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## **A Study of Mysticism and Visionary Consciousness in Blake's Selected Works**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper studies a critical analysis of the connection between mysticism and visionary consciousness in the selected works of William Blake. By concentrating solely on the poetic and prophetic works of Blake, which include the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", "Milton", and "Jerusalem", the paper explores how Blake makes an idiosyncratic mystical structure based on the idea of Divine Imagination. The study utilises existing critical interpretations and analyses Blake through his symbolic language, mythological framework, and dialectical vision of innocence and experience. It also claims that the works of Blake present a consistent philosophy of vision that opposes Enlightenment rationalism and institutionalised religion, as well as redefining the human sense and spiritual life. To conclude, this work foresees the mystical dimension of the internal consistency of his vision by focusing only on the texts of Blake under study.

**Keywords:** William Blake, Mysticism, Visionary Consciousness, Divine Imagination, Romanticism, Symbolism

### **1. Introduction**

William Blake (1757-1827) is still one of the most progressive and non-traditional poets in English literature the creative talent of which cannot be easily classified. Being both a poet and a visionary artist, he managed to reach a unique synthesis of aesthetic innovativeness and mysticism. The illuminated texts of Blake, which are textual and pictorial representations combine, show the sophistication of visual and verbal symbolic expressions to bring forth intricate spiritual and philosophical facts. His writings are a challenge to the rationalist and materialist premise of the enlightenment, which anticipates imagination and visionary perception as a big part of knowing (Abrams, 1971). In his focus on the intuitive and spiritual aspects of the experience, Blake prefigures major interests of Romanticism, especially its glorification of creativity as the means of access to transcendent truth.

The most important creative vision of Blake is the idea of mysticism, which can be interpreted as the immediate, first-hand experience of the divine, which can be barely comprehended by common sense (James, 1902/ 2002). Mystical experience to Blake cannot be conceived without visionary consciousness, a state of consciousness of perception, by the way of which spiritual and moral truths are disclosed. In the songs of innocence and experience, we can also find that play in poems like the lamb where the speaker praises the presence of God in creation: *He is named by thy name; He calls himself a Lamb* (Blake,

1789/1794, *Songs of Innocence*). On the contrary, The Tyger asks about the presence of both innocence and experience, good and evil, the order of the creation: *Did he who made the Lamb make thee?* (Blake, 1794, *Songs of Experience*). Likewise, the prophetic poems of Blake, such as “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”, offer a radical reformulation of the order of things, both spiritual and moral, provided the doors of perception were cleansed, all find themselves before man, indefinitely, infinite indeed, a visionary consciousness that goes beyond the dogmas of religion.

The article explores the way poetic symbolism and myth-making bring out the mystical and visionary imagination of Blake. It emphasises his criticism of institutional religion, materialist ideology and social orthodoxy, and locates his works in the larger Romantic literary discourse by concentrating on textual analysis. The combination of spiritual experience, imaginative freedom, and social critique in Blake is what makes his mystical vision relevant long-term in the study of the connection between art, consciousness, and the divine.

## 2. Literature Review

According to Kaur (2023), the poetry of Blake can be understood as the act of existential mysticism because his poetry reflects a universal quest of meaning by using symbols and imaginative frameworks. Their paper identifies the way that the poetry of Blake offers a transition between spiritual transcendence and the human experience. Sharma and S. D. (2024) also note that Blake combines the physical and spiritual worlds by pointing out that texts like the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and the “Marriage of Heaven and Hell” offer a very individual and non-institutional concept of the divine.

Usman and Hussain (2025) interpret works of Blake in terms of philosophical unity as the article argues that his poetry is always an expression of a quest towards divine unity that transcends the institutions. This supports previous meanings of the mysticism by Blake as being a spiritual liberation. Besides the articles, there are recent monographs that have served to study Blake. In fact, Blake does not have a mystic identity, and after Ellwood (2011) and Marley (2026) analyse his visionary thinking, it is evident that Blake is more complex than he might have seemed when Ellwood and Marley aided in re-evaluating his mystic identity. Lefkowitz (2020) also advises that the treatment of nature presented by Blake, in essence, is imaginative and epistemological, wherein reality is redefined by perception.

Although these works have been made, a lot of the new scholarly work takes comparative or thematic approaches, which disaggregate the vision of Blake. Numerous studies interpret single works or the comparison of Blake with other mystical traditions without referring to the inner consistency of his writings. There is thus a serious gap in the necessity to have a text-centered, integrative examination of the writing that Blake has chosen, and how the mysticism and visionary consciousness is functioning as a whole system through his works. This paper fills that gap by discussing the key texts of Blake as a whole that highlight the continuity of his ideas philosophically and symbolically.

