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ABSTRACT

Boehme's influence on Blake, although often acknowledged, is frequently underestimated and has never been comprehensively investigated. Much modern criticism regards Blake's work as non-transcendental, even secular. This is partly a reaction against earlier criticism, which was more sympathetic to Blake's connection with the mystical tradition. The argument of this thesis, however, is that Boehme exerted a continuous and pervasive influence on Blake, and that recognition of this can illumine some of the most difficult and contradictory elements in Blake's work. These include the attitude to the body and the senses, and the metaphysical status of the selfhood and the created world.

Chapter One discusses Boehme's system, noting that it represents a synthesis of many different currents of thought, including the Dionysian via negativa, the Hermetic tradition, the Kabbalah and the Lutheran faith. It is emphasized, however, that his philosophy arose from intense mystical experience rather than academic study, and that he chose to express it in symbolic and mythological terms rather than rational concepts.

Chapter Two, on The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, suggests that Blake was pursuing his central concern, of how to unify existence without destroying its essential polarity, in the wake of a study of Boehme. Chapter Three views The Book of Urizen against the background of Boehme's first four properties of Eternal Nature and his account of the fall of Lucifer and Adam. The final chapter presents a synoptic examination of The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem. Among the topics discussed are: the designs by Dionysius Freher in the context of Blake's unfallen Albion; the Behmenist 'lightning-flash' compared to Blake's experiences as recorded in Milton; the concept of eternity, shared by Boehme and Blake, which combined stasis and activity; Blake's use of the 'language of nature' in the context of the risen Albion, and the connection between Blake's figure of Los and Boehme's Mercurius, as transmitters of the divine Word.

The Influence of Jacob Boehme on the  
Work of William Blake

by Bryan Aubrey

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Note on Text and Abbreviations

1. All quotations from Blake are taken from The Complete Writings of William Blake, edited by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Revised edition, Oxford University Press, 1966. Reprinted, 1974.

Quotations are identified by the abbreviated form of the poem, followed by plate and line number, and the page number in Keynes, thus: F.Z. 8:114-6, K344.

Where there is no line number in Keynes, I have just used plate and page numbers. In the chapters on The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and The Book of Urizen, it was unnecessary to continually repeat the abbreviated form of the poem, so I have used only plate, line and page number.

Abbreviations

B.A.	<u>The Book of Ahania</u>
B.L.	<u>The Book of Los</u>
B.U.	<u>The Book of Urizen</u>
E.	<u>Europe</u>
F.Z.	<u>The Four Zoas</u>
G.P.	<u>For the Sexes : The Gates of Paradise</u>
J.	<u>Jerusalem</u>
M.	<u>Milton</u>
M.H.H.	<u>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</u>
N.N.R.	<u>There is no Natural Religion</u>
S.B.D.	<u>Legends in a Small Book of Designs</u>
S.I.	<u>Songs of Innocence</u>
T.	<u>Tiriel</u>
V.D.A.	<u>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</u>
V.L.J.	<u>A Vision of The Last Judgment</u>

Blake's marginal annotations are abbreviated to Ann., followed by the name of the author. References to letters and notebook entries are to the page number in Keynes.

2. Quotations from Boehme are taken from the following editions:
- i) The Works of Jacob Behmen, edited by George Ward and Thomas Langcake, London, 1764-81. In four volumes. Known as the 'Law edition'. The contents of each volume, with the abbreviations I have used, are as follows:

Volume 1:	<u>The Aurora</u>	Aur.
	<u>The Three Principles of the Divine</u>	
	<u>Essence</u>	T.P.
	<u>The Life of the Author</u>	

Volume 2:	<u>The Threefold Life Of Man</u>	T.F.L.
	<u>The Answers to Forty Questions concerning the Soul</u>	F.Q.
	<u>The Treatise of the Incarnation : In Three Parts</u>	Inc.
	<u>The Clavis : Or an explanation of some principal Points and Expressions in his Writings</u>	Cl.
Volume 3:	<u>The Mysterium Magnum : or an Explanation of the first Book of Moses, called Genesis : In Three Parts</u>	M.M.
	<u>Four Tables of Divine Revelation</u>	
Volume 4:	<u>Signatura Rerum; the Signature of all Things</u>	S.R.
	<u>Of the Election of Grace; or, Of God's Will towards Man, commonly called Predestination</u>	E.G.
	<u>The Way to Christ</u>	
	(Discovered in The Following Treatises	
	1. <u>Of True Repentance</u> W.C.1 (Of Rep.)	
	<u>Of True Resignation</u> W.C.2 (Of Res.)	
	<u>Of Regeneration</u> W.C.3 (Of Reg.)	
	<u>Of the Supersensual Life</u> W.C.4 (SSL)	
	<u>A Discourse between a Soul hungry and thirsty after the Fountain of Life, the Sweet Love of Jesus Christ; and a soul enlightened.</u>	
	<u>Of the Four Complexions</u>	F.C.
	<u>Of Christ's Testaments, Baptism, and the Supper</u>	

Each volume also contains 'Figures, illustrating his Principles left by the Reverend William Law, M.A.', (The Freher diagrams).

As each work is separately paginated, quotations are identified by the abbreviated title, followed by the chapter and section number, e.g. M.M. 28:36. For the Treatise of the Incarnation, reference is to part, chapter and section number, e.g. Inc. 1:4:31. (The Mysterium Magnum is also in three parts but has continuous chapters; the inclusion of part number was therefore unnecessary.) The treatise Of True Repentance has no chapter or section numbers, so reference is to page number. For Of the Supersensual Life, some editions have the translation by John Sparrow, others the Francis Lee translation. Some editions include both. The Lee translation has no section numbers, so reference is to page number. Reference to a section number indicates the Sparrow translation.

I have retained the original capitalization and punctuation, but not the italicization.

- ii) Six Theosophic Points and Other Writings.  
Translated by John Rolleston Earle, with an introductory essay by Nicholas Berdyaev, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1958. Reprinted 1971.

<u>Six Theosophic Points</u>	S.T.P.
<u>Six Mystical Points</u>	S.M.P.
<u>On the Earthly and Heavenly Mystery</u>	E.H.M.
<u>On the Divine Intuition</u>	D.I.

Reference is to chapter (or its equivalent), section and page number, except in Six Theosophic Points, where the reference is to point, chapter, section and page number.

- iii) De Electione Gratiae and Questiones Theosophicae.  
Translated by John Rolleston Earle, Constable, London, 1930.

<u>Questiones Theopsophicae</u>	T.Q.
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Reference is to question and section number.

3. In the footnotes, I have given full details where a work is mentioned for the first time. Subsequent references are abbreviated to author and short title.

The bibliography is a list of works consulted during the preparation of this thesis.

Note: I had intended to include copies of all seven of the Freher diagrams referred to in the text, but have unfortunately only been able to obtain four of them.

## Introduction

Over the last quarter of a century a vast body of critical literature has accumulated around Blake, including much work on his sources. The first question that needs to be answered by anyone entering this apparently well-worn territory is why yet another investigation of the subject should be necessary. The surprising answer is that in spite of all the recent work on Blake, the amount of literature which deals specifically with the influence of Boehme remains comparatively small. In broad terms, the link has been noticed from the earliest days of Blake scholarship. In 1863, Blake's first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, observed that Blake had 'eagerly assimilated' the writings of Boehme and Swedenborg.<sup>1</sup> However, with the exception of E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats in their 1893 edition of Blake's works (and they remain the only critics to suggest that Blake could have been interested in Boehme's 'Language of Nature'),<sup>2</sup> it was not until 1924, with the publication of S. Foster Damon's William Blake : His Philosophy and Symbols, that any serious attempt was made to indicate the full extent of Blake's knowledge of Boehme. Damon referred to Boehme as one of Blake's 'spiritual masters',<sup>3</sup> and he located numerous parallels between them. If his method was somewhat unsystematic, and the comparisons he made not always the most apt or significant, his work nonetheless served, and still serves, as a useful starting point for further enquiry. Milton O. Percival's William



Blake's Circle of Destiny (1938), in the course of placing Blake's myth firmly in the esoteric and mystical tradition, with copious examples from Swedenborg, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism and the Kabbalah, also unearthed a series of parallels from Boehme's doctrines and related them to Blake in less haphazard fashion than Damon. He noted the importance of Boehme's imagery of fire and light, symbolising angry Father and beneficent Son, and the general similarities in the fall narratives, comparing Urizen's Mundane Shell with Boehme's world of stars and elements, the sphere of Vernunft, or reason. He remained until recently the only critic to suggest a connection between Urthona and Boehme's first principle,<sup>4</sup> and this needs further investigation. Since the war, however, further progress has been slow. Mark Schorer (1946) was anxious to dissociate Blake from the taint of mysticism, and dismissed Boehme as a 'Protestant mystic low in the scale',<sup>5</sup> although he conceded that Blake was indebted to Boehme for his concept of the imagination and his doctrine of contraries.<sup>6</sup> J. G. Davies (1948), whilst regarding Boehme as an 'invaluable aid to the understanding of Blake',<sup>7</sup> did not advance much beyond the pioneering work of Damon and Percival, primarily noting parallels in the accounts of creation and fall and also hinting that Boehme's seven properties of Eternal Nature bore some resemblance to Blake's Seven Eyes of God.<sup>8</sup> However, his quotations from Boehme are unidentified; they are in fact taken from

the nineteenth century translation by Franz Hartmann, which differs markedly from the translations which Blake would have known. Bernard Blackstone (1949) alluded to Boehme but not in great detail;<sup>9</sup> Jacques Roos (1951) discussed the place of reason and the imagination, and the Behmenist concept of 'signatures', and was also the first to notice that the word 'selfhood' first appeared in the language in the seventeenth century Ellistone translations of Boehme.<sup>10</sup> Gerald Bentley (1954) examined the alchemical background to Blake's works, referring chiefly to Boehme. He concluded that 'Blake inherited from Boehme the ideas which formed the foundation of his philosophy and his myth'.<sup>11</sup> This was the most detailed work that had appeared up to that date, and was also the first to examine in detail the 'Law edition' of Boehme, which Blake would have read. But it was by no means exhaustive, and Bentley himself has since expressed dissatisfaction with its 'diffuse and inconclusive' results.<sup>12</sup> In 1964, Désirée Hirst made the first tentative attempt to assess why Blake had praised so highly what both Damon and Davies had referred to as the 'absurd diagrams' by Dionysius Freher, which had been included in the 'Law edition'.<sup>13</sup> John Beer (1969) also commented on the Freher diagram entitled 'The Tree of the Soul', and made the valid suggestion that in the four levels of reality it depicts, Blake found 'a form against which to structure his vision at an early stage'.<sup>14</sup> The Freher diagrams, which Kathleen Raine has also commented upon,

need further investigation.

By far the most useful, indeed indispensable works to date on the subject in hand are Kathleen Raine's Blake and Tradition (1968), and Morton D. Paley's Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought (1970). Of particular interest in Dr. Raine's study is her analysis of how Blake, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, penetrated the significance of Boehme's 'dark world'; her discussion of the Behmenist concept of the 'opening of centers' in the context of Blake, and of the parallels between Blake's Jerusalem and Boehme's Sophia.<sup>15</sup> Paley concentrates more on the revolutionary political and social aspects of Blake than on the Neoplatonic tradition which is Dr. Raine's main concern. He gives the best account available of how Boehme's contraries of wrath and love operate in Blake's work, seeing the myth of the fall, as described in the Lambeth prophecies and The Four Zoas, as a transition from Boehme's second, light principle to his first, dark principle. He also gives full weight to the close similarities in the way Blake and Boehme understand the process of regeneration, and the central role that both ascribe to the imagination.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting that although both scholars approach Blake from very different standpoints, they can still reach similar conclusions about the extent of Boehme's influence on his work. I shall draw heavily on the results of their research, and hope to extend their conclusions.

Looking at some of these contributions from a more negative angle, it has to be said that not all literary critics who comment on Boehme are entirely accurate in their presentation of his views. Désirée Hirst, for example, states that according to Boehme, man was originally a 'purely spiritual being, an angel'.<sup>17</sup> This is rather misleading. Boehme always states that man from the outset possessed an outer, material body, but that it was entirely illumined by the angelical, spiritual body which lay couched within it. The omission of the former alters the myth radically, since had man been an angel, his condition after the fall would have been the same as Lucifer's; he would have been imprisoned in the dark spiritual kingdom rather than on the material earth. The inaccuracy has, I suspect, been adopted from Miss Hirst by Michael Davis, in his recent biography of Blake, where he states that Boehme depicts the original man as a 'pure angel'.<sup>18</sup>

John Beer, in his discussion of the 'Tree of the Soul' diagram, states that

[Blake] differs from Boehme in one important respect; his interest is more in psychological explanation than in pietistic exhortation. The 'dark world' of Boehme is not far removed from the 'vanities of this world' which are rejected by the Christian of conventional piety. Blake, on the other hand, would identify it immediately as the world of 'Reason' - that scientific interpretation of the world set forth by the followers of Locke and Newton which he felt to be the lowest world of all. <sup>19</sup>

In fact, Blake and Boehme are very close on this point;

Boehme also connects the dark world and fallen nature with the limited world of 'reason'; the link is therefore not entirely Blake's invention. Beer continues:

...where Boehme would think of the next stage on the scale as representing the punishing wrath of God, Blake would give it wider significance, regarding it as the sphere where energies operate uncontrolled.<sup>20</sup>

Again, the fire world in Boehme has just this significance; it is far more than merely the 'punishing wrath of God'.

Another example can be found in W. H. Stevenson's recent edition of Blake's poems,<sup>21</sup> where he comments on how Blake borrowed and reshaped Boehme's ideas. One point he makes is that in The Book of Urizen

there is a constant social and moral emphasis, which is absent from his religious and mystical sources... Boehme has much to say of the inward-looking of the mind, but nothing of tyranny and social or personal unhappiness.<sup>22</sup>

Once again, this is somewhat misleading. It was an integral part of Boehme's world-view that the body politic must be cleansed; he condemns tyranny and social injustice with the same force as Blake, which was one reason why his books made such a strong appeal to the revolutionary sects of seventeenth century England. Also like Blake he traces the causes of social disorder to the diseased state of the individual mind, the failure to uphold the Divine Vision. The diagnosis and the cure are the same in each case.

These are minor objections perhaps, to the work of critics whose observations on Boehme form only a small part of their contribution to Blake studies. But since in some quarters Boehme's influence on Blake is denied altogether, it is as well that those who defend such an influence should not have to make do with generalizations gleaned from a hasty reading of Boehme's 'tough book'.<sup>23</sup> In the interests of Blake scholarship, what is needed is a reliable guide to what Blake took from Boehme, how he used it, and what he rejected or ignored. Over the last decade there has not been a great deal of progress towards this goal. Gerald Bentley, more than twenty years after the completion of his own thesis, writes:

...the significance and importance of alchemy (chiefly Boehme and Paracelsus), of the Kabbala, of Milton and of the Neo-Platonic traditions, have yet to be reliably and definitively evaluated.<sup>24</sup>

This challenge has not yet been taken up directly, with the exception of an M. A. thesis in 1979 by N.V.P. Franklin, which deals with the presence of Boehme's 'Christian theosophy' in The Four Zoas, largely from the alchemical point of view.<sup>25</sup> Franklin sees the poem as 'an exercise in human alchemy'.<sup>26</sup> He suggests that the 'love-wrestling' which characterizes the ideal form of interaction between Boehme's seven qualities (particularly as described in the Aurora) served as the model for the 'stern debate' of the Zoas and their emanations.<sup>27</sup> As in the Aurora, these 'sports of love' have become

perverted, resulting in the savage conflict which characterizes Blake's poem. The purpose of the activity of the seven qualities is always to regain their former equilibrium and in doing so give birth to 'a spirit which is light'.<sup>28</sup> This corresponds to the quarrelsome activity of the Zoas; its purpose is to regenerate the Eternal Man through a second birth. On this basis, Franklin suggests that the nine nights of the poem represent an arduous pregnancy, corresponding to the labours of the alchemical 'mother' in Boehme's thought, as she strives to bring forth the light-child.<sup>29</sup> He argues that Boehme always describes this as a fourfold process, consisting of mind, will, desire and imagination, which Franklin then connects with each of the Zoas.<sup>30</sup> The analysis, based largely on Boehme's The Three Principles of the Divine Essence, is not entirely successful. The suggested correspondence of Tharmas and Luvah to will and desire respectively, as described in The Three Principles, is unconvincing, and when Boehme writes of the fourfold birth of nature he is referring primarily to the first four forms of Eternal Nature (harshness, bitterness, fire and water, to use the terms of The Three Principles) rather than to mind, will, desire and imagination. More successful are the links Franklin makes between Enitharmon and the alchemical 'tincture',<sup>31</sup> and between Urthona and Boehme's second property, both conceived as the agents of individuation, and related to the

alchemical process of separatio.<sup>32</sup> This is an extremely useful line of enquiry and needs to be further developed in relation to Blake's other works.

Franklin's work, however, represents an exception to the general trend in Blake criticism. He himself notes that although four generations of Blake scholars have commented on Boehme's influence, their combined labours still do not amount to a very substantial body of work.

Why should this be? It may in part be due to a certain wariness amongst Blake critics concerning the subject of mysticism, which according to Northrop Frye, 'has never brought anything but confusion into the study of Blake'.<sup>33</sup> Early Blake criticism unhesitatingly described Blake as a mystic. Damon, for example, charted Blake's progress through five stages of the classic mystical path, which he called Innocence, Experience, Revolution, the Dark Night and the Ultimate Union,<sup>34</sup> based on the classifications made by Evelyn Underhill in her well known study of mysticism. But in 1927, Helen White, in the only full length study of the subject,<sup>35</sup> concluded that the term mystic was not appropriate for Blake. This was largely because Blake attached great importance to his visions, which mystics generally do not regard highly, and also because he rejected asceticism, humility and chastity. His work therefore lacked a proper ethical base, and his

concept of 'self-annihilation' was not the same as the total surrender of the will that is characteristic of genuine mysticism.<sup>36</sup> White's book was followed up by Mark Schorer (1946), who was plainly antagonistic towards mysticism in general, regarding it as selfish and 'antihumanist', consisting of the 'denial of nearly everything that makes us men'.<sup>37</sup> Mysticism demanded the abandonment of the world, and a retreat from 'natural pleasures'. Since Blake countenanced neither, and since he would also have found any notion of 'the Plotinian rest in the super-essential solitary' repellent,<sup>38</sup> he could not therefore have been a mystic, and was instead a 'humanist'.<sup>39</sup> Schorer's book had less influence in the United Kingdom than it did in the United States, where it set the pattern for much subsequent criticism. Thomas Frosch (1974), pursuing a parallel path, complained of the unhelpful legacy of earlier criticism: 'Our understanding of Blake...is still so encrusted with defining analogies to the impulses and traditions of mysticism'.<sup>40</sup> Frosch regarded his work as a continuation of the post-war trend in Blake criticism which viewed the 'Blakean renovation as at once visionary and anti-mystical'.<sup>41</sup> This trend, originated by Northrop Frye as well as Schorer, also lies behind Harold Bloom's controversial view, expressed in 1963, that Blake

read little with any care besides the Bible and Milton; he is not likely to have derived anything really central to him from ancient philosophy, or from the theosophy of the Cabala, or Boehme.<sup>42</sup>

Accordingly, the term mystic is no longer much used in connection with Blake, although Damon defiantly retained it in his A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake (1965).<sup>43</sup>

It is my belief that this reluctance to acknowledge a link between Blake and the mystical tradition has severely, and unnecessarily, inhibited a closer investigation of Boehme's influence on his thought. It has generally been writers who are favourable to mysticism who have given Boehme his due.

Several points now need to be made. Blake is obviously not a mystic in the sense that Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross were mystics. The via negativa, whereby the mind is emptied of all thoughts and images and remains conscious of itself only as an undifferentiated unity, beyond the duality of subject and object, is absent from his work. (Nevertheless, he found a place in his mythology for the tranquillity, rest and sense of eternal freedom which normally accompany the experiential aspect of the via negativa, and this should not be minimized; he did not envisage the life of eternity as consisting entirely of strenuous effort.) But all writers on mysticism are agreed that the via negativa represents only one side of mystical experience; the other side, in Evelyn Underhill's words, is 'sacramental, not ascetic',<sup>44</sup> outgoing rather than ingoing, whereby nature itself,

in all its diversity, is seen to possess a unity which underlies, pervades and glorifies it.

W. T. Stace classified the two experiences as 'introvertive' and 'extrovertive' mysticism respectively.<sup>45</sup> Schorer implicitly recognized the existence of the latter category, when he noted that Boehme's quest was 'predominantly in nature itself',<sup>46</sup> but he thought that this represented a falling away from mysticism proper, seeing Boehme's system as an example of 'mysticism that is well on the road to corruption and extinction'.<sup>47</sup>

Not many would agree with this verdict. Boehme in fact clearly represents both poles of the mystical consciousness. In Blake's case, if we consider the six main characteristics of the 'extrovertive' experience, as listed by Stace, it will be plain that he is a strong candidate for inclusion in this category; a person may well be subject to certain kinds of mystical experience without necessarily fulfilling all the criteria that would entitle him to be called a mystic. Stace's points are, briefly:

1. 'The unifying vision', a oneness 'perceived through the physical senses, in or through the multiplicity of objects'.
2. Experience of this unity as 'life, or consciousness, or a living Presence. The discovery that nothing is "really" dead'.
3. 'Sense of objectivity or reality'.
4. 'Feeling of blessedness, joy, happiness, satisfaction etc.'.

5. 'Feeling that what is apprehended is holy, or sacred, or divine'.

6. 'Paradoxicality'.<sup>48</sup>

Without wishing to labour the point, all these characteristics can be found very clearly in Blake. Like the mystics, his belief in the existence of a higher reality was to a large extent the product of direct experience. The sense of a new awakening lies behind the Songs of Innocence and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell just as much as it does Boehme's Aurora. When Milton Percival compared what he called Blake's mystical ecstasies with similar experiences recorded by Plotinus,<sup>49</sup> he might also have made a comparison with Boehme, which would have been even more appropriate.

A contrary but related point also needs to be taken into account. Blake's reading of mystical texts would have led him to interpret his experiences in a certain way, and would also have aroused in him certain prior expectations about the nature of the experience itself. As Leopold Damrosch has suggested, some passages in Blake, particularly those which echo the paradoxical expressions of the mystics, sound as if he is deliberately imitating their language rather than giving expression to first-hand experience of his own.<sup>50</sup> Although there is truth in Crabb Robinson's remark that Blake was 'not so much a disciple of Jacob Böhmen & Swedenborg as a fellow visionary',<sup>51</sup> Blake was also prepared to use Boehme to explain,

augment and validate his own experience. What matters is not so much the question of whether Blake should be called a mystic as the fact that the closest analogues to his thought are likely to be found in the mystical tradition as it was known to him - largely Paul (I take the view that Paul's theology contains strong mystical elements), Boehme and Swedenborg, who all used similar language, and also the Neoplatonists, including Plotinus. In particular, study of this tradition promises to illumine some of the most difficult and contradictory elements in Blake's myth. On the question of dualism, for example, Thomas Frosch too easily declared that Blake's philosophy was monistic, and therefore marked a clear break with mysticism (including Boehme), which he saw as crudely dualistic.<sup>52</sup> But Damrosch, in his cogent and refreshing re-appraisal of Blake, faces up to the ambiguities in Blake's thought (his ambivalent attitude towards the body, for example), and suggests that he was 'a dualist who wishes he were a monist'.<sup>53</sup> His 'dualistic monism' parallels that of Boehme and the Neoplatonists.<sup>54</sup> This seems to me to be closer to the truth. On many other questions which continually recur in Blake's work - the role of the senses, the status of the created world, and of the selfhood - his attitudes and solutions are also strikingly close to Boehme's. From one point of view, this merely throws the question of what Blake means back into Boehme's lap, but it does also serve to reinforce

the transcendental element in Blake's vision, which is too often obscured. Much modern Blake criticism is reductionist in tone. One critic, for example, takes Blake's concept of eternity to mean no more than "'time which is flexible and open to change"'.<sup>55</sup> But the kind of eternity that Blake is said to reject - a static and changeless state of endless duration - is more like Milton's Heaven than Boehme's Eternal Nature, which is a radical concept combining stasis and dynamism. Blake's eternity follows Boehme's model, and is certainly more than just 'a quality of time'.<sup>56</sup> Blake criticism must be wary that in its efforts to interpret Blake it does not simply substitute a more subtle version of the very 'natural religion' that Blake sought to transcend.

