CHAPTER V

FEARFUL SYMMETRY

BLAKE’S DIALECTICAL VISION
1. The Differences between the States of Innocence and Experience
2. Dialectical in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell
3. Blake’s Dialectical Vision
Chapter V, which is entitled, Fearful Symmetry is a continuation of contrastive poems, namely, The Lamb and The Tyger. The researcher is going to introduce Blake’s dialectical vision which discusses the co-present of oppositions as the two contrary states of the human soul. These animals symbolize contradictions in human nature. These animals also indicate states in human beings which are necessary to individual progress. The true answer which the speaker in these poems seeks, is a balance, or symmetry.

However, Blake believed in Transcendentalism or the idea that God exists within all living things. Because Blake is often called a poetic prophet, his use of spiritual language and symbols may be considered part of his prophecy. In these poems, Blake is asking how God could have created both the monstrous Tyger and the innocent Lamb? How we as human beings reconcile the existence of both good and evil?

Chapter V, discusses Blake’s dialectical process in which a given concept, thesis necessarily generates its opposite, antithesis, and interacts with it to reach a reconciliation, or synthesis. Blake’s dialectical vision engenders such contrasting pairs of concepts as Innocence vs. Experience and the Prolific vs. the Devouring in his mind. So his most famous saying that there is no progression without contraries, to achieve embodiment. Attraction and
Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to human existence. In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake wants the warfare to continue because he seeks a reality within existence unlike religion that seeks to end the warfare of contraries because it claims to know a reality beyond existence. In Blake’s dualistic world, there is forever a composite of good and evil, joy and sorrow, peace and violence,...etc., a world in which God makes both the lamb and the tiger.

The first state which is presented for contemplation in The Songs of Innocence, is the state of ‘innocence’, the second which is presented in The Songs of Experience is the state of ‘experience’, but the third state which is called ‘organized innocence’, which comprehends but transcends the first two states, if one is to arrive at perfection. So, Blake’s vision is a dialectical one, in which the contrary states are changing all the time. There is a profound sense of opposition. The co-existence of them is a must. This ever-changing binary opposition is a Romantic irony. This is Blake’s dialectical vision in particular.

The researcher is going to remind the readers of Blake’s first song of Innocence in his Poetical Sketches, namely, To Spring but his first song of Experience is called The Golden Net which were explained in chapter III of this thesis. Because the purpose of the researcher in this chapter is to show the significance of contrariety in Blake’s view and its relation to his mysticism in general, it should be emphasized that the seed of contrariety can be traced
back in Blake’s early works and in fact it was like a dormant volcano.

The researcher is going to attract the attention of the reader to the most complete of geometrical figures, that is circle. As it was explained in chapter IV, The T’ai-chi symbol indeed is a circle which is half black and half white. It is very similar to Blake’s painting of Michael and the Dragon which are struggling in a circle. The Lamb and The Tyger can also be compared to two parts of a circle. The Lamb indicates white colour while The Tyger shows black. In chapter IV, Blake’s symbolism was discussed in relation to his mysticism. Chapter V, comprehends The Songs of Innocence and Experience but tries to transcend both of them and reach a state of equilibrium, a balanced state or symmetry which in Northrop Frye’s book is shown as Fearful Symmetry. This symmetry can be explained in this chapter by Blake’s concept of the co-existence of oppositions.

