

William Blake and Systems Theory  
The Attempted Unification of History and Psychology

by

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## ABSTRACT

William Blake created a large body of artistic work over his lifetime, all of which is a testament to a unique man, a man who would not live by standards that he felt were binding and inadequate. Blake stated that he needed to create his own system so as not to be enslaved by a paradigm not of his own making. The result of this drive can be seen in his mythology and the meaning that he attempts to inscribe upon his own world. Throughout the corpus of his writings, Blake was working with complex systems. Beginning with contraries in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The Songs of Innocence & Experience*, he then took his work in the contraries and applied it to history and psychology in *Europe a Prophecy* and *The First Book of Urizen*. In Blake's use of history and psychology, he was actually broaching the idea of social systems and how they interact with and effect psychic systems. This paper looks at the genesis of Blake's systems through the contraries, up to the point where he attempts to bring social and psychological systems together into a universal system. He uses projection and introjection to try to close the gap in double contingency. However, grappling with this problem (as well as the issue of a universal system) proves to be too much when he reaches *The Four Zoas*. In his later works, some of these issues are resolved, but ultimately Blake is not able create a universal system.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

William Blake created a large body of artistic work over his lifetime, a portion of which was burned. What was left is a testament to a unique man, a man who would not live by standards that he felt were binding and inadequate. As Blake via Los stated in *Jerusalem*: “I must Create a System, or be enslav’d by another Mans / I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 153). He felt that man should be trapped in a paradigm not of his own making. The result of this drive can be seen in the genesis of his own mythology as a vehicle to inscribe individual presence upon his world.

Blake, throughout the corpus of his writings, worked on a very complex idea of dynamic unity, beginning with contraries, moved into historical and psychological works, and finally resulting in an effort to bring together two seemingly disparate systems that are actually always intertwined. He did not complete this project, but in his tackling this problem he opened himself up to a myriad of later interpretation and the application of the entire world of theory. In his use of history and psychology, Blake was actually broaching the idea of social systems and how they affect and interact with psychic systems. He tries to make them part of a larger system bound to the idea of the spiritual body, which is never seen to completion; thus *The Four Zoas* was never finished.

Systems theory has been around in various forms for a long time. A leader in today’s systems theory, Niklas Luhmann, speaks of its origins in a tradition of

understanding that a whole is composed of parts. This created an issue, since in this line of thinking the whole has to be understood as “the unity and as the totality of its parts” (5). One must be able to acknowledge both the whole as its own being, as well as understand the parts that make up that whole and how they work together. A more recent form of this type of thinking “developed in the eighteenth century, used the concept of the universal. The entire world or the totality of humanity as the universal had to be present, it claimed, in man” (6).

While Blake opposed Newton’s universal system and the role that science plays in the world of systems, he himself tried to reconcile all the parts of man into one whole system. This is problematic for systems theory, though, in that each disparate system (such as psychic and social systems) does not integrate with the others.

System theory works within a complex set of ideas. Behind all of these ideas is the concept of communication and how it binds systems together. Systems are able to change as they develop; this requires that the smaller parts (which bind together the whole) change at the same time; this is called autopoiesis (or an autopoietic system). The action of the whole and the parts changing together is self-referentiality, the system referring back on itself to grow and change. This change is important because it requires communication between the parts in order to shift the whole; without communication there is a failure, and the system will become stagnant or will fall apart.

Autopoietic systems are closed systems; they do not interact with their environment, but rather with representations of their environment (McGraw-Hill).

Social systems, which are closed systems, rely on communication. Anything that is not communication is a part of a social system's environment. There is a problem with communication, though, in that communication is dependant upon the response of the addressee to the speaker, and the addressee on what the speaker says.

This problem is referred to as double contingency. This is an issue that initially Parsons presents, and then Luhmann tries to grapple within his own work. The way in which cultural norms are built into social structure helps to dispel some of the issues of communication, but there is still a gap between the speaker and the addressee. This gap falls between psychic and social systems, as well as with issues of personalization in social systems. The personalization of communication requires individuals to act yet to take into account psychic systems separate from social systems. However, these two systems must work together in order for the two speakers to come to a conclusion. The understanding reached between these two is not aided by the aforementioned self-referentiality, which causes a system to come up with conclusions based upon itself rather than outside input. This understanding will always be in question since the result of the interaction could always have been different had different choices been made or actions taken.

In system theory, the primary problematic (from a Blakean point of view) is that history and psychology are two separate systems that cannot be analyzed as the same system. While they can act as an environment to each other, they cannot interact with one another. Luhmann states that "psychic systems constituted on

the basis of a unified (self-referential) nexus of conscious states, and social systems constituted on the basis of a unified (self-referential) nexus of communications” (Luhmann 59). While these two systems can inform one another, they cannot interact. Blake attempts to go directly against this in his the large-scale epics that conclude his poetic career.

Blake sought to show through his corpus of works that systems of thought are inscribed in history, and when they are inscribed in history they are re-inscribed into the psyche. To Blake, history and psychology (e.g. social and psychic systems) are actually a part of one larger system, not just an environmental influence upon one another. The beginning of this attempt to reconcile psychological and sociological systems can be seen in Blake’s work with binaries and contraries.

This opposes Luhmann’s theory because he believes that man cannot be a system; man acts within too many systems himself and is subject to the limitations of these systems. Luhmann states that a “human being is not a system” (40). A result of the processes of several systems working together cannot be a system in itself: “no system can realize the logical possibility of connecting every element to every other one” (44). Blake’s attempt to reconcile the psychological and social systems is ultimately rendered incomplete, because though they inform one another they never actually interact. Blake’s efforts to bring these two systems together resulted in the constant revisions of *The Four Zoas*, and the incomplete formation of a universal system. This is not a complete loss, however,

as it allows Blake to be interpreted on a myriad of levels encompassing nearly all theory.

In Blake's time, there was a push to uncover the system within the natural world. Naturalists pursued this through "identifying features of organic structures and grouping them into logical orders. Blake, however, did away with such taxonomical distinctions" (Gigante 468). He was more interested in the larger picture. As can be seen in his prints he looked at how systems worked together and the possible results of such joinings (such as the people who have plant like aspects in *Jerusalem*). Blake would not be bound by what he could see and allowed his imagination to explore the possibilities of a world in which systems were not scientifically tied within their structures. Structures and systems are two distinct concepts, but they are tied together. Structures are at play in society and what Blake is attempting in his works, but they are not active in and of themselves. Systems come about when ideologies take over structures. These systems then use the structures to engender and to enforce their particular paradigm. He wanted to be free of these systems and wanted to help mankind to find that same freedom. He worked to develop "narrative structures that could function therapeutically to rehabilitate imaginations damaged by 'Single vision'" (*Narrative Unbound* 3). This single vision (selfhood) is what bound man to the moral law and religious structures that kept him from making free choices.

