DAVID L. CLARK

Against Theological Technology: Blake's 'Equivocal Worlds'

> The conditions which compose a moral practice are not theorems or precepts about human conduct, nor do they constitute anything so specific as a 'shared system of values': they compose a vernacular language of colloquial intercourse ... Each such vernacular of moral converse is a historic achievement of human beings ... It emerges as a ritual of utterance and response, a continuously extemporized dance whose participants are alive to one another's movements and to the ground upon which they tread. This language ... is never fixed or finished, but (like other languages) it has a settled character in terms of which it responds to the linguistic inventions, the enterprises, the fortunes, the waywardness, the censoriousness, and sometimes the ridicule of those who speak it. It *is* its vicissitudes, and its virtue is to be a living, vulgar language articulating relationships, responsibilities, duties, etc., recognizable by its speakers as reflections of what, on earth, they have come to understand themselves to be ... Moral conduct is not solving problems; it is agents continuously and colloquially related to one another in the idiom of a familiar language of moral converse.
>
> Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*

Blake no doubt felt strangled by the Great Chain of Being, and by the myriad onto-theological systems whose underlying purpose it was to promote the dead certainties of essence at the expense of the liveliness of existence. He resists the coercive force of these systems, not because he thinks that eternity is an illusion or that the world in its present condition is all that is the case, but because he believes that 'metaphysics' (*MHH* 19, E 42)[1] – in Hegel's definition, the 'range of universal

thought-determinations ... the diamond-net into which we bring everything in order to make it intelligible' (Petry 202) – has grievously misunderstood the true nature of perfection. *Meta*-physics: the very word marks and enforces the hierarchical division between the fractious complexities of the world's body and their rightful sublation into the serene realm of thought and spirit. Like Nietzsche, Blake sees that the strict discrimination between being and becoming leads inevitably to two 'Great errors':[2] first, the denunciation of difference, contrariety, and relation as marks of falsehood; and second, the identification of 'purity in holiness' (*J* 86.7, E 244) with the masterful ascension to a world of 'joy without pain' (*BU* 4.10, E 71).

In an epigram entitled 'The Root of All Evil,' Hölderlin asks: 'Whence comes among humankind the cursed wish that there should only be the one and that everything should come from the one?' (36; translation modified). What I want to argue is that in answering his German contemporary's searing question, Blake retains the classical metaphysical opposition of essence and existence, but crucially displaces its moral valuations; for him, the relation-less, undifferentiated world of the 'One' is the weary projection of the mind blinded to the differentiated possibilities of the Many, not the simple form and truth of which the Many are a feeble shadow. Although I shall refer to passages drawn from across Blake's *oeuvre*, three texts are crucial to this discussion: *The Four Zoas*, providing as it does a critical rhetoric with which to discuss Blake's notion of apocalypse; *Jerusalem*, whose written accounts of 'the Four-fold Humanity' (*J* 78.20, E 234) augur a revisionary Christianity founded upon the dialogical principle of 'mutual interchange' (*J* 88.5, E 246) rather than the monological principle of 'undivided Essence' (*FZ* 84.5, E 359); and the illustrations to the Book of Job, one plate of which strikingly visualizes both Blake's ideal world and the totalitarian cosmos that it interrogates. The fact that 'the dreadful state / Of Separation' (*FZ* 87.32–3, E 369) between the One and the Many constitutes the inaugural condition of philosophical and theological thinking points to the depth and originality of Blake's critique. But Blake is not, or not merely, a metaphysician; he also objects more pertinently to the fatal complicity between the assertive, classificatory idiom of Western ways of knowing and being, with its emphasis on the containment of the Other and the absolute sublation of contrariety, *and* the calculated distribution of power and knowledge within any given social formation or institution. For Blake, meta-physical thinking is in this sense always also a form of social practice. He wanders through the 'charter'd street[s]' (*SI*, E 26) of

London, and everywhere he looks he sees the agonistic clash of wills, the endlessly repeated structures of domination and techniques of correction. Whenever he hears talk of Christian forbearance and charity, whenever he encounters angels with bright keys who teach the virtue of obedience, sacrifice, and discipline, he hears only the punitive language of *ressentiment*. To paraphrase Foucault, in the absence of other voices, the voices of the Other, all that is audible is the monologue of identity about difference (*Madness* x–xi).

In *Jerusalem* Los proclaims that he 'must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans' (*J* 10.20, E 153). The curiously self-qualifying nature of this declaration of independence deserves pause: the imperative to be free compels Los, but that law is expressed in the form of a compulsion to reinvent his slavery. In other words, *what* Los says does not quite match *how* he says it, and this disparity between script and performance helps clarify what I perceive to be two competing understandings of subjection and revolutionary change in Blake, one of which will be more to my purposes than the other. We should see right away that the liberty about which Los speaks cannot be the same as that pictured in paintings like *Glad Day* (fig. 1), whose titular subject stretches muscularly outwards in a thrilling gesture that appears to vanquish all forms of containment: as the artist's inscription simply declares, 'Albion rose from where he labourd at the Mill with Slaves / Giving himself for the Nations he danc'd the dance of Eternal Death' (E 671). Freedom is more complexly figured in Los's claim: here Blake's incredulity is not directed towards metaphysics as such, which he frankly concedes is inescapable, but to the carceral implications of 'another Mans' systematic thinking for the life-world human beings inhabit now and in the future. But how can Los so enthusiastically endorse a position which amounts to celebrating the liberty to create one's *own* form of incarceration? What can it mean for the purposes of revolutionary thought and action merely to substitute one kind of 'System' for another, as if – to cite Hegel's description of the 'unhappy consciousness' – 'freedom [were] still enmeshed in servitude' (119)?[3] Los's double gesture makes sense, it seems to me, if it is treated as a critique of the 'repressive hypothesis':[4] in Foucault's analysis, this is the single vision and Marx's sleep which dreams of discrete coercive agencies – the State apparatus, the super-ego – blocking the spontaneous overflow of unfettered human energy. It is a hypothesis to which Blake sometimes seems naïvely attracted, drawn towards a Hegelianism that imagines the destiny of consciousness to be

Fig. 1. *Glad Day, Albion Rose,* or *The Dance of Albion*

fulfilled only when human beings wholly realize themselves as free, self-determining agents. In his equivocal (de)valuation of 'System,' however, Blake's 'Prophet of Eternity' (*M* 7.36, E 101) hints instead that slavery is more than freedom's determinate negation, the two notions having another and finer connection than that of contrast. Free creation is unavoidably the reinscription of coercive systematization, Los suggests, even if that compromise is his alone to make. Read against the grain of its own idealism, Los's position comes perilously close to Foucault: 'to imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system.'[5] We might even say that 'there is nothing outside "System" [no outside-"System"],' if it were not for the fact that this Derridean phrasing, already a quarter-century old, continues to be more scandalous than understood. But if all systems are equal, perhaps it is the case that some are more (or less) equal than others; a crucial task of this essay will be to demonstrate how Blake, in full knowledge of the fundamental pervasiveness of 'System,' pursues the difficult task of imagining *otherwise*, which is to say, of envisioning other configurations and economies of power, and thus other kinds of subjects, where the carceral *frame*-work of system might give way to the *borders* of vision.

In the language that this essay will develop, struggling 'against' techniques of subjection cannot therefore simply mean overthrowing them, as if the release of an un-subjected subject were the proper or even coherent end of revolution. Foucault's critique of the 'repressive hypothesis' brings out the phantasmic nature of that absolute 'freedom,' reminding us that Blake had already determined as much in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where he determines that no quantum of 'Energy' can exist independently of its 'outward circumference' (*MHH* 4, E 34).[6] And if Foucault proves useful by way of a supplementary reading of Blake, then the reverse may also be true. Insofar as Foucault's writings tend not to involve emancipatory narratives, containing nothing of the fabulous kind that we see at the conclusion of *The Four Zoas* or *Jerusalem*, they are fundamentally unlike Blake's. Yet reading *Discipline and Punish after* Blake, I have found, helps retrieve from that text the residua of a certain revolutionary, liberationist desire. As Charles Taylor has rightly observed, the imposition of power, even of the highly generalized kind that Foucault evokes, is unintelligible without a concomitant notion of 'freedom' (174–7). Let us say, then, that Foucault's spectacles of subjection are at the very least haunted by a picture of freedom – if only in the form of a resistant after-image, an after-image

of resistance. It is the fitful emergence of this difficult liberty, beyond the 'repressive hypothesis,' that I want to discuss in the context of Blake's work. Blake does not simply oppose the totalizing pretensions of metaphysics to postmodernist free-play; he instead pursues what amounts to a nascent philosophy of finitude (in the manner of Schelling, for example, and anticipating Heidegger and Derrida) – a philosophy which, very simply put, recognizes that knowledge and the knowing subject are always in arrears vis-à-vis the structuring principle of their articulation. As Manfred Frank cogently argues, 'It is ... a commonplace of late idealist philosophy and romantic philosophy ... that consciousness (including self-consciousness) is not the author of itself, but rather that it experiences itself as inescapably thrown into the determination of being a self. To that extent it is not master of itself' (283). In eschewing the seductions of Urizenic self-mastery for the contingently ecstatic life of what Heidegger calls 'thrownness [*Geworfenheit*]' (*Being and Time* 329), Blake paradoxically finds the grounds for a new kind of freedom. The path to this discovery, I wish to argue, is through an analysis of the 'range of universal thought-determinations' that underwrites Judeo-Christianity, 'the diamond-net' that simultaneously captures, disciplines, and fashions the *theological* subject, bewitching it under the immediate eye of heaven. In his writings and in his pictures, Blake asks how *on earth* the carceral experiences of this regimen have come to reflect what the subject understands *itself* to be. What is the relationship between the 'german forged links' (E 796) – the poet's figure, abandoned in manuscript, for the despotism of the Hanoverian kings – and the less tangible but equally coercive 'manacles' that are 'forg'd' in the 'mind' (*SI*, E 27)? How is onto-theological oppression the alibi or origin of social oppression?[7] What is the connection between 'violence and metaphysics' (to cite the title of a relevant essay by Derrida)? What changes in the structure of thought itself will best ensure the triumph of Christian liberty – even a revisionary understanding of 'liberty' – and the realization of what Kant describes as 'the highest end' intended for humankind, 'namely, sociability [*Geselligkeit*]' (54)?

I. 'UP' AND 'DOWN' IN THE NON-MORAL SENSE

> 'Whither is God gone?' he called out ... 'Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither is it now moving? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not lunging unceasingly? Back-

> wards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and down?'
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

'Sociability,' or what I will call, after Foucault, the notion of human communities organized according to the principle of 'horizontal conjunctions' rather than 'verticality' (*Discipline* 219–20), is an ideal that surfaces early on in Blake's work, but perhaps most polemically in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. There he asserts that the 'history' of the spectacularly unhappy process by which human beings came to renounce the progressive life of the 'Contraries,' in favour of conforming to the hegemonic demands of the 'One,' is 'written in Paradise Lost' (*MHH* 5, 3; E 34). In Milton's poem Raphael learnedly instructs a suitably docile Adam on how creation is structured 'by degrees,' each element fitted to the next in a serviceable order that easily becomes the promise of a seamless whole: 'One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end' (7.161).[8] If there is change or movement among the created, it is meticulously controlled, a careful proceeding up the scale of nature within predetermined bounds. Under these conditions, creative acts of the individual, in a repetition of Christ's triumph over Satan's armies, affirm the deep structures shaping the cosmos and organizing it into hierarchies of being. Acts of rebellion, by contrast, constitute a fundamental refusal to conform to these hierarchies: *Paradise Lost* tells the story of how the original whole exorcized those elements which threatened the body of truth with the contagion of dissent. As the Devil's remarks in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* imply, Milton is never more a member of the angels' party – and thus more aberrant in his thinking – than when he demands that the proper pattern of human experience is to internalize that originary police action, and to do so by handing the disorderliness of devilish energy over to the rule of angelic rationality.

Milton's creation provides the righteous with the option of 'open[ing] ... at length the way / Up' (7.158–9) to God, whereas it is important to remember that in Blake's myth the notion of an Absolute condescending to the graduated ascent of humankind is at best the 'pernicious' (*VLJ* 91, E 563) sign of fallen thinking, and at worst a humiliating illusion that closes the imagination off from the shape of the true reality. For Blake, as for the Gnostics by whom he was complexly influenced, creation is the violently illegitimate imposition of hierarchical structures on a universe that was originally and energetically non-hierarchical in nature.[9]

In Blake's apocalyptic politics, the goal of imagination – in Raphael's terms, the 'way / *Up*' – is more properly the revolutionary break *out* of the vertical, totalitarian structures which so powerfully obtain in *Paradise Lost*, or in any other text which promotes the fearful symmetry of Milton's 'architecture of ... space and being' (B. Rajan, *Lofty* 62). As Blake says, flatly rejecting what he sees as Dante's similarly maniacal adherence to the perpendicular design of the cosmos: 'In Equivocal Worlds Up & Down are Equivocal' (E 690). Blake is not known for his positive reception of European science, but in this instance he does not hesitate to draw a figure from it in order to unsettle what he could only have felt was the 'moralizing sadism'[10] of Dante's world-view. Just as Copernicus had introduced early modern astronomy to the vertiginous notion of a universe in which there is no above and below, Blake asks us to imagine the dizzying prospect of counter-worlds lacking a firmly fixed orientation point with which to get one's moral bearings. Where do human beings fall *from* or ascend *to* if 'Up & Down are Equivocal'? He consequently conceives of 'equivocality,' not negatively as a condition of ambiguity or ambivalence, but positively as a state of creative instability, a rootlessness founded upon a deep wariness about the coercively centring powers of the *un*equivocal.