However, chapter V may be considered as the climax of this thesis. Since the researcher has tried to provide a systematical approach to Blake’s mysticism by explaining his mystical poems and showing the contrastive poems, namely, The Lamb and The Tyger, and their religious symbolism in chapter IV. It is useful to enumerate the main differences in The Songs of Innocence and The Songs of Experience. This will not only help the reader to get a better idea of fearful symmetry in Blake’s poems but also serves as a good introduction to Blake’s dialectical vision.
1. The Differences Between the States of Innocence and Experience

There are many differences between these two states which are very significant as far as fearful symmetry is applicable to William Blake’s The Songs of Innocence and of Experience. The researcher tries to explain not only the contrastive points in these poems but also the form of explanation itself is contrastive and reminds the interested readers of fearful symmetry. These differences can be briefly enumerated as follows:

1- The speaker in Innocence is a participant.
2- The speaker in Experience is an onlooker.
3- The speaker in Innocence is unconscious.
4- The speaker in Experience is conscious.
5- The speaker’s motivation in Innocence is unclear.
6- The speaker’s motivation in Experience is clear.
7- The landscape in Innocence is a country.
8- The landscape in Experience is a city.
9- The important time in Innocence is always daytime.
10- The important time in Experience is always night.
11- The children and adults in Innocence are good-hearted and kind.
12- The children and adults in Experience are bad-hearted and unkind.
13- The atmosphere of Innocence is always protective.
14- The atmosphere of Experience is always unprotected.
15- The characters in Innocence are carefree.
16- The characters in Experience are careful.
17- The characters in Innocence are always happy.
18- The characters in Experience are always unhappy.
19- The sequence of events in Innocence are constructive.
20- The sequence of events in Experience are destructive.
21- The Innocence can be shown by white.
22- The Experience can be shown by black.
23- The design and paintings in Innocence show healthy nature.
24- The design and paintings in Experience show unhealthy nature.
25- There is no death and threatening atmosphere in Innocence.
26- There is death and threatening atmosphere in Experience.
27- The happy childhood is the focal zone in Innocence.
28- The unhappy childhood and adulthood is the focal zone in Experience.
29- The animal of Innocence is the Lamb.
30- The animal of Experience is the Tyger.
31- The speaker in Innocence is sure of his knowledge.
32- The speaker in Experience is unsure of his knowledge.
33- The atmosphere of Innocence is full of hope.
34- The atmosphere of Experience lacks hope.
35- The characters in Innocence are optimistic.
36- The characters in Experience are pessimistic.
37- Innocence symbolizes Eden.
38- Experience symbolizes Hell.
39- The characters in Innocence are active.
40- The characters in Experience are passive.
41- Innocence portrays beautiful and innocent part of human nature.
42- Experience portrays fearful and experienced part of human nature.
43- In Innocence God is portrayed as an intimate presence.
44- In Experience God is not portrayed as an intimate presence.
45- The focal point in Innocence is the creative vision of man.
46- The focal point in experience is not the creative vision of man.
47- The Lamb presents answers.
48- The Tyger presents questions.
49- The tone in the Lamb is lulling, childish.
50- The tone in the Tyger is one of fear and panic, revulsion and disgust.
51- There is not symmetry in the Lamb.
52- There is symmetry in the Tyger.
53- The atmosphere in Innocence is certain.
54- The atmosphere in Experience is uncertain.
55- The calm, peaceful feeling in The Lamb comes from the wording and sound effects.
56- The feeling of terror and fright in The Tyger comes from the wording and sound effects.
57- In The Lamb, the final question of the poem is answered.
58- In The Tyger, the question is never plainly answered.
59- The Lamb can do no harm.
60- The Tyger is a fierce and ferocious animal.
61- The Lamb has a singsong nursery rhyme cadence to it.
62- The Tyger has a hammering rhythm similar to The Tyger’s heart beat.
63- The Tyger with its several questions seem more demanding.
64- The Lamb provides its reader an easy reading of the poem.
65- The Lamb symbolizes Christ.
66- The Tyger symbolizes Satan.
67- Fearful symmetry in The Tyger makes the animal seem to be exotic.
68- The Lamb is a tame, meek and mild animal.
69- The Lamb celebrates the nature of divine creation.
70- The Tyger considers the dark and mysterious aspect of creation.
71- The Lamb opens with two questions, which reflect a childlike curiosity.
72- The Tyger bombards the reader with several questions which reflect an adulthood uncertainty.
73- The Lamb seems like a religious and devotional prayer.
74- The Tyger seems like a request for contemplation.
75- The Lamb shows childhood as a period when life is easy.
76- The Tyger shows adulthood as a period when life is fearful.
77- In The Songs of Innocence, spontaneity is an important element.
78- In The Songs of Experience, almost everything is preplanned.
79- In The Songs of Innocence, childhood is a state of spiritual vision.
80- In The Songs of Experience, adulthood is a state of deprivation of spiritual vision.
81- The Songs of Innocence tries to paint the unfallen state of man.
82- The Songs of Experience tries to portray the fallen state of man.
83- Spontaneous happiness seems to be the motto of The Songs of Innocence.
84- Preplanned torment seems to be the motto of The Songs of Experience.
85- There is no reference to the French Revolution in The Lamb.
86- The Tyger shows Blake’s detestation of the French Revolution.
87- The Lamb seems to lack depth.
88- The Tyger seems to be very deep.
89- The reader of The Lamb feels happy and content of creation.
90- The reader of The Tyger feels unhappy and discontent with creation.
91- In The Songs of Innocence, life is a continuation of delight.
92- In The Songs of Experience, life is a continuation of suffering.
93- In The Songs of Innocence, everything is under the divine protection.
94- In The Songs of Experience nothing is under the divine protection.
95- In The Lamb, the tender voice of the lamb can be heard, its naïve bleating.
96- In The Tyger the rhythmic pulse of the heart of the tiger can be heard.
97- In The Songs of Innocence, human desire is always human achievement.
98- In The Songs of Experience, there is always a deep gap between human desire and human achievement.
99- In The Songs of Innocence, joy is the essential nature of every soul.
100- In The Songs of Experience, suffering is the essential nature of every soul.