## 3. Conceptual Framework: Mysticism and Visionary Consciousness

The mysticism of Blake prioritises the direct spiritual experience, and every time he mediates it through the faculty of imagination, the imagination is the key vehicle that receives the divine revelation. As opposed to purely intellectual or doctrinal approaches to spirituality, Blake asserts that the only way to come to know the spiritual world is through the visionary experience. This view is similar to the description of mystical experience by William James

(1902/2002) and especially its ineffability and notices, when insight reveals deep truths that cannot be described in regular language. In “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”, an example is that Blake says the doors of perception were cleansed and everything would be before man as it is infinite (Blake, 1790/2000, Plate 14), showing how best the visionary perception is transformative, as it is the imagination that allows man to perceive directly the infinite.

Blake, however, reinvents mysticism as an active, creative experience, and not a passive one. His poetry has visionary consciousness which is generative in that it generates symbolic forms, which bring out spiritual truths. In the poem, “The Lamb” (*The Songs of Innocence*), the speaker of the poem directly talks to a godlike entity: *Little Lamb, who made thee?* (Blake, 1789/2000), Combining the naivety of a child with the existential question, the speaker is introducing the divine to us by his imagination. This active imagination is the questioning of dualistic distinction; the reality is shown as one total of mind, spirit and materiality. He believes in “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” that without contraries no progression hence his assertion that human consciousness which acknowledges contraries and imagination, is involved in divine creation (Blake, 1790/2000, Plate 3). When he sets imagination as the seat of mystical intuition, Blake describes a vision where the human mind is both open and creative; it combines perception and revelation to give birth to a lasting spiritual and poetic vision.

#### 4. Blake’s Mystical Philosophy

The principle of contraries, which Blake develops and embraces, is the primary component of his mystical philosophy. According to it, the opposition is not only unavoidable but the only way to human knowledge and spiritual development (Blake, 1790/1793/2008). In other poems like the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, he stresses severally that innocence and experience, joy and sorrow, reason and energy are interdependent and not mutually exclusive. To illustrate the idea, in the poem “The Chimney Sweeper” of the *Songs of Innocence*, Blake illustrates child suffering as a symbol of social struggle, but he also creates the impression of spiritual salvation and heavenly relief: “*And by came an Angel with a bright key, / And he opened the coffins and set them all free*” (Blake, 1794/2008, p. 12). This contrast between desperation and freedom depicts his understanding that spiritual knowledge is the result of the relationship between opposites.

The dialectical vision of Blake goes not just to the moral or social opposite, but to a metaphysical knowledge of reality itself. His statement in “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”, where he states it most notoriously, is, Without Contraries is no progression (Blake, 1790/1793/2008, p. 21), making opposition a creative concept. In this case, the conflict between the concept that society tends to consider good and evil is changed into a dynamic and integrative process, in which the human mind is turned into the place of imaginative synthesis. Instead of thinking of reality as a fixed hierarchy of opposites, Blake introduces it as fluid and continuous, with mystical consciousness as a result of the acknowledgement and the resolution of these forces.

Therefore, the notion of contraries, according to Blake, not only undermines the traditional binaries, but also shares the mystic vision of the world where spiritual development, moral knowledge, and imagination could not be separated. By describing contraries as generative as opposed to antagonistic, Blake places the human imagination in a position of being perceptive and creative, able to see the unity behind what seems to be opposites. This method can be highlighted as his larger mystical philosophy, where the way to divine understanding is the dynamical interplay and imaginative synthesis.

### 5. Mysticism in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

In the poems, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), Blake is able to give a complex dialectic conception of the human mind where innocence and experience are not just temporal phases in the life of a human being but modes of spiritual seeing. Innocence is a condition of unmediated spiritual permeability, which is a state of trust, purity, and owning an intuitive relationship to the divine. This is clearly seen in the example of the Lamb where the childish speaker asks, "*Little Lamb, who made thee?*" and is assured that creation is under a benevolent and harmonious divine power. Experience, on the contrary, exposes the person to the uglier face of human life—corruption, suffering and alienation. The fear and anticipation of the speaker in *The Tyger*, we see in the lines, *Tyger! Tyger! burning bright / In the forests of the night*, highlight the enigmatic and even frightening nature of creation, and the reader is pushed out of the realm of naivety to realise the depth and richness of the world.

The juxtaposition in the two forms of consciousness that Blake has highlighted depicts his overriding belief of the presentation of opposites together and the need to make peace between them in the same spirit to help in building spiritual growth (Frye, 1947). With innocence, on its own, is comforting, but it is an imperfect insight in the world and experience alone can result in hopelessness or disappointment. It is the active interplay between these poles that gives human consciousness depth, insight and a sense of morality. Comparing the soft, provincial imagery of "The Lamb" with the incendiary and powerful sight of "The Tyger", Blake emphasizes the fact that a real understanding of the spiritual and moral aspects of life presupposes mention of both light and shadow. In the end, though, Blake has a work confirming, not the preventive of suffering or ignorant blindness, but the reflective experience of the whole range of human perception, in which innocence and experience are integrative, not opposite, creating a unitary, unitarian, visionary paradigm of consciousness.

### 6. Visionary Dialectics in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"

The principle of contraries developed by Blake emphasizes that opposition is not only inevitable but needed to develop spiritually, morally and imaginatively (Blake, 1790-1793/2008). He is well known to say in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", "No progression without contraries. Human beings require attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, and that is what Blake describes (Blake, 1790-1793/2008, Plate 3). This is an expression of the radicalism with which Blake criticized traditional dualisms, focusing on the fact that what seem to be opposites in reality are mutually sustaining sides that activate creativity and self-realization and visionary intuition. Instead of reconciling by conformity or consubstantiation, a dialectical vision, Blake gives a mystical interpretation of reality where unity is brought about by a state of tension, which holds that spiritual and imaginative growth is only enabled when opposing forces are continually placed against each other.

This principle is poetically dramatized in the songs of innocence and of experience in a couple of poems, e.g. "The Lamb" and "The Tyger". The Lamb is a wise hymn to meekness, to simplicity and to spiritual purity, and The Tyger is the hymn to the sublime and terrifying aspects of the creation, but both are born of the same imagination: *Tyger! Tyger! burning bright / In the forests of the night* (Blake, 1794, *Songs of Experience*). The contraries presented by Blake are mutually constitutive, and by so doing, his mystical vision deconstructs hard binaries into a more dynamic, interrelated and intermediated reality shaped by the human imagination.

Finally, the philosophy of contraries proposed by Blake attests that the human mind is involved in the divine creation, and it is part of their lives to move in both harmony and conflict as one of the tools to reach a deeper understanding of their world.

### **7. Myth and Vision in the poems of “Milton” and “Jerusalem”**

The prophetic works of Blake form a symbolic mythology of symbols that is incredibly dense and multi-layered, representing the combination of the psychological and spiritual forces of human consciousness. The main characters of this mythos include *Urizen* and *Los*, who represent conflicting and complementary aspects of the human mind. In the Book of *Urizen*, Blake calls him the selfhood, the source of all that binds (Blake, 1794), and his role as the imposition of restrictions and separations of the psyche is stressed. In comparison, *Los* is full of imagination, creativity and prophetic vision, which is active in forming and mobilising consciousness.

Using these mythological characters, Blake makes the interior processes of visionary consciousness external, making dramatic the conflict between restricting reason and setting imagining free. The framework of symbols enables the reader to work with the complex spiritual and psychological truths in a creative, experiential position as opposed to philosophical exposition. Blake, Blake is prophetic mythology, and so, as Paley (1983) points out, does not just describe these forces, but performs this act, drawing readers into a participatory process in relation to the visionary consciousness. The very end of the work by Blake is that spiritual insight, the result of active interaction between imaginative vision and intellectual reflection, does not arise by passive contemplation. His mythopoetic system, therefore, supports one of the main principles of his mysticism: that the human mind is both a locus of divine revelation and also a creative space where the unification of opposites, reason and imagination, restraint and freedom, can be achieved by creative imagination. By so doing, the prophetic vision of Blake remains as a deep and timeless point of reference as to how human consciousness can be transformed.