The question now arises of Blake's other sources. The esoteric tradition in which he was widely read consists of a large body of heterogeneous writings which nonetheless use, to a certain extent, the same symbolic vocabulary, and are united in their attempt to penetrate the eternal spiritual realities which underlie the ebb and flow of temporal phenomena. Saurat,<sup>57</sup> Percival, Hirst, Raine and others have given adequate attention to the influence of Swedenborg, Paracelsus, Vaughan and the entire Hermetic tradition, the Kabbalah, with its Christian versions in Fludd and Agrippa, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism and certain strands of Indian tradition. Bearing this in mind, to what extent is it possible

to pin down particular passages or ideas in Blake to a precise source in Boehme? For example, although there are close similarities between Blake's Jerusalem and Boehme's Sophia, the figure of Sophia also occupies a prominent place in the various Gnostic systems, while the Kabbalist concept of the Shekhinah, the feminine element within the Godhead and also the habitation of the soul, is also similar. Again, Blake's Albion has roots in Swedenborg's Grand Man and the Kabbalist Adam Kadmon, as well as Boehme's unfallen Adam. The matter is complicated by the fact that in some cases Blake's sources were the same as Boehme's; both read Paracelsus and both knew the Kabbalah, and this is quite apart from their common dedication to the Bible. In addition, Swedenborg possibly knew Boehme and the Kabbalah, and it has also been suggested that Milton, the poet who most influenced Blake, was himself influenced by Boehme.<sup>58</sup> Although I think the latter suggestion is unlikely, it does illustrate the difficulty of tracing Blake's ideas to their exact source. One thing can certainly be said: Boehme's fusion of Neoplatonic and alchemical elements within an overall Christian framework would have attracted Blake strongly, especially when it was on occasion delivered with all the fire and 'honest indignation' of the Hebrew prophet. Boehme also occupies a unique place in the esoteric tradition. In some respects, his system is boldly original, and his treatment of common, particularly Biblical themes

is often highly distinctive, and is clearly echoed by Blake. There is therefore a surprising amount in Blake which can confidently be traced specifically to Boehme, in addition to other parallels where Boehme was a contributory, if not the sole source. There are also a number of similarities in the form which their work took, which cannot be entirely coincidental. They both developed a highly complex system using myth and symbol as their vehicle of expression, and both emphasized that their work was accessible not to the 'Corporeal Understanding' (Letters, K825), but only to a higher intuitive faculty. Both utilized haphazardly whatever sources were available, producing an unwieldy synthesis which bends under its own weight, but which for the most part, and in spite of some apparently irreconcilable contradictions, holds together as a unity. Boehme always begins by laboriously recapitulating the basis of the myth, adding fresh insights as he goes, refining rather than consciously repudiating what has gone before. William Law's comment on his works could be equally applied to Blake:

...it was this frequent and almost constant Repetition of one and the same Ground that swelled his Writings into so many Volumes, though it may be said that there is nothing separately in any of his Books but what is to be found in almost every other, though not so largely set forth.<sup>59</sup>

Blake would have been aware of some of the details of Boehme's life and personality. Boehme reveals a great deal of himself in his work, and his

biography was readily available. Blake may well have felt a particular affinity with him at the personal level; their lives were similar in a number of ways. They both lacked a formal education; both felt isolated and at odds with the society in which they lived, due, in Boehme's case, to persecution, and in Blake's, to neglect and lack of recognition. They both experienced intense psychological conflict, and the extent to which they elevated the strife of contraries and the necessity of pain to the level of fundamental principles underlying the entire life of the cosmos, can be seen, at least in part, as an attempt to come to terms with the turbulence of their internal lives.<sup>60</sup> In their final years they both attained a measure of serenity, and even the manner of their deaths - Blake singing songs to his maker, and Boehme hearing the music of Paradise-resemble each other.<sup>61</sup>

Of the other main non-literary influences on Blake, Swedenborg is by far the most important. Blake's rejection of him in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell should not mislead. As Kathleen Raine remarked, 'no lapsed Catholic thinks like a Protestant, still less like a logical positivist',<sup>62</sup> and in many respects Blake remained a Swedenborgian throughout his life. The case of Paracelsus is rather different. Although Blake acknowledges a debt to him and twice links him with Boehme, it is difficult to gauge precisely what was his effect on Blake. Paracelsus' confusing and inconsistent

writings are undoubtedly more obscure than Boehme's. One modern scholar states that Paracelsus 'never seems to have read what he had written',<sup>63</sup> and another doubts whether any coherent patterns of thought can be extracted from his works.<sup>64</sup> It is unlikely that the texts that have come down to us are completely accurate, since many were hastily dictated, and others were compiled from notes taken at Paracelsus' lectures. Only a small proportion of the complete works would have been available to Blake, in seventeenth century English translations. They deal primarily with the practical details of the alchemical work, and with prescriptions for the treatment of disease based on the notion of 'signatures', which rests on the fundamental idea of man as a microcosm of the universe. Blake probably paid most attention to the treatise on cosmology entitled Philosophy to the Athenians,<sup>65</sup> which is an alchemical account of the creation of the world through the process of 'separation' out of the 'Great Mystery'. S. Foster Damon and Kathleen Raine have noted in it a number of parallels with Blake's work.<sup>66</sup> In general terms, Blake would certainly have appreciated the sense of the interrelation of all things which runs through Paracelsus' work, although the practical details would not have concerned him. He was a poet not a doctor, and Paracelsus' primary concerns were always medical. Blake may also have been attracted to Paracelsus because of his reputation as an

outspoken rebel against convention and established authority, and by his frequent claims to possess a wisdom superior to that of the schoolmen. Had more of his works which deal directly with Hermetic philosophy rather than with magic and medicine been available to Blake, his influence on the poet might have been greater. In most of the works to which Blake had access, the underlying philosophy is assumed rather than systematically elaborated. Blake differs from Paracelsus in the same way that Boehme had done before him. Both are more concerned with spiritual regeneration than with the tending of the natural body. Boehme occasionally adopted Paracelsan terminology, but only to give form to his own ideas. The main themes which he repeats over and over again, the theogonic process, the two 'principles' of darkness and light, or wrath and love, the distinction between spiritual and natural, the paradisiacal life and the fall of Lucifer and of Adam, the 'new birth' in Christ and the importance of the imagination in giving direction to individual life, are not, with the exception of the last named, Paracelsan, but they match Blake's interests almost exactly.

The question of how Boehme and Blake used the Bible also needs a brief preliminary comment. To both of them, the Bible represented only the tip of an iceberg, and they were as interested in exploring what lay beneath the surface as what was clearly revealed. Spritual wisdom is multi-layered.

Blake's method of interpreting the scriptures was certainly nourished by his study of Boehme, as well as by his early immersion in the 'internal sense' of the Word as revealed by Swedenborg. Often the full significance of his use of Biblical themes cannot be understood without recourse to Boehme, since they both made extensive use of the same symbolism, such as the seven spirits of God, the beast and the whore from Revelation, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the cherub with the flaming sword from Genesis, the spiritual body mentioned by Paul, the wheels and precious stones of Ezekiel. The point is that even when the Bible is obviously Blake's major source, Behmenist influence cannot be completely dismissed.<sup>67</sup>

In this thesis I have attempted to take some account of the many influences on Blake other than Boehme, citing parallels (and divergences) where they have occurred to me, and attempting to assess their significance. However, I have endeavoured to keep clearly in mind the main task, which is to assess the specific influence of Boehme, and this I have done as directly as possible, with close reference to the respective texts. If my work should on occasion display the bias of the advocate, I can only plead that since Boehme's influence has been much neglected in the past, a forceful counter-argument will not be out of place, and I hope that the detailed analysis contained in this thesis may help to redress the balance.

I have thought it best to devote the first chapter to a consideration of Boehme's system, quite apart from any links with Blake. This will put what follows into perspective, since Blake was more interested in some aspects of Boehme's thought than in others. Some elements he disregarded completely. I have kept this chapter fairly brief, as many of the topics will be discussed more fully in the context of Blake's work. Chapters two and three deal with The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and The Book of Urizen respectively. Taken together these books are representative of Blake's work during the last decade of the century, and both show Boehme's influence to a marked degree, although in very different ways. The final chapter considers the three major prophetic books, The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem. Since they form a more or less consistent system I have taken them synoptically, although I have not ignored differences in emphasis. This method has allowed the full extent of Blake's use of each Behmenist idea to be considered under one heading, and has therefore avoided any need for undue repetition.

I shall conclude this introduction with a brief sketch of how Boehme's works were received in England, and the route by which they reached Blake, a century and a half after Boehme's death. It was not necessary for him to ferret out, entirely on his own initiative, the work of an obscure and forgotten mystic. Boehme's name had long been held

in respect by many people of Blake's cast of mind, and it would have been quite natural for him to seek out the theosopher's work for himself; indeed, it would have been surprising had he not done so.<sup>68</sup>

Boehme's works had all been translated into English by John Sparrow, John Ellistone and Henry Blunden, and had been published between 1645 and 1662. They had made an immediate impact on a society which was seething with radical ideas. Boehme (or Behmen as he was usually known) was hailed as a prophet and a seer of the highest order, and for a considerable period the enthusiasm for his work seemed to know no bounds. Sparrow's introductions to his own translations have an awe-struck tone; mysteries that had been hidden since the beginning of the world were now to be revealed in the pages of Boehme.<sup>69</sup> In 1650, Durant Hotham, in a preface to his translation of a lecture on Boehme given in Latin at Cambridge University by his brother Charles, considered that Boehme's work excelled the combined wisdom of Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato and Plotinus.<sup>70</sup> By 1653, Parliament was being urged to provide colleges specifically for the study of Boehme.<sup>71</sup> Richard Baxter identified the Behmenists as a distinct sect, and likened them to the Quakers.<sup>72</sup> By 1662, they were sufficiently well established to become the target of a direct attack in a pamphlet by the Quaker John Anderdon, who accused them of misunderstanding Boehme's teaching.<sup>73</sup> During this

period the main Behmenist figure seems to have been John Pordage, an eccentric Anglican minister who wrote lengthy expositions of Boehme's thought and accumulated a number of followers, although his somewhat bizarre life-style, and the fact that he was also a practising astrologer and occultist, gained him considerable notoriety. One of his disciples was Jane Lead, who was much given to visions and revelations, about which she wrote frequently and at great length. Towards the end of the century, after Pordage's death, she and her son-in-law, Francis Lee, a former Oxford scholar, formed the Philadelphian Society, which acted as a focal point for the study of Kabbalism, Behmenism and other mystical doctrines and revelations.<sup>74</sup> In general, however, it seems that the Behmenists formed a loose network of enthusiasts rather than a formally constituted sect; Boehme's doctrines were equally to be found amongst Seekers, Ranters and Muggletonians, who were attracted to the idea that Christ was in all men, and that the inner spirit should not be bound to any laws instituted by men. Many of these seventeenth century sects were still active in London during Blake's youth, particularly amongst the artisans and tradesmen - the same social class to which Blake belonged, and in which he moved freely.<sup>75</sup> Boehme's name probably cropped up frequently in discussion.

In the eighteenth century, however, the Behmenist flame was kept alight mainly by William Law, a more formidable figure than any of the enthusiasts of the

previous century. Law had first become acquainted with Boehme's thought about 1735,<sup>76</sup> and the works he produced from 1739 until his death all show a heavy dependence on Boehme, whom he declared to be 'the strongest, the plainest, the most open, intelligible, awakening, convincing Writer that ever was'.<sup>77</sup> Law did not simply adopt Boehme's system wholesale; before discovering him he had long been immersed in study of the Church Fathers and the Christian mystics, and a wide knowledge of them underlies his later mystical works. He also modifies Boehme's teaching in certain respects; unlike Boehme, for example, he came to believe in universal redemption, and in general he does not match, nor did he wish to, the range of Boehme's metaphysical speculations, being more concerned with a practical piety based on sound and reasoned argument. Neither does he use Boehme's alchemical and astrological language. But in what he does adopt from Boehme he is an accurate interpreter. If we do not catch from his books quite the same feeling that Boehme communicates, of first hand mystical experience tumbling from a mind that can hardly keep up with itself (and Law confessed that he was 'a stranger to divine illumination', although this was before he read Boehme),<sup>78</sup> the controlled lucidity of his prose makes a refreshing change after the unschooled meandering of Boehme.

Law had intended to translate Boehme himself, and produce a completely new edition of his works, using

The Way to Divine Knowledge as an introduction, but he died before the task could be accomplished. A four volume edition of Boehme, edited by Law's friends George Ward and Thomas Langcake, was published between 1764 and 1781, as a memorial to him. It is usually known for this reason as the 'Law edition', although it is in fact a reissue, with only minor alterations, of the Sparrow and Ellistone translations.<sup>79</sup> The only exception is the dialogue Of the Supersensual Life which was translated by Francis Lee, whose papers had been acquired by Law after Lee's death. The diagrams and illustrations in the Langcake and Ward edition were attributed to Law, but as already mentioned, they were in fact the work of Dionysius Andreas Freher, a German student of Boehme who had lived in London until his death in 1728. Law admired his work and made extensive, handwritten copies of Freher's manuscripts.<sup>80</sup>

It has been established that Blake owned some of Boehme's works.<sup>81</sup> He also admired Freher's designs, comparing them to Michaelangelo.<sup>82</sup> It therefore seems certain that he possessed at least some volumes from the 'Law edition', since this was the only edition of Boehme in which the designs appeared. The exact route by which he became interested in Boehme cannot be known for certain. Law's circle of friends and followers, including such men as John Byrom, Henry Brooke and Jacob Duché, were all well versed in Behmenist studies.<sup>83</sup> Blake's name appears in the list of subscribers to Duché's

Discourses on Various Subjects (1779).<sup>84</sup> In addition to this, a number of publications connected with Boehme appeared in the period 1770 to 1795, which was a formative period for Blake. There was A Compendious View of the Grounds of the Teutonick Philosophy published by 'a Gentleman retired from Business' (1770),<sup>85</sup> part of which is a reprint of a treatise by Pordage. An Anglican clergyman, Richard Symes, claimed in Fire Analysed (1771)<sup>86</sup> that Boehme's first three 'properties' or 'qualities' of Eternal Nature could be used to explain the generation of electricity; The Way to Christ was reprinted (1775),<sup>87</sup> and Francis Okeley, a Moravian minister and friend of Law, assembled in one volume a translation of Abraham von Franckenberg's biography of Boehme, and various other testimonials about Boehme's life and death (1780).<sup>88</sup> Finally, there was a reissue of Extracts from Mercurius Teutonicus (1795),<sup>89</sup> a collection of eschatological passages which had first appeared in 1649. Included in the same volume was material concerning the millenarian prophet Richard Brothers, which is an indication that Boehme was also seen in this light. Certainly his belief that 'the time of the lily' was at hand would have commended him to one who was announcing 'the return of Adam into Paradise' (M.H.H. 3, K149).

Whatever was the immediate source of Blake's interest in Boehme, we have his own testimony about his intellectual history. If his chronology is to



Chapter OneJacob Boehme

It is not my intention to give a full account of Boehme's life, but only to discuss a few points about it which are relevant to the understanding of his work. The first biography of Boehme was written by his friend, Abraham von Franckenberg, in 1651, twenty-seven years after Boehme's death.<sup>1</sup> All later biographies up to that of Will-Erich Peuckert in 1924<sup>2</sup> were based on a largely uncritical acceptance of Franckenberg's account. From Franckenberg stems the traditional view of Boehme as the humble and unlettered shoemaker who received spontaneous illumination direct from God Himself. Franckenberg relates how Boehme was possessed by the beatific vision for seven consecutive days, and he also gives the famous account of Boehme's second experience of enlightenment, occasioned by a glance at a bright pewter dish.<sup>3</sup> Franckenberg emphasizes the miraculous, and his account is full of the stuff of legends, even down to the young Jacob discovering hidden treasure, and later encountering a mysterious stranger who prophesied a momentous future for him.<sup>4</sup>

This material obviously has to be treated with a certain amount of caution. Boehme, for example, makes no mention of a mystical ecstasy lasting an entire week. It is now generally accepted that he was not as completely uneducated as was formerly believed. Although he received only elementary

schooling, he later read widely in the philosophical, alchemical and theological literature of the day, and his travels as a merchant enabled him to acquire a number of learned friends. The primary influences on him were, firstly, the German mystical tradition, including Tauler and the Theologia Germanica. Much of this reached Boehme through Martin Moller, the pastor of Görlitz from 1600 to 1606, who was well read in medieval mysticism. Secondly, the Lutheran faith which Boehme never renounced;<sup>6</sup> thirdly, the sixteenth century German 'Spiritual Reformers', Schwenkfeld, Franck and Weigel;<sup>7</sup> fourthly, Paracelsus and the alchemical tradition<sup>8</sup> and lastly the Kabbalah.<sup>9</sup> Boehme was to mould all these streams of thought into a new synthesis.

But whilst it is obviously important to examine the influences on Boehme other than the Almighty, and to place his thought in the context of the various religious cross-currents in which he was caught, it should not be forgotten that his whole system was based on mystical experience of the highest order, rather than on intellectual speculation or accumulated learning. His claim that he had directly cognized the inner mechanics of creation places him closer in spirit to the rishis of the Vedas than to any Western school of learning. It is easy to be sceptical of Boehme's claims,<sup>10</sup> since the West has come to value more highly a different route to knowledge, but it is fair to suggest that without this experience,

Boehme would probably have written nothing. He is quite specific about the origin of his insight:

I do not borrow of other Men in my Writings: and though indeed I quote many Examples and Testimonies of God's Saints, yet all is wrote by God in my Mind, so that I absolutely and infallibly believe, know, and see it, yet not in the Flesh, but in the Spirit, in the Impulse and Motion of God.

(Aur. 3:103)

He reiterates the point in a letter to Caspar Lindnern, dated 1621:

Thus now I have written, not from the instruction, or knowledge received from men; not from the learning, or reading of Bookes; but I have written out of my own Book which was opened in me, being the Noble similitude of God.<sup>11</sup>

In his first book, the Aurora (1612), which he originally intended for his own eyes only, he describes his illumination of 1600, to which Franckenberg had referred:

... in my resolved Zeal, I gave so hard an Assault, Storm, and Onset upon God, and upon all the Gates of Hell, as if I had more Reserves of Virtue and Power ready, with a Resolution to hazard my life upon it, which assuredly were not in my Ability without the Assistance of the Spirit of God, suddenly, after some violent Storms made, my Spirit did break through the Gates of Hell, even into the innermost Birth or Geniture of the Deity, and there I was embraced with Love, as a Bridegroom embraces his dearly beloved Bride.

But the Greatness of the Triumphant that was in the Spirit, I cannot express either in Speaking or Writing; neither can it be compared to any Thing, but with that, wherein the Life is generated in the Midst of Death, and it is like the Resurrection from the Dead.

In this Light my spirit suddenly saw through all, and in and by all the Creatures, even in Herbs and Grass, it knew God, who he is, and how he is, and what his Will is: And suddenly in that Light my Will was set on by

a mighty Impulse, to describe the Being of God.

(Aur. 19 : 10-12)

Further details emerge from Boehme's letter to Lindhern:

... the Gate was opened to me, that in one Quarter of an Hour I saw and knew more, than if I had been many Years together at an University...  
 For I saw and knew the Being of all Beings, the Byss and the Abyss, and the eternal Generation of the Holy Trinity, the Descent and Original of the World, and of all Creatures through the Divine Wisdom : I knew and saw in myself all the three Worlds, namely The Divine, angelical and paradisical; and The dark World, the Original of the Nature to the Fire; and then, thirdly, the external and visible World, being a Procreation or external Birth from both the internal and Spiritual Worlds. And I saw and knew the whole working Essence, in the Evil and the Good, and the Original and Existence of each of them, and likewise how the fruitful-bearing Womb of Eternity brought forth.<sup>12</sup>

According to his own account, more experiences followed in the years of silence which elapsed after the Aurora had been confiscated by the authorities, and these enabled him to obtain 'a better style in writing, also deeper and more grounded knowledge'.<sup>13</sup>

Initially, although he had had 'a thorough View of the Universe, as in a Chaos, wherein all Things are couched and wrapped up', he lacked the ability to explain it in writing.<sup>14</sup> This was where his reading of the 'very high Masters' (Aur. 10:45), which he does not deny, was of use to him: he needed a language in which to express what he had seen. He was well aware of the problem of communication :  
 'If I had the Tongue of an Angel, and thou hadst an angelical Understanding, we might very finely discourse of it' (Aur. 4:45). It is customary to

berate Boehme for his obscurity. Hegel found it impossible to read him continuously, complaining that the endless parade of 'qualities, spirits and angels' made him dizzy,<sup>15</sup> and one eighteenth century English bishop thought that 'Behmen's works would disgrace Bedlam at full moon'.<sup>16</sup> It is certainly true that Boehme can be laborious, repetitive and confusing, pulling the exasperated reader first one way and then the next, using a welter of ill-defined terms which jostle each other for attention. It has been argued that he never really understood the Paracelsan language he adopted;<sup>17</sup> certainly his use of Latin words does not always illuminate his meaning. The problem is most acute in the early works, up to The Threefold Life of Man. But there is a strange irony here. The very works which are the most chaotic in style are also the ones which have the greatest immediacy; the words seem to pour out with the eruptive force of a volcano, as if a voice was speaking, breathlessly, from the very roots of being. This is less noticeable in the greater detachment and lucidity of the later works.

The real difficulty, as far as Boehme's obscurity is concerned, is that he is forced to communicate through the written word a knowledge which he believes is obtainable only through another means. He continually contrasts the limitations of discursive reason (Vernunft), which 'knows nothing of God' (M.M. 8:16), with what he calls understanding

(Verstand), a higher intelligence which 'proceeds only from God' (S.R. 13:4). Vernunft is analytic and sequential, baffled by paradox and unable to see the universe other than as a series of unrelated parts. Verstand, on the other hand, is intuitive and holistic, able to grasp and reconcile contradictions in a simultaneous vision of the whole. Boehme continually maintains that his works are not the product of 'outward Reason' (T.F.L. 6:8); if the spirit leaves him, he cannot understand them himself (Aur. 3:105). If the reader of Boehme follows his advice, he must also attempt a leap from Vernunft to Verstand. As Mircea Eliade has stated of primitive myths:

... there is no other way of understanding a foreign mental universe than to place oneself inside it, at its very center, in order to progress from there to all the values that it possesses.<sup>18</sup>

Like the Gnostics and Kabbalists before him, Boehme is a mythologist as much as a philosopher (hence his appeal to the Romantic poets), and at the very least, some kind of imaginative or sympathetic identification with the higher level of reality that he seeks to convey is essential if the full scope of his enterprise is to be grasped.

Boehme's system must now be considered. The early works, the Aurora (1612), The Three Principles of the Divine Essence (1619), The Threefold Life of Man (1620), and the Forty Questions Concerning the Soul (1620), show a clear line of development, which Boehme himself acknowledged,<sup>19</sup> and which Koyré has exhaustively traced. The later works form a more or

less consistent system. Much of the development, however, consists of the clarification and expansion of existing ideas, rather than their repudiation.<sup>20</sup> The following exposition will be principally concerned with the mature system, although where necessary, the lines of development will be broadly indicated.

### God and Eternal Nature

Boehme's universe begins in the eternal silence of what he called the Ungrund. This term, which the seventeenth century English translators rendered as the 'abyss', first appears in the Forty Questions Concerning the Soul (1:26), and it marks the final stage of Boehme's probe into the primordial nature of God. The Aurora had been pantheistic; God was described as a harmony of seven qualities or powers, and the world was seen as an extension of his body (Aur. 2:17-18). In The Three Principles of the Divine Essence, however, Boehme attempted to penetrate beyond these qualities (now conceived in terms of the three prime alchemical substances, Sulphur, Mercury and Salt), to what lay behind them, the 'Originality [i.e. origin] of the Essence of all Essences' (Urkunde der Wesen aller Wesen) (T.P. 14:61). However, other than its designation as the eternal mind (Gemüth) of God, from which emanates a dialectic of will and desire (T.P. 14:60-80), we learn little about it. In The Threefold Life of Man, God is identified with the original will, antecedent to nature and free of it, which, in itself, is

'still and quiet', needing the stimulus of desire before it can reveal itself (T.F.L. 2:11-13, 75-77). The pure undifferentiated unity of the Ungrund, also described as the 'Nothing', is the unmanifest aspect of God and represents the final step in Boehme's quest. It is the equivalent of the en-sof of the Kabbalah, and the istigkeit of Meister Eckhart. It is eternal, boundless and forever at rest within itself. The eternal One, it is beyond good and evil, light and dark, joy and sorrow, or any duality of subject and object (Inc. 2:1 29-30, E.G. 1: 4-9). It is like an eye which sees itself (F.Q. 1: 25-6). Hidden within the eye is the entirety of creation in unmanifest form (S.T.P. 1:1:10, p.7). The Ungrund is therefore 'Nothing and All-things' (E.G. 1:8), an 'Eternal Chaos' (M.M. 1:8). But nevertheless, its possibilities would remain forever unrealized were it not for the presence of will, the inherent tendency within the Ungrund towards self-consciousness and self-expression. This will takes on a threefold aspect, corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity. Initially, as Father, it is indeterminate, simply 'the Will to something' (M.M. 7:6), searching to discover and reveal itself. Simultaneous with its act of seeking comes its awareness of itself as possessing a determinate structure, the eternal Good (E.G. 1:11). This second impulse within the will is the Son, Word, or Heart of the Father, his 'Pleasure or Delight'

( Cl. 18). The will has now grasped and comprehended itself as a will to love; the first stirring has been made in the silence. The Ungrund, in the gentlest of ripples, has moved to a Grund. The proceeding forth of this marshalled and purposeful love-will is the Spirit, ready to frame an image of itself, to itself, as an infinity of potentialities. This image, the passive mirror of Deity engendered by the 'Divine Imagination', Boehme calls Sophia, the Divine Wisdom. The equivalent of Plato's realm of Ideas, Plotinus' Divine Mind and the occult form of the Torah in Kabbalist speculation,<sup>21</sup> Wisdom is the blueprint of creation, a

Shadow, Idea, Representation, Reflexion  
or Pre-modelling in a Glass, wherein God  
has from Eternity seen in his Wisdom  
what could be.

(E.G. 5:32)

The Unity of God therefore exists in a 'threefold breathing' (T.Q. 2:6) as the holy name Jehovah (T.Q. 2:6-8), sporting with itself in eternal discovery and contemplation of the 'Powers, Colours and Virtues' ( Cl. 42) that are revealed in the Wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

But it is important to understand that as yet, none of this has an essential reality. It remains only a will towards manifestation, and a vision of inherent possibilities. God does not yet exist as a fully self-conscious being, the Nothing has not yet constructed the Something in which it can fully experience itself as a living organism. This brings

us to the heart of Boehme's system; the price of self-consciousness is the setting of one thing against another:

The reader is to know that in Yes and No consist all things, be they divine, diabolic, terrestrial, or however they may be named. The One, as the Yes, is pure power and life, and is the truth of God or God himself. He would in himself be unknowable, and in him would be no joy or elevation, nor feeling, without the No. The No is a counterstroke of the Yes or the truth, in order that the truth may be manifest and a something, in which there may be a contrarium, in which the eternal love may be moving, feeling, willing, and such as can be loved.

(T.Q. 3:2)

Only through the action of this dynamic polarity can God (or anything else) attain conscious personality. For Boehme, oneness is the equivalent of nothingness; the positive, outflowing Ja is defined only by its negation, Nein (as the sound of the word suggests: the open vowel is stopped only by the movement of the tongue as the consonant is formed. Boehme made frequent use of linguistic analysis such as this). God must have a dark centre and a light centre, poised in such a relationship that the dark serves to reveal rather than overshadow the light. The origin of this dark centre can be found in the opposition Boehme posits between will and desire, or spirit and nature. In the Trinity conceived as will, there is no desire (Begierde), but it is only desire that can produce essence (Wesen) (S.R. 2:10). Boehme characterizes desire as a restless centripetal force, possessed by an insatiable hunger for the stillness and quiet willing of the Unity. In the conjunction of the two

consists what he calls the 'eternal birth' of the Deity.