Blake is a close enough reader of Dante and Milton to see that the moral intelligibility of their 'univocal' worlds is indistinguishable from their disciplinary organization. Although neither precursor is entirely without visionary strengths, both suffer from what Nietzsche calls an 'arbitrary incarceration in the pre-Copernican prison and field of vision' (*Will* 417). (We shall have reason to return to this penal metaphor, and to the identification of confinement with a regime of visibility.) In *Paradise Lost* and *The Divine Comedy*, knowledge and power, the promise of comprehension and the expression of divine authority, jointly rest with the stringent discrimination between 'Up' and 'Down,' a place for everything and everything in its place: *where* one is, is a measure of *what* one is. The exclusionary structure of this cosmos calls out for 'reorganiz[ation],' as Albion argues in a crucial passage from *The Four Zoas*:

> If Gods combine against Man Setting their Dominion above
> The Human form Divine. Thrown down from their high Station
> In the Eternal heavens of Human Imagination: buried beneath
> In dark oblivion with incessant pangs ages on ages
> In Enmity & war first weakend then in stern repentance

> They must renew their brightness & their disorganizd functions
> Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human[.]
>
> (126.9–15, E 395)

Albion's account remembers the story of the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*, but reverses and disrupts its spatial and moral dynamics: here, it is the 'Gods' who are disobedient and who deface the 'Human' in whose 'image' they have been made. By 'Setting their Dominion *above* / The Human form Divine,' Albion suggests, the 'Gods' behave in a way that is paradoxically *beneath* their 'high Station'; they consequently find themselves cast into a place analogous to Milton's hell. Blake's syntax conveniently lacks a subject to name who it is that has actually 'thrown' the 'Gods' out of 'the Eternal heavens of human Imagination,' making it seem that they have somehow managed to expel themselves. Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson point out that this 'lecture sums up the theme' of *The Four Zoas* (223), but it might just as easily be argued that it embodies a distrust of vertically organized structures that reverberates throughout Blake's work, from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* to *Jerusalem*, and from the frontispiece to *Europe* (*The Ancient of Days* [fig. 2]) to the illustrations for the Book of Job. What is curious about the passage from *The Four Zoas* is that in reversing the moral polarities of Milton's universe, Albion clearly reinscribes the very 'Up & Down' (E 690) organization he would unsettle: that the hero of the poem should himself be drawn back into the disciplinary possibilities of this design suggests both its inherent seductiveness and the difficulty of imagining worlds founded upon wholly different principles.

In 'Equivocal Worlds,' however, the regulative force of pyramidal structures no longer obtains because the hierarchical valuations upon which these structures depend, beginning with the distinction between 'the higher' and 'the lower' as the proper and the improper, are no longer given, but construed, not univocally enforced but equivocally interpreted. To put it in Nietzschean terms, in an equivocally re-organized universe, terms like 'Up & Down' can only be understood in their 'extra-' or 'non-moral sense.'[11] Without a higher place from which to feel the burden of a sustained moral surveillance, or a lower place in which to suffer the 'pangs' of 'Enmity' and 'repentance,' life is liberated from the traditional metaphysical compass points with which it orients itself. Not surprisingly, the immanent loss of these points triggers the onto-theological equivalent of vertigo, as Urizen feels in the Ninth Night of *The Four Zoas*:

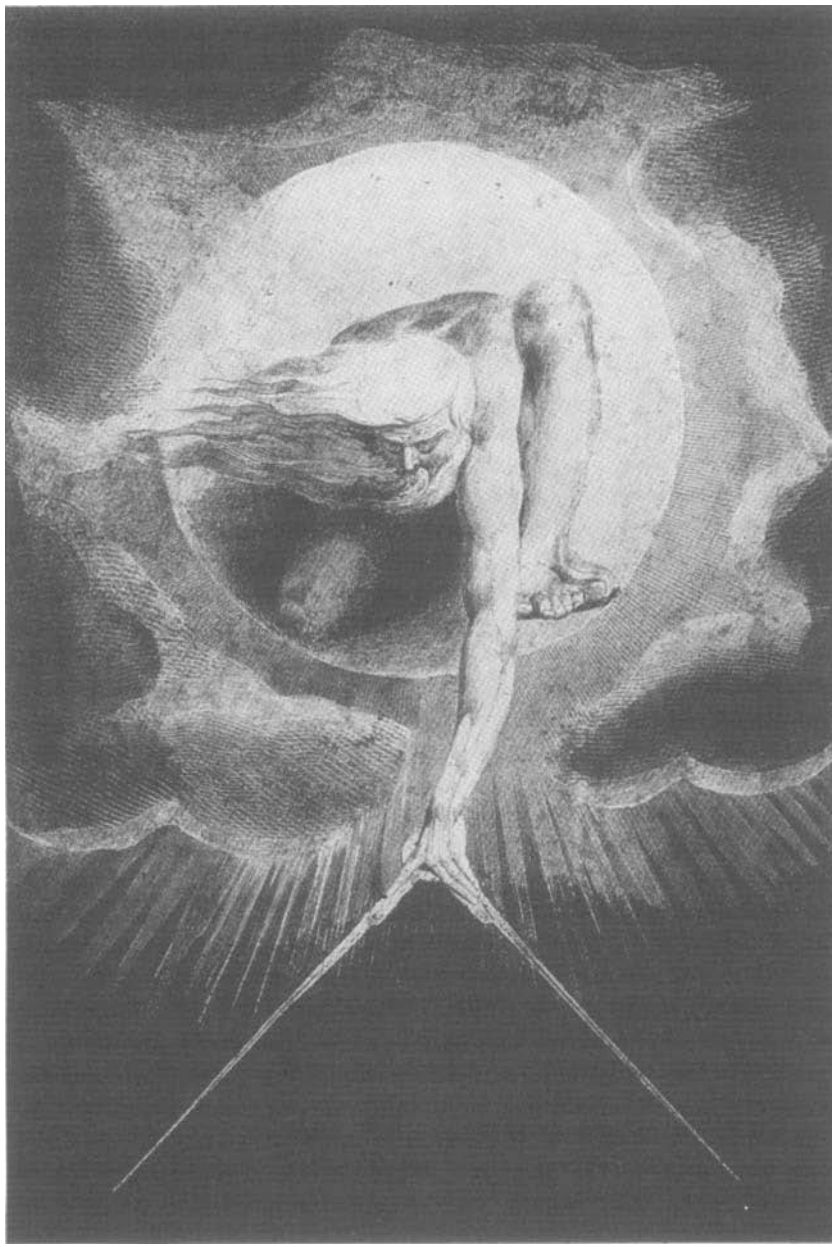

Fig. 2. *'Europe,' Plate i; Frontispiece: The Ancient of Days*

> ... I have Erred & my Error remains with me
> What Chain encompasses in what Lock is the river of light confind
> That issues forth in the morning by measure & the evening by carefulness
> Where shall we take our stand to view the infinite & unbounded
> Or where are human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens[.]
>
> (122.21–5, E 391)

Urizen's nervous questions anticipate those of Nietzsche's madman in the third book of *The Gay Science*, for whom the immanent collapse of metaphysics leads to a moment of profound disorientation. Remembering Copernicus, he asks: 'What were we doing when we loosened this earth from its sun? ... Is there still an up and down?' (181). So afraid that the demise of the old metaphysical order can only mean the end of the world, and unable to imagine the absence of the centre except as the advent of utter darkness, the madman lights a lantern even though it is a bright morning. As Urizen comes to the threshold of his regeneration in *The Four Zoas*, his sense of moral direction becomes similarly confused. On the one hand, he knows that while 'our eyes are in the heavens,' we inevitably reinscribe the vertical design of the cosmos, setting the 'Dominion' of the 'Gods ... *above* / The Human form Divine' (*FZ* 122.22–4, E 391). Looking skyward rather than at the other Zoas with which he is irrevocably bound, and unable to see where the true, 'human' ground lies, he can only stumble blindly into an in-human future – which is to say, into a future determined in 'heaven.' On the other hand, in asking anxiously after the fate of the 'Chain' that 'encompasses' the order of things, Urizen betrays a residual faith in the disciplinary structure of a univocal world: there, at least, the line dividing 'morning' from 'evening' is carefully maintained, there the 'river of light' is properly 'confind.' More important, the prospect of apprehending absolute knowledge, of commandeering the absolutely unconditioned and dominating stance from which to 'view the infinite & unbounded' (*FZ* 122.22–4, E 391), continues to tantalize and distract his imagination. Urizen here evokes the oldest, and, one might say, the founding dream of metaphysics: namely, to know and to see the world from an Archimedean point. As the position from which all other positions can be seen, this 'stand' is, precisely, a non-place, an *ou tópos* or utopia. It is the stance that Blake portrays in *The Ancient of Days* (fig. 2), a painting whose ironic intent does not quite succeed in undercutting the heroic grandeur of its subject, as if the artist were simultaneously repulsed and captivated by the possibility of absolute knowledge. Blake

also represents Urizen's aggressively panoptic fantasy of bringing the entire universe into view in an illustration to the Book of Job (fig. 3), to which I want to return; for now it is sufficient to note how the myth's most recalcitrant Zoa teeters aporetically between two worlds, at once cognizant of the 'Error' of imagining the Absolute as absolute relationlessness,[12] but as yet unable to think *otherwise*: as he concedes, his 'Error remains with' him (*FZ* 122.21, E 391).

The irony is that Urizen's dizziness only augurs a more profound displacement. In a moment, the Great Chain of Being begins to disintegrate, 'rivn link from link' (*FZ* 122.26, E 392). Although Blake's account of the unravelling of the architecture of space and being is dense with allusions to Revelation, it begins with a detail that is conspicuously alien to that text: 'the bursting Universe explodes,' he writes, 'All things reversd flew from their centers' (*FZ* 122.26–7, E 392). Apocalypse *begins*, in other words, with a liberating flight outwards from the centre rather than an inward gravitational collapse towards that placeless place where 'things' are said simply to *be*, unequivocally present to themselves in the sanctity of their own essence. Since Plato, mental travellers have conventionally conceived of the apprehension of knowledge as the penetration to just such a *punctum saliens*. But Blake is suspicious of what he calls 'concentering vision' (*FZ* 87.30, E 369), and of the totalizing notion that to know something is to master what it *is* at the point of its elemental and undifferentiated ground, unconditioned by or related to any other 'thing.' As Urizen more than any other figure in the myth demonstrates, the 'conglobing' (*J* 38.16, E 184) desire to suppress otherness and to trace a path back to an underlying epoch is in fact a concealed craving after 'a world of the constant.'[13] Whatever 'Heaven' is, it cannot possibly lie in the 'holiness' and 'purity' of an inner sanctum against which the contingent, various life of human beings is measured and invariably found wanting: so conceived, the origin is a terrible delusion, an 'Inner Sanctuary: a False Holiness hid within the Center' (*J* 69.40, E 223). As Urizen's experience of the reversed centres in 'Night the Ninth' suggests, Blake's revisionary response is to displace the hallucinatory hold which that 'Center' has always had over imagination by turning the false heaven *inside out*, exactly as the annotations to *The Divine Comedy* urge his readers to turn Dante's univocally organized world upside down: in 'Equivocal Worlds' 'within & without' (*J* 12.15, E 155) are also equivocal. (In a declaration whose invaginated topography is not without relevance here, Blake writes: 'From every-one of the Four Regions of Human Majesty, / There is an Outside spread Without, &

an Outside spread Within' [*J* 18.1–2, E 162].) Explosively wrenched away from the self-centred centre, in the boundary region of the circumference, 'All things' are necessarily exposed to the contextualizing presence of 'all [*other*] things' (*FZ* 122.27, E 392). In *Jerusalem*, the displacing force of this 'de-concentering vision' is even more clearly articulated; as Blake argues, it is the function of Jesus to remind us that the search for an epochal truth is inherently misleading: 'the Sanctuary of Eden' lies not in some mysterious centre, but in the equivocal region of the *parerga*: 'in the Camp: in the Outline, / In the Circumference' (*J* 69.41–2, E 223).

II. 'A BECOMING GOD'[14]

> Apart from a fallen confinement in an isolated selfhood there could be no awareness of God as Wholly Other.
>
> Thomas Altizer, *The New Apocalypse*

For all of his idealism, however, Blake harbours few illusions about the difficulty of achieving or sustaining 'de-concentering' vision, a fact put to us by the degree to which *Jerusalem* is taken up with representing not the equivocal life of Eden, but the viciously embroiled world of fallen consciousness. The desire to escape the nightmare of history is human, all-too-human; what Blake objects to is the theological transformation of this desire into the denunciation of difference, or what he calls 'Striving to Create a Heaven in which all shall be pure & holy' (*J* 49.27, E 198). When 'The Twenty-eight' cathedral cities despair to see each of the Four Zoas 'dreadfully plotting against each other' (*J* 37.23, E 183; *J* 38.4, E 184), their prayer for intervention from an outside realm makes a certain, undeniable psychological sense. But Los's 'furious' and 'raging' reply is revealing:

> ... Why stand we here trembling around
> Calling on God for help; and not ourselves in whom God dwells
> Stretching a hand to save the falling Man: are we not Four
> Beholding Albion upon the Precipice ready to fall into Non-Entity[?]
> (*J* 38.12–15, E 184)

Significantly, Los's rhetorical questions do not condemn a providential rescue so much as a rescue of a conventional 'metaphysical' kind. What-

ever 'help' is available will not come from some dimensionless, non-perspectival point beyond the Zoas, before which they can only 'tremble' in meek acknowledgment of their creaturely dependence. '[A]re we not Four[?]' Los asks, reminding his counterparts not only of their fundamentally horizontal and pluralistic make-up, but of the more difficult fact that *being* a Zoa irreducibly means being-in-the-midst-of the other Zoas: which is to say, absorbed into a structure of sociable (*geselligl*) relation and difference. Los's question reaches back to Blake's earliest suspicions about the identification of self-sameness with truth and multiplicity with falsehood; in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, for example, it is the Angel who appeals to the unity of God as a way of underlining the derivative condition of the Many. Adopting the self-abasing posture of what Nietzsche called Christian *ressentiment*, it is the Angel who asks, '[I]s not God One?' (*MHH* 23, E 43), naïvely oblivious to the Devil's counter-affirmation of the duplicity at the heart of things, of the fact that everything that *is* – reason, energy, spirit, body, heaven, hell – is ineluctably bound up with its contrary in a field of forces that is irreducible to any original simplicity. As Blake's contemporary Friedrich Schelling convincingly demonstrates, God himself was originally not one but at least two.[15] Or perhaps more – as Los insists, redemption is constituted not by the re-collection of our absolute dependence on an Absolute which is wholly other than 'ourselves,' but in reaffirming the original coexistence of the 'Four' that is our truest self. Indeed, the syntax of Los's plea suggests that the self-effacing gesture of 'Calling on God for help' is itself symptomatic of (or perhaps even responsible for) the 'conglobing' of the universe into the brutalist architecture of 'Heaven & Hells.' To be sure, the imagination continues to strive for perfection; but Blake feels compelled to distinguish this ideal from a root univocality which would silence the contention of voices with one voice speaking for all.

