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Exploring How William Blake Views The Sacred 'Fall' Of Judeo-Christianity As Triggering A Sacrilegious 'Fall Of Man', Utilising The Ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche

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To make use of the term 'fall of man' is perhaps ironic; it is associated with a Miltonic, Judeo-Christian 'fall', which has a semantic implication of the sort against which Nietzsche battles when he begs for the 'death of God' to be absorbed into society's reasoning. The sacred theological 'fall' of man from the faultless prelapsarian Eden to the fallible realism of Earth is far from how Blake, and indeed Nietzsche, understands man's sacrilegious 'fall' to his present state. Within this essay, Blake will take centre stage, as his poetry and prose imaginatively envisions and explores this 'fall'; most of my conclusions will be drawn from examination of his work. Nietzsche, although immeasurably valuable in his own right, will be used within this essay as a useful counterpart to clarify and assess Blake's ideas; in some cases he will take Blake's ideas further.

While both men express little short of loathing for the Judeo-Christian presuppositions of the world's creation, I use the term 'fall' with full awareness of its implications. In Milton, Eve's weaknesses – inherent in her composition as a human – became her defeat when she submitted to temptation and thus 'fell' (or, was banished from Eden). This is echoed in the Nietzschean and Blakean reading of man's reaching of his present state: the two men understand man's inherent weaknesses to have become pre-eminent, and consequently his own 'fall'. As Eve succumbs to temptation in a way that may be argued as inevitable, so does man succumb to the lure of logic and reason (embodied phonetically in Blake's vision of the soul in the form of 'Urizen' as 'your reason'). It is with this recognition of man yielding to human weakness that this essay begins to discuss the idea of the 'fall'.

Having demanded a 'reason' for living, mankind turns to the safe harbour – and, according to Nietzsche, harrowingly corruptive force – of the institution of Judeo-Christianity. Within the religion, God has a defined place, man has a pre-set purpose, and all questions are answerable by the sheer omniscience of the deity. (It is worth noting here

that while I use the term 'man' to indicate what Blake and Nietzsche refer to as 'mankind', I use the term without any gender associations). While in this institution man is 'fallen' from birth and marked by 'original sin' throughout his life, Blake and Nietzsche invert this idea to assert the premises of their own purported 'fall'.

Previous to both Blake and Nietzsche, the basis of their ideas can be found in Rousseau when he wrote that 'man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains' (Rousseau 14): born untainted and with a right to liberty (particularly in Blake), man turns to reason as an escape from hopelessness (Nietzsche's image of the reception of Judeo-Christianity) and finds himself, centuries later, deeply and irrevocably chained by the 'mind-forged manacles' (Complete Blake 410) which the oppressive institution has wrought upon him. Here, man's 'fall' is re-written in conflict with the premises of Judeo-Christianity: man is born *without* sin, and the perverted institution that claims he is, is what causes his 'fall'. This institution, according to Nietzsche, propagates an amplification of human weakness: according to Blake, a grievous misunderstanding of the Bible. Blake's sense of religion (perhaps better described as idiosyncratic spirituality) is seemingly at odds with Nietzsche's most well-known assertion that 'God is dead' (Santaniello 64). It in fact makes him as much of an adversary of the institution – Judeo-Christianity having caused the death of the perception, in his view, of the 'true' and loving God – as Nietzsche is of atheism.

When John Milton imaginatively re-wrote the theological account of creation in *Paradise Lost* (1667), he employed its tripartite structure: before the fall (the prelapsarian idyllic paradise), during the fall (man succumbing to temptation) and after the fall (the postlapsarian exile from Eden). However, in Blake's ironic reconstruction of the creation myth, *The Book of Urizen* (1794), his idiosyncratic Genesis opens and ends with 'the fall': this sets the stage for Blake's presentation of man as perpetually imperfect, 'fallen' in the present tense, and his sacrilegious subversion of Judeo-Christian theology. This is reflected in its opening:

Lo, a shadow of horror is risen
In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific,
Self-closed, all repelling: what Demon
Hath form'd this abominable void,

This soul-shudd'ring vacuum? (426)

