Actually, Clark's assertion is not a new one. In her article "Governor of the Unwilling" Raine states: 'Saurat suggests that Blake was of Urizen's party without knowing it; but this is to underrate the thoroughness of his thought.'²

Bloom comments that 'by a very grim paradox, Urizen, the limiter of energy, is himself an indomitable energy' ... and Cantor notes that Blake 'makes Reason energetic enough to begin its war with Energy', and that 'one often finds oneself in the logically awkward position of speaking of Reason's passions'³ ... Urizen, it should be noted, only acquires an 'I' here, (that is in plate four, where Urizen's formation takes place) and has to wait until the tenth plate for a body. Prior to this, he appears as the pure impulse of 'silent activity' and 'incessant labour', that accepts the challenge of exploring the

¹ Worrall, D. - Clark, S. eds. *Blake in the Nineties*. (Macmillan Press, 1999), 149.

² Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. V. II. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 70.

³ Worrall, D. - Clark, S. eds. *Blake in the Nineties*. (Macmillan Press, 1999), 152. See: Clark, Steve. "Labouring at the Resolute Anvil"; Blake's Response to Locke."

‘deep world within’, and achieves a precarious mastery over the chaos of these elemental desires.’¹

Critics arrived at this conclusion because of Blake’s unresolved oscillation between objective reality and imagination, the prophetic vision. Blake’s aesthetic idealism is actuated in the ‘Sublime of Imagination’, which is Jesus incarnated, truth’s revelation and the artist’s fulfilment. His development of Urizen’s theme belongs to the sphere of his contemplation on the fallen reality, which is Satan. Reason is not a positive force regardless of its power in the material world. Imagination is sublime, because it is the only form of self-fulfilment. Thus, the argument that Blake was ‘of Urizen’s party without knowing it’ is not tenable because Blake’s reason is in opposition to imagination. Urizen is not a positive sublime force because Blake’s reason is obsolete and Satan’s representation. Reason is inimical to eternity and it represents the subversion of Blake’s sublime in his aesthetic theory. Los’s painstaking endeavour to retain his creative imagination, which is his only means against reason’s usurpation of the prophetic vision, suggests that reason functions as Blake’s negative aesthetic, and it is disassociated from his artistic sublime.

In *The Book of Urizen*, Blake develops his perception of reality by exposing reason’s ineffectiveness and error’s prevalence. Urizenic life is the deception of self-righteousness. It is a faulty, miserable, and untrue existence. Urizen’s objective is human communication. This is achieved by offering the fallen world the solid, stable and unchangeable laws that regulate life:

And Urizen, craving with hunger / Stung with the odours of
Nature / Explor’d his dens around / He form’d a line & a

¹Ibid., 145-6.

plummet / To divide the Abyss beneath. / He form'd a
dividing rule: / He formed scales to weigh; / He formed
massy weights; / He formed a brazen quadrant; / He formed
golden compasses / And began to explore the Abyss / And
he planted a garden of fruits (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. VII,
PLATE 20, ll. 30-41, E 80-1).

Blake explicitly presents reason's falsity because its laws are erroneous and urizenic communication ineffective. Communication is unattainable according to reason's directives because although humans believe that they communicate, essentially they do not. They trust to a false, meaningless communication which reproduces the book of error and the world of paradox: 'Here alone I in books form'd of metals / Have written the secrets of wisdom / The secrets of dark contemplation ...' (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. II, PLATE 4, ll. 24-6, E 72). Conventionality and conformism define urizenic communication. Natural laws prevail over imagination's principles and the prophetic vision is perceived as a fallacy and an illusion.

Repressive existence verifies the delusion of urizenic communication: 'Brooding, shut in the deep; all avoid / The petrific, abominable chaos' (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. I, PLATE 3, ll. 25-6, E 71). Everything, which is conventional and acceptable by institutionalised religion, represents perverted intellect, which is constructed by fallen nature's mirror image and perpetually reproduces reason's absurdities. Blake exposes the fallen world of error having one single objective: Urizen's subversion by the man of imagination. The artist intervenes between nature and God for the creation of art works. If this subversion is not attained, reason triumphs and error is eternally continued. Human imagination causes Urizen's downfall and re-establishes communication with an absent divinity. Reason is overturned by imagination, when

humans acquire consciousness and self-knowledge that is they realize error within themselves and expel false perception. Intellect being taught erroneously by reason, perceives the false world of appearances as the substantial, unerring, infallible reality on which all life must subsist. In effect, urizenic life is a restricted dependence on self-delusion. 'Self-closd, all-repelling: what Demon / Hath form'd this abominable void / This soul-shudd'ring vacuum?' (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. I, PLATE 3, ll. 3-5, E 70).

If reason precedes imagination, communication is impossible. Divine communication is lost because of the restrictive, false perception that reason ensures a stable life and regulates the time and space that encloses humans in their fallen reality. Urizen is a tempter, and his proposal is alluring because it safeguards life. Dependence on reason and persuasion that the false reality is true is for Blake, the error within that the self must confront and realize, in order to be free from self-deception. Energy will always resist error because it can be destroyed by falsity. Error can render energy impure. The struggle between Urizen and energy indicates the human ability to confront the formidable personal adversary, which will attempt to persuade man that his / her actions are religiously and socially proper. This perspective of reality leads to self-righteousness and faith in Satan. Therefore, consciousness is silenced, energy is restricted, will is passive and desire's true expression is perceived by the urizenic self as a useless realisation of action.

Miscommunication is established from within the self, producing self-alienation which is an inner sickness and a loss of communication between the individual and divinity: 'The obscure separation alone; / For Eternity stood wide apart, / As the stars

are apart from the earth' (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. III, PLATE 5, ll. 40-1, E 73). The conflict between energy and reason is a state of eternal hell, where conscious contact with the inner self and the outer world is lost. Reason proves stronger than energy because it represents the law of self-preservation. Blake senses the importance of the law of self-preservation in the development of his belief in Urizen's power, but he never submits to reality's laws because they are death to the artist. He believes that imagination, which is his aesthetic proposal and represents human perfection, bestows eternity. He never abandons his optimism and conviction that humanity is capable, by confronting the adversary and fighting against 'selfhood', to succeed in overthrowing reason and following the imagination, which may not secure mundane existence but ensures inner personal exultation and leads to eternal life.

Blake's aesthetic view of reality is focused on loss of communication between consciousness and divinity. Urizen is the representation of false natural and social structures which must be abolished. Continuation of error causes destruction. Consequently all urizenic-institutionalised structures must be destroyed. False institutionalised structures based on reason had permeated eighteenth century thought and had created a restricted universe grounded in controlled codes by presenting rationality as the only reality. Blake believes that all social and moral systems were erroneous because they concealed truth and repressed energy.

Reality could change through energy's release which defines the 'new man' after the Age of Reason. Energy expressed and intellect's use, instead of reason, represents the man of imagination. Imagination is the only redemptive force. As Bloom comments: 'Reason was an attribute of the soul proving its goodness until Blake came to reverse

the wrong scheme in the books of error attacking the dualism of Christian Tradition, the negation of setting the body's energy as evil.'¹

Eighteenth century popular definitions attributed to reason several meanings. Reason correlated with virtue and vice, human and divine perception, senses, truth and falsehood, law, understanding, order and discipline. Reason - rate - ratio - ration was defined as the faculty or capacity of the human mind by which it is distinguished from the intelligence of inferior animals; the higher as distinguished from the lower cognitive faculties, sense, imagination, and memory, and in contrast to feelings and desires. Reason comprises conception, judgment, and the intuitional faculty. Specifically, it is the intuitional faculty, or the faculty of first truths, as distinguished from the understanding, which is called the discursive or ratiocinative faculty. Reason was considered the only means of perceiving or knowing anything divine or human. Reliance on the five senses and reason was the presupposition of the learning process. Reason was the power of knowledge, the only means to distinguish truth from falsehood, and right from wrong, and by which humans are able to combine means for the attainment of particular ends. There was a natural and eternal 'reason' for goodness and virtue. Reason could explain vice and wickedness. Whatever was reasonable was right. Rational nature was identified with intellectual powers and reason was used to express those powers which elevate man above the brutes. Deduction or argumentation was performed by reason's use. Coleridge regarded pure reason to be the power by which humans become possessed of principles. He also contended that men perceive by their senses. Also that understanding, which performs its peculiar operation, conceives reality, whereas reason, or rationalized understanding comprehends. Reason's function was related to the mechanistic conception of the

¹Bloom, Harold. *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument*. (London: Gollancz, 1963), 78.

world. The notions of motion and balance of the wheels raised reason to divine status, in the sense of accurate perfection. Philosophers and poets were devoted to reason's power. The exercise of the reasoning faculty was the evidence of intellectual capacity to approach divinity. Human identity was revealed through natural laws and reason, which was nothing more than the mind rightly exercised, right intellectual judgment, clear and fair deductions from true principles, that which is dictated or supported by the common sense of mankind, right conduct, propriety and justice. In short, reason permeated all individual and social life. It was the evidence of God's wisdom which guaranteed order and security, albeit reason indicated entrapment in an insipid life which was regulated by a God of righteousness and propriety. This God is Blake's Urizen. He is natural and untrue. He also represents falsity and the human mirror image reflected on 'nature's vegetable glass', depriving them of their true identity.

Such beliefs led Blake to proclaim the falsity of rational perception. Self-righteousness stops desires from expression and promotes lack of understanding. These are the products of repressed energy. Expressed energy is an attitude to life. The 'new man', as Blake conceived his / her identity at the end of the eighteenth century, should possess a different perception to reason's rules and false persuasions. Blake's exposition of the urizenic error was the starting point for real man's creation. Expressed, pure energy and free intellect represent the artist, whose inspiration is Jesus the imagination.

Ugliness is aesthetically represented by reason, and Urizen is the aesthetic category of the ugly. Ugliness is Satan and is created by energy's repression. It takes many

forms, which obscure and obstruct the ascent to the fourfold world of perfection, the infinite perception. Urizen is 'A wide world of solid obstruction'. (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. II, PLATE 4, l. 23, E 72). Impure energy's accumulation is ugliness. Impurity is a sexual multiple perversion that causes depression and apathy, persuading the individual that the only life is the urizenic life. Through time, man enters into deception which is a state of internal psychic death. Reason and error dominate the soul. Ungratified sexual desires cause psychic destruction that is ugliness. Reason restricts true desires and blurs the intellect. Satisfaction is perverted and error solidifies impurity.

'The Strong man represents the human sublime. The Beautiful man represents the human pathetic, which was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. The Ugly man represents the human reason.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543). Blake distinguishes three aesthetic categories: the sublime, represented by the strong man, the beautiful, represented by the human pathetic and the ugly, represented by human reason. Urizen is ugliness, because it is the restrainer of human consciousness forbidding desires' expression.

For Blake, restraint is a type of indecision, and proceeds from a mind in chaos. Decision and true action, proceed from the imaginative mind, and must be fulfilling. Whatever is negative is a restraint upon another, and not an action. Restraints are 'omissions of intellect', (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, E 601) and generate from spiritual poverty, which is lifelessness. That is the absence of intellectual exuberance of delighting in its own affirmative powers: 'The paradoxes of Blake's Proverbs of Hell nearly always arise from an ironic awareness of the gap

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between “what the laws of Kings & Priests have call’d Vice” and what an artist sees as Vice: the omission of act in self & the hindering of act in another.” What is hindrance and not action is evil, whether one hinders the self or another.’¹ ‘Repression is a form of murder.’² This means not only a personal repression of energy and ‘murder’ of the intellect, but a whole system of religious, moral, social and political values of restraint, which derive from the erroneous belief in reason’s power.

In Blake’s mythology reason belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly. Ugliness which is attributed to reason, defines the ‘devouring’ and it is dissociated from the context of the sublime, the beautiful and God. In Blake’s visionary aesthetics the strong man is the imagination. The beautiful man is a universal concept, who represents the human pathetic and implies the evocation or expression of pity, sympathy, tenderness and emotion. Antithetically, reason which is the chains of self-enclosure, as opposed to the sublime, is ‘the cunning of weak and tame minds. which have the power to resist energy.’ (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 16, E 40). Reason is the antithesis to the aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful.

The sublime and the beautiful represent Blake’s prolific. The strong good man, the man of imagination, is his sublime. The beautiful man, the human pathetic, also represents the prolific and their common enemy is the strong wicked man, the ugly man, which is reason. The strong good man is the man of imagination and the human pathetic is the man of emotion. The sublime is imagination and the beautiful is emotion. Reason stands in opposition to the aesthetic categories of the sublime and

¹ Bloom, Harold. *Blake’s Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument*. (London: Gollancz, 1963), 85.

² Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake’s Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 15.

the beautiful and it is human spiritual fulfilment's rival. Urizen is the adversary, Satan, evil personified who represents intellect's binding to reality, where corporeal needs impose material dependence by depriving man of eternity's vision. The urizenic man is neither sublime nor beautiful. Creation belongs to the divine sphere of imagination. When reason rules the prophetic vision is subverted and artistic creation does not exist.

Urizen, with its restrictive commands, is responsible for miscommunication and loss of communication within the self. This restricted situation is projected outwards. Reason hinders vision and thwarts imaginative perception. Urizen is ugliness, the adversary, who obstructs spiritual growth and binds man to the fallacious principles and laws of earthly existence, which are imposed by institutionalised religion and society: 'So twisted the cords, & so knotted / The meshes: twisted like to the human brain / And all call'd it, the Net of Religion' (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. VIII, PLATE 25, ll. 20-2, E 82). Neither institutionalised religion nor society consider 'the Human Form Divine' and issue abstract and general conventional rules to the masses without regard for human needs and soul's desires.

Urizen represents a state of consciousness which creates a reality of finite perception: a consciousness derived from a separation of body and soul which by relying solely upon "natural or bodily organs" to form the world, generates a world centred in corporeal needs and desires. It is a world "cut off from life and light," a world which is an "Incrustation" over the "Immortal Spirit" of man. It is a world which seems concrete, solid, and articulate but is paradoxically, abstract, illusory, and void of meaningful communication. It is a world perpetuated by tables of law,

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sacred codes, and books of error.¹ ... In *The Book of Urizen*, energy is represented by the Eternals who stand for those enduring forces of existence, which, in their variety, stimulate the protean and dynamic motion of human life. Urizen is also an Eternal and represents organization and order. Urizen is that aspect of consciousness within us all which prefers to see error in others rather than in himself ... the urizenic consciousness is the consciousness of the do-gooder who seeks to reform others rather than reforming himself. ... The urizenic consciousness assumes that man is his body, his selfhood, and nothing more. The body becomes the source of dualistic error, but Blake insists that the body is not error in itself. The error lies within the kind of perception which closes off the body from Eternity.²

By identifying body and soul and accepting the 'Body as a portion of Soul', (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34) that is accepting the body 'as the boundary of the soul, the outward circumference', as Bloom defined it³, Blake renders the body energy's source and attributes to it sexual energy in its amorphous state. He views bodily liberation as the means of potential redemption. Body is not in error, energy is not a sin and corporeal needs, which render Urizen powerful, are not wrong in themselves. Everything is in a potential state of creation, in relation to imaginative perception, which must direct the thought: 'Blake's proposal was to compel his readers to acknowledge their impure energy, and recognize their enemy, the adversary within themselves, so that by giving a body to error they may cast it off and undertake spiritual quest.'⁴

¹ Easson, Parkhurst Kay and Easson, Roger eds. *William Blake: The Book of Urizen*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 68.

² Ibid., 69.

³ Bloom, Harold. *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument*. (London: Gollancz, 1963), 78.

⁴ Easson, Parkhurst Kay and Easson, Roger eds. *William Blake: The Book of Urizen*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 67.

Intellect, as the complementary aesthetic component of Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination', intervenes with the prophetic vision by regarding energy, the source of life, as a precarious balance because energy if left uncontrolled can harm the spirit. Reason restricts but intellect itself is not restriction. Wisdom is conscious perception and cannot be mistaken: 'Genius has no Error it is Ignorance that is Error' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 652). Reason, on the other hand, provides the religious or normative social rules, which seem to preserve life although they restraint and enclose it into the strictness of corporeal existence.

Man becomes Urizen when he / she opposes his body to his soul, opposes his finite perspectives to the infinite and eternal potential his body contains. However, when an individual recognizes his divine body, he will open to eternal, visionary existence: (released energy and free intellect). Urizen himself signifies all errors caused when perception occurs only through sensory organs ... Urizen exemplifies the error of finite perception because, as Blake asserted, man is "not bounded by organs of perception; he perceives more than sense tho' ever so acute can discover." It is man's error that he falls into Generation of decay & death (*The Four Zoas*), that he confines himself to finite, mortal perception and negates the eternal and infinite. This negation shuts him off from direct communication with his own divinity, and traps him within the boundaries of his own body. Urizen is incapable of meaningful communication. To be in Urizenic error, as Blake demonstrates, is to be unable to hold a meaningful conversation.¹

Meaningful communication is an essential subject to Blake's conception of Urizen's function in reality. Imagination's function is disrupted due to loss of communication

¹Ibid., 69.

with the eternal world. Aesthetically, Urizen who represents ugliness and defines life's seclusion produces error, a multiple proliferation of the mistaken soul, which continues eternally if imagination does not intervene.

Blake opposes reason's ugliness by exposing impurity, which is responsible for reason's predominance. Energy's restriction creates Urizen who is also responsible for the dichotomy of body and soul. Senses determine finite perception, obstructing communication with divinity. The result is human entity's alienation, and disorientation. In addition, Urizen establishes a permanent state of erroneous precepts which cause alienation from divinity's true world. Mainly, Urizen as the agent of miscommunication or loss of communication renders man incapable of any meaningful action apart from an alienated self which is obsessed with matter, believing the false urizenic self to be the only real self.

This is the result of believing in erroneous meaningless, flawed but secure laws, which regulate life by depriving it of beauty. Pretence and self-deception persuade man that life's dimension is merely the subjective and the objective perception of the world of generation which is the entrapped man's twofold vision. A man who realizes the impregnable traps of Urizen never abandons improvement or the struggle of ascent to the fourfold vision which is human perfection. Truth is revealed only through energy's release, which becomes the individual expressed perception of divinity. Intellect yields to imagination, truth's eternal world. Pure energy is truth and genuineness, whose opponent Urizen is falsity, imitation and fraud: 'That he who will not defend Truth, may be compelled to / Defend a Lie, that he may be snared & caught & taken' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 8, ll. 47-8, E 102).

Blake's 'marriage' of the antithetical contraries (good and evil) determines existence, but the human condition is such that there is no absoluteness in division. Sexual energy is restrained by reason causing anomie from which the individual tries to escape. Urizen's realisation by the intellect is not an easy task. Urizen is the personification of a false system of restrictive religious, social and moral standards that persuade the individual of its valid doctrines by offering an inactive life that is preserved by reason. In order to avoid immorality, dissoluteness, unfaithfulness and isolation, humans embrace urizenic falsity believing it as truth.

Through time, Urizen becomes God (Satan) and the process of its acknowledgment gradually and steadily solidifies, petrifies and dominates the self. It is a learned behaviour, where the mind cannot escape its teachings. Man becomes Urizen by adopting the reasoning power, which guarantees material security. But its cost is self-alienation and anomie. It is a world of loss and chaos, which usurps truth's place. Urizen's gestation cycle represents the identification process, the gradual consolidation of the erroneous human perception, the entrapment in false communication and the loss of the fourfold vision of imagination, the only promise of eternal life.

Urizen explor'd his dens / Mountain, moor, & wilderness,
With a globe of fire lighting his journey / A fearful journey,
annoy'd / By cruel enormities: forms / (*The Book of Urizen*,
Ch. VIII, PLATE 20, ll. 46-50, E 81).

Of life on his forsaken mountains. / And his world teemd vast
enormities / Frightning; faithless; fawning / *Portions of life*;
similitudes / Of a foot, or a hand, or a head, / Or a heart, or an
eye, they swam, mischevous / Dread terrors! delighting in

blood. (*The Book of Urizen*, Ch. VIII, PLATE 23, ll. 1-7, E 81). (emphasis added).

Urizen's communication is one-dimensional. It communicates with itself alone, imposing laws, true or false, indicative of its confusing apprehension of humanity. Urizen ignores essential communication and hinders creative work.

Urizen is nourished by his own illusory heavens with no connection with the eternal heavens.¹

Los who intervenes in chapter three is the protector, the communication link between eternity and fallen man. Urizen and the Eternals see themselves as isolated forces in opposition, that is lack of communication, in the corporeal warfare of right and wrong. Therefore the contraries, which are necessary to existence, are negated into dualism, and a cycle of tyranny is initiated.²

As a result, miscommunication is established:

In this struggle Los is the agent of the Eternals, and the Eternals have accepted an adversarial relationship with Urizen. Therefore, Los's actions and the Eternals are Urizenic.³

This means that they have both entered into error:

Los and Urizen are one entity in eternity, neither hermaphroditic nor androgynous, but contrary forms.⁴

In *The Book of Urizen*, Los represents the false prophet whose mental world is enclosed by Urizen's self-deception. Los's identification with Urizen confirms the

¹ Ibid., 73.

² Ibid., 75.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

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contrariety of good and evil, which is established by Urizen's supremacy because it is the creator of 'life.' Los, the Eternal Prophet, 'the Human Form Divine' who is the mediator between the fallen and the eternal world, introduces energy's duality and man's urizenic enslavement by intervening between these antithetical modes of perception. In Blake's thought contrariety does not exist in reality. Good and evil are rather productions of particular mental perceptions and attitudes to life, which by the process of identification with pure or impure energy define humans. Pure energy and intellectual freedom are not constructions but conscious apocalyptic states representative of life's wholeness. Imagination is the only promise of eternal life. Being in the urizenic state means being in error without realizing it, thus accepting falsity as truth and forgetting spiritual transcendence that is the transformation of impure energy into a pure creative, vital attitude to life.

The Book of Urizen is about error and the misguided soul's failure to realize the lie, the creator of self-righteousness, which must be annihilated. First, Urizen lies to itself and then to others. Falsehood is responsible for the urizenic state that is created by error. This hinders meaningful communication. Blake senses that reason is communication's destroyer. It was the flawed perception promised by the Age of Reason. It is the fallacious promise of state religion, of morality and of ethics to regulate, control and secure a protected but insubstantial life. Only imagination offers escape from the erroneous reality of vegetation, nature-animals, generation and corporeal existence. Imagination is irreconcilable to any religion and system of conventional morality. The truth and freedom that imagination promises, through pure energy's release and intellect's exercise defines the artist. Blake moves far from reason's deception by offering imagination as the true and unique escape from the

spurious, perverted perceptions of urizenic life. Los's entrapment in the body that is energy enclosed and repressed indicates that he has misunderstood his role as a true prophet. His mission is energy's release and transformation. Instead, he has identified with Urizen. Due to loss of communication with eternity, Urizen and the urizenic Los suffer falsehood and error's consequences.

Pity is presented as the result of the loss of communication with eternity. 'Pity is a judgmental, rational action, which "divides the soul" and promotes selfishness, tyranny and vengeance.'¹ It is obvious that Urizen, by rationalizing falsity is responsible for a proliferation of evils. Reason is the source of all evils and is produced from the sorrows of Urizen's soul, that is its murderous energy, which has silenced consciousness and transformed energy's potentially redemptive purity into the impure restrictive power of transitory reality, establishing the supremacy of necessity's lie. Error is the Net of Religion, which is produced by the necessity to regulate life for the sake of its preservation. Starting from the self in error, falsehood is projected onto the social world and spread over Urizen's cities. Individual error becomes social error and vice versa. Thus, human communication and interaction is lost and reality is nothing but a false 'incrustation' over the divine body. The duality of good and evil, the touchstone of Natural Religion, is responsible for the creation and production of urizenic consciousness. As Easson comments:

... this tree is the axis of Urizen's world, ... brought into existence by the mystery of Natural Religion and symbolic of the dualistic and judgmental belief that Christ, in his incarnation and his crucifixion on the tree of mystery, comes to bruise the serpent's head. The consequence of adherence to a

¹Ibid., 77.

religion of mystery and vengeance is that Urizen bruises with his heel the potential of the book and the living body of truth it could contain.¹

...Unlike Genesis, ... Blake, in *The Book of Urizen*, does not portray the creation of the physical world as “good”, nor does he depict a resurrected body to be governed by a universal last judgment. Both Genesis and Revelation contain the idea of “Eternal Justice” (*Paradise Lost*), which Blake repudiates. Blake replaces eternal justice with his belief in the mercy of Jesus the Imagination and the forgiveness of Sins, which leads to individual renovation of error.²

In Blake’s theology, the loss of communication within the self and eternity derives from the dichotomy of the tree of mystery, which, by establishing opposition’s law creates the self-righteous Urizen. It also imposes linearity’s fallacious logic, rational thought and dull repetition without evolution on all forms of life. According to Easson: ‘Los and Urizen identified are exemplars of the reciprocal tyranny instead of the mutuality of contrary states.’³ Pure energy’s release and prolific’s beauty are the adversaries of reason’s ugliness and its false dogma.

Blake writes that reason’s dominance should stop because ‘Urizen proliferates the illusory, fake human production, which is a parody of the divine creation in the fallen world.’⁴ Humans are deprived of the divine image and urizenic error multiplies into futurity. Error lies within reason’s conception of the self. Urizen’s mental enclosure in the cave of perception is indicative of its solipsism. By pure energy’s liberation reason loses its power to direct mind and soul. Perception, filtered through pure energy’s release, alters human perception and reveals the ‘real man’. Human

¹ Ibid., 87.

² Ibid., 98.

³ Ibid., 84.

⁴ Ibid., 85.

understanding acquires supremacy fighting against the selfhood and following the fourfold vision of imagination. The transformation that occurs is unique because the human being becomes an artist releasing his / her feelings and the redemptive power of imagination restores the lost internal communication, together with its relation with the external world and with eternity. Error is eliminated, selfhood is annihilated and intellectual perception promotes humanity and avoids reason's false promises which attempt to destroy soul's purity.

Living within the "natural" world, obeying books of error, which record punishment, which causes anguish and torment, is the state of those characters who live in Urizen. These characters resist transformation; they deny the transformation inherent in physical form. In the *Book of Urizen*, Blake gives us a Book of Error, but within it are emblems of a Book of Transformation, that we might escape physical suffering and raise the body and the soul to joyful existence.'¹

This is the transformation of impure energy into pure, of darkness to light; the corporeal natural man becomes the spiritual man of imagination:

'It is the potential transformation, the surrender to life and the strength of purpose, which as contraries engender progression.'²

In *The Four Zoas*, Urizen is Satan, but this correlation is not established in *The Book of Urizen* itself. As Raine contends:

¹ Ibid., 89.

² Ibid., 100.

Urizen, as at first conceived, is Blake's Satan; later a distinction is made between Urizen, who is the Zoa of reason, and "Satan the Selfhood", but since reason is the agent chiefly responsible for "error or creation", we know Urizen best in his fallen and satanic phase; as the Prince of Light and the husbandman, he is hardly realized. Blake understood well that as God resides in man so does Satan; 'man creates his own world by his manner of perceiving it.' (emphasis added). The world of positivist philosophy is a hell created by fallen reason; it is the kingdom cut off from God, and in it the usurper passes for God.¹

Urizen, reason and the spectre represent the ugly man, the 'devourer' as opposed to the beauty of the prolific that is imagination perfected, which is pure energy's exuberant release and flow. Urizen is not an external creation of man. It is cultivated internally and becomes conscious through a learned process of thinking, which although it is erroneous manages to subdue and tame energy and also to embed and seclude mind and soul into the 'narrow chinks of his cavern' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 14, E 39).

Blake's Satan, who is reason, is identified with science and the scientific knowledge, which rests on experiment and on the observation of the natural world. Science is Urizen's cold universe. The mechanistic perception of the world, instead of its imaginary view, is the ground in which loss of communication and self-alienation is established. Blake exposes the fallacy of the pseudo-creation of the world of generation, where reality, which is cut off from God, is the universe as conceived by the scientific philosophy: 'Reason the usurper of imagination, the setter of the bounds of the universe, is rooted on the immutable mechanistic natural system, which for

¹ Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. V. II. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 53.

Blake was external to the “divine bosom”, life and mind.’¹ ‘For Blake the Cartesian - Newtonian mechanistic universe is the true metaphysical hell.’²

In Blake’s aesthetics the central arguments (that is, self-alienation, Urizen’s loss of communication with eternity and pure psychic energy’s perversion due to earthly life’s false reality) direct us to consider their results in art. If internal communication is lost, due to impure energy’s predominance and reason’s supremacy, all truth along with the artistic vision is also lost. This is the point that Blake wants to make clear. Internal communication indicates truth’s disclosure. Art is communication. Its purpose is to surpass an obstructing reality and overcome reason in order to contribute to social discourse. This discourse is not a stream of consciousness or inter subjective dialogue but a third kind of interaction which is residual and suspended between reality and eternity. It is an ineffable, internal discourse. The link between reality and eternity is Art, which is active communication. Genuine communication is pure energy. It is the eternity’s vision that is God. Impure energy cannot lead to the ‘Sublime of Imagination’ which is the link between reality and eternity.

Los is redeemed from Urizen’s domination through imagination. He must struggle to restore his lost communication. But he can attain this only through pure energy’s release, the transformed, communicative artistic self, as presented in *Jerusalem*, the artist-mediator between the world of reality and eternity. Imagination and Art is the Blakean ‘real man’, is an external creation. The artist’s perception defines communication. ‘The bound is the generated the infinite is the *intellectual order*.’³ (emphasis added). Intellectuality and communication are the artist’s merits. Urizen

¹ Ibid., 56.

² Ibid., 82.

³ Ibid., 56.

represents loss of communication with eternity. Jesus, the imagination is the supreme artist. Therefore if communication is lost the aesthetic vision is impossible. On the contrary, if communication between man and God is established, Urizen's cold and dark world is destroyed by pure energy's fire and free intellect's exercise that is human communicative completion.

Chapter 2

2.1. Energy and intellect as aesthetic components of Blake's 'Sublime Allegory'

Although Blake did not offer a systematic theory of the sublime and the beautiful the chapter examines the concepts of energy and intellect that compose his sublime and presents their interrelation. This part explains why energy and intellect are the two fundamental principles on which the Blakean 'Sublime of Imagination' is based. Primarily, Blake's sublime is an artistic concept. In addition, it is directly associated with Jesus. This is verified by the following arguments:

First, nature, reason and God (as an abstract entity), are excluded from the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Blake's apocalyptic sublime is Jesus who is the personification of an idea. Jesus's purity is intellectual beauty. The idea of Christ, whose divine body is the human imagination, associates with beauty which is the artistic sublime. In Blake's aesthetics, beauty is introduced by energy and intellect which in their pure forms create the apocalyptic sublime. In their degraded forms, that is Urizen and impurity, the aesthetic category of the beautiful degenerates to ugliness. Thus, the aesthetic category of the ugly is Blake's 'negative sublime' and completes his aesthetic vision.

The reference to Kant, Longinus and Burke aims at distinguishing the Blakean sublime from their inartistic views about it. The Longinean sublime is nearer to Blake's because it relates to divine inspiration and the human soul. Kant's philosophical sublime does not seem to approach Blake's because it does not refer to divinity or shape reality artistically. According to Blake reality must acquire an

aesthetic form. Art and the sublime correlate giving a form to culture. Burke's views differ from Blake's because they are based on empirical observations which exclude vision. The origins of the sublime and the beautiful, which are founded on the opinions of the empiricists, are unreal and inartistic. Their views concerning the world's aesthetic conception are not based on Jesus the imagination but on conventional philosophical ideas and fabricated religious doctrines. Such apprehension of divinity produces false art. Divine inspiration must penetrate art and alter the empirical opinions about the aesthetic categories of the sublime and beautiful. Divinity and art is the combination of the apocalyptic sublime. The objective of the Blakean sublime is the artistic conception of the world.

The validity of these arguments is represented by Kant's views on the sublimity of war. In his work, Blake extensively talks about the inability of warriors to produce sublime art because of their insistence on false religious principles that are dissociated from divinity and human imagination. Blake was aware of the philosophy of the heathens and art's foundation on untrue principles ordained by priests who worship false gods and kings who conduct unholy wars:

Obtuse Angle answerd the heathens in the old ages usd to have
Gods that they worshipd & they usd to sacrifice to them ... Then
the Cynic sung

Honour & Genius is all I ask

And I ask the Gods no more

No more No more} the three Philosophers

No more No more} bear Chorus (*An Island in the Moon*, E 452)

Having understood the falsity of archaic and empirical aestheticism he introduced his aesthetic vision which is the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Another critical idea that validates this argument is Paley's reference to revolutionary energy which is an allusion to impure energy. Paley's 'Sublime of Energy' is not an artistic concept. I assert that the aesthetic category of the beautiful, which is subordinate to the sublime, is pure energy.

The chapter is structured on Weiskel's contention about Blake's 'negative sublime', the fall of Urizen which indicates that the aesthetic category of the ugly originates from degraded intellect. Paley's (1970), Weiskel's (1976), De Luca's (1991) and Richey's (1996) works, although are not representative of the current state of Blake or of British Romantic scholarship, are significant sources of the apocalyptic sublime. Particularly, De Luca's conceptual analysis of the 'bardic' and the 'iconic' Blakean sublimines. However, these differentiations either (Paley's 'Sublime of Energy' and 'Sublime of Imagination', or De Luca's poetic and pictorial sublimines) are not clearly placed in the context of aesthetics or Blakean aestheticism. Since the human imagination is Jesus, it is Blake's sublime. Beauty is found in other values such as purity, duty, the pathetic and Thel's dilemma. Ugliness, which is introduced by reason, is Blake's aesthetic realism. Perhaps it is the most important part of his sublime because it relates to the spectre and 'the Prince of this World, God; and destroying all who do not worship Satan under the Name of God!' (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, E 201).

In *The Ancient Britons* (1809) Blake explicitly presented and elaborated on the three aesthetic categories of his vision. These are cultural types and derive from the artist's

inspired perception of divinity. Imagination, the force that structures society by cultivating humanity, is expressed and unrestrained energy and intellect. Stagnation and degeneration are Urizen's products. Reason dictates disintegration. During the Romantic era there was a vigorous spiritual attempt to aesthetically transform the world. For Blake, the redemptive power that could attain the old order's subversion was the 'Sublime of Imagination', which represented the avoidance of spiritual death, dissociation from the misleading self-deceptive religious beliefs, and submission to the forces of evil. The conclusion is that energy and intellect constitute Blake's apocalyptic sublime. The fundamental principles on which he depended to form his sublime are explained by energy and intellect's duality which generates the aesthetic categories of the beautiful and ugly.

Energy and intellect as aesthetic components are conducive to the formation of Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination'. Pure energy and wisdom constitute Blake's aesthetic category of the beautiful. Intellect is indispensable to attain union with the Supreme Being and partake in the city of art. Energy and intellect are not objects or works of art to which we attribute value and qualities as we would to a painting or musical piece, but they are considered constituent parts of Blake's sublime conducive to artistic creation and the formation of the artist. Energy and intellect define the human entity, the artist. They are considered aesthetic components of the 'Sublime of Imagination' due to the notions of goodness, truth and beauty which are included in them, namely in pure energy and intellectual beauty. The basic argument of the assertion that energy and intellect are aesthetic components of the 'Sublime of Imagination' arises because of their dualistic nature. Energy is pure and impure, redemptive and destructive. Intellect is wisdom and reason. Impure, destructive energy suggests submission to the forces of evil. Pure energy is repressed by reason, which is false judgement about the divine, projected onto the fallen world of reality. In opposition, the wise man represents intellectual beauty.

Another argument which challenges energy's sublimity is that the term 'Sublime of Energy' seems to attribute to the concept significance equal to the 'Sublime of Imagination' without considering energy's dual expression. In the human being the physical and psychic sexual energy, the spirit which in its pure form identifies with wisdom, is the 'double edged sword' which determines either the ascent to the prophetic vision, the world of eternity, or a decline into the earthly, fallen reality and the soul's descent to the realm of Ulro. On the other hand, intellectual beauty as pure energy's component is a requisite to the formation of Blake's 'Sublime of

Imagination' because without it his sublime lacks the necessary strength and consistency to stand alone and represent Jesus, the ideal of Christianity in eternity. Imagination is the only inspired concept of his aesthetic theory. His prophetic vision is established by using energy and intellect as aesthetic components which constitute his 'Sublime of Imagination', thus, defining the visionary, secular artistic and apocalyptic sublime. The notions of truth and goodness are found in energy and intellect although Blake never names these as constituent parts of his 'Sublime Allegory.'

Blake presents a kind of sublime, which is deprived of nature's power (dynamic sublime) or the passion of suffering. Imagination is intellect's 'civilised' exercise in the sense that it releases the productive human forces for the achievement of the greatest human goal, which is eternity. By identifying imagination with Jesus, Blake offers the vision of eternity which is Christ's presence in the world. Imagination is the only escape from the fallen world of restriction and seclusion. Although 'Without Contraries there is no progression' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 3, E 34) imagination appears as the annulling force of the conflict between the duality of good and evil, energy impure and pure, reason and intellectual beauty. Blake's sublime is the human imagination due to its redemptive power. In his progressive aesthetic thought energy's importance is reduced and intellect's significance is intensified. This happens because intellectual beauty and spirituality define the man of imagination.

The 'Sublime of Imagination' is a sufficient explanation of Blake's 'Sublime Allegory' and art, because it derives directly from his perception of divinity. Pure

energy's release is associated with humanity and morality. Both energy and intellect define the 'real man', at the beginning of the industrial era. Without intellectual beauty eternity is unattainable. However, reason, the ever-menacing threat, is always there aiming to subvert the prophetic vision by bringing disruption and compelling the human entity to surrender to the forces of evil, that is impurity. This is personified in the spectre leading to a urizenic life according to the law of the Prince of this World.

Blake also excludes from the conception and formation of his sublime God, nature, reason and the senses as mere receptacles of this world, which is false and requires illuminating by the creative power of imagination. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the highest truth, art. As a neo-platonic artist, he establishes a visionary and secular sublime. His 'Sublime of Imagination' cannot be submitted to any aesthetic analysis which accepts as its foundation principles as the Kantian idea of Reason, or the Burkean obscurity, of terror and astonishment, which are the effect of the sublime in its highest degree of fear, pain, danger and emotion. In Blake's theological system Jesus is not a religious figure but the personification of an idea. Consequently, in Blake's Christianity the sublime is also personified as an idea, which can assume any form or interpretation based on individual imagination. The individual perception is significant because Blake ascribes to his 'Sublime Allegory', (The 'Sublime of the Bible') notions which all contain the personification of an idea conceived and interpreted according to the individual intellect:

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 be found in this World. To me This world is all
One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination & I feel

Flattered when I am told So. (Letters 5 [To] Rev^d Dr Trusler,
Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, E 702).

Additionally, Blake's claims that: 'For the Eye altering alters all' (*The Mental Traveller* l.62, E 485) and 'we see not Thro the Eye' (Pickering Manuscript, *Auguries of Innocence*, l.126, E 492, & *The Everlasting Gospel* l.100, E 520) characteristically emphasise the observer's mental perception of the outer world. Blake does not consider the aesthetic experience to reside in the object of perception but in the depth of our judgement when he advises us to look through the eye and not with the eye. Emphasis is not given to the organ of perception or to the object of perception, but to the way the sense-sight perceives the world. The eye as sense organ is able to perceive only the limitations of the external world. Blake's characters become what they behold that is they assimilate the object they transform and convert its substantial structure according to their mental faculties and abilities. Their individual intellect assisted by imagination provides a specific and humane perception of reality. Human mentality alters and transforms the fallen reality according to the immense potentialities of imagination. In this way, human perception particularises, shaping individuality and collective existence.

Kant's description of the mathematical sublime defines the sublime, as the name given to what is absolutely great, that is what is beyond all comparison great.¹ Longinus asserts that sublimity is the image of greatness of soul: 'For I would confidently pronounce that nothing is so conducive to sublimity as an appropriate

¹Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgement*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 94.

display of genuine passion, which bursts out with a kind of 'fine madness' and divine inspiration, and falls on our ears like the voice of a god.'¹

Kant bases his aesthetic theory on Reason, although his study provides various explanations of the sources of the sublime. In a sense, the priority he attributes to sublime experience depends on the subject and his relation to the external world. The subject's perceptions filtered through reason, are considered receptacles of superiority lending to the subject the gravity and dependability of the sublime experience. The senses are mere contributors to aesthetic completion. In defining the true aesthetic experience, Blake distinguishes his apocalyptic 'Sublime of Imagination' from Longinus, Kant and Burke. Kant relies on Reason, mind and the subject, but Longinus on the soul, and Burke on a sublime experience which is based on astonishment, terror pain, fear and awe.

The attribution of sublimity to a Supreme Being who is not an abstract God, but Jesus was Blake's innovation. The greatness of the large object (Kant) or the sublimity of the soul (Longinus, although his assertions are nearer to Blake), do not seem to offer an adequate explanation or to justify Blake's visionary 'Sublime of Imagination.' Blake regards imagination as the only redemptive power and source of inspiration, the constitutive principle of the human entity. For Kant, imagination refers to the supersensible realm. The infinite is empirically perceived. It has a mathematical dynamism. For Blake, the infinite is perceived within 'the Human Form Divine', where the redemptive imagination has the power to actualise images which are not based on empirical experience and reason.

¹ Warrington, John. *Aristotle Poetics: Demetrius on Style Longinus on the Sublime*. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1963), 145.

Aesthetics present intractable problems, and critics analysing Blake's 'Sublime Allegory' point out the painstaking task of penetrating the complex formation of the Blakean sublime. The complexity of the arguments that concern his sublime is obvious in critical analyses of his aesthetics. The difficulties, which are presented in comprehending Blake's sublime, are a subject that has received various interpretations from critics and scholars. In addition, the comprehension of the diverse meanings that Blake attributes to the concept of the sublime, and its use in his poetry and art compounds the complications of the term. The following exposition of scholars' opinions is indicative of the variety of claims that support different ways of reading Blake's sublime. As Paley contends:

... we have to think of the term 'energy' in more than one sense. In Blake's time it could be a rhetorical term as well as a neoplatonic aspect of the soul, amongst other things. The scientific usage of the term appears in the early nineteenth century. In Blake's particular sense, in the early 1790's, it is associated with the transformative power of revolution, and especially of the French Revolution. At that time Imagination was not an articulated concept for Blake but was contained within the loose term 'Poetic Genius'. There followed a period in which Blake saw that the revolution had turned into a new kind of empire, and consequently became disillusioned with the idea of the concept of imagination. Later he sees energy and imagination as collaborating in the production of works of art.¹

Paley's statement is a useful explanation of the notion of revolutionary energy, but it is not sufficient to establish energy as sublime. The 'Sublime of Energy' is the

¹ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 24.

transformative power of revolution and associates with the wrath of God. It has a dual expression: 'Evil is a direct outcome of the primary principle of divine manifestation - it is the wrath side of God.'¹ The wrath of God, which is the force that liberates us from oppression, Paley considers 'Sublime'. But this kind of energy is not aesthetic or artistic. Energy is the power that liberates us from the oppressor. The representation of authority is the tyrant God, King, Priest and Father. Energy is the invigorating power that opposes any kind of authority. Sircello considers the wrath of God beautiful:

What we are looking for to exemplify beautiful anger is someone who is magnificent or glorious in his wrath, much as a powerful lion is magnificent and glorious in full attack defending his pride. The only example of such an anger that I know, even in literature, is God's wrath. But we know that this is such an example, not because of the descriptions given of it, but because we can deduce that the wrath of God must be glorious and magnificent when He sends the rebellious angels into Hell, or when He comes to punish the wicked on Judgment Day.²

The wrath of God is neither sublime nor beautiful because every expression of aggressiveness and destructiveness is inartistic and inhuman. Thus, the Wrath of God cannot be considered an aesthetic concept even if revolution and war are the only means to subvert tyranny. Kant attributes sublimity to war, by stating:

¹ Carus, Paul. *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trübner & Co., 1900), 153.

² Sircello, Guy. *A New Theory of Beauty*. (London: Princeton UP, 1975), 95-6.

War itself, provided it is conducted with order and a sacred respect for the rights of civilians, has something sublime about it, and gives nations that carry it on in such a manner a stamp of mind only the more sublime the more numerous the dangers to which they are exposed, and which they are able to meet with fortitude. On the other hand, a prolonged peace favours the predominance of a mere commercial spirit, and with it a debasing self-interest, cowardice, and effeminacy, and tends to degrade the character of the nation.¹

Blake's answer: 'For war is energy Enslav'd by thy religion.' (*The Four Zoas*, Vala Night the Ninth, PAGE 119{IX 67-110}, l. 42, E 390) distinctly states that sublimity is irrelevant to war. On the contrary, enslaved energy, repressed by religion, meaning false beliefs, urizenic, wrong perception is the cause of war. Energy enslaved is impure energy. It is immorality and it cannot be considered positive, artistic sublime. Pure energy, and intellectual beauty are identified as constitutive parts of the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Pure energy is beauty and impure energy, which is reason, is ugliness. Beauty is Blake's liberated energy and intellect. In his aesthetics, beauty is an aesthetic category and as such it functions in his vision. Besides, he attributes to female beauty use-value (*The Book of Thel*) and considers Vala the representation of 'delusive beauty'. Beauty is another aesthetic category, which is included in his vision, and it is subordinate to the 'Sublime of Imagination'.

The acceptance of energy as an aesthetic component of Blake's sublime relates to goodness and its redeemable potentiality, qualities that are included in the self. Beauty is contained in human energy, in a state of awakening. It can be expressed or

¹ Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgement*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 113.

remain enslaved. The priority that is given to imagination and its consequent sublimity is due to its identification with Jesus. Blake's visionary sublime comprises energy and intellect as existential and artistic principles and excludes everything that is inimical to the prophetic vision. Imagination's predominance indicates the superior position that Blake attributes to 'the Human Form Divine' by rendering the 'Sublime of Imagination' the foundation of his poetry and art. Imagination permeates his 'Sublime Allegory', offering a unique interpretation of the Divine Word under the rules that imagination ordains. In his study of Blake's Aesthetics, Richey states:

Still, while I have been influenced by the poststructuralist approaches of critics such as W. J. T. Mitchell, Tillotama Raja, and Molly Anne Rothenberg, I stop short of the more radical implications of the arguments. I, of course, also recognize the irreconcilability of many of Blake's positions and the "incoherence" of some of his texts, but I continue to believe that there exists within each major phase of his career a general consistency of purpose and that - if we view these phases within their historical context - we can perceive an identifiable pattern of change. Given its rather mercurial nature, though, the pattern that I see has little in common with Frye's "permanent structure of ideas" or even Paley's gradual evolution from the 'Sublime of Energy' to the 'Sublime of Imagination'. In fact, if we are to describe this pattern as an evolution at all, it is one that is far more Cuvierian than Darwinian - a sequence of sharp and sudden ruptures rather than an orderly series of incremental steps.¹

¹ Richey, William. *Blake's Altering Aesthetic*. (London: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 11.

Richey's assertions for not accepting either Frye's 'permanent structure of ideas' or Paley's 'gradual evolution from the Sublime of Energy to the Sublime of Imagination' suggest that he rejects the assumption that Blake had a steady and concrete vision and that there is continuity in his thought and ideas throughout his work. In addition, Richey does not accept that there is a chronological evolutionary pattern in Blake's construction of the visionary, mythological and theological system of his sublimes, but a sequence of sharp and sudden ruptures.

Paley's two different sublimes collaborating together, namely the 'Sublime of Energy' (early) Blake, and the 'Sublime of Imagination' (late) Blake, is an acceptable explanation of the progressive development of Blake's thought. Indeed, Blake's aesthetic perception, starting from energy, later found its way towards the imagination. However, energy cannot be considered sublime even if it is good, because it contains both qualities of purity and impurity, which describe morality and immorality. Blake does not distinctly separate or explicitly refer to such a dichotomy, which is related to ethics. In his theological system both energies are acceptable. His answer to Lavater's dictum that 'He alone is good, who though possessed of energy, prefers virtue, with the appearance of weakness, to the invitation of acting brilliantly ill.' verifies this: 'Noble But Mark Active Evil is better than Passive Good' (Annotations to *Lavater's Aphorisms on Man*, E 592). However, he uses pure energy, the beauty of the artist and wisdom, intellectual beauty to create the 'Sublime of Imagination', which is his aesthetic explanation in relation to the secular and eternal worlds. But how can sexual energy, which is both good and evil, be compared to Jesus who is pure energy and imagination incarnated? Theoretically, Paley's dual sublimity is not a satisfactory aesthetic solution to the intricacies of Blake's sublime.

Imagination is the apex of Blake's vision. At this point, I offer two explanations as to why I use energy and intellect as constituent parts of Blake's visionary sublime: Energy's effectiveness as revolutionary force is reduced and the idea that energy is sufficient by itself to lead to eternity is abandoned after *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. As far as intellect is concerned, I assume that Blake might have developed the concept from the contrast between the 'Corporeal Understanding' and the 'Intellectual Powers'.

The 'Corporeal Understanding' depends upon what Kant calls the pure concepts to which the faculty of the understanding refers, or that which Burke in his *Enquiry* associates with material existence in the natural world. By employing the 'Intellectual powers', Blake asks his readers to consider experience in terms of the sublime's boundlessness of their own ability to create imaginative mental images. These can dislocate the reader's perspective of the natural world thus, manifesting the unlimited constructive powers of the imagination.

Weiskel's and De Luca's views on Blake's sublime are indicative of how the concept was elaborated upon and how this analysis, of Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination', differentiates from their own claims. Weiskel wrote that 'Blake's analytic of sublimation is shrewd enough to wrinkle the brow of any self-conscious literary intellectual'¹ because 'We are sometimes told that Blake has no distinct concept of the sublime as a separate category of aesthetic experience, that he uses the term as an indiscriminate epithet of praise, and that he conflates the categories of the sublime and

¹ Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 71.

the beautiful at will.’¹ Weiskel clearly states that Blake’s ‘sublime is not the Romantic sublime.’² Moreover, in a series of assertions he claims that Blake’s sublime is a particular case in describing the sublime experience in Romanticism:

Blake offers all the advantages of a perspective truly outside the Romantic sublime.³ And there is the odd literalism of the visionary tradition, a persistent atavism which found in Blake a major representative⁴ ... Blake hated the indefinite, rejected the numinous, and insisted on *the primacy of the imagination*. (emphasis added) ... Blake’s work makes a profound critique of the natural sublime⁵ ... Burke’s recommendation of obscurity seemed to Blake disastrous.⁶

In Blake’s aesthetics, these beliefs are common in the critical analysis of his sublime. Weiskel’s views about Blake’s sublime seem consistent because Blake distances himself from the natural sublime as well as the romantic dualisms of eye and object in perception, spirit and sense that the sublime presupposed and reinforced. His sublime is an innovative proposal grounded in the supremacy of the imagination and a radical answer to the reign of reason.

Blake’s sublime is the power of human imagination to bring about redemption. Impure energy is the evil substance of the human entity, the natural state of man. Furthermore, the predominance of evil in the world of ‘vegetation and generation’ renders humans capable of realising that creative imagination and not reliance on

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 42. See: De Luca Vincent Arthur. “Blake’s Concept of the Sublime.”

² *Ibid.*, 67.

³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

restrictive reason can alter the postlapsarian reality. Impurity is not a definite state. It can be transformed into pure energy through the redemptive power of imagination which reveals new dimensions of human abilities. The idea of the inner goodness of the soul, innocence, is re-examined in the light of the natural impurity of man. Blake accepts the natural state of man, attributing it to impurity and not to Original Sin. 'Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether an Evil, ...' (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, E 200). In addition, the laws of oppressive reason are unbearable. Rationalists believed that dependence on the principles of relative innocence and restrictive reason, which according to Blake were erroneous, ensured life's continuity:

But your Greek Philosophy (which is a remnant of Druidism) teaches that Man is Righteous in his Vegetated Spectre: an Opinion of fatal & accursed consequence to Man, as the Ancients saw plainly by Revelation to the intire abrogation of Experimental Theory. *and many believed what they saw, and Prophecied of Jesus.* (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, E 200-1). (emphasis added).

Weiskel believes that 'Blake's myth of the Fall is an analytical critique of sublimation.'¹ There are many accounts of the Fall in Blake and several critiques of sublimation in its sexual, political, and properly artistic guises.² He also claims that for Blake:

the crisis of man's fall lies in a sublimation in which the formal properties of what is seen are dissolved and the residual otherness of the thing is alienated as indefinite substance. In his view the positive or egotistical and

¹ Ibid., 68.

² Ibid., 71.

negative, or Kantian sublimities turn out to be not genuine contraries but two versions of the same lapse, the negation of visionary perception.¹

Weiskel considers the moment of Urizen's fall in *The Four Zoas*, to be a version of the sublime moment when Urizen rejects his emanation Ahania. Thus, he writes: 'Mind's alienation in Kant is parallel to Urizen's fall in Night III.'²

Weiskel refers to the sublime experience as an aspect of the Fall. He also detects a 'negative delight' in it. He defines the 'sublime moment' as a threefold episode of consciousness. The sublime experience is defined and described by three states of ordinary awareness, of radical disequilibrium and the state of transcendent exaltation. Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is a positive aesthetic experience that determines the artistic self and discloses pure energy's hidden powers. The subject is exposed to the completeness of the visionary moment of the apocalyptic. Imagination brings about in the subject a transformation. In Blake's theology, humanity and morality are attributes of his positive sublime. The 'negative sublime', which is also a threefold episode of consciousness, it only reveals the spectre's power to subvert the prophetic vision. It is threatening and terrifying. Darkness is the 'negative sublime'. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is spiritual light.

Intellect's participation in the visionary experience is not found anywhere in Weiskel's analysis of Blake's sublime. In his chapter: "Darkning Man: Blake's Critique of Transcendence" the negativity of the sublime moment, the fall of Urizen,

¹ Ibid., 68.