Blake sought out a primary system; his dabbling in the intermixing of systems and science were an effort to find the base of all systems. He "saw that this doctrine of the 'one true system,' which could connect such otherwise diverse



modes of explanation as Biblical exegesis, alchemy, and scientific demonstration, presupposed a particular kind of single, coherent, unified world toward which all true explanation must point (“Incommensurability and Interconnection” 277). He wanted to reject the systems that were placed upon the world, to break the “Newtonian narrative” (*Narrative Unbound* 3) in order to explore the possibilities of systems working together. He desired to create the system that he saw operating in man, which could help those bound in societal and psychological systems break free of them while also teaching them to break free of his own system.

To understand what Blake attempts, we first must understand what exactly Blake means by “system.” This particular term is used a few times across his cannon, primarily in *Jerusalem*, but also in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the speaker proposes the formation of Gods or Geniuses through the naming of sensible objects by ancient poets. These poets studied each city and placed each under their

mental deity.

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood. (38)

Blake labels religion as a system, and while this is not the only system he speaks of, it is a good starting point to reach his definition of the concept.

What Blake proposes is a set of ideas and rules, which tie a group to a certain action set and way of thought. Blake had problems with systems of

thought such as this because he found them binding. He felt that they constricted imagination and free choice in whomever was entrapped within them. Blake's issues with these systems can be seen in the effort he put into his own mythology and his attempts to explain the world around himself. He had a unique perspective and he tried to break through the systems of thought that would contradict his perspective. This concept of systems of thought were not the only systems at work in Blake's texts, though. How Blake conceived of systems evolved and caused him to look at systems of behavior and actions within society and the individual.

Blake believed in a universal system (such as Luhmann discusses when speaking of the state of system theory in the 18<sup>th</sup> century). He thought that there was a "particular kind of single, coherent, unified world toward which all true explanation must point" ("Incommensurability and Interconnection" 277). Blake operated with the idea of a system of theories that he believed were interconnected and overlapped. This eventually led to his trying to show that psychological and social systems are part of the same system, and that they work together within an individual. This, however, wasn't where Blake's work in systems started.

The critical tradition surrounding Blake's work with systems is dense and frequently in contradiction. Kim, in speaking on the aforementioned quote in *Jerusalem*, points out that,

often this statement is quoted in defense of the clarity and accessibility of his system. However, according to Thomas Altizer 'Blake's is a 'system which cannot be translated into rational

terms. Blake profoundly opposed all of the established forms of conceptual coherence (xvi). (761)

Blake wanted to separate himself from the systems at work in society. If he wanted to have free reign to create his own system he would have to disregard the established forms. Blake let imagination rule him and his work, and would not be bound by these forms just as he would not be bound by another man's system. However, in his work, Blake was not just trying to create a system for himself; he wanted to demonstrate how to escape the constrictions of the social system for all of mankind

Just as he would not be tied to established forms, Blake would also not cohere to already established systems. In speaking of Blake's writings and the details that lend a systematic structure to the work Ackland states:

these details in themselves, do not constitute persuasive evidence that all his work fits into a fully articulated, rigid, and static system. Consequently, specialists argue instead, to borrow the words of Robert F Gleckner, in favour of viewing the poems as an 'organic and ever developing system.' (150-1)

Blake's systems would be organic over structured, due to the fact that structure is what he is opposing by creating his systems: the structure of religion, moral law, and Newton (to name only the most overt system he critiques). The further he can get from these structures the better his systems will be served. Overall, the critics seem to agree that there is a system, but cannot agree on just what that system is.

With what Blake is aiming to accomplish, his distancing himself from established structures makes sense. There are a myriad of interpretations to be taken from Blake's works, especially when looking across the entire compendium. In order to understand what is happening in his writings it is best to look at how his systems came to fruition. The beginning of Blake's efforts to bring together psychological and social systems can be found in his work with contraries found in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. These contraries are opposing states that are required in order for any forward motion in society and the evolution of the individual. In order to look at the evolution of his work with contraries we will look at the *Songs of Innocence*, *The Marriage*, and *The Songs of Experience*. While *The Songs of Innocence* was written before *The Marriage*, it serves us better to look at it after it was packaged with *The Songs of Experience* since the contraries are the beginning of the construction of Blake's system.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTRARIES AND DYNAMIC SYSTEMS

In *The Marriage*, Blake explores contraries and how they operate together.

The speaker states: "without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 34). These are two opposing forces that allow mankind to move forward. Without opposites there is never a choice to make, and without a choice there is no movement at all. Blake shows what he believes to actually construct the world: "the unregulated struggle of Contraries, which produces not the standstill of equilibrium but movement and action" (Schock 457). Blake further outlines the effect of this, stating: "From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason[.] Evil is the active springing from Energy" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 34). In Blake's definition of these contraries they become parts of man and operate within man's spirit and body.

According to Blake, the dualism of soul and body is actually another contrary and works within this idea of heaven and hell / good and evil. Love and hate, attraction and repulsion, good and evil, these are all contraries that must work with and against one another. This concept of contraries being of the same source, or two sides of the same coin, also comes into play with the body. Blake "reads 'body' with Idealist spectacles - Blake transforms its concepts into an account of the infinite forces and energies abstracted and reduced by the religious into the dualisms of soul and body, good and evil" (Schock 457). Contraries are

not like dualisms; they come from the same source. It is systems of thought such as religion (or the system that created the priesthood) that creates dualisms.

Dualisms are not productive in the way the contraries are. Blake doesn't see Good and Evil as the dualistic Good and Evil presented by moral law, rather: "Good is the passive that obeys Reason Evil is the active springing from Energy"

(*Complete Poetry and Prose* 34). Evil is what allows for creativity in Blake's eyes; it is not an evil in the biblical sense, but rather is a place of creativity that is misunderstood or labeled as evil. This is because it helps to break out of a static state by bringing action and energy to man.

The contrary system is also present in the soul and body. According to Blake the soul and the body are not opposing forces. He proposes that "the conventional dualism of body and soul is a delusion. His elusive third assertion concludes that we possess not a soul and body but a spiritual body, from which both energy and reason emanate" (Schock 458). The spiritual body is the source of the soul and the body, and therefore houses both reason and energy, good and evil. The body binds the soul to this world, "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 34). The body and the soul are bound together as the spiritual body, which holds both reason and energy; these contraries work together and come from the same source.

Blake worked outside the bounds of dualism to transform the supposed dualism of good and evil "by inverting it in *The Marriage*, identifying hell with an inner world of spiritual energy, heaven with the sterile outward bound of

reason" (Schock 456). Once this inversion is accomplished, then the negative connotations of hell and evil fall away. We must observe them as two contrary states to the same being or purpose. They are necessary to one another in order for the universe to move forward and develop.

In *The Marriage* the reader is introduced to the various forms of the author and the speaker which become very important through his works. Blake creates both an inside and an outside to his works. It is difficult to judge where the speaker lies and where Blake lies. This is especially pertinent in *The Marriage* where some of the sections are written in the first person "I" which forces the reader to be complicit in what is happening. It allows them to be both inside and outside of the text. This leads, in the later works, to the reader being an active agent in their own development.

