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Blake worked on illustrations for an edition of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* between 1795 and 1797, though he engraved only forty three of the five hundred and thirty seven water-colour designs he made for the poem. The first part of Young's illustrated text, containing forty three of Blake's engravings, was published in 1797. The enterprise was a commercial failure and the subsequent 'Nights' were never published. From late on in the First Night, and continuing to the end of the poem, Blake indicated, with a single cross or asterisk, those lines of Young's text which had specifically influenced his pictorial representation and it is possible to elucidate, to a certain degree, the minute particulars of Blake's political theology by analysing his pictorial response to Young's poem.

Young's *Night Thoughts* was first published between 1742 and 1746 and became immensely popular among its readers, both domestic and foreign, "and was to be found side by side with the Holy Book in almost every pious household" (Guerber 105). By the late 1800s, however, Young's reputation and the popularity of his *Night Thoughts* had diminished greatly. It is commonly held by critics that Young's poem was composed in the manner of contemporary popular literature on melancholy; though Young's conception of melancholy was somewhat unconventional, differing from that found in the likes of Milton's *Il Penseroso*, for example, and was one of a number of pensive, melancholic or Graveyard poems such as Robert Blair's *The Grave*, published in 1745, and the Methodist James Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*, published between 1745 and 1746. Young's originality lies in the poem's intensely subjective focus. His pouring out of grief without restraint and "gloomy thoughts always centring on his own experience" (Wicker 27) worked to oppose the artificiality of neo-classicist

poetry. The *Night Thoughts*, therefore, stands out as “the most personal poem of the Graveyard school” (14). Young’s lugubrious melancholy is a version of what James Thomson called “philosophic melancholy” in his poem *Autumn*, published in 1730. Young believed that philosophic melancholy was a means to arouse the imagination and the senses so that religious devotion would be heightened to rapture, or enthusiasm, which conflicts in the poem, however, with his reasoned argument based on natural religion, that “the world’s a system of theology” (VII: 1138). D. W. Odell argues that Young belongs to the tradition of natural philosophy as it was espoused by Thomas Aquinas, Richard Hooker and the Cambridge Platonists and according to him, Young believed that the natural world was analogous to the Divine Nature – that God is “written in nature” – so that, in it, may be read evidence of human immortality as well as the existence of God. Young’s view is, therefore, “a mainstream Christian view of the relation of reason to revelation” (Odell, ‘Christian Rationalism or Fideism?’ 51).

Young was a Christian rationalist. He believed that faith is not its own evidence in and of itself, but rather depends upon the revelation of the Scriptures as well as revelation through the natural world. Young believed, moreover, that reason enables fallen Man to ascend to knowledge of God and so, to an extent, reclaim his divinity, and in the *Night Thoughts* the speaker exhorts the character Lorenzo to “be a man! And Thou shalt be a god” (IX: 1965). Christ, in the Atonement, not only gave “the proof supreme of immortality” (IV: 269-74), but also gave “lost Reason life” (IV: 759), and subsequently the “energy divine” with which Man’s innate reason is conferred, and so reason is not only that “Heav’n lighted Lamp in Man” (III: 2), but is the root of which faith is “but the Flow’r”. The speaker of the *Night Thoughts* states that “Faith is not reason’s labour, but repose” (VII: 1428); and it is through the human faculties, through reason and not faith alone, that Man aspires unto God and so the riches of this world reside not in material wealth but in faith and the intellect: “What Wealth in Intellect, that sovereign Power” (VI: 449). Blake, in contrast to Young, believed the doctrine of Atonement to be abhorrent. He saw in Christ the paradigm of self-sacrifice, not in terms of Christ’s

payment of a debt – “a pardon bought with... blood divine” (IV: 322) – but rather the example of Christian brotherhood, which is achieved through mutual forgiveness and self-annihilation; the liberation from oppressive Selfhood (for example see Erdman 139)^[1].