² Ibid.

(that is the subversion of the positive energetic forces which undermines the ascent to the prophetic vision) is attributed to reason which is the sublime's only enemy. This assertion is valid because the fallen Urizen represents impure energy and the atrophied intellect, the false principles of reason, which in Blake's visionary aesthetics represent the aesthetic category of the ugly. Ugliness and the fallen Urizen define the destabilised man who is deprived of intellectual beauty.

As Weiskel adds: 'The conflict between Urizen and Luvah, reason and energy, is the immediate cause of Urthona's fall.'¹ Urthona is the creative Imagination of the individual:

In Urizen's view, Man fell because he became intellectually lazy, attributing the weariness of his indulgent self to Vala, Nature.² ... His "active masculine virtue" succumbed to Vala, "the feminine indolent bliss. The indulgent self of weariness" which he hopes to avoid by casting out Ahania. By rejecting his emanation, Urizen falsely succumbs to the natural world in an attempt to regain his lost intellect so he may return to his unfallen condition.³

Not only impure energy which is reason, but also the weary intellect is responsible for the fallen state of man, and this indicates intellect's supportive part collaborating with pure energy, which is beauty, to form Blake's sublime. Moreover, Weiskel states that 'In Kant's theory of the sublime we find the defeat of the sensible imagination or

¹ Ibid., 72.

² Ibid., 73-4.

³ Ibid., 74.

phenomenal intellect'¹ notions, which in Blake under the visionary perspective of imagination constitute the sublime. His assertion that 'Blake uses the word *sublime* as a general honorific and obviously had no use for the distinction, fashionable after Burke (1757), between the sublime and the beautiful'² must be reconsidered.

In *The Ancient Britons* (1809), Blake acknowledges three aesthetic categories: the human sublime, the human pathetic and the human reason. These 'fallen' human forms are potentially eternal. The aesthetic categories of the sublime, the beautiful (which is the pathetic) and reason (which is ugliness) are in a state of transformation through the exercise of the creative power of human imagination. Imagination, the incarnated Jesus, is the human entity itself. Energy and intellect constitute forms which determine the human aesthetic. The sublime man represents the strong man, the beautiful man is the man of pathos and reason is the ugly man.

Weiskel was able to detect the importance that Blake attributed to imagination when his vision reaches maturity. He refers to a kind of 'fallen sublime'. This 'fallen', 'negative sublime' is Blake's aesthetic realism and belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly, which is reason. Impure energy, reason and the spectre constitute Blake's 'negative sublime'. For Blake, humanity is in a state of transition towards the ideal form through the use of creative imagination. The existent negativity of the sublime moment, the fall of Urizen, which is attributed to reason, equals impure energy. Impurity hinders the release of personal creative powers to fight the opposing forces of evil.

¹ Ibid., 68.

² Ibid., 67.

De Luca's study of Blake's sublime is the only complete exposition of what Blake might have meant by referring to the diverse forms that the sublime takes in his poetry and art. However, De Luca's views of Blake's aesthetics differ from mine. He cites the various sources and influences that Blake incorporates to form his sublime, but these are not in accord either with the ultimate conception of Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' or the way it is formed by energy and intellect. De Luca's study does not place Blake's sublime in a specific context of aesthetics although he discusses extensively the two aspects of the 'bardic' and 'iconic' sublime. I will now focus on the points that De Luca considers evidence of Blake's sublime by offering constructive criticism of his views. He contributes to the controversy by indicating that:

It is not easy to know what Blake means when he speaks of the sublime. The term appears often in his work (as either adjective or noun), although not always in clarifying contexts. Blake did not offer a systematic theory of the sublime such as we find in Burke or Kant or even in Addison or John Dennis, ... Blake declared himself to be a "Sublime Artist". He offered his "Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry", specified the conditions that establish the "Foundation of the Sublime" and talked about the separation of the sublime and the pathetic (first plate of *Jerusalem*).¹

De Luca considers two different sublimes in Blake's poetry and art, 'the bardic sublime of the temporal abyss and the iconic sublime, better understood as the

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 17. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

sublime of the hieroglyphic icon.’¹ He focuses on the effects of these two different modes of sublimity:

... I would argue, sublimity never manifests itself in Blake’s writings as an amorphous body of vague concepts and conventional terms, but rather resolves itself into two strongly delineated and differentiated sublimes. As a poet, Blake entertains both sublimes even if he prefers one, and their ongoing debate in his poetry has far-reaching effects on specific features of its style, organization, images, and motifs.²

He continues:

For all the harsh attacks on Burke, we may still sense the presence of a Burkean magnetic field tugging at the needle of Blake’s aesthetic compass. While Blake’s poetic and artistic practice is intellectually directed against Burkean assumptions and precepts, it often betrays a certain fondness for Burkean effects. Burke and Blake *seem to belong to the same camp*: (emphasis added) they are unavoidably allied as advocates of a problematic and agonist sublime. They both provide a structure that includes a moment of discontinuity, the episode “of astonishment” and a psychic effect in which the mind becomes self-divided. They differ in that Blake recognizes the means for a more thorough discontinuity and a more radical division of the faculties.³

¹ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 6.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 42.

He also states that his discourse on Blake's sublime is 'a theory founded on ideals of determinacy and concentrated precision, formulated in deliberate opposition to prevailing Burkean views, yet sharing several cognate features with them.'¹

Blake repudiated Burke's *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful* with 'Contempt and Abhorrence' and gave priority to inspiration and vision. De Luca's assertions that Blake drew from Burke and Kant to formulate his sublime contradict Weiskel's views on the subject which divorce Blake rigorously and entirely from the whole Burkean, Kantian, Wordsworthian conception of the sublime. Weiskel is insightful about Blake's visionary sublime and his desire to present a Christian, apocalyptic version of the sublime, placing the imagination at the centre of his theology. Blake, without being explicit about his sublime repudiated Burke's treatise for the sake of the apocalyptic sublime, thus distancing himself from the empiricist and social implications that Burke's aesthetic analysis on the sublime and the beautiful provided. Yet, according to De Luca 'the fact of the similarity remains.'²

In reply to this statement, Paley proposes two reasons for Blake's 'contempt and abhorrence' of Burke's philosophy on the sublime and the beautiful. First, 'it is Burke's reductive theory, not the concept of the sublime itself, to which Blake is hostile';³ second, because in the 'Enquiry, the book that stirred Blake's 'Contempt and Abhorrence', Burke attempted to discover a physiological basis for the sublime.'⁴

¹ Ibid., 5-6.

² Ibid., 25.

³ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 16.

⁴ Ibid., 228.

Actually, Blake's imagination shares little with the passions and emotions that terror, pain, danger and awe cause when they are agitated. In his *Treatise*, Burke referred to the notions of the sublime and beautiful as well as the concepts of desire, delight and lust, attributing to them qualities different than Blake's. For Burke: 'the ruling principle of the Sublime is terror.'¹ In Blake's perspective of imagination and divine inspiration notions such as terror, awe and wonder acquire another meaning. Their significance serves aesthetic purposes associated with his artistic aspiration to create and shape 'the Human Form Divine.'

If imagination shaped reality, Blake's social vision would be substantiated and the divine presence in the fallen world would be visible and sensed by all humanity. Burke called 'Beauty a social quality.'² Blake attributes beauty to the genitals and identifies it with Pathos. His beauty being an attribute of the body signifies pure energy, free intellect and mental purity. He abandons proportion and size and turns instead to the spiritual world where the 'Sublime of Imagination', inspiration and vision offer to the fallen man the promise of redemption and eternal life.

Burke talks about 'Astonishment, which is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree'³. Blake also uses the term to describe sublime moments. But the entry *astonishment* appears thirteen times, *astonishd* thirty two and *astonished* two in all his works, whereas *fear* appears one hundred and ninety three, *terror* ninety two, *wonder*

¹ Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* 1759 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 36.

² *Ibid.*, 39.

³ *Ibid.*, 53.

fifty four, *horror* twenty seven, *awe* seventeen, *amazement* three and *amazed* once.¹

De Luca supports the view that 'Blake uses the term astonishment more frequently than any other major poet in the period from 1660 to 1830, but always with careful discrimination.'² Blake rather used and interpreted the constitutive elements of the sublime within the perspective of imagination, which is the theological sublime of a neo-platonist visionary prophet and artist whose aim was 'the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite.' (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 12, E 39).

The only acceptable interpretations from De Luca's study of Blake's 'bardic' and 'iconic' sublimes are Urizen's petrification and Blake's sublime moment as a form of liberty. His interpretation of Blake's definition of the 'Most Sublime Poetry', his myth of *The Ancient Britons* and the relationship between 'Corporeal Understanding' and 'Intellectual powers' must be reviewed because the explanation that he offers is not adequate to illuminate Blake's intricate conception of the sublime.

I will begin this critical analysis by mentioning De Luca's belief that 'Blake's Imagination is repeatedly drawn to the Burkean Sublime, but he [Blake] appears sceptical that it can serve as a mode of genuine elevation and access to a liberating power.'³ Burkean influence is a matter of controversy because as far as Blake regards Burke's philosophy with 'contempt and abhorrence', Blake's claims are not disputed. Besides, Blake, in forming his 'Sublime of Imagination', drew directly from the

¹ William Blake's Archive. [blakearchive.org / main.html](http://blakearchive.org/main.html)

² Wu, Duncan, ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 20. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

³ *Ibid.*, 22.

incarnated Jesus, and all the other influences that he might have accepted are of little importance. Imagination serves as a mode of genuine elevation and access to a liberating power because it is the only escape from the isolation and delusions that reason generates. Imagination permeates the artistic entity. Art and the artist cannot exist without the liberating, creative power of imagination. Without imagination a work of art lacks beauty because the 'artist' merely copies nature and employs skilful techniques of construction. The work of art is neither a construction, nor a duty. It is a creation that derives from the combination of the artist's perception of beauty. Pure energy, combined with intellectuality and the release of creative imagination produce the artistic work. If any of these constitutive elements is missing the work is false. It is a fabrication easily attainable by following a set of rules. Blake does not refer to construction. Reason does not explain his aesthetics, and his work does not obey natural rules. Imagination is the beginning and end of his entire prophetic vision, and he is never sceptical or doubtful of its power to establish a new order by destroying classicism.

The other objection, to De Luca's arguments on Blake's sublime concerns his reference to the 'Sublime of Energy'. He does not dispute or aesthetically conceptualise the notion 'Sublime of Energy' and its relation to the 'Sublime of Imagination'. The following description is indicative of his approach to Blake's complex conception of the sublime without clarification and context:

These various formulations - Lowth's splendid and pointed sentences, Blair's "lively" ideas, or Payne Knight's distinctly clear rolling waves - all pose a sublime based on salience or concentrated force against the Burkean sublime or perceptual

deprivation and diffusion. This sublime substitutes intensity for extensiveness - it cuts more sharply and more deeply, vibrates more intensely, and compresses its power more minutely than anything that our ordinary senses provide. This mode subsumes what Morton Paley has called "the sublime of energy", and it operates not only in energy's domain of the body but also in the domain of the text, or wherever the multiple and the multifaceted are made altogether manifest in a little moment or a little space. In his *Annotations to Reynolds*, Blake provides the most articulate and cogent formulation of this notion of the sublime.¹

It could be argued that the sublime effect is the result of imagination. Energy's extensiveness from the body to the text does not define its sublimity. Besides, how does energy, which mainly is the substance of the body, describe the sublime text? Bodily energy and sublime text are two separate things. Perhaps, De Luca is attempting to combine Blake's 'bardic' and 'iconic' sublimines through energy. The energy of the text is due to the 'bardic' sublime's effect. In poetry the aesthetic experience derives from the synthetic use of the words, which effect its presence.

What does textual energy mean? The text is sublime because imagination is infused in the words. Energy is the human instigating power for action and does not alone render the text sublime. Such an interpretation of Blake's supposed devices to demonstrate sublime effects indicates the difficulties that his artistic and linguistic, 'bardic' and 'iconic' sublimines present in their synthesis.

¹ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 40.

Conversely, De Luca's views about Los and Urizen's correlation with 'stone in astonishment' and petrification must be taken into consideration although Blake does not use the word astonishment more than fear. Fear is associated with death whereas astonishment relates to petrification with its positive and negative effects. He assumes that Burke influenced Blake in his creation of the aesthetic experience that is the feeling of astonishment. The sublime effect is obvious when man is filled with admiration and awe. 'The moment of astonishment is, then, the moment par excellence when, in Blake's famous formula, one becomes what one beholds.'¹ The moment of astonishment is considered as a sublime moment; it is a form of Blake's sublime. In addition, fear, horror, terror, awe and wonder are sublime moments.

According to De Luca, sublimity is a wide concept, which comprises all the subject's aesthetic experiences: 'Blake proclaims the sublimity of determinacy, particularity, and discrimination for their own sake.'² Blake's major source of sublimity is imagination, his artistic sublime. All the other sublime moments appear of secondary importance. In fact, the priority that Blake attributes to the 'Sublime of Imagination' is because of imagination's ability to create art: 'SCIENCE is the Tree of DEATH ART is the Tree of LIFE GOD is JESUS (*The Laocoön*, E 274). 'From Imagination our perceptions are *temporarily* (emphasis added) raised to another level of existence. This other level, in both Keats and Blake, is the realm of Art'.³

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 20. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

² De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 40-1.

³ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 209.

De Luca's assertion that 'Blake's Sublime moment takes the form of Liberty' supports the 'Sublime of Imagination.' '...arrest is freedom here, for to be filled with the object, is in this case to be filled with a being who is "called Liberty among the Children of Albion" (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 54, l.5, E 203).¹ Imagination is liberty. It is the true Christian life and relates to the release of pure energy and intellect for the emergence of the regenerated self: 'I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the *liberty both of body and mind* (emphasis added) to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination.' (*Jerusalem*, To the Christians, E 231). The participation of the body and mind for the exercise of the 'divine arts of imagination' is a precondition of the 'Sublime of Imagination' because without physical and mental liberty the sublime cannot be attained. This is essential for the artist to produce art of divine origin. Intellectual liberty is art. Artistic perception is not situated a level higher than imagination. For Blake, imagination and art are identical.

Blake's imagination is not only associated with liberty but also with love and moral virtue. In *The Four Zoas*, Enion tells to Tharmas that liberty and love are identical and when liberty is absent hatred replaces love and requires the stern demands of duty. In the fallen reality, these are a prerequisite for human survival:

All Love is lost Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love / And
stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty. (*The Four Zoas*,
Vala Night the First, PAGE 4, {I 17-64}, ll.18-9, E 301).
You cannot have Liberty in this World without <what you call>
Moral Virtue & you cannot have Moral Virtue without the Slavery

¹ Wu, Duncan ed *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 21. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

of that half of the Human Race who hate <what you call > Moral
Virtue (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 564).

Blake's social message is bodily and mental liberation for the sake of art. In fact this message of liberty becomes universal, and presupposes universal toleration, as Blake assumed when he wrote: 'What is Liberty without Universal Toleration' (Annotations to Boyd's *Historical Notes* on Dante, E 635). Love, moral virtue and universal toleration are the positive results of imagination, when it is exercised for artistic purposes.

I will briefly refer to what Blake intends by defining his poetry as 'The Most Sublime Poetry' and to the meaning that he attributes to Allegory in his visionary artistic work. Blake's 'Most Sublime Poetry' is defined as such because of the position that imagination holds in his work. Energy's distinction between pure and impure differentiates the man of reason from the man of imagination, the true from the false artist. On the other hand, intellect defines the artist as well as the man of reason. Urizenic, weary intellect applies to the false artist whose energy is not beauty. Beauty alone without imagination cannot produce an artist.

Thus I hope that all our three years trouble Ends in Good Luck at last & shall be forgot by my affections & only remembered by my Understanding to be a Memento in time to come & to speak to future generations by a Sublime Allegory which is now perfectly completed into a Grand Poem [...] ... Allegory addressd 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 defined by Plato.
(*The Letters*, 27 [To Thomas Butts], E 730).

The reference to Plato alludes to the world of ideas, the ideal forms which exist before our birth and are written individually into our souls. On earth, in the 'cavern' of reality, these ideal forms of eternity are reflected in distortion, and so are false perceptions of the ideal world of perfection. This is the Platonic conception of the fallen world. Blake's corresponding belief: 'For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern' (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 14, E 39) implies human self-enclosure by the restrictive power of reason. Returning to Blake's 'Most Sublime Poetry', he also talks about ideal forms of perfection in eternity, but he filters them through imagination. Moreover, in *A Vision of The Last Judgment*, he clearly states:

Fable or Allegory are a totally distinct & inferior kind of Poetry.
... Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally
Exists. ... Fable or Allegory is Formed by the Daughters of
Memory. Imagination is Surrounded by the daughters of
Inspiration ... The Hebrew Bible & the Gospel of Jesus are not
Allegory but Eternal Vision or Imagination of All that Exists ...
< Allegory & Vision > [< & *Visions of Imagination* >] ought to be
known as Two Distinct Things & so call'd for the Sake of Eternal
Life ... (E 554).

Consequently, Blake moves away from Allegory, which was connected with antiquity and the philosophy of the heathens. He substitutes the obsolete remnants of memory with inspiration which is vision's presupposition. This means that cultures that are stuck in memory are doomed to stagnation and underdevelopment. Imagination is

the power of progress and intellectual growth. The Hebrew Bible became his inspiration, a validation of the 'Sublime of Imagination' because 'the Gospel of Jesus' is ideas whose inspired nature is the fundamental belief 'for the Sake of Eternal Life.'

Blake talks about Allegory in two different ways: 'Allegory addressd to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding' (*The Letters*, 27 [To Thomas Butts], E 730), also the 'Gospel of Jesus ... the Eternal Vision or Imagination'. These statements imply the 'infernal or diabolical sense' in which Blake prompts his readers to interpret the Bible. The conventional, orthodox way of reading the Bible exercises the 'Intellectual powers.' However, intellect becomes aware of its capabilities when one thinks alternatively. Alternatively does not mean contemplating the dualism of good and evil but rather interchanging them in order to improve perception. This kind of thinking is 'altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding' because 'Mental Things are alone Real what is Calld Corporeal Nobody Knows of its Dwelling Place <it> is in Fallacy & its Existence an Imposture' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 565). What exactly Blake means by 'Corporeal Understanding' is difficult to determine but I believe it is located in pure and impure energy. 'Corporeal Understanding' might mean amorphous energy, unshaped by imagination.

'Corporeal Understanding' is the barrier, the obstacle that needs to be surpassed by the reader's intellect in order to ascend to intellectual heights. This is achieved with the assistance of imagination. The confrontation of the corporeal limits is associated with the finite limits of the fallen world and its requirements. These are responsible for imagination's defeat and the death of artistic vision. Blake blames the secular, cosmic barriers such as reason, laws, institutions and self-righteous morality for

obstructing the visionary revelation and expelling man from eternity. Sublime poetry speaks the intellect and the 'Intellectual powers'. In my analysis of the intellect as energy's aesthetic component, I will return to the contrast between 'Corporeal Understanding' and 'Intellectual powers' as Blake establishes their difference.

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2.2. Intellect as an aesthetic component of the 'Sublime of Imagination'

The purpose of this chapter is to present and elucidate the notion of intellect. Also to explain why Blake uses it as to form the 'Sublime of Imagination.' The following arguments confirm why intellect is energy's aesthetic constituent:

First, intellect identifies with intellectual beauty and it closely relates to pure energy. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake discusses the sublime, pathos and beauty by attributing them to organs of the human body. Beauty's initial conception is carnal but later Blake identifies it with intellectuality. The fact that sexual energy is initially intellectual discloses Blake's belief in intellectual beauty which is not antagonistic to sexuality. Every human being possesses intellect but few cultivate it. The origin of human intellect is the Holy Ghost and its manifestation on earth is the Poetic Genius. Intellect associates with spiritual power, mental gifts and human passions. In his *Annotations To The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Blake refers to 'Knowledge of Ideal Beauty' and 'Innate Ideas' (E 648) suggesting that intellect is an aesthetic concept which contributes to the formation of his positive sublime.

Another theoretical idea is that reason is not intellect. They are two distinct things. Deformity is reason and intellectual beauty dissociates from ugliness. These notions belong to Blake's 'negative sublime'. De Luca's arguments that 'intellect is the matrix of desire which generates the exuberant passions', and 'Intellectual Powers which is only one instance of Blake's usual relation of the sublime with a manifestation of intellect and a flight from the corporeal', denote that 'Intellectual powers' differentiate from 'Corporeal Understanding.' This differentiation relates to

the dual formation of the Blakean sublime. Furthermore, there is a relation between intellect, understanding and experience. Blake's sublime contains many notions that are interrelated and contribute to the creation of the aesthetic experience.

In Blake's art intellectual beauty is represented by 'Beauty' which is defined as 'Passion & Expression' (Annotations *To The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 653). 'Violent Passions Emit the Real Good & Perfect Tones' (Annotations *To The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 660). Passions define the intellectual man; but without imagination and inspiration the spirit remains silent: 'The Man who never in his Mind & Thoughts travel'd to Heaven Is No Artist' (Annotations *To The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647).

The conclusion of this chapter is that intellect is an aesthetic concept due to the differentiation between 'Intellectual powers' and 'Corporeal Understanding', and because of the Holy Ghost and its position in Christianity. Matter and spirit are distinguished. Reason is Blake's 'negative sublime' because of its association with the corporeal order. Intellect is energy's aesthetic component conducive to the artistic sublime. The antithetical principles of the corporeal, reason, impurity and deformity contrast the intellectual, wisdom, purity and beauty. Nevertheless, both divisions of the secular sublime constitute Blake's aesthetic.

As the breath of the Almighty. such are the words of man to man
In the great Wars of Eternity, in fury of Poetic Inspiration,
To build the Universe stupendous: Mental Forms Creating
(*Milton*: Book The Second, PLATE 30[33], ll.18-20, E 129).

Our wars are wars of life, & wounds of love,
With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought:
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 34 [38], ll.14-5, E 180).

De Luca's analysis of Blake's concept of the sublime concludes with the following statement; 'On the level of style, as well as of idea, there are two sublimes, one darkly mimicking the other, namely, *the sublime of intellect*.'¹ (emphasis added). This statement reveals the multiple interpretations of Blake's 'Sublime Allegory', but the term 'sublime of intellect' does not thoroughly represent the Blakean sublime. Energy and intellect are considered the components of the 'Sublime of Imagination' where intellect constitutes the second essential principle on which Blake establishes the apocalyptic sublime. Intellect is impeccable judgment and identical to beauty.

Intellect is wisdom and not reason. 'The horse of Intellect is leaping from the cliffs of Memory and Reasoning; it is a barren Rock: it is also called the Barren Waste of Locke and Newton.' (*Blake's Exhibition and Catalogue* of 1809, Number VI., E 546) also: 'Man by his reasoning power. can only compare & judge of what he has already perceiv'd.' (*There is No Natural Religion* [a], E 2). As regards wisdom:

If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character. the
Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 48. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

things, & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again (*There is no Natural Religion* [b], E 3).

Reason is wisdom's degradation and identifies with Satan. That is why, intellect like energy, is also dualistic in conception. It is true intellect that is wisdom, and reason. Intellect because of its dualistic nature is an aesthetic component of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. The dualism and the consequent differentiation of energy and intellect, possessing potentially good and evil qualities, means that they are aesthetic components of Blake's sublime.

Before I continue to analyse intellect as an aesthetic component of Blake's sublime, I will refer to an argument which is associated with energy and intellect in his aesthetics. George, in her book *Blake and Freud* argues:

In Freud, sexual energy must be sublimated in order to produce art, or any other of the "higher" cultural achievements; that is it must be diverted, or aim-inhibited. But for Blake, art and love do not take opposite directions, and libidinal energy need not be forced into cultural aims. If permitted to develop freely, libidinal energy and creative energy will take identical form.¹ ... But intellectual energy was not originally sexual; *sexual energy was originally intellectual*. "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 does not minimise the significance of sexuality with his formulation, *nor does he make it antagonistic to the intellect*. (emphasis added). He inverts the progression and derivation. It is not through repression, diversion, or displacement that sex may be brought to the service of the intellect, and thereby to the service of cultural achievement. Rather, it is through these

¹George, Hume Diana. *Blake and Freud*. (London: Cornell UP, 1980), 143.

psychic processes that sexuality is perverted into forms that annihilate intellect. The pressure of culture *artificially* (emphasis added) separates the sexual and the intellectual. Freud thought that left to itself, sexual energy would not transform. Blake thought that only if left to itself could sexual energy build genuinely human cities and create fully realized relationships.¹

The fact that sexual energy is not antagonistic to the intellect and that it must be 'left to itself' to create art renders the two aesthetic components indispensable for the formation of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. Freud's sublimation process and the repression of the sexual instinct (for the sake of cultural production) do not apply to Blake's conception of art, which is the co-operation of energy and intellect to produce the imaginative sublime. One reason is because Blake's sublime is Jesus, God: 'there is no other God, than that God who is the intellectual fountain of Humanity;' (*Jerusalem*, C4, PLATE 91, l.10, E 251) the personification of absolute freedom where there is no space for sexual energy's repression, diversion or displacement. Energy must be expressed freely and unrestrainedly. The other reason is that Blake, as an artist, envisions the production of works of art as derivations of the supreme divine mind and not as products of reason. The technological, scientific and material production is the result of a mechanistic conception of the universe. Its God, Urizen, demands the repression of desire for the construction of commodities and the accumulation of wealth. For Blake, the processes of repression or sublimation are unnecessary because the artist '... is "inspired", or possessed with "divine fire".² That is, energy and intellect must be expressed in exuberance for the sake of artistic production. Blake proclaims the 'Realities of Intellect from which All the Passions

¹ Ibid., 144.

² Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination*. (London: Harvard UP, 1981), 16.

Emanate <Uncurbed> in their Eternal Glory.’ (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 564).

As Yeats commends ‘Passions, because most living, are most holy – and this was a scandalous paradox in his [Blake’s] time – and man shall enter eternity borne upon their wings.’¹

The Fool shall not enter into Heaven let him be ever so Holy.
Holiness is not The Price of Enterance into Heaven Those who are
cast out Are All Those who having no Passions of their own
because *No Intellect*. Have spent their lives in Curbing &
Governing other Peoples by the Various arts of Poverty & Cruelty
of all kinds ... (emphasis added) (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*,
E 564).

For Blake, passions are innate, aesthetic ideas; they are offspring of the intellect and do not originate in empirical sensation and reflection (Locke).

Knowledge of Ideal Beauty. Is Not to be Acquired It is born with
us Innate Ideas. are in Every Man Born with him. they are <truly>
Himself. The Man who says that we have No Innate Ideas must be
a Fool & Knave. Having No Con-Science <or Innate Science>
(Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 648)

‘Mind and Imagination’ are not dependent on ‘Mortal & Perishing Nature’
(Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 660) but on the eternal world of
spirit.² In his Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Blake states:

¹ Yeats, W. B. *Ideas of Good and Evil*. (London: Bullen, W.C. MCMIII, 1898), 168.

² Phillips, Michael ed. *Interpreting Blake*. (London: Cambridge UP, 1978), 113.

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 (E 656).

Blake's negative opinion about the mortal world, the world of reason is associated with his belief in the imaginative power of the 'Poetic Genius.' Intellect's origin, like energy, is divine. God is the Holy Ghost, the intellectual fountain. '... Imaginative Art & Science & all Intellectual Gifts' are the 'Gifts of the Holy Ghost' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 554).

What are all the Gifts of the Spirit but Mental Gifts?' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 562).

What is that Talent which it is a curse to hide? What are the Treasures of Heaven which are to lay up for ourselves, are they any other than Mental Studies and Performances? What are all the Gifts of the Gospel, are they not all Mental Gifts? Is God a Spirit who must be worshipped in Spirit & in Truth and are not the Gifts of the Spirit Every-thing to Man? (*Jerusalem, To the Christians*, PLATE 77, E 231).

Also:

He who despises & mocks a Mental Gift in another; calling it pride & selfishness & sin; mocks Jesus the giver of every Mental Gift, which always appear to the ignorance-loving Hypocrite, as Sins. but that which is a Sin in the sight of cruel Man, is not so in the sight of our kind God. (*Jerusalem, To the Christians*, PLATE 77, E 232).

The combination of energy and intellect as aesthetic components produces the 'Poetic Genius', the artist, the man of imagination whose utmost qualities are inspiration and vision. 'Poetic Genius' is poetic idea (s). Besides, intellect, like energy can not be

suppressed: 'He who Can be bound down is No Genius Genius cannot be Bound it may be Renderd Indignant & Outrageous Oppression makes the Wise Man Mad.' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 658). The similarity of Blake's constituent parts of his sublime is indicative of their equal significance. Although intellect may be imagination's origin, energy and intellect are equally important to form the 'Sublime of Imagination' without attributing prioritisation to any of them.

'Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have <curbed &> governd their Passions or have No Passions but because they have Cultivated their Understandings.' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 564). Passions as ideas interrelate with human understanding. Intellect is human understanding contrasted with 'Corporeal Understanding.'

If God is any thing he is Understanding He is the Influx from that into the Will ... Understanding or Thought is not natural to Man it is acquired by means of Suffering & Distress i.e. Experience. Will, Desire, Love, Rage, Envy, & all other Affections are Natural. but Understanding is Acquired (*Annotations to Swedenborg's Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* London, 1788, E 602).

Man receives light from Heaven with the aid of affections. This influx is divine inspiration which comes from Jesus, the spirit of truth, 'the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on, ...' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 35). Intellect, like energy is Jehovah 'he who dwells in flaming fire'. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 35). The indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the spirit in the human body is the manifestation of the divine in man whose internal conflict, which occurs

between energy and reason is no other than the spirit, flaming fire warring against restriction and social convention.

‘The terrible wars of intellect, which are fundamentally humane’¹, indicate the internal struggle of all the ambivalent psychic conflicts concerning man’s decisions and actions. The conflict between energy and reason is the fight of intellect against the reasoning power. Reason exercises judgement usually based on fallible criteria that aim to conventionality which generates repression. Reason wars against human genuineness but the liberated intellect is capable of resisting conformity to institutional and repressive laws. Reason demands predominance and establishment by solidifying its negativity, thus silencing all human expressive and creative powers. The internal fight against psychic division between beauty and ugliness is individual resistance to the reasoning power. Man aspires to partake to the infinite world of imagination and incorporate the prophetic vision. Reason obstructs this process because its objective is human enclosure and privation of individual freedom. Pure energy, and intellectual beauty define the artist. Blake’s great task is:

To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes / Of Man
inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity / Ever
expanding in the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 1, PLATE 5, ll.18-20, E 147).

Passions are not only ideas. They are a manifestation of beauty: ‘Passion & Expression is Beauty Itself -The Face that is Incapable of Passion and Expression is Deformity Itself’, also ‘Violent Passions Emit the Real Good & Perfect Tones’.

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 441.

(Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 653 and E 660). Blake attributes multiple characteristics to beauty; it is pure energy, intellect, duty, passions, and its position is the genitals. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he names 'The head Sublime', that is intellectual beauty, 'the heart Pathos', that is the feminine, and 'the genitals Beauty', that is pure energy. 'the hands & feet Proportion.' (E 37). The triad of beauty, which is masculine, intellectual and feminine, constitutes the human composition and its basis is the organs of procreation. The carnal conception of beauty is circumscribed by intellectuality. The multiplicities of the characteristics of the beautiful constitute its exuberance. The exuberant passions, the ideas, which signify individual particularity, are the origins of the artist's creative imagination.

De Luca also comments that intellect is associated with the passions:

In Blake's thought, intellect in its fine essence is always connected to the passions. It is through this connection that the Intellectual Powers discover themselves with that total cognition defined as *sublime* by its idealist theoreticians. ... (emphasis added). Intellect is the matrix of desire, and generates those passions that, when "uncurbed", are the Alpha and Omega of human happiness. In contradistinction to Kant's supersensible Reason, Blake's supreme faculty discovers itself not in the attainment of some cool, absolute rationality but in the infinitude of its desire. An intellect that fails to quicken Enthusiastic Passions - in short, to emanate as love - would be, for Blake, no intellect at all.¹

¹ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 28-9.

De Luca defines intellect as the matrix of desire which generates the exuberant, 'uncurbed' passions. Sexual energy is primarily intellectual. It is the source of imagination and creativity. 'Freud thought that even if intellect was originally derived from sexual energy, an 'irreconcilable antagonism' exists between them. Blake reverses the causal relationship.'¹ He considers the intellect the spring of passions, that is ideas, which become human actions. Intellect is the substance of desires, passions, ideas, the utmost manifestation of beauty. Exuberant, 'uncurbed' intellect is human imagination, the representation of the divine mind.

De Luca claims that 'Blake's letter to Butts about the Intellectual Powers is *only one instance* (emphasis added) of his habitual association of the sublime with a manifestation of intellect and a flight from the corporeal.'² His statement justifies intellect's function as the second aesthetic component on which Blake bases his prophetic vision. By stating that 'the Intellectual Powers are only one instance of Blake's association of the sublime and the intellect, a flight from the corporeal', he explains intellect as a component of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. Thus, spirit differentiates from matter and reason from wisdom, producing the apocalyptic sublime.

Energy and intellect are not antithetical forces. The antithesis exists in the division between the 'Corporeal Understanding', matter, and the 'Intellectual powers', spirit. Here, I refer to a fourfold division. Energy and intellect are in conflict because of reason's struggle for supremacy. The mental warfare is between the 'corporeal', which represents restriction and repression of will and desires' free expression, and

¹ George, Hume Diana. *Blake and Freud* (London: Cornell UP, 1980), 144.

² De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 27.

the 'intellectual' which is free spiritual expression. Passions 'uncurbed' are desires unobstructed by corporeal nature. 'Corporeal Understanding' thwarts 'Intellectual powers' to manifest themselves because man is entangled into the fallen reality. The union with the Supreme Being can be achieved by the exercise of 'Intellectual powers'. Intellect springs from and returns to its eternal origin, which is spirit, God. Immense, unobstructed expansion of 'Intellectual powers' is exuberance, beauty itself. The 'Sublime of Imagination' and intellectual beauty is spirit. It is the representation of the complete union of the human and divine natures.

2.3. Corporeal Understanding and Intellectual Powers

The differentiation between matter and spirit becomes explicit in this chapter which refers to the 'Corporeal Understanding' and 'Intellectual powers.' Although they are antithetical forces the utility and necessity of the corporeal in earthly existence does not render it the fundamental principle of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. 'Intellectual powers' are conducive to the formation of the major aesthetic category of Blake's vision.

The intention of this chapter is to elucidate the corporeal and intellectual concepts; also to highlight the priority which is given to the intellectual in relation to the corporeal. Spiritual ascent is achieved by the development of the intellectual powers. This statement is proved by the following arguments:

Although 'Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul ...' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34), dependence and adherence on the body generates the split between the corporeal and the intellectual. Mental and corporeal division is established due to reliance on the body, which in this case, is identified with selfhood and sin, memory and reasoning.

What is the corporeal? It is material existence which prioritizes the real and not the imaginative perception of the secular world. The corporeal is the vegetative eye's finite perception of the world; i.e. rationalization which brings about corruption and human degeneration. Naivety, foolishness and hypocrisy are the products of the corporal perspective. On the contrary 'Intellectual powers' represent eternal life. The 'Sublime of Imagination' reveals intellect's superiority to bodily existence.

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Apart from the body and mind split, the corporeal generates sexual division. But in spiritual existence humans are united. Blake's two concepts, the emanation and female will are the products of this division. Men and women are divided because they are trapped in corporeal command instead of mental signification. In order to eliminate this division Blake proposes human understanding and the absorption of the female into the male in intellectual unity. The union of individual emanations, intellects, achieves solidarity and brotherhood. In addition, mutual interchange promotes communication.

Corporeal understanding and intellectual powers associate with particular and general knowledge. Particular knowledge is the foundation of artistic creation while general knowledge that is 'single vision' is the result of corporeal command. This argument about particular knowledge relates to Art. Blake provides several correlations that concern particular knowledge and art. Notions as 'minute discrimination' and 'distinction of merit' prove that particular knowledge is the basis of artistic creation. This is disclosed in the execution of artworks. The artist who abandons general forms and rules and is inspired by imagination and vision contributes to art's progress.

In corporeal existence sublimity is impossible. This final argument also indicates that energy because of its impurity is not a sublime force. It must be refined and become beauty; an aesthetic category that is subordinate but also included in the 'Sublime of Imagination'. The conclusion is that Blake assumes that intellectual powers determine spiritual quest and complete his aesthetic vision. Corporeal command is not true understanding. True art's rule is powerful imaginative and intellectual perception.

I care not whether a Man is Good or Evil; all that I care
Is whether he is a Wise man or a Fool. Go! Put off Holiness
And put on Intellect: or my thunderous Hammer shall drive thee
To Wrath which thou condemnest: till thou obey my voice
(*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE 91, ll. 54-7, E 252).

Eternity's inhabitants are:

... walking up & down in Conversations concerning *Mental Delights* / Here they are no longer talking of what is Good & Evil or of what is Right or Wrong & puzzling themselves in Satans [Maze] Labyrinth But are Conversing with Eternal Realities as they Exist in the *Human Imagination* ... Jesus is surrounded by Beams of Glory in which are seen all around him Infants emanating from him these represent the Eternal Births of *Intellect* from the *divine Humanity* ... (emphasis added) (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 562).

Blake's vision of Jesus, the divine humanity, the 'Sublime of Imagination', is the personification of intellect. It represents the immense abilities of the human spirit if it is left free and unrestrained. As far as Blake's aesthetics are concerned, it signifies the incorporation, the fusion of the intellect into the 'Sublime of Imagination'. The Mental Delights of Eternity have annulled, extinguished, and resolved the conflict between the real world's corporeal needs and necessities and the ascending intellect's challenge. In the urizenic reality, which is 'energy enslav'd' and the 'fever of the human soul', intellect wars against the corporeal element, which is the gradual, transient '... & ever dying Vegetation & Corruption'. (*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE 90, l. 42, E 250). 'Element against Element, opposed in War / Not Mental, as the Wars of Eternity, but a Corporeal Strife.' (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 31 [34], ll. 24-5, E

130). Blake talks about 'Corporeal Friends' who 'are Spiritual Enemies' (*Milton: Book the First*, PLATE 4, l. 26, E 98), stating that brotherhood is a spiritual union and not a corporeal one. 'I have tried to make friends by corporeal gifts but have only Made enemies: I never made friends but by spiritual gifts; / By severe contentions of friendship & the burning fire of thought.' (*Jerusalem C4*, PLATE 91, ll. 15-7, E 251). That is intellectual gifts, which are the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

In Blake's vision 'corporeal command' and 'mental signification' are antithetical forces. They are reason and imagination. The corporeal relates to the sensual and vegetative world. It signifies transitory existence, death and finality. For Blake, aesthetically the corporeal element is of little importance because the natural world is a false perception. 'The Corporeal Vegetative Eye' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [PAGE 91], E 563) is not an accurate source of perception because it contributes to false understanding and stabilizes reality's lie: '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.' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 566). Corporeal command represents all kinds of personal and social restrictions, which obstruct imagination in the making of artworks.

The indeterminacy of the corporeal element, the unknown 'Dwelling Place' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 565) that Blake says, urges us to assume that it is the 'circumference' that restricts life. It is associated with naturalness, bodily existence, reason, death and finality. The corporeal is the enclosure, the inevitable limit. It partially expands and contracts human existence in the sense that the corporeal determines the human limits. It describes temporality and mortality, which Blake

identifies with Hell, when man is imprisoned in the corporeal desires: 'but hell is the being shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man for *all life is holy*.' (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, E 590). Possession and weary intellect is earthly hell. The corporeal as disease must be overcome by the 'Intellectual powers' in order to avoid the dangers of 'single vision.' 'Corporeal Understanding' is the cause of division, the dualism of body and spirit fighting against unity.

Blake envisions unified wholes in harmony where antithetical juxtapositions are creative. They consist of conflicts which take place in the human mind and soul. Human wisdom springs from the warfare of body and spirit. Experience is the human strife to balance and reconcile the bodily and mental existential claims. Experience '... is bought with the price / Of all that a man hath his house his wife his children Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy / And in the withered field where the farmer plows for bread in vain' (*The Four Zoas*, Vala Night the Second, PAGE 35 {II 387-405}, ll.12-5, E 325). 'Corporeal Understanding' is the reality where 'The gardens of wisdom are become a field of horrid graves / And on the bones I drop my tears & water them in vain' (*The Four Zoas*, Vala Night The Fifth, PAGE 63 {V 167-97}, ll.30-1, E 343).

The bones signify the corporeal, perishable human nature. Vanity and futility is attributed to reason, to the righteous 'Angels' of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, whereas wisdom is priceless and eternal: 'I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning' (PLATE 21, E 42). Men must strive 'Seeking

the Eternal which is always present to the wise ...' (*The Four Zoas*, Vala Night the Ninth Being The Last Judgment, (PAGE 121 {IX 162-204}, l.10, E 390). In the vanity of 'Worldly wisdom or demonstration by the senses ...', (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 603) 'Corporeal Understanding' contradicts the 'Intellectual powers', that is the human, divine wisdom. 'Intellectual powers' render existence worth living and promise eternity: 'Solomon says Vanity of Vanities all is Vanity & what can be Foolisher than this' (*Inscriptions*, E 686).

In reality, where the 'corporeal command' is the rule of survival, 'mental signification', that is intellect's ability to construct reality, opens a perspective of various controversial issues. Does the antithesis between corporeal limits and mental infinities signify reality's 'defeat' or conquest by the imperfect intellect? Blake's 'Most Sublime Poetry' has been defined as: 'Allegory addressd to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding ...' (*The Letters*, [To Thomas Butts], E 730). What does it mean for poetry to be hidden from corporeal signification? Corporeal command is limited perception, but how infinite can intellectual pursuit be within the boundaries of reality? The circumference is the imagination's limit and energy's restriction, the compulsory boundary of existence.

In Blake, the antithesis between the corporeal and the intellectual is constructive rather than polarized. It seems unlikely that intellect's power can 'defeat' reality. However, intellect can progress and promote the existing reality by imagining its probable and feasible improvement. Reality's 'defeat' is an aspiration and a future reversal of the rational, unsettling state of existence. Blake argues in favour of mental

or intellectual war to replace corporeal war. For example, at the end of *Jerusalem*, Los's conflict with the corporeal command has been resolved. It seems that the corporeal has been 'defeated', but does this mean that the intellect has 'defeated' reality, especially in any broader sense? If an individual allows him / herself to be governed by reason he / she is mired in a state of mind that Blake finds puzzling. If the individual readjusts his / her thinking or perspective about reality, then the whole world changes. Hell only looks like torment and insanity to those who do not understand it. If it is properly realized it is really a place of energy, liberation and creativity. Mental hell is the individual's inability to understand his / her internal conflicts, (corporeal desires and needs). Rationalising obsesses man; with consequence the proliferation of various outlets which cause human degeneration. The spread of the corporeal disease results in the loss of creativity. The only remedy is intellect's release and the redemptive power of imagination.

De Luca claims 'that we must understand the meaning of the word *sublime* in order to understand what Blake means by Allegory. In particular, why is a division in the audience or faculties of reception a necessary condition for sublimity? And what does concealment (the "altogether hidden") have to do with this division?'¹ The answer to this question is found in accepting energy and intellect as aesthetic constituents of Blake's sublime. The division (energy, pure and impure, intellectual beauty and reason) that Blake assumes is the presupposition for the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Intellectual beauty and pure energy are 'altogether hidden from the corporeal understanding' because the corporeal, the material, impure energy and reason which is degenerated intellect define esoteric, psychic and external hell.

¹ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 22.

As De Luca contends:

The Corporeal Understanding and the Intellectual Powers are faculties within any mind, and not designations for the minds of different (weak & strong, ignorant & wise, idiots and geniuses) persons. Blake strives to uncover the intellectual gifts that we all potentially possess. This is to be done by presenting to the mind artifacts that sift it, separating out the dull from the bright, the stony from the buoyant, so that what is imaginative and visionary within us can outwardly manifest itself.¹

Blake proposes the cultivation of understanding. Understanding is not the power of perception (Locke) but it defines human thoughts and affections. It is human understanding where the false presuppositions of negativity, which are inherent in the corporeal, are abolished by the illuminated intellect which brings about unity and promotes solidarity and brotherhood:

Understanding or Thought is not natural to Man it is acquired by means of Suffering & Distress i.e. Experience. Will, Desire, Love, Rage, Envy, & all other Affections are Natural. but Understanding is Acquired But Observe. without these is to be less than Man. Man could? never [have received] ?light from heaven ?without [aid of the] affections one would be ?limited to the ?five [? heavens &] ?hells [& live] in different periods of time (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 602).

When 'Corporeal Understanding' is impure energy, it is associated with foolishness.

'A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees'. (*The Marriage of Heaven and*

¹Ibid.

Hell, Proverbs of Hell, E 35). Fools perceive the natural world according to their corporeal needs. The wise man envisions nature by unfolding the creative imagination and contemplating on the external world artistically. The corporeal, philistine element of perception vanishes when wisdom intervenes and shapes surfaces and forms. For the man of imagination, every object of the external, natural world acquires artistic dimensions. Thus, his intellectual perspective is impregnated by vision and shapes reality imaginatively because: 'If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 14, E 39). This is the true dimension of vision, intellect's manifestation of infinity in the urizenic reality. The Fool does not 'persist in his folly ...' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Proverbs of Hell, E 36). Fools continue rationalising, thus perpetuating error. If they were acting otherwise, the result would be wisdom. 'Folly is the cloke of knavery'. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Proverbs of Hell, E 36). Truth is persistence in folly. Fools are tangled in various traps and religious snares. By obeying religious righteousness and following reason's dictates, error is solidified: 'He has observd the Golden Rule / Till hes become the Golden Fool' (*Satiric Verses and Epigrams*, E 508).

Idiots forget that they have feelings as human beings: 'I always take my judgment from a Fool / Because his judgment is so very Cool / Not prejudicd by feelings great or small / Amiable state he cannot feel at all' (*Satiric Verses and Epigrams*, Cromek Speaks, E 509). Blake's ugly man is the fool. In a fool's mind, where intellect is idle, existence is a material concern rather than spiritual: 'Where is the Existence Out of Mind or Thought Where is it but in the Mind of a Fool.' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 565). Also, 'Thought without affection makes a distinction between

Love & Wisdom as it does between body & Spirit.’ (*Annotations to Swedenborg’s Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 603). ‘Rather than be such a blind Human Fool / Id be an Ass a Hog a Worm a Chair a Stool.’ (*Satiric Verses and Epigrams*, E 514). Rather than being an object without feelings living in a plasmatic, false reality, ‘... the Greater Fool, the Greater Liar’, (*Satiric Verses and Epigrams*, E 515) intellect provides life’s essence. Fools are self-righteous and naive. The idiots’ ‘wisdom’ is hypocrisy. Blake’s concept of self-annihilation implies intellect’s release and consequently wisdom. His strong man is the man of imagination whose survival is evident by his actions: ‘the wise man falleth 7 times in a day & riseth again &’ (*Annotations to Lavater’s Aphorisms on Man*, London 1788, E 597).

Blake despises ignorance and considers it responsible for art’s condition:

(For Ignorance is Folly’s leeing nurse, / And love of Folly needs none other curse;) (*Miscellaneous Poems An Imitation of Spenser*, E 420).

Where Ignorance is bliss / Tis folly to be wise (*Inscriptions and Notes on or For Pictures*, E 677).

Genius has no Error it is Ignorance that is Error (*Annotations to The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 652).

Art’s condition was full of errors because of the laws of reasoning and the obedience to general rules that Reynolds prescribed as the pattern for ‘true’ art:

The Errors of a Wise Man make your Rule / Rather than the Perfections of a Fool. (*Satiric Verses and Epigrams*, E 510).

Let not that Nation where Less than Nobility is the Reward.
Pretend that Art is Encouraged by that Nation: Art is the First in
Intellectuals & Ought to be First in Nations (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 637).

Artists do not obey reason's rules: 'what has Reasoning to do with the Art of Painting?' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647). Learning is a false practice for the true artist. Imagination, inspiration and intellectual power is the artist's creative life:

The Increase of a State as of a Man is from Internal Improvement
or Intellectual Acquirement. Man is not Improved by the hurt of
another ... (Annotations to Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical
and Political*, London, 1798, Of Seditions and Troubles, E 625).

Imbecility and ignorance can be surpassed by inspiration and vision:

The Man who on Examining his own Mind finds nothing of
Inspiration ought not to dare to be an Artist he is a Fool. & a
Cunning Knave suited to the Purposes of Evil Demons
(Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647).

Intellect is associated with 'particular knowledge', which is the foundation of all art, in contrast to theories concerning generalised rules in art and science that could apply to all forms of perceptive and receptive knowledge: 'what is General Knowledge is there such a Thing [*Strictly Speaking*] All Knowledge is Particular' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 648) and is based on enthusiastic admiration: 'Enthusiastic Admiration is the first Principle of Knowledge & its last' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647). Particular knowledge in art deals with

details, which determine the artwork's value. Generalisation, which demonstrated the knowledge of the past, did not allow space for imagination to be exercised. Reason easily establishes rules when generalization is the basis of thought. Individuality, particular knowledge and particular intellect are the presuppositions for the actualisation of imagination's creative power.

Knowledge is promoted by individuality, which is personal intellect. General knowledge belongs to history, to the Age of Reason. In Blake's pro-capitalist era the detailed, particular knowledge is the fundamental principle of individuation. It is manifested in human, social activity: 'We can conceive nothing clearly in the abstract' maintained Hugh Blair in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles* (1783); all distinct ideas are formed upon particulars.'¹

Characters in all their branches is the alone Wise or Sensible Man & on this discrimination All Art is founded. (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 560).

But General Forms have their vitality in Particulars: & every Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus. (*Jerusalem*, C4, PLATE 91, ll. 29-30, E 251).

Generalizing in Every thing the Man would soon be a Fool but a Cunning Fool (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 649).

To Generalize is to be an Idiot To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit - General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess [*As do Fools that adore Things & ?ideas x x x of General Knowledge*] (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 641).

¹ Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination*. (London: Harvard UP, 1981), 144.

These are the Idiots chiefest arts / To blend & not define the Parts
(*Satiric Verses and Epigrams*, To English Connoisseurs, E 513).

General Principle[s] Again! Unless. You Consult. Particulars. You
Cannot. even Know or See Mich: Ang.^o or Rafael or any Thing
Else (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 645).

General knowledge prevents the 'Intellectual powers' from expressing mind's
creativity and genuineness. Distinction of merit, distinctness in particularity and
minute discrimination constitute Blake's concept of the artistic sublime:

Distinct General Form Cannot Exist Distinctness is Particular
Not General (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua
Reynolds*, E 649).

Minute Discrimination is not Accidental All Sublimity is
founded on Minute Discrimination (Annotations to *The Works
of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 643).

In corporeal existence sublimity is impossible. In spiritual existence the sublime is
revealed. Human intellect (as the embodiment of spirituality) represents the ideal
world. Eternity is intellect's destination. In the fallen world: 'Once Man was occupied
in intellectual pleasures & energies / But now my soul is harrowd with grief & fear &
love & desire / And now I hate & now I love & Intellect is no more' (*Jerusalem*, Ch.
3, PLATE 68, ll. 65-7, E 222). The concept of female will derives from the division,
the split of individual intellects being in contrariety. Man and woman entangled in
the net of Urizen experience love and desire in a false union: 'Two Wills they had;
Two Intellects: and not as in times of old.' (*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE 86, l. 61, E 245 also
in *The Four Zoas*, Vala Night the [Second], PAGE 30 {II159-214}, l. 48, E 320).

The division of intellects separates the 'innocent world' of unitary wills. Experience, reason's domain, solidifies the split intellects, and the female will presides in this division. In secular time and space where the 'weary intellect' declines into division of love and hate, true beauty vanishes: 'There is no time for any thing but the torments of love & desire / The Feminine & Masculine Shadows soft, mild & ever varying / In beauty: are Shadows now no more, but Rocks in Horeb' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 68, ll. 68-70, E 222). Blake's vision is intellectual union restored in eternity, which is imagination. The ideal union of man and woman comes from the mingling of intellects. In eternity the female does not exist as a separate entity, but is absorbed into the male. Sexual division is absent. Intellect is restored in the ideal world. Imaginative 'reality' refines distorted, divided natures by restoring the union of separated intellects. Intellects and emanations are one. Purity (energy) and wisdom (intellect) are unified:

When in Eternity Man converses with Man they enter / Into
each others Bosom (which are Universes of delight) / In mutual
interchange. and first their emanations meet / Surrounded by
their Children. If they embrace & comingle / The Human Four-
fold Forms mingle also in thunders of Intellect / But if the
Emanations mingle not; with storms & agitations / Of
earthquakes & consuming fires they roll apart in fear / For Man
cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations ... (*Jerusalem*,
C4, PLATE 88, ll. 7-10, E 246).

The ideal union is substantiated:

In new Expanses, creating exemplars of Memory and of
Intellect / Creating Space, Creating Time according to the

wonders Divine / Of Human Imagination, throughout all the
Three Regions immense / Of Childhood, Manhood & Old Age
[;] & the all tremendous unfathomable Non Ens ... (*Jerusalem*,
C4, PLATE 98, ll. 30-3, E 258).

Blake sees human difference as a mental condition and not a predetermined state of material circumstances. Spiritual quest is the most significant achievement in secular life. Exercise of reason is uniformity whereas differentiation is liberty. Multiplicity and expression of intellect is intellectual abundance and true Christianity. Plurality of opinions is universal participation in life, which promotes understanding and brotherhood. Intellect, thought and action in absolute freedom is beauty. The exercise of intellect engenders the artist.