Boehme analyzes this process in terms of seven qualities, properties or 'fountain-spirits', which together make up Eternal Nature, or the realized body of God. He defines a quality as the 'Mobility, boiling, springing and driving of a Thing' (Aur. 1:3), and the seven qualities constitute the fundamental energies not only in God but also in creation. They are found in everything (M.M. 7.18), in an infinite number of combinations and patterns (Cl. 59) and everything is produced from them (Aur. 9.74).<sup>23</sup>

The first property constitutes the most fundamental creative act. It represents the beginning of all substantial life, the cause of hardness, roughness, sharpness and coldness. Boehme usually refers to it as 'astringency' (Herbigkeit). Without it, neither God nor creature could exist (Aur. 13:84). It arises from an act of contraction, or limitation, on the part of the will, which, longing for a Something, turns in upon itself and becomes transformed into the hunger of desire. Desire, centering on a point within the spaciousness of the Nothing, causes a 'Compaction', 'Coagulation' or 'Impression' to occur within it (M.M. 3:6). The Nothing is thereby overshadowed and darkened, but unbeknown to it, desire has sown the seed of substance: in the darkness the eternal Word incubates.

The second property arises from the first and stands in deadly opposition to it. Desire in expansive form, it opposes motion and differentiation to the solidifying and homogenising action of the first property. It is the 'sting' (Stachel) which continually goads existence into multiplicity, and is the cause of bitterness and pain. These two opposite poles of desire, continually pulling against each other, create the underlying tension in all existence, without which there could be no true life, but only the silent tranquillity of the Nothing. Neither property could exist without the other. Bound together in a furious antagonism, they mutually enkindle the very force from which they wish to become free. As a result of this unending conflict in which there can be neither victor nor vanquished, the two properties lapse into a circular movement, thereby generating the third property, the anguish (Angst), which Boehme describes as a 'turning wheel' (Cl. 80). These three qualities together form the foundation of the dark centre in God; they are the origin of hell, the dark world and the wrath of God, and yet they are also the platform from which joy can emerge. But as yet there is no proper self-consciousness (S.T.P. 1:1:49, p.17) but only a dark whirlpool of conflicting energies, called by Boehme the centrum naturae (S.T.P. 1:1:50, p.17).

The crucial moment in the unfoldment of the divine body has now been reached. Desire has taken an independent, self-tormenting life; will must now

arise to discipline and channel it. Spirit must redeem nature. This is accomplished through the fourth property, the lightning-flash of fire, which occupies a pivotal point in the seven. The process takes place as follows: the will of the eternal freedom longs to lay hold on the anguish of desire, so that it can have a basis for manifestation. In its turn, the anguish longs for the freedom and gentleness of the unity, in order to escape its torment. In other words, each has what the other needs, and as they move towards each other the creative spark is suddenly kindled, and amidst Blitz and Schrack the dark properties surrender their independent will, and the light bursts through. As the sting of death is broken there arises

... the other will of the Father, which he drew prior to Nature in the mirror of wisdom, viz. his heart of love, the desire of love, the kingdom of joy.

(S.T.P. 1:1:57, p.18)

Through the enkindling of fire, freedom becomes manifest, and the two 'principles', or centres, of darkness and light, anger and love, Ja and Nein, are born. Each dwells in its own place and 'works and wills in itself' (T.Q. 3:3) without knowledge of the other, and yet each is dependent upon the other. The severity of the anguish is mitigated by the light that has overcome it, and the light could have no essential existence without the fire which sustains it. Anguish is the root of joy.

The remaining properties constitute the second principle, or light world, in which the latent powers

of the unmanifest God are released and flow out unobstructed. The fifth property is love, or light, unity in motion, knowing and feeling itself as a flame of love. The sixth, sound or speech, is the fully articulated divine Word, and the seventh forms the body of the other six, in which they rest. This is Paradise, the eternal uncreated heaven, the divine body fully realized.

Although Boehme is forced to list the properties sequentially, he denies that they form a temporal progression, and neither should they be understood in Neoplatonic or Gnostic terms as a series of emanations from the One. In reality, no property is either first or last, all are equally eternal (Cl. 131). Within God, they operate as a unity (M.M. 6:22), one within the other (Aur. 10:66). Boehme calls this the 'temperature' (Cl. 123), a dynamic harmony characterized as joyful 'Love-play' (M.M. 6:2), and described in markedly sensual terms (Aur. 9 :61-7).

Boehme also links the properties in pairs (Cl. 126). The first and seventh are one, since they both refer to substance (the first as seed, the seventh as achieved reality); the second and sixth are identified, because the painful vibration of the one finds its fulfilment in the harmony of speech represented by the other. The last pair, three and five, are linked because Angst arises only when the desire to love is obstructed. The higher ternary therefore represents the fulfilment of the lower;

directionless desire is transformed into a purposeful love-will, the change being effected through the fire of the fourth property, which stands as the central transition point.

Boehme also connects the properties with the Trinity, although not with great precision. He ascribes the first principle to the Father and the second principle to the Son. The Holy Spirit occupies an ill-defined position as the 'egressive Power in the Love-Flame' (S.R. 14:37) or as the 'moving Life in the Tincture' (M.M. 7:13). Sometimes Boehme seems to take the logical step of equating the Spirit with the third principle, the created world (T.F.L. 4:82), but he does not do this consistently. In the pairs referred to above, properties one and seven are assigned to the Father, two and six to the Son, and three and five to the Spirit, which leaves the fourth property unaccounted for.<sup>24</sup>

Traditionally, seven is a highly symbolic number, and Boehme also links the properties with the seven days of the week (E.G. 3:94), the seven days of creation (C1. 137) - the seventh property representing the rest of the Sabbath - and the seven planets (S.R. 9:8), each property bearing a resemblance to the functions attributed to each planet by traditional astrology. This sheds some light on the pairing of properties three and five, since their astrological equivalents are Mars and

Venus respectively, which represent opposite but complementary values; the energetic assertiveness of Mars is balanced by the more gentle, harmonizing virtues of Venus. Similarly, Saturn (Boehme's first property) is traditionally associated with the denseness of matter, and with restriction, limitation and rigidity.

The seven properties could also have been developed under the influence of the Kabbalah. The parallels are striking. Like the seven properties, the ten Sefiroth, or attributes of God, in the Kabbalah represent a dynamic harmony of interrelated powers. The first Sefirah, Kether Elyon ('supreme crown'), which emerges from the primordial nothing of en-sof (Ungrund), corresponds to the majesty of Boehme's God in Trinity, prior to Eternal Nature; the second Sefirah, Hokhmah, is identical to Boehme's Sophia. Also similar is the presence of a potentially dark aspect of the divine, Gevurah, or Din (representing justice, the basis of God's wrath), which is tempered by love and mercy (Binah). The final Sefirah, Malkhuth, or Kingdom, resembles Boehme's seventh property, the house or garment of the other six.<sup>25</sup> It would, however, be wrong to call Boehme a Christian Kabbalist. Although the structural similarities are close, his system is his own. There is nothing in the Kabbalah, for example, which resembles Boehme's extraordinary accounts of the process by which the Angst of the first principle is generated, and the mechanics of

transition, by means of the lightning-flash of fire seems also to be an original concept.

An even more intriguing comparison is with the Hindu concept of the three gunas, since it is extremely unlikely that Boehme could have known of it. Like the seven properties, the gunas form the basic constituents of all creation, and are never found in isolation from each other; all three are present in everything. Tamas is a negative, retarding force (dark world) and opposed to it is sattva, the purity of Being, identified with Jnâna, the light of knowledge<sup>26</sup> (light world). Rajas is the energy which provides the spur to activity, and acts as a link between the other two, itself remaining neutral (fire; the parallel is suggestive, if not exact). As in Boehme, creation results only when the equilibrium of the gunas (properties), at rest within Prakriti, the primordial undifferentiated substance, is disturbed. Creation then proceeds through the interaction of the two opposed forces.<sup>27</sup>

Boehme's theogony can now be briefly summarized: the Ungrund, beyond distinctions, develops in itself a will to manifest, and 'imagines' its potentialities in the mirror of Wisdom. It transforms these latent possibilities into essential realities through the creation of a 'contrary will', desire, which is then overcome through a sudden 'lightning-flash', and yoked in service of the divine will. This provides the basis

for God to manifest in flames of love and joy. Boehme constantly emphasizes the unity of God, who is pure love without shadow of anger (T.Q. 3:27). God cannot be divided against himself, and can neither will evil nor be the cause of evil (E.G. 2:109). The fire within him is only one fire, although it necessarily separates into two principles. Within God, the 'temperature' can never be disturbed. Boehme's doctrine thus explains how God can be completely one and completely good, and yet also be a self-conscious, personal being. Whilst excluding evil from God, Boehme has also managed to lay the foundations of a theory of the origin of evil, and by introducing the idea of the seven properties he has produced a framework within which he can explain any event in the universe, from the growth of a plant (S.R. 8:15-23) to the birth of a child (T.P. 13:49-60).

#### The Angels and the Fall of Lucifer

The Angels were created out of all the properties of Eternal Nature (M.M. 8:1). They are the names of God (T.Q. 5:14), the letters of his Word (T.Q. 5:20) springing from his breath (T.Q. 5:1). They are the thoughts of God (T.Q. 6:5), the embodiment of the divine ideas (T.Q. 6:10). The will of the Deity is in their imaginations (T.P. 4:66) and they act as 'co-imagers' of creation (Aur. 13:144), bringing their desires into shape and form (T.Q. 6:10). They exist in three hierarchies and seven dominions, corresponding to the three principles and seven

properties (E.G. 4:52). In the Aurora the three realms were ruled by Michael, Lucifer and Uriel, and corresponded to Father, Son and Spirit respectively (Aur. 12:100-45).

All the angels were originally created for the light (M.M. 9:5), and should have remained as the innocent expressions and executors of the divine will. But they were also endowed with freedom of choice, and through imagination could introduce themselves into the dark or the light centre (E.G. 4:56). Lucifer, filled with pride in his own beauty and power, was not content with his angelical estate. He desired to domineer in the strength of the fiery properties, despising the gentleness of the Heart of God in the light (T.P. 4:68). He valued the Nein more highly than the Ja. As he joined his own will to the 'contrary will' in the dark centre, he abandoned the holy name which should have been his food (T.Q. 8:9) and broke himself off from the divine unity (T.Q. 7:5). At that instant the Ja within him was extinguished, he lost his angelical splendour and the dark properties within him lapsed into their original bitter and painful condition. The Nein no longer breathed with the unity but with its own harsh and poisonous breath (T.Q. 8:3). Lucifer had made two where before there had been only one (Aur. 12:75). With the fall of Lucifer and his hosts, existence ceased to be perfect. For the first time there were creatures whose centre of consciousness was not in the 'temperature' but in the unredeemed

powers of the dark properties; hell had been born.<sup>28</sup>

### Creation

The fall of Lucifer preceded the creation of the world (Inc. 1:5:107), and was its immediate cause (T.P.5:7). However, Boehme does not imply that had Lucifer not fallen, creation would not have taken place. His position is close to the maxim 'good diffuses itself' which characterizes the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation from the One.<sup>29</sup> In his view, the divine nature is expansive and overflowing, always seeking wider avenues of self-expression. He therefore regards the created world as a continuation of the process of divine self-revelation already begun in Eternal Nature. It is God's 'Sport out of himself', an outbreath of the eternal speaking Word, in which a multiplicity of powers are attuned into one harmonious sound (S.R. 16:1-3). It is in this breathing out that the 'compaction' of spiritual form into material substance takes place. The inner and outer worlds therefore correspond to each other as the speaker to his word or the breather to his breath.

The creation can also be seen in alchemical terms. As the world is exhaled, its components are separated out from the mysterium magnum, in which exist the ideal form of every created being (E.G. 4:22). God therefore becomes the supreme alchemist, his power represented by the second of the seven properties, equated with the alchemical Mercury

(C 1. 83, 115), which acts as the 'Separator, or Divider in the Powers and Virtues' (C 1. 76), throughout the six days of creation (C 1. 138-50). The details of the process are almost impossible to follow, as Boehme, elaborating on the Biblical text, juggles with a host of properties, elements and 'astrums'.<sup>30</sup> The important point is that, like the God of Genesis, he declares the finished product to be good. The whole creation rested in the seventh day, which as the equivalent of the seventh property, was Paradise, the eternal day, in which all life worked together as one body (M.M. 16:16, 23). Evil was no more manifest than night in the day (C 1. 153). Boehme does not, however, view the world itself as divine. It is not the body of God that he had declared it to be in the Aurora (2:17-18). Although it has sprung from eternity it cannot be identified with it, although eternity remains couched within it. His point is that because the world has been breathed out of both the inner principles, darkness and light, it contains them both; its nature is dual. While the properties had existed only in the divine essence they had been as one, and there had been no possibility of the 'temperature' being disturbed. But in the outbreathing, the pattern of their existence was no longer unalterable. For as long as eternity continued to penetrate and illumine time, Paradise would remain on the earth, but it needed only the touch of a confused but powerful mind to destroy

the delicate equilibrium. In other words, the condition of creation depends upon man.

### Man and his Fall

Man was created in Lucifer's stead, as a new king, to possess what Lucifer had lost (M.M. 17:31). He is a complete image of God, an expression of the divine Word, bearing within him the divine name (M.M. 4:13). Of all creatures, only man can bring the 'Wonders of the world' to light (T.F.L. 9:7). In this sense, his life is higher than that of the angels (Aur. 11:137). Boehme's view of man is dominated by the ancient idea of the correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Man can be lord of the universe because he is an epitome of it, formed from all three principles. Boehme therefore distinguishes three levels of existence within man, the elemental, sidereal and spiritual, each with its own soul and body. The first two make up the 'outward' or 'natural' man, formed from the limus (or limbus) of the earth.<sup>31</sup> In accordance with the traditional idea that the inferior is governed by the superior (M.M. 10:54), and that each layer of existence receives influences from the one above it,<sup>32</sup> the sidereal body governs the elemental body, dwelling within it (M.M. 11:23-5). But it is not divine and cannot reach beyond its own principle, the Spiritus Mundi (C 1. 158). Boehme always associates the stars and elements with the sphere of Vernunft. From the

point of view of traditional wisdom this is somewhat idiosyncratic, but is entirely consistent with Boehme's system, with his desire to downgrade reason and elevate 'understanding' (Verstand).

The latter is contained only in the 'holy spiritual Body' (M.M. 15:22), which is formed from the one, pure element, out of which the four elements separate (M.M. 15:11-13).

The soul, like the body, stands in three principles. It has its origin in the first principle (T.P. 2:3), and Boehme describes it as the 'roughest Thing in man... fiery, harsh, bitter and strong' (T.P. 13:30). This is its root condition; it then receives the light of the second principle (T.P. 19:5), and also acquires an external aspect, the 'animal Soul', which corresponds to the Spiritus Mundi (M.M. 15:20). In one of Boehme's last works, the unfinished Theosophic Questions, he hints at a Pauline, tripartite division of man's constitution into soul (fire world), spirit (light world) and body (outer world) (T.Q. 12:15-17), but in general he uses the term spirit only loosely, often interchangeably with soul (e.g. M.M. 11:20, 30).<sup>33</sup>

The first man, Adam, was created perfect, in great beauty and glory (M.M. 18:12). The seven properties within him were in equilibrium (M.M. 16:5), and the spiritual body penetrated the outward body, each rejoicing in the presence of the

other (M.M. 18:7-8). He was androgynous, and had the ability to reproduce out of himself without pain or distress (M.M. 18:10). He was subject to no disease or vice (T.F.L. 11:19), suffered neither heat nor cold and knew nothing of fear (M.M. 18:13-4). He could have become immortal (T.P. 10:12). He ruled over the outward world, which was his playground (M.M. 18:13), and in this lay his highest function. Like the angels, he was to act in partnership with God as a co-former of creation, completing the work of divine revelation. This was the very purpose for which he had been created (Inc. 1:4:29).

However, Adam's idyllic existence proved to be short-lived. The details of the fall will be fully discussed in the following chapters, so only a brief outline is necessary here.<sup>34</sup> Adam's imagination should have remained wholly in the inner, spiritual world of the second principle. This was the life of bliss for which he was created, and one of Boehme's basic tenets is that everything should remain in the principle to which it belongs. Adam should have been like a king who rules his territories without having to leave his inner fortress. Had he done so, the outer world would have remained solely for his play and sport. But he was not content with this. Like Lucifer, he possessed a will of his own, a selfhood. He desired to experience the properties in themselves, when out of the 'temperature', to know the outer

world in itself, divorced from its spiritual basis. He sought multiplicity rather than unity. From this one act of the imagination, his fall proceeded. He fell asleep, which signified the loss of his divine consciousness. When he awoke, it was to time rather than eternity. At the same time, he lost Sophia, the divine wisdom, who had been his heavenly bride, and received Eve, created from the female element within him. This separation of the male and female 'tinctures'<sup>35</sup> was a fatal event, since a divided life cannot remain in eternity. But as yet, the fall was not complete; Adam and Eve remained in Eden. The final stage occurred when Eve, who inherited from Adam the same incipient desire to taste the fruits of the outward world, succumbed to the subtle deceits of Lucifer, whose imagination was set against man.

The consequences of the fall were immediate: the body became gross matter, the divine light within was eclipsed, and the 'temperature' amongst the properties was destroyed. With innumerable contending wills striving for mastery within him, man became many times divided against himself. Having lost Verstand, the divine understanding, he found himself occupying the world of stars and elements, the province of Vernunft, but now as servant rather than master, subject to the will of the Spiritus Mundi.

Adam's act also introduced disorder into his environment. The holy element withdrew into itself - this is Boehme's interpretation of the Biblical curse (T.P. 18:5) - and the outward world stood revealed in all its rawness as a scene of perpetual conflict, where the evil and the good struggle incessantly for possession of the human soul. The playground had been transformed into a battlefield.

It will have been noticed that will and imagination form an important element in Boehme's account of the fall, as in his entire cosmic drama. The primal will beholding itself in the mirror of Wisdom, Lucifer's act of rebellion, the ability of angels and men to take part in the creative process - all these are acts of the imagination. Imagination is the means through which subjective idea passes into objective reality. It acts as the creative instrument of will. Will alone is not sufficient, but 'the Imagination of the willing maketh Substance' (Inc. 2:2:23). Will and imagination can be creative or destructive; they hold the keys to life and death, and it is here that man's freedom is to be found, which he retains in spite of the fall. He can choose to place himself where he will, in darkness or light, hell or heaven (T.F.L. 14:72). Only imagination can affect the condition of the soul, for good or ill (F.Q. 11:9), 'for what life imagines after, that it receives' (S.T.P. 4:6:14, p. 65). The imagination is linked with the two

wills, self-will and 'resigned' will, which Boehme sees operating throughout human history. Self-will is particular, affirming its own independence, but bound for darkness and destruction. The resigned will is at one with the universal will which brought it forth, and inherits freedom and the light.

### Regeneration

In spite of the fall, man is not irredeemably lost. Unlike Lucifer, the divine image within him is dormant, not totally destroyed. Whatever the weakness of man, the innermost tendency of life remains expansive, seeking to express itself, and containing within itself the seeds of its own renewal. When man fell, taking the entire cosmos with him, this inward regenerative principle began to unfold itself. The forces which would restore equilibrium to man and world were set in motion.

God had perceived in the mirror of Wisdom that man would fall, and therefore, even prior to the creation of Adam, the name Jesus had been incorporated into Adam's heavenly form as a regenerator (E.G. 6:24). It was this imprinted name, which embodied the 'deepest Love of the Deity' (M.M. 23:16), which prevented man from falling further and becoming a devil (Inc. 1:7:44), and in which the salvation of the world was assured, even before the incarnation of the name Jesus in the historical figure of Christ (Inc. 1:7:45). When man fell, the holy name Jesus began to stir itself;

the Heart of God, the light of the second principle, which had rested from eternity (Inc. 1:8:36) moved to reawaken the sleeping holy element within man, to rekindle the Ja and overcome the Nein.

The incarnate Christ, like the first man, stood in all three principles. He had to possess a fully human body if there was to be a meeting point between the divine and the human. Otherwise there could be no redemption (Inc. 1:8:1-4). He therefore took on the essence of man in the womb of Mary (T.P.22:41) whilst himself remaining sinless (W.C. 3 (Of Reg.) 3:84). Also like Adam, Christ was a 'Masculine Virgin' (M.M. 58:46); in him the tinctures of fire and light, male and female, were reunited. He and the Virgin Sophia were as one person (M.M. 50:48). Through Christ, man received once more his heavenly bride, whom Adam had lost, and so recovered his paradisiacal wholeness (M.M. 25:14). It will be apparent that Boehme is developing his own version of Paul's doctrine of Christ as the second Adam. The two figures are inextricably linked, as two sides of the same coin. Adam is the 'outspoken, formed, creaturely Word'; Christ the 'Eternal Speaking Word' (E.G. 6:104). What the first Adam lost, the second Adam restored. But Boehme is more of a mythologist than a theologian. He interprets Christ's death as a reverse image of Adam's fall; events that are separated in time become mystically fused. The breaking of Christ's body on the cross is identified

with the rending of Adam's body when the woman was taken from him, but with the opposite effect, the reunion of the sexes (M.M. 19:6-7). Christ's rest in the grave becomes the sleep of Adam (M.M. 19:5), but again the result is different: the sleeping Adam lost his inner divinity and retained only the outward man; the resting Christ cast off his outer humanity whilst retaining his divinity. One of the crucial points in the redemptive process is the forty day temptation of Christ, which is identified with the forty days of Adam's innocency (M.M. 18:12). Where Adam had fallen, Christ, his soul baptised in the water of the holy element (T.P. 22:84-6), withstood, his imagination remaining in the Word of God which was his food (T.P. 22:87-92). With this, 'the Devil lost his Right in the Soul' (T.P. 22:93), and the divine love, embodied in Christ and now safe in its own purity, was free to accomplish its act of redemption. The name Jesus had from eternity interposed against the wrath fire of the Father (Inc. 1:9:30), and since the fall had mitigated the severity of the Father's judgement against man (S.R. 11:14), but a greater movement was now demanded. The love must enter the awakened anger in order to quench it (S.R. 11:8), and so transform its operation in man from a fire of wrath to a fire of love (S.R. 11:6). Such was the crucifixion; the wrath was drowned in the divine blood (S.R. 11:10), the anger and the love became as one (S.R. 11:35), and God and man were reunited (S.R. 11:34). What

died on the cross was not the immortal name Jesus (S.R. 12:3), but only the human selfhood (M.M. 39:24) which Christ had adopted and which he now resigned up to the deity (S.R. 12:1). The death of Christ was therefore also the death of the Adamic selfhood (S.R. 12:7), at which human life returned to Paradise; a new creature sprung up out of the old (S.R. 12:5).

Boehme's account of what he calls the 'Process of Christ' (S.R.Ch.11) can be understood at the psychological, historical or theogonic level, since he sees life as a series of recurring patterns (S.R. 7:72). The transformation of death into life through the crucifixion is the same as the process by which the dark properties are penetrated by the light as Eternal Nature unfolds. The alchemical attempt to purify matter (which Boehme calls the 'philosophic Work', S.R. 11:5) must also follow the same pattern, as Signatura Rerum makes abundantly clear. Man has the ability to transmute wrathful nature, but he must first change himself (S.R. 8:26); the death of the selfhood and the rebirth of Christ in the soul must be re-enacted within each individual. Although the manifestation in history of the 'process of Christ' had fundamentally changed the balance of power between the two inner principles - the wrath no longer held unopposed sway - it remained up to each individual to complete the work of salvation within himself. Christ had destroyed the power of death, but this

was of no use to man unless he experienced Christ within himself. He must turn away from selfhood and self-will, in which there is only discord and restless activity (M.M. 66:65), and return to the stillness of the Nothing, where all activity ceases:

When thou art quiet or silent, then  
thou art that which God was before  
Nature and Creature, and whereof he  
made thy Nature and Creature: Then  
thou hearest and seest with that  
wherewith God saw and heard in thee,  
before thy own Willing, Seeing and  
Hearing began.

(W.C.4. (S.S.L.) 4)

The self-will then becomes one with the universal will which brought it forth, and man breathes once more with the unity (S.R. 15:46; D. I. 2:17-21, p p. 184-6). This aspect of the regenerative process marks Boehme's closest affinity with the Dionysian via negativa and its expression in the medieval German mystics, particularly Eckhart and the Theologia Germanica. The proof of the holy man is that he 'stands still to God in all Things' (M.M. 66:68), as Christ did (S.R. 10:33) and Adam failed to do (W.C. 3 (Of Reg.)2:52). In prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow, he maintains equanimity; all is alike to him (M.M. 66:63).<sup>36</sup> He desires nothing and acknowledges nothing as his own, and therefore nothing in the world can enslave him (W.C. 4. (S.S.L.) 9). But this detached equanimity presents only one side of Boehme's view of the regenerate life. He was not content with mere stillness and passive acceptance. Just as the

Nothing could experience itself as joy only through movement in the Something (S.R. 2:22), so it was for man, and Boehme sought to combine the stillness of the Ungrund with the dynamism of the working properties, to reclaim time as well as eternity, the sensual as well as the supersensual. He was therefore less world-negating than many mystics (St. John of the Cross, for example). The via negativa lay side by side with other streams of thought : the Hermetic desire for power over nature (M.M. 11:9 ff) - no passive acceptance here - the alchemical vision of turning earth into heaven (S.R. 10:53), the Judeo-Christian view of the redemptive purpose of history and the Christian millenarian hope. The regenerate man once more becomes the ruler of creation, acting as God's regent, his life resembling that of Adam before the fall (T.P. 3:3). Boehme's vision of the integrated life combined dynamic action (man must 'open the wonders') with inner stillness, implying a state of eternal readiness rather than of passive quietism. A further implication is that the new born man, having embraced the divine freedom, passes beyond struggle, and his life therefore becomes spontaneous play, as it had been for Adam (M.M. 24:27). Boehme's own experiences had convinced him that such an enlightened condition was possible (T.P. 10:1, 22:7), although sometimes he doubted whether it could be permanently maintained in this life (T.P. 16:12). He often emphasized the fragility

of the Christian life, the sufferings and trials it must undergo on earth, subject to the assaults of the devil. Final and irreversible regeneration had to wait until the death of the physical body and its subsequent resurrection (S.R. 11:53). There is tension between these two positions, and Boehme was forced to balance what he conceived to be possible in the present, against what had to be relegated to future hope. He was certainly at his most impassioned and uninhibited when he wrote of the transformation which could be accomplished now, in the present. This was what he instinctively longed for. Man's life on earth, pregnant with divinity, was too noble and too sweet to be passed over in misery and ignorance. The need for self-knowledge lies at the core of Boehme's idea of regeneration; man under the spell of Vernunft knows nothing of the jewel he carries within him. Boehme's preface to The Three Principles of the Divine Essence sums up the practical nature of his endeavour:

Man can undertake nothing from the Beginning of his Youth, nor in the whole Course of his Time in this World, that is more profitable and necessary for him, than to learn to know himself; what he is, out of what, from whence, and for what he is created, and what his Office is.