This introduction alerts the reader to the temporal difference between Blake's 'fall' and Judeo-Christianity's 'fall': the rise of a 'shadow of horror' corresponds to an immediate 'fall' bereft of the presence of prelapsarianism. Blake abandons the linear nature of the traditional 'fall' to devalue the belief system analogous to it, effectively replacing theological creationism with his individual narrative relating how mankind fell. Within this vision, a demon has 'form'd' a 'vacuum', a 'void', in which mankind is about to be submerged. This demon is subsequently introduced as 'Urizen': 'your reason', a direct plea to the reader to become aware of his unconscious forces. Once a 'Zoa', which may be defined, in Blake, as a balanced trait of man – in Urizen's unfallen state, he embodied 'faith and certainty' (Leader 216) – he has become 'self-closed'. In this fallen state, Urizen repels the other three Zoas and dismantles their previous balance – this is a far cry from when man was 'unfallen', when the four Zoas harmoniously existed to constitute him. Having thus fallen – although only spiritually, isolated Urizen finds himself the principal state of man- he embodies harsh logic and demand for 'reason', coldly desirous of intellectual foundation and missing the emotion and imagination by which he was once supplemented in the form of the other Zoas. As Majdiak and Wilkie note, the titular page of *The Book of Urizen* depicts 'a compulsively scribbling scholar and lawyer' (Majdiak and Wilkie 88), hunched and isolated, and singularly attentive to his reasoning. This may be read as an interpretation of how 'fallen' man finds himself once he is solely occupied by his need for reason: isolated, miserable, squatting as though chained, having powerfully and dangerously discarded sentiment and creativity.

Blake explicitly links this predominance of 'reason' to the 'fallen universe' by making 'your reason', Urizen, preside over it: his sterile world of 'dark desarts' and 'dim rocks', created 'in enormous labours' (Blake 426) is an inversion of the bright and fertile world which Blake believed to have been constructed by his God, a deity embracing imagination and creativity. As this deity created the idyllic landscape of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789), so does Urizen create a world of 'petrific abominable chaos': the Zoas watching 'howld' and wonder, 'What is this? ... Death' (Complete Blake 426). This 'death' is the 'fall' of the purported world of Blake's God into a dismal universe that Blake relates to Hell: 'fires pour thro' the void on all sides ... in fierce anguish and quenchless flames' (426). This new world

is one in which imagination and creativity are trapped in the form of the Zoa, Los, and 'reason' presides as creator and ruler. Urizen's tool of entrapment is a 'web':

A Web dark and cold throughout all
 The tormented element stretch'd...
 None could break the web... (426)

As of yet, this 'web' has not been explicitly denoted as a real-life force, as Urizen and the other Zoas have. However, the allusions to creationism and Hell, and the similarities between Urizen and the Judeo-Christian God – as Edward Larrissy points out, Blake draws Urizen with features of the traditional deity, and Urizen has thematic connotations to the Gnostic 'demiurge' (Baldwin and Hutton 94) – lend the reader a dawning awareness of Blake's theme, confirmed in this next passage by denoting the 'net' as the institution of Judeo-Christianity:

So twisted the cords and so knotted
 The meshes: twisted like to the human brain
 And all call'd it the Net of Religion (Blake 428)

Urizen's world is thus established as the reader's: that is, one governed by the prevalence of religious institution. Figured as a Hell, this comment on Judeo-Christianity is dripping with irony: in its emphasis on finding 'a joy without pain...a sold without fluctuation' (428) and consequent dismissal of the quality of this world, the institution has metamorphosed our world into a Hell. Its 'Net of Religion', preventing those born into the religious culture from abandoning themselves spiritually into Blake's 'Fountains of Living Waters'. (These 'Fountains of Living Waters' are Blake's imaginary vision of the highest plane of spirituality man can reach, either in life or beyond it.) This 'Net' entraps its captors in 'mind-forg'd manacles': 'no more could they rise at will | In the infinite void, but bound down | To earth by their narrowing perceptions' (428).

As Hell is the antithesis of Heaven, so is the world of Urizen – Blake's position on our world, ruled by the institution of Judeo-Christianity – a stark antithesis of its envisioned potential, as Nietzsche expresses in *The Antichrist*:

The Christian church has left nothing untouched by its depravity; it has turned every value into worthlessness... every truth into a lie... every integrity into baseness of the soul. The cross [is] the distinguishing mark of the most subterranean conspiracy ever

heard of; against health, beauty, well-being, intellect, kindness of soul – against life itself... (57)