Blake's ontological idealism is based on imagination, where the flawed reality of Urizen becomes eternity through intellect, the ultimate ideal reality. In establishing the corporeal understanding and intellectual powers as 'antitheses' in his visionary aesthetics, Blake concedes that total reliance on the body and its needs creates the illusion of life. The body is our reality that is death. In mundane existence the man of reason erects bodily kingdoms. Physical nourishment and subsistence on the body is the corporeal man's priority whose limits are predetermined. 'Intellectual powers' mean organisation of mental chaos, individual introspection, annulling of prearranged institutional limits, spiritual transformation and participation in eternal life. The exercise of intellectual abilities will bring about salvation. Reliance on the body means surrender to corporeal forces that limit existence and promote general identity obstructing personality's expression. Particularization obliterates uniformity. Blake makes clear that '... the Stupid are born with Faculties Equal to other Men Only they

have not Cultivated them because they thought it not worth the trouble'. (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 658).

True wit is intellect; false wit is corporeal dependence. It is reliance on memory and reasoning, which are 'Corporeal Understanding'. Intellect apprehends reality and transforms it accordingly. 'Intellectual powers' shape perception and attach true religious significance to the concept of understanding. As Easson states:

The mortal body and the finite perception it produces are the consequences of Urizen, the intellectual body of errors in perceiving and thinking, often institutionalised in the church. The illusion of life originates from the reliance on the body and its needs. Dependence on the body is living, thinking and believing according to the needs of the flesh. We erect kingdoms of the body on earth; we fear the death of the body since it is our reality.¹

Paley supports the view that 'it is not however, the human power to reason that Blake condemns, but an authoritarian attitude masking itself as Reason.'² Authority and 'Corporeal Understanding' generate from selfhood. The focus on authority is associated with Blake's concept of selfhood and its annihilation. Reason is self-centeredness, egotistical human perception and encourages an authoritative attitude towards life. Blake concedes that reason is the cause of negativity. Either as selfhood or authority, reason generates negativity.

¹ Easson, Parkhurst Kay and Easson Roger R. eds. *William Blake: The Book of Urizen* (London: Thames and Hudson 1974), 84.

² Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 252-3.

The identification of corporeal with selfhood and sin, as opposed to intellect, seems to be the essence of Blake's belief in human imagination.

Spiritual travel, a process of individual transformation, begins when the false perspectives of the adversary are recognised by the consciousness and embraced as the individual's own error. If the traveller answers, as does Milton's Satan "Which way I fly is Hell; myself is Hell," that is the natural state of man (impure energy), he finds a spiritual path. He acknowledges as does Blake's Milton "I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One! He is my Spectre!" (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 14 [15], ll. 30-1, E 108) and discovers Blake's essential teaching that hell is of the traveller's own making.¹

In conclusion Blake's 'Intellectual powers' provide the solution to the human predicament. Their exercise offers the vision of eternity whereas the corporeal command is identified with his 'negative sublime'. Men must strive towards the 'Sublime of Imagination' that is Jesus who is the embodiment of intellect. Beauty, which is a subordinate aesthetic category to the sublime, is thus incorporated in it. Pure energy and intellectual beauty constitute Jesus's secular identity and promise eternity. Both values are the aspiration of every human being who envisions the world imaginatively without being deluded and misled by religious and institutionalised beliefs that aim at life's restraint and seclusion.

¹ Easson, Parkhurst Kay and Easson Roger R. eds. *William Blake: The Book of Urizen*. (London: Thames and Hudson 1979), 70-1.

Chapter 3

3.1 The Ancient Britons

The myth of *The Ancient Britons* represents Blake's aesthetic vision of the real world. His aestheticism depends on divine inspiration. In the myth, he discusses the three aesthetic categories of the sublime, beautiful and ugly. These establish his theory of art, which is based on imagination. The three aesthetic categories that Blake forms from energy and intellect constitute his social and cultural perception of reality and inspire his prophetic vision. The myth also concerns art and the role of the artist in life. Art is imagination and communication, and the artist is the inhabitant of 'that happy country of Eden.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543). The artist is inspired by creative imagination whose aesthetic quest starts from divine inspiration and ends in eternity. The three classes of men, the Elect, the Redeemed and the Reprobate, the sublime, beautiful and ugly are restored to their true forms and their qualities are reinstated in infinity.

The intention of this chapter is to provide the answers that concern Blake's aesthetics and elucidate the aesthetic categories of the sublime, beautiful and ugly. The 'Sublime of Imagination', Blake's major aesthetic category, relates to the 'Strong man' of *The Ancient Britons*. In addition, beauty is a distinct aesthetic category essential and supplementary to the formation of the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Jesus, the archetype of Blake's 'Strong man', is the possessor of exuberant beauty which is pure sexual energy, and intellectuality. Beauty is incorporated and diffused in the sublime. Blake distinguishes the three major categories of the sublime beautiful and ugly by their actions which decide the Man. As he claims: 'The Beautiful Man acts from duty, ...'

whereas 'The strong Man acts from conscious superiority, ...' and 'The Ugly Man acts from love of carnage, ...' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545). *The Ancient Britons*, is the lost painting of the *DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE*, &C. &C. Its subsequent explanation, NUMBER V, confirms Blake's main aesthetic preoccupation. Starting from the conviction that antiquity and classical art provided obsolete models for emulation he concluded that since the mathematic form is not art, it should not be the rule of the English eighteenth century art. Gothic is the living form and represents the union of the secular and divine worlds. The gothic artistic style is the incarnated Jesus, the 'Sublime of Imagination', who is Blake's aesthetic apex, the supreme category of his vision.

Another critical idea in the chapter is that the sublime and beautiful are not contraries, but beauty is an aesthetic category which is incorporated in the sublime. This contention is supported by the argument that beauty, and intellectuality identify. Moreover, beauty is the power, 'the energizer' of the true artist. Who is the human sublime? He is the man who acts from conscious superiority according to the divine decrees and an inspired prophetic mind. Who is the Beautiful man? He is the Man of duty. Lastly, the Ugly man is the man of war, aggressive, he is not an artist, and acts from love of carnage, approaching to the beast in features and form, with a unique characteristic, that is the incapacity of intellect. It is obvious that from the time of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where Blake attributed aesthetic qualities to bodily parts, his vision has been progressed and completed. His contention that the genitals are the locus of beauty justifies its genesis and identification with pure energy. *The Ancient Britons* is a myth, which is based on Jesus the Imagination, where the sublime, beautiful, and ugly are forms indicative of gradations of divine influx in

every individual. The myth is important because it explicitly describes, defines and distinguishes the three aesthetic categories that schematise the secular and eternal human existence.

Undoubtedly, Blake's aesthetic vision presents many difficulties in interpretation. In my opinion the sublime is not a mere value that Blake uses inartistically. His aestheticism is secular and aspiring to perfection. De Luca's argument about the sublime as a fallen state is a matter of reconsideration, since I accept that Blake's secular sublime is a redeemable state of being. De Luca focuses on the relationship between male and female where he detects the source of 'a deprived sublime, petrified & fallen.' The secular sublime, which describes the fallen human state suggests the masculine and feminine experience of the Fall. Consequently, the human situation appears doomed and irredeemable. If the sublime is the masculine and pathos the female forces, Blake assumes that the inevitability of reasoning and suppression of desire, whose origin is energy, brings about their separation and incompleteness. In a non-communicative intercourse the sublime and the beautiful are apart. These are the fallen state's consequences. The loss of innocence is inevitable but the human situation is a redeemable state. In eternity, the sublime and pathos are joined in an intellectual androgynous form. This theoretical idea is the core of the chapter because Blake's aesthetic theory is built upon it. The myth of *The Ancient Britons* reveals the basis of his visionary aesthetics bringing together the two traditionally separated realms of earthly and eternal life. Actually, Blake's realism does not overlap his idealism. He is optimistic despite reason's predominance. The artist is the model of human salvation. Imagination is the redemptive force, 'exuberance is beauty', and inability to feel is the ugly man.

Another interesting argument, which needs explanation, concerns De Luca's question about the fourth form of the human division that was 'like the Son of God.' Taking into consideration that the threefold is the sexual human situation and the fourfold the ideal humanity, Blake's fourth form, who according to Damon is Los, represents the imaginative structure of the real world. This argument hints at Jesus's perfection that is the infusion of the beautiful into the sublime. It also indicates human completeness through imaginary perception, the fourfold vision.

The last argument of the chapter refers to the three classes of men, the elect, redeemed and reprobate that juxtapose to the sublime, beautiful and ugly. All human forms are redeemable states, not static but progressive even if their fulfilment on earth is improbable. As the masculine and feminine are not contraries but supplementary forces, so the sublime and pathos are integrated entities.

In conclusion, Blake's myth of *The Ancient Britons* provides explanations about his aesthetically perceived secular and eternal worlds. The myth refers to the distinction between the three aesthetic categories and it also reveals his aesthetic philosophy and vision. True artist is the man of imagination, the poetic genius and the visionary aesthete.

Apart from the myth of *The Ancient Britons*, another dimension of beauty is provided in *The Book of Thel* where Blake thoroughly examines the beauty of women. The problem of female beauty is an ethical subject. Femininity and ethics is the central issue of the following chapter. Blake's female types, mostly Thel, Oothoon, Vala and Jerusalem are variations of female beauty.

Blake had an antipathy towards the classical world because of its dependence on the 'Mathematic Form.' (*On Virgil*, E 270). According to his views, antiquity was based on reason and promoted a restricted perception of the world:

It has been said to the Artist, take the Apollo for the model of your beautiful Man and the Hercules for your strong Man, and the Dancing Fawn for your Ugly Man. Now he comes to his trial. He knows that what he does is not inferior to the grandest Antiques. Superior they cannot be, for human power cannot go beyond either what he does, or what they have done, *it is the gift of God, it is inspiration and vision.* (emphasis added) He had resolved to emulate those [P 46] precious remains of antiquity, he has done so and the result you behold; his ideas of strength and beauty have not been greatly different. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 544).

In Romanticism the existing religious Christian system was the continuation of a theological system, which depended on a urizenic God of revenge and retribution. The 'Gothic is Living Form', (*On Virgil*, E 270) which originates in the Hebrew prophetic tradition, is what Blake describes in *The Ancient Britons*. The myth is based on the Christian truth of imagination, his sublime, the 'Strong man' and 'the Human Form Divine.' His ideas about art are best explained in the Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*. But in the myth of *The Ancient Britons* he reveals his aesthetic and cultural vision of the world by describing human types, as he perceives them. The aesthetic categories of the sublime, the pathetic and the ugly, to which he attributes individual and social qualities, constitute his conception of reality:

The three general classes of men who are represented by the most Beautiful, the most Strong, and the most Ugly, could not be represented by ... the Ancient Britons; ... They were overwhelmed by brutal arms all but a small remnant; Strength, Beauty, and Ugliness escaped the wreck, and remain for ever unsubdued, age after age. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 542) ... The Strong man represents the human sublime. The Beautiful man represents the human pathetic, which was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. The Ugly man represents the human reason. They were originally one man, who was fourfold; he was self-divided, and [P 42] his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. How he became divided is a subject of great sublimity and pathos. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543).

The myth of *The Ancient Britons* concerns the transformation of Blake's contemporary world, which in his opinion was drained of imagination and vision. It represents the poet's aspiration to an imaginative world, which is artistic and based on human entities. These characters being aesthetic categories constitute reality and shape culture. The amount of their imagination, which is the creative force of their aesthetic qualities, differentiates them in three major categories concerning their human identities.

The myth is an aesthetic vision, which consists of the man of imagination, the beautiful man who represents the human pathetic (who was divided in the wars of Eden into male and female) and the ugly man who represents the human reason. The 'Strong man', the man of imagination, represents the human sublime, which identifies with 'the Human Form Divine.' The identification of the 'Sublime of Imagination', the incarnated Jesus with the 'Strong man' indicates the union of the

secular and the eternal worlds. This union is attained by the redemptive power of imagination, which is the link between the two traditionally separated worlds of existence: 'hell', the earthly world and heaven, the infinite world of eternity. Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' unites reality and eternity. Therefore, imagination constitutes the only sublime category in his art and poetry.

Before I attempt an analysis of the myth of *The Ancient Britons*, I will refer to some critical views that need clarification, as there are some variations that appear in Blake's explanation of his artistic perception of reality. The following excerpt from De Luca's analysis of the myth proves the difficulty that Blake's aesthetics present in defining and attributing the proper terminology to explain his aesthetics. As De Luca claims:

We are uneasily aware the "human sublime" offered to us here (in *The Ancient Britons*) is something different from notions of the sublime discussed earlier in this chapter, as deduced from the letter to Butts or the annotations to Reynolds. In those instances, the sublime appears to be a term for an absolute height of *value* toward which all art must tend; here, it merely connotes one *kind* of *aesthetic value* among others, existing on a par with other competing *values*, such as those of the *beautiful* and the *pathetic*.¹ (emphasis added).

The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the supreme aesthetic category of Blake's aesthetic vision. It is a religious term, which concerns the Christian truth of imagination and the idea of Jesus. As I shall argue in the process, Blake is explicit about his

¹ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 46.

aesthetic, artistic vision, and there is no ambivalence about the categories of the sublime, beautiful and ugly and what his visionary, artistic mission should be.

Although De Luca starts by defining the sublime, the beautiful - pathetic and the ugly as aesthetic categories¹ he assumes that the beautiful and the pathetic are aesthetic values, thus diminishing their representational status. Weiskel explicitly states that the sublime is an aesthetic category and not an aesthetic value.² Blake's sublime is the major aesthetic category of his vision and not a mere, diffused and dispersed aesthetic value, which insignificantly permeates all his writings. The reason for this confusion is because Blake discusses human forms in connection with his art in order to substantiate the social and cultural reality that he envisages. Blake establishes the concepts of the sublime, the strong man, the beautiful, the human pathetic and the ugly, the human reason based on religious and aesthetic origins. He is clear about these types of men, their representation and demeanour. However, De Luca also states:

Blake displays a perfect conversance with the terminology of aesthetic categorisation in his day. The categories are listed, for example, with anatomical seats of origin, in this Proverb of Hell:

"The Head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty...

¹ The discussion of the Ancient Britons strangely converts a myth of the origins of history into an allegory of the genesis of aesthetic categories; the myth not only projects "sublimity and pathos", it is *about* sublimity and pathos. ... Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 42. De Luca Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

² Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), 66. More information about the meaning of the aesthetic value is given by Hospers, John in *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics*. (London: Collier-Macmillan 1969), 11-3. Also see: Meynell, Hugo A. *The Nature of Aesthetic Value*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1986), 1.

(*Marriage* 10.1). Later in his career he develops a strong preoccupation with these *categories*, particularly the *two contraries*, *the sublime* and *the pathetic* (often subsumed in contemporary accounts by the beautiful). (emphasis added). Thus we may infer from some cancelled lines of the frontispiece to *Jerusalem* that he originally intended to make the separation of sublimity from pathos the very argument of his great poetic *summa*.¹

At another point he asserts:

In his account of the Ancient Britons, Blake categorizes these principles, yet tends to *blur* the distinctions between them. Among the Ancient Britons there are, after all, no separate females; all three are men.² (emphasis added).

In Blake's artistic vision the sublime and the beautiful, pathetic are not contraries. They are different aesthetic categories but they co-operate to form his aesthetics. Actually, the beautiful is incorporated into the sublime. This argument relates to the distinction between pure and impure energy. The notion of impure energy is associated with 'The Beauty that is annexed and appended to folly, is a lamentable accident and error of the mortal and perishing life; it does but seldom happen; but with this unnatural mixture the sublime Artist can have nothing to do.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 544). This kind of beauty correlates with impure energy and defines the false artist. Thus, Blake distinguishes the false and true artist. The distinction is based on beauty and defines the human pathetic. The sublime artist, the 'Strong man' produces artworks depended on beauty. Conversely, the false artist lacks

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 42. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

² *Ibid.*, 44.

beauty and his work is unimaginative and delusive. It is 'A pretence of Art, to destroy Art.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 38 [43], l. 35, E 185).

The Beauty proper for sublime art, is lineaments, or forms and features that are capable of being the receptacles of intellect; accordingly the Painter has given in his beautiful man, his own idea of intellectual Beauty. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 544).

Blake equates intellectual beauty to pure energy. Beauty and intellectuality are identical. Another interesting point is that he describes his 'Strong man', the human sublime, 'as a receptacle of Wisdom, a sublime energizer'. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545). This does not mean that energy is sublime. Beauty supplies the 'Strong man' with the power to become vigorously active. The man of imagination is an artist, and the one who activates energy through beauty. Paley asserted that: 'Regenerated by energy, life becomes a mode of art, an idea which Blake later reiterates in calling the Strong Man of his *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809) 'a sublime energizer.''¹ This idea needs clarification, in the sense that beauty is neither an inferior or identical category to the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Although beauty is subordinate to the 'Sublime of Imagination' it is included in it. The beautiful does not comprise the sublime. Along with the aesthetic category of the ugly, the sublime and the beautiful produce Blake's visionary aesthetics.

The 'Strong man', the man of imagination, possesses wisdom. Wisdom cannot exist without imagination because imagination helps humans to unmask reality. Wisdom is attributed to the sublime whereas intellectual beauty belongs to 'The Beauty

¹ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 24.

proper for sublime art, ...' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 544). Consequently, the distinction between the two categories of the sublime and beautiful is explicit and Blake does not confuse them. On the other hand, 'Strength consists in accumulation of power to the principal seat, and from thence a regular gradation and subordination; strength is compactness, not extent nor bulk.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545). Blake's reference to compactness signifies his differentiation from the general artistic rules of his era that concerned size (extent and bulk). Concentration, composition, small but well-proportioned artistic work is the evidence of strength in creation and execution of artworks. This reference mostly concerns art and not human nature. According to De Luca:

Strength is, ..., a conventional attribute of the Burkean sublime, but here [*The Ancient Britons*] it is difficult to distinguish from Beauty; if one is a "receptacle of intellect," the other is a "receptacle of Wisdom." ... Beauty is thus defined in terms that belong properly to the sublime ("the head Sublime"), and the human sublime is described in terms traditionally proper to beauty. They interpenetrate in a latently erotic union, as compact strength energizes itself within a receptacle of lineaments - lineaments of gratified desire, perhaps.¹

These claims are not clear because the aesthetic categories of the sublime and beautiful are differentiated through energy and intellect and become constituents of Blake's sublime. Therefore, the explanation that beauty is a subordinate but integrated category to the 'Sublime of Imagination' justifies De Luca's argument about its distinction from the sublime. Beauty dissociates from impurity and is a

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 44. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

receptacle of intellect. Otherwise it degrades to ugliness. Reason and impurity define the ugly, uninspired man.

The three aesthetic categories that concern human types differ according to their acts: 'The most sublime act is to set another before you.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Proverbs of Hell, PLATE 7, E 36). Also:

The strong Man acts from conscious superiority, and marches on in fearless dependence on the divine decrees, raging with inspirations of a prophetic mind. The Beautiful Man acts from duty, and anxious solicitude for the fates of those for whom he combats. The Ugly Man acts from love of carnage, and delight in the savage barbarities of war, rushing with sportive precipitation into the very teeth of the affrighted enemy. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 544) ... the Artist has imagined his Ugly man; one [P 48] approaching to the beast in features and form, ... the stamina of his make, comparatively little, ... and every thing tending toward what is *truly Ugly; the incapability of intellect*. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 544-5) (emphasis added).

The description of the acts of humans who possess the qualities of the three aesthetic categories constitutes Blake's social and cultural reality. The 'Strong man' is the human imagination. Blake refers to the divine origin of his spiritual superiority and prophetic mind. '... Inspiration, and cannot be surpassed; it is perfect and eternal.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 544). Jesus is the strong man's archetype. Wisdom defines his intellect; imagination and inspiration are his earthly allies against evil.

As far as beauty is concerned, Blake ascribes to it another dimension, which uniquely defines the beautiful human form. Pure energy is beauty, the beautiful man and the human pathetic are identical, and human beauty is duty. In *The Ancient Britons*, Blake accepts different versions of beauty. His aesthetic vision is more concrete here than it was in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where he attributes aesthetic categories to parts of the human body: 'The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet Proportion.' (PLATE 10, E 37). In this version, the sublime is the man, the heart is the woman, and beauty is located in the genitals. This ideal conception of human nature is completed in *The Ancient Britons* where the sublime, beautiful and ugly acquire significant qualities, which define the human aesthetic.

The sublime man is the intellectual mind. His quality is superior because of the spiritual power of imagination, which defines character types. Blake never refers to woman specifically as sublime. This aesthetic category is Jesus, imagination incarnated. The beautiful man, who acts from duty, is the man who is obliged to act from moral, legal or religious motives. In society he is bound and obliged to be dutiful to a set of laws that are not imposed on him externally, but derive from personal, internal, conscious rules of 'anxious solicitude for the fates of those for whom he combats'. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545). Accordingly, his relation to the external world is a constructive entanglement in society and his otherness is generated by pure energy. 'The Ugly Man', the man of reason, the false man, is an aggressive man whose otherness is 'the affrighted enemy', (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545) who confronts 'by rushing with sportive precipitation into the very teeth' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545) of social reality. The reason for acting in such a way is the

sense of his inferiority due to deprivation of creative imagination. He is truly ugly because of 'the incapability of intellect.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545). The incapability of intellect is reason and impure energy.

It could be argued that the myth of *The Ancient Britons* is not easily explicable because it presents certain difficulties that need further elaboration. For example, De Luca talks extensively about the artistic presentation of the sublime as a fallen state of existence. Although the myth sufficiently explains Blake's aesthetic perception of reality, it represents a fallen state of being in a non-communicative intercourse. Non-communicative intercourse means urizenic perception and 'Corporeal Understanding.' As De Luca contends:

Blake's painting of the ancient Britons thus depicts gradations of fallenness; some residues of the fall have separated farther from the lineaments of intellect and gratified desire than others, but all are separate and diminished to some degree. It is only a matter of time before the Strong man, the human sublime, becomes no more than the brawny cavern-dwelling "*strong Urthona*" (*Europe* 3.10) depicted in the early Lambeth books, or the raging, despairing, indefinitely formed Tharmas "Parent *power* darkning in the West." (*Four Zoas* 4.6). These are mock strengths and mock powers - for the human sublime, when it is cut off from pathos, or the love of intellect for form, becomes an elaborate masquerade for despair.¹

Actually, the myth starts with a destructive war 'In the last battle of King Arthur' where 'only Three Britons escaped.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 542).

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 45. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

... these were the Strongest Man, the Beautifullest Man, and the Ugliest Man; these three marched through the field unsubdued, as Gods, and the Sun of Britain s[e]t, but *shall arise again* with tenfold splendor when Arthur shall awake from sleep, and resume his dominion over earth and ocean. (emphasis added). (*The Ancient Britons*, E 542). ... They were originally one man, who was fourfold; he was self-divided, and [P 42] his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543).

The state of the fall that Blake describes here is a redeemable vision of ideal forms that can be actuated in reality by energy's release and intellect's contribution to the creation of art:

All these things are written in Eden. The artist is an inhabitant of that happy country; and if everything goes on as it has begun, the world of vegetation and generation *may expect to be opened again to Heaven, through Eden*, as it was in the beginning. (emphasis added) (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543).

It cannot be accepted that the human forms, as Blake describes them, represent mock aesthetic categories in reality. Conversely, the fallen human aesthetic form anticipates redemption through imagination. The Artist is the mediator between Eden and reality. His role is to restore these fallen forms (De Luca's mock strengths and mock powers) to their original prelapsarian state. The fourfold man's division and loss of his completeness explain the Fall. After the fourfold man's self-division, which is 'a subject of great sublimity and pathos', 'his real humanity was slain on the stems of generation', (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543) (that is due to reason and materialism he (man) lost his innocence and he entered the world of

experience) 'and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543).

This argument about the formation of the 'Sublime of Imagination' is problematic because, as I have argued the 'Sublime of Imagination', the human sublime and the 'Strong man' are one with Jesus. Therefore, the question is: if the 'Sublime of Imagination' is Jesus, why is the form of the fourth that was 'like the Son of God' a separate category, which defines and divides the divine from the real world? De Luca posits three significant questions on the matter:

If the sublime, the beautiful, and the pathetic are one, why establish them as separate personifications in the first place? And why attach these figures to a myth that discovers them to be already diminished forces? If the Strong man is the human sublime, who is this fourth, who, according to the myth, vanished "In the last Battle of King Arthur [when] only Three Britons escaped" (Erdman, 542)? Indeed, who is the "one man" whose "real humanity" was slain? The "human" of the terms "human sublime", strength and "human pathetic", appears to be something less than "real humanity", just as three is an inescapable reduction of four.¹

The reason that Blake establishes these three aesthetic categories confirms the threefold vision: 'The Sexual is Threefold: the Human is Fourfold.' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 4, l.5, E 97). The threefold vision is 'Corporeal Understanding.' Human reality is circumscribed by the threefold. In this sense the three aesthetic categories are limited and finite due to materialism and reason. Blake's three

¹ Ibid., 44.

aesthetic categories are established into the 'wirey bounding line', (*A Descriptive Catalogue*, NUMBER XV, E 550) the limit of mortality, but I cannot accept that they are fallen categories and represent degraded forms in reality. Our partial and exclusive worldly perspective renders them fallen, but they are prospective infinite forms in eternity. The form of the fourth, the totally divine part in the fourfold man, is the ideal concept of the aesthete's perception of divinity. Damon assumes that the form of the fourth is Los.¹ On earth, Los incarnates Jesus. 'The prophet of eternity' is the creative imagination. The form of the fourth substantiates the fourfold vision which is the ideal conception of the boundless earthly world. The human wholeness of the fourfold man is only achieved by the redemptive power of imagination.

The aesthetic categories of the sublime, beautiful and ugly are human forms that exist on earth, in the real world. Although they are diminished and fallen forces due to evil they are potentially redeemable forms and personifications of genuine human types. They are perfect forms in eternity. Blake seeks transcendence and human perfection by creating three aesthetic categories, which can be actuated in human life. The God's-eye perspective is within the capability of the intellectual mind, the 'Strong man.' But mortality, which defines the human limits, renders these categories imperfect forms, making the vision of human totality unattainable. The fourfold divided humanity is constituted by the 'most Beautiful, the most Strong, and the most Ugly, the three general classes of man'. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 542). These types were ideal forms whose humanity was 'slain on the stems of generation.' Since then, their secular forms are debased. If the 'Strong man', (the man of imagination, the human sublime) represents a degraded class, the form of the

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 209 and 247.

Fourth who 'was like the Son of God' is the divine ideal. The explanation that can be given here about 'the form of the fourth' is that although Blake talks about human aesthetic types, he includes in the division of the fourfold man a divine part that 'was like the Son of God' to which all the other degraded parts must aspire. This part concerns the creative imagination. Los incarnates imagination, the divine ideal.

Blake establishes an aesthetic, secular vision of potentially redeemable 'classes of men', which extends to eternity. Faith in the vision and its cultural actualisation will substantiate his secular aestheticism. The 'Strong man' is the man of imagination and 'The Beautiful man' is dutiful. Their ideal is Jesus whereas the Ugly man 'who represents the human reason' is the enemy of the 'Sublime of Imagination.' He seeks the subversion of the prophetic vision because of his faith in the fallen reality.

De Luca explains Blake's myth literally and not aesthetically and culturally. Blake's aesthetic categories represent 'the Human Form Divine.' De Luca considers Blake's categories, particularly the sublime and the beautiful, as fallen, separated forms, which are involved in a non-communicative intercourse in fallen existence. As he states:

This latter stage of separation is presented in two important passages from *Jerusalem*, ... His sublime & Pathos become Two Rocks fixd in the Earth / His Reason his Spectrous Power, covers them above Jerusalem his Emanation is a Stone laying beneath (1.4-6). ... no more the Masculine mingles / With the Feminine, but the sublime is shut out from

the Pathos / In howling torment, to build stone walls of separation, compelling / The Pathos, to weave curtains of hiding secrecy from the torment. (90.10-13)¹

De Luca contends that in the eighteenth century the sublime and the beautiful that is the pathetic were not mixed aesthetic categories:

Throughout the eighteenth century, ideas of the beautiful and the pathetic tend to separate out from the idea of the sublime.² ... Late in the eighteenth century the sublime and the pathetic have become quite distinct, as Johnson's comment on the Metaphysical poets serves to indicate: "Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetick". ... Burke rejects proportion as the source of beauty and locates it instead in the small, the physically unthreatening, the smooth, and the gently curvaceous, all essentially female attributes that, ... comprise "the physical cause of love". The pathetic and the beautiful thus converge upon a common eroticized femininity.³

Blake might have been familiar with the idea of separation of the two significant aesthetic categories but he attributes to his aesthetic characters divine origin and eternal orientation. He also divorces proportion from beauty. He locates beauty in the genitals (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 37), proving the origin of energy and the generation of beauty from the male and female organs of reproduction. He does not define beauty as a specifically feminine quality and does not attribute it only to one sex. Both sexes are beautiful, pure energy is their sublime force, and

¹ Ibid., 45.

² De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 46.

³ Ibid.

beauty, in the myth of *The Ancient Britons*, is defined as duty. All these correlations determine the communicative intercourse through pure energy's release. 'Francis Ferguson has noted Burke's oddly enervating conception about sexual arousal and the effects of beauty.'¹ However, it is doubtful if Blake was influenced by such ideas when he stated: 'the genitals Beauty.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 10, E 37). As De Luca assumes:

Blake perpetuates the identification of the contraries ("the human *sublime*" and "the human pathetic"), as masculine and feminine principles.² ... The Beautiful man (who represents the human pathetic) was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. In the fall this Ancient Briton evolves a female double. Blake's type of the human Pathetic, is, before an unfortunate postlapsarian division into sexes, a Beautiful *man*.³

He considers that the differentiation of the Sublime (Masculine) and Pathos (Feminine) describes a *deprived* sublime, one that is *petrified* and, in short, *fallen*.⁴

... the "stone walls of separation" and the curtain of secrecy that the sublime and the pathos, place before one another look suspiciously like those thwartings, as barriers, or obscurities that figure so largely in eighteenth-century accounts of the sublime as a mode of deprivation - a view found in its most rationalist form in Burke. A sublime of deprivation becomes automatically a sublime that puts itself in *reason's spectrous*

¹ Wu, Duncan ed. *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 46. See: De Luca, Vincent Arthur. "Blake's Concept of the Sublime."

² *Ibid.*, 43

³ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 50.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

power, for it requires that we reason the idea of strength or power into being through negative tokens - withdrawals, resistances, incomplete disclosures. But what has really withdrawn is not the “great” (as Addison called the sublime experience), but rather something so deeply hidden that its absence is unremarked because its appeal is buried (like the Emanation Jerusalem “laying beneath”) or forgotten. The mind’s deep quest is for receptacles of intellect, the total gratification of desire in definite, permanent form.¹ (emphasis added).

De Luca considers Blake’s aesthetic categories as fallen forms in human reality, where the sublime and the beautiful function in separate fields of reference. He claims that ‘The full language of Eros is the masculine sublime’² and that ‘In the fall, one forgets what one loves - even though the desire for it remains.’³ He also assumes that Blake’s three fallen aesthetic categories that is the Sublime (Strength), Beauty (Struggle) and Reason (Contest) ‘are all necessary to break down conventional modes of understanding.’⁴

The conventionality of understanding is associated with the communicative or not intercourse between the sublime and pathos. Non-communicative intercourse is a product of reason. In consequence, when Blake describes the non-communicative intercourse where ‘no more the Masculine mingles / With the Feminine’, (*Jerusalem*, C4, PLATE 90, ll.10-1, E 249) and between them there are ‘stone walls of separation’, (*Jerusalem*: C4, PLATE 90, l.12, E 249) he means that this situation

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., 50.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 51.

is the result of reasoning and distortion, a twisting, or even a perversion of desire. Desire has been misdirected because 'the human reason has advanced to sovereignty over the other faculties.'¹ De Luca believes that 'desires are not quelled, but simply shifted elsewhere'² but he does not specify the locus of these desires.

He asserts that for Blake, the masculine and the feminine experience of the Fall 'does not refer of course, to actual men and women'.³ He accepts that Blake refers to the 'masculine and feminine principles *within the self*, which comprise the love dialogue between creative intellect and formal lineaments. (emphasis added). These have become sundered so that love is sought in one place and transcendence or the sublime in another, in a masculinist framework divorced from the fulfilment of erotic desire.'⁴

The separation of the emanation appears in several poems and follows the same pattern, but the association of the sublime with the masculine and pathos with the feminine gives it an interesting twist. If it could be accepted that the sublime is the masculine and pathos (beauty) represents the feminine, why can it not be argued that Blake perhaps includes male and female forms to describe the separation of these aesthetic categories? When 'the Sublime is shut out from the Pathos' (*Jerusalem*: C4, PLATE 90, l. 11, E 249) 'compelling it, to weave curtains of hiding secresy from the torment' (*Jerusalem*: C4, PLATE 90, l. 13, E 249) Blake does not concede that this situation is the result of fallen existent forms, but assumes that the

¹ Ibid., 49.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 49-50.

necessity of co-existence establishes and perpetuates the inevitability of reasoning by suppressing or forgetting desire whose origin is energy. '... the restrainer or reason usurps' the place of desire, '... And being restrained it ... becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 5, E 34). Therefore, 'the doors of perception' (PLATE 14, E 39) are blurred, man has distanced himself from infinity, and 'has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.' (PLATE 14, E 34).

Suppression of desire is accumulated and promotes enclosure and restriction. The sublime and pathos are disintegrating and separating. The mutual expression and fulfilment of desire can break the 'stone walls of separation' and rip 'the curtains of hiding secrecy from the torment'. Blake does not seem particularly optimistic on the latter, but he believes in its effectuality and wishes its actualisation and realization. Oothoon's decisiveness and determination to prioritise life instead of death indicates his ultimate belief in erotic truth, which derives from energy's release and desire's fulfilment.

De Luca views this fulfilment in eternity where 'In the Edenic state, the sublime and the pathetic presumably disappear as separate modes of aesthetic experience and reappear joined in an intellectual androgynous form neither male nor female.'¹ The integration in eternity, of the sublime and the beautiful in an intellectual androgynous entity is the perfect form of their union. In eternity, there is no sexual division. Sex is only one and it is masculine (sublime), clothed by his feminine emanation, beauty, (pathos). Jesus is the personification of the union of the sublime

¹Ibid., 51.

and beautiful on earth. The ideal form and perfect aesthetic experience is conceived as the total incorporation of the sublime and beautiful. If De Luca's assertion is accurate, could it be accepted that there are two different separate realms of aesthetic experience, the domain of the secular fallen forms and their ideal essence in eternity?

The total assimilation of the beautiful into the sublime is the result of the fulfilment of desire, which establishes communicative intercourse. In reality, where desire usually remains ungratified or is 'false desire,' and 'weary lust,' (*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, PLATE 5, l.27, l.23, E 49), human interaction is based on 'spiritual Hate, from which springs Sexual Love as iron chains.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 54, l.12, E 203). Repression, frustration and rage result in war and disintegration, establishing 'morality', guilt and shame as the basis of the social edifice.

Non-communicative intercourse is the outcome of a social reality whose members interact and interchange with their spectres and not with their emanations. Although this reality describes the situation of the fallen world, Blake believes that the vision of eternity, where communication and personal interaction between humans is attainable through the union of their emanations, can be actuated and can reshape existence. If existence is based on the redemptive power of imagination which presupposes the release of pure energy, fulfilment of desire and free exercise of the intellect, the different mode of existence to which Blake aspires does not refer to an ideal Edenic state but can be secularly substantiated on earth. De Luca concedes that perfection is the ideal state in eternity. He overemphasises the significance of

Blake's aesthetic realism opposed to his [Blake's] aesthetic idealism. He [De Luca] also points out the obstacles that hinder progress towards infinity.

There seems to be a relation between the three aesthetic categories of the sublime, the beautiful and the ugly (whose perfect forms are found in eternity) and the three classes of men on earth: the Elect, the Redeemed and the Reprobate. Blake inverts the traditional categories of these groups according to his aesthetic vision. His transgressors, the lawbreakers, are the true believers, the Elect who are reprobated by the conventional angels. The traditional Elect, the visible Saints, are Blake's Pharisees 'And therefore the Class of Satan shall be calld the Elect, ...' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 11 [12], l.21, E 105) and the Redeemed 'Who live in doubts & fears perpetually tormented by the Elect' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 25[27], l.36, E 122) are the sinners who have atoned for their guilt.

Although the three classes of men 'are the Two Contraries & the Reasoning Negative' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 5, l.14, E 98) it cannot be argued that the sublime and the beautiful are contraries, because if the latter statement is accepted it implies that the sublime (masculine) and the beautiful (pathos, woman) are contraries. Also, the Elect, the Redeemed and the Reprobate are in contrariety, in the same way that Heaven and Hell oppose each other. But 'For Blake good and evil are not contraries, but negations. The universal tensions Blake calls contraries are abstracted by society into morality.'¹ In addition, '... the clash of contraries is

¹ George, Hume Diana. *Blake and Freud*. (London: Cornell UP, 1980), 122.

part of a process of human transformation.’¹ All human forms are redeemable states, not static but progressive even if their fulfilment on earth is improbable.

I have argued that Blake acknowledges the bleakness and obscurity of reality, where because of reason’s power mutual communication and interaction are neither actuated nor realised. But he does not abandon his liberal vision of aesthetic idealism simply because reason predominates. He does not accept the defeat of creative imagination. On the contrary, the three classes of men are distinguished according to their aesthetic qualities. Eternity is open to all humans who have realised the importance of imagination, energy’s release and intellect’s free exercise, in order to achieve redemption: ‘For in every Nation & every Family the Three Classes are born / And in every Species of Earth, Metal, Tree, Fish, Bird & Beast.’ (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 25[27], ll.40-1, E 122).

Blake’s ‘natural sublime’ is not unrelated to the three aesthetic categories of his aesthetic vision. The above excerpt is indicative of his connection of ‘the Human Form Divine’ to the natural world. His aesthetic categorisation, the three classes of men are also skilfully posited in a natural context, which shapes the forms, thus uniting the divine that is imagination with the secular, natural world. The sublime, beautiful and ugly can be found on earth in many natural forms such as trees, fish, birds, beasts and metals. The Elect, the Redeemed and the Reprobate, as ‘aesthetic categories’, are also natural as well as divine forms.

¹ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake’s Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 13.

The myth of *The Ancient Britons* is Blake's aesthetic aspiration and vision. His aesthetic thought developed when he realised that the Greco-Roman ancient culture was based on myths and artistic rules that promoted urizenic thinking. Before he formulated his own aesthetic categories he studied the classic style of aesthetics, which depended on mythology. But his aesthetics' origin is not classical mythology. He considers antiquity's models a source for emulation, but he assumes that they are obsolete.

His vision derives from the Hebrew prophetic tradition, and his aesthetic categories have human characteristics. They are defined by their personal actions, which are projections of energy and intellect's exercise on which the 'Sublime of Imagination' is based. Energy and intellect are the sources of these three categories, which are not abstractions but realities in the secular world. In this way, culture is given an aesthetic form and shapes human existence. In Blake's sense the sublime man of imagination, the beautiful man of pathos, and the ugly man of reason are not fallen forms. Every natural, fallen human form is in a potential state of salvation due to the aesthetic vision, which is the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Imagination is the artistic force which schematises these categories and determines their ultimate form. On earth, 'the veil' of the natural world covers these eternal forms. Their perfect and unfallen forms are produced and actuated in mundane existence. Elect, Redeemed or Reprobate, their qualities are formed by imagination. The myth of *The Ancient Britons* is Blake's aesthetic, artistic progress from the urizenic reality of his era. His aspiration is a fundamental, creative improvement of English aesthetics.

3.2 *The Book of Thel* and female beauty's presentation as use-value

The Book of Thel and female beauty's presentation as use-value chapter is divided in two parts. The first part concerns Thel's predicament, which resolves with her decision to return to death, Har, and the second part refers to Oothoon's sexual 'liberation' through her senses. The intention of the chapter is to elucidate the issue of female beauty and reveal Blake's ideas about female sexuality and 'fulfillment.'

The texts that will be discussed are: *The Book of Thel* (1789) and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). These texts, which refer to Thel and Oothoon respectively, have been chosen because they present two females who experience their sexuality in different ways. Thel's tragic lot and Oothoon's determination to prioritize life instead of death are standard subjects in Blake's criticism. The chapter examines Thel's dilemma by explaining her identity, i.e. the repressed woman. It also discloses that Oothoon's 'emancipation' is a matter of liberation of her senses, an experience of which Thel is ignorant.

The theoretical ideas that are introduced during the course of the chapter about Thel are various. Starting from her name, it signifies the female (thely, or thili, θήλυ) and not will (θέλω). Thel has rejected her maternal role and the patriarchal standards and of her era. She has chosen not to exercise her will to survive. Blake wonders if beauty and lack of female will coincide. The conclusion is that the female who is unwilling to exercise female will is doomed to 'the vales of Har.' Thel is not useful, she equals to nothing and she is the mysterious female possessed by evil. Use-value 'beauty' is not the beauty proper for women; it is suitable for survival but does not

guarantee fulfillment. The chapter elucidates the issue of female beauty, it reveals Thel's complex nature, and answers her predicament.

The questions that arise from her dilemma are: what is female beauty, and why does she choose death to identify with? The principal argument is that Thel's value is merely aesthetic and contributes to nothing because use-value is not considered female beauty. Although Thel is a 'shining woman' she is useless, she only lived 'to be at death the food of worms.' (PLATE 3, l. 23, E 5). The basic difference from the current corpus criticism is that it examines Thel's dilemma as an aesthetic, moral problem where female beauty, use-value and evil interrelate. The intricate relationship of beauty and madness is also a matter of investigation. Therefore, beauty's mystery remains. In addition, the reference to Oothoon, Vala, Jerusalem, and emanation explains Blake's ideas about female nature and woman's position in the universe.

Critics offer numerous explanations about Thel's problem by examining her dilemma from feministic, religious, psychological and ethical aspects. The chapter discusses the aesthetic aspect of Thel's moral quality which is focused on the interrelation between female beauty and use-value. The inference from the above argument is that use-value 'beauty' is not beauty. The relation of beauty and death is an intricate subject to elaborate on. However, expanding on the basis of the relation between female beauty, use-value, and death the following conclusions are extracted:

Thel, due to her impurity, which is the natural state of man, and her decision to embrace death and inaction, apathy in order to survive, belongs to the aesthetic indifferent, and she is a repressed woman. Like the spectre she belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly. She is self-devouring and self-destructive, a female

who does not experience the prolific state of being. She rejects transformation from the devouring to the prolific state of being through coitus as unnecessary and useless because of Satan, 'the Prince of this World' (*Jerusalem*, To The Deists, PLATE 52, E 201) who possesses her. Therefore, beauty is irrelevant to the repressed woman and the spectre. Goodness, virtue and beauty are qualities of which Thel is bereft. Her morality is defined by her choice of death, her flight back to 'the vales of Har.' (PLATE 6, l. 22, E 6). However, her predicament remains an ambiguous issue because her choice of death is justified due to the urizenic predominance in temporary and mundane life. Her unwillingness to accept Urizen and pursue imagination categorizes her to the repressed woman.

In 1789, Blake perceives a triple female destiny. That is, emanation, repressed woman and the spectre. Thel and Oothoon are repressed women. Their only difference is that Oothoon accepts Urizen; a choice which ensures her survival. The most suitable female for survival is Vala, the female will, whose beauty is deceptive, a figure that Blake will develop later in juxtaposition with Jerusalem. Striving to discover a form of female beauty among these women proves an unattainable endeavour. Blake seems to assume that woman's destiny is fulfilled in afterlife, where there is no sexual division. The emanation, the counterpart of the bisexual male, without a separate will is annihilated and absorbed into the male. In eternity, the emanation of man has no will of her own. This is 'The Mystic Union of the Emanation in the Lord; ...' (*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 53, l. 24, E 203). Although the emanation and Jerusalem seem to be the only 'fulfilled' women in reality it is precarious to assume that these are representations of female beauty. Either emanation or Jerusalem, woman's lot is destined to harsh survival options because of the urizenic reality.

The juxtaposition between Vala and Jerusalem is developed at the second part of the chapter which concerns Blake's ideas about the human senses and their role in earthly existence. Jerusalem represents imagination and liberty and Vala, who is deceptive beauty, is her shadow. Thel is not the bride of Jesus because '... happy Jerusalem', is 'The Bride and Wife of the Lamb.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch.2, PLATE 41 [46], ll. 27-8, E 189). Vala is delusive beauty who provides the bodies but Jerusalem offers the souls.

In conclusion after Thel's unwillingness to be a use-value female and exercise female will it could be argued that beauty is irrelevant to materialism and urizenic reality. Blake locates beauty in sexual purity and intellectuality. Therefore, Thel's 'beauty' is tainted. On the other hand being 'useful' according to urizenic standards also proves an unfair choice for women. Blake's skepticism about female beauty, morality and woman's destiny seems to polarize between these options that every female has to accept or not. The choice is personal. Thel's choice was to return to death because of her self-destructiveness which was inevitable since she refused to survive under Urizen's commands. Perhaps, her 'beauty' is found in her own death. Beauty and self-destruction is a strange correlation, which in my opinion, is not Blake's suggestion but an issue of puzzling preoccupation.

... without *a use* this shining woman liv'd,
Or did she only live. to be at death the food of worms. (ll. 22-3, E 5)
(emphasis added)

In *The Book of Thel* (1789) Blake exposes the meaning and significance of the aesthetic category of the beautiful, attributing 'beauty' to Thel by calling her 'The daughter of beauty' (PLATE 5, l. 7, E 6) and by addressing her: 'O beauty of the vales of Har.' (PLATE 4, l. 10, E 5). She is also the 'Queen of the vales ...' (PLATE 2, l. 13, E 4) where she inhabits in an individual world of seclusion and self-indulgence.

It could be argued that the concept of beauty in Thel is a progression of Blake's thought. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he associates the organs of reproduction with beauty, '... the genitals Beauty, ...' (PLATE 10, E 37), where he puts the sublime and the beautiful together, that is the head and the genitals, to confirm that 'Man has no Body distinct from his Soul ...' (PLATE 4, E 34). However, beauty is not a concept which is simply associated with the sexual organs and mental sublimity. In *The Book of Thel* he attempts to schematize female beauty and explain this aspect of ethical feminine development. He also attempts to provide the reason(s) for women's unattainable personal and social fulfillment. *The Book of Thel* represents Blake's first preoccupation with the issue of female beauty specifically during the time of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Thel, the only female character in the poem, is the symbol of beauty's problematic nature. If 'Exuberance is Beauty' (PLATE 10, E 38) Thel's 'beauty' is a lifeless shadow. The argument of this chapter is that Thel is not truly beautiful because she exclusively experiences her impurity, which is mistakenly related to 'beauty.' Another interesting point is that Blake ascribes to beauty use-value implying that without it women cannot be characterized

as truly beautiful. In my opinion, use-value primarily means that women, after having realized their inner self, that is their qualities, must become independent and autonomous social agents. This is feasible by exploring their sexuality and by using their intellect. Thel's intellect is undeveloped and her predicament is a moral issue. Use-value is possible through a process of mental rebellion and free thought. If women are allowed to develop these merits, without patriarchal and social restraints, they construct a feminine identity which promotes their human value and improves their individuality. Thus, human progress is inevitable because women's role in society is determined by their own will and choices. As Burder characteristically claims:

... Thel is a poem in which the sceptical enquiries of a determined young woman thoroughly unmask patriarchal ideology, an ideology which promised women that heterosexual romantic and maternal roles equalled heavenly fulfilment, but which Thel discovers amount to nothing less than death. According to *The Book of Thel* life under patriarchy is a grave plot.¹

Burder bases her argumentation about Thel, on Mary Wollstonecraft's assertions, which associate with the assigned female role of the eighteenth century woman whose survival was determined by the patriarchal standards of her era. She views Thel under this perspective and emphasizes Thel's inability to adjust to her predetermined roles of the obedient wife and caring mother. In fact, Blake does not envisage for Thel a predefined destiny according to her sex but he intends to bring to surface her inner conflict and reveal her inconsistency, which leads her back to the fatality of the grave.

¹ Burder, Helen P. *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*. (London: Macmillan, 1997), 44.

Her initial ambiguity concerning her life has not been resolved. Burder concludes that 'Blake has reached some kind of historically specific imaginative limit in his thought about women's rights and roles ... but he is not able to envisage any way for them to end their victimization and become self-determining and autonomous social agents.'¹ The context of Thel's beauty and use-value relates to her aesthetic value as a human being. This last associates with her moral quality. Her use-value relates to her social feminine quality. Thel's beauty is irrelevant to dimensional properties. Blake differentiates from Burke's contentions about female beauty which are attributed to dimensional analogies and stress smallness, delicacy and weakness. Burder also supports this argument.² In addition, as De Luca states:

Burke rejects proportion as the source of beauty and locates it instead in the small, the physically unthreatening the smooth, and the gently curvaceous, all essentially female attributes that, he writes, comprise "the physical cause of love". The pathetic and the beautiful thus converge upon a common eroticized femininity.³

That is Burke clings to attribute beauty to women. Burder also claims that 'exquisite beauty connotes trembling fragility, and such weak, almost vaporous, creatures are likely to submit to the patriarchal moulding ...'⁴

The notions of goodness, morality and virtue are entangled with the concept of beauty. Until the eighteenth century the concept of beauty was influenced by the

¹ Ibid., 54.

² Ibid., 45.

³ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 46.

⁴ Burder, Helen P. *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*. (London: Macmillan, 1997), 46.

ancient Hellenic tradition, where beauty could not be considered outside the context of morality. Sircello cites this correlation by referring to the sources that relate beauty and morality. 'Crombie reports that the ancient Greek word for "beautiful" (*κάλλος*) was the standard word for the highest moral virtue. *Κάλλος* means exactly what we mean by "moral" or "morally" good.'¹ Through the centuries, there was

... a whole stream of philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Finico, Shaftesbury, and Kant, who attributed beauty to moral virtues, to "souls" or persons, apparently without embarrassment, that is, without a sense that they are doing something "linguistically odd".²

Actually, Thel's 'beauty' is an issue which concerns her inner moral quality as a female. Thel's intrinsic value is her impurity. She is neither an aesthetically valuable agent nor a useful woman. Blake combines naturalness with impurity (Thel's case) and is skeptical about what is true female beauty. In the poem, he seems to resolve this ambiguity by conceding that naturalness is not the suitable female beauty because impurity is the false human entity. Instead use-value 'beauty' might have resolved Thel's predicament. But, Thel due to her naturalness, impurity is not beautiful. This is justified because of her return to death. She is born impure, which is the natural state of man: 'Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually & must continually be changed into his direct Contrary.' (*Jerusalem*, PLATE 52, To the Deists, E 200), and she remains impure because of her pathetic intellect to value life. Blake is puzzled about Thel's choice to linger on impurity, although he is doubtful about use-value 'beauty' to redeem her. Ultimately,

¹ Sircello, Guy. *A New Theory of Beauty*. (London: Princeton UP, 1975), 83.

² *Ibid.*, 82.

use-value proves insufficient to resolve her dilemma. This is due to her moral problem. Nevertheless, the poem is not an affirmative answer about the useful feminine 'beauty.' Blake rather exposes his skepticism and uncertainty about naturalness, impurity and female spirituality.

The Book of Thel is one of his first confrontations with the aesthetic appreciation of 'beauty' as use-value, which is the female moral challenge that Thel experiences through her denial to live according to the standards of the traditional woman's role. In addition, Blake perceives her 'beauty' as her willful refusal to adjust to the realistic demands of her female tasks. These 'burdens' are anticipated in a society where women are subordinate to male supremacy. Thel's use-value is his proposal that might resolve her predicament. However, Thel's 'beauty' is a moral issue that reveals her ethical quality. Blake's aesthetic approach is stimulating because he refers to the meaning of 'beauty' as use-value, although he does not precisely consider female beauty to be a matter of utility. The focus of his perspective changes from the aesthetic to the useful and the morally good. 'Beauty' as use-value has a meaning different from the notion of beauty as aesthetic value. The utility value of beauty does not constitute its aesthetic appreciation. This was Blake's main dilemma as a radical artist: to distinguish between the purpose of beauty and its perception as an abstract value with or without importance. This argument particularly concerns female identity which cannot be positioned within the feminine framework of the eighteenth century woman. Thel is not a beautiful woman because both values, the aesthetic and the useful, cannot determine her feminine identity. In the poem, she never refers to herself as beautiful. Her 'beauty' is presented by her placement within the natural environment. Her naturalness is determined by her surroundings and especially with

her conversation with the worm. Without being able to extract from nature a sensible answer about her dilemma she abandons herself to impurity which determines her life. Thus, she is fatally led to death which essentially is the death of her 'locked' and intact body. Blake presents the uselessness of female beauty perceived as natural merit, as opposed to beauty as use-value. The notion of use-value also hints at the Protestant Christian concept of utility which is associated with rationality and work ethics. Use also has a particular meaning in Swedenborgian doctrine in which Blake was interested at the time of *The Book of Thel* and to which he refers in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

The poet does not intend to provide any moral precept or introduce a mode of proper female attitude. The prevalent ideology about female identity was influenced by the ideas of nature and reason. He viewed the latter, as responsible for human enclosure and as a hindrance to human development. Therefore, he exposes and condemns the traditional model of female identity which is based on naturalness and reason's predominance. Later, in his work he develops several types of females, which represent his visionary aesthetics, culminating in Jerusalem, the liberal and truly beautiful personification of the ideal female.