### **8. Symbolism and Visionary Language**

Symbolic imagery used by William Blake is an extremely powerful tool of expressing the sophisticated mystical concepts, combining both spiritual insight and poetic imagination in a way that makes this a smooth process. Some of the most important motifs of his symbolic system include the light and fire that often represent the divine power, enlightenment, and awakening. In “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”, as an example, Blake talks of the fires of imagination that reflect the power of divine imagination and how spiritual knowledge could not be held out of the vision of creativity (Blake, 1790-1793). Conversely, darkness tends to represent spiritual tyranny, blindness, and the limiting power of institutionalized authority. This duality can be seen in the case of *Songs of Experience*, and especially in “The Chimney Sweeper”, the depressing, gloomy climate symbolizes the corruption of society and morals, as the human ability to see the spiritual and to have the imagination is flattened by the surrounding circumstances.

The fusion of the visual and written material also adds to the mystical aspect of Blake. In his scribbled manuscripts, with text and elaborate drawings living in a symbiosis, he provides the reader with a multi-sensual experience with the divine. The Book of *Urizen* is an exercise of grotesque imagery and inspirational verse that creates a visionary world, where the human mind and spirituality are united, and is an expression of the belief of Blake that mystical experience cannot be described solely through language (Otto, 2011). Taking the symbolic

scene and combining it with the poetic and the visual, Blake offers the mystical structure of imagination as the channel and the discovery of the spiritual truth at the same time.

After all, the participatory aspect of mystical experience is emphasised in the visionary art of Blake. His writings provoke the reader to view the divine not as an abstract, remote concept, but as a kind of close-up, imaginative experience that brings out a deep sense of human imagination and spirit. By incorporating this, Blake confirms the fact that imagination is the necessary medium in which mystical knowledge is manifested and conveyed.

### 9. Critical Evaluation

The poetic involvedness of Blake may be seen as an intentional response to the ineffability which is at the core of the mystical experience, which Frye (1947) notes so astutely. His works cannot be easily interpreted, consciously combining symbolism, paradox, and visionary images to create consciousness that are beyond the reach of the usual language or logical thinking. In “The Lamb” of the Songs of Innocence, an example, Blake brings out the divine creation using the kind, childish eye: *Little Lamb who created thee?* The diction is simple, though the question points to something indefinable, which brings out the close proximity of the divine in the physical. In this manner, the noetic and ineffable nature of mystical knowledge is emphasised, which is consistent with the fact that, as has been observed by William James (1902/2002), spiritual experience is inherently ineffable and authoritative.

On the other hand, in “The Tyger”, *Songs of Experience*, Blake addresses the fearful, terrific sizes of creation: *Tyger! Tyger! flaming bright/ In the woods at night, / What hand or eye immortal, Describes thy fearful symmetry?* The combination of vivid imagery, rhythmic intensity and rhetoric question here reflects the paradoxes of mystical consciousness, and is at the same time arousing wonder, fear, and reverence, emotions which can never be explained by the other discourse of reason.

The core of Blakean mystical system is that imagination is the most important tool that can be used to perceive the truth. In contrast to the rationalist and empiricist paradigms which dominated his time, Blake places the faculty of imagination as a version of epistemic authority, highlighting, as a point of view, that visionary knowledge is participatory, transformative, and active. He conceives human consciousness as being not a spectator but a participant in the divine process of creating something, as able to bridge the finite and the infinite. By prioritizing the appeal to imagination over discursive argumentation, Blake foreshadows modern philosophical and cognitive debates about the inability of reason to reach into spiritual or transcendent planes of reality. His poetry therefore is extremely relevant, showing that art and visionary literature provide essential ways of experiencing and communicating truths that are complex, paradoxical and ultimately ineffable. The very poetic action in the oeuvre is a kind of mystical knowing, and imagination is the window and the channel through which the human and the divine meet.

### 10. Conclusion

The selected works by William Blake mark a consistent and consistent involvement in mysticism, making visionary consciousness the core of his poetic and philosophical work. Blake uses his imaginative and symbolic form of expression to explain a spiritual vision that goes beyond the orthodoxy of religion, that focuses on direct, experiential knowledge of the divine. His abandonment of dualistic systems and his insistence on the active, creative role of the human imagination create a special philosophical methodology wherein the mind is both

a locus and a tool of revelation. The fusion of moral, metaphysical, and aesthetic aspects helps Blake to create a single philosophical base of spirituality that does not only increase the range of interpretation of his poetry but also appeals to wider tendencies of philosophical and mystical thinking. Lastly, his visionary framework continues to shape the modern literary criticism and spiritual discourse and philosophical enquiry as evidence of the strength of the influence of Blake as one of the seminal figures, whose investigation of the role of imagination and mysticism is still pertinent today in comprehending the relationship of human consciousness and the transcendent.

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