(T.P. : Author's Preface, 1)

Self-knowledge is the key to knowledge both of God and of creation (T.P.: Author's Preface, 1-3), and Boehme links the latter with the human faculty of speech, which man alone possesses. This leads directly to the final topic to be discussed, Boehme's theory of language.

The Language of Nature

Boehme's theory of the 'language of nature' (Natursprache) is fundamental to his thought. He describes it as the root of all other languages, in which the perfect knowledge of everything is contained (Aur. 20:88). It rests on a correlation between the name of an object and its physical form, and an explanation of it must trace out Boehme's view of the origin of language in the creative Word of God. In the silence of the Ungrund, which could be described as the transcendental level of the Word, all language is at rest, contained within the divine unity. Thereafter, Boehme describes the unfoldment of the entire universe in terms of speech. The original will to manifest is 'mute', but its heart or centre (the Son), as 'the Mouth of the willing', gives it a voice. The Spirit is the energy which propels the word forth, and that which is 'outspoken' is the Wisdom, in which the 'word of Life' becomes manifest to itself (Inc. 2:2:12-14). This ideal level of manifestation, which contains the entirety of creation in seed form, is also the level at which the name of each object or creature is brought into being, the name being understood as a network of subtle impulses or tendencies in which the entire structure of the physical form is contained, in the same way that an oak tree is contained in an acorn. Idea, name and physical form are therefore indissolubly linked. God is the 'Eternal speaking Word' (E.G. 1:70), and the material

world is the 'out-spoken formed Word' (E.G. 1:70) or 'pronounced Voice' (M.M. 13:10), in which the speaking word continually breathes itself forth. Boehme associates this specifically with the sixth property of Eternal Nature, which is the 'speaking, viz. the Divine Mouth, the Sound or Voice of the Power' (E.G. 3:71). In the movement from subtle idea to gross substance, which constitutes the act of creation, the potentialities inherent in the name become realized in a palpable structure. Every created object or being therefore bears its name within itself, as the most subtle expression of its essential nature. To apprehend a thing at the level of its name is to penetrate to its inner qualities, characteristics and potentialities. This knowledge of what Boehme calls the 'signature' yields power over the created world; and it lies at the basis of magical theory regarding the potency of proper names.<sup>37</sup>

The language of nature was spoken by Adam, who, as Genesis relates (Gen. 2:19), was able to name the animals (M.M. 19:22). Adam's discourse, it can be surmised, was essentially a communion and celebration between him and the entire cosmos. His words, resonant with the signatures of all creation, touched and enlivened bird, beast and flower, thrilling a universe which was vibrantly alive. He stood as revealer, awakener and pronouncer of a universe bound into a living harmony of sound.

The language of nature was lost by the confusion of tongues at Babel (M.M. 35:14), but Boehme saw it partially reflected in other languages, particularly Hebrew, Greek and Latin (E.H.M. 7:6ff, p. 154). Human speech also retains a vestige of its original purity, and Boehme hints at the possibility of a mystical, intuitive form of communication between men, based on a perception of the 'signature' of the other (S.R. 1:1-3). But fallen man, imprisoned in the Nein, is ignorant of his own powers (T.Q. 5:23-4).

Boehme also uses the idea of a natural language for the exegesis of certain scriptural passages, such as the first verses of Genesis (Aur. 18:58ff) and the Lord's Prayer (T.F.L. 16:38ff). His analysis is based on the assignment of specific values to each letter of the alphabet, according to the movements made by the tongue, teeth and lips in the act of pronunciation. The vowels, which were incorporated into Boehme's scheme from the Mysterium Magnum onwards, are identified with the holy name Jehovah (M.M. 35:49ff). As pure undifferentiated spirit, lacking any determinate structure, they can be made manifest only through interaction with the consonants, which are to the vowels what the Nein is to the Ja. Boehme is particularly fascinated by the German r, 'snarling' at the back of the throat,<sup>38</sup> which he takes to represent the dark properties, since it provides the necessary obstruction to the outflowing of the

breath, in which the vowels are contained. What this amounts to is that in the act of speech, the human mouth reveals itself as a complete microcosm, containing and putting in motion the fundamental impulses of creation, re-enacting the Word of God. Words, whether human or divine, make worlds.<sup>39</sup>

The language of nature has obvious similarities with theories of language developed by the Kabbalists,<sup>40</sup> but it should also be pointed out that, as with the seven properties, Boehme's theory bears a close resemblance to a system of thought about which he knew nothing, namely the traditional understanding of Sanskrit, which was regarded as a holy language precisely because it was thought to exhibit a close correspondence to the actual structures of the physical world.

Chapter Two'Morning Redness in the Rising':'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'

Kathleen Raine has stated that The Marriage of Heaven and Hell 'marks the strongest influence of Boehme on Blake',<sup>1</sup> and Martin K. Nurmi has suggested that it was the outcome of a 'relatively recent spiritual crisis involving both Swedenborg and Boehme, in which intellectual affinity shifted from Swedenborg to Boehme'.<sup>2</sup> David Erdman's view is similar, that Blake was 'turning back from Swedenborg's sweetness to the "Wrath" of Boehme',<sup>3</sup> and this has been the general critical view.<sup>4</sup> Reference is usually made to the doctrine of contraries. Nurmi believed that Blake took his 'general conception' of the contraries from Boehme, but used it for his own purposes, the final result bearing only a distant resemblance to Boehme's original concept.<sup>5</sup> In a later judgement, Nurmi concluded that the idea of existence as a conflict between opposites was a philosophical commonplace, and could be found in poetry ranging from Spenser to Pope, and in the philosophies of Heraclitus and the Pythagoreans. Blake was only adapting what was freely available.<sup>6</sup>

It is certainly true that Blake could have discovered the basic idea of contraries from a number of sources. Robert Fludd quoted Heraclitus approvingly, that 'all things are made and composed

of strife and friendship, that is to say, Of hatred and love',<sup>7</sup> and Paracelsus declared that 'nothing exists without friendship and enmity'.<sup>8</sup> Swedenborg also had a theory of contraries, believing that nothing could exist except in relation to its opposite. For every good, there was an evil opposed to it, and knowledge of a thing could be deduced from a knowledge of its opposite.<sup>9</sup> But it was in Boehme that the theory had taken a new development. His originality lay in his belief that, firstly, it was only through conflict that joy could become manifest, and secondly that in the perfect life of Eternal Nature, conflict did not simply lead to joy, as something beyond itself, it became the very joy itself. Yeats captured this vision in his play The Unicorn from the Stars, in which the dreamer Martin Hearne (who is based on Boehme), discovers that the life of Paradise is like 'a battle where the sword made a sound that was like laughter'.<sup>10</sup> This is something quite different from the common resolution of the problem of opposites, whereby all discord is considered to form part of a larger pattern of order or harmony. Blake's approach in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell clearly resembles that of Boehme, and in the emphasis which both place on the need to reconcile the opposites at a higher plane of existence, they are also distinguished from Swedenborg, who considered that a static balance had to be maintained between opposing forces of good and evil, and saw no need to transcend these

conventional categories.<sup>11</sup> Blake chose Boehme's dynamism in preference to Swedenborg's equilibrium; his aim was to apply Boehme's insight to the creative activity of the artist, and also to use it as a weapon with which to overturn conventional religion and morality.

However, the problem of the contraries cannot be quite so neatly resolved. There is a certain ambivalence in Blake's doctrine, which, curiously, is also found in Boehme; both suggest that several different types of relationship between the contraries are possible. The issue is brought into focus by a passage from one of Boehme's mature works, The Election of Grace :

And in Nature there is one Thing always set opposite to another, the one to be an Enemy to the other. Yet not to that End to be at Enmity one against another, but that in the Strife one should stir up the other, and manifest it; that the Mysterium Magnum should enter into Distinction, and be an Exulting and Joyfulness in the Eternal ONE.

(E.G. 2:69-70)

Boehme has stated the problem bluntly: everything is at enmity, and yet not at enmity, and Blake's aphorism 'Opposition is true Friendship' (20, K157) might almost be a marginal annotation to this very passage. However, the real nature of this opposition needs to be further investigated. Can there ever be a true marriage between either Blake's contraries of reason and energy or Boehme's two principles of darkness and light, or is it a question of one contrary or principle subjugating

the other? The conquered may well serve the conqueror without ever being properly reconciled to him. An examination of Boehme and Blake reveals that, at different points, they describe both kinds of relationship. In Boehme's early works, particularly the Aurora, he emphasizes that there is no antipathy between the seven 'fountain-spirits'. As long as the 'temperature' is maintained, they know only 'Joy and Delight' (Aur. 10:93), 'triumphing and rejoicing' (Aur. 9:61), and their activity is 'a pleasant Striving, Struggling and wonderful Generating' (Aur. 13:109), carried out in love, mercy and friendliness (Aur. 4:12), without trace of a contrary will (Aur. 10:90-1). In The Three Principles of the Divine Essence, where the properties have become more firmly differentiated into first and second principles, Boehme implies that the dark properties are actually transformed by their contact with the light. The astringency, for example, 'loses its dark, rough, harsh, and cold Virtue, and leaps or springs up for Joy, and rejoices in the Light' (T.P. 2:9). But this is less apparent in the later works. In the Signatura Rerum, after the lightning-flash, 'the Darkness remains in itself dark, and the Light continues in itself light' (S.R. 14:26), and in the Mysterium Magnum it is emphasized that even in Eternal Nature 'the Darkness is the greatest Enmity of the Light' (M.M. 5:7). The dark properties are therefore not joyous in themselves;

they do not love the light, even though they serve it by acting as its hidden foundation. In this sense the first principle, the contractive, form-giving basis of existence, is passive, and the second principle, the expansive, outflowing light is active, and this seems also to be the pattern which underlies Blake's contraries, reason and energy.<sup>12</sup> The ideal relationship seems to depend on the passivity of reason, which Blake regards as creative only in the sense that it stamps order and form on the 'Ideas' generated by energy (6, K150). Its task begins and ends at energy's circumference (4, K159). Even though each is necessary for the existence of the other - energy, the Prolific, would be dissipated unless reason, the Devourer, was on hand to capture its delight (17, K155) - they are not equal partners; energy dictates, reason obeys. This ideal relationship is destroyed by the self-assertiveness of reason, usurping its proper position, just as in Boehme, the 'temperature' is disrupted when the dark properties break out of their subservient role and become 'kindled' (Aur. 8:29).

But the very idea of a marriage suggests that the relationship between contraries should be something more than one of domination and submission, and both the embracing Angel and Devil at the foot of the title-page, and the productive co-operation between Dragon and Viper in the printing house (15, K153-5) point to a relationship which is much closer to the energetic and fruitful love-wrestling

between all the properties which Boehme had emphasized in the Aurora. The Song of Liberty, which proclaims that 'now the lion & wolf shall cease' (27, K159-60), and is illustrated with several unfettered, leaping 'horses of instruction' also suggests a more active role for reason. However, Blake complicates the matter further in the section on the relationship between the Prolific and the Devourer, where he states that such a marriage cannot be attained. The Prolific and the Devourer correspond to two 'classes of men', who must always remain enemies, existence itself depending upon their opposition (16-17, K155).<sup>13</sup> It is by no means clear that he is referring only to the Devourer in its perverted capacity as the enslaver of energy. He could equally be implying that the contraries must always and inevitably be opposed, whether or not reason behaves itself, in which case he has introduced a third type of relationship between them. This also has a parallel in Boehme, who states at one point that the two centres within God are in 'continual conflict' (T.Q. 3:3), the implication being that this is neither 'love-wrestling' nor a condition where one principle submits to the authority of the other, but a struggle in which both principles attempt to become the active and dominant partner.

To summarize what has been established so far: three different kinds of relationship between the contraries, or principles, can be discerned in both

Blake and Boehme. Firstly, one of mutual affirmation in love and joy; secondly, a delicate balance based on the subjugation of one by the other, and thirdly, one of endless struggle. A fourth can be added if the enmity between Prolific and Devourer is taken to be the result of the Devourer rising above its station, in which case the correspondence is with the operation of Boehme's two principles in the fallen world, where they become divided into good and evil, with no possibility of reconciliation between them:

...the Wrath of God, together with the Devils, are, in the House of this World, set in Opposition to the love, so that both these all the Time of this World, must fight and strive one against the other, as two Armies in the Field.

(Aur. 18:121)

If this is what Blake is implying, it suggests that even a misguided, self-assertive reason is a necessary part of 'progression'; the relationship remains a creative one, almost in spite of itself. In Blake's later work, when he needed to find a place for negations and selfhoods, he would express the same idea unequivocally: 'to be an Error & to be Cast out is a part of God's design' (V.L.J., K613). Faced with the same problem, Boehme had also decided that even the overt manifestation of evil in the fallen third principle was useful, because it provided the means for God to further reveal himself (T.F.L. 9:13, M.M. 71:12-17).<sup>14</sup>

The fact that the same pattern, and the same ambiguity, underlies the treatment of contraries in

both Blake and Boehme strongly suggests that Blake was grappling with the problem of how to unify existence without destroying its essential polarity, in the wake of a study of Boehme. Leopold Damrosch argues that as Blake's myth developed, he found it increasingly difficult to accommodate the idea of two active, mutually affirmative contraries, tending to 'exalt one and repel or even exterminate the other',<sup>15</sup> and there is truth in this as far as reason and energy are concerned. However, the contraries could also take other forms, and Blake continued to employ Boehme's idea of two opposed but complementary principles to indicate the different ways in which the Godhead could be experienced, as wrath or pity, tiger or lamb, and his Eden remained a union of these principles in '...wars of life & wounds of love' (J. 38:14, K664), beyond the moral code of good and evil. The ambivalence, however, remained. The 'Universal Family' live as one man 'Mutual in one another's love and wrath all renewing' (J. 38:16, K664), and yet the Eternals also declare that 'To make One Family of Contraries' is the work of Satan (J. 55: 9-16, K686), which brings the argument back to Boehme's principles, together and yet separate, the question of friendship or enmity remaining

unresolved:

For there have been only two Principles from Eternity; the one in itself, the Fiery world; the other also in itself, the Light-flaming world.

And yet they were not parted asunder,  
as the Fire and Light are not parted  
asunder, and the Light dwells in the  
Fire, unapprehended by the Fire.

(Inc. 1:1:38-9)

It was mentioned that Blake's Eden was a state which transcended good and evil, and since this is also a central theme of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, it must now be considered in detail. Blake's treatment of it is clearly indebted to Boehme. In the structural pattern analysed above, the passivity of reason had corresponded to Boehme's first principle, submissive before the light. But Blake also perceived another role for the dark properties, and in doing so he grasped their true significance, although certain aspects of his interpretation would not have met with Boehme's approval. The steps by which he reached his conclusions can be retraced.

It has been indicated in the previous chapter that Boehme's dark properties are the source not only of the wrath, but of all life; nothing could exist unless it had within it the 'fiery Triangle' (E.G. 2:111). Boehme's earliest formulation of the seven properties in the Aurora describes how the first property (astringent), in combination with the second (sweet) generates the heart, or Son of God (Aur. 8:37); only when it departs from its proper function does it become a 'burning Source-vein of the Wrath of God' (Aur. 8:27). Similarly, the third property, the bitter spirit, is 'the source of Joy' (Aur. 8:45) which becomes a 'tearing astringing, and

burning Poison' (Aur. 8:48) only when 'kindled'.  
 In other words, the dark properties are not in themselves evil, a fact which Dionysius Freher had noted in his exegesis of Boehme:

Darkness could not have been evil... unto the light, for it was its helpful root and ground... What reason can there be to call it evil?... Certainly no reason at all can be given a priori, why the darkness should be called evil, and the light alone good; but all that we may find and say will prove to be fetched only a posteriori from an outward consideration of their present state, divided by the fall of creatures...<sup>16</sup>

Blake too warns against a failure to see beyond an 'outward consideration' of man's present environment; its more fearsome and distressing aspects should be comprehended within a wider totality, beyond man's limited vision:

The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man.  
 (8:7, K151)

But more specifically, Blake was attracted to Boehme's descriptions of the dark properties, and he found it easy to identify them with the energy which he was so enthusiastically celebrating:

For from the two-fold Source, every Thing has its great Mobility, running, springing, driving, and growing. For Meekness in Nature is a still Rest, but the Fierceness in every Power makes all Things moveable, running and generative.  
 (Aur. 2:4)

By his term 'fierceness' (Grimmigkeit), Boehme conveys the sense of a driving, restless agitation, akin to the 'cauldron of seething excitement' which Freud discovered in the Id.<sup>17</sup> In The Marriage, Blake seized on Grimmigkeit and saw it as the embodiment of

life's procreant urge, the very source of creative energy, and he had ample justification in Boehme for doing so:

... the Fierceness [or wrath] is the Root of all Things, and moreover, the Originality of the Life; therein only consists the Might and the Power, and from thence only proceed the Wonders.

(T.P. 21:13)

Blake personifies the 'might and the power' in the form of a group of giants, shackled and huddled together against a dark background (the dark abyss of the first principle?); it is they who are responsible for forming the world, and they remain 'the causes of its life & the sources of all activity' (16, K155). The title-page of The Marriage can also be seen in a Behmenist light, clearly showing the outer world as an 'outbirth' of the two interior worlds. In Blake's eyes, Boehme had laid bare the surging energies at the heart of existence, and for both men too, it was a vision which transcended the limitations of good and evil. Neither term had a place in the truly integrated life, whether of God or man; when Boehme refers to God as the 'Eternal Good' (M.M. 3:4) or the 'only Good' (Cl. 16), he usually means the unmanifest God in Trinity, prior to his self-realization in Eternal Nature. But this goodness is static, whereas the life of Eternal Nature is goodness on the move, joy itself, 'eternal delight' (Cl. 95), and any other term is inadequate to describe the nature of divine life. So also for man, who was created 'in Paradise in the Joyfulness' (T.P. 10:17); he should have known as little of the evil as he did

of the good (M.M. 17:12), he was of a different order, a different principle; he stood in bliss itself.

Good and evil are therefore limited categories, recognized only by an impoverished and divided mind.

As Nicolas Berdyaev, who was heavily influenced by Boehme, wrote:

The Kingdom of God cannot be conceived moralistically: it is on the other side of the distinction. It is the Fall that has made moralists of us.<sup>18</sup>

So also for Blake, who shared the desire to raise others to the level of the 'immense world of delight' which he perceived in the flying bird (7, K150), a state of joyous and unreflective activity in which the empty piety of the Swedenborgian Angel was transcended. But Blake was also prepared to turn Boehme's insights upside down. He recognized that in spite of Boehme's daring metaphysics, his morality, like Swedenborg's, remained conventional; he often exalted restraint, for example, counselling the Christian to walk with humility and meekness under the cross of Christ, and sometimes he used the terms good and evil in exactly the moralistic sense that Blake disliked. Blake would have argued that he had failed to carry through the implications of his metaphysics. He had grasped that evil arose only when the smooth unfoldment of the dark properties, which constituted the fundamental life-forces, was arrested or hindered. But Blake would take this a step further and identify the dark energies with what he had earlier called 'the staminal virtues of humanity' (Ann. Lavater, K88), meaning the physical

appetites of man, particularly sexual desire. Any energy which is repressed becomes poisonous; a desire which is not consummated 'breeds pestilence' (7:5, K151). Boehme would not have accepted this as a reasonable interpretation of his philosophy, but nonetheless, at the metaphysical level his point is basically the same: the dark properties, by turning in upon themselves and refusing to act in consort with the others, become transformed into a whirlpool of unfulfilled desire, and it is this which spawns the venomous creatures of hell. In each case, the crime is that an essential aspect of life should remain incomplete and unsatisfied. It should be remembered that Blake also understood the term desire in a wider sense, as an expression of the longing of the finite for the infinite, of time for eternity, and conversely, as the pouring out of the eternal ideas into temporal forms. In this respect, the Blakean desire resembles the expansive nature of Boehme's Ungrund, in its yearning to come forth and display itself, and also Boehme's belief that all manifest life is driven by a desire to re-establish a living connection with its infinite source. Only in isolation does desire become restless and desperate; when joined with the purity of the divine desire<sup>19</sup> it finds peace and fulfilment; the 'painful Desire' is transformed into a 'Love-Desire' (S.R. 3:24), the two are related as bondage is to freedom. Blake too was aware of the double-edged nature of desire. His idea of hell was 'being

shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man, for ALL LIFE IS HOLY' (Ann. Lavater, K74). It is being 'shut up' with the desire, not the desire itself, which is harmful. But this implies two things. Firstly, that the desire must be acted out rather than suppressed, and secondly, that the act itself should be accompanied by a particular mental attitude. Because all life is holy, there is no need to appropriate small parts of it for oneself, for this would be an attempt to possess what will not be possessed. To lay hold on a desire arrests its free movement and so renders it grasping, egotistical and destructive:

He who binds to himself a joy  
 Does the winged life destroy;  
 But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
 Lives in eternity's sun rise.

(Notebook, K179)

Blake's quatrain translates into psychological terms Boehme's observation about the two aspects of desire: 'In Nature's Desire arises the Death and Enclosing, and in the Desire of the Liberty arises the Opening and the Life' (S.R. 5:2). The free desirer becomes a channel for the unrestricted flow of divine energy; he is a vessel quickened by a force which is both his own and not his own, and which he does not obstruct. As a thankful receiver, he bears a plentiful harvest, and the harvest is life itself, springing from the eternal desiring. Blake, like Boehme, has outlined two levels of thinking and acting in terms of desire, and it seems reasonable to suggest that he was greatly stimulated by Boehme's treatment of the

subject.

Much of what has been said so far can also be seen in Blake's extensive use of the alchemical image of fire. From the very outset, when Rintrah 'shakes his fires in the burden'd air' (2:1, K148), flames race through The Marriage. In the alchemical work, fire was the agent of transformation. According to Paracelsus, nothing could be accomplished without it; it made manifest whatever was hidden and destroyed all that was imperfect.<sup>20</sup> But the alchemists were notoriously imprecise when they attempted to define their 'philosopher's fire'. It was not to be confused with the element of fire, but the only clue to its identity was its supposedly moist and invisible nature. Various unlikely places were suggested where it might be found, including horse dung, ants eggs and juniper ashes.<sup>21</sup> Blake of course was more interested in fire as a symbol of passionate libido than in practical (or impractical) alchemical prescriptions. Much nearer to his concern was Thomas Vaughan's statement that fire was the 'vestment of the Divine Majesty',<sup>22</sup> an attribute of the Godhead itself. Similarly, in The Divine Pymander, fire is seen as the body and clothing of Mind, the instrument of its creative power.<sup>23</sup> But the closest link is with Boehme, for whom fire was of fundamental importance. It was the foundation of all life (S.R. 14:29), burning in the centre of each creature (T.F.L. 8:30). Like Blake, he used the image of fire, as Stoudt

notes, in the sense of 'life, an élan vital, a drive, an energetic source'.<sup>24</sup> The image dominates Boehme's thought in his answers to the Forty Questions Concerning the Soul, where he explains the entire texture of eternity in terms of 'ten forms' of fire (F.Q. Ch.1). Fire is the 'power of the life and of the driving' (1:104); it precedes both light and spirit (1:275), neither of which could exist without it (1:101). This gives added significance to Blake's identification of Jehovah as 'he who dwells in flaming fire' (6, K150), which can be taken to imply that Jehovah is not only, as it were, the patron of energy, corresponding to the fiery God of Boehme's first principle, but also the total form of God, in whom the Trinity is contained. This implication is strengthened by Blake's statement that 'after Christ's death, he became Jehovah' (6, K150), meaning presumably that after the crucifixion Christ was reabsorbed into the flaming vitality of the all-embracing Godhead. This is in line with Blake's normal usage of the name Jehovah,<sup>25</sup> and it parallels Boehme's identification of Jehovah as the holy name which encompasses the entirety of the divine power, and out of which the name Jesus proceeds (Cl. 31-9, M.M. 17:32-3, 23:14).<sup>26</sup>

Jehovah thus represents the harmony of the two 'central fires' in God, the fire of anger and the fire of love (T.Q. 3:33). That Blake is dealing with Behmenist ideas in this section seems to be confirmed by his statement that the Messiah

'formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss' (6, K150) for this is an apt description of the functioning of the two Behmenist fires, the light of the second principle being derived from the burning fire of the first principle. Whether it is 'stolen' or given gladly brings the argument back to the problem already discussed of the relationship between the contraries.

Boehme's distinctive treatment of the fire image finds further echoes in Blake when it is applied at the human level. Boehme always insists that although there is only one fire, it can be experienced in two different ways, according to the mental condition of the experiencer. Man gets the kind of God he deserves since he sees only a reflection of himself.<sup>27</sup> Hence Blake can picture himself at ease with the divine, walking pleasurable through the fires of hell, which the Angels experience as 'torment and insanity' (6, K150).

Swedenborg makes a similar point:

Both infernal and coelestial love originate from the same divine principle, but the former becomes infernal only from the will and disposition of the recipient; for all influx from the spiritual world is according to the condition or state of the subject receiving it.<sup>28</sup>

But in the satire on Swedenborg which occupies Plates 17-20 of The Marriage, Blake uses the implications of this argument against his former instructor. Whereas the Angel sees 'the infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city' (18, K156)

and the monstrous presence of Leviathan, Blake, in the same place but in the absence of the Angel, finds himself sitting on a pleasant, moonlit riverbank listening to the music of a harp. It is clear that Blake is undermining Swedenborg with the new insight he had gained from Boehme. The Angel might well be informed that 'all that we saw was owing to your metaphysics' (19, K156); he might equally have been told, in Behmenist language, that 'all that each of us sees is according to the principle which we inhabit' (see for example M.M. 8:11, 19ff.).

