

WILLIAM BLAKE'S CONCEPTION OF CONTRARIES AS PATHWAYS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND AWAKENING.

ABSTRACT:

William Blake employs contraries as a foundational framework to establish and integrate his philosophy of the duality of contraries in his seminal poetic collection of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789, 1794). His works juxtapose the two states of human awareness – innocence and experience, not as moralistic opposites but as independent agencies that engage in a composite integrating dialogue throughout. This study intends to elucidate the engagement of Blake's dialectic of contraries, which aims to deliver both thematic and structural meaning, shaping the poetic artist's collective vision and philosophy.

Qualitatively constructing from the hermeneutic methodology as the basis, this paper executes a close textual analysis of poems such as "The Lamb" and "The Tyger", showcasing the contrasting interplay of innocence and experience. The study presents how Blake has contrasted imagery, diction, and form in the structure of his work to incorporate the tension between the states of purity, faith, trust, and harmony, and the state of incorporating knowledge, alienation, and social critique. For instance, pastoral simplicity and divine consideration are explored through the rhythm and imagery of the poem "The Lamb," while "The Tyger" uses blazing symbolism and questioning to evoke the sublime aspects of creation. Such a pairing contrast opens the avenue for the reader to explore the complexity of human understanding and the spiritual underpinnings of the physically discomforting realities.

The study, thence, constitutes a reflection of the historical context of the critique of rationalism, institutional religion, and social injustice in late 18th-century England, thereby prospecting the scope of imagination in reflecting a philosophical vision over the mystical concerns, emphasizing the importance of paradox essential to spiritual growth and understanding. Therefore, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* offer a textual framework to explore the aspects of moral complexities of human consciousness through the use of symbolism and imagery as elements of imagination, creating nature, unfolding a dimension with the potential for spiritual integration through a Gestalt panoramic view through his artistic work.

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

William Blake (1757-1827), a known poet, painter, and visionary, has woven a narrative through his works that has been accounted for having challenged the conventional perceptions of innocence and experience, through the presentation of his concept of contraries. William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* engraved in 1789 seem to present two radically different views of the world and it might be considered true, if appraised by its subtitle *Shewing the Two Contrary States of Human Soul*, however, in his prophetic work *JERUSALEM: The Emanation of The Giant Albion*, (17:33-35) Blake sheds a detailed light on his idea of contraries by stating that

“Negations are not Contraries: Contraries mutually Exist:
But Negations Exist Not: Exceptions & Objections & Unbeliefs
Exist not: nor shall they ever be Organized for ever & ever”

(*Jerusalem* 17: 33-35)

Blake is considered an important figure mainly because of his unique vision, which he tried to present through his Illuminated Paintings. His vision is seen to be no different from the Romantic concept of Imagination, since both vision and imagination strive to present a permanent/eternal truth. For Blake, imagination is not merely the power of visualization or a power of association, but, as Engell remarks, Blake's idea of imagination can be closely related to Coleridge, i.e., a creative power by which the mind “gains insight into reality, reads nature as a symbol of something behind or within nature not ordinarily perceived.”¹

“To see a World in a Grain of Sand:
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.”²

Blake considers all nature to be “imagination itself.” He does not believe in any distinction between Nature and man, i.e., there are no distinct contraries. In his letter to Reverend John Trusler, he tries to elucidate on the “World of imagination and Vision”. He states:

¹Richards, I.A (1935). *Coleridge on Imagination* .

²Auguries of Innocence by William Blake.

“The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way. Some See Nature all Ridicule & Deformity, & by these I shall not regulate my proportions; & Some Scarce see Nature at all. But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, So he Sees.”

Such a view of imagination justifies the necessity of myth and of metaphor and of symbol as its vehicle.