Odell claims that Young’s epistemology is Neo-Platonic in the sense that true knowledge is to be discovered in the self, through the synthesis of faith and reason, so that the human senses, like human reason, are Divine. Reason is “that god in man” and so, according to Young, “What Reason bids, GOD bids”; and reason is, moreover, that “sovereign power” which apprehends in the natural world “a copy fair” of God’s divine plan (VI: 459) and looks towards the infinite in Man:

The Visible and Present are for brutes,

A slender portion, and a narrow bound!

These Reason, with an energy divine,

O’erleaps, and claims the Future and Unseen;

The vast Unseen, the Future fathomless! (VI: 246-250)

Reason, however, may potentially conflict with emotion or passion when the passions are errant in human hearts and subsequently “Mistake their objects, or transgress their bounds” (VIII: 548). In order to control errant passion, and in order to fix emotion primarily on God, it must be restrained by “Reason’s golden chain”. Contrarily, in Blake’s anti-rationalist poem *The Book of Urizen*, first printed in 1794, Los – an extension of Urizen, who signifies fallen Reason – represents the fallen Imagination bound by Reason and, in his creation of the corporeal world or the Mundane Shell, as Blake later called it in *The Four Zoas*, contracts the “eternal mind” until it is “in chains of the mind locked up” (Erdman 75). In this context, the chains associated with Reason are oppressive. Young believed that the affections themselves may be evidence of the Divine working upon the heart of the individual, stating that “creation’s model in thy breast” (IX:

1339). Where reason is silent, passion “speaks A future scene of boundless objects...And brings glad tidings of eternal day” (VII: 548-50) and so for him the passions, like the senses, are divine so that, in this way, emotion or enthusiasm in religious matters is justifiable.

Young, primarily in Night IX of the *Night Thoughts*, presents his argument for the existence of God from the point of view of empirically verifiable revealed religion and yet treats internal and external revelation in equal measure, believing that “to believe...is to feel” (IV: 200). His conception of internal revelation was most likely influenced by the Cambridge Platonists, such as Ralph Cudworth, Henry More and John Smith who, despite championing reason and abjuring enthusiasm in religious matters, placed a stress on emotion as opposed to reason. For instance, John Smith believed that knowledge of God could only be attained through the heart, and not through a detached, speculative mind: “neither can the soul of man behold God, unless it be Godlike, hath God formed in it, and be made a partaker of the divine nature” (see Hall 459). Similarly, Henry More believed that “The intellect of man is as it were a small compendious transcript of the Divine Intellect”. Young echoes these sentiments in his belief that Man is inherently god-like – his position in the ontological Chain of Being is “Midway from Nothing to the Deity” (I: 74) – and must become like God in order to know God – “Divine contemplate, and become divine” (IX: 1386). Man attains knowingness through the inward searching of the heart stating “Look inward, and look deep; and deeper still” (IX: 425). Likewise, Blake placed an emphasis throughout his life and work on the Human Form Divine, or Man’s innate godliness and capacity to reach unto the Divine Body, which is Christian fellowship.

Young’s conception of revelation through Nature was influenced by John Locke who, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, first published in 1690, distinguishes between two types of faith, one empirical, the other revelatory. In the late seventeenth century, religious evidence via revelation was not discounted, though it lacked the ascertainable proofs of empirical evidence, and Locke perceived in the natural world a type of evidence that was at once reasonable – or

empirically verifiable – and revelatory. Peter Stubbs, moreover, observes a similarity between Young and Locke’s rationalist theory of perception (see Stubbs 14-15). In Night the Sixth of the *Night Thoughts*, Young exalts the creative power of Man’s senses; “senses which inherit earth and heavens... Take in at once, the landscape of the world At a small inlet... And half create the wondrous world they see. Our senses, as our reason, are divine” (VI: 420-436). In his *Essay*, Locke uses the term ‘inlet’ to describe the perceptual process as “the first step and degree towards knowledge and the inlet of all the materials of it” (Locke 147); and, significantly, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake refers to five senses as “the chief inlets of Soul in this age” (Erdman 34), and so may be alluding to Locke. Stubbs argues that Young’s lines “are merely the imaginative and rhetorical expression of the epistemologist’s thesis” (Stubbs 14) and cites a passage from Locke’s essay in order to substantiate his claim. In the second book of his *Essay*, Locke states that:

The particular bulk, number, figure, and motion of the parts of fire or snow are really in them, whether any one’s senses perceive them or no; and therefore they may be called *real* qualities, because they really exist in those bodies. But light, heat, whiteness, or coldness, are no more really in them than sickness or pain in manna. Take away the sensation of them; let not the eye see light or colours, nor the ear hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell; *and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds*, as they are such particular ideas, *vanish and cease*, and are reduced to their causes, i.e. bulk, figure, and motion of parts (Locke 137).