The speaker in *The Marriage* is speaking to an angel at one point. They are watching vast black and white spiders hunting their pray, and the speaker asked the angel what his (the speaker's) lot was in this, the angel replied: "between the black & white spiders" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 41). It is man's lot to live in the grey areas between the contrary states of being. There is a system being created here in which the contraries are balanced through the spiritual body of man.

Miller states, "*The Marriage* disallows both dualism and monism, yet permits no middle ground" (500). However, this is untrue. Blake is working here with the idea that there is a middle ground in the contraries. They are opposing sides of the same force, which is why the speaker's lot is between the black and

white spiders; it is in the grey area where the fight for life is taking place. This creates a zone of space, not a specific point in time. Blake develops this idea further in his later works trying to break out of the constraints of linear time in order to capture a moment of middle ground where action can take over. If there is no middle ground then there can be no action and, thus, no movement forward.

Blake is trying to fuse together the contraries here, showing that they exist, but that they work together. Schock, in speaking of *The Marriage* and its goals states:

Satan and Christ, infernal Revelation, divinely sanctioned  
revolution out of hell: in each case the effect is to overwhelm a  
binary opposition, joining together what not only traditional  
Christianity but the Millenarianism of the 1790s have put asunder.  
To fuse them is to achieve an ontological 'critical mass,' fully  
grounding the cluster of revolutionary values *The Marriage*  
projects. (456)

The binary opposition does exist, but is held within a greater order. Contraries act like binaries in the fact that they appear to be opposing forces. However, they work together to bring about change through their opposition. Without one there is not the other, and without both there is never a choice which can change the direction of growth in the system.

Within this opposition of contraries another element is very important. This is the existence of the neutrals. Neutrals must be conquered; they are not strong enough to fight because "they are victims of revenge morality" (*Fearful*



*Symmetry* 74). The neutrals create an eternal loop where any act requires neutralization; therefore, no action can take place. Moral law calls for retribution for sins, but it is this retribution that leads to a stagnant state rather than an active one, thus reinforcing the work of the neutrals. Laws, penal codes, and persecution are all negative acts that have come into use after the Fall. These are not redemptive acts, as only forgiveness can lead to redemption because it leads man into an imaginative state and takes him out of a self-righteous state.

Contraries are “an essential part of the ‘redemption’ of mankind” (*Fearful Symmetry* 190); through their clashing they disallow negations and neutrals. Contraries give options to mankind and allow for man to choose which path to follow or what aspects of either side are truly good or truly bad. Negations maintain the status quo and allow for the continuation of ritual and morality, which blindly binds man. Kim states: “the distinction between good and evil is for Blake the basic negation perpetuated by religion. Negation murders because it abolishes half life” (Kim 766). Half-life according to religion cannot exist, but according to Blake it can. Negations use good and evil to their own purpose, to keep a stasis in life. This is done through religion and is purported by individuals who do not care enough about liberty and imagination to clash with anyone over their opinions.

The Fall of mankind is what caused the degeneracy of society and thus the ritual of morality and rise of religion. With the rise of religion comes the rise of evil, against which man must hold himself. This is a self-perpetuating circle, and “the more degenerate the society, the more obvious this alliance of moral good

and evil against the power of genius becomes” (*Fearful Symmetry* 199).

Maintaining the binary opposition at its stasis of good and evil is the driving force behind religion and moral law. This is the only way that moral law and religion can survive. By allowing for the clash of contraries there is a revolution towards a more visionary society. This system binds man within its rules and rituals; this is what Blake fought against in his efforts to create his own system. He wanted to expose the necessity of contrary states in order for man to be able to recognize them in himself and work through them, rather than just punish himself for his sins. If man gets caught in this system of constant punishment then he is also caught in a system of selfhood that leaves no room for imagination and free choice.

Blake’s work with systems and contraries did not end with *The Marriage*. He develops his ideas further in *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*, trying to show the work of contrary states in the growth of systems. This time he does so through the progression of time and the experience gained through living in the world. This leads to a dynamic system which change over time allowing the contraries to grow and develop.

After *The Marriage*, Blake delved deeper into the idea of contrary states and how they operate together. *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* were packaged together as “two contrary states of the human soul” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 7). As the individual grows from childhood to adulthood, they gain experience and thus change from one state to another. This mirrors the state of humanity pre and post Fall. It looks at the innocence and the good in mankind in

childhood and the experience and corruption that accompanies maturing into adulthood.

In the *Songs of Innocence*, Blake explores the idea of innocence and a childlike state. This is his exploration of the idea of Paradise, before it is ruined by the Fall. In the introduction of these *Songs*, the poet is asked by a child to “Sing thy songs of happy cheer” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 7). This collection of short poems was initially published on its own in 1789, and contains works such as “The Lamb,” “The Chimney Sweeper,” and “Holy Thursday.” These poems have a childlike air about them; however, they are not all as gay and light as they might seem. The weight of the world and the fall of mankind are heavily hinted at in the songs, as are Blake’s issues with the society in which he lives.

Blake attempts to capture the innocence of childhood. He looks back in “The Eccoing Green”, saying; “such such were the joys. / When we all were girls & boys” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 8). This retrospective gaze at childhood is a celebration of the innocence and joy of childhood. Celebrations along these same lines can be found in most of the songs in this collection, as well as an introspective look through the lens of childlike naiveté. The naiveté can particularly be observed in “The Lamb,” where the speaker attempts to understand the origin of the lamb, as well as the origin of himself. The speaker, in an attempt to answer his own question as to who made the lamb, states:

He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb: He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child:

I a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee. (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 9)

These texts look at how an innocent state can affect one's outlook on the world and how one attempts to explain their existence in that world. As we grow and gain experience, that outlook changes.

In *The Songs of Experience*, the reader is shown the other side of these characters. The reader meets the children of *The Songs of Innocence* after they have been in the world and understood its horror, once they have lost their innocence. In *The Songs of Innocence*, the shadow of experience exists; it comes into fruition in *The Songs of Experience*. In the introduction the bard now calls "the lapsed Soul" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 18), giving a much darker start to this set of poems than the previous half of the collection. In "The Tyger" (the poem set contrary to "The Lamb") the speaker asks, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 25). The speaker wonders how such an innocent creature could be made by the same hand as such a murderous beast. This calls into question religion and the construction of good and evil as opposing forces. If God (good) made the lamb and the tyger, then evil and good must be bound together in some form. The way that these contraries are presented forces the reader to acknowledge this on some level; they also bring into question the role of society in the preservation of innocence and good.

There are two poems, one in each set, titled "The Chimney Sweeper" which will be shown to be a good example of contrary states of the soul. In

*Innocence* this is one of the darker poems. It outlines small children working as chimney sweepers and their perspective on the situation. In the *Innocence* poem, one of the children (Tom) had a dream that

thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack  
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black,  
And by came an Angel who had a bright key,  
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free. (*Complete Poetry  
and Prose* 10)

This imagery, though dark, also shows a gleam of hope in these children. In their innocent state they are able to see hope in their situation. After the dream Tom awoke and was “happy & warm,” with the closing line, “if all do their duty, they need not fear harm” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 10). This is the naive belief in the system; if they do what is required, someone will take care of them. Later, in *The Songs of Experience* the futility of this way of life is outlined, for the children have done what is required, and still they are not taken care of.