These differences show a distinct contrast in each state. Perhaps one can find even more different aspects in both states, but the important differences are the ones that explained briefly. This list helps the enthusiastic readers to concentrate on the symmetrical and contrastive points in each state.
However, in William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience, the gentle lamb and the dire tiger define childhood by setting a contrast between the innocence of youth and the experience of age. The Lamb is written with childish repetitions and a selection of words which could satisfy any child. Blake applies the lamb in representation of youthful immaculateness. The Tyger is hard-featured in comparison to The Lamb, in respect to word choice and representation. The Tyger is a poem in which the author makes many inquiries, almost chantlike in their reiterations. The question at hand: could the same creator have made both the tiger and the lamb? For William Blake, the answer is frightening one. The Romantic Period’s affinity towards childhood is epitomized in the poetry of Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience. The Lamb’s introductory lines set the style for what follows: an innocent poem about an amiable lamb and it’s creator. It is divided into two stanzas, the first containing questions of whom it was who created such a docile creature. There are images of the lamb frolicking in divine meadows and babbling brooks. The stanza closes with the same inquiry which it began with. The second stanza begins with the author claiming to know the lamb’s creator, and he proclaims that he will tell him. Blake then states that the lamb’s creator is none different than the lamb itself. Jesus Christ is often described as a lamb, and Blake uses lines about him to accomplish this. Blake then makes it clear that the poem’s point of view is from that of a child, when he claims to be a child. The poem is one of a child’s curiosity, untainted conception of creation,
and love of all things celestial. The Lamb’s nearly polar opposite is The Tyger. It’s the difference between a feel-good minister waxing warm and fuzzy for Jesus, and a fiery evangelist preaching a hellfire sermon. Instead of the innocent lamb, we now have the frightful tiger, the emblem of nature red in tooth and claw, that embodies experience. William Blake’s words have turned from heavenly to hellish in the transition from lamb to tiger. There are many lines in the poem which are examples of how somber and serrated his language is in his poem. No longer is the author asking about origins, but is now asking if he who made the innocuous lamb was capable of making such a dreadful beast. Experience asks questions unlike those of innocence. Innocence is ‘why and how?’, while experience is ‘why and how do things go wrong, and why me?’ Innocence is ignorance, and ignorance is, as they say bliss. Innocence has not yet experienced fiery tigers in its existence, but when it does, it wants to know how lambs and tigers are supposed to co-exist. The poem begins with “Could frame thy fearful symmetry?” and ends with “Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?” This is important because when the author initially poses the question, he wants to know who has the ability to make such a creature. After more interrogation, the question evolves to who could create such a villain of its potential wrath, and why? William Blake’s implied answer is ‘God’. In the poems, innocence is exhilaration and grace, contrasting with experience which is ill-favored and formidable. According to Blake, God created all creatures, some in his image and others in his antithesis. The Lamb
is written in the frame of mind of a Romantic, and The Tyger sets a divergent Hadean image to make the former more holy. The Lamb, from William Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience is a befitting representation of the purity of heart in childhood, which was the claim of the Romantic period.³