Hence, by presenting the contraries as a natural part of nature propelling for growth, it opens the scope of reading Blake’s works, offering a methodology for awakening. Therefore, this research aims to investigate William Blake’s conception of contraries, particularly through his works of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and its presentation of the tension between opposites as a source of suggested integration and not division, patronizing a dimension for spiritual growth and awakening.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Songs of Innocence and of Experience have been greatly studied by various critics. It has been read either as separate entities or in contrast, offering a moralistic suggestion with the backdrop of critiquing the aspects of social injustice in the religious and industrial institutions of his times, often not considering the role of dialectic relations of narratives. It runs the risk of reducing the work of a binary allegory, obscuring the role of dynamic tensions of opposites in raising consciousness and spiritual integration. Further, the dialectic relationship exists at various levels, not limited solely to the thematic or structural aspect of Blake’s works, but also in the symbolic and epistemological form of his work, wherein the dialectical nature informs the poetic form of the work, becoming the tone and voice of individual poems, thereby envisioning Blake’s view of a suggested integration from innocence to experience without providing a leveraging privilege to either.

This study, therefore, tries to view the contraries in the works of William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, forming an integrated architecture for delivering his philosophy.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The aim of this study is to examine the use of contraries in the works of William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and analyze the interplay of dualities, leading to an individual’s spiritual growth.

The dialectic between innocence and experience also embodies a critical reading of the Enlightenment thought on Rationalism, Empiricism, Progressivism, and conventional morality, instead advocating for an imaginative epistemology where progression arises from the interplay of opposites. This study anticipates to explore these dialectics through a close analysis of selected poems from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate Blake's vision of the idea of contraries as a pathway for spiritual awakening achieved through transcending dualities and differences.
2. To understand the symbolic and visual representation of contraries in William Blake's works, against a backdrop of traditional religious thought in 18th -and 19th-century Britain.
3. To critically evaluate the theme of the integrated nature of contraries in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.
4. To understand Blake's holistic view of human knowledge, embracing logic and passion, in contrast to the Enlightenment thought of reason as the sole truth.
5. To assess Blake's contribution to the development of human nature and psychology, and its relevance in contemporary times.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer:

1. How does Blake envision the idea of contraries as a pathway for spiritual awakening through the transcendence of duality?
2. How does Blake depict the idea of contraries through symbolic and visual representations such as Tyger and Lamb, in the context of the traditional religious thought of 18th and 19th-century Britain?
3. Which poetic strategies convey the dialectic of contraries in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*?
4. How does Blake's dialectic technique critique the prevailing philosophical Enlightenment binaries of his time?
5. How does Blake's unified conception of the idea of contraries offer spiritual solutions to the crisis of the modern globalized and multicultural world?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is expected to be valuable to scholars of Romantic literature, literary theory, English literature, Philosophy, and the newly emerging area of well-being literature. Further, it aims to add to the interpretive approaches to Blake's poetry with relevance to studies of paradox and ambiguity.

It has been said that "the fragmentation of society that Blake had experienced due to industrial urbanization and dislocation of old class structures affected him deeply and was to be transmuted into the main metaphor of his Prophetic Books and his Myth of Man."³ Blake is considered to be a humanist who believed that Man's restoration to the perfection of Eden lies in humanity's own hands.

He attacks the traditional valorization of the immortal soul, which he regards as a notion founded on egotism. For him, the soul to be "transcendent" means that it can recognize its divinity and it can embrace it through the enjoyment of its creativity⁴.

Blake constantly presents opposite aspects of being in his prophetic book *Vala or The Four Zoas*. But contraries are not negations. The states are contraries because, as Harold Bloom says, "they cannot be reconciled within the limitations of human existence. But their simultaneous reality demonstrates that neither merely negates the other." Blake insists on the importance of contraries or dualities because it is only through them that a man can move towards Higher Innocence. As Blake says in his book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

"Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to human existence."

"Four Mighty Ones are in every Man," says Blake. The story of The Four Zoas re-emphasizes man's primary role in the universe. He sees the body as a repository of the spirit, passion, and wisdom, and emphasizes treating each individual identity with dignity. For Blake, life fully developed is Four-Fold.

"Now I a Four-Fold vision see

And a Four Fold vision is given to me

'Tis Four-Fold in my supreme delight

³Cama, S. Introduction to William Blake. In *Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge* (pp. 41-59). Worldview Critical Editions.

⁴Quinney, L. William Blake on Self and Soul.