In the second version of this poem, the “truth” of their situation is uncovered. Hope is lost in this poem, along with innocence. The parents of these children clothed them “in the clothes of death, and taught [them] to sing the notes of woe” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 23). The children are no longer holding onto hope: they are jaded by their experience. The speaker states,

because I am happy, & dance & sing,  
They think they have done me no injury:  
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King

Who make up a heaven of our misery. (*Complete Poetry and Prose*  
23)

They are now playing a part in the system in which they have become enslaved.

Blake is working with dynamic systems in these poems. The move from innocence to experience is a trajectory for the system between a childlike state and the experience of adulthood. Fairer, in his introduction to his essay on “Holy Thursday” states: “Blake's texts lose their innocence more easily than most, and like Adam and Eve they do so by knowing Good and Evil, by finding a wider oppositional context in which a truth is split into its dynamic contraries” (535). In the innocent version of “Holy Thursday” the children are referred to as lambs, and the final line of the poem warns to “cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 13). This is a harsh warning in a song of innocence, which points to the pomp and circumstance surrounding the holiday, hiding the truth of the state of these children. Blake was, throughout his poems, trying to point out the dynamic systems and the trajectories that they follow.

The second version of “Holy Thursday” is more of a chastisement than the first poem. The speaker talks of “Babes reduced to misery, / Fed with cold and usurious hand” and “Is that trembling cry a song? / Can it be a song of joy?” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 19). This poem asks how, in this rich and fruitful land, so many children can be in such a destitute state? With the state that its children exist in, shouldn't this be a land of eternal winter? Blake looks at the world as a place where imagination can grow and thrive, but so long as there is pain (especially in those as innocent as children) imagination will be inhibited.

Children must grow into this world where morality rules and systems cause imaginative growth to be thwarted. These two sets of poems work to show the absurdity of either side of the soul. Frye, in speaking of this deadlock between the contrary states, points out that:

This is the only world the child can grow into, and yet the child must grow. The *Songs of Experience* are satire, but one of the things that they satirize is the state of innocence. They show us the butcher's knife which is waiting for the unconscious lamb. Conversely, the *Songs of Innocence* satirize the state of experience, as the contrast which they present to it makes its hypocrisies more obviously shameful. Hence the two sets of lyrics show two *contrary* states of the soul, and in their opposition there is a double-edged irony, cutting into both the tragedy and the reality of fallen existence. (*Fearful Symmetry* 236)

The contrary states in *The Songs* help outline what Blake is ultimately trying to achieve. He is trying to unravel the universal system that is in place in his world. This universal system is many things; it is the scientific system that Newton has established, the social system, the religious and political system. All of these are wrapped up in one system that results in a particular way of thinking that traps the individual within its structure. He finds this a binding and inadequate environment to foster imagination and growth. Ultimately, this system keeps mankind from rising from their fallen state and achieving the visionary state of which they are capable.

The dynamic system that makes up an individual is shown here for what it truly is to Blake: a loss of innocence and imagination, a fall from grace into an enslaving system of morals. To Blake this system is unacceptable in a world that is supposed to be rich and full of life. He wants to set the individual free of this system, as well as to teach the individual how to break free of Blake's own system. Nevertheless, even if one is set free of the system of moral virtue, there are still many other systems that entrap him.

The problem at this point is that Blake's contrary states are multiplying. As he enters his next period of writing, he starts to look at history, psychology, and the makeup of the social system. The contrary states are not left behind; but he turns to look at a different kind of contrary state. Blake looks into social and psychological systems and how they work. This is another reflection of the contraries at work in *The Marriage* as well as in *Innocence & Experience*. Rather than being contrary states of the human soul, these are contrary states of the human psyche. He starts trying to show how they actually work together, instead of constantly existing as separate systems.



## CHAPTER 3

### SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Moving from Blake's works with *The Marriage* and *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* there is a shift in focus. He has now laid the groundwork from which he can spring into his work with systems. There is a distinct change between the books of prophecy composed in the Lambeth period and Blake's earlier prophetic works. Frye notes that: "The ordinary reader is thus apt to make a sharp distinction between the lyrical poems and the prophecies, often with a hazy and quite erroneous notion in his mind that the prophecies are later than the lyrics, and represent some kind of mental breakdown" ("Introduction to Experience" 57). Here he brings to light the shift from the works that are much easier to handle, into the works focusing largely on Blake's mythology. When Blake moves into this period of his work, he takes his focus on systems to a new level. He begins to look at social and psychological systems and how they might interact and work together to bring a greater understanding of the base system, which is at our core. This base system, according to Blake, is the spiritual body.

In *Europe*, Blake constructed a "social allegory, comprising a broad spectrum of phenomena, ranging from the historical sphere to the political one" (Ghita 28). *Europe* opens with the speaker asking a fairy he has come across "what is the material world, and is it dead?" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 60). From there, the revolution of the history of the world unfolds as the fairy dictates the tale. From "the breast of Orc" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 60) a shadowy

female rose. As she is given voice, she speaks for Orc and calls to Enitharmon to bring out her other children.

Speaking as Orc, this shadowy female wishes ‘his’ “name to vanish” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 60) so that he cannot be found. Following this, ‘he’ wishes that he were not alive, and then begins to outline what he has been doing, starting with seizing the power of the stars in order to “bring forth howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 61). The shadowy female brings revolution and terror to the land; constantly in action, chaos follow his every move. In the summation of what he has been doing, it is said that:

Devouring & devoured roaming on dark and desolate mountains

In forests of eternal death, shrieking in hollow trees.

Ah mother Enitharmon!

Stamp not with solid form this vig’rous progeny of fires.

(*Complete Poetry and Prose* 61)

He wishes to not exist, and the shadow gives voice to this. At the end of this section the Preludium ends and she “roll’d her shady clouds / Into the secret place” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 61). At this point, the prophecy begins.

At the beginning of winter and night, peace comes: “War ceas’d, & all the troops like shadows fled to their abodes” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 61). There is a celebration of peace in this break between Orc’s cycles. The children of Enitharmon arise and Los “joy’d in the peaceful night” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 61). There is a foreboding in this peaceful time, though, as Urizen “unloos’d from chains / Glows like a meteor in the distant north” (*Complete*

*Poetry and Prose* 61). The sons of Urizen are not content with the peace that the children of Los enjoy.

Once again, Orc is summoned from his sleep. A call is issued:

Arise O Orc from thy deep den,

First born of Enitharmon rise!

And we will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy vine;

For now thou art bound;

And I may see thee in the hour of bliss, my eldest born.

The horrent Demon rose, surrounded with red stars of fire,

Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend.

*(Complete Poetry and Prose 62)*

After this call, it is announced, “Womans love is Sin!” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 62) and all of Enitharmon’s children are called upon. This announcement that woman’s love is sin is Blake’s link to genesis and the birth of the world. He is attempting to reconstruct history here with his own mythology. The call to Orc is the beginning of his cycle, issued to bring about revolution once again. In the meantime “Enitharmon slept, / Eighteen hundred years” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 63) while the history of the world is retold.