The craving after the security of a univocal life, of which Urizen is a kind of limit case, is not living at all, but precisely the systematic denial of life – or 'Eternal Death' (*J* 4.2, E 146 et al.), as Blake calls it – whose names in *Jerusalem* are as various as 'Natural Religion' (*J* 90.66, E 250), 'Demonstrative Science' (*J* 12.14, E 155), and 'Brooding Abstract Philosophy' (*J* 70.19, E 224). Metaphysics is, as Nietzsche declares in *Twilight of the Idols*, so much 'Egyptianism': 'All that philosophers have handled for millennia has been conceptual mummies; nothing *actual* has escaped from their hands alive ... What is, does not *become*; what becomes *is* not' (35). In *Paradise Lost*, Raphael happily anticipates the evolution of the universe into limitless univocality, 'One Kingdom, Joy and Union with-

out end' (7.161). But Urizen exposes that expectation's mortifying subtext, confidently announcing that the beginning and the end of all our exploring should in fact be 'One command, one joy, one desire, / One curse, one weight, one measure / One King, one God, one Law' (*BU* 4. 38–40, E 72). As a blueprint for the order of things, this proclamation frankly identifies the will-to-truth with the will-to-power, and apocalypse with the death of difference. For Blake, the abstraction of particularity and the sublation of the 'Contraries' in the name of 'Negation' orients existence towards a bloodless essence and compels the mind's eye to turn, with a self-destructive mixture of nostalgia and abnegation, to 'that sweet golden clime / Where the travellers journey is done' (*SI*, E 25). Under the auspices of this 'Egyptianism,' this worship of the dead, fourfold vision degenerates into mere memory, imagination into the mindless heliotropism of Blake's sunflower.

Rather than ceaselessly recalling ourselves back to some 'undivided Essence' (*FZ* 84.5, E 359), Blake's notion of 'Equivocal Worlds' calls for an energetic leap into an undetermined future. In this way, his position most closely resembles the radical elements of Søren Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism. In the opening paragraph of *Repetition*, published only fifteen years after Blake's death, Kierkegaard mocks those thinkers who pretend to celebrate the noisy flux of human becoming while covertly returning philosophy and theology to the quiet consolations of being: as the ironically named 'Constantin Constantius' says, the metaphysician always 'find[s] an excuse to sneak out of life again, for example, that he has *forgotten* something' (*Repetition* 131; emphasis mine). Against this subtle treachery, whose roots lie in Plato, Kierkegaard asserts a theology of *kinesis* or Christian repetition. As John D. Caputo cogently argues, 'In repetition, eternity is not something lost but something to be attained, not a lost actuality but a possibility yet to be seized, not something passed (past) but something to come, not something to recover but something toward which we must press forward' (14–15). Like Kierkegaard, Blake opposes the 'Greek' fascination with 'Memory,' with the recollection of what eternally *is*, to the dynamism of Christian becoming, the arduous and continually recreated faith in what could be: the object of vision is not what was forgotten but what can be imagined. Nowhere is this advancing dynamism more evident than in the concluding plates of *Jerusalem*, where Blake's accounts of life in eternity give a form and a face to Kierkegaard's somewhat abstract notion of *kinesis*. Here redemption is not the 'Safe' return to an 'eternal Paradise of rest' (12.314), as Michael promises Adam in Milton's poem,

but an electrifying deliverance into an unsaturable condition of being ever more about to be, an 'irresistible' motion *'from* Eternity *to* Eternity' (emphasis mine), neither up nor down, neither inside nor outside, but a region of connectedness and circulation, a 'going forward' which is always also a 'living going forth & returning' (*J* 98.27, E 257; *J* 99.2, E 258). In 'Equivocal Worlds' life is fundamentally one of unending *doings*, as the predominance of verbal constructions attests even at the level of Blake's syntax. Where 'metaphysics puts becoming under the protective rule of essence so that nothing genuinely new can emerge' (Caputo 33), Blake represents perfection as a process of producing and reproducing ever new configurations of reality: 'creating exemplars of Memory and of Intellect / Creating Space, Creating Time' (*J* 98.30–1, E 258).

The dis-oriented and pluralistic shape of Blake's 'Equivocal Worlds' suggests what this recreated 'Space' might look like. The nature of an analogously recreated 'Time' is somewhat more difficult to imagine. But temporality remains crucially important to Blake, as it does to Kierkegaard, because it is the condition of meaningful transformation. Without the contingent possibility of change, human freedom is an illusion, a hallucinated space carved out from the realm of Necessity. Constantin: 'Therefore, when Aristotle long ago said that the transition from possibility to actuality is a *kinesis* [motion, change], he was not speaking of logical possibility and actuality but of freedom's, and therefore he properly posits movement' (*Repetition* 310). The violence of metaphysics is that it leaves human beings 'killing' time rather than 'making' or 'creating' it, waiting for the end of change rather than affirming it as the mark of true Christian liberty. Blake is so concerned to restore a certain innocence to the non-closural liveliness or kinetic movement of becoming, and thus to rescue motion and change from its ancient defamation at the hands of being, that his accounts often make redeemed existence seem uncannily similar to the 'fluctuation' of the temporal world: as the concluding plates of *Jerusalem* make clear, life in the 'Sanctuary of Eden' is a furious *mélange* of sex, sacrifice, singing, weaving, hunting, walking, fighting, and, above all, talking (see Clark, 'Innocence' 103). Characterized by 'the hardiness of Christian, existential advance,'[16] Blake's ideal is fundamentally an on-going project rather than a withdrawal into an immutable realm like Urizen's 'solid without fluctuation' (*BU* 4.11, E 71). Manfred Frank points out that metaphysics conventionally 'orients the decentering power of time around the concept of a unity that history always and unforgettably imagines as its final aim' (77). If historical life is considered metaphysically significant at all, it is as the means

or medium by which the spirit is finally made present to itself – at the end of history. To those who are 'weary of time' (*SI*, E 25), however, Blake offers no respite, no escape from 'life' in the manner of Constantin's 'sneaky' philosophers or Nietzsche's 'Egyptians'; to the extent that he insists upon preserving the ardour of becoming and the mutability of temporality, he resists the classical metaphysical subordination of existence to essence and the temporal to the timeless, and asks us instead to think of redemption in terms of an agonistic immersion *in* a form of idealized temporality. The radical contingency which is temporality's fundamental nature, the moment-by-moment 'transition from possibility to actuality' (*Repetition* 310), guarantees human freedom from the 'rule of essence' (Caputo 33). For this reason, recreated 'Time' cannot be mere duration, the period of spirit's servitude or rectification, from which it is eventually freed as a prisoner is from incarceration; ideal temporality is instead the condition of the possibility of the 'genuinely new' (Caputo 33), not a time in the service of Platonic recollection but of human invention, a *'creating'* – as opposed to a *re-membering* – 'time.'

Just how it is that 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time,'[17] even as the Devil had once elliptically announced (*MHH* 7, E 36), is largely put to us in the charged life of the Four Zoas. Using the complex figure of the Zoas in an economic circulation of 'mutual interchange' (*J* 88.5, E 246), Blake decisively shifts thinking about the origin from metaphors of substance and identity to that of force and thus of difference and displacement. The 'Human form Divine' (*FZ* 126.10, E 395) is not simple, a locus of indivisible singularity; in fact, by refiguring the metaphysical ground as non-hierarchically plural in nature, the Four Zoas precisely rule out singularity as such. As Leopold Damrosch argues, the 'Zoas are not faculties, and certainly not discrete beings; they are an ever-shifting *system* of relationships within the self' (128; emphasis mine). In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake had first posited the notion of a complex rather than integral subjectivity in the form of a duplicitous knot of 'Reason' and 'Energy.' Moreover, inasmuch as 'Reason' is there described as the 'bound or outward circumference of Energy' (*MHH* 4, E 34), it is compelled to recognize the containment of the Other by which it has constituted itself. By quadrupling the origin into fourfold *logoi*, Blake develops the most radical features of his earlier position. In 'mutual interchange' the Other is not what dispossesses the self from itself, as if to block its path towards inward and absolute self-relation; because no Zoa is

absolutely relation-less but acquires its significance in relation to the remaining three, Otherness is patently ineradicable in nature. Continually generating new 'exemplars of Memory and of Intellect' (*J* 98.30, E 258), the Four Zoas are never fully present; irreducibly in excess of themselves, they are therefore the site and source of a perpetual unfolding towards the future. To put it another way, because the Zoas are unable to close up into a unity, but instead project anticipatorily ahead of each other, they themselves ecstatically perform a temporalizing structure of *espacement* and delay: precisely, in Blake's words, 'Creating Space, Creating Time' (*J* 98.31, E 258).[18] Any attempt by one Zoa 'to Create a Heaven in which all shall be pure & holy' (*J* 49.27, E 198) is therefore automatically illegitimate, the imposition of a hierarchical containment upon a horizontally organized field which precludes the origin from ever coinciding unequivocally with itself. In the unending and essentially differential activity of the Zoas, Blake signals his most complex refusal to 'sneak out of life' (Kierkegaard, *Repetition* 131), preferring instead to affirm multiplicity over self-sameness, the equivocality of dissent over the commanding power of the 'Omnific Word' (7.217), and the 'mutual interchange' of the Many over the mute inertia of the One. By making a virtue of equivocality, Blake in effect dis-orients the polarities governing the order of things: just as the fall of consciousness is not from univocality to a benighted state of difference, as is the case in *Paradise Lost*, but from the original, creative difference represented by the Four Zoas to the absolutist order of the Great Chain of Being, so too the goal of imagination is not to renounce life by securing a frame of reference beyond difference, but much rather to immerse oneself utterly in its fundamentally productive equivocality. Under these conditions, true knowledge is indistinguishable from its differential circulation, visionary *gnosis* from all manner of dialogical *praxis*.

III. CONVERSING WITH ETERNAL REALITIES

> The prison must be the microcosm of a perfect society in which individuals are isolated in their moral existence, but in which they come together in a strict hierarchical framework, with no lateral relation, communication being possible only in a vertical direction.
>
> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

In *Jerusalem* Blake puts the differential aspect of 'mutual interchange' to us in many different ways: I have elsewhere discussed how he characterizes the dialogical instability of 'Eden' as a special form of contrariety called the 'wars of life, & wounds of love,' a reciprocally sustaining condition of attraction and repulsion in which life is lived 'Mutual in one anothers love and wrath all renewing' (*J* 34.14, 16; E 180); perfection is also figured forth as an agonistic process of 'Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice' (*J* 61.23, E 212), which is Joseph's name in *Jerusalem* for a profitless economy of atonement that frees human beings from the absolute cost incurred by the original and unrepeatable sacrifice of the Son to the Father (see Clark, 'Innocence' 104–11). Blake's metaphors of dialogue are similarly revealing because they place individuals in intertextures which disperse or 'disseminate' their significance into fields of active relation, rather than allow any single entity to arrogate to itself a metaphysical priority or centrality. It is worth emphasizing that the Blakean paradigm for error in the fallen world lies in exactly that arrogation. But each time the life of the unfallen Four Zoas is described, the same revisionary strategy is in place: the possibility of arresting all motion, of saying the last word, of securing an everlasting peace, is aggressively deferred in favour of bringing elements into a 'Perpetual' relation in which there is no certainty of a simple ground, no chance of finding a resting place in the absolutely unequivocal.

In its local context, Los's evocative phrase 'mutual interchange' refers specifically to the eternal conversation at work in a redeemed world of *Geselligkeit*. Eternity is not a question of being absorbed into what Coleridge once described as an 'energy divinely languageless' (*Notebooks* no. 3401). Blake's view of language and truth could not be more different from that of Augustine, for whom (as Joseph Mazzeo argues) 'all dialectic, true rhetoric, and thought itself were but attempts to reascend to that silence from which the world fell into the perpetual clamour of life as fallen men know it' (23). Blake certainly finds the noisy fractiousness of the fallen Zoas reprehensible; yet he also condemns the notion that the object of imagination is properly the return to a univocal presence beyond language. The first descriptions that we get of Urizen in Blake's *oeuvre* underline the nightmarish character of this silence:

> Dark revolving in silent activity:
> Unseen in tormenting passions;

An activity unknown and horrible;
A self-contemplating shadow,
In enormous labours occupied[.] (*BU* 3.18–22, E 71)

Present only to himself in his self-contemplation, and thus without need of conversation, Urizen embodies the tortured autism of pure intellection, the involuted energy of a divinity trapped in its own muteness.

For Blake, however, the movement of imagination is not from the clamour of life to the calm silence of life everlasting; it is instead a translation of uncreative into creative difference and debate, both a defibrillation (to follow the implications of Blake's own mixed metaphors) of the 'heart ... shut up in integuments of frozen silence' (*J* 38.33, E 185) and an opening out into the give and take of a dialogue with and of God. In *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, Blake imagines 'Paradise' as a pastoral landscape of 'tents & pavilions Gardens & Groves'; yet rather than picturing its 'Inhabitants' in quiet repose, as we might expect, Blake has them 'walking up & down' in

Conversations concerning Mental Delights.

Here they are no longer talking of what is Good & Evil or of what is Right or Wrong & puzzling themselves in Satans [*Maze*] Labyrinth But are Conversing with Eternal Realities as they Exist in the Human Imagination[.] (85, 90; E 562)

The reference to 'Satans [*Maze*] Labyrinth' recalls the activities of Milton's fallen angels, some of whom debate amongst themselves 'And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost':

Of good and evil much they argu'd then,
Of happiness and final misery,
Passion and Apathy, and glory and shame,
Vain wisdom all, and false Philosophie[.] (2.561–5)

But Blake's allusion to *Paradise Lost* amounts to more than a verbal echo; it brings out what Milton had already invited us to hear in 'the great consult' (1.798): namely, that the appearance of dialogue does not guarantee its substance. In the passage from *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, the poet distinguishes between a genuine dialogue with God and those conversations which remain caught up in the belief that truth-seeking is strictly a matter of un-puzzling what is assumed to be the *un*equivo-

cal answer. But for Blake the belief that coherence and truth are grounded in binary structures of 'Good & Evil or ... Right or Wrong,' like that of 'Up & Down' (E 690), risks reinscribing the hierarchical organization of the fallen universe. That the misguided devils wandering around 'Satans ... Labyrinth' concern themselves exclusively with moral discriminations thus plays out an irony with which Milton had also undercut the pretensions of his fallen angels: even though they rebel against the Father's exclusionary metaphysic, their conversation remains conspicuously theological, centred on the nature of the very deity they would decentre.