Nietzsche recognises the global impact of Judeo-Christianity, and – in his insistence that every single ‘value’ and ‘truth’ has been perverted by the institution – subtextually figures an existence in which these errors are not made, and ‘life itself’ may be enjoyed and affirmed to its full potential. This essay’s use of the term ‘fall’ does not imply knowledge of a prelapsarianism, a state of man to which he wistfully aims to return; it reflects Blake and Nietzsche’s convictions that man’s potential has been disregarded – and thus unemployed – by the prevalence of a long-term institution that praises meekness and piety over man’s natural energy and dynamism. Inherent to this understanding of man’s ‘fall’ lies the consequent supposition that there is a possibility of a re-ascension towards his boundless realms of potential. As Blake posits to the reader: ‘How do you know but ev’ry Bird that cuts the airy way, is an immense world of delight, closed by your senses five?’ (*Complete Blake* 413)

Blake elucidates here his conviction that an ‘immense world of delight’ lies surreptitiously behind our rationale: in the division of the self, confined from the spiritual, one reads a bird as merely a bird. Here, Blake links the present state of the reader to this caged existence: by making reason paramount, Blake suggests that man (‘you’) has ‘closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks in his cavern’ (414). The passage recalls the allegory of Plato’s Cave (Plato 193), in which men are trapped within their narrow and incorrect belief system – ‘shadows’ (*Complete Blake* 428) that reflect reality, rather than mimic it – and unable to escape without the knowledge of an alternative. The darkness and sterility of Plato’s cave existence reflects the imagery of the world of Urizen: their ‘stony sleep’ (*Complete Blake* 427) mimics Urizen’s sleep, their lives are ‘ruinous fragments’ of their potential; the cave itself is reflected within Urizen’s world, ‘mountainous all around ... voidness unfathomable’ (426). Indeed, Plate 10 of *The Book of Urizen*, literally and by the illustration entitled ‘Los with skeleton in chains’ (212), features Los trapped in a cave of ‘dismal woe’ (427).

To illustrate that we all have the potential to escape this cave, Blake explores the state of our ‘natural’ selves in *Songs of Innocence*. ‘The Lamb’, in both content and as illustrated on plate 8 (50), equates children with the ‘lambs’ that symbolise Jesus; the illuminated plate of

'The Echoing Green' sees children playing amongst Edenic scenery (48). Blake's incorporation of children into representations of Biblical prelapsarianism illustrates his belief in a link between childishness and godliness. While the text's relationship with *Songs of Experience* (*Innocence's* counterpart, 1794) makes clear the inevitable loss of the essence of this state in maturity, it also demonstrates that one may maintain some of the spirituality that defines the youth in *Songs of Innocence*. The question becomes, therefore, that if our natural state boasts a divine sublimity ('and round the tent of God like lambs we joy', (*Innocence* 406) that freely embraces Blake's purported God, what in the prevalence of Judeo-Christianity has obscured and corrupted society's vision, compounding its 'fall'?

Frye claims that:

In Blake there are no characters who represent anything qualitatively superior to man... The term 'angel' and 'spirit' in Blake, when not used in an ironic sense, means the imagination functioning as inspiration. (Frye 38)

This 'superiority' of man as the highest being, ruling a world bereft of what Frye labels 'an external spiritual agency' (38), underpins Blake's work. The disagreeing party is the dogma of Judeo-Christianity, which 'presupposes that man does not know, cannot know, what is good for him, what evil,' (86) Nietzsche explains in *Twilight of the Idols* (1889). 'He believes in God, who alone knows it' (86). The philosopher here provides a stark contrast to his life-affirming *Übermensch* (*Thus Spake Zarathustra* 12): the omniscience of Judeo-Christianity's God requires man, a flawed and ignorant inferior to the grand deity, to exercise humility, docility and passivity during his lifetime. To Nietzsche, Judeo-Christianity 'is a command... It is beyond all criticism, all right to criticism' (*Twilight of the Idols* 86). Therefore, the unquestionable doctrine of this self-assumed authority pronounces the very act of living as little more than a laborious task, a divine assessment. Man is flawed within his composition, and must accept his life as such: he may only achieve a 'perfect' existence, one easy to affirm, by suppressing his natural selfishness, energy and dominance during his lifetime. This encouraged passivity as an extension of our 'original sin' was loathed by Blake and Nietzsche.

Songs of Innocence paints children, icons of innocence, as corrupted by the system in which they live, a system which is corrupt in itself:

Thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack,

Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black.
 And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
 And he open'd the coffins and set them all free;
 Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
 And wash in a river, and shine in the Sun.