In the section following this, terror reigns and the Angels of Albion follow “the fiery King” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 63) as he searches for his ancient temple. While they search, the king brings the clouds of war across the lands. When they find the temple, it takes several forms, one of which was a serpent, which caused man to flee and hide in the forests of the night.

Urizenic structure plays a part in the development of the world. The speaker states that:

Albions Angel rose upon the stone of Night.

He saw Urizen on the atlantic; And his brazen book,

That Kings & Priests had copied on Earth

Expanded from North to South. (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 64)

Urizen unclasps his book to unleash his Law upon the city and upon man, binding them within his structure. As Urizen prepares to inscribe his law upon the land, the people of England “heard the voice of Albions Angel howling in flames of Orc, / Seeking the trump of the last doom” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 64). Orc, in his revolution, is seeking the last judgment of man and the end to his cycles. He could not bring about the last judgment; he “could not blow the iron tube!” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 65). This mattered not, however. Someone else was up to the task.

Somewhat fittingly, Newton is the one who summons the dead to Judgment, he “siez’d the Trump, & blow’d the enormous blast!” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 65). He causes the angels to fall from the sky as the Urizenic structure takes over. The politics of Blake’s day play heavily into this poem, as does the revolutionary fervor of the time. Blake felt that the Newtonian system was part of the problem; therefore, “the mental attitude represented by Newton moves toward a consolidation of error which could provoke an apocalypse” (*Fearful Symmetry* 252). Blake points the finger at Newton here specifically because he purports yet another binding system to enslave mankind.

Enitharmon finally awakens after “eighteen hundred years were fled / As if they had not been” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 65). At this point, she calls her children to the sports of the night where they sing and play until the morning light when they abandon her. This starts the cycle all over again as Orc lights up the vineyards of France with his fury and Los “Call’d all his sons to the strife of blood” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 66). This continues the revolution and the breaking of systems in order to free mankind.

Orc is a very important character for all three of the historical prophecies (*America, Europe, and The Song of Los*), as he connects three themes which appear in all of the texts: “the theme of satire, or the prophet’s denunciation of society; the theme of achieving liberty through revolutionary action; and the theme of apocalypse” (*Fearful Symmetry* 189). Orc is who ties the histories together and moves them forward as an “action catalyst” (Ghita 26). Orc’s revolution allows for the stasis of moral law to be broken, since (as *The Marriage* teaches) conflict allows for a productive clashing that can result in forward movement.

This poem, along with the other two historic prophecies, “place themselves in a world historical space and... construct history as a shifting discursive surface” (Rajan 394). They deal with the social system and Blake tries to create a new sort of system by avoiding the traps of negations and neutrals through the constant revolutions of Orc. Orc helps to construct this new social system largely through his constant motion. He is the character that allows for

advancement because he is the character that brings action. He works within the contrary states of Good and Evil to bring energy into play.

Rajan says of *Europe* and *America* that they are “Blake’s first reflection on the relationship between that space and the time of history” (395). Blake strives to create a new sort of social system that does not just use cultural queues but also that takes into account environmental and other systems. In working with space and time Blake frees himself of the fetters of the natural progression of time. He works outside the Newtonian universe and allows his characters to work in cycles. These cycles are mainly driven by Orc, who is constantly starting new revolutions, and thus never allowing a stagnant state to form.

In the three poems following the historic prophecies Blake explores an entirely different sort of system. In *The First Book of Urizen* (as in *The Book of Ahania* and *The Book of Los*), Blake shifts his focus from the historical (social) to the psychological. In these poems “whose titles are provided by characters and not continents, those characters (Urizen, Ahania, Los) [are] psychological rather than geographical ‘states’” (Rajan 394). In *The First Book of Urizen*, Blake explores the psychology behind mankind. Urizen falls, severing himself from Los and the other Eternals. They

spurn’d back his religion;

And gave him a place in the north,

Obscure, shadowy, void, solitary. (*Complete Poetry and Prose*,

*Urizen* 70)

He falls into confinement within his own psyche, he

strove in battles dire

In unseen confictions with shapes

Bread from his forsaken wilderness. (*Complete Poetry and Prose*  
70)

Urizen is at war with himself at this point, he is trapped within his own psyche, but without imagination all he can do is attempt to inscribe reason upon it, thereby creating a rigid structure in which to live.

Urizen, in his confinement, creates a structure of his own ideals to fight against his perceived evil. He states:

Here alone I in books form'd of metals

Have written the secrets of wisdom

The secrets of dark contemplation

By fightings and conflicts dire,

With terrible monsters Sin-bred:

Which the bosoms of all inhabit;

Seven deadly Sins of the soul. (*Complete Poetry and Prose, Urizen*  
72)

Urizen, in his fallen state, has taken on the sins of the world and come up with a method of warding them off. He calls for one law, which will bind the land and the imagination, but he only has bound himself in his efforts; “The eternal mind bounded began to roll / Eddies of wrath ceaseless round & round” (*Complete Poetry and Prose, Urizen* 75). Urizen is causing trauma to himself as he is attempting to inscribe reason onto his universe.

Urizen is attempting to create his own system in his universe. As Peterfreund states,

In *The Book of Urizen* Blake's archpriest Urizen practices such projections and denial in his mistaken demiurgic creation of the Newtonian universe of matter, motion, and force, as well as in his creation of the rigidly prescriptive and reductive book of law by which that universe is to be understood. (46)

This system mirrors the system that currently binds mankind. The book of law and the Newtonian universe force a rigid system that does not allow for creation and imagination. It does not allow for conflict and clashing; therefore, it does not allow for growth and free choice.

As Urizen attempts to inscribe reason into his universe, Los is falling into a state without reason. Los "the central prophetic figure of *Urizen*, is mad. Plates 6 and 7 show his rapid decline into insanity when Urizen is torn from his side" (Barr 747). Los falls into insanity, pure imagination has no ability to function on its own. It needs its contrary state (reason and structure) in order to progress. Los falls apart, he

wept howling around the dark Demon:  
And cursing his lot; for in anguish,  
Urizen was rent from his side;  
And a fathomless void for his feet;  
And intense fires for his dwelling. (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 43-4)



Los is trapped in Urizen's universe without the benefit of having Urizen by his side. He has no body and no communications but the "howlings of mad prophecy" (Barr 748). Without structure there is no way to communicate, as Barr states: "the utterance of pure inspiration without articulation into transmittable and abstract figures sounds and appears very much like madness" (748). Los needs Urizen in order to be understood; since he has no body and no way to communicate, he attempts to shape the human imagination so that he may communicate again.

As Los is trying to give shape to human imagination, Urizen is in the form of a solid rock. Frye points out that "here the rock is the container of the chaos without, or the sea, and the container of the chaos within, or the ferment of potential life" (*Fearful Symmetry* 283). Urizen is bound in his own system, living in chaos without the imagination to create a new way out of his predicament. Structure without imagination is binding and without escape, but imagination without structure espouses madness. Blake is working against the structures that bind mankind, but he must create his own structure that allows for imagination to communicate its genius.