In 'Paradise,' however, the question of 'what is Right or Wrong' is replaced by perpetual dialogue: 'Conversing with Eternal Realities as they Exist in the Human Imagination' (*VLJ* 90, E 562). To evoke a contemporary *theological* equivalent to Blake's dialogical understanding of eternity, we could turn to the 'Rabbinic' hermeneutic of Emmanuel Levinas, in whose writings Derrida discovers deep resonances: 'the route followed by Levinas's thought,' Derrida points out, 'is such that all our questions already belong to his own interior dialogue, are displaced into his discourse and only listen to it, from many vantage points and in many ways' ('Violence' 109). The metaphors of audition and conversation, notwithstanding their phonocentric bias, do not appear in Derrida's text unreflectively. As Susan Handelman argues, Levinas's critique of ontology, to which Derrida acknowledges his indebtedness (*Grammatology* 70), is 'structured not around a hierarchical great chain of being, but ... conceives of metaphysics as a discourse with God, an endless dialogue and disputation, interpretation and reinterpretation' (116).[19] The trope of '"inter-subjective space"'[20] would seem to appeal to Levinas, Derrida, and Blake for quite similar reasons: it is the means by which to reconceive the fundamental relationship between humankind and the absolute Other signified by 'God,' and thus to think the 'liberat[ion]' of human beings from 'the Greek domination of the Same and the One (other names for the light of Being and of the phenomenon) as if from oppression itself – an ... ontological or transcendental oppression, but also the origin or alibi of all oppression in the world' (Derrida, 'Violence' 83). The irreducible mediation of dialogue, in other words, threatens and displaces the concept of plenitude as unified, autonomous, free-standing presence and stages it instead as an intersubjective space, as site and condition of mutual interchange in which the issuance of a single subsuming voice is creatively deferred rather than obsessively sought: the latter

mode of thinking constitutes the real hellishness of 'Satans ... Labyrinth.'

Dia-logos – a speaking between – displaces *Logos*:[21] 'When in Eternity Man converses with Man,' Los says to Enitharmon, 'they enter'

> Into each others Bosom (which are Universes of delight)
> In mutual interchange ... (*J* 88.3–5, E 246)

The mutual entry of beings 'Into each others Bosom' recalls Los's explicitly dialogical assertion that 'Contraries mutually Exist' (*J* 17.33, E 162). But it also echoes the promise that Jesus gives Blake at the start of *Jerusalem*: 'Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me' (*J* 4.19, E 146); and, as is the case in that passage, Blake's rhetoric of chiasmic reversal and economic transaction resists allowing the terms of this interchange to coalesce into a univocal presence. In eternity, both 'Man' and his 'Four-fold Forms' (*J* 88.7, E 246) are first characterized by their desire for combination: 'they embrace & comingle ... in thunders of Intellect' (*J* 88.3, 7, 6–7; E 246), Los says. But Blake also delicately underlines the simultaneous pressure of their differences, for 'Man ... unite[s] with Man' not by collapsing into an undifferentiated whole but by engaging one another through 'their Emanations' (*J* 88.10, E 246): as he asserts earlier in the poem, 'Man is *adjoind* to Man by his Emanative portion' (*J* 39.38, E 187; emphasis mine). Of course, Blake's androcentric rhetoric reminds us that his resistance to the dominant ideology is hardly complete, or unproblematical. Alan Richardson claims that 'Blake's conception of "emanation" as feminine belies his utopian vision, for here again we see woman's sympathetic, maternal capacities subordinated to a male agenda' (20); but this assessment of the poet's position within the dominant ideology is undoubtedly too unequivocal, for it ignores the critical power that the concepts of 'sympathy' and 'maternality' assume *within* the larger context of *Jerusalem*'s opposition to the coercive effects of the logic of identity. To be sure, the feminine is subordinated to 'Man' as 'his Emanative portion.' If Blake's strategy is to trivialize women by feminizing the emanations, however, that may remain troublesome only for those who think that 'sympathy' and 'maternality' are trivial. Moreover, as Nancy Chodorow has observed, the masculinist derogation of relationality as a 'feminine' quality serves and enhances the interests of industrial capitalism (180–90), whose atomistic and utilitarian ethic had swept England during Blake's formative years as an engraver's apprentice (King 27). In the poem, it should

be remembered, Blake is massively critical of a world that has been subordinated to the 'male agenda' of loveless, Promethean self-sufficiency. His suspicion of this position helps explain why he refrains from developing the notion of male emanations in any detailed way. To the degree that 'sympathy' and relationality are 'feminine' qualities, they function as part of Blake's criticism of the Urizenic obsession with the sovereign self, 'free' from the contextualizing presence of other selves. The poet's emphases lie less in the efficient subordination of the female emanations to their male sources and more with their affirmative role in bringing selves into sociable relation, adjoining them like links in a chain or stitches in a weave, while also insisting on the differences between each self, the fact that only a 'portion' has been adjoined. Damrosch suggests that 'Blake can come to terms with the Emanation only by seeing it as a mode of activity rather than as a part of the self' (346), but I would go further and suggest that in this case, the emanation is a trope for the possibility of relationship itself, for the principle of adjoining which inscribes entities in the web of difference. In the midst of Edenic dialogue, human beings are necessarily disseminated into a self-complicating intertexture of words, 'Forms,' and 'Emanations' (*J* 88.7, 10; E 246), or what Jesus calls 'Fibres of love from man to man thro Albions pleasant land' (*J* 4.8, E 146). Searching for a language with which to describe eternity as a site of *dialogos*, Los (who is not without his own Promethean qualities) understandably moves with ease from a metaphor of conversation to one of weaving. 'When Souls mingle & join thro all the *Fibres* of Brotherhood,' he concludes, 'Can there be any secret joy on Earth greater than this' (*J* 88.14–15, E 246; emphasis mine)?

But why only a 'secret joy'? And why only a 'Brotherhood'? Perhaps echoing the ideals of the French Revolution (*liberté, egalité,* and, especially, *fraternité*), Los imagines the true community as one that is possible between men, but not necessarily between men and women or women and women. His language remains both conspicuously patriarchal and faintly homoerotic in nature, and it is impossible not to ask whether there would be less need for 'secrecy' had he instead imagined a horizontally structured and truly *gesellig* society composed of both 'Sisterhood' *and* 'Brotherhood.' The privative nature of Los's mingling of 'Souls' in 'Brotherhood' inevitably recalls the unequivocally exclusionary and hegemonic shape of a 'joy[less]' community described earlier in *Jerusalem*:

> Then all the Males combined into One Male & every one
> Became a ravening eating Cancer growing in the Female[.] (*J* 69.1–2, E 223)

It would be hard to imagine a more gruesome warning against the dangers of the consolidation of power in the hands of men. Left to fulfil their Urizenic desires, men would reduce the world to a homogeneous mass, the featureless shape of the (male) Same. As Blake clearly understands, this anti-community, founded as it is on the suppression of sexual difference, only 'Devour[s] Jerusalem' (*J* 69.5, E 223), the true embodiment of sociability. Blake's rhetoric of parasitism characterizes 'Brotherhood,' not positively as the gathering of a visionary company, but negatively as a hegemony carelessly secured and maintained at a horrifyingly destructive cost for women. And when women deflect that violence, it is easily translated into more overt forms of hostility. In the previous plate, for example, the 'Warriors' culminate their 'Songs' by openly admitting to the masculinist identification of sexual gratification with fighting: because they are 'drunk with unsatiated love,' the brothers in arms cry, they 'must rush again to War' (*J* 68.10, 62, 63; E 221–2). These passages bring out the limitations of Los's vision of 'secret joy,' as does Blake's description of redeemed sexuality. In the 'Sanctuary of Eden,' we are told,

> Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet;
> And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place.
> (*J* 69.41, 43–4; E 223)

Here Blake figures forth patriarchal conceptions of sexuality as a duplicitous form of subjection: the feminine is simultaneously *constructed* as 'Mystery' (*J* 93.25, E 255) – hallucinated as the Holy of Holies – and *regulated* by a class of men whose arrogant privilege it is to command the power to penetrate this occult site, surveying and apprehending it, and thus to possess it absolutely. Against the techniques of this sort of *assujettissement*, Blake insists upon a revision of sexual relations in which one sex neither 'combine[s]' against the other nor clandestinely invades the other, but in which each mingles with the other according to horizontal rather than hierarchical principles of human relations. Against the masculinist ethic of utility and exploitation, where men are 'higher,' spiritualized entities who reduce women to 'lowly,' fleshly orifices, Blake's redeemed community briefly evokes what Carol Gilligan would call a feminist 'ethic of care,' whose motivating premise is 'nonviolence – that no one should be hurt' (174).

Jerusalem implies more interesting insights into the disfiguring effects of a masculinist culture than it pursues, no doubt because Blake is too

often caught up in that same culture, teetering between denouncing the female as either passive or aggressive, Beulah or the Female Will. The fact that he considers the relationship between violence and metaphysics in gendered terms at one point in *Jerusalem* and not at another forces us to read each plate as part of a weave of differences, and to consider it in terms of its paradigmatic relationship with other plates in the poem. In other words, it is possible that the principle of dialogue inadvertently applies to the structure of *Jerusalem* as a poem in conversation with itself over the question of gender and the 'Sanctuary of Eden.' Notwithstanding the ideological limitations of Blake's vision, the interchange and the intercourse of Edenic life remain ennobling to the degree that they prevent the 'One Male' from having the final say and thus from 'Devouring Jerusalem' (*J* 69.1, 5; E 223). For Blake, the last word too closely resembles the omnipotent 'Word' of the 'great Work master' Urizen (*FZ* 24.6, 5; E 314). As the original utterance marking the end of difference, it is the death sentence – *l'arrêt de mort* – or closural gesture that 'shut[s] up' the 'open heart ... in integuments of frozen silence' (*J* 38.33, E 185). In a perpetual, mutually sustaining conversation, no speaker can claim for himself or herself an independence from every other speaker, no more than a stitch in a weave can be considered outside of the warp and woof by which it is made. Dialogue, like mutuality, forces us to reconsider truth as a site of relation and displacement rather than identity, as a presence or self-sameness always crossed by otherness, always somehow related to other elements, anticipating them or coming after them, resembling them or differing from them, as a text suspended in and intersected by a context. That the highest imaginative experience possible sees humanity inserted into a charged space of dialogue is vividly confirmed by the text's concluding images, where Blake's masculinist rhetoric mostly falls away. In Eden, 'The Four Living Creatures Chariots of Humanity Divine Incomprehensible / ... expand'

> ... going forward forward irresistible from Eternity to Eternity
> And they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic which bright
> Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous majesty ...
>
> (*J* 98.24, 25, 28–30; E 257)

Repeating the word 'forward,' the visionary's tongue redounds upon itself, perhaps tripped by the precipitous momentum of the energetic world it articulates. Here, as elsewhere in *Jerusalem*, we are asked to

consider the paradox of being 'in Eternity' (*J* 71.6, E 225) while also advancing upon it, as if by permanently deferring the closure of arriving, imagination kept itself from ever grasping a single, totalized meaning. Carrying themselves ever ahead of themselves, the 'Living Creatures' (*zoa*) constitute Jerusalem as a place ever more about to be: theirs is always 'the coming community.'[22]

Eternity is a perpetual conversation between the Four Zoas, a 'thunderous' intertexture woven by the shuttling '[t]o & Fro' (*J* 98.39, E 258) motion of their walking and talking. Blake describes the texts that they create as 'Visionary forms dramatic' – dramatic, I would argue, because drama is a genre which calls explicit attention to itself as a tissue of differences, each voice played off against the next and thus entirely dialogized by its context.[23] As Keats more than any of the other Romantics affirmed, successful drama effaces the 'concentering' (*FZ* 87.30, E 369) or 'egotistical' (Rollins 387) presence of the author.[24] Blake himself scoffed at readers who nevertheless continued to ground out the positions of dramatic characters in the author who created them (E 601). In Eden, the Four Zoas compose the drama of their own fourfold composition, performing what they produce and producing what they perform, folding author into text and being into language, all in a self-recharging nexus of living forces. 'Visionary forms dramatic': like 'Human Form Divine' (*SI*, E 32), the phrase is itself the site of significant cross-talk, one adjective, 'dramatic,' gently contesting the monological associations of the other, pulling the 'Visionary' claim to substance, origin, and the self-presence of a thing to sight into the mutual interchange and displacement of conversation.[25]

Perhaps not surprisingly, the implicit dialogue with Milton that I have identified as functioning all along as the framework for Blake's revisionary stance against the architecture of space and being is carried over into this concluding account of the Four Zoas. Their description as 'The Four Living Creatures Chariots of Humanity Divine' (*J* 98.24, E 257) declares its affiliation with the 'four Cherubic shapes' that convey Milton's similarly unstoppable 'Chariot of Paternal Deity' in *Paradise Lost* (6.753, 750) – but with a significant modification. Missing from this apocalyptic scene is an emphasis on the inviolate Godhead, making it appear that the fatherly divinity has been diffused, without loss of power, into the multiple visage of its conveyance, and the focus of the vision thereby shifted from the First Mover to the movement itself. 'The Four Living Creatures' appear for a moment to bear something other than and superior to themselves, the 'Humanity Divine,' until we realize

that what they carry is – precisely – themselves, the 'Humanity Divine' being indistinguishable from 'the *Four*-fold Humanity' (*J* 78.20, E 234; emphasis mine) in Blake's myth. Neither the multiple image of God, nor God himself, the Four Zoas are both ground and figure at once in a shimmering, horizontally organized motion of 'living going forth & returning' (*J* 99.2, E 258).

IV. VIOLENCE AND METAPHYSICS: THE REGIME OF SIGHT[26]

> The entire parapenal institution, which is created in order not to be a prison, culminates in the cell, on the walls of which are written in black letters: 'God sees you.'
>
> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

The assimilative design of the metaphysic of the One, its preoccupation with the scrupulous determination of identity as that which simply (rather than complexly) *is*, the inside inside and the outside outside, is everywhere apparent in Blake's representation of the fallen world: in Milton's violent expulsion of the devils, in Urizen's desire for a world 'without fluctuation' (*BU* 4.11, E 71), in the narrowing effects of 'concentering vision' (*FZ* 87.30, E 369), and in the Four Zoas' longing for what William James once described as 'that sense of a perfected Being with all its otherness soaked up into itself.'[27] The significance that Blake attaches to the non-hierarchic equivocality of the Zoas over the hegemonic authority of the 'Paternal Deity' (6.750) is perhaps no more powerfully evident than in the late illustrations to the Book of Job,[28] and it is to one of these designs (fig. 3) that I want to turn in order to provide a visual focus for my remarks. *When the Morning Stars Sang Together* depicts a crucial moment in the narrative of the Old Testament story. Tortured in mind and in body, his family destroyed and his wealth decimated, Job understandably calls divine justice into question. In response to the senselessness of his suffering, he bluntly accuses God of apathy and carelessness with respect to his human subjects. Feeling himself unjustly wronged, he insists upon knowing the crimes with which he has been charged. Although he risks outright blasphemy, Job goes so far as to demand an audience before which he might argue his innocence and reassert his righteousness. In Blakean terms, Job resists his invisible accuser and implies that 'Conversing with Eternal Realities' (*VLJ* 90, E 562) must include debate about the nature of providence itself.