(‘The Chimney Sweeper’, *Songs of Innocence*, 406)

Here, the chimney sweepers of industrial towns are physically and mentally ‘lock’d up’. Their ‘coffins of black’ symbolise their blackened bodies, pale innocence corrupted. The image also stands for the chimneys that trap them, their lack of potential escape, and their destruction by the societies that house them. The non-divided state of youth, Blake attests, ought to be allowed to express itself in reckless abandon, ‘running’ towards the image of this Edenic ‘green plain’ that is present in *Songs of Innocence*. As critics have noted (Eaves 201), Blake establishes his own vocabulary of self-reference throughout his works, each image denoting a specific theme: ‘green plain’, the central image of *Songs of Innocence*, encapsulates the liberty of the ‘natural’ state of man, using Edenic imagery to impress its purity upon readers. This results in our ability as readers to gauge the context of a poem from a single image or plate illustration.

In the corresponding *Songs of Experience* poem, for example, the narrator is depicted as blackened and walking with trepidation through rain: the combination of deliberately grave weather and the narrator’s image – stained dark by experience and walking through adversity, quite set apart from his pale and active *Songs of Innocence* counterparts – instantly alerts the reader to the ‘fallen’ situation. In the text, the vicious circle of victim and perpetrator is traced to the institution of Judeo-Christianity:

Where are thy father and mother? say?
 They are both gone up to the church to pray...
 And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King,
 Who make up a Heaven of our misery.

(‘The Chimney Sweeper’, *Songs of Experience*, 409)

The establishment of institutionalised religion is expressed in this passage as more pernicious than a misappropriation of Blake’s spirituality: its actions create an inversion of this spirituality, robbing innocence and imagination – Blake’s vision of the truly spiritual –

from its chief dwelling-place: children. As corrupt and dominant Urizen causes the 'fall' of the three remaining Zoas, so does the institution of the Church – which perverts religion into a cacophony of rubrics and 'iron laws' (*Complete Blake* 428) – rob true spirituality from those in which it dwells, and becomes the direct instigator of the 'fall' in a vicious circle of the spiritually devoid, and system-bound, society.

Songs of Experience may be read as a 'fall' from the glorified childhood state of *Songs of Innocence*: an initial reading of the former collection is jarring in its sharp break with its predecessor (as David Fairer notes, 'Blake's texts lose their innocence more easily than most', 535). The latter collection sees chapels hijack Blake's 'green plain[s]' of *Songs of Innocence* and priests 'bind... joys and desires' (*Complete Blake* 415). Although the titular trait of innocence is irrevocably lost from the *Songs of Experience* collection, Blake emphasizes that the spirituality found in childhood may be carried on, in a developed form, into the adult world. The 'Nurse's Song' of *Songs of Innocence* sees a nurse calling 'Come home, my children|... The dews of night arise' (408), gently and protectively forewarning them of the harsh world of *Songs of Experience*. The children, depicted as bright figures illuminated with mirth on the corresponding plate (66), cry back:

No no let us play, for it is yet day...
 Besides, in the sky, the little birds fly
 And the hills are all covered with sheep. (408)

The nurse, whose 'heart is at rest' at the sight of her charges' boundless freedom, is also aware that the state is transitory. Benevolently, she grants them liberty analogous with that of the creatures of nature:

Go and play until the light fades away
 And then go home to bed. (408)

The identically titled poem in *Songs of Experience* stresses the collection's subtitle: it 'shew[s]' a 'contrary state of the human soul' (406) in its representation of a second nurse whose 'face turns green and pale' (409) at the children's play. The illustrated plate for this poem, Plate 36, depicts a woman combing a child's hair – this encouraging of adult habits in a child is in sharp opposition to the former sanctioning of the 'natural' childhood state – while another child restricted from play sits behind them, bored and lethargic. When the

nurse calls the children inside, her tone originally resembles the semantic nuances of the original nurse's, before taking a darker turn:

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down
 And the dews of night arise;
 Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
 And your winter and night in disguise. (409)

The 'dews of night' have taken their toll: this nurse, bereft of her former 'godliness', bitterly chides the children with her empirical knowledge that their status of purity cannot last, and is thus 'wasted'. The children are not given a voice in this poem (as they are in its counterpart), exemplary of the innocence being physically lost from the verse. Both nurses have traversed the border from innocence to experience: Blake does not suggest that we should, or even could, regress back to youth when trying to re-acquaint ourselves with the spiritual. He does, however, posit two guardians on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of retaining their former spirituality, and leads the reader to a visualisation of the alternate effects on the subjects: 'The little ones leap'd and shouted & laughed| And all the hills echoed' (*Songs of Innocence* 408), as opposed to the blank space of the latter poem in which the children would otherwise be frolicking.