The psychological system that Blake is exploring here is bound within itself. It has no way to communicate without structure, but it has nothing beyond structure to communicate without imagination; this poem is not just about the human psyche, it is also about history. As Rajan states, "Blake reaches back to the prehistorical traumas that encode history, the unseen 'rifts' and 'perturbations' that produce its furious disorganization" (394). This reaching into history in order

to look at the human psyche gives Blake a link from the psychological to the social. This is a cross between the systems.

In reaching back to these traumas Blake forces Urizen and Los play them out while in their fallen state:

Ages on ages roll'd over them  
Cut off from life & light frozen  
Into horrible forms of deformity  
Los suffer'd his fires to decay  
Then he look'd back with anxious desire  
But the space undivided by existence  
Struck horror into his soul. (*Complete Poetry and Prose, Urizen*  
77)

They are trapped in the void of the mind: as time passes they must each try to function without one another: reason without imagination and imagination without reason. These two contraries cannot function without one another. They are

In chains of the mind locked up,  
Like fetters of ice shrinking together  
Disorganiz'd, rent from Eternity. (*Complete Poetry and Prose, Urizen* 75)

Without one another, and the other Zoas, they are without their contraries that would allow them to find a way forward and to fill what they lack.

Another example of history at work in *Urizen* can be found within Orc's cycles. Frye, in his analysis of *Urizen*, points out "the three stages of the cycle are tied to one or two more or less recognizable historical pegs" (*Fearful Symmetry* 220). Orc ties history to psychology in *Urizen* and functions as a social cycle within the psychological cycle. What is at work in Blake's poems is an attempt to bring together these two disparate systems. As previously stated, Luhmann holds these two systems apart, claiming that they cannot interact with each other. Blake does not acknowledge this binding state and tries to forge his own system in which they function together in the spiritual body. Orc is one of the driving forces behind this effort; he is a shared character between the two poems, and he drives action in both works.

These two poems work together much more than two disparate systems would. In *Europe*, the speaker states,

Albions Angel rose upon the Stone of Night.

He saw Urizen on the Atlantic;

And his brazen Book,

That Kings & Priests had copied on Earth

Expanded from North to South. (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 64)

The psychological state and the creation of structures from Urizen's mind has a direct impact upon the historical world of *Europe*. Urizen can be seen in this poem to look out over the land and is implicated in history. He inscribes reason and structure on the social system at play here. The details of the city are described in the poem: "Over the doors Thou shalt not; & over the chimneys Fear

is written” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 64). The Urizenic system comes into play with the building of history, and is linked to the moral laws and systems Blake tries to liberate. As the ages pass over Urizen and Los “in a state of dismal woe” (*Complete Poetry and Prose, Urizen* 75), the Urizenic system tries to inscribe reason into history without imagination.

While in *Europe* Newton blows the horn and summons the apocalypse to earth, in *Urizen*

The sound of a trumpet the heavens

Awoke & vast clouds of blood roll’d

Round the dim rocks of Urizen. (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 71)

The summons are heard in the world of Albion and science brings about the unshakable structures of Urizen and his one law. In this poem, as in others, science does not fare well in the realm of favorable presentation. As the other eternal separates themselves from the fallen Los and Urizen, they erect a tent around them “and called it Science” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 78). In both poems the structures and systems in place mirror the binding structures of science that create a rigidity which Blake opposes because it does not allow for imagination or opposition.

Newton, in summoning the apocalypse, is calling the Urizenic system to come down and rule the world with its iron law. This law is outlined by Urizen:

Lo! I unfold my darkness: and on

This rock, place with strong hand the Book

Of eternal brass, written in my solitude.

Laws of peace, of love, of unity:  
Of pity, compassion, forgiveness.  
Let each chuse one habitation:  
His ancient infinite mansion:  
Once command, one joy, one desire,  
One curse, one weight, one measure  
One King, one God, one Law. (*Complete Poetry and Prose, Urizen*  
72)

Urizen is projecting this One Law onto the social system. Orc works to unseat this one law in *Europe* by bringing revolution to history and to act as a catalyst for action against the stagnation of this structure.

Orc also works as the catalyst for action in *Urizen*. Los and Enitharmon chain Orc at the top of the mountain “With the Chain of Jealousy / Beneath Urizens deathful shadow” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 80). Orc's cries awaken Urizen from his death sleep, and he begins to explore his surroundings while Los hides Enitharmon from sight. Here Urizen begins to multiply and ensnare his progeny (as well as the rest of mankind) in his “Net of Religion” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 82) because, as he walks the earth, he realizes that “no flesh nor spirit could keep / His iron laws one moment” (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 81). Urizen tries to project structure and law upon the world, but he cannot enforce it. Every man and woman has a choice, but if they live in the world of moral law (the net of religion) then they void that choice. Urizen’s children choose to reject his law, and they walk they away from the rest of humanity and the net of religion.

As psychological and social systems work within their environments, they project and interject upon one another and themselves. Melanie Klein introduced this idea of projection and introjection, as Elizabeth Wright outlines in

*Psychoanalytic Criticism:*

It is this interaction that establishes ‘object-relations’, the structurings ‘projected’ outwards and ‘introjected’ inwards which form the pattern of a self’s dealings with the world, including other people. Projection is a process whereby states of feeling and unconscious wishes are expelled from the self and attributed to another person or thing. Introjection is a process whereby qualities that belong to an external object are absorbed and unconsciously regarded as belonging to the self. (72)

Through projection and interjection, people interact and come to an understanding between each other. It is this concept that theoretically helps mend the gap in double contingency.

Blake uses projection and introjection in *Europe* and *Urizen* in that they inform one another. In the social system, it projects its revolutionary ideas upon the psychological system. At the same time, it introjects the psychological ideas onto itself, just as the world of *Europe* takes on the structure of Urizen’s law and his net of religion as it develops. In *Urizen*, the prophets project their psychological turmoil upon their surroundings and the world at large while they introject the history of the world and its social queues upon themselves. The characters at play act as infants trying to understand their world, and “the

development of the infant is governed by the mechanisms of introjection and projection” (Klein 282). In order to learn to function in their environment, they must learn through this method, and conversely they must affect one another through this same method. Projection and introjection form a bridge between psychological and social systems.

There is also another important aspect to Klein’s theory that comes into play with Blake, which is that “at the core of Klein’s theory is an awareness that good and bad can alternate and coexist within a single concept” (Wright 72). This connects back to Blake’s contraries; someone or something is not bound to being purely good or purely evil, these concepts can exist together in an individual or concept working with and against one another. Just as these states can exist in a single individual, so can many systems. Blake breaks down the systems in Albion, the eternal man, and makes him their environment and the universal system. This is done in order to show how they operate in each of us, and to cast individuals as a primary system.