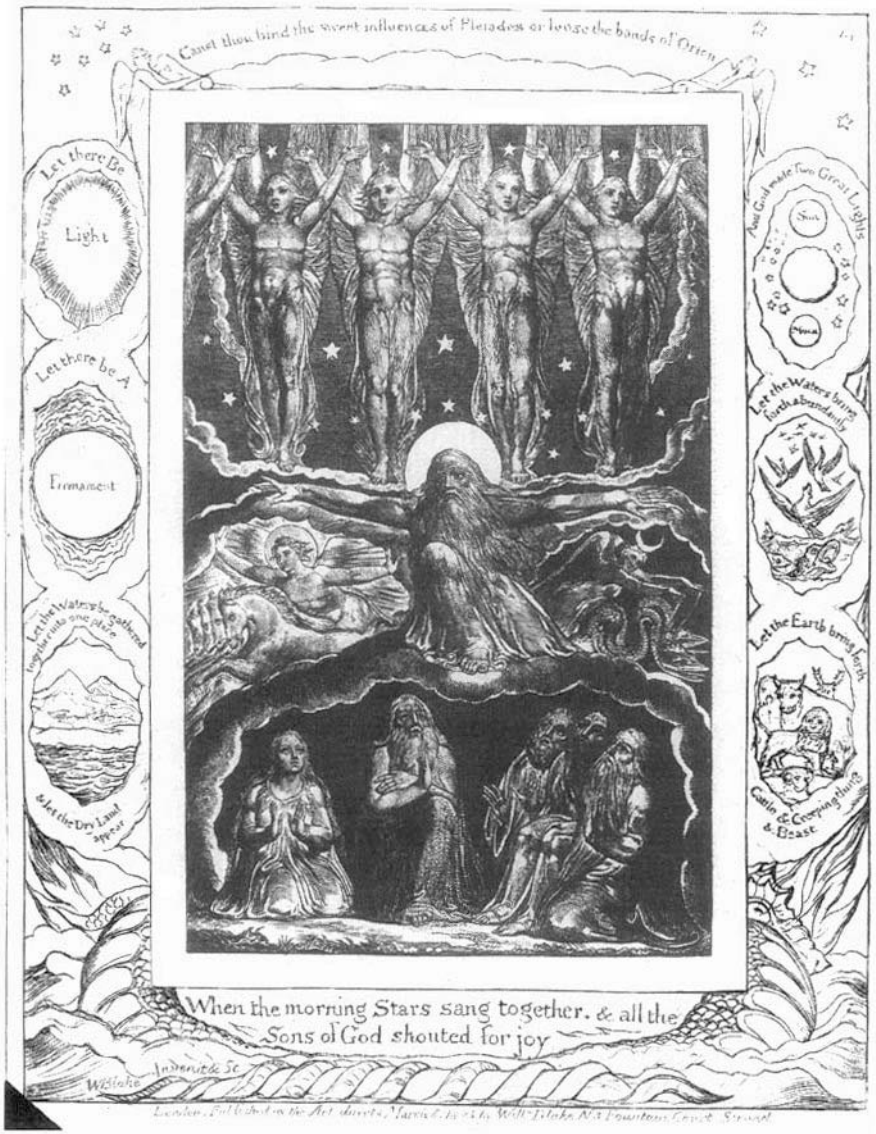

Fig. 3. *When the Morning Stars Sang Together,* illustration to the Book of Job

With an indifference to Job's terrifying predicament that Blake no doubt found cruelly paradigmatic of a certain Judeo-Christian conception of the deity, God refuses either to entertain his righteous subject's questions or to respond in kind to the debate that had hitherto been conducted between him and his friends. Jehovah chooses instead to make a series of severely – even absurdly – ironical pronouncements from the whirlwind. Of course, the whirlwind is the conventional medium of theophanies, but it is also a metaphor throughout Blake's work for the deity's most vicious qualities, the qualities that identify him as Urizen: his self-obscuring aloofness and abstraction, his defensiveness, and his faceless malevolence towards humankind. God refrains from physically destroying Job, though the threat of that annihilation unavoidably forms the disciplinary background in which this scene of instruction is set. Yet his pronouncement from the sanctuary of the whirlwind is not without its own remarkable violence; it could be argued that it is the nature of this less spectacular brutality which is the real target of Blake's curious illustration. As if to mock Job's profound and profoundly felt questions, God answers with a ferocious counter-interrogation whose sole purpose it is to intimidate Job into dutiful silence. Who is Job to 'darken' God's design with a cloud of thoughtless words? Who is this man who speaks from ignorance? What could he possibly know of the creation of the world, the taming of the oceans, and the ordering of the constellations? Can he grasp the expanse of the earth, the source of the rivers, the depth of the seas, the beauty of the snow, the nature of death, the fate of the wicked? Where were you during the laying of the foundations of the world, he charges his paralysed listener, 'when the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy' (38.7)?

Job had demanded answers from his Lord, but at this point receives only questions about the spectacle of creation and the origin of its coherence, questions for which he cannot possibly provide replies. As God well knows, when the world was created only the angels were in a position to stand together amongst the dawn's constellations and sing songs of holy adoration. Job, like all human beings, was absent from this primal scene, and something of that lack remains with him still as the mark of his relative insubstantiality and ignorance. By virtue of his simple creatureliness, all the riddles of creation exceed his puny grasp. To be human is fundamentally to be lowly and in the dark, as Blake's depiction of Job and his circle in a dim grotto at the bottom of the design literally suggests. To the extent that Job's pleas are addressed at

all, it is by way of suggesting that the burden of the mystery of suffering is to be born by human beings but never explained. The heartless rhetorical question forming the caption to Blake's design decisively fixes Job's position within the Great Chain of Being by registering both his belatedness and inconsequentiality in the order of things. Not surprisingly, the effect of Jehovah's counter-interrogation is immediate and complete: Job humbly acknowledges God's omnipotence and his own unworthiness, vowing never to question the deity's wisdom again.

Needless to say, it is a strange and violently hierarchical vision of the shape of the true reality, and Blake could not help but be repulsed by every aspect of it. What does not escape his critical eye is that Job's accusation of God's indifference to human suffering is in fact proven by the deity's intimidatory tactics. In this univocal world, God's assertion of his own omniscience immediately translates into an act of power, absolute knowledge being precisely the means by which the deity enforces total control over even the most insignificant signs of dissent. The assertion of such knowledge primarily serves the purpose of *exposing* Job's near total ignorance about the world whose design he has dared to question. And indeed, as Blake's illustration grimly suggests, while Jehovah pronounces upon the extent and the mystery of creation, arms outstretched in order to contain all things in a single, totalizing gesture, Job and his circle find themselves silhouetted by and imprisoned within a band of clouds. We see this space in the form of a 'cut-away,' as if Job were an animal or a prisoner, and the world a cell or a cage in which – as with all cells and cages – confinement is indissociable from the humiliating experience of being rendered absolutely visible to the outside observer. Human beings thus share the carceral exposure that Behemoth and Leviathan must suffer in the design (fig. 4) immediately following *When the Morning Stars Sang Together.* In this illustration, God points muscularly downward into the creation of which Job is surely a part, compelling him to observe the earth's greatest creatures stuffed into similarly constricting circumstances. Because Jehovah watches Job looking at the strangely compressed vista below, the disciplinary intent of this scene of instruction appears to be to make human beings see and feel an exaggerated re-presentation of their own condition. To be sure, Jehovah contrasts the immenseness of the beasts to the smallness of Job. Yet Blake's side-by-side designs also bring out their common condition, at once captured and inescapably visible. What René Girard says of Behemoth and Leviathan holds equally true for Job and his followers: they are 'les grandes vedettes de cette

Fig. 4. *Behemoth and Leviathan,* illustration to the Book of Job

ménagerie,' that is, 'the stars of this zoo' (208). By implication, Jehovah is the 'zoo-keeper' and the world merely a place in which to show off his most interesting creatures.[29] The speech from the whirlwind therefore provides a spectacular instance of what Foucault calls 'the superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations' (*Discipline* 185).[30] In a cosmos properly governed by the principle of unconditional love rather than discipline, life under the immediate eye of heaven would mean the reassurance of God's sustained and sustaining providence; in Blake's picture, however, providence is supplanted by penetrating surveillance. Limitlessly available to the sight of the Creator, but, like all lesser beings, himself unable to see the source of that surveillance, Job and his circle are immobilized within a space of domination carved out from the basement of the world.

From his vantage point of his perch atop Job's cell (fig. 3), Jehovah claims that the mysteries of the universe are illuminated only by himself. Blake's response is to show how that bright design is characterized by its own pervasive darkness. God demands that Job imagine creation as a building, constructed with foundation stones and a measuring line; what Blake's illustration brings out is how that edifice, imbued as it is with the imposition and effects of power, and clearly structured for the purpose of subjecting its occupants to unequivocal mastery, is nothing less than penal in nature. For this reason, Jeremy Bentham's specifications for an imaginary prison – published in a series of letters in the same year (1791) that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* was probably completed – seems uncannily apposite to Blake's illustration; as Foucault points out, the design for the new penitentiary or 'Panopticon' is not so much a cultural artefact in the history of penal architecture as a 'diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form' (*Discipline* 205). Its central principle is control through segregation and observation; its purpose is to make it possible, through the orderly arrangement of spaces, to keep its inmates under sustained, centralized, intimidating surveillance: *pan-opticism*. The 'Panopticon' therefore differs from the prisons it was to replace in one crucial respect: rather than hiding prisoners away within a dark fortress, the masters place them in a structure of limitless visibility. Under these conditions, the inmate experiences incarceration not actively, at the hands of the master's crushing violence, but passively, by being placed, seen, and known to all who would observe. As Foucault argues, a panoptic disciplinary structure is designed 'to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; in more general

terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals; to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them' (*Discipline* 172). In Blake's illustration to the Book of Job, Jehovah occupies the masterful position equivalent to the prison warden of Bentham's 'Panopticon.' The cosmos is represented as a gigantic 'instrument of subjection' (*Discipline* 224) in which nothing, no matter how small or how large, can escape Jehovah's keen gaze. The design's details are appropriately sweeping in their reach, from the great sea monsters in the churning oceans below to the limitless reaches of the stars above, and from the first fiat announcing the advent of 'Light' to the sixth fiat decreeing the creation of the living creatures, the *zoa*. Blake's severely foreshortened perspectives flatten out the design and give it a certain frozen and cartographic quality: what we see here is a schematic diagram, so to speak, of the mechanism of theological power reduced to its ideal form. Literalizing the penal and disciplinary nature of the architecture of space and being, Blake's illustration is unusually busy with frames and with the cellular distribution of spaces, all of them radiating outwards from the Urizenic figure whose backlit face forms the dead centre of the design. The outside border is itself inscribed with individually framed depictions of the originating bounds of the cosmos, each fiat 'fram[ing]' the universe with a 'fearful symmetry,' even as Blake had suggested twenty years earlier in a poem whose hysterical series of rhetorical questions also remembers the Book of Job (*SI*, E 24-5). Blake gives these fiats an undeniably sinister context by locating them in the same parergonal space as the coiled, headless serpent at the bottom of the illustration and the constellations at the top: in the artist's visual language, these are unhappy figures for the fission of the universe into brute matter and a volatilized heaven. Within this complex frame lies another frame, conspicuously blank. And inside that border, the design's lower region is made up of three cramped tableaux. Immediately beneath one of Jehovah's ruling hands, Helios and his dutiful horses struggle to part the circling clouds; beneath the other, a winged goddess drives the dragons of passion before the cusps of a waning moon (Butlin, *Text* 415). The disposition of Blake's visual figures puts to us that under the auspices of Jehovah, even our psychological lives are scrupulously compartmentalized, like this picture, into Platonic dualisms of spirit and flesh, the hard daylight of bridled intellect and the dark place where worms fly in the night. Jehovah's unnaturally long and muscular arms seem indistinguishable from the thick cord of clouds

which shut humanity up in a subterranean cavern. From the grotto of the world, Job, his wife, and his comforters are compelled to worship a creation whose very vastness isolates and objectifies them in their creatureliness.

For Blake, the unhappiest fact is that Jehovah's techniques confine Job and his followers at the same time as they instil within them the feelings of self-loathing (or what Nietzsche denounced as Christian *ressentiment*) which internalize this discipline and make it indistinguishable from being human. Here Job is controlled by the manipulation of his own feelings of responsibility and guilt; here, humankind is enlisted as its own jailer, a horrifying effect of coercion that Blake had earlier explored in 'The Chimney-Sweeper' of *Songs of Innocence*. The scene is paradigmatic not only of a certain Judeo-Christian view of the relationship between the One and the Many, but also of a transitional moment between two forms of discipline by which that relationship is established and executed. Earlier in the narrative Job and his family experience the rule of their sovereign in the form of brute, concentrated force. With a kind of lurid intensity, power is exercised directly over Job through a series of ritualistic disasters: the slaughter of his servants, the abduction of his cattle and camels, the sudden electrocution of his sheep, the death of his children by the whirlwind, and finally the affliction of the boils and 'loathsome sores.' (Blake reserves one of his most grisly Job illustrations for the last form of subjection.) The cruel irony is that Job's objection to this torture leads, not to the end of his suffering, but to a subtle shift in the means by which his subjugation is carried out. For Job, the corporal ritual of torture is superseded by the non-corporal ritual of inspection. Jehovah's intimidatory questions perform the disciplinary function of the examination: as Foucault remarks, the examination combines 'the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth' (*Discipline* 184). Under interrogation, Job is confined to a single place in the Great Chain of Being, where every aspect of his smallness and creatureliness is brought into the light, silhouetted against the glare of creation in all its regulated mystery. As Blake's illustration suggests, insofar as the architecture of space and being is itself entirely penal in nature, and every feature of it, whether distant in time or large in size, instantly available to the panoptic gaze of its creator, power need not be expressed through spectacular acts of localized violence; the very arrangement of the cosmos, a place for everything and everything in its place, automatically registers and carries out this discipline. For this

reason, Jehovah looks away from the very human subjects whom he has fixed and objectified for the purposes of examination. His indifferent stare reminds the viewer that power is no longer concentrated in single acts of punishment meted out by a guardian, but rather lies in the disciplinary structure which governs the cosmos down to its smallest details. Jehovah imagines a univocal cosmos that is subjugated by hierarchies, bounding lines, and regulating fiats. Here, disciplinary force need not be brought to bear all at once, as it were, in exceptional acts of subjection, for the very *form* of the cosmos as it is experienced by human beings, the crowded, anxious, and entirely carceral experience that is represented in Blake's design, passively *performs* this discipline as a matter of fact. This is an *over-looked* universe, where the architecture of surveillance has come to replace the surveillance itself. Like the prison master in Bentham's 'Panopticon,' Jehovah could, paradoxically, withdraw from this penitential structure, and the imposition of power, the play of its coercive effects upon the personal and the social body, would remain entirely intact. To be sure, Jehovah initially permits Satan to exercise sudden and arbitrary power over Job; but the narrative of the Old Testament story turns at the point when Job is compelled to see that power also functions continuously in the structure of the universe, subtly present in the very orderliness of the order of things.