If we follow Stubbs that Young accepted Locke’s notion that the mind operates upon the real or primary qualities of things – the causes of sensation – in order to sense their secondary or non-essential qualities – that is, the effects of sensation – Young, then, would have accepted the notion that the mind creates, to an extent, the world it perceives through a dialectical interchange between the mind and the external, objective world and so, to a degree, fashions the reality that the mind apprehends. He believed that “Objects are but th’ occasion; ours th’ exploit; Ours

is the cloth, the pencil, and the paint, Which nature's admirable picture draws....Like Milton's Eve, when gazing on the lake, Man makes the matchless image man admires" (VI: 420-436). Blake's illustration to Young's lines is a literal depiction of Eve staring back at her own reflection in a lake and he marked the line beginning "Like Milton's Eve" in his copy of the water colour prints. In plate 242 of his illustrations to Young, which relate to Night VI lines 391-410, Blake marks the line "Then, like an idiot gazing on the brook" and represents what is presumably a fool gazing at the reflection of the stars in the brook, attempting to touch them. In the context of Young's poem, the poet is criticising the vice of "blind Ambition" or overreaching pride though, in the context of Blake's illustration of Eve gazing upon her reflection, this design represents Blake's critique of Young's Christian rationalism.

According to Christian rationalists, such as Young, knowledge is acquired through Nature as an analogical representation of the Divine so that the natural world becomes, as it were, a reflection of the Divine Image. In Young's words, "nature is the glass reflecting God, As, by the sea, reflected is the sun" (IX: 1007). In illustrating the foolishness of Man in attempting to apprehend the stars in their reflection, Blake uses the idea of reflection in the context of Young's assertion that the mind half creates the world it perceives in its own image; Man makes the matchless image Man admires. The image of the fool chimes with the image of Eve, so that his error of attempting to gain knowledge of things in themselves through mere reflection is echoed in her gazing upon her own reflection in the lake. Just as the idiot cannot attain unto a knowledge of things divine through their reflection, similarly Man cannot obtain a knowledge of the divine essence of things by reading Nature analogically or reflectively, and so it may be said that Blake is critiquing not the concept of the creative capacity of the mind, but rather, in Eve's case, the notion that knowledge of the world and of the self is attained via cognitive reflection – a notion central to Locke's rationalist epistemology (see Locke 128-133). For Blake, where Reason falls short in apprehending things

unseen, an alternative mode of perception must supersede it; and this, he believed, is the Imagination.

George Gilfillan said of Young “He has brought out, better than any other poet, the religion of the stars” (xxi). In the *Night Thoughts*, Young draws upon the science of Newton in order to support his argument for Christian rationalism. Young was a subscriber to Henry Pemberton’s *A View of Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophy*, published in 1728, and in this way became familiar with the fundamentals of Newton’s astronomy and, in the manner of other Christian apologetics, utilised Newtonian science to defend his teleological argument for the existence God. He believed that the “mathematic glories of the skies” are ordered or “ordain’d” in “number, weight, and measure”; and, here, Young echoes Wisdom 11: 21 – “Thou has ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight” – and may be paralleled with Blake’s conception of the creation of a mathematically assembled universe in *The Book of Urizen* whereby Urizen, or Reason, who represents “Blake’s vision of Newtonian nature” (Hagstrum 77) – a nature that is cold, remote, and mathematical – “Times on times... divided, & measur’d Space by Space” (Erdman 70) in his forging of the Universe. Similarly, in *The Four Zoas*, Urizen constructs the Mundane Shell, and the stars are fixed “by proportions of number weight And measure” (322). In Blake’s view, the mathematical architecture of the Universe is the product of a repressive, rational mind which reduces Man, Vision, and the eternal to the fallen, rational, and material world.