Kathleen Raine has explored this extremely important point, observing that for Boehme there was an utter separation between each principle. Although the devils and the angels occupied the same ground, for 'heaven is in hell; and the hell is in heaven' (M.M. 8:28), they were not manifest to each other, being separated by their irreconcilable states of being. Blake followed this idea in the design for Plate 4 of The Marriage, and enlarged upon it in the colour print of 1795 entitled 'Good and Evil Angels', where the devil is clearly blind to the light in which the angel stands,<sup>29</sup> as Boehme had first suggested, writing of the new born soul, in

The Three Principles of the Divine Essence:

the Devil cannot see that Soul, for the second Principle, wherein it lives, and in which God and the Kingdom of Heaven stands, as also the Angels, and Paradise, is shut up from him, and he cannot get to it.

(T.P. 5:5)

Dr. Raine also points out that Boehme's 'great gulf [or cliff]', which separates the principles, is used

by Blake in his description of how a 'flat sided steep frowns over the present world', on the side of which hovers 'a mighty Devil' (6, K150).<sup>30</sup> However, one important difference should be noted: Boehme's devil is an irrevocably fallen creature, dedicated to evil, and therefore not the devil of The Marriage, who embodies the creative imagination. Blake has completely reversed Boehme's standpoint. The illustrations referred to therefore reveal Blake's debt to Boehme's metaphysical framework at the same time as they show his independence of mind, his desire to subvert conventional notions.

Further resemblances to Boehme's distinctive treatment of alchemical themes can be found in the designs for Plate 3 of The Marriage which are clearly related to the early chapters of The Three Principles of the Divine Essence. This was Boehme's second book, written in 1619, seven years after the Aurora. During the intervening period, Boehme had been acquiring a knowledge of alchemical terms, and he now describes the first property (Herbigkeit, which Sparrow here translates as 'harshness') as the prima materia (T.P. 1:9), out of which the 'divine Birth' (T.P. 2:8) - the emergence of Eternal Nature - proceeds. Boehme also calls this property 'the mother', who labours continually to generate the other forms (T.P. 3:11), and sometimes he refers to the first principle as a whole as the 'Begetter, Matrix or Genetrix' (Gebarerin; T.P. 5:7) or the 'eternal Mother' (T.P. 5:12). In the emergence of the second principle

the 'beloved Child is born', a birth which is accompanied by the sixth property, sound, as its 'Declarer or Pronouncer' (T.P. 3:13). If Blake's designs are viewed as a sequence it becomes clear that they represent a similar process. The illustration at the top of the plate shows a woman reclining in flames; at the bottom, on the left, we also see a reclining woman, as a child, arms outstretched in triumph, leaps from her womb. At the bottom right, we see a young couple, embracing and kissing. This can be translated into Behmenist terms: the 'eternal mother', through being enveloped in the divine fire (the lightning-flash) gives birth to the 'beloved child' (is the child also shouting for joy?), and this results in the marriage of the principles, where 'the whole Begetting or Generating falls into a glorious Love; for the Harshness now loves the Light dearly' (T.P. 4:51). Boehme had already, in the Aurora, described the 'gracious, amiable, blessed Kissing' amongst the properties as they greeted the birth of the love (Aur. 9:66), and he had also compared it to the rejoicing between a bride and her bridegroom (Aur. 9:67). Boehme's 'genetrix' appears in the text of The Marriage as the 'Eternal Female' (25, K159) of the Song of Liberty, who would later become the 'nameless shadowy female' in Europe, 'sitting in fathomless abyss' (E.2:2, K238) and clearly related to Boehme's later description, in his most alchemical work the Signatura Rerum, of the 'genetrix' as the 'mother...

from whence the innumerable multiplicity arises...  
 she generates life and death, evil and good'  
 (S.R. 14:5).<sup>31</sup>

In Blake's designs for Plate 3 of The Marriage, then, he may well have been illustrating the process he had found described by Boehme. At the very least, he would have been aware of how closely his own work corresponded to it. He would probably have known, independently of Boehme, that the alchemical work was often likened to the process of childbirth, and that the idea of a 'chemical marriage' between Sol and Luna, Sulphur and Mercury, representing the union of opposites, was another common symbol.<sup>32</sup> But Boehme's account of the 'divine birth' provides a remarkably exact parallel.

The alchemical philosophy rested on a basically Neoplatonic foundation, whereby the universe was understood, as in the Timaeus, to be a 'moving image of eternity',<sup>33</sup> having proceeded from the One and remaining linked to it. Both Blake and Boehme believed that

In every external Thing there are two Properties; one from Time, the other from Eternity; the first Property of Time is manifest; and the other is hidden, yet it sets forth a Likeness after itself in each Thing.

(S.R. 4:18)

It is because of this that 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time' (7:10, K151), since time is the expressed word, or signature, of the 'eternal speaking word':

The whole outward visible World with all its Being is a Signature, or Figure of the inward spiritual World; whatever is internally, and however its Operation is, so likewise it has its Character externally.

(S.R. 9:1)

Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences is similar to Boehme's signatures, and is certainly a parallel influence here.<sup>34</sup> But Blake and Boehme shared the alchemical vision of nature as a vast, seething receptacle for the refinement and spiritualization of matter, an alchemical retort no less; 'the Earth must be turned to Heaven' (S.R. 10:53). For good or ill, this perspective is absent from Swedenborg, and Blake certainly reacts as an alchemist when he implies that Swedenborg's writings can be placed in the same category as 'Aristotle's Analytics' (20, K157). It was fashionable for Hermetic philosophers to dismiss Aristotle and the schoolmen with contempt, supposing that they studied books too much and nature too little; in consequence, their knowledge had no experiential basis.<sup>35</sup> Vaughan complained that the scholastics thought of God as a carpenter, piecing the universe together with dead materials, whereas in truth the world was 'full of spirit, quick and living'.<sup>36</sup> Boehme too, reading the book of nature, sensed that 'Nature labours with utmost Diligence, to produce in its Power heavenly Figures, Shapes or Forms' (Aur. 4:33); he saw in the wrestling of the seven properties a vast creative power:

...what an Eternal labour there is therein, so that one form generateth another, till they are all brought to

Light, and so the Eternal is manifest...  
(T.F.L. 6:45)

In a long and extraordinary passage in the Aurora, he describes how the ceaseless activity of the properties gives birth to a flower or plant (Aur. 8:75-99). It may well have been the inspiration behind Blake's proverb 'To create a little flower is the labour of ages' (9:17, K152), which succinctly expresses Boehme's meaning.

The position of honour which Blake accorded to the body must also be understood against an alchemical and Behmenist background. He had already observed in his annotations to Lavater that 'God is in the lowest effects as well as in the highest causes' (Ann. Lavater, K87), which suggests his early familiarity with the aphorism 'What is below, is like what is above' from the Emerald Tablet of Hermes. Boehme echoes the same thought: 'What the Superior is, that is also the Inferior' (M.M. 10:33); the entire universe, even down to the most dense matter, is permeated by living spirit. Thus Blake's description of body as a 'portion of Soul' (4, K149) was sanctioned by the Hermetic tradition, and Blake overcame the possibly dualistic implications of the terminology of above/below, superior/inferior by stating that the body could break free of its self-imposed limitations and embrace soul as an equal partner, thereby ensuring that existence was no longer divided against itself: 'Man has no Body distinct from his Soul' (4:k149). Boehme likewise held the body in high regard, as an outbirth of the

divine, a temple rather than a tomb. He could not conceive a disembodied, purely spiritual existence; the invisible must put on the visible, for neither could manage without the other. A spirit without a body was 'empty' and could not know itself (F.Q. 4:1). In this sense, Blake's statement that 'Energy is the only life, and is from the Body' (4, K149) could have been penned by Boehme. It was precisely because man possessed a body, in addition to his spiritual make-up, that he was able to function as a concentrated receptacle of divine power, both microcosm, 'the whole Eternity manifested in an Image' (T.F.L. 6:53), and microtheos, 'the child of God; not a similitude only, but a Child... born of God' (Inc. 1:3:75), harmoniously uniting in himself two realms of being.

The relationship of body and soul can be looked at from another point of view. So far, the term has been used in a broad sense, to indicate the eternal rather than the temporal principle. It might be compared to the All-Soul of Plotinus rather than to 'soul' as used by Boehme, although Blake rejected Plotinus' dualism. But if 'soul' is taken in the sense that Boehme uses it, as the eternal essence of each individual being, which is capable either of upholding its divine status or of lapsing into darkness, it can equally be seen to form part of a non-dualistic philosophy akin to Blake's. This can be seen from William Law's Behmenist work The Spirit of Love, where Law rejected the dualism associated

with Locke, Descartes and Malebranche, whereby body and soul were seen to be essentially alien to each other, yoked together solely by the arbitrary will of God and unable to act upon each other except by an act of that will. This, argued Law, was to accuse God of creating man into an 'unnatural State', which he declared to be impossible.<sup>37</sup> The truth was that

Body and Soul go hand in hand, and are nothing else but the inward and outward State of one and the same Life.<sup>38</sup>

In man's fallen condition, body and soul suffer from the same evil. The soul that has lost the divine light is as dark as the fallen body is gross, since each reflects the condition of the other. Both must be reborn. Blake's statement that body is a portion of soul applies equally well in this context.

Mention of the fallen, 'bestial' body is important, because for Boehme it is only at the fall that antipathy arises between flesh and spirit. His philosophy is exactly that of Paul, who, like Boehme, often sounds dualistic, but in fact draws a very careful distinction between flesh (sarx), which is sold into sin, and body (soma), which is for the Lord. So also for Boehme, the 'gross, deformed, bestial dead Image' (S.R. 8:47) belongs only to the fallen third principle; the 'true body', belonging to the second principle, lies couched within it 'as the Gold in the Ore' (M.M. 16:1), and it is this holy body which must be revealed, so that body and spirit may once more be united. The point is an

important one, because although never explicitly stated, it underlies Blake's thought in The Marriage. Boehme's 'bestial man' has already made his appearance in Blake's Tiriel, as the 'worm of sixty winters' (T. 8:24, K110), and his equivalent in The Marriage is the caverned man of restricted sense-perception, whereas the life which Blake exalts is that of Boehme's 'true golden divine Man' (S.R. 4:34). However, there is a certain amount of assumed reading here. In The Marriage Blake does not choose to make an absolutely clear distinction between the type of body which is proper to each principle. He appears to be an advocate of 'body', without qualification. But in The Book of Urizen he was fully to explore the Behmenist distinctions, and it is this book which provides the link between his enthusiasm for physical life in The Marriage, and the ambivalence towards the body which characterizes his later work.

This ambivalence is also apparent in Blake's view of the senses, in which he is much closer to Boehme than might at first appear. Boehme also had a place for the improvement of sensual enjoyment; at the level of divine life, it necessarily followed the birth of the love-child from the 'genetrix':

...all the Virtues or Powers are stirring,  
and see, feel, have smell, and taste one  
another in the Light, for the whole Birth  
nourishes itself in its first Mother...  
and...stands in very great Joy, Love,  
Meekness, and Humility, and is nothing  
else than a mere pleasing Taste, a  
delightful Sight, a sweet Smell, a

ravishing Sound to the Hearing, a soft Touch, beyond that which any Tongue can utter or express.

(T.P. 3:13)

Boehme clearly relishes his descriptions of the sensual life of the properties, and he seems to equate the richness of their embrace with the all-encompassing knowledge of Verstand, which grasps the entirety of existence in a single sweep:

This Harmony of Hearing, Seeing, Feeling, Tasting and Smelling, is the true intellective verständliche Life; for when one Power enters into another, then they embrace each other in the Sound, and when they penetrate each other, they mutually awaken and know each other; and in this Knowledge consists the true Understanding Verstand, which is innumerable, immense and abyssal, according to the Nature of the Eternal Wisdom, viz. of the ONE, which is ALL.

(M.M. 5:14)

This is similar to the universalizing of the senses which Blake envisaged; the man who breaks out of the cavern, or in Behmenist language, is born into a new principle, finds that his experience becomes as total as before it was partial. It is as if his viewpoint has suddenly been reversed. Instead of being a small individual straining to perceive the universal, he has become the very universal, and from his new base can seek out all particulars with ease, and experience them with a rich immediacy, unavailable before.

There is no doubt that Boehme himself, like Blake, experienced the world of sense with great intensity. One commentator has observed that when Boehme writes of an 'All-seeing, All-hearing, All-

smelling, All-feeling, All-tasting God' (Aur, 3:23), he is idealizing his own desire for exquisite sensual experience.<sup>39</sup> Boehme too was of the Devil's party. Similarly, Boehme is loath entirely to remove sensual pleasure from the life of the unfallen Adam, who eats and drinks - although in a 'heavenly Manner' (E.G. 5:112) - and experiences great delight in the act of reproduction (M.M. 18:10), although this is performed 'magically' rather than sexually. In other words, Boehme hints at the possibility of a more refined level of human existence, in which sensuality is enhanced rather than eliminated. Blake seized on the implications of this, no doubt feeling that in Boehme there was a sensual man continually rising up against the ascetic. Certainly it was not Boehme's wish to promote indulgence of the senses; he believed that the fall had been as much a descent into sense as a circumscribing of, or falling away from, the original, eternal senses. The distinction is basically the same as that between the bestial body and the spiritual body, and in Boehme's view it was not possible to indulge the one in order to promote the other. Blake, at least in The Marriage, believed otherwise, that eternity could be taken by storm through a greater and more intense contact with the world of sense. And yet here also, at the very moment that Blake affirms with such conviction the need for 'sensual enjoyment', there is ambivalence. Although the senses are able to discover 'the

infinite in every thing' (12, K153) they are unable to perceive the 'immense world of delight' in the flying bird (7, K150). They are irksome reminders of man's limitations just as much as they are gates which open into eternity. This ambivalence towards the senses underlies Blake's work as a whole. Like Boehme, he has clear intuitions of a transcendent dimension of experience, to which belongs the authentic human existence, and is aware that the average man's experience of the world is but a poor imitation of the eternal ideal. This higher reality can be expressed in sensual terms, but nonetheless far exceeds the limitations of ordinary five sense perception. In other words, the senses alone are insufficient; they are not the most fundamental mechanism of experience, and need to be enriched by that which lies beyond and prior to them if they are to function to best effect. Referring back to the tractate All Religions are One, it is the Poetic Genius rather than sense which is the 'true faculty of knowing' and which determines the outward 'forms of all things' (K98). The first power is the infinity of Mind, and the creative imagination which springs from it. Although, as Morton Paley has pointed out, Blake does not use the actual word 'imagination' very frequently in his writings before 1799,<sup>40</sup> the early tractates and The Marriage clearly indicate the Behmenist line that his thought was taking. For Boehme, it was through imagination that the primordial will first brought Wisdom into being. The desire to

manifest is itself an imagination,

Wherein the Will, in the Looking-Glass of Wisdom, discovers itself, and so it Imagines out of the Abyss into itself, and makes to itself, in the Imagination, a ground in itself, and Impregnates itself with the Imagination out of the Wisdom...

Thus the Imagination of the willing, viz. the Father's, attracts the Aspect, Form or Representation of the Looking-Glass... into itself, and so becomes Impregnated with the Glance of the Wisdom, with the Power and Virtue : This is the Will's, viz. the Father's Heart, wherein the Abyssal Will attains a Ground in itself, through and in the eternal Imagination.

(Inc. 2:2:5, 9)

Man shares in this divine imagination, through which he acts with, and on behalf of, the creator:

For the Soul comprehends the highest Sense, it beholds what God its Father acts or makes, also it co-operates in the heavenly Imaging or Framing : And therefore it makes a Description, Draught, Platform or Model for the Nature-Spirits, showing how a Thing should be imaged or framed.

(Aur. 15:55)

Blake's proverb 'Where man is not, nature is barren' (10:8, K 152) should be understood against this background. Man is a little God, his imagination acting upon nature in the same way that, in the beginning, the spirit of God gave form to the void. The imagination therefore is the power which shapes and colours nature, and its reach is vast; nothing in the universe is immune <sup>from</sup> ~~to~~ its influence, as Blake's proverb 'One thought fills immensity' (8:16, K151) suggests. As the agent of change, the imagination is the power which leads from the fire of the first principle to the light of the second (Inc. 2:4 70-1), and in Blakean terms it is only the imagination, the

faculty which man has neglected, which can lead him out of his self-imposed prison. If man could recover his former imaginative power he could transform his environment at a stroke; like Blake's Devil, he would see pleasant moonlit riverbanks where he now saw Leviathans. Boehme equated the strong imagination with the faith that moves mountains (Inc. 1:5:33), and Blake's equivalent is the 'firm perswasion' which moved mountains in the 'ages of imagination' (12, K153). Boehme reiterates the point, using an expression which Blake was later to adopt:

If we have not divine Imagination, viz.  
 Faith in us, then the divine Love will  
 leave us, and not let us in at her Doors...  
 (Inc. 2:9:19)

This is obviously the sphere of ideas in which Blake was moving at the time of his writing The Marriage, and the inspiration he derived from Boehme should be abundantly clear. Although the imagination also occupies an important place in the work of Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus, neither magician nor alchemist made it the central pivot of his philosophy, whereas the paramount significance which Boehme attached to it would be apparent even to a casual reader.

One difference between Boehme and Blake concerning the means of regeneration should be briefly pointed out. It arises from the fact that Boehme combined a number of different strands of thought in his system, one of which, the via negativa, was anathema to Blake. At one level, therefore, the methods of regeneration which they advocate appear to be sharply contradictory.

Blake emphasized the virtues of dynamic activity, because he thought that man was in a state of inertia and complacency and needed to be hauled out of it, whereas Boehme believed that the vital first step was a passive one. Man should cease his own activity and return to the silence of the 'still eternity', in which he would be refashioned and made capable once more of reflecting the divine image. He could not simply indulge the fallen body in the hope that it would transform itself. This is not Blake's attitude. But in Boehme's system, the via negativa is often crowded out by other, contradictory, viewpoints. He does not always follow his own advice; there is sometimes a tension between effort and effortless, action and non-action. He often declares that his knowledge has been gained by 'seeking and knocking' (T.P. 2:6), and his description of the 'resolved zeal' with which he made 'so hard an Assault, Storm and Onset upon God' (Aur. 19:10) hardly suggests passivity. From this point of view, Yeats' two lines about Blake, 'Who beat upon the wall/  
Till Truth obeyed his call',<sup>41</sup> could equally well apply to Boehme. Man must summon up all his imaginative power, and with the aid of a sudden 'lightning-flash', he will leap from one principle into another. Blake identified with the striving, restless Boehme rather than with the sometimes reluctant quietist.

We now need briefly to consider the similarities

between the social and political views of Blake and Boehme. This has deliberately been left to the last, firstly because their statements about human society cannot be properly understood in isolation from their view of the individual, and secondly because they both believed that the transformation of human society would follow the regeneration of the individual, but could not precede it.<sup>42</sup>

The first issue, Blake's antinomianism, was implicit in the earlier discussion about the transcendence of good and evil. Blake portrays Jesus as a shameless law-breaker who contravened every one of the Commandments, acting 'from impulse, not from rules' (23-4, K158). Blake no doubt had Swedenborg in mind, for whom the Commandments retained their validity even in the spiritual life.<sup>43</sup> They were 'so holy, that Nothing could be holier'.<sup>44</sup> Boehme, on the other hand, shared Blake's view of law. He believed that 'the right Spirit doeth that which is right' (W.C.3(Of Reg.) 5:122) and needed no prompting or external guidance. In the 'Image of God' there is no law and 'no compulsion... but a mere free-willing desirous Love-Service' (M.M. 33:10). Whilst Adam and Eve were in paradise they were subject to 'no Law from any thing or to any thing; for all had been free unto them' (M.M. 18:14). They acted spontaneously, and their acts were fine (Inc. 1:4:59). Boehme was therefore suspicious of all laws, declaring them to be the cloak of the Antichrist, who

has detained People with Laws of his own inventing, which are neither grounded in Nature, nor in the Paradise of God, neither are they to be found in the Center of the Birth of Life.

(T.P. 4:12)

In this passage Boehme is plainly referring to the established religious authorities, and when he addresses them directly he can be aggressive and polemical:

Your Laws, Councils, Decrees, Canons, and your singular Articles or Opinions, are but mere deceit : the Spirit of Christ in God, will not be bound to any Laws. Whatsoever you teach concerning your own Power in Heaven, which you appropriate and usurp to yourselves (without the New Birth in Christ) is all false and lies.

(T.F.L. 3:67)

Passages such as this occur frequently throughout Boehme's work, as he breaks off from his main theme either to challenge the reader or to lambast the Antichrist and his laws:

O what sharp Thorns the Devil has brought into the Sport of Love, that we practise such proud Contention in the noble Knowledge, insomuch that Men bind up the Holy Ghost with Laws! What are Laws in the Kingdom of Christ, who has made us free, that we should walk in him in the Holy Ghost? To what Purpose are they invented, but for the Pleasure of Antichrist, who thereby struts in Might and Pomp, and is God on Earth?

(T.P. 9:17)<sup>45</sup>

In Boehme's system, the Law was given to man by God the Father, in the harshness of the first principle, with 'Fire and Thunder' (T.P. 12:3). It could not come from the second, light principle 'for there is no Fire and Thunder in the Heart of God, but kind Love' (T.P. 12:3). This is also Blake's position, although it is more apparent in his later work than

in The Marriage, where he is more concerned with bringing out the hidden strength and vitality of the first principle than with associating it with the law-giver.

In spite of these passages, however, Boehme was not an antinomian in the truest sense of the word. He was accused of being one, but denied the charge.<sup>46</sup> He believed that laws signified man's enslavement, but were not themselves the cause of it. Because of the fall, man had brought them on himself, and in his fallen state they were necessary and should be obeyed (W.C.3 (of Reg.) 7:170). Man could not simply adopt a mode of living which was inappropriate to the principle in which he found himself, although Boehme believed, with Paul, that the law could only be properly fulfilled when it was transcended in the eternal freedom of the divine. Boehme's antinomianism, then, such as it was, was less extreme and more reasoned than Blake's. Blake, at least in The Marriage, was perhaps closer in spirit to movements such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit, whose members believed that they had attained perfection and could therefore do as they pleased, and also, as a more immediate influence, the Ranters.<sup>47</sup>

Bound up with Boehme's hostility to law was his belief in the equality of all men. He declared that the whole family of man had one root in Adam (M.M. 22:75), and that God had made 'no Lord nor Servant, but... all alike, none noble or ignoble' (M.M. 33:5); all goods

should therefore be held in common (M.M. 22:77).

It was only a fallen nature which produced and sanctioned the rule of one man over another (M.M. 22:74):

All Royal and Princely Highness and  
Excellency, together with all  
Governments and Dominions, arise from  
the Order of Nature.

(M.M. 33:10)

It is easy to see from these examples how Boehme's writings found such a foothold amongst the revolutionary millenarian sects of the seventeenth century, and how Blake, following in this tradition, would find them equally attractive; everything that Blake included in the term 'Empire' was condemned in similar fashion by Boehme. Boehme was of course only one of many giving expression to similar political and social ideas. However, the fact that Blake, by his own account, first read Boehme in his youth, suggests that Boehme had some influence on the development of Blake's views on the subject. At the very least, Blake would have discovered in Boehme views which were compatible with his own, and this would also have reinforced his belief in the inspired nature of Boehme's writings, and the truth of his insight into the inner life of eternity.

The final point to be considered, which can also be regarded as a prelude to The Book of Urizen, concerns the attitude to reason. Blake attacked the pretensions of fallen reason, which 'takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole' (16, K155). Because reason is ignorant of the unity which underlies the diverse elements of creation, the unity which it



seeks can only be artificially imposed from without, and this is inevitably baseless and damaging : 'One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression' (24, K158). Blake's distrust of reason, the mere intellect unillumined from above, was a fairly standard ingredient of eighteenth century Enthusiasm,<sup>48</sup> and was undoubtedly stimulated by knowledge of Boehme's work. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Boehme too condemned reason for the partial knowledge which it produced; because it was unable to penetrate beyond its own principle, that of the stars and elements, it was the faculty which was least suited to impose universal laws. Reason could deal only in 'opinions', and once opinions started, there was no end to them (T.F.L. 7:5) - 'Satan's Labyrinth', as Blake later described it (V.L.J., K613). Knowledge of God was not a matter of opinion, but of experience; it began where reason ended. Reason could not conceive that the unifying value in creation was an infinity which was common to all finite appearances. Reason could dissect, but it could not unite. Blake's proverb 'Bring out number, weight & measure in a year of dearth' (7:14, K151) suggests the same. Blake no doubt intended a reference to contemporary economic conditions, but a metaphysical meaning is also implied. The proverb recalls a passage from Boehme:

For in the Eternal Center there is no Number [Or Measure,] but it is the Omnipotence in the springing up without number; for that which can be numbered or comprehended, is not Eternal, it hath a beginning and end.<sup>49</sup>  
(T.F.L. 6:42)

Eternity is one and undivided, but is unapprehended by the reasoning mind, open only to the dualities of time and space. Blake's proverb presents a neat preview of Urizen's acts of dividing and measuring - a creation which is also a fall - and also reveals why the created world appears 'finite & corrupt' (14, K154): it is seen only under the limitations of time and not the boundlessness of eternity. Both Blake and Boehme believed that as long as reason, together with its handmaids the five senses, dominated human consciousness, the years of dearth would inevitably continue.

In conclusion to this chapter, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Boehme was the largest single influence on The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Blake's penetrating and frequently revolutionary interpretation of his system is a tribute to the major effect it had on him. Although some of the points which have been discussed can be partially explained by reference to other sources, it was only in Boehme that Blake could have found them combined with such originality and vigour. Blake must surely have been impressed by the sheer energy which flows through Boehme's work, and recognized in him the same experience of creative inspiration to which he, Blake, had been subject. It is likely that he had been unable to detect a similar experience lying behind Swedenborg's numerous excursions into the spiritual world, and had therefore dismissed Swedenborg's works as no more than an 'analysis' of the sublime (22, K158).