For Blake, as for the Gnostics, creation is the originary Great Confinement, after which all other illegitimate forms of exclusion and imprisonment are patterned. We see why Blake frames the scene of Job's incarceration and instruction with depictions of scenes from the opening chapters of Genesis. As Blake had seen in engravings after Michelangelo's frescoes on the Sistine Ceiling, the opening book of the Old Testament presents 'primal acts of binary differentiation as the essential feature of divine creativity' (La Belle 76). The marginal 'quotations' form a backdrop reminding the viewer that the disciplining of Job is not merely negative and repressive; the moment of his subjugation is also, 'positively,' the momentous occasion of his production or creation as a specifically *theological* subject. (For this reason, perhaps, Blake's marginal illustrations from Genesis do not include a depiction of God's final fiat announcing the creation of humankind; the unhappy scene of Job and his followers in their subterranean cavern takes its place and functions as a severely ironic refiguring of the command 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over ... every

creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth' [Gen. 1.26]. The artist's bitterly critical point here would seem to be that under Jehovah's discipline, it is humanity which has been turned into a 'creeping thing.') As we see in Job's upturned eyes, his confinement not only excludes and isolates, it is also responsible for generating a particular experience of faith: the moralizing sadism of the carceral universe produces human subjects who excel through obedience and who are emptied of any positive content that is not directed towards fulfilling that 'ennobling' end. Job is therefore not unlike Winston Smith at the conclusion of *1984*; at the instant that he comes to 'love' his overlord, he is re-created into an unmediated effect of the State. The Job who cowers reverentially in the cave at the bottom of Blake's illustration is similarly re-produced, but under the auspices of a theological rather than political technology where divine knowledge, power, and human being intersect. Jehovah's normalizing orthopaedics, which effectively shame Job into 'discovering' his true self, *open up* the docile region of the human subject as a space of subjection. What Job *is*, here, now, at this relatively late point in his examination, is irreducible to his being-surveyed and being-arraigned, fixed in the 'penal mapping' (Foucault, *Discipline* 78) of an infinitely juridical cosmos. Jehovah would have us believe that Job's discipline is no more contingent than the discipline of chaos is in Genesis; in both cases, the acts of subjugation are *constitutive* in nature, a making that is somehow always also a breaking. Job's individual subjection/invention is in this way located within a universal context, and his particular discipline connected to the generally disciplinary nature of a cosmos which of course *began* with extraordinary acts of containment: not only the unequivocal separation of the light from the dark, the firmament from the waters, and the sun from the moon, which is to say, the subject of the scenes that fill the outer frame of Blake's design, but also the taming of the oceans, the ordering of the constellations, and the laying of the foundation of the world, the latter being the scenes of power that Jehovah specifically conjures up in the Book of Job. From Jehovah's commandeering perspective, all of these first fiats are recalled so as to remind Job of his finite humanity; from the point of view of the Blakean spectator, however, the visual and verbal allusions to Genesis in the illustration's margins recall quite another truth, one that Job cannot afford to imagine: while he crouches in the cramped prison for which he is deemed responsible, he is kept from seeing that it is creation in its entirety which is carceral.[31]

V. LIVING ON/BORDER LINES: BLAKE'S 'EQUIVOCAL WORLDS'

> Am I in Jerusalem? This is a question to which one will never respond in the present tense ...
>
> Jacques Derrida, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials'

Across the centre of *When the Morning Stars Sang Together* (fig. 3), Jehovah's outstretched arms divide the illustration into two distinct areas. As I have argued, the partitioning of the illustration into upper and lower sections rehearses Job's lesson in the hierarchical organization of the order of things: in the world below, humanity is circumscribed in place and in time; but in the world above, beyond the limited vision of Job and his circle, the angels and stars joyfully witness the foundation of the cosmos. Given Blake's suspicion of this sort of vertical organization, however, we have reason to ask whether the illustration also works in more complex ways. With Blake's admonition about 'Equivocal Worlds' in mind, let us look at the design again, this time paying closer attention to the way in which it is transected by axes that run left and right as well as top to bottom. In the grotto below, Job and his companions gaze prayerfully upwards towards God, their sight-lines marking the up*right* construction of the universe in which they live; by contrast, in the constellations and morning stars above, the world is conspicuous for its lateral rather than perpendicular shape. Because of the imposing form of their jailor, however, they are unable to discern these starry expanses. What is the significance of that unseen sky? What is the meaning of its textured infinity? Four winged angels, their mouths open in song, gaze outwards into the space shared by the viewer. Their limbs are raised in celebration, each crossing the other in a woven chain of mutual interchange whose lateral direction visualizes a non-hierarchical world founded upon horizontal rather than vertical principles of human relations. In other words, Blake subtly contrasts two representations of the shape of the true reality within one picture, playing the desire for containment and control in the lower realm against the infinitely expansive possibilities that are depicted in the upper portion of the illustration. Rather than all of a whole, the design is therefore itself equivocal: to use the language of *Jerusalem*, the lower portion reflects Los's fear of assimilation into the undifferentiated unity of the Godhead, while the upper part embodies his hopes for a world in which the 'One' is creatively exposed to the ongoing dissent of the

'Four.' In the water-colour version of this plate (fig. 5), Blake paints only four figures, but in the engraving he has the presence of mind to add the arms of two more angels in the left and right margins – thereby auguring a potentially endless sequence, limited only by the boundaries of the illustration's inner blank borderline. The change between the water-colour and engraved versions is small, but its implications for Blake's critique of the metaphysics of the One are large and complex.[32] Because the unengraved version depicts four and only four angels, it is more easily interpreted as representing Blake's ubiquitous Zoas or perhaps the four evangelists. But by adding the liminal limbs in the engraved version, the artist shifts the focus from what the angels might *mean* as a group of four to the importance of their *position* in the structure of mutual interchange which clearly exceeds them.

What the artist finds repulsive about the Urizenic figure who intimidates Job is that he lords his mastery over his subjects by reminding them that he alone is in a position to comprehend creation, and thus to make visible what will forever remain hidden to humanity. Yet the upper portion of the design interrogates Jehovah's pretensions to the unequivocality of absolute knowledge by pointing to the inescapable *excess* which the articulation of that knowledge mobilizes. In this illustration we are not offered an intimidating glimpse of creation in its entirety, but a 'window' or perhaps 'clearing' [*Lichtung*] whose limiting border forms an 'event horizon' – a term I borrow from theoretical physics (J. Taylor 53–6) – which reminds the spectator that everything cannot be seen all at once, as it were, and in one go. The four angels which are wholly visible do not simply appear, innocent of any context, but come into appearance as a framing *effect* precisely because this context is blanked out. Heidegger is helpful in this regard when he argues that '[a] boundary is not that at which something stops but ... is that from which something *begins its presencing*' (*Poetry* 154). That is to say, the visibility of the angels depends on the invisibility of the chain or unarticulated background within which their articulation is possible. What lies inside the frame is constituted by the trace of its difference from what lies without, in this case a trace quite literally marked by the angelic bodies which the illustration's blank border transects and leaves as mere residua. This can be expressed differently: because the border is crucial in making the four 'stand out' (*ex-sistere*), but is not itself *of* the four, it points to the fact that an 'ex-sisting' being can never be in full possession of itself – in much the same way that the eye's field of vision can never so widen as to include the sight of itself seeing. (Blake's

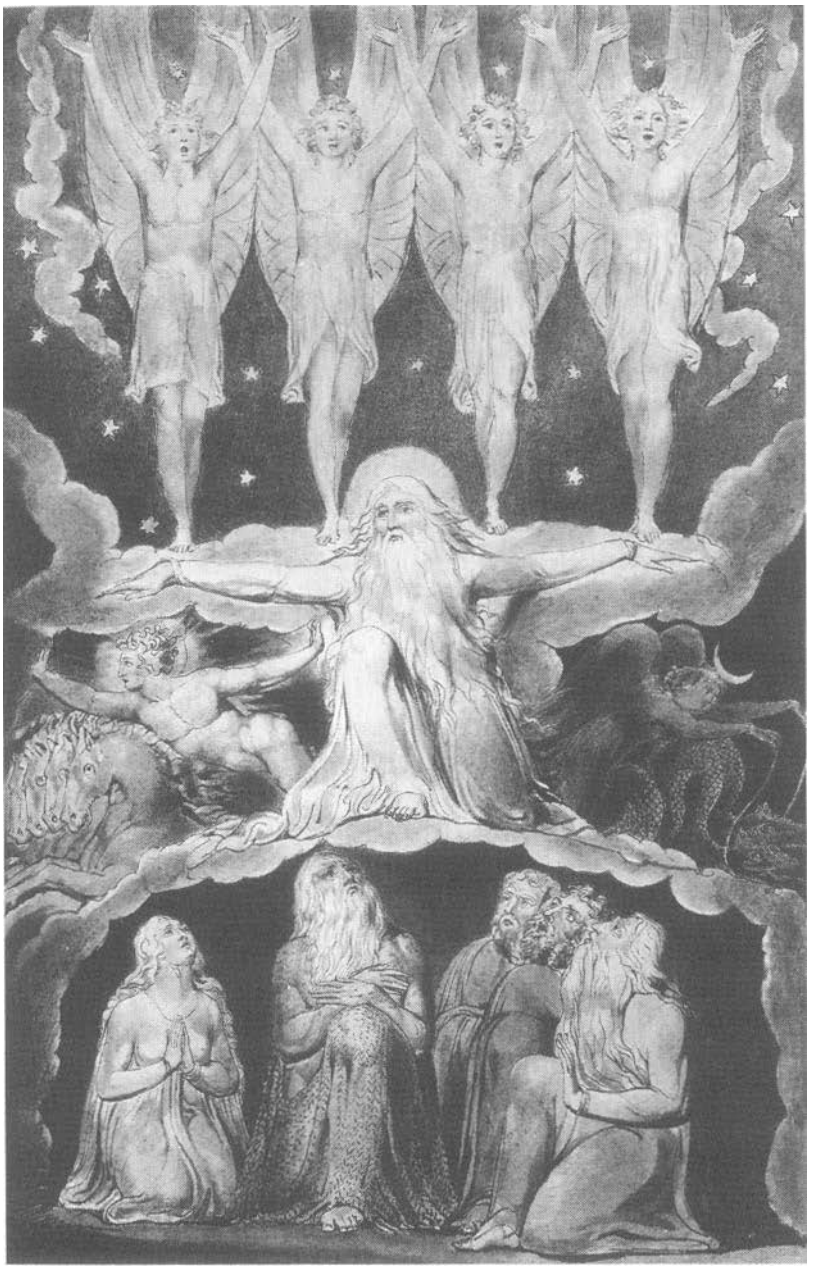

Fig. 5. *When the Morning Stars Sang Together,* illustration to the Book of Job

contemporary, Fichte, had come to consider the impossible notion of a gaze capable of bringing itself into view as *the* central philosophical question.)[33] It is not the first time that Blake has evoked this epistemological knot of blindness and insight, of a certain blindness *enabling* insight. Towards the conclusion of *Jerusalem*, for example, Blake's 'Prophet of Eternity' and his dark double peer into the night sky, at once seeing and not seeing: 'Los reads the Stars of Albion!' whereas 'the Spectre reads the Voids / Between the Stars' (*J* 91.36–7, E 251). As in the Job illustration, Blake turns to the stellar field as a way of evoking an interdiction that is hidden from the eye of reason. As Derrida describes it: '*blindness to the supplement* is the law' (*Grammatology* 149). Despite, or rather, because Blake's figures insist that they are reading antithetically opposed scripts, they are prevented from seeing that the two texts by which they are separately captivated combine into one complex inscription. But this blindness or aphasia is inescapable, indeed, to the exact extent that the combination of the scripts is unavoidable: the 'Stars' and 'Voids' appear as distinct objects of apprehension only because of the 'prior' blanking out of the semiotic economy – illegible as such – that brings them into visibility and legibility in the first place. The fact that the diacritical spacing of the two texts remains illegible to both figures *even while they continue to read* suggests how their identically reversed blindnesses produce a deeper insight: namely, insofar as knowledge is inscribed in and articulated by systems of signification it can never be absolutely in possession of itself. The play of signs and the inscriptive organization of blank spaces, *as* play and *as* inscription, are always illegible to readers who after all read 'only' signs and to knowers who know 'only' knowledge, just as the structure of difference that mutually implicates Los and the Spectre remains inaccessible to them precisely because they are situated *within* it. Neither 'Voids' nor 'Stars,' but the enabling 'principle' of their intertexture, the 'structural unconsciousness' (Derrida, 'Signature' 192) of Blake's night sky, marks the condition of the possibility of articulated knowledge; as such, however, it will always be elsewhere and out of reach, an irreducible remainder and supplementary in-between that remains radically un-known and un-read. In an analogous way, Jehovah cannot realize the panoptic position of absolute knowledge that he claims is his privilege in the Book of Job because his very positioning – the 'stand' he must 'take' (*FZ* 122.24, E 391), somewhere – prohibits him from broadening his visionary powers to the point that he can grasp what, in himself and in all others, necessarily exceeds and precedes these powers. No vantage point is so

univocally secure, or, more precisely, so removed from structures of difference that it contains all other vantage points. As Blake never tires of saying, to pretend to occupy such a (non-)place leads only to the death of the imagination. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Jehovah appears massively rooted into his perch atop the cave that imprisons Job and his followers, in effect reminding the viewer that his putatively absolute vision is irreducibly relative.