Young’s argument from design continues:

An undevout astronomer is mad.

True, all things speak a God; but in the small,

Men trace him out; in great, he seizes man.

The grand of nature is th’ Almighty’s oath,

In reason’s court, to silence unbelief.

But what miracles apart, who sees him not,
Nature's controller, author, guide, and end?
Who turns his eye on nature's midnight face,
But must inquire - "What hand behind the scene
What arm Almighty, put these wheeling globes
In motion, and wound up the vast machine?" (IX: 844-855)

Young's Creator is omnipotent – God created the entire Universe, “a whole creation, and a single grain” (IX: 1561) – and is all benevolent in the sense that His Creation evidences Man's ability to aspire unto divinity. Blake, on the other hand, questions God's benevolence in the act of creation in his poem ‘The Tyger’ (Erdman 24-25). In the poem Blake, speaking from the point of view of Experience, one of the two contrary states of the human soul, posits a remote Creator inhabiting “distant deeps or skies” and so echoes the aloof, “unseen, unknown”, quasi-Deistic God Urizen who, in the eponymous poem, creates the rational and material Universe. Blake, arguing from the perspective of Natural Theology, presents God-as-Maker in which the act of creation is excruciating, involving the twisting of nerves and sinews to mould the beating heart of the tiger and is, moreover, mechanical, like the making of a clock-world, using hammers and chains. The line “what immortal hand or eye”, which echoes Young's “Who turns his eye on nature's midnight face”, suggests a bipartite process of creation, involving both invention or conception – the work of the eye, of design as it exists in the mind – and execution – the operation of the skilled hand forging the design into material being. Blake questions whether the creator of the tiger is all-loving – “Did he smile his work to see?” – suggesting that the Creator, perhaps, did not intend to create the tiger, and subsequently raises the question as to whether God, the Creator, can intentionally forge fearsome, malevolent creatures as part of a benign cosmic scheme. He asks “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?”, that is, he who fashioned Innocence. In the line, “Could frame thy fearful symmetry”, the

modal verb ‘could’ connotes the potential for creation: God has the potential ability to create evil if he so wishes. In contrast, in the line “Dare frame thy fearful symmetry”, ‘dare’ implies volition; that God wills the creation of evil in the world. That evil, it may be inferred, is necessary – the innocence of the Lamb, capitalised to imply Christ, is apprehended only by its opposite, the fearful symmetry of the tiger, so that good is known only by experiencing evil. Blake’s line “What immortal hand” echoes Young’s “what hand behind the scene”; and it is significant also that, in his notebook draft of ‘The Tyger’, Blake substituted the line “What dead grasp” for “What the arm”, and so may have had in mind Young’s “What arm Almighty” when initially composing and revising the poem.

Newton and Locke endeavoured to demonstrate that the “rise of science does not signal the immediate demise of revealed religion” but rather “stimulates efforts to show how science may demonstrate and elaborate the essential truths of revelation” (Lincoln 142-43). Blake read Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* “when very young”, as well as Burke’s *On the Sublime* and Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning*; and in his annotations to *The Works* of Joshua Reynolds, claimed that he felt “the Same Contempt and Abhorrence” for those works “then that I do now” (Erdman 660). Blake opposed Locke’s notion that there are no innate ideas, stating that “Innate Ideas are in Every Man, Born with him; they are truly Himself” (648); and more comprehensively than Young, Blake opposed Locke’s epistemology based on the concepts of sensation and reflection – the former referring to the perception of objects, the latter to the classification of objects and sensations into abstract ideas. Blake also criticised Locke’s mechanistic psychology for mocking “Inspiration & Vision” and challenged Locke’s notion that the mind is a passive receptacle receiving impressions from the external world via sensation by asserting instead the active and creative role of the Imagination in the act of perception. For Blake, Man is not fashioned by the impressions he receives external to the mind, but rather fashions himself and his reality through a cognitive and imaginative engagement with the outside world. Moreover, Blake associated Locke’s concept of reflection with Memory – of ideas