It is important to note that Boehme's Aurora has the same confident, exuberant and sometimes arrogant tone that characterizes The Marriage; it too was the product of a new awakening, written by a man who had been 'set on by a mighty Impulse' (Aur. 19:12), and who was convinced that the truth had never been so fully revealed to anyone (Aur. 9:86). Like Blake, Boehme believed that a new era was about to be inaugurated, the 'Morning-redness' was breaking forth (Aur. 13:4 ). Both men possessed an overwhelming sense of the immediacy of the divine world, contingent only upon an adjustment of the perceptual mechanism:

But if God did but once put away that  
Duskishness, which moves about the Light,  
and that thy Eyes were opened, then in  
that very Place where thou standest,  
sittest or liest, thou shoudst see the  
glorious Countenance or Face of God,  
and the whole heavenly Gate.  
(Aur. 10:98)

Blake admired the intense drama of Boehme's universe, in which man is presented with a stark choice between extremes: anguish or love, terror or bliss. In this battle of opposites, man is the chief actor: 'We have Heaven and Hell in ourselves. What we make of ourselves, that we are' (T.F.L. 14:71). Thus man becomes his own God, or his own devil (Inc. 1:5:133); his freedom to choose confronts him at each moment:

For every Man is free, and is as a God  
to himself; he may change and alter  
himself in this Life either into Wrath,  
or into Light. Such Cloaths or Garments  
as a Man puts on, such is his Ornament or  
Lustre.  
(Aur. 18:47)

This emphasis on the freedom of the will can of course be found in Milton, and, in spite of Blake's belief to the contrary, in Swedenborg.<sup>50</sup> But it is likely that Blake sensed in Boehme the presence of a far richer concept of freedom. In Paradise Lost, for example, freedom is a limited concept. It is inextricably bound up with the moral law, since it is conceived as a matter of choices: freedom to perform an action, or not to perform it. For Boehme, however, freedom, whilst including this idea, also reached beyond it. He sometimes refers to the Ungrund as 'eternal freedom' (ewige Freiheit, Cl. 88, although Sparrow renders it simply 'liberty')<sup>51</sup> and man, having sprung from eternal freedom and remaining joined to it, can therefore claim it as an aspect of his own constitution. He is, in his true self, boundless. It is ignorance of this level of freedom which produces the kind of world which Blake portrayed in The Book of Urizen.

Chapter ThreeThe 'Angst' of Unfulfilled Birth:  
'The Book of Urizen'

In the complex interaction of text and design, and the sheer scope of the subject matter, The Book of Urizen was the most ambitious of Blake's early works. Most critics of the poem have emphasized the large number of Biblical and Miltonic allusions and parodies. The possible influence of Plato's Timaeus, and of the heretical speculations of the Gnostics, have also been noted.<sup>1</sup> Boehme's influence has been less generally acknowledged,<sup>2</sup> in spite of the fact that many years ago W. B. Yeats pointed the way. He criticized Blake's commentators for failing to realize that Urizen was

page by page a transformation, according to Blake's peculiar illumination, of the doctrines set forth in the opening chapters of the Mysterium Magnum of Jacob Boehme.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter the examination of Boehme's influence on Urizen will also include reference to The Book of Los and The Book of Ahania, since both belong to the same period of Blake's work and deal, from different points of view, with the same themes.

The first task is to reconstruct, from the few clues which Blake leaves, a picture of the life of eternity which Urizen flees. Boehme can shed light on the subject. He shared Blake's enthusiasm for variety-in-unity, and its manifestation in the free and unrehearsed activity of the 'Minute Particulars':

Who judgeth [or condemneth] the Birds  
in the Woods, that praise the Lord of  
all Beings with various Voices, every  
one in its own Essence? Doth the  
Spirit of God reprove them, for not  
bringing their Voices into one Harmony?

(W.C.3 (Of Reg.) 7:176)

This recalls Oothoon's anguished complaint to Urizen  
in the Visions of the Daughters of Albion. Urizen's  
'one law for both the lion and the ox' (V.D.A. 4:22,  
K192) is inadequate:

How can one joy absorb another? are not  
different joys  
Holy, eternal, infinite? and each joy is a Love.  
(V.D.A. 5:5-6, K192)

Similarly, in Boehme's paradise, there is a 'distinct  
Variety ...where every Creature has its greatest Joy  
in the Virtue and Beauty of another' (T.P. 8:11).<sup>4</sup>

The interaction of the many and the one within the  
Godhead itself is particularly relevant:

[God]...is called God only according to  
the Light; viz. in the Powers of the Light,  
wherein the Science or Root is also  
manifested, and that in endless Variety or  
Divisibility. But all in the Love-Fire,  
where all Properties of the Powers give  
their Will up into the One onely; viz.  
into the Divine Temperature, where but one  
only Spirit and Will rules in all Properties,  
and the Properties all give up themselves  
into a great Love in and towards one another;  
where one Property desires to taste and  
relish the other in great fiery Love, and  
all is but one entire lovely Power,  
qualifying or infusing into another.

(E.G. 2:105)

It is this volatile, self-sacrificial life of Eternal  
Nature (which William Law described as 'undivided  
Fluidity')<sup>5</sup> which Urizen cannot endure; he seeks a  
'solid without fluctuation' (4:11, K224). He flees  
from what seem to him the 'unquenchable burnings'  
(4:13, K224) - the 'great fiery love' in the above

extract from Boehme - in which the Eternals live. He wants 'a joy without pain' (4:10, K224), but according to Boehme this cannot be: '...if there was no Sorrow, then Joy also would not be manifest to itself' (M.M. 5:7). Urizen asks in dismay 'Why will you die, O Eternals?' (4:12, K224); he cannot comprehend that the Eternals, like Boehme's properties above, 'give up themselves' in love for each other. (Blake will state this concept of 'self-annihilation' more explicitly in the later prophecies, but it is clearly present in Urizen.) Morton Paley has pointed out that Blake's Eternals resemble the Gnostic 'Eons', the celestial family who inhabit the pleroma, of whom Blake could easily have read.<sup>6</sup> But it should be added that the conditions prevailing in Blake's version of the pleroma are taken largely from Boehme's Eternal Nature, as here outlined, rather than from the Gnostic sources.

With this background in mind, we can now turn to the main action of the poem. In the first chapter, Urizen's activity appears to resemble that of the God of the Old Testament. He first creates a void (3:4, K222; cf. Gen.1:2), attempts to give it form by a series of divisions (3:8, K222; cf. Gen. 1:4-10), and attempts to populate it with living forms (3:13-16, K222; cf. Gen. 1:20-5). Significantly however, there is no mention of light. There are also a number of allusions to Paradise Lost,<sup>7</sup> but the overall impression is that a rather different God

than that of either the Bible or Milton is being described. Urizen is considerably less than omnipotent. In The Book of Urizen, creation is not, as in Genesis, a smooth, happy event, the result of an untroubled 'let there be'. On the contrary, it seems to involve an immense and laborious effort by the creator, and to form part of his tortuous attempts to bring himself to consciousness. Blake emphasizes this by describing Urizen as 'unknown' no less than five times in the first chapter. He also carefully constructs a feeling of tension, with Urizen's incessant silent activity, and suggests that ominous events are taking place, as 'dark Urizen/Prepar'd ' (3:27-8, K223). It is clear that we are not only in a Biblical and Miltonic world, but a Behmenist one also.<sup>8</sup> Almost all Boehme's works begin with what H. H. Brinton has aptly described as a 'terrific struggle to get the universe started',<sup>9</sup> as the unknown and unknowing God attempts to set out from the abyss, to move from Ungrund to Grund. Schelling described these early episodes (the opening chapters of The Three Principles of the Divine Essence and The Threefold Life of Man are good examples) as

a true spectacle of Nature labouring with itself and yearning for freedom and autonomy but always remaining at the same spot, rotating about itself, unable to transform its rotation into real motion.<sup>10</sup>

Urizen's struggles are also placed before the creation, at a time when 'Earth was not' (3:36, K223). The difference between the two is that Boehme's Ungrund

is, from the very beginning, a state of pure, naked 'isness'. Its first movements constitute an attempt to clothe itself with conscious personality, to manifest its freedom in a dynamic, organic life. This unmanifest God cannot become the creator of the world until it has brought all its latent qualities to consciousness. On the other hand, Urizen travels in the reverse direction, renouncing the fullness of his existence, which he cannot comprehend, and seeking solitude. Only then does he create the world; his flawed creativity is the price he pays for renouncing the life of Eternal Nature. The point is that once Urizen takes his 'place in the north, /Obscure, shadowy, void, solitary ' (2:3-4, K222) his condition becomes close to that of Boehme's unmanifest God. They must both start from a condition of undifferentiated emptiness, and their subsequent actions show striking similarities. Boehme's accounts of the initial stages of the divine manifestation undoubtedly held Blake's attention. Although they are turbulent, repetitive and often confusing, they are also extraordinarily vital, the product of an imaginative energy that was scarcely less than Blake's own. Northrop Frye's comment that Blake's poems 'are difficult because it was impossible to make them simpler'<sup>11</sup> may apply in some measure to Boehme as well.

In Urizen, Blake pays most attention to the dark world of Boehme's first four properties. This is not surprising, since Boehme often does so himself, (as

did William Law), regarding them as the essential basis for all further manifestation (T.F.L. 2:31, 45). The vivid imagery with which he describes these properties makes them more immediately striking than those of the light world, which are less easy to differentiate and to visualize. But the dark world in Urizen is no longer recognizable as the joyous energy which had surged through The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Blake has turned the coin over. Now, not being properly used, the dark properties are truly dark, painful and hellish, the 'original of God's anger'.

Urizen's first act is to draw in upon himself. Because he is shutting himself off from eternity, he has only his own materials, the stuff of himself, to create from. He is therefore seen as a 'self-contemplating shadow' (3:21, K223); the void he creates is 'Self-clos'd, all-repelling ' (3:3, K222) he is a 'dark power', 'secret' and 'hid' (3:7, K222). In this way Boehme describes his first property as 'conceiving itself, overshadowing itself and it makes... the great Darkness of the Abyss.' (M.M. 3:9). In the Aurora, he had written that 'there is in the Divine Power, hidden in Secret, the astringent Quality' (Aur. 8:21. My emphasis). Boehme equated the first property with the original will of the Ungrund, which was self-contemplating because nothing existed other than itself, to which its attention might be directed. (This is not in fact true of Urizen, but he acts as if it is.) Boehme

repeats this idea in most of his books. It will be useful to take up Yeats' suggestion and examine in particular the Mysterium Magnum, which, as Boehme's commentary on Genesis, would undoubtedly have attracted Blake's attention at the time that he was himself rewriting the creation story. Here is Boehme's description:

For the Nothing hungers after the Something, and the Hunger is a Desire, viz. the first Verbum Fiat, or creating Power. For the desire has nothing that it is able to make or conceive; it conceives itself, and impresses itself; it coagulates itself; it draws itself into itself, and comprehends itself, and brings itself from Abyss into Byss, and overshadows itself with its Magnetical Attraction; so that the Nothing is filled, and yet remains as a Nothing; it is only as a property, viz. a Darkness. This is the eternal Original of the Darkness.

(M.M. 3:5)

The first stage in the quest of the One for self-knowledge and self-revelation is therefore a journey within. Boehme had already suggested this in an earlier work:

For the vast infinite space desireth narrowness and enclosure [or comprehension] wherein it may manifest itself, for else in the wide stillness there would be no manifestation; therefore there must be an attraction and enclosing, out of which the manifestation appeareth.

(T.F.L. 1:33)

This closely resembles the theory of tsimtsum, meaning withdrawal, or retreat, which was a development in sixteenth century Kabbalism.

Professor Scholem explains:

The first act of En-sof, the Infinite Being, is ...not a step outside but a step inside, a movement of recoil, of falling back upon oneself, of withdrawing

into oneself. Instead of emanation, we have the opposite, contraction. The God who revealed himself in firm contours was superseded by one who descended deeper into the recesses of His own being, who concentrated Himself into Himself, and had done so from the very beginning of creation.<sup>12</sup>

Boehme may have known this theory, or arrived at his similar position independently. Blake's most likely source seems to be Boehme, because in Urizen there are further concepts and images which are specifically Behmenist rather than Kabbalist, although Blake could have found a version of the Kabbalist theory in Fludd's Mosaicall Philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Although there are differences between the two theories (Boehme's God is not voluntarily renouncing an area within himself, but seeking within himself for self-knowledge), the important point is that they both provide an explanation of the origin of evil which Blake could use for his own purposes. The third chapter of the Mysterium Magnum, in which Boehme's theory of retraction appears, is entitled

How out of the Eternal Good an Evil is come to be; which in the Good had no Beginning to the Evil: And of the Original of the Dark World, or Hell, wherein the Devils dwell.

The theme of the first sentence finds an echo in Blake's 'Lo, a shadow of horror is risen/In Eternity!' (3:1-2, K222). The Kabbalist theory conveys a similar idea. The act of tsimtsum, since it is an act of negation, involves the revelation of the qualities of Din (judgement), which up to that point have been hidden, together with love and mercy, within the Godhead.<sup>14</sup>

There is one difference between Blake and Boehme on this point. Whereas for Boehme, the self-contemplation of the One not only made possible the later emergence of evil, it was also essential for the revelation of the divine being in Eternal Nature. Blake, however, saw the process as entirely negative. Boehme's Ungrund, tunnelling darkly within itself, provided him with a perfect macrocosmic parallel to a process which he had already observed operating at an individual, psychological level. The harmful consequences of a withdrawal into self-engrossed isolation had been the theme, for example, of many of the Songs of Experience. Throughout Urizen, Blake operates simultaneously on the theogonic, cosmogonic and psychogonic level, since he believed that the pattern underlying each of them must be identical, a notion which Boehme had helped to teach him:

Now as the Dominion or Government of God's eternal, unbeginning, infinite Birth or Geniture is, so also is the Beginning and Rising, or Springing up of the seven Planets and the Stars; and just so also is the Rising or Springing up of Man's Life.

(Aur. 26:55)

Boehme also describes his first property as a 'raw Coldness' (M.M. 3:10); it 'dries the Water, and makes it sharp Ice' (Aur. 8:35). When Lucifer rebelled, this property became 'so cold, that it made the sweet Spring or Fountain-water turn to Ice' (Aur. 9:78). Blake follows this closely, describing Urizen's 'cold horrors' (3:27, K233) and his 'hills

of stor'd snows, in his mountains/Of hail & ice'  
 (3:32-3, K223). (William Law described the first  
 property as 'the Creator of Snow, and Hail, and Ice,  
 out of something that before was only the Fluidity  
 of Light, Air and Moisture'.)<sup>15</sup> Urizen also  
 creates by freezing the waters until a world of  
 'solid obstruction' (4:23, K224) appears.<sup>16</sup> Blake  
 and Boehme both seek to convey the sense of a  
 solidifying, constrictive, coagulating power. The  
 first property makes 'hardness' (Cl. 70), and so  
 Urizen's world is 'petrific' (3:26, K223), and in  
The Book of Los, Los finds himself hemmed in by a  
 Urizenic

Coldness, darkness, obstruction, a Solid  
 Without fluctuation, hard as adamant,  
 Black as marble of Egypt, impenetrable,  
 Bound in the fierce raging Immortal.  
 (B.L. 4:4-7, K257)

(One of Boehme's seventeenth century expositors,  
 Edward Taylor, called the first property the 'Binding  
 or Astringency', and identified it with the 'power  
 tending to impenetrability' which produced tough,  
 durable matter in the outward world.)<sup>17</sup> Boehme also  
 connects the first property with salt, which, since  
 the time of Paracelsus, had been one of the three  
 primary substances of the alchemists. Blake seems  
 to be recalling his alchemical reading in his  
 reference to the 'salt floods' (28:9, K236) which are  
 the fallen material world, an idea which he repeats  
 in the last line of the poem: 'And the salt Ocean  
 rolled englob'd' (28:23, K237). There seems to be  
 no other explanation for the reference to salt, and

Blake does not use the term again in this sense.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Boehme's first property is the cause of all substance, of 'stones, and bones' (Cl. 71), and is associated with the planet Saturn, which is the cause of all bodies (Aur. 26:15). It was this power which was active on the first day of creation, which is why Urizen receives 'bones of solidness', again accomplished by freezing, in the first of the seven stages in the forming of his body. Urizen's world is therefore one of 'dim rocks' (3:42, K223), and it is his 'vast rock of eternity' in which Los finds himself frozen and trapped (B.L. 4:12, K257). Urizen himself falls into a 'stony sleep' (6:7, K226) and becomes indistinguishable from his own creation:

The Eternals said: "What is this? Death.  
 "Urizen is a clod of clay."  
 (6:11-12, K226)

Blake would have read the following passage in the

Aurora:

It [first property] is a Key which locketh into the Chamber of Death, and generates Death, from whence proceed Earth, Stones and all hard Things.

(Aur. 8:30)

Thus in giving Urizen the characteristics of Boehme's first property, Blake explained not only why he eventually assumes a physical body, but also why that body must be a body of death, unless another agency should join in fashioning it. Urizen is therefore both a creator and a destroyer; a God, but also Satan.

This cluster of symbols remained important for Blake throughout his working life. Many of the designs in Urizen illustrate the same theme. On the

title-page, the two books on which Urizen writes can be seen as a single coffin-lid,<sup>19</sup> and the tablets behind him are also tombstones. A group of four plates<sup>20</sup> convey a sense of being buried alive.<sup>21</sup> One shows Urizen apparently being crushed by his own creation; in another he appears as a skeleton, crouched in a foetal position. But in Urizen as a whole, this constrictive energy is not the only force at work. The oppressive, monolithic atmosphere is frequently being opposed and broken up by other elements in text and design. There is a tormented rhythm of contraction followed by expansion,<sup>22</sup> which clearly resembles the interaction between the first two properties in Boehme:

The Second Property is the stirring, or Attraction of the Desire; it makes stinging, breaking, and dividing of the hardness; it cuts asunder the attracted desire, and brings it into multiplicity and variety; it is a ground of the bitter pain, and also the true Root of life; it is the Vulcan that strikes Fire.

(Cl. 61)

Here is one of the elements which make up the figure of Los. It is Los who rouses his fires and pounds his hammer at the sight of the hard shapelessness of Urizen; Los who is seen standing with limbs spread, hammer in hand, in expansive flames (Pl. 18), and Los who pushes away Urizen's rocks so that gaps begin to appear (Pl. 10). A similar pattern occurs in The Book of Los:

The Immortal stood frozen amidst  
The vast rock of eternity times  
And times, a night of vast durance,  
Impatient, stifled, stiffen'd, hard'ned;

Till impatience no longer could bear  
 The hard bondage: rent, rent the vast solid,  
 With a crash from immense to immense,

Crack'd across into numberless fragments.  
 The Prophetic wrath, struggling for vent,  
 Hurls apart, stamping furious to dust  
 And crumbling with bursting sobs, heaves  
 The black marble on high into fragments

Hurl'd apart on all sides as a falling  
 Rock, the innumerable fragments away  
 Fell asunder.

(B.L. 4:11-25, K257)

Los's furious impatience, set against the recalcitrance of Urizen, matches the desperate, maddening futility of the struggle between the first two properties in Boehme, one of which 'desireth the sour strong shutting up in Death' and the other which is 'the Opener' (T.F.L. 1:28) or the 'Raver' (T.F.L. 2:16). Because each is a measure of the other, neither can exist separately. They become what they are through their mutual opposition; they 'make themselves their own Enemies' (S.R. 14:19) :

It is even here as Father and Son; the Father would be still, and hard; and the Compunction (Stachel), viz. his Son, stirs in the Father, and causes Unquietness; and this the Father, viz. the Astringency, cannot endure; and therefore he attracts the more eagerly and earnestly, in the Desire, to hold, refrain and keep under the disobedient Son; whereby the Son grows only more strong in the Compunction.

(M.M. 3:11)

Urizen and Los are of course also linked (although not as father and son), and can be seen as different aspects of a single being. It is because of this that in spite of all Urizen's efforts to the contrary, his world struggles and beats like a human heart (5:36, K226). Whether he likes it or not, it contains the energies of Los, and they cannot forever be suppressed.

His world is 'petrific' but also a 'chaos' (3:25, K223) always threatening to burst from his enclosing grasp. How to reconcile these antithetical energies is the unresolved problem of The Book of Urizen. Blake had forged such a synthesis in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, but the reasoning Angel with whom he had playfully sparred was a less formidable figure than the dark death-desirer who stalks the pages of Urizen. Urizen is a tragic figure because he cannot recognize his own incompleteness, and it is because of this that the basic living rhythms of contraction and expansion turn against him. Blake later gave Plate 9 the caption 'Eternally I labour on',<sup>23</sup> but nonetheless Urizen's creation appears to be ready to crush him. Like Boehme's 'eternal band' of the first two properties, the harder he tries, the worse the situation will become, and will continue to do so for as long as Urizen is exiled from eternity. When he and Los were together as unfallen Eternals, his was the discriminating intellect, particularizing, ordering, whilst Los, as the beating divine heart, flamed in fiery love around him. But now there is only limitation, frustration and blindness for Urizen, whilst Los has become, like Boehme's 'Raver', the 'ground of bitter pain'. It is he, rather than Urizen, who appears to be in the greater distress, 'howling' and 'cursing' (6:2-3, K226), 'groaning' and 'gnashing' (7:2, K226).

Elements of this distorted pattern of contraction and expansion recur in the episode of the binding of

Orc by Los (which is interesting when one recalls that Boehme likens the 'eternal band' to a father and his disobedient son). When Los finds himself finally closed off from eternity (20:1-2, K233), he becomes a restrictive, Urizenic figure. At first, he retains enough residual awareness of his unfallen state to resent bitterly the jealous figure he is becoming. But like Urizen, his true function has become perverted, and his energies are counter-productive. No sooner does he break the chain of jealousy that grows around him, than another takes its place and holds him the more firmly captive. When he becomes completely subject to it, and therefore an enclosing, repressive power, he binds down, appropriately, on Urizen's rock, the child Orc, who had been born in 'fierce flames' (19:45, K232) and who now represents the expansive energies that Los has betrayed. This is emphasized by the contrast in text and design on Plate 20. The text tells of the contraction of Los - 'No more Los beheld Eternity' - whilst the design shows the new born Orc in the flames which Los had earlier 'suffer'd ... to decay' (13:44, K230). A further point is that Boehme sometimes refers to the first two properties as a chain as well as a band (T.F.L. 1:29), and to the dark world as a 'strong Chain' which keeps the soul captive in the wrath of God (T.F.L. 8:9).

Although Blake's most easily recognizable allusions in this section are to the crucifixion of Christ, the preparation of Issac for sacrifice by Abraham, and

the chaining of Prometheus, it may well be that Boehme's 'disobedient son', as an expression of the oppressive rhythms of the 'eternal band', was not far from his mind either.

Throughout Urizen, Blake is of course transforming his sources, not merely borrowing from them. He has his own story to tell, and Urizen is far more than Boehme's first property. In his isolation and his struggle against adversity he is a recognizable human figure, his good intentions flawed by his egoism and inflexibility. Los too is a flesh and blood creation, not merely a personification of Boehme's 'Raver'. His fall into time and duality makes him an ambivalent figure; he is capable of love and pity, and yet he is also the father who fears his own son, finding himself forced to adopt a role that is not truly his own. Blake's sympathetic portrayal of Los, Enitharmon and Orc in Plate 21 reveals them as possessing a forlorn dignity, in spite of their stricken condition. In each case Blake's characters call forth an emotional response from the reader in a way that Boehme's abstract properties do not. The parallels are more with the superhuman figures who inhabit the Gnostic 'Eons' than with Boehme. But if the centre of the stage is occupied by these large figures, acting out their own dramas, the background is certainly that of Boehme's dark world. This can be further substantiated by an examination of Boehme's third property, the anguish, and how it is born from the interaction of

the first two:

the Astringent Desire conceives itself, and draws itself into itself, and makes itself full, hard and rough; now the Attraction is an Enemy of the Hardness; the Hardness is retentive; the Attraction is fugitive; the one will have it into itself, and the other will out of itself. But seeing they cannot separate, and part asunder one from the other, they remain in each other as a rolling Wheel: the one will ascend, the other descend. ... These both mutually circulate in themselves and out of themselves, and yet cannot go any where [parted]. What the Desire, viz. the Magnet, makes hard, that the Attraction again breaks in Pieces; and it is the greatest Unquietness in itself; like a raging Madness: and it is in itself an horrible Anguish,

(M.M. 3:15,16)

With this we can compare the 'rolling of wheels' (3:30, K223) which forms part of Urizen's preparations, and also Urizen himself:

Dark, revolving in silent activity:  
Unseen in tormenting passions:  
An activity unknown and horrible,  
(3:18-20, K223)

In the Book of Los, the situation of Los resembles that of Urizen. He too fights with the fire, and as the flames stand 'wide apart' from him, he remains 'In the void between fire and fire' (B.L. 3:44, K257). Since all that is then left to him is the 'dark fire-root' of the first three properties, it is no surprise to find, as we have earlier noted, that a process of contraction and expansion, solidification and fragmentation, immediately ensues. Following this, we find Los 'revolving, indignant', as he falls through the void, measuring out the rhythms of day and night in 'incessant whirls' (B.L. 4:36-7, K258). William Law called the third property the 'whirling

Anguish of Life'.<sup>24</sup> The circles that Los forms as he falls are the precursors of the 'circle of Destiny' which is set in motion by Tharmas in The Four Zoas (F.Z. 1:74, K266). Boehme calls his wheel 'the Circle of life, which the desiring hath shut up, out of the still wideness, into narrowness.' (T.F.L. 2:15). Blake might have quibbled with the adjective 'still' but otherwise this well expresses his idea of the energy of life betrayed into the endless 'dull round' of historical cycles, unless a 'new birth' be opened.

It is also useful to note that in Boehme 'the Anguish makes the Sulphurous Spirit' (M.M. 3:17) and compare this with Los' view of Urizen as the 'surging sulphureous, /Perturbed Immortal, mad raging' (8:3-4, K227). The connection occurs again as Urizen sleeps and is bound by Los into time:

The Eternal mind, bounded, began to roll  
 Eddies of wrath ceaseless round & round,  
 And the sulphureous foam, surgeing thick,  
 Settled, a lake, bright & shining clear,  
 White as the snow on the mountains cold.