An insight is offered into the mechanism of this corruption:
 The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind|
 My face turns green and pale. (409)

Her uncomfortable, pallid reaction to the memory suggests a violated innocence, which, ironically, she re-performs on the next generation. Here Blake expresses that man may not change his temporal state and the knowledge he has amassed: his choice lies in whether or not he decides, like Blake himself, to preserve the imaginative spirituality he once possessed and whether, like Blake does, to appreciate its value.

The line 'your spring and your day are wasted' recalls this essay's discussion of Judeo-Christianity and its propagated 'shade' of this life – represented in 'The Echoing Green[s]' illustration on plate 5 (48) as a tree spanning the width of the page, blocking all subjects from the sun – a mere shadow of the wonders of the afterlife. Subtextually, there is a derision of Christianity within the relationship of the poems. Blake's *Songs of Innocence* nurse is his personal interpretation of God as a benevolent and loving carer, whereas the

nurse of *Songs of Experience* is dispassionate, condescending and seeks to end their play by pronouncing their life on this earth wasted. She represents Blake's view of the God of Judeo-Christianity: her restrictions on the children are those which religion imposes on the innocent, as it presumably did in her own youth. Under these restrictions, wholesome religiousness becomes forced 'iron laws' (*Complete Blake* 426), and the spiritual becomes an uninhibited realm of the psyche. Even the choice to remain spiritual is taken away by the purveyors of Judeo-Christianity, who emphasize, as Urizen does, the necessity of:

One command, one joy, one desire...

One King, one God, one Law. (*Complete Blake* 428)

Blake here emphasizes that Urizen's book of 'eternal brass' perverts the naturally virtuous 'laws of peace... love... unity... pity, compassion, forgiveness' into 'one habitation' (428) each, with no room for anything other than logic. At the outbreak of this corruption, 'eternity roll'd wide apart', with everybody 'departing, departing, departing'; all that is left are 'ruinous fragments of life' (426).

This corruption becomes, as discussed with the 'Nurse's Song[s]', a vicious circle, perpetuated throughout generations. The 1794 poem 'London', of *Songs of Experience*, is a representation of doomed modernity. Not a single human is to be found in Blake's London, but instead just their 'marks', 'cries', 'sighs', 'blood' and 'curses' (410). These representations of the spiritual devastation of England's capital establishes London as the urban 'charter'd' (410) waste land in which man has been left by Judeo-Christianity. Ironically, Nietzsche claims, this chain of perversion began in an attempt to fill a hopelessness inside of man:

[Christianity] is no more than a profound uneasiness in the presence of reality...

Who alone has any reason for living his way out of reality? The man who suffers under it.

(*Antichrist* 14)

This suggests that Christianity's origins lie in the unconscious unloading of sufferings. This attempt to make sense of an apparently nonsensical world is similar to the way in which Blake's Albion places Urizen in a position of dominancy. In this way, Nietzsche links 'reason' to Judeo-Christianity in the same way that Blake does.

As Roy Graves notices, the third stanza of 'London' acrostically reads 'H-E-A-R', 'an intuitively climactic position' (132) which points to the poem's 'fallen' state of man. The

illustration on plate 48 (88) figures a child, confident in his spiritual lucidity, leading a weak old man, the personification of London. The poem thus entreats the reader to re-hear the understandings that we have lost, and to, as the smaller illustration shows, put out the fire that we have begun. This 'fire' is the very nature of our world, one figured by Blake as a Hell, and, as Mollyanne Marks notes, 'as a fallen human body' (581), as illustrated in this quotation from *The Book of Urizen*:

Like a human heart struggling and beating
The vast world of Urizen appear'd... (426)

This quotation reads the world of 'reason' as a physically doomed, unhealthy imitation of vitality. Plate 9's illustration (212) depicts the figure of Los – the fallen 'creative or imaginative impulse' (Madjiak and Wilkie 91) – trapped in flames, and writhing in agony. London, in its 'mind-forg'd manacles' and 'hapless' (*Complete Blake* 410) entrapment, may be replicated in Los' situation: one of the illustrations adjacent to 'London' is that of unrelenting flames, and the poem is saturated with allusions to entrapment. Therefore, if Blake's London is the epitome of man's 'fall', then the capital city is imagined in *Urizen* as a hellish coffin, full of 'formless, unmeasureable death' (426). As the poem 'London' is lacking the corporeal human form, but is rife with 'blood' and 'cries', this too suggests that the city's 'mind-forg'd manacles' are spiritually annihilating its populace.