abstracted from their objects. Enchained under the “Philosophy of the Five Senses” (68), Man’s capacity for Vision is restricted, so that Reason and sensation permits Man to see the ratio of things, which is himself only, and so is confined to the material world by a narrowness of Vision and a constrictive Selfhood, whereas Imagination enables the freedom of perception towards creative self-development. Blake’s opposition to Locke has been well documented by scholars and it is indeed a critical commonplace that Blake was generally opposed to Enlightenment thinking, notably the rationalist epistemology of Locke, the empirical philosophy of Bacon, and Newton’s systematic view of the Universe and his notion of God as the Divine Architect which Blake associated with Deism.

Blake associated the tyranny of Deism with the Urizenic tendencies of Locke and the materialism of Newton, who worships “The God of This World, & the Goddess Nature, Mystery” (254) as well as the philosophies of Voltaire and Rousseau, precursors of the French Revolution, who are “Frozen Sons of the feminine Tabernacle of Bacon, Newton & Locke” (218). Urizen is the personification of fallen Reason, and hence the embodiment of Blake’s critique of Deism, of Newtonian science – in that he delimits space via mathematical abstraction, which is the Limit of Contraction – and Lockean rationalism – in that he shrinks the all flexible senses of man until he sees only the ratio of things, which is the Limit of Opacity. Furthermore, it is Urizen who, in the *The Song of Los*, delivers the “Philosophy of the Five Senses...into the hands of Newton & Locke” (68).

It is uncertain whether Blake read Newton’s *Principia* first hand though, as Martin. K. Nurmi argues if he did, then it was most likely to have been the first English translation by Andrew Motte published in 1729 (see Nurmi 207-217). Blake’s colour print entitled ‘Newton’, dated 1795, is instructive in elucidating Blake’s objection to Newtonian science. Blake depicts Newton leaning over at a right angle, looking downwards – literally emphasising his fallen Vision – and measuring the sides of a triangle, which is inscribed on a scroll, with a pair of compasses and, as Anthony Blunt identifies, compasses “stand not merely for

learning but also rationalist knowledge, to the old dispensation...as opposed to the new order represented by Christ” (Blunt 60). Blake associated rationalism with the repression of Energy or desire and envisaged Jesus as the paradigm of revolutionary energy who acted not from rules but from impulse so that, in this sense, Jesus represents an opposition to fallen Reason and to all that is anti-visionary, in contrast with Young, who wedded Christian rationalism with revelation and perceived in Christ’s Atonement evidence of immortality known through reason (see Erdman 43). In the design, Newton’s body is angular – his nose it straight and sharp, his body horizontally contorted, his fingers straight and rigid, his eyes askew and narrow, his muscles defined as if in an anatomical drawing – which represents Newton as a victim of his own philosophy; his mind functions in reductive, mathematical terms and so his body his fashioned likewise. Anne. T. Kostelanetz identifies a number of triangular shapes in the print which chime with the triangle that Newton is measuring: “the hill on the left, the figure of Newton in which his head forms the apex, the calves on Newton’s legs, the compasses” (Kostelanetz 126). Newton inhabits a subterranean, cave-like world which is commonly held among interpreters of the design to be the depths of the ocean, and so links the print to pages 8 and 11 of *The Book of Urizen* which depict the God of Reason inhabiting an enclosed, at once cave-like and sea-like subterranean world. Given that Blake often associated water and the ocean with chaos – with unformed, primordial matter – it is fitting that Newton is portrayed imposing design. The cave-like setting additionally relates to the rationalist philosophy of the five senses which reduces Man’s perception “till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern” (Erdman 39).