(10:19-23, K227)<sup>25</sup>

With the emergence of the Angst, the crucial moment in the creative process, whether within God or man, is at hand. The sparking of the fire, the fourth quality, offers either escape from the anguish into the joy of the light, or a deeper imprisonment in what then becomes a 'fiery wheel' (T.F.L. 3:55). It is through fire that the substantial creation appears. The first three properties on their own possess only a phantom-like existence: '...no right feeling is perceived until

the Fire ...wherein the Manifestation of each Life appears' (M.M. 3:16). In the description of Urizen's early labours in the first chapter of the poem, there is no direct reference to fire, and Urizen is able to produce only insubstantial '...shapes/Bred from his forsaken wilderness' (3:14-5, K222). By Plate 5 however, as the fire of the Eternals pours on his 'self-begotten armies' (5:16, K225), the 'living creations' appear for the first time, and only now does Urizen's 'vast world' (5:37, K226) become a tangible reality. This plate is clearly describing a transition similar to that which occurs in Boehme through the enkindling of the fire. But Urizen is unable to turn it to his advantage. In his eyes, the flames of the Eternals are those of 'eternal fury' (5:2, K225), and his condition again closely resembles Boehme's first principle:

In fierce anguish & quenchless flames  
 To the deserts and rocks he ran raging  
 To hide; but he could not: combining,  
 He dug mountains & hills in vast strength,  
 He piled them in incessant labour,  
 In howlings & pangs & fierce madness.

(5:19-24, K225)

(This should be compared with the Angst passage from Mysterium Magnum, quoted above.) Of course, fire is punishment only to those who make it so. The Eternals are not simply reacting vindictively to the promulgation of Urizen's laws, or to his misnaming of the 'forms of energy' (4:48, K225) as the 'Seven deadly Sins of the soul' (4:30, K224). Since fire is also creative energy, they are simultaneously expressing their contempt for these shallow pronouncements, and also giving him the

tools he needs: those who cannot seize the fire must have it thrust upon them.

It should also be noted that in four of the seven copies of Urizen, Plate 4 is omitted. Blake obviously thought that a coherent reading was possible without it. (In copy G the verse number (3) at the bottom of Plate 3 is erased, obviously to give continuity when Plate 5, which also has a verse 3, directly follows it.)<sup>26</sup> Without Plate 4, the Behmenist sequence of events can be seen more clearly. After Urizen's contraction and rotation in chapter one comes the apocalyptic trumpet which wakes the heavens (3:40, K223), and which has already been suggested by the reference to the '...thunders of autumn/When the cloud blazes over the harvests' (3:34-5, K223). Boehme compares his lightning-flash of fire to thunder and lightning in the natural world (S.R. 2:40). The fires of Plate 5 then immediately follow the sound of the trumpet, as the next stage in the creative process. In this version, there is no intermediate law-giving by Urizen, and the fire cannot therefore simply be a punitive act by the Eternals. As in Boehme, the fire is a separator:

Sund'ring, dark'ning, thund'ring,  
 Rent away with a terrible crash,  
 Eternity roll'd wide apart,  
 Wide asunder rolling;  
 Mountainous all around  
 Departing, departing, departing,  
 Leaving ruinous fragments of life  
 Hanging, frowning cliffs, & all between,  
 An ocean of voidness unfathomable.

(5:3-11, K225)

Blake is back in the Behmenist world of 'gulfs', 'cliffs'

and 'principles', of the impassable barriers between different states of being which he had first explored in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

For Eternity stood wide apart,  
As the stars are apart from the earth.  
(5:41-6:1, K226)

But even though Urizen's world is formed like a womb (5:29, K225), there is to be no 'new birth' from it, no pleasant unfoldment of the divine power such as occurs in Eternal Nature; the mechanism fails at the crucial point:

But no light from the fires: all was darkness  
In the flames of Eternal fury.  
(5:17- 8, K225)

All Urizen can do is frame a 'roof vast' (5:28, K225), which shelters him from the flames but also cuts him off from eternity. This is the equivalent of Boehme's third principle, the natural world, in its fallen state, which forms only a cloak, a temporary refuge from the eternal fire or light. Urizen's act of self-protection is therefore also an act of self-imprisonment, and this is equally true of Boehme's fallen man, who also fails to bring the creative act to the desired conclusion; light, the 'blessed child' is still born - man wilfully thwarts its emergence at each moment of his fallen existence. As a result, his world, like Urizen's, becomes a self-imposed prison-house; he becomes bound by time, flesh and the selfhood, and the earth, dependent upon him, remains cursed and forsaken. Blake's attention in Urizen is therefore not with Boehme's God in light triumphant, but with the distorted, twisted and

incomplete world that results from the absence of light.

Looking briefly once more at The Book of Los, there is further evidence to suggest that Blake was strongly fascinated by Boehme's descriptions of the transition from darkness to light. Boehme emphasizes the fear which afflicts the dark world as the fire-flash penetrates it:

Now understand us concerning the Crack of the Fire, for it is horrible and consuming, and overcometh all the Forms of all the Essences: for as soon as the twinkling beginneth, all the forms of the Darkness are consumed, and the dark sour atringency (viz. the stern Death) trembleth at the life, and falleth back as dead and overcome, and of hard becometh feeble and weak.

(T.F.L. 2:72)

In the Mysterium Magnum, he gives a similar description:

For the Astringent harsh Darkness, which is cold, is dismayed at the Light and great Meekness of the Free Lubet, and becomes in itself a Flagrat of Death, where the Wrathfulness and cold Property retires back into itself, and closes up itself as a Death. For in the Flagrat the dark Mind becomes essential, it sadly betakes itself into itself; as a great Fear before the Light, or as an Enmity of the Light.

(M.M. 3:26)

This fear and loss of potency on the part of the dark qualities finds its way into Blake's imagination. As Los stamps his feet to ward off the rampaging flames

In trembling and horror they beheld him;  
They stood wide apart, driv'n by his hands  
And his feet, which the nether abyss  
Stamp'd in fury and hot indignation.

But no light from the fires! all was  
Darkness around Los: heat was not; for bound up  
Into fiery spheres from his fury,

The gigantic flames trembled and hid.

(B.L. 3:45-4:3, K257)

The flames which hide resemble the dark properties which retreat into themselves, and the trembling 'fiery spheres' are the equivalent of Boehme's 'shivering wheel' (T.F.L. 2:42). Blake makes free use of Boehme's concept; in Boehme it is the first three properties which are frightened by the lightning-flash, whereas in Blake it is the fire itself which is fearful, and refuses to produce the creative spark. But the imagery is common to both, and one feels that once more Boehme is playing Virgil to Blake's Dante, guiding him through Hell.

The events which immediately follow the separations in Plate 5 of Urizen reveal that Blake is switching his attention to Boehme's account of the fall of Adam, the background of which would be familiar to any reader of Blake, even if he knew nothing of Boehme:

Now when Adam's Hunger was set after the Earthliness, it did, by its magnetick Power, impress into his fair Image the Vanity of Evil and Good; whereupon the heavenly Image of the angelical World's Essence disappeared. As if a Man should insinuate some strange Matter into a burning and light-shining Candle, whereby it should become dark, and at last wholly extinguish; so it went also with Adam, for he brought his Will and Desire from God into Selfhood and Vanity, and broke himself off from God, viz. from the divine Harmony.

(M.M. 19:3)

In Boehme, the loss of eternity is often signified by sleep:

Where Sleep is, there the Virtue or Power of God is hidden in the Center; for where that virtue of God grows,

there is no Sleep.  
(T.P. 17:28)

Therefore Adam, at the first stage of his fall

...sunk down into a Swoon, into Sleep,  
viz. into an Inability, which signifies  
the Death : for the Image of God, which  
is immutable, does not sleep. Whatsoever  
is eternal has no Time in it; but by the  
Sleep the Time was manifest in Man, for  
he slept in the angelical World, and  
awaked to the outward World.

(M.M. 19:4)

Blake follows this exactly, linking together sleep,  
time, death and flesh:

But Urizen laid in a stony sleep,  
Unorganiz'd, rent from Eternity.

The Eternals said: "What is this? Death.  
"Urizen is a clod of clay."  
(6:7-10, K226)

Even Blake's term 'Unorganiz'd' parallels the  
'inability' of Boehme's Adam, who is also transformed  
into a clod of clay:

Adam was in an angelical Form before  
the Sleep; but after the Sleep he had  
Flesh and Blood; and he was, (in his  
flesh) a Lump of Earth.  
(T.P. 17:31)

That Urizen is falling into time as well as flesh is  
later made quite explicit:

Ages on ages roll'd over him;  
In stony sleep ages roll'd over him,  
(10:1-2, K227)

It is also at this point that Los is seen '...forging  
chains new & new, /Numb'ring with links hours, days &  
years' (10:17-8, K227). Neither the Bible nor  
Paradise Lost imply that Adam's sleep is in any way  
connected with his fall. Boehme therefore seems to be  
the obvious source, although the theme is common  
enough in mythology generally.<sup>27</sup> What Blake has done

here is to connect two strands in Boehme's thought: we have noted earlier his identification of Urizen with Boehme's first property, which is the cause of 'stone and bone', and therefore the reason Urizen becomes a clod of clay. He now reinforces the point by constructing similarities between Urizen and Boehme's falling Adam. This connection between the action of the first property and the fall of both man and the earth had also been made by Boehme:

And we are here fundamentally to understand, how the gross Properties, in the Wrath of the Fiat in the Essence of the Body have obscured and wholly shut up the heavenly Essentiality in the Sulphur, so that the heavenly Man was no longer known... For the Desire, viz. the first Form of nature, which is the Fiat, has swallowed, in the Grossness, the heavenly Part both in Man and Metals.

(M.M. 21:8)

Urizen must therefore suffer the earthliness, because as representative of the first property, he cannot help but manifest it; it is his nature to do so. But as representative of the condition of fallen man, he cannot help but lament his own actions, tormented and puzzled by a situation which he has created, but which he cannot comprehend. The dismay of St. Paul, 'For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate' (Romans 7:15), is Urizen's also.

We should examine more fully the link between Boehme's Adam and Urizen. Adam was created from each of the three principles, and therefore, unlike Urizen, had from the outset a body of time as well as a body of eternity. But the important point is that he did not identify with his outward, elemental body, which was

merely the obedient and unnoticed servant of the inward, spiritual body, which penetrated it with its own light. Adam was to enjoy the world, which was also illumined by a more brilliant and constant light than its own, but should not have become enmeshed in it. In his innocency, the centre of his consciousness was elsewhere. It was only when he directed his attention towards the outward world of the third principle that he also became aware of his outer body; world and flesh appeared at the same instant, suddenly, where neither had been before. Whereas when Urizen fell, he acquired a body and created a world, the falling Adam simply discovered what before had been hidden. However, since Urizen is a drama of the perceiving mind and its power to alter its own landscape (in this case, for the worse), it really makes little difference what was previously 'there' or not; 'to be is to be perceived', to use Berkeley's phrase. If an act of perception is also an act of creation, Boehme's Adam creates his body and his world as surely as does Urizen, and were the story of the fall to be told from Adam's point of view, it would be hard to distinguish it from Urizen's experience. But in any case, Adam is directly responsible not only for becoming involved and identified with his temporal body, but also for the form which that body subsequently takes. The original outward body was not as coarse as it later became (M.M. 16:2); there were in the beginning 'no such hard Bones in his Flesh' (T.P. 10:21). But as Adam

shifted his awareness from inner to outer, the outer lost its heavenly tincture, which alone made it holy, and fell out of the 'temperature'. With this, it became progressively degraded until it was formed of 'gross Flesh and hard Bones' (M.M. 23:1). This is clearly paralleled by Urizen, for whom '...bones of solidness Froze/Over all his nerves of joy ' (10:40-1, K228). His sons and daughters meet the same fate:

Then the inhabitants of those Cities  
Felt their Nerves changes into Marrow,  
And hardening Bones began.  
(25:24-6, K235)

As their eternal senses contract (we can compare their 'shrunken eyes, clouded over' (25:31, K236) with Adam's loss of his 'clear pure steady Eyes and Sight, which was from the divine Essence' (M.M. 18:33)) they become 'reptile forms' (25:37, K236). Boehme writes of the 'monstrous' or 'bestial' form of the fallen Adam (T.P. 10:6), for 'when he entered into the four Elements, he Entered into Death, and his body became like a Beast ' (T.F.L. 5:136).

The blighted world of sun, stars and elements which Adam falls into is the principle to which 'reason' belongs, and beyond which it cannot penetrate. The light of the sun is a poor imitation of the divine light, but it is all Adam now has to guide him, and he must use it as best he can. Similarly, when Urizen explores his 'dens' he has only a 'globe of fire' (20:48, K234) to light his way. But it is hardly adequate for his purpose; in the design on Plate 23 it seems to weigh him down rather than light his path:

he gropes with his left hand to find his way, and the nearby lion seems ready to catch him unawares. In his answers to the Forty Questions Concerning the Soul, Boehme uses the phrase 'Globe of Fire' (7:16) to describe not the sun but the soul, which has a 'Fire-eye' and a 'Light-eye', placed back to back, each within the other (7:16). The right eye (by implication, the light-eye) looks forward into eternity, the left (fire) eye, backwards into 'Nature' (12:16). Blake later gave the title-page of Urizen the caption 'Which is the Way/The Right or the Left' (S.B.D. K261). By Plate 23 Urizen has obviously taken the wrong turning, and chosen the wrong eye; with only the fire-eye open, he can see in one direction only, and even then imperfectly.<sup>29</sup> Another way of looking at the same plate is to see Urizen pushing against the boundaries of his 'principle', in a vain attempt to break free and open the light-eye. W.J.T. Mitchell comments on this plate:

he [Urizen] pushes against the frame of the picture as if trying to break the laws of pictorial illusion and escape from the universe in which Blake has placed him.<sup>30</sup>

Plate 27 contains a similar suggestion, although the illustration can be seen in a number of different ways. It may be that Urizen now pushes the 'globe of fire' that he has previously been carrying, or the globe may be an entire world rather than just the sun.<sup>31</sup> If this is the case, Urizen may be gazing into his world, hands upheld in horror, or possibly he is trying to protect himself, or to force a way through. Whichever view we take, the plate suggests the struggle and misplaced

effort that blind reason, deprived of the light of the second principle, finds itself involved in.

Boehme sneers at the limitations of 'reason', which

runs to and fro in the Creation, as a  
Bird that flies up and down in the Air,  
and looks upon all Things, as an Ox upon  
a new Door of his Stall, and never so  
much as considers what itself is.

(M.M. 10:2)

If Urizen were to take pause, he would realize that his world is only the excrescence of his own darkened consciousness; he may push it, peer at it or otherwise examine it as he will, but the more he involves himself in it, the deeper will its contradictions become, and the more impenetrable will be the darkness that surrounds him. Instead of stamping his new-found terrain, he would do better to return to the one he forsook; the problem is not his world, but himself; it is through 'self-annihilation' rather than self-assertion that the light-eye may be opened.

Another interesting feature of Urizen's world concerns the birth of the four elements. Their condition is one of wretchedness and acute distress:

Most Urizen sicken'd to see  
His eternal creations appear,  
Sons & daughters of sorrow on mountains  
Weeping, wailing. First Thiriell appear'd,  
Astonish'd at his own existence,  
Like a man from a cloud born; & Utha,  
From the waters emerging, laments:  
Grodna rent the deep earth, howling  
Amaz'd; his heavens immense cracks  
Like the ground parch'd with heat, then Fuzon  
Flam'd out, first begotten last born.

(23:8-18, K234)

A clue to the reason for their anguish can be found in Boehme, for whom the four elements have their origin in

one 'pure' element, the quinta essentia of the alchemists. Boehme uses a number of different terms to define this element, and it is difficult to isolate exactly what he means, although the general sense is clear. The pure element stands in the same relationship to the four elements as the inner body of man stands to the outer body, and the second principle to the third. It is the 'inward Heaven of the holy Essentiality' (M.M. 10:59), and is also identified both with the body of Christ (T.P. 23:7) and the body of the Virgin (T.P. 22:20). It is

neither hot nor cold, neither dry nor moist; it is the Motion or Life of the inward Heaven...the first divine Manifestation out of the Fire, through Nature. When the properties of the eternal nature work therein, it is called Paradise.

(M.M. 10:49)

The four elements emerge at the creation of the outward world:

...the Fire, Air, Water, and Earth, are all gone forth out of the Center of Nature, and before the kindling, were all in one being, but with the kindling were known in four forms, which are called four Elements, and yet are in one another as one, and there is no more but one; there are not four Elements in Heaven, but one : yet all the four forms lie hidden therein, and with the kindling they become active, and now they stand in the outward substance, comprehensible to the Creatures.

(T.F.L. 5:105)

At the beginning of time, the one element penetrated the four, and paradise was manifest on earth (M.M. 17:3). But at the fall, the holy element withdrew into itself and the grosser substances received their power. However, their new, independent existence was gained only at great cost to themselves:

...the four Elements, which are nothing else Inwardly but one only Ground, must long one for the other, and desire one another, and seek the Inward Ground in one another.

For the Inward Element in them is divided, and the four Elements are but the Properties of that divided Element, and that causes the great anxiety and desire betwixt them; they desire continually [to get] into the first ground again, that is, into that one Element in which they may rest.

(Cl. 168-9)

If we bear this passage in mind, and look at Blake's depiction of the elements in Plate 24, we can well understand their surprise and horror; they have, quite literally, been wrenched out of their element, the 'first ground' in which their true life consists. They must now compose a world from their divided and incomplete selves, and it will be but half a world, lacking anything that could bind it into a unity. Boehme describes fallen, temporal nature as 'half-dead' (Aur. 15:52), and he also clearly associates the four elements with the dark properties: 'the Ground [or Foundation] upon which they stand, is the Fire of the fierce Anger of God' (T.F.L. 5:141). Blake could have found nothing resembling this in the Bible, or in the Timaeus, where the elements are the constituent parts of a world which is formed according to a well ordered plan, as a 'blessed god'.<sup>32</sup> Nor does Paracelsus' account of the creation suggest the stricken condition of the Blakean four elements, or imply, as Boehme does, that they are in any way deficient, or seeking to return to the Great Mystery (Paracelsus' term) from which they arose.<sup>33</sup> In the general outline of his vision, Blake appears to follow Boehme.

A further point concerning the elements is the synaesthetic quality of many of the designs in Urizen, which W.J.T. Mitchell has noted: 'The pictures are a whirlwind of elemental forms which are transformed one into another with dazzling rapidity.'<sup>34</sup> This is particularly noticeable in Plate 4, where the figure can be seen as

sitting in a shower of dark rain, a thicket of subterranean or submarine vegetation, or a curtain of fire. The implicit synaesthesia of the earlier plates (Urizen's beard as a flood of frozen fire, the flame-vegetation of the Preludium) now becomes explicit, combining all four elements into a single system of forms.<sup>35</sup>

But we can also understand this design from the opposite point of view, not as four fused into one, but as the stirring of the one as it begins to take on multiplicity. It is as if Blake has taken a snapshot of a twofold process of disintegration, at the moment of its transition; the distress of the head-clutching figure - his mind is breaking up - serving also to illustrate the pain of the primal element as it suffers its unity to be broken into diverse forms, which cannot yet be properly distinguished from each other. (In Jerusalem Blake identifies the fallen Zoas with the four elements - 'Four ravening deathlike Forms' (J. 36: 36, K663) - as they separate from the divine body of Albion. This gives added weight both to Boehme's connection of the elements with the dark world, and of the pure element with the body of Christ. He also calls the pure element the 'divine body' (S.R. 13:25).)

It might be objected that we are taking Urizen far too seriously. 'The Fiction of outward Reason', writes Boehme, 'is as a fighting with a shadow' (F.Q. 21:29), and Blake can sometimes be seen laughing up his sleeve at the absurdity of Urizen's venture. The elaborate fanfare and the gathering of the 'myriads of eternity' in Plates 3 and 4 suggest a great occasion, but Urizen's account of his battles and the announcement of his laws have only the appearance of profundity; they are, in truth, banal. He is foolish and ridiculous as much as he is tyrannical. The life which he seeks to control extends far beyond the 'apparent surfaces' (M.H.H. 14, K154) of his shallow dominion; it has foundations of which he knows nothing and heights which he cannot reach. The very first line of the poem tells us of his 'assum'd power' (2:1, K222), which describes both his act of usurpation and his erroneous belief that it bestowed upon him a genuine authority. His claim can be taken seriously only for as long as the light-eye of eternity, which alone has power to put the matter in perspective, remains closed. Urizen would do well to listen to the advice proffered by the Master in Boehme's dialogue Of the Supersensual Life, to the disciple who wishes to know how he may be a true ruler over the created world:

Thou must learn to distinguish well  
betwixt the Thing, and that which is  
only an Image thereof; betwixt that  
Sovereignty which is substantial, and  
in the inward Ground or Nature, and  
that which is imaginary, and in an  
outward Form, or Semblance; betwixt

that which is properly Angelical, and that which is no more than bestial. If thou rulest now over the Creatures externally only, and not from the right internal Ground of thy renewed Nature; then thy Will and ruling is verily in a bestial Kind or Manner, and thine at best is but a Sort of imaginary and transitory Government, being void of that which is substantial and permanent, the which only thou art to desire and press after. Thus by thy outwardly lording it over the Creatures, it is most easy for thee to lose the Substance and the Reality, while thou hast nought remaining but the Image or Shadow only of thy first and original Lordship.

(W.C. 4 (SSL) p. 75)

Ultimately, Urizen's world is a deceit, and the power he has over it an illusion, based on a false premise. So it is that all tyrannies, most of which, like Urizen's, begin with benevolent constitutions and high intentions, are elaborate charades, although horribly real to those who become involved in them. There is no mistaking the intense suffering portrayed in the illustrations to Urizen, and as the last plate shows, the enslaver becomes himself enslaved in his own illusions, creating a complicated, mutually reinforcing web of shared agonies. Urizen now resembles yet another actor in Boehme's cosmic drama : the fallen Lucifer. Boehme often puts 'reason' and the devil in the same camp:

...as the Devil would (in his fiery source [or property]) fly up above the Heart of God, and yet remaineth still in the four forms in the Eternal Nature in the Darkness, so it is also with blind Reason, which sitteth in the dark, and seeketh God in the Darkness.

(T.F.L. 3:32)

When Lucifér fell, it was into the 'Kingdom of Phantasy' which, like the trap sprung on Urizen by his own

creation, 'instantly seized upon him' (E.G. 4:72).  
By 'phantasy' Boehme means a kind of negative  
imagination, prolific yet spectral, able to conjure  
apparitions but unable to manifest a living world:

...the Devil has forged to himself a  
strange Fool's-play, where he can act  
his Deceptions with his several  
Interludes, and Disguises, and demean  
himself like an apish Fool, and  
transform himself into monstrous,  
strange and hideous Shapes and  
Figures.

(M.M. 9:19)

(The fool can be seen as Urizen, and the 'hideous  
shapes' as the distorted forms of his sons and  
daughters) Of course, the devil is traditionally a  
liar and a deceiver, and these are qualities which  
arise from his perpetual desire to disguise his own  
emptiness:

...the Devil is the poorest Creature in  
the Essence of this World; and has nothing  
in this World for his own Possession, but  
what he can cheat from the living Creatures  
which have an Eternal Being.

(M.M. 10:31)

Those who possess an 'eternal being' are those who  
retain their knowledge of themselves as an outbreath  
of the divine, and thus are free from either  
enchantment or curse. To be cheated of this knowledge  
is to lose one's birthright, and become a deluded  
<sup>wanderer</sup>~~wander~~ in a 'strange lodging', the victim of a  
trickster. But like all tricksters, Lucifer is  
helpless when exposed:

...no Man ought to think, that the Devil  
is able to tear the Works of light out of  
his [man's] Heart, for he can neither see  
nor comprehend them: and though he rages  
and raves in the outermost Birth in the

Flesh, as in his Castle of Robbery or Fort of Prey, be not discouraged or dismayed; only take heed thou thyself bring not the works of Wrath into the Light of thy Heart, and then thy Soul will be safe enough from the deaf and dumb Devil, who is blind in the Light.

(Aur. 19:120)

For both Blake and Boehme, the implication of the above passage is that those who become ensnared in the devil's web have no-one to blame but themselves; if they 'imagine' into the wrong principle, they should not be surprised at the result. Boehme insists that the fall and the curse should be understood not as punishments meted out by an angry and vengeful God for an act of disobedience regarding an apple (Inc. 1:2:38, T.P. 10:24f.), but as the inevitable result of a decision made by man to exercise his imagination in a certain way. The fall, whether of Adam or of any man at any time, is therefore a failure of perception rather than of morality, whereby man puts his attention towards time rather than eternity, diversity rather than unity and darkness rather than light, all of which are contained as different vantage points within every individual mind. From this point of view also, the act of judgement ceases to appear as the arbitrary decision of an alien authority seated beyond the skies, (as Boehme's Vernunft would suppose), and becomes something that is self-imposed and self-revealed at each moment, simultaneous with each act of fallen perception. Man should not blame his lamentable condition on constraints imposed from without, and beyond his control. 'The world is my idea', as Schopenhauer famously put it, and Boehme is equally

clear that the responsibility for it falls to no-one but the thinker: 'only thou sufferest the Serpent's Will in thy right eternal Soul's Will to hold thee' (M.M. 26:74). Just as one thinks what one chooses to think, ultimately one sees what one wants to see; both are voluntary acts, free choices. There is nothing that causes the dark world to close itself up - it 'shuts itself up' (F.Q. 1:80); there is no place that 'eternal justice' prepared for Lucifer - he prepared it himself: 'no other [anguish] Source will spring up in him [and torment him] than his own Quality' (T.P. 4:36). So also for Adam:

We are not to conceive, that there was anything else upon Adam, which made his Eve out of him, or that formed them both to the outward natural Life, but only the Verbum Fiat in them, their own very Propriety, and not any alienate (or any thing strange) from without them.

(M.M. 19:26)

Nothing is added that was not there before, only that which exists is perceived differently.

Although we are writing of Boehme, we could just as well be discussing Blake; it is hard to separate them on these most fundamental points. Blake is not just borrowing a few ideas, but entering into an entire vision. He saw in Boehme's view of God and world an alternative to the Nobodaddy of morality and judgement. Here was neither 'abstract non-entity' (B.A. 2:11, K249) nor 'tyrant crown'd' (E. 10:23, K241), nor a world seen as an independent and unalterable 'given' somewhere 'out there', but a true Divine Humanity - the term is used by Boehme as well

as Swedenborg (M.M. 36:65) - creating and shaping its own world through the fluctuations in its perceptual mechanisms:

The Sun's Light when he unfolds it  
Depends on the Organ that beholds it.