The 'black'ning Church' of 'London' (410) is the source of the poem's oppression: the 'manacles' are those that Judeo-Christianity imposes on its children, and are compounded throughout life. 'The new-born Infant', once imagined in Blake as pure and happy ('Infant Joy'), now sheds a passive tear; the 'youthful Harlot', having just given the gift of life, 'curse[s]' her fate (410).

Nietzsche goes further than Blake in the following passage from *The Antichrist*: his identification of the problem is coupled with his resolve for correction.

I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity... I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind... And one calculates time from the *dies nefastus* on which this fatality arose - from the *first* day of Christianity! *Why not rather from its last? From today?* Revaluation of all values! (57)

Nietzsche here spiritedly sets the stage for a new era of mankind, one in which the chains of the last two thousand years are lifted, and man is liberated. As the divided Zoas overthrow Urizen and return him to their balanced state in Blake, so must we, suggests Nietzsche, work to triumph over our 'mind-forged manacles', and restore ourselves to a state in which we are – as we were in childhood – brimming with potential. As the protagonist of Plato's allegory finds as he dares to abandon the cave, so Blake hopes we will discover that:

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. (*Complete Blake* 414)

Blake's illuminated titular plates of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* are a fitting conclusive interpretation of both his and Nietzsche's most valuable points in this discussion: two figures – characterisations of the potential for man in the shape of the poetry collection's titular characters – are bent in the midst of a blazing fire. One, 'Innocence', lies against the ground, face turned into the flames; the second, 'Experience', cowers from them, hiding its face with its arms. The flames may be read as the experience of being alive, and the 'Experience' figure, via its adherence to the institution of Judeo-Christianity, hides from 'reality'. As Nietzsche bluntly expresses:

Christianity was from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, life's nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed as, faith in 'another' or 'better' life. (*Wagner* 21)

This quotation reads religion as a 'hiding' mechanism, the means by which the 'Experience' figure manages to bear the flames of living. Nietzsche is attributed to have said that 'To live is to suffer' (Abugel 55), and Blake in this image frames man's 'fall' – the surrendering of freedom to the institution – through the context of the prevalence of life's suffering.

Without the guiding force of a divine, he suggests, the lack of control and hopelessness of pain may be 'a fire' too great to bear. Yet, the 'Innocence' figure has a different reaction to the flames: he presses himself to the green earth, demonstrating his faith in the divinity of nature and his insistence on his liberty, and turns his face towards the flames with the intention of bearing them. As Nietzsche continues: 'To survive is to find some meaning in the suffering' (55). The same open-mindedness that provokes the 'Innocent' character –

Blake's image of man's 'natural' and thus ideal state – to embrace his fate, regardless of consequence, is that which will later lead him to throw himself in the 'Fountains of Living Waters', culminating in this vision of Blake's eternity. Blake's positive vision for man, therefore, is the frank bravery to embrace all which the world may offer, which has significant links to Nietzsche's own vision of the progressive man, the *Übermensch*, who courageously embraces and affirms every part of life, pain or otherwise, to the greatest extent.

Whilst Blake and Nietzsche's visions may appear different from one another, their shared hope for mankind can be seen as the possibility of 'self-overcoming'. Nietzsche's vision of the *Übermensch* leaves present man behind as a 'laughing-stock' (*Zarathustra* 20), locked in his 'mind-forg'd manacles'. 'Man is something is to be surpassed', declares Nietzsche (*Self-Portrait* 124), presenting his *Übermensch* as the next step: having undergone his 'revaluation of all values' and understood that 'God is dead', the *Übermensch* has discarded any echoes of Judeo-Christian morality, language or action. Much more may be said about both men's ideas of regeneration: with the exception of Harvey Birenbaum, who wrote *Between Blake and Nietzsche* (1992) about the symbolism in their work, there has been little movement to compare both men's ideas against one another. This discussion has only gone some way into expressing how to utilise this juxtaposition: hopefully it will invite more of the same.

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