Blake's illustration represents the character of knowledge that the mind achieves in fundamentally different ways. In the design's lower region, Jehovah's words and actions evoke the intimidating possibility that creation could be exhaustively grasped and known. But the upper portion of the illustration suggests otherwise: because it is here faced with a potentially limitless chain of angels, knowledge is necessarily incomplete. Significantly, this in-completeness is structural in nature, and not to be confused with a sublimity of infinitude, the very exorbitancy with which Jehovah threatens Job. The distinction between these two forms of 'non-totalization' is crucial to Derrida, who radicalizes Claude Lévi-Strauss's notion of *'bricolage'* as a way of distinguishing his project from that of the 'engineer[s]' ('Structure' 285–6). As Gayatri Spivak remarks, Lévi-Strauss makes a strong advance against the totalizing pretensions of the engineer by conceding that 'it is in fact impossible for him to master the whole field':

> Derrida, by important contrast, suggests that the field is *theoretically*, not merely empirically, unknowable. Not even in an ideal universe of an empirically reduced number of possibilities would the projected 'end' of knowledge ever coincide with its 'means.' Such a coincidence – 'engineering' – is an impossible dream of plenitude. (xix)

As the cellular mapping of the cosmos in Blake's Job illustration suggests, Jehovah has a special stake in a meticulously 'engineered' creation. Above his weary or anxious gaze, however, the interlocked angels effortlessly transgress the design's tabular spaces, forever just out of range of his vision. And beyond the left and right border lines, the same angels extend outwards past *our* view as well. To the extent that the four angels are brought into sight, they are already marked by the trace of excess by which they are shaped and upon which they are dependent. By relying on the articulating force of the border, the four are fundamentally in excess of what they appear to be, never absolutely or unequivocally present to themselves. Exceeded by the principle of

their articulation, they stretch forever ahead of themselves into an unfinishable future: 'Eternity ... in love with the productions of time' (*MHH* 7, E 36). The presence of residual limbs in the left and right margins marks this excess, reminding the viewer that the border could always transect the angels *elsewhere*, at some other point. The point seems to be that a border will always transect them *somewhere*; there will always be some form of articulation where knowledge is concerned, since articulation is what makes knowledge possible, but is also what makes it *absolutely* impossible. The root epistemological question is, then: at what point does one draw the line? Where to begin, or end? For Derrida's *'bricoleur,'* the answer is fundamentally equivocal: here, or there, more to the left or to the right, with whatever comes to hand. 'We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace ... has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are*: in a text where we already believe ourselves to be' (*Grammatology* 162). Only engineers like Urizen and Jehovah dream of absolute visibility, which is to say, of grasping knowledge that has turned back upon itself to incorporate the principle of its own articulation, knowledge so expansive as to apprehend *without remainder* or *excess* or *over-run* its own determining ground. Only Urizen dreams of appropriating the absolutely unconditioned and masterful stance from which to 'view the infinite & *unbounded*' (*FZ* 122.24, E 391; emphasis mine).

The un-viewable remainder at the point of the border's blankness brings Blake to the threshold of illustrating what amounts to the 'structural unconsciousness' (Derrida, 'Signature' 192) of all that is seen and known. In doing so, he risks a scandal that is not so much irrational as *other* than rational in kind. As Derrida writes in an essay whose title – 'Living On / BORDER LINES' – is not without significance here: 'Visibility should – not be visible. According to an old, omnipotent logic that has reigned since Plato, that which enables us to see should remain invisible: black, blinding ... To see vision, to see on beyond sight: this abyss-like madness of an utterly primal scene, the scene of scenes, stages, representation' (90–1). Blake might say: 'According to an old, omnipotent logic that has reigned since Jehovah's inaugural fiat, "Let there be light," that which enables us to see should remain invisible.' From the beginning, *Fiat lux* has meant *Fiat lux et veritas*: God's inaugural command flushes the universe with that brightness in which all beings are presented to knowledge. Truth must be its own irradiated appearance, the transparency of the seen to seeing, the luminous clear-

ing where what *is* is what stands out before God's great, pure, sunny contemplation. Blake puts this paradox to us in the illustration of *fiat lux* in the design's upper left margin. 'Let there be light': what lets light be? How to illustrate – better, illuminate – this letting-be of light, this originary moment of utter illumination? Light *there is*: what is the un-lit (darkness [visible]) that underwrites that visibility, gives the givenness of light the force of law by setting it irretrievably upon its way? In this marginal 'quotation' from Genesis, Blake looks into the sun ... and envisions nothing, a shape, all light whose blankness he can visualize only supplementarily, that is, by surrounding it with a sort of radiant outline. That, and by writing the word 'Light' across this blankness, thereby making the sheer featurelessness of the inaugural scene of illumination *invisible*. What strange economy of blindness and sight is here at work? We 'see,' as it were, that when light is made visible (by becoming legible in the word 'Light'), its luminosity is extinguished, its blankness blanked out, filled in; the word literally performs the erasure of what it signifies, as though the bringing into light necessarily brought with it a deprivation, a sightlessness, and a hidden invisibility.[34] What can it mean to cast one's eye back to that first fiat and first dawn? Metaphorically speaking, does Blake not risk a certain blindness and lunacy, precisely in order to disclose something that is neither light nor dark, visibility nor invisibility? 'During one of the first American expeditions to the moon,' Geoffrey Bennington writes,

> a careless astronaut pointed his camera at the sun, which immediately burned out its cells. The camera cannot tolerate the source or purity of what is its only *raison d'être* to capture and relay. This lunar drama of reflected light, of a burning that leaves only ash, of the sun and death that cannot be looked at directly, haunts all Derrida's thought. We should follow all the suns that figure this blinding source of what allows us to see. (137–8)

How, then, to make appearing appear, to bring into visibility that which goes without seeing – *must* go without seeing – for the integrity and distinctness of the *logos* to remain lucid and intact? As the condition of the possibility of that which appears, *appearing* as such is radically invisible, a blind spot escaping even Jehovah's absolutely discerning eyes. Appearing cannot be seen, except, perhaps, in the incalculably 'thin' line, visible only in its transecting effects, joining the four which are framed to those which are not. Both this line and the blank frame, which is its shadow, augur in their very emptiness a conception of the

bounding gesture which does not admit a strictly exclusionary distinction between inside and outside, *ergon* and *parergon*. Jehovah apprehends the shape of the true reality through violently exclusionary acts; but Blake asks us to consider the frame as a border, neither entirely inside nor outside, 'where' that shape is at once articulated and cleft. Inasmuch as the true reality is a totality, it is a structured totality, which is to say, irreducible to its differential articulation and consequently at no single point unequivocally visible – that is, *present* – to itself.

In an artist who always insisted on the imaginative efficacy and clarifying power of the 'distinct, sharp, and wirey ... bounding line' (*DC* 63–4, E 550), the revisioning of the frame as border and frontier is not a matter of dissolving boundaries, but much more a question of investigating their nature and of reassessing their use. To return to a point made at the start of this essay: Blake resists the allure of the 'repressive hypothesis,' and thus the temptation to think of freedom as the condition of unboundedness. However, the principle of articulation that Blake figures forth in the border cannot, as the condition of visibility and specificity, form a part of the visual system and be 'situated as an object in its field.' This does not mean, as Derrida warns, that it has a 'real field *elsewhere*, *another* assignable *site*' (*Grammatology* 60). Because the articulating force of the border, or rather, of bordering in general, operates as the 'infrastructural possibilit[y]' (Gasché 160)[35] of all particular boundaries, distinctions, and differentiations, and because this 'already' at once opens the space of the human *and* renders the human irretrievably derivative, belated, with respect to that opening, one could be forgiven for calling it *God*.[36] Bordering renders things visible, makes them 'ex-sist,' but does not strictly speaking belong anywhere to the order of visibility; to the extent that it lights up all the world but itself, which is to say, remains necessarily in-visible to itself, a black sun, the tain of the mirror, bordering in general is at the very least God-like. To imagine the inscription of the border (beyond the imposition of the frame) is to envision the unseen ground of seeing. It is to understand what it means for the human to be 'sighted,' if by this term we mean not the anxious condition of being-surveyed but, as Fichte says of absolute self-consciousness, the apprehension and letting-be of the 'power *into which* an eye is implanted':[37] beyond panoptic domination, then, the eye that finds its *ethos*, its true dwelling-place, *in-the-midst-of* the production of the visible. Jerusalem: a clearing, *wherever we are*.

What Blake calls 'fourfold vision' (E 722) cannot simply be an increase in acuity or resolution, a quadrupling of the capacity to see – as if two eyes were not enough with which to be blind. It is rather the capacity to glimpse 'around' glimpsing, to 'see' the logos at the fundamentally equivocal point of its coming into sight, the 'blind spot' or 'not-seen that opens *and* limits visibility' (Derrida, *Grammatology* 163; emphasis mine). This vision – folded into itself, into its own indiscernible folds – peers without seeing into a certain 'bottomless fund [*fonds sans fond*],' a 'store of deep background,' which Derrida will call 'the *pharmacy*' (*Dissemination* 127, 128). Indeed, *Plato*'s pharmacy. Its viewless 'reserve' resists the 'omnipotent logic that has reigned since Plato' (Derrida, 'Living' 90), embarrassing the metaphysic of the One with the trace of an excess that transgressed that logic from the beginning. The *total* shape of the true reality is therefore 'incomprehensible' (*J* 98.11, 24; E 257), even as Blake says twice at the conclusion of *Jerusalem*. But here incomprehensibility is not the measure of an in-human magnitude; non-closure is brought about not by the size of the field, but rather by its character, whose irreducible excess makes all frames, systematizations, and unifications provisional and open to being differently redrawn.

Blake's transected angelic chain greets our gaze and draws us into a reciprocal form of visibility: as spectators of the illustration, we are asked to imagine the networks of differences in which we are also situated, and to discern the borders – or what Blake calls the 'lineaments divine of human beauty' (*FZ* 25.2, E 314) – that make them come into appearance. In a pictorial equivalent to dramatic irony, then, *we* see so much more than Job, who must look fearfully from the bottom 'Up' (even as Milton's Raphael had said to Adam) and whose only source of light comes significantly from the halo behind Jehovah's imposing head. This scene of subservience captures the power-knowledge nexus that Job duly rehearses in his final words:

> I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.
>
> Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knoweth not.
>
> I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.
>
> Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (42.2–3, 5–6)

Job begins by frankly acknowledging his utter visibility before God. But the carceral physics of Jehovah's universe are so efficiently manipulative

that he experiences this surveillance as its opposite – as the sight of God. But Job's momentary reversal of perspectives serves to identify the apprehension of God's face with the confirmation of human worthlessness: according to the implacable logic of his imprisonment, glimpsing God automatically translates into despising oneself. The end of Job's moral examination – insofar as it could ever come to an end – is realized in the form of a gesture that seamlessly combines adoration with self-abasement. What keeps Job from attaining *four*fold vision, that is, from escaping his 'arbitrary incarceration in the pre-Copernican prison and field of vision' (Nietzsche, *Will* 417) and from apprehending the fundamentally non-hierarchical shape of the true reality, would seem to be concentrated in the alien figure of Jehovah. As the illustration attests, however, Job's face is indistinguishable from that of his jailor. From Blake's point of view, the God that Job thinks he sees is his own invention, a hallucinatory product of his inability to imagine the *Geselligkeit* of 'equivocal worlds' founded upon 'horizontal' rather than 'vertical' principles of human relations.

Blake's illustration contrasts two ways of living in and knowing about the world: on the one hand, life under the auspices of a certain 'Egyptianism,' as Nietzsche puts it, in which knowledge involves the grim entombment and silent exchange of so many 'conceptual mummies,' the chastening re-collection of what is and what has always been (*Twilight* 35). By compelling Job to recall the origin and orderliness of creation, and to feel the cold heart of sameness to which all difference is compelled to return, Jehovah instils in his human subjects a form of metaphysical necromancy and nostalgia. His is the fiat underwriting all fiats, the imperative driving all catechisms: *'Don't forget'* or *'You must remember this.'* In the design's upper portion, on the other hand, Blake represents the subject living a life of what Kierkegaard calls repetition, as opposed to re-memoration. As Kierkegaard's work of the same name promises in its opening pages, repetition frees the Christian from turning resolutely from the sensible to the intelligible, which is to say from the domination of the metaphysical and the theological as these terms have governed thinking since Plato. Not the narcotic gaze upwards to the word and the face of God, but the shared look outwards to us. Not the *frame* that cleanly separates the forms of heaven from the dwellers of the cave, but the *border* that always and already exposes the light to the dark, the stars to the voids between the stars, eternity to the productions of time. Not the intimidating recollection of a frozen *eidos*, but the repetition of a work of weaving whose warp and woof run off the

margins of knowledge in a 'textual ... in-finity' (Caputo 150). Here the adjoined, singing angels are inscribed like musical signs, their 'dynamics ... always oriented towards the future of their repetition, never toward the consonance of their simultaneity' (de Man 129). Here the border-line embodies the forward motion of *kinesis* or Christian becoming, human being pulled ceaselessly towards the frontier of an absolute future. Do these angels trace the lineaments of Jerusalem? This is a question to which one could never respond in the present tense.

NOTES

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1 Blake is quoted from David V. Erdman (1982). In citations in the text, the following abbreviations will be used: *Jerusalem* (*J*); *The* [*First*] *Book of Urizen* (*BU*); *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (*MHH*); *Milton* (*M*); *Europe* (*E*); *The Four Zoas* (*FZ*); *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (*SI*); *Vision of the Last Judgment* (*VLJ*); *Descriptive Catalogue* (*DC*). The abbreviations are followed by numbers indicating plate and/or line; then by 'E' and numbers indicating page references to the Erdman edition.

2 My phrase recalls Nietzsche's numerous references to the fundamental or 'Great Errors' which underwrite what is said to be 'truth.' See, for example, 'The Four Great Errors,' in *The Twilight of the Idols* 47.

3 I am grateful to Judith Butler, whose essay 'Stubborn Attachment, Bodily Subjection: Rereading Hegel on the Unhappy Consciousness' pointed me to Hegel's curious phrase.

4 Perhaps the clearest articulations of Foucault's position vis-à-vis the 'repressive hypothesis' are in part 2 of his *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* 17–49, and in 'Truth and Power,' the interview conducted by Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, collected in *Power/Knowledge* 109–33.

5 Cited in Michael Walzer, 'The Politics of Michel Foucault,' in Hoy 60.

6 See Clark, 'The Innocence of Becoming Restored.'

7 In a discussion of Emmanuel Levinas to which I want briefly to return,

Derrida notes that the Jewish thinker seeks to liberate onto-theology 'from the Greek domination of the Same and the One ... as if from oppression itself – an ... ontological or transcendental oppression, but also the origin or alibi of all oppression in the world.' See 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas' 83.

8 All references to Milton's *Paradise Lost* are from the Hughes edition, and will be cited in the body of the essay by book and line number.

9 Harold Bloom remarks: 'From a normative Jewish or Christian point of view, catastrophe is allied to the abyss, and creation is associated with an order imposed upon the abyss. But from a Gnostic perspective, catastrophe is true creation because it restores the abyss, while any order that steals its materials from the abyss is a sickening to a false creation' (20). Bloom's comments of course recall *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which Milton's 'Messiah' is condemned as 'Satan' for 'form[ing] a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss' (*MHH* 5, 6, E 34, 35).

10 I borrow Foucault's description of the will-to-power disguised as altruism, in this case the 'philanthropy' of the 'liberation' of the mad in the nineteenth century (*Mental* 73).

11 My argument alludes here to the title and substance of Nietzsche's essay 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense.' As Nietzsche argues, the stable distinction between truth and falsehood – upon which the intelligibility of metaphysics rests – begins to disintegrate once truth is freed from its moral valuation as a positivity, and instead revalued as a special category of lying. See Nietzsche 79–81.

12 My characterization of Urizen recalls Heidegger's description of what he calls 'totality': 'In accordance with its nature, this totality can no longer be determined by *relations, in terms of* relations *to something else* – otherwise it wouldn't be a totality. This totality of Being lacks a relation to other things, is not relative, and is in this sense absolutely *absolved* from everything else, released from all relations because it doesn't admit of any such thing at all. This absolute *relationlessness* to anything else, this absolutely absolved is called the *Ab-solute*' (*Treatise* 43).

13 Nietzsche argues that 'the will to truth is ... merely the desire for a world of the constant.' See *The Will to Power* 317.

14 'Thus a *becoming* God! [*Also ein* werdender *Gott!*]': so Heidegger (*Treatise* 190) exclaims over Friedrich Schelling's highly unconventional representation of God as a site of conflicting forces rather than a stable substance. The German is cited from Heidegger (*der Menschlichen* 109).

15 'Duality must therefore be just as original as unity' (Brown 157n12), Schelling says in a lecture given to supplement *Of Human Freedom*. In that

text, Schelling argues that God's self-revelation is always a process of inward displacement and self-repetition, the production of an intertexture of darkness and light rather than the unveiling of a pre-existent identity. Like Blake, the later Schelling demonstrates the profound influence of Boehme, perhaps no more tellingly than in the German philosopher's sense of the Godhead as a 'nexus of forces.' See *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* 41. For an English translation of a portion of Schelling's Stuttgart lecture, see Robert Brown 157n12. See also n22.

16 So Caputo (14) characterizes Kierkegaard's process of repetition.

17 Kierkegaard similarly writes: 'The moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time.' See *The Concept of Anxiety* 89. For Kierkegaard's 'ambiguity' we might substitute Blake's 'equivocality.'

18 Derrida's account of the relationship between time and space is useful: 'I often talk about spacing, but this is not simply space as opposed to time, but a mode of producing space by temporalizing it. Temporization, to temporize, means waiting or expecting, postponing or delaying. Temporizing is spacing, a way of making an interval, and here again with the idea of differance the ideas of spacing and temporization are inextricably linked' (Mortley 100).

19 Derrida summarizes Levinas's position as one arguing for 'Discourse with God, and not in God as *participation*. Discourse with God, and not discourse on God and his attributes as *theology*' ('Violence' 108).

20 Derrida cites Levinas's phrase from *Totality and Infinity*.

21 I borrow these terms from Tilottama Rajan, who argues that Nietzsche's 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense' 'replaces truth as identity with truth as difference, *logos* with *dia-logos*.' Rajan suggests that for Nietzsche 'figured language is seen as true precisely because it unsettles without dissolving the identity of the signifier and signified, and makes the idea a network of differences, a summa of human relationships' ('Displacing' 467).

22 I borrow this phrase from the evocative title of Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community*, a book whose vision of radically new forms of *Geselligkeit* has no doubt influenced my thinking here.

23 My argument adapts to a dialogical or semiological context Joseph Anthony Wittreich's conclusion that Blake emphasizes the specifically dramatic structure of prophetic vision. As Wittreich notes, the conception of revelation as a '"high and stately Tragedy"' would have come to Blake in part through Milton's discussion of the biblical commentator

David Pareus in *Reason of Church Government*. 'With greater precision than Milton,' Wittreich writes, 'Blake defines multiple perspectives contending with one another as characters in a drama ...' (34, 43). It is important to emphasize, however, that for Wittreich these contentions are 'complementary' (42), related in a complex harmony whose unity is confirmed rather than dislocated by the differences in perspective. Balachandra Rajan responds to this point by asking about the 'extent to which even a mode as self-confident as the prophetic may be beset with uncertainty and the extent to which that uncertainty may be implicit in the "contending perspectives" the prophetic voice struggles to establish as "complementary"' (*Form* 140n). My point is that whatever the nature of the prophetic text in terms of its multiple layers of voices and narrative strands, Edenic dialogue is 'complementary' insofar as it is creatively confrontational, but 'uncertain' because it must resist the mute certainty of totalization.

24 See, for example, Keats's letter to Richard Woodhouse (27 October 1818) on 'the poetical Character' (Rollins 386–8).

25 Robert N. Essick has noted that 'Blake's famous phrase, "Visionary forms dramatic," offers one relatively simple example of his management of language so as to involve the reader in structural transformations. The syntactic order of the three signifiers is only one of three arrangements that yield meaning (although perhaps only versions of the same meaning) because of the grammatical indeterminacy, and hence fluidity, of each. This opening up of determinate structures, penetrating beyond tropological inventiveness and into the most basic elements of language, should offer opportunities for investigation by those schools of modern criticism founded on linguistics and semiotics' (398).

26 This is not the place to discuss in any extended way the philosophical-historical context for Blake's revisionary metaphysics. But it should be said that he is hardly alone in his exploration of structures of difference as a way of delegitimizing the metaphysics of the 'One,' whether those structures are overtly thematized, as in the case of the notion of the Four Zoas in a relationship of 'mutual interchange' (*J* 88.20, E 234), or whether they are articulated in more subtle ways, as in the scene of reading involving Los and his Spectre (see the discussion in part 5 of this essay). In characterizing the shape of the true reality in terms of difference and relationality rather than self-sameness and exclusion, Blake closely resembles a number of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thinkers who, in different ways, and with varying degrees of insight into the radical implications of their own work, similarly jettison pretensions to absolute knowledge.

In lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh during the latter half of the eighteenth century, for example, Hugh Blair speaks of relationality as an irreducible feature of mental life. 'Every object which makes any impression on the human mind,' he argues,

> is constantly accompanied with certain circumstances and relations that strike us at the same time. It never presents itself to our view, *isolé*, as the French express it; that is, independent on, and separated from, every other thing; but always occurs as somehow related to other objects; going before them, or following them; their effect or their cause; resembling them, or opposed to them; distinguished by certain qualities, or surrounded with certain circumstances. By this means every idea or object carries in its train other ideas ... (354)

What is intriguing is that Blair makes this remark in the midst of a discussion of the origin and nature of figural language *but does not take the next logical step and theorize consciousness in linguistic terms.* Compare Derrida's well-known description of 'the play of differences,' a play that

> supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself. Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each 'element' – phoneme or grapheme – being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system ... Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. (*Positions* 26)

As both Tilottama Rajan (*Supplement* 281) and Jerrold E. Hogle have recently argued, Shelley also acknowledges the non-closural play of difference and similarity in which and by which consciousness is articulated but goes much further than Blair inasmuch as he identifies 'dissemination as a source of imaginative power.' '[T]he logic of transposition,' as Hogle puts it, 'is primal and constantly active in Shelley's portraits of sensation, perception, association, recollection, anticipation, inspiration, conception, declaration, allusion, and communication' (13).

Analogous claims for the creatively disruptive power of relationality are also made by contemporaneous German philosophers, notably by

Schleiermacher and Schelling. Schelling's case is particularly instructive. During the last years of the eighteenth century, the German philosopher developed a theory of natural phenomena that emphasized the interchange of dynamically opposed forces. As Robert Stern argues, in *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797) Schelling 'stands opposed to the Newtonian picture of matter as made up of hard, impenetrable, inert particles ... and argues instead that matter is an equilibrium of active forces that stand in polar opposition to one another' (x). In the years that followed, culminating with the publication of his treatise on human freedom in 1809, Schelling came to similar conclusions regarding the nature of primordial being. In an attempt to break with what Rodolphe Gasché calls 'German Idealism's pretensions to have deduced the oneness of origin' (181), Schelling turns to Jacob Boehme's theosophical speculations, not to abandon Enlightenment rationality for mysticism, but to displace the classical metaphysical presupposition that difference derives from an original simplicity in God. For Schelling, as for Boehme before him, God's appearance as the 'One' is indistinguishable from his irreducibly differential interplay with an equally original 'Other,' thereby making 'Duality ... as original as unity' (Brown 157n12). In *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling neutralizes the moral opposition of identity as good and difference as negation and reinscribes it as the difference between the 'light' centre and the 'dark' (38). Beyond good and evil, these centres form the bivalent sub-version of the origin, now conceived not as a simple substance but as a circulating relationship or 'cycle.' As Schelling writes, at the origin neither one centre nor the other possesses

> precedence in time [or] ... priority of essence. In the cycle whence all things come, it is no contradiction to say that that which gives birth to the one is, in its turn, produced by it. There is here no first and no last, since everything mutually implies everything else, nothing being the 'other' and yet no being being without the other. (33)

Schelling's case is apposite to Blake's for several reasons, not the least of which is their shared interest in Boehme, especially his representation of primordial being as a 'nexus of living forces' (*Of Human Freedom* 41). As in the case of Blake's Four Zoas, the shift from figures of substance to figures of force is important because it enables the German philosopher to map reality not only positively in terms of discrete entities but differentially in terms of the relationship between entities. Under these conditions, there is no 'precedence in time' because the 'cycle whence all

things come' is *itself* the origin of non-self-coincidence, spacing, and temporality. Moreover, Schelling's critical reception shares certain features with that of his English contemporary. In both cases, the most far-reaching implications of their revisioning of classical metaphysics have up until relatively recently been ignored. Like Blake, the German philosopher has more often been celebrated as one of the last great systematizers. With the exception of a recent reassessment by readers under the influence of de Man and Derrida, Schelling continues to be read as the 'Prince of the Romantics,' and as one of German idealism's foremost champions of the mind's unequivocal power to apprehend presence. M.H. Abrams is representative of an analogously idealistic strain of Blake criticism when he argues that it is 'very dubious indeed that Blake ... can be read by a deconstructor as paradigmatic; beyond most poets, he is an essentialist who claims that his fundamental assertions disclose presence' (169). The limitations of this position have only recently been the subject of critical discussion. Arguably the most significant of these reassessments is Peter Otto's powerfully illuminating and scrupulously argued *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction*. Other readers of both the deconstructive and non-deconstructive persuasion have emphasized the artist's disseminative play with the graphic and phonic substance of his visual and verbal languages, as well as the pervasively anti-systematic character of his narrative, hermeneutical, and illustrative strategies. [See, respectively, Nelson Hilton, Donald Ault, Tilottama Rajan (*Supplement*), and David Clark ('How to Do Things').] But the resistance to interpretations by what Abrams rather cavalierly calls 'deconstructor[s]' is not difficult to understand: for Blake may affirm the equivocality of differential structures, but he does so with a prophet's univocal confidence that his words and pictures are of one's 'eternal Salvation' (*M* 4.20, E 98). If there is a developing methodological division in Blake studies, it is because the texts *themselves* embody a theoretical tension between the claims of *logos* and *dialogos*, essentialism and an incredulity towards essence conceived as univocal in nature. Revolutionary in his time for pluralizing the origin and for affirming the constitutive significance of difference and relationality, he remains conservative for confidently reifying 'the logocentrism of the Bard' (T. Rajan, *Dark* 264). For this reason, as I have argued elsewhere, 'Blake cannot be translated into Nietzsche and one post-structuralist law applied to both' ('Innocence' 111).

27 James is discussing – no doubt mistakenly – the 'mystical' element in Hegel's treatment of the self (298–9n).

28 For an interpretation diametrically opposed to the one that I offer here, see S. Foster Damon.

29 I am grateful to Professor Janine Langan for pointing out this passage from Girard.

30 My remarks here and throughout this section of the essay owe a great deal to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, especially part 3,' entitled 'Discipline.'

31 The human world thus resembles what Jean Baudrillard would call the 'order of the hyperreal and of simulation' in which 'prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral' (25).

32 There are many other significant changes between the two versions of Blake's illustration, including alterations to Jehovah's and Job's hand-signs, and to Job's sight-lines. Discussion of these changes must await another essay.

33 Dieter Henrich (33) argues that this optical trope, and the philosophical problem it expresses, dominated Fichte's thought during the last thirteen years of his life – the years that Blake was creating *Jerusalem*.

34 The (re)visionary optics of this scene recall the situation of the actor playing Jack the Giant-killer in Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1805, 7.310), whose invisibility is at once represented and disguised – in a redoubled motion that de Man would call 'disfigurement' – by the word 'INVISIBLE' written 'upon his chest.'

35 Gasché writes: 'Deconstruction reinscribes the origin into the context or text of its infrastructural possibilities. To speak the language of philosophy, one could say that this context of infrastructures – the space of inscription of the function of origin – is an *absolute passivity*, if it did not also anticipate the metaphysical difference between active and passive ... The system of infrastructural possibilities inscribes both the origin and its function of command, and even though this system of possibility does not control or command the origin, the origin presupposes it as its (limiting) possibility. An origin presupposes this play as a text presupposes its context, *a book its margins, a painting its frame, or any unity its border*' (160; emphasis mine).

36 Mark C. Taylor notes that there is 'a striking similarity between Derridean *différance* and what theologians have traditionally called "God"' (99). In a relatively recent discussion which sketches out the complex relationship between, on the one hand, the '"already there" (*déja-là*)' of *différance* as that which 'will have rendered speech possible' and, on the other hand,

the '*Christian* apophatics of Dionysus,' Derrida writes: 'Language has started without us, in us and before us. This is what theology calls God, and it is necessary, it will have been necessary, to speak' ('How to Avoid' 28, 29).

37 Emphasis mine. Manfred Frank quotes and discusses Fichte's curious phrase from *Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* (1801) in *What Is Neostructuralism?* (89).

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