But when The Tyger is read along side with The Lamb, the reader starts to see what Blake means. In the Bible, there is a reference to the Lion laying down with the lamb as a sign of peace, unity and harmony. This is perhaps what Blake was referring to when he wrote these two poems. He is perhaps saying that no matter how different we are, or the darkness that may reside within some, we can coexist together because we come from the same place.⁴

However, another significant point which Blake tries to make in these poems is that good and evil are conflicting aspects of everyman’s nature. Without this, innocence and experience, man is not whole. These two states have to deal with creation, which is shown in these contrastive poems.⁵

Therefore, the message in The Lamb may lead to God, so does the message in The Tyger. Being creations of God, both the tiger and the lamb are necessary to individual progress. The true answer lies in a balance, or symmetry.⁶

But the problem is: how do we as human beings reconcile the existence of both good and evil? In fact the reader of Blake first finds the co-existence of oppositions in his work, then the second riddle is the process of reconciliation of the opposites. This process
can be called marriage in Blake’s own work, namely, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Neither contrary is good, but only a balanced design is desirable. William Blake himself, provides the key to this riddle by introducing the power of imagination. Imagination provides man with vision and vision actually comprehends and overcomes the contraries and transcends them by reaching a balanced state in which both contraries, namely, innocence and experience are needed to be understood within a single unified design. This reconciliation of the opposites again reminds the researcher of the circle, of the apocalypse, and the end of creation which is shown in both the T’ai-chi symbol and Blake’s Michael and the Dragon painting. This discussion revolves round William Blake’s dialectical vision. Nowhere this dialectic finds its best expression, except in Blake’s Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

2. Dialectic in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

The researcher is going to explain the process of reconciliation, synthesis or marriage in Blake’s own work which fortunately bears the same title in an ironic way.

It is suggested to distinguish the Marriage as in itself dialectical and the dialect it attempts to present. The same distinction, rigorously set forth, would clear away much of Blake’s epics too. In content, the Marriage compounds ethical and theological ‘contraries’; in form, it mocks the categorical techniques that seek to make the contraries appear as ‘negations’. The unity of the Marriage is in itself dialectical, and cannot be
grasped except by the mind, moving between the Blakean contraries of discursive irony and mythical visualization.

Apocalypse is dialectical in the Marriage, as much as in Blake’s ‘Night the Ninth of The Four Zoas. The great difficulty of dialectical apocalypse is that it has got to present itself as prophetic irony, in which the abyss between aspiration and institution is both anticipated and denounced. The specific difficulty in reading The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is to mark the limits of its irony: where does Blake speak straight? In Blake, rhetoric subsumes dialectic, and usurps its place of privilege. But the process of usurpation is not clear, though this is no flaw in Blake as poet and polemicist. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is a miniature ‘anatomy’, in Northrop Frye’s recently formulated sense of the term, and reserves to itself the anatomy’s peculiar right to mingle satire with vision, furious laughter with the tonal complexity involved in any projection of the four or more last things.