According to Luhmann, psychological systems and social systems cannot interact. As Cary Wolfe, responding to Luhmann, points out: “humans cannot communicate; not even their brains can communicate. Only communication can communicate” (19). This implies that communication cannot be a part of any other system, including psychological systems. According to Luhmann, communication also “cannot be conceived as action” (164). Conversely, psychological systems can be conceived as action, but not as communication. Blake works against this theory between *Europe* and *Urizen*. He uses the

comprising parts of each system to show the interaction between action and communication.

In *Urizen*, Los is unable to communicate because he has lost structure (in the corresponding image he is without tongue); therefore, he tries to create a form in which he can communicate. Meanwhile, Urizen does create structures of laws, which he then imposes as the sole social system of the world. These structures all end up breaking because people cannot hold to his one law, which is why the web of religion is created. The psychology of Urizen is directly affecting the social structures and thus the communication between anyone living in this world. This is reflected in *Europe* with the echoes of his law and religion appearing in the cities. Conversely, the social systems found in *Europe*, in the history communicated there, can be found in *Urizen*, as the creation of the world is remade within Blake's mythology.

Systems have the ability to change and grow over time. According to Luhmann, "every communication in a social system, not just ones that cross the external boundaries, employs the system/environment difference and thereby contributes to determining or changing the system's boundaries" (Luhmann 195). Blake accounts for the ability of systems to change by allowing growth in his characters. They shape themselves within their environment, and thus shape the environment itself. In a difference from Luhmann's statement, Blake's psychological systems are also able to grow and change. Though Blake primarily uses action to achieve this, there is still an element of communication between the characters and between the historical and psychological poems.



The environment that Blake creates in his poems and the systems that he is working with are all effected by space and time. Frye, in his observations on experience in Blake, states:

for Blake... there must also be another dimension of experience, a vertical timeless axis crossing the horizontal flow of time at every moment, providing in that moment a still point of a turning world, a moment neither in nor out of time, a moment that Blake in the prophecies calls the moment each day that Satan cannot find.

(“Introduction to Experience” 58)

These moments help to unite the disparate parts of the Blakean system. They allow for a full concentration of the psyche as well as a complete consolidation of the social. This “moment” would be a collection of environment and system in one specific place at one specific time. If this worked, it would eliminate the problem of double contingency because psychological and social systems would be allowed to interact with one another and occupy the same space.

Blake’s seeming disregard of the environment in order to bring together psychological and social systems raises the issue of the difference between system and environment. According to Wolfe:

systems theory, in other words, does not occlude, deny, or otherwise devalue difference but rather *begins* with difference – namely the cornerstone postulate of the difference between system and environment, and the corollary assumption that the

environment of any system is always already of overwhelmingly greater complexity than the system itself. (14)

This raises a problem with Blake, for against Luhmann's own statement he is trying to create an "ur-system." A system which is above all other systems, the primary system which Luhmann claims cannot exist. Blake's work with the environment of these systems has nearly eliminated the environment itself, leaving only systems. Wolfe points out "psychic and social systems have coevolved, each serving as the environment for the other" (20). Here, though, they are still separate systems, which each require an environment. Blake is attempting to create a larger system in which these both function and work with one another.

Psychological and social systems, according to what Blake is working on here, interact with one another and inform one another. Albion, the eternal man, is the surface on which this interaction plays out. He is a blank slate on which Blake attempts to make his systems function. Albion is Blake's representation of the spiritual body; he is to be the site where all action of the contraries within Blake's system take place. The spiritual body is the place where the contrary of the body and soul play out, so it is the perfect site for all the other contraries to clash. Albion also plays another important purpose in Blake's corpus in that the systems at work inside of him break the self-referential state systems become caught in, and that stymie their communication.

Part of what Blake is working against is the concept of selfhood. This concept is what binds people in the structure of moral law. It is what causes them to look at their own sins and to seek retaliation for them and for the sins of others.

This is what ties them to original sin and the fact that they will always be in a state of seeking forgiveness. Selfhood can be seen as another form of self-referentiality, which binds systems. The constant looking back of mankind into themselves at their sins and constantly trying to atone from them keeps mankind from moving forward. Just as self-referential states are bound to their own internal knowledge and cannot glean any information from their surroundings.

Albion is the ultimate system (the universal system): all other systems are subsystems. Luhmann (as noted in the introduction) claims that man cannot be a system; therefore, Albion (though he is the eternal man) cannot be a system. This, as well as the continuing problem of double contingency, is part of what Blake finds at issue with when he starts his work on *The Four Zoas*. This work is never completed in the end, since Blake cannot find a way to deal with his own self-conflict about *The Four Zoas* and the proliferation of characters and systems it contains.

## CHAPTER 4

### BLAKE'S EPICS AND/AS SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

What Blake is trying to take on with contraries and systems is played out with increasing intensity across his major works. For this analysis, though, we will end with *Europe* and *Urizen*. The purpose here was to explore the genesis of the system and the moment at which Blake had all the pieces in place at the end of his Lambeth period. This project looks at how Blake deals with psychological and social systems and tries to bring them together through contraries and their environment. It also looks at how Blake proposes to create a universal system. Due to the nature of this project *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* will only be touched upon here; yet, nonetheless, can confirm Blake's continued emphasis on, and subsequent modification of systems analysis.

When Blake reaches *The Four Zoas*, he attempts to bring together in one epic model all the systems he believes to be operating in man. He attempts to both show the contrary states and how they work together, as well as systems functioning together. This results in much conflict, which cannot be resolved until all the systems come back to work for the universal system once again. As Billigheimer notes: "as an individual's Emanation separates from him, he divides into warring faculties and opposing sexes while being created into the world of conflict and error" (94). These warring faculties are also systems, or parts of warring systems, attempting to exert control upon the eternal man. The scope of this work is much greater than in *Europe* and *Urizen*. Blake has to deal with all of the Zoas as well their Emanations, their children, and the specters. Only when

they are able to work together as a whole are they able to function properly within the spiritual body as one system.

The idea behind this work was never realized since Blake never finished. After years of writing and revision, he finally handed off the work to a friend and never touched it again. The nature of his inability to complete this project has much to do with the boundaries of systems. As the idea of a universal system was impossible, so is the idea of systems working with one another, as systems theory states. Even with projection and introjection there is still an issue with double contingency. Psychic and Social systems may share a structure, and they may act as an environment for one another, but psychic systems never communicate and social systems are never conscious. That final gap is never completely closed in a way which is acceptable to the theory and to Blake's work. The more Blake attempted to work out the problem of the contraries and of systems, the more he realized the extent to which he was in conflict with himself. He did not stop trying to fix the problems he found in the systems he felt trapped mankind when he gave up on *The Four Zoas*. Instead, he tried to deal with the problem in other ways through his other works.

In *Milton*, Blake took on the problem with the contraries once again. By his own standards, this resolved all the issues he had in that area. While at the end of *Milton* the contraries are still in conflict, "the Contraries of Beulah War beneath Negations Banner" (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 134), they are balanced conflict with understanding on each side. Kim points out: "Blake's system of Contraries is generated by a movement which is endlessly contradictory" (762).

This requirement of endlessly contradictory movement is not resolved in *The Four Zoas* nor any of the earlier works, but through his exploration of the contrary states in *Milton* Blake is able to come to an accord with these states.

In *Jerusalem*, Blake resolves his issues with moral law and the systems he is attempting to break. According to Kim: “what is gradually revealed in *Jerusalem* is that each such system must be constructed along its contrary, which is the need to smash systems, or it leads to eternal death” (766). This brings together contraries and systems in a way that resolves the problems with both of them. Without contraries there can be no progression towards a world without binding systems.

In the theme of system smashing, Blake works to free mankind from the encumbering systems that fetter them. In *Jerusalem*:

Los constructs systems not only to bring the innocent away from the systems of others but also deliver them from his own system. Thus creating a system is conjoined with attacking, destroying, or evading a system. And an Individual is constituted both as one whose individuality is realized only in the process of being freed from the constrictions of a system, and as one who is only produced or defined as individual within and by virtue of such a system. (Kim 767)

Blake has found a way to deal with systems and to move beyond them. This way involves making his own systems through imagination. He has constructed a way

to free the individual, as well as have the individual free himself from Blake's own constructed system.

The closest Blake is able to come to breaking the boundary between systems is in the art of his prints, not the written text. According to Luhmann, "The disorder present in the psychic system is the effect of language transferring social complexity into psychic complexity" (379). Blake manages to bypass language in some ways through his illuminated plates. Rajan states:

as the containing form of the system, the illuminated book accomplishes what the system by itself cannot. For whereas the system as verbal construct can do no more than contain difficulty in the double sense of the word contain the composite artifact of the illuminated book 'reduces' difficulty within the intricacy of a figured surface, allowing us to look rather than read, to assimilate the text as art rather than experience. (391)

Blake in this method has found a way to supplement language, so as to bypass the issues with language itself. With the actual visual representations there is no longer a boundary between the speaker and the listener, there is a visual queue by which they can understand and act. By creating the art on which his words take place, there is a double-edged approach to system breaking in Blake's work.

Unfortunately, *The Four Zoas* was never printed on its own plates, and thus never had the chance at a visual approach to the problem of "completely separate, self-referentially closed, autopoietic, reproductive systems" (Luhmann 379). However,

his other works did have plates created and in them can be seen this bridging over language.

Blake's prints contained the artwork of a visionary man. As his writing evolved so did his artwork. As his artwork developed it took on shapes that were further and further from normal scientific structures. Gigante, in looking at one of the plates, states:

The delicate convergence of plant and animal life evident in the gorgeously imbricated females on the title page to Jerusalem suggests that accepted categories of biological organization will not suffice to comprehend Blake's World of Generation. By implication and more importantly, I would argue, Blake calls into question existing social and political structures that support that axiomatic view of life. (468)

Blake creates a new structure here, rejecting scientific structures in favor of imaginative ones. He regenerates "individual and communal automata (social organizations, ideological subjects) as living forms" (Gigante 470). He creates creatures outside of the normal structures of life.

There are many examples of his creations in his works, mostly in the later writings. In *Europe*, the frontispiece (*Illuminated Books* 174) features Urizen with his golden compass inscribing reason upon the world. While this is not a cross of natural systems, this is a visual link to the theory that Blake is trying to put forth in his systems. This visual connection allows for the understanding of Urizen and what he is attempting to execute without the written word or language. Thereby,



this image escapes the issue of communication between the psychological and the social systems by bypassing language altogether.

While *The Four Zoas* was never printed, there were sketches that went along with the poem. On Page 26 (*Four Zoas* 140) there are several forms, the largest of which seems to be a cross between a bird, a serpent, and a woman. On Page 90 (*Four Zoas* 204), there is a sketch of a cobra with the face of a man. Lastly, on Page 100 (*Four Zoas* 214), there is a sketch of some sort of creature that has the haunches and back legs of some sort of bird or possibly a cat without a tail, bat wings, and what resembles the head of Urizen. These chimeras are incomplete sketches on an incomplete poem. Their potential was never filled, and they will never be finished. This is in a way suiting since Blake never really finished his theory of psychological and social systems.

Finally, there was a proliferation of these creatures in *Jerusalem*. On Plate 2 (*Illuminated Books* 299), the title page of the poem, there are several creatures that are best described as human butterflies. They may also be humans combined with leaves, though the brightly colored wing like shape of them would suggest butterflies. On Plate 11 (*Illuminated Books* 308), at the top there is a woman with the wings, neck, and head of a swan. At the bottom of this plate, there is another woman who may be part flame or have feathers/leaves growing out of her. Plate 74 (*Illuminated Books* 371), features a man with roots growing between him and the ground. Plate 78 (*Illuminated Books* 375), has one of the most seemingly out of place images. It portrays a man gazing out at the sunset, but he has the head of a chicken. Plate 85 (*Illuminated Books* 382) shows a man and a woman, the woman

is pulling grapevines. On one side the vines are attached to the side of the panel, on the other they are growing out of the man. There are many other examples of these crosses between animal and man, and plant and man, throughout *Jerusalem*. The plates that have been brought to attention here are some of the larger and more obvious examples of the chimeras that Blake has created in his sketches and artwork.

These crosses between humans and other life forms are another form of system-smashing. Blake is demonstrating states contrary to reality in order to visually queue his audience in on what he is trying to accomplish. These are creatures of pure imagination, and what Blake is trying to encourage in all of mankind (the imagination, not necessarily the creatures). He is trying to break through the Newtonian scientific structures which bind life and shows this in his art work. He effectively bypasses the problem with language that creates issues between psychic and social systems by creating a visual representation of what his systems look like, systems of pure imagination.

Blake's creations within the realm of visual representation do remove the problem of the verbal construct, and the issues regarding language. They do not override the fact that Blake was not able to conclude his work with psychological and social systems that he worked on in *The Four Zoas*. He had more success with systems in *Jerusalem* than any of the other final three major works. The visual constructs add to that success as they not only break the language barrier, but they also serve to enhance the writing itself. The visual representations (if

language is not an issue) help to give an example as to what exactly Blake meant by free imagination and system smashing.

Blake did not succeed in his efforts with *The Four Zoas*, in his own way he was able to resolve his own issues with the binding systems that he wished to break. He did not succeed in breaking the model for systems theory, but his efforts cause him to work in ways that opened his texts up to a myriad of critical interpretations and theoretical applications. In Kim's essay she concludes by saying: "to find an answer to the question of whether Blake does or does not construct a system is not possible" (774). Kim's analysis covers a variety of critical interpretations of Blake's systems, all of which have different and sometimes opposing opinions. Blake seems to have created contraries even in the later critical analysis of his work. In looking at his work and at the critical tradition surrounding it, it is easy to understand why.

While Blake did try to create a system, it was ultimately for the purpose of breaking systems and creating a world of free imagination. Blake's work with psychological and social systems ultimately led to this, though his efforts to bring them together in *The Four Zoas* and to escape the trap of double contingency was never completed. This should not necessarily be looked upon as a failure, but rather an issue that Blake was never able to resolve in his lifetime. What resulted from his efforts was a wide variety of works that were open to a wide variety of interpretations and critical traditions.

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