Thel represents the inexpressibility of beauty. Her predicament is a choice of whether to live a useful life through '... Suffering & Distress i.e. Experience.' (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 602) or to remain impure and inauthentic, merely a useless beauty. Leading a useful life means acquisition of human understanding, which is absent when the world is perceived in

its naturalness without illumination by the imagination. Experience is a harsh state that Thel abstains.

Actually, the poem is not a clear and manifest exegesis of whether or not beauty tends towards utility, but an intriguing investigation into the aesthetic problem of beauty. Thel's dilemma is a question of beauty as an unsubstantiated aesthetic concept. Although Blake clings to the concept of beauty's utility, (Thel's inability to be a useful female), he doubts this explanation and leaves the question open to his audience, a common policy in his poetry. Thel's individual, 'genuine' hypostasis is a challenge for his readers. She is viewed as a useless aesthetic 'object' deprived of any purpose in life, whereas beauty as use-value is considered the beauty proper for women. However, the question remains unsolved with Thel preferring death to an unrealized life.

Thel's Motto¹ introduces Blake's skeptical attitude towards the meaning of beauty, particularly female beauty, and explores its origins through sexual energy and intellect. The poet considers naturalness a lie. Nevertheless, it is indispensable for existence and life's preservation. The rod and the bowl are useful objects, in which neither Wisdom nor Love can be captured. The Eagle and the Mole inhabit and experience different levels of perception. The one represents light and the other subterranean darkness. Life is a synthesis of opposing elements like light and darkness. The realms of the eagle and the mole are absolutely separate. Each creature

¹ Mitchell, W. J. T. in *Blake's Composite Art*, cites an analysis of Thel's motto in "The Form of Innocence, Poetic and Pictorial Design in *The Book of Thel*" (Princeton, 1978), 85-6. Also, Wilkie, Brian gives information about the motto in Blake's *Thel* and *Oothoon* (English Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 1990), 91-3.

explores its own reality the one ignorant of the other's world. This is the natural law. Although the silver rod and the golden bowl are useful material objects it is doubtful whether they could enclose and contain Wisdom and Love. The triad of Eagle - Mole, Wisdom - Love, and silver rod - golden bowl represent male and female forms in antithetical patterns of the aesthetic, the beautiful and the useful. Beauty cannot be expressed, because in the fallen world reason constructs laws of enclosure and repression. Wisdom and Love, as ideals, cannot be placed in a useful context for the purpose of life's continuity; but Blake seems to wonder about their mundane utility. Beauty has various dimensions that render it overwhelming either as purposeless aesthetic value or as use-value. This predicament describes life. Purity, usefulness and impurity, uselessness are two options of survival. Abstract and useful 'beauty' is two different approaches to existence that lead humans to discover the meaning of their own lives. However, the choice seems not to challenge Thel. Therefore, what are her beauty and her death kingdom since she's a queen?

Another issue associated with the concept of beauty is its deceptive degraded manifestation, ugliness. Thel belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly for the simple reason of her uselessness. She is indifferent to the world that surrounds her. The natural world with which she identifies is the domain of her entire existence. Therefore, Thel's value and will are negative because she denies utility by remaining naturally 'beautiful.' Thus, she is imperfect beauty. Negative will is the sickness of the mind, and her individual hypostasis is negative merit. In Blake's aesthetic system pure energy, beauty is a positive value, whereas impurity is negative. Intellect or wisdom is an aesthetic concept, and reason is Blake's negative aesthetic. But the poet's thought was not polarized between purity and impurity. This dualism, which

he rejects, is destructive and related to the deistic apprehension of divinity. Ugliness is not the deprivation of beauty because the latter exists in the soul of every human being. Impurity is falsehood and deception caused by the prevalence of reason in human perception. Reason blurs the mental faculties, solidifies error and brings about sorrow and distress. Dissatisfaction, in contrast to gratification, has destructive results, such as psychic repression, depression, even madness. The power of negativity, the denial of life, is immense, and human will is usually unable to resist the forces of evil.

True beauty is attained through goodness, which for Blake means purity and understanding. Self-knowledge and self-annihilation assist the process of transformation of impure into pure energy through coitus; that is, the expression of feelings is the only indispensable stage in the process of human alteration. *Thel* represents the denial of the sublimation process; that is the transformation of her negative, psychic energy into the prolific state of being. Therefore, we as readers must discover why for her, naturalness is preferable to utility. Use-value refers to her feminine identity as a consort and prospective mother. Her moral state provides the answer. Her impurity deters her female development. She considers the task futile and motherhood in vain. *Har* and *worm* identify, cynically representing fatality.

In *The Book of Thel* the central theme of Blake's perception of beauty in general and female beauty in particular represents his condemnation of female uselessness according to the patriarchal standards of his era. He exposes women's identity as merely 'ornamental' objects without spirituality, self-knowledge or understanding of their own sexuality. He shows the failure of beauty as an aesthetic, abstract value and

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seems to favour use-value 'beauty' as a social duty without specifying its context. He just condemns the existent feminine destiny of his era. In the myth of *The Ancient Britons* (1809) he supports the view of dutiful beauty that is framed within a 'urizenic' context by accepting the necessity of reason where beauty is sacrificed.

Thel's supposedly 'moral feat' of entering the house of 'the matron Clay' (PLATE 5, l. 14, E 6) to explore her impure energy, and then taking flight into 'the vales of Har' (PLATE 6, l. 22, E 6) is not an achievement. It is a game, like the playful pastime of the children riding the serpent at the last plate, numbers six, IV where she enters 'death's realm' and then flees back to the comfort of 'the vales of Har.' She glimpses her debased nature, but decides that it is futile to sacrifice herself and become use-value 'beauty'. Her immanent quality is her impurity. Her potential superior nature remains impure, and her spirituality uncultivated. Burder offers an explanation to Thel's decision to return to death. As she claims:

Heterosex means motherhood, and motherhood in this patriarchal environment means self-sacrifice. All will indeed say 'without a use this shinning woman liv'd' if she chooses not to become a mother and yet, as Thel complains, accepting available maternal roles is as good as dying and becoming the food of worms.¹

For Burder, the notion of female sacrifice links with Thel's decision to reject her maternal role. I assume that Thel's choice is not only based on the futility of motherhood but her option is also a moral issue which is associated with impurity and sin. If '... Womans love is Sin!' (*Europe a Prophecy*, PLATE 5, l. 5, E 62), what's the point of proliferating evil since impurity is perpetuated through heterosex and sin?

¹ Burder, Helen P. *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*. (London: Macmillan, 1997), 49.

As Burder believes:

The Book of Thel offers no alternative to the conventional and stereotypical feminine roles it so astutely caricatures. As Thel progresses she unmasks and rejects heterosexual culture's romantic and maternal myths, but she is not able to construct any kind of workable alternative identity. The only possible escape route ... is the road of libidinal rebellion, ...¹.

She also claims that 'this paucity of solutions points to a situation of historical deadlock'² and that '*The Book of Thel* addresses a specific historical problem' ... Also ... 'no Blakean writer has pursued any of the feminist implications of this luminously woman-centered poem. In the 1990s this must amount to a critical scandal.'³

The historical problem that Blake in *The Book of Thel* presents is not only Thel's feminine identity under the patriarchal structure of the eighteenth century but also her female sexuality which determines her morality. Thel's development is a matter of beauty that concerns her sexual energy and intellect. Since impurity is her choice her feminine identity is irrelevant to beauty. For Blake, Thel's decision to return to Har is beauty's predicament. As far as women's beauty is concerned it remains an inexplicable and incomprehensible aesthetic problem. There is no possible outlet or solution for the female who prefers impurity to use-value 'beauty'. Burder offers a plausible explanation of Thel's unfulfilled feminine identity but she disregards Thel's complex personality in reference to female, moral integrity which is indispensable to illuminate woman's destiny. On the contrary, Blake hints at Thel's beauty despite

¹ Ibid., 53-4.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

her choice to remain impure, in the state of death. Thel despises the traditional female tasks considering motherhood useless because of her reluctance to accept the predetermined women's responsibilities. She also defies death which paradoxically embraces to 'continue' life. Death is preferable to reason, necessity, compromise and dependence. It is a dreadful destiny, the tragic fatality of woman's beauty.

Among the most controversial subjects in criticism of *The Book of Thel* are her state of being, her will, her desire, her female hypostasis and her negation of life. Thel is accused of being an unborn soul living in an embryonic, innocent, fantasy world, and a false paradise of senile delusion vanity and selfishness. She is trapped in naturalness and memory. She is considered unimaginative and willful. The theme of her will, like her name Thel, is also a matter of dispute. Thel is not a female without will. Fox also supports the same view:

Thel is not devoid of will. She has not the power to realize her will. She fails for lack of will, but we have more sympathy for her in her failure than we might have had had she succeeded and turned into, say, the Shadowy Female of America once she had found her voice, or Enitharmon in Europe, or Vala in The Four Zoas. Thel needs will, but not female will, and she needed female will to succeed.¹

All human beings have will, but hers is negative. This is because it does not contribute or provide anything useful in reality. In fact, her will is right, in terms of her own truth, according to her moral perception and decision, but negative, in practice. The external world, which represents reason, challenges Thel but she

¹ Fox, Susan. "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry." *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Spring 1977): 512.

perceives the fallen reality as a hindrance to self-realization. Fox also states that 'The female power which governs the Beulaic vales in *The Book of Thel* is not only restricted, but also negative in implication.'¹ Mellor agrees with Fox that 'Thel lacks the will to confront the fallen world of Experience and try to redeem it. Oothoon, despite her liberated vision, is an impotent revolutionary.'²

Actually, her name, Thel, derives from the Greek verb *thél* - *o* (θέλω), meaning 'I want', although not all critics accept this derivation.³ Thel has will because without it, she would not be able to enter her grave-plot. Her will is negative though because her impure energy proves stronger than her creative will. She does not want or she cannot offer herself. Thus, she subsists on 'The Spectre is the Man, the rest is only delusion and fancy' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the First, PAGE 12 {I 312-55}, l. 29, E 307). What is the relation between negative will and female beauty? Thel abandons the project of salvation either in this world or in another. Does this mean that true female beauty is deprived of will? The answer could be affirmative but it will be simplistic to support such a view. Rather positive, creative will has been substituted by negativity because of her disbelief in love. '... maturation in civilised society is bound to take the course Freud described. What passes for love is dependence and fear'.⁴ Thel's energy is repressed and her negativity is manifest: 'I weep' ... 'I fade away', ... 'leave my shining lot.' Her lot is determined by her impurity combined with negative will. These suggest her soul's death. 'Sighs and moans' haunt her doomed destiny. Beauty dies and 'the vales of Har' receive the eternal worm.

¹ Ibid., 510.

² Mellor, Anne. K. "Blake's Portrayal of women." *Blake An Illustrated Quarterly* 16 (1982 - 83): 148.

³ Bogen, Nancy ed. *William Blake, The Book of Thel. A Facsimile and a Critical Text*. (Brown UP, 1971), 67. Bogen on page 67 cites a series of possible interpretations of Thel's name that none of them seems to provide a suitable explanation of her character, state of existence and dilemma.

⁴ George, Hume Diana. *Blake and Freud*. (London: Cornell UP, 1980), 107.

What does Fox mean by stating that 'Thel needs will, but not female will'? In 1788 Blake had stated:

There can be no Good - Will. Will is always Evil It is pernicious to others or selfish If God is any thing he is Understanding He is the Influx from that into the Will Thus Good to others or benevolent Understanding can [? &? does] Work [? harm] ignorantly but never can? the Truth [be? evil] because Man is only Evil [when he wills an untruth] (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 602).

This assertion concerns human will in general and not female will in particular. Will is considered evil because of its impure energy. Fox probably means that because of her femininity, that is weakness, Thel cannot free herself from her 'unacted desires'. Thel's problem is not the existence or otherwise of her will, but her resistance to the forces of evil. Her transformation can only be achieved by defeating evil through sacrifice. It is plausible to understand the correlation between female weakness, unacted desires, sacrifice, and beauty. However, Thel's dilemma is an ethical issue that relates to her final decision to return to 'the vales of Har'. Har is the state of death, where she breeds worms in stagnation and inactivity. Usefulness means sacrifice. For Thel, apathy is the preferable state of female 'beauty'.

Thel resides in a dream world, which Blake rejects as unproductive. It is an ineffectual reality, insipid and useless, a product of impure energy, a refuge for vanity. Fox considers Thel to be a failure,¹ whereas Bogen believes that she is not,

¹ Fox, Susan. "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry." *Critical Enquiry* (Spring 1977): 512.

and I agree.¹ Thel is not a failure because of the way she rationalizes existence. Obstacles and human adversities hinder the transformation process, the 'burning out' of impure energy and the expression of purity. Although the two are matters, of personal choice, they can also be a matter of luck, and many other complex human circumstances. Pragmatically, Thel is a failure because of her uselessness, her refusal to sacrifice herself and accept the predestined feminine identity of the patriarchal standards.

For Blake, the female destiny is triple in actualization: Emanation, repressed woman and the spectre. This means that one woman in three manages to fulfill her destiny, that is, to become an emanation. Thel's female hypostasis is the repressed woman. She is aesthetically indifferent, meaning that her will is negative. "Negation is Blake's word for "repression," and at the root of that repression is a ravaging lust for power, the spectre that is at bottom utterly devoid of "reasonableness." Blake's female will, is the female counterpart of the spectre.² However, Thel is deprived of female will which is proper for experience. Female will is reality's 'beauty'. Consequently, she fits in the aesthetic category of the ugly and not the beautiful, although she is 'the daughter of beauty', the 'beauty of the vales of Har,' and the 'queen of the vales'. She is a 'virgin' daughter but her domain is 'the vales of Har'. Har derives from the Greek word Hár-os (Χάρος), meaning Death. That is, Thel's condition is a state of mental and psychic death and not 'the holy life of innocence' (Mellor) or her 'innocent youth where she belongs'. (Bogen).³ Thel returns to inertia and indolence

¹ Bogen, Nancy ed. *William Blake and the Book of Thel. A facsimile and a Critical Text*. (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 20. 'Thel, then is not an antiheroine but a positive figure, like Oothoon and like Blake himself when he appears in his own works. Also on page 21 she states that 'Thel is the heroine of the poem and like Oothoon, represents Blake's alter ego.'

² George, Hume Diana. *Blake and Freud* (London: Cornell UP, 1980), 179.

³ Bogen, Nancy ed. *The Book of Thel. A facsimile and Critical Text* (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 31.

because of her weakness to survive as a useful female and her inability to realize and control her impurity. She is not innocent in 'the vales of Har', she is conscious of her state and her retreat is voluntary, because of her disbelief in utility.

Thel is also considered a female unable to love because of her egoistic self-love which originates from her impure energy that perpetuates her existence. On the other hand it prevents her from realizing her identity and her role in the world of creation, that is motherhood. Love is sacrifice but she refuses either to devour or be devoured. Offering 'love', giving in to fleshly pleasures in the world of generation means experiencing suffering but also knowledge of good and evil and realization of identity. She insists on her impure energy, and her mistake is her reluctance to accept that the only way to purify herself is through her evil nature. She finally decides to return to death (that is, to remain impure, rather than become more corrupted). The process of transformation requires experience which Thel considers, erroneously or not, to be worse than her natural self. Her 'coming' to Har signifies her fear of self-realization, of confronting her limits. She acts because of a need to preserve her bodily and mental integrity rather than an egoistic refusal to confront reality. Her instinct of self-preservation springs from her negative energy. Thel is able to 'burn up' and consume all her impurity, to become Jerusalem who is ideal beauty, and not rational demonstration of utility. Jerusalem represents total spirituality and not useful 'beauty'. This last causes Thel's maximum uneasiness. She is unwilling or unable to live by devouring. Her reluctance is due to her negative will. As Fox contends her inability comes from lack of realization of her female will.¹ She also decides not to become 'food' for other humans, but 'food for worms' only. She is unable to realize

¹ Fox, Susan. "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry." *Critical Enquiry* (Spring 1977): 512.

social necessity. In this sense she denies the devouring and prolific states of existence thus remaining impure and immature.

The poem's irony and allegory is focused on Thel's mentality. Thel's 'intelligence' is used to preserve her impurity because she mistrusts purification. By exposing Thel's uselessness, her natural beauty and her supposed 'intelligence', Blake rejects this idea of feminine 'fulfillment'. Thel, who is the youngest of the daughters of Mne Seraphim, 'fades away like morning beauty' (PLATE 1, l.3, E 3) because her innocence is indicative of her naivety. Aphrodite, the Greek goddess, the Roman Venus, represents natural female beauty. She is a typical stereotype of the frivolous and scattered-brained female. Thel, who is 'like a parting cloud', 'like transient day' and 'Like a reflection in a glass', does not resemble Venus's beauty.

'The daughters of Mne Seraphim', a title similar to one that occurs in Cornelius Agrippa who 'defines the Seraphim as "the Intelligence of Venus", and elsewhere describes Venus as presiding over the processes of vegetation. The Seraphim are "the fifth order of angels by which God Elohim Gibor [the cabalistic Geburah] ... draweth forth the elements"' ¹

Gleckner calls the older daughters of Mne Seraphim 'higher innocents, who have gone through experience to achieve eternal delight'² unlike Thel who is reluctant to withstand purification. She prefers to abstain from 'dirt' for the sake of a feminine perception of inexistent beauty. In this way, she remains immature, comparatively ignorant and unwise. Actually, Thel is indifferent either to earthly or eternal life.

¹ Gillham, D. G. *William Blake*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973), 172.

² Johnson, Mary Lynn. "Beulah, "Mne Seraphim," and Blake's Thel." *Journal of English and German Philology* 69 (1970): 264.

The living natural creatures, the Lilly of the valley, the Cloud, the Clod of Clay and the Worm cannot understand the reasons or accept her 'intelligent' retreat from reality. Her questions and interlocution with them are unimportant because Thel already knows and perceives the usefulness of natural living things and their contribution to evolution. Her life is also natural but she cares little about life's maintenance. As Pearce states:

natural elements as symbols of the old deistic standbys of the physical and natural sciences from which Thel cannot get spiritual vision, the truth of the prophetic imagination, nothing assuring her of personal salvation, or of the indwelling fellowship of Jesus, or of her oneness with him.¹

The advice that Thel gets from the natural world leaves her unsatisfied. She is not persuaded that the cycle of life and death hold any meaning for her. Being an impure entity Thel seems to challenge the purpose of existence and insists on remaining naturally beautiful, ignoring the fact that '... Life lives upon Death & by devouring appetite / All things subsist on one another ...'. (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Seventh, PLATE 87{VII 372-43} ll.18-9, E 369). 'Blake believed that the universe is a system of natural substances locked in a cyclic process which is its divine law, that every creature lives not in or for itself but as a tiny portion of everything else around it.'²

If existence is finite, corrupt and urizenic with just a promise of eternity, which appears to be the reward of a useful life, what's the point of self-sacrifice?

¹ Pearce, Donald. R. "Natural Religion and the Plight of Thel." *Blake Studies* 8 (1978): 30.

² Ibid.

What Thel really needs to learn, and what none of her tutors can convey by rote, is the true nature of immortality. The Lilly and the Cloud speak of abundant life, in the present, but Thel seems to believe that immortality is a future reward for utilitarian accomplishments.¹

Although some critics assume that Thel is an innocent foolish virgin, others disagree.² It could be argued that she is not an innocent female because of her descent into death. She is not ignorant of the impure substance of the human soul and is no longer self-deluded. Blake claims that 'Innocence dwells with Wisdom but never with Ignorance' (*Miscellaneous Prose*, E 697). For him, beauty as use-value seems to be the only alternative for Thel. Nevertheless, he rejects use-value 'beauty' for her. 'The daughters of Mne Seraphim' are industrious and productive. But are they truly beautiful? Thel is not useful and prefers her isolated vanity. She has shut her senses to their own destruction through which she will achieve 'fulfillment'. Industriousness and productivity are notions that hint at use-value for women so as to fulfill their destiny. But if production and industriousness are not Thel's objective what is her use?

If the usefulness of dreary death is the promise of eternity, Thel is indifferent to it, because natural or abstract beauty is apparently not the key that opens the realm of eternity, although it seems the beauty proper for eternity. All her beauty is her naivety. She also believes in an ideal world where goodness reigns. This ideal world is a creation of her fancy because the actual world is fallen and corrupt, ruled by

¹ Johnson, Mary Lynn. "Beulah, "Mne Seraphim," and Blake's Thel." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 267.

² Gillham, D.G. *William Blake*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973), 175. 'Thel, is no innocent, unless one takes Innocence to mean a rather self-conscious naïveté, and we have seen that it means anything but that.'

reason and the Prince of Darkness. Thel is aware of this and cannot be considered innocent. She uses her natural conversants, to get the answers that she already knows or perceives but she enjoys listening to them speak of reality.

Thel's self-enclosure is her own hell. She is trapped in her impure energy: 'Hell is the being shut up, in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man for *all life is holy*. (Blake's emphasis, Annotations to Lavater, E 579, K 74) The only way out of self-imprisonment is through an "improvement of sensual enjoyment ..."'.¹ Johnson mentions that 'Thel's pallor and secrecy, ominous symptoms of the diseased life of souls trapped in Experience, slipping into Ulro, rather than moving on to higher Innocence, relate Thel to the worm, ...'.² Thel does not use her senses to explore sensuality or surrender to experience. This process is necessary to achieve the desirable metamorphosis of the '... worm of sixty winters ...'. (*Tiriel*, 8, l.11, E 285). She is aware of the futility of the natural cycle and prefers the physical impurity of being. She is real and 'beautiful' and not 'trapped in experience', 'slipping into Ulro'⁴ as Johnson assumes. In her sexual ignorance she willingly returns 'into the vales of Har.'

It could be argued that the attribution of 'higher innocence' to 'The daughters of Mne Seraphim' defines spiritual female fulfillment that is wisdom, of which Thel is bereft. As far as her intellect is concerned, she tends towards death, 'the mnemonic (cumulative knowledge based on sensory perception as arranged by reason)'.⁵ She is

¹ Johnson, Mary Lynn. "Beulah, "Mne Seraphim," and Blake's Thel." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 265.

² Ibid., 264-5.

³ Ibid., 258.

⁴ Ibid., 265.

⁵ Ibid., 274.

plunged in reality where memory and reason rule and destroy human life. Therefore, she is unimaginative, without inspiration and unable to offer herself to other humans. Her transformation does not occur, because she is persuaded of the meaninglessness of coital 'love'. Thus, without will to explore any other reality than her individual 'beauty' she remains immature. However, Thel is not unable to love. Rather, she is rightly aware that love does not exist in reality. She prefers death to knowledge of herself, experience and the falsity of mundane existence.

Johnson in her article refers to Paul Miner's observation that in Blake's symbolism the act of coitus becomes a propitiatory offering, a sacrifice of the selfhood.¹ In fact, this assertion is the core of Thel's psychic puzzle. Miner refers to the ideal state of sexual intercourse, where selfishness has been substituted for mutual understanding, the blending of body and soul. Impurity has been replaced by reciprocal satisfaction. In the fallen world though coitus is based on the female will for possessiveness. It is the corrupting lust for dominance. Unions are not harmonious because they are not based on reciprocal gratified desires but expediencies ordained by the cruel, urizenic laws. Human life is a treacherous guise where understanding is pity and '... Pity divides the soul ...'. (*The Book of Urizen*, Chapter: V, l.53, E 77, and *Milton Book the First*, PLATE 8, l.19, E 102). Male pomposity and female secrecy are not the constituents of reciprocal unions. Blake substitutes the moral precepts of Druidism for the Holiness of male and female merging energies. He proposes 'embraces and cominglings' which replace pity. On the contrary, understanding promotes relative balance and stability. Falsity is the veil that Jesus rends and Blake aspires to mutual relationships, where hate, deceit and fear are absent. Chastity and moral law hinder

¹Ibid., 266.

reciprocity and human communication. He condemns the relations that are based on mutual treachery. Thel is aware of her lack of female will to dominate man and she is indifferent to the treacherous game of 'love'. Her resistance to self-sacrifice is correct since pity, dependence and conventionality characterize heterosexual relationships.

And now the Spectres of the Dead awake in Beulah: all
The Jealousies become Murderous: uniting together in Rahab
A Religion of Chastity, forming a Commerce to sell Loves
With Moral Law, an Equal Balance, not going down with decision
Therefore the Male severe & cruel filld with stern Revenge:
Mutual Hate returns & mutual Deceit & mutual Fear.

Hence the Infernal Veil grows in the disobedient Female:
Which Jesus rends & the whole Druid Law removes away
From the Inner Sanctuary: ... (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 69,
ll. 32-40, E 223).

.....
Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet;
And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place.
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 69, ll. 43-4, E 223).

Pearce asserts that in the pit Thel finds:

The brutal philosophy that makes lilies rejoice, clouds exult,
and clods content - natural philosophy - only succeeds in
driving the human soul to despair.¹ "... it is impossible for
man to derive spiritual truth from Nature, but only natural
truths;" Thus, Thel loses her immortality believing that she is a
dying animal and that the whole of the natural order is only a
passing vision.²

¹ Pearce, Donald. R. "Natural Religion and the Plight of Thel." *Blake Studies* 8 (1978): 32.

² *Ibid.*, 33.

Her retreat to the Land of Har is the soul's retreat from Experience due to deprivation of cosmogonic vision into a lapsed state of life-long unenlightenment ... as though a butterfly were to re-enter its discarded cocoon. But she does so at the price of her immortal soul.¹

The human soul is driven to despair because of the natural state of man, which is impure energy. Experience moulds the soul and enlightens the mind. The worm becomes a butterfly, beauty, that is, pure energy. Thel's re-entrance 'into the vales of Har' signifies commitment to evil, due to a mistrust of life. Ugliness is established as impurity and unwillingness to submit to experience and to social service. Human communication and contact is lost because of the predominance of impurity, which is surrender to the natural state of man.

Thel in the 'hollow pit' where 'she saw the couches of the dead' (PLATE 6, l. 3, E 6) and listened to 'Dolours & lamentations' (PLATE 6, l. 7, E 6) realizes this grim truth. She has no faith in experience. Mark Schorer's suggestion that 'Thel is fearful of the sexual act'² is inaccurate because Thel mistrusts experience and despises dutiful beauty. She distrusts offering as human value and its useful purpose, which is attained (by transformation) through coitus. She seems persuaded that living is hopeless and futile because of the Prince of this World, the urizenic state: 'The goodness of God is apparent only in the eternal life to which we are called.'³ She perceives evil as a necessity that ensures survival. Therefore, it defines her existence. She is aware of this reality and her alienation from the world is due to her impurity.

¹ Ibid., 32.

² Bogen, Nancy. ed. *The Book of Thel. A facsimile and a Critical Text.* (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 16.

³ Gillham, D. G. *William Blake.* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973), 185.

Dependence on impure energy causes self-alienation, which corrupts her perspective of life. But she subsists on it, due to her indifference to fallen world and humanity. Her natural beauty depresses her, bringing about her death wish. Evil power is a death wish that has prevailed internally casting a shadow on her entire soul. It is suffocated and untransformed energy. An abstract God is her ultimate salvation because she is persuaded of the purposelessness of transformation. She is convinced of the worm's futile struggle to become a butterfly. The spectre spreads the veil of death from which nobody escapes. Therefore, Thel has abandoned the effort of purification. Consequently, impurity defines her self.

By hinting at 'beauty' as use-value, Blake proposes with ambiguity an option of a female purposeful life, which Thel rejects. The state where internal hell and 'purity' define the being is not a state of beauty or pleasure. Thel is trapped in mortality. She prefers the comfort of impurity to the horror of experience. She denies use-value. She refuses to serve the fallen world and yields to her natural state of impurity, which she uses to safeguard her perceived beauty, her only true 'purity'. Maturity is self-knowledge and experience, not defiance of reality. Thel does not achieve mundane transformation and transcendence. She rejects temporal life, because in her 'grave plot' she discovers that there is too much impurity in purity. Actually, what Thel observes in her 'grave plot' are the many deaths, 'the couches of the dead' (PLATE 6, l.3, E 6) which represent sacrifices necessary for personal purification which she must also suffer and which she cannot endure. True beauty requires a tremendous psychic cost. She is reluctant to sacrifice and annihilate herself (that is, to experience her 'death' in order to preserve life). After having descended into death's realm she is

better off than in her previous situation, but she remains stubbornly self-enclosed, imprisoned by her baser instincts and inert senses.

She refuses to become 'food' for other humans, choosing to preserve her flesh 'untainted' and rot in the grave to become 'the food of worms.' (PLATE 3, l. 23, E 5). She ignores the Cloud's answer 'every thing that lives, / Lives not alone, nor for itself: ...' (PLATE 3, ll. 26-7, E 5), and its irony: 'Then if thou art the food of worms. O virgin of the skies, / *How great thy use. how great thy blessing;*' (PLATE 3, ll. 25-6, E 5) (emphasis added). Thel contemplates the futility of mortal life and she assumes that there is no purpose of spiritual transcendence. Her natural beauty is the subject of Blake's allegory. Naturalness is uselessness, and she is the personification of purposeless 'beauty'. Ultimately she is not a beautiful female but an unspiritual entity.

Johnson asks some important questions about Thel. Is Thel a story illustrating the problem of Christian self-sacrifice? In my opinion, it is not because *The Book of Thel* constitutes Blake's aesthetic dilemma, whose focus is female beauty and the shape it must acquire in reality. Natural beauty is rejected and true beauty is the ideal. But what is true female beauty? Thel could be considered a female mystic, but she is not because of her inability to adore Christ who is rather her ideal, her authentic refuge, and the substitute for her death wish, which is a sexual unaccomplished desire for intercourse that would potentially lead her to purity:

Ah! Gentle may I lay me down, and gentle rest my head.
And gentle sleep the sleep of death. and gentle hear the voice
Of him that walketh in the garden in the evening time.
(PLATE I, ll. 12-4, E 3).

God and Death are related to each other. Thel desires redemption from her impurity because of her limited ability, her weakness to fight against herself, her natural 'beauty'. She pities herself and asks salvation from God. She desires death, that is sex, but she is persuaded that her naturalness will not be 'burnt up' so as to bring about her purification, which she considers a futile belief. She perceives her self-sacrifice and the state of being 'loved', as false. Thus, she denies the real 'lie'. Impurity proves stronger than deceit which is more desirable than the insecurity of sex and the shallow human relations.

Pearce contends that 'the plight of Thel is intended by Blake to be representative of the pernicious consequences for the human soul and will that flow from false religious instruction.'¹ He assumes that the teachings of Natural Religion are responsible for Thel's insubstantial identity. As he also states:

her return to the vales of Har' is the result of the negative vision of life produced and fostered by 'natural religion' whose purpose is to present the world of experience as basically untranscendable, to convince us of that, and reconcile us to the condition, whose surface seductiveness and inner brutality Blake was later to sum up in the figure of Rahab.²

Pearce's statements about forming individual identities according to deistic and rational tradition are placed within the cultural, theological context of natural religion's instructions. According to these instructions human identities are deprived of pure energy and intellect. They are human non-aesthetic beings bereft of internal

¹ Pearce, Donald. "Natural Religion and the Plight of Thel." *Blake studies* 8 (1978): 28.

² Ibid.

sexual realization, and self-knowledge. Thus, they are unable to achieve anything creative. They are fearful creatures wishing death as the ultimate solution to their suppressed instincts, desires and senses. Conversely, pure energy's release and intellect's expression contribute to human improvement that is to personal and social progress. Otherwise, the vision of eternity is blocked by the old doctrines of natural religion and reason.

At this point, it is worth mentioning Ferber's arguments that Thel is entangled in an interpersonal relationship with the Divinity and Christ:

Blake had a higher conception of Jesus as the Divine Humanity and Imagination. He saw the power of love as a redemptive and transfiguring force in nature and above it, like the Imagination, a force that could elevate the state of Generation into Beulah or even Eden.¹

The critic finds several associations between Thel and Christian Tradition, but the basic question is whether Thel (because of her natural beauty) is the Bride of Jesus. I believe that she is not because she does not view Divinity as identical to herself, as a female mystic would, but rather as the saviour, the sanctuary for her redemption. Besides, the Bride of Jesus is Jerusalem, Christ's Emanation: 'She is androgynous and represents ideal beauty, liberty and wisdom. She is the emanative portion of all humanity regardless of gender, a wholly positive force.'² Thel is not the Bride of Jesus because her helplessness renders her fragile and not decisive and strong. Jesus was a rebel not a fugitive. He did not escape death, he confronted his human nature

¹ Ferber, Michael. "Blake's Thel and the Bride of Christ." *Blake studies* 9 (1980): 53.

² Fox, Susan. "The female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry." *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Spring 1977): 518-9.

and he ruled over evil through sacrifice. He is not Thel's pattern of salvation but her imperfectly realized principle of deliverance. Ferber gives an explanation of her descent from heaven to earth:

Thel cannot bear the heat and light of God's fiery love and so she seeks the air and the river. ... this is a descent, from the empyrean realm of divine fire, through air, to water; she will end with earth. ... alienating herself from God the sun she in a sense brings about her own mortality: she gives up what Blake elsewhere calls "Eternity's sun rise" to move ever farther downward ...¹

Being is a fallen state. Thel is alienated from God due to her impurity and her descent attests that purification is true union with God and it can be attained through coitus. 'Thel cannot see, that the "use" to which she is being called is not limited by the vegetation cycle but includes a transcendent marriage to God.'² Transcendent marriage to God is a fantasy. Thel is not suitable to become the Bride of Jesus because she is repressed and not liberated. Jerusalem's will is complete annihilation of the self. Jerusalem's intelligence is wisdom. She unlike Thel is androgynous, purified and free. She is a female prototype, even more developed than Oothoon's expressiveness and revolt against her slavery.

Jerusalem is an ideal, unlikely to occur in reality, but not unattainable. Thel is a female struggling to find and form an identity in flesh. Her existence is a transient reflection on the glass of nature, a shadow in mortal reality. She does not perceive herself as a natural being, although she is a part of creation. This does not mean that

¹ Ferber, Michael. "Blake's Thel and the Bride of Christ." *Blake studies* 9 (1980): 49.

² *Ibid.*, 48.

she realizes herself as a human being. Her idealized nature is an alienated self of no use. A 'work of art' useful to be 'food of worms.' This role is a death wish. This is the way we as readers observe her, but this view of Thel is also emblematic of the dramatic effect of her 'beauty', which is detached from reality. She gives the impression that she inhabits an ideal, non-existent world that renders her a dreamlike fairy, without flesh, bones and blood.

Thel's disgust at the idea of feeding the graveworm is not only indicative of her fear of sexual experience but also clear evidence that this "virgin of the skies" has no ichor in her veins; her flesh is the ordinary kind that rots in the grave.¹

Thel is not afraid of sexual experience. She fears her impurity and the discovery of her bodily restraints and limits through sexual intercourse. Thus, her flesh is insubstantial because of its uselessness in reality, either as a prospective mother or self-sacrifice for social and useful aims.

Aesthetic perfection gives the impression of inapproachability. Objective perception misinterprets perfection, placing it in an ideal world, alienating the being from her environment. Reality has standards of conformity that Thel does not want to follow. Her withdrawal is a subjective willing retreat. It is exclusion from reality by refusing to accept convention's standards. Therefore she 'is alienated' and isolated from the external world. Her 'uniqueness' is a result of her inability to participate in life.

¹Johnson, Mary Lynn. "Beulah, "Mne Seraphim," and Blake's *THEL*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 268.

Thel's differentiation from the rest of women is introduced from the beginning of the poem. Thel is separated from the other 'daughters'. Her role among other women is 'To fade away like morning *beauty* ...' (PLATE I, l. 3, E 3) (emphasis added). Beauty alienates the self. Thel is deprived of human communication. She only communicates with natural creatures. Her natural self is unable to confront reality, albeit naturalness is herself. Instead, she takes refuge in conscious withdrawal. This is an attitude of indifference to life and a deathly passivity. The external world is seen as '... a watry vision ...', (*Jerusalem*, Ch.2, PLATE 43, [29], l.39, E 192) unintelligible and unimportant.

The argument that beauty alienates the self by enclosure and self-denial must be reconsidered in order to realize Thel's internal function and decision to retreat to the comfort of 'the vales of Har' (PLATE 6, l. 22, E 6). Thel's alienation is not selfishness or an egoistic stance against the world. It is a compelling introversion and return to the 'protectiveness' of impurity. This occurs because of female 'beauty's' inability to preserve and sustain life. Differentiation by natural beauty's standards is useless. Dependence on it proves ineffectual. Existence becomes an indifferent mode of living, meaningless and purposeless. Consequently, the self is unwilling to fight for survival in the external world. Deliberate introversion is an inner quest for truth's personal disclosure. This process is a continual esoteric state that instinctively and unconsciously blurs the mind, resulting in withdrawal from reality. Impurity is enclosure in physicality, the natural state of man.

Man is a twofold being. one part capable of evil & the other capable of good that which is capable of good is not also capable of evil. but that which is capable of evil is also capable

of good. this aphorism seems to consider man as simple & yet capable of evil. *now both evil & good cannot exist in a simple being.* for thus 2 contraries would. spring from one essence which is impossible. but if man is considered as only evil. & god only good. how then is regeneration effected which turns the evil to good. by casting out the evil. by the good. See Matthew XII. Ch. 26. 27. 28. 29 v⁵ (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, London 1788, E 594) (emphasis added).

Thel's evil part, her death wish, desires her own self-destruction. Through time the negative self is stabilized; it becomes permanent through restriction. Because of self-enclosure the individual is reluctant to offer anything to anybody. Denial to serve is a deceptive self-retreat with traumatic and pernicious results. Physical natural, 'beauty' is considered to be devil's possession. As a result, Thel belongs to 'the vales of Har' and Satan possesses her. Natural, female beauty is perceived as devilish. The paradox is that 'devilish beauty' is beauty in 'exuberance' but it denies the world because it is without perfection. If absolute perfection is not of this world what is beauty and why it must be expressed? 'Exuberance is Beauty' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 10, E 38) means vibration of the soul but exuberant beauty in reality is an incongruity. It is neither self-love nor self-alienation. It is perceived and framed as such due to isolation, because of the defiance of objectification that the self as substance resists. The image and the conscious self operate in different levels of reliance on the external world. Thel is a spiritual failure because she has no use-value. Blake considers and simultaneously doubts expressed beauty as use-value that can substantiate female identity. Thel is ugly because she is possessed by evil power:

Women it would seem from these early poems, are trapped in a reality which recognizes no female power but evil female power.¹ ... No woman in any Blake poem has both the will and the power to initiate her own salvation - not even the strongest and most independent of his women, Oothoon.²

Thel's unwillingness to live derives from her useless 'beauty'. On the contrary, use-value beauty ensures survival. Unfortunately, woman's lot compels her to exercise female will in order to exist. As Everest remarks: 'Thel denies the identity of Enitharmon's character in *Europe* (1794) who says to her children, "from her childhood shall the little female / Spread nets in every secret path."³ Thel refutes this role. Everest assumes that 'ideology defines the process by which individual subjects come to accept modes of self-definition.'⁴ This consideration renders Thel an entity excluded from social life. She is ensnared in the natural perspective of temporary, perishable beauty. Thel is self-alienated by her evil power, and she expresses disruption in her identity which is evident in her speech:

Thel speaks of herself repeatedly in the third person, or as one observed, as for example in 'Why should the mistress of the vales of Har, utter a sigh' (E 4) or 'without a use this shinning woman liv'd'. (E 5). She seems wary of delivering herself up to the order of language by accepting identification through which the autonomous individual disappears into the system of differences of the language. Language as the primary social order is indeed the chief agent of those modes of social being whose interpellations Thel feels nervous about.⁵

¹ Fox, Susan. "The female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry." *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Spring 1977): 512.

² *Ibid.*, 513.

³ Everest, K. D. "Thel's Dilemma." *Essays in Criticism* 37 (1987): 197.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

Thel's speech is indicative of the crisis in her personality because of lack of identity and dependence on impurity and vanity. In addition her speech in the third person verifies loss of contact with her consciousness. It also expresses her inability to directly relate to the external world. Third person speech is indirect existence. Not living in the I of self-fulfillment. She is not the self-centred girl on the verge of womanhood. It is not her selfishness that gets her into trouble and prevents her from experiencing life. 'These leaps between third and first person are in one respect devices of characterization, showing what some readers consider to be Thel's attitudinising and infantilism.'¹ Mitchell also supports the same view. 'Her self-objectification is exhibited in her frequent references to herself in the third person (also a sign of infantilism)'.² The argument that beauty alienates the self is verified by Thel's speech which proves her self-objectification. She retains for herself an infantile relation to the external world that does not offer her anything substantial.

Communication is a social necessity. Thel resides in her own natural reality excluded from the human, social world. She is also uninterested in anything that surrounds her, since all existence is corrupted and futile. Her impure hypostasis is her only shelter, but it also confirms her desperate effort to exist without female power. 'She talks to herself in the third person throughout, conceiving her role as that of a sensitive soul - tender, forlorn, easily moved to tears - and this role determines not only her thoughts of herself but her response to other creatures.'³ Thel's alienation reveals her failure as natural, also as use-value 'beauty'.

¹ Wilkie, Brian. *Blake's Thel and Oothoon*. (English Literary Studies. University of Victoria, 1990), 65.

² Mitchell, W. J. T. *Blake's Composite Art*. (Princeton: Princeton, 1978), 90.

³ Gillham, D. G. *William Blake*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1973), 117.

In 'the world of vegetation and generation' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543) she must acquire a feminine identity and perform her role as a mother. Her unwillingness to act these two, will lead her to madness. Wilkie assumes 'that identity and role are not synonymous; they are antonyms. Thel fails to distinguish between identity and role. This fact is one of the most poignant or perverse about Thel.'¹ In fact, she is reluctant to perform any role in reality. Her identity is her 'beautiful' existence. For her, identity and role are undifferentiated, due to her impure energy.

Wilkie also considers that the vehicle through which Blake explores the themes of growth and identity, is sex treated in three aspects. One is interpersonal physical sex. At the other extreme is Blake's exploration through sex of sociological and political issues and between these two extremes, sex is a measure of the individual's total growth, of search for an identity that transcends physical sex while remaining intimate, personal, erotically tinted.²

In my opinion, the most important aspect concerning sexuality is the middle ground, 'how sex can work as a half-symbolic motive in the individual consciousness.'³ Is Thel's retreat a 'death' out of sexual starvation? Thel 'dies' consciously. Her withdrawal is because of the ambiguity of her natural state, impurity and the uncertainty of a future liberation from her poisonous, tainted sexuality. She is pessimistic about her prospective purity but not mistakenly. Blake does not explicitly or didactically declare that 'the more active and extroverted are human sex lives, the

¹ Wilkie, Brian. *Blake's Thel and Oothoon*. (English Literary Studies. University of Victoria, 1990), 63.

² *Ibid.*, 73.

³ *Ibid.*

better and healthier people are, mentally and spiritually.’¹ He rather presents identities’ complexities that arise from the conduct of individual sexuality:

Thel and Oothoon dramatise, in different ways, how sex can operate in a psychologically limiting way, how it can take on, in individual minds a meaning that distracts from or impairs an accurate sense of oneself. These things can happen when sex takes a distorted imaginative form or looms too exclusively as a measure of one’s essential worth.²

Her experience of the world is seclusion in impurity and simultaneously withdrawal from it, seeking refuge in a vague God who actually is her death. She desires to unite with Him without having acquired self-knowledge and experience through contact with the realities of others. The salient point of her alienation is her belief that without human interaction and establishment of relative communication, specifically communication with the realities of other humans, she will fulfill her destiny. Thel is unable to establish a ground of common meaning with the actual world because her intellect hinders her realization. She cannot understand what she is supposed to do to confront indirectness in human contact and the constructed reality of human interaction.

Constructed reality is a lie to which she refuses to submit. She cannot live the lie of dutiful ‘beauty’, preferring her natural ‘truth’. Therefore, she is unable to live. Thel rationalizes the inherent meaningless of existence. Johnson comments that ‘Thel is mortal and useless because she feeds only worms at her death. She associates use with death for the same reason that she associates eternity with death: she is trapped

¹ Ibid., 74.

² Ibid.

by futurity.’¹ She has abandoned faith in her will to construct her meaning rather than passively accepting mortality. As a result, she cannot consciously find a meaning in life, acquire an identity and perform a role. Her speech is the speech of an alienated being that has lost contact with ‘reality’s lie’ verifying her sham identification with the false, constructed world.

Is she a ‘foolish virgin’ or the ‘intelligent’ beauty? In fact Thel is neither. She suffers the consequences of sexual ignorance, her ‘innocence’ (presumably) and her moral ‘weakness’. According to Blake, impurity produces a negative attitude to life. Thel denies sexual death that gives life. She consciously makes a ‘reasonable’ but fatal decision to remain impure that is naturally beautiful, preserving her negativity and immaturity. She does not accept that immortality is entangled with purification which requires experience.

The solution to her predicament is to learn the lesson of the Sick Rose and the Lilly of the Songs of Experience: ‘O Rose thou are sick. / The invisible worm, / That flies in the night / In the howling storm: / Has found out thy bed / Of crimson joy: / And his dark secret love / Does thy life destroy.’ (E 23). The Sick Rose teaches Thel the unavoidability of being ‘eaten’ and exposes her denial of useful ‘beauty’. Similarly the Lilly: ‘The modest Rose puts forth a thorn: / The humble Sheep, a threatening horn: While the Lilly white, shall in Love delight, / Nor a thorn nor a threat stain her beauty bright.’, (E 25) advises Thel that impurity is embedded in purity, and although purity generates impurity (rose - thorn, sheep - horn), ironically the white Lilly will remain pure, ‘in love’s delight’ and beauty’s unstained brightness.

¹ Johnson, Mary Lynn. “Beulah, “Mne Seraphim,” and Blake’s *THEL*.” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 268.

Blake is puzzled about the duplicity of naturalness. The whiteness of the Lilly is due to its natural beauty. In addition the irony of 'thorn, threat, stain and beauty bright' reveals how mistrustful are appearances. On the other hand, 'beauty bright' is the Lilly's beauty proper. Neither Thel nor the lilly can deny their naturalness. The lilly's whiteness is the evidence of love and love's pleasure. It is purity, beauty, a mere aesthetic value but woman's survival requires female will. Thel is unaware of both teachings. She is unenlightened and unintelligent, inexperienced and realistic. She incorrectly believes that her retreat from the material world is spirituality. Impurity will not help her to reach union with God and immortality. Immortality depends on sexual experience, suffering and self-sacrifice.

Another issue, which relates to Thel's dilemma and elucidates her denunciation of use-value 'beauty', is that of the senses, which is directly associated with aesthetics. The argument that Thel represents the aesthetic indifference and belongs to the repressed, ugly woman is justified in her grave plot by the voice which speaks the abuse of the senses and reveals her incapacity to direct them towards useful purposes:

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile?
Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!
Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright.
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy?
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?

The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek.
Fled back unhinderd till she came into the vales of Har
(PLATE 6, ll. 11-22, E 6).

Thel's inability of communication is due to her inadequate senses to imaginatively perceive the real world. Knowledge is attained through sensory perception. Senses are 'the chief inlets of Soul in this age' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34) and the avenues of all knowledge. Thel's insight is a matter of opening of her senses and disengaging from the reflective Lockean perception. Her senses are the 'unpurified' finite sensory organs of perception, untouched by intellect and the redemptive power of imagination. Closed senses and rigid selfhood are impurity, natural beauty. But are her seclusion, isolation, alienation and worldly withdrawal due to the enclosure of her senses? Thel's predicament involves her liberation from the limits of the senses. If they are bound, beauty is trapped in naturalness. If they are freely expressed, beauty constitutes the true aesthetic experience of infinite perfection. Eternity is accomplished by the liberation of the senses. The voice from the grave with the questions that it puts is a contemplation about the organs of perception as contributors to a non-existent aesthetic experience. When senses are restricted, they are not oriented towards the aesthetic. Restrained and deadened by the necessities of mundane reality, they compound fruitlessness and alienation.

Therefore, in the fallen world, sexuality is irrelevant to senses's liberation, that is experiencing life sensually, but '... a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!' and '... a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire.' (PLATE 6, ll. 19-20, E 6). Blake hints at 'ungratified desires' which are the source of complexes and the discontents of culture. He also describes their dullness and frailty. He does not refer to sexual

perversions but psychic restrictions generated by sexual inhibitions. Self-knowledge is knowledge of the inner voice of the body, its wishes and its sensual indulgence. Restriction proves stronger than the positive will to act out desires. Confining the self brings about indifference to life and a preoccupation with death and inactivity. Inertia is not use-value, and Thel favoured apathy, stillness and stagnation instead of an active life. She does not dispute the 'use' of her existence:

Thel's vision revealed in the voice from her grave plot, insists that the ordinary operations of the senses are sources of horror.¹ ... It also expresses Thel's desire and a sense of passivity and of victimization by sex and by males.²

Her dead voice heard from the grave, thinks exclusively in terms of the body, enumerating and describing the senses, including the sexual 'sense', but says nothing of the divine or eternal.³

The focus of Thel's crisis is her inability to find gratification through coitus. The core of her psychic development is centred here. Is this a matter of dead senses and restrained sexuality? Is it because of her self-alienation? Neither parental conflicts and influences nor her state of impurity can provide a sufficient explanation. Blake emphasizes the importance of beauty in connection to the subject of the senses. In *The Book of Thel* he seems persuaded that enclosed senses are responsible for the failure of human purity:

¹ Wilkie, Brian. *Blake's Thel and Oothoon*. (English Literary Studies, 1990): 48.

² *Ibid.*, 114.

³ Gillham, D.G. *William Blake*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973), 187.

The senses interpret the world according to what we are,¹ ... if they could be closed the human soul could not exist or come into existence; only human senses operating in a human being could give rise to human thoughts and perceptions, and the quality of the senses will vary with the quality of the individual who exercises them.²

Thel contemplates various unimportant and inessential questions about the sensory organs. She wonders why the senses are used to serve wrong purposes whereas they should be organs of physical and mental liberation. The Ear, Eye, Tongue, Nostril suffer enclosure with the subsequent results: Cruelty has a Human Heart / And Jealousy a Human Face / Terror, the Human Form Divine / And Secrecy, the Human Dress / The Human Dress, is forged Iron / The Human Form, a fiery Forge. / The Human Face, a Furnace seal'd / The Human Heart, its hungry Gorge.' (*Songs of Experience*, A Divine Image, E 32). Since reality is fallen, Thel is right in rejecting the world of experience. But in the ideal world of innocence: ... Mercy has a human heart / Pity, a human face: / And Love, the human form divine, / And Peace, the human dress. ... Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell, / There God is dwelling too. (*Songs of Innocence*, The Divine Image, E 12).

'The senses protect the individual and they involve him in his world; they make participation possible but do so by shaping that with which we participate, so that we are both formed by our world and yet form what it is.'³ But senses fail to define the human situation. Their inclusion is not so important as the limitations set upon the

¹ Ibid., 189.

² Ibid., 187-8.

³ Ibid., 191.

instinct. 'Blake's questions about the senses finish with reference to the sexual parts of man.'¹ Communication, contact and interaction ensure life's vitality. 'Acts of love, like other acts of participation, involve the whole being and are simultaneously an intensification of the self and a giving up of the self.'² Thel is unaware of this knowledge.

The "voice of sorrow" (Thel's own voice, really, since it comes from her grave), expresses her general alienation from her body, its senses and sexual drives. The senses are seen as breaches in the defences of the self through which beguiling, destructive forces may enter, or as offensive weapons designed for the entrapment and destruction of others. Male sexuality is seen as repressed by "a tender curb," and female sexuality is shrouded in mystery by "a little curtain of flesh."³

Bogen assumes that:

... the landscape of the place that Thel visits is to an otherworld of evil spirits, or a hell. ... The inhabitants of the land are in a lamentable condition; and, though they are not diabolical, there is a general lack of love and wisdom in the land, for the voice from the grave complains of the prevalence of malice ("destruction" to the "Ear") and dissimulation ("poison" to the "Eye"). And the voice goes on to particularize, enumerating seven faults or sins: veiled hostility ("Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn, / Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie" flaunting ("an Eye of gifts & graces. show'ring fruits & coined gold" cunning ("Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind" shallow or unappreciative listening ("an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in" fear ("a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling &

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Mitchell, W. J. T. *Blake's Composite Art*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 90-1.

affright” excessive modesty (“a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy”) and sexual abstinence (“a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire”). ... Thel acts like any visitor to a hell: she sees, she wanders, she listens, and she waits in silence.¹

In the mundane world the forces of evil suppress the human personality. The external world is mistakenly perceived as a real, substantial world. It is deprived of imagination and spirituality. For many humans senses do not function as organs of imaginative perception but as mere receptors of the natural reality. Naturalness is life's lie. Man believes that the external world is the only actual existence. It is not, because imagination can modify and improve natural reality. It can also bring about moral transformation and spiritual illumination. Bogen asserts that ‘... the voice from the grave seems to say that this world can be different, for the key word of its message is *why* - why is man (symbolized by the eyelid, eye, tongue, ear and nostril) so full of hostility, flaunting, cunning, shallow listening, and fear? Why is he so modest? And why does he restrict himself by religious laws’² and why, I would add, does he prefers pity and fear, the superficiality and frivolity of human relations, ‘a little curtain of flesh’ that is dismal contact and mere expediency in human communication? The answer to these questions is provided by the condition of what we call love in the fallen world: The look of love alarms / Because tis filld with fire / But the look of soft deceit / Shall Win the lovers hire / Soft deceit & Idleness / These are Beautys sweetest dress. (*Several Questions Answerd*, E 474).

¹ Bogen, Nancy. ed. *William Blake, The Book of Thel, A Facsimile and a Critical Text*. (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 27.

² *Ibid.*, 28.