The poem that opens the Marriage is entitled Argument which has not been much admired, nor much understood. The poem involves the reader in the contraries for cliff is opposed to river, tomb to spring, bleached bones to the red clay of Adam. The turning of this cycle converts the meek just man into the prophetic rager, the easeful villain into the serpent sneaking along in mild humility. But “just man” and “villain” are very nearly broken down as categories here: the equivocal “Devil” and “Angel” begin to loom as the Marriage’s contraries. Before the Marriage moves into diabolical gear, Blake states the law of his dialectic:
Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.¹¹

The key here is Human, which is both descriptive and honorific. This is a dialectic without transcendence, in which heaven and hell are to be married but without becoming altogether one flesh or one family. By the ‘marriage’ of contraries, Blake means only that we are to cease valuing one contrary above the other in any way.

Therefore, the contraries, when stated in the famous Voice of the Devil passage, have ceased strictly to be contraries. Blake’s lower or earthly paradise, Beulah Land, is a state of being or place where contraries are equally true, but the Marriage is written out of the state of Generation, our world in everyday aspect, where progression is necessary. Christian dualism is therefore a negation, hindrance, not action, and is cast out beyond the balance of contraries. There exists the complex apocalyptic humanism of the Marriage, denying metaphysics, accepting the hard given by this world, but only insofar as this appearance is altogether human.
In the Marriage, the Angel teaches light without heat, the vitalist or Devil, heat without light; Blake wants both, hence the marriage of contraries. Rhetoric carries the Marriage through its implicit irony; Blake speaks straight for once before subjecting Paradise Lost to the play of dialectic:

Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

Energy is Eternal Delight.\(^{12}\)

In Blake, one contrary is as true as another. The contraries are going to continue their strife in the Memorable Fancies, brilliant exercises in satire and humanism which form the bulk of the Marriage, and tend to evade Blake’s own dialectic, being assaults, furious and funny, on Angelic culpability. The dialectic of the Marriage receives its definitive statement once more in the work, in the opposition of the Prolific and the Devouring. If one grasps that complex passage, one is fortified to move frontally against the most formidable and properly most famous section of the Marriage, the Proverbs of Hell, where dialectic and rhetoric come together combatively in what could be judged the most brilliant aphorisms written in English, seventy reflections and admonitions on the theme of diabolic wisdom.
Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the other the Devouring: to the Devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains; but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole.

But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer, as a sea, received the excess of his delights.\(^{13}\)

Therefore, Blake gives a definitive statement of the phenomenology of existence, the ceaseless dialectic of daily appearance. There is another section in the Marriage which contains the contraries:

Some will say: ‘Is not God alone the Prolific?’ I answer: “God only Acts and Is, in existing beings or Men.

These two classes of men are always upon earth, and they should be enemies: whoever tries to reconcile them seek to destroy existence.

Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.\(^{14}\)
Religion seeks to end the warfare of contraries because it claims to know a reality beyond existence; Blake wants the warfare to continue because he seeks a reality within existence. Milton’s heaven knows no strife, and therefore no progression, and is to Blake, hell.

The last part of the Marriage contains the Proverbs of Hell. Each of these proverbs depends for its true meaning on a dialectic definition of desire and act, though rhetorically the meaning is overtly antinomian. Desire is positive; it leads to an action which is not the hindrance of another. Act is positive and is virtue; Blake, commenting on Lavater, defines its contrary as “accident”.¹⁵

Accident is the omission of act in self & the hindering of act in another; This is Vice, but all Act is Virtue. To hinder another is not an act; it is the contrary; it is a restraint on action both in ourselves & in the person hinder’d, for he who hinders another omits his own duty at the same time.

Murder is Hindering Another.
Theft is Hindering Another.
Backbiting, Undermining, Circumventing, & whatever is Negative is Vice.¹⁶
William Blake tries to make a distinction between a contrary and a negation. In the Proverbs of Hell he states a famous proverb which can explain the difference between the two:

Where man is not, nature is barren.\(^{17}\)

What Blake means is that take man and his struggle of contraries out of nature, and you are left with the barren, with the same dull round over again, the merely cyclic movement, if such it can be termed, of negations.\(^ {18}\)

FINITE/CORRUPT—INFINITE/HOLY

However to understand the dialectics of the contraries above, we have to understand what conception of human beings and of the world is assumed in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. On plate 4 of The Marriage, the first anti-thesis to the common religious assumptions in Blake’s time reads:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.\(^ {19}\)

The concept of body and soul being one thing reoccurs with great emphasis throughout The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. On plate 14 quoted above, the popular conception of a separate body and
soul is even described as the one reason for everything bad in the world.

Max Plowman has a very illuminating idea about Blake’s distinction between body and soul when he writes:

Blake regards life as the descent of spirit into matter in order that spirit may achieve form: “We like Infants descend/In our Shadows on earth.”20 Fully to understand these words is to obtain the key to Blake. He looked upon human life, not as the discontinuous appearance of phenomena, but as the particular manifestation of eternal being. Awake, we live in Eternity; asleep, we exist in Time. His idea of reality is the converse of the common idea. We speak of reality of objects when we mean their material substance. That is precisely what Blake regards as their mortal disguise, or shadow. The living and informing spirit is for him the reality: the “Corporeal”21 or “Vegetative”22 form, the passing shadow.23

But that is not exactly what Blake says, “Body”24 and “Soul”25 are not distinct. The relationship of the two is like the relationship of the tip of the iceberg and its whole. The sailor on a boat sees the tip as we mortals see the body. Only a diver, with his goggles on the water, can see the whole thing, realizing that only an insignificant portion is normally visible. And that diver’s view is the view the Poet-Prophet takes at times: “displaying the infinite which was hid”.26 He tries to explore his complete, spiritual nature. He is able to transcend physical matter and perceive beyond his
bodily constrains, the “outward circumference of Energy”. 27 The whole world is viewed as a spiritual entity who forgot about being “infinite”. 28 In fact, every living being is thought to be essentially spiritual, like in the prologue to the Proverbs of Hell:

How do you know but ev’ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, clos’d by your senses five? 29

Any bird, any living creature, is seen as a spiritual entity only partly visible to regular men who are limited to “finite organical perception”. 30 This same idea closes The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, which ends in the credo “For everything that lives is Holy”. 31 This does not mean that everything that lives is precious and ought to be treated well, but it also means “everything that lives is spiritual.” 32

William Blake in A Memorable Fancy again tries to explain “the infinite in every thing”. 33

I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical Perception; but my sense discover’d the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded, & remain confirm’d; that the voice of honest
indignation is the voice of God, I cared not
for consequences but wrote.  

Isaiah’s answer fits well with the conception of the reverse soul-
body dualism. The subject of the conversation is the question of
authority. The Poet-Prophet asks the widely read and accepted
prophets what made them feel that “God spake to them”. Just as
the Poet-Prophet is understood as a person, who is aware of being a
spiritual entity, the Biblical prophet Isaiah is attributed with the
same concept.

However, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is an attempt at
articulation of Blake’s essential contraries. The researcher can
discover the following contraries in this work:

- angels vs. devils,
- reason vs. energy,
- devouring vs. prolific,
- attraction vs. repulsion,
- love vs. hate,
- good vs. evil,
- heaven vs. hell,
- active vs. passive,
- innocence vs. experience
- infinite vs. finite
- holy vs. corrupt
- unity vs. division