150 And Three-Fold in soft Beulah's night
151 And Two-Fold always. May God us keep
152 From Single Vision & Newton's sleep"⁵

153 As Shernaz Cama puts it, "Single Vision is that seen by the eye; it is repressive because man
154 should always accept different perspectives. Two-Fold Vision perceives the value of things,
155 Three-Fold Vision recognizes the emotions and inspires creativity. Four-Fold Vision is the
156 ultimate, the achievement of spiritual ecstasy." Blake's Four Fold Vision links to the myth of
157 Four Zoas. Zoas are psychic energies like the Humours, which must be in harmony.

158 These Zoas are visible in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in the image of the priest
159 and authority figures in poems like *The Garden of Love* and *London*, dominating the aspect of
160 Experience, representing Urizen, while both the songs of Innocence and Experience, *The*
161 *Little Black Boy* and *The Chimney Sweeper* present Luvah, innocent affection and tragic
162 suffering, they also exhibit aspects of earthy sensory presence through *Spring* in Innocence
163 and suffering in Experience, i.e., Tharmas. However, it is Urthona (Los) that transcends both
164 the states of Innocence and Experience, as per Blake's mythical philosophy, through is
165 Imagination and prophecy presented in the *Introduction*.

166 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

167 Due to limitations of time and resources, the current study focuses exclusively on the *Songs*
168 *of Innocence and of Experience*, excluding Blake's other prophetic works and his artistic
169 explorations to maintain clarity and depth in analysis. Though the *Songs* are his foundational
170 text enmeshing contraries, this focus also limits the scope of exploring the evolution of these
171 contraries in his later works. The study employs interpretive methods subject to debates and
172 alternative readings. The analysis centers primarily on English text and doesn't consider any
173 translation versions of his works or visual derivations and representations that are integral but
174 outside the scope of this study.

175 II. LITERATURE REVIEW

176 CONCEPTUAL INSIGHT

⁵Letter to Thomas Butts-K, 818

William Blake's works have been criticized and appreciated for a long time; however, the design of looking at the idea of contraries was not particular to Blake, but had been discussed by various philosophers. A pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Anaximander, had stated that there was a constant war of opposites. However, according to Anaximenes, a follower and successor of Anaximander, believed that there was not so much a war of opposites, but a continuum of change. Yet, it was Heraclitus to first suggested the *Doctrine of flux and unity of opposites*. He considered that the universe is in a constant change, yet the same. It defines a situation in which the existence or identity of a thing (or situation) depends on the co-existence of at least two conditions which are opposite to each other, yet dependent on each other and presupposing each other, within a field of tension. Unity of opposites then became a central category of dialectics. Later, Hegel, a German philosopher, wrote about the dialectic understanding, in his criticism to Immanuel Kant, where he stated:

"That true and positive meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements. Consequently, to know, or, in other words, to comprehend an object is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations." (*Science of Logic*, 1812-1813)

It is similar to the triad: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which is often used to describe Hegel's thought. A thesis is a beginning proposition; an antithesis is a negation of that thesis and a synthesis whereby the two conflicting ideas are reconciled to form a new proposition. Various critics have read Blake's vision dialectically in the Hegelian sense. However, some critics like Nurmi in *William Blake's The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* argue that Blake is unlike Hegel since his contraries do not disappear in some sort of higher synthesis; nor do they change their identities in the dialectical process, as Hegel's opposites do.

Often, Blake's realization that contraries mutually exist is compared to Carl Jung's focused attention on reconciling opposites within the process of 'individuation', and to what he calls 'reconciling third'.

"By bearing the opposites we can expose ourselves to life in our humanity... We have to realize the evil is in us; we have to risk life to get into life, then it takes on color, otherwise we might as well read a book....

The opus consists of three parts; insight, endurance and action. It is conflicts of duty that make endurance and action so difficult. The one must exist and so must the other. There is no resolution, only patient endurance of the opposites, which ultimately spring from your own nature. You yourself

are a conflict that rages in and against itself in order to melt its incompatible substances, the male and female, in the fire of suffering and thus create that fixed and unalterable form which is the goal of life.... We are crucified between the opposites and delivered up to the torture until the reconciling third takes shape." (From letter to Olga Forbe-Kapteyn)⁶

Thus, works of scholars like David V. Erdman provide a suggestive light when he states that Blake's spiritual agitation is a response to the materialism and rationalism of his era, offering an alternative vision of human potential, which aligns with Michael Davis' interpretation in *The Spiritual Imagination of William Blake* (2005), of Blake's work as a form of an artistic vision emphasizing on the transformative powers of imagination, through the use of contraries, while E.P. Thompson in *Witness Against the Beast* (1993) reads Blake's works as a challenge to institutionalized religion and the conventional morality of his time.

ELABORATION OF THE TERMS

The following operational terminology shall guide the textual analysis of Blake's use of language and structure in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

The primary term used in regard to *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is 'contraries', which suggests an essential opposition that is interdependent and dialectically related rather than being mutually exclusive. Such contraries represent different modes of perception, being Innocence in harmony with the divine, and Experience marked by an awareness of suffering and injustice.

'Dialectic' here refers to the dynamic tension between the contraries, producing progression, maintaining the vitality of progression as a creative and transformative force.

"Innocence" in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is the state of a spiritual and psychological purity like that of childhood or Edenic bliss. It is not idealized by Blake for its naivety, but it is rooted in faith.

"Experience" in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* signifies the loss of innocence due to social injustice and oppression. It embodies disillusionment and critical consciousness.

"Imagination", according to Blake, is what constitutes the nature, and is the vital faculty of man that makes him complete and reliable. Through which he can perceive beyond the

⁶In C. Dunne, *Carl Jung: Wounded Healer of the Soul* (p. 89).
(William Blake: Religion and Psychology, 2011)

237 empirical, enabling transcendence of realities. It both sustains the dialectic and offers a
238 creative insight into the unity beyond.

239 OPERATIONALIZATION

240 Blake's works reflect two literary influences: firstly, the pastoral tradition⁷ and his excessive
241 use of symbolism, and secondly, in writing his poems for children, it has been contemplated
242 that he showed an interest in the literature for children (unlike any other Romantic poet) since
243 his books maintained the moralistic tone, though it is restrained to a minimum.

244 Blake believed that contraries must mutually exist for growth to happen. While *Songs of*
245 *Innocence* was published in 1789, it was not until 1794 that *Songs of Experience* was
246 released. The piper pipes his song about the Lamb twice in the "Introduction" to *Songs of*
247 *Innocence*, and the second time, the child "wept to hear". Blake meant to indicate that
248 Innocence had its "Contrary State", which later he was to call "Experience".

249 We can find an inter-relationship between the *Songs of Innocence* and *of Experience*,
250 respectively. The language itself displays contraries in the terms, "life" and "death", "night"
251 and "day", "love" and "joy", "sorrow" and "fear".⁸ Blake's "The Lamb" is in contrast to "The
252 Tyger", "Laughing Song" provides a contrast to "The Garden of Love", "The Little Black
253 Boy" is answered in "The Little Vagabond", "The Shepherd" opposes "London".⁹

254 The landscape of Innocence is humanized. It echoes human songs and laughter and
255 sympathizes with feelings. This harmony is presented in "The Lamb". In the poem, a
256 question is posed to know the creator of the Lamb, like in "The Tyger". However, "The
257 Tyger" almost ends in perpetual questioning, but "The Lamb" tends to present some answer
258 to the question.

259 "Little Lamb I'll tell thee!

260 He is called by thy name,

261 For he calls himself a Lamb:

262 He is meek & he is mild,

⁷Blake's use of a pastoral idyllic state and an emphasis on childhood is later seen in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*. A comparison between Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and Rossetti's *Goblin Market* is often a matter of discussion.

⁸Miles, J. (1973). "Blake's Frame of Language". In P. A. Philips, *William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes* (pp. 86-89).

⁹Partridge, E. Inter-relationships in Blake's Songs. 222.

264 In “The Lamb”, we find a movement towards language acquisition. In the world of
 265 innocence, we find that we cannot talk about naming without entering into the context of
 266 power and the interposition of form¹⁰. Hilton argues that the alterations that the poetic voice
 267 makes between capital and lower-case “He”/ “he” and between “lamb”/ “Lamb” further
 268 invoke confusion between subject and object¹¹ and provides an insight into child’s ability to
 269 comprehend the metaphor, as seen in the plate of *Songs of Innocence*, the children were
 270 taught to read and were provided with interpretations by the adult. Similarly, the text
 271 highlights a child’s joy of mastery on knowing an answer. Though the poems are explicitly
 272 presenting a state of innocence but this innocence sharply conveys the injustice and
 273 sufferings caused by society to the children in a state of ignorance, like in “The Little Black
 274 Boy” and “The Chimney Sweeper”.

275 “The Little Black Boy” presents the pain of being born with black skin. The slightly older
 276 speaker’s detachment heightens the sense of pain (“So your chimneys I sweep”). Blake
 277 imaginatively enters into the condition of the boy and the mother and provides a vision that
 278 makes the suffering temporary. By showing her boy that the body is like a “cloud” that
 279 absorbs the beams of God’s love and vanishes after a short period of trial, she turns the
 280 standards of the world around him upside down. Here, God is conceived as in Milton, where
 281 he dwells in “unapproached light,” which the angels can bear to behold only when they veil
 282 their eyes with their wings¹². The poem ends with a reversal where the little black boy sees
 283 himself with the English child in heaven; however, the black boy shows a strain of mature
 284 understanding and pity for the white boy. The line, “And be like him, and he will then love
 285 me”, highlights Blake’s Essential Humanism. The body is perceived as a hindrance to access
 286 God’s world, where the boy hopes of getting love that is denied to him in this world. It is only
 287 the boy’s faith that grants him to live without surrendering to the inevitable.

288 “The Chimney Sweeper” descends far into the suffering of Tom, and only the innocent faith
 289 that we see in Tom’s dream is his means of survival. A grim irony is presented in the last lines
 290 that hint towards the duties left unperformed by the boy’s elders and lack of any reward for
 291 his virtues. A person incorporates both imagination and reason, but it is in Blake’s art that all

¹⁰Similar to Louis Althusser’s “interpellation”

¹¹Hilton, N. (1998). William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. In D. WU, *A Companion to Romanticism*. Oxford & Mass: Blackwell Publisher.

¹²Price, M. *The Vision of Innocence*.

292 the virtues and vision of innocence are presented together in the *Songs of Innocence*, which in
293 turn leaves the poems in *Songs of Experience* dark and full of pathos.

294 In the poem “The Tyger,” we find a coming together of the voice of innocence and
295 experience.

296 “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?”

297 Usually, the tiger and the lamb are read as contraries, but Mark Schorer remarks that “the
298 juxtaposition of lamb and tiger points not merely to the opposition of innocence and
299 experience, but to the resolution of paradox they present”. The innocent impulse of the lamb
300 has been curbed by restraints, and the lamb has turned into the tiger. In other words,
301 “innocence is converted to experience”. But, energy can only be curbed and not destroyed; it
302 then converts into wrath. The poem “The Tyger” deals with the problem of how to reconcile
303 the Forgiveness of Sins (“The Lamb”) with the Punishment of Sins (“The Tyger”). Through
304 the juxtaposition of figures of Lamb and Tiger, the image of Christ becomes one, where he
305 represents both a passive as well a fiery energy. The tiger seems to symbolize a spiritual
306 energy which may bring form out of chaos and unite man with the part of his own being
307 which has been lost.

308 There has been a universal use of fire as a symbol of wrath, and Blake too uses the symbol of
309 fire in his poem “The Tyger”. He found some good in Wrath.

310 “The Tygers of wrath are wiser than the Horses of instruction”

311 Another symbol that he uses is that of the Forest. In Blake, Forest is the world of Experience,
312 where errors (dead trees) conceal the path. And the great purpose of Wrath then is to consume
313 the Errors of corrupt social orders and beliefs, which the “horses of instruction” fail to do.
314 Fire/Wrath also symbolizes the potential of a revolution and hints towards the political
315 undertones of the French Revolution in the time when Blake was writing. The revolution that
316 God/ Christ/ Tiger will bring is understood as the transgressing force that will burn away the
317 “forest” which stands for the corrupt order.

318 “Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright¹³

319 In the forests of the night,”

¹³Here, there is also a subtle hint towards the myth of Prometheus.

320 It is often claimed that The Tyger was created by the mechanical laws of the fallen world of
321 Reason (symbolized by the Stars, as the world of Urizen).

322 “When the stars threw down their spears,

323 And water’d heaven with their tears.”

324 (“The Tyger”: 17-18)

325 Blake shows the process of tyger’s creation. First, the “fire of his eyes” is gathered from the
326 cosmos; he seemed to have begun the creation of the tiger with the creation of his eyes,
327 because the Eye to Blake meant Intellect. Then the heart is created, the feet forged, and
328 ultimately the brain¹⁴. Kathleen Raine comes to the conclusion that the creator of the tiger is a
329 devil. She suggests that Lamb and Tiger inhabit different worlds and are works of different
330 creators. She suggests the sources in Gnostic and Hermetic mysticism as proof that the Lamb
331 was made by the son of God and the Tiger was made by the third person of the Gnostic
332 trinity.

333 The word “fearful” in the phrase “fearful symmetry” throws a doubt upon the benevolence of
334 the creator, but also emphasizes that the tiger is both terrifying and beautiful¹⁵. Blake
335 combines two contrary ideas (terrifying and beautiful) in the same concept. On the surface,
336 Blake’s doctrine of contraries seems to be derived from Boehme. Boehme, the eighteenth-
337 century philosopher, thought that God manifests himself in two contrary principles: wrath and
338 love, fire and light, father and son. These principles are not opposites but are contraries in an
339 unending dialectic whose synthesis is the Godhead. The flame represents the interaction of
340 these two aspects – its light corresponding to his love and his heat to his wrath. The divine
341 wrath in the eighteenth century was considered the highest manifestation of the sublime.

342 Paley compares The Tyger to the Leviathan of Job since both are fiery images of the divine.
343 He compares Lord asking Job from the whirlwind:

344 “Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of the waters, or a way for the lighting of
345 thunder?”

346 to Blake’s speaker asking: “Did he who made the Lamb made thee?” in Blake’s Notebook,
347 the tiger appears after the moral terrain has been tainted by the hapless soldier, the blackening

¹⁴Damon, S. (1947). *The Initial Eden. William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*.

¹⁵From a Marxist perspective, the process of constructing and identifying what is beautiful can be seen as a hegemonic process.

church, the harlot, the chimney sweeper. The function of “The Tyger” is also compared to the role played by Leviathan as a culminating image of God’s speech to Job.

The poem makes use of a rhetorical strategy. The poem is then read from the perspective of Experience. The divine energy of the tiger leads to a sense of awe and sublimity. It appears to be a kind of praise of the creator rather than an enquiry into his identity. But, it betrays the tension it creates since what it wants to say in the praise of the creator and the way it is said limit the praise. There is a conflict between the adjectives and the nouns of the poem; the adjectives want to drag the creator to a superhuman sphere, but the nouns ground him to the human level. For example: “What immortal hand or eye”, “What dread hand? & what dread feet?”, “Dare its deadly terrors clasp?” So, the greatness of the creator is imposed through means like questioning, superlatives, and a general atmosphere of astonishment and wonder.

According to Martin Price, the repetition of the first stanza in the last and the change from “could” to “dare” suggest that the question of who “made thee?” has been answered, but not explicitly told. Nevertheless, Paley presents the idea that Blake’s furnace (referring to Blake’s method of illuminated painting) is the perpetual source of power for transforming a dead world, which is a kind of Los furnace in which he created “The Tyger” and “The Lamb”.

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?

Like “The Tyger”, “London” is also a poem depicting wrath against the corruption of civilization by the power of Reason, but moreover, in a concentrated format. Ironically, it is only the visionary poet alone who can see it.

“In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant’s cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear.”

The blood on the walls of the palace is not specifically defined as the blood of soldiers who died in war; David Erdman interprets this blood as soldiers’ own. Blood was also seen as an apocalyptic omen of mutiny and civil war.

In the structure of the poem, the soldier's utterance that puts blood on palace walls is paralleled to the harlot's curse. The youthful harlot presents both a physical and moral disease evident only to the visionary poet.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse.

A point worth noticing in all the poems is that the sufferers have an identity, for instance, the chimney sweeper, the black boy, the hapless soldier, infants, harlots; however, the perpetrators of suffering have no names. As Price says, the gap between suffering and awareness is part of the terror of London.

Blake's description of London is like a bridge between Wordsworth's and Johnson's portraits of London in their respective poems. Where Blake's poem has a pessimistic tone and a use of synecdoche to describe the misery and pain of the population of London city: "the new-born infant," "the hapless soldier," "the youthful harlot.", Wordsworth's tone is quite optimistic and he presents a serene portrait of London with his main poetic device being personification to capture the radiant beauty of London city. Johnson's "London" is however, similar to Blake's poem. He criticizes the mercantile expansion, capitalism, insidious consumption, and social and political corruption.

We also find that in every poem of *Experience*, there is an image of being tied down. For instance, "They clothed me in the clothes of death, And taught me to sing the notes of woe." ("The Chimney Sweeper"), "The mind- forg'd manacles I hear" ("London"), "And binding with briars my joys & desires" ("The Garden of Love"), "What the hammer? What's the chain?"¹⁶ ("The Tyger") etc. So, Blake exposes the simultaneous control and creation processes in the world of *Experience*, almost making us compare the world of reason to an industry.

To add more to the ideas discussed, we see that Blake was against the Church and constantly condemned it. For instance, in "The Garden of Love", we see that the "gates of this Chapel were shut" for the world of Innocence and Imagination, and rather it propagates Reason, where "And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door". But Blake, although speaking against the institutions, provides a picture in favor of the institutionalized God, Christ, where he seems to believe in the philosophy of Christianity, that is, Christ is for all irrespective of any division. This minute contrary is held even in his works. In "The Little Black Boy", he is against the

¹⁶ The use of "hammer, chains" in "The Tyger" presents itself as a symbol for the Industrial Revolution.

notion of slavery on the basis of which human beings are differentiated and sees the body only as a transitory “cloud”; on the other hand, he also parodies the Christian dictum that everybody has a “white” soul.

Hence, we find that a dynamic interplay of contraries creates a fine balance in the philosophical universe of Blake. By the term ‘contraries’, Blake does not mean ‘negatives’. His philosophy insists upon the mutual existence of contraries because growth happens in the presence of both the contraries (positive and negative; Innocence and Experience), therefore serving the philosophy of his spiritual landscape.

III. METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design grounded in literary textual analysis, foregrounding critical insights aimed at building an understanding of Blake’s use of contraries in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Given the symbolic holdings in the work, the interpretive analysis allows insights into the structural, thematic, and epistemological dimensions of the work. Besides the close textual reading, the study examines the dialectical interplay, emphasizing linguistic features and elements, integrating historical and philosophical contextualization, situating Blake’s contraries in the 18th-century discourse on childhood, morality, religion, and Enlightenment. The study has also included scholarly annotations supplemented by critical commentaries. Through this lens, the study has explored the literary methods used by Blake that have served both as a critique of the rationalist discourse and a reconfiguration of the spiritual truth.

SAMPLES AND TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED

The study has employed purposive sampling based on the theoretical richness of the text and direct engagement with the theme of contraries. The works included are William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. This text is not for representative purposes of his entire writings, but only for his exemplary articulation of the theme of contraries in a dialectical vision, as the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* are structured in a dialogic framework where each poem finds a counterpart. It offers a rich tapestry of poetic and symbolic material to analyse Blake’s deployment of contraries.

METHODS OF TEXTUAL EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Primarily, the data gathered is from primary and secondary sources of William Blake's works. The Primary works include the poetic texts of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, as it becomes the main source of the analysis among the drafts, and the visual illuminations of William Blake. The imagery aspect of the poetry has also been included, such as the fiery description of "The Tyger." Secondary sources for research have included other philosophical readings, critical essays, and journals that focus on Blake's philosophy of spirit, his conception of contraries, the influence of his times, and the impact of his works on Romanticism. They were obtained through academic databases such as JSTOR. Theoretical frameworks of scholars like Northrop Frye (myth criticism), Harold Bloom (gnosticism and poetic influence), and Kathleen Raine (mystical and Neoplatonic traditions) have provided interpretative scaffolding to the literary interpretations. The combination of primary texts and critical analysis has brought a nuanced and well-supported analysis.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

This study has been carried out through a multi-layered interpretive strategy, combining a close study of the textual, structural, symbolic, and philosophical analysis. At the core are the oppositional motifs in Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the understanding of reason and trust. The study has analyzed how the traditional binaries are utilized to subvert them to draw a larger meaning, as Blake has said in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Opposites is true friendship."

Structural analysis has also been carried out in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, which has brought to light the limitations of reading with one-sided perception. The contrasting poems do not replace each other but contribute towards adding a larger meaning to the human condition depicted. Symbolic and imagistic analysis of the recurring images was explored as the Tyger describes the fire as both with the potential of divine creation and destructive potential, showcasing the dual nature of existence. Hence, the analysis draws the philosophically informed connections, integrating the contraries.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The close critical reading of the text, involving a comparative analysis, reveals that the poems in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* constitute an interplay of complex binaries central to contributing a larger meaning and impact, thereby offering a critique of the Enlightenment

thought of his times, and adding to the emerging early Romanticism. The contrast created through imagery and diction in poems like “*The Lamb*” (Innocence) and “*The Tyger*” (Experience) contributes to the philosophical thought of Blake that negations are not contraries, but they mutually exist in the sphere of nature and existence as do the creations of an artist through his imagination. The question “Little Lamb, who made thee?” and the confident response “He is called by thy name” create a universe of creation that is divinely benevolent and all-inclusive, which unfolds the sphere of spiritual transcendence. It hence proves the philosophical fact woven in the tapestry of Blake’s works that the mutual existence of contraries facilitates the existence of nature, as objections and exceptions non-relational will fail to exist and hence couldn’t be organized in the layout of the larger picture. It thereby unfolds the Gestalt vision of viewing the nature of existence and offers a unique approach to finding one’s path towards self-actualization, through the tension of contraries that are not to be considered negative.

V. CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

By focusing on Blake’s view of contraries as a means for growth, this study has offered a more nuanced comprehension of the integration of opposites as an important milestone in the quest for self-realization and growth. The dialectic structure showcases a movement from the state of innocence towards experience, integrating through the challenges faced. Blake’s portrayal of the dissatisfaction with the dominant mode of reason of his time acts as an interpenetrating force, drawing the complexities of existence and the path of finding true understanding towards a spiritual realm. Through his poems, like “*The Lamb*.” He has successfully symbolized innocence through figures like the *lamb* and the child, representing the purity and divinity of creation. To contrast innocence with the ferocious potential of corruption of experience, Blake extends the use of animal imagery through the figure of *the tyger*. Although various poets have used Christian symbolism, Blake criticizes the society and religion, placing the liability on it as the experience provider for the world of innocence, along with leaving a room for redemption by employing the symbolism of Christ as both a childlike innocent and a guidance-providing shepherd to the lambs, hence crafting his philosophy of divinity present in humanity from Essential Humanism.

Therefore, besides benefiting scholars and students of Literature, Theology, and Philosophy, this study’s framework of integrating Blake’s design towards providing a suggestive pathway

to self-fulfillment may also appeal to contemporary audiences interested in integrating ideas in modern self-development methods for wellbeing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the study in this direction, it is recommended that Blake's complete works could be reread to trace his philosophy and art, demonstrating a pathway to reaching the vision of a unified state of utopic vision that could be extremely helpful in the contemporary times of strife and tensions. Further, interdisciplinary approaches of child psychology, cognitive development, coping mechanisms, and the role of imagination in creating utopia and mediating opposites could also be linked in William Blake's works. In addition, teaching methodologies in the 19th century and learning pedagogies, along with the approach of imparting instruction, could also be employed upon Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, indicating interdisciplinary research related to learning and education affecting the fabric of imagination and creation of an enhanced society, providing insights into resilience formation, and navigating the trajectory through opposites during the times of distress.

FUTURE WORK

This study has aimed to contribute to the growing body of scholarship on William Blake, offering insights into his visionary philosophy, by focusing on the tension on binaries and reconciliation between dualities showcasing how contraries can serve as a means for both personal and collective enlightenment, as his works stand as a testament of contribution to the age of Romanticism in the past.

To achieve an integrated and suggestive expansion of a later interdisciplinary study of William Blake as an artist, exploring his political, philosophical, mythical, and mystical dimension of his times, accompanying his spiritual vision additionally through his art paintings, later contributing to the early Romanticism, will be of great advantage. Archival research about finding how the dialectic develops in creative works can also offer a new approach to reading William Blake's works in the future, henceforth, maintaining a continuity of existence of a timeless poet.

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