A number of Blake’s illustrations for Young’s *Night Thoughts* are critical of Newtonian conceptions of the Universe as a regulated and orderly machine. Blake’s illustration to Night IX lines 1865-1885, for example, shows two figures with their backs facing the reader, standing beside a huge telescope with one of the figures, a female, pointing vertically towards the sky. A third figure is crouched on the ground and is measuring a triangle which is drawn in a book with

a set of compasses, much like the figure of Newton in Blake's 1795 print. Blake's illustration is a response to Young's lines "O for a Telescope His Throne to reach! Tell me ye Learn'd on Earth! Or Blest Above! Ye searching, ye Newtonian Angels! Tell, Where, your Great MASTER'S Orb? His Planets, where?" (IX: 1866-1869) In this design, Blake incorporates visual motifs from his own illuminated works, such as the symbol of the compasses, the triangle, and the book; yet his illustration elaborates upon Young's meaning to offer a critique of Newtonian science and, by extension, Christian rationalism. The young astronomer who would search the heavens for evidence of the Divine discovers only a triangle of his own making, thereby exposing the narrowness of mathematical thought or Mathematical Form, and Blake associated rational or Mathematical Form with classicism and with the "Reasoning Memory" (Erdman 270). In his *The Laocoon*, he writes: "The Gods of Greece and & Egypt were Mathematical Diagrams" (274) and alludes to Plato; whereas "God is not is a Mathematical Diagram" (664); God cannot be known through science and Reason but through revelation or Imagination, which is represented by the female figure who points to the heavens without the aid of a telescope. There is a blast of light emanating from the top left hand corner of the design, and yet the telescope is facing the ground, like the astronomer, and not the light source which, in this context, signifies illumination through Imagination or Vision, not Reason. The telescope merely alters the ratio of the object, while the object *per se* remains untouched (see 127).

Blake's design for Night IV lines 719-737 is a personification of Faith. He depicts a male figure walking across a bridge, with surging waters underneath, reading a book, which may possibly be the Holy Scriptures. Young, in his poem, speaks of death, and how nature is "dumb" regarding the resurrection of the dead, which seems inconsistent with his argument for immortality from Nature. For Young, in this instance, it is faith that "speaks aloud" and "builds a bridge across the gulf of death"; though Young combines faith with a belief in "All-sacred reason". Faith, then, united with reason, aids Man in overcoming the fear or gulf of death, which

Nature alone cannot assuage: “Death’s terror is the mountain faith removes”. In this context death is associated with the surging waters and, elsewhere in Blake’s symbolism, water can signify chaos. The figure – presumably the personification of Faith – ostensibly finds solace in his book, which Blake represents as a symbol of fallen Reason, though the figure is wholly absorbed in it; his head is immersed in its pages and so the figure cannot see where he is walking so that, in this way, Blake critiques faith led by Reason. The figure’s transition from life to death, if guided by Reason, is an unseen path. Young states further on in the *Night Thoughts* that “Reason is the root, fair faith is but the flower. The fading flower shall die; but reason lives Immortal” (IV: 751). In his illustration to these lines, Blake depicts personified Nature holding a pair of scales, presumably weighing faith against Reason, and representing the point of transition at which the poet’s “heart became the convert of my head” (IV: 740).

Thomas H. Helmstadter has observed how a number of Blake’s illustrations challenge Young’s deification of Reason by illustrating the primacy of the Imagination (see ‘Blake’s *Night Thoughts*’ 27-55). The illustration on the verso of the title page for *Night the First*, for example, conveys Blake’s subversion of fallen Reason by the Imagination. He depicts two aerial spirits carrying a scroll towards an aged, Urizen-like figure sitting under a withered tree – possibly the Tree of Death which Blake associated with Science and Reason – who is transcribing from the scroll onto a tablet of stone. The scroll originates from a man above; a reclining figure, who is leaning over a pedestal and who is holding a writing implement, and whose laurel-crowned head has sunk into his arms. The pedestal and laurel crown identify the writer as a neo-classical writer, who Blake believed had a limited Imagination. He believed that classicism is the Daughter of Memory and Reason and so lacks Inspiration or Imagination – “We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations” (Erdman 95) – and the separation of Reason and Imagination is expressed in *Jerusalem*:

The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man; and when separated

From Imagination, and closing itself as in steel, in a Ratio

Of things of Memory. It thence frames Laws & Moralities

To destroy Imagination! (229)

In his design to Night IX lines 1968-1987, Blake portrays a Nebuchadnezzar-like figure crouched like a beast and inhabiting a subterranean world – his fingers are straight and arched, like a pair of compasses, he is covered in hair like the Biblical Cain, and he is pointing downwards towards the earth, and is staring upwards, anguished, at a female, angelic figure who points to the stars. Here, Blake is depicting the Natural Man who is bound down to earth by his own narrowed perception which is bereft of Imagination: “All that we See is Vision from Generated Organs gone as soon as come Permanent in The Imagination, considered as Nothing by the Natural Man” (273). In the poem, Young refers to Man’s imitation of Nature in the progress of the soul: “Thou, like them, shalt shine; like them, shalt rise From low to lofty”. Young refers to Nature, which “delights in progress”, and which advances “from worse to better” in a perpetual cycle of rebirth and in contrast, to Men, whose progress of the mind “depends upon themselves”. The angelic figure pointing to the stars represents Young’s notion that Man must imitate Nature in order to ascend unto God whereas the beast-like man represents the mind enchained to the material, subterranean world. Blake’s design has parallels with his illustration to lines 520-541 of Night VII of Young’s *Night Thoughts* and with his 1795 print entitled ‘Nebuchadnezzar’, as well as his illustration to plate 24 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* whereby he shows a similar figure crawling on his hands and knees like a beast dwelling in a cavern. In Night VII of the *Night Thoughts*, Young refers to “the proud Eastern, struck by Providence” (VI: 533) – who is Nebuchadnezzar – as an example of the corrupt passions – passions which were divine “Ere Adam fell” (VII: 532) – which limit Man to this world and its base pleasures (“low, terrestrial appetite” VII: 535).

As Helmstadter argues, Blake and Young differed radically on religious or ecclesiastical matters and, furthermore, “Blake’s own ideas in the *Night Thoughts* are most easily recognized when his designs make significant additions to or departures from their text” (‘Blake and Religion’ 200). For instance, Young was an Anglican priest who upheld the moral truths of his religion, whereas Blake was opposed to all forms of institutionalised religion. Blake’s anti-clericalism is evident in plate 233 – the illustration to Night VI lines 211-30 – and more specifically the lines “Ambition! Avarice! The two Daemons these...” (VI: 221) Blake depicts a Bishop, signified by the mitre, and a king, signified by the crown and sceptre – the two-headed demon, or the Beast and the Whore of the Book of Revelation, which Blake associated with institutionalised Christianity – forcing a human herd, presumably slaves, both young and aged, to pull a plough on which the two oppressors ride. Blake’s delineation of the Bishop has echoes with the tyrant Urizen – the primeval Priest – who subjugates humankind under “one King, one God, one Law” (Erdman 72); and associations with Urizen’s oppressive Moral Law are further evident in the poem *Europe*, where kings and priests copy their stony Law from Urizen’s brazen book (see 64). In his illustration to plate 11 of *Europe*, Blake depicts a bat-winged Bishop holding across his lap an open book which is reminiscent of his illustration to Night III lines 173-212 of the *Night Thoughts*. In his design to Night II lines 280-300, Blake illustrates a Urizen-like figure, in this context personifying Conscience, instructing a youth from “leaves of brass” (II: 275) whose raised hands suggest an unwillingness to conform to the oppressive modes of education being forced upon him, or the moral charges being made against him. The “leaves of brass” in Young’s poem hint at Urizen’s “book of brass” which, for Blake, signifies oppressive modes of learning as well as the Mosaic Law so that, in this way, if we follow Blake’s symbolism, education and morality are linked to oppressive Reason.