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spiritual vs. material
inward vs. outward
delight vs. pain
time vs. eternity
human vs. divine
male vs. female
creator vs. emanation
soul vs. body
desire vs. restraint
temporality vs. permanence
youth vs. age
text vs. design
the Neoplatonic vs. the Alchemical
lyric vs. epic
poetry vs. prose
pastoral vs. satire
the Hellenic vs. the Hebraic
act vs. accident
vice vs. virtue
Satan vs. Christ
city vs. country
weak vs. strong
joys vs. sorrows
laugh vs. weep
black vs. white
opposition vs. true friendship
So, the researcher tries by enumerating the significant contrasts and focusing on them to imprint in the reader’s mind an amazing stripe of oppositions which is a reminiscent of a tiger’s symmetrical patterning that is burning bright like Blake’s The Tyger.

What is the significant point in enumerating William Blake’s oppositions in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell? First of all, it helps the reader to concentrate on Blake’s oppositions, second, it makes the contrastive points more apparent, third, it introduces the co-existence of existence, and finally, it paves the way for Blake’s dialectical vision discussion which is going to close the chapter V.

3. Blake’s Dialectical Vision

However, to say Blake’s vision is a dialectical vision, is to invite an explanation of the term ‘dialectic’. In Hegel’s philosophical system, history is not static but contains a rational progression, a dialectical process in which a given concept (thesis) necessarily generates its opposite (antithesis) and interacts with it to reach a reconciliation (synthesis), which then becomes a new thesis to start a new cycle of conceptual interaction and reconciliation. So, in Hegelian dialectic “no single concept, not even the highest, represents the whole truth; all concepts are only partial truths; truth or knowledge is constituted by the entire system
of concepts, every one of which has evolved from a basal concept.”

Now, is Blake’s vision dialectical in the Hegelian sense? Not exactly, of course. Blake certainly has the habit of viewing from two contrary angles. Hence, binary opposition becomes his way of thinking, and it engenders such contrasting pairs of concepts which have already been introduced. Also Blake certainly takes the interaction of contraries as a momentum of progression. Hence his most famous sayings: “Without contraries is not progression.” However, as some critics have already pointed out, Blake is unlike Hegel in that his contraries do not disappear in some sort of higher synthesis; nor do they change their identities in the dialectical process, as Hegel’s opposites do. When Blake talks of the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, for instance, he does not mean that either Heaven or Hell is annulled in the ‘marriage’; nor does the ‘marriage’ give birth to any offspring much unlike the heavenly or the hellish.

Therefore, Blake sees no mutual negation between his thesis and antithesis. In fact, “Blake comes to see negation not as the interplay of opposites, but rather as a principle that stands outside of the contraries.” And in truth he regards negation as a false body that must be annihilated. There is a certain contradiction, indeed, in Blake’s wanting contraries without negation. Yet, it is not hard to understand that in Blake’s mind there may be different kinds of contraries, “some of which are easily reconciled, others with great difficulty if at all.”
But “all contraries, in Blake, operate as opposing yet complementary male-female powers which, in their energetic love-hate relationship, are necessary to all modes of progression, organization, and creativity, or procreativity.” With this understanding, then, one can see how far Blake has let his contraries go to accomplish his dialectical vision of this world. In Blake’s earliest work, Poetical Sketches, there are signs of his consciousness of the co-existence of opposing forces in the world. In To the Evening Star, for example, the poet uses the flock-wolf-lion imagery which naturally bring us to the two famous contrasting poems, The Lamb and The Tyger in the Songs of Innocence and Experience.

The subtitle of this work is Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul, but the reader may notice that even The Songs of Innocence contain such poems as The Little Black Boy and The Chimney Sweeper which incorporate injustice, evil, and suffering. This shows Blake’s understanding that although we can look at our world with an innocent eye, we must acknowledge that this world is forever a composite of good and evil, joy and sorrow, peace and violence, etc., a world in which God makes both the lamb and the tiger.