Mitchell talks about “a sweet crime” meaning that while this love destroys its victims, it also showers on them “fruits and coined gold,” and impresses their senses with “honey from every wind” ¹. Thel seems aware of this, which is why she is not innocent but sexually ignorant and uncertain about her moral transformation. Her unwillingness to become use-value ‘beauty’ arises from her inherent belief that this kind of female fulfillment in the world of ‘vegetation and generation’ is meaningless and futile. Beauty is lost in experience. It becomes ‘dead senses’, which contribute nothing to the self, apart from alienation and the creation of an egocentric identity.

The subject of Thel’s doubting selfhood is central to constructing her identity, but, as I stated (see page 185), she is not the self-centred female who obstinately denies life.

Thel uses her reasoning power to retreat from and evade experience, and instead of finding herself she creates what Blake was later to call the “Selfhood” or “spectre”, an “abstract objecting power” which reduces the contraries of life to negations, and objectifies the human self to itself. ... Since Thel’s world is defined as constant flux, any particular objectification of the self is doomed.² ... Blake’s concept of selfhood in his later poems is treated not as an unambiguous source of evil but as a necessary part of the structure of consciousness.³

By making Thel’s journey include an exploration of her own “after life,” Blake removes this escape, forcing us to decide whether Thel’s dilemma is soluble in concrete, human terms, or is simply an unavoidable element in human nature.⁴

Mitchell proposes that:

¹ Mitchell, W. J. T. *Blake’s Composite Art*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 93.

² *Ibid.*, 90.

³ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

Thel must be willing to give up her Selfhood or ego and construct a new self.¹

“Self - annihilation” does not mean the permanent abolition of Selfhood; it is the prelude to the creation of a *new* Selfhood which will serve the imagination.²

The concept of self-annihilation will be developed later in Jerusalem, where the self's negative aspects will be subdued for the sake of creative work and art: ‘Ultimately the Selfhood and his brethren, the Spectre, the Elect, Urizen, and Satan, are to be “reclaimed” and compelled to assist in his work “thou my Spectre art divided against me. But mark / I will compell thee to assist me in my terrible labours”.’³ Thel is unable and unwilling to subdue her spectre, her negative self, but she has good reasons for her decision. It is questionable, though, whether she is right according to her own perspective or not. Actually, she needs a new self-identity. She asks for a sheltered, protected personality, clothed by the creative imagination and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If becoming use-value can provide these, where beauty is a ‘willingness to offer up her body, literally as fertilizer, symbolically as a Eucharistic sacrifice for others, sexually as a shameless offering to another, and just possibly as a martyr for love or principle’⁴ is doubtful but desirable.

Blake discloses Thel's self-destruction through her descent into the realm of hell and her wilful choice of impurity, to embrace death forever. Thel devours herself, ‘... one savourily picking the flesh off of his own tail; ...’ (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 20, E 42). Being devoured by herself means that she is a sacrificial victim

¹ Ibid., 94.

² Ibid., 91.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 94.

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living in eternal death. The state of natural beauty is the unfulfilled female who suffers in earthly 'goodness', unable to have power over her impure self. According to her perception of the natural world her choice of death is correct. But being devoured by herself, she remains unproductive. The question about the preference of 'false', natural or useful 'beauty' still puzzles readers and remains an enigma.

Mitchell wonders: What is it that Thel has learned from the voice of her own "buried self"? Also, 'Thel has "rejected error," but what truth must she embrace?'¹ I believe that Thel has listened to the voice of her body; she is self-conscious and she has denied purity and moral transformation. The error that she has rejected is reality's lie. The truth that she embraces is the natural state of man. These thoughts direct us to consider Mitchell's argument about the absence of God from the "eternal vales". As he comments: 'Thel discovers the world of fallen Eros because that parent ... turns out not to be there, or anywhere else, and because she sees that the belief in this illusory deity was at the root of the problem all along.'²

Pierce attributes Thel's plight to false religious instructions, to Natural Religion but Mitchell progresses further, writing that: 'Thel's entrance into the earth's household is a proof that the nourishing, just, and merciful deity to whom her fate is in his hands, this god does not exist.'³ He also asserts that: 'Thel's shriek, at the end of the poem, may be a cry of pain at this basic discovery, or it may be something more, a recognition that the vision of repressed, destructive sexuality she has witnessed is not "a world she never made," but a product of her reliance on that father - god.'⁴

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 93.

⁴ Ibid.

Both arguments are indicative of Thel's faithlessness. She knows but is not conscious of the existence of God. Is impurity irrelevant to God? Obviously, the answer would be affirmative; but on the contrary, it is erroneously associated with Satan. These are theological explanations of Thel's state, but I think that the focal point of her problem is her reluctance to become use-value because of her unimaginative perception of human life. As Mitchell correctly remarks: '... to Thel's Selfhood the erotic awakening of the senses is inseparable from the threat of annihilation, and so she sees only "a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in."'¹ Thel is bereft of seriousness which is achieved through the resolution of negations and the expression of pure energy that define true beauty. Consequently, she remains immature, playing the amusing, carefree, superficial game of sexuality (like the children riding the snake in the last plate) experiencing life through impurity and childlike ignorance. But she is happy in 'the vales of Har'. Her identity is impurity that is ugliness through which she preserves her purity. Her senses are closed and submitted to evil, to 'Har', to psychic death. She entirely controls her blocked senses (which potentially can open to experience life) but she consciously prefers not to allow this to happen.

¹ Ibid., 105.

The answers to the series of the questions concerning the senses are given in the corresponding text of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) throwing light on Thel's unresolved mystery. Bogen remarks that some critics suspect that 'Thel's flight back to 'the vales of Har' occurs because of a flaw in her character.'¹ This implies that instinct prevails over the senses and reveals the reason for Thel's unwillingness and inability to enter the world of experience.

With what sense is it that the chicken shuns the ravenous hawk?
With what sense does the tame pigeon measure out the expanse?
With what sense does the bee form cells? 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*:
Ask the wild ass why he refuses burdens: and the meek camel
Why he loves man: is it because of eye, ear, mouth, or skin
Or breathing nostrils? *No. for these the wolf and tyger have.*
Ask the blind worm the secrets of the grave, and why her spires
Love to curl round the bones of death; and ask the rav'nous snake
Where she gets poison: & the wing'd eagle why he loves the sun
And then tell me the thoughts of man, that have been hid of old.
(emphasis added) (PLATE 3, ll. 2-11, E 47).

.....
Does the whale worship at thy footsteps as the hungry dog?
Or does he scent the mountain prey, because his nostrils wide
Draw in the ocean? does his eye discern the flying cloud
As the ravens eye? or does he measure the expanse like the vulture?

Does the still spider view the cliffs where eagles hide their young?
Or does the fly rejoice. because the harvest is brought in?
Does not the eagle scorn the earth & despise the treasures beneath?
But the mole knoweth what is there, & the worm shall tell it thee.

¹ Bogen, Nancy. ed. *William Blake The Book of Thel A facsimile and a Critical Text*. (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 16.

Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering church yard?
(PLATE 5, ll. 33-41, E 49).

And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave
Over his porch these words are written. Take thy bliss O Man!
And sweet shall be thy taste & sweet thy infant joys renew!’
(PLATE 6, ll. 1-3, E 49).

The above excerpt does not only refer to instinct, which determines individual forms, but it also presents Blake’s attitude towards the aesthetic although he cannot be considered an aesthete in the strict sense of the word. In his work the aesthetic natural perception and appreciation of the world of appearances has been substituted for primitivism in connection with individual intellect. This is the early stage of the development of Blake’s thought, where energy is the starting point of his quest. This period is dominated by primitivism but later Blake abandons his query about sensual matters, considering energy an aesthetic idea of minor importance compared to the ‘Sublime of Imagination.’ Blake’s primitivism and his later scepticism about the senses, is another reason why energy cannot be considered sublime. Bogen contends that:

these lines – “Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy,
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire”? – are clearly
a call for sexual freedom and breaking’, a theme that dominates the
works of the early 1790’s, like *Songs of Experience* and *Vision of
the Daughters of Albion*. Since those lines are preceded by the
passage on the corruption of the senses ..., Blake may well have
deleted them to give more emphasis to the passage, the idea being
that particular forms of restraint, like sexual inhibition, are
included in the general condemnation of restraint. On the other
hand, he may have recognised the inconsistency of following the
general condemnation with complaint about particular forms of

restraint. Similar passages on the senses are found in later works: The Eye of Man, a little narrow orb, clos'd up & dark, / Scarcely beholding the Great Light; conversing with the [Void]: ¹ The Ear, a little shell, in small volutions shutting out / True Harmonies, & comprehending great, as very small: / The Nostrils, bent down to the earth & clos'd with senseless flesh / That odours cannot them expand, nor joy on them exult: / The Tongue, a little moisture fills, a little food it cloys, / A little sound it utters, & its cries are faintly heard. ... omit specific reference to the sexual. Blake never lost his antipathy to organised religion and the inhibited wretches that it spawned, but sometime after the turn of the century ultimate value and the possibility of fulfilment shifted in his work away from the objective world and its delights to imagination and eternity.¹

The text from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, presents the power of the instinct and the relevant importance of the senses to contribute to the creation of the human aesthetic. Every particular form is unique and instinctual. Thel's personality schism, 'the flaw in her character,' is due to her drive of *thanatos*, (θάνατος) which will certainly lead her to social exclusion, even paranoia, if she does not find a way to fulfill herself. If her *thanatos* drive, her impurity is not sublimated to *eros* (έρως), that is purity, in order to perform works of art, her destiny is the hermaphroditic² and not the androgynous female. In essence, her beauty as death drive is not beauty. It is insanity and leads to madness, 'Thel's "suicide" '³ as Fisher claimed. Her death drive is self-poisonous and self-destructive. She lacks the strength to transform her *thanatos* instinct into creativity, due to her dependence on impurity. At least, she saw her

¹ Ibid., 8.

² Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 181.

³ Bogen, Nancy. ed. *William Blake The Book of Thel. A facsimile and a Critical Text*. (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 16-7.

grave plot and made her choice. But this choice renders her a tragic female figure. Unable to compromise and accept the fallen reality she is consciously given to impurity, to madness, the happy hallucination of 'the vales of Har.' Possessed by the 'urizenic' god of nature, she is prevented from exploring and realizing her limits. It will take her a long time to understand the truth or falsity of her decision.

If, on the other hand, she is able to escape from madness, it may be too late, for the reason that she did not offer life a chance, or she was persuaded of the futility of any chance offered to her, in the fallen world. Thel mistrusts experience. She refuses self-deception or being trapped by herself by giving in to utility and the real world. Her instinct is a matter of speculation, because the core of her willing return to impurity is her desire to remain in naturalness instead of accepting the traditional female standards. To preserve her original state, she chose impurity, where her uselessness defines her identity.

At this stage of Blake's exploration of the aesthetic category of the beautiful, he contemplates on impurity's necessity in order to define the feminine aesthetic. There is no total negation of naturalness. There is only his ambivalence about beauty's value as merely aesthetic, and use-value as the beauty proper for women. However, he is puzzled by this uncertainty, and he seems to cling to evaluate female beauty as use-value, but without specifying a conclusive context to resolve this ambiguity. Thel's beauty is a moral issue and an aesthetic problem. Her identity, ethical quality is the repressed woman who is not beautiful; she belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly. The reasons for her return to Har are obscure but justified because her choice is against use-value 'beauty' which apparently is not beauty. Thel resists objectification

that is the traditional woman's destiny. If impurity is preferable to objectification is a matter of personal choice. Thel is sexually dead and not a useful woman. Her unrefined senses are responsible for her unfulfilled fate.

Returning to Blake's ideas about the role of the senses and the instinct in human personality, it could be argued that he values senses as indispensable for human evolution since he integrates them with energy and intellect. He also expresses their association with religion, philosophy and art. As far as conventional religion is concerned, he criticizes Milton in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: 'But in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses. & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!' (PLATE 5, E 35). He also considers 'Praise of Atheism' and a 'Pretence to Religion to destroy Religion' (his answers to Bacon), the traditional beliefs about sense as the following excerpts indicate:

... Atheism *leaves* a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; ... (Annotations to Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical and Political*, London, 1798, E 626).

The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work, ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. (Annotations to Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical and Political*, London, 1798, E 621).

He supposes that senses are entangled in learning not as mere natural organs which facilitate the process, but as implements to explore the transcendental perception of the divine beyond nature. This approach is attainable through the redemptive power of imagination. The space that Blake envisions for the senses is the abyss and the infinite. He assumes that his present world and 'home' was 'the abyss of the five

senses' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 35) where 'a mighty Devil ... wrote the following sentence now perceived by the minds of men, & read by them on earth: How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 35).

The subject of the senses is an inquiry from the part of 'a mighty Devil', who doubts the traditional philosophy of sensual space of restriction, showing the 'immense delight' that bodily senses can provide, if they are released. His visionary aesthetic takes an ethical stance in opposition to the social rules of institutional religion and moral law. Liberated energy defines 'states' and offers the immense delight of creation: 'The Four senses are the Four Faces of Man & the Four Rivers of the Water of Life'. (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 663). 'And the Four Zoa's who are the Four Eternal Senses of Man ...' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 32 [36], l. 31, E 178).

However, 'in a finite organical perception' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 12, E 38) senses are inactive and the external world is observed 'thro' ' the 'narrow chinks of ' man's 'cavern'. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 14, E 39). The visionary prophet, having the perception of the infinite, as 'Isaiah answer'd', knows that the voice of God surpasses the given limits of the senses that humans, as natural beings, experience:

I saw no God. nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded. & remain confirm'd; that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I

cared not for consequences, but wrote. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 12, E 38).

Senses can open to the infinite beyond physical perception. In secular life, though, the contraction and expansion of (flexible) senses set the limits of human abilities. Male and female 'forms' adjust to material reality. Blake defines the orb, the closed system, which is the circumference of imperfect human potentialities. The senses are closed in an orb, determining the fixed time and space of life: '... For in their orb'd senses within clos'd up they wander'd at will ...' (*The Four Zoas*: Night the Ninth, PAGE 126 {IX 358-94}, l. 25, E 395). The quote refers to Luvah and Vala describing male and female relationship as they '... descended & enter'd the Gates of Dark Urthona ...' (*The Four Zoas*: Night the Ninth, PAGE 126 {IX 358-94}, l. 18, E 395). But even in the isolated reality of experience, conscious human will realizes its limits and attempts to surpass the given restrictions:

Let the Human Organs be kept in their perfect Integrity
At will Contracting into Worms, or Expanding into Gods
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 55, ll. 36-7, E 205)

.....
... for tho we sit down within / The plow'd furrow, listning
to the weeping clods till we Contract or Expand Space at
will: or if we raise ourselves / Upon the chariots of the
morning. Contracting or Expanding Time! ... (*Jerusalem*,
Ch. 3, PLATE 55, ll. 42-5, E 205).

Between the abyss, which is contraction, and expansion that is the infinite, there is the orb of seclusion. The orb, the circumference is the cycle of mortality and fatality. Thel prefers contraction out of fear of growth and development. She mistrusts the

sensory organs of perception, and her senses are restricted. Thus, she is abandoned to baser instincts. Exuberant beauty requires open sensual abilities for the creation of the aesthetic experience: '... Driving outward the Body of Death in an Eternal Death & Resurrection / Awaking it to Life among the Flowers of Beulah rejoicing in Unity In the Four Senses in the Outline the Circumference & Form, for ever ...' (*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE 98, ll. 20-2, E 257). Without the outline of utility, which is ordained by necessity, Thel will be driven to insanity. Disruption of the aesthetic experience occurs when the senses are agitated: '... When the senses / Are shaken, and the soul is driven to madness, / Who can stand? ...' (*Prologue*, Intended for a dramatic piece of King Edward the Fourth, E 439).

Thel's shriek and unhindered return to death is due to her anxiety for her participation in experience as a useful female. She is restless because of her denial to objectify herself in matter and actualize her feminine identity. Her intellect is not sufficient enough to make her realize how to use her senses and acquire profitable understanding of the world. This understanding is material perception of life, which Thel totally rejects with her rational abilities. Lavater claimed: 'Sense seeks and finds the thought; the thought seeks and finds genius.' Blake replied: '& vice. versa. genius finds thought without seek^g & thought thus, producd finds sense'. (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, London 1788, E 594) 'Demonstration is only by bodily Senses.' (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 604) and Thel desires to demonstrate nothing. Entrapped in her enclosed senses she experiences death by rationalizing existence. Sensuality is a matter of liberation of the senses of which Thel is ignorant and unaware. She only possesses

‘... a finite organical perception’ through which she perceives the external world. Her naturalness signifies her surrender to evil from which she is unable to escape.

Thought and sense interrelate through intellectuality; genius employs thinking and senses. But Thel is not involved in this process of understanding. She feels and comprehends naturalness. She is unresponsive to any perception beyond the natural. Spiritual transformation is not worth her attention. Her disbelief in eternal life is her earthly death. This death is due to the disorder of her conscious thinking and sensing of reality. Persisting in her naturalness, she safeguards her ‘sterling character’¹ (as a mere aesthetic value) from ‘all contagious taints’. (PLATE 2, 1.7, E 4). Instead of prioritizing life through impurity, which she considers violation of her soul, she chooses to remain in death rather than be debased by more impurity, ambiguous pure transformation and urizenic ‘love’. Blake’s ideas about the function of the senses in perception are developed in *There is No Natural Religion*:

‘Man’... Naturally he is only a natural organ subject to Sense.
(*There is No Natural Religion* [a], E 2).

The desires & perceptions of man untaught by any thing but
organs of sense, must be limited to objects of sense. (E 2).

However,

Mans perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. *he perceives more than sense* (tho’ ever so acute) can discover.
(*There is No Natural Religion* [b], E 2) (emphasis added).

.....
The desire of Man being Infinite the possession is Infinite &
himself Infinite (*There is No Natural Religion* [b], E 3).

¹Ibid., 19.

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 (E 3).

Starting from man perceived as a natural organ subject to sense, Blake concludes that sense organs are not confined to external stimulation. If senses are open to the infinite through imagination man's mental abilities are immense. The infinite, or God, is attained in the total aesthetic experience, the becoming one with Him. In this sense, Thel is entirely out of the context of the aesthetic, because of the seclusion of her senses, which produces her death. Her death instinct leads her to experience a living death closing the orb of mortality by excluding utility; thus, forming the natural aesthetic. Usefulness would perhaps have provided a frame to include her identity. Infinite perception is the step beyond the senses. 'Intellectual powers' is the means for the shaping of the instinct, a process of maturation that she did not allow to occur. In fact, even if she had chosen utility, the orb could have devoured her in its closed system where dissatisfaction, even despair, would be her destiny. Urizen would allow her to experience life as a half-dead or half-alive female. Experience means suffering. For her, impurity is preferable to utility. To avoid this, she chooses death.

Closed senses are death:

[*seen even by mortal men: / Who call it Fancy, & shut the gates of sense, & in their chambers, / Sleep like the dead.*] (*America a Prophecy*, PLATE C (as revised) ll. 21-3, E 59)

...The Senses inward rush'd shrinking, / Beneath the dark net of infection. ... (*The First Book of Urizen*, Chap: IX, ll. 29-30, E 82).

... On a vast rock, perciev'd by those senses that are clos'd from thought: ... (*Europe a Prophecy*, PLATE 12, l. 8, E 64)

Till a Philosophy of five senses was complete / Urizen wept &
gave it into the hands of Newton & Locke ... (*The Song of Los*,
PLATE 4, ll. 16-7, E 68).

These are the results of the restriction of the senses, the barren ground of philosophy, natural religion, the strict code of art without inspiration and vision. The creation of the Selfhood, 'One Great Satan,' (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 39 [44], l. 58, E 140) is due to sealed senses which are responsible for restricted human perception. It is the state that is so effectively described in *Jerusalem*, (Ch. 2, PLATE 49, ll. 36-41, E 198), the excerpt that Bogen cites to support her view on Blake's ideas of sexual inhibition and restraint. (see page 200). Enclosure of the senses is the death of the aesthetic. Beauty cannot be conceived without liberation of the senses, which contribute to the imaginative restoration of the world that surrounds us.

In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Blake presents another version of the aesthetic, emphasizing the importance of instinct where he states: 'The Eye sees more than the Heart knows' (E 45) meaning that sense is capable of profound knowledge beyond the external phenomenal perception. Oothoon who outspokenly declares 'Sweetest the fruit that the worm feeds on' (PLATE 3, l. 17, E 47) is given to exploitation, human consumption and utilization without thinking of impurity and death. She does not care for her lovers. Why should she care for the rapist Bromion or Theotormon who jealously and indifferently rejects her? Thel is the representation of the denial of utility, whereas Oothoon experiences reality instinctively, without consideration of loss or profit. Her perception is humane and her desires corporeal, and substantial. Through her liberated bodily senses she achieves survival but not female fulfillment. As Vernon Lattin writes: 'Oothoon's tragedy is greater: she returns to a state of

dependency and loneliness because, although she comprehends truth and rejects her given role as submissive woman, she is unable to unite *energy and vision* and thus becomes a liberated woman *in words only*.¹ (emphasis added). She does not dispute God's existence or absence because she has acknowledged and incorporated Urizen's laws, in order to fight against him. She confronts reason by using its 'weapons.' She is strong and independent, but her female force is diminished, when compared with urizenic omnipotence. In this sense, she cannot be considered an adequate representation of the beautiful for the simple reason that the unfettered expression of her desires does not render her morally acceptable. She is useful, she cannot be categorized as aesthetically indifferent like Thel, but she is not beautiful.

In 1793 beauty, and female beauty in particular, still remains Blake's quest. Later in his career, when imagination permeates his prophetic aspiration and the 'Sublime of Imagination' conceptualizes his vision, he discovers Jerusalem, the ideal beauty, 'the Center, unapproachable for ever', (*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 12, l. 56, E 156), who is the representation of total spirituality. Perhaps, Thel's beauty, which springs from her naturalness, is the nucleus of the development of female identity. Oothoon is the useful but unfulfilled female. She is Thel's seeming contrary, but misleading in the sense that Thel is right in her choice of aesthetic naturalness and wrong because she resists the challenge of utility. Jerusalem who is spirituality, integrates the cycle of perfect aesthetic completion.

Vala is natural, material, reasoning power, satanic holiness, self-righteousness, uncircumcised selfishness, moral pride (virgin - harlot), mother of war, the religion of

¹ Vernon, Lattin E. "Blake's Thel and Oothoon: Sexual awakening in the eighteenth century." *Literary Criterion* 16 (1981): 13.

chastity, mystery and jealousy, in short deceptive beauty.¹ She establishes division and represents falsity, the split of body and soul:

(For Vala produc'd the Bodies. Jerusalem gave the Souls)
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 18, l. 7, E 163).

A False Feminine Counterpart Lovely of Delusive Beauty
Dividing & Uniting at will in the Cruelties of Holiness / Vala
drawn down into a Vegetated body now triumphant / The
Synagogue of Satan Clothed her with Scarlet robes & Gems / And
on her forehead was her name written in blood Mystery ... (*The
Four Zoas*, Night the Eighth, PAGE 109 [105], ll. 11-5, E 378).

.....
The Synagogue Created her from Fruit of Urizens tree / By
devilish arts abominable unlawful unutterable / Perpetually
vegetating in detestable births / Of *Female forms beautiful* thro
poisons hidden in secret / Which give a tincture to *false beauty*
then was hidden within / The bosom of Satan / The *false Female* as
in an ark & veil / Which christ must rend & her reveal ... (*The
Four Zoas*, Night the Eighth, PAGE 109 [105], ll. 20-6, E 378).
(emphasis added)

Jerusalem and Vala are born together: 'Heaven & Hell are born together.'
(Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E
609). Vala possesses the body and Jerusalem the spirit. However, Vala will continue
give the bodies and Jerusalem will continue give the souls. They never interchange
roles. Jerusalem will never produce the bodies. Thus, their juxtaposition is established
because their roles are incompatible. They are both useful for different purposes.
Vala will never give the souls. She is the representation of the female will. For this

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New
England UP, 1988), 428.

reason, Thel is right for not having Vala's will, preferring a living death to falsity and deception. Jerusalem is liberty and the wife of the Lamb. She is not only the representation 'of the holiness of the body and the purity of sex'¹, but also true beauty's tragic lot in worldly life. Perfect presentation of the female aesthetic is found only in Jerusalem. Use-value 'beauty' by shaping the ideal form, brings the vision to its end, so setting the limits of human perfection. Ulro is Thel's world of death, the closed self-devouring orb. Vala is the leader in the world of 'vegetation and generation', (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543) Urizen's domain. Oothoon is the inhabitant of the moony land of Beulah, and Jerusalem, the Emanation of the Giant Albion, is Jesus' bride, wisdom in the world of Eden.

Therefore, true beauty is life's utopia, and it also entails a tragic destiny. Liberty, the ideal form, is crushed under the urizenic necessity and the laws of convention. True beauty is the unapproachable, isolated and solitary female form, in the real world. It remains reality's utopia although it is not an unattainable and futile endeavour. It is authenticity and genuineness, whose complement is Vala. Jerusalem and Vala, purity and impurity, struggle for predominance in the world of 'vegetation and generation', where Vala is the winner. Jerusalem's fate is tragic. Her fulfillment is found in afterlife. Her quality is not just purity, it is the divine personified on earth. But the human beauty of the mortal man is the beauty of Vala: '... Know me now Albion: look upon me I alone am Beauty / The Imaginative Human Form is but a breathing of Vala ...' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 29 [33], ll. 48-9, E 176). Nevertheless, this beauty is desirable: '... Sometimes I curse & sometimes bless thy fascinating beauty ...'

¹Ibid., 207.

Jerusalem, Ch. 3, PLATE 68, l. 64, E 222). It is delusive but 'attractive,' the way Urizen is the guardian of preservation.

Delusive beauty is deprived of light. Jerusalem's light is soft, naked, beaming beauty, loveliness and perfection. Intellectual beauty is knowledge of ideal beauty. Vala and Jerusalem stand in juxtaposition to each other, defining the systems of human enclosure and liberation accordingly. Regardless of their qualities, the orb of mortality leaves both of them unfulfilled. Thel is also unsatisfied, trodden under Vala's dominion because she chooses not to manifest herself. Thel has the potential to become Jerusalem but she cannot withstand failure. Catastrophe and the sublime find a common ground of reference in Jerusalem. But 'To be the food of worms is a sublime privilege.'¹ Thel, who avoids disaster by retaining her impurity, remains inexperienced and stupid in her wisdom. Oothoon is an essence that daringly confronts adversities albeit without fulfillment.

Although Blake presents woman's destiny as unfulfilled and forlorn, in each particular female form, he acknowledges beauty's utopia in the real world. He dissociated beauty from its traditional affiliations with morality and virtue. In these early eighteenth century works, beauty has become a matter of investigation, because nature was not sufficient to provide the form where beauty could manifest itself. Blake conceives utility's context as including beauty, although he does not offer it a place in the secular world. He schematizes the framework where beauty's limits attain relevant significance, thus contributing to a different and additional perception of the

¹ Berger, Pierre. *William Blake Poet and Mystic*. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1914), 262.

beautiful, without any idealized presentation of it in reality. In this sense, he approaches modern theories of beauty and works of art, where the concept of the beautiful is entirely lost or completely non-existent:

... modern European civilization stopped applying "beautiful" to virtues because the *concept* of moral beauty fell into disuse, possibly because moral beauty became, as a type of phenomenon, very rare or nonexistent, or because it became so culturally and socially unimportant that there was no longer any need or point to talk or think about it.¹

Use-value 'beauty', on the other hand (although it seems the beauty proper for survival) does not promise female fulfillment and liberation from social restraints. Blake's female forms anticipate the ideal. Even Jerusalem has to confront disaster to obtain wisdom, genius, specifically the eagle's perception of the infinite. Although imagination defines Jerusalem's spirit, Blake refers to her as the desirable state for female individuality, an earthly representation of the divine 'a requisite for all society'.² When he states: 'That sweet Love & Beauty are worthy our care' (*Songs and Ballads*, Mary, l.12, E 487) he rather implies a further investigation and elucidation of the matter.

Bogen's 1971 interpretation of *The Book of Thel*, left many questions about female identity unanswered. The solution that she proposed to Thel's predicament is an optimistic view of the heroine's future destiny. She talks about Thel's uselessness without focusing on the most important issue, in my opinion, of Thel's use-value

¹ Sircello, Guy. *A New Theory of Beauty*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975), 84.

² Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary, The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 206.

'beauty' and moral quality, which is the core of her unfulfilled female personality.

As Bogen contends:

Implicit in those lines is one of the two solutions to Thel's problem of purpose. Since she has only recently descended from the realm of Mne Seraphim, or been born, *she is too young or immature to have a "use."* She is like the worm in this respect, and she is closest to it in the eighteenth - century order of creation. Like an "infant" wrapped in the Lilly leaf' and dining on "milky fondness," *the Worm too has no purpose.* But what will happen when both of them grow up? The Worm will be a consumer of carrion, but what of Thel?¹ (emphasis added).

She also concludes that:

Thel's "use," would be to play the role of protester in a world in which man does not love his fellow as he should – that is, as the creatures of Har love one another.²

If Thel really will find her purpose as a protester, why does she, in the strange conclusion of the poem, start from her seat, shriek, and flee back to the vales of Har? The answer is that, having been surrounded by pure love in Har, Thel is shocked by the loveless human world and the prospect of playing in it the role of protester.³

Thel's role in the world will not be that of the protester; because beauty is not a protest it is an assertion. In traditional aesthetics beauty is considered a thesis, an affirmation and a positive value in contrast to ugliness which is defined as beauty's

¹ Bogen, Nancy. ed. *William Blake, The Book of Thel A facsimile and a Critical Text.* (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 30.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 31.

antithesis. I have provided the answers to these questions about Thel's predicament and her future destiny. Thel is neither immature nor too young to have a use. She willingly and consciously rejects utility, preferring impurity because of mistrust in God. Her faith is weak. Bogen also assumes that 'Thel's role in the "land unknown" is not at all like that of Persephone, a mythical being, but like the roles of Dante and Thomas the Rhymer; ... Thel will someday speak her mind, like Oothoon, ... and Dorothy in L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* and Lewis Carroll's Alice.'¹

Indeed Persephone, Hades wife represents another female identity. She is not like Thel. Persephone was abducted and was kept against her will by Hades, the male ruler of the underworld. Thel intentionally chooses impurity, but her future development will not be Oothoon's assertiveness or the other characters' relevant fulfillment that Bogen proposes, as Thel's prospective identity and potential, positive outlets. If Thel manages to escape madness, which seems unlikely, her lot will be ill fated. Blake does not provide any potential future destiny for her. She returns to death. Her naturalness preserves her purity and safeguards her 'beauty'. Her position is unlucky, but her choice is respectable because of her rejection of use-value 'beauty'. Her resistance to the useful female identity will lead her to crooked and harsh survival options. Since she chooses death, she must live according to its dictates and survive by its standards.

Thel's return to death is associated with her negative 'will' to live. Critics assume that Thel's name (see page 165) indicates her inability to express female will. In fact, *The Book of Thel* is not the book of 'will' but the exact opposite. If Blake is not

¹Ibid.

ironic, her name's attribution to 'will' and its association with the Greek verb *thel* - ο, *θέλ* - ω (I want) must be reconsidered. The association of Thel's name with *thel* - ο meaning 'will', must be abandoned altogether because the word 'will' does not appear anywhere in the poem, as either verb or noun, except for the adjective wilful which refers to the 'evil foot / That wilful, bruise'd its helpless form: ...'. (PLATE 5, ll. 9-10, E 6). 'Often glossed as "will" or "wish," this name more likely reflects the title of a controversial book by Martin Madan, *Thelyphthora* (1780), (*thili* - *phthora*, *θηλυ* - *φθορά*) which means "destruction of the female," in which case the name means "female".¹

The book of female (*thely*, or *thili*, *θήλυ*) is an appropriate explanation because Thel represents the prime and progressive stages of female development, but she is the 'beauty' of death: '... Satan is the State of Death, & not a Human existence: ...' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 49, l. 67, E 199). In Greek, the word *thely* - *phthora* is associated with the loss of virginity, but Thel's virginity cannot be taken literally² although she is '... virgin of the skies'... , (PLATE 3, l. 25, E 5), 'enter with thy virgin feet.' (PLATE 4, l. 17, E 6), 'O little Cloud the virgin said, ...' (PLATE 3, l. 1, E 4), 'O virgin know'st thou not.' (PLATE 3, l. 7, E 4). The lily is also the '... little virgin of the peaceful valley.' (PLATE 2, l. 28, E 4) in contrast to Thel. I assume that by virginity Blake implies the natural state of man that is impurity, virgin innocence, moral virtue, self-righteousness, '... the Satanic Body of Holiness' (*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE 90, l. 38, E 250).

¹ Eaves, Morris. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 284.

² Bogen, Nancy ed. *William Blake, The Book of Thel*. (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 19. Of course, Thel is called a "virgin" now and then, and we know that during the early part of his career Blake was firmly opposed to sexual restraint. But he used the word in a positive as well as a negative sense. (emphasis added).

Nor pale religious lechery call that virginity, that wishes but
acts not! (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Chorus, E 45)
That pale religious lechery, seeking Virginity, ... (*America a
Prophecy*, PLATE 8, l.10, E 54).

Literally accepted, virginity is purity. Blake uses 'virgin pure' ironically. This state of purity is Thel's sexual ignorance. It is the apparent pastoral, harmless and safe reality in which she lives. Consequently she is self-deceived and not naturally innocent. Thel did not realize her naturalness and, as a result, she is not consciously aware of her sexuality.

How is impurity transformed to consciousness? Beauty is the ideal to which man strives. Although Blake avoids teaching moral lessons about beauty and goodness, natural life is full of ugliness which man must remove. Art expels nature. These values are the presuppositions of Thel's transformation. Is she immoral because of her fixed state of impurity? 'Virgin pure' is nature personified. Use-value 'beauty' effaces naturalness. As Blake's thought progressed in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* (through the concepts of self-annihilation and submission of the spectre respectively), beauty defines the artist and his artworks in relation to the Protestant Jesus.

The Book of Thel is a female choice of naturalness or unfulfilled utility, which determined feminine identity in late eighteenth century, emphasizing particularly the human aesthetic. Thel's choice to go 'back to the present and her innocent youth, where she belongs'¹ is an aesthetic alternative of impurity, which is preferable to conventional worthiness. The consensus interpretation that Thel represents all females

¹Ibid., 31.

and she is a literal virgin who defies the world of experience, suggests that feminine resistance to sexuality is evil. Sexual defiance obstructs female completion and self-awareness. All females are born impure, and if they defy body's liberation they embrace death. Blake seems to consider Thel a repressed woman willingly trapped in evil. But is she a representative of all immature and unfulfilled females due to her sexual repression or is her dilemma due to her naturalness?

Blake seems to imply that all young women are potentially beautiful and 'shinning queens' if they are useful and self-fulfilled. Thel is a 'queen' and a 'shining woman', 'rather caught up in the self conceit of her own shining womanhood'¹, 'Thel is called the "queen of the vales" and sits on a "pearly throne"'.² These characteristics are implications of her natural beauty, albeit 'beauty' of 'the vales of Har', that is death. True beauty is radiant and emerges from spirituality, internal light. Thel's beauty is Blake's puzzle and disapproval because she does not shine without a purpose of existence. Her natural shine is '*But no light from the fires. all was darkness ...*' (*The [First] Book of Urizen*, PLATE 5, l. 17, E 73).

The land of darkness flamed *but no light*, & no repose:
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 13, l. 46, E 157)

But no light from the *fires* all was / Darkness round Los: *heat*
was not; ... (*The Book of Los*, PLATE 3, l. 49, & PLATE 4, l. 1, E
91) (emphasis added).

¹ Murray, B. E. "Thel, *Thelyphthora*, and the Daughters of Albion." *Studies in Romanticism* 20 (1981): 282.

² Bogen, Nancy. ed. *William Blake, The Book of Thel, A Facsimile and a Critical Text*. (New York: Brown UP, 1971), 22.

*Coldness, darkness, obstruction, a Solid / Without fluctuation,
hard as adamant / Black as marble of Egypt; impenetrable ...
(The Book of Los, PLATE 4, ll. 4-6, E 91) (emphasis added).*

Thel's beauty is dark, infernal and delusive light, springing from her impure energy. She is beautiful but trapped in narcissism, which to her is evil. Her self-love is her weakness. Thel's presentation in the poem is the description of a weak female character of minor and inferior quality due to her faith in naturalness and her sexual ignorance. Female weakness cannot embrace life. On the contrary, female will guarantees a urizenic life. Blake's personification of the female is a weak worm of naturalness: 'Art thou a Worm? image of weakness. art thou but a Worm?' (PLATE 4, l. 2, E 5). Thel is generally considered the archetype of all females, but she represents natural beauty, which is death. Vala is the shadow of Jerusalem. Thel is also a shadow. Vala and Thel are both representations of female, urizenic will and negative, absent 'will' to manifest itself. They are both morally ugly and unfit female forms, due to their unspirituality and unfaithfulness to Jesus.

Thel resembles *Mary* who exclaims:

O why was I born with a different Face / Why was I not born like
this Envious Race / Why did Heaven adorn me with bountiful
hand / And then set me down in an envious Land / To be *weak* as
a Lamb & smooth as a Dove ... (*Songs and Ballads, Mary*, ll.
21-5, E 487)

.....
*I will humble my Beauty I will not dress fine / I will keep from
the Ball & my Eyes shall not shine ... (ll. 29-30)*

She remembers *no Face like the Human Divine / All Faces have Envy* sweet Mary but thine / And thine is a Face of *sweet Love in Despair* / And thine is a Face of mild sorrow & care / And thine is a Face of *wild terror & fear* / That shall never be quiet till laid on its bier (*Songs and Ballads*, ll. 43-8, *Mary*, E 488) (emphasis added).

I see a Feminine Form arise from the Four terrible Zoas
Beautiful but terrible struggling to take *a form of beauty* ...
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 74, ll. 52- 4, E 230)
(emphasis added).

Chapter 4

4.1. The 'Sublime of Imagination' and Blake's Aesthetic Idealism

The intention of this chapter is to answer the question why imagination is Blake's sublime. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the apex of his visionary aesthetics. Although imagination was the most critical issue among the Romantics, Blake was the only poet and artist that attributed to it the highest position in his aesthetic theory. This was not an accidental alternative to explain the reality of his era but a religious, visionary and inspirational choice in order to understand why faith in Deism was ineffective, why imagination is a redemptive force, and what does Blake mean by referring to true religion and true art. There are many arguments which explain why Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is an aesthetic, religious and artistic concept.

The principal argument that supports this assertion is because imagination is Jesus: '... Imagination / (Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch.1, PLATE 5, l. 59, E 148). Blake emphasizes the human, creative imagination which is the foundation of true religion and art. The 'Sublime of the Bible' explains religion's affiliation with art. Divinity and art interrelate forming the Blakean aesthetics. Imagination is sublime because it is the Poetic Genius. Every country's culture derives from the prophetic spirit's interpretation. Imagination is in contrast to nature and reason and dissociates from the natural sublime. Blake's ideas about the Poetic Genius are found in *All Religions are One*.

The most important critical idea of the chapter is that the Blakean 'Sublime of Imagination' is constituted by Christian humanitarian values with positive attributes.

The concept is based on: self-annihilation, universal brotherhood and the doctrine of forgiveness of sins. These beliefs apply to Blake's poetry and describe his 'religious' theory. They are Protestant, humanitarian values which he aspires to apply to individual consciousnesses and social reality. Blake's 'Sublime Allegory' and the 'Sublime of the Bible' are the basis of his visionary aesthetics.

Imagination is an artistic concept and relates to true art. This indicates that human imagination is the source of sublime art. Revolutionary energy cannot be considered a sublime force. Blake also favours spiritual war against corporeal strife. As the 'Sublime of Imagination' is based on Christian and humanitarian values, also his art is grounded on the principles: absence of obscurity, minute discrimination and neatness of execution, and singular and particular detail of forms. Jesus is the supreme artist and the human imagination is the only means to establish the true relationship between man and God.

Burke's aesthetic theory, his ideas about the sublime and the beautiful differ from Blake's. Burke's aesthetics depend on empiricism but Blake's aesthetic theory is a product of the human imagination whose origin is divinity. There are also similarities between Blake and Kant particularly concerning the Poetic Genius. Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is a concept which describes human activity: sublime acts, masculinity, also space and architecture. Los's endeavours to submit his spectre are considered a sublime work.

Apart from the 'Sublime of Imagination' Blake's 'negative sublime' (according to Weiskel) is indicative of the two parts of which Blake's aesthetics is composed. His

‘negative sublime’, the Bible of Hell is the abyss and chaos, also ugliness. Reason and the spectre represent the component of the ‘Sublime of Imagination’. The apocalyptic sublime (according to Paley) is Blake’s perception of divinity with its two contrary sides. Light and darkness, imagination and reason reveal that Blake’s sublime is neither a synthesis of diverse ideas about the aesthetic, the sublime and the beautiful, nor a simple exploration of the ‘Mundane Shell’, but since its source is Jesus himself, it is the only noteworthy romantic aesthetic theory.

The reference to modern aesthetics explains that the Blakean ‘Sublime of Imagination’ dissociates from modernity’s catastrophic sublime. Furthermore, De Luca’s ‘iconic’ and ‘bardic’ sublimes explain the application of the ‘Sublime of Imagination’ in Blake’s poetry and art. That is, the function of the Protestant, humanitarian values and the principles that the poet establishes in his art. In conclusion true religion and true art are founded on the human imagination’s creative and redemptive power.

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This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity it is the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body 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 (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, PAGE 69, E 555).

The aesthetic experience is a complex *modus operandi* that mainly requires feeling, and it is created by the participation of feelings and senses. The aesthetic is feeling and requires emotions to capture the experience, which is an emotional possession. In the eighteenth century, feeling was placed within a Christian framework. The aesthetic mediates between a feeling and an idea. Blake challenges this differentiation. Creative imagination intervenes to transform and restore forms to their true artistic ideals. Ideas are not abstract concepts; they acquire substance through feeling which is expressed in imaginary art.

Exposure to a sublime experience evokes fear and the instinct of self-preservation is involved in order to maintain contact with reality during the time of the visual event or the aesthetic 'happening'. 'The feeling of the sublime includes fear, a species of pain.'¹ Whatever causes terror, a sense of threat and abject inferiority to the subject, such as the Supreme Being, nature, natural phenomena and monumental edifices can evoke the feeling of the sublime. The aesthetic experience intensifies along with the time of exposure. The core of the aesthetic experience is the regular and diverse feelings that occur (during the subject's involvement with the 'happening'), between the initial feeling of terror and the instinct of self-preservation. The ego's threat of

¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. Goldthwait, John translator. (London: University of California Press, 1960), 34.

losing contact with reality during the experience causes retreat. Reason contributes to re-establish the broken communication between the subject and the observed object of the external world. As Goldthwait explains, 'Burke contended that the initial fear in the presence of some mighty object, turns to delight when one learns that he is not in actual danger. The ability of the mind to transcend the thought of danger Kant took as a sign of its moral dignity.'¹

Senses contribute to the formation of the aesthetic experience, but their role is ambivalent and indistinct. Blake's divergent ideas about senses render the aesthetic experience indistinguishable and indeterminate. Senses as mere receptors function as copiers of the natural, an aesthetic practice which he considers invalid. As such, (that is, mere perceptive organs) should not be trusted. In his perspective, senses (without underestimating their role in the aesthetic experience) are not the decisive components of aesthetics. Empiricist aesthetics is dependent upon affective response, contending that this determines the status of an object, although it claims that objects of perception are responsible for one's affective response. Blake disputes empiricist aesthetics. The sublime experience is an apocalyptic alteration and modification of forms. It is not based on empirical knowledge. Imagination is dissociated from empiricism because it is an aesthetic and true religious concept which also comprises the beautiful in Jesus. Pure energy and intellectual beauty constitute one part of Blake's visionary aesthetics. The other is the 'negative sublime' and concerns reason. Blake's aesthetic idealism, the 'Sublime of Imagination' is the apex of his visionary aesthetics. For him imagination, the greatest power of human transformation in the Romantic era, becomes the utmost and absolute representation of God's presence on

¹Ibid., 35.

earth. Starting from the identification of the ideal - divine with the fallen - human form, he renders imagination the only sublime power and redemptive force that leads to eternal life. Imagination is the ability to think freely, it is liberty and the promise of alteration. The dangerous and illusionary implications that render imagination a deceptive, futile mental activity, is for Blake, reality's true religious and artistic conception. His faith in imagination is firm, regardless of the hallucinatory dangers that lurk in the exercise of imaginative meditation. In his vision the perilous paths of imaginative contemplation were nothing compared to its power to liberate the individual from personal, social and political restraint. This was a shared belief among all the Romantic poets of the eighteenth century, but each manifested imagination's force in a different way.

Blake is the only Romantic poet and painter who daringly, without fear of imagination's failure renders it the supreme aesthetic category of his visionary aesthetics. However, the 'Sublime of Imagination' represents the 'failure' of his aesthetic idealism, due to the predominance of reason in reality. Imagination seems to escape the perils of delusion because it is acknowledged by reason, but not reconciled to it. Reason and energy are conflicting forces. Reason is also energy's boundary: '... Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34). Reason, which is degenerated intellect, is imagination's adversary. The genuine man is imagination, and the 'reasoning power' can be fought by intellectual effort. In Blake's aesthetic vision intellectual beauty indicates imagination's triumph of the spiritual over the bodily, material existence. The 'Sublime of Imagination' originates from pure energy's (beauty's) collaboration

with intellect (intellectual beauty), forming his visionary, aesthetic conception of secular reality.

Why do Blake's aesthetics render the 'Sublime of Imagination' the prevalent aesthetic category of his vision? Why is imagination his sublime? How does the sublimation process function in his work? How does imagination engage with politics and the revolutionary movements that changed history in Europe and America? To what extent is imagination capable of representing God, and how does it differ from a belief in a lie, granted that 'in the Age of Reason it was considered a degenerative malady of the intellect. Dr. Johnson could write: "All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity" (*Rasselas*, Chap. xliv, "The Dangerous Prevalence of Imagination"). And to this day, the word "imagination" is ... a polite substitute for "falsehood."'¹

The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the result of a series of reconsiderations that Blake made in order to form his true religious aesthetic. These re-evaluations concern nature's traditional notion and the natural world as opposed to the spiritual, natural religion-Deism and natural beauty, impurity, revolutionary energy-war, reason, memory, 'selfhood' and retribution. The 'Sublime of Imagination', freed from the evils of the Enlightenment, is the pure expression of true aestheticism in poetry and art. As a rule, the sublime is attributed to either visible objects or a concept which is great, magnanimous, mighty, powerful, majestic, excellent and honourable. Blake's religious sublime constitutes the foundation of his beliefs about true religion and true art. The Protestant Jesus is the source of his sublime. The religious sublime is the

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 195.

regenerated man in imagination's realm which impregnates religion, art and even politics. It is the manifestation of divine diffusion into the human form in order to transform reality. Therefore, every aspect of life that is saturated by imagination verifies the divine. Attempting to write of the sublime using only religious notions is merely naïve. Blake's sublime is not a one-dimensional spiritual perspective. It is mostly artistic and aesthetically comprehensible, because it does not renounce reality. It incorporates and transforms the consecrated structures of human life to produce true art.

In Blake's view, imagination and nature are incompatible. In natural philosophy, nature is considered the source of all knowledge. Human perception relies on it because it is the representation of the Creator's perfection. The Supreme Being manifests itself in nature; therefore it must be adored, admired and copied. 'Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night; God said, Let Newton be, and all was light.'¹ These ideas about nature's predominance made Blake dispute its power, re-evaluate its potential and re-establish its position. For him, nature is an untrustworthy goddess who does not deserve adoration. God's existence is not proved by nature's existence. 'Newton's nature was the point of departure of the transcendental idealists in their quest for reality.'²

Therefore, Blake proposes nature's transformation through imagination out of a disbelief in the material world. '... I do not behold the Outward Creation ... it is a hindrance & not Action it is as the Dirt upon my feet No part of Me.' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 565). Earlier in his career, he conceives nature's inherent negativity

¹ Thayer, S. H. *Newton's Philosophy of Nature. Selections From His Writings*. (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1953), xiv.

² Ibid.

and man's position in a universe defined by natural laws. Nature does not provide any truth concerning human identity. It does not manifest the Creator, though it is accepted as the force on which humanity depends. There is in nature an element of pessimism because of decay. These assumptions made Blake dispute nature's predominant position in creation. Later, his vision is substantiated and the 'Sublime of Imagination' establishes itself as the major category of his aesthetic idealism. He also develops the concept of 'reasoning power', spectre as imagination's adversary, rendering reason responsible for imagination's failure to redeem evil and convert the fallen reality.

Primarily, imagination is an artistic concept but Blake aspires to reform all individual and social life with it. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the earthly domain of the regenerated human being and extends to infinity. It is the autonomous expression of the ideal, divine realm in combination with the fallen, secular reality. Blake is the representative of what could be called the true religious sublime, a distinctive expression of the divine in literature, and particularly, in art. Imagination is his sublime because it is identified with Jesus and signifies his aspiration to the eternal, ideal world. The original source of his urge to reformation is the Protestant Jesus, the artist and the revolutionary and not the figure of stern authority, the tyrant and the false artist of natural religion. His aspiration to divine truth is in contrast to the old religious order of representation which was synonymous with passivity and stagnation. Jesus, Blake's objective and vocational inspiration, is the supreme artist, imagination incarnated which manifests himself in his works of art: 'Jesus & his Apostles & Disciples were all Artists' (*The Laocoön*, E 274). The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the 'Poetic Genius', a representation of the divine force in reality: 'He

who Loves feels love descend into him & if he has wisdom may perceive it is from the Poetic Genius which is the Lord.’ (Annotations to Swedenborg’s *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 603). Swedenborg claims that ‘... The Negation of God constitutes Hell, and in the Christian World the Negation of the Lord’s Divinity.’ Blake answers: ‘the Negation of the Poetic Genius.’ (Annotations to Swedenborg’s *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 603).

The term genius means the guiding spirit that each person is given at birth, and to whose inspiration his original ideas are due. Enlightenment attributed genius to nature’s bounty, as a kind of birthright. Genius was not seen to derive from imagination. Kant’s ideas about genius are more complex than the romantic view on genius. They are applicable in Blake’s conception of the poetic genius with a significant difference. Blake’s concept of genius derives from divinity. Its spiritual origin is Jesus, the imagination and His manifestation in reality. Genius represents visionary and inspirational revelation and is not subjected to rational rules of philosophical analysis. Blake assumes that genius’s origins are grounded in metaphysical notions of the divine:

Likewise that the forms of all things are derived from their Genius.
which by the Ancients was call’d an Angel & Spirit & Demon.

.....
The Jewish & Christian Testaments are An original derivation
from the Poetic Genius. this is necessary from the confined nature
of bodily sensation (*All Religions are One*, E 1).

Institutionalised religion is the product of genius’s spiritual prophetic aspiration, albeit national religions receive and interpret genius differently. Culture is created by

the way the prophetic spirit is interpreted. National religious variation indicates genius's origin: 'The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nations different reception of the Poetic Genius which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy.' (*All Religions are One*, E 1).

Blake and Kant's ideas about genius's ability to transform reality are analogous. They both accept that nature seems to conceal its own design. Kant supports the view that genius transforms nature. The means by which Kant attempts to unite the contradiction between form in nature and art is through the figure of genius whose mediation transforms nature into art. Genius exists both within and as the difference between infinity (nature) and finitude (art). In Kant's aesthetic theory, nature deforms or sacrifices itself in order to become art. Understanding requires imagination's sacrifice. Therefore, understanding deforms imagination. Art represents this incomprehensible sacrifice. Art is the residue of forms. Concepts take shape in form. In representing reality genius undergoes a deformity. This occurs because genius discloses that illusion is reality. Kant contends that genius represents that which is always already absent, 'the object'. Genius represents all absences and ideas of invisible beings or concepts. He claims that genius breaks with tradition by not following rules or prescriptions. Genius is a force rather than the attribute of an individual subject. Blake's statement 'But Genius is Always Above The Age' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 649) verifies Kant's assertion. Genius can only be truly understood or appreciated by another genius, to whom it is addressed. 'That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care.' ([To] Rev^d Dr Trusler, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, E 702). Because of its exemplary

character, followers and adherents copy genius's art. Blake shares the same opinion as Longinus, who contends that the sublime is born in a man, and not to be acquired by instruction; genius is the only master who can teach it. In *Milton* Book the First, Blake's Bard replies:

I am Inspired! I know it is Truth! for I Sing

(PLATE 13 [14], l. 51, E 107)

According to the inspiration of the Poetic Genius

Who is the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity

To whom be Glory & Power & Dominion Evermore Amen

(PLATE 14[15], ll. 1-3, E 108).

Kant's genius is a male whose work is original and expressive of an innate spirit, mental predisposition (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art. Blake's male genius' expression is a matter of sexual gratification:

The Female searches sea & land for gratification to the

Male Genius: who in return clothes her in gems & gold

And feeds her with the food of Eden. hence all her beauty beams

(*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 69, ll. 16-8, E 223).

Here, he refers to male intellect and not to genius (the exceptional intellect). His aim is to suggest sexual propriety. Beulah's sexual fulfilment is the threefold and imagination is the fourfold, sublime humanity: 'The Sexual is Threefold: the Human is Fourfold.' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 4, l. 5, E 97). The Poetic Genius is the creator of national religions: 'The Jewish & Christian Testaments are An original derivation from the Poetic Genius.' (*All Religions are One*, E 1).

For Kant, poetry holds the highest rank among fine arts because it allows intellect to contemplate upon and judge phenomenal nature. Blake's belief that 'One Power alone makes a Poet. - Imagination The Divine Vision', (Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*, E 665) confirms human imagination's ability to transform nature into art. The artist is the manifestation of genius: 'That the Poetic Genius is the true Man. and that the body or outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius.' (*All Religions are One*, E 1).