(G.P., K760)

What links Blake and Boehme at this point is the imagination, the formative power. It is important to note that in Boehme, the imagination can be either a positive or a negative force, an agent of regeneration, or of the fall. Lucifer and Adam knew well of the latter: Lucifer glanced into the fire of the centrum naturae: he became a spark of fire. Adam beheld the earth: he became earth. The imaginer is changed as much as the object of his imagining, exactly as Blake later described the experience of Los as he unwillingly binds Urizen:

terrified at the shapes  
Enslav'd humanity put on, he became what he beheld:  
He became what he was doing: he was himself transform'd.

(F.Z. 4:285-7, K305)

The idea of 'becoming what you behold' has been traced to Neoplatonic sources,<sup>36</sup> but what has not been generally recognized is that it is also a perfect expression of Boehme's concept of imagination. Although Blake does not refer directly to either concept in Urizen, they nonetheless form an essential element in the drama, affecting several of the main characters. Los, for example, is forced by circumstances to focus his mind on what is happening to Urizen, and he comes to resemble him<sup>37</sup> (the reference in the above passage from The Four Zoas to Los becoming what he beheld only makes

more explicit what is clearly taking place in Urizen). The Eternals, as a result of their observation of the same events, also behave like Urizen; their withdrawal into their own world cements the divisions which Urizen has created.<sup>38</sup> Of course, Urizen also becomes a victim of the process which he has initiated. This can be seen from a comparison of the first and last plates. The title-page shows him, eyes closed, in intense contemplation. The last plate, which is in part a mirror image of the first,<sup>39</sup> suggests that he has now become trapped by what he beheld in the depths of his own mind. In this sense Urizen himself, the arch-reasoner, has also been engaged in a form of imagining. He is rather like a demonic parody of Boehme's God, who 'imagines' his potentialities in the mirror of Wisdom. But whilst Boehme's God remains free, Urizen, like Boehme's Lucifer and Adam, becomes trapped. The poem can thus be understood as an exposure not only of the folly of rationalism but also of the consequences of the wrong use of the imagination. As Boehme wrote, neither fire nor sword could touch the soul, but only the imagination, which was its poison (F.Q. 11:9), and this recalls Blake's poison tree in Songs of Experience, which grows directly from the wrathful mind of man.<sup>40</sup>

There are further parallels between Boehme's Lucifer and Blake's Urizen. The most obvious is that both attempt to break away from a unified, co-operative life and assert their selfhoods. Urizen's 'I alone, even I!' (4:19, K224) is paralleled by Lucifer, who

'would be Lord of the Deity and would not endure any Co-rival' (Aur. 14:18), his spirit supposing 'that itself alone was God' (Aur. 15:68). Lucifer's fall was the immediate cause of the creation of the world (T.F.L. 8:43), which was created in the place of his original domain (Aur. 18:11, M.M. 9:23). So far, none of these ideas are exclusive to Boehme, but form part of the common stock of Christian tradition. But Boehme, like Blake, stamped his own manner of thinking on whatever he inherited from tradition. The important point is that Lucifer's fall did not merely precipitate creation; his 'elevation', the extinguishing of the light within him, his expulsion from heaven, themselves simultaneous, coincided with the first day of creation, as one act:

By this we give you clearly to understand,  
 the Fall of Lucifer, who thus reached into  
 the Center of Nature, into the harsh  
 Matrix, and awakened it, so that it  
 concreted the Substantiality, and so Earth  
 and Stones came to be.

(T.F.L. 8:42)

Commenting on the first five verses of Genesis, Boehme writes:

for the Beginning is the first Motion,  
 which came to pass when prince Michael  
 fought with the Dragon, when he was spewed  
 out with the Creation of the Earth. For  
 even then the enkindled Essence, which  
 with the Enkindling coagulated itself  
 into Earth and Stones, was cast out of the  
 Internal into the External.

(M.M. 12:10)

Viewed in this light, Lucifer's fall and the creation of the world can be seen as two aspects of one process, just as Urizen's acts of creation are inextricably linked with his fall - indeed, would not have been possible

without it. Creation is therefore the obverse of fall, its inevitable and immediate consequence. Boehme of course was at pains to avoid giving the impression that Lucifer rather than God was the creator of the world (e.g. E.G. 4:81), and he shrank from the implication that without Lucifer's fall there would have been no creation. But this was the very inference which Blake, with some justification, may have made from the above passages. The parallel can be further extended. We catch in these passages from Boehme the sense of a subtle network of movement, of linked cause and effect, which works incessantly and inevitably like the rhythms of a living body, rather than at the dictate of a Miltonic, overseer God. Just as Lucifer's movement constitutes the beginning of creation, Adam's fall is also simultaneously the first movement of redemption, because the redeemer, the holy name Jesus, which had been implanted in man even prior to his creation, when he was still a 'heavenly essence' in the wisdom of God, begins to unfold itself at that same instant. The implication of this is that to the enlightened mind, all the great movements and counter-movements in creation may be perceived at work within a single moment, a moment which holds and reconciles all irreconcilables: anger and love, fire and light, fall and redemption. This is the significance of Boehme's experience quoted earlier, when he 'saw and knew the whole working Essence, in the Evil and the Good'.<sup>41</sup> Lifted into eternity, even for a moment, the seer knows all moments. This might at first seem a long

way from the oppressive atmosphere of The Book of Urizen, but a close examination of the poem suggests otherwise. Lying behind the overwhelming sense of gloom and desolation there are glimpses of a more comprehensive vision than any of the individual characters in the poem are aware of. W.J.T. Mitchell's study of Urizen is again invaluable. He notes that Blake continually frustrates our expected sense of linear progression. In chapter one, for example, Urizen's retreat into solitude

resounds...with echoes of widely disparate events in the temporal and spatial structure of Paradise Lost, touching on all the regions of Milton's cosmology (heaven, earth, hell, and chaos) and alluding to several distinct phases in his picture of sacred history (creation of life by Holy Spirit, war in heaven, Satan in hell, Satan traversing chaos, and the apocalypse). Blake suggests that Urizen's withdrawal is, in some sense, all of these events, and occurs in (or creates) all these places.<sup>42</sup>

Blake's purpose in doing this, according to Professor Mitchell, is

...to convey a sense of time as a simultaneous presence, a vast panorama of events which may be rearranged by the poetic imagination into any order which discloses significance. ...He is obviously working toward the idea of compressing all history into the vivid moment in Urizen, in his attempts to conflate beginnings and ends, pasts and futures in each episode of the poem.<sup>43</sup>

The design for Plate 6 reveals this process at work. It shows three figures, which we may assume are members of Urizen's 'self-begotten armies', falling headlong into the flames of hell. The serpents entwined around each figure also suggest a fall into time and mortality, since the serpent is the traditional alchemical symbol of unregenerate nature. (Boehme writes that because of

the fall, 'the Image of Man cometh to be the Image of the Serpent' (T.F.L. 6:58).) But as Professor Mitchell notes,<sup>44</sup> there is a marked contrast between the contorted, head-clutching postures of the figures on the right and left, and the resigned composure of the central figure, who appears to be taking the attitude to fire that, in the poem, Urizen refuses to take: giving himself up to it in an act of voluntary sacrifice, and allowing it to work through him. The design can therefore be seen as a depiction not only of fall and damnation, but also of transformation; the fire may be a purifier, and rebirth at hand. The fact that the design also suggests the crucifixion of Christ - the two contorted figures being the equivalent of the two thieves crucified with him - reinforces this view.<sup>45</sup>

Returning to Boehme, we find that at the crucial point in the unfoldment of the seven properties the anguish-wheel, in self-abnegation, becomes transformed into a cross (T.F.L. 2:27). In The Three Principles of the Divine Essence, Boehme charges this with meaning by calling it a 'cross Birth' (T.P. 2:13) - it would be hard to find a more evocative expression to describe Boehme's entire world-picture - and elsewhere he calls it the 'Cross of Nature', out of which 'is the Eternal Word Generated' (T.F.L. 2:39). This recalls the chaining of Orc, where what is presumably the painful cry at the intended moment of sacrifice also indicates the emergence of new life: 'The dead heard the voice of the child/And began to awake from sleep' (20:26-7, K233), and stimulates Urizen to fresh creative activity, seemingly of a less inadequate kind

than before.

By showing that it is possible to grasp creation and fall, fall and redemption, sacrificial death and new life as simultaneous events, revealed in an instant (any instant), Blake is following the spirit of Boehme's vision, and urging his reader into a sudden 'lightning-flash' of new realization. This prevents us from seeing Urizen in a wholly negative light. Perspectives other than those which engross the characters in the poem are possible; vast processes surge around them, of which they are largely unaware, and the possibility remains that at some point their blinkered vision can be transcended. Urizen's grim world therefore cannot quite convince us of its finality; the divine vision waits to engulf it.

What is also noticeable in this section is the contrast with Milton. Urizen is Blake's reply to Paradise Lost, and it is Boehme who supplies much of his ammunition. Milton's imagination, for example, was primarily literal and historical rather than mythic, and his mind theological rather than mystical or visionary. His work lacked the psychic immediacy for which Blake was searching, and which he found in Boehme. In Milton, there is no 'vision of the Eternal Now' (Ann. Lavater, K77); his concept of eternity is little more than time, infinitely extended, and Blake found this wooden and spiritless compared to the possibilities presented by Boehme.

The final point that needs to be investigated concerns the division into sexes. Boehme's Adam was originally androgynous; he contained within himself both male and female 'tinctures', and these were 'the two Loves, which in the Temperature are divine' (E.G. 3:47). Each tincture was able to enjoy the embrace of the other, because

perfect Love consists not in one Tincture alone, but it consists in both, the one entering into the other; From thence arises the great fiery Desire of love.

(E.G. 6:7)

Similarly, Blake portrays the unfallen life of the Eternals as a union of masculine energy and feminine repose, a blissful commingling such as that evoked by Ahania in praise of Urizen:

When he gave my happy soul  
To the sons of eternal joy,  
When he took the daughters of life  
Into my chambers of love,

When I found babes of bliss on my beds  
And bosoms of milk in my chambers  
Fill'd with eternal seed.  
O eternal births sung around Ahania  
In interchange sweet of their joys!

(B.A. 5:15-23, K255)

In Urizen, however, the action begins only after such 'interchange sweet' has been left behind, although we can assume a similar relationship between Los and Enitharmon when they were in eternity as one being.

It was because of the productive mingling of the tinctures within him that Boehme's Adam had the capacity to reproduce from within himself, without external aid, in great delight and without pain (M.M. 18:10). This is the equivalent of the 'eternal births' of Urizen/Ahania ('eternal birth' is a Behmenist phrase, e.g. T.P. 4:66,

T.F.L. 1:19). But as we would expect, there is no untroubled reproduction in Urizen - indeed, Boehme's Adam failed to take advantage of his power - but only the anguish of the separation between Los and Urizen, and the birth of Enitharmon from Los, 'In pangs, eternity on eternity' (18:5, K231). The latter division horrifies the Eternals:

All eternity shudder'd at sight  
Of the first female now separate,  
Pale as a cloud of snow  
Waving before the face of Los.

Wonder, awe, fear, astonishment  
Petrify the eternal myriads  
At the first female form now separate.

(18:9-15, K231)

Although in Boehme the creation of Eve does not cause Adam the direct pain that Los suffers in the birth of Enitharmon, both episodes are intended to indicate that an already divided being is entering a further stage in its fall. Adam ignores the divine feminine principle within him, and imagines into the earthliness of the third principle. As a result, he loses the female aspect of himself, which becomes externalized in the form of Eve.

The idea that man was originally androgynous is certainly not exclusive to Boehme, but can be found for example in Plato's Symposium, the Kabbalah, and Philo of Alexandria's allegorical interpretations of Genesis.<sup>46</sup> But in the Symposium, the origin of the sexes as a punishment by the gods for man's pride is very different from Blake's version, and there is no evidence that Blake knew anything of Philo. Boehme therefore

seems to be the most likely source. Not only does Blake follow his outline of a division into sexes which follows a fall into matter, he also shares the view, which is a very modern one, that aspects of the personality which are rejected are likely to reappear in the external environment, perceived as an objectified 'other', and in consequence presenting both a threat and a puzzle.

It will be useful to examine Boehme's attitude to sexuality, and compare it with Blake's, in the light of the division into sexes. Boehme continually emphasizes that the need for the act of reproduction to be performed sexually is a lamentable consequence of the fall, and a constant reminder to man of his divided condition and the loss of his paradisiacal power. He believed that the 'bestial Lust' was 'an Abomination before God' (T.P. 20:56), but that it was tolerated because in man's fallen state it had become necessary (M.M. 41:2). Sexual desire was an expression of the desire of each 'tincture' to recover the original unity:

Thus Nature longeth after the Eternal,  
and would fain be delivered from the  
vanity. And thus the vehement desire  
in the Feminine and Masculine Gender  
of all Creatures doth arise, so that  
one longeth after the other for  
Copulation.

(T.F.L. 9:114)

Although it is abundantly clear from Blake's works that he believed instinctively in the purity of sexual energy, he appears now to adopt a more complex position. In Urizen, the Eternals are appalled by the first sexual act:

Eternity shudder'd when they saw  
 Man begetting his likeness  
 On his own divided image.

(19:14-16, K232)

This is a long way from the 'happy copulation' that Oothoon had celebrated in the Visions of the Daughters of Albion. In Urizen, each point in the emergence of sexuality marks a further movement away from eternity. At the sight of Los and Enitharmon now separated, the Eternals erect a tent to hide them from view (19:2-9, K231), which is finally completed as the first sexually propagated child is born (19:47, K232). At this point 'No more Los beheld eternity' (20:2, K233); the two states cannot co-exist. It seems highly probable that this new element in Blake's thought resulted from his study of Boehme. This is not to say that he was converted to Boehme's obvious distaste for sexuality, or that he counselled the suppression of the natural instincts. But he felt the force of Boehme's argument that sexual desire can arise only in an incomplete being, since in eternity the masculine and feminine principles are in a continual and undivided love-embrace, needing no sexual stimulus to unite them. The difference between Blake and Boehme is largely this: Blake believed that sexual activity, although it belonged to man's fallen state, could nonetheless be the means through which he recovered the paradisiacal wholeness. (Although the latter possibility does not appear to be the case in Urizen, generally it is so.)<sup>47</sup> Boehme, although he acknowledged that the origin of sexual desire lay in the yearning of each 'tincture' to recapture its lost unity, would not have entertained

such a view. The nearest he got to it was to say that in the sexual act the eternal tinctures received each other in joy, but that the outer, bestial body was too gross to appreciate such a delicate union (Inc. 1:7: 17-21). Only Christ could restore to man his lost feminine principle.

What this discussion amounts to is that Blake has deepened his view of what might be called the layered nature of reality, involving a hierarchy of different 'principles'. This was of course implied at several points in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, but in that book Blake celebrated the body and its appetites, apparently without qualification. The 'reptile forms' (25:37, K236) of Urizen, and the shrieks of horror in eternity at the sight of the sexual act suggest a sharpening of distinctions. His realization, fuelled by Boehme, is that what is applicable to one state of being may not be applicable to another, particularly in the case of man, who has fallen from one principle into another.

This also sheds light on Blake's view of the status of the created world. On the surface, Urizen appears to be a pessimistic, almost Gnostic account of creation, but this is surely an over simplification of Blake's view, which can be more accurately explained by reference to Boehme. Boehme too, when he writes of the fallen third principle, can sound similarly Gnostic. Man has become enclosed in a 'strange lodging' (T.F.L. 1:16), a 'Prison or Dungeon of Darkness' (T.P. 5:2), a

'House of Darkness and of Death' (Aur. 25:14), captured by the 'spirit of the world' and subject to the wrath of God the Father. Boehme's God in his angry aspect, the giver of the moral law, can seem to resemble the Gnostic demiurge, who was often given the characteristics of the Old Testament God.<sup>48</sup> But this would be a careless interpretation of Boehme. What distinguishes him from the Gnostics is that he does not share their crude dualism. Whereas the Gnostics saw the world as an ineradicable darkness, utterly opposed to the light of the divine, Boehme saw it differently. As an outbreath of the divine, the temporal world is organically related to that which precedes it: 'the spiritual world is the Inward ground of the visible world; the visible subsists in the spiritual' (Cl. 133). If the connection between the two is no longer perceived, this is due to the grossness of man's senses and the impoverished state of his mind, both of which are self-induced. Only then does the world become a 'house of darkness'. The original condition of man was entirely different. Adam was on the earth, yet enwrapped in heaven, and Boehme sometimes resorts to simple contradiction to describe it:

...Adam in his Innocence before his sleep  
 ...was in this world in Paradise; and yet  
 it might well be said, not in this world;  
 he was indeed in this world upon the face  
 of the Earth, but in a paradisaical source  
 [or property] in the Dominion of the [one  
 pure] Element, and not in the four Elements.

(T.F.L. 5:135)

This is not mere clumsiness on Boehme's part; it is central to his outlook. He frequently explains the

relationship of inner and outer by an analogy of fire through-heating an iron (M.M. 70:65 for example); as long as the fire remains, the iron glows. Although the two are separate, since the iron itself is not the fire, they can be joined as one. So too the eternal and the created world form a unity, yet they exist in two different dimensions, which may be perceived together as one, in joyful partnership, or as two, in which case they are opposed, having nothing in common with each other.

This is the background against which Blake's view of the created world can be seen. A Behmenist framework can explain how it was possible for him to hold apparently contradictory positions: 'everything that lives is Holy' (M.H.H. Pl. 27, K160) and yet 'I do not behold the outward Creation...it is as the Dirt upon my feet, No part of Me' (V.L.J. K617). How else to reconcile the 'immense world of delight' of the flying bird in The Marriage (6, K150), with the distress of the 'fawning/Portions of life' (23:3-4, K234) in Urizen? Boehme shows the same apparent contradictions. His praise of the outward world sometimes has a Blakean ring:

God manifested his manifold Virtue with  
 the manifold Herbs, Plants, and Trees,  
 so that every one that does but look  
 upon them, may see the eternal Power,  
 Virtue, and Wisdom of God therein; if he  
 be born of God he may know in every Spire  
 of Grass his Creator, in whom he lives.  
 You shall find no Book wherein the divine  
 Wisdom may be more searched into, and  
 found, than when you walk in a flowery  
 fresh springing Meadow, there you shall  
 see, smell, and taste the wonderful Power  
 and Virtue of God. (T.P. 8:9,11.)

But equally apparent is his disgust for that same world (see T.F.L. 8:14ff.), and his contempt for the 'bestial life', for which man was not made. With this in mind, it is unnecessary to see Urizen as an example of Blake's Gnosticism, or to suggest, as Paley has of the Lambeth books, that Blake found his mythology trapping him in a dualist position.<sup>49</sup> Urizen can equally be understood as an exploration of Boehme's third principle, the outward world, in its fallen state, and to the religious mind, fall suggests the possibility of return. We come back to the point made earlier, that Urizen's world can persuade us neither of its permanence nor its inevitability. To the 'Eyes of the Man of Imagination' (Letters, K793) it would present a different face, and to the expansive ear, a different tune: 'As a man is, So he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers' (Letters, K793). This is not to suggest that at the time of writing Urizen Blake was not pessimistic about the average man's ability to break out of the prevailing Urizenic mentality. It does however lessen the difficulty of explaining Blake's apparent embrace of a dualism which he had so emphatically rejected only a few years previously. He could use Boehme to sanction a negative evaluation of the finite world as ordinarily perceived without necessarily implying the absolute and unqualified condemnation usually associated with Gnosticism. From the opposite point of view, Boehme's vision of an unfallen world, shot through with divine signatures, offered Blake an alternative not only to negation but

also to the kind of shallow optimism of Deism, content to praise the creation simply in the form that the natural eye could perceive it. From Blake's point of view this was the elimination of spiritual experience altogether.

The Book of Urizen, then, as this chapter has shown, reveals Blake's deep indebtedness to Boehme. I must therefore disagree with the conclusion of Professor P. H. Butter, in his article on Boehme and Blake, that Urizen derived only 'in a very minor degree'<sup>50</sup> from Boehme. Professor Butter argues that whilst Blake was undoubtedly passing comment on the Bible and Paradise Lost, and therefore intended his reader to recognize his allusions to them, he did not intend similar comment on Boehme. It is therefore not necessary for the reader to have Boehme's system in mind for his appreciation of Urizen. In my view, this is only partly true. Blake's primary purpose was indeed to undermine the orthodox cosmogony of Genesis and Paradise Lost, but he comments on Boehme simply by treating him as a fellow-subversive, and drawing on his vision to support his own rewriting of scripture. This is comment enough; he could hardly have paid Boehme a higher compliment. It is with a knowledge of Boehme's work that the full range of Blake's thought in Urizen strikes more forcefully home.

Chapter Four'The End Finds the Beginning':'The Four Zoas','Milton' and 'Jerusalem'

The previous chapters have laid the foundations for an exploration of the three major prophetic books, The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem. As stated in the introduction, these poems will be treated synoptically. It will be my contention that Blake continued to draw inspiration from Boehme; indeed, that Boehme's system had lodged itself so deeply in his awareness that it continued to produce a wealth of conscious and unconscious echoes. This chapter will begin with a consideration of the role of Albion as the universal man, and of the importance of the analogy between the microcosm and the macrocosm. This will be followed by another examination of the fall and its consequences. The main body of the chapter, however, will consist of a gradual ascent from the lower levels of vision to the higher, although this is a general outline only. Frequently, the lower and higher realities will have to be considered in juxtaposition, and sometimes the discussion will be more like an exploration of successive spokes of a wheel than a series of steps on a ladder of ascent. As Keats wrote, 'any one grand and spiritual passage serves...as a starting post towards all "the two-and thirty Pallaces"'.<sup>1</sup> Such a scheme is possible because the basic structure of Blake's system in the major prophetic books resembles Boehme's to a marked degree.

Blake's states of Ulro and Generation, the nadir of human and cosmic existence, correspond to the properties of Boehme's lower ternary and to his outward world in its corrupted state. Each system also contains a series of transition points, such as the lightning-flash, 'self-annihilation' and the 'opened center' (all of which are Behmenist concepts adopted by Blake), through which life is propelled into a higher dimension, corresponding to Blake's states of Beulah and Eden, and Boehme's Eternal Nature. Through this transition, man regains the divine light, the divine speech and the divine body, which constitute the fifth, sixth and seventh properties of Boehme's Eternal Nature, and which were lost to him in the desolation of Ulro.<sup>2</sup>

Two extracts will serve as an epitome of what follows.

The first is from Northrop Frye's Fearful Symmetry:

Man stands at the level of conscious life: immediately in front of him is the power to visualize the eternal city and garden he is trying to regain; immediately behind him is an unconscious, involuntary and cyclic energy, much of which still goes on inside his own body. Man is therefore a Luvah or form of life subject to two impulses, one the prophetic impulse leading him forward to vision, the other the natural impulse which drags him back to unconsciousness and finally to death.<sup>3</sup>

The 'unconscious, involuntary and cyclic energy' is the Angst of Boehme's dark ternary, and the 'two impulses' are the equivalent of Boehme's two wills, the self-will and the 'resigned' will. The second quotation is from Boehme's Signatura Rerum, and shows that Boehme too believed that man stood at a pivotal point:

In the Salnitral Flagrat lies the Possibility backwards and forwards; if the Will of the Desire goes back, then it is as to the Kingdom of this World [earthly], and as to the Kingdom of the eternal World it is in God's Anger, and cannot see God unless it be converted, and enters into the dying in the Fire, and wholly dies to its Selfness, and enters into the Resignation of the Eternal Will in the Salnitral Flagrat into the Element, viz. into the heavenly Essentiality and Corporality... thus from the dying in the Fire arises the Light, for here the Liberty is enkindled.

(S.R. 14:59)<sup>4</sup>

In the 'enkindling of the liberty', man regains his universal status. In terms of Blake's myth, he becomes once more akin to the unfallen Albion, the universal man.

i) The universal man

Blake's idea of seeing the universe in the form of a giant man came to him in the first instance from Swedenborg, who described heaven as a 'Grand Man' because each of its inhabitants contributed to the smooth running of the whole unit, as in a well functioning human body.<sup>5</sup> Swedenborg has a detailed series of correspondences between the different parts of the Grand Man and the divine virtues: the head corresponds to love, peace, innocence, wisdom and intelligence; the breast to charity and faith, the loins to conjugal love, and so on.<sup>6</sup> Meticulous to the last, he includes correspondences for liver, kidneys, pancreas and spleen, for the Grand Man resembles exactly the body of a man.<sup>7</sup> Each individual man shares these correspondences, because man is 'a heaven in its

least form after the likeness of the greatest'.<sup>8</sup>

There is also a correspondence between man and the entire created universe, so that 'man also is a kind of universe'.<sup>9</sup> A close parallel to Swedenborg's Grand Man is the Kabbalist figure of Adam Kadmon, the primordial man, who is the form taken by the ten Sefiroth in their first manifestation.<sup>10</sup> The Biblical Adam was considered to be the last and lowest reflection of Adam Kadmon, but was nonetheless conceived as a noble, spiritual being, a microcosm of all the worlds.<sup>11</sup> Jewish exegetical literature referred to his enormous size; he filled the entire universe, and was reduced only at the fall.<sup>12</sup> His name was said to derive from the initials of the four compass points.<sup>13</sup> Blake was aware of this tradition (J. 27, K649). But a third factor which went into his conception of the 'Eternal Man' (F.Z. 1:484, K277) was Boehme's presentation, as imaginative and as wide-reaching as anything in Swedenborg or the Kabbalah, of the vast potential of human life. The first point to note is that Boehme subscribed to the common idea of man as a microcosm of the universe:

And we declare unto you, that the Eternal Being, and also this world, is like Man: The Eternity generateth nothing but that which is like itself...

And as you find Man to be, just so is the Eternity: consider Man in body and soul, in good and evil, in joy and sorrow, in light and darkness, in power and weakness, in life and death; All is in Man, both Heaven and Earth, Stars and Elements; and also the Number Three of the Deity; neither can there be any thing named that is not in Man; all Creatures (both in this world, and in the Angelical world,) are in Man. All of us, