

BLAKE, KIERKEGAARD, AND THE SPECTRE OF DIALECTIC

LORRAINE JOAN CLARK
New Liskeard, Ontario, Canada

B.A., University of Toronto, 1973
M.A., University of Toronto, 1975

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Paul A. Carter

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Abstract

Irony, as both a philosophical and aesthetic concept, has long been recognized by critics as somehow fundamental to Romantic patterns of thought. But critics have limited themselves (and the poets they seek to interpret) to two forms of Romantic dialectics: Hegelian mediation and Schlegelian Romantic irony. Neither pattern illuminates the more profound concept of irony underlying the Romantic enterprise of secularization. Mediation is too theologically optimistic, Romantic irony too nihilistic, to do justice to the passionate struggles of thought between theology and nihilism which run throughout Romanticism. My thesis argues that William Blake at the beginning of the age and Soren Kierkegaard at its end exemplify with particularly fierce clarity this stubbornly ironic vision, and that Kierkegaard defines a third form of dialectic more true to its struggles: Socratic irony. His "either/or," a deliberate reaction against Hegel's "both-and" and Schlegel's oscillation of contraries, illuminates the concept of irony in which he and Blake saw the true passion of Romanticism.

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A Note on Texts and Abbreviations

All Blake quotations are from David Erdman's The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, with commentary by Harold Bloom (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1965). For convenience I have included Erdman's page numbers as well as Blake's plate and line numbers. Blake's most frequently cited works are abbreviated as follows:

FZ	<u>The Four Zoas</u>
J	<u>Jerusalem</u>
M	<u>Milton</u>
MHH	<u>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</u>
VLJ	<u>A Vision of the Last Judgment</u>

Kierkegaard's most frequently cited works are also abbreviated, as follows:

CD	<u>The Concept of Dread</u>
CUP	<u>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</u>
E/O	<u>Either/Or</u>
FT	<u>Fear and Trembling</u>
PF	<u>Philosophical Fragments</u>
PV	<u>The Point of View for My Work as an Author</u>
R	<u>Repetition</u>
SUD	<u>The Sickness Unto Death</u>

I. Introduction

No, everything has its dialectic, not indeed such a dialectic as makes it sophistically relative (this is mediation), but a dialectic by which the absolute becomes manifest as the absolute by virtue of the dialectical.

--Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript

This study examines William Blake's concept of "dialectic" in his final prophetic works, Milton and Jerusalem. In so doing it explores the concept of dialectic in the Romantic movement as a whole--in particular, the relation of dialectic to the central Romantic concepts of irony and of "life."

Literary critics have come to identify the term dialectic almost exclusively with Hegelian dialectic, and have identified Hegelian dialectic in turn with Romanticism. Ever since M.H. Abrams argued in Natural Supernaturalism that the central pattern for Romantic literature and philosophy is, in his words, "a fall from unity into division and into a conflict of contraries which in turn compel the movement toward a higher integration,"¹ this reconciliation or marriage of contraries has been the accepted formulation of the Romantic ideal. Even though Abrams discusses Hegel as merely one example of this pattern among many, "dialectic"--implicitly Hegelian--has

become almost an abbreviation for the general pattern Abrams describes.

Because of its faith in the ultimate reconciliation of contraries, the pattern of Hegelian mediation has been called optimistic and theological. Abrams argues however that this faith in the ultimate reconciliation of contraries is not shallowly optimistic but takes full account of the extent of suffering in the human condition:

These Romantic affirmations do not eliminate nor, taken in their full context, do they minimize the agony and strife of human hearts. To justify evil by placing it in a large conceptual overview is not to annul it, or to lessen the pain of suffering; an excess of suffering does not foster character but destroys it.²

It is true that, as Abrams says, "these poets were almost obsessively occupied with the reality and rationale of the agonies of the human condition,"³ and that they undertook to find some justification for these sufferings not in some other-worldly realm but in the realm of human experience itself. Yet it is nonetheless true that the idealist dialectics of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel to which he compares Romantic poetry do finally pass over the division or alienation of contraries to emphasize their progression towards, and ultimate reconciliation within, an ideal systematic unity. In the final analysis, nothing in human experience is unassimilable; no evil is so radi-

cal that it cannot be gathered up into this all-encompassing final whole or system. As Abrams summarizes his thesis, "Romantic philosophy is thus primarily a metaphysics of integration, of which the key principle is that of the 'reconciliation,' or synthesis, of whatever is divided, opposed, and conflicting."⁴ He quotes Hegel's remark that in the process of growth towards the final unity, "'nothing is lost, all principles are preserved,'"⁵ and Schiller's comment that the final unity of life "'does not reside in the exclusion of certain realities, but in the absolute inclusion of all realities.'"⁶

A number of critics have challenged this "optimistic" and "systematic" interpretation of Romanticism, and in keeping with the current intellectual climate have argued for a more skeptical or even nihilistic definition of the Romantic ideal. They propose an alternative dialectic as a more accurate model for Romantic thought, Friedrich Schlegel's Romantic irony. This dialectic, far from reconciling opposites within a higher unity, supposedly renounces this "nostalgia" for unity to celebrate the infinite play of contraries without resolution. As Paul de Man, among the first proponents of this now popular view, describes Schlegel's dialectic,

The dialectic of self-destruction and self-invention which for him [Schlegel] . . . char-

acterizes the ironic mind is an endless process that leads to no synthesis. The positive name he gives to the infinity of this process is freedom, the unwillingness of the mind to accept any stage in its progression as definitive, since this would stop what he calls its "infinite agility." . . . irony engenders a temporary sequence of acts of consciousness which is endless.⁷

Romantic irony is both a philosophical and aesthetic theory, involving certain aesthetic practices--primarily, the author's continual creation and destruction of his own fictions, a calling attention to the fictionality of his work. As René Wellek has defined it, Romantic irony is "the deliberate breaking of illusion, the interference of the author, the manipulation of the conventions of the novel or the play."⁸ And as Wellek points out, this aesthetic irony is founded upon a deeper philosophical irony, a notion of existence as pure Becoming, chaos, or contradiction, in which all apparent stability or Being is merely a man-made construction or illusion which after a brief appearance dissolves back into the flux of life:

This breaking of the illusion . . . is only a superficial symptom of romantic irony as espoused theoretically by Friedrich Schlegel and Solgar. To them, irony means complete objectivity, and ultimately an insight into the contradiction of all existence and the nothingness of aesthetic illusion. . . . in the best romantics it is more than a realization that art is only art, that imagination is free and capricious: it is an insight into the chance existence of man, his insignificance, and his sov-

ereignty over his insignificance.⁹

In creating and destroying his fictions, the artist mimics and participates in this vision of life as becoming; his ceaseless activity unites him with the ceaseless activity that is "life."

The definition of Romantic irony is notoriously slippery, with many disagreements among its interpreters. Anne K. Mellor, for example--a current advocate of Romantic irony--finds de Man's characterization of Romantic irony too negative and skeptical, one which emphasizes too much the ironic destruction of illusion over the enthusiastic creation of it. She describes recent critical debate about Romantic literature as polarized around Abrams's "constructive" and de Man's "deconstructive" approaches, and proposes her version of Schlegel's Romantic irony as a reconciliation of the two. Abrams, by omitting from Natural Supernaturalism "all discussion of the sceptical Byron, Friedrich Schlegel, and Romantic irony . . . has chosen to privilege mythopoeic creation at the expense of ironic scepticism," whereas de Man, in attacking Abrams, equally privileges "ironic deconstruction" over "symbolic creation." And since Schlegel's dialectic is both creative and destructive (or constructive and deconstructive, in her terms), his dialectic is

the ideal synthesis of the two.¹⁰

Mellor's criticisms of de Man will serve to illustrate later discussion of some fundamental confusions plaguing much critical debate about Romanticism. For the present it is more useful to note that despite their differences, Mellor and de Man share with each other and with other current advocates of Romantic irony a belief that Romantic irony is truer to the Romantic ideal of life than is Hegelian dialectic. For they see Romantic irony as open-ended and unsystematic, truer fundamentally to the radical temporality or flux of life than is the closed Hegelian system. It is to them more "authentic," a more accurate embodiment of life's conflicts, which often do not attain a happy synthesis except (according to them) as an illusion which eventually self-destructs. Finally, they see Romantic irony as a dialectic of true freedom, for the Romantic ironist is bound by no necessity, but creates and destroys his worlds entirely at will. He is bound neither by a determinist "system" nor by a stubbornly intractable thing-in-itself which resists all his efforts to assimilate it.

These opposed Romantic dialectics provide a useful context for discussing Blake's dialectic. For Blake's dialectic, while it resembles both dialectics in some respects, finally fits neither pattern of Hegelian media-

tion or Schlegelian Romantic irony. Yet it is at the same time deeply "Romantic," and may indeed be truer to the Romantic ideal of life than are these supposed paradigms. And it is not only different from but deeply opposed to these models in a way which offers a profound critique of idealist dialectics as an adequate representation of the Romantic ideal.

By Blake's "dialectic," I refer specifically to the dialectic of Los and the Spectre of Urthona which Blake worked out during his three years at Felpham and made into the central dynamic of Milton and Jerusalem. This discovery was an extraordinary breakthrough for him, a solution (as he saw it) to the problem of "the contraries" which had dogged him throughout his career. For although he never wavered from characterizing "life" as a dynamic interaction of contraries, he struggled throughout his entire career with different ways of representing that interaction. His continual reworking of The Songs of Innocence and Experience was part of this struggle, as was his sustained engagement with the battle between Orc and Urizen which Northrop Frye has so thoroughly explicated.¹¹ Blake's increasing dissatisfaction with this static "Orc cycle," as Frye has called it, and final abandonment of that battle with the appearance of the Spectre of Urthona is the turning point around which this study

revolves.

This turn is also familiar to readers as the turn from Blake's early "Two Classes of Men" (The Marriage of Heaven and Hell) to the "Three Classes of Men" (Milton and Jerusalem), and from "the Two Contraries" to "the Two Contraries and the Reasoning Negative." He further confusingly titles these two contraries "the Reprobate" and "the Redeemed," and calls the third class of men "the Elect." The dialectic is further complicated by the fact that the two contraries are within Los, while the "reasoning negative" is the Spectre.

Unravelling the dynamics of this dialectic will be the task of this study. For the moment, the point is that the new and crucial element in this later dialectic is the addition of a third element: the Reasoning Negative or Negation (the Third Class of Men or the Elect):

There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary
 The Negation must be destroyd to redeem the
 Contraries
 The Negation is the Spectre; the Reasoning Power
 in Man
 This is a false body: an Incrustation over my
 Immortal
 Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off &
 annihilated away
 To cleanse the Face of my Spirit by Self-
 examination.

(M, II, 40:32-37; 141)

This Negation or Spectre threatens to reconcile or mediate

the contraries of life contained within Los, reducing them from absolutes to mere relativities within a system. I shall argue that Blake despised such mutual accommodation as a blurring of distinctions which reduces the passion or energy of life, and relegates this kind of "marriage" to the secondary realm of Beulah--"To where the Contraries of Beulah war beneath Negations Banner" (M, II, 34:23; 133).

Because Los must cast off this negation, Blake's dialectic of Los and the Spectre is one of exclusion not inclusion, emphatically not a happy marriage of contraries. And it is this new, central emphasis on casting off, on decisively differentiating between men and their spectres, between "sheep" and "goats," and between truth and error, which makes Blake's dialectic so resistant to the all-inclusive, systematic logic of idealist dialectics. His dialectic of life is the activity of clarifying muddled perception into clear-cut differentiation or what he calls "minute discrimination" (VLJ; 550). As Blake cogently summarizes his dialectic,

All Life consists of these Two Throwing off
Error & Knaves from our Company continually &
receiving Truth or Wise Men into our Company
Continually. . . . to be an Error & to be Cast
out is a part of Gods Design No Man can Embrace
True Art till he has Explord & Cast out False
Art . . . whenever any Individual Rejects Error
& Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon

that Individual.

(VLJ; 551)

Most critics have loosely characterized Blake's dialectic as Hegelian. It is common practice to refer to Blake's contraries as "dialectical" without any examination of what this means, or of the Hegelianism thereby (usually) implied. This results largely from taking as the law of Blake's dialectic his famous aphorism from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that "Without Contraries is no Progression" (pl. 3, p. 34). But this is the very doctrine which Blake later repudiates--at least in its original sense, and as it is commonly understood--in Milton and Jerusalem. Harold Bloom, for example, glosses this aphorism "the law of Blake's dialectic is formulated and given eternal statement, as a concept of contraries born together and forever opposed in a mutual immanence."¹² Yet Blake's final dialectic of contraries does not keep them "forever opposed in [the] mutual immanence" of the Hegelian system, but decisively casts one off. Leo Damrosch has made this same observation:

It is tempting to understand Blake's aphorism ["Without Contraries . . ." etc.] as pointing to a Hegelian Aufhebung, the dialectic that simultaneously annuls each stage and raises it to a higher one. But the developed Blakean myth has no place for the upward spiral that absorbs each preceding stage, emphasizing instead that the spectral or Satanic must be

expelled utterly. . . . Blake's movement away from the optimistic "progression" of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and toward the drastic exclusion of "negation" represents a recognition that much in our experience is radically unas-similable.¹³

Bloom's assumption that Blake's early aphorism is the "eternal statement" of his dialectic also underlies M.H. Abrams's Hegelian interpretation of Blake's dialectic. Abrams formulates this in the familiar innocence-experience set of contraries, which he describes as "progressing" from innocence to experience to higher innocence:

The unity which Blake thus figures at the end of the artist's redemptive course retains the fruits of the experience it has acquired en route. "The war of swords" (conflict in the fallen world) has departed, yet survives in a higher form as the equilibrium of opposing forces in "intellectual War"--that is, the "mental fight" which . . . must go into the poet's building of Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land."¹⁴

Throughout his discussion here,¹⁵ Abrams takes as his model The Four Zoas--their "fall into Division" and "Resurrection to Unity"--as the model for Blake's entire myth. And indeed The Four Zoas is Blake at his most "Hegelian," for all the Zoas are "contraries" ideally in dynamic equilibrium within one systematic unity. After their fall into disintegration all are gathered up or aufgehoben into the final whole; no one Zoa is cast off

or excluded.

Yet if it is incorrect to assume that The Marriage of Heaven and Hell gives us the "law" for Blake's entire system of thought, it is equally a mistake to make The Four Zoas the pattern for Blake's final position on the contraries of life. For the whole point of his abandonment of The Four Zoas for Los and the Spectre is precisely to reverse his emphasis from reconciliation or mediation to exclusion and casting off. The Four Zoas cannot therefore illuminate the central dynamic of Milton and Jerusalem.

Both Frye and Damrosch point out significantly un-Hegelian features in Blake's dialectic. Damrosch notes the lack of sequential, progressive development in Blake's notion of dialectic--again, his later rejection of the Hegelian notion of "progression" implicit in "Without Contraries is no Progression." As Damrosch points out, "Blake's system is often called dialectical, but it is so only in a special sense, envisioning truth as the simultaneous union of all particulars rather than as the sequential development that we necessarily expect in dialectic."¹⁶ "Life" for Blake is not a gradual progression towards some increasingly visible goal or "truth," but the repeated activity of casting off error and embracing truth. And in each act of embracing truth, that

truth is whole and complete, not partial or a mere approximation of some ultimate truth. In Damrosch's words, "Blake maintains further, as Hegel would not, that the whole is fully present in each particular member, and is unwilling to hold as Hegel does that the particulars are necessarily finite and transitory."¹⁷ In other words, Blake's "contraries" (synonymous with "particulars") are not merely parts adding up to some larger all-inclusive whole, but are wholes in themselves.

Northrop Frye clarifies and at the same time complicates Blake's notion of dialectic by arguing that Blake has both an individual and an historical notion of dialectic, and says further that both are un-Hegelian. The individual is engaged in the non-progressive, repetitive dialectic which Damrosch describes--the repeated casting-off of error and embrace of a truth which is always whole and complete, a "Last Judgment," each time the individual embraces it. But at the same time, mankind as a whole moves progressively towards a universal Last Judgment when Truth and Error will confront each other in absolute contrast:

Blake also postulates a historical process which may be described as the exact opposite of the Hegelian one. Every advance of truth forces error to consolidate itself in a more obviously erroneous form, and every advance of freedom has the same effect on tyranny. Thus history

exhibits a series of crises in which a sudden flash of imaginative vision (as in the French Revolution) bursts out, is counteracted by a more ruthless defense of the status quo, and subsides again. The evolution comes in the fact that the opposition grows sharper each time, and will one day present a clear-cut alternative of eternal life or extermination.¹⁸

In other words, both on an individual and on an historical or collective basis, men experience life, according to Blake, as a series of crises, in which they are confronted with making a radical distinction between truth and error and with choosing between them. These "choices" are moments of full and blinding vision or revelation.

Frye's insight into this crisis structure of Blake's dialectic is the insight upon which this study is founded. For his observation not only clarifies the enormously complex structure of Jerusalem, but also suggests that this apparently inexplicable "aberration" on Blake's part is in fact not a contradiction or puzzling anomaly (as Damrosch for example tends to see it), but a systematic inversion of Hegelian dialectic. Blake's dialectic is, as Frye says, "the exact opposite of the Hegelian one"--and my study explores the implications of this statement not only for Blake's thought but for Romantic thought as a whole.

Blake's inversion of Hegelian dialectic was repeated fifty years later by Soren Kierkegaard. And Kierkegaard

undertook his equally systematic inversion as a deliberate critique of Romanticism as it had come to be embodied in idealist dialectics. He looked back on the Romantic age as it had culminated in Hegel, the dominant philosopher of his time, and pronounced his diagnosis: "The calamity of Romanticism is that what it grasps is not actuality."¹⁹ Hegel's Begriff was empty. The Romantic ideal of "life" had evaporated into the bloodless abstraction of the post-Kantian idealist systems culminating in Hegel; and Kierkegaard focuses his attack specifically on Schlegel's Romantic irony and Hegel's mediation.

Kierkegaard's analysis exposes not only the abstraction of these dialectics, but also many of the confusions about the nature of Romantic irony which currently plague studies in Romanticism. These confusions are based on an assumption of a radical difference between Romantic irony and Hegelian mediation, a difference between Hegel's optimistic higher unity of Absolute Spirit and Schlegel's negative unity of pure Becoming. But as I have suggested, the proponents of Romantic irony locate its qualitative difference from Hegelian mediation elsewhere: in its supposedly unfinished, unsystematic, and hence "undogmatic" structure--its infinite play of contraries without resolution, an infinite play therefore supposedly closer to "life."

Here de Man and Mellor provide the clearest instances of this reasoning. Both use Romantic irony as the solution to certain problems raised by the Abrams model of Hegelian dialectic. De Man first criticized the "privileging" of Hegelian dialectic in the literary analyses of Abrams and Earl Wasserman, a privileging whose source he located in the exaltation of the romantic symbol over allegory and irony as "the unit of language in which the subject-object synthesis can take place" (184). Abrams and Wasserman, he declared, "see Coleridge as the great synthesizer and . . . take his dialectic of subject and object to be the authentic pattern of romantic imagery" (181-182). But de Man argued that this led to a contradiction, for the critic invariably found himself exalting either subject or object as the overarching principle within which the synthesis took place. And as a result, romanticism became either "subjective idealism," the priority of subject over object, or "a return to a certain form of naturalism after the forced abstraction of the Enlightenment," the priority of object over subject (182). Astonishingly, de Man saw Romantic irony, which he identified substantially with his idea of "allegory,"²⁰ as an escape from this "pseudo dialectic between subject and object" (183). Both irony and allegory, he claimed, make no attempt to reunite subject and object, the ideal and

the real, fiction and reality. "In both cases," he said, "the relationship between sign and meaning is discontinuous" (192). Irony depends upon a gap between an apparent, surface meaning and the real, underlying meaning--and Romantic irony deliberately reinforces the gap between fiction and reality by continually exposing the fictionality of fictions. Romantic irony states "the continued impossibility of reconciling the world of fiction with the actual world" (200); de Man's "allegory" "suggests a [permanent] disjunction between the way in which the world appears in reality and the way it appears in language" (176). For de Man it followed that allegorical signs "referred" therefore only to each other. The symbol deluded itself that it had reconciled subject and object, whereas allegory and irony, claimed de Man, basically eschewed this false optimism and static reconciliation for a "painful" but "authentic" recognition of the radical temporality of existence. In summary, he claimed,

renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it [allegory] establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self . . .

We are led, in conclusion, to a historical scheme that differs entirely from the customary picture. The dialectical relationship between subject and object is no longer the central

statement of romantic thought, but this dialectic is now located entirely in the temporal relationships that exist within a system of allegorical signs. It becomes a conflict between a conception of the self seen in its authentically temporal predicament and a defensive strategy that tries to hide from this negative self-knowledge (191).

This characterization of Romantic irony is fraught with contradictions, and de Man's claims for it, especially in opposition to Hegelian mediation, are equally contradictory. It is difficult to see how this dialectic "located entirely in the temporal relationships . . . within a system of allegorical signs" is emancipated from the Hegelian subject-object dialectic, for surely that too is located in the temporal relationships within a system--the Hegelian system. If de Man understood "subject-object" as synonymous with Kant's phenomenon-noumenon distinction, then he was correct to say that romantic irony is free of this distinction, for Schlegel, like Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, denied the existence of Kant's unknowable noumenon or "object" in the true sense of object as absolute otherness. But if this is so, Hegelian dialectic is equally emancipated from subject-object distinctions, and this can no longer be a point of significant differentiation between Hegel and Schlegel as de Man claimed. Furthermore, if this is so, de Man's dialectic is one of self with self, or subject with subject (as his final

sentence above seems to acknowledge)--in which case it is hard to see how his dialectic escapes the charge of "subjective idealism" and "pseudo dialectic" which he levelled against Abrams and Wasserman. Finally, while on the one hand de Man located the dynamic of his dialectic entirely "within a system of signs," on the other hand he seemed to locate the real passion, tension or dynamic outside that system in the self's painful awareness of the non-self which escaped the system. In saying that the non-self "is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self," he seemed to re-introduce the non-self or "object" (in the sense of the inaccessible Kantian noumenon) into a dialectic which he also claimed was free of this distinction. The Romantic ironist in fact has no "painful recognition" of an unknowable non-self, because he, like the other German idealists, has declared such a thing illusory, a mere fiction.

Anne Mellor correctly criticizes de Man's skeptical emphasis on the phenomenon-noumenon disjunction as the motivation for Schlegel's dialectic, "for Friedrich Schlegel long ago identified as a fiction the Kantian antinomy that de Man assumes to be ontological fact" (233). But curiously, while Mellor tries to reaffirm the "enthusiasm" of Schlegel's dialectic--its attempted embrace of creativity and life--over de Man's skeptically

one-sided affirmation of its "irony," she refuses to acknowledge the sense in which the dynamic of Schlegel's dialectic is a drive towards "unity" or "system." She correctly locates its dynamic in a desire to "hover between" skepticism and affirmation, irony and enthusiasm, in a "difficult but exhilarating balancing act between self-creation and self-destruction" (229), and she emphasizes the unending striving of this process. She acknowledges that what impels the dialectic is not a drive for disjunction, but for unity with life through imitating and thereby participating in its ceaseless flux, its "never-exhaustible abundance of creative becoming" (228). At the same time, she reintroduces the same emphasis on disjunction which she criticized in de Man, by insisting on the endless deferralment of any total unity between the finite and the infinite. One eternally approaches the infinite but never fully attains it; in Schlegel's words, "'the vocation of man is to wed the infinite with the finite; the full coinciding is however eternally unattainable.'"²¹ Like de Man, Mellor ends up minimizing the extent to which romantic irony is a drive towards unity and system, and like him emphasizes instead the "unfinished" nature of its striving, the "disjunction" of its infinite progression towards an unreachable goal. For her, as for him, this is why Schlegel's dialectic is by

implication truer to the radical temporality of life, which they assert is the only "authentic" vision of it. Their only real difference is that where de Man experiences this ceaseless striving as "painful," Mellor celebrates it as "exhilarating."

De Man's account is ultimately the more honest (if more logically confused). His mistake was to confuse a negative criticism of Romantic irony with Schlegel's positive intentions, so that indeed he overemphasized the skepticism, pain and despair of the romantic ironist over the affirmation of life which Schlegel intended. But Mellor conversely ignores the pessimistic implications of romantic irony to accept at face value Schlegel's enthusiastic affirmation of it (ignoring too his later repudiation of it and turn to Catholicism). She ignores the fact that to merge totally with life, with what Schlegel calls a "fertile abundance" or "fülle," "the exhaustless fund of life which is continually developing itself in nature,"²² is to merge, finally with death, a negative unity. Leonard P. Wessell (to whom she claims to be deeply indebted) is far more honest in assessing the possible negative implications of Schlegel's position, acknowledging that "despite all his attempts to combine the infinite with the finite, Schlegel places man in an eternal cycle of affirmation and fulfillment followed by

negation and frustration . . . all affirmations of reality seem to be doomed to negation" (663). And he is far more careful to differentiate between Schlegel's intentions and the arguments which could be made against them. Schlegel attempts to avoid being trapped in a static cycle by making the activity itself the goal instead of the unattainable infinity, he points out, so that the movement of his dialectic is an upward moving spiral. But Wessell is careful to qualify his opinion of the success of this strategy:

It is this continual approaching that constitutes the essence of "progressivity" and saves Schlegel from being faced with a Nietzschean type of heroic pessimism (though one might plausibly contend that the fact that Schlegel's progressive becoming never reaches its ultimate goal--which is the logical deduction from the notion of eternally approaching--might ultimately require just such a pessimism) (665).

Mellor will acknowledge neither the "upward spiral" or "progressivity" of Schlegel's dialectic (because this sounds too much like Abrams's characterization of the romantic-Hegelian spiral) nor its alternatively "Nietzschean type of heroic pessimism." Nor does she acknowledge what would seem to be the only other alternative: the total stasis of this endless vacillation.

More to the immediate point, however, Mellor and de Man ignore the extent to which Schlegel's dialectic shares

the same logical structure as Hegel's dialectic and indeed all the post-Kantian idealist dialectics. All share the same structure of "Becoming," of declaring that the ground or ultimate principle of life is a principle of becoming which mediates all contradictions within itself. All recognize that the only way apparent opposites can be reconciled is if they are only apparent, at bottom one and the same--which is to say, reconciled within some overarching unity or system. It seems extraordinary that de Man could claim that romantic irony is emancipated from the subject-object structure of idealist dialectics, and that Mellor could so carefully describe the way in which Schlegel takes as his starting point a denial of Kant's distinction, yet still insist that for Schlegel there is no "synthesis," either as beginning or end of the dialectic. She asserts this even in the face of Schlegel's own use of the word "synthesis." She quotes Schlegel's summary of his dialectic as "an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts," but insists "By 'synthesis' here, . . . Schlegel means not reconciliation or harmonization but rather conjunction: being and becoming stand side-by-side, in unresolved and unresolvable conflict."²³ At the same time, she elsewhere clearly describes Being and Becoming as synthesized within the ultimate principle

of Becoming, saying "Schlegel can therefore unite the infinite and the finite 'as a being becoming activity at most only differentiated by degree.'" ²⁴ Further, she never explains how this "conjunction" significantly differs from Hegel's Aufhebung which identically "preserves and annuls" contradiction.

These are some of the confusions which Kierkegaard's analysis cogently addresses. There is a certain poetic justice to his demonstration that romantic irony is differentiated from Hegelianism only by a matter of degree--that its claims for its absolute differentiation from Hegelianism are "negated" by its own logic of merely relative differentiations. Further, Kierkegaard's analysis addresses even more urgent implications, the implications of statements such as Mellor's claim that the romantic ironist "must always sustain the incredibly difficult but not impossible dual awareness that everything one believes is both true and false," and that "a fictional world must be both sincerely presented and sincerely undermined." ²⁵ Kierkegaard would ask what "sincerity" in this context can possibly mean. It is this question of ethical and religious values in relation to the structure of dialectic which most concerns Kierkegaard and Blake. What they share most deeply is the belief that life without the ethical-religious "passion for distinctions" is not life

at all.

Kierkegaard's famous "either/or" deliberately inverts the "both-and" logic of idealist dialectics--the systematic, all-inclusive logic which even Schlegel's dialectic follows, literary critics to the contrary notwithstanding. Just as Blake came to see in the course of his career that his originally systematic dialectic of contraries (Orc and Urizen) abstracted from and hence destroyed his ideal of "life," so Kierkegaard came to see in the course of the Romantic age that all the systematic idealist dialectics abstracted from and thereby destroyed life. Their easy mediation of contraries within what Kierkegaard called the "higher unity" of the Hegelian Aufhebung and the "higher madness" of Schlegel's Romantic irony²⁶ was a mediation which could occur only in the abstract realm of thought, not in the concrete realm of "life." For Kierkegaard as for Blake, "much in our experience is radically unassimilable" (to repeat Damrosch's phrase); much in our experience cannot be "mediated." Change and loss can be radically wounding, experiences of profound discontinuity which do not always heal and cannot always be "rationalized" away. Change and loss "exclude" certain possibilities forever. And these "acts of exclusion" (to reverse Michael Cooke's phrase for Romanticism as "acts of inclusion")²⁷ are not only suffered by the man who

truly lives, but are also voluntarily undertaken each time he makes a choice in life. For Kierkegaard, "both-and" logic is life-denying because it blurs the absolute distinctions or minute discriminations in which life consists; it does not encourage choosing among alternatives, but rather suggests that all alternatives are equal. Life for Kierkegaard as for Blake is the activity of sharpening distinctions or "contraries" to the point at which they become absolute and one embraces truth in a moment of unmediated fusion with it.

Kierkegaard's either/or systematically reverses Hegel's both-and point for point, and this systematic philosophical critique of Hegel makes explicit the peculiarly logical illogic behind Blake's revisions to his myth. Kierkegaard's dialectic, like Blake's, emphasizes subjectivity over objectivity, the individual over the system, exclusion over inclusion, passion over reason, truth and error over good and evil. It proceeds not through a series of gradual, mediated steps toward some absolute goal, but through a series of unmediated leaps, each of which is absolute in itself, a crisis of vision. Its focus is what Kierkegaard calls "the instant," the moment of apocalyptic breakthrough when truth or the eternal enters time, the moment which Blake calls the "Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find/Nor can his Watch Fiends

find it" (M, II, 35:42-43; 135).

In rejecting both-and logic for the decisive differentiations of either/or, Blake and Kierkegaard reject the Spectre of the Hegelian negative, the "Abstract objecting power, that Negatives every thing" (J, I, 10:14; 151). This Spectre is what Blake calls in Jerusalem "Abstract Philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination" (I, 5:58; 147), a shadowy parody of Los who threatens to usurp him and turn all his creative activities or life into destruction and death. The Spectre is a frame of mind, an abstract perspective on life which flattens the very discriminations or contraries in which life consists. This flattening results in the mental passivity or spiritual inertia which Blake and Kierkegaard mutually abhor as the greatest evil. They call this inertia variously "melancholy," "jealousy," "despair," and "dread"--all the mind-forged manacles which hinder men from actively participating in life.

In rejecting this Hegelian negative, however, Blake and Kierkegaard do not thereby reject "negativity" per se. On the contrary, negativity is absolutely fundamental to their concept of life. They reject the negativity of "mediation" for the negativity of "the leap." Theirs is a dialectic of truly unmediated vision; and it is from this deliberate refusal to "mediate," to make things easy,

that much of their notorious difficulty and obscurity arises.

In their shared struggle with "negativity," Blake and Kierkegaard grapple with the negativity at the heart of the Romantic ideal of "irony" and of "life." They also confront directly the central Romantic tension between religion and nihilism. For the negative of "the leap" which both oppose to the false negative of Hegelian mediation is not just a return to the "leap of faith" celebrated by orthodox religion, but is a radical negativity which comes precariously close to the very nihilism it sets out to defeat. Blake and Kierkegaard may walk a very fine line between religion and nihilism, but I shall argue that they do successfully walk that line. Its tenuousness is indeed the measure of their success, for in that fine line is the "minute discrimination," the qualitative distinction which makes all the difference between "life" and the grisly parody of life which Blake calls "the Spectre" and Coleridge called "death-in-life."

II. The Spectre and the Logic of Error

Thou art in Error Albion, the land of Ulro
 One error not remov'd, will destroy a Human Soul
 Repose in Beulahs night Till the Error is
 remov'd
 Reason not on both sides.

--Blake, Jerusalem

We read in fairy tales about human beings whom mermaids and mermen enticed into their power by means of demoniac music. In order to break the enchantment it was necessary for the person who was under the spell to play the same piece of music backwards without making a single mistake. This is very profound, but very difficult to perform, and yet so it is: the errors one has taken into oneself one must eradicate in this way, and every time one makes a mistake one must begin all over.

--Kierkegaard, Either/Or

Crises in their personal lives contributed in large measure to the erratic evolution of Blake and Kierkegaard as poet-philosophers. True to their own dialectic of crisis, of the individual, and of "life," they perceived certain events in their lives as decisive turning points for their thought and literary production. "At the first glance I saw that he was a poet," says Kierkegaard's Constantine Constantius, "--for this reason, if for no other, that an occurrence which, if it had happened to a commonplace man would quietly have come to nothing, assumed in his case the proportions of a cosmic event" (R,

137). Such a momentous event marked the beginning of Kierkegaard's career, while one equally momentous marked the nadir of Blake's--a three-year period of intense despair, out of which he recovered to write his last prophecies.

Both of these "cosmic events" were confrontations with the spectre of mediation or compromise, confrontations from which both men emerged triumphantly--or perhaps not so triumphantly--"unmediated." For Kierkegaard, the central event in his life, the occasion behind virtually all his pseudonymous works, was his aborted engagement to Regina Olsen in 1841.¹ With characteristic absolutism, he apparently felt upon meeting her that either he would marry this woman or he would never marry. He did not marry her, and he never married. He was not, however, as one might expect, the rejected party; on the contrary, he himself called off the wedding and extricated himself with great difficulty and considerable anguish from the situation. He then seems to have spent the rest of his life wondering whether he had done the right thing. The puzzle is why he did it at all; but on this point he remains (understandably) enigmatic.² The story appears in various places throughout his pseudonymous works, retold in a number of parables. The most suggestive of these is the Abraham-Isaac story which Kierkegaard ana-

lyzes in great detail in Fear and Trembling. Kierkegaard himself said that "Fear and Trembling reproduced my own life,"³ and "If you can explain Abraham's collision [of the "ethical" with the "religious" sphere], you have explained my whole life."⁴ His preoccupation is with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, where Abraham unexpectedly receives Isaac back again, "by virtue of the absurd." Abraham breaks the laws of conventional morality (which would call him a murderer) to serve the command of God; he renounces the finite (Isaac) at the bidding of the infinite, only to receive the finite back again, transformed into a great and unexpected gift (as was Isaac's birth to begin with). There is some speculation that Kierkegaard's "sacrifice" of Regina was meant to be a sacrifice of the same sort--that he hoped, having renounced her for religious reasons, to receive her back again (Lowrie, 267). Perhaps it was even his test to see whether God existed or not, for to receive her back, unexpectedly and impossibly, after having renounced her totally, would surely constitute a "proof." But he did not receive her back; in fact, she married another man, within an "indecently" short interval after the rupture with Kierkegaard. Not only did God not demonstrate his existence; this "cosmic event" threatened to be merely mundane after all. Clearly Regina's perception of the

situation was considerably less cosmic than Kierkegaard's; she evidently did not feel that either she would marry Kierkegaard or she would never marry.

Kierkegaard's response to this renunciation of marriage was to rush off to solitude in Berlin and write; in the two years following the event he wrote and published, in rapid succession, Either/Or (February 1843), Two Edifying Discourses (May 1843), and in October 1843, Fear and Trembling, Repetition, and Three Edifying Discourses. He sent Either/Or, Fear and Trembling, and Repetition to Regina, who read them aloud to her husband (Lowrie, 194). Formerly somewhat of an aesthete and a dilettante (spending ten years writing his graduate thesis, The Concept of Irony, for instance), Kierkegaard continued this astonishing pace and prolific output for the rest of his life.⁵

He had renounced "marriage," and his entire "literary" output--i.e., the pseudonymous works⁶--re-enacts this struggle and this momentous decision. It is also his attempt to justify that decision to himself; for unless his renunciation had some higher "religious" justification, it was a meaningless gesture. His real task then was to justify God's ways to men, a task made the more difficult by the fact that God had not responded to Kierkegaard's sacrifice as he was supposed to have done. The onus was on Kierkegaard to keep the entire incident

from collapsing into meaninglessness, an experiment which had backfired, an absurd tragedy of unfulfillment. It is no wonder he felt impelled to produce so prolifically; for if the event could be thus productive, that productivity alone would be some justification for it. "So costly this girl had to become to me, or so costly I had to make her for religious reasons," he says in his Journal (Lowrie, 220).

The pseudonymous works re-enact not only Kierkegaard's struggle and decision to renounce marriage, but also his struggle to reject the Hegelian system, for these were in fact the same struggle. Hegel was the great philosopher of marriage, whose own happily married bourgeois life broke with an entire tradition of philosophic isolation:

Particularly among philosophers, there were until the nineteenth century very few exceptions to the rule that men of learning, if not necessarily celibate, should at any rate be undisturbed by the domestic turmoil of marriage. In the Middle Ages, of course, most philosophers were clerics. But even after Luther set the example of a married clergy, and did it with such zest after all those years in the monastery, it continued to be taken for granted that a scholar, and particularly a philosopher, could not combine the high seriousness of his calling with marital frivolities and vexations. Then, too, philosophers doubtless were daunted by the example of the terrible-tempered Xantippe.

In Germany, it was the idealistic successors of Immanuel Kant who decisively broke the

pattern. . . . When the so-called German idealists . . . transferred the scene of philosophical thinking from the monkish cell to the bourgeois household, the transfer manifested a new philosophical humanism. This was true in the life and work of Hegel above all. The culminator of German idealism, Hegel could also be called, invoking his own view of the philosophical task and a little poetic license, the first thoroughly domesticated philosopher. For the first time philosophy found itself comfortably at home with the common life, in Marie Hegel's parlor.⁷

To Kierkegaard, the Hegelian system was as ponderously slow-moving--as static, finally--as the institution of marriage itself. Like marriage, it collapsed the cosmic into the mundane, the incommensurable into the commensurable; it collapsed the spirited, unmediated, passionate relations of "love" into the spiritless, systematic, mediated relations of duty, social convention, and "family love."

This "error" which the entire nineteenth century around him seemed to have "taken into itself," the error he had successfully expelled from his own life as an individual, Kierkegaard methodically set out to eradicate. Step by step he carefully played backwards the music of the Hegelian system, and it is a discordant, difficult, jarring piece of "music" which results. Not objectivity but subjectivity, not reason but passion, not collectivity but individualism, not continuity but discontinuity, not

"history" but the "moment"--all these reversals mark his tortuous, negative way, his systematic anti-systematic undoing of the Hegelianism he had taken into himself.

The "cosmic event" marking a crisis in Blake's turbulent evolution as a poet was the famous episode in his garden at Felpham, when John Milton descended from above and entered into Blake's left foot--"an altering of Blake's poetic stance," as Harold Bloom so imperturbably informs us.⁸ Objectively speaking this event might seem of a somewhat different order than Kierkegaard's (considerably more cosmic indeed); but subjectively speaking as we are here, this too was the culmination of Blake's decisive confrontation with, and breaking away from, "commensurability."

His three year sojourn at Felpham was a period of intense despair, when he feared he was losing not only his productivity, but also his poetic vision altogether. What appeared initially to be an ideal situation for poetic inspiration--a cottage in the country, solitude, plenty of bread-and-butter commissions procured for him by his patron William Hayley--became a nightmare of paralysis and self-doubt.

The story has been told many times--of Blake's clashes with Hayley, his obscure marital troubles, his

bizarre trial for sedition, a trial which could only confirm that his general feelings of paranoia were no mere products of imagination.⁹ Fundamentally, it is the story of Blake's confrontation with the spectre of compromise, a spectre which had haunted him throughout his career but which materialized with sudden, unexpected definition in the figure of Hayley. For Blake saw in his apparent benefactor the embodiment of all that blocked true poetic vision: a temptation to dependence on his beneficent, "fatherly" patronage which would destroy Blake's fierce independence of imagination. Hayley's commissions demanded that Blake abandon visions for portraits, inspiration for convention, imagination for common sense, the exalted for the mundane. And these demands were made on entirely "reasonable" grounds--the grounds of simple survival, the basic financial necessity Blake had to acknowledge and could best meet by hiring himself out for this kind of work. "Reasonable" and "necessary" to be sure; but an unacceptable compromise to Blake's uncompromising temperament. Either one produced "true art," inspired subjectively from within by visionary truths, or one produced "false art," dictated by the muses of external, objective necessity and of public opinion and convention. One could not do both; at least, not if one was Blake. Being true to vision might--and

should--produce material rewards as a consequence; but material necessity could not for Blake usurp the place of visionary truth as the primary motivation for his art. When it did, when the spectrous tyrant of objective necessity and "obligation" filled Blake's vision, he was paralyzed.

More accurately, he was probably paralyzed by ambivalence, by the very real temptation to take the easy, "mediated" route rather than the difficult, "unmediated" route to recognition. He had by this time spent years in isolation and neglect; here was a patron at last, who promised to mediate between Blake and his uncomprehending public. And perhaps it would not be such a compromise after all; perhaps his "visionary forms dramatic" were, as Hayley apparently told him, merely the phantasms of a madman, phantasms which needed these curbs of "necessity" and convention to make them comprehensible. Perhaps this discipline imposed from without was the true discipline, the true "bounding line" Blake's art needed: the discipline of objective "reality" or "existence." Blake did after all want his art to be true to human experience or "life"--and were these not the demands of "life" which Hayley urged upon his art? This spectre bore an uncannily close resemblance to some truths Blake could not but acknowledge.

Blake's escape from this paralyzing ambivalence required an enormous effort of will, an act of decision by which he sharply differentiated himself from Hayley, rejecting all of Hayley's temptations to compromise. And this decision was indeed a "leap of faith" for by it he cast off the "corporeal friendship" of Hayley to embrace instead the "spiritual friendship" of John Milton. This crisis of decision at Felpham, the subject matter of Milton, marks Blake's leap from paralysis into production, his rejection of the false art for the true. And this crisis marks also a sudden kaleidoscopic shift in Blake's myth--a shifting of his plates into a new configuration which retains and yet transforms, the same yet not the same, the earlier components of the myth. These components shift into the configuration decisive for Blake's last prophecies, particularly Jerusalem, where they consolidate with intense and final clarity.

The decisive shift which crystallizes for Blake here is his new focus on the Los-Spectre dialectic as the centre of his myth, and his rejection of the Orc-Urizen dialectic of the earlier myth. This shift corresponds to the reversal from a Hegelian both-and dialectic to a Kierkegaardian either/or dialectic, a move from the "objective" Hegelian dialectic to the "subjective" Kierkegaardian one which follows the progressively inward-

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turning direction of Blake's myth. His abandonment of belief in an actual historical revolution or apocalypse (Orc) and relocation of this apocalypse within the perception of the individual (Los) is exactly Kierkegaard's attempted internalization of Hegelian dialectic.

In brief, as Kierkegaard tries to reverse Hegel's dialectic, Blake tries to reverse his own Orc-Urizen dialectic when he discovers it to be in "error." His new dialectic is the same yet not the same as his early one; it is an exact inversion of the earlier dialectic which merely makes explicit the error hidden within that dialectic and then casts it off. This is the error which he calls "negation" or "the Spectre." And where formerly he would not cast off Urizen as the solution to the Orc-Urizen conflict, he now casts off the Spectre in a Kierkegaardian either/or (although the nature of this casting off is paradoxically, again as in Kierkegaard, that of an embrace as well).

A more detailed account of this turn to the Spectre must begin with an account of the poetic event which was the catalyst. For something happened at Felpham which made the Spectre leap into sudden prominence. Milton not only records in a single "moment" this decisive event in Blake's life as a man and as a poet, but also gives us in little the history of the entire progression of Blake's

myth. For its history is that of his struggles to correct not only his own errors, but also the errors (as he saw them) of Milton's Paradise Lost. Blake's entire career is in a way a backwards retracing of Milton's steps, an attempt to undo Milton's errors, in which Blake finds himself merely repeating those errors and having to begin all over again. The overall dialectic of his career is one of the progressive sharpening not only of Los (truth) but also of the Spectre (error). They emerge with equal and opposite intensities, the one an equally potent yet paradoxically shadowy analogy of the other.

The structure of Milton illustrates Blake's reversal of Hegelian dialectic with remarkable clarity. The poem as a whole moves not from "division" to "reconciliation," but the reverse. It moves from an initial state of "mediation" or unity to an exposure of this state as false or illusory, then to a decisive casting off of this state, and finally to a state of true unity and poetic vision. It begins, in the "Bard's Song," with the "corporeal friendship" of Blake-Palamabron and Hayley-Satan, a false friendship and a false poetic vision. The crisis of the Song is the exposing and casting off of this false friendship, an expulsion of Satan or "error" which thus allows Blake to unite in true "spiritual friendship" with Milton. In the Bard's Song, Blake is cleansed of his error; in the

rest of the poem's two books, Milton is cleansed of error in a step-by-step narrative retracing and correction of his steps in Paradise Lost, a progression which culminates in a decisive confrontation with his spectre. These two "negative" movements of Blake and Milton take place simultaneously with their "positive" embrace of each other and of Ololon, the emanation of true poetic vision and unity. For the poem's narrative events all occur in the "moment" --the "Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find"--the moment of decision and of incarnation when Blake brings Milton out of eternity and into time to be his ally against Hayley.

The poem even gives us a visual emblem of Blake's dialectic in the opening plate of the second book, a plate which contains both forward and backward writing. The forward writing says merely "Milton Book the Second;" one must read laboriously backwards or else hold the plate up to a mirror to read (arching across the top of the plate): "How wide the Gulf Unpassable between Simplicity & Insipidity," and below this, "Contraries are Positives A Negation is not a Contrary." The "gulf unpassable" is presumably the qualitative difference between Milton's grand simplicity and Hayley's petty insipidity; and as we shall see, Blake and Milton are the "contraries" of which Hayley is the mere "negation."

Blake is "erroneously" allied with Hayley because Hayley-Satan has usurped Blake-Palamabron's poetic task and instruments--his "Harrow of the Almighty"--and tried to perform Blake's task himself. The patron has tried to be the poet: "he hath assum'd my place/For one day, under pretence of pity and love to me" (I, 7:25-26; 100). But "My horses he hath maddened! and my fellow servants injur'd:/How should he know the duties of another?" (I, 7:27-28). And Blake's fear is that no one will recognize Satan's destructiveness, because it is so successfully concealed in "soft dissimulation of Friendship" (I, 8:35; 101) and "incomparable mildness" (I, 7:4): "Palamabron fear'd to be angry lest Satan should accuse him of/Ingratitude, & Los believe the accusation thro Satans extreme/Mildness" (I, 7:11-13). Worst of all, Satan himself is not really a hypocrite, but genuinely unable to see his own destructiveness: "Meanwhile wept Satan before Los, accusing Palamabron;/Himself exculpating with mildest speech. for himself believ'd/That he had not oppress'd nor injur'd the refractory servants" (I, 8:1-3; 100). But "seeming a brother, being a tyrant," Satan must be exposed as such, and to this end "Palamabron called down a Great Solemn Assembly/That he who will not defend Truth, may be compelled to/Defend a Lie that he may be snared & caught & taken" (I, 89:46-48; 102). Blake-

Palamabron's strategy for exposing Satan is to make him reveal himself, which he does by making Satan angry; for "Satan flaming with Rintrahs fury hidden beneath his own mildness/Accus'd Palamabron before the Assembly of ingratitude! of malice:" (I, 9:19-20; 102). Once he is angry, Satan loses control, raging amidst the Assembly and saying "I am God alone/There is no other! Let all obey my principles of moral individuality" (I, 9:25-26; 102). His true enmity to poetic vision is revealed; the Assembly stands appalled; and he sinks down "a dreadful Death" (I, 9:48; 103).

Anger, Rintrah's prophetic wrath, is the agent of "redemption" for Blake-Palamabron. Anger is a divisive rather than a mediating emotion, an emotion of sharp, antagonistic combat which Blake opposes to "pity," the soft, mediating, indiscriminating emotion which has caused all the trouble in the first place. Hayley-Satan is destroyed by his own anger not only because it reveals his true enmity, but because, unused to such a decisive, differentiating emotion, he cannot control it: "And Satan not having the Science of Wrath, but only of Pity:/Rent them asunder and wrath was left to wrath, & pity to pity./He sunk down a dreadful Death" (I, 9:46-48; 103). Hayley-Satan is unable to make qualitative distinctions, and this, finally, is his "sin": He cannot see the difference

between himself and Blake-Palamabron, the difference between his idea of art and Blake's, the difference which makes his attempted usurpation of Blake's role such a destructive parody of it.

Blake learned from this incident the saving value of anger: "If you account it Wisdom when you are angry to be silent, and/Not to shew it: I do not account that Wisdom but Folly" (I, 4:6-7; 97). He learned from it in other words the destructive quality of "mediation" and the saving quality of "division," the very concept he had spent his life up to this point fighting against. And he had fought against it most vehemently in the person of John Milton, whose Paradise Lost for Blake embodied the tyranny of division in its most spectrous form.

Issues of "division," the qualitative distinction between man and God, are at the heart of all of Milton's justifications of the ways of God to men in Paradise Lost. Even though Raphael assures Adam and Eve that they are different from God in degree but not in kind, there remains the inescapable, absolute difference in kind which the prohibition on the tree of knowledge seems to set up. That prohibition is none other than God's firm command to Adam and Eve to observe the qualitative distinction between themselves and him, not to seek to know too much, not to seek equality with God. And for Blake (as for

other thinkers) this prohibition seemed directly responsible for the fall, for had it not been established, had this unattainable otherness not been set up to tempt Adam and Eve, they would not have fallen.

The second division in Paradise Lost which seems equally to make God responsible for the fall is the division of the sexes. For it is Eve's "separateness" from Adam which seems to make her peculiarly susceptible to the serpent; had she not insisted on wandering off on her own, he would not have found her alone and unprotected. Eve seems to be created inherently flawed by the very fact of her physical and sexual separation from Adam, a separation typologically repeated in all her actions throughout Paradise Lost.

The third separation Blake objected to was the casting out of Satan, God's act of ultimate, absolute division. For Satan cannot be redeemed; this tyrant will not forgive him his sin--again, the sin of wanting to be equal to God. And why should this be a sin?

Milton's justification of the ways of God lies in the concept of "freedom." God's greatest gift, apart from life, is freedom--that man should be free to choose whether or not to worship God. Compelled obedience is meaningless, for as God says,

311 "WILKINS"
"XIX ON" SK
"AT MS" SK
"SK" SK

Not free, what proof could they have giv'n
 sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
 Where what they needs must do appeared,
 Not what they would? What praise could they
 receive,
 What pleasure I, from such obedience paid,
 When Will and Reason (Reason also is Choice)
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
 Made passive both, had served Necessity,
 Not me?

(Paradise Lost, III:103-111)

The only way Adam and Eve can be free to choose whether or not to worship God is if they are offered some real, qualitatively real, alternatives. It is this qualitative choice which the prohibition symbolically represents. Only the prohibition gives Adam and Eve the freedom to choose between obedience and disobedience; before the prohibition, the choice and the freedom did not exist. Limitless freedom is not freedom but necessity. And only Adam's separation from Eve allows her to choose between idolatry (worship of Adam) and true worship of God. (Her temporary narcissism at the pool, when she is first created, is yet another symbol or type of her freedom of choice, for her choice here is between her own reflected image and Adam).

The prohibition is Milton's "wirey bounding line," what shapes the key ideas of Paradise Lost. It is a line of decisive differentiation, of qualitative distinction, a line which seemingly fixes an "unpassable gulf" between

God and man, man and woman, and heaven and hell. Yet this gulf for Milton does not mean that man is inherently fallen: the sin is not division per se, but "idolatry," substitution of the wrong alternative for the right. Sin is the perversion or negation of value distinctions, for to worship someone or something other than God is to hold it up as equal or superior in value to God. It is to upset the proper hierarchy of values.

For Blake throughout most of his career, not "idolatry" but hierarchy (what Blake calls "jealousy") is the sin--that is, division per se, God's selfishly possessive and elitist protection, via his prohibition, of his own knowledge and superiority. And it is the division between the sexes which keeps them in perpetual "torments of love and jealousy," fruitlessly trying either in torments of desire to cross the unpassable gulf, or in acts of selfish possessiveness and "chastity" to fix it more firmly between them. Each attempt at true freedom, each Orc who appears to liberate men from this tyranny, is bound down eventually and irrevocably by this "Chain of Jealousy."

Milton's wirey bounding line in other words looked very much to Blake like the line made by Urizenic dividers, a line which bound man a prisoner of a Urizenic spectre of abstraction, an "abstract non-entity." For it divided God off from man in splendid isolation, as someone

outside of man remaining untouched by, and oblivious to, his torments. Blake's struggle throughout his career, then, is to expel this tyrannous spectre of division and abstraction by creating a "seamless" myth. This would mean that the division of man from God would be a division within God himself; not man but God falls, or man is fallen God. It should also mean that there would be no Satan who is irrevocably cast out as an irredeemable sinner; all parts of the fallen self should be taken up again into the whole. And it should finally mean that no acts of "repentance," "forgiveness," "redemption," or "grace" are involved in the reintegration of the fallen self; for such acts by definition ratify the God-man distinction.

Blake's problem, however, is that while he wants to get rid of Milton's dualism, he wants to maintain qualitative distinctions. He wants to get rid of hierarchy--a transcendent God who is superior to man, or in psychological terms, a "reason" which rules over "passion." Yet at the same time, he wants to maintain the qualitative distinctions between transcendence and immanence, or between reason and passion. His ideal of "life" is always as the dynamic interaction of qualitatively distinct contraries--yet the unavoidable impasse he confronts is that contraries cannot be qualitatively distinct without hierarchy--that is, without elevating one contrary over the

other. Qualitative distinctions are by definition hierarchical, yet it is just this which Blake refuses to accept.

This is why Blake struggles for so long with different sets of contraries--innocence and experience, Orc and Urizen, Zoas and emanations, Los and the Spectre, Rintrah and Palamabron (or wrath and pity), truth and error. With each successive pair he tries to reformulate his ideal. But he has only two alternatives. Either his contraries will be qualitatively distinct, in which case they must by definition be hierarchical, with one contrary necessarily elevated above the other; or the contraries will be equal and opposite, non-hierarchical--in which case they will not be qualitatively distinct, not real contraries.

Blake wants neither of these alternatives, because either alternative seems to destroy his ideal of life. His polemical temperament and deeply religious absolutism make him want to choose one contrary rather than the other, in a kind of "either/or" moment of choice--a moment of unqualified, fervent embrace. But this seems too dogmatic and one-sided to be true to his ideal of life as something always changing. Such hierarchy seems clearly tyrannical, for one contrary dominates over the other by casting it off or else by subsuming it within itself. On

the other hand, equallizing the contraries in an eternal "both-and" dialectic seems equally destructive of life, for they can only oscillate in perennial vacillation, with no end to dialectic. Blake wants life to be dynamic yet definite in shape; he wants neither the rigidity that dualism seems to impose upon it nor the formless dissolution into flux which the equallizing of the contraries seems to produce. Striving is not all, for Blake; life must take definite form.

Blake's contraries of innocence and experience provide one example of this struggle between systematic "both-and" contraries and unsystematic "either/or" contraries. The relation between the state of innocence and the state of experience has been long contested by critics. Does Blake value innocence over experience? Experience over innocence? Or are they synthesized in some higher state, a unity of innocence and experience called "higher innocence," that unexamined catchword in Blake criticism? E.D. Hirsch, Jr. has summed up the debate over innocence and experience as polarized between the "systematic" and the "biographical" approaches to Blake.¹⁰ The systematic approach (held by Northrop Frye, Foster Damon, Harold Bloom, Robert Gleckner) sees innocence and experience as "intellectual counters with a dialectic" (6-7). It holds that Blake had a systematic,

dialectical whole in mind when he first wrote the Songs of Innocence--that is, that Blake wrote the Songs of Innocence with the Songs of Experience in mind from the beginning as the "contrary state of the soul." From this viewpoint innocence and experience are equally necessary to life; neither is superior to the other, and each is incomplete without the other. Their relationship is satirical and intellectual or "objective," for each satirizes and completes the other's incompleteness. The two states together add up to a larger whole or unity that in some sense "contains" them.

Hirsch argues that the biographical, or unsystematic, approach is more correct. This view (held by Hirsch, D.J. Sloss and J.P.R. Wallis, and D.G. James) holds that what governed Blake's treatment of the contraries were not abstract logical considerations but changes in his point of view, in his beliefs. The Songs of Experience were not therefore published as the completion of a dialectical system implicit from the beginning, but were first published as a total repudiation of the Songs of Innocence, a repudiation as total and as vigorous as Blake's earlier embrace of innocence. And it was only after this, Hirsch argues, that Blake tried to impose a systematic dialectical relationship on the Songs by publishing them together under the systematic title The Songs

of Innocence and Experience, Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.

But even here, Hirsch suggests, Blake ran into difficulties, pulled away from his dialectical ideal to a one-sided elevation of experience as the superior state:

But the new title has the same problematic character that numerous readers have observed in the similarly systematic title of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. The new title to the Songs pays lip service to a dialectical unity in which Innocence is just as important as Experience, but it fails to describe the fact that Innocence is in general satirized and Experience celebrated. Blake says in The Marriage that the Devourer is necessary to the Prolific, but the work is primarily a celebration of the Prolific. In the systematic unity which the new title imposed on the Songs, he implies that Innocence is as permanent and as necessary to human existence as Experience, but the addition of the countervolume is more a repudiation than a marriage (103).

Despite his attempt to systematize the Songs in a dialectical unity, then, Blake still leans toward a Kierkegaardian "repudiation" of one of the contraries rather than a Hegelian "marriage." And Hirsch argues that in the end Blake abandons all attempts at a dialectical system, in a return to an even more transcendental or visionary state of innocence than that which he celebrated in his youth.

The same problems can be seen in Blake's prolonged struggle with another pair of contraries, Orc and Urizen.

This is in a way the same pair of contraries, since one of the ideas which Orc and Urizen represent is the conflict again between innocence and experience. But since Blake worked through this Orc-Urizen pattern separately from the Songs, it deserves a separate examination. And because Orc and Urizen also represent "passion" and "reason," they are more immediately useful for comparing Blake with Milton.

Orc and Urizen first appear as "the Prolific" and "the Devouring" in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, and here Blake explicitly states that the two contraries of life must remain absolute, qualitatively distinct:

Thus one portion of being, is the Prolific the other, the Devouring: to the Devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole.

. . .

These two classes of men are always upon the earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence.

Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.

Note: Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says I came not to send Peace but a Sword.

(pl. 16, p. 39)

Blake wants these two principles to remain in productive

strife, yet Orc continually threatens to annihilate Urizen. Urizen is a clear "villain" throughout Blake's early works (America, Europe, The Book of Urizen, The Song of Los, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los), while Orc is clearly the "hero" (in The Book of Ahania the Orc figure is called Fuzon). Yet Blake realizes he does not really want Orc to cast off Urizen but rather to unite fruitfully with him. Urizen has divided himself off from Orc as Milton's God cast off Satan; and to have Orc in turn cast off Urizen would make Orc repeat the mistakes of Milton's God and become himself a new Urizen. It would ratify the very God-man distinction in Paradise Lost which Blake is trying to overcome. There is only one alternative, however--to have Orc "swallow" Urizen instead of casting him off. But this would reduce Urizen's potency as an antagonist, render Orc's victory a feeble one, and again, make Orc a Urizenic tyrant. This is in fact what does happen to Orc: Blake discovers that he has allowed Orc to tyrannize onesidedly over his myth to the exclusion of Urizen, just as Urizen previously tyrannized to the effective exclusion of Orc. Blake's dialectic of life has ended--there is no dialectic.

A simpler way of putting this perhaps is to say that Blake sees life, which should be a fruitful interaction of reason and passion, as tyrannized over by reason. He

therefore sets "passion" against this reason, only to find that passion without the bounds of reason is as tyrannical as reason without passion. Orc has triumphed, but to the destruction of the very life he was supposed to embody: "Once Man was occupied in intellectual pleasures & energies/But now my soul is harrowed with grief & fear & love & desire/And now I hate & now I love & Intellect is no more," Blake/Los laments in Jerusalem (III, 68:65-67; 220). Blake discovers in other words that the excess of either principle leads to an excess of the other: an excess of reason leads to uncontrolled (and hence tyrannical) passion, and an excess of passion leads to a tyranny of reason. This means that Orc and Urizen are mutually implicated in the fall of man--that both are in some sense "equal." This is why Blake in The Four Zoas makes Luvah (Orc) and Urizen equally responsible for the fall of man into disunity, instead of blaming the fall on Urizen alone as in the early myth. Luvah has usurped Urizen's "Horses of Light"--but Urizen has voluntarily handed them over.

Blake discovers in other words that since they are mutually implicated in the fall, Orc and Urizen are not real contraries but different aspects of the same thing. Frye has carefully charted his increasing discovery of this "Orc cycle," his realization that Orc is not tyran-

nized over by a Urizen who is different from him, but that Orc himself declines inevitably into Urizen.¹¹

"Innocence," revolutionary energy, and desire inevitably decline into "experience," stasis, and repressive reason. This is the cycle of "life"--but it is in fact a cycle of "death."

Blake's struggle with these two sets of contraries demonstrates the two poles between which he was continually pulled throughout his career. The outcome of his struggle in the Songs is an "either/or" celebration of one contrary--innocence--to the exclusion of experience. By contrast, his Orc-Urizen struggle ends in the stalemate of a "both-and" dialectic which neutralizes both contraries in a static cycle. Blake ultimately rejects the both-and dialectic and, as Hirsch rightly says, opts for something closer to "either/or." Yet really he wants neither of these alternatives, as I have said, and therefore opts for a very special kind of either/or which is neither "both-and" nor "either/or" as that is simply understood.

Blake's disillusionment with the static both-and Orc cycle is usually described as a disillusionment with the idea of political revolution. And his turn to Los as the new agent of redemption is described as a turn to the imagination or the visionary faculty as the new redeemer.

In this sense, Los is seen as Blake's "solution" to his problem with the Orc cycle. But Los too proves inadequate on his own. Blake has rejected the Orc cycle as static, yet by introducing Los as the visionary or imaginative faculty which will put Orc and Urizen together in a dynamic unity he still does not solve his problem. He has overcome the problem of either Orc or Urizen taking over in a dogmatic tyranny which one-sidedly ends dialectic or the flux of life's contraries. Yet he has not escaped the trap of the Orc cycle itself, the systematic logic of contraries which he has just discovered to be static. Los is a "third thing" who therefore seems to transcend the Orc-Urizen trap--yet how does the introduction of Los solve the problem of how to put Orc and Urizen together in such a way that they form a dynamic unity of life rather than a static cycle of death? How is Los to unify Orc and Urizen without becoming, like "Religion," "an endeavour to reconcile the two," which "seeks to destroy existence"? In fact, as Blake has just discovered, the whole problem is that Orc and Urizen have already been "reconciled" within some invisible higher unity, which is why they are not real contraries, and why their conflict is static.

Blake must prevent Los from becoming simply a name for or an embodiment of this invisible higher unity which

has mysteriously negated Orc and Urizen within itself. He must keep Los from being hierarchically superior to Orc and Urizen or else Los will be an abstract unity, an empty "container," and Orc and Urizen will be reduced to feeble "things contained," their energy negated in mutual accommodation.

Blake's multiplication of the contraries into the four "Zoas" seemed initially to be a successful strategy for doing this. It decentralized Orc and Urizen by making them merely two parts of a four-part schema; and theoretically at least it kept all four Zoas in dynamic equilibrium. No one Zoa was higher than any other; no Zoa would be cast out or excluded as the "original sinner"--all would be taken up again into the final whole. The entire structure of the poem was a more moderated or mediated one, not only because Orc and Urizen became just part of the Zoa scheme instead of the whole, but because the idea of repentance or acknowledgement of error became a new and prominent feature.¹²

But Blake still finds that he cannot avoid elevating Los qualitatively above the rest, as the agent of redemption. Los therefore runs the risk of seeming to be a kind of deus ex machina who reaches down from above and redeems the other Zoas up into himself. Such a unity would make Los into an abstract Urizenic God much like Milton's God,

when Blake wants to insist above all that man must effect his own redemption.

Blake therefore introduces at this point the Spectre of Urthona as the final solution to his problems with the contraries. The Spectre is fundamentally the abstract form of Los, all of the qualities of abstraction which Blake wants to dispel from Los. He is the abstract transcendent unity which reconciles and hence "negates" the contraries, a parody of the concrete, human unity which Blake wants Los to represent. The Spectre is the shadow or "trace" of Los's unfallen form--the qualitative transcendence from which Los has fallen, the "memory" of the unity-that-was. This is why the Spectre is truly in a sense Los's "real self," the eternal self from which Los has fallen, and why it is said of him that he "kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble" (J, II, 44:15, p. 191; IV, 95:20, p. 252). In this sense he is a positive figure, absolutely necessary for reintegration to be possible. Yet he is also a negative figure who threatens to usurp Los's role in reintegrating the fallen parts, the abstract God of orthodoxy who tempts man passively to await his own redemption instead of actively effecting it himself. His temptation is what causes Los to rage so furiously at the other Zoas in Jerusalem, crying "Why stand we here trembling around/Calling upon God for help;

and not ourselves in whom God dwells" (J, II, 38:12-13; 182).

The Spectre represents, in other words, the abstract unity of death that stands opposed to the concrete unity of life which Blake wants Los to embody. He must be united with Los in the "Divine Human"--but this unity must for Blake be in a way more human than divine, a unity instigated by Los. What is most divine is what is most human, for Blake. The Spectre threatens to usurp Los by uniting with Enitharmon to create the true unity, the true poetic vision of "life," and this is why the struggle of Los and the Spectre over Enitharmon is central to the confrontations in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem. But the marriage of the Spectre separate from Los to Enitharmon would produce an abstract unity, a parody of the true poetic vision. The Spectre's form of mediation would in fact ratify division, for although it would reintegrate the fallen Zoas, and reintegrate Los, Enitharmon, and himself, it would reintegrate them into an abstract unity removed from life.

What Blake discovered in the course of his struggle with the contraries was that he had to battle not one but two spectres--and that these spectres were ultimately one and the same. He realized increasingly that Los's "mediation," his attempted solution to Milton's error of

Urizenic "division," was itself another form of abstraction, a repetition of the same error. Milton's qualitative divisions between God and man, reason and passion, might lead to the tyranny of abstraction--God and reason--over life. Yet the mediation of these distinctions could only be effected within some higher unity which negated the energy of the contraries in an equally tyrannical abstraction from life.

Furthermore, mediation was an even greater danger to life than was division. For this spectre of false unity looked too much like the Los of true unity, and this hypocritical parody is far more dangerous than open opposition. Blake does want Los to "unify" life's contraries--but in a dynamic, unsystematic way. The Spectre is therefore doubly dangerous, because he does unify life's contraries. And most people will not see that he does so in a way which kills life. Milton's God of division is less dangerous, because he at least openly declares that his activity is divisive: his prohibition is absolute and clearly stated. The Spectre by contrast pretends to mediate while thereby dividing men even more radically from life.

It was this revelation about the nature of "mediation" which was brought home to Blake with unexpected force by his encounter with Hayley at Felpham. For if

Hayley's lack of discrimination, his blurring of the "unpassable gulf" between true and false, "simplicity" and "insipidity," Blake and himself, was what mediation led to, then mediation was even more dangerous to poetic vision than the original enemy of division. The tyranny of Milton, the tyranny of the "divisive" perspective which saw life's contraries as absolute, was not so tyrannical as that of Hayley, the tyranny of the "mediating" perspective which reduced life's contraries to indeterminacy. The tyranny of the absolute was not so tyrannical as that of the relative holding itself up as the absolute. "Division" at least declared itself for what it was; "mediation" pretended to be what it was not.

This revelation allied Blake with Milton because he saw with sudden clarity Milton's justifications for the prohibition, the "unpassable gulf" of division in Paradise Lost. Blake's new focus in The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem therefore is on "usurpation"--Luvah's usurpation of Urizen's Horses of Light, Hayley's attempted usurpation of Blake's poetic vocation, and the Spectre's attempted usurpation of Los. Usurpation is almost synonymous with Milton's concept of "idolatry" as the original sin. Usurpation, like idolatry, depends upon the notion of hierarchy--the idea that qualitative distinction, the superiority of one contrary over another, is being vio-

lated by a claim of equality. Adam and Eve declare themselves God's equals; this is their sin. The Spectre declares himself Los's equal, and this is his sin. He also declares that life's contraries are equal--an equallizing that brings death into Blake's world as surely as Adam and Eve brought it to theirs. Blake's embrace of Milton here then is a return to and embrace of qualitative distinctions or hierarchy.

Even this formulation is not exact enough for Blake's ideal, however. The Spectre after all represents both Hayley's and Milton's respective forms of abstraction, mediation and division. He is not merely Hayley's mediation; Blake wants neither Milton's tyranny of the absolute nor Hayley's tyranny of the relative. He wants something in between--again, an ideal of life less rigidly defined and divided than Milton's God renders it, yet more distinct and formed than Hayley's blurring of distinctions does to it. Most correctly, he wants something in-between yet closer to Milton than to Hayley, for he has just seen how dangerous Hayley's annihilation of distinctions can be and how essential an antidote Milton's qualitative distinctions provide.

This is why Milton and Hayley become for Blake two kinds of negative, a "contrary" and a "negation" respectively. Milton is a "negative" in the sense that he is

an opponent. But he is a more "positive" negative ("Contraries are Positives," Blake declares, "a Negation is not a Contrary"), because battle with him generates life. Battle with Hayley destroys life, as Blake has just experienced; it negates it.

The negation must therefore be cast off; the contrary however can be embraced. But the contrary must be "redeemed" first; Milton must moderate his divisions before Blake can embrace him. He must cast off his own personal spectre--the spectre of Urizenic division--and this is what he decides to do when he decides to descend from eternity. He must fight simultaneously with his spectre "Satan"--the clearest instance of absolute division in Paradise Lost--and with Urizen, his abstract God, for in a way this is the same battle. If he can cast off this Satanic spectre of division and abstraction he will be able then to "humanize" Urizen. He comes, he says, "To bathe in the Waters of Life; to wash off the Not Human" (II, 41:1; 141). As he battles with the spectre he simultaneously meets Urizen "on the shores of Arnon" and makes his God over, this time in the image of man:

Silent they met, and silent strove among the
streams, of Arnon,

• • •
But Milton took the red clay of Succoth, mould-
ing it with care
Between his palms; and filling up the furrows

of many years
 Beginning at the feet of Urizen, and on the
 bones,
 Creating new flesh on the Demon cold, and
 building him,
 As with new clay a Human form in the Valley of
 Beth Peor.

(I, 19:6-14; 111)

He casts off in the figure of the spectre all his rationalistic qualities which dehumanize his God and which prevent his alliance with Blake.

By casting off spectrous abstraction, Milton corrects all his "errors" in Paradise Lost: his own Satan, his Urizenic God, and finally his "sinful" female, Eve. He is now able to embrace Ololon, his emanation, in a state of redemption and final unity denied to the sexes in Paradise Lost. He is now not in an illusory or false eternity as he was at the beginning of the poem, but has by leaving that eternity behind entered into the true eternity, the true unity of poetic vision, the human unity, of his "incarnation" within William Blake.

Blake's struggles with "division" (Milton) and "mediation" (Hayley), the struggles which he finally condenses into the extraordinarily dense figure of the Spectre, sum up his struggle with the problem of the "contraries" throughout his career and his final solution to that problem. They also sum up the struggles with the logic of

"dialectic" in the Romantic period as a whole. The Romantic dialectics of Fichte, Schelling, Schlegel, and Hegel attempted to embody this same dynamic unity of contraries, this same ideal of "life" as a "Divine Human," as the absolute in the heart of the contingent, reason united with passion. They too were trying to overcome dualism--the dualism of orthodox religion and the dualism of the Kantian wound--yet they too realized the necessity of simultaneously maintaining the qualitative distinctions of transcendence.

These idealist dialectics settled for the same solution to this paradox, however--the solution which Blake rejected when he rejected the Orc-Urizen dialectic. All of these dialectics reconciled life's contraries within a larger all-encompassing "both-and" system. Only Soren Kierkegaard, like Blake, went beyond this notion of dialectic to a new idea of dialectic which precisely inverted the old. Only Kierkegaard, like Blake, turned to the idea of casting off the Spectre--the Spectre not only of Kantian division but also of the Hegelian negative or mediation--as the solution to the problems of dialectic. For Kierkegaard, as for Blake, casting off the Spectre was a way of casting off both kinds of abstraction: that of dualism and that of mediation. It was a way of creating an ideal which was in-between Kant's dualism and

Hegel's mediation--in-between yet closer to Kant, for Kierkegaard, like Blake, was a reactionary who appealed to dualism as the antidote to a mediation which he had come to see as more destructive than the dualism it claimed to overcome.

In turning to the Spectre, Blake gave up trying to locate the fall of man in either reason or passion. And he went further than simply turning to "imagination" or Los as the redemptive faculty. In their turn to the Spectre, Blake and Kierkegaard turned to the notion of perspective as the solution to the problem of Romantic dialectics. It remains to be seen just how they hoped that this new idea of "perspective" could capture "life" as these other dialectics could not.

III. The Spectre as Kierkegaard's Concept of Dread

Around Golgonooza lies the land of death eternal; a Land of pain and misery and despair and ever brooding melancholy.

--Blake, Jerusalem

For Blake and Kierkegaard the greatest enemy of the Romantic idea of life is spiritual passivity, a state of mental torpor. This state, which Blake calls "jealousy" and Kierkegaard calls "dread," corresponds to the medieval accidie or spiritual despair considered to be one of the greatest sins against God. For Blake and Kierkegaard, it is the greatest sin against life. The man in this state of passivity suffers from melancholy, dread, fear of futurity; he lives in a state of indolence and self-imposed repression that hinders all action and traps him within himself, unable to break through to true existence.

"Dread . . . makes the individual impotent, and the first sin always occurs in impotence," says Kierkegaard, "melancholy is a sin, really it is a sin instar omnium, for not to will deeply and sincerely is sin, and this is the mother of all sins" (CD, xii; E/O, II, 193). And Blake writes fervently about the evils of mental passivity and self-thwarting repression:

if we fear to do the dictates of our Angels &

tremble at the Tasks set before us, if we refuse to do Spiritual Acts, because of Natural Fears of Natural Desires! Who can describe the dismal torments of such a state!--I too well remember the Threats I heard!--If you who are organised by Divine Providence for Spiritual Communion Refuse & bury your Talent in the Earth even tho you should want Natural Bread Sorrow & Desperation pursues you thro life! (Letter to Butts, 10 January 1802; 688-9).

Directly experiencing it as the single greatest source of their most intense struggles, Blake and Kierkegaard suffered excessively from this condition of melancholy, repression, or what Blake elsewhere calls "hindrance,"¹ the negation of all action in oneself. "I begin to Emerge from a Deep pit of Melancholy, Melancholy without any real reason for it," writes Blake, "a Disease which God keep you from & all good men" (Letter to Cumberland, 2 July 1800; 679). Kierkegaard battled a chronic melancholy so intense that he claimed it as one of the reasons for breaking his engagement to Regina Olsen--that he feared to inflict it upon his wife. According to Lowrie, intense intellectual labor was his only defense against melancholy, his proliferation of writings a desperate hedge against it (Lowrie, 233). Neither man affected or indulged this melancholy as a "Romantic" state. It was a condition of deeply felt spiritual despair which they were at great pains to conceal from others and which they battled fiercely and persistently against. Kierkegaard

despised the soft, swooning melancholy of fashionable Romanticism, and attacked it vigorously in his polemic against Romantic irony.²

This melancholy of a mind turned in upon itself in too intense self-reflection resulted in no small measure from the extraordinary isolation in which Blake and Kierkegaard lived all of their lives. But their individual experience also exemplified the greatest danger to Romantic philosophies of imagination generally, for once this inner spiritual power was exalted as the free and independent creator of all human meaning (and hence of "life"), the danger was that this imagination would sever itself totally from all sense of an external other and collapse into sterile self-absorption. It is this retreat into isolation and abstraction which destroys "life" and causes melancholy, as Blake all too painfully experienced. He lamented to Thomas Butts,

I labour incessantly & accomplish not one half of what I intend because my Abstract folly hurries me often away while I am at work, carrying me over Mountains & Valleys which are not Real in a Land of Abstraction where Spectres of the Dead wander. This I endeavour to prevent & with my whole might chain my feet to the world of Duty & Reality but in vain! The faster I bind the better is the Ballast for I so far from being bound down take the world with me in my flights & often it seems lighter than a ball of wool rolled by the wind . . . who shall deliver me from this Spirit of Abstraction & Improvidence (11 September 1801; 685).

Kierkegaard similarly complains of living in a "spirit-world," which he again gives as his reason for not being able to marry Regina:

So I got married to her, let us suppose. What then? In the course of half a year, in less than that, she would have worn herself out. About me--and this is at once the good and the bad in me--there is something rather ghostly, which accounts for the fact that no one can put up with me who must see me in everyday intercourse and so come into real relationship with me. Of course, in the light surtout in which I commonly show myself it is different. But at home it will be observed that essentially I live in a spirit-world. I was engaged to her for half a year, and still she did not really know me (Lowrie, 220-221).

Kierkegaard's apparent concern for the possible effect of his abstraction upon Regina was probably warranted; one is reminded of Catharine Blake's complaint "I have very little of Mr. Blake's company; he is always in Paradise."³

This "Spirit of Abstraction" is extraordinarily isolating, cutting a man off from love (as in Kierkegaard's case) and work (as in Blake's)--or in other words, from all that constitutes "life." And it is this spirit of abstraction, this life-denying state resulting finally in despair, which all of Kierkegaard's writings attempt to combat and which Blake tries to master through Los's mastery of the Spectre of Urthona. The Spectre is

Kierkegaard's "concept of dread" personified, the "shadow blue obscure & dismal" (FZ, IV, P 49, 13; 326) who stands between a man and life. He binds one with mind-forged manacles, what Blake calls "the Chain of Jealousy" and Kierkegaard "the chain of melancholy" (E/O, II, 208) and it is this purely mental character of the Spectre which makes him so elusive, shadowy, and dangerous a figure. He is a mental state and not an objective reality, an inner not an outer source of tyranny, not because objective reality is not "real" for Blake and Kierkegaard, but because for both this recognition that the manacles are mind-forged is the first and crucial step towards breaking out of one's passivity. Both feel that blaming something outside oneself as the cause of one's despair merely compounds the disease; one thereby adopts the stance of the helpless victim subject to an external and hence unmanageable tyrant. "A man may have sorrow and distress, yea, it may be so great that it pursues him perhaps throughout his whole life, and this may even be beautiful and true," says Kierkegaard, "but a man becomes melancholy only by his own fault" (ibid., 190). Kierkegaard's distinction between sorrow or distress and melancholy is crucial, for it shows that he by no means denies the existence of an objective reality which inflicts very real and tangible hardships. Yet he implies that far worse than these hard-

ships is the state of melancholy, because it is the passive attitude towards hardship which is the first and greatest obstacle to overcoming it.

Locating the cause of one's disease as "abstraction," a state of mind within oneself, however, is still only a beginning to the cure. One has to go beyond this to locate it within some faculty or quality. Does the melancholy death-in-life stem from a man's rational faculty or his passionate, willful faculty--from a failure of "reason" or a failure of "will"? As I have suggested at the end of Chapter I, Blake and Kierkegaard conclude that the cause of spiritual inertia is neither simply reason/Urizen nor passion/Orc, but an abstract and hence passive perspective on life, a perspective which may result equally from either extreme of reason or of passion. Both conclude that either extreme leads finally to the same state of impotence, and that one must therefore attempt to cast off not reason or passion, but this perspective on reason and passion which somehow negates their dynamic interaction.