Blake's inspiration is the 'Sublime of the Bible' as opposed to the obsolete antiquated concepts that dominated the Age of Reason. In his opinion, sublimity does not originate in classical art, but rather in the Bible:

The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero. which all Men ought to contemn: are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible. (*Milton*, Preface, E 95).

The Whole Bible is filld with Imaginations & Visions from End to End & not with Moral virtues that is the baseness of Plato & the Greeks & all Warriors The Moral Virtues are continual Accusers of Sin & promote Eternal Wars & Domineering over others (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 664).

Sacred Truth has pronounced that Greece & Rome as Babylon & Egypt: so far from being parents of Arts & Sciences as they pretend: were destroyers of all Art. ... Rome & Greece swept Art into their maw & destroyd it (*On Virgil*, E 270).

The Greek & Roman Classics is the Antichrist (emphasis added) (Annotations to Thornton's *The Lord's Prayer, Newly Translated*, London, 1827, E 667).

The Classics, it is the Classics! & not Goths nor Monks, that Desolate Europe with Wars. (*On Homers Poetry*, E 270).

Apparently, these views cannot be accepted literally, because Classicism significantly contributed to the development of science and art through centuries. Blake believed that classic 'influence on the neoclassical arts was bad'.¹ Therefore, he broke with neo-classicism: 'We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; in Jesus our Lord.' (*Milton*, Preface, E 95). He argues that the classical world was an obsolete cultural heritage which was based on paganism. The biblical tradition is the unique source of true art. His poetry and art are the products of the biblical sublime.

Blake defines the 'beauty proper for Sublime Art' and what 'Sublime Allegory' and poetry represent. Lineaments, or forms and features, the receptacles of intellect, constitute intellectual beauty. 'Sublime Allegory, which is addressed to 'Intellectual powers' as distinguished from 'Corporeal Understanding' and vision, relates to the incorporation of the natural and spiritual realms through imagination. The integration of these realms and intellect's exercise to reconstruct reality produce the 'Most Sublime Poetry'. Biblical sublimity is not a new subject for speculation in aesthetics.

Lyotard claims that 'Boileau was set against Pierre-Daniel Huet, over the issue of whether the Bible's *Fiat Lux, et Lux fuit* is sublime, as Longinus thought it was ...'²

Paley and De Luca support the view that Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* potentially influenced Blake. Wittreich also argues that Blake may have been influenced by the Renaissance tradition of reading the book of Revelations as a 'picture prophecy'. The Blakean 'Sublime of the Bible' might have

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (London: New England UP, 1988), 350.

² Benjamin, Andrew ed. *The Lyotard Reader*. Jean - Francois Lyotard. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 201.

derived from this tradition of biblical interpretation. De Luca contends that possibly Blake's biblical sublimity originated from the Kabbalistic doctrines of 'the creative power inherent in the Hebrew letters of the unutterable Tetragrammaton'.¹ All these assumptions indicate that Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' and the 'Sublime of the Bible' (which are purely aesthetic, artistic concepts) are his source of inspirational and visionary art. He uses imagination and the Bible to create his theory of true art in contrast to the natural depiction of forms.

De Luca's 'bardic and iconic' sublimes are identical. According to Blake's 'theory of art', the 'Sublime of Imagination' permeates the poetic as well as the iconic style of visionary aesthetic representation. In poetic speech Blake's sublime (which he defines as Allegory) reveals the multiple aspects of reality seen under the principle: 'Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 8, E 37). Blake's poetic speech is constituted by imagination and allegory. His poetry is a mixture of divine inspiration combined with allegory. However, he uses the word allegory in various contexts. Allegory's literal meaning is: 'Fable or Allegory is Formd by the Daughters of Memory.' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 554). He implies the Greek fables or mythology, which differ from the Bible:

The Hebrew Bible & the Gospel of Jesus are not Allegory but Eternal Vision or Imagination of All that Exists <Note here that Fable or Allegory is Seldom without some Vision Pilgrims Progress is full of it the Greek Poets the same but [*Fable [a]*] <&> *Allegory*] <Allegory & Vision >[<& *Visions of Imagination*>] ought to be known as Two Distinct Things & so calld for the Sake of Eternal Life Plato has made Socrates say that Poets & Prophets do not Know or Understand what

¹ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), 87.

they write or Utter this is a most Pernicious Falshood. (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [P 68], E 554).

Allegory's other connotation is substitution. I define Blake's 'Allegory' as an oppositional mode of thinking and substitution of meaning concerning traditional beliefs. Blake's poetic speech, (De Luca's 'bardic sublime') is an allegorical presentation of imagination. Messages are conveyed to the reader through the symbolic language of myth and metaphor. Blake's poetic 'hidden meaning' is a sublime expression. 'Boileau refers to the opinion of the Messieurs de Port Royal and in particular to Silvestre de Saci that: the Jansenists are masters when it comes to matters of hidden meaning, of eloquent silence of feeling that transcends all reason and finally of openness to the *Is it happening?*'¹ 'Happening' is the definition of modern sublime. Longinus contends that the sublime is the lofty style in rhetoric and poetry. The sublime is the poetic expression concerning the technique, the mode of speech's presentation in connection with the effect (the shock-effect in modern aesthetics terminology), the impression imposed on the viewer or reader.

In Blake's poetry the 'shock-effect' is produced by the fragmented and incomplete structure of episodes, particularly in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*. His text stirs the readers' imagination by enabling them to produce mental images. The text is a challenge to discover the human limits and an attempt to surpass them through the infinite visionary potential. Imagination is sublime because it manifests itself in the creative process of material reconstruction. The human imagination is the divine body of Jesus.

¹ Benjamin, Andrew ed. *The Lyotard Reader*. Jean - Francois Lyotard. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 202.

Similarly, in Blake's painting the sublime event (*it is happening*) is a demonstration of the reformed reality. The creative power of imagination is mental images as constructed and conceptualised in the viewers' minds. Blake emphatically stresses intellect's importance in the sublime experience. He assigns the aesthetic experience to intellect, thus disclosing through intellectual beauty the feeling of the sublime. Human intellect recreates appearances and reinstates them to their true ideals. This activity, which is creative and artistic, ascribes to the man of imaginative perception.

The 'Sublime of Imagination' is constituted by the ideas of self-annihilation, universal brotherhood and the doctrine of forgiveness of sins. Accordingly, Blake's art is distinctly defined by three important characteristics. These are the absence of obscurity, minute discrimination and neatness of execution, and singular and particular detail of forms. Without these attributes Blake's visionary aesthetics could not exist. Apparently, these qualities generate the 'Sublime of Imagination', indicating that it is the only stirring force of artistic creation. Imagination recreates the world according to divine ideals. Forms' ideal images are generated in the artist's imagination and intellect. Therefore, the natural world is transformed according to the artists' insight. Imagining the world is a creative involvement in life, which reveals the concealed potentialities of individual intellect. The divine ideal is the source of human inspiration. Without imagination, nature's transformation into true art would be an illusion. Art would be an ordinary replica of forms based on rules, an unimaginative copy and imitation of realities, reproducing false appearances. False art is naturalness, a dull reality, which is deprived of vision and inspiration, where humans are trapped in artificiality and deception. Nature is an unimaginative world of false appearances embedded in reason's laws. Imagination is individual ability to

remove the 'mundane shell's' false appearance, to reveal and restore forms to their true, ideal identity: '... The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative it is an Endeavour to Restore <what the Ancients calld> the Golden Age' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [P 72], E 555). Even if human intellect does not succeed in conceiving the ideal forms, the effort to unmask reality reveals the immense abilities of human mind to imagine outward appearances and discover multiple modes for their representation:

To bathe in the Waters of Life; to wash off the Not Human
I come in Self-annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration
To cast off Rational Demonstration by *Faith in the Saviour*
(*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 41[48], ll.1-3, E 142).
(emphasis added).

Self-annihilation, in the sense that its artistic positivity is revealed in human qualitative form, the real self, constitutes the 'Sublime of Imagination': 'That mortal body & by Self annihilation back returning / To Life Eternal be assrd I am thy real Self' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Seventh, PAGE 95[87] (Second Portion) {VII 332 -57}, ll. 34-5, E 368). Jesus' covenant is forgiveness of sins because is the evident truth of selfhood's total destruction:

In Forgiveness of Sins which is Self Annihilation. it is the Covenant
of Jehovah (*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE 98, ll. 23-4, E 257).
The Spirit of Jesus is continual forgiveness of Sin
(*Jerusalem*, Sheep Goats, PLATE 3, E 145).
O holy Generation! [*Image*] of regeneration!
O point of mutual forgiveness between Enemies!
Birthplace of the Lamb of God incomprehensible!
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 1, PLATE 7, ll. 65-7, E 150).

The Glory of Christianity is, To Conquer by Forgiveness.
(*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E 201).

But Jesus is the bright Preacher of Life
Creating Nature from this fiery Law,
By self-denial & forgiveness of Sin.

(*Jerusalem*, To the Christians, PLATE 77, ll. 21-3, E 232).

In Hell all is Self Righteousness there is no such thing there as
Forgiveness of Sin he who does Forgive Sin is Crucified as an
Abettor of Criminals. ... Forgiveness of Sin is only at the Judgment
Seat of Jesus the Saviour where the Accuser is cast out. ...

(*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [P 93], E 565).

How Generation & Death took Possession of the Natural Man & of
the Forgiveness of Sins written upon the Murderers Forehead
(*Genesis*, Chap IV, E 688).

Forgiveness of Sins This alone is the Gospel & this is the Life &
Immortality brought to light by Jesus.

(*The Everlasting Gospel*, [a], PAGE I [PENCIL], E 875).

Perfection is found in universal brotherhood and without Christianity's presupposed values, eternity is unapproachable: 'a Perfect Unity / Cannot Exist. but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the First, PAGE 3, ll. 4-5, E 300). When Urizen reigns imagination, instead of being the source of human inspiration, is destroyed by reason's negativity, which is self-delusion and eternal demise. Deism, natural religion and self-righteousness is hell, a mere pretension of Christian superiority which is false and pharisaic: 'Every Religion that Preaches Vengeance for Sin is the Religion of the Enemy & Avenger; and not the Forgiver of Sin, and their God is Satan, Named by the Divine Name Your Religion O Deists:' (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E 201).

These ideas that form the 'Sublime of Imagination' permeate Blake's theory of art. They are the source of divine and inspirational art. Visionary art cannot be sublime without being based on sublime Christian ideas. Blake's art is effective in representing the ideal forms, recreating them by the exercise of the artistic imaginative perception. The sublime is not an abstract quality attributed to forms. It is rather the sublime effect and its appeal to readers or viewers that defines the concept, discerning its attributes in the forms whose sublimity is found in their poetic, stylistic and artistic representation. Blake's artistic sublime is based on the absence of obscurity, minute discrimination, and neatness in execution. Singular and particular detail of forms is also indispensable to produce sublime art:

Minute Discrimination is Not Accidental All Sublimity is founded on
Minute Discrimination (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 643).

Without Minute Neatness of Execution. The Sublime cannot Exist!
Grandeur of Ideas is founded on Precision of Ideas
(Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 646).

Singular & Particular Detail is the Foundation of the Sublime
(Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647).

Distinct General Form Cannot Exist Distinctness is Particular Not
General (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 649).

<Broken Colours & Broken Lines & Broken Masses are Equally
Subversive of the Sublime>
(Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 652).

The Venetian and Flemish practice is broken lines, broken masses, and
broken colours. Mr. B.'s practice is unbroken lines, unbroken masses,
and unbroken colours. Their art is to lose form, his art is to find form,
and to keep it. His arts are opposite to theirs in all things.
(*A Descriptive Catalogue, &C. &C.*, E 538).

Minute discrimination concerns distinctness of outline. Obscurity is rejected as an outdated artistic mode of forms' representation, because it blurs the outline. Imagination restores natural forms to their true ideals. Consequently, natural art is the result of the Age of Reason. It is copying from nature, dependence and belief on experiment. It is based on natural religion's doctrines which refer to the natural and not to the spiritual man. Human imagination, '... the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus.' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 3, l. 4, E 96) is the light of the freethinking intellect and presupposes faith in God. Transformed forms are the evidence of imagination's expression and manifestation. Singular and particular detail suggests perfection in execution, thus diverging from the gross and massive depiction of general forms. Bulk and size of shapes is vulgarity and bungle. Detailed and minute execution produces delicate forms. Their beauty is found in the singularity and particularity of their outlines. Imagination transforms the objects of the artist's perception. They become distinct and acquire specific qualities. Each one is particular and exact. Their beauty resides in minuteness. Imperfection and weakness of forms are incompatible with the sublime.

Blake's ideas on beauty found similar application to his 'theory of art' where beauty was diversely expressed although he does not specifically define and elaborate on what is artistic beauty. The classical model of symmetry and proportion is not his representation. The Bible and his visions are his guides to the 'Sublime of Imagination' that permeates his artistic work. His source of inspiration is Jesus, whose divine, artistic image is not a product in institutionalised religion. Divinity replaces the traditional aesthetic relationship between religion and art. These are dissociated because Blake's art is visionary and inspirational. It aims at recreating

and restoring 'the Human Form Divine' that is, the 'human nature' which 'is the image of God' (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, London 1788, E 597). His quest, as a visionary artist, is the ideal form of beauty, which is displayed by the true exhibition of forms: 'Art can never exist without Naked Beauty displayed No Secresy in Art' (*The Laocoön*, E 275). Beauty is exuberant because it is a composite of the 'Sublime of Imagination': 'Beauty is exuberant but not of ugliness but of beauty & if ugliness is adjoined to beauty it is not the exuberance of beauty.' (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, London 1788, E 595-6).

'This great ideal perfection and beauty are not to be sought in the heavens, but upon the earth.' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647). For Blake, this is 'A Lie' (E 647) in spite of his secular sublime. In his art, ideal perfection and beauty has divine origins. It is the artist's task to envision and represent the ideal forms in his creative work. Great art does not copy nature and reality. The artist who is not devoted to inspirational and visionary art is a craftsman and not a creator of true art:

No Man of Sense ever supposes that Copying from Nature is the Art of Painting if the Art is no more than this it is no better than any other[']s Manual Labour any body may do it & the fool often will do it best as it is a work of no Mind (*Public Address*, PAGE 76, E 578).

Divine inspiration is the origin of true artistic creation. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the only source of true art. Our innate ideas are knowledge of ideal beauty. 'This idea [acquired by habit of observing] ... which the Artist calls the Ideal Beauty, is the great leading principle. ...' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 648). The above excerpt suggests Reynolds' proposal for craftsmanship which is

based on habit, imitation and observation, 'the great leading principle' of unspiritual, false art. True art requires genius and is not acquired by given, tested rules principles and experiments. Bacon is 'full of Self-Contradiction & Knavery' who 'treats with ridicule the idea of confining proportion to rules, or of producing beauty by selection.' Blake claims that 'here he [Bacon] says that Art must be produced Without such Method.' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 648), Blake means experiment and unbelief. He calls him 'the Little Bacon' because he [Bacon], the scientist, was incapable of understanding Art.

False art, by attempting to depict the ideal, presents forms in embellishment. For Blake, this method must be abandoned and replaced by visions as representation of the divine and the ideal beauty of form, which is found in the outline. As Reynolds contends:

Michael Angelo [thought] that the principal attention of the Venetian painters [was to] the study of colours, to the neglect of the IDEAL BEAUTY OF FORM, ...

But Blake believes that:

Venetian Attention is to a Contempt & Neglect of Form Itself & to the Destruction of all Form or Outline <Purposely & Intentionally> (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 651).

Proportion adds dimension to forms. Blake deems leanness and fatness as properties of each class, inclusive forms in art without characterising them beautiful or ugly. When Reynolds assumes that: 'There ... is a kind of symmetry, or proportion, which

may properly be said to belong to deformity. A figure lean or corpulent ... though deviating from beauty,' Blake answers that:

The Symmetry of Deformity is a Pretty Foolery. ... *Leanness or Fatness is not Deformity*. but Reynolds thought Character Itself Extravagance & Deformity Age & Youth are not Classes but [*Accidents*] [*<Situations>*]*<Properties>* of Each Class so are Leanness & Fatness (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 648) (emphasis added).

'The most beautiful forms have something about them like weakness, minuteness, or imperfection.' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647). The most beautiful forms are not weak or imperfect. Weakness and imperfection are excluded from the idea of the beautiful. In contrast to the conventional notion of frail and inexpressive beauty, Blake proposes the minuteness of forms, which elevate their beauty: 'Minuteness is their whole Beauty'. (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 647). Minuteness evokes appeal and affection, also delicacy: 'Every Line is the Line of Beauty it is only fumble & Bungle which cannot draw a Line this only is Ugliness.' (*Public Address*, E 575). In art, beauty which is reduced to general principles in order to comply with science is not beauty. Blake considers this kind of association foolishness and knavery, Bacon's philosophy, which contributes nothing to true art. Reynolds' belief, that the non-expression of passions preserves 'the most perfect beauty IN ITS MOST PERFECT STATE,' is '... Nonsense'. (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 653). Deformity is the incapability of passion and expression: 'Let' Deformity 'be Painted <& Patchd> & Praised & Advertised for Ever <it will only be admired by Fools>'. (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 653).

Therefore, it is obvious that the artistic character, any artistic talent is competent to distinguish deformity, that is ugliness of forms from their real and true representation as imagined by the artist's genius. The element that intervenes here to make this distinction is personal taste, which defines the man of imagination. Taste is a gift and endowment of individual imagination which establishes communication between the artist and his viewers. The work of art, the medium, the mediator, is the stimulus for sensual liberation and 'mental signification' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543) to recreate forms which are enclosed into outlines according to the dictates of imagination. If imagination is the common ground of reference between the artist and his viewer, the artist has succeeded in his objective and the viewer is rewarded. This intervention of imagination between the creator, the artist, his work of art and the participation of the viewer determines the aesthetic experience. Particular imagination ascribes to forms diverse interpretations. Admiration by fools is craftsmanship of no signification, where the viewer's re-creative, interactive imagination is absent. In this kind of relationship between the artist and his viewers the work of art is 'accepted' as a dead object incapable to ascertain itself as a medium of communication. It is seen but not sensed, it exists but it is non-existent.

I assume that Blake renders imagination his sublime, the only universal code of human interaction in true art of divine origin, because of its participation in the aesthetic experience as the mutual language shared between the painter and his addressees. In addition, as far as beauty is concerned:

Boileau takes the same stand as Père Bouhours, when in 1671 the latter declared that beauty demands more than just a respect for rules, that it requires a further 'je ne sais quoi',

also called genius or something 'incomprehensible and inexplicable', a 'gift from God', a fundamentally 'hidden' phenomenon that can be recognized only by its effect on the addressee.¹

Art fulfils its purpose, if it is only a joint aesthetic experience shared by 'silent interlocutors' who partake in the imaginative recreation of artistic forms presented by the artist's genius. These ideas concern Blake's notion of artistic beauty, but in his poetry, beauty as an aesthetic category is associated with his idea about pure energy and its expression. Impurity and envy is in opposition to utility and love. Pure energy and wisdom is in contrast to impurity and reason. In his aesthetic theory the category of the beautiful is pure energy and dutiful beauty. It is pathos and the female.

Detailed execution that produces delicate forms is associated with the bounding line which, for Blake, is steady and continuous. The bounding line is the circumference of imagination and protects it from the dangers of hallucination. Imagination remains within the limits, the circumference of the bounding line. Blake does not lose contact with reality. The bounding line prevents vision from disintegration and provides the framework of art and life:

If losing and obliterating the outline constitutes a Picture, Mr. B. will never be so foolish as to do one. Such art of losing the outlines is the art of Venice and Flanders; it loses all character and leaves what some people call, expression: but this is a false notion of expression; expression cannot exist without character as its stamina; and neither character nor expression can exist

¹ Benjamin, Andrew ed. *The Lyotard Reader*. Jean - Francois Lyotard. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 201.

without firm and determinate outline. (*A Descriptive Catalogue*, NUMBER XV, E 549).

The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, ... and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; ... How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox, but by the bounding outline? How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding line and its infinite inflexions and movements? ... Leave out this l[i]ne and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again, and the line of the almighty must be drawn out upon it before man or beast can exist. (A Descriptive Catalogue NUMBER XV, E 550) (emphasis added).

Blake's poetry and innovative art is a sublime vision, organised in minute particulars. The Christian and humanitarian qualities of the 'Sublime of Imagination' do not only concern the artistic representation of forms but every human outline is an identity, which deserves specific attention:

so he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole / Must see it
in its Minute Particulars; Organized & not as thou / O Fiend of
Righteousness pretendest; thine is a Disorganized / And snowy
cloud: brooder of tempests & destructive War (*Jerusalem*, C4,
PLATE 91, ll. 20-3, E 251).

But General Forms have their vitality in Particulars: & every
Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus.
(*Jerusalem*, C4, PLATE 91, ll. 29-30, E 251).

Labour well the Minute Particulars, attend to the Little-ones:
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 55, l. 51, E 205).

The imaginative sublime does not only signify Blake's aesthetic idealism, but it is also manifested in the real world in various forms. He refers to sublime acts, stating

that their proliferation defines the sublime man: 'The most sublime act is to set another before you.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 36). He defines masculinity as sublime, 'His Sublime & Pathos' (*Jerusalem*, PLATE 1, [Frontispiece] l.4, E 144) and he contends that 'The Strong man represents the human sublime.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543). The strong man, who is the man of imagination, is a sublime individual. Los's endeavours to subdue his spectre are considered a sublime effort: 'At the sublime Labours for Los. compell'd the invisible Spectre' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 10, l. 65, E 154).

The constituents of the 'Sublime of Imagination' are positive values. They are also humanitarian and artistic attributes which are sublime ideas. I believe that Blake ascribes to his sublime explicit and definite Christian values and characteristics in order to accomplish the purpose of art, his reformatory aspiration of the natural world. Sublimity is human virtues. Love, mercy and honour are included in the sublime category of imagination. Negative, ambivalent and subversive divisions, such as those which exist in the notions of energy (purity-impurity) and intellect (wisdom-reason), compose Blake's aesthetic wholeness. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is constituted by intellectual beauty. Jesus is truth and cannot be divided. Life is an undivided whole. Division, which is established by contrariety and opposition, the either / or perception of reality, is negation of wholeness. Division is a delusion. The 'Sublime of Imagination' incorporates in Jesus both self-annihilation and sacrifice. Also, the doctrine of forgiveness of sins effaces retribution. Without these presuppositions, universal brotherhood is unattainable. Blake envisions social transformation and the city of art constructed by:

The stones are *pity*, and the bricks, well wrought *affections*:
 Enamel'd with *love & kindness*, & the tiles engraven gold
 Labour of *merciful* hands: the beams & rafters are *forgiveness*:
 The mortar & cement of the work, tears of *honesty*; the nails,
 And the screws & iron braces, are well wrought blandishments,
 And well contrived words, firm fixing, never forgotten,
 Always comforting the remembrance: the floors, *humility*,
 The ceilings, *devotion*: the hearths, *thanksgiving*: (*Jerusalem*,
 Ch. I, PLATE 12, ll. 30-7, E 155) (emphasis added).

His ultimate objective is the creation of Golgonooza, the city of art, which is eternal light. The artist is the dweller in the imaginative spiritual realm of light, which is full of sublime images, sublime conceptions, intentions, forms and works of art. It is a living world of 'sublime ornaments' of 'sublime astonishment'. The light of intellectual beauty, which is integrated into the 'Sublime of Imagination', guarantees peace, national and universal prosperity. These presuppositions are indispensable for the creation of art. Peaceful and prosperous nations guarantee that the arts will thrive:

Now You will I hope shew all the family of Antique Bowers,
 that Peace & Plenty & Domestic Happiness is the Source of
 Sublime Art, & prove to the Abstract Philosophers - that
 Enjoyment & not Abstinence is the food of Intellect. (*The*
Letters, 2 [To] G[eorge] Cumberland Esq^r, Bishopsgate near
 Egham, Surrey, E 700).

Blake considers war, revolutionary energy the greatest enemy of art. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is an artistic concept which is dissociated from war because it is based on true Christianity:

But the Religion of Jesus, Forgiveness of Sin, can never be the cause of a War nor of a single Martyrdom. (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E 201).

The Word of God, the only light of antiquity that remains unperturbed by War. Virgil in the *Eneid* Book VI. line 848 says Let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War & Dominion ... a Warlike State never can produce Art. It will Rob & Plunder & accumulate into one place, & Translate & Copy & Buy & Sell & Criticise, but not Make. (*On Virgil*, E 270).

Therefore, revolutionary energy cannot be considered a sublime force because it is associated with war, which hinders art's creation. Rebellion is a sublime act, but I assume that in Blake's mind it was rather the effect of revolution, that is liberation, which is sublime because it subverts the old order. This last, does not necessarily mean that the final effects of revolution are always positive or beneficial, but every rebellion is a final crisis after judgement and conscious realization. Revolutionary actions require energetic force, but sublimity is found in the conscious necessity for change, in order to establish a new reality.

Energy will enter history ... That moment itself is the subject of Blake's most famous single poem, in which the ominous and threatening aspect of Energy is perceived by the prophetic imagination as a sublime phenomenon.¹

The excerpt refers to 'The Argument' in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* where the French Revolution 'expected to create the new earth and the new heaven.'² As De Luca claims: 'The sublime *experience* must eventuate in a sublime *doing*, or else the

¹ Paley, Morton D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1970), 29.

² Ibid.

interplay of intellect and its self-satisfying desire remains a sterile and narcissistic exercise, quite alien to anything we know of Blake's program'.¹ Paley and De Luca emphasise the sublime act but revolutionary energy is not an artistic concept. 'The ominous and threatening aspect of Energy' is not a sublime phenomenon. In this particular case, it is associated with war and revolution. Rather the need of subversion of the previous authoritarian status, the common recognition of oppression, and the prospect of a nation liberated from tyranny, are the essentials that define revolutionary energy as a sublime phenomenon. Behind the action there is a sublime intention, which is actuated through subversion.

Revolution is a sublime act, which demands energy. The energetic force that is required for the accomplishment of revolt is only the means to achieve the sublime act. The sublime is both the idea, for example, liberty, the will to overthrow tyranny, and the act, that is rebellion. However, Blake does not favour wars that are conducted by politicians. He envisions intellectual rebellions and favours sublime acts that are associated with reality's creative transformation. Thus, he defines the artist's task. The only war that he accepts is the spiritual war against the corporeal. Mental warfare is sublime, because it is associated with imagination, the force behind every honourable rebellion for humane, social purposes. This war of spiritual enlightenment is sublime because it requires inner strife against negativity, impurity and the subversive force of the 'reasoning power'. Imagination wages war on materiality, imbecility, dogmatism, repression and tyrannical dominion:

¹ De Luca, Vincent Arthur. *Words of Eternity. Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), 44.

Element against Element, opposed in War
Not Mental, as the Wars of Eternity, but a Corporeal Strife
(*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 31[34], ll. 24 -5, E 130).
... ignorant Hilerings! For we have Hilerings in the Camp,
the Court, & the University: who would if they could,
for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War.
(*Milton*, Preface, E 95).

Furthermore, Blake perceives the sublime in space and architecture. He even refers to the natural sublime of mountains and animals, although nature is not his inspiration. In fact, I think nature is the source of inspiration, but for him the natural represents the potential true form revealed through imaginative perception:

And stretching out his holy hand in the vast Deep sublime
(*The Four Zoas*, Night the First, PAGE 5, l.10, E 302).
and Urizen ... Falling into the deep sublime!
(*America a Prophecy*, PLATE 16, ll. 2 ... 5, E 57).
Their Villages Towns Cities Sea-Ports Temples sublime
Cathedrals; (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 71, l. 13, E 225).
Consulting as One Man above the Mountain of Snowdon
Sublime (*The Four Zoas*, Night the First, PAGE 21, l. 7, E 311).
And the leopards coverd with skins of beasts tended the roaring
fires / Sublime distinct their lineaments divine of human beauty
(*The Four Zoas*, Night the Second, PAGE 25, ll. 1-2, E 314).

He describes the natural sublime directly and plainly. The external world does not represent God and the perfection of forms. The human imaginative mind perceives the natural forms in their true dimensions. Therefore, in his poetry, Blake uses nature to produce the sublime effect; which is a synthesis of the existent natural world with the creative imagination which transforms appearances. The outer shell of the external

world is artificial. The artistic mind, the poetic genius, the 'Sublime of Imagination' shares a divine portion of wisdom that enables the artist to envisage the restoration of appearances to their true forms, as they exist in his conception of the ideal, eternal world. Every artist has a different perception of forms and their representation. The aggregate of artistic creation is the evidence of imagination, a disclosure of genius's different aspects of reality. In this sense the artist becomes a co-creator, partaking in truth's revelation, God's supreme quality.

In the world of experience the fourfold man is shattered by the knowledge of good and evil. His / her corporeal, vegetative existence is ruled by reason. The division of the fourfold man is a sublime paradox: 'How he became divided is a subject of great sublimity and pathos.' (*The Ancient Britons*, E 543). Blake sees the sublime in various forms, even in the division of man. The loss of man's real humanity is a sublime phenomenon. The fallen condition is one of aesthetic division. Reality needs restoration to its sublime eternal form. Only then can man find his humanity and his unified self. His / her self-division is rescued by imagination which is the human sublime that guarantees liberation from 'the mind-forg'd manacles'.

Blake's priority and utmost aspiration for human reformation is intellectual liberty. Without imagination's intervention, forms cannot disclose their uniqueness and their true identity. In fact, human imagination is the restorative means, the sublime of the eternal forms:

Eternal Realities as they Exist in the Human Imagination.

(*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, PAGE 90, E 562).

... & the Nature of Eternal Things Displayd All
Springing from the Divine Humanity All beams from him

[<Because> as he himself has said All dwells in him] He
is the Bread & the Wine he is the Water of Life ...
(*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, PAGE 84, E 561).

Imagination's purpose is to 'fabricate forms sublime'. (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Seventh, PAGE 98 [90], l. 22, E 370).

Blake dissociated himself from the prevalent eighteenth century natural sublime ideology. His re-evaluation of naturalness appears early in his literary career. Reliance on nature is the perception of a limited mind which judges and accepts the external world according to the 'single vision'. Obedience to natural laws equals imagination's demise which is mental death. The misleading doctrines of the Age of Reason considered nature God's perfect manifestation and wanted to subject it to man's dominion. The depiction of God's overwhelming force as an ontological absolute of sublime might manifests itself in the natural world through life, death and physical destruction. Natural Religion's God is Blake's Urizen, a frightening deity. Man feared the external world and its Creator. Therefore he copied its disguise, ignoring that nature is the appearance of forms. This relationship of man with nature rendered art inexpressive, a mere flat reproduction of shapes. Blake considers this approach to art incorrect and disastrous, because its basis is a threatening nature ruled by a menacing, intimidating, frigid and unproductive deity. As Weiskel argues:

Now the sublime plays a critical role in the semiotic economy of the eighteenth century. In poetry and in theory the sublime becomes associated not with the clear and the distinct but with the vague and the obscure;¹ In nature, "dark, confused, uncertain

¹ Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 16.

images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions than those have which are more clear and determinate.”¹ The natural sublime was developing independently of literary influence. In one sense, it was a response to the darker implications of Locke’s psychology and what that psychology represented of changes in perception. If the only route to the intellect lies through the senses, belief in a supernatural Being finds itself insecure. God had to be saved, even if He had to marry the world of appearances. And so, in the natural sublime, He did.²

Blake, is not interested in whatever is vague and obscure. Rather, he explicitly denounced the obscurity of forms, stressing their detailed representation. God does not ‘marry the world of appearances.’ The human imaginative mind transforms appearances. Reliance on naturalness is ineffective. Blake abandons the natural sublime and relies completely on imagination in search of eternity’s divine realm. His sublime is also detached from Kant’s dynamic sublime where ‘nature *is* considered as a might and ‘looked upon as an object of fear’ (so far, so Burkean),’³

Blake does not depend on nature’s wildness and vastness for his visionary aesthetics. He uses naturalness without attributing to it supremacy. Nature is reality. It is imagination’s obstruction, the barrier that impedes spiritual progression. Nature stimulates man to know its limits in order to rediscover and redefine his / her place in the universe. It is the starting point for ascendance to divinity’s imaginative realm. Imagination, the spiritual sublime, precedes the natural sublime. ‘The Human Form Divine’ is the supreme manifestation of the spiritual sublime in reality. The ‘Sublime

¹ Ibid., 17.

² Ibid., 14.

³ Wu, Duncan ed. *A Companion to Romanticism*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 84. Trott, Nicola. “The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime.”

of Imagination', the true religious apprehension of forms, indicates true art's production. The natural sublime reproduces the unimaginative and uncreative world of false appearances.

In the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant states that the sublime experience arises through an excess of sensory information. This experience may occur either through an overwhelming sensation of immensity, the mathematical sublime, or of power, the dynamic sublime. Kant's mathematical sublime is size and bulk and the dynamic sublime is 'Nature as a might'. The mathematical sublime is attendant upon feelings of bewilderment or perplexity, when for instance viewing immense edifices. In the dynamic sublime, a formless experience occurs through interaction with natural power. Natural phenomena arouse the feeling of the sublime, that is terror and a sense of helplessness and weakness. But other feelings ensue as a counter-force, indicating a condition of free judgement. The sublime experience depends upon the subject and not on the observed object, for example nature. Kant considers imagination necessary to produce the sublime experience. Sensory stimulation precedes imagination, which is subjected by reason. Kant's aesthetic experience is dependent upon the subject and his mind. In this sense, man dominates nature. 'Kant states flatly that the sublime is unthinkable without "the moral attitude", i.e., the mind's susceptibility to reason's ideas.'¹ It could be argued that Kant overestimates man's, the subject's reason by relying on the sensory organs, thus shaping the aesthetic according to reason's rules. As Boileau writes: 'The Sublime is not strictly speaking something which is proven or demonstrated, but a marvel, which seizes one,

¹ Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 24.

strikes one, and makes one feel.’¹ Besides, in Kant’s aesthetic theory a transcendental object, that is an unknowable God, does not determine or establish the sublime experience.

Blake establishes the metaphysical, apocalyptic aesthetic, thus disengaging himself from Kant’s super sensible reason. Blake’s aesthetic experience is grounded in the supernatural which presupposes belief in God, and identification with spirit. Being one with the divine is a wholly merging sublime experience which unites the separated, detached secular and divine worlds. The ‘Sublime of Imagination’ is a human endeavour to approach the divine and incorporate the spiritual into appearances. Imagination is the means by which natural forms are transmuted. Consequently, imagination restores natural forms and the fallen human condition to their lost artistic ideal archetypes.

Blake does not develop a complete theory of the sublime, but he uses the word regularly as a term of the highest praise and as one describing the art of which he approves. His relation to Burke is complicated. He complains that Burke “mocks inspiration and vision,” but in many ways he follows his ideas on the sublime.²

This argument is a common assertion among Blake scholars but Blake considers Burke’s theory ineffective to describe his sublime. In the eighteenth century, imagination was not regarded a sublime force. It could not be trusted because fancy

¹ Benjamin, Andrew ed. *The Lyotard Reader* Jean - Francois Lyotard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 202.

² Blunt, Anthony. *The Art of William Blake*. (London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1959), 16.

‘distorts’ the real world by presenting as true imagination’s figments. Only Blake renders human imagination his sublime and identifies it with Jesus.

Three main issues structure Burke’s aesthetic theory. These are the categorisation of human passions, the sublime and the beautiful. He classifies human passions in two categories: The first category includes, the self-preservation passions, like pain (sickness and death) or danger and pleasure. ‘The passions that belong to self-preservation are the strongest of all passions that is, pain and danger.’¹ The other category is associated with society. Burke claims that there are two sorts of societies: general society that is man and all other animals, and the society of sexes. Each of them is ruled by its principles. Love-lust and its object, that is the beauty of women, constitute the society of sexes. In general society, lust has no place. Love and its object, beauty ensures mankind’s preservation. He considers the sublime to be an *idea* which belongs to the passions of self-preservation and is founded on terror, fear, wonder, pain and danger. (emphasis added).

The sublime is an idea belonging to self-preservation.² Passions are painful when their causes immediately affect us; They are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances; this *delight* I have not called *pleasure*, because it turns on pain, and because it is different enough from any idea of positive pleasure. Whatever excites this delight, *I call sublime*.³ The ruling principle of the sublime is *TERROR*.⁴... for terror is a passion which always

¹ Phillips, Adam ed. Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 36.

² Ibid., 79.

³ Ibid., 47.

⁴ Ibid., 54.

produces delight when it does not press too close¹ ... but when danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible.² ... Things which are terrible are always great.³

Burke is not explicit about who or what is the source of the sublime. Perhaps its origin is God himself, whereas Blake clearly defines the sublime which is imagination embodied in Jesus. The Burkean sublime delights in everything that is magnificent until the human imagination is fixed on the Supreme Being who is the supreme of all. This perhaps is the true source of the sublime, which is always greatly heightened when any of human passions are strongly agitated, such as terror, grief, rage, indignation, admiration and love.

The source of the sublime is whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.⁴ All general privations are great, because they are all terrible; *Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence*.⁵

Burke centres the sublime on terror and privation. However, Blake's God is not a privation and does not induce terror. Imagination is a redemptive force, which abolishes individual limits, and it is sublime because it represents artistic creativity. Burke contends that the sublime is produced when destructive qualities are included

¹ Ibid., 42.

² Ibid., 36.

³ Ibid., 79.

⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁵ Ibid., 65.

in the object or when describing it the natural elements mix with excessive expressive feelings. The sublime emerges only when strength becomes menacing or pernicious, that is to inflict death and when natural elements combined with animalistic aggressiveness such as fierceness bring about danger, terror and menace of death, thus heightening circumstances. He contends that astonishment is the sublime effect. 'Astonishment is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree. ... It is that state of soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror.'¹ (Blake's sublime effect is a fusion of contradictory feelings imposed upon the reader in order to stimulate the intellect and release his / her imaginative capacity to recreate the world. Nevertheless, by exposing reason's domain Blake enables his readers and viewers to realise natural and human 'obscurity' so as to dispose of error and embrace truth.

Burke supports the view that the object's use-value does not determine its sublimity: 'The sublime appears when the useful quality of (a horse for example) entirely disappears.'² Therefore, the object's aesthetic value defines its sublimity. This important statement is applicable to early Blake's uncertainty (*The Book of Thel*) where he is sceptical on attributing to beauty use or mere aesthetic value. Later, as his vision develops, use-value beauty becomes duty (*The Ancient Britons*) and describes the beautiful man. The strong man is the human sublime. Thus, he establishes the two basic aesthetic categories of his visionary aesthetics.

Burke's elaboration on the sublime is more effective than his analysis of beauty. He ascribes to beauty a bodily and a social dimension. '... that beauty is, for the greater

¹ Ibid., 53.

² Ibid., 60.

part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses.’¹ ‘I mean that quality in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it.’² He relates bodily beauty to love, thus identifying physicality with feeling. And he continues by distinguishing love from desire or lust:

I likewise distinguish love, by which I mean that satisfaction which arises to the mind upon contemplating anything beautiful of whatsoever nature it may be, from desire or lust;³ Which shews that beauty, and the passion caused by beauty, which I call love, is different from desire, though desire may sometimes operate along with it;⁴

Blake does not distinguish love from lust and does not consider lust a moral evil. Energy comes from the body, and gratified desires contribute to pure energy’s creation, which is beauty. In addition, Blake by introducing the doctrine of forgiveness of sins accepts energy’s multifarious expression as the source of all life. Burke assumes that beauty is a social value: ‘I call beauty a social quality;’⁵ Blake expands this notion as, in 1809, he overtly claims that ‘The Beautiful Man acts from duty, ...’ (*The Ancient Britons*, 545). Apart from being pure energy (early Blake) beauty as duty is a social value (late Blake). Therefore, Blake’s aesthetic vision develops as a spiritual perspective from bodily to intellectual signification. Energy wanes in favour of spiritual quest. Intellectual beauty acquires a real, social meaning. Furthermore, Burke states that proportion is the measure of relative quantity.⁶ But it

¹ Ibid., 102.

² Ibid., 83.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁶ Ibid., 84.

is not the cause of beauty in plants where disproportion is frequently found.¹ He also considers proportion not a cause of beauty in animals. As far as beauty in the human species and proportion is concerned 'wherever these (proportions) are found exact, the person to whom they belong is beautiful. I mean in effect produced on the view, either of any member distinctly considered, or of the whole body together.'² Burke's ideas on beauty are evidently ambiguous: 'These proportions are certainly to be found in handsome bodies. They are certainly in ugly ones, as any which will take the pains to try, may find.'³ For Blake, beauty is attributed to sexuality and proportion has a practical value: '... the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet Proportion'. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 37). Moreover, proportion is related to reason to which Blake opposes naked beauty. He reaffirms sexuality's significance in artistic context:

Mocking Druidical Mathematical Proportion of Length Breadth
 Highth / Displaying Naked Beauty! With Flute & Harp & Song
 (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 4, ll. 27-8, E 98).
 And Mathematical Proportion was subdued by Living
 Proportion (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 5, l. 44, E 99).

How important is proportion in defining the beautiful? Burke contends that mathematical ideas are not the true measures of beauty. However, he does not explain what are the true measures of beauty. By stating that 'God is not a Mathematical Diagram', (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 664) Blake dissociates proportion from the conception of divinity. The 'Sublime of Imagination' incorporates beauty. He introduces deformity to describe the 'frozen' world of Urizen and delineate Ulro. Burke claims that 'Deformity is not the opposite of beauty. It has

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., 88.

³ Ibid.

to do with the opposite of the *compleat, common form*.¹ The true opposite to beauty is not disproportion of deformity, but ugliness. In his aesthetic theory, Burke does not develop the meaning of ugliness. He defines beauty by rejection of proportion, perfection, fitness and deformity. Ugliness is not a sublime idea on condition that terror determines ugliness: '... I would by no means insinuate that ugliness of itself is a sublime idea, unless united with such qualities as excite a strong terror.'² Blake's deformity is associated with the subversion of the prophetic vision, impurity, reason and it is Weiskel's 'negative sublime'. For Blake, inexpressiveness is deformity and indicates false art: 'Passion & Expression is Beauty Itself–The Face that is Incapable of Passion and Expression is Deformity Itself ...' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 653).

For Burke, there is a difference between admiration and love. Admiration is attributed to the sublime which is great, and love to the beautiful which is relatively small. Both aesthetic categories are related but they are not alike. Each stands uniform and distinguished. In Blake's aesthetics they are distinguished but also united and incorporated in Jesus.

The sublime, which is the cause of the former, always dwells on great objects, and terrible; the latter on small ones and pleasing; we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us; in one case we are forced, in the other we are flattered into compliance. ... So that attending to their quantity, beautiful objects are comparatively small.³ ... sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones are comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent;

¹ Ibid., 93.

² Ibid., 109.

³ Ibid., 103.

beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive.¹

Burke differentiates between the sublime and the beautiful by their size. Sublime objects are great, beautiful are small. In his aesthetics, the differentiation between the two aesthetic categories is clear. 'For Mengs, Barry and Reynolds the sublime is really a superior form of the beautiful, whereas for Burke the two ideas are opposed and mutually exclusive.'² However the reasons, which he gives to justify this differentiation, are not effective. Size is an attribute of the beautiful regardless of its proportion and beauty is a quality inherent in the object. The sublime originates from the beautiful. Their difference is established in their expression. In modern aesthetics, beauty has disappeared for the sublime, the latter being the only prevalent category. Burke concludes that although '... the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, ... they are not therefore the same.'³ He also asserts that:

it will appear, that the sublime and the beautiful are built on principles very different, and that their affections are as different: the great has terror for its basis; which, when it is modified, causes that emotion in the mind, which I have called astonishment; the beautiful is founded on mere positive pleasure, and excites in the soul that feeling, which is called love.⁴

¹ Ibid., 113.

² Blunt Anthony. *The Art of William Blake*. (London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), 14-5.

³ Phillips, Adam ed. Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 114.

⁴ Ibid., 145.

His perception that 'beauty must not be obscure, but light and delicate'¹ and the sublime must 'be dark and gloomy, solid and massive'² is incompatible with Blake who proclaims: '<Obscurity is Neither the Source of the Sublime nor of any Thing Else>' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 658). Obscurity is attributed to Urizen's place: 'And gave him a place in the north, / Obscure, shadowy, void, solitary.' (*The [First] Book of Urizen*, PLATE 2, ll. 3-4, E 70). Besides, 'What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men.' (*The Letters*, 5 [To] Rev^d Dr Trusler, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, E 702). Jesus, the 'Sublime of Imagination' is spiritual light and not obscurity.

Blake's aesthetics are not directly associated with Kantian or Burkean aesthetic theories on the sublime and the beautiful, although elements of their assumptions can be found in his poetic speech. Blake refuted Burke's aesthetics with 'contempt and abhorrence' because they were based on the external world's observation and the deceptive judgments of senses functioning as mere receptive organs. Burke describes the sublime as a terror-grounded experience:

Burke wrote that for this terror to mingle with pleasure and with it to produce the feeling of the sublime, it is also necessary that the terror-causing threat be suspended, kept at bay, held back. This suspense, this lessening of a threat or a danger, provokes a kind of pleasure that is certainly not that of a positive satisfaction, but is, rather, that of relief. This is still a privation, but it is a privation at one remove: the soul is deprived of the threat of being deprived of light, language, and life. Burke distinguishes this pleasure of

¹ Ibid., 113.

² Ibid.

secondary privation from positive pleasures, and he baptizes, it with the name delight.¹

In analysing the psychology of the sublime (logic of terror), Weiskel claims:

... for both Kant and Burke, the myth of the superego takes a theological form. ... This meditation on authority leads straight to the view that the idea of God is inconceivable without terror, and Burke is soon quoting the maxim *primos in orbe deos fecit timor*. He immediately draws back, however, and rests with the observation that "true religion has, and must have, so large a mixture of salutary fear," although Christianity, he adds, has humanized the idea of divinity.²

He also states:

Delight is the temporary negation of paralysis, the expulsion of what blocks the mind. Indeed, the affective coincidence of ego and superego appears to be the foundation of mystic ecstasy - an absorption into a greater power at once beyond and within.³

Although this description of the sublime event finds applicable ground in Blake, it does not expand to include the mystical-ecstatic experience of union, which distinguishes Blake's sublime from the natural and the romantic sublime. His sublime experience is different, because the aesthetic is focused on imagination, which discloses the union of the human with the divine form. Therefore, it is a visionary

¹ Lyotard claims that terrors are linked to privation: privation of light, terror of darkness; privation of others, terror of solitude; privation of language, terror of silence; privation of objects, terror of emptiness; privation of life, terror of death. Benjamin, Andrew ed. *The Lyotard Reader*. Jean - Francois Lyotard. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 204-5.

² Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), 94.

³ *Ibid.*, 97.

‘happening’ (it can also be called mystical because of divine involvement). It requires not only bodily and mental liberation of human faculties but also self-annihilation which functions on two diverse levels: Primarily, the ego suffers penetration by the divine medium, and the self is absorbed into the Deity. Self-annihilation endorses spiritual apprehension of truths that are beyond understanding. The ‘Sublime of Imagination’ is rapture. Exuberance is intellectual beauty. Human imagination is capable of experiencing the aesthetic, the ecstasy of unification with the supernatural Being. The feeling of the sublime is the rapture that imagination brings to humans.

As Weiskel argues: ‘Blake’s sublime deviated from the Romantic sublime.’¹ The particularity of the Blakean sublime is located in a context distinctively different from romantic aesthetics. The Romantic poetics of sublimation were not Blake’s aesthetic perspective. His sublime has no connection with the romantic transcendent, awe-inspiring lofty value of perfection attributed to nature or natural religion’s God, the almighty omnipotent and omnipresent deity who threatens humanity with punishment and retribution. Blake’s God is forgiveness of sins and universal brotherhood: ‘I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;’ (*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 4, l. 18, E 146).

Blake’s aesthetic experience focuses on the spiritual rather than the emotional. The aesthetic is the imaginary process of envisioning the world of appearances. Inspiration and vision surpass the natural man. Therefore, the ‘Sublime of Imagination’ determines the aesthetic. His theological sublime implies a God who does not instil fear or intimidates humanity. This God is mystery, the division of

¹Ibid., 67.

good and evil. Mystery is embedded in appearances and causes pain and privation. Divinity, the 'Sublime of Imagination' does not induce terror. On the contrary, man is a strong entity because the human mind cannot be subdued by fear, danger or threat. 'The Human Form Divine' is an artistic reality. As long as God is an authentic presence: 'I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine: ...' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 4, 1.7, E 146) the aesthetic experience is established on entirely artistic principles. Vision is a sublime experience. Blake's entire work is a continual aesthetic experience. Consequently, the aesthetic is present in the world of appearances disclosing the divine origin of Blake's visionary aesthetics.

The Blakean sublime is dissociated from the subject-object division upon which empiricist aesthetics depend. Blake's visionary aesthetic experience involves the domains of the sacred and the profane. Therefore, it is an exposure to the divine power of revelation, an experience of the infinite that primarily requires ego's paralysis, self-annihilation. Without this presupposition his aesthetic experience cannot happen. The realm of death and the abyss must be penetrated in order to unveil appearances and reach the truth.

Northrop Frye has called attention to the antinomian transvaluation of verticality which is a feature of Romantic imagery, and in our day depth is the unchallenged locus of god or value. The sublime moment (episode) establishes depth because the presentation of unattainability is phenomenologically a negation, a falling away from what might be seized, perceived, known. As an image, it is the abyss.¹ ... Verticality is the appropriate dimension, and the image is inevitably some variant

¹Ibid., 24-5.

of the abyss, the “fixed, abysmal, gloomy breathing-place” which is the central in *The Prelude*, and indeed in most romantic poetry.¹

The abyss and chaos are characteristic loci of the Blakean sublime. The abyss is the abode of lost spirits, the place of their incarceration and torment. The following excerpt from Virgil describes the Blakean sublime experience:

Ye subterraneous gods! Whose awful sway
The gliding ghosts, and silent shades obey;
O chaos hoar! And Phlegethon profound!
Whose solemn empire stretches wide round;
Give me, ye great tremendous power, to tell
Of scenes and wonders in the depth of hell;
Give me your mighty secrets to display
From those black realms of darkness to the day.²

The subterranean power of the sublime which emerges from ‘the depth of hell’, is the aesthetic experience of the underworld. It is the realm of vastness and wonder, danger and horror. The ‘Sublime of Imagination’ accomplishes the process of bringing to light ‘from those black realms of darkness’ the world of the chaotic ‘unorganised consciousness’. Blake aspires to organised consciousness through the power of imagination without excluding the negative aesthetic from his vision. Weiskel defines Blake’s negative sublime by stating that Urizen is in some respects a type of negative aesthetic:

¹ Ibid., 27.

² Phillips, Adam ed. Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 65.

Blake's central conviction, dramatized in the career of his character Urizen, is that solipsism and the rational alienation of perception into mechanical regularity both result from the same imaginative disease. Blake is equally acute in diagnosing the negative sublime, of which Urizen is also in some respects the type.¹

The negative sublime begins with an excessive interest in nature and ends with an excessive disdain of nature, ... Reason, and its cognates begin as a negative or dialectical alternative to human limitation, but such quasi-theological prestige begins to accumulate around the ideas of reason that in the end reason requires a total withdrawal from all natural connection.²

In Blake's view, the positive and negative sublimines turn out to be not genuine contraries but two versions of the same lapse, itself the negation of visionary perception. Blake's myth of the Fall is an analytic critique of sublimation.³

It could be argued that Weiskel focuses Blake's sublime on the 'central imagery of fallen limitation, the circle of destiny or the mills of Satan.'⁴ This argument indicates that Weiskel considers Blake's sublime to be the 'negative sublime': 'We can read the affective logic of the sublime partly in Albion's fall and partly in Urizen's complicated state of self-knowledge.'⁵ Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' does not belong to the category of the 'negative sublime'.⁶ Evidently its significance exceeds the 'negative sublime', regarding it as the limit which should be surpassed. I consider the 'negative sublime' to be a degradation and degeneration of the 'Sublime of

¹ Wieskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 65.

² *Ibid.*, 76.

³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶ Weiskel claims that there are two different sublimines: the negative or Kantian and the positive or egotistical sublime, which seem to be genuine contraries. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 63.

Imagination'. Urizen, the representation of the 'negative sublime', belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly. Weiskel's argument about the positive and negative sublimines being 'two versions of the same lapse' suggests that Blake's aesthetics does not exclude the 'negative sublime' in favour of the 'Sublime of Imagination.'

At this point it is worth mentioning Armstrong's assertion that Blake's aesthetic belongs to Hell.¹ She contends that since 'Exuberance is beauty' is a proverb of Hell, the aesthetic escapes from the ethical: it need not belong to moral order, it can be neutral, or it can belong to evil. In its pure self-justifying freedom it is severed from the ethical and may even do violence to it. Blake's beautiful *can* be emancipatory (another reason, of course, why it belongs to Hell), ...²

If the aesthetic belongs to Hell, then *Songs of Innocence* at least afford a glimpse of an emancipatory aesthetic, a revisionary creativity so radical but so immediate that - an essential for that rare thing, a populist reading - the challenge to categories is widely available.³

Armstrong's 'emancipatory aesthetic' correlates with Blake's perception of the necessity of evil, particularly in the works of his early career where the 'religious Angels' conceal and disguise the truth which is known to the reactionary 'angels': 'This Angel, who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend: we often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense...' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 24, E 44) that is in its demonic 'wisdom'. The Bible of Hell is not deprived of substantial insight or 'sublimity'. However, Blake's vision does not stop

¹ Armstrong, Isobel. *The Radical Aesthetic*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 27.