However, in such a dualistic world, Blake does not encourage us to remain innocent. In The Book of Thel, Blake suggests that naïve innocence must necessarily pass through and assimilate the opposite state of experience and reach the third state called “organized innocence” which comprehends but transcends the
first two states, if one is to arrive at perfection. This idea brings Blake closer to Hegel’s idea of synthesis. Besides, it shows that in Blake’s dialectic there are two opposing worlds, the real world of change where innocence and experience exist together, and the ideal world of permanence where no distinction of innocence from experience is necessary as they have become an organized whole. As a Romantic, Blake naturally hopes that mankind can all transcend the former world and enter the latter with the help of imagination.

Blake’s The Book of Thel shows a debate between the Neoplatonic and the alchemical philosophies. D.G. Gillham argues that in the poem, Thel who fears to descend into generation and loses her immortal nature, represents the Neoplatonic doctrine while the alchemical beliefs are put forward by the Lily, Cloud, and Clod of Clay, who are content to accept the transience of mortal forms and the cycle of nature. In view of this, then The Book of Thel contains a dialectic of two antique cosmic ideas, those of change and permanence.

Blake’s vision is a dialectical one, in which the contrary states are changing all the time. One is never purely innocence or experience itself. Rather, one’s innocence or experience is increasing or decreasing in every phase of life. Likewise, human love is never purely delight or pain. Rather, it is sometimes more delightful than painful or vice versa. It is a combination of pain and delight. To escape this dialectic of delight and pain is to leave this world.
However, Blake’s dialectical vision may be presented in his composite art. Blake did three kinds of artistic work, writing, painting, and engraving. They were all available ways of externalizing or objectifying his inner life. Blake’s works are the composite art of text (the result of writing) and design (the result of painting and engraving). Between text and design, then, there is a visual-verbal dialectic. So Blake moves toward a balance of pictorial and poetic elements.

Viewed from another angle, Blake can be said to have written the genres of verse and prose. Regarding this, Alicia Ostriker says: “in Blake’s work there is a vicious wrestling between verse and prose, in which bones are broken and muscles horribly twisted, but neither side ever wins.” However, like the blending of the lyrical and the epical, the blending of verse and prose in Blake is an indication of his dialectical synthesis, which, negating neither, only strengthens the bond.

Viewed from still another angle, Blake’s work can also be said to belong to the two special genres: pastoral and satire. As Blake refers us to the two states of innocence and experience, so he addresses us in both the mild tone of pastoral and the severe tone of satire. And just as the two states imply each other, so the two tones complement each other throughout his writing career, if only one tone may dominate over the other at times.
CONCLUSION

Finally, as Michael Ferber suggests, Blake’s whole life seems to be a struggle to reconcile the Hebraic ear-oriented temporal sense and the Hellenic eye-oriented spatial sense. Blake anticipates an eternal kingdom like any religious man. In his aspiring for that kingdom, however, we find even his eternity is a dynamic one. His Eden is “the reverse of Christianity’s static and aristocrat heaven.” In his perpetually dynamic republic, dialectics are the rule. That is why throughout his poetry “there is a profound sense of oppositions: between different faculties in the human psyche, between different approaches to life, between different interpretations of history.” The opposites, be they Reason & Energy, Soul & Body, Restraint & Desire, Angel & Devil, Devourer & Producer, Innocence & Experience, the Neoplatonic & the Alchemical, Heaven & Hell, Temporality & Permanence, Youth & Age, Text & Design, Lyric & Epic, Poetry & Prose, Pastoral & Satire, the Hellenic & the Hebraic, etc., are all like our two sexes. They can be synthesized or married; they can struggle against or conflict with each other; they can give birth to their composites or children; but they can never negate or cancel one another. Their co-existence is a must, although as time goes on, one contrary in a pair may be more dominant than the other in the same pair. This ever-changing binary opposition is a Romantic irony. This is Blake’s dialectical vision in particular and in his
vision the one eternal verity is: this world is unchangeably changing!\textsuperscript{46}