By locating the cause of the disease (or "fall") in the spectre of abstract perspective instead of in one of life's contraries, Blake and Kierkegaard hope to create a dialectic of life which avoids collapsing its contraries into either extreme of a will-philosophy (in which Orc

dominates Urizen) or a reason-philosophy (in which Urizen dominates Orc). They thereby hope to avoid and go beyond the only two options seemingly available once one conceives of life as a dialectic of reason and passion. This means that their dialectic is at once curiously moderate and intensely polemical. It is polemical in its decisive casting-off of "negation" or this passive perspective--but it is moderate in its ultimate refusal to cast off either reason or passion. It tries to cast off their excesses only; and this decisive casting-off paradoxically "redeems" the contraries. The complexities of this paradoxical dialectic and in particular its relation to the both-and logic of idealist dialectics in general should become clearer if we turn first to Blake's Spectre of Urthona and his actual narrative role in The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem.

The Spectre of Urthona embodies "dread" in its most literal sense, for indeed he is dreadful to behold. When Los-Urthona falls, the Spectre separates from his back with shrieks of anguish, "in temptations/And in grinding agonies in threats! stiflings! & direful strugglings" (J, I, 17:57-58; 161). He is a "dark Demon," "a black Horror . . ./Howling in pain: a blackening Shadow, Blackening dark & opake/ Cursing the terrible Los" (ibid., 6:5-6;

147). In Blake's longest physical description of him he is a mighty armored figure, "a spectre Vast, feet & legs with iron scales;" "iron spikes instead/Of hair shoot from his orb'd skull. His glowing eyes/Burn like two furnaces. He called with Voice of Thunder" (FZ, VI, P 75, 13-18; 345). The spectre is also dreadful in his continual howlings and shriekings, sometimes inarticulate with pain and rage, "panting like a frightened wolf, and howling," but often marvellously eloquent in his threats and temptations to insanity and despair, using "arguments of science" as well as tears and "terrors in every nerve" (J, I, 7:146-7; 148). He is alternately cringing and defiant, obsequiously obeying Los while plotting his revenge:

While Los spoke, the terrible Spectre fell
 shuddering before him
 Watching his time with glowing eyes to leap
 upon his prey.
 . . . He saw that Los was the sole, uncontrolled
 Lord of the Furnaces
 Groaning he kneeled before Los's iron-shod feet
 on London stone,
 Hungring & thirsting for Los's life yet pretend-
 ing obedience.

(ibid., 8:21-28; 150)

And while he seeks to lure Los into despair, his tears are often genuine, as when he cries out in perhaps the most anguished speech in all of Jerusalem "Despair! I am Despair . . . Life lives on my/Consuming: . . . knowing/And seeing life, yet living not." Los feels genuine sympathy

for the Spectre at times ("So spoke the Spectre shuddering," adds Blake, "& Dark tears ran down his shadowy face/ Which Los wiped off, but comfort none could give! or beam of hope") (ibid., 10:60-61; 152). But in general Los threatens and curses the Spectre as vehemently as the Spectre threatens him:

Shuddering the Spectre howls. His howlings terrify the night
He stamps around the Anvil, beating blows of stern despair
He curses Heaven & Earth, Day & Night & Sun & Moon
. . . Driven to desperation by Los's terrors
 & threatening fears. (ibid., 10:23-28; 152)

All of Los's energies are devoted to furiously compelling the Spectre to obey him; when he succeeds, they work together to build Golgonooza, the city of art and the recovered state of eternity.

"Ambiguity" is the most fundamental characteristic of the Los-Spectre relationship. It is intensely ambivalent, a love-hate relationship which neither one seems able to break. The Spectre hates Los and plots against him, yet also weeps with remorse and pleads continually for pity. Los rages against the Spectre yet sometimes pities him, and he cannot seem to perform his labors without him. The Spectre is somehow his indispensable tool for recreating the lost eternity. The two of them

are finally allied not only in building Golgonooza but also as the "watchmen of Eternity":

The Spectre remains attentive
 Alternate they watch in night: alternate labour
 in day
 Before the furnaces labouring, while Los all
 night watches
 The stars rising & setting, & the meteors and
 terrors of night!

(J, IV, 83:78-81; 240)

Ambiguity is also the defining characteristic of Kierkegaard's concept of dread. Dread is a nameless fear of life and change, a fear which stops one from acting. It is ambiguous because it arises from a sense of futurity, possibility or potential--and "potential" is fundamentally ambiguous, arousing not fear of any definite something but fear of an indefinite (because still potential) possibility of life. Dread is therefore fear of the infinite, because the infinite is possibility; it is also fear of freedom, the freedom to realize any one of an infinite number of possibilities through decisive action. "The future, the possibility of the eternal (i.e. freedom) in the individual is dread," says Kierkegaard, and says further, "Dread is a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy" (CD, 81, 38; K's italics) a complex mixture of fear and desire:

For dread is a desire for what one dreads, a

sympathetic antipathy. Dread is an alien power which lays hold of an individual and yet one cannot tear oneself away, nor has a will to do so; for one fears, but what one fears one desires. Dread then makes the individual impotent, and the first sin always occurs in impotence.

(CD, xii)

This wonderfully characterizes the way in which the Spectre, "an alien power," lays hold of Los, who cannot tear himself away, for this Spectre which he fears he also desires or at least needs. As Kierkegaard also says, "He cannot flee from dread, for he loves it; really he does not love it, for he flees from it" (CD, 39). The Spectre himself embodies this mixture of fear and desire resulting in impotence. He is a raging lust for life, "a ravening devouring lust continually/Craving & devouring" (FZ, VII a), P 84, 37-38; 352), yet he simultaneously cringes in fear and impotence, crying out "Life lives on my/consuming . . . knowing/And seeing life, yet living not--how can I then behold/And not tremble; how can I be beheld & not abhorred" (J, I, 10:55-59; 152). The Spectre suffers from the same sickness of dread and despair which he inflicts in turn upon Los; he is in fact its very embodiment. He is at once cause and effect, the cause of Los's despair and its effect on Los's spirit--another ambiguity which contributes to his elusiveness.

The question then becomes why Los should desire or

need the Spectre, and why the Spectre is somehow indispensable to his recovery of the lost eternity. As I have suggested in Chapter II, the answer is that the Spectre is in a sense that lost eternity or at least its trace. He is the memory of the unfallen Urthona, a shadowy remnant who is therefore (again ambiguously) both unfallen and fallen. He is unfallen in so far as he is a trace of the eternal; but he is fallen in that he does not really exist in separate form until the fall, his separation and very existence symptomatic of it. As the vestige of the eternal in the fallen Los, the Spectre is therefore a sign of Los's immortality. He is "at once the good and the bad" in him, as Kierkegaard says, for this "something rather ghostly" is nothing other than his spirit, his eternal self. But it is also what Kierkegaard calls "the abstractest possibility of the self," the "infinite form of the self," and "the negative self" (SUD, 201-2). It is the self which one wants to bring down to earth, to realize; yet this involves such a great struggle that it is easier to lose oneself in the ideal instead. As Kierkegaard describes this struggle between the negative and the "actual" selves:

This self which the individual knows is at once the actual self and the ideal self which the individual has outside himself as the picture in likeness to which he has to form himself and

which, on the other hand, he nevertheless has in him since it is the self. Only within him has the individual the goal after which he has to strive, and yet he has this goal outside of him, inasmuch as he strives after it. For if the individual believes that the universal man is situated outside him, that from without it will come to him, then he is disoriented, then he has an abstract conception and his method is always an abstract annihilation of the original self.

(E/O, II, 263)

The Spectre is this "negative" self, the picture in likeness to which Los has to form himself, and which nevertheless Los must see as within himself. Los must struggle to sustain this extraordinary paradox which the Spectre embodies--the Spectre's radical transcendence yet radical immanence. If Los sees the unfallen Urthona as too remote, too transcendent, he will despair of being able to recapture that lost eternal self; but conversely, if he loses a sense of Urthona's radical otherness or transcendence, he will lose the ideal which he pursues. He will be evaporated or volatilized into the infinite, on the one hand, or condensed into the finite on the other. Either extreme will destroy the true self, because the true self is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, a synthesis which Kierkegaard calls the "spirit." "If a man were a beast or an angel, he would not be able to be in dread," he says, "since he is a synthesis he can be in dread, and the greater the dread, the greater the man"

(CD, 137). But this "spirit" can ambiguously either save or damn him. It can save him by reminding him that he is fallen and divided, a self-awareness he must have if he is to strive for recovery of that lost self. But it can equally damn him if he allows this awareness of his fallenness to throw him into despair--the temptation the Spectre indeed continually holds out to Los.

a. Dread as Beyond Innocence and Experience

"Dread" would appear to be exclusively a condition of fallenness, the state of paralysis which for Blake and Kierkegaard negates life. In this respect it seems to be the state of "experience;" yet curiously enough it can characterize both innocence and experience and thus go beyond them. Because the spectre of dread is at once unfallen and fallen, a vestige of one's eternal self yet symptomatic of one's fall away from that self, dread properly characterizes both the state of innocence from which one has fallen and the state of experience into which one falls. This rather surprising implication of the spectre's ambiguous role is paradoxical, but it is crucial to the new dialectic of "perspective" which Blake and Kierkegaard (with remarkable affinity in this instance) are attempting. Kierkegaard is very explicit that dread has both "innocent" and "experienced" forms.

The unfallen state of dread is that which children exhibit; it is a state of innocence as "ignorance" in which the knowledge of the distinction between good and evil does not exist. But nonetheless, it is a sense of the future and of possibilities to be realized, a "sweet feeling of apprehension":

The dread which is posited in innocence is, in the first place, not guilt; in the second place, it is not a heavy burden, not a suffering which cannot be brought into harmony with the felicity of innocence. If we observe children, we find this dread more definitely indicated as a seeking after adventure, a thirst for the prodigious, the mysterious . . . This dread belongs to the child so essentially that it cannot do without it; even though it alarms him, it captivates him nevertheless by its sweet feeling of apprehension.

(CD, 38)

The child is a "dreaming spirit," a spirit which has not yet realized itself in what Kierkegaard calls its "eternal validity." This "dread as innocence" is the world of Blake's Songs of Innocence, a pastoral world of peacefulness and harmony in which the antithesis of good and evil does not appear. There are presentiments of the future, of the time when "The sun does descend,/And our sports have an end:/ . . ./And sport no more seen/On the darkening Green,"⁴ but there is nothing specifically threatening in these presentiments--they do not "taint" the world of innocence with experience or knowledge of good and evil.

Even "The Little Boy Lost," while it may express childish dread in one of its most intense forms, cannot properly be called a vision of "fallenness," evil, or experience. There is no sense of guilt or sin, no knowledge of good and evil, only the child's bewilderment and fear of an unknown future. Kierkegaard uses this very image of being lost to describe innocence "brought to its last extremity," saying, "it is not guilty, and yet it is in dread, as though it were lost" (CD, 41).

Blake's Book of Thel, by contrast, provides a good example of the kind of dread which according to Kierkegaard (and also Blake) is "sin," a fall into experience or guilt which Thel brings upon herself despite (and in fact because of) her attempts to circumvent it. Thel is the epitome of dread as fear of life and futurity. She retreats into the dreamy pastoral world of innocence, a world of infinite possibility which is nonetheless stultifying because it seems she has no purpose in it. There is no role for her to play, no way to realize herself in this world of mere potential, and this sense of her uselessness is the source of Thel's dissatisfaction and longing. She desires life and yet she fears it; her soul seeks to realize itself but in order to do so must leave this world of dreamy possibility for the world of life and action. Earth, "the matron Clay," tells her to

"fear nothing," "tis given thee to enter,/And to return," but in refusing this invitation to live, Thel thwarts her own growth and returns not to a state of innocence but to what has now become a fallen state of passivity and despair. The poem may seem rather more ambiguous than this in that the vision of experience or life which Blake portrays Thel as refusing is very bleak, arguably not a real option. Perhaps Thel is right, therefore, to reject this world of experience; the poem as a whole may present only two equally negative options: the world of thwarted potential removed from life, and the tragic world of life or experience which is nonetheless still a world characterized by frustrations or "hindrance," albeit of another kind. The repression in the world of experience is material, not spiritual--the "tender curb upon the youthful burning boy," the "little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire" (IV, 6:19-20; 6). It may be then that Thel's choice is merely between two kinds of passivity or hindrance; but it would seem rather that her attempted return to innocence is mistaken, a return Blake does not endorse. The Clod of Clay seems to be the spokesman for the correct, encompassing point of view: Thel should enter the world of experience and only then return to innocence. Her spirit cries out for something more than its passive, dreamy life in the values of Har; and in thwarting that

movement towards something higher, *Thel* falls. She falls in other words not by acting but by her refusal to act-- the "negating" act which for Blake is not an act, "but on the contrary . . . a restraint on action."⁵

This ambiguous realm of dread which can be a state of innocence at one time yet become a fallen state at another develops into the idea of "Beulah" in Blake's later myth. Again, "ambiguity" is the key to this state, an ambiguity metaphorically represented by Beulah's shadowy, "moony" atmosphere. It is a world of half-light, of "mild moony lustre":

There is from Great Eternity a mild & pleasant
 rest
 Namd Beulah a Soft Moony Universe feminine
 lovely
 Pure mild & Gentle given in Mercy to those who
 sleep
 Eternally.

(FZ, I, P 5, 29-32; 299)

Beulah is the world of maternal, brooding, protective love seen in The Songs of Innocence and in Thel, but the dangerous ambiguity of this love is much more explicit here. This world is one of suspension, a limbo, dreaming state which can be either restorative or stifling. Geographically, Blake locates it in a state of suspension between Eternity and Ulro, another metaphor for its state of psychic suspension and ambivalence. It too is a world of

potential, out of which one can move up to Eternity, the state of higher innocence, or down to Ulro, the state of experience or fallenness. And in truth Beulah is therefore both innocence and experience--"both" because potentially "either." It is also "innocence" in that, like the Spectre, it "preserves the Divine Vision in time of trouble," the emanations rest there after the fall, protected from further fall, and must awake from it when the time of apocalyptic reunion is at hand. The fallen Albion is also told to "repose in Beulah's night till the Error is remov'd;" thus the eternal or "innocence" in him is preserved.

This state of suspension and repose can be restorative; but it can be equally destructive, become in itself a fall or consolidation of the fall. And just as in Thel, this destructiveness occurs if one stays in Beulah or this state of imaginative idleness too long. It occurs in other words through inaction, not through action; Beulah simply turns into or becomes Ulro if one tries to stay there. This is why Albion is confusingly spoken of as being in both Beulah and Ulro simultaneously. The frontispiece to Jerusalem declares that the fallen Albion rests apparently in Beulah:

There is a Void outside of Existence, which if
entered into

Englobes itself & becomes a Womb, such was
 Albions couch
 A pleasant Shadow of Repose call'd Albions
 lovely land.

(J, frontispiece, 1-3; 143)

But chapter one opens by claiming to speak "Of the sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through/Eternal Death! and of the awaking to Eternal Life" (I, 1:1-2; 145). And the clearest example of the conflation of Beulah with Ulro is in the exhortation "Thou art in Error Albion, the Land of Ulro:/One Error not remov'd, will destroy a human soul/Repose in Beulahs night, till the Error is remov'd" (II, 41:10-12; 186). Albion is already in Beulah, and it is his refusal to awaken from it that has turned it into Ulro. Yet he cannot abandon Beulah entirely to transform Ulro into Eternity, for Beulah holds part of Eternity too.

Beulah is "dread;" Ulro is more properly what Kierkegaard would call "despair"--the definite realization of something that is merely an indefinite possibility in Beulah. As Blake formulates it, "Thus wept they in Beulah over the Four Regions of Albion/But many doubted & despaired & imputed Sin & Righteousness/To individuals & not to states, and these slept in Ulro" (J, I, 25:14-16; 169). I shall return to this distinction and in particular to "despair" presently. For now, we should examine more closely the concept of dread especially in its rela-

tion to innocence and experience.

As we have seen, the dread experienced by children is an ignorant and innocent dread, a fear not of good or evil (a distinction which does not exist for innocence), but a fear simply of "possibility." This dread is appropriate to childhood and this is also why it is "innocent." But a time comes when this dreaming spirit seeks to realize its potential in some definite way, when the child desires to grow into an adult. And if one thwarts this desire to change and grow, one "falls," a fall which transforms what was once a state of innocence into a state of experience exactly identical in terms of its features (being still a state of dreaming potential, etc.), but exactly reversed in its value. The state of childish innocence is unnatural for adults--from their perspective, as an ideal for them, it is fallen.

This attempted retreat to childhood innocence and the womb in the face of change is only one form of dread as it is experienced by adults. Adults also experience what Kierkegaard calls "dread of the good" and "dread of the evil," because, unlike children, adults also experience a form of dread which is not ignorant of the distinction between good and evil. This distinction comes into existence whenever one acts, because according to Kierkegaard one can act only by acting for good or evil--that is, by

realizing one or the other. So long as one does not act but remains (or tries to remain) in the realm of mere potential, the distinction does not come into being. But once one acts, one enters into either the state of evil or the state of good. And when in the state of evil one dreads the good; conversely, in the state of good one dreads the evil. In other words, what one really dreads, again, is simply "change;" this is where the affinity with the "innocent" form of dread lies.

The perspectivism of this concept of dread is clear, and its implications enormous. It profoundly alters the traditional concepts of innocence and experience--so profoundly that Blake and Kierkegaard (again with remarkable affinity) abandon them altogether for the new dialectic of contraries called truth and error. Blake and Kierkegaard might seem to use perspective simply to invert innocence and experience as we normally understand them. That is, what looks like (and indeed is, from a certain perspective) "innocence"--the childhood condition of ignorance--becomes from another perspective "negated," a state of fallenness or "experience" for the adult. And conversely, the state of experience or knowledge (knowledge of good and evil) becomes from another perspective a state of higher innocence, because such a state depends upon action, and action is for both redemptive. This

might look at first like the familiar doctrine of felix culpa, but this particular version of it is so extreme that it would be repudiated by most adherents of it in its traditional form. This is because for Blake and Kierkegaard all action is redemptive. For them, even action for evil is better than inaction. "Active Evil is better than Passive Good," declares Blake (Annotations to Lavater; 581), and "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires" (MHH, 10:67; 37). Kierkegaard calls inaction "spiritlessness," and declares "For rather let us sin, sin out and out, seduce maidens, murder men, commit highway robbery--" than remain in this passive state (CUP, 485). This is also why Blake says "Error can never be redeemed in all Eternity/But Sin Even Rahab is redeemed in blood & fury & jealousy" (FZ, IX, P 120, 48-49; 375). Sin--that is, action for evil--can be redeemed because at least it is aware of the distinction between good and evil and because it is action. Error--that is, inaction and their new name for what was formerly called evil or sin--must be utterly cast off.

This new doctrine of innocence and experience, then, essentially redefines sin as "error" and conversely defines redemption as "truth." This would appear to approach a Socratic definition of sin. But Blake and Kierkegaard again go beyond even this doctrine, because

"will" remains essential to their definition of error, as we shall see, whereas it is excluded from the Socratic definition. I shall return to these implications of Blake's and Kierkegaard's perspectivism, and particularly to the issues of good and evil, error, and especially will in relation to the Spectre. For now the point is to see how they hope to use "perspective" (as illustrated in the concept of dread) to grasp their ideal of life. Clearly, perspectivism allows most for change in human life--for the fact that what is at one time life-denying can be at another time life-affirming and vice-versa. And these changes of perspective are in a way dictated by life itself--by the "eternal" or the "spirit" in man, the synthesis of soul and body, eternity and time, which strives to realize itself and demands that one change accordingly. What tells us that life or the eternal dictates these changes is the fact that any given state, no matter how "good," inevitably becomes fallen if we do not continue to act. But what Blake and Kierkegaard hope will prevent this from being a deterministic idea of life is the fact that one can always choose whether to let inertia overcome one or whether to act. According to them, one's spirit will always rebel when its growth is being thwarted--and given this signal that change is necessary, one can always then choose whether to act or to remain in

stasis--whether to battle the spectre or to give in to his temptations. This also means that one can "fall" repeatedly, again, that fall being always a fall not through action but through inaction. Each time one rejects or thwarts the call to life and action, one falls; each time one conquers this temptation to inertia, to a static death-in-life, one redeems oneself. But this crisis of decision and of action must be faced repeatedly as long as one lives--it is never ended until life is ended. More correctly, it shouldn't be ended until life is ended. One can refuse to act, but one is then spiritually dead, living only a death-in-life. One is only the spectre or shadow of one's true self.

This notion of "dread," then, is in a way "beyond innocence and experience," since it can characterize both stages or more accurately "spheres" of life. By characterizing the prelapsarian state as "dread" instead of "innocence" as that is normally understood, Blake and Kierkegaard create a state which contains the possibility of a fall yet is still not itself fallen. At the same time, it is also not a state to which one should want to return. The "dreaming spirit" of childhood, the pastoral blissfulness of "innocence," is very different from the decisiveness of spirit which is necessary for its full realization. "Christianly understood, to look back--even

though one were to get a sight of childhood's charming, enchanting landscape," says Kierkegaard, "is perdition." Such a childish conception of the ideal tries "to transform the thing of becoming a Christian [i.e., realizing one's eternal spirit] into a beautiful resolution, whereas in fact it is the most decisive thing a man becomes" (CUP, 533).⁶ Redemption therefore does not mean casting off experience and returning to innocence, but casting off a perspective on innocence and experience (dread) which allows one to redeem both. One paradoxically recovers "innocence," defined as "unity with life," by casting off dread and plunging into "experience," defined as action and choice. Finally, because this dread is encountered by the individual repeatedly throughout life (not merely as a child), the real movement of life is not a temporal movement from childhood to adulthood, but an atemporal leap from non-existence to existence. The movement is only partly dictated by temporality--the march of time by which the forms of life inevitably grow old and die; one can master temporality through repeatedly casting off this deadened state (dread) and recapturing innocence or "life." This is why existence is more accurately described in terms of simultaneously existing "spheres" or "states" for Blake and Kierkegaard, rather than as a progression of "stages."

b. The Spectre as Despair

Giving in to the spectre of dread results finally in despair, what Blake calls the state of Ulro or Satan. Despair is the Spectre in his most intense form, and here Kierkegaard offers a passage wonderfully descriptive of Blake's Spectre of Ulthona as both cause and effect of this conditon. Despair results from a man's dread "of the highest demand made upon him, that he be spirit" (SUD, 155) says Kierkegaard:

The spirit constantly desires to break through, but it cannot attain the metamorphosis; it is constantly disappointed, and he would offer it the satiety of pleasure. Then the spirit within him gathers like a dark cloud, its wrath broods over his soul, and it becomes an anguishing dread which ceases not even in the moment of pleasure . . . behind the eye lies the soul as a gross darkness. . . . The spirit wills to break through, wills that he shall possess himself in his consciousness, but that he is unable to do, and the spirit is repressed and gathers new wrath.

(E/O, II, 190-191)

From this description, it might seem that Los, not the spectre, causes the state of despair (i.e., through repressing the spectre). It is true that this "dark cloud" results from Los's repression of his eternal self. But it is important to remember once again that the spectre is the embodiment of this repression, and that as this embodiment he is both its cause (dread) and its effect,

the form or shape that this dread takes in Los's soul.

When one thus represses one's spirit, Kierkegaard says, "the spirit will not let itself be mocked, it revenges itself upon you, it binds you with the chain of melancholy" (E/O, II, 208). In its most intense form, this melancholy becomes despair; but like dread, despair arises from the presence of the eternal, the "spirit," in man. It is (or should be) therefore paradoxically consoling, a proof of one's immortality, for as Kierkegaard points out,

Socrates proved the immortality of the soul from the fact that the sickness of the soul (sin) does not consume it as sickness of the body consumes the body. So also we can demonstrate the eternal in man from the fact that despair cannot consume his self, that this precisely is the torment of contradiction in despair.

(SUD, 153)

This "torment of contradiction" is that one dies everlastingly yet does not die; one cannot get rid of this haunting spectre of the eternal in oneself. "My Spectre around me night & day/Like a wild beast guards my way," as Blake laments (*Songs & Ballads*, 467). Despair is thus "an impotent self-consumption which is not able to do what it wills; and this impotence is a new form of self-consumption, in which again, however, the despairer is not able to do what he wills, namely, to consume himself" (SUD,

151). Los cannot rid himself of the Spectre, no matter how much he threatens and curses and beats him into submission. And the more he tries the more he seems to torment himself in a fury of impotence. This state of impotent self-consumption is the "sickness unto death," and here we find the closest Blakean parallel not in Los but in Albion: "Albion is sick! said every Valley, every mournful Hill/And every River: our brother Albion is sick to death" (J, II, 36:11-12; 180). Los never quite succumbs to this sickness unto death, partly because the dramatic exigencies of Blake's myth demand that part of Albion--the part called Los--survives to instigate Albion's resurrection. Albion is in a sense the "outer" man who to all appearances has sunk totally into the passivity of death, when in fact his hidden, inner faculties are continuing to struggle. But Los also nearly succumbs to the sickness:

Thus Albion sat, studious of others in his pale
disease;
Brooding on evil: but when Los open'd the Fur-
naces before him:
He saw that the accursed things were his own
affections,
And his own beloveds: then he turn'd sick! his
soul died within him
Also Los sick & terrified beheld the Furnaces of
Death
And must have died, but the Divine Saviour
descended

(J, II, 42:1-6; 187)

Los is saved by "the Divine Saviour" (whose role I shall examine more closely later), but he is also saved by his own continual struggle with, and refusal to yield to, the Spectre. Los quite properly never does sink into Albion's sickness unto death simply because he does resist and conquer the Spectre's temptations to despair; for him they remain temptations. Albion's despair here illustrates what Kierkegaard calls the despair of weakness, "despair at not willing to be oneself," whereas Los manifests the despair of defiance, "despair at willing to be oneself." Together these are the two forms of despair as Kierkegaard defines it. Albion's seems to be the despair of weakness because he has despaired over his own passivity--despaired at seeing that "the accursed things were his own affections/And his own beloveds." He cannot endure the consciousness of his own weakness: "Just as a father disinherits a son, so the self is not willing to recognize itself after it has been so weak. In its despair it cannot forget this weakness, it hates itself in a way" (SUD, 196). Albion's response to this self-hatred is to sink even further into passivity, to abandon the struggle. Los's despair, however--the form of despair which the Spectre most closely resembles--is more properly the defiant "despair at willing to be oneself," what Kierkegaard also calls "demoniac despair." This is characterized by the

inability to lose oneself in order to gain oneself; the self "is not willing to begin by losing itself but wills to be itself." Such a self is raging, malicious, and spiteful--"with hatred for existence it wills to be itself, to be itself in terms of its misery," says Kierkegaard, "it wills to be itself in spite" (SUD, 207). This demoniac self is really one's ego or "pride," and indeed pride is for Kierkegaard what underlies both the weak and the defiant forms of despair. The weak despairer thinks he is in despair over his weakness, but Kierkegaard objects "just as if it were not pride which attached such prodigious weight to weakness, just as if it were not because he wanted to be proud of himself that he could not endure this consciousness of weakness" (SUD, 199). The defiant despairer proudly wills to be himself without the aid of the eternal, in total independence:

The self wants to enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself, of developing itself, of being itself; it wants to have the honor of this practical, this masterly plan according to which it has understood itself.

(SUD, 203)

This proud despairer sees himself as an objection against the whole of existence, his own raging torment as proof that existence or the eternal is not "good" or omnipotent; his whole tormented existence is a witness against it,

and he therefore clings to his misery as the only way of asserting his power against the eternal.

This pride which underlies both forms of despair is what Blake calls "selfhood," and he explicitly links this with the Spectre: "I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One!" exclaims Blake's Milton, "He is my Spectre!" (M, I, 14:30-32; 107). And in Jerusalem, Los answers his Spectre "Thou art my Pride & Self-righteousness: I have found thee out/Thou are reveal'd before me in all thy magnitude & power" (J, I, 8:30-31; 150). This pride or selfhood is a false self as opposed to the true or eternal self, "a false Body: an Incrustation over my Immortal/Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off & annihilated away," as Blake says (M, II, 40:35-36; 141). It is important to see that the ideal for Blake and Kierkegaard is neither total annihilation of the self (which is in fact "despair at not willing to be oneself") nor total assertion of the self ("despair at willing to be oneself"), because both of these apparent opposites ultimately embody the same false selfhood, the same mixture of weakness and defiance, fear and desire, called "pride."

What Blake and Kierkegaard finally mean by "pride," however, is really "will," and it is this that the Spectre ultimately represents. More correctly, he ideally repre-

sents false as opposed to true will. Because this false self or selfhood is the single state resulting from both extremes of reason and will (extremes finally identical), this raises the problem of whether we call this single state "reason" or "will," particularly when the whole point of this new dialectic is to get beyond this opposition. It also raises the very interesting issue of what Los, as the opposite of this selfhood, should properly be called. If the Spectre is false will, then Los must be true will; yet Blake and Kierkegaard (the former more than the latter) wish to reject will as nihilistic. On the other hand, if the Spectre is false reason, then Los must be true reason or "intellect," and Kierkegaard in particular would reject reason as equally nihilistic. Finally, if the spectre is Will and Los is Reason, or conversely, if Los is Will and the Spectre is Reason, then this dialectic which has attempted to go beyond this opposition has failed. The Spectre must remain defined as a "Selfhood," consisting of false will and false reason (or the extremes of will and reason); Los must remain defined as "Imagination," consisting of true will and true reason (or the moderation of will and reason) in dynamic unity.

To what extent this way of defining Los and the Spectre is indeed possible will be the central issue raised in my conclusion. For the moment, the point is to

see how Blake and Kierkegaard hoped to attain this ideal. They did so primarily by making this single state called "Selfhood" the ground of all passivity and despair, and by claiming that this selfhood always takes two opposite forms ultimately identical. This results logically from the structure of the self as both Blake and Kierkegaard define it. For Kierkegaard, as I have mentioned, the self is a synthesis of two principles, which he calls "the infinite" and "the finite." These would seem to correspond to "The Prolific" and "The Devouring," or Orc and Urizen, in Blake's myth, in that Kierkegaard defines the finite as "the limiting factor" (Urizen) and the infinite as "the expanding factor" (Orc) (SUD, 162-3). Kierkegaard defines the self, its purpose, and the despair that results from failing to achieve this purpose, as follows:

The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God. But to become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete means neither to become finite nor infinite, for that which is to become concrete is a synthesis. Accordingly, the development consists in moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing. If on the contrary the self does not become itself, it is in despair.

(SUD, 162-3)

This is much like Blake's early formulation of his ideal

in the aphorism "Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (MHH, 4; 34)--life consists of energy, the expanding factor, and reason, the limiting factor, in dynamic synthesis. Despair thus results from becoming either too finite or too infinite; one suffers from either "the despair of infinitude due to the lack of finitude," or "the despair of finitude due to the lack of infinitude," as Kierkegaard puts it. In the despair of infinitude, the self lacks limits and thus evaporates into the infinite. "The self is simply volatilized more and more," and a man "becomes in a way infinitized, but not in such a way that he becomes more and more himself, for he loses himself more and more" (SUD, 164). In the despair of finitude, the self lacks a sense of possibilities; instead of expanding infinitely it contracts and becomes "desperately narrow-minded and mean-spirited." The self becomes preoccupied with temporal existence, with the trivial, and with worldly affairs--it loses itself again, but this time in the finite (SUD, 166).

The early Blake, the Blake who saw Urizen as the villain of his myth and Orc as the hero, could be said to have suffered from the "despair of finitude"--the repression of expanding passion by limiting reason. But when he came to see that his celebration of Orc was too extreme a reaction, he was thrown into the opposite "despair of

infinitude due to lack of finitude," the despair which led him to cry out "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" (J, III, 68:65-66; 220). As Kierkegaard describes this state, "his soul is, as it were, anesthetized by despair . . . his rational soul is smothered and he is transformed into a beast of prey which shuns no expedient because all is self-defense" (E/O, II, 225-6). (Again, there is a striking similarity to Blake's description of the spectre as a "wild beast" guarding his way). This is how Blake came to see that both extremes, apparently such opposites, were in fact united in the same negative unity of despair, the death-in-life--that they constituted not a dialectic of life but a cycle of death and "negation."

In his final attempt to correct his own extremism, Blake therefore attempts to correct or redeem Urizen, the "Intellect" he had earlier rejected. This is why all three of the later prophetic works--The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem--are concerned each in their own way with this regeneration of Urizen or "the limiting factor." And it is no accident that this rejuvenation of Urizen appears simultaneously with the new character of the Spectre, for these two prominent innovations in Blake's myth are pro-

foundly linked. As "the negation [which] must be destroyed to redeem the contraries," the Spectre is what allows Blake to redeem not only Urizen but ultimately Orc as well.

Although "spectres" appear in much of Blake's earlier work, the Spectre of Urthona as a distinct character does not appear until The Four Zoas. And as Frye has suggested, his appearance there (especially in Night VIIa, which Blake extensively revised at Felpham) probably exploded the whole Zoa scheme and led Blake to abandon the poem for Milton and Jerusalem, both of which employ the new psychological model of Los and the Spectre (FS, 292-299). The Spectre is very much an evolving (and hence incomplete) conception through The Four Zoas and Milton, but he does spring forth full-blown in Jerusalem with great clarity and intensity. And in all three poems certain ideas (in more or less articulated form) stand out in association with him. Not only does the Spectre in each poem take on the worst of Urizen or Orc or both, he also represents various forms of false unity, the false ideal or perspective of death which threatens to usurp the true perspective of life. This repeated association of the Spectre with an idea of false unity is essential to Blake's new perspectivism, for it is how Blake represents the fact that the Spectre is not just a part of

life, a "contrary," but a "whole," an encompassing perspective, the overarching "negation" which destroys the contraries.

c. The Spectre in "The Four Zoas"

The Spectre's role in The Four Zoas is somewhat confused, probably in part because it was a developing idea with which Blake was newly experimenting. But as we have seen, this confusion or ambiguity is also fundamental to the Spectre's very identity as both the unfallen yet fallen form of Urthona. In this poem he is particularly interchangeable with Los in a way that he is not in the later poems, for it is Los who is referred to here as a "terrible Demon" (Night VIIa, P 85, l. 32; 353) and as "the Spectre Los" (Night IX, P 139, l. 5; 392). Blake at times seems to adopt the Spectre's point of view that it is Los and not himself who is the "spectre" or delusive phantom, the fallen form of Urthona. Blake seems sympathetic to the Spectre's exhortation

be assur'd I am thy real Self
 Tho thus divided from thee & the Slave of Every
 passion
 Of thy fierce Soul Unbar the Gates of Memory
 look upon me
 Not as another but as thy real Self I am thy
 Spectre.

(FZ, VII a), P 85, 35-38; 353)

The Spectre appears in the fourth night, simultaneously with the division (or fall) of Los and Enitharmon. Tharmas commands the Spectre to reunite Los and Enitharmon, but the Spectre "seeing Enitharmon withd/His cloudy form in jealous fear & muttering thunders hoarse" (IV, P 49, 24-25; 326). To him, Los is the fallen man while he is the eternal man who should therefore rightfully unite with Enitharmon. And indeed he does seem to be the memory of Urthona in his unfallen state, convincing even Tharmas of this by recounting how he, the last Zoa to fall, protected Tharmas in his fall:

I beheld thee rotting upon the Rocks
 I pitying hovered over thee I protected thy
 ghastly corpse
 From Vultures of the deep then wherefore
 shouldst thou rage
 Against one who thee guarded in the night of
 death from harm.

(IV, P 50, 24-27; 327)

The Spectre repeats this "saving" function throughout the poem, reviving Los and Enitharmon when they have fainted and guarding Orc from Urizen⁷--all prototypes of his ultimate saving role in Jerusalem, where he "preserves the Divine Vision in time of trouble." He is also told by Tharmas that he must help Los to reverse the fall "& him assist to bind the fallen King/Lest he should rise again from death in all his dreary powers" (FZ, IV, P 51,

3-4; 327). Tharmas promises Enitharmon to the Spectre as his "sweet reward," but Los, in his fury and desire for revenge upon her for her desertion, compels the Spectre to bind her as well as Urizen with molten iron:

The Spectre wept at his dire labours when from
 Ladles huge
 He pourd the molten iron around the limbs of
 Enitharmon
 But when he pourd it round the bones of Urizen
 he laughed
 Hollow upon the hollow wind--his shadowy form
 obeying
 The voice of Los compelled he laboured round
 the Furnaces.

(FZ, IV, P 53, 15-19; 329)

With this consolidation of the fall, the fixing of its limits, the fourth night ends and the Orc cycle (the cycle of fallen life and death) begins. The Spectre plays a role here as well, where (in Night V) he helps Los chain down Orc with the "chain of jealousy" (V, P 60, 19-30; 334). He also stands guard over Orc, defending him against Urizen's advance (end of Night VI). But the climax of his dramatic function appears in Night VIIa, where his interaction with Los and Enitharmon unexpectedly displaces the Orc-Urizen confrontation (the Orc cycle) at its apparent climax. This curious evaporation of Orc and Urizen partway through one of the plates (p. 81, 1.7 ff., p. 349) in favor of an entirely new focus seems to be where Blake's imaginative breakthrough to the Spectre

suddenly began to consolidate.

The central events in this confrontation are the unity of the Spectre first with the Shadow of Enitharmon and secondly with Los. The Spectre's seduction of the Shadow of Enitharmon clearly creates a fallen unity, as a number of details seem to indicate. The seduction occurs beneath Urizen's "Tree of Mystery" in a temptation scene clearly meant to suggest Eve's seduction by the serpent in Paradise Lost (VII a), P 84, 1-42; 352-3). And this union gives birth to "a wonder horrible": Vala, Rahab, or "Error." The union of Los and the Spectre however is much more ambiguous. The Spectre promises Los, as he promised Enitharmon, a recovery of the lost Eternity if Los will unite with him; indeed, he threatens that this recovery is totally impossible unless Los obeys him:

Thou never canst embrace sweet Enitharmon
 terrible Demon. Till
 Thou art united with thy Spectre . . .
 If we unite in one, another better world will be
 Opend within your heart & loins & wondrous
 brain.

(VII a), P 85, 32-45; 353-4)

Fry suggests that these two unities provide the poem with a "double crisis"--that the unity of the spectre with the Shadow of Enitharmon and the subsequent birth of Rahab from this union symbolizes "a consolidation of error," while the unity of the Spectre with Los symbolizes "an

imaginative advance" (FS, 278). Yet Los's unity with the Spectre here may be a false or delusive unity as well. The Eternity the Spectre promises Los seems to be not the real Eternity but Beulah, the Eden or false eternity which Blake ultimately rejects. For the Spectre repeatedly describes the "better world" as "threefold," and despite their mingling, he still seeks to destroy Los:

But mingling together with his Spectre the
 Spectre of Urthona
 Wondering beheld the Center open'd by Divine
 Mercy inspired
 He in his turn Gave Tasks to Los Enormous to
 destroy
 That body he created but in vain for Los
 performed
 Wonders of labour

(VII a), P 87, 2-6; 354)

The Eternity which the Spectre promised Enitharmon was similarly Beulah, or the "married Land," "those mild fields of happy Eternity/Where thou & I in individed Essence walked about/Embodied. Thou my garden of delight & I the spirit in the garden" (VII a), P 84, 4-6; 352). And as we have seen by the birth of the "wonder horrible" from Enitharmon's surrendering to this vision of the lost unity, the result was not Eternity or "Truth" but a state of Error. The Spectre's seduction of Enitharmon is indeed probably not an act separate from his attempt to unite with Los, but the same act. His seduction of Enitharmon

is part of an attempt to unite with and hence destroy Los through Enitharmon, not to unite fruitfully with him, as Urizen's command to his daughter (also in Night VIIa) seems to verify:

bring the shadow of Enitharmon beneath
 our wondrous tree
 That Los may Evaporate like smoke & be no more
 Draw down Enitharmon to the Spectre of Urthona
 And let him have dominion over Los the terrible
 Shade.

(P 80, 5-8; 348)

The delusive unity of the Spectre with Enitharmon, then, is merely the first step in uniting with Los in a similarly delusive unity, one which will "evaporate" him into the Spectre's shadowy parody of life, the unity not of life but of death.

It is significant that this unity of death which tries to "evaporate" Los is instigated by Urizen, for it demonstrates a fundamental alliance of the Spectre with Urizen--or with Urizen's most negative qualities. The Spectre is Urizenic most notably in his cold, shadowy abstraction from life, an abstraction which threatens to be as tyrannical over and destructive of Los as was Urizen's earlier tyranny over Orc. Urizen also tries to tempt Los into the Spectre's point of view by exclaiming "The Spectre is the man/The rest is only delusion & fancy" (FZ, I, P 12, 29; 303). And the Spectre is most notably

in league with Urizen or with Urizenic functions in that he takes on himself the blame for the divisive activity which caused the fall, weeping and exclaiming "I am the cause/That this dire state commences--I began the dreadful state/Of Separation & on my dark head the curse & punishment/Must fall . . . " (FZ, VII a), P 87, 32-34; 355). This admission is the most explicit indication in the poem of how the presence of the spectre will allow Blake eventually to absolve Urizen and Orc--or at least, the best of Urizen and Orc--from culpability.

With typical ambiguity, the Spectre is not only aligned with Urizen but also at times opposed to him. For while he is often himself Urizenic, he also helps Los against Urizen, by binding Urizen and by protecting Orc against Urizen's advance. This doubleness may have two possible explanations. The first is that where Los controls the Spectre he is able to thwart the Spectre's own Urizenic tendencies or alliances with Urizen. The second is that the Spectre's antagonism is to the "good" Urizen--the redeemable portion which Blake has realized he wants to rehabilitate. The Spectre naturally wants to thwart this healthy restored unity of the Zoas and substitute his own unhealthy parody of it, a unity in which "false reason" would dominate instead of the true reason which Blake has newly decided that Urizen can be. Again, we

see how Blake is beginning to reformulate life's dialectic more moderately as involving not the confrontation of reason with passion, but that of false reason versus true reason, or of two perspectives on reason and passion.

Urizen is indeed redeemed as "true reason" in The Four Zoas, in a narrative innovation as striking as the introduction of the Spectre. In Nights I through VI Urizen is, as in Blake's earlier myth, responsible for the initial fall of the four Zoas into disunity. But significantly, Orc-Luvah is equally responsible: Luvah and Vala have flown up from their proper place in the loins to usurp Urizen's horses of light. Urizen's sin is now not his desire to dominate (as in the early myth), but his voluntary relinquishing of the reins of "reason" to the anarchy of the passions. This means that not "division" but false unity--the mistaken alliance of Urizen and Luvah--is the cause of the fall. And Blake's new ideal of recovered unity, therefore, is one in which Urizen will separate himself again and resume his rightful place of dominion over the passions. This is why Albion sends Urizen forth to begin the process of regeneration (Night II), and why Blake has Urizen voice perhaps the most lyrical vision of Eternity in the entire poem (Night V, pp. 336-7), in a piercing lament for its loss. Urizen's unexpected redemption occurs at the end of Night

VIIIa):

Startled was Los he found his Enemy Urizen now
 In his hands. He wondered that he felt love &
 not hate
 His whole soul loved him he beheld him an infant
 Lovely breathd from Enitharmon he trembled
 within himself.⁸⁴

(FZ, VII a), P 90, 64-67; 357)

This redemption is repeated from a more cosmic perspective in the apocalyptic Ninth Night, when Urizen repents his error, shakes off the "snows from his Shoulders," and rises "into the heavens in naked majesty/In radiant Youth" (IX, P 121, 1-32; 375-376). And this redemption or "ransom" of Urizen is explicitly associated with the Spectre and with Blake-Los's new sense of moderation in the poem. Enitharmon suggests to Los "if thou my Los/Wilt in sweet moderated fury fabricate forms sublime/Such as the piteous spectres may assimilate themselves into/They shall be ransoms for our souls that we may live" (VII a), P 90, 21-24; 356). In obedience "Los his hands divine inspired began/To modulate his fires," and the direct result of this is Urizen's redemption (VII a), P 90, 25-26; 356).

Blake-Los is able to redeem Urizen as true reason by displacing false reason onto the Spectre, redefining "life" as the struggle of false versus true reason. Concomitantly, he also tries to redefine life as the battle of true versus false passion. For if the Spectre contains

all the worst of Urizen's rational qualities--his cold abstraction, his divisiveness--he also contains Orc's corollary excesses of passion. The Spectre is not only a repressive Urizen but a repressed Orc, the raging passion chained down by Urizenic repression. He is a thwarted lust for life, as his uncontrollable passion for Enitharmon symbolizes, self-thwarted and tormented by his impotence:

Thou knowest that the Spectre is in Every Man
 Insane brutish
 Deformd that I am thus a ravening devouring
 lust continually
 Craving & devouring but my Eyes are always upon
 Thee O lovely
 Delusion & I cannot crave for any.thing but
 thee.

(VII a), P 84, 36-39; 352)

This is also why his unity with Enitharmon produces Vala or the female will--the fallen form of passion or will. Their unity demonstrates Blake's recognition that either excess of reason or passion produces the same state. It is the Spectre's Urizenic, "rational" evaporation of the Shadow of Enitharmon up into himself, as well as his "ravening devouring lust," which has produced this extreme of will represented by Vala. This displacement of "evil" will onto the Spectre's unity with Enitharmon will allow Blake to redeem Orc-Luvah just as it allowed him to redeem Urizen; indeed, Orc-Luvah will become the Christ-figure

in Jerusalem. Blake is not here concerned with the eventual redemption or resurrection of Luvah, however, because it is the imbalance towards Orc-Luvah and away from Urizen which he is trying to correct at this point.

d. The Spectre in "Milton"

Despite the embryonic state of the Spectre in The Four Zoas, his association with a more moderate perspective on life which will allow Blake to redeem Urizen is very clear, as is his association with the notion of false unity, a false ideal. These ideas become progressively more explicit through Milton and Jerusalem. Milton in particular makes clear (as we have seen in part already) the way in which the Spectre represents false unity, divisiveness, and especially false as opposed to true "reason." To begin with, battle with the Spectre is the central dynamic of Milton, as opposed to its peripheral role in The Four Zoas. Blake's battle with his spectre Hayley-Satan, as we have seen, is a battle primarily against the false unity of "mediation." Blake's numerous names for this spectre of false unity make much clearer the sense in which it is both "false" and a "unity." The spectre is a unity in that it is a "pretence of pity and love," "officious brotherhood," "soft dissimulation of friendship," and "corporeal friendship."⁸ It is a false

unity because it is in truth profoundly divisive: the alliance of Blake-Los with Satan-Hayley divides him radically from the true poetic vision which he seeks. Blake also much more explicitly associates this state of false mediation with the landscape of Beulah, the geographic location of the entire poem, as he makes clear from its very beginning, where he calls on the Daughters of Beulah to "Record the journey of immortal Milton thro' your Realms/Of terror & mild moony lustre, in soft sexual delusions/Of varied beauty" (M, I, 2:2-4; 95). The second book similarly begins by placing us firmly in the landscape of Beulah, which he defines as "a place where contraries are equally True,/ . . . a pleasant lovely Shadow/Where no disputes can come" (II, 30:1-3; 128).

As commentators have often noted, in rejecting the soft delusions, the false mediations of Beulah, Blake is rejecting the Eden of Paradise Lost for a higher ideal of eternity, a higher strife of contraries which are not equally true. The spectre which Blake battles in "The Bard's Song" may look very different from the Spectre which Milton battles in the rest of the poem, a spectre defined as Urizen and as Satan. But as I have suggested earlier, these battles are the same battle, halves of a whole. Beulah is an excessively naturalistic ideal, a land of generation and nature which leads ultimately to

death: "the Natural power continually seeks & tends to Destruction/Ending in Death," as Blake says in Book I (26:41-42; 122-3). Hayley-Satan's appeal is to the "natural man" instead of the poet, the man who must make money and eat to live, the man who fears bodily death. Such a man when controlled by this sense of necessity becomes preoccupied with the vegetable world of the body, the soft, swoony sleep of spiritual torpor which in its unity with nature is ultimately a unity with death. Milton's spectre Urizen, by contrast, is hard, divisive, and cold, a masculine god of division who appears to be the opposite of the soft feminine mediations of Beulah. But his excessive rationalism is simply another kind of death, not the feminine "natural power," but the masculine rational power which in its apparently contrasting sterility is equally deathly. Beulah is really concomitant with or the result of Urizen's excessive rationalism, which has split the world into the two extremes of body and mind.

The association of the Spectre with Beulah and with Urizen, an association merely begun in The Four Zoas, is much clearer here. Blake's explicit identification of Milton's spectre with Urizen as false reason is even further developed by Milton's catalogue of exactly what rationalistic qualities he is casting off in the figure of his Satanic-Urizenic spectre:

To cast off Rational Demonstration by faith in
the Saviour
To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by
Inspiration
To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albions
covering
To take off his filthy garments, & clothe him
with Imagination
To cast aside from Poetry, all that is not
Inspiration

. . .
To cast off the idiot Questioner who is always
questioning,
But never capable of answering; who sits with
a sly grin
Silent plotting when to question, like a thief
in a cave;
Who publishes doubt & calls it knowledge; whose
Science is Despair,
Whose pretence to Knowledge is Envy, whose whole
Science is
To destroy the wisdom of ages to gratify
ravenous Envy
That rages round him like a Wolf day & night
without rest

(II, 41:3-18, 141)

It is clear that the spectre, as "the reasoning power in man," a "selfhood," is the time-bound ego as opposed to the immortal imagination. He is the demand for rational proof instead of faith, the insistence that the only truth is that which can be proven with absolute rational certainty. As memory instead of inspiration, he is the passive dependence of the mind on external reality instead of on its own creative powers, a mind which creates only "by imitation of Natures images drawn from Remembrance" (II, 41:24; 141). Worst of all, perhaps, as "the idiot questioner" the Spectre is the intellectual skeptic, who

sees history only as civilization's negation of itself.

As we have seen, Milton decisively casts off these Urizenic excesses of reason to embrace not only Albion but also Blake. As in The Four Zoas, this casting-off is paradoxically extreme and moderate, an exclusion which opens the way to an inclusion, an embrace. For the poem is not finally about the rejection of Urizen or reason; on the contrary, it is about Blake's embrace of reason in the form of Milton himself. Just as casting off the spectre paved the way for the redemption of a modified Urizen in The Four Zoas, the fact that Milton and Blake cast off their spectres paves the way for their embrace of each other and especially for Blake's embrace of Miltonic reason. But it is crucial that this is a moderated Miltonic reason--just as Blake-Los had to "modulate his fires" of passion/Orc in The Four Zoas, Milton here has had to modulate his fires of reason/Urizen. To use a more accurate metaphor, he has had to "melt" Urizen's snows of reason in a neat inversion of Los's modulation of his fires, remaking Urizen in the image of man.

Battle with the Spectre thus leads, in Milton as in The Four Zoas, to the redemption of "reason" not to its casting-off. It excludes the excesses of reason, the false reason symbolized by Hayley, to embrace a more moderate ideal of reason, the "true" reason which attempts

to fall into neither extreme of Beulah-like mediation or
Urizenic division. This is how "the negation must be
destroyed to redeem the contraries,"--the false forms of
reason and passion must be cast off for the true.

e. The Spectre in Jerusalem

In Jerusalem the Spectre of Urthona springs forth full-blown at last. The poem opens with a thundering confrontation between Los and the Spectre which is sustained for a full seven plates, a confrontation which reveals with great clarity the Spectre's full symbolic value. Its climax is the Spectre's own culminating outburst:

O that I could cease to be! Despair! I am
despair
Created to be the great example of horror &
agony . . .
. . . Life lives on my
Consuming: & the Almighty hath made me his
Contrary
To be all evil, all reversed & for ever dead:
knowing
And seeing life, yet living not; how can I then
behold
And not tremble; how can I be beheld & not
abhorrd

(J, I, 10:51-59; 152)

Once again, the Spectre is very closely associated with a false ideal, the delusive unity of mediation or Beulah. The fallen Albion sleeps in Beulah, "a Void, outside of Existence, which if entered into/Englobes itself &

becomes a Womb" (J, I, 1:1-3; 143). Los immediately perceives that this state of mediation or false unity is the enemy which he must combat: "Half Friendship is the bitterest Enmity said Los" (I, 1:8; 143). Blake later in the poem identifies this false unity not only with false friendship, but with what he calls "soft Family-Love," exclaiming, "A mans worst enemies are those/Of his own house & family" (II, 27:77, 81-2; 172). The Spectre repeatedly tries to substitute his false brotherhood for the true, arguing that Los's brotherhood with Albion--the true unity or ideal--is the delusory one:

And thus the Spectre spoke: Wilt thou still go
 on to Destruction?
 Till thy life is all taken away by this deceit-
 ful Friendship?
 He drinks thee up like water! . . . Thy stolen
 Emanation
 Is his garden of pleasure! all the Spectres of
 his sons mock thee
 Look how they scorn thy once admired palaces!
 Now in ruins
 Because of Albion! because of deceit and
 friendship!

(I, 7:9-17; 148)

Another form of false unity besides "brotherhood" which the Spectre represents is again the false unity of "marriage," union with Enitharmon, as Los clearly recognizes:

Tho my Spectre is divided: as I am a living Man
 I must compell him to obey me wholly: that
 Enitharmon may not
 Be lost: & lest he should devour Enitharmon:

Ah me!

(I, 17:16-18; 160)

The Spectre tries to undermine the true unity of Los and Enitharmon as rigorously as he tries to destroy the unity of Los with Albion; when Los and Enitharmon quarrel,

A sullen smile broke from the Spectre in
 mockery & scorn
 Knowing himself the author of their divisions &
 shrinkings, gratified
 At their contentions, he wiped his tears he
 washed his visage.

(IV, 88:34-36; 245)

The last form of false unity which the Spectre represents is that of memory--as in The Four Zoas, he is a memory of the unity-that-was, the abstract eternity from which Albion and his Zoas have fallen. "Listen, I will tell thee what is done in moments to thee unknown," he commands Los, and proceeds to tell the whole story of the Zoas' fall (I, 7:29-50; 148).

Fundamentally, the Spectre is Los's abstract self, but as we have seen through all three of these prophecies, this abstract self takes two forms: the natural and the rational. The dominance of the natural or vegetable man, the "corporeal" self or ego associated with bodily desires and the temporal world, is what Blake calls "corporeal friendship" as opposed to "spiritual friendship." This distinction first arose in Milton, where Los exclaimed

"Mark well my words! Corporeal Friends are Spiritual Enemies," and where it became the basis for Blake's crucial differentiation between Hayley and Milton (M, I, 4:26; 97). (As Blake wrote in a letter to Butts from Felpham in 1803, "if a Man is the Enemy of my Spiritual Life while he pretends to be the friend of my corporeal, he is a Real Enemy"; 697.) In Jerusalem Blake-Los exclaims "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" (IV, 91:15-17; 248). This corporeal Spectre of the "natural" man attempts to drag man towards death by means of "turning his eyes outwards to self," Blake's description of Albion's disease (FZ, II, P 23, 2; 309).

It is excessive reason which tries to convince a man that he is only corporeal, his existence merely material or vegetable. This again is how the excessively rational self is in fact the same as or leads to the natural or corporeal self. Blake is explicit about the Spectre's role as false reason here, as even the frontispiece proclaims; the fallen Albion's "sublime & Pathos become Two Rocks fixed in the Earth/His Reason, his Spectrous Power, covers them above./Jerusalem his Emanation is a stone laying beneath" (I, 4-6; 143). And as Blake later defines

the Spectre:

The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man, &
 when separated
 From Imagination, and closing itself as in
 steel, is a Ratio
 Of the things of Memory. It thence frames Laws
 & Moralities
 To destroy Imagination! The Divine Body, by
 Martyrdoms & Wars.

(J, III, 74:10-13; 227)

As "the Reasoning Power in Man," the Spectre tries to undermine all faith in a spiritual realm, in an immortality which survives bodily death. Los cries out to him not to tempt his "children" to despair--"Reason not against their dear approach/Nor them obstruct with thy temptations of doubt & despair" (J, I, 10:32-33; 152)--but the Spectre obstinately replies

. . . the joys of God advance
 For he is Righteous: he is not a Being of Pity
 & Compassion
 He cannot feel Distress: he feeds on Sacrifice
 & Offering:
 Delighting in cries & tears & clothd in holiness
 & solitude.

(I, 10:46-49; 152)

Albion's Spectre similarly represents skepticism and the temptation to despair, presenting Albion with a chilling version of the rise and fall of civilizations, the march of history toward oblivion:

I am your Rational Power O Albion & that Human

form
 You call Divine is but a Worm seventy inches
 long
 That creeps forth in a night & is dried in the
 morning sun
 In fortuitous concourse of memorys accumulated
 & lost
 It plows the Earth in its own conceit . . .
 . . . London & Canterbury tremble
 Their place shall not be found as the wind
 passes over
 The ancient Cities of Earth remove as a
 traveller.

(II, 29:5-14; 173)

If the Spectre is so clearly "the Rational Power" in Jerusalem, in what sense is he not "Reason" but false reason--an embodiment merely of reason's excesses? No obvious redemption of Urizen or reason occurs in the plot of this poem as it did in The Four Zoas and in Milton. But other details suggest even more powerfully that indeed Blake means to cast off the false reason for the true. As I have been suggesting, the first evidence for this is that here as in the other two poems the Spectre takes on the naturalistic and rationalistic extremes formerly associated with Orc-Luvah and Urizen. And Blake's rejection of these extremes for a more moderate ideal is most strongly supported by two new narrative details: a new description of the Zoas' fall, and the introduction of a separate spectre for Albion. Blake now sums up the fall thus:

The four Zoa's clouded rage; . . .
 And the Four Zoa's are Urizen & Luvah & Tharmas
 & Urthona
 In opposition deadly, and their wheels in
 poisonous
 And deadly stupor turn'd against each other loud
 & fierce
 Entering into the Reasoning Power, forsaking
 Imagination
 They became Spectres; & their Human Bodies were
 reposed
 In Beulah, by the Daughters of Beulah with tears
 & lamentation.

(III, 74:1-9; 227)

The significance of this new description of the fall is that all the Zoas fall by "entering into the Reasoning Power, forsaking Imagination." Urizen is now no longer alone symbolic of the Reasoning Power; that power has become a state into which all the Zoas enter equally when they fall. Although in their fallen state the Zoas are divided against each other, in a true sense they are not really divided against each other because none of them specifically has caused the others to fall. All have fallen by the "Spectrous Power," a power which cannot be identified with any one Zoa. The real division then is not among the Zoas, but between a true and a false form of the Zoas: the spectrous fallen form and the imaginative eternal form. And both of these forms are "unities": the fall is in a sense not from unity into division but from true unity, the unity of "life," into false unity, the unity of "death." This point is crucial to under-

standing just how Blake can claim paradoxically both to cast off and to embrace Orc and Urizen (and indeed all the Zoas). Only their spectral forms are cast off; their true forms can be embraced. It is also critical for seeing just how Blake hopes to use the idea of "perspective" to attain his ideal: one does not cast off division for unity (although in a sense this remains true), but one kind of unity for another--or more accurately, one perspective on the unity of the Zoas (the Spectre's) for another perspective on that same unity (Los's).

This new way of conceptualizing the fall is also why Albion now has a Spectre as well, a Spectre who plays a role in the poem separate from that of the Spectre of Urthona. Again, neither Urizen or Orc is responsible for Albion's fall, but rather his Spectre, a spectre who combines the excesses of both. Blake calls Albion's Spectre "his Spectrous Chaos," his "Rational Power," and describes him in terms formerly associated with Urizen and Orc. When Albion falls, his spectral form duplicates the Urizen of Blake's early myth:

Cold snows drifted around him: ice covered his
 loins around
 He sat by Tyburns brook and underneath his heel,
 shot up
 A deadly Tree, he nam'd it Moral Virtue, and the
 Law
 Of God who dwells in Chaos hidden from the human
 sight.

The Tree spread over him its cold
 shadows.

(II, 28:13-17; 172-3)

The fallen Spectre is also described with imagery associated with the Orc of Blake's early myth,

There to eternity chain'd down, and issuing in
 red flames
 And curses, with his mighty arms brandish'd
 against the heavens
 Breathing cruelty blood & vengeance, gnashing
 his teeth with pain
 Torn with black storms, & ceaseless torrents
 of his own concurring fire.

(II, 36:36-39; 180)

The presence of this Spectre of Albion again "redeems" the four Zoas from individual culpability in Albion's fall. Like the Zoas, Albion has fallen by succumbing to his spectrous power, a power which is not merely some single part or faculty but somehow a separate whole. By giving Albion this Spectre, Blake again makes it clear how he is reconceiving life as a struggle not between parts within a whole, but between two wholes. And one is the "shadow" or false form of the other, which is to say, they are the false and true perspectives on the single unity of life.

All of these narrative details point to a new dialectic of "perspective." Blake's strategy of putting the worst of Orc and Urizen into the Spectre in order to cast

it off, yet still redeem Orc and Urizen, demonstrates how he is trying to redefine life's contraries in an entirely different way. By trying to cast off the excesses or false forms of reason and passion in order to save what is best in them, their true forms, essentially he is redividing life's contraries into truth (true reason and passion) and error (false reason and passion) instead of into reason and passion. In other words, life is now the struggle not between two contraries within a single systematic dialectic (two parts within a larger whole) but between two entire dialectics (or two wholes). Again, this is why the Spectre is so repeatedly linked with the idea of false unity; he is not a mere part which can be reconciled within a larger whole, but an entire encompassing perspective on life, a whole in himself. "Life" is the struggle between two mutually exclusive perspectives: truth vs. error, Los vs. the Spectre, Life vs. Death. It is a dialectic of exclusive perspectives rather than of inclusive contraries. We can see how this idea of life as a battle between two irreconcilable absolutes (i.e., one of which must be cast off) which nonetheless casts off neither reason nor passion would seem to approach Blake's lifelong ideal of life as a struggle of dynamic, unsystematic contraries. And we can see how it would seem to create a new unsystematic definition of dialectic

which in its lack of system might seem inherently truer to life. We should now turn to Kierkegaard to see more clearly the struggle of this new, unsystematic "either/or" dialectic with the systematic "both-and" logic of idealist dialectics in general.

IV. The Spectre and the Line of Life

The to-a-certain degree mode of thought (that travesty on tolerance which mediates everything without petty scrupulosity), regarded as negative by the ancients, has now become positive, and what the ancients regarded as positive, the passion for distinctions, has now become a childish folly.

--Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments

My argument has been that at Felpham Blake came to see the true enemy of life not as division/Urizen but as mediation/the Spectre of Urthona, who is really a disguised form of division. This is why the Spectre is identified with Beulah, the delusive paradise "Where Contraries are equally True" (M, II, 30:1; 128). It is significant that this "married land" of mediation disguises at once truth or eternity where contraries are absolute and not equally true, and error or Ulro, where contraries again are absolute. Ulro is the negative state of true division, the profound alienation from life which really underlies Beulah's (and the Spectre's) appearances of mediation.

Blake ultimately calls Beulah the land of "negation," where "the Contraries War beneath Negations Banner" (M, II, 34:23; 133). He also explicitly calls the Spectre the spirit of "negation," in one of his clearest and most

forceful descriptions:

And this is the manner of the Sons of Albion in
 their strength
 They take the Two Contraries which are calld
 Qualities, with which
 Every Substance is clothed, they name them Good
 & Evil
 From them they make an Abstract, which is a
 Negation
 Not only of the Substance from which it is
 derived
 A murderer of its own Body: but also a murderer
 Of every Divine Member: it is the Reasoning
 Power
 An Abstract objecting power, that Negatives
 every thing
 This is the Spectre of Man: the Holy Reasoning
 Power.

(J, I, 10:7-15; 151)

These lines make it clear that Blake associates "negation" or this passive perspective on life with a certain logic of contraries in which both are subsumed within a larger whole which "negates" them. This logic of negation is for Kierkegaard the logic of all the post-Kantian idealist dialectics, the both-and logic which negates life's contraries by mediating them in a reconciliation which destroys existence. Negation, "the abstract objecting power," is for him the spectre not only of the Hegelian negative but also of Schlegel's Romantic irony. According to Kierkegaard, both dialectics ultimately share the same logic of contraries, the same perspective on life which he sees as the source of the Nineteenth century's melan-

choly and despair.

a. Kierkegaard's Assessment of His Times

"The age of distinctions is past and gone," lamented Kierkegaard in 1844, "the System has overcome it. He who loves distinctions is regarded as an eccentric man, who longs for that which has long vanished" (CD; Epigraph). All qualitative distinctions, all real differences, have been annihilated by the Hegelian negative pervading German life and thought. God has been collapsed into man and nature in one vast pantheism. Good and evil, truth and error, reason and passion, subjectivity and objectivity--all the distinctions which give life value and energy--have been collapsed within the system. Even language has lost its potency and degenerated into that ambiguous word at the heart of the Hegelian system, the self-contradictory "Aufhebung" which both preserves and annuls in vacillating indeterminacy (CUP, 199). Spiritual inertia and apathy are widespread: people either sit in stolid complacency, convinced that they know the truth or have been saved simply by being born into the "theocentric" Nineteenth century (CUP, 354); or they languish in listlessness and Romantic melancholy, with brief frenzied spurts of illusory and primarily erotic passion. Men are afraid or cannot be bothered to act, since one cannot act without

choosing among alternatives, alternatives which have been negated within the system. The age indulges in "a fantastic ethical weakness," Kierkegaard declares. Distinctions have no significance, so that men scramble vainly to be "different":

Men have perceived that it avails nothing to be ever so distinguished an individual man, since no difference avails anything. A new difference has consequently been hit upon: the difference of being born in the nineteenth century. Everyone tries to determine his bit of existence in relation to the age as quickly as possible and to console himself. But it avails nothing, being only a higher and more glittering illusion.

(CUP, 318)

People are afraid, Kierkegaard says, "that if they were to become particular existing human beings, they would vanish tracelessly, so that not even the daily press would be able to discover them, still less critical journals, to say nothing at all of speculative philosophers immersed in world-history;" they fear that "if a man lets go of Hegel he will not even be in a position to have a letter addressed to him" (CUP, 317-18). Such fear is legitimate, Kierkegaard acknowledges, in that insofar as a man lacks ethical and religious passion he may well vanish tracelessly: "it cannot be denied that when a man lacks ethical and religious enthusiasm, being an individual is a matter for despair--but not otherwise" (CUP, 318). People

do not act because they are afraid to make the decision necessary for action--or because they assume that these decisions have already been made for them by the system. They are paralyzed by living in a realm of abstraction--the realm defined by not only the Hegelian mediation but also the Romantic irony pervading the age. This realm is "the fantasy medium of possibility," "the realm of abstract thought with its shadow-boxing," a realm which fictionalizes existence within the sphere of pure thought (CUP, 514, 316).

The Hegelian dwells in the world of infinite retrospect or what Kierkegaard calls "recollection;" the Romantic ironist dwells in the realm of infinite prospect or possibility. Both are at once everything and nothing: the Hegelian is the sum of all that has gone before, the Romantic ironist is the sum of all future possibilities. And both therefore cannot act, because for both life is "contemplation." Both are "spectators" "outside the game," spectators for whom there is no either/or. "You mediate contradictions in a higher madness," Kierkegaard tells the Romantic ironist, "philosophy mediates them in a higher unity. You turn towards the future . . . You say 'I can either do this or do that, but whichever of the two I do is equally mad, ergo I do nothing at all'" (E/O, II, 174). "What unites you is that life comes to a

stop," Kierkegaard says:

Philosophy turns to the past, towards the whole enacted history of the world, it shows how the discrete factors are fused in a higher unity. It mediates and mediates . . . the philosopher hastens back into the past to such a degree that, as a poet says of an antiquarian, 'only his coat tails are left behind in the present.'
(E/O, II, 174-5)

The philosopher is "outside, he is not in the game, he sits and grows old listening to the songs of long ago, harkening to the harmonies of mediation" (E/O, II, 176). The Romantic ironist finally mediates contradictions within the negative unity of "boredom," for his poetry is merely "poetry about poetry in the infinite." "The fact that this poetry vacillates between opposites shows that in a deeper sense it is not true poetry " (CI, 321, 320); and "As there must always be a bond uniting these oppositions, a unity into which these intense dissonances of feeling resolve themselves, so upon closer examination one will even find such a unity in the ironist," Kierkegaard claims:

Boredom is the only continuity the ironist has. Yes, boredom: this eternity void of content, this bliss without enjoyment, this superficial profundity, this hungry satiety. But boredom is the negative unity . . ., the negative unity in which opposites disappear. That both Germany and France at this moment have only too great a number of such ironists, and no longer need to be initiated into the secrets of boredom by some

English lord, the travelling member of a spleen club; and furthermore, that one or another youthful ward of the Young Germany or France would long ago have died of boredom had not their respective governments been so fatherly as to arrest them in order to give them something to think about--all this would scarcely be denied by anyone.

(CI, 302)

The infinite striving or becoming of the Romantic ironist turns out to be a kind of death-in-life, a "habit of vacillation" within a realm of infinite possibility (CUP, 444). "And is it not painful and sad to let life go past thus without ever gaining a firm position," asks Kierkegaard, "Is it not sad, my young friend, that for you life never acquires content?" (E/O, II, 88). Life is always "absent" for such an individual; and he is not merely sad but comic, because he is comically absent-minded (or absence-minded, as one might say of the twentieth-century deconstructionist version of the Romantic ironist): he has forgotten that he must exist. It is indeed true that "there is no special difficulty connected with being an idealist in the imagination," acknowledges Kierkegaard, "but to exist as an idealist is an extremely strenuous task, because existence itself constitutes a hindrance and an objection" (CUP, 315).

While the Hegelian and the Romantic ironist are very alike in some respects, they are also very different. The

Hegelian is too dogmatic, complacent, and systematic--the epitome of a stolid, apathetic complacency which looks on life as mere "result," as something already finished. He is paralyzed (albeit unknowingly) by Kierkegaard's "despair of finitude or necessity" due to lack of "infinity" or "possibility" (SUD, 162-175). No possibilities exist for the Hegelian because possibility belongs to the realm of the future which Hegelianism excludes. The Hegelian individual lives under the yoke of necessity and result, confined in the routine of domestic everyday life and in a state of quiet, invisible despair unnoticed by all around him, who see him as a solid citizen and family man. The Romantic ironist is the aesthete and seducer who lives in a state of infinite, tortured, restless striving after "the infinite" (defined for him as "the interesting") which will save him from his melancholy and his boredom. His despair is the opposite of the Hegelian's (despite the fact that both conditions of despair result from living abstracted from life): he suffers from the despair of "infinity" or "possibility." Where the Hegelian suffers from too many limits and the lack of possibility, the Romantic ironist suffers from limitlessness and too much possibility. For such an individual "possibility . . . appears to the self ever greater and greater, more and more things become possible, because

nothing becomes actual. At last it is as if everything were possible--but this is precisely when the abyss has swallowed up the self" (SUD, 69). This self lacks reality because it lacks limits; the Hegelian self lacks reality because it lacks possibility. Either extreme of Hegelian system or Schlegelian striving results equally in unreality and the despair of the self that cannot break through to existence. Hegelian thesis and Schlegelian anti-thesis result, finally, in death-in-life, reconciled within this negative unity.

We can see how these two dialectics manifest the two forms of despair as Kierkegaard has defined them. Further, they demonstrate the two extremes into which all of the post-Kantian idealist dialectics ultimately fall. All collapse into either a reason-philosophy (here represented by Hegelian mediation) or a will-philosophy (here represented by Schlegel's Romantic irony)--the extremes of rationality and irrationality which Kierkegaard, like Blake, wants to avoid and go beyond. Kierkegaard's analysis clearly demonstrates how these two extremes are not really opposed, not real contraries, but the "reason" and "will" poles of the same dialectic. Mediation is the dialectic of pure transcendence, Being, Reason, or Absolute Spirit; Romantic irony is the dialectic of pure immanence, Becoming, Passion, or "Life." Mediation empha-

sizes the reconciliation of contraries within the system; Romantic irony emphasizes infinite process not final reconciliation or resolution. Mediation stresses objectivity, Romantic irony subjectivity. Yet according to Kierkegaard, both dialectics are equally undialectical--equally static and dogmatic "system" on the one hand, equally vacillating and indeterminate "process" on the other. Both are equally "rational" because equally abstracted from life into the realm of pure thought; and both are equally "irrational" because both are dialectics of pure will. Both are equally dialectics of pure transcendence in which existence and passion are swallowed by pure thought, and dialectics of pure immanence in which thought is swallowed by life and passion. They are not really then two different dialectics but the two poles of the single dialectic of both-and logic.

Both dialectics offer in other words the same abstract perspective on life. The key to Kierkegaard's criticism of the Hegelian and the Romantic ironist is his complaint that both are "spectators," for this not only emphasizes the idea of "perspective" so crucial to his dialectic, but also underscores the aptness of Blake's choice of the word "spectre" for this state of abstraction and inertia. This state is spectral--i.e., shadowy and elusive--because it is only a perspective. Yet it is

also spectral because it is a passive frame of mind which "spectates" on life instead of participating in it. This perspective is spectral too because its effect is such a shadowy, negative one; its potency lies in its impotence, its indefinite hindering of all action, rather than in any active, defined evil. Finally, this perspective is spectral because as a way of seeing, a perspective, it is potentially everywhere, an all-pervading, ghostly shadow haunting all of life and coloring it "blue obscure & dismal."

The Spectre is thus a vast illusion or error, a veil over man's vision which blurs all distinctions into confusion and indeterminacy. He is the illusion of life, the fiction that one is living when one is really not existing in any truly dynamic sense. And "illusion" is the most difficult enemy to fight, for obvious reasons--because it is so elusive, something which appears and disappears with the wink of an eye, but mostly because its central strategy is to masquerade as the truth, to cultivate a resemblance to it. As Kierkegaard says, "the most dangerous form of scepticism is always that which looks least like it" (CUP, 275). And as we have seen, in Blake's spiritual crisis at Felpham he was apparently most threatened by Hayley's resemblance to him, his "seeming a brother" but "being a tyrant," his corporeal friendship

but spiritual enmity. The greatest difficulty is to convince people that they must change into something which they think they already are--for Blake to convince Hayley that he must become his friend when Hayley is convinced that this is what he already is, or in the more general terms of the Romantic ideal, to convince people to "live" when they take it for granted or insist that this is what they are always already doing. Kierkegaard gives as an example of this the difficulty in convincing the Hegelian "Christian" that he is in fact a false Christian who must convert to the true:

everyone knows that the most difficult leap, even in the physical order, is when a man leaps into the air from a standing position and comes down again on the same spot. The leap becomes easier in the degree to which some distance intervenes between the initial position and the place where the leap takes off. And so it is with respect to a decisive movement in the realm of the spirit. The most difficult decisive action is not that in which the individual is far removed from the decision (as when a non-Christian is about to decide to become one), but when it is as if the matter were already decided. . . . In brief, it is easier to become a Christian when I am not a Christian than to become a Christian when I am one;

(CUP, 327; K's italics)

The spectre of Hegelian Christendom asserts that one is always already a Christian by virtue of being born into Protestant nineteenth-century Germany. And Kierkegaard's point is that this illusion is the first and greatest

obstacle to be overcome, for until it has been dispelled there will be no motivation to change, no incentive for movement: only complacency and spiritual stasis.

Illusion or error must be expelled; this is the first step in Blake's and Kierkegaard's dialectic. It must be expelled by being forced to reveal itself as it really is--as illusion not truth, as death not life. As Blake says of the Spectre "he who will not defend Truth, [must] be compelled to defend/A Lie: that he may be snared and caught and taken/That Enthusiasm and Life may not cease."¹ The demon can be exorcised only after he has been forced to appear in his true shape. Traditional lore has it that one does this by reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards (Frye's description of Jerusalem)²; or to repeat Kierkegaard's injunction, one must "play the same piece of music backwards without making a single mistake" (E/O, II, 168-69). In other words, one makes first a negative movement; the revelation and hence destruction of error must precede revelation of the truth.

Blake and Kierkegaard both use the metaphor of corrosion to describe the initially negative activity of their dialectic. Blake speaks of his activity as "printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid" (MHH,

14; 38). His other equally corrosive, negative, and "medicinal" image for this (in Jerusalem) is circumcision, the stripping away of a veil of flesh: "Establishment of Truth depends upon destruction of falshood continually/On Circumcision: not on Virginity, O Reasoner of Albion" (J, III, 55:65, 66; 203). Kierkegaard describes the negative strategy of stripping away illusion thus:

there is an immense difference, a dialectical difference, between these two cases: the case of a man who is ignorant and is to have a piece of knowledge imparted to him, so that he is like an empty vessel which is to be filled or a blank sheet of paper upon which something is to be written; and the case of a man who is under an illusion and must first be delivered from that. Likewise there is a difference between writing on a blank sheet of paper and bringing to light by the application of a caustic fluid a text which is hidden under another text. Assuming then that a person is the victim of an illusion, and that in order to communicate the truth to him the first task, rightly understood, is to remove the illusion . . . one must first of all use the caustic fluid. But this caustic means is negativity.

(PV, 39-40)

Kierkegaard is careful to distinguish this caustic negativity, however, from the infinite negativity or destruction of illusion characteristic of the Romantic ironist; as Judge William in Either/Or tells the Romantic ironist:

You are absolutely indefatigable in ferreting out illusions in order to smash them. . . . However, you have not reached the truth, you have come to a stop with the destruction of

illusions, and inasmuch as you have wrought that destruction in all possible and imaginable directions, you have really worked yourself into a new illusion: the illusion that one can stop there. Yes, my friend, you are living in an illusion, and you accomplish nothing.

(E/O, II, 80)

Blake similarly castigates the illusion that the destruction of illusions can in itself be a kind of truth or knowledge when he rants against the Spectre "who publishes doubt & calls it knowledge; whose Science is Despair,/ Whose pretence to knowledge is Envy, whose whole Science is/To destroy the wisdom of ages to gratify ravenous Envy" (M, II, 41:15-17; 141). Both Blake and Kierkegaard would insist that the destruction of illusion is only one half of their dialectic, the other (crucial) half being the subsequent leap to "truth"--a truth which is permanent and does not itself become subject in turn to further destructions as illusion.

By forcing the Spectre to "defend a Lie," or as Blake also says, to "be revealed in his system" (J, II, 43:10; 189), Blake and Kierkegaard hope to reintroduce the qualitative distinction between truth and error which the Spectre has tried to negate. They hope in other words to re-introduce the principle of contradiction which he has tried to abolish--and whose abolition is according to Kierkegaard the root cause of the spiritual stasis of his

age. This is the lie or fiction which the Spectre must defend: that "contradiction" can be abrogated for the existing individual.

b. The Principle of Contradiction

at bottom it is an immovable firmness with respect to the absolute, and with respect to absolute distinctions, that makes a man a good dialectician. This is something that our age has altogether overlooked, in and by its repudiation of the principle of contradiction.

--Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments

In Eternity one thing never Changes into another thing Each Identity is Eternal . . . A Man can never become Ass nor Horse some are born with shapes of Men who may be both but Eternal Identity is one thing & Corporeal Vegetation is another thing

--Blake, A Vision of the Last Judgment

"Wherever there is life, there is contradiction," declares Kierkegaard. This is why life has escaped idealist dialectics: "in our philosophical nineteenth century . . . dialectics has lost its passion," because "it has become so easy and light-hearted a thing to think contradictions" (CUP, 345). All contradictions have become mediated and finally abrogated within the system of pure thought. This is because all of the post-Kantian

idealist dialectics took as their first principle the abolition of Kant's claim that the phenomenal, finite world of Becoming or A exists over against the noumenal, infinite world of Being or Not-A, and that the two cannot therefore be reconciled (A cannot be not-A). Instead of accepting Being as the ground of life, they made Becoming the ground, and Being a merely phenomenal appearance within Becoming--an illusory stability thrown up by this underlying Becoming. And in making Becoming the underlying substance of reality they abolished the principle of contradiction because as A becomes not-A there must be a point at which A is both A and not-A. A and not-A are one in the process of Becoming--and yet their difference is at the same time supposedly preserved.

Kierkegaard bluntly responds that "to answer Kant within the fantastic shadow-play of pure thought is precisely not to answer him" (CUP, 292). All this "becoming" and unifying of the finite and the infinite is illusory, for if all disjunctions are only apparent, reconciled at bottom in the principle of becoming, the passionate striving or becoming which is life is reduced to a feeble, illusory struggle for something which is always already mediated. Kierkegaard insists that "the abrogation of the principle of contradiction, if it means anything . . . means for the existing individual that he has ceased to

exist" (CUP, 310). The existing individual can never see life as a system or unity in which all contradictions have been reconciled, either in the positive unity of Hegel's Absolute Spirit or in the negative unity of Schlegel's Romantic irony, for "anyone who is himself an existing individual cannot gain this finality outside of existence," this abstract perspective on life (CUP, 108).

In abolishing the principle of contradiction, claims Kierkegaard, these dialectics have reduced the true "negative" of life to a mere relativity--they have substituted a faint, shadowy "negation," a merely systematic difference, for the absolute difference (between what Blake would call the "contraries") in which life consists.

"The higher an individual stands, the more differences he has annihilated or despaired over, but he always has one difference left which he is not willing to annihilate, that, namely, in which life consists" (E/O, II, 233).

This absolute difference is the disjunction between the finite and the infinite, the qualitative value of transcendence whose mediation or compromise Kierkegaard and Blake so fiercely resist. "The negativity that pervades existence," says Kierkegaard, "or rather, the negativity of the existing subject . . . has its ground in the subject's synthesis: that he is an existing infinite spirit" (CUP, 75). It is an irreducible paradox that the existing

individual should be this synthesis of the finite and the infinite; it is an irreducible, incomprehensible paradox that the eternal should enter time at all. For Kierkegaard, this "paradox" defies reason and demands faith, in absolute contrast to the "contradiction" which mediation and reason are able to resolve and hence abolish. Contraries may be unified in thought, Kierkegaard acknowledges, but in life they are always separated: "The systematic Idea is the identity of subject and object, the unity of thought and being. Existence, on the other hand, is their separation" (CUP, 112). The truly existing individual

is conscious of the negativity of the infinite in existence, and he continually keeps the wound open, which in the bodily realm is sometimes the condition for a cure. The others let the wound heal over and become positive; that is to say, they are deceived.

(CUP, 78)

One is reminded here of Los's binding of Urizen in Blake's early myth, a binding which cauterizes or seals open the wound of their separation rather than closes it over. And his later fiercely antagonistic struggle against the Spectre who has been similarly wrenched apart from him also serves to maintain their separation rather than to heal it. This cauterizing image, like the metaphor of corrosion, again emphasizes the paradoxically healing

negativity of this dialectic.

Everything Kierkegaard says about his ideal of life sounds almost exactly like what all the Romantics and idealist dialecticians claim to be their ideal of life: his emphasis on life as the "paradox" of contraries kept apart yet also unified (preserved and annulled?), his attacks on "system," his emphasis on "striving" or "becoming." And indeed this is the heart of the difficulty of his enterprise (and of Blake's): they share the same ideal of life as do all the Romantics, but differ from them in advocating what appears to be the opposite way of arriving at this ideal. Because Blake and Kierkegaard work through "differentiating" instead of through "mediating," they make idealist dialectics appear to be shadowy, inverted parodies of the true dialectic of life. Their shared passion for absolute distinctions is at least as strong if not stronger than their desire for unity; the deliberate making of distinctions, rather than an emphasis on their mediation or abrogation, becomes increasingly for them the central activity of life, the negative way of uniting with life. Again, as Blake puts it, "Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual" (VLJ, 551). Rejecting error means rejecting vacillation, compromise, blurred distinctions, and indeterminacy for

clarity--the clarity of sharp distinctions and decisiveness. The task of the existing individual is to become "clear" or "transparent," Kierkegaard says, and "it is a mistake to think that the abstract is the transparent. The abstract is the turbid, the foggy" (E/O, II, 252). This making of distinctions, this "becoming transparent," is what Blake calls "drawing the line of life":

The great and golden role of art, as well as of life, is this: that the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling. . . . The want of this determinate and bounding form evidences the want of idea in the artist's mind, and the pretence of plagiary in all its branches. How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox, but by the bounding outline? How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding line and its infinite inflexions and movements? What is it that builds a house and plants a garden but the definite and determinate? What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions. Leave out this line 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.

(Blake's "Exhibition and Catalogue of 1809"; 540)

Here again Blake demonstrates not only his passion for distinctions, but also his conviction that the real enemy of life is false resemblance or illusion, here called "weak imitation" and "pretence of plagiary." And he

clearly identifies the line of life as "the line of the almighty"--which is to say, the absolute line or "negative" of the infinite in existence, the qualitative distinction which only the qualitative difference of the eternal can introduce into time. This decisive black line, the line of either/or, is for Blake and Kierkegaard the true line of life; the both-and "line" of merely relative differentiation is a pale and wavering inverted reflection of it, a weak imitation.

Blake and Kierkegaard want to re-introduce this true negativity of the infinite into existence, the absolute difference in which life consists. As Kierkegaard puts it, he wants to reintroduce the "difficulty" of life, "not to make it more difficult than it is" (CUP, 495), but to be true to the individual's experience of life:

Out of love for mankind, . . . seeing that I had accomplished nothing and was unable to make anything easier than it had already been made, and moved by a genuine interest in those who make everything easy, I conceived it as my task to create difficulties everywhere.

(CUP, 166)

He and Blake try to "create difficulties everywhere" by reintroducing this negativity which has been falsely expelled from life. And they try to reintroduce this negativity not in order to negate life but to affirm it, for as Kierkegaard says, "existing individuals must be repre-

sented in their distress, when existence presents itself to them as a confusion, which is something different from sitting safely in the chimney corner and reciting de omnibus dubitandum" (CUP, 236). In keeping open the wound of the negative in existence they attempt to re-open something very like the Kantian wound between the finite and the infinite; and "the principle of contradiction" is their surgeon's knife. But they are re-opening the wound in order to heal it; they are re-introducing distinctions for the sake of uniting with life. The "principle of contradiction" which they introduce is the contradiction of warring perspectives, and the "difficulty" of life becomes casting off one perspective absolutely and embracing the other absolutely. As Kierkegaard puts it, "the difficulty consists . . . in holding fast the qualitative dialectic of the absolute paradox and bidding defiance to the illusions" (CUP, 498). We shall see whether this paradox of mutually exclusive perspectives, the paradox of either/or, can indeed escape the relativism of both-and logic and manage to capture "life." Is this dualism of perspective a real dualism, an "either/or," or a merely apparent dualism, a "both-and"?

c. Life and the System

Existence must be revoked in the eternal before the system can round itself out: there must be no existing remainder, not even such a little minikin as the existing Herr Professor who writes the system.

--Kierkegaard, Concluding
Unscientific Postscript

Negation, transition, mediation, are three masked men of suspicious appearance, the secret agents which provoke all movements.

--Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread

By its abrogation of the principle of contradiction, both-and logic has abrogated the qualitative distinctions in every sphere of life: those between thought and reality (or logic and life), system and striving, Being and Becoming, good and evil, reason and passion, truth and error. These are the distinctions which Blake and Kierkegaard undertake to revitalize--to re-introduce, but again, "with a difference." This method consistently follows the pattern we have seen in Chapter III--that of casting off not one of the contraries, but the perspective which negates them--so that (as we have seen) they attempt to cast off neither reason nor passion but the perspective which collapses them into each other. At the same time, they claim that their sustaining of both reason and pas-

sion in this unity of "life" escapes being "both-and" logic. We need to look more closely at just how they can make this remarkable claim.

Like the Romantics, Blake and Kierkegaard use the word "system" to signify any abstract form of life. Life becomes systematized when it loses its energy and becomes passively instead of actively lived. For Blake and Kierkegaard, this means lived either purely retrospectively as memory and result (the despair of finitude) or purely prospectively as infinite possibility (the despair of infinitude). These are the spectral parodies of life, its empty forms, superficially resembling it but profoundly opposed to it. Separating the forms of life from its informing energy and elevating these empty forms to laws which dictate over life is the worst form of tyranny for Blake and Kierkegaard because it encourages passive obedience to laws abstracted from the changing realities of circumstances. Yet conversely, they equally abhor chaos or pure striving, the antithesis of system and the total lack of any laws or stabilities in life. One cannot overemphasize the extent to which there can be no true action or life for Blake and Kierkegaard without fulfillment--without a breakthrough from potentiality or striving to actuality, from non-existence (in a spiritual sense) to existence. This is why all conditions of pure striving

(i.e., towards an unattainable goal, as for instance in Romantic irony) are in fact static for them, the cause of spiritual impotence and despair. "Invention depends altogether upon Execution," declares Blake (Annotations to Reynolds; 626). They "must create a system," as Los says, must break out of the cycle of Becoming into the fulfillment of Being. Their entire effort, then, is towards re-introducing the "Being" which has been mediated within the idealist principle of Becoming. But again, they are re-introducing Being for the sake of true Becoming or Life. They seek to re-introduce the distinction between Being and Becoming for the sake of both. This is why Los says "I must create a System, or be destroyed by another Man./My task is not to Reason and Compare, but to create" (J, I, 10:20-21; 151). Los rejects the immaterial system of reason or negation, within which one can only "reason and compare" since all its "contraries" are merely comparative differences of degree. But he does not reject the whole notion of system. His task is to create his own, individual, dynamic "system" of life--to create. For him, creation is not an endless striving towards something already created, a "reasoning and comparing," but the making of something new, the fulfillment of striving in a new stability, whole, or "system."

Here again it is difficult to see how Blake and

Kierkegaard differ from other Romantics. They too shared this ideal of striving and system, the "dynamic system." Schlegel's succinct formulation of this ideal would be endorsed not only by other Romantics, but by Blake and Kierkegaard as well. As Schlegel puts it, "It is equally destructive for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to combine the two."³ That this is a fairly precise formulation of the Romantic ideal is true enough. But again, the way in which they are "combined" is the crucial differentiating factor for Blake and Kierkegaard. For both would add a slight qualifier--a qualifier which makes all the difference; both would reply that the only way "to have a system and to have none" is to separate the two.

d. Being and Becoming

The terms Being or system and Becoming or striving are confusing because, like all such terms in Blake's and Kierkegaard's dialectic, they have a true and a false form. The idealist systems of Becoming, for example, are really static systems of pure Being, Kierkegaard argues, because in them nothing really becomes or is created--everything just is. And he argues that his own dialectic which seeks to re-introduce absolute Being, on the other hand, is really a dynamic dialectic of true Becoming.

This confusion is again due to both-and logic. Because this logic has abrogated the distinction between Being and Becoming, the terms become interchangeable, and the choice of one rather than the other a matter of emphasis. But this confusion can perhaps be clarified if we abandon the terms Being and Becoming for the moment and introduce instead the word "movement." Movement or life is what Kierkegaard feels has fundamentally been lost by the idealist systems; movement is the "transcendence" which has escaped them. Whether we say it has escaped because they have collapsed Being into Becoming or vice-versa is less important (at this point at least) than the recognition that it has escaped because the two poles have been collapsed into each other. And what we call this "movement" which Kierkegaard tries to reintroduce is similarly for the moment at least less important than the recognition that according to Blake and Kierkegaard it can be re-introduced only by reintroducing their separation. This indeed is Kierkegaard's goal: to re-introduce movement in such a way that his dialectic cannot be called one of either Being or Becoming, cannot collapse into either extreme.

Kierkegaard's attack on the lack of movement in the idealist systems takes the form of an attack on "the negative." As always, his focus is the false negative or

"negation," the relative difference. The idealist systems turn life into pure thought or logic:

in logic, they use the negative as the motive power which brings movement into everything. And movement in logic they must have, any way they can get it, by fair means or foul. The negative helps them, and if the negative cannot, then quibbles and phrases can, just as the negative itself has become a play on words. In logic no movement can come about, for logic is, and everything logical simply is . . . In logic every movement (if for an instant one would use this expression) is an immanent movement, which in a deeper sense is no movement, as one will easily convince oneself if one reflects that the very concept of movement is a transcendence which can find no place in logic. The negative then is the immanence of movement, it is the vanishing factor, the thing that is annulled (aufgehoben). If everything comes to pass in that way, then nothing comes to pass, and the negative becomes a phantom.

(CD, 11-12)

"The negative becomes a phantom," the ubiquitous spectre once more. True movement is a transcendence, Kierkegaard insists, "the immanent transition of speculative philosophy is . . . a chimera, an illusion . . .; for the category of transition is itself a breach of immanence, a leap" (CUP, 262). Movement is "decisiveness," it is "repetition." Movement consists in making absolute distinctions, thereby bringing the eternal, the qualitative difference or absolute negative, into time:

Existence is in this respect something like walking. When everything is, and is at rest,

it seems plausible enough to say that everything is equally important, provided I can acquire a view of it which is equally calm. But as soon as movement is introduced, and I am myself also in motion, my program in walking consists in constantly making distinctions.

(CUP, 370)

As Kierkegaard also puts it, "the goal of movement for an existing individual is to arrive at a decision, and to renew it" (CUP, 277). Until the individual has introduced or "realized" the qualitative difference in time, he is not really existing. And the only way to introduce this qualitative other is by "arriving at a decision"--which is to say, by casting off one alternative and embracing another. This must be repeated as long as the individual lives--it is the task of life.

But what are these "distinctions," what is this decision which one must make and constantly renew? It is the decision "between existing finitely and existing infinitely," Kierkegaard responds. I quote the following passage at length because it is one of the clearest and most central expressions of Kierkegaard's philosophy:

On paper the proposal to mediate looks plausible enough. First we posit the finite and then the infinite; thereupon we set it down on paper that there must be a mediation. And it is incontrovertible that here has been found a secure foothold outside of existence where an existing individual may mediate--on paper. The Archimedean point has been discovered; only it does not yet appear that the world has been moved. But where

the scene is in existence and not on paper, the mediating individual being an existing individual (and thereby prevented from mediating), then any individual who becomes conscious of what it means to exist (that he exists) will instantly become an individual who distinguishes absolutely, not between the finite and the infinite, but between existing finitely and existing infinitely. For the finite and the infinite are put together in existence, in the existing individual; the existing individual therefore has no need to trouble himself to create existence, or to imitate existence in thought, but needs all the more to concentrate upon existing. Nowadays existence is even produced, on paper, with the assistance of mediation. In existence, where the individual finds himself, the task is simpler, namely, whether he will be so good as to exist. As an existing individual he is not called upon to create existence out of the finite and the infinite; but as one who is himself composed of finite and infinite it is his task to become one of the two existentially. It is impossible to become both at the same time, as one is both by being an existing individual. For this is precisely the difference between being and becoming.

(CUP, 375-6)

The critical phrase here is Kierkegaard's stipulation that the individual "distinguishes absolutely, not between the finite and the infinite, but between existing finitely and existing infinitely." For what he means is that the individual "distinguishes absolutely," not between the contraries of life ("the finite and the infinite") but between two perspectives on the contraries ("existing finitely and existing infinitely"). One perspective is that of "Being": the individual is both the finite and the infinite as the "given" of his being. But this is

not really life or existence; it is the state of potential with which all individuals are endowed as the condition of their creation. Existence is not just a given but also a task, Kierkegaard insists--the task of "becoming" oneself. And as he says, "it is impossible to become both [contraries] at the same time, as one is both by being an existing individual." One cannot become all possibilities simultaneously in reality (however possible this may be in thought, as Kierkegaard readily acknowledges); one must become some one thing in particular. Otherwise, one remains "abstract."

One must therefore realize or become one of the possibilities within oneself: either the finite or the infinite. One must choose one and cast off the other. But paradoxically, this does not mean that the absolute choice is indeed "between the finite and the infinite" (the contraries) after all, and that Kierkegaard's added qualification of "existing finitely and existing infinitely" is redundant. It is true that the only way to cast off the passive perspective of mere potential or "being" is to choose one contrary and cast off the other. But the point is that casting off either contrary constitutes the leap, the qualitative decision which expels error and brings the eternal into time. One brings the eternal or infinite into time even if one chooses to

become the finite. This is how both contraries are in a way paradoxically "redeemed" despite the fact that one is absolutely cast off. One does not have to cast off specifically "the finite" contrary to bring the eternal or "infinite" into time; casting off "the infinite" contrary equally brings the eternal into time. Failure to bring the eternal into time is traceable not to either contrary in particular but to the failure to choose between them--to "negation," the failure to act.

This raises the new question of whether in fact the contraries are not therefore relativized despite the supposedly absolute casting-off of one and embrace of the other. For if it does not matter so much which contrary is cast off as that one of them is cast off, they would seem to lose their qualitative distinction. I shall return to this issue at the close of my discussion here; it becomes particularly interesting when the contraries are "good" and "evil," as we shall see.

For now, the point is to see how Kierkegaard (and Blake) hoped that this dialectic would work. In casting off one of the contraries to embrace fully the other, the existing individual brings the eternal into time, into unity with himself, by virtue of making the qualitative distinction or leap. This means that "time" and "eternity" are united in time--or in other words, that the

finite and the infinite have united in the unity of life or existence. Yet this is a very different kind of unity from their unity in the realm of mere potential or being, and the contraries seem to be much greater and more vital here as well. The synthesis of the finite and the infinite in the realm of potential was passive, a given, a state of possibility. This new synthesis of the finite (the individual in time) and the Infinite (the qualitative other which he has brought into time through leaping out of potentiality into actuality) is a dynamic synthesis, one which has required decision, action, and great energy. We can see how this new synthesis also appears to be a new kind of dialectic. It has reduced the systematic both-and dialectic of contraries to just one pole--"existing finitely"--of an entirely new dialectic; and the other pole --"existing infinitely"--indeed seems to be a transcendence beyond system, outside "both-and." The new dialectic of life is between these two mutually exclusive perspectives, which is why the Spectre of Urthona moans in Jerusalem that "the Almighty hath made me his Contrary/To be all evil, all reversed & for ever dead" (J, I, 10:56-57; 152). It is a higher notion of "Contraries" as well, an apparently unsystematic dialectic in that these perspectives cannot be reconciled, cannot be held simultaneously in existence. One must choose one and cast off the

other. As Kierkegaard puts it:

Two ways, in general, are open for an existing individual. Either he can do his utmost to forget that he is an existing individual, by which he becomes a comic figure. Or he can concentrate his entire energy upon the fact that he is an existing individual.

(CUP, 109)

We can see, then, how one kind of synthesis seems to be a pale and spectral reflection of the other, how they superficially resemble each other yet may be profoundly different. One is pale because it exists only in the realm of potential; the other is darker, more vivid, because it is that potential realized. This true as opposed to false synthesis is what Kierkegaard calls "repetition"--it is the repetition of what one already is (a synthesis of the finite and the infinite in the realm of potential) in a dynamic, higher, truer form (the same synthesis in the realm of actuality). This again is why repetition is a leap, and why it is so difficult--because, as Kierkegaard says, "the most difficult leap, even in the physical realm, is when a man leaps into the air from a standing position and comes down again on the same spot." And this is why it is so difficult to convince men of the necessity for "repetition"--of why they should try to become a synthesis of the finite and the infinite when they always already are this synthesis. They should do

so, Kierkegaard would reply, because there is a qualitative distinction between the two syntheses--the difference between potential and actual, non-existence and existence, the difference between spiritual death and life.

Life is the opposite of death; this is the sense in which through "repetition" the individual becomes the opposite of what he was before. "Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually & must continually be changed into his direct Contrary," says Blake (J, III, 52; 198). Yet he does not really become his "direct Contrary" in the sense of becoming, for example, "reason" instead of "passion" (or vice-versa); he is the contrary synthesis of reason and passion, the dynamic as opposed to the static synthesis. He is "the same and yet not the same," in Kierkegaard's favorite phrase, "the whole of life and existence begins afresh, not through an immanent continuity with the foregoing (which is a contradiction), but by a transcendent fact which separates the repetition from the first existence by such a cleft that it is only a figure of speech to say that the foregoing and the subsequent states are related to one another" (CD, 16 n.). This repetition through which one becomes one's direct contrary (alive instead of dead) is what Kierkegaard means by "existing infinitely," and "mediation," through which

one stays what one is (dead instead of alive) is what it means to "exist finitely." Mediation is the opposite of repetition, its usurper:

In our days they have even gone so far as to want to have motion introduced into logic. There they have called repetition "mediation." Motion, however, is a concept which logic cannot endure. Hence mediation must be understood in relation to immanence. Thus understood, mediation cannot be employed at all in the sphere of freedom, where the next thing constantly emerges, not by virtue of immanence, but of transcendence . . . To prevent this . . . ambiguous agreement between logic and freedom, I thought that in the sphere of freedom one might use repetition.

(R, 19)

Mediation is the play of relative differences; repetition is the "leap" of absolute differences. Repetition is total, radical change, not gradual, evolutionary change--a rupture not a continuity. This is because the change is one of absolute value--from false to true, or from existing finitely to existing infinitely. This repetition happens "continually," as Blake says, but he does not mean that it continually approaches but never reaches its goal. Repetition is the opposite of such an approximating process--it is the repeated embrace of the infinite or the truth in all its fullness, a "Last Judgment." Each repetition is a complete, not partial, breakthrough to transcendence; the continuing struggle or "task" of life

is that this breakthrough must be fought for over and over again. One can never break through once and for all in a "chimerical mediation," as Kierkegaard says; and indeed, one should not want to do so, for that would mean the end of life. And "to be finished with life before life has finished with one, is precisely not to have finished the task" (CUP, 147).

Repetition rather than mediation is Los's "task" in Milton and Jerusalem. Blake's repeated use of the word "task" (as in "my task is not to reason and compare") and his emphasis on Los's great struggles and labor at his task indicate the extent to which he, like Kierkegaard, feels that life is not just a given but also a task, something the individual must labor to create. That Blake considered the greatest struggle in life to be the task of realizing one's potential or given is clear too from his repeated references to the parable of the talents in letters written to Thomas Butts from Felpham. "That I cannot live without doing my duty to lay up treasures in heaven is Certain & Determined & to this I have long made up my mind," he declares, exhorting, "if we . . . tremble at the Tasks set before us . . . if you who are organised by Divine Providence for Spiritual communion. Refuse & bury your Talent in the Earth . . . Sorrow & Desperation pursues you thro life!" (10 January 1802; 688-9). And in

a second letter (also to Butts, and also from Felpham), he says "I know that you see certain merits in me which by God's Grace shall be made fully apparent & perfect in Eternity. In the mean time I must not bury the Talents in the Earth but do my endeavour to live the Glory of our Lord & Saviour" (25 April 1803; 696). It is no coincidence that the parable of the talents should be so persistent a reference during his time at Felpham, by all accounts the worst crisis in his spiritual development and the time he came closest to succumbing to the spectre which tempted him to bury his talents.

Leaping out of the realm of potential and non-existence into the realm of actuality and life, then, is Los's great task, his struggle against the Spectre to attain his own "repetition." In Jerusalem he attains this repetition in Christ (the form of the eternal in time for Kierkegaard as well); as Albion says to Christ, "I see thee in the likeness & similitude of Los my friend" (J, IV, 96:22; 253). This divine likeness, similitude, or repetition of Los is true "Friendship & Brotherhood," as Christ tells Albion--the true unity of contraries which is life. I shall deal more fully with this Christ figure in Blake's and Kierkegaard's thought presently; for the moment we should look more closely at the nature of Los's task and why it is repetition rather than

mediation.

Los's task is repetition because deliberate acts of decision and differentiation are a critical prelude to the desired state of unity. We have already seen this in terms of the narrative structure of Milton, where the expulsion of Hayley-Satan had to precede Blake-Los's embrace of Milton. But Blake also simply says that Los must differentiate in order to unite; as Los cries out,

Fellow labourers! The Great Vintage & Harvest
is now upon Earth
. . . Therefore you must bind the Sheaves not
by Notions or Families
You shall bind them in Three Classes; according
to their Classes
So shall you bind them. Separating What has
been Mixed
. . . When under pretence to benevolence the
Elect Subdud All
From the Foundation of the World.
(M, I, 25:17-37; 120-121)

Los and his fellow-laborers must separate what has been mixed under the "pretence of benevolence," the false unity; thus "the Three Classes of Men take their fix'd destinations," says Blake, adding "they are the Two Contraries & the Reasoning Negative" (M, I, 5:13-14; 98). Los's critical task is in other words to divide life according to contraries and negations, to create the "qualitative dialectic" of life. In this poem, the contraries are Blake and Milton, as I have suggested, and

the negation is Hayley; and this critical differentiation is what saves Blake-Los from his state of inertia and despair. The poem as a whole gives us the clearest case of repetition in the three prophecies--clearest perhaps because it was Blake's great moment of crisis and illumination when he discovered the idea.

By putting the static Orc-Urizen, infinite-finite, dialectic into the Spectre, and by re-locating the struggle of life in the conflict between the Spectre and Los, Blake performs the same logical move to "perspectivism" which we have seen Kierkegaard perform. Blake-Los, the existing individual, now "distinguishes absolutely, not between the finite [Urizen] and the infinite [Orc], but between existing finitely [the Spectre] and existing infinitely [Los]." He distinguishes absolutely, not between the contraries of life but between two mutually exclusive perspectives on the contraries.

Here again we are faced with the puzzling resemblance of either/or to both-and, a resemblance which Blake and Kierkegaard would claim masks profound opposition. For the both-and logic of mediation looks moderate insofar as it mediates the contraries, whereas either/or looks extreme because of its claim to differentiate them absolutely and to cast off negation. Yet Blake and Kierkegaard would argue that both-and logic is in fact

extreme or one-sided, because by refusing to differentiate life's contraries absolutely, it inadvertently collapses them into each other, so that they no longer can be said to exist. The existing individual who lives according to mediation finds himself one-sidedly abstracted from existence, in either the despair of finitude or the despair of infinitude. His one-sidedness comes from the fact that one contrary is always mediated within the other, and no matter which contrary has been mediated within which, his state of abstraction and despair remains the same. The either/or individual, by decisively differentiating life's contraries, ideally brings the absolute or qualitative distinction into existence--that is, he brings true "two-sidedness" into existence. The choice brings the absolute difference into being, the difference which is the only way of preserving both contraries. The paradox of this resemblance yet opposition could be summed up thus: the passive two-sidedness of both-and results paradoxically in one-sided abstraction from life. The active one-sidedness of either/or results paradoxically in two-sidedness (involvement in life). In other words, the only way not to be one-sided is to be one-sided, i.e., to choose, because by choosing one brings both contraries into being. One battles the one-sidedness of abstraction by the one-sidedness of commitment--false one-sidedness

with true. As Kierkegaard explains this difference between kinds of one-sidedness:

. . . the misfortune of the present age is not that it is one-sided, but that it is abstractly one-sided. A one-sided individual rejects, clearly and definitely, what he does not wish to include; but the abstractly one-sided individual imagines that he has everything through the one-sidedness of the intellectual . . . the one-sidedness of the intellectual creates the illusion of having everything.

(CUP, 312)

The one-sidedness of intellectual mediation lives under the delusion that by refusing to differentiate the contraries, by being all-inclusive, it has grasped the whole of life. But in fact it thereby loses life.

e. Beyond Good and Evil

And now the Spectres of the Dead awake in
 Beulah: all
 The Jealousies become Murderous: uniting
 together in Rahab
 With Moral Law, an Equal Balance, not going
 down with decision

--Blake, Jerusalem

The Spectre of mediation negates not only the distinctions between being and becoming, system and striving, thought and reality, but also ethical and religious distinctions. Indeed, these latter distinctions of value are Kierkegaard's fundamental concern--the values of transcen-

dence which have been mediated within the idealist systems. "May it not be the case that the appearance of these fabulous pure thinkers is a sign that some misfortune threatens humanity," he asks, "as for instance the loss of the ethical and the religious?"

It is necessary to be thus careful in dealing with an abstract thinker who not only desires for himself to remain in the pure being of abstract thought, but insists that this is the highest goal for human thought, and that a type of thought which leads to the ignoring of the ethical and a misunderstanding of the religious is the highest human thinking.

(CUP, 272)

Once again he focusses his attack on the Hegelian negative:

Leaving logic to go on to ethics, one encounters here again the negative, which is indefatigably active in the whole Hegelian philosophy. Here too a man discovers to his amazement that the negative is the evil. Now the confusion is in full swing; there is no bound to brilliancy . . . One sees how illogical movements must be in logic since the negative is the evil, and how unethical they must be in ethics since the evil is the negative. In logic this is too much, in ethics too little; it fits nowhere if it has to fit both places. If ethics has no other transcendence, it is essentially logic; if logic is to have so much transcendence as after all has been left in ethics out of a sense of shame, then it is no longer logic.

(CD, 12-13)

Just as movement has supposedly been imported into logic by the system, so ethics, the distinction between good

and evil, has supposedly been captured within the idealist system. But once again Kierkegaard invokes the principle of contradiction, insisting that the negative "fits nowhere if it has to fit both places;" it is only a phantom once more. If the negative is logic then it cannot also be "evil," a category of ethics, and vice-versa; ethics, the realm of freedom, and logic, the realm of necessity, are fundamentally opposed and cannot be reconciled. Just as thought is not reality and being is not becoming, logic is not ethics; nor can either become the other through any mediated transition. And Kierkegaard further invokes, in relation to this principle of contradiction, the individual's perspective on life, the perspective to which his own philosophy is trying to adhere: "If a man occupied himself, all his life through, solely with logic, he would nonetheless not become logic; he must therefore himself exist in different categories" (CUP, 86).

Good and evil have been systematized, have become what Blake would call an "Abstract," a "system of moral virtue," terms he explicitly associates with the Spectre:

And this is the manner of the Sons of Albion in
 their strength
 They take the Two Contraries which are calld
 Qualities, with which
 Every Substance is clothed, they name them Good
 & Evil
 From them they make an Abstract, which is a
 Negation .

(J, I, 10:7-10; 151)

This abstract or system abstracted from particular circumstances and made into an abstract law is for both Blake and Kierkegaard the good and evil of conventional morality. And again, both perceive this mediation of good and evil, their false alliance, as the real enemy of life. The struggle of life is once more not between the contraries of good and evil, but against this false mediation which effectively negates them.

Blake and Kierkegaard therefore propose to go beyond good and evil, to cast off this systematic perspective on them. But again, they want to go beyond good and evil in order to redeem them as true contraries; they do not want to cast off good or evil per se, but what we might call good-and-evil. This is so despite Blake's apparently total rejection of the categories altogether through such statements as "The Combats of Good & Evil is Eating of the Tree of Knowledge The Combats of Truth & Error is Eating of the Tree of Life" (VLJ, 553) and Los's exclamation "I care not whether a Man is Good or Evil--all that I care/Is whether he is a Wise Man or a Fool" (J, IV, 91:54-55; 249). As we shall see, the terms "Truth and Error" become the new poles in the dialectic of life for both Blake and Kierkegaard. But truth, rather than being a rejection of good and evil, is their dynamic dialectic, while error is their static cycle.

Kierkegaard states his position on good and evil in phrases almost identical to his statements about the finite and the infinite. Again, one must choose good or evil in the interests of true becoming or life; good and evil belong only to the static realm of being:

It is possible to be both good and bad, as we say quite simply, that a man has tendencies to both good and evil. But it is impossible at one and the same time to become both good and bad . . . take the individual out of the medium of imagination, the medium of being, and place him in existence: Ethics will at once demand that he be pleased to become, and he becomes--either good or bad. . . . This summa summarum, that all men are both and bad, does not concern Ethics in the least. For Ethics does not have the medium of being, but the medium of becoming, and consequently rejects every explanation of becoming which deceptively explains becoming within being, whereby the absolute decision that is rooted in becoming is essentially revoked, and all talk about it rendered essentially nothing but a false alarm.

(CUP, 376-7)

This same distinction between being both good and bad versus becoming one or the other seems to be implicit in Blake's statement "Good & Evil are Qualities in Every Man whether a Good or Evil Man" (VLJ, 553). The distinction is latent and in this sense non-existent until one chooses to become either good or evil; as Kierkegaard puts it, "only when I have absolutely chosen myself have I posited an absolute difference, the difference, that is to say, between good and evil" (E/O, II, 228). Yet at the same

time, the distinction is not between good and evil but between whether to live according to the absolute distinction (the "true" perspective) or whether to exclude it (the false perspective):

What is it, then, that I distinguish in my either/or? Is it good or evil? No, . . . My either/or does not in the first instance denote the choice between good and evil; it denotes the choice whereby one chooses good and evil/or excludes them. Here the question is under what determinants one would contemplate the whole of existence and would himself live.

(E/O, II, 172-3)

Here again, the either/or does not "in the first instance" denote the choice between the contraries, but the choice between two perspectives on the contraries. And even though choosing the right perspective involves choosing one of the contraries, this latter choice remains in a sense secondary in importance. The question that further arises once more then is in what sense these contraries are truly absolutes. If it matters more that one choose to live according to good or evil than whether one chooses to live according to good instead of evil, are the contraries not equallized?

Kierkegaard's idea of how one goes beyond good and evil in order to preserve them is best illustrated by turning to his analysis of the Abraham-Isaac story in Fear and Trembling. The conventional morality of good-and-evil

would call Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac "evil," and Abraham a murderer. Yet Abraham knows within himself (as conventional morality cannot know) that he has been told to sacrifice Isaac by God. Abraham is breaking one law--the law of conventional morality--to obey God's law, and these two laws are absolutely opposed in this instance. The laws of society become suddenly transformed, for Abraham, from being fair and just laws into a temptation--the temptation to destroy God's command, to turn back from the higher law to the lower. And this temptation is the greater for the fact that Abraham must face it entirely alone, as an individual totally apart from society (including even his wife, to whom he is forbidden to speak of this command).

Abraham is therefore at the highest pitch of "dread," in "fear and trembling" at the decision which faces him. He is faced with the realization (characteristic of dread) that what was once a positive state, his protective and fatherly relation to his son Isaac, has now become a negative state which he must repudiate. "Dread" attempts to hold him back, to keep him from leaping out of this state, but Abraham, the "knight of faith," conquers this spectre of dread by making the leap of faith. He moves to sacrifice Isaac--and receives Isaac back again, saved by God's substitution of a lamb even as he draws the

knife. He and Isaac are reunited as father and son in a luminous instance of "repetition"--their relationship transformed or infinitized by the test of faith. Isaac is in a sense no longer merely a given but something Abraham has earned; hence their relationship is no longer static but dynamic, as is Abraham's relation to God. Abraham's relationship to both the finite (Isaac) and the infinite (God) has been transformed utterly.

But how has orthodox morality blurred the distinction between good and evil? Is it not rather Abraham who blurs the distinction by committing (or nearly committing) an "evil" act yet claiming that it is "good"? The opposition at stake here is perhaps better re-phrased as the difference between love of the finite (Isaac) and love of the infinite (God). That is, conventional morality (and Abraham, insofar as he is a conventional father) has blurred the distinction between loving the finite and loving the infinite. God's command forces Abraham to confront the opposition between his love for Isaac and his love for God--to sharpen that opposition by being forced to choose. But the ultimate choice turns out to be not the choice between Isaac and God (since Isaac is in fact returned to Abraham), but between existing without any awareness of the distinction between love of Isaac and love of God, and existing with the awareness of that

distinction. And again, the only way Abraham can attain such awareness is through the decision.

Here again, despite the apparent casting-off of one of the contraries (Isaac), that contrary is nonetheless paradoxically "redeemed." It is redeemed in two senses--literally, one might say, in the fact that Isaac is saved at the last minute. But it is also redeemed in the sense that it is not merely Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac which brings the absolute distinction into being, but his great love for Isaac. Only because his love for Isaac is absolute does the conflict between the two loves become so intense; his decision is not an easy one but excruciatingly difficult. In other words, his "embrace" of Isaac is as decisive for the choice as is his "casting-off." This is why one cannot say that one contrary--love of Isaac/the finite--is "at fault" and to be cast off, while the other contrary is therefore good and to be embraced, the sole redemption. Once again, the perspective which does not differentiate between the contraries is more properly what is at fault.

This Abraham-Isaac illustration raises a number of crucial issues concerning good and evil--not the least of which is the status of murder in Kierkegaard's ethics. I shall return to these issues, considered also in conjunction with Blake's ideas about good and evil, presently.

For now, we should return to an illustration of Blake's ethical stance by considering his response to another Biblical tale, also involving the crime of murder --but this time a completed murder. This is Blake's short poetic drama The Ghost of Abel, written in response to Byron's Cain. It is clear that Byron holds up Cain as a hero superior to Abel, someone who has a great intellectual curiosity and spiritedness which Abel lacks. Byron implies that Cain's murder of Abel is the necessary outcome of his intellectual quest, for in seeking the ultimate "knowledge," Cain is seeking (wittingly or unwittingly) death. But unlike the traditional accounts of Adam's and Eve's fall into death as also being the result of seeking ultimate knowledge (knowledge of good and evil), Byron's account does not seem to offer Cain's pursuit of ultimate knowledge as a kind of warning or negative precept. Byron rather celebrates Cain as a heroic quester beyond good and evil, whose murder of Abel is not so much "evil" as a sign of his superiority to orthodox good and evil; and he laments that Cain should be thus exiled for his superiority.

Blake's response in The Ghost of Abel seems to be that on the contrary, Byron is wrong--hence his address to "Lord Byron in the Wilderness" and his remonstrance "can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah?" Blake seems

to agree that Byron's Cain is indeed a visionary or poetic genius who in that sense does go (or "see") beyond good and evil. But he objects that Cain has misinterpreted his vision--and that his response, the murder of Abel, is therefore profoundly wrong.

Byron's Cain has been taken on a visionary journey by Lucifer, a journey which essentially shows Cain man's insignificance in the universe, and the universe itself as a vast conglomerate of whirling spheres of dead matter. It is this materialism of Can's vision which Blake seems to find most objectionable, for it has blurred the outlines of Cain's (and Byron's) vision, the determinate black line of life. As Blake objects in his short prologue addressed to Byron:

. . . Nature has no Outline:
 but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune: but
 Imagination has!
 Nature has no Supernatural & Dissolves:
 Imagination is Eternity

(1; 268)

Cain has correctly seen that nature is merely dead matter; he has correctly seen the Orc cycle of generation and death to which nature is subject. This is why he is a visionary--because he has seen the cycle clearly from a perspective outside it. But his mistake is in then succumbing to that vision as representing the whole of life

instead of merely a part of life--the cycle of nature. This vision of life as ultimately ending only in death is what leads him to murder Abel, in an attempt to murder not only Abel but the God who has made such a world. Cain refuses to see the immortality of the spirit which transcends this cycle of nature (rather ironically, since his own vision of this cycle is itself a perspective beyond it). Further, by murdering Abel, Cain introduces an entire cycle of self-destructive vengeance into the world--the vengeful good-and-evil of orthodox morality. In Blake's coda to Byron's drama, the ghost of Abel appears to Adam and Eve as they mourn over Abel's body, and cries out savagely for vengeance, that Cain in turn be killed in retribution. But "Jehovah" replies "He who shall take Cains life must also Die O Abel/And who is he? Adam wilt thou, or Eve thou do this" (1:15-16). The vengeful "Life for life! . . . Sacrifice on Sacrifice Blood on Blood" which Abel demands is no better than Cain's original murderousness. The victim is no better than his murderer, not least because Abel in turn shows Adam and Eve the same chilling vision of death and nothingness that Lucifer once showed Cain (and Cain all too vividly "showed" Abel). "Abel is dead & Cain slew him! We shall also Die a Death/And then! What then?" cries Adam, "be as poor Abel a Thought: or as This!"

(referring apparently to Abel's corpse lying before them) (1:19-21; 269). The victim and the murderer with their respective visions of death have become equallized in a static law of action and reaction, a cycle of sin and moral retribution which Blake represents by Satan. When Jehovah offers a way out of the cycle by replying "Lo I have given you a Lamb for an Atonement instead/Of the Transgressor, or no flesh or Spirit could ever Live" (2:10-11; 269), Satan appears, insisting "I will have Human Blood & not the blood of Bulls or Goats/And no Atonement . . . Thou shalt Thyself be Sacrificed to me thy God on Calvary" (2:13-17; 269). But Jehovah appears to have the last word, replying "Such is my Will. That Thou Thyself go to Eternal Death," and the drama ends with a chorus of angels celebrating "the Forgiveness of Sin," "Peace/Brotherhood and Love."

This forgiveness, atonement, or what one might call "love" is the central way through which Blake and Kierkegaard hope to break out of the static cycle of good and evil. This can be either man's love or God's love. In Kierkegaard's Abraham-Isaac interpretation, Abraham is saved from sacrificing Isaac (committing murder) by God's love, symbolically represented by the lamb which he substitutes for Isaac. And Abraham is also saved by his own great love for Issac and for God, the love whose intensity

makes his struggle so difficult and which therefore brings the saving "qualitative difference" of the eternal into time. This great passion in Abraham is what differentiates him from ordinary men--so entirely differentiates him that they should not even consider following his example, as Kierkegaard stresses repeatedly. The atonement through a sacrificial lamb also seems to be Blake's solution to the cycle of vengeance implied by Byron's Cain; and implicit too is the idea that Abel should forgive Cain's sin rather than seek to avenge it. The Biblical account of the Cain-Abel story has God descend and put a mark on Cain to prevent him from being murdered out of vengeance. The significant feature in common with Blake's and Kierkegaard's ideas about how one breaks out of the cycle is that something transcendent breaks into the cycle from outside--the higher law of God, truth, or life which is beyond orthodox good and evil yet still not lawless. But where Blake and Kierkegaard radicalize this seemingly orthodox salvation through grace is in their equal and opposite (or perhaps more than equal and opposite) emphasis on the individual's passion or faith which brings in this transcendence from the outside. While this is not emphasized in The Ghost of Abel, it is significant that Adam and Eve resist the cycle of vengeance by choosing to believe in "the Visions of Jehovah." They see death

before them in Abel's corpse, "yet Jehovah sees him/Alive & not Dead," says Eve, and urges further (as Blake is undoubtedly urging Byron) "were it not better to believe Vision/With all our might & strength tho we are fallen & lost" (2:1-2). They do choose to believe with great passion--"with all [their] might & strength," and it is clear too that the struggles of Blake's Los in the prophecies emphasize the active role that human passion must play in escaping from the static cycle. Significantly, this also seems to have been an option for Byron's Cain, who realizes that his capacity for love is what differentiates him from Lucifer--and yet rejects this escape from the cycle (II, ii, 305-338).

Abraham and Cain are both visionaries, men of great passion whose passion is what essentially takes them beyond good and evil. But what saves them from embodying an intensity of passion which we might call nihilistic "will"? Murder is surely just such an act of nihilistic passion--yet Kierkegaard's Abraham is ready to murder his own son, and Kierkegaard seems to be telling us that this readiness is the right or true thing for Abraham to exhibit. By contrast Blake seems to feel that Byron's Cain is wrong to murder Abel--and yet Blake shares the same visionary ideal of going beyond good and evil and to that extent must surely acknowledge that Cain is a visionary

like himself (and like Blake-Los). Furthermore, Blake elsewhere sometimes seems to condone murder, through such remarks as "sooner murder an infant in its cradle, than nurse unacted desires" (MHH, 10:68; 37), and his response of "bravo" to Lavater's aphorism "The most stormy ebullitions of passion, from blasphemy to murder, are less terrific than one single act of cool villany" (No. 63; 575). What are we to make of these confusing attitudes toward murder? And what is the real difference between the two "murderers" as Blake and Kierkegaard interpret them?

The difference is that between the "knight of faith" (Abraham) and the "sinner" (Cain), and together these are the true contraries of life in its ethical-religious sphere--the contraries which truly stand beyond the good-and-evil of "negation." Both Abraham and Cain act, which is why they are contraries (and visionaries) rather than negations. But Abraham is the man who acts "for good" while Cain is the man who acts "for evil," as we shall see. Both Blake and Kierkegaard try to differentiate "sin" or "acting for evil" as a contrary rather than a negation (which both call "error"); and for both, sin can be redeemed because it is an act. This is how they hope to avoid the potential nihilism, the sheer willfulness, of their joint claim that essentially all action is "good" (or more accurately, "true") and all inaction is evil (or

false). Some actions are "sinful"--which is to say, profoundly bad--yet they are nonetheless redeemable because they are actions.

1. The Knight of Faith and the Sinner

Both Abraham and Cain are taken on a journey beyond good and evil--Abraham taken by God, Cain taken by Lucifer. Both are confronted with a potentially nihilistic vision of life as emptiness or nothingness: Cain sees that this world and the entire universe are dead matter, Abraham is told to destroy that which he cares most about in this world. Both stories hinge on the same conflict between the finite and the infinite: Cain's vision of the infinite seems to annihilate the significance of the finite, just as Abraham's vision of the infinite tells him to annihilate the finite. But in the face of this potentially nihilistic vision, their responses are very different. Cain responds with a hatred and violence that seeks to destroy not only the finite (Abel) but also the infinite (God). Abraham, by contrast, responds with love, even though God has made this terrible demand upon him.

Cain is a "sinner" because he has acted, but acted with the wrong passion: the passion of hatred instead of the passion of love. This is why his god is Lucifer; for Kierkegaard, it would be almost as if Cain's hatred for

and jealousy of Abel produced this God, just as Abraham's intense love for Isaac and for God produces the God of love who similarly manifests himself to Abraham. This means that when one acts--that is, acts with the energy and passion that essentially define an act for Blake and Kierkegaard--one brings either the God of good (God, love) into time or the God of evil (Lucifer, hate) into time. One thereby places oneself "in relation to the eternal" (in Kierkegaard's phrase) simply by having posited the choice between good and evil. Even the sinner who has chosen the evil (and thereby realized the wrong god) has put himself in relation to the good (the eternal) by virtue of having posited the choice. Byron does not emphasize this moment of choice or crisis as Blake and Kierkegaard would do--the moment when Cain realizes he has a choice between love and hate and chooses hate. But nonetheless Blake and Kierkegaard would want to argue that he did have that moment of choice, and that despite choosing the evil Cain nonetheless places himself in relation to the eternal or the good. At the same time, both would argue that this does not equate God with Lucifer, or good with evil--the contraries remain qualitatively distinct, far more distinct after this decisive moment of choice than they were before the choice was made. As Kierkegaard formulates the difference,

The absolute duty may cause one to do what ethics would forbid, but by no means can it cause the knight of faith to cease to love. This is shown by Abraham. The instant he is ready to sacrifice Isaac the ethical expression for what he does is this: he hates Isaac. But if he really hates Isaac, he can be sure that God does not require this, for Cain and Abraham are not identical.

(FT, 84)

The precariousness of this assertion that God and Lucifer are qualitatively distinct is very clear, as is the precariousness of the concomitant assertion that the passion of love can be clearly differentiated from the passion of hate. What about the insane individual, who thinks that his hatred is actually a form of love, or who translates love into murderous action (again, as Abraham actually does here)? Insanity is indeed a very real danger for this intensely private and subjective choice, as Kierkegaard acknowledges; this is why he repeatedly cautions us against following Abraham's example, and repeatedly emphasizes Abraham's extraordinary character.

How can one know, when confronted with the decision and the leap, whether one is making the leap of faith or committing a terrible sin? One cannot know with any objective (i.e., material, external) certainty, is Kierkegaard's reply. Both faith and sin are "incomprehensible": Abraham receives Isaac back again "by virtue of the absurd," in Kierkegaard's phrase. And his Abraham

wonders after the event whether he has sinned (FT, 28-29). But it seems that two factors primarily determine the difference between faith and sin. The first has to do with the individual--with the intensity of his passion or conflict. This determines whether one stands in active relation to God (either in the relation of faith or in that of sin) or stands in no action relation to God (in the state of negation or error). But one can have the wrong kind of passion--hatred instead of love--which is therefore "sin." It is crucial to both Blake and Kierkegaard, however, that the individual cannot sin unknowingly. In other words, he can always differentiate between love and hate, because by putting himself in relation to God he essentially receives a revelation from God as to what sin is. As Kierkegaard puts it, "sin is, after having been informed by a revelation from God what sin is, then before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself" (SUD, 227). Blake makes the same appeal to revelation when he says "Do or Act to Do Good or to Do Evil who Dare to Judge but God alone" (Annotations to an Apology for the Bible, P 118, p. 609), and "no man can do a Vicious action & think it to be Virtuous. no man can take darkness for light. he may pretend to do so & may pretend to be a modest Enquirer, but he is a Knave." This latter

statement concludes a passage which with remarkable clarity describes Blake's version of the distinction between the sinner and the knight of faith:

Paine is either a Devil or an Inspired man. Men who give themselves to their Energetic Genius in the manner that Paine does are no modest Enquirers Examiners. If they are not determinately wrong they must be Right or the Bible is false. as to modest Enquirers Examiners they will always be found to be neither cold nor hot & will be spewed out.

(Annotations to an Apology
for the Bible, P 4, p. 603)

2. Sin and Error

In the passage above, Blake describes not only the sin-faith opposition--the opposition of true contraries--but the opposition between sin and error. Those in error are the "modest Enquirers" or "Examiners" who "will always be found to be neither cold nor hot & will be spewed out." One way of understanding the difference between sin and error is that the sinner is often the individual who begins the cycle of negation or error. Yet he is himself outside it, as the one who begins it; Cain is the first murderer. His "sin" can therefore be redeemed, but the cycle of vengeance or moral good-and-evil which it introduces cannot be. In this respect he is much like Blake's Orc, who brings "energy" (against Urizenic inaction) into life, but the wrong kind of action which results in a

static cycle. As Frye puts it, "Orc brings life into time; the shaper of Orc brings life in time into eternity" (FS, 251). Cain's murder is a sin; but other murders, murders within the cycle of vengeance, are more accurately negations.

"Sin is not a negation but a position," Kierkegaard declares; in other words, sin is a contrary (SUD, 227). This contrary which Kierkegaard calls a "position" Blake similarly calls a "positive"; in his words, "Contraries are Positives a Negation is not a Contrary" (M, II, 30--frontispiece, 128). As a position or positive, sin is a leap, just as faith is: "When sin is posited in the particular individual by the qualitative leap, the distinction is then posited between good and evil," Kierkegaard declares (CD, 100). Once again, Blake and Kierkegaard are attempting to leap beyond the determinism of the idealist system, the determinism which declares not only that one is always already "saved," but that one is always already "in sin." The system has annulled sin just as surely as it has annulled faith, according to Kierkegaard. Again, logic claims to encompass or to "understand" sin--to explain how it happens and how it is annulled. But "to want to explain logically the entrance of sin into the world is a stupidity," Kierkegaard exclaims:

Every science has its province either in immanent logic, or in an immanence within a transcendence which it cannot explain. Now sin is precisely that transcendence, that discriminem rerum, by which sin enters the individual as an individual. In no other way does sin enter the world, and never has it entered otherwise.

(CD, 45)

"The dialectic of sin is directly contrary to that of speculation," he claims (SUD, 251); it is in other words a spirited act of freedom, not a necessary and inevitable corruption into which the individual gradually and imperceptibly declines. Hegelian Christendom "is so far from being what it calls itself that the lives of most men are, Christianly understood, too spiritless even to be called in a strictly Christian sense sin" (SUD, 235). The spiritless are more properly in the state of error or negation, the passive state which does not stand in any relation to God, either in the relation of faith or in that of sin. Instead of this state of spiritlessness, Kierkegaard exclaims, "far rather let us sin, sin out and out, seduce maidens, murder men, commit highway robbery--after all, that can be repented of, and such a criminal God can still get a hold on" (CUP, 485).

Blake makes the same distinction in The Four Zoas when he announces that "Error can never be redeemed in all Eternity/But Sin Even Rahab is redeemd in blood & fury & jealousy" (IX, P 120:48-49; 375). He also makes

this distinction in A Vision of the Last Judgment:

Forgiveness of Sins is only at the Judgment Seat of Jesus the Saviour where the Accuser is cast out. not because he Sins but because he torments the Just & makes them do what he condemns as Sin & what he knows is opposite to their own Identity.

(P 93; 555)

The Accuser is cast out "not because he sins," but because he makes people live a spiritual death instead of life; he hinders or negates them, thus hindering action, the realization of one's "eternal validity" (in Kierkegaard's phrase), identity, or true self. As Blake also says,

We do not find any where that Satan is Accusd of sin he is only accusd of Unbelief . . . Satan thinks that sin is displeasing to God he ought to know that Nothing is displeasing to God but Unbelief & Eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil

(VLJ, P 86; 553)

Only unbelief and eating of the tree of knowledge are displeasing to God because they are errors of passivity and inaction. Unbelief is passive because it is a negation of belief, a refusal to make the leap; eating of the tree of knowledge is passive because it is also a negation or abstraction which tyrannizes over life. Blake explicitly identifies unbelief with negation in Jerusalem, when he says "Negations exist not: Exceptions & Objections & Unbeliefs/Exist not" (I, 17:34-35; 160). The distinction

between sin and error is also implicit in Blake's remark that "when a Religious Man falls into Sin, he ought not to be calld a Hypocrite: this title is more properly to be given to a Player who falls into Sin whose profession is Virtue & Morality & the making Men Self-Righteous" (J, III, 52; 199). The hypocrite once more is the plagiarist and pretender, the negation whose profession is good-and-evil. It is also significant that the context for this statement is a diatribe against religions of vengeance, for it emphasizes that sin is what can be forgiven, in contrast to the error which must be cast off: "Listen! Every Religion that Preaches Vengeance for Sin is the Religion of the Enemy & Avenger;/And not of the Forgiver of Sin, and their God is Satan, Named by the Divine Name" (J, III, 52; 199). Forgiveness of sin is essential if one is to break out of the static cycle, as Los clearly realizes:

If I should dare to lay my finger on a grain of
 sand
 In way of vengeance; I punish the already
 punished: O whom
 Should I pity if I pity not the sinner who is
 gone astray!
 O Albion, if thou takest vengeance, if thou
 revengest thy wrongs
 Thou are for ever lost!

(J, II, 45:33-37; 192)

And he opposes the notion of atonement through human sac-

rifice, exclaiming "Must the Wise die for . . . Atonement? does Mercy endure Atonement?/No! It is Moral Severity, & destroys Mercy in its Victim" (J, II, 35:25-26; 179).

This rejection of vengeance is entirely in keeping with Blake-Los's "modulation of his fires" in the last three prophecies, and the corollary redemption or ransom of both contraries. And it is clear that this "forgiveness of sin" depends entirely upon making the distinction between sin and error.

It would seem, then, that sin is actually somewhere between error and the leap of faith. Like the leap of faith, sin is a spirited act, albeit an act for evil instead of good. On the other hand, this kind of spirited leap leads to the destruction of spirit, the cycle of negation or error. Despite this alliance with error, however, for Blake and Kierkegaard sin remains more decisively differentiated from error than from faith by the one quality which it shares with faith: spiritedness or will.

Once again we have been led to the issue of "will" in this new dialectic of contraries. By keeping the notion of sin in their dialectic of truth and error, Blake and Kierkegaard are trying to keep the Christian element of will in what otherwise might appear to be a purely Socratic definition of sin as error. They are attempting

to find the middle ground between Socrates and Christ as yet another way of finding the ideal dialectic of reason and passion, or intellect and will--a dialectic which combines the two in truly dynamic unity. This is the culminating dialectic of mutually exclusive perspectives which sums up the pattern of contraries and negations we have seen repeated in numerous spheres: the dialectic of truth and error. Socrates and Christ are the representative "passionate individuals" who stand alone in the clear light of this distinction.

3. Christ and Socrates

Christ is very decided on this Point. "He who is Not With Me is Against Me" There is no Medium or Middle State & if a Man is the Enemy of my Spiritual Life while he pretends to be the Friend of my Corporeal he is a real Enemy

--Blake, Letter to Mr. Butts, April 25, 1803

While Socrates politely and indirectly took away an error from the learner and gave him the truth, speculative philosophy takes the truth away politely and indirectly, and presents the learner with an error.

--Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript

Abraham and Cain are instances of "truth as subjectivity" in the sense of truth as individualism--the indi-

vidual beyond good and evil, the individual beyond the system. Both see the truth--that is, both put themselves in relation to God by their decisive actions--and their experience of this truth is deeply passionate and private. In spite of all appearances, Abraham is in the right; and in spite of all appearances, Cain too is "in the right"--or more accurately, "in the truth"--albeit in the truth of sin not faith. Job is another such individual, who figures prominently in Kierkegaard's Repetition and in his letters. "The secret in Job, the vital power, the nerve, the idea, is that in spite of everything Job is in the right," Kierkegaard declares (R, 112); yet all of existence contradicts Job and he is "an exception to all human juridicial interpretations." Job does not lose faith despite the fact that all of his "objective" experience works toward the destruction of faith. Job is also a sympathetic figure for Blake, who not only engraved plates for the Book of Job, but also celebrated Job as exemplifying the true "line of life":

a Line or Lineament is not formd by Chance a
 Line is a Line in its Minutest Subdivisions
 Strait or Crooked It is Itself & Not Intermea-
 surable with or by any thing Else Such is Job
 but since the French Revolution Englishmen are
 Intermeasurable One by Another Certainly a happy
 State of Agreement to which I for One do not
 Agree. God keep me from the Divinity of Yes &
 No too the Yea Nay Creeping Jesus from supposing
 Up & Down to be the same Thing as all Experimen-

talists must suppose.

(Letter to Cumberland, 12 April 1827; 707)

It is significant that in this passage Blake associates Job with his own clearest formulation of the principle of contradiction, the principle which he wants to uphold rather than to abolish. A line "is itself," not both itself and something else; it is absolutely "different" and not comparable to or intermeasurable by anything else. The abolition of the principle of contradiction leads to the "Divinity of Yes & No too the Yea Nay Creeping Jesus" --an indecisive both-and God. Only experimentalists, the reasoners who abstract from life to consider it hypothetically or experimentally, can see up and down as the same thing, a vision which Blake elsewhere equates with a vision of hell.⁴ Like Kierkegaard, Blake identifies true "contradiction" with the individual (Job) who stands alone against the crowd--the individual who steadfastly maintains his faith in spite of the fact that all of existence contradicts him. Such an individual celebrates this contradiction as intensifying the passion of faith--the passion which Blake and Kierkegaard argue is essential to life.

In celebrating the contradiction between the individual and the crowd, the individual and his external circumstances, Blake and Kierkegaard tried to find conso-

lation for their own often painfully isolated lives--not by trying to overcome that isolation through mediation with the crowd, but by intensifying that isolation as the very source of their integrity or truth of vision. The painfulness of this isolation nonetheless tried Blake's spirit severely:

O why was I born with a different face
 Why was I not born like the rest of my race
 When I look each one starts! when I speak I
 offend
 Then I'm silent & passive & lose every Friend
 . . .
 I am either too low or too highly priz'd
 When Elate I am Envy'd, when Meek I'm despis'd
 (Letter to Butts, 16 August, 1803; 700)

Whatever state he is in, existence is "incommensurate" with it. But what Blake seems to have learned at Felpham was that this "difference" could in fact save his vision, not necessarily destroy it. By learning to turn to "spiritual friends" he learned to turn to inwardness, to truth as subjectivity, to what Kierkegaard also calls "spirit." As Kierkegaard puts it, in a lament very similar to Blake's:

I was never like the others. Oh, in the days of youth, of all torments the most horrible, the most excruciating--not to be like others, never to live a single day without being painfully reminded that one is not like others, never to be able to run with the crowd . . . With the years, certainly, this pain disappears more and more; for in the measure that one be-

comes more and more spirit, it is no longer painful not to be like others. Spirit is just this--not to be like others.

(Lowrie, 230)

Once again, however, it is important to see that one casts off mediation or the crowd not in the interests of absolute isolation, but in order to be alone with the truth--to embrace it in a higher unity than that which the crowd represents. This is why Blake identifies the "line of life" not only with the individual (as he does in the example of Job here) but also with "the almighty" ("leave out this line and you leave out life itself"--see chapter 4, p. 151), for the two are one and the same. The individual finds truth or God only in himself, which is to say, in himself as separated from other people or the crowd.

For Kierkegaard, Socrates and Christ are the highest examples of such individuals, isolated from and ultimately murdered by the crowd for their exception to it. Both lived according to an absolute difference. Christ exemplified the difference, not the mediation, of God and man--the absolute irreducible paradox of the eternal in time. As for Socrates--"Socrates was great for the fact that he distinguished between what he understood and what he did not understand," claims Kierkegaard--and in this difference also "life" consists (Hamann, as quoted in the

epigraph to CD).

Socrates

"To understand oneself in existence was the Greek principle," Kierkegaard declares; unlike the Hegelian, "the Greek philosopher was an existing individual, and did not permit himself to forget that fact" (CUP, 315, 354). Instead of seeking to know "world-history" the Greek philosopher (and Socrates in particular) sought only to know himself:

And this is the wonderful thing about life, that every man who gives heed to himself knows what no science knows, since he knows what he himself is; and this is the profundity of the Greek saying, know thyself, which so long has been misunderstood in the German way as pure self-consciousness, the airiness of idealism. Surely it is high time to try to understand it in the Greek way, and then again in such a way as the Greeks would have understood it if they had had Christian presuppositions.

(CD, 70)

This attempt to combine Christian with Socratic thought to produce a truly "existential dialectic" leads Kierkegaard to a theory of truth as Socratic ignorance, an ignorance which he claims is an analogy for Christian faith. And this is remarkably like Blake's doctrine of truth versus error as a kind of faith as well.

According to Kierkegaard, the Hegelian claims that

truth is "knowledge" (meaning, rational knowledge) and further, that he understands or "knows" everything, the whole of life, by virtue of the all-comprehending system. But, Kierkegaard declares, "it is . . . impossible for a Hegelian to understand himself by means of his philosophy, for his philosophy helps him to understand only that which is past and finished, and a living person is surely not dead" (CUP, p. 272 n.). And Kierkegaard further adds, with characteristic sarcasm,

Socrates said quite ironically that he did not know whether he was a human being or something else, but an Hegelian can say with due solemnity in the confessional: "I do not know whether I am a human being--but I have understood the System." I for my part would rather say: "I know that I am a human being, and I know that I have not understood the system."

(CUP, 276)

Truth for the existing individual is not knowledge of the system, for that knowledge can be available only to God. The truly existing individual knows only that he cannot know life as a rationally complete system, and that all attempts to do so result in mere approximations which fall far short of the truth. The systematic thinker who tries to adopt God's perspective instead abstracts from life, and sees only a very limited part of life, the small "s" system circumscribed by the limits of his own very limited reason. Only by performing the leap beyond

reason does the existing individual bring true Being into time. And he sees this Being or Truth always unsystematically, as the irreducible paradox of the truth in time, never as system, being or truth simply, as it would be for God.

This is why for Kierkegaard Socrates is the truly existential thinker, for Kierkegaard's Socrates never loses sight of the absolute disjunction between knowledge and ignorance, a disjunction which Kierkegaard translates into very modern terms. To him, it is the disjunction between what one can rationally understand (i.e., by virtue of the idealist system) and what cannot rationally understand (i.e., that which lies beyond the system and is apprehended through faith and moral action). In Kierkegaard's version, this translates further into the disjunction between "error" or "illusion" (what reason calls knowledge) and "truth" (what reason calls ignorance), which is how he arrives at the odd equation of truth with ignorance. Truth is ignorance because it is finally a kind of faith not knowledge--and yet it remains a kind of knowledge very differently understood. Again, Kierkegaard will attempt to go beyond traditional categories, this time the distinction between faith and knowledge.

Socrates is thus true to the "negativity" pervading

existence, claims Kierkegaard, and he is so in several ways. The first is in maintaining the disjunction between what one can and cannot rationally understand. The second is in his strategy of indirection or irony, the strategy by which he maintains the disjunction. Since the truth is always beyond system or mediation, it can only be indirectly expressed; and indeed Kierkegaard is initially ambivalent about whether Socrates ever actually "gives" the learner the truth. Socrates is "irony in its total striving, and dialectic in its negative, emancipating activity," Kierkegaard declares (CI, 152); he leads the learner to recognize only his error, and leaves him on the brink therefore of truth, at the point where the learner must himself make the leap to the truth. Socratic irony is therefore the negative, corrosive exposure of error which we have seen to be the first, negative step in Blake's and Kierkegaard's dialectic. Its function is purely "maieutic," Kierkegaard claims--that is, it brings one to the point of making the leap but does not make the leap for one, because that would contradict the very essence of truth as Kierkegaard defines it. Truth cannot be mediated, which is why Kierkegaard himself must resort to often tortuous indirections in his own rhetorical strategies.

In his earliest work, The Concept of Irony,

Kierkegaard saw Socrates as pure negativity, offering no positive truth or content, and differentiates him from Plato in this respect. Plato is the visionary, vatic philosopher who gives one "content," whereas Socrates "plunges everthing into the nothingness of ignorance" (CI, 77). Socrates "touches the Idea," Kierkegaard allows, but it does not unfold itself to him; for Socrates, "infinity is not a manifestation but a limit" (158, 231). Hence there is "an absolute dissimilarity between Socrates and Christ," says Kierkegaard, for "the ironical personality [Socrates] is just the outline of a personality," whereas "in Christ dwelt the immediate fullness of godhead" (242 n.).

In his later works, however, Kierkegaard repudiates this early understanding of Socrates as too negative, and seeks increasingly to align Socrates with Christ. He realizes that his early conception of Socrates underemphasized the positive leap to truth, and that this idea of "the leap" is what needs correcting. Without explicitly introducing the category of the leap, Kierkegaard nonetheless took the presence of this leap for granted in his early characterization of Socratic irony when he insisted that this irony took one only to the brink of truth, after which one had to make the leap to truth oneself. Yet he later realizes that indeed there is no such

leap in the Socratic doctrine of truth and error--that one in fact embraces truth simultaneously with one's perception of error. For Socrates, one does not have a choice to embrace truth or error, which is why "sin" for Socrates is simply "error." Anyone who acts wrongly is "in error"; it is impossible that he could have seen the truth but willfully refused to follow it. And as we have seen, this is why Kierkegaard (and Blake) retains the Christian category of "sin" as an act of willful, clear-sighted wrongdoing: because they want to retain the qualitative disjunction, the decisive "leap," and therefore the element of "will" in this "intellectual" dialectic of truth and error.

Kierkegaard thus re-introduces once again here the element of "will" and the decisive leap as a way of combining Christian with Socratic thought. He reinterprets the Socratic maxim "know thyself" to mean "choose thyself" in order to introduce (very explicitly this time) the choice, the leap, and will into the dialectic. The early Kierkegaard interprets "know thyself" as containing no positive content; it simply means "separate yourself from the other," he claims (CI, 202). Knowing oneself is therefore only negatively defined, again as against a kind of "limit" or otherness. But in his later works he objects that Socratic thought "lacks a dialectical determi-

nant for the transition from having understood something to the doing of it" (SUD, 224). Even Socratic thought is too contemplative, and finally lacks sufficient movement.

"The ethical individual knows himself," he concedes,

but this knowledge is not mere contemplation (for with that the individual is determined by his necessity), it is a reflection upon himself which itself is an action, and therefore I have deliberately preferred to use the expression "choose oneself" instead of know oneself. So when the individual knows himself he is not through; on the contrary, this knowledge is in the highest degree fruitful, and from it proceeds the true individual.

(E/O, II, 263)

The individual must choose himself through performing the leap of faith, by which he attains his own "repetition." And this leap of faith is an analogy to Socratic ignorance, Kierkegaard claims: it is the leap beyond rational knowledge (error) to irrational faith (truth)--that is, from knowledge to ignorance. Socrates "conceived infinity in the form of ignorance," Kierkegaard says, by which he means that Socrates conceived infinity as beyond "knowledge." Nevertheless, this leap to what rational knowledge calls ignorance is in fact a leap to self-knowledge--that is, to another kind of knowledge, and what is more, to true knowledge and not error. This is because it is not really a blind leap in the dark, the usual definition of the leap of faith, but more accurately

a clear-sighted leap to one's "eternal self" made absolutely concrete or "realized" in existence.

Kierkegaard's Socrates thus embodies truth as subjectivity or inwardness primarily because for him the real truth lies in what cannot be directly apprehended through reason or communicated through language. The truth is always hidden, always ironically at odds with appearances or error. Yet this internal, subjective truth is nonetheless absolutely certain, Kierkegaard claims, despite the fact that objective/material reality almost always contradicts it. Kierkegaard sees such subjective certainty as epitomized by Socrates' "daimon" which he describes as the first instance of the "free decision of the mind in itself," the first instance in history of "truth as subjectivity." He agrees with Hegel that with Socrates' daimon the "deciding mind" is placed within the subjective consciousness of man; men are liberated from the tyranny of external gods in this "transition from the oracle's external relation to the individual to the inwardness of freedom" (CI, 189-190).

Blake's attitude to Socrates is much more ambivalent, as is his opinion of the Ancients in general. At times he criticizes the Greeks for celebrating "man in his Vegetated Spectre" (J, III, 52; 198), for too naturalistic or materialistic a view of man; at other times he celebrates

their passion for writing and likens himself to them in this respect ("the Ancients entrusted their love to their Writing, to the full as Enthusiastically as I have who Acknowledge mine for my Saviour and Lord, for they were wholly absorb'd in their Gods"--J, I, 3; 144). He also celebrates their indirection and difficulty, their emphasis on "rouzing the faculties to act," again an intellectual attribute with which he claims to identify (Letter to Dr. Trusler, 23 August, 1799; 676). And in his final formulation of life's dialectic as one of truth against error, Blake is most clearly "Socratic," most obviously aligned with a notion of Socratic intellect.

About Socrates himself, however, Blake is very ambivalent. "If Morality was Christianity Socrates was The Saviour," he declares (Annotations to Thornton, iii; 657), a remark which Frye interprets as a "sneer" (148). Blake here seems to identify Socrates with orthodox morality, and hence with the wrong kind of "reason." Yet Blake elsewhere praises Socrates, sometimes likening him to Christ, as when he says "Anytus Melitus & Lycon thought Socrates a very Pernicious Man So Caiphas thought Jesus" (J, IV, 93 [drawing]; 250). This comparison of Socrates to Christ also occurs in The Everlasting Gospel, where Blake says "Socrates taught what Melitus/Loathd as a Nations bitterest Curse/And Caiphas was in his own Mind/A

benefactor to Mankind" (P 33; 516). The key to Blake's relation to Socrates, however, lies in his well-known objection to the comment that the poet is a kind of inspired madman who does not know what he is saying: "Plato has made Socrates say that Poets & Prophets do not Know or Understand what they write or Utter this is a most Pernicious Falshood. If they do not pray is an inferior Kind to be calld Knowing Plato confutes himself" (VLJ, P 70; 544). What Blake objects to is not the idea that poets are inspired, but the idea that inspiration is not true knowledge, is not "objective" in some sense, rather than being a merely subjective frenzy. He objects to the idea that poets, despite being inspired, do not know what they are doing but do it blindly without real vision. True poets are always inspired, Blake would agree; and, true poets always know what they are doing. True poets are clear sighted visionaries who see the truth which inspires them.

For Blake, as for Kierkegaard, this vision of the truth is at once "intellectual" (i.e., clear-sighted, sharp, determinate) and "intuitive" (not reached through consecutive, logical reasoning). Blake makes a number of comments to this effect: "Knowledge is not by deduction but Immediate by Perception or Sense at once" (Annotations to Berkeley, P 214; 653); "What is it sets Homer Virgil &

Milton in so high a rank of Art . . . Is it not because they are addressed to the Imagination which is Spiritual Sensation & but mediately to the Understanding or Reason" (Letter to Dr. Trusler, 23 August 1799; 677); "Demonstration Similitude & Harmony are Objects of Reasoning Invention Identity & Melody are Objects of Intuition . . . God forbid that Truth should be Confined to Mathematical Demonstration" (Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds, P 200, 201; 648).

But does Blake, like Kierkegaard, really believe that one can choose truth or error once one has clearly seen the difference between them? What are we to make of Blake's most Socratic statement that "Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd" (MHH, 10:69; 37)? The main problem in attempting to answer these questions is that Blake is not nearly so systematic in presenting his ideas as is Kierkegaard--which is why Blake may be more a poet than a philosopher, and Kierkegaard more a philosopher than a poet. As we have seen, in maintaining the distinction between "sin" and "error," Blake seems to be trying to maintain the Kierkegaardian category of "the leap" versus a purely contemplative or intellectual Socratic category of "error." But this is not systematically argued by Blake; and when it comes to his "Last Judgment," error is "Burnt

Up the Moment Men cease to behold it," Blake claims (VLJ, P 95; 555). The implication seems to be very Socratic-- that the moment one clearly differentiates truth from error, error simply vanishes. There seems to be no choice or leap, simply clarifying one's vision to the utmost, at which point one automatically ceases to behold error, because error is the veil or illusion which has been burned off in the very act of perceiving the truth.

This seems to be a very "intellectual" Last Judgment, one with little or no place for faith, will, or choice. Yet here again Blake's idea of the contraries seems to suggest otherwise. Although "error" is burned up, the distinction between the contraries continues even on the Day of Judgment. This "day" (although it should be remembered that this is not necessarily only a strictly historical Day of Judgment, but the judgment which occurs each time an individual differentiates truth from error) ranges all the true contraries of life against each other: in William Blake's particular Day of Judgment, "Bacon & Newton & Locke" stand over against "Milton & Shakespear & Chaucer" (J, IV, 98:9, 254). It is crucial to remember that one distinguishes truth from error by distinguishing between these contraries. "Milton & Shakespear & Chaucer" are "right," "Bacon & Newton & Locke" are "wrong," and it is by making this differentiation that one casts off error

for truth. Error is the state of not making distinctions; truth is the state of making distinctions. It is the simultaneity of these two distinctions themselves--that between truth and error, and that between the contraries--which so confuses the issue of intellect and will here. One makes the intellectual distinction between truth and error only by making the intuitive distinction (the leap of faith) between the contraries. Thus in a way intellectual clearsightedness follows the leap of faith; yet Blake and Kierkegaard would want instead to insist on the simultaneity in order to insist on the perfect fusion of intellect and will, knowledge and faith, in this act of choice.

This Socrates-Christ, intellect-will distinction and fusion in Blake's and Kierkegaard's thought raises some further interesting similarities and differences between the two thinkers. Socrates plays almost no explicitly significant role in Blake's thought; the figure of Christ is far more prominent, particularly in Jerusalem, the very poem in which the truth-error dialectic is most clearly evident. For Kierkegaard, the reverse is true: Socrates is his prominent ideal, whereas Christ, although the culminating paradox of Being or the truth in time, is nowhere fully or explicitly discussed in his own person. This is in part Kierkegaard's deliberate strategy of indirection--his way of being true to his own doctrine that "truth is

subjectivity." Since Christ is only in the existing individual, Kierkegaard cannot fill in the content of Christ for us. But Blake's emphasis on Christ and Kierkegaard's emphasis on Socrates also underscores the difference between the visionary poet and the more skeptical, rational philosopher. Blake's emphasis is finally more on vision and revelation than on the skeptical, corrosive, intellectual activity of burning up error or illusion.

At the same time, however, Kierkegaard is in fact the one who is in a sense more explicitly "Christian" in his repeated insistence on the "leap" of faith, his careful revising of Socratic thought to include the Christian element of will. And Blake, by contrast, is the one whose final dialectic of truth and error appears almost straightforwardly Socratic, any emphasis on a leap, choice, or act of will much more difficult to find. It is worth noting also that Blake's Christ is peculiarly "Socratic," if we take Socratic to mean in part the intellectual activity of exposing error and making decisive discriminations. Blake's Christ, throughout all the changes in Blake's myth, is always a corrosive, decisive Christ, not a "yea nay Creeping Jesus," but a Christ who comes to separate the sheep from the goats. "Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them [i.e., the two classes of men]," declares Blake, "as in the Parable of

sheep and goats! & he says I can not to send Peace but a Sword" (MHH, 17; 39). Despite the fact that this is the early, satirically corrosive Blake, this same association of Christ with separating sheep from goats persists in Blake's later thought, where he declares "Jesus does not treat all alike because he makes a wide distinction between the Sheep & Goats consequently he is not Charitable" (Miscellaneous Prose, 673). The opening plates of Jerusalem are marked "sheep" and "goats" in opposite margins (I, 3; 143); and in A Vision of the Last Judgment Blake similarly declares "Christ comes as he came at first to deliver those who were bound under the Knave not to deliver the Knave He comes to deliver Man the Accused & not Satan the Accuser" (553). The most forceful expression of Christ's clear-sighted intellectual decisiveness is in a letter to Thomas Butts:

Christ is very decided on this Point. "He who is Not With Me is Against Me" There is no Medium or Middle state & if a Man is the Enemy of my Spiritual Life while he pretends to be the Friend of my Corporeal he is a Real Enemy--but the Man may be the friend of my Spiritual Life while he seems the Enemy of my Corporeal but Not Vice Versa

(25 August 1803; .697)

This clear-sightedness or vision, the clarity normally claimed as the prerogative of reason not faith--so murky, obscure, and superstitious, the blind leap in the

dark--is the higher kind of "intellect" which Blake and Kierkegaard want to associate with their Christ. Socratic intellect becomes the higher form of the debased "reason" or intellect both want to cast off; and Christian will is the higher form of the debased will or passion both also want to cast off. This is how Christ and Socrates come to represent the true, dynamic dialectic of Intellect and Will, the dialectic of true contraries which is "life." Blake sums up this dialectic of true passion and intellect in A Vision of the Last Judgment:

Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed & governed their Passions or have No Passions but because they have Cultivated their Understandings. the Treasures of Heaven are not Negations of Passion but Realities of Intellect from which All the Passions Emanate Uncurbed in their Eternal Glory . . . 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

(553-554)

True passion is intellectual passion, by which Blake means something neither rational nor irrational but spirited and spiritual--what he calls "spiritual friendship." "I never made friends but by spiritual gifts;/By severe contentions of friendship & the burning fire of thought," Los exclaims (J, IV, 91:16-17; 248); and it is the true friendship which opposes all the false friendships of "reason" and

mediation. For Blake, those lacking "intellect" will also lack passion because the two are one and the same. And the clear-sighted vision which results from this unity he calls "knowledge" not "faith":

to Labour in Knowledge is to Build up
Jerusalem: and to Despise Knowledge, is to
Despise Jerusalem & her Builders. And remember:
He who despises & mocks a Mental Gift in an-
other; calling it pride & selfishness & sin;
mocks Jesus the giver of every Mental Gift,
which always appear to the ignorance-loving
Hypocrite, as Sins. . . . Let every Christian
as much as in him lies engage himself openly &
publicly before all the World in some Mental
pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem

(J, IV, 77; 230)

f. Spirit and Matter

We have seen how Blake and Kierkegaard have tried to go beyond the static dialectic of intellect and will, first by decisively differentiating them, and then by recombining them in their highest form, the true "contraries" of Socrates and Christ. But it would appear that they have now consolidated an unbridgable gap between mind and body, spirit and matter--for if truth is subjectivity, something purely inner or spiritual, what role is left for "objectivity" to play? Again, they will make the same paradoxical claim that the only way to combine the two is to separate them.

1. Pantheism

Milton and Byron are redeemable "contraries" for Blake, but Wordsworth is an irredeemable "negation." "I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually & then he No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true Poetry or Inspiration," declares Blake; "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; 654-655). This might seem to echo his complaint against Byron that "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"; 268). But as I have suggested, Byron would seem to be redeemable because he does see the nihilism of any purely naturalistic vision, that such a vision leads to death. Byron may be wrong to celebrate death--but at least he is under no illusion that it is life. Wordsworth by contrast celebrates naturalistic vision and the static cycle as life.

Blake's attitude to nature and the body is complicated, still a matter of ongoing debate. Did he embrace or cast off material reality, the world of nature and the senses? The later Blake seems definitely to discard them,

exclaiming, "I do not behold the Outward Creation & . . . to me it is a hindrance & not Action it is as the Dirt upon my feet No part of Me" (VLJ; 555). Yet some would argue that Blake fervently believes even to the end that the imagination can transform objective reality--to which others reply that such a transformation so little approximates anything we would call "objective reality" that it is pure idealism, an effective repudiation of material reality. As usual, the truth may be somewhere in between; at least, this is Blake's ideal.

Whatever the confusions about Blake's attitude to nature, it seems that at no time did he ever give nature priority over spirit. Even when he celebrated Orc he was celebrating a principle of energy, which is to say, a principle of energy in which human consciousness or spirit was the main element. Only in The Songs of Innocence is there anything approaching an unambiguous pantheism--a nature which is spiritual: living, breathing, conscious, suffused with a divine spirit of love and maternal protectiveness. And it seems clear that Blake grew increasingly hostile to nature, just as he grew increasingly hostile to "mediations" of all kinds. The main reason he dislikes ancient or "pagan" philosophers is because of their pantheism, as his phrase "heathen philosopher" for Wordsworth would suggest. As he elsewhere declares "your Greek phil-

osophy (which is a remnant of Druidism) teaches that man is Righteous in his Vegetated Spectre: an opinion of fatal & accursed consequence to Man" (J, III, 52; 198).

What Blake dislikes about pantheism (and particularly Wordsworthian pantheism) is the suggestion that mind and nature are equal and easily mediated. Again, this is for him simply not true to the struggle of life as he conceives of it--the continual struggle to see who shall be master, the spiritual or the natural man. The struggle is always for, not against, hierarchy--the struggle to declare superiority rather than the equality and reciprocity which Wordsworth celebrates. To Wordsworth's "How exquisitely the individual Mind . . . to the external World/ Is fitted.--& how exquisitely too, . . . the external World is fitted to the Mind," Blake growls in reply "you shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted I know better & Please your Lordship," and "does not this Fit & is it not Fitting most Exquisitely too but to what not to Mind but to the Vile Body only & to its Laws of Good & Evil & its enmities Against Mind" (Annotations to Wordsworth's Preface to The Excursion; 656). Once again, Blake is reasserting the principle of contradiction which is being abolished--the contradiction now between existing "naturally" or "corporeally" and existing "spiritually."

Kierkegaard voices very similar objections to

Schelling's philosophy as "pantheistic," objections all the more bitter because he had placed great hopes in Schelling's criticisms of Hegel's idealism. "Reality" was the magic word which drew him to Schelling, for Schelling's "reality" was decisively to refute the Hegelian substance-as-subject. But Kierkegaard was soon deeply disappointed, complaining

The fact that philosophers talk about reality is often just as deceptive as when a man reads on a sign-board in front of a shop "Ironing done here." If he should come with his linen to get it ironed, he would be making a fool of himself, for the sign-board was there only for sale.

(Lowrie, 234)

All "systems" are in fact "pantheistic," Kierkegaard argues, because every system not only abrogates the distinction between good and evil and destroys freedom, but "every such system fantastically dissipates the concept existence." "Every system must be pantheistic precisely on account of its finality," he insists; every system, in order to be a system (which is to say, complete) must have mediated existence within itself, destroyed its transcendence "leaving no existing remainder" (CUP, 111). And Kierkegaard insists that one cannot worship God in nature because God is not so easily and directly present. "Nature is, indeed, the work of God, but only the handiwork

is directly present, not God"; a direct relationship through nature is "paganism." God is elusive; one must make the break with outer reality and turn to inwardness: "And why is God elusive? Precisely because He is the truth, and by being elusive desires to keep men from error" (CUP, 218).

2. History

Blake and Kierkegaard also assert the priority of spiritual truths over historical facts in Biblical interpretation. Blake writes

I cannot conceive the Divinity of the books in the Bible to consist either in who they were written by or at what time or in the historical evidence which may be all false in the eyes of one man & true in the eyes of another but in the Sentiments & Examples which whether true or Parabolic are Equally useful as Examples given to us of the perverseness of some & its consequent evil & the honesty of others & its consequent good. this sense of the Bible is equally true to all & equally plain to all

(Annotations to Bishop Landaff's
An Apology for the Bible; 607)

Only the inner, spiritual truths of the Bible are "equally plain to all"; historical evidence is contingent, uncertain, an approximation always. Further, there is no necessary relation between historical and spiritual truths; the latter do not depend upon the former for their truth, which is entirely different in kind.

This same disjunction between historical and spiritual truths is central to Kierkegaard's opposition to Hegel. For Hegel asserts that spiritual truth is in history, which Kierkegaard emphatically denies. All historical knowledge is uncertain, mere approximation; the realm of history and nature is the realm of contingency. Further, there can be no transition between historical and spiritual truths; since they are different in kind, it is only by a prodigious leap that one can bridge the gap from one to the other. Spiritual truths can not be reached through the mediation of history, through "a quantitative approximation" (CUP, 25-47). On the contrary, in such a rational, "objective" approach one loses the infinite passion which is the only way to such truths. Kierkegaard claims a deep affinity with Lessing's attack on the idea that there can be any transition from historical to spiritual truths, that instead there is a vast "ditch" requiring a leap. And he locates the whole force of Christianity in its demand that one make this leap with respect to the Incarnation. Christianity demands of its followers that they base their "eternal happiness" on the historical fact of the Incarnation--on an objective uncertainty (in the same sense that all historical facts are for Kierkegaard "objectively uncertain"), and on the absolute paradox that the eternal has come into time.

The Incarnation embodies the greatest possible paradox, the yoking together of God/the eternal and time/the historical--a paradox which only the utmost intensity of faith can apprehend. The disjunction between historical and spiritual truths thus becomes for Kierkegaard the source of faith and the basis for his definition of truth: "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual" (CUP, 182; K's italics).

This emphasis on truth as inwardness, faith, or subjectivity raises even more insistently the question of the status of historical fact in Blake's and Kierkegaard's thought. Yet it should be clear that for Kierkegaard it is crucial that there be such a thing as an unmediated fact, something which resists assimilation into pure thought. For without the tension between objective reality and thought, between historical and spiritual truths, there would be no faith, the passion of life which is predicated on this disjunction.

Here again Blake and Kierkegaard try to preserve the disjunction through preserving two separate dialectics which run along in parallel. Kierkegaard does not deny that history, logic, and nature may operate according to "mediation"; nor does he deny that the individual lives

within this actual "objective" history. But every individual has two histories, he claims--an inner or subjective one, and an outer, objective one:

even the humblest individual has a dual existence. He also has a history, and this is not merely the product of his own free actions. The inward work, on the contrary, belongs to him and must belong to him unto all eternity; neither history nor world history can take that away from him, it "follows him" either for joy or for sorrow. There rules in this world an absolute either/or, but with this world, philosophy has nothing to do. If I picture to myself an elderly man who looks back upon an eventful life, I admit that he can get a mediation out of it, for his history was intertwined with that of time; but in the most inward sense he gets no mediation. An either/or still separates enduringly that which was separated when he chose.

(E/O, II, 179)

Either/or thus rules in the realm of freedom, the realm of the spirit, Kierkegaard is claiming; both-and rules the realms of necessity with which true spirit has nothing to do. When he speaks of the task of life as the task of becoming subjective, he means not that one should seek to mediate reality within thought, but that one should try to live according to the dialectic of freedom not the dialectic of necessity. The struggle is always to assert the freedom of the spirit over matter or necessity--the struggle to live actively and in freedom instead of passively, as merely part of nature and therefore subject to

its necessity. We are part of nature and our bodies are subject to its necessity, Kierkegaard again would readily acknowledge; but we also have souls which can and ought to live by different rules.

Once again we find a close parallel in Blake, for as I have been suggesting, in the figures of Los and the Spectre of Urthona he retains the same pattern of two separate dialectics or perspectives on life. Los's struggle for mastery over the spectre is the struggle to live according to freedom and the laws of the spirit rather than to live by the laws of nature and necessity. This is the sense in which Los tries to turn objectivity into subjectivity or inwardness: he is not trying to assimilate reality into thought, but to master reality, to assert the superiority of spirit over matter.

Blake's retention of the Orc cycle along with the Los-Spectre dialectic in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem is therefore critical for understanding the place that material reality plays in his thought. The crisis of both poems is the sharpening of the opposition between these two dialectics: the revelation of the Orc cycle as the cycle of birth and death irrevocably bound to nature and hence as the Antichrist, and Los's subsequent battle with the Spectre, who symbolizes the Orc cycle taking over the realm of the spirit. As we have seen, Milton is also

structured on this same antithesis of two dialectics, even though the Orc cycle does not appear as such but rather takes the form of the static Blake-Hayley confrontation. In Jerusalem the Orc cycle appears in the figure of Luvah, and as in The Four Zoas ends in crucifixion on the Tree of Mystery (III, 65; 214). Significantly, while Blake identifies this Luvah with Christ, for this Christ there is no resurrection; the crucifixion marks the end of his story. This is because he is not really Christ but Anti-christ, the corporeal and historical Jesus. Just as Blake divided Orc and Urizen into true and false forms of themselves, he divides his Christ figure into two: the corporeal Christ who is Luvah, and the spiritual or visionary Christ who is "Imagination" or Los.

This crisis structure is also the structure of Blake's apocalypse, and this raises further issues in relation to Hegel and Kierkegaard. Blake's apocalypse is an apocalypse of perception, and in this respect is clearly aligned with what we might call Kierkegaard's "apocalypse." For both, this "apocalypse" is the moment of crisis or choice, when the antithesis between truth and error stands revealed and one must choose between them. As I have mentioned, this is what both call "the moment" or "the instant" (see I, 26-27 above). It is clear how very different this moment is from the "apoca-

lyptic" end of history in Hegel. Unlike Hegel's end of history, this apocalypse is fundamentally open-ended. It is not the end of history, but a repeated moment in yet out of history, a moment repeated as long as the individual lives. And it is open-ended also because it is the moment of choice, when one trembles on the brink not of an end but of a new beginning. Finally, it is a moment of rupture which involves a radical break from the past, rather than being a necessary outcome of that past, something gradually evolved out of it. It is not therefore progressive but a "repetition"; nonetheless, this repetition is not static because it truly reaches the eternal or absolute which is the goal of dialectic.

The apocalypse in Jerusalem and in A Vision of the Last Judgment, however, seems to mark an end of history for Blake as well, and in this respect he might seem very different from Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard is not interested in speculating about the end of history; indeed, this is the very perspective on life which he attacks in Hegel. Blake by contrast offers a vision of history which seems to be at once individual and what we might call "world-historical" and "progressive." For Blake, as for Kierkegaard, outer or objective history is a series of cycles: each Hegelian thesis and antithesis proves to be a false opposition, a war of contraries beneath negation's

banner which collapse into identity and stasis. But unlike Kierkegaard, in Jerusalem Blake seems to present history as a finite number of Orc cycles--seven, to be exact--which he calls "the seven eyes of God" (M, I, 23:52, 24:7; 118. See also Frye, 211). And he does seem to imply that in this final seventh Orc cycle the true Christ is appearing at last. It seems therefore that Blake is adopting here an all-inclusive, Hegelian perspective on history as progressive and as finite.

But Frye suggests that despite this progressivism, Blake's idea of history is nonetheless fundamentally different from Hegel's:

Blake also postulates a historical process which may be described as the exact opposite of the Hegelian one. Every advance of truth forces error to consolidate itself in a more obviously erroneous form, and every advance of freedom has the same effect on tyranny. Thus history exhibits a series of crises in which a sudden flash of imaginative vision (as in the French Revolution) bursts out, is counteracted by a more ruthless defense of the status quo, and subsides again. The evolution comes in the fact that the opposition grows sharper each time, and will one day present a clear-cut alternative of eternal life or extermination.

(FS, 260)

If Frye is correct, this means that the progress of history for Blake has been a kind of negative one, in which

the limitations of history or the historical perspective are what has been increasingly revealed. The progress has been not towards the revelation of history as spirit (or spirit as history) but the revelation of the absolute antithesis between history and spirit. Blake simply considers the Deism of his own time to be Christianity's absolute "consolidation of error," its lowest point and therefore its most potentially redemptive point. It cannot go further into error than it now has, and since this revelation of error in its most intense form is the fundamental prelude to apocalypse for Blake, that apocalypse is therefore at hand. And here again, even in these "world-historical" terms this apocalypse is not the end of history for Blake as Hegel's end of history is its end. For Blake it is or can be the end of fallen history; and what it leaves men with once more is the open-endedness of the choice. Blake the visionary has revealed to England that it can choose to follow truth or error:

The English nation in Blake's day has come to the historical crisis in which it has to choose whether it will follow the Orc cycle to its end or make the imaginative recreation of itself that will achieve a spiritual England as the Hebrew prophets achieved a spiritual Israel.

(FS, 406)

It is also arguable that despite the fact that Kierkegaard does not dramatize the current state of

affairs in his time--does not give us the equivalent of Blake's apocalyptic frenzy in Jerusalem--he conceives of it in much the same terms. For Kierkegaard, not Deism but Hegelianism is the "consolidation of error," Christianity at its lowest point, with the absolute paradox of Christian faith collapsed into the Hegelian system. He also is pointing out to his age that it stands confronted with the choice between following the Hegelian vision of life to its end (in nihilism) or making an imaginative recreation (or "repetition") of itself that will achieve a spiritual redemption. His rhetorical strategy may be all that really differentiates him from Blake here; Blake simply dramatizes his vision of the current crisis in a way that Kierkegaard does not.

Interestingly, Blake and Kierkegaard may look Hegelian when they are not, for one main reason. Both may be caught in an apparent self-contradiction by the fact that they are self-declared prophets with a special perspective on their times which most men have not, a perspective apparently self-contradictory because it implies that they also have a kind of Hegelian overview of the age. Most men live inside the Orc cycle of Hegelian dialectic, and cannot see its limitations, that it is not the whole of life but only a part of it. Blake and Kierkegaard claim to stand outside of it and to see

its limitations; but this stance implies the very all-inclusive, systematic Hegelian perspective which they are arguing is not available to existing individuals. But their final vision is more correctly a vision of potential, not finality: the potential for truth or error which men must activate themselves.

In conclusion, material reality and history are indeed very "real" for Blake and Kierkegaard. Nothing emphasizes this so much as the fact that they retain two separate dialectics for history and for the spirit--or for the outer and the inner perspectives on life. This retention of a separate both-and dialectic for the realms of necessity is how they hope to emphasize the intractability, the radical otherness of the material world. It is their attempt not to be pure idealists living in a shadowy world of abstractions. Yet Blake in particular is often criticized as rejecting absolutely the "reality principle," as seeking to transform the world totally into a realm of pure imagination.⁵ If he were doing this, he would banish the Orc cycle from his myth, and the struggle of Los and the Spectre would not be central to it. The Orc cycle is real, and cannot be banished from the world. But the spirit can master this Orc cycle, not by declaring that it does not exist, but by asserting its freedom from these rules of material necessity. The

spirit does not reject the body and material reality, but the body and material reality as all there is, as the whole of life. The spirit acknowledges that material reality operates by a certain dialectic, but asserts that the spirit need not operate according to this dialectic. In other words, this spiritual vision does not try to get rid of death, which it recognizes is impossible, but of what we might call death-in-life: the death of the spirit which results if it considers itself bound by the material necessity which binds the body.

V. Communication, Interpretation, and Authority

What Tarquinius Superbus spoke in his garden
with the poppies was understood by his son, but
not by the messenger.

--Hamann; epigraph to Fear and Trembling

I never in all my conversations with him could
feel the least justice in calling him insane;
he could always explain his paradoxes when he
pleased, but to many he spoke so 'that hearing
they might not hear.'

--John Linnell (artist friend of Blake)

Blake and Kierkegaard have always been notoriously difficult to interpret. Blake's myth, despite its roots in Gnosticism and Christianity, is a highly idiosyncratic amalgam of these and other systems of thought. We tend to forget how relatively recent Blake's integration into the canon of English literature has been--that it was not until the interpretive efforts of Yeats and Frye in the twentieth century that Blake was at all widely read or understood. Kierkegaard's works are deeply enigmatic as well, largely because of his use of literary pseudonyms, deliberately constructed fictional personae which many would argue conceal more than they reveal Kierkegaard's real views as author.

This interpretive "difficulty" once more arises from

the radical individualism and perspectivism so central to their philosophy. Blake not only develops a dialectic of perspectives in his myth, he also uses a good deal of what we might call verbal perspectivism throughout his poetry. His poetry, letters, and marginalia are also full of remarks about the essential individuality of perception. "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees," he remarks (in typically aphoristic style; MHH, 5:8; 35);

As a Man is so he sees . . . I see Every thing
I paint in This World, but Every body does not
see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is
more beautiful than the Sun & a bag worn with
the use of money has more beautiful proportions
than a Vine filled with Grapes. The tree which
moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of
others only a Green thing that stands in the
way.

(Letter to Dr. Trusler; 676-7)

Blake extends this last "guinea-sun" analogy in what has become his most well-known statement about the nature of perception:

What it will be Questiond when the Sun rises do
you not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like
a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company
of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is
the Lord God Almighty

(VLJ; 555)

The paradox of Blake's perspectivism is that despite the fact that everyone sees differently, some people see bet-

ter than others. The vision of the sun as a heavenly host is for him the true vision; the miser's vision of it as a guinea is narrowly circumscribed. Yet the miser's vision is true in the sense that it is a true measure not of the sun but of the miser; the limitations of the vision mark the limitations of the man.

Blake's individualistic theory of perception extends to specifically verbal interpretation as well. He equates verbal interpretation with interpretation generally in a passage from The Everlasting Gospel which also reiterates his belief in the individuality of perception:

The Vision of Christ that thou dost see
 Is my Visions Greatest Enemy
 Thine has a great hook nose like thine
 Mine has a snub nose like to mine
 Thine is the Friend of All Mankind
 Mine speaks in parables to the Blind
 Thine loves the same world that mine hates
 Thy Heaven doors are my Hell Gates
 Socrates taught what Melitus
 Loathd as a Nations bitterest Curse
 And Caiaphas was in his own Mind
 A benefactor to Mankind
 Both read the Bible day & night
 But thou readst black where I read white

(P 33; 516)

The inversion of values here--of love and hate, heaven and hell, black and white--demonstrates how very radical Blake's perspectivism is. The identification of Christ's face with the face of his beholder also emphasizes the extent to which for Blake the individual finds Christ

within himself. Interestingly, Blake also says of his Christ here that he communicates indirectly, through "parables," and to a specific audience--"the Blind." Blake's antagonist's Christ by contrast speaks directly (as "the friend") and to "all Mankind," a contrast which suggests that the blind are a fit audience though few, a select audience which necessarily understands or reads differently because they are blind. Blindness here would seem to suggest corporeal not spiritual blindness--an audience that sees more clearly in the visionary sense because its corporeal eyes are blind.

This suggests that Blake's verbal perspectivism may be in part at least a deliberate strategy to make things difficult, to make the reader work at understanding him. Certainly his friend John Linnell's comment that Blake often spoke in paradoxes so "'that hearing they might not hear'" would seem to confirm this,¹ as does Blake's retort to the Reverend Dr. Trusler

you ought to know that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak Men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the Ancients considered what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction because it rouzes the faculties to act. I name Moses Solomon Esop Homer Plato

(23 August 1799; 676)

Blake's battle against spiritual inertia occurs on all

fronts--not only in his attacks on the established religious, scientific, and aesthetic institutions of his day, but on the linguistic institutions or systems as well. Language also has become deadened and systematized; language also must be revitalized. And the way to do this is to make communication and interpretation "difficult"--which is to say, idiosyncratic and perspectival.

Blake nowhere articulates, however, such a coherent or deliberate verbal strategy, and it would be unwise to push the point too far. He does want to be understood, to have his meaning or vision fully revealed with all the brilliance of revelation. He is after all a self-styled visionary and prophet, a seer who above all wants to make his readers see the truth as he sees it. This is the fiercely strong-willed and dogmatic Blake whose voice comes through the confusion of the prophecies--the Blake whose clearly didactic intentions propel all his poetic enterprises. He has a complex problem to solve: how is he to overthrow the old institutional tyrannies (especially that of language) without destabilizing them so radically that all dissolve into indeterminacy? And if he seeks to assert his own authority, his alternative stabilizing truth, how is he to do so without simply re-establishing a dogmatic tyranny or system? Fundamentally, he will try to do so through establishing a new kind of

"authority," a new definition of "authorship" which exactly inverts the usual systematic notions of authority. And once more, his "perspectivism" is the paradoxically stable instability that he hopes will solve his problem.

Much of Blake's verbal perspectivism comes from such things as his eccentric names for the characters in his myth. The names of the Four Zoas, for example, resist easy interpretation into symbolic terms. Yet Blake has invented the names precisely to forestall such allegorizing or translation into a systematic symbolic code. And even if we do translate "Urizen," for instance, essentially as "reason," we are still forced to puzzle out Blake's changing attitude to (or perspective on) reason. It turns out that Urizen is not such a villain after all--that not Urizen but the Spectre is really reason or more properly false reason. And this means that Los, whom we may tend to translate too allegorically as "imagination" (and hence as more allied to passion than to reason) more properly represents what Blake comes to call "intellect." Even when Blake retains the same name for a character--as he does here in retaining Urizen's name but reversing his evaluation of him--his attitude towards that character can radically alter the character's real significance. It matters a great deal to our interpretation of Blake's myth to see that he does not want to re-

ject reason but false reason--that his ideal is not one of irrationality.

Blake's use of the word Christ in The Four Zoas and in Jerusalem provides another telling instance of the complex relation between words and meanings in his works. As I have mentioned, he calls both Luvah and Los "Christ." We can explain this away by saying that of course in the end they are all figures within a single individual. But it is highly significant that Luvah-Christ, who is sacrificed on the Tree of Mystery, is in fact the Antichrist, the historical and corporeal Jesus who was crucified in the very act of his incarnation, the "vegetable" Christ whom Blake decisively repudiates. He still calls this figure Christ; but his real meaning is that this Christ is the opposite of the real Christ, the spiritual Christ of imagination. This is the same use of the word Christ with exactly antithetical meanings which appears in the lines from The Everlasting Gospel quoted above. There it is equally clear that if "the Vision of Christ that thou dost see" is the opposite of the vision of Christ that Blake "dost see," the former vision is really that of the Antichrist.

But perhaps it is not so very clear whose vision is right and whose is wrong, and why; perhaps this is where Blake's perspectivism may get him into trouble. This same

strategy of radical reversals is everywhere throughout his work. His first and most clear-cut reversal of institutional values occurs in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, where he clearly inverts the values of reason and passion, heaven and hell, Satan and Christ, Devils and Angels. His subsequent inversions of the values of innocence and experience in the Songs are much more subtle and difficult to trace, but nonetheless, the essential pattern of radical reversal remains the same (as Hirsch has charted). Only his method has changed; now he much more subtly changes his evaluation of the states by altering the sequence of the plates and by omitting certain poems from the sequences at different times. This kaleidoscopic shifting of the plates provides the perfect metaphor for Blake's alterations, at once so radical and so conservative. The plates (and individual poems) remain the same, fixed metal plates indelibly engraved with fixed lines of poetry; but their significance is profoundly altered by their new sequence, by Blake's new perspective on them. Similarly, Blake's reversal of his attitude to Milton reveals his conservatism (he wants to "conserve" Milton or at least the best of Milton) and his radicalism (he conserves Milton by altering him profoundly, casting out that which is most abhorrent and recreating Milton in his own image). Lastly, Blake's Los-Spectre dialectic is a

radical transformation of the Orc-Urizen dialectic, one which conserves while profoundly altering the original dialectic of reason and passion. It is also his way of symbolically rendering all of these reversals in his myth, the structure of his own developing thought. This essential conservatism yet radicalism is the paradox of stable instability which lies at the heart of Blake's and Kierkegaard's "difficulty." If something is altered so profoundly that its value is fundamentally reversed, in what sense is it still "the same"? Where is the stability in this dialectic of perspectival reversals, the stopping point that prevents it from being an arbitrary and infinitely fluctuating transvaluation of values? Where and how, in other words, does interpretation arrive at a stable meaning and stop?

Here Kierkegaard's more explicitly articulated theory of interpretation may help to clarify these issues. Kierkegaard quite deliberately sets out to destabilize interpretation, to render it difficult. To this end he employs aphorisms, parables, and most of all literary pseudonyms whose explicit fictionality is designed to call into question the comprehensiveness of the point of view being expressed. Each pseudonym is only a point of view; each is only a perspective on the whole. The pseudonyms are "poetically actual subjective thinkers" (CUP, "A First

and Last Declaration")--that is, they represent not any single abstract objective perspective (the perspective of the Hegelian), but necessarily partial perspectives within existence. Constantine Constantius of Repetition is "case-hardened understanding," Victor Eremita of Either/Or is "sympathetic irony," the Fashion Tailor of Stages on Life's Way is "demoniac despair in passion," etc. (CUP, 264).

The pseudonyms constitute the central aesthetic strategy of Kierkegaard's interpretive perspectivism. They make the aesthetic works essentially into dramatic monologues--what Kierkegaard terms "dialectical lyrics" (FT)--and as such offer him the paradoxically objective subjectivity which he desires. All of the works are lyric outpourings, subjective confessionals; yet their objectivity lies in the fact that they are objective masks hiding the real author. They allow Kierkegaard most of all the indirection and incompleteness which is central to his theory of indirect communication--an indirection fundamentally opposed to the direct communication characteristic of Hegelian philosophy. He makes it clear that this attack on Hegelianism, not any political or legal considerations, is what entirely motivates his "secret writing":

My pseudonymity or polynymity has not had a casual ground in my person (certainly it was

not for fear of a legal penalty, for in this respect I am confident that I have committed no misdemeanor, and at the time the books were published, not only the printer but the Censor, as a public functionary, was officially informed who the author was), but an essential ground in the character of the production.

(CUP, "A First and Last Declaration"

Most simply put, Kierkegaard's philosophy of language differs from Hegel's on the same issue of immanence versus transcendence which divides them in all other respects. For Kierkegaard, meaning transcends the linguistic system exactly as the eternal transcends the systems of nature, history, and logic. And according to Kierkegaard, for the Hegelian, meaning is immanent in the linguistic system just as for the Hegelian the eternal is immanent in nature, history, and logic. For the Hegelian, truth is directly available in language; and it is equally accessible to all reader-interpreters. Language is mediation; the Hegelian author therefore communicates directly to his readers, giving them the meaning as finished "result." For this reason, Hegelian readers are apathetic and lazy; interpretation requires no strenuous activity because everything is always already understood in the very act of reading. Truth once more is "objectivity"--that is, directly available and immediately present in the "objective" linguistic system, the public form of mediation.

But for Kierkegaard, because "truth is subjectivity"

or "inwardness," it is not directly available in the objective system of language, just as it is not present in all such institutional forms of mediation. Truth can only be indirectly presented--as something beyond language, which offers merely a perspective on truth. Truth is available only to the reader who will make the leap beyond the limitations of language: just as the knight of faith must face and make the decisive choice between truth and error, so the Kierkegaardian reader must make an interpretive leap of faith between true and false interpretations of Kierkegaard's works. There is no directly available truth or stable meaning to take the choice away from him. Kierkegaard's reader must always be in a state of uncertainty, the uncertainty and state of striving that is life, not resting in the passivity of certainty and "result." Kierkegaard calls this indirection "existential communication," as opposed to the dogmatic "doctrine" of Hegelian Christendom.

Fear and Trembling provides the clearest example of Kierkegaard's theory of indirect communication in practice, and also raises the problems of this theory in a particularly interesting way. Its pseudonymous author is Johannes de silentio, whose name raises the central issue of language and silence in Kierkegaard's theory. For his claim that the truth lies essentially beyond language

would seem to mean finally that the truth resides in silence--clearly a notion fraught with difficulty and potential self-contradiction for any writer.

Fear and Trembling is also radically perspectival, a work which demands interpretation and reinterpretation and which is fundamentally about interpretation. Not only does Kierkegaard disclaim his own authority by employing a pseudonym, the pseudonymous author in turn prefaces the work with a disclaimer about his own authority, declaring

The present writer is nothing of a philosopher, he has not understood the System, does not know whether it actually exists, whether it is completed; . . . he is . . . an amateur writer who neither writes the System nor the promises of the System, who neither subscribes to the System nor ascribes anything to it.

(FT, 23-24)

Johannes, like all of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors, knows only that, unlike the Hegelian, he does not know everything; like Kierkegaard's Socrates, he knows only the radical difference between what he understands and what he does not understand. Clearly, then, he disclaims "authority"--but only the authority of the Hegelian systematizer. The question will be what kind of authority Kierkegaard will claim that he has in its stead.

Johannes now tells the story of "a man" who "once upon a time as a child had heard the beautiful story about

how God tempted Abraham, and how he endured temptation, kept the faith, and a second time received again a son contrary to expectation" (26). In telling this story of "a man" in the third person, Johannes once again disclaims his own authority--this time the authority of personal experience, the authority of the first person "I." And further, the "man" has no authority--he "was not a thinker, he felt no need of getting beyond faith; . . . [he] was not a learned exegete, he didn't know Hebrew, if he had known Hebrew, perhaps he would easily have understood the story and Abraham" (26). But this man does not "understand" the story, and as a result he ponders different interpretations of it, each of which understands it differently. Johannes presents us with four of these. In version I, Abraham pretends to be a murderer, turning on Isaac in a great fury, so that Isaac will not lose faith in God; Abraham thereby in a sense sacrifices himself, leading Isaac to hate him instead of God (27-28). In version II, all happens as in the Biblical version except that Abraham returns home desolate afterwards, and is forever unable to forget that God made this terrible demand upon him: "Isaac throve as before, but Abraham's eyes were darkened, and he knew joy no more" (28). In version III, Abraham feels guilt-ridden forever after the event, ceaselessly praying to God to forgive him for the

sin of being willing to sacrifice his son (28-29). Lastly, in version IV, upon their return Isaac loses his faith (29). Each of these versions also has a closing paragraph using the analogy of a child being weaned from its mother by various methods as a further interpretation of the tale, the analogy being that weaning is also a "collision" or crisis between a loving parent and a child such as Abraham is facing here. Yet this analogy which supposedly interprets Abraham's crisis is itself deeply enigmatic, and if anything stands in complete contrast to that crisis. As Kierkegaard says in his journal, "this collision [of mother and child in weaning] is easily resolved . . . happy is he who has not experienced more dreadful collisions"--such dreadful collisions as Abraham's, one assumes he means (FT, Translator's introduction, 12).

The main body of the work concerns itself with three "Problems": the problem of suspending the ethical (father-son relationship) for the religious (the God-relationship); the problem of one's absolute duty to God; and the problem of silence. Johannes formulates all of these not as statements but as questions, asking lastly "Was Abraham ethically defensible in keeping silent about his purposes before Sarah, before Eleazar, before Isaac?" This is the longest section of the work--three times

longer than the discussions of problems I and II--which together with Johannes de silentio's name suggests that indeed this relation between language and silence is the work's central focus.

As the knight of faith, "Abraham cannot be mediated," Johannes says, "and the same thing can be expressed also by saying that he cannot talk" (70). Abraham stands in an absolute relation to God, which means that he stands beyond all human relations including that of language. Just as he is "beyond good and evil," he is "beyond communication" and "beyond understanding," again in the restricted Hegelian sense of the word "understanding." "'From men man learns to speak, from the gods to keep silent,'" as Anti-Climacus elsewhere quotes Plutarch (SUD, 258). Abraham stands in the silence where one experiences "the delicious quickening of that lonely wellspring in every man, that wellspring in which the Deity dwells in the profound stillness where everything is silent" (CUP, 163). What Abraham does in sacrificing Isaac is literally unintelligible to the world, because it is not done for the sake of the world--for the sake of ethics--but for God, and God cannot be "understood." This is what differentiates the knight of faith from the tragic hero, for Kierkegaard. The tragic hero can be understood and can speak/make himself intelligible, because all he

does is for the sake of the ethical--for what Kierkegaard rather confusingly calls "the universal," in opposition to "the absolute" (God). If Abraham were required to make this sacrifice by the Church, for example, he would be "only a tragic hero. For the idea of the Church is not qualitatively different from that of the State, in so far as the individual comes into it by a simple mediation. . . . Such an ecclesiastical hero expresses in his act the universal, and there will be no one in the Church --not even his father and mother, etc.--who fails to understand him" (85). The tragic hero has the security of knowing that all he does is for the sake of the universal (the ethical), and that all will understand him:

Thus Abraham could surely have wished now and then that the task were to love Isaac as becomes a father, in a way intelligible to all, memorable throughout the ages; he could wish that the task were to sacrifice Isaac for the universal, that he might incite fathers to illustrious deeds--and he is almost terrified by the thought that for him such wishes are only temptations and must be dealt with as such, for he knows that it is a solitary path he treads and that he accomplishes nothing for the universal but only himself is tried and examined.

(67)

Abraham cannot speak, because what he is doing is unintelligible to conventional ethics. Nonetheless, he does speak a last word to Isaac, and in Kierkegaard's interpretation of this last word is the crux of his ideas about

language and silence:

Abraham did not speak. Only one word of his has been preserved, the only reply to Isaac, which also is sufficient proof that he had not spoken previously. Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb is for the burnt offering. 'And Abraham said, God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' . . . in so far as I can understand the paradox I can apprehend the total presence of Abraham in this word. First and foremost, he does not say anything, and it is in this form he says what he has to say. His reply to Isaac has the form of irony, for it always is irony when I say something and do not say anything.

(124-128)

Abraham has performed the impossible: he has spoken yet remained silent. He has spoken; and he has not lied to Isaac but spoken the truth. Further, it is the truth of faith--his faith that "God will provide Himself the lamb" which will save Isaac. Lastly, Abraham has spoken in such a way that Isaac "comprehends" but does not "understand" him--Isaac does not know what Abraham knows, nor is there any lamb yet visible before him. Abraham's "irony" therefore serves the purposes of truth not error or negation, and Kierkegaard declares that

even the New Testament would approve of such a silence. There are even passages in the New Testament which commend irony--if only it is used to conceal something good. . . . This passage bears witness directly to the truth that subjectivity is incommensurable with reality, yea, that it has leave to deceive.

(120)

Abraham's irony thus allows him to perform the "difficult task of keeping silent through speaking" (CUP, 61) which is the task of Kierkegaard's entire authorship. The truth which Kierkegaard seeks to convey is the paradox of the eternal in time--the paradox which by definition cannot be mediated or understood or spoken. This is why Johannes qualifies his understanding of Abraham (above) with the phrase "in so far as I can understand the paradox," and so carefully uses the word "apprehend" instead of "understand." This is also why Kierkegaard's pseudonyms so repeatedly qualify their "understanding" of what they speak, so repeatedly disclaim their own authority. Not only do the pseudonymous authors allow Kierkegaard to speak while remaining silent, they in turn attempt to speak yet remain silent, through strategies such as Johannes Climacus's revocation at the end of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript. In his appendix "For an Understanding with the Reader," Climacus denies that he is himself a Christian, insists that he has no authority and no opinion, and states further

As in Catholic books, especially those of an earlier age, one finds at the back of the volume a note which informs the reader that everything is to be understood conformably with the doctrine of the Holy Catholic Mother Church--so what I write contains also a piece of information to the effect that everything is so to be understood that it is understood to be revoked,

and the book has not only a Conclusion but a Revocation.

(547)

But this revocation or silence with which Johannes de silentio, Johannes Climacus, and Kierkegaard wish to leave the reader clearly runs the risk of revoking all meaning or "presence" whatsoever. It is the same silence which Kierkegaard maintains with reference to the word "Christ"; as he points out, he often deliberately abstains "from the use of a Christian-dogmatic terminology, from mentioning the name of Christ, and so forth," because "in an age of knowledge, when all men are Christians and know what Christianity is, it is only too easy to use the sacred names without attaching any thought to them" (CUP, 243, 252). Yet such an omission suggests that there may be nothing, or absence, in this void where Kierkegaard assumes we will leap to infer the unnamed presence or Christ. Johannes de silentio acknowledges this great danger residing in silence, saying

Silence is the snare of the demon, and the more one keeps silent, the more terrifying the demon becomes; but silence is also the mutual understanding between the Deity and the individual.
(FT, 97)

Furthermore, "secrecy and silence really make a man great precisely because they are characteristics of inwardness";

they force him to "stumble upon the paradox, either the divine or the demoniac, for silence is both" (97). The risk is indeed everything, for Kierkegaard; without risk, there cannot be faith.

This theory of indirect communication, and especially the celebration of silence, demonstrates again how much more contrived and devious Kierkegaard is than the visionary Blake would ever be or want to be. But although Blake does not articulate so systematic a theory, this same hiddenness--the hiddenness of the transcendent other--is arguably present in Blake's perspectivism, individualism, and frequent obscurity. And Blake does say in Jerusalem "The Visions of Eternity, by reason of narrowd perceptions,/Are become weak Visions of Time & Space, fix'd into furrows of death;/Till deep dissimulation is the only defense an honest man has left" (II, 49:21-23; 196). This suggests, along with his habit of "speaking in paradoxes" and his other statements about "rouzing the faculties to act," that Blake's obscurity may be in part at least intentional, the strategic "deep dissimulation" of "an honest man." Like Kierkegaard, Blake undermines "Christian-dogmatic terminology"; like Kierkegaard, he celebrates the individual's private visionary communion with the eternal.

Further, Blake and Kierkegaard both fiercely reject

"direct communication" in the form of the public press, which becomes in a way symbolic of all "objective" communication, the language of mediation. They reject its claims to truth and objectivity of interpretation, seeing it rather as the spokesman for the vulgar crowd, whose standard is not the ideal but relativity and mediocrity. Interestingly, both writers were harshly criticized by the press in attacks which heightened their sense of isolation and intensified their proud individualism in response. Kierkegaard was mercilessly caricatured for nearly a year by a popular comic weekly in Denmark, The Corsair, with the result that (according to Lowrie) the name Soren became synonymous with "fool" even in stage plays of the day, and for nearly the rest of his life Kierkegaard was hounded by "urchins" and "louts" wherever he went. This event apparently affected Kierkegaard as profoundly as his broken engagement to Regina, and was the only other "external event" to do so.² It is no wonder that Kierkegaard bitterly asserts "the crowd is untruth," and invokes the martyrdom of Christ, adding

Therefore was Christ crucified, because, although He addressed himself to all, He would have no dealings with the crowd, because He would not permit the crowd to aid Him in any way, because in this regard He repelled people absolutely, and would not found a party, did not permit balloting, but would be what He is, the Truth, which relates itself to the individ-

ual. --And hence every one who would truly serve the truth is eo ipso, in one way or another, a martyr.

(PV, "The Individual," 114)

Blake shares Kierkegaard's contempt for the lowest common denominator--the denominator of the crowd--as the true measure of the ideal. Again, his strongest expression for this is his complaint that "since the French Revolution Englishmen are Intermeasurable One by Another Certainly a happy State of Agreement to which I for One do not Agree" (Letter to Cumberland, 12 April 1827; 707). It is implied in his declaration that "Genius is Always Above the Age" (Annotations to Reynolds, P 71; 638) and in his sharp distinction between knaves or fools and wise men. Like Kierkegaard, Blake also complains about the collusion between public opinion and the press, declaring

The manner in which my Character has been blasted these thirty years both as an artist & a Man may be seen particularly in a Sunday Paper call'd the Examiner Publish'd in Beaufort Buildings. We all know that Editors of Newspapers trouble their heads very little about art & science & that they are always paid for what they put in upon these ungracious Subjects & the manner in which I have routed out the nest of villains will be seen in a Poem concerning my Three Years Herculean Labours at Felpham which I will soon Publish. Secret Calumny & open Professions of Friendship are common enough all the world over but have never been so good an occasion of Poetic Imagery. When a Base Man means to be your Enemy he always begins with being Your Friend.

(Public Address; 561)

It is interesting that Blake here identifies the press with the conspiracy he felt was being waged against him at Felpham. The press or "public communication" is clearly linked in his mind with the false friendship or "mediation" which he found to be so destructive there. His reputation as promulgated by the press has nothing to do with the real Blake, he feels, as a man or as an artist; it is "incommensurate" with his true worth. The outer is not the inner; the reputation or "spectre" is not the poet; and language, like all the other outward forms, is not the truth.

Kierkegaard even more vehemently singles out the press as largely responsible for the demoralization of the entire age. It allows an anonymous author to say what he would fear to say as an individual, he claims; it lets that author address "ten thousand times ten thousand" and get them to repeat what he has said. Worst of all, it gives "omnipotence" to "a nobody, an anonymity, who is the producer (auctor), and another anonymity, the public" (PV, 116). People, he says

do not realize that the press in general, as an expression of the abstract and impersonal communication of ideas, and the daily press in particular, because of its formal indifference to the question of whether what it reports is true or false, contributes enormously to the general demoralization, for the reason that the impersonal, which for the most part is irrespon-

sible and incapable of repentance, is essentially demoralizing. They do not realize that anonymity, as the most absolute expression for the impersonal, the irresponsible, the unrepentant, is a fundamental source of the modern demoralization.

(PV, 44)

Here again, Kierkegaard's pseudonymity is his response to this anonymity. Each pseudonym is meant to be a distinctive individual^{id}, not an anonymous abstraction; each pseudonym is an intensification of subjectivity who explicitly disclaims the much-vaunted objectivity of the press. And while each pseudonym does allow Kierkegaard to be anonymous--may appear to allow him the evasion of responsibility for which he criticizes the press--at the same time the pseudonym does communicate Kierkegaard's deepest, most personal beliefs as author. He would argue that finally pseudonymity is not an evasion but provides the indirection essential to his doctrine that truth cannot be directly communicated. Significantly, Kierkegaard once more introduces the concept of irony into his discussion of truth and its relation to the crowd, insisting that irony is fundamentally antithetical to the crowd. It is a contradiction to say that a crowd can be ironical, he claims; and this is his final jeer at the crowd and at The Corsair. Speaking of the episode, he recounts

At this time there developed little by little

the rather remarkable phenomenon that the entire population of Copenhagen became ironical--and just so much the more ironical in proportion as the people were more ignorant and uneducated. It was irony here and irony there, from one end to the other. . . . these thousands and thousands become . . . just about the one thing I would venture to assert it is impossible for them to become (especially en masse and en famille) they become ironical, by the help of a sheet, which in turn (ironically enough) leads the fashion by the help of editorial blackguards, and the fashion it sets is . . . irony. It is impossible, I believe, to think of anything more ludicrous. . . . Irony is absolutely unsocial; an irony which is in the majority is eo ipso not irony. Nothing is more certain than this, for it is implied in the very concept. Irony tends essentially towards one person as its limit.

(PV, 53-55)

For Blake and Kierkegaard, then, meaning or truth or the eternal is elusive, and in that sense "ironic." It is not necessarily ironic in the usual sense of mere verbal irony--the bitter irony of tone which Blake largely abandoned after The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and the Songs of Experience--but rather irony as the transcendent otherness of truth which stands always in ironic contrast or contradiction to error. Yet this ironic truth runs the great risk of being itself subject to irony. Blake and Kierkegaard have arguably undermined the possibility of a stable irony to the point where they have destroyed it. They have rejected conventional "dogmatic" terminology; they have rejected the consensus of "the crowd" as a

measure of stable interpretation. Both would agree that "irony tends essentially towards one person as its limit" --that there is a limit to irony, the limit of "the individual." Yet this individualism seems to be the most radically perspectival element of all, the profoundly unstable foundation of their theory of life. We need to look more closely at the identity of this remarkable individual who marks the limit of irony.

a. The Ideal Reader

Los reads the Stars of Albion! the Spectre
 reads the Voids
 Between the Stars

--Blake, Jerusalem

When the Reverend Dr. Trusler complained to Blake that Blake needed someone to elucidate his ideas, Blake replied with rather optimistic defiance:

I am happy to find a Great Majority of Fellow
 Mortals who can Elucidate my Visions & Particu-
 larly they have been Elucidated by Children who
 have taken a greater delight in contemplating
 my Pictures than I even hoped . . . Some Chil-
 dren are Fools & so are some Old Men. But there
 is a Vast Majority on the side of Imagination
 or Spiritual Sensation

(677)

Blake does believe in not just a single ideal reader, but

in a group of ideal readers, readers who, like Los, his representative ideal reader, will read the stars of Albion rather than the voids between the stars. They will read for "presence" not "absence," truth not error. The possibility for such a correct reading is implicit in all of Blake's distinctions between wise men and fools, for what differentiates one from the other except this ability to see or read clearly? "As a Man is, so he sees," indeed; that is, what he sees is a strict measure of who he is. The miser's vision of the sun as a golden guinea provides a true measure of his soul; the visionary's picture of the sun as a choir of the heavenly host similarly is a true measure of his soul. But the difference between them is that the visionary's soul is thereby revealed as the greater, truer one; as Blake remarks, "The Style that Strikes the Eye is the True Style But A Fool's Eye is Not to be a Criterion" (Annotations to Reynolds, P xviii; 628). The wise man's or visionary's eye is the criterion --he is the true reader of the stars.

Kierkegaard similarly believes in an ideal reader, although unlike Blake he seems much less optimistic about finding even a small group of ideal readers, let alone a "vast majority":

For who in our time would waste an instant upon
the whimsical thought that there is an art in

being a good reader? --to say nothing of expending time to become such. This lamentable situation has naturally an effect upon the author, who, in my opinion, does well to write like Clemens Alexandrinus in such a way that the heretics cannot understand what he writes.

(R, 131)

This passage is from a section of Repetition addressed by Constantine Constantius "To N-- N--, Esq., this book's real reader," in which Constantius goes on to caricature a series of false readers and their probable responses to the book (the "inquisitive woman reader" who has to turn to the end first to see how it all comes out, "a genial housewife," "a staunch champion of reality," "an experienced watchmaker," "His Reverence," "His Right Reverence," "the ordinary reviewer," etc.). But clearly it is Kierkegaard's faith in a "real (ideal?) reader" which motivates his entire enterprise including his rhetorical strategies.

What characterizes this real/ideal reader? Fundamentally, energy or passion of intellect, what Blake calls "Imagination." The best reader is the most energetic reader, who is willing to struggle through obscurity and perspectivism (the veil of error) to truth. Kierkegaard calls this struggle to interpret "appropriation," and even goes so far as to say at times that truth is appropriation, declaring "truth exists only in the process of be-

coming, in the process of appropriation" (CUP, 72). Once again, Kierkegaard is trying to emphasize the elusiveness of the truth, the fact that "existence makes the understanding of the simplest truth for the common man in existential transparency very difficult and very strenuous" (CUP, 228). He is trying to emphasize that truth is not directly available as static result, but must be leapt to with the passion of faith.

The reader/interpreter's role in interpretation is in other words exactly analogous to the existing individual's role in relation to existence: the reader must make the same strenuous leap required of the knight of faith. His interpretive energy is absolutely required to "constitute" the true meaning of the text. As Blake puts it, "Jesus could not do miracles where unbelief hinderd hence we must conclude that the man who holds miracles to be ceased puts it out of his own power to ever witness one" (Annotations to An Apology for the Bible; 606). The emphasis is on the existing individual's faith to constitute the miracle, which is to say, to bring "the eternal" (call it God or the meaning of the text) into time.

This emphasis on the passion of interpretation is meant to stress once more the individual's role in attaining his own "salvation," and it is where Blake and Kierkegaard are most fully humanistic or existential. But

once again they try to back away from the total collapse into immanence which this would imply. Kierkegaard recognizes that if all the emphasis is on the passion of personal appropriation, on the struggle or leap of faith or act of choice, the truth may seem to be fully created by that struggle and hence to collapse into it. He hastens therefore to add that strength of passion is not quite all; the nature of the object appropriated is also crucial. One can act with the full passion of faith, but attach oneself to the wrong object, so that "the ludicrousness of the zealot consisted in the fact that his infinite passion had attached itself to a mistaken object (an approximation object); the good in him was that he had passion" (CUP, 36). Kierkegaard also cites Don Quixote as another example of passion attaching itself to the wrong object and hence appearing ridiculous (CUP, 175). And he acknowledges here that this is why the passion of subjectivity may come very close to madness. Madness is precisely this attaching of one's passion to the wrong object, to a "particular finite idea" instead of to "the infinite" (CUP, 175).

Kierkegaard assumes then a kind of limit beyond the process of appropriation, an "objectivity" which in itself determines whether or not the passion is mistakenly directed. This is how he would argue that the reader does

not "make" the meaning which he understands, despite the fact that his strenuous act of reading is essential to bring this meaning into being. The situation is once more analogous to the distinction between the knight of faith and the sinner: they may act with equal passion, but nonetheless one is right and the other is wrong. This is why passion alone is not enough to define the ideal reader, and how Blake and Kierkegaard would hope to avoid defining the reader as a sheer will-to-power who creates in the very act of interpretation the meaning which he apprehends. His passion may constitute that meaning, but it does not create it.

b. The Author

This appeal to an "object" beyond the individual, perspectival act of interpretation is clearly an appeal to a kind of "revelation" of the text's meaning. Despite their radical individualism and perspectivism, their emphasis on the existing individual's initiative in bringing the eternal into time, Blake and Kierkegaard do ultimately appeal to revelation as the ultimate authority, the final "limit to irony." We have already seen some of Blake's appeals to revelation (Chapter IV, p. 192, above), but these will bear repeating: "a Man can only reject Error by the Advice of a Friend or by the Immediate Inspiration of God" (VLJ,

552); "Conscience in those that have it is unequivocal, it is the voice of God Our Judgment of right & wrong is Reason" (Annotations to An Apology for the Bible, 602-3); "Do or Act to Do Good or to Do Evil who Dare to Judge but God alone" (Ibid., 609). And to repeat Kierkegaard's appeals to revelation: "there has to be a revelation from God to enlighten man as to what sin is" (SUD, 226); "He who with quiet introspection is honest before God and concerned for himself, the Deity saves from being in error" (CUP, 543); "God is 'the Judge' because before him there is no crowd but only individuals" (SUD, 254 n.).

For the reader, such an appeal to revelation is an appeal to the author to set for him the limits of irony in the text. But this appeal is not unproblematic. The author may be as elusive as God:

For no anonymous author can more cunningly conceal himself, no practitioner of the maieutic art can more carefully withdraw himself from the direct relationship, than God. He is in the creation, and present everywher in it, but directly He is not there . . . Is not this to behave, in relation to the individual, like an elusive author who nowhere sets down his result in large type or gives it to the reader beforehand in a preface? And why is God elusive? Precisely because He is the truth, and by being elusive desires to keep men from error.

(CUP, 217-218)

Blake and Kierkegaard as authors are elusive, as few readers would disagree. Neither speaks in a direct lyric

voice, something which sets Blake distinctively apart from the other English Romantic poets. Further, neither one writes directly confessional autobiography in the way that Wordsworth's Prelude, for instance, is directly autobiographical. Kierkegaard's pseudonyms keep him "elusive"; Blake's frequent reversals of perspective serve the same function, making the "real" Blake difficult to find.

Both also deny that the author has a privileged perspective on his own work--that the author is necessarily his own best interpreter. We see this in Blake's criticisms of Wordsworth's Prefaces to his Poems (1815), when he retorts, "I do not know who wrote these Prefaces they are very mischievous & direct contrary to Wordsworths own Practise," and "It appears to me as if the last Paragraph beginning With 'Is it the result' Was writ by another hand & mind from the rest of these Prefaces. Perhaps they are the opinions of a Portrait or Landscape Painter . . . Imagination has nothing to do with Memory" (Annotations to Wordsworth's Poems; 654-5). Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus similarly inveighs against dogmatic authorial prefaces, at the very moment when he is embarking on an interpretation of the pseudonymous works:

Whether my interpretation is the same as the author's, I can of course not know with certainty, since I am only a reader; on the other hand, it gives me pleasure to see that the

pseudonyms, presumably aware of the relation subsisting between the method of indirect communication and the truth as inwardness, have themselves said nothing, nor misused a preface to assume an official attitude toward the production, as if an author were in a purely legal sense the best interpreter of his own words; or as if it could help a reader than an author had intended this or that, if it was not realized; or as if it were certain that it was realized because the author himself says so in the preface.

(CUP, 225)

Kierkegaard's strategy here is characteristically subtle; this section of the Postscript is entitled "Appendix: A Glance at a Contemporary Effort in Danish Literature" (225-266), and is a markedly straightforward interpretation of his pseudonymous works. Yet by putting this interpretation into the mouth of Johannes Climacus, he avoids speaking in his own voice and hence adopting a dogmatic, authorial, "official attitude toward the production." Because Johannes is only a reader of other people's works, Kierkegaard thus duplicates or dramatizes what he feels is the situation of any author in relation to his own works.

Yet when all is said and done, Blake and Kierkegaard are merely elusive, not absent, authors--and there is a difference (one might say, a qualitative difference). In the first place, their works are deeply and essentially autobiographical, as we have seen: Blake's Milton is

clearly based on the episode at Felpham, and Kierkegaard's whole authorial enterprise (in particular, Fear and Trembling) comes out of the crisis of his broken engagement. In fact, the whole argument for a dialectic of crisis as the real structure of their thought is based on this assumption of a biographical or "existential" rather than an intellectual foundation for it.³ It is true that Milton and Fear and Trembling are indirectly autobiographical (again, one thinks of the contrast to Wordsworth's Prelude, which requires none of their elaborate transmutations of autobiography into symbol or parable), but this is very different from having no significant foundation in autobiography. At some level, of course, one could argue that all artistic production must have its roots in autobiography, so that the point is hardly a telling one. But this would be to ignore the extent to which both writers here are performing a particularly close and deliberate rendering of personal crises into poetic form.

Both authors also engage in an astonishing amount of interpretation and reinterpretation of their own works, an almost obsessive reworking of them which invokes a very insistent authorial presence indeed. Blake's continual reworking of the Songs, of the Orc-Urien conflict, of the Four Zoas; his pictures accompanying the poems; his prose commentaries on his pictures (particularly on A Vision of

the Last Judgment)--all of these suggest he became increasingly preoccupied not merely with interpreting other poets, but with interpreting his own works, and not only to himself. At the deepest level he could not bear to be misunderstood by the wise men, however many obscurities he may have thrown in the way of fools.

Kierkegaard's works are also obsessive reinterpretation of one another. As he puts it, they are always "the same and yet not the same." "Another time, perhaps tomorrow," says Johannes Climacus, "I may say more, but always the same and about the same, for only gypsies and thieves have the motto: Never return to the same place again" (CUP, 253 n.). This again is the essential virtue of Socrates, for Johannes (and for Kierkegaard): "Socrates held it his honor and pride always to say the same things about the same things" (CUP, 253-4). Kierkegaard takes pride in being a "trained dialectical gymnast" who can continually produce and change and produce the same again, because "it is the nature of eternity always to be the same" (CUP, 255).

Not only do the works interpret and reinterpret each other, ringing changes on the same theme, Kierkegaard also uses the pseudonyms to interpret the works--always, of course, as "readers." But it is remarkable how straightforward and accurate Johannes Climacus's interpretation

of the "contemporary effort in Danish literature" is.⁴ The Concluding Unscientific Postscript was intended to be just that--the concluding work in the pseudonymous authorship. Clearly Kierkegaard could not resist the desire to set the record straight, if only through the pseudonym. And ultimately, he felt he had to go even beyond this and speak in his own voice, in his remarkable little book The Point of View for My Work as an Author. Published posthumously by Kierkegaard's brother eleven years after it was written, it is exactly what its title suggests: Kierkegaard's explanation of his entire authorship. In it he renounces his authorial silence to affirm "what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author" (PV, 5). He charts the close relationship between his pseudonymous or "aesthetic" works and his strictly religious works (always signed in his own name), emphasizing how carefully he alternated between the two throughout his career. He was never a purely "aesthetic" author, he insists--not even one who later "changed" to become a religious author, as the simultaneous production of the two kinds of works attests. The religious works were a kind of insurance against the aesthetic works being taken as purely aesthetic, as lacking a religious author ultimately behind them. Kierkegaard also charts the close connection between his life and his work--that is, the

role that his autobiography played in all his productions.

This self-defense through an authorial "postscript," however, is surely no better than the dogmatic authorial "preface" which assumes "an official attitude towards the production," and it is surely subject to the same objections. To quote Kierkegaard against himself, what good is it to offer up this authorial intention "as if it were certain that it was realized because the author himself says so in the preface"? The author's declaration of his intentions may be useless--as Blake argues Wordsworth's are--because every author is a man as well as a poet. Every author is in other words a "spectre" as well as a true poet, and it may well be the spectre who is speaking, and not the poet at all--"the Natural man rising up against the Spiritual Man," as Blake says of Wordsworth. ✓ Kierkegaard acknowledges this problem immediately, agreeing that "qua author it does not avail much that I protest qua man that I have intended this or that . . .

If as a third person, in the role of a reader,
I cannot substantiate the fact that what I
affirm is so, and that it could not but be so,
it would not occur to me to wish to win a cause
which I regard as lost.

(PV, 15)

Instead of simply declaring his intention, therefore, Kierkegaard brilliantly sets about a textual demonstration

which will render that declaration, as he says, "superfluous." He sets out to demonstrate that his works cannot be explained in any other way except as the works of a religious author; that his way explains every detail; and that if this is so, "then this explanation is substantial as evidently as it is ever possible to establish the correctness of an explanation" (PV, 16). And he begins by proposing as his initial hypothesis the hypothesis which he wants to disprove: namely, the hypothesis that the whole of his literary production was written by a purely "aesthetic" author.

Once again, in this definition of authorship or authority, the distinction between a man's spectre and his true self proves to be crucial. The reason that Blake and Kierkegaard distrust the author as a privileged reader is because he is after all a human author, subject to human foibles or "error." Like all existing individuals, he has the spark of the eternal in him, and what is true in his vision is this spark of the eternal. But as soon as he speaks, he speaks as a man to men, as an interpreter of the truth. As an existing individual, he is, like his reader, "without authority":

Without authority to call attention to religion, to Christianity, is the category for my whole activity as an author, integrally regarded. That I was 'without authority' I have from the

first moment asserted clearly and repeatedly as a stereotyped phrase. I regarded myself preferably as a reader of the books, not as the author.

(PV, "The Accounting," 151)

All of this implies of course that an author may not know (in the sense of consciously know) his intentions. This does not mean that those intentions are inaccessible, or that they do not exist. It implies that the truth speaks through him, a doctrine of inspiration. Kierkegaard calls this inspiration "Divine Governance," and this is for him the ultimate "authority" for his authorship. "It is Governance that has educated me," he says, "and the education is reflected in the process of the productivity . . . I have been conscious of being under instruction, and that from the very first"; it has been "as if I had had nothing else to do but to copy daily a definite portion of a printed book" (PV, 72-73). We have seen that Blake objects to this notion of inspiration, in his complaint that "Plato has made Socrates say that Poets & prophets do not Know or Understand what they write or Utter this is a most Pernicious Falshood" (VLJ, P 70; 544). Yet his criticism of Wordsworth demonstrates his belief that indeed it can be true that a poet does not understand what he writes. And certainly Blake often speaks as though he believes in inspiration: "I see the

Saviour over me/Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song," he says at the opening of Jerusalem II, 4:4-5); "O Lord my Saviour, open thou the Gates/And I will lead forth thy Words" (J, III, 74:40-41). His objection to Plato is to the idea that this inspiration is mysterious, enigmatic, outside the poet, instead of something deeply within him. But once again, the paradox to be sustained here is that this inspiration is at once deeply within yet qualitatively other than the poet. And Blake would agree that this inspiration cannot be known in the sense of purely rationally understood and in that sense "interpreted" by the poet: "Knowledge is not by deduction but Immediate by Perception or Sense at once Christ addresses himself to the Man not to his Reason Plato did not bring Life & Immortality to Light Jesus only did this" (Annotations to Berkeley's Siris, P 214; 653).

Only God, the ultimate author, is truly unmixed with any error or spectrous self:

Some People flatter themselves that there will
 be No Last Judgment & that Bad art will be
 adopted & mixed with Good Art That Error or
 Experiment will make a Part of Truth & they
 Boast that it is its Foundations these People
 flatter themselves I will not Flatter them
 Error is Created Truth is Eternal

(VLJ, P 92; 555)

The human author contains this spark of truth, but the sign of his humanity--the sign of his qualitative difference from God--is that his truth is not unmixed with error. This is why, even at the end of The Point of View, Kierkegaard gives the last word to someone else, to a pseudonym once more:

I have nothing further to say, but in conclusion I will let another speak, my poet, who when he comes will assign me a place among those who have suffered for the sake of an idea, and he will say:

'The martyrdom this author suffered may be briefly described thus: He suffered from being a genius in a provincial town.'

(PV, 100)

To conclude this way with a fictional speaker might seem to compromise radically Kierkegaard's revelation of his own voice as author. But his point in ending with the pseudonym is simply to emphasize that as an existing individual author he also is a pseudonym--for God. In other words, Kierkegaard stands in the same relation to God as his author that his pseudonyms stand to him as their author. All existing individuals are only pseudonyms of God--which for Kierkegaard does not mean that the truth is thereby fictionalized. It is his way of representing the nature of the truth in existence, being in time, the eternal in the existing individual.

The fictionalists and aesthetes will nonetheless insist on "deconstructing" him, Kierkegaard predicts. Once again he brilliantly anticipates the response of a certain group of readers, those who prefer to read the void\$between the stars. This group's highest category, their criterion for interpretation, is "the interesting":

'But what have you done now?' I hear somebody say, 'Do you not perceive what you have lost in the eyes of the world by making this explanation and public acknowledgment?' To be sure, I perceive it very clearly. I have lost thereby what in a Christian sense it is a loss to possess, namely, every worldly form of the interesting. . . . I lose the interesting distinction of being an interesting possibility, suggestive of the query whether it might not after all be the case that he who represented the ethical with such warmth and enthusiasm--whether he might not after all be exactly the opposite, either in one way or another, since it is (so interestingly) impossible to say which he is. I lose the interesting distinction of being an enigma . . . The interesting is what I have lost in the eyes of the crowd, in the world's eyes--

(PV, 93)

The aesthete sees no limit to irony, which for him means Romantic irony, the infinitely interesting. For him there is no determinate author, and no determinate reader either, only the infinite play of possibilities. But for Kierkegaard, as for Blake, the limit of irony is in the individual--in the determinate author and in the determinate reader. The ideal reader will find the author's

meaning at once in and beyond himself. The true reader is a "believer," and

a believer is one who is infinitely interested in another's reality [in this case, the author's]. This is a decisive criterion for faith, and the interest in question is not just a little curiosity, but an absolute dependence upon faith's object.

(CUP, 290)

How one reads is, like all human activities, not a matter of necessity but one of freedom and ethical choice, a decision. And "decisiveness is precisely the eternal protest against all fictions" (CUP, 203).

VI. Conclusion

The dialectic of either/or rests finally on the qualitative distinction of God and man. This is the true difference in which life consists, the true dualism which claims paradoxically to get rid of the false dualisms of both-and logic, particularly the dualism between reason and passion, or intellect and will. Either/or also claims to rest on a qualitative distinction from both-and logic, and it is this claim which we need finally to evaluate. Both-and is the spectral inversion of either/or, and as such the two dialectics bear the same close resemblance that characterizes the Spectre's relation to Los, a resemblance which makes their differentiation very difficult. Like Hegel, Blake and Kierkegaard characterize the human condition as one of "alienation" from eternity or true spiritual values; like Hegel, they share an ideal of unity which brings these values into human life. Like Hegel, Blake and Kierkegaard want to emphasize life or this world, not some otherworldly realm, as the locus of meaning or value. Yet, according to the logic of either/or, Hegel's characterization of this ideal is deeply erroneous, a spectral parody which we must struggle to differentiate and cast off. Hegel's both-and logic characterizes "alienation" as a merely systematic difference of con-

traries; it says that man is only quantitatively removed from truth or the eternal. Either/or logic says of this that it is, on the one hand, not true alienation but false alienation; it is in fact mediation, the exact opposite of alienation. The eternal has supposedly already been mediated, in both-and logic; the alienation it speaks of is therefore merely illusory. On the other hand, according to either/or, this mediation is itself merely illusory, and in fact indicates the most profound or true alienation from eternity possible. For to assume that the eternal is already in existence, has always already been mediated within it, is to be at the furthest possible remove from actually grasping the eternal. Either/or thus characterizes man's condition in a way which is identical yet opposite to both-and's characterization of it:

either/or agrees with both-and that man's condition is one of alienation from eternity; but it reverses both-and's definition of alienation by saying that man is alienated from, because he thinks he is mediated with, eternity.

Far from unifying man with eternity, mediation is actually what alienates him from it, by giving him a false sense of security, an illusory confidence that he has already grasped the eternal. Lulled into this false security by mediation, man absentmindedly dreams his life away: why struggle for what is already in his grasp? What mediation

calls "existence," then, is according to either/or nothing but a ghostly mockery of it.

This oddly identical yet inverse relationship of the two dialectics is what makes them appear to move in opposite directions: both-and logic seems to move from a state of alienation or warring contraries to one of mediation or unity of the contraries; either/or apparently moves from a state of mediation to one of increasing differentiation of the contraries and finally to the casting-off of one of them. Yet either/or is moving from a state of illusory mediation which is in truth profoundest alienation, to a state of radical differentiation which is in truth profoundest unity.

Either/or is thus "the same yet not the same" as both-and; the same logic of conversion which radically reverses values within the either/or dialectic applies to the relationship between the two dialectics. Both-and logic claims that its vision encompasses the whole of life, and that the differentiations of either/or are subsumed within this higher both-and unity. But either/or claims that its vision is the true whole, and that both-and is merely a partial view of life, the limited view of "reason." Each dialectic casts off the other only insofar as that other claims to represent the whole of life; but each embraces the other insofar as that other reduces its

claims to merely partial ones. Clearly each dialectic involves the other as part of itself. This would seem to indicate that they are not qualitatively distinct, not true contraries, but merely differentiated by degree. In other words, they are themselves subject to both-and logic, because they are simply two perspectives on the same thing.

But we have seen that Blake and Kierkegaard embrace this perspectivism as somehow embodying real, not merely illusory, contradiction or difference. How can they do this? Once again, we arrive at the paradoxical quality of perspectivism in their thought. There may be just two perspectives on life, which are in that sense then "equal." But in fact Blake and Kierkegaard would argue that one perspective is higher than the other. This is because one perspective is God's and only God's. Ironically, this is the perspective of both-and logic, which means that it is the whole vision of life and not merely a partial one. The subtlety of this dialectic of perspectives is that either/or is in a sense the lower perspective because it is that of man, the existing individual, while both-and is in a sense the higher perspective because it is that of God. But the crucial point is that either/or is the higher perspective for the existing individual, who cannot and should not try to adopt God's

perspective. It is impossible for him to do so; the Hegelian can think he has adopted God's perspective, but he lives only an illusion of having done so. This is the real "difference," the real dualism, which Blake and Kierkegaard would argue stabilizes their irony or fluctuation of perspectives. God is qualitatively other, not merely a different perspective; his perspective is similarly radically other, and is not available to man.

This raises a new problem, however, the problem of all real dualisms. If God is so radically other, so qualitatively distinct, he runs the risk of becoming irrelevant to human life and hence of disappearing altogether. And indeed, this God or qualitative otherness in Blake's and Kierkegaard's thought is much reduced from the God of orthodox Christianity. He may well be, as Kierkegaard said of Socrates, "not a manifestation but a limit"--a curiously empty God whose content is almost fully invested in him by the existing individual. He comes dangerously close, then, to being himself a "spectre," a ghostly shadow of his former self.

Nonetheless, this "limit" is everything, the crucial factor differentiating Blake and Kierkegaard from Romantic thinkers easily assimilated into the pattern of idealist dialectics. The presence of this limit is what saves them from being philosophers of pure passion or will; it is the

"Being" or "Reason" which is "the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (MHH, 4; 34). It is the objective limit to their subjectivity; and paradoxically, its otherness saves them from the subjectivity of the so-called "objective" idealist systems of Hegel and Schelling. This qualitative otherness is as crucial to their thought as Kant's noumenon is to his philosophy, and Kant in this respect provides perhaps their closest analogy. Kant may seem to have opened up the highway to idealism by insisting on the otherness of this noumenon, an otherness which made it dispensable to the idealists who followed him. But he was not himself an idealist, as his refusal to abolish this noumenon testifies. Similarly, Blake and Kierkegaard may seem to have opened up the highway to existentialism and to nihilism, but they were neither existentialists nor nihilists. Their insistence on the intractability of "the other" was an attempt to prevent the collapse of all value distinctions which they could see might be the outcome of the increasing secularization of their age.

In the ambiguous yet decisive relationship between either/or and both-and lies the key to Blake's and Kierkegaard's eccentricity in all respects: their confusing logic (or illogic) of ideas, which does more than simply invert ideas in straightforward ironic fashion;

their own simultaneous ambiguity or relativizing of distinctions (both-and) and decisiveness or absolutizing of distinctions (either/or); their systematic yet puzzlingly asystematic quality of thought; their radical conservatism which conserves identity at the same time that it radically transforms it into complete otherness. And it is the key to understanding their rather eccentric relationship to Romanticism as a literary movement.

Both have always been difficult to place in relation to Romanticism. Both stand at historical crisis points, moments of transition or what they would call "collision": Blake at the turning-point between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kierkegaard at the turning point between nineteenth-century Romanticism and modern nihilism. Both have Janus faces, equally pronounced backward- and forward-looking sides expressing their deeply dialectical perspectives. For this reason, Blake is often grouped with the eighteenth-century graveyard school of Collins, Gray, and Cowper; alternatively, he is grouped with the English Romantic poets in a way which blurs his eccentricities. Blake is very different from both of these groups and especially from "Romanticism" as it has come to be defined--yet he is deeply Romantic. He saw with greater clarity the true form of the Romantic ideal, and he saw it because his temperament was so much more

fiercely polemical than those of the other Romantics. They were much more easily "mediated" into systematic patterns of thought, whether those of orthodox religion or those of idealist dialectics. Blake remained more stubbornly "transcendent" or asystematic, more physically and intellectually isolated, and the "dialectic of transcendence" which in part results from this is truer not only to his circumstances and temperament, but also to the nature of the Romantic ideal he so clearly saw. It was to be an ideal in which the qualitatively distinct values of transcendence were not to be lost; and who could better preserve them than this poet whose own independence of thought had been so steadily and obstinately preserved in the face of neglect and public ridicule? Blake stands transcendently outside of, sharply differentiated from, "Romanticism" as it became embodied in systematic patterns of thought; in some sense he casts it off as "error". Yet he also embraces Romanticism, or more accurately, the Romantic ideal, in its truest form, with equally great intensity. His Romanticism is at once "the same and yet not the same."

Blake's retrospective side reacted against eighteenth-century rationalism; his prospective side anticipated and reacted against the potential nihilism of the Romantic ideal, its loss of qualitative distinctions.

And while this potential error was perhaps more dimly apprehended than the actual error of Deism which was a clear reality for him in his time, his criticisms of Deism anticipate many of Kierkegaard's objections to Hegelianism because Hegel's rational abstraction in many ways repeats the central rationalistic errors of Deism which Blake attacked. The potential nihilism of the Romantic ideal may also, however, have become increasingly clear to Blake as his career progressed and he began to wrestle with his own alternatives to Deism more than with Deism. In any case, the potential nihilism of the Romantic ideal was for Kierkegaard a spectre on the immediate horizon. For him it lay not only ahead but immediately behind--for him, it had already appeared, in the systematic Hegelian distortion of it. In his attempts to revitalize this ideal, Kierkegaard looked back to its very beginnings, before its distortion through idealist dialectics--and it is this retrospective side of Kierkegaard which leaps with unexpected vigor across the intervening Romantic period into unity with Blake.

This unity is not so startling or eccentric as might appear, when one considers how much more central to his thought was Kierkegaard's retrospective side, his Romantic anti-Hegelianism, than was his prospective side, the existentialism with which he has been so closely--and incor-

rectly--identified. Kierkegaard would have been appalled to find himself "the father of existentialism;" not only did he not want to propagate a movement, a doctrine, or disciples, he did not want to expel the transcendent as the motive force for "life." He did want man to exercise himself more vigorously in the attainment of his salvation; but the point of his philosophy is that one must strive for something beyond life for life. His entire polemic against both-and logic is against its ultimate self-referentiality or aesthetical-metaphysical narcissism.

Like Blake, Kierkegaard stands transcendently outside of Romanticism as it came to be defined; as Blake stands at its beginning, so Kierkegaard stands at its end. His peculiarly intense vision of the Romantic ideal gained its clarity from this perspective, this vantage point from which he could look back and trace the decay of that ideal. And again as in Blake's case, his intensity of vision was also due to a polemical temperament and an exceptionally isolated existence, an atmosphere of alternate neglect and ridicule in which he held his own not only against these "outer demons" but also against the "inner demons" of melancholy and despair which this isolation fostered. And if Blake is one of the most curious eccentrics in the canon of English literature, how much

the more so is Kierkegaard--a Dane writing in and against the German idealist tradition in the middle of Copenhagen --in the history of philosophy. His intense individualism puts him beyond the usual systematic categories, including that of Romanticism--yet like Blake, while he casts off or leaps beyond this Romanticism as "error," Kierkegaard embraces it in perhaps its truest, most intense form. He also is "the same and yet not the same"--Romantic, yet in a way which is in many respects the opposite of what has come to be called Romanticism.

Blake's and Kierkegaard's eccentric perspective on Romanticism, a perspective deliberately ambiguous, duplicitous, yet finally I would argue "decisive," may well provide us with a truer perspective on the Romantic ideal. Kierkegaard's dialectic is particularly suited not only to Blake's fierce individualism, but also to the essential individualism or qualitative transcendence of the Romantic ideal of unmediated vision. It does not necessarily provide a systematic paradigm for the interpretation of individual poets, a systematizing impulse which in any case should perhaps be resisted. Only Blake in his polemical individualism so closely "matches" Kierkegaard; what they both do, however, is define with greater clarity the ideal for which all the Romantics struggled in different ways.

Not "the generalizing law" but "the exception" is

the rule for the Romantic ideal. Perhaps this dialectic of the exception, a dialectic which is itself an eccentric exception to the generalizing laws of idealist dialectics, is closer to providing the rule for the Romantic ideal of life. Not an abstract, indefinite unity or system, but the concrete individual man, is for Romanticism the true measure of all things, the God of "life."

Notes

Chapter I

¹ M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971) p. 193.

²p. 444.

³p. 443.

⁴p. 182.

⁵p. 184.

⁶p. 186.

⁷Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Interpretation: Theory and Practice, ed. C.S. Singleton (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 202.

⁸René Wellek, "German and English Romanticism: A Confrontation," in Studies in Romanticism (New York: AMS Press, 1965), vol. 4, 1964-65, pp. 47-48.

⁹p. 48.

¹⁰Anne K. Mellor, "On Romantic Irony, Symbolism, and Allegory," in Criticism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), vol. 21, no. 3, summer 1979, pp. 217-229.

¹¹Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947). See chapters 7 and 8, and especially pp. 210, 214, 217.

¹²Erdman and Bloom, p. 810.

¹³Leopold Damrosch, Jr., Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 179 and 181.

¹⁴Abrams, p. 262.

¹⁵pp. 256-264.

¹⁶Damrosch, pp. 27-28.

¹⁷p. 151.

²⁸Frye, p. 260.

¹⁹Soren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony, transl. by Lee M. Capel (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 319.

²⁰Why de Man introduced the term "allegory" into what was really a discussion of "irony" is rather puzzling. My speculation is that because allegory and symbol have been traditionally opposed, especially by the Romantics (as de Man discusses at the beginning of his essay), he wished to make the now familiar deconstructionist move of elevating the lower principle in a traditional hierarchical opposition into the upper one. But by rapid sleight-of-hand "allegory" became "irony"--de Man's real subject matter.

²¹Quoted in Leonard P. Wessell's "The Antinomic Structure of Friedrich Schlegel's 'Romanticism'," in Studies in Romanticism (New York: AMS Press, 1973), vol. 12, summer 1973, no. 3, p. 667.

²²Schlegel, as quoted by Mellor, p. 224.

²³Anne K. Mellor, English Romantic Irony (Harvard, 1980), p. 12.

²⁴Mellor, "On Romantic Irony, Symbolism, and Allegory," p. 225.

²⁵Mellor, English Romantic Irony, pp. 13 and 14.

²⁶Kierkegaard, Either/Or, vol. II, transl. by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 174.

²⁷Michael G. Cooke, Acts of Inclusion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

Chapter II

¹See Lillian Swenson's preface to Either/Or, vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944). Walter Lowrie also discusses at length this relationship and its consequences for Kierkegaard's life and work in his biography Kierkegaard (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford

University Press, 1938); see especially "Regina," pp. 191-231.

²He does say in his Journal, "My intellectual life and my significance as a husband are two incommensurable qualities" (quoted in Lowrie, p. 229). And he apparently wrote a book entitled Prefaces (not translated into English) of which Lowrie says "In the preface to Prefaces the pseudonymous author, Nicholas Notabene, confides to the reader that he is not permitted to write a book because his wife is jealous of his preoccupation with such work, and hence he resorts to the expedient of writing a volume of prefaces." (Either/Or, II, pp. x-xi, translator's preface.)

³Fear and Trembling (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), quoted from Kierkegaard's Journal in Lowrie's introduction, p. 19.

⁴Lowrie, Kierkegaard, p. 209.

⁵From 1844 to 1859, Kierkegaard published an average of two books per year.

⁶Either/Or, Fear and Trembling, Repetition, Philosophical Fragments, The Concept of Dread, Stages on Life's Way, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, The Sickness Unto Death, Training in Christianity.

⁷Stephen Crites, In the Twilight of Christendom: Hegel vs. Kierkegaard on Faith and History (AAR Studies in Religion, No. Two, 1972), pp. 4-5.

⁸David Erdman, ed., and Harold Bloom, commentary, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), p. 829.

⁹See especially Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 313-355.

¹⁰E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Innocence & Experience: An Introduction to Blake, Second ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

¹¹See chapters seven and eight, especially pp. 210, 214, 217.

¹²In Night I Los repents of striking Enitharmon

(p. 303); in Night IV Tharmas expresses great regret over Enion, whom he has cast out, and pities those he is about to destroy (p. 325); in Night V Los repents chaining down Orc (p. 335). Most notable, however, are Urizen's expressions of repentance in Nights V (pp. 336-7), VI (p. 341), and especially in Night VII (p. 367, pp. 375-6). His repentance in Night VII results in his complete transformation into a "radiant Youth" (p. 376). Blake/Los has discovered that he must "modulate his fires" for redemption (p. 357). He has discovered to his astonishment that he loves Urizen (p. 357)--a redemption made possible by the Spectre, the negation whose destruction redeems the contraries.

Chapter III

¹"Accident is the omission of act in self & the hindering of act in another, This is Vice but all Act <from Individual propensity> is Virtue. To hinder another is not an act on the contrary it is a restraint on action both in ourselves & in the person hinderd. For he who hinders another omits his own duty at the time"--Annotations to Lavater, Erdman and Bloom, p. 590.

²See, for example, CUP p. 484, where Kierkegaard speaks of the "voluptuous, soft exaltation of despair" characteristic of his age.

³Blake Records (Oxford, 1969), p. 221.

⁴Blake, "The Echoing Green," l. 23-30, p. 8.

⁵Cf. note 3.

⁶For Kierkegaard's very full discussion of "childish Christianity"--that is, the mistaken identification of true "spirit" with the state of innocence--see especially 523-537.

⁷FZ, Night V, page 63, l. 7-8, p. 336; Night VI, page 75, l. 1-24; p. 344-345.

⁸Milton, I; 7:26, p. 100; l. 42, p. 100; 8:35, p. 101; 4:26, p. 97.

Chapter IV

¹M, I, 8:47-48; 102. J, I, 9:29-31; 151.

²"Jerusalem is harsh: the Lord's Prayer is not very euphonious when said backwards, and Jerusalem is continually muttering or howling sinister spells to compel the devil to appear in his true shape"; 358.

³Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments, transl. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis, 1971), 167, #51.

⁴"In Equivocal Worlds Up & Down are Equivocal," Blake comments on his design for Dante's nine Circles of Hell (no. 101; 668).

⁵See for example Leo Damrosch's discussion of how "Blake openly defies the reality principle" (Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth, Princeton, 1980), 163-4.

Chapter V

¹Quoted by Milton Klonsky in William Blake: The Seer and his Visions (New York, Harmony Books, 1977), 14.

²Lowrie, Kierkegaard, 347-363 ("The Corsair"); see also his appendix to The Point of View for My Work as an Author, 163-165.

³See Hirsch's discussion of this distinction, in Innocence and Experience (Chicago, 1964), "Preface to the Second Edition" (1975), xi-xxi.

⁴The opening paragraph of his discussion of Either/Or is a good, brief example of this essential directness:

Either-Or, whose very title is suggestive, exhibits the existential relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical in existing individualities. This is for me the book's indirect polemic against speculative philosophy, which is indifferent to the existential. The fact that there is no result and no finite decision, is an indirect expression for the truth as inwardness, and thus perhaps a polemic against the truth as knowledge. The preface itself says something about it, but not didac-

tically, for then I could know with certainty,
but in the merry form of jest and hypothesis.
The fact that there is no author is a means of
keeping the reader at a distance.

(CUP, 226)

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