² *Ibid.*, 28.

³ *Ibid.*, 43.

by offering the 'diabolical' Bible to the world 'whether they will or no'. The Bible of Hell is the inspirational code of liberation, 'the emancipatory aesthetic' that aspires to the 'Sublime of Imagination', the true religious grandeur of Blake's mature creative poetic and artistic period. In his early career, which is an exploration of impurity through energy, reverse ideas of good and evil are presented in order to gradually disclose the negative aesthetic which is the presupposition of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. Thus, the Bible is read 'in its infernal sense' so as readers to perceive the negative aesthetic. His theoretical aesthetic is substantiated in his poetic speech.

Since antiquity, the sublime style in speech, 'the didactic form of *technè rhetorikè* has been a mode of representation that was associated with the republican institution; one had to know how to speak before assemblies and tribunals, a style in poetics, or politics which intended to be model for practitioners.'¹

Longinus tried to locate sources for the sublime in the ethos of rhetoric, in its pathos, in its techniques: figures of speech, diction, enunciation and composition. ... There is, wrote Longinus, a sublimity of thought sometimes recognizable in speech by its extreme simplicity of turn of phrase, at the precise point where the high character of the speaker makes one expect greater solemnity. It sometimes takes the form of outright silence.²

Grandeur in speech is true when it bears witness to the incommensurability between thought and the real world.³

The grandeur of spirit which 'is not of this world' and 'from the sublime springs a lot of reflection'⁴ is the sublime manifested in speech.

¹ Benjamin Andrew ed. *A Lyotard Reader*. Jean - Francois Lyotard. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 200.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

Longinus went so far as to propose inversions of reputedly natural and rational syntax as examples of sublime effect.¹...

But the sublime, according to Boileau:

cannot be taught, and didactics are thus powerless in this respect; the sublime is not linked to rules that can be determined through poetics; the sublime only requires that the reader or listener have conceptual range, taste, and the ability to sense what everyone senses first.²

As Burke contends:

... painting is doomed to imitate models, and to figurative representations of them, whereas in poetry that Burke considered to be not a genre with rules, but the field where certain researches into language have free rein, the power to move is free from the verisimilitudes of figuration.³

Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is 'the grandeur of spirit from which springs a lot of reflection', of natural images transformed in ideal conceptions of eternity. The transcendental world is a concrete human design of reality. Blake's sublime is not rhetoric or moralizing for social reformation. Its particularity is not just the sublime effect on the reader or viewer of his works. He succeeds in projecting the unreal or conceptually ideal imaginary reflection, so as to activate human mentality to envisage a new identity and worldview. This is attained by poetic speech which effects 'the dissolving of word into Word, or for that matter of face into Human Form, is a

¹ Ibid., 201.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 205.

moment of “daemonic” influx.’¹ The Romantic sublime is a speech experience of ‘the daemonized ego who can speak again only through a displacement, a secondary, metonymical sublimation that diffuses the power of the ego and subverts its freedom.’² ‘The immediate value of Blake’s text is that it plays out a logic implicit in discursive theories of the sublime.’³

Blake’s ‘daemonized ego’ is significantly self-determined but his / her perception is not limited. The ego’s crucifixion on the ‘Tree of Mystery’, is a boundary that all Christians must surpass in order to achieve purification and salvation. Blake’s reader is confronted by theological mystery, ‘the dark conceits of allegory, or any text whose ultimate meaning lies in just the fact that it cannot be grasped.’⁴ Allegory is metaphorical speech, where the words are not literally interpreted. Attempting to understand the metaphorical character of the same words is a sublime experience on the reader’s part. Blake’s poetic sublime effect lies in his ability (through contrary words’ meaning) to compel the reader to unveil and evaluate appearances. On the other hand, the reader must use his or her intellect to envision reality. Metaphor is a challenge to the reader, and allegorical meaning is indicative of ‘theological mystery’.

In modern aesthetics ‘sublimity is no longer in art, but in speculation on art.’⁵

Burke’s aesthetic is in danger because the sublime is kindled by the threat of nothing further happening.⁶ ...

¹ Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 27.

² *Ibid.*, 32.

³ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵ Benjamin, Andrew ed. *A Lyotard Reader*. Jean - Francois Lyotard. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 210.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

The arts, whatever their materials, pressed forward by the aesthetics of the sublime in search of intense effects, can and must give up the imitation of models that are merely beautiful, and try out surprising, strange, shocking combinations. Shock is, *par excellence*, the evidence of (something) happening, rather than nothing, suspended privation.¹

Lyotard contends that 'avant-garde art is concerned with privation. This is the sense in which it still belongs to the aesthetics of the sublime.'² The fundamental question in modern aesthetics is not 'how does one make a work of art, but what is it to experience an affect proper to art.'³

The artist becomes the involuntary addressee of an inspiration come to him from an 'I know not what'. Art does not imitate nature, it creates a world apart, ... in which the monstrous and the formless have their rights because they can be sublime.⁴ ... The art object no longer bends itself to models, but tries to present the fact that there is an unrepresentable; it no longer imitates nature, but is, in Burke, the actualization of a figure potentially there in language.⁵

In modernism, as Lyotard claims the status of works of art is at stake in poetic-theological debates, and he asks:

Are the works of art copies of some ideal model? Can reflection on the more perfect examples yield rules of formation that determine their success in achieving what they want, that is,

¹ Ibid., 205.

² Ibid., 208.

³ Ibid., 203.

⁴ Ibid., 202.

⁵ Ibid., 206.

persuasiveness and pleasure? Can understanding suffice for this kind of reflection? ¹

There are issues which are associated with modern aesthetics, such as the recognition of art works by the community and the status of the artist:

In romantic art support, frame, line, colour, space, the figure - were to remain subject to the constraint of representation. ²

In modernism, the social community no longer recognizes itself in art objects, but ignores them, rejects them as incomprehensible, and only later allows the intellectual avant-garde to preserve them in museums as the traces of offensives that bear witness to the power, and the privation, of the spirit. ³ 'One paints for very few people', writes Cézanne. Recognition from the regulatory institutions of painting - Academy, salons, criticism, taste - is of little importance compared to the judgement made by the painter-researcher and his peers on the success obtained by the work of art in relation to what is really at stake: to make seen what makes one see, and not what is visible. ⁴

In modernity, the sublime has effaced the beautiful. The sublime experience is defined by the 'shock-effect.' Sircello refers to the beautiful as an insipid experience and in short, lifeless.

It is also true that "objects" that are, for a variety of reasons, repulsive and definitely not beautiful may naturally, and not just by artifice, possess properties that are, in that very instantiation, beautiful. The motion of the mushroom cloud of an atomic bomb

¹ Ibid., 202.

² Ibid., 206

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 207.

explosion has a kind of *sublime grace*, and its billowing, vaporous volume is beautifully voluptuous-looking. Yet, it is hard, because of its moral obscenity, to call the explosion itself beautiful.¹ (emphasis added).

This conception of the beautiful is totally out of Blake's context of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. Taking into consideration that for him the sublime is primarily an artistic concept, the 'catastrophic sublime' is dissociated from the 'Sublime of Imagination.' Death and catastrophe belong to the aesthetic category of the ugly. Reason and falsity represent the 'catastrophic sublime' which must be surpassed in order Christians to embrace the truth of God. The 'catastrophic sublime' is Satan and signifies death of intellect. Impurity, Blake's 'negative sublime' is ugliness. 'Frye, writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, describes a sublime drama in which the imagination opposes and ultimately sublates the totalitarian spirit (exemplified by the goddesses of Reason and Nature)'². As Otto comments:

Although the structure of the sublime remains broadly the same through the eighteenth century, and, arguably, the nineteenth and twentieth - it functions in radically different ways. This is nowhere more evident than in the changing locus of the power that gives rise to the experience of sublimity: the orator in the rhetorical sublime; God in the religious sublime; Reason in the Kantian sublime; the self or the imagination in the romantic sublime; and language in the postmodern sublime.³

¹ Sircello, Guy. *A New Theory of Beauty*. (London: Princeton UP, 1975), 108.

² Otto, Peter. *Blake's Critique of Transcendence. Love, Jealousy, and the Sublime in The Four Zoas*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 31.

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

Kant taught us that the sublime is a feeling and the beautiful evokes feeling. Inducing feeling means that beauty is a quality inherent in the object. Beauty gives a positive pleasure. Otto by quoting the following excerpt from *The Four Zoas*: Mingling his horrible brightness with her tender limbs then ... concludes that 'with this passage we have reached the beautiful, the opposite pole to the sublime in Burke's aesthetics.'¹ For Blake, the beautiful is not the opposite pole of the sublime. Burke's assertion that beauty is 'those qualities in bodies by which they cause love'² justifies Blake's pure and impure energy.

Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is not the transcendental ideal. It refers to the secular reality, human imagination which can transform the world of appearances. The Kantian Reason which is concerned with totality, morality, freedom and the absolute, does not recreate the phenomenal world: 'For Kant, imagination shapes the manifold of experience in accordance with the categories of the Understanding.'³ Kant's Reason corresponds to Blake's Urizen and Kant's Understanding is akin to Blake's Corporeal Understanding.⁴ Kant's imagination is the faculty that can potentially present the infinite beyond the sensible world. It expands the soul, but Kant's reliance on reason in order to comprehend the sensible renders imagination unconstructive to represent the phenomenal world. Blake's imagination is spirituality. Intellectual powers read the text which is 'a kind of wall' (De Luca's bardic sublime) attempting to disclose the terrible and the obscure.

¹ Ibid., 71.

² Phillips, Adam ed. Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 83.

³ Otto, Peter. *Blake's Critique of Transcendence. Love, Jealousy and the Sublime in The Four Zoas*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 45.

⁴ Ibid., 30.

‘The romantic sublime ends with ‘home-coming’, in which nature, culture, and text are recognised as creations of the imagination.’¹ The Blakean sublime is a departure from ‘home’ through imagination to the eternal world of the ideal. The redemptive power of imagination suggests that Christ and man are aligned and the blockage of impurity, Satan is gradually confined. Human understanding is intellectual powers where beauty and the sublime combine in Jesus. Man and divinity are one spiritual body entangled in a relationship of true religion and true art. This is the splendour of imagination.

¹Ibid., 34.

4.2. The Splendour of Imagination

The Splendour of Imagination chapter explains why imagination possesses the highest position in Blake's aesthetics as a religious and artistic concept. It starts by differentiating Blake's imagination, which is his sublime, from Wordsworth's egotistical sublime and Coleridge's primary, secondary imagination and fancy. The reference to these writers is necessary because they did not attribute to imagination the status that it has in Blake.

Why imagination is not Wordsworth's sublime? Wordsworth, due his egotistical sublime, and the fact that he is nature's worshipper could never consider imagination sublime. He venerates nature because it is God's creation. The egotistical sublime is self-admiration. It relies on subjective perception and the agent's fear of God. This kind of sublime cannot produce true art. It is only suitable for contemplation and reverie because it does not establish communication with the Supreme Being.

Imagination is not Coleridge's sublime because it describes poetic creation in a stylistic context. Although imagination is the poetic genius's soul, which forms all into one whole, due to its categorisation lacks the ability to restore nature and bring about the individual's spiritual development. His primary and secondary imagination proves inadequate to describe the sublime experience. The reason is that the subject stands between the secular and the divine world powerless and incapable either to worship nature or identify with God. The conscious self is suspended between two worlds that cannot be merged. Therefore the subject suffers due to the incompleteness of the aesthetic experience. Imagination is a projection of the human mind which

expands to the divine. However, Coleridge's imagination because of its inadequateness to unite man and God has no power to redeem the individual. In addition, fancy is the lowest form of imagination and it is not a creative power at all. It is a kind of memory and the drapery of poetic genius.

Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is Jesus, 'the Human Form Divine.' For him, nature is fallen and dead. Thus, Blake's imagination is divinity itself. Wordsworth's egotistical sublime is substituted by annihilation of the selfhood, and Coleridge's hesitation between man and God, which is a result of man's weakness and God's omnipotence, is eliminated by spiritual mystery and real vision. Imagination, which primarily is a religious and aesthetic concept, is Blake's sublime, an artistic, prophetic and apocalyptic mode of communication between man and God.

The distinction between these three kinds of imagination proves that Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is the most significant concept of the Romantic era. God is not an abstract deity but man himself: 'Man is All Imagination' (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 664). The Blakean imagination dissociates from memory and reason which are its enemies. Also, Blake does not differentiate between visionary fancy and imagination. Although sometimes the word fancy has the notion of dream and illusion, it mainly means imagination. Allegory is vision and fable is fiction. Nature and fancy are opposing forces. These distinctions indicate that art is divided in true and false. Accordingly, true and false artists are distinguished by imagination. True art is invention and inspiration. Natural religion and natural perception is imitation and false art.

The basic argument of the chapter is that since Jesus is imagination, and Blake's sublime, the 'Sublime of Imagination' is the appropriate term to describe his aesthetics. However, due to the combination of the sublime and the beautiful in Jesus the term Splendour of Imagination explains Blake's aesthetics according to pure energy and intellectual beauty. Therefore, transcendence is attained by the inclusion of the beautiful in the sublime, a combination that produces splendour, Jesus' identity.

Another argument is that Burke's sublime is not artistic. The same applies to Reynolds' theory of art because according to Blake his 'artistic' rules are based on imitation. Thus, it is not inspired art. Blake's art is founded on imagination, minute discrimination, singular and particular detail of forms. The secularisation of the sublime is Blake's innovation and describes visionary art. In conclusion imagination holds the highest position in Blake's aesthetics because it is Jesus, vision and inspiration. True religion and true art is imagination, which is not only sublime but because the beautiful is also included in it, Jesus's splendour, light and immortality define the real man.

The Eternal Body of Man is The IMAGINATION.
God himself

that is

JESUS we are his Members

The Divine Body (*The Laocoön*, E 273).

The IMAGINATION then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or whether this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead. FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.¹

Coleridge's secondary imagination appears to be an extension of the primary and resembles Blake's pure energy. But the separation between the subject - I and object - the external world, is still partially retained. Individual consciousness seems detached from nature and, consequently, divinity. The natural world, earth, sea, and air, and human existence in general, 'is conceivable only by reference to the Godhead.'² In

¹ Coleridge S. T. *Biographia Literaria*. Vol. I. (London: The Scholar Press, 1971) 295-6.

² Wu, Duncan ed. *A Companion to Romanticism*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 85. See: Trott, Nicola. "The Picturesque the Beautiful and the Sublime".

this sense, imagination has no power to redeem the individual. Coleridge perceives and observes imagination as a projection of the human mind, which is then subjected to investigation and evaluation. He accepts, as imagination's origin, the conscious self. He starts from the human and expands to the divine as a natural projection from man to God.

Blake does not distinguish between primary and secondary imagination or between visionary fancy and imagination. As Engell states: 'Unlike many others Blake does not distinguish between levels of the imaginative power. For him, there is only one operation and essentially only one degree of it. ... he puts his notion into rather cryptic or terse statements.'¹ 'The Nature of Visionary Fancy or Imagination is very little Known & the Eternal nature & permanence of its ever Existent Images is considered as less permanent than the things of Vegetative & Generative Nature ...' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 555). His imagination is not a mediator between the individual and the divine. '... to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination Nature is Imagination itself.' (*The Letters* 5 [To] Rev^d Dr. Trusler, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, E 702).

Blake's imagination, which transforms nature and creates the human form, is identified with Jesus. 'To Blake, however, the Imagination was the central faculty of both God and Man; indeed, here the two become indistinguishable. "The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination, that is God himself, The Divine Body, Jesus: we are

¹ Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination. Enlightenment to Romanticism*. (London: Harvard UP, 1981), 246.

his members.”¹ Blake’s ‘Sublime of Imagination’, the aspiration of the visionary, represents the union with the Supreme Being in eternity. However, it is a secular sublime, true religion. Blake’s universal brotherhood implies a sublime secularisation. Coleridge’s ‘unity as boundless or endless *allness* – the Sublime’² is Blake’s ‘Sublime of Imagination’. ‘The imagination is often rendered as the power of reconciling the particular and the universal. ... this emphasis is Coleridge’s and not Wordsworth’s.’³

Blake and Coleridge remind us that the sublime has its roots in religion. In the former, imagination is divinity itself; in the latter, the symbol is founded in the idea of the absolute unity of God as the ground of being, and it follows of the oneness of object and subject, world and mind. ‘Unity’ being the overriding ideal in Coleridge’s thought, he naturally designates it ‘sublime’. And the origins of this equation emerge, first in Coleridge’s early Unitarianism (‘ ’Tis the sublime of man ... to know ourselves Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole,’ *Religious Musings*, 140-3) and then in Wordsworth’s Coleridge’s - inspired pantheist equivocations, from *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, where the poet’s reflections upon nature are said to bring ‘a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused ... / A motion and a spirit that impels / All thinking things, all objects thought, / And rolls through all things. (ll. 96-103)⁴

Coleridge’s place is between Wordsworth and Blake. Wordsworth, because of his egotistical and self-absorbing sublime and his doubt in the power of imagination, is

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 195.

² Wu, Duncan ed. *A Companion to Romanticism*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 85. See: Trott, Nicola. “The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime.”

³ Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime. Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 59.

⁴ Wu, Duncan ed. *A Companion to Romanticism*. (Oxford: Blackwell 1998), 84-5. See: Trott, Nicola. “The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime.”

captivated by the natural world. Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' stands in contrast to the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime (the I in isolation perceiving nature's wonder) and is dissociated from 'the material, natural sublime as Keats coined it in 1818.'¹ Wordsworth's sublime relies on subjective perception. Human reason, mind, controls everything without allowing space for divine intervention. Wordsworth declares the subject's omnipotence. It is an attempt to master the external world due to fear of God. The sacred is venerated because God is manifested in nature. Therefore, the subject acquires its identity by experiencing nature and projecting its subjectivity, the 'I am', because nature is divine manifestation.

The identity in which the egotistical sublime culminates is an infinitely repeatable "I am." No "thou" or "it" can enter its attractive orbit without being transubstantiated into the "I". The identity so conceived is the inevitable precipitate of the Coleridgean "secondary Imagination," and in fact Coleridge's famous formulation can be transposed without much reduction into the circular dialectic of narcissism.²

Subjective dependence renders human beings inferior to God or subordinate to Him in an intimidating relationship with the Creator. The sacred is exclusively divine, is not part of the human. Creation is overestimated and man is perceived as a stranger who is invited to participate in the Supreme Being's glorification and celebration:

Blake, in conscious contrast to Wordsworth, emphasized both that the mind alone is formative – which unconsciously echoed Kant and Hazlitt – and that nature by itself is not, as Wordsworth

¹ Ibid., 78.

² Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (London: The John Hopkins UP, 1976), 158.

implies, “fitted” to the mind, but is “fallen” and dead. But seeing nature with imaginative vision, we enliven and rescue it, and also save our own souls. ... For Blake, imagination is this very God in us: “God is Man & exists in us & we in him.” ¹ (Annotations to Berkeley’s *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 664).

In reverse analogy, Blake’s ‘Sublime of Imagination’, in contrast to Wordsworth’s egotistical sublime, is grounded in the annihilation of the selfhood. In imaginative existence, man is not alienated from God. In human nature the sublime is identified with spirituality. Intellect and energy enable the man of imagination to attain sanctity and eternal life:

... the imaginative eye is for Blake always turned outward, away from the selfish. Blake conceives of an “antithesis” of imagination and Selfhood.” The freedom of the self to create something eternal means the opposite of self-involvement and self-concentration, the lowest and worst form of living hell (Ulro), where the individual psyche splits into spectres and devours itself in self-cannibalizing solipsism. For Blake, the unity of subjective and objective carries with it a moral dimension. The imagination becomes in effect the “moral sense.” ²

Blake’s imagination does not aspire to morality. Primarily, it is an artistic and cultural concept. Its moral dimension, according to Engell, is found in the unity between the Creator and the fallen world. Imagination, the beneficent Creator, reforms the fallen world and re-establishes creation. I assume that Blake’s imagination is not ‘moral sense’, because the ‘Sublime of Imagination’ is an aesthetic

¹ Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination. Enlightenment to Romanticism*. (London: Harvard UP, 1981), 247.

² *Ibid.*, 249.

concept detached from the world of appearances. The secular and divine worlds are united in liberty and not in morality. Morality in the fallen world is conventionality and conformism. Imagination and morality is a rather problematic association. Liberty and imagination are the appropriate correlation.

Engell refers to the subject - object division as the universe split between the creator God (the One) and the creation "fallen world", (the all). 'Jesus and the love that is Jesus become, for Blake, the imaginative connection of the "One and the all."'¹ The unifying force to redeem the fallen world is 'Love and desire (which) become the hope to regain an original union with God. ... Imagination and love, as Blake argues and Wordsworth affirms, cannot exist without each other.'² The 'Sublime of Imagination' proves God's love for fallen creation manifested through his Son. Engell assumes that 'Jesus becomes the Logos, the act of love incarnate, and for Blake, as for Coleridge and Schelling, Jesus is the imagination in divine-human form.'³ Jesus, the supreme artist, restores the fallen world through his sacrifice, which is an act of love. In the union of the 'One and the all', the fallen world of division is restored by imagination.

Jesus, the sublime and the beautiful combined, that is, splendour, blends human nature with the divine idea. Blake's Jesus, imagination incarnated, is the amalgamation of the 'One and the all', the incorporative force of false appearances. 'Blake recognizes this loving power as the highest reach of the imagination, and Jesus is for him the symbol of symbols, where love and imagination are drawn into unity.'⁴

¹ Ibid., 253.

² Ibid., 252.

³ Ibid., 253.

⁴ Ibid.

Coleridge's imagination, divided into primary and secondary, is an ineffective attempt to unite the earthly and divine worlds. Blake's imagination is a productive and creative effort to secularise the divine by uniting human nature with God. In this sense, divinity, which occupies the spiritual realm, retains its highest position, and, by merging with the human, it transforms and renovates the secular. Blake attributes to the sublime not institutional religious value but true artistic value. Wordsworth and Coleridge failed to conceive the artistic sublime, because they did not attribute to imagination the supreme position that it holds in Blake's aesthetics.

For Coleridge and Wordsworth imagination was a force, which could not be entirely trusted, as sublime. It was used to explain and not to create the world imaginatively. Wordsworth relies on nature and Coleridge envisions imagination within the context of subjectivity, without considering it a sublime force which could reform humanity. Imagination's secularisation is Blake's conception. Its necessity is artistic and cultural rather than theological or strictly religious.

Imagination is also the reconstructive, reformatory social force. Although Blake does not support war and revolution, whose ultimate objective is the establishment of an authoritarian regime under the delusion of liberty and equality, Engell supports the view:

...that Blake, Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth were definite and heated in their political actions and opinions, especially during the early phase of the French Revolution. And Blake, like Hazlitt, retained a fiery and vocal liberalism throughout life, despite the irony that in France its radical

exercise resulted in Napoleon, who said himself, "The world is ruled by imagination".¹

Certainly, the world is not ruled by imagination in the manner that Blake views Christianity, because the 'Sublime of Imagination' is the poet's and painter's artistic aspiration and concerns culture. In order to control democratic institutions according to their ambitions politicians can abuse imagination, or any other notion to shape an intellectual milieu which serves their objectives.

The spiritual trinity of pure energy beauty, intellectual beauty and its apex the 'Sublime of Imagination' construct Blake's aesthetic vision. As Engell contends:

Jesus, understood as the completing and all-penetrating bond of love and imagination, changes the character of the Trinity for Blake, as Christ does in a similar way for Coleridge and Schelling.² ... Frye puts Blake's view succinctly: The three persons of the Trinity are to be connected by ors rather than ands, and the real God is fourfold, power, love and wisdom contained within the unity of civilized human imagination. God is Father, Son, and Spirit: the imagination tries to see this Trinity in the fourfold unity of Jesus.³

Frye's assertion substantiates Blake's aesthetic visionary conception of the secular world as energy, intellect and the 'Sublime of Imagination'. It also clarifies why imagination is Blake's sublime, his prevalent aesthetic category and why he insists on the prophetic vision. As Paley claims:

¹ Ibid., 247-8.

² Ibid., 253.

³ Ibid., 253-4.

In early Blake in the three texts of *All Religions are One* (1788), ... along with the two tractates *There is No Natural Religion* ... and the exposition by Ezekiel in *The Marriage*, the term imagination is seldom used, however: it occurs only once in *The Marriage* (twice if we count imagin'd), and only once elsewhere in all Blake's writings up to 1799. Poetic Genius is a somewhat looser, more inclusive, and less structured concept than what Blake later calls Imagination.¹

It could be argued that even if Blake, in the beginning of his career, seldom uses the term imagination, his reference to the Poetic Genius in *The Marriage*, certifies that imagination defines the Poetic Genius. Perhaps, it is not yet his sublime, because of energy's significance, but the question: 'does a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make it so?' and the reply: 'All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm perswasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm perswasion of any thing.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 12, E 38-9) implies that imagination, identified with '.... the first principle and all the others merely derivative, ...', (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 12, E 39) is the prevalent idea and spirituality's origin.

Paley assumes energy's sublimity, but I accept energy's necessity, without considering it sublime, in achieving the ascent to the prophetic vision. The development of the idea (imagination) permeates Blake's entire work from his early literary and artistic years. The turning point of identifying it with Jesus signifies his mature thinking, where the 'Sublime of Imagination' becomes the climax of his true religious credo. Paley also contends that: 'We have previously seen that Blake's

¹ Paley, Morton. D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1970), 24.

concept of Imagination as symbolised by Los in the Lambeth books and in *Vala* is different from the conception we find in *The Four Zoas*.¹

Blake's concept of imagination is in evolutionary development, particularly during the years after the French Revolution, where he abandons his belief in energy as a reformatory force. Energy is set aside, because it is insufficient to attain the totality of his aesthetic vision. It is only used to create the aesthetic category of the beautiful, that is when pure energy is released, liberated and gratified desire. Only then can it be 'Eternal Delight'. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 4, E 34). Otherwise ungratified desire is perversion and psychic death. Apparently, energy's function (that is beauty, only when it is purity), verifies its 'sublime' inadequacy. In *Milton*, 'The Imagination is not a State: It is the Human Existence itself', (Book the Second, PLATE 32[35], l. 32, E 132) and in *Jerusalem*, the secularisation of the 'Sublime of Imagination' is evident. As Paley claims, in *Milton*, '... Imagination is grounded not in materials of sensation but in innate ideas.'² Therefore, Blake's intellectual quest reaches its apex and Jesus the imagination, establishes Blake's aesthetics.

Paley provides an extensive account of the origins of the 'Sublime of Imagination', which [origins] influenced Blake to render imagination his sublime aesthetic category.³ His [Blake's] imagination is prophetic and apocalyptic. Its basic function is the ability to conceive intellectual images. Imagination provides a plan for recreating and restoring forms to their artistic dimensions. Thus, it becomes the means of intellect's expression. As Paley claims:

¹ Ibid., 200.

² Ibid.

³ See: Paley, Morton. D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 200-60.

Blake gives the notion of the intellectual apprehension of Form his own characteristic expression when he wrote "... the Oak dies as well as the Lettuce but its Eternal Image & Individuality never dies. but renews by its seed. Just [as] < so > the Imaginative Image returns [according to] < by > the seed of Contemplative Thought".¹

This particular excerpt indicates that the natural forms' reproduction and intellect's intervention to recreate images. Nevertheless, imagination is spirituality's source, art's unique foundation and true Christianity.

Blake's imagination contains a variety of ideas about human existence, philosophy and art. Although reason and imagination are contraries, his ultimate aspiration is reason's subjection to imaginative perception. 'The idiot Reasoner laughs at the Man of Imagination / And from laughter proceeds to murder by undervaluing calumny' (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 32 [35], ll. 6-7, E 131). Blake declares that: 'My Streets are my, Ideas of Imagination.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 34 [38], l. 31, E 180). For him, imagination is a theory of knowledge where reason and in a certain extent sense perception have no place. Reasoning is the corporeal vegetative existence which creates and perpetuates error, thus distancing man from truth and eternity: 'Entering into the Reasoning Power, forsaking Imagination / They became Spectres;' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 74, ll. 7-8, E 229), 'Petrifying all the Human Imagination into rock & sand.' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Second, PAGE 25 {II 33-76}, l. 6, E 314). In the mortal, material world visionary perception is a continuous seeking after the imaginative truths, which are comprehended in Jesus:

¹Ibid., 207.

In your Imagination of which this World of Mortality is
but a Shadow. (*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 71, l.19, E 225).

... as the Reasoning Spectre / Stands between the
Vegetative Man & his Immortal Imagination

(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 32 [36], ll. 23-4, E 178).

Imagination the real & eternal World of which this
Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow & in which we
shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies, when
these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more.

(*Jerusalem*, To the Christians, PLATE 77, E 231).

Blake's redemptive vision is a constant re-creation of the world of appearances
through human imagination:

For All Things Exist in the Human Imagination

(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 69, l. 25, E 223).

Calling the Human Imagination: which is the Divine Vision
& Fruition / In which Man liveth eternally:

(*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 32 [35], ll. 19-20, E 132).

The purpose of exercising imaginative perception is self-knowledge. Mundane
experience is 'urizenic' identity and 'single vision', which must be realized and cast
off in order to embrace the universal fourfold eternity. The temporal and the eternal
are different perspectives which are defined by the redemptive power of imagination:

All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the
Divine [P 70] body of the Saviour the True Vine of Eternity
The Human Imagination who appeared to Me as Coming to
Judgment. ... throwing off the Temporal that the Eternal
might be Establishd. (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E
555).

Abstract philosophy and heathen idolatry are imagination's enemies. On the other hand, imagination is a secular concept detached from abstract, philosophical contemplation. Jesus is Blake's secular vision, imagination personified:

Brooding Abstract Philosophy. to destroy Imagination, the Divine-Humanity. A Three-fold Wonder: feminine: most beautiful: Three-fold. (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 70, ll. 19-20, E 224).

And by Abstraction opposed to the Visions of Imagination (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 74, l. 26, E 229).

This kind of imagination is not a producer of chimeras which are unrelated to reality. Imagination is vision's presupposition. Without imagination there is no vision. Sublimity is grounded in imagination's power to uncover false appearances and redeem the distorted reality, which is a satanic fabrication and machination, because Satan is 'The Elohim of the Heathen'. (*The Ghost of Abel*, E 272).

What Jesus came to Remove was the Heathen or Platonic Philosophy which blinds the Eye of Imagination The Real Man. (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 664).

Jesus considered Imagination to be the Real Man & says I will not leave you Orphanned and I will manifest myself to you (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 663).

Self-annihilation, universal brotherhood and the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, are the gospel of Jehovah. Therefore, Christianity and art are identified. All Christians must practice some form of art because imaginative perception, inspiration and vision are innate qualities in everyone, but most do not cultivate them, because of the reasoning spectre. Self 'unlocking' is a process of individual achievement through

intellectual effort. Man must realize, recognize and converse with his / her spectre. Self's 'dark horror' must not occupy imagination's space and destroy the soul's humanity. The 'reasoning' man is in a state of mental seclusion, in selfhood's pride and carnal gratification. The man of imagination experiences pure energy's release and spiritual liberty. The sublime does not only represent divine nature. It is human nature shaped by imaginative perception.

Blake assumes that, apart from reason, memory is imagination's enemy. Imagination is dissociated from memory: 'Imagination has nothing to do with Memory.' (Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*, London, 1815, E 666). Memory is identified with the 'reasoning power' because it is inhibition and generates revenge and retribution:

The Memory is a State always, & the Reason is a State
Created to be Annihilated & a new Ratio Created

(*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 32 [35], ll. 34-5, E 132).

Memory and Reasoning; ... is a barren Rock: it is also called
the Barren Waste of Locke and Newton.

(*Descriptive Catalogue*, Number VI., E 546).

The Greek Muses are daughters of Mnemosyne, or Memory,
and not of Inspiration or Imagination, therefore not authors of
such *sublime conceptions*. (*Descriptive Catalogue*, Number II,
PAGE 2, E 531). (emphasis added).

Blake's sublime is detached from the '... rotten rags of Memory ...' (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 41 [48], l.4, E 142). Inspiration is a substitute for memory's relics: 'Imagination is Surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration who in the aggregate are calld Jerusalem' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, PAGE 70, E 554). Memory

reproduces natural images by copying without creating or allowing imagination to reform reality. Blake considers this practice inartistic, because it is based on reason and proportion. Classical art is founded on these premises and not on divine inspiration. Therefore reason is the constructed and restricted outline which conceals the true identity of forms.

Reason is not emotion or truth. On the contrary, it represents stagnation and immobility. It denotes stability and firmness. Motion and expression, which represent life's uncertainty and mutability, describe the true meaning of forms: 'Mathematic form is Eternal in the Reasoning Memory. Living Form is Eternal Existence.' (*On Virgil*, E 270). Sublime conceptions and creations are inspirational art. Blake, the artist combines the 'Sublime of Imagination' with Genius (poetic inspiration) and vision: '<A Work of Genius is a Work "Not to be obtained by the Invocation of Memory & her Syren Daughters. but by Devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit.' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 646).

'Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists. Really and Unchangeably. Fable or Allegory is Formd by the Daughters of Memory.' (*A Vision of The Last Judgement*, PAGE 70, E 554). Blake's ideas about allegory and fable need clarification. In 1803, he defines his poetry as 'a Sublime Allegory addressd to the Intellectual powers ...' (*The Letters*, 27 [To Thomas Butts], E 730). In 1810, intellectual beauty and the 'Sublime of Imagination' have already formed his aesthetic 'allegory'. He differentiates between fable, (which is fiction) and allegory that is vision. 'Fable or Allegory are a totally distinct & inferior kind of Poetry'. (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, PAGE 70, E 554). Fable is identified with allegory. They are both

memory. The distinction between allegory and vision correlates to the establishment of the 'Sublime of Imagination'. Whatever is not vision is out of the context of the sublime. Fable stands in opposition to imagination and it is replaced by visionary fancy. Memory is an obsolete, inartistic premise, because it is associated with natural religion and the philosophy of the Heathens:

Jupiter ... Begat on Mnemosyne or Memory The Greek Muses which are not Inspiration as the Bible is. Reality was Forgot & the Vanities of Time & Space only Rememberd & call'd Reality Such is the Mighty difference between Allegoric Fable & Spiritual Mystery Let it here be Noted that the Greek Fables originated in Spiritual Mystery & Real Vision ... and Real Visions Which are lost & clouded in Fable and Alegory [*which*] <while> the Hebrew Bible & the Greek Gospel are Genuine Preserv'd by the Saviours Mercy ... (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [P 72], E 555).

Allegories are things that Relate to Moral Virtues Moral Virtues do not Exist they are Allegories and dissimulations <But Time & Space are Real Beings a Male & a Female Time is a Man Space is a Woman & her Masculine Portion is Death> (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [PAGE 91], E 563).

Allegory's attribution to moral virtues (that 'do not exist') is a very odd statement. 'Dissimulations are allegories' suggests that allegory implies negativity, naturalness versus imagination. Blake's poetry, which is 'a Sublime Allegory', differs from Romantic poetry because the 'Sublime of Imagination' is the aesthetic vision and the only true artistic expression. The juxtaposition that Blake cites here concerns the ideology of the heathens compared to the spiritual mystery and real vision of the Hebrew Bible. Certainly, the Hebrew tradition surpasses fable and allegory because its roots are found in monotheism, mystery and vision.

Apart from memory's ineffectuality, which is imagination's opponent, another important issue is the relationship between fancy and imagination.¹ As Paley assumes:

Addison takes fancy and imagination as synonymous and divides their pleasures into primary ('which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes') and secondary ('called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious', and which are the pleasures of art).²

Our poets stop short at mere fancy, evoking images which place the mind by their beauty or their unexpectedness. The poets of the Romantic School soon began to make a distinction between this "fancy" and "imagination," which perceives the soul behind the visible object, and which is the true creative faculty, the power that as Wordsworth says, is given us to awake and sustain the eternal side of our nature, while "fancy" can only please the temporal side. It is this kind of imagination which was to play so great a part in the poetry of the nineteenth century, and which Blake calls "double vision."³

Blake does not differentiate between visionary fancy and imagination. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the fourfold vision. Imagination's division into primary and secondary would be a split of the sublime, a division that he considers unnecessary because the aesthetic category of the beautiful had already been introduced by energy's separation into pure and impure. Another confirmation that visionary fancy and imagination are identified, is his assertion that fancy is the sublime creator of divine images: '... the Writings of the Prophets illustrate these conceptions of the

¹ See: Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination*. Chapter 13. Distinctions between Fancy and Imagination. (London: Harvard UP, 1981), 172-183.

² Paley, Morton. D. *Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 223.

³ Berger, P. *William Blake Poet and Mystic*. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1914), 254.

Visionary Fancy by their various *sublime & Divine Images* as seen in the Worlds of Vision' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, [P 69], E 555). (emphasis added).

Nature and fancy, like imagination, are opposing forces: 'all likeness from memory being necessarily very very defective but Nature & Fancy are Two Things & can Never be joined neither ought any one to attempt it for it is Idolatry & destroys the Soul' (*The Letters*, 27 [To Thomas Butts], E 730). Thus, the conclusion is that visionary fancy and imagination function in a similar way, producing the sublime without any split or differentiation between them. Indeed, as an aesthetic idea, Jesus the imagination cannot be divided because Blake was opposed to division of any kind. Besides, beauty, Jesus' energy, is incorporated into the 'Sublime of Imagination', which is an aesthetic mixture, and not a separation of the sublime from the beautiful. The synthesis of the two produces splendour, which is Jesus. Splendour is Blake's divine, the most appropriate aesthetic conception of spirituality. However, visionary fancy is not only spiritual but also artistic.

Sense is necessary for the creation of imaginary vision. In 1793, Blake contends that fancy is not detached from sense: '*Who call it Fancy, & shut the gates of sense, & in their chambers, / Sleep like the dead.*' (*America a Prophecy*, PLATE C, ll. 22-3, E 59). This assertion suggests that senses are not excluded from the sublime experience. Nevertheless, sensory organs are untrustworthy. I believe that Blake's ambivalent attitude toward the senses is brought about because the 'Sublime of Imagination' is Divine Vision, and not sensory perception, which is mostly associated with nature and the natural world. Thus, the senses' function in the aesthetic experience is necessary

but not decisive. Imagination's function is to shape reality. Art achieves this through imagination and not by copying nature:

There is one kind of imagination that projects itself outward, believing that if only its present state were changed, then pleasure would result. This kind of imagination can ignite envy, covetousness, or the canker of dissatisfaction. The creative imagination of art, often fashioning a pleasant, escapist world, can actually intensify this tendency. ... But we can escape such subjectivity and see the world and ourselves for what they are, according to Goethe, only through art itself. But the art must draw on the other kind of imagination that opens us to experience, that informs our hearts and minds with truth. Art based on this kind of imagination reaches our "inner sense," Leibniz's "*sens interne*," and exposes us completely to the outside world. This is the familiar theme of fusing subjective and objective, releasing the self from the pit of its own experience, opening it to other experiencing natures.¹

Imagination or the Human Eternal Body in Every Man

.....

Imagination or the Divine Body in Every Man

(Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 663).

Imagination is true art. Without the 'Sublime of Imagination', art cannot exist. The man of imagination is the true artist. Blake's creative imagination merges the subjective (threefold) with the objective (fourfold) to attain the sublime experience. Transcendence is eliminated because the secular and the divine identify. Blake introduces the sublime's secularisation: 'The imagination ... acts both as an emissary

¹ Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination. Enlightenment to Romanticism*. (London: Harvard UP, 1981), 283-4.

between the empirical and the concrete and as an ideal vision of the future, of new knowledge that might be revealed.’¹ He emphasises imagination’s supremacy by disdaining the artist who draws by using only his / her natural perception because the latter produces the false artist:

The spirit of Titian was particularly active, in raising doubts concerning the possibility of executing without a model, and when once he had raised the doubt, it became easy for him to snatch away the vision time after time, for when the Artist took his pencil, to execute his ideas, his power of imagination weakened so much, and darkened, that memory of nature and of Pictures ... of the various Schools possessed his mind, instead of appropriate execution, resulting from the inventions; (*A Descriptive Catalogue*, Number IX, E 547).

This kind of art is not Blake’s aspiration because it is not the product of visionary fancy. It is false art, unimaginative and without inspiration. Visionary perception is artistic creation. He is critical on painting’s execution and denounces direct copying from nature, which practice he considers false art: ‘Art that is bad is not just a product of fancy; it is a twisted use of the stronger power of imagination and thus something that must be attacked and criticized intelligibly because of its perverse unity.’²

Blakean imagination is superior to memory (perversion) and nature (evil). Artistic invention is imaginative art’s first principle. Art is ‘The All in Man The Divine Image or Imagination.’ (Annotations to Berkeley’s *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 663). Nature and urizenic reality are false art, which is the result of natural religion. False art is the aggregate of erroneous religious values and rules which establish artificial reality and

¹ Ibid., 283.

² Ibid., 284.

imitative art. If the rules are untrue, that is without imagination's influence, art as a cultural product, is general, gross and aesthetically vulgar: 'Art Degraded Imagination Denied War Governed the Nations' (*The Laocoön*, E 274). Lack of imagination in art indicates false art, and uncivilised nations. Therefore, the Protestant Jesus, being imagination, culturally shapes art and inspires society.

Detailed execution is not just a rule in art. It discloses form's ideal shape. Blake's theory of art contains many and various rules that apply to forms' depiction as well as colouring but they are all subsumed under the 'Sublime of Imagination.'

Imagination only, can furnish us with colouring appropriate, such as is found in the Frescos of Rafael and Michael Angelo: the disposition of forms always directs colouring in works of true art. (*The Ancient Britons*, E 545).

... Forms must be apprehended by Sense or the Eye of Imagination Man is All Imagination God is Man & exists in us & we in him (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 664).

Sense and imagination are necessary for the apprehension of forms:

What is it sets Homer Virgil & Milton in so high a rank of Art. Why is the Bible more Entertaining & Instructive than any other book. Is it not because they are addressed to the Imagination which is Spiritual Sensation & but mediately to the Understanding or Reason Such is True Painting and such <was> alone valued by the Greeks & the best modern Artists. Consider what Lord Bacon says "Sense sends over to Imagination before Reason have judged & Reason sends over to Imagination before the Decree can be

acted.” (*The Letters*, 5 [To Rev^d Dr Trusler, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, E 702-3).

Senses are used as a means to transform reality. Not every artist sees alike. Imagination is particular and universal: ‘And I know that This World Is a World of Imagination & Vision I see Every thing I paint In this World, but Every body does not see alike.’ (*The Letters*, 5 [To]Revd Dr Trusler, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, E 702). The world of ‘generation’, ‘vegetation’ and ‘death’, must be cast off. True art is imagination, and the artist is reality’s transformer:

To recover Art has been the business of my life to the Florentine Original & if possible to go beyond that Original < this > I thought the only pursuit worthy of [*an Englishman*] <a Man>. To Imitate I abhor I obstinately adhere to the true Style in Art such as Michael Angelo Rafael Jul Rom Alb Durer left it [*the Art of Invention not of Imitation. Imagination is My World this world of Dross is beneath my Notice & beneath the Notice of the Public*] I demand therefore of the Amateurs of [P 21]art the Encouragem^{ent} which is my due if they <continue to> refuse theirs is the loss not mine <& theirs is the Contempt of Posterity> I have Enough in the Approbation of fellow labourers this is my glory & exceeding great reward I go on & nothing can hinder my course’ (*Public Address*, E 580-1).

In the Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Blake explicitly expresses his opinion about imagination’s function in what he considers true and false art. His disagreement with Reynolds focuses on the latter’s art theory, which conforms to ‘the Wretched State of Political Science...’, (*Public Address*, E 580) and a specific mode

for the execution of forms. Engell contends that Reynolds's art theory is based on imagination, although Blake argues that Reynolds's ideas about art deviate from his visionary art theory:

Reynolds uses imagination to replace the function of reason in the arts. Like the concept of the sublime, it offered a great deal to the new psychological criticism without necessarily either threatening the classical ideal of moral purpose or sweeping away all assumptions of the classical approach based on the imitation of nature.¹

Reynolds pries further apart the widening meanings of fancy and imagination. Fancy is for him slightly derogatory. It harbors delusions, and he uses "fantastical" in a disparaging sense. By the thirteenth *Discourse*, he finds "imagination" wholly desirable and drops "fancy" as having any real meaning in discussions about genius.²

Reynolds downgrades reason as a deductive and truthful measure of the arts. Reason had too long been made to stand for "partial, confined, argumentative theories," which Reynolds characterizes as "principles falsely called rational." He harkens back to Greek humanism where man is the measure of all things, not man's systems or formal contrivances. With finality and assurance, he defines the imagination as the response of the whole individual turning to particular ideas and actions. The imagination connects the particular to the universal; it unites the specificity we always find in individual situations with "the accumulated experience of our whole life."³

Reynolds concludes that "the imagination is the residence of truth."
... He is the first Enlightenment thinker to formulate ... a belief:

¹ Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination. Enlightenment to Romanticism*. (London: Harvard UP, 1981), 185.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 186.

truth is attained through the imagination and, more specifically, through imaginative art.¹

For Blake who read Reynolds's contention: 'My notion of nature comprehends ... also the ... human mind and imagination' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 660), he [Reynolds] subsumes to general rules nature, human mind and imagination, because he does not understand the difference between philosophy and art: '<Here is a Plain Confession that he Thinks Mind & Imagination not to be above the Mortal & Perishing Nature. Such is the End of Epicurean or Newtonian Philosophy it is Atheism>' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 660). In addition, '[In the highest] flights of ... imagination, reason ought to preside from first to last,...', (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 660) is a statement which does not verify Engell's assertions that Reynolds 'downgrades reason' and considers 'imagination truth's residence'. Besides, Blake's reply: '<If this is True it is a Devilish Foolish Thing to be An Artist >' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 660) confirms his belief in imagination as the sublime in art. To Reynolds' assertion: 'From a slight underdetermined drawing ... the imagination supplies more than the painter himself, probably, could produce; ...' Blake exclaims: 'What Falshood' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 662). Imagination is not an abstraction: 'They also considered God as abstracted or distinct from the Imaginative World but Jesus as also Abraham & David considered God as a Man in the Spiritual or Imaginative Vision ...' (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 663).

¹Ibid.

Reynolds' ideas about the function of imagination are confusing. The reason for this is that, in the eighteenth century, imagination was not regarded a redemptive force because of the uncertainty which is embedded in its function. Blake's imagination, identified with Jesus, explains imagination's function in art and reality. Engell repeats Weiskel's assertion about imagination being the unifying force of the particular and the universal. Blake's imagination achieves this, because it is the secular sublime. Imagination's secularisation illuminates the source of the sublime. Burke and Reynolds take for granted God's incomprehensibility and human nature's inferiority. Therefore, their sublime is not artistic because it is not secular. Blake's artistic sublime does not regard God as terror and obscurity. On the contrary, it is founded on imagination, minute discrimination and singular and particular detail. Particularization, as an artistic practice is associated with the outline of forms. Thus, the sublime is the aggregate of particularities. Minuteness derives from particularisation, proportion. Minuteness presupposes detailed artistic execution. 'Sacrifice the Parts. What becomes of the Whole?' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 650). The whole collapses. Details constitute the whole. Deficiencies, weaknesses and imperfections of all the objects, which are exhibited to our view by nature, do not constitute beauty. Beauty is found in the minuteness of forms in their details, and in their meticulous execution. Art's essence is Genius's intellectual beauty. Art is personal expression, a divine manifestation and universal communication. Blake disagrees with Reynolds' idea that 'great ideal perfection and beauty are to be sought upon the earth.' Due to his secular sublime, although perfection and beauty are heavenly generated, are found 'upon the earth' through imagination. Blake's theory of art is an issue of style, that is representation of forms and restoration to their true ideals, as perceived by the artist's imagination.

In the Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Blake exposes the status of his contemporary art. His basic assumption is:

Degrade first the Arts if you'd Mankind degrade,
Hire Idiots to Paint with cold light & hot shade:
Give high Price for the worst, leave the best in disgrace,
And with Labours of Ignorance fill every place. (E 635).

.....
While S^r Joshua was rolling in Riches Barry was Poor &
[*Independent*]*<Unemployd except by his own Energy>*
Mortimer was [*despised & Mocked*] *<calld a Madman>*

.....
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

.....
O Society for Encouragement of Art - O King & Nobility of
England! Where have you hid Fuseli's Milton Is Satan
troubled at his Exposure (E 636).

.....
When a Man talks of Acquiring Invention & of learning how to
produce Original Conception he must expect to be calld a Fool
*<by Men of Understanding but such a Hired Knave cares not
for the Few. His Eye is on the Many. or rather on the Money >*
(E 655).

.....
*<The Enquiry in England is not where a Man has Talents. &
Genius? But whether he is a Passive & Polite & a Virtuous
Ass: & obedient to Noblemens Opinions in Art & Science. If
he is; he is a Good Man: If Not, he must be Starved>* (E 642).

We want a Fair Price & Proportionate Value <& a General Demand for Art> (E 637).

Eighteenth century art had come to this because it was not impregnated by vision and imagination. Blake's theory of art is a proposal of how 'true art' should be. The 'Sublime of Imagination' distinguishes true art from false art. Genius cannot be taught: '... all Pretence to Inspiration is a Lie & a Deceit to say the least of it [*If the Inspiration is Great why Call it Madness*] <For if it is a Deceit the Whole Bible is Madness> This Opinion originates in the Greeks Calling the Muses Daughters of Memory' (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 642). National and universal art will thrive if intellectual beauty is allowed to set the rules of human imagination. Culture is not a product of systematic laws which must be followed to teach the art of painting. Imagination contributes to stylistic development. Blake's aspiration is invention and particular, imaginative, stylistic representation of forms. Imagination does not obey specific art rules. It is liberty and presupposes creative, detailed execution. It also indicates rupture with naturalness. Nature is imagination's adversary and is also associated with natural religion. Copying from nature defines the false artist. Aesthetic Christianity is not natural religion because it degrades art. According to Blake, imagination is the true Christianity which produces true art.

4.3. Imagination, Nature and Natural Religion

The thesis's last chapter, imagination, nature and natural religion, is supplementary and explanatory of Blake's aesthetic idealism. It concerns the relationship between nature and imagination, natural religion and art.

Blake's true religion and art differentiate from Deism and the conventional artistic style of his era. His ideas on art derive from imagination and the way he views Christianity. For him, nature is matter, and the natural law is the law of the devourer. Due to these premises he considers man's dependence on nature erroneous. Therefore, he turns to imagination which he identifies with divinity. Thus, he establishes a relationship between man and God. Faith in nature proves man's weakness and Blake's 'real man' is not a weak man. He is a regenerated and inspired human being through imagination. Wordsworth's perception of nature contrasts with Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination'. Nature is Wordsworth's aesthetic whereas Blake's is Jesus, the imagination.

Hutchings mentions three arguments about Blake's nature: First, that 'Blake's critics often mistakenly identify Vala as nature herself.' Second, that 'Blake was of nature's party without knowing it' and third, that 'the notion of female will is a kind of fiction and not an essential category in Blake's mythology.' These are challenged by the following arguments: Vala belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly. She, like nature, is material and identifies with urizenic existence. Blake was not 'of nature's party without knowing it' because Vala, the ugly female, represents a variety of evils due to the fact that she is not a spiritual entity. That is, imagination contrasts with

reason. In addition, Vala, who is the representation of the disruption between body and mind, is committed to the body. The female will is the product of Vala's identification with bodily and material existence. Thus, survival and urizenic life is guaranteed. However, for Blake, this kind of life is an insipid reproduction of forms. Vala is not a fiction. She is Blake's representation of the urizenic and ugly female. Consequently, nature and woman is Blake's quest and contemplation.

The most important part of the chapter refers to the relationship between natural religion and art and Blake's true religion and art respectively. The argument suggests that Blake rejects natural religion and proposes a set of ideas concerning true art. His assertions are based on true Christianity because Deism, which he considers atheism, and the tree of mystery that is the dichotomy of good and evil, is false religion. Natural religion's 'impossible absurdity' urged him to allege 'the marriage of heaven and hell.' Catholicism and Orthodoxy, which proclaim that nature is God's creation, follow Urizen's cruel practices. Deism, Druidism is responsible for human slavery, war and spiritual backwardness. Blake's Protestant Jesus, the imagination is spirituality and productivity. This does not mean that Catholicism and Orthodoxy are false religions. The basic idea of the differentiation between religions is not the division of good and evil but the ground on which this division is based. Protestantism's basis is spirituality. Although 'Man must and will have Some Religion,' religion is 'a web' and a 'direful wheel.' Jesus is not a religion, in the sense that religion is a system of justice which is based on single standards that regulate human ethics and conduct. Understanding Jesus is a process of self-knowing. Man should not strive to express himself through religion but through his creative imagination and the humanitarian values of annihilation of the selfhood, brotherhood

and mutual forgiveness of sins. In false religion the virtues of humanitarianism, love and forgiveness of sins are ignored. Jesus is the spiritual sun of eternity. True religion is the Splendour of Imagination. Blake's ideas about true religion found expression in his art. False artists are influenced by natural religion's artificial values of good and evil, of 'justice', disregarding the individual and overlooking the true aesthetic which is imagination. Thus, they depict forms in their natural reality and not in their inspirational and visionary dimension.

The chapter completes the analysis of Blake's aesthetic idealism. The other part of his aesthetics, his aesthetic realism concerns reason and the spectre, the individual and social polypus. Blake's aesthetic realism is intriguing because it elucidates further the 'Sublime of Imagination'. It explains his negative aesthetic, reason and its consequences in human life. The opposite component of aesthetic idealism reveals what he means by true religion and art, that is imagination and inspirational representation of forms.