It is interesting to compare Young’s ideology of education with that of Blake. Young believed that ideas should be exchanged in order to keep thought alive. In Night II he claims that friends provide us with this opportunity, just as teachers

and their students share ideas and so stimulate learning: "Teaching, we learn; and giving, we retain... 'Tis Thought's exchange, which like th' alternate Push Of waves conflicting, breaks the learned Scum, And desecates the Students standing Pool" (II: 488, 498-500). Blake was, likewise, a proponent of dialogue in educational matters in so far as he was wholly averse to institutionalised and dogmatic forms of education, based on Reason, believing them to be potentially constrictive to thought and to the Imagination. Indeed, he saw in the schools and universities of his time the imposition of rationalist modes of thought, not the open exchange of ideas: "I turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire, Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton" (Erdman 159). In plate 64 to his illustrations to the *Night Thoughts*, Blake depicts a scene of education in which an aged, Urizenic teacher is instructing a group of children. The figure is shown pointing with his left index finger to his fourth finger on his right hand, which is imitated by one of the children who points upwards towards the sky, while an old woman – presumably the children's mother, though possibly a version of Enitharmon, the "aged Mother" in the *Song of Los* – is an onlooker of the scene. The aged teacher sits in a chair, which is bat-winged in shape, in contrast with the mother's blossom-like chair, which is surrounded by flame-like foliage. Above the teacher and children there are two figures, one reclining on a cloud, the other sat playing a lyre. There are a number of details in the illustration, however, which suggest that Blake opposed Young's notion of "Thought's exchange". For example, the mother's countenance is riddled with anxiety as she holds back one of her children from participating in the lesson; the Urizen-like teacher – who may be associated with "Aged Ignorance" of Blake's *The Gates of Paradise*, a plate which bears the motto "Perceptive Organs closed, their Objects close" (265) – is an imposing figure, towering over the small children; the instructor is counting on his fingers – the wisdom of number, weight and measure – thereby suggesting a lesson in Memory, in quantitative knowledge, and not the free exchange of ideas; the lyre player and the languishing figure above represent Imagination, free from the repressive scene of education below, and separated from the children, though

one child points upwards towards the sky suggesting a dichotomy between oppressive Reason and liberating Imagination in educational matters; the instructor's bat-winged chair associates him with oppressive and Satanic Reason in contrast with the mother's chair, which symbolises energy and abundance; and the scene generally is wholly contrasted with the title page of the *Songs of Innocence*, where Blake depicts an infant reading from a book on his mother's lap, which suggests unbridled, reciprocal education. Rather than depicting the free exchange of thought, "Blake's illustration dramatizes the fall from energy, imagination, and joy into the adult world where bat-winged Reason imposes patterns of thought upon his students" (Helmstadter 'Blake's *Night Thoughts*' 40).

Blake, then, opposed Young's rational Christianity and his advocacy of a Newtonian universe. Young's championing of Reason was, for Blake, archetypal of the Error of Urizen and his identification of this Error is central to his response to Young in his illustrations to the *Night Thoughts*. Blake saw in Young the same errors of the trailblazers of the Age of Reason, such as Newton and Locke and so his endeavour in the designs to the *Night Thoughts* was less one of subversion than correction, just as Blake sought to correct the Errors he perceived in Milton's Puritanism in his eponymous poem. Blake, then, modified the meaning of Young's text by incorporating elements of his own symbolism into his illustrations, such as the figure of Urizen, and challenged Young's deification of Reason – and concomitantly his Christian Rationalism, which argued for the immortality of the soul and the existence of God as evidenced in nature through Reason – by exposing its limited perception in the fallen world. Blake, moreover, attacked Newtonian ideas regarding the design and nature of the Universe. Blake was fervently opposed to the epistemology of Locke and the new science expounded by Newton, perceiving them to narrow thought, enchain the mind, and to limit Man's perception of God to Nature and the fallen, material world.

Endnotes

^[1] All quotations from Blake's poetry are taken from David Erdman, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York, 1988).

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First Response

This article offers interesting and original insights into Young, and Blake's response to him. The author discusses Young's *Night Thoughts* seriously as a philosophically and theologically informed poem, and examines Blake's criticism of Young's positions, as implied in his illustrations for that work. The material is therefore likely to be of interest, both to those working on eighteenth century and Romantic literary topics, and also to those working on the visual arts in the period.