Nature has no Outline: but Imagination has.

Nature has no Tune: but Imagination has!

Nature has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity
(*The Ghost of Abel*, E 270).

Some See Nature all Ridicule & Deformity & 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. (*The Letters*, 5 [To] Rev^d Dr Trusler, Englefield Green, Egham Surrey, E 702).

Rivers Mountains Cities Villages, / Are all Human & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk / In Heavens and Earths; as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven / And Earth, & all you behold, tho it appears Without it is Within / In your Imagination of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow. (*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 71, ll. 15-9, E 225).

In the eighteenth century, nature was perceived as the manifestation of God's perfection. Man was dependent on nature because it was the expression of divine might. It was associated with materialism and industrialism. How does Blake perceive nature? He re-evaluates this 'powerful' natural world, considering nature cruel and malevolent. For him, nature comprises all the phenomena, substances, energies, processes of the universe, including all the sciences, human nature and in short, life and death. Nature is identified with matter and represents the falsity of the world of appearances. There is in nature an element of disintegration, decay and 'devouring' craving: 'The Spider sits in his labourd Web, eager watching for the Fly / Presently comes a famishd Bird & takes away the Spider.' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the First, PAGE 18 {I 454-68}, ll. 4-5, E 310). There is in nature an 'image of eternal death'. (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 14 [15], l. 35, E 108). The natural law is the law of the devourer.

Blake repudiates dependence on nature, due to its dark side, the monstrous powers of the natural world that cause humans horror and despair instead of complacent brooding and soothing thoughts. Nature is concrete but also false, in the sense that it ensnares man in appearances and hinders human spiritual progress. This happens because man believes in nature's powerful 'vegetable' mirror reflection.

By exposing nature's failure to represent the true world Blake re-establishes a human relationship with divinity beyond the material mirror image. He considers man responsible for this deception. Enclosure into naturalness, which is 'single vision' and intellectual incapability, renders humans slaves to falsity. They remain unimaginative and dependent on nature's abstract power to control human life. Mankind bound to the five senses and being in an uninspired contracted state, sees his / her reflection in nature and not in God. Vision is illusion and not redemption. Therefore, when nature is regenerated by imagination it becomes a part of man. Blake, whose objective is the incorporation and regeneration of binary oppositions (like good and evil, imagination and reason), envisages nature's restoration to its appropriate place in the universe.

Art and nature do not coincide because art is imagination and vision. Blake's ideas about nature interrelate with false art. Although his aesthetic is sought in heaven, where imagination reigns, human imagination is its secular presence. Nature's copiers are not artists. Art is divine inspiration and not nature's imitation. True artists represent nature's image according to their imaginative perception:

Men think they can Copy Nature as Correctly as I copy
Imagination this they will find Impossible. & all the Copies or
Pretended Copiers of Nature from Rembrat to Reynolds Prove
that Nature becomes [*tame*] to its Victim nothing but Blots and
Blurs. Why are Copiers of Nature Incorrect while Copiers of

Blake's nature is identified with impurity, which is the main cause of the prophetic vision's subversion. Nature is imagination's opponent. God and nature are not equated. Jesus, the imagination, stands above nature because intellectual beauty differs from natural beauty. Naturalness is a delusion. As Engell contends:

Nature is "fallen"; that is, it remains imperfect and beneath paradise, cut off from a direct communion with God where eternity and permanence reign. But man's imagination can regenerate nature and raise transitory forms to the symbolic level of "ever Existent Images" and ideas. There is, in Blake, a kind of pre-established harmony between the psyche and nature.¹

However, Blake is not inimical to nature. He regards it as necessity, like reason from which man can escape through imagination. Nature's regeneration is within human capacity. Reality and nature's cruelty can be defeated by the creative imagination. Man is the mediator between nature and God. Nature is not the mediator between man and God: 'For man's creative energy or imagination to merge with God's through the medium of nature is to see, according to Blake, that "... Nature is a Vision of the Science of the Elohim." ' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 29 [31], l. 65, E 128).² If nature is the mediator between God and man, human life is a tyrannical God's creation, whose purpose is enslavement in urizenic laws, through obedience to cruel natural rules which deter progress and deprive man of individual freedom. This entrapment inflicts suffering although it is regarded as propriety, virtue and urizenic individual merit.

¹ Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination. Enlightenment to Romanticism*. (Harvard UP, 1981), 249.

² *Ibid.*, 251.

Blake's 'Real Man' is not the natural man but the spiritual man who is capable, through imagination, to perceive the truth. As Engell comments:

For Blake, nature becomes subservient to a revealed faith. At the apocalypse we realize that nature is a necessary but interim stage to a higher reality. ... When Blake says that "to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself," he is again speaking of what Coleridge and Schelling mean by *natura naturans*, the forming power or "connatural" energy working in the mind and in nature alike, an energy available for man's enlightenment if only his imagination has the courage to use it properly. ... Blake contrasts this idea with the dead forms of nature – Coleridge and Schelling's *natura naturata*. ... in Blake, [these forms] are often represented by mechanical or mineral images.¹

Blake is not ensnared by nature's witchery. He sees through nature. His ideas about nature's failure to represent God, are expressed in his Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems* 1815, where he explicitly states: 'I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually & then he is No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true Poetry or Inspiration' (Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*, London, 1815, E 665). He considers Wordsworth enmeshed in nature. Weiskel affirms Wordsworth's 'regressive attachment to Nature,' and contends that:

... one does not respond satisfactorily to the theory that Wordsworth simply could not free himself from Mother Nature. Nature, after all led him into it; in the 1805 version, he writes "(surely I was led by her)" as if there were doubt or anxiety on this point.²

¹ Ibid.

² Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. (The Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), 102.

Wordsworth perceives divinity through nature, which is the mediator between man and God. Therefore, he prioritises nature and not man. Man is intellect, that is, 'Intellectual powers.' Nature is not intellect. Therefore, it cannot represent God's perfection and compel humans to believe in its power. Nature is not wise. It is cruel and injudicious: 'To display Natures cruel holiness: the deceits of Natural Religion' [.] (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 36 [40], l.25, E 137). Blake's imaginative man recreates nature by acknowledging its might. However, nature is not man's faith. Blake does not transform human experience of nature into a religious experience. Natural power is not attributed to a supernatural Being. His vision is anthropocentric: 'To accept this world of matter as real is "atheism"-wherefore Wordsworth was an atheist; ...'¹

Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is universal brotherhood, annihilation of the selfhood and mutual forgiveness of sins. Without these presuppositions, God cannot be approached because these Christian principles promote understanding of man, of self, and of nature. According to Blake, Wordsworth did not surpass nature because he sought human understanding through nature and not through human imagination. Although, in his literary career, he continued to define nature (and, for that matter God) as more closely identified with 'the mind of man'. The Wordsworthian mind is not permeated by imagination. For Blake, intellectual beauty is imagination and redeems nature. Wordsworth's 'mind of man' functions as nature's reflection. Blake's imaginative mind operates as nature's transformer of the world of appearances: 'Natures Shadows <are> Ever varying.' (*Public Address*, E 575). 'There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 555). Wordsworth's God is the apotheosis of human

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 295.

mind that contemplates divinity. He worships the capacity of his own mind to experience a sense of sublimity and transcendence that is as Keats says, 'the egotistical sublime.'

Man is inferior and helpless in front of nature's might. Individual intellect is not trustworthy and imagination is viewed as an unsuitable means to reach God. Consequently, nature asserts its predominance because there is no escape from its laws. Humans are attached to naturalness because it is their existence and material safety. In this way, God is forgotten; that is, truth is lost. The material, is the natural man. Imagination is degraded by any attachment to nature: 'Imagination is the Divine Vision not of The World nor of Man nor from Man as he is a Natural Man but only as he is a Spiritual Man ...'. (Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*, London, 1815, E 666). Meaningful communication between man and God is impossible. The natural man is a 'reasoner' whose perception is limited because nature obstructs vision. Confinement in natural perception is atheism, because conscious communication with God is lost. Man has lost his consciousness by worshiping the world of appearances: 'Natural Objects always did & now do Weaken deaden & obliterate Imagination in Me Wordsworth must know that what he Writes Valuable is Not to be found in Nature ...' (Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*, London, 1815, E 665).

In my opinion, Wordsworth's nature represents a non-aesthetic, that is non-Blakean approach to reality. Due to his attachment to the natural world and his oscillation between the material, the numinous and the subjective, Wordsworth's attempt to disclose human nature through nature alone is unsuccessful. In fact, he neither venerates nature nor is he ensnared by its alluring grace. In 'Intimations of Immortality' he expresses his valediction to nature because he cannot interpret it and rise above the

natural world. He lacks vision and belief in the redemptive power of imagination. Wordsworth's sublime is defective.

Nature is not a sublime force, due to its aesthetic inadequacy to express the divine. Since nature is the fallen world it needs redemption: 'what is the material world, and it is dead?' (*Europe a Prophecy*, PLATE iii, l.13, E 60). Mater, which is nature, is dead without human intervention: 'Where man is not nature is barren.' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PLATE 10, E 38). Blake's 'Sublime of Imagination' is not loss or dejection, as a consequence of a non-existent afterlife, but survival after death and abundance in eternity. Jesus is immortality and eternal light.

Wordsworth's nature, the 'natural sublime' appears as unreality, pre-existence and life as a dream. Nature needs restoration. Damon talks about the doctrine of nature's 'apocatastasis', which Blake had accepted.¹ Wordsworth's nature does not need reestablishment. It is powerful and represents the world of false appearances. Conversely, it is a responsive natural engulfing of humanity. Blake's nature, the 'Consumed and consuming', and 'Devouring & devoured' (*Europe a Prophecy*, PLATE I, l.10, E 60, & PLATE 2, l.5, E 61) reveals its true essence. For him, nature is not disguise, the veil which conceals truth and renders nature desirable because of its deceptiveness. He sees through it by disclosing its unreality. Survival is the law of devouring and utilization. Delusion is created due to nature's acceptance as the nurturing Goddess whose objective is man's dependence on its 'secure' laws. Fundamentally, Urizen and nature do not differ: 'And Urizen craving with hunger Stung with the odours of Nature / Explor'd his dens around' (*The [First] Book of Urizen*, Ch. VII, ll. 31-2, E 80).

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 296.

Aesthetically, Blake's nature exists imaginatively in the human mind: '... into The Mind in which every one is King & Priest in his own House God Send it so on Earth as it is in Heaven' (*The Letters*, 91 [To] George Cumberland Esq^{re}, Culver Street, Bristol, E 784). Mystery is nature's 'science':

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.
(*Songs of Experience* 1794, The Human Abstract, E 27).

Therefore, imagination liberates humans from mystery's torture. Blake uses the word nature to describe existential substances and non-existential structures such as: the 'nature of infernal wisdom', the 'energies of nature', the 'odours of nature', the 'nature of female space', the 'nature of infinity', the 'nature of Ulro', the 'vast form of nature', matter, Goddess Mother Nature, Vala, who is 'the lilly of the desart.' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Seventh, PAGE 83 {VII 233-66}, l.8, E 358) in juxtaposition with Jerusalem, 'The Lilly of Havilah.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 1, PLATE 19, l. 42, E 164). It is noteworthy that he uses flower imagery to describe Vala, who symbolises the barren, unspiritual ground of existence, and Jerusalem, whose main attributes are purity and freedom of love. They are both 'lillies', one of the 'desart', and the other of the 'rich land in gold, bdellium, and onyx'¹ respectively. Nature is 'Matter which is a delusion, a thin coating of unreality, which is mistaken for reality by those whose vision is single only, like Newton's. It is the veil of Vala.'²

¹ Ibid., 176.

² Ibid., 266.

Urizen is 'A World where Man is by Nature the enemy of Man.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 49, ll. 69-72, E 199). Natural existence is urizenic existence. It is the agent of spiritual death. Blake's human nature is impurity, unlike Rousseau's, who 'thought Men Good by Nature; he found them Evil & found no friend.' (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E 201). Instead of 'universal brotherhood', natural existence promotes individual interest and selfishness. The world of 'vegetation and generation' is Blake's world of experience and adulthood. Vegetative nature is 'Satan's Wife' who 'is War & Misery ...' (*The Laocoön*, E 273). She is 'the Delusive Goddess Nature & her Laws' (*The Letters*, [To] George Cumberland Esq^{re}, Culver Street, Bristol, E 784).

Nature's dark side is Blake's contemplation because human experience is of the natural world. The same condition exists in art where the man of imagination must cast out False Art and embrace True Art: 'such is the Nature of Mortal Things' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 562), 'The Nature of Hatred & Envy & of All the Mischiefs in the World ...' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 564). Satan rules in nature, which is dead intellect: 'Nature in darkness groans / And Men are bound to sullen contemplations ...' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Ninth, PAGE 138, {IX 806-45}, ll. 11-2, E 406). Nature is 'like a serpent.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 43 [29], l. 76, E 192). Sexual division is naturally and not spiritually determined:

Of the Sexual Nature & its Fall into Generation and Death
(*Genesis*, E 688).

The nature of a Female Space is this: it shrinks the Organs
Of Life till they become Finite & Itself seems Infinite.
(*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 10 [11], ll. 6-7, E 104).

Blake's work is 'Visionary or Imaginative ...' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 555). It is 'the Nature of Eternal Things'. (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 561). He advocates freedom from nature and its laws, '... Natural Fears or Natural Desires!', (*The Letters*, 24 [To] M^r Butts, Great Marlborough Street, Oxford Street, London, E 724) because they enslave man in urizenic existence: 'To keep the gen'rous from experience till the ungenerous / Are unrestrained performers of the energies of nature;' (*America a Prophecy*, PLATE II, ll. 8-9, E 55). The insinuation 'energies of nature' implies impurity. Generosity is the prolific; devouring is the ungenerous natural man.

Therefore, imagination is detached from the 'mortal and perishing substances, ...' (*Descriptive Catalogue*, Number IV, E 541)

A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. (*Descriptive Catalogue*, Number IV, E 541).

Imagination is the spiritual man whose existence is immortality. Is there spirit in nature? Blake's answer is negative because vision is not of the natural world: '... & the Goddess Nature <Memory> <is his Inspirer> & not <Imagination> the Holy Ghost ...' (*On Blake's Illustrations to Dante*, E 689).

Blake considers '... the Limit of Opacity ...', (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Fourth, PAGE 56, {IV 254-79} l.19, E 338) 'Opacity was named Satan ...' (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 13 [14], l.21, E 107) to identify with nature's falsehood. That is, obedience to nature's laws restricts existence and reproduces sin. This suggests that naturalness, sin

and Satan constitute the triad of destruction. Spirituality, creation and Jesus are the triad of true art:

All Forms are Perfect in the Poets Mind. but these are not Abstracted nor Compounded from Nature <but are from Imagination> (Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, E 648).

Permanent in The Imagination; considered as Nothing by the NATURAL MAN (*The Laocoön*, E 273).

Nature's 'hard restricting condensations' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 73, l.21, E 228) suffocate man. Intellectual liberty is salvation because, in the mortal world nature represents all that is despised and loathed by the man of imagination: 'Worshiping the Deus / Of the Heathen, The God of This World, & the Goddess Nature / Mystery Babylon the Great, The Druid Dragon & hidden Harlot' (*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE 93, ll. 23-5, E 254). God's perfection is not manifested in nature. The human mind is the agent of perfection. Artists are creators, inspired by imagination, which is the only dominant force on evil.

Blake sees nature as intertwined with human nature. However, 'human nature is the image of God' (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, London 1788, E 597). Man is not the mediator between nature and God but the transformative agent of naturalness. Thus, artists are nature's transformers. God's presence is directly defined through imagination. When the persona in the poem asks: 'Am not I / A fly like thee? Or art not thou / A man like me?' (*Songs of Experience*, E 23), Blake reveals that the natural form is human divinity, (God in man). The natural image is God's presence on earth. Human imagination is the modifier of the external world. This is artistic creation.

Determinism is God's manifestation, a repetition of nature's cycle. Human enclosure in naturalness is death. Impurity is entrapment in the natural state of man. It is the situation that man must escape in order to create art. This can happen through the gratification of desires and imagination. Nature reproduces itself and man follows its course. '... the Oak dies as well as the Lettuce ...' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 555) but they are reproduced by their seeds. This is the natural course. Real sublimity is found only in imagination:

just [*as*] <so> the Imaginative Image returns [*according to*] <by>
the seed of Contemplative Thought the Writings of the Prophets
illustrate these conceptions of the Visionary Fancy by their
various sublime & Divine Images as seen in the Worlds of
Vision (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 555).

The same excerpt is found in *Milton*:

Whatever can be Created can be Annihilated Forms cannot
The Oak is cut down by the Ax, the Lamb falls by the Knife
But their Forms Eternal Exist, For-ever.
(*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 32 [35], ll. 36-8, E 132).

Blakean nature is not sublime because natural reproduction is an unimportant 'dull round'. It 'would soon become a mill with complicated wheels.' (*There is No Natural Religion* [b], E 2). Eternal forms are unique natural archetypes which die and reproduce themselves. Human nature is imaginative existence whose archetype is God:

Nature Teaches nothing of Spiritual Life but only of Natural Life
(Annotations to Boyd's *Historical Notes* on Dante, Dublin, 1785,
E 634).

... the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again (*There is No Natural Religion* [b], E 3).

Only artists depend on imagination. Philosophers use nature as their ally:

Deduct from a rose its redness. from a lilly its whiteness from a diamond its hardness from a sponge its softness from an oak its height from a daisy its lowness & [*chaos*] rectify every thing in Nature as the Philosophers do. & then we shall return to Chaos & God will be compell'd to be Excentric if he Creates O happy Philosopher (Annotations to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, London 1788, E 595).

Nature is false and unreliable, but for an artist is a source of inspiration. Religion and nature cannot produce art: 'Lies and Priestcraft Truth is Nature' (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Providence*, London, 1790, E 609). Imagination, Blake's secular sublime, replaces the natural sublime. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is true art and true religion. The relationship between art and nature reveals why Blake's sublime is not the natural sublime. He clearly states that:

No Man of Sense can think that an Imitation of the Objects of Nature is The Art of Painting ... (*Public Address*, E 577).

The English Artist may be assured that he is doing an injury & injustice to his Country while he studies & imitates the Effects of Nature. (*Public Address*, E 578)

Israel deliverd from Egypt is Art deliverd from Nature & Imitation (*The Laocoön*, E 274).

These are his artistic beliefs about nature's imitation. Imitative art is an obsolete aesthetic representation of the world. Since appearances determine human life, reality's

depiction is an unproductive non-aesthetic work. Copying nature is the 'art of reasoning.' It does not contribute anything to the human aesthetic. Production and reproduction of naturalness through forms is stagnant and unimaginative. This tradition breaks with the Blakean 'Sublime of Imagination.' Blake creates imaginative art which is basically dependant on religious issues interpreted through his theory on imagination. Jesus and God are one. The secular and the sublime in art are not just a synthesis of two divided worlds. They are one generative world of imaginative forms created in the artist's intellect. In *Fearful Symmetry*, for example, Northrop Frye defines Jesus the Imagination as:

a Logos, a compelling Word continually recreates an unconscious floundering universe into something with beauty and intelligence. This definition allows him to argue that 'The Son and the Holy Spirit are the same thing' (they are both creative powers, and that 'this Son or Spirit' is universal Man who is the unified form of our scattered imaginations, and which we visualize as a Father.¹ ... If God the Father is the collective form of our individual imaginations then the final revelation of Christianity is not that Jesus is God, but that "God is Jesus". Propositions such as these polarize life between 'the Creator and the Creation, the larger human mind and body of God and the minimum life of nature and reason. They set the stage for a crisis strongly redolent of the romantic sublime.'²

Blake's rules about nature's function and natural presentation of forms are explanatory of his theory of art: 'They say there is no Strait Line in Nature this Is a Lie like all that they say, For there is Every Line in Nature But I will tell them what is Not in Nature. An Even Tint is not in Nature it produces Heaviness.' (*Public Address*, PAGE 46, E

¹ Otto, Peter. *Blake's Critique of Transcendence. Love, Jealousy, and the Sublime in The Four Zoas*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 27.

² Ibid., 28.

575). By referring to 'Every line in nature', he means the outline which determines the forms and their imaginative depiction. Nature is only suitable for natural painting: 'for I have now discovered that without Nature before the painters Eye he can never produce any thing in the walks of Natural Painting ...' (*The Letters*, 19 [To] M^r Butts, Great Marlborough Street, London, E 717). Imaginative, visionary art is dissociated from natural painting. Visionary art is true art. Nature is not necessary to depict the artistic insight. Although imaginative art does not depend on nature, the natural sublime is a stage that must be surpassed: 'If you have not Nature before you for Every Touch you cannot Paint Portrait. & if you have Nature before you at all you cannot Paint History it was Michall Angelos opinion & is Mine.' (*The Letters*, 22 [To] M^r Butts, G^r Marlborough Street, E 719).

Blake seems to consider that the natural sublime was inadequate to express eighteenth century art and the era of the revolutionary movements, which promised spiritual liberty and sexual emancipation. The 'Sublime of Imagination' is an innovative artistic expression. Its objective is the disclosure of truth, the unmasking of reality in order to promote self-knowledge and human understanding. Shallowness and imagination do not coincide. Naturalness and insubstantiality correspond, reproducing falsity. The world of appearances, which defines materialism and capitalism, is unable to reveal human consciousnesses. Only imaginative art can it achieve this, because reality, which penetrates consciousness, shapes the mental state whose artistic expression reveals all human suffering. Therefore, imagination's function and purpose is not just reality's reformation. Its ultimate purpose is the union with the supreme Being. It is an intellectual quest towards eternity, man's unique pursuit and fulfilment.

Humans suffer mentally and psychically due to their impure nature and necessity's laws. The natural conscious self is not Blake's imaginative man. Pure nature is spirituality and consciousness shaped through imagination. Blakean art is the beginning of a mental revelation, an inner but apocalyptic moment of terror. Knowledge of impurity's negativity is the presupposition of the apocalyptic sublime's expression. Aesthetically, revelation is an instance of mental exposure, Blake's revelatory and not natural existence. False art and nature do not contribute to the apocalyptic. Innovative art is imaginative art in the sense that its objective is to reveal the conscious self. Purity, that is beauty and the sublime, comprise Blake's vision.

Traditional Blake criticism assumes that 'Vala is the goddess of Nature.'¹ Blake personifies nature in the figure of Vala, the eternal female. It is worth mentioning that this view has been challenged by Hutchings, who claims that 'Blake's critics ... often mistakenly identify Vala as nature "herself." '²

Traditionally, Vala has been defined in essentialist terms as a personification of "nature" itself: she is, to cite a handful of examples: "nature on earth" (Frye 1970, 263), "the laws of nature" (Damon 1988, 430), "the possessive love of a fixed natural order" (Bloom 1963, 378), "purely physical nature ... control[ling] the world in which she exists" (Doskow 1982b,19), and "nature wanting to be all in all" (Hagstrum 1973, 112). What is especially curious about such critical evaluations of Vala's character ... is the degree of agency casually attributed in Vala's name to the realm of nature she ostensibly symbolizes. ... Vala is, ... an insidious force controlling the world, actively "wanting

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 428.

² Hutchings, Kevin. *Imagining Nature. Blake's Environmental Poetics*. (London: McGill - Queen's UP, 2002), 18.

to be all in all". Thus, Jean H. Hagstrum argues that Vala, in the guise of "the dominant Female Will," "extends her sway from nature to philosophy, which she naturalizes into mechanism, and to religion, which she naturalizes into deism" (1973, 112). Or, as Mina Doskow ... would have it, "Nature's destructiveness ... expands to include the destructiveness of material institutions, penal codes, civil laws (courts), wars (armies), civil institutions, and nations, as well as the closest human relationships, (families), and all human expression (tongues)" (1982b, 127). In both of these arguments (which are in many ways representative of discussions of the Vala-nature nexus in Blake's work), an active Vala wilfully contaminates the cultural realm ... and not vice versa.¹

Hutchings bases his argument on Kiralis's contention who remarked that:

... these identifications of Vala as "Babylon, the City of Vala", "the Goddess Virgin-Mother," and "She is our Mother! Nature!" are "fallen ... conception[s] of her and not, as some critics have assumed, [her] basic meaning." Thus, Kiralis correctly concludes, "Nature is not an adequate description of Vala" (1961, 105).²

Vala represents not only nature and matter but also the natural, urizenic man in general. Possession, and not liberty, is the word that best defines her identity. Vala and Jerusalem stand in juxtaposition with each other. Vala is beautiful, like Thel, but her beauty is deceptive and seductive providing nothing but an unimaginative, insipid life, and representing the destructive female identity. Aesthetically, in the context of the development of Blake's beauty, Thel is the female without use-value whose impurity has suffocated her. On the other hand, Vala represents the delusive beauty of corporeal existence. Vala is the 'useful' female but her use is in the secular world, where urizenic

¹ Ibid., 172-4.

² Ibid., 175.

existence predominates. Thel is Vala without the latter's 'Female Will', which is suitable for corporeal survival. Vala is falsity with perverted female will. Thel's beauty is impurity and Vala's beauty is delusive, like the world of appearances that she represents. Although Hutchings contends that Vala's identification with nature is not correct, Blake describes Vala by using natural imagery: Vala is 'the lilly of the desert'... (*The Four Zoas*, PAGE 83, l. 8, E 358).

Human nature is our corporeal existence. Imagination is our spiritual life. Corporeal existence describes the ugly man. Vala, like reason, is ugly. She is the shadow of Jerusalem and represents suppressed desires, the reasoning power and delusion. Because of these, her 'beauty' is a lie; to which man believes:

Man is adjoind to Man by his Emanative portion:
Who is Jerusalem in every individual Man: and her
Shadow is Vala, builded by the Reasoning power in Man
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 39 [44], ll. 38-40, E 187).

The 'reasoning power' is the Male Spectre, that is, the representation of the devouring human nature. Satanic 'purity' triumphs in Vala precisely like the Accuser or *diavolos* whom 'we do not find any where that Satan is Accused of Sin he is only accused of Unbelief & thereby drawing Man into Sin that he may accuse him.' (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 564). Satanic 'holiness' is also associated with natural religion:

while the Satanic Holiness triumphd in Vala.
In a Religion of Chastity & Uncircumcised Selfishness
Both of the Head & Heart & Loins, closd up in Moral Pride.
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 60, ll. 47-9, E 211).

Consequently Vala does not only represent nature, but also a whole variety of 'evils' which are derived from her possessiveness. As Hutchings claims:

Although Blake chooses to leave us uncertain whether nature arises from "Jerusalem's or Vala's ruins," we can be relatively certain of one thing: "the vast form of Nature" is, for Blake, the very *product* of power relations.¹

Though Hutchings's reference to power relations is not clear, Vala's need for dominance expands to include all human society. Thus, Blake's nature takes the form of the polypus, which contaminates every social and individual action. It must be destroyed because it reproduces religious and social error. Under natural religion's presuppositions, true art is impossible. True art derives from true religion. Imaginative perception is true art. Jerusalem is true beauty and Jesus's sublime domain. Golgonooza, the city of art is God's manifestation. Intellectual beauty is Jesus's imaginative realm. Nature is the outdated deity. Worshipping nature is sacrilege. The profane is placed in nature, whereas the sacred is human imagination.

Certainly, Vala is not only our Mother Nature. Blake attributes to the 'shadowy', natural and eternal female all the characteristics of the urizenic, secular world. The unimaginative and corporeal female, who is deprived of wisdom and whose intellect is reason, is only capable of reproducing bodies, that is, death. Vala '... triumphs in pride of holiness' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 60, l.45, E 210) and '... in pride of beauty' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 4, PLATE 80, l.6, E 236). She is the 'Mother of the Body of death' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 62, l.13, E 213). 'And the Veil of Vala, is composed of the Spectres of the Dead' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 47, l.12, E 196). Vala is not a spiritual entity. Imagination is totally absent from her perspective. Jesus is not her God because

¹Ibid., 17.

she considers that existence is nothingness. Therefore, Vala, like Thel, is not a subject but an object. Blake seems to consider that utility determines subjectivity, whereas nature and human objectification coincide. Naturalness is only suitable to reproduce unimaginative human objects without self-knowledge and consciousness. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake develops the story of Luvah & Vala where her identity is explicitly presented. She is the mysterious female whose urizenic existence perpetuates life. Vala establishes her identity in *Jerusalem*, where initially she is one with her: 'He' [Albion] 'found Jerusalem upon the River of his City soft repos'd / In the arms of Vala, assimilating in one with Vala' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 19, ll. 40-1, E 164). Jerusalem and Vala are one, in the same way that 'Heaven & Hell are born together' (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1790, E 609). Nevertheless, Blake emphasises her bodily existence and unimaginative nature:

O Vala! Humanity is far above / Sexual organization; & the
 Visions of the Night of Beulah / Where Sexes wander in dreams
 of bliss among the Emanations / Where the Masculine &
 Feminine are nurs'd into Youth & Maiden / By the tears &
 smiles of Beulahs Daughters till the time of Sleep is past.
 Wherefore then do you realise these *nets of beauty & delusion*
 In open day to draw the souls of the Dead into the light. / Till
 Albion is shut out from every Nation under Heaven. (*Jerusalem*
 C4, PLATE 79, ll.73-80, E 236) (emphasis added).

Hutchings concludes that 'If Blake was not intentionally championing Vala's cause, perhaps he was of Vala's party without knowing it.'¹ Another interesting point, in his

¹ Hutchings, Kevin. *Imagining Nature. Blake's Environmental Poetics*. (London : McGill - Queen's UP, 2002), 188.

analysis of Vala's identity, is that '... the Female Will is a kind of fiction and not an essential category in Blake's mythology.'¹ As he also contends:

... any consideration of Vala's role as a major representative of the Female Will must take into account the latter's discursive aspect, or Blake's critique of the ideological production that is nature will be misunderstood as a simple denunciation of the material world as such.²

Due to Blake's belief in Jerusalem's unfortunate destiny in the fallen world, Vala appears as the only female identity who can guarantee material existence. As I stated (see page 118), Blake ascribes 'Female Will' to Vala because her identity generates division. She is the representation of the disruption between body and mind, and she is committed to the body. 'Female Will' is associated with impurity due to bodily reproduction. Physicality and natural existence is the unimaginative female. The 'Female Will' is nature and materiality which produces bodies, whereas Jerusalem provides the spiritual existence, where imagination prevails. By reminding Vala that 'humanity is far above Sexual organization', Blake emphasizes that humanity is not bodily existence and is dissociated from sexual division. The argument that 'the Female Will is a kind of fiction' does not justify Vala's reproductive role as the giver of bodies. Bodily existence presupposes 'Female Will', because Blake does not reject nature. He only asserts that dependence on nature produces the unimaginative human identity.

'The Female Will, however, is evil. Vala, without knowing what she is doing, practically destroys Luvah.'³ It could be argued that Hutchings considers Vala to be neither a representation of nature nor 'Female Will', but the idea of the latter is

¹ Ibid., 187.

² Ibid.

³ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 447.

destruction and male ruin, in particular, husband or son. In fact, most of Blake's references to Vala imply negativity and death. She may not be an explicit representation of nature or the 'Female Will', but her correlation with impurity, unspirituality, destruction and death is clear. Besides, Blake explicitly states that: <In Eternity Woman is the Emanation of Man she has No Will of her own There is no such thing in eternity as a Female Will> (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 562). The statement indicates that in the secular world 'Female Will' is existent and manifest.

Vala does not represent the city of art, the spiritual realm of true beauty. Unlike Vala's delusive beauty, Blake's ideal conception of beauty is Jerusalem. In *The Book of Thel*, he presents the unimaginative female who prefers impurity to imagination because she is dependant on naturalness which she regards as true beauty. Vala, the ruler of the fallen world, is a life-threatening and negative force personified in a female form who is false beauty. She is also natural and wilful. Destruction requires 'Female Will'. Vala produces the bodies that she destroys. Primarily, Jerusalem is liberty (intellectual beauty) and not natural existence. In her, nature is sublimated to freedom and spirituality. She represents the 'fourfold' humanity, which is 'far above / Sexual organization'. Jerusalem is Blake's aspiration. It could be argued that, in this sense, she is fiction and ideal beauty, whereas Vala is real and destructive. However, their juxtaposition gives meaning to life:

& as the Spectres choose their affinities / So they are born on
 Earth, & every Class is determinate / But not by Natural but by
 Spiritual power alone. Because / *The Natural power continually*
seeks & tends to Destruction / Ending in Death: which would of
 itself be Eternal Death / And *all are Class'd by Spiritual, & not*
by Natural power. And every Natural Effect has a Spiritual
 Cause, and Not / A Natural: for a Natural Cause only seems, it is

a Delusion / Of Ulro: & a ratio of the perishing Vegetable Memory. (*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 26 [28], ll. 38-46, E 124) (emphasis added).

In Blake, nature's negativity and all the destructive forces that threaten life with extinction are closely associated. Natural religion, which is a product of man's dependence on nature, impurity and materiality are responsible for man's inability to commune with God. When nature is God, man is enslaved in conventionality and conformity. Thus, imagination cannot be a redemptive force when nature reigns. It is not even perceived by the natural man because Urizen is natural religion's God. Blake, who believes that the beauty of the Bible is its simplicity, proclaims:

... Nature Hermaphroditic Priest & King Live in Real Substantial Natural Born Man & that Spirit is the Ghost of Matter or Nature & God is The Ghost of the Priest & King who Exist whereas God exists not except from [*them*] <their Efluvia>

.....
Thus we see that the Real God is the Goddess Nature & that God Creates nothing but what can be Touchd & Weighed & Taxed & Measured all else is Heresy & Rebellion against Caesar Virgils Only God ... (Annotations to Thornton's *The Lord's Prayer, Newly Translated*, London, 1827, E 669 & 670).

He considers dependence on nature an unreliable policy and an erroneous religious attempt to interpret the fallen world. Nature, matter, mystery and false religion are personified in the 'Whore of Babylon', who is another form of Vala:

Babylon again in Infancy Calld Natural Religion

(*The Four Zoas*, Night the Eighth, PAGE 115 [111], {VIII 567-620}, l. 24, E 386).

To Natural Religion! To Tirzah the Daughter of Rahab the Holy!

(*Milton*, Book the First, PLATE 19 [21], l. 54, E 113).

False religion is the religion of the 'Tree of Mystery' on which Jesus was crucified. The combination of mystery and false religion produces false art. Natural religion is the result of nature's predominant position in a theological explanation of divinity:

The Ashes of Mystery began to animate they calld it Deism

And Natural Religion ... (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Eighth, PAGE 115 [III] {VIII 567- 620}, ll. 22-4, E 386).

Deism, is the Worship of the God of this World by the means of what you call Natural Religion and Natural Philosophy, and of Natural Morality or Self-Righteousness, the Selfish Virtues of the Natural Heart. This was the Religion of the Pharisees who murderd Jesus. Deism is the same & ends in the same.

.....
All the Destruction therefore, in Christian Europe has arisen from Deism which is Natural Religion. (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E 201).

Blake assumes 'that Deism is a stage in man's mental development'¹ and that imagination is the supreme intellectual stage which is true religion. If instead of nature, imagination and liberty are placed at the centre of religious thinking, mortals overcome falsity and become the 'Real Man', the strong Urthona. Nature's veil hides the truth, whereas imagination unmaskes the real world. The phenomenal world is nothing but a

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbol of William Blake*. (London: New England UP, 1988), 102.

‘... faint Shadow Calld Natural Life.’ (*The Letters*, 61. To William Hayley, Esq^{re}, Felpham near Chichester, Sussex, E 767).

When considering Blake’s ideas about natural religion and Catholicism, it could be argued that he attacks the Pope and the Catholic Church for adoring nature as Goddess and matter as God, instead of true Christianity which is the Holy Ghost: ‘Money, which is The Great Satan or Reason the Root of Good & Evil ...’ (*The Laocoön*, E 275). Brotherhood and solidarity is not a product of money but spiritual communication: ‘The True Christian Charity not dependent on Money (the lifes blood of Poor families) that is on *Caesar or Empire or Natural Religion*’ (*The Laocoön*, E 275) (emphasis added). Reason is the ground of natural religion, which Blake considers the touchstone of false Christianity: ‘God is not a Mathematical Diagram.’ (Annotations to Berkeley’s *Siris*, E 664).

The Pope supposes Nature and the Virgin Mary to be the same allegorical personages, but the Protestant considers Nature as incapable of bearing a child. (Annotations to Cellini (?), E 670).

Every thing in Dantes Comedia shews That for Tyrannical Purposes he has made This World the Foundation of All & the Goddess Nature and not the Holy Ghost as Poor Churchill said Nature thou art my Goddess ... & the Goddess Nature <Memory> <is his Inspirer> & not <Imagination> the Holy Ghost ... (*On Blake’s Illustrations to Dante*, E 689).

Imagination is true Christianity because the spiritual dominates the natural: ‘The Natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul or Spiritual Body’ (Annotations to Berkeley’s *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 664). Then, natural heart is a falsity: ‘The Idol Virtues of the Natural Heart, & Satans Seat’ (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 38 [43], l.46, E 139) and physical existence is responsible for selfish chastity and self-

righteousness: 'In their Own Selfhoods, in Natural Selfish Chastity to banish Pity' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 49, l.28, E 198). Nature's satanic essence is the substance of delusive beauty. Mystery, the dichotomy of good and evil is responsible for nature's failure to represent true Christianity and art. Why is mystery necessarily evil? Is it because of concealment, which is associated with falsity instead of genuineness?

The day for war the night for secret religion in his temple
(*The Four Zoas*, Night the Seventh, PAGE 88 [96], {VIIb 21-54}, l. 18, E 361)

.....
Or Secret religion in their temples before secret shrines
(*The Four Zoas*, Night the Eighth, PAGE 102, l. 13, E 374)

According to Blake the natural aesthetic, the 'Tree of Mystery' on which natural religion is established, is false because its ground is Urizen, who is delusion and abstraction: 'Urizen sitting in his web of dece[i]tful Religion' (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Eighth, PAGE 106, (Second Portion) {VIII 414-45}, l.18, E 381). The 'Sublime of Imagination' is the true aesthetic. It is spiritual productivity: 'The unproductive Man is not a Christian much less the Destroyer' (*The Laocoön*, E 274). By exposing his objection to natural religion Blake explains why naturalness is not liberty and true Christianity:

They saw the Sexual Religion in its embryon Uncircumcision
(*Jerusalem*, Ch.2, PLATE 44 [30], l. 11, E 193).

In a Religion of Chastity & Uncircumcised Selfishness
(*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 60, l. 48, E 211)

A Religion of Chastity, forming a Commerce to sell Loves
(*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 69, l. 34, E 223).

The 'religion of Chastity', which is based on the dichotomy of good and evil, which Blake ardently objects, is spiritually impure because of its dependence on reason:

The Bible says that God formed Nature perfect but that Man perverted the order of Nature since which time the Elements are filld with the Prince of Evil who has the power of the air Natural Religion is the voice of God & not the result of reasoning on the Powers of Satan (Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible*, London, 1797, E 614).

In *Jerusalem* he explicitly states that: 'Man must & will have Some Religion; if he has not the Religion of Jesus, he will have the Religion of Satan, & will erect the Synagogue of Satan.' (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E 201). This statement implies that if a human being is not able to reach God through imagination he / she will definitely follow reason's commands and become a 'reasoner' instead of a sublime force. Therefore, division is inevitable: '<Good and Evil are Qualities in Every Man whether <a> Good or Evil Man>' (*A Vision of The Last Judgement*, PAGE 86, E 563). The consequence of the 'Tree of Mystery', that is, the separation of good and evil is not desirable but predestined for all religious humans that for them, Jesus is not imagination. Thus, division is not the crucial religious issue. The focal point of religious concern is the ground on which this division is based. Natural religion's basis is nature and Protestantism's spirituality. The prolific and the devouring are products of this division:

These are Enemies & destroy one another by every Means in their power both of deceit & open Violence The Deist & the Christian are but the Results of these Opposing Natures Many are Deists who would in certain Circumstances have been Christians in outward appearance (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, PAGE 86, E 563-4).

Deists, who insist on the belief in division's inevitability, are the enemies of Christianity for the simple reason that Deism does not practice the three true Christian principles of the 'Sublime of Imagination.' In fact, Deism teaches and practices self-righteousness and retribution, forgetting what humanity truly is:

Explore in all its Selfish Natural Virtue & put off

In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone:

To put off Self and all I have ever & ever Amen

(*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 38 [43], ll. 47-9, E 139).

Of Natural Virtue, for their Spiritual forms without a Veil
Wither in Luvahs Sepulcher. (*Jerusalem*, Ch. I, PLATE 21, ll.
15-6, E 166).

He never can be a Friend to the Human Race who is the
Preacher of Natural Morality or Natural Religion. ... You O
Deists profess yourselves the Enemies of Christianity: and
you are so: you are also the Enemies of the Human Race & of
Universal Nature. (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E
200).

Brotherhood is Religion (*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 57, l.10, E
207).

Opposing Nature! It is Natural Religion / But Jesus is the
bright Preacher of Life / Creating Nature from this fiery Law,
By self-denial & forgiveness of Sin. (*Jerusalem*, To the
Christians, PLATE 77, ll. 20-3, E 232).

mocking God & Eternal Life: & in Public / Collusion, calling
themselves Deists, Worshipping the Maternal / Humanity;
calling it Nature, and Natural Religion (*Jerusalem* C4, PLATE
90, ll. 64- 6, E 250).

Nature and imagination are different sources of religious sentiment. Because of this
difference art and culture are diverse:

By imitation of Natures Images drawn from Remembrance
These are the Sexual Garments, the Abomination of Desolation
Hiding the Human Lineaments as with an Ark & Curtains
(*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 41 [48], ll. 24-6, E 142).

Natural Religion is an outdated conception of divinity: 'Adam is only The Natural Man & not the Soul or Imagination' (*The Laocoön*, E 273). It is the product of warlike states that their body politic is condemned to the false structure of religious error: 'The Building is Natural Religion & its Altars Natural Morality' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 65, l. 8, E 218). Blake aspires to reform the body politic through the condemnation of the natural body, in favour of spiritual: 'This Natural Religion! this impossible absurdity' (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 40 [46], l. 13, E 141) dominates states where religion, institutional abstraction, and not Jesus, true Christianity is the symbol of political authority:

Are nor Religion & Politics the Same Thing?
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 57, l. 10, E 207).
Setting up Kings in wrath: in holiness of Natural Religion
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 3, PLATE 73, l. 31, E 228).
A Female hidden in a Male, Religion hidden in War
(*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 40 [46], l. 20, E 141).
Religion hid in War, a Dragon red & hidden Harlot
(*Jerusalem*, Ch.3, PLATE 37 [41], l. 43, E 138).
Crept in the skeleton. In the den nam'd Religion, a
loathsome sick / woman, bound down ... (*The French
Revolution*, PAGE 3, ll. 35-6, E 287).

For Blake, religion is not what defines the aesthetic. He rather considers it the enemy of the aesthetic because there is nothing real in religious doctrines and practices. Religion is an unreal representation of divinity which has nothing to do with the 'Real

Man' and humanity. For him, the true aesthetic is Christian virtues which are personified in Jesus the imagination. Spirituality surpasses nature because nature is the world of false appearances. The natural world ends with death and 'The Natural Man is at Enmity with God'. (Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*, London, 1815, E 665).

Druidism and Deism are dead religious doctrines and unable to represent the true aesthetic. Blake's conclusions about the true aesthetic are centred in re-evaluating the natural, but he does not allow the natural to influence his own representation of divinity. He strongly believes that the natural aesthetic deprives art of its inspirational character, thus rendering it a dead material activity. Natural religion, which is the origin of the natural aesthetic, is also false in the sense that its basis is matter instead of spirit. He totally rejects conventional religious systems which proclaim art's development under their auspices. Religion is a social construction which binds humans to conformism and fatality. It is a 'wheel' and a 'direful web' that Blake rejects as untrue spiritual sentiment. Jesus is not religion. He is the 'Human Existence itself.' (*Milton*, Book the Second, PLATE 32 [35], l. 32, E 132). 'The All in Man The Divine Image or Imagination' (Annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, Dublin, 1744, E 663). 'Satan is the State of Death, & not a Human existence.' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 49, l. 67, E 199).

Imagination is the spiritual sun. Visionary perception is eternal life. Swedenborg's assumption that 'the Things, which constitute the Sun of the spiritual World, are from the Lord, and not the Lord, therefore they are not Life in itself, ...' verifies Blake's contention that the natural world is material and unproductive: 'This assertion that the spiritual Sun is not Life explains how the natural Sun is dead.' (Annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, London, 1788, E 606).

Conclusion

Taking into consideration Madeleine L. Cazamian who emphasises Blake's incoherence, it is easy to understand the difficulties that any aesthetic theory of interpreting his prophetic vision presents:

During these exuberant and complicated accounts the same characters die, are resurrected and reborn at various times in different circumstances. At one point Los and Enitharmon are the children of Tharmas and his emanation, Enion, and Urizen is their son; elsewhere he is engendered by Vala. The creation of the world is therefore no longer attributed to him - only its organisation according to the laws of reason. Later, in *Jerusalem*, it will become the work of Elohim, another of the Eternals, or else it will emanate entirely from the 'universal Man'. In the *Four Zoas* Urizen is called Urthona and becomes the ghost of Los; in yet another poem, *Milton*, he is identified with Satan. He is a dark monster from another light; after the North, with its shades and its frosts, other cardinal points are attributed to him according to the symbolic design in which he is incorporated. Now, he was, and usually remains, the Jehovah of the Bible, the jealous creator of the Mosaic religion, the founder of the law. But in *Jerusalem*, Jehovah is invoked as the God of forgiveness, while 'the lamb' or Christ distributes special grace. Elsewhere, when Blake personifies the imaginative vision, he calls it Jehovah-Elohim. It is impossible to attempt a full interpretation. The poet seems to live in a nightmare, or in a daze...'¹

In spite of his mythological confusion, as an artist, painter his aesthetic vision appears to have a frame of reference because his inspiration is Jesus. It could be argued that because of the divine origin of his art his vision acquires the necessary characteristics that define true art. The 'Splendour of Imagination', which is the combination of the

¹ Bataille, Georges. *Literature and Evil*. (London: Marion Boyars 1990), 89.

sublime and the beautiful in Jesus, renders Blake's aesthetics noticeable because the categories of the sublime and the beautiful are explicitly presented, so as to form his artistic truth. However, in interpreting his aesthetics, scholars assume different viewpoints. The following excerpt is indicative of the various ways that Blake's aesthetics are understood:

Blake's adherence to the truth of the inner image, and his devotion to the paramount importance of the intuitive realization, is clearly shown in the oscillation of his art between two contrary standpoints, the aesthetic and the ontological. For whilst some of Blake's designs can be regarded as purely aesthetic, in the modern Western sense, others are decidedly ontological or didactic in character. For, instance, his pictures of 'The Last Judgment', 'The Laocoön,' or 'The Gates of Paradise', are much less aesthetic than didactic; their ontological character is very much in evidence. *In fact Blake's art is never entirely aesthetic*, although often mistaken as such; nor it is ever entirely ontological. It swings between these two poles and always contains elements of both.¹ (emphasis added).

The differentiation between the aesthetic and didactic is incorrect, because aestheticism is due to the didactic character of Blake's paintings. True art is didactic because of its divine origin, in the sense that it discloses truth or a particular, individual truth according to the artist's insight. The fact that Blake's art 'swings between the poles of the aesthetic and the ontological' is because his aesthetic theory is composed by the 'Sublime of Imagination', his aesthetic idealism and aesthetic realism, which is the presentation of his 'negative sublime' (Weiskel); it is represented by reason and indicates the subversion of the prophetic vision.

¹ Wingfield, George Digby. *Symbol and Image in William Blake*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1957), 122.

Blake's aesthetic realism includes all aspects of ugliness such as impurity, naturalness and the spectre. Vala is also included to a certain degree as a representation of negativity and human destruction. Blake's spectre has two forms. It is the individual and social polypus:

he [the Spectre] is the Great Selfhood
Satan: Worshipd as God by the Mighty Ones of the Earth
Having a white Dot calld a Center from which branches out
A Circle in continual gyrations. this became a Heart
From which sprang numerous branches varying their motions
Producing many Heads three or seven or ten, & heads & feet
Innumerable at will of the unfortunate contemplator
Who becomes his food[:] such is the way of the Devouring Power
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 29, ll. 17-24, E 175).

His aesthetic realism comprises and explains how these ideas function in his 'negative sublime'. Reason is considered sublime (Weiskel), but in my interpretation of Blake's aesthetics it belongs to the aesthetic category of the ugly, as he [Blake] defines the ugly man in *The Ancient Britons*. (E 543). Although Blake did not develop any concrete and complete aesthetic theory, I assume that the two poles of his aesthetic idealism (where he combines the categories of the sublime and the beautiful in Jesus and explains what he means by true religion and true art) and aesthetic realism comprise his aesthetic theory. In fact, Blake's aesthetic realism is of greater significance for his aesthetic idealism because of the revelation of the aspects of evil.

Blake's aesthetic category of the ugly, which is mainly represented by the 'reasoning power', comprises various forms that are all negative and generate death. Negativity starts as impurity, 'reasoning power', then develops the self-centred selfhood, which

is the spectre, and culminates in Satan, that is evil and death. Man in his 'reasoning power' is 'in Error', in the state called Satan: 'Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether an Evil, ...' (*Jerusalem*, To the Deists, PLATE 52, E 200), but he / she must be delivered from this state; which is self-destructive, and impels humans towards death:

A World where Man is by Nature the enemy of Man
Because the Evil is Created into a State. that Men
May be deliverd time after time evermore. Amen.
Learn therefore ... to distinguish the Eternal Human
... from those States or Worlds in which the Spirit travels:
This is the only means to Forgiveness of Enemies[.]
(*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 49, ll. 69-75, E 199).

'The reasoning power' is hostile to creativity because the man and woman who live in their spectre's power experience a spiritual death. Deprived of the redemptive power of imagination, man is ugly in the sense that ugliness is negativity and enclosure in a self-centred existence. In describing the 'Sublime of Imagination', Blake constantly emphasises the perils of the psyche in remaining in the state of Satan. Humanity means annihilation of the spectre and redemption in eternity. The annihilation of the spectre is feasible through imagination. The three major principles of the 'Sublime of Imagination', that is, the annihilation of the selfhood, the doctrine of forgiveness of sins and universal brotherhood that constitute the real man are annulled by the predominance of the 'reasoning power.' In consequence, the ugly man / woman is deprived of humanity, brotherhood and forgiveness of sins. If imagination is repressed by reason, consciousness is unable to actively and creatively experience life. In *Jerusalem*, Los's struggle with his spectre is the representation of individual

evil. Its annihilation is the presupposition for the creation of the city of art. The individual polypus, Satan's evil quaternary has the following structure:

East - Emanation → Sin (of the Emotions), Luvah

West - Shadow → Death (of the body), Tharmas

North - Humanity → Chaos (of the Imagination), Los, Urthona

South - Spectre → Night (of Reason), Urizen¹

The second form of the spectre is the social polypus, which is represented by Albion's spectre and is universal evil. The social polypus embodies Natural Religion which is Deism, the Druid culture, political, economic and social status, institutions, armies, churches, courts, families and religious, civic and moral laws. The Spectre of Albion symbolizes the state of all nations in slavery. Albion is separated from his emanation Jerusalem who is liberty. Universal evil is identified with war and springs from loss of human freedom. The social polypus means a network of satanic expansion which corrupts states. In his aesthetic realism, Blake develops both forms of the spectre, that is, individual and social evil, by explaining the ugly man / woman and his / her characteristics. Ugliness as a phenomenon that applies to social reality refers to a nation whose aesthetic idealism is not developed. Jesus' position in a Christian schema, which explains culture, is not found. Therefore, culture is a product of aesthetics; that is, the categories of the sublime, the beautiful and the ugly which appear as the result of divinity's perception. In particular, Blake's aesthetic realism is centred in reason and the belief that it is the major cause that deprives man of

¹ Damon, Foster S. *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*. (London: UP of New England, 1988), 77.

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eternity's vision. Eternity, which for the man of reason is a utopia, is for the artist, an experience of the 'Splendour of imagination.'

Many suppose that before [*Adam*] <the Creation> All was Solitude and Chaos This is the most pernicious Idea that can enter the Mind as it takes away all sublimity from the Bible & Limits All Existence to Creation & to Chaos To the Time & Space fixed by the Corporeal Vegetative Eye & leaves the Man who entertains such an Idea the habitation of Unbelieving Demons Eternity Exists and All things in Eternity Independent of Creation which was an act of Mercy (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, PAGE 91, E 563).

The problem and the difficulty that Blake's aesthetics present is that, although his aesthetic theory is remarkable in conception, his visual art does not always express the 'Splendour of Imagination.' It is inspirational and visionary but in fact, it expresses his aesthetic realism, in the sense that reason permeates his drawings, and so fills many viewers with bewilderment, horror and depression.

Regardless of the pictorial presentation of reason's predominance, Blake's art asserts its divine origin because it is based on the Protestant conception of Jesus, who is the embodiment of imagination. As the last illustration, *The Judgment of Paris*, indicates Blake expresses his assertion about the falsity of naturalness and the misconception of beauty as a natural product. His aesthetics is not based on the false natural sublime or beautiful categories that are used as guides to define art. His art and poetry, inspirational and visionary, claims that it is true art because of its divine origin. Imagination, and not nature, is the basis of true religion and art. It is not 'A pretence of Art, to destroy Art: a pretence of Liberty / To destroy Liberty. a pretence of Religion to destroy Religion' (*Jerusalem*, Ch. 2, PLATE 37 [41], ll. 35-6, E 185)

because eternal life is accomplished only through the redemptive power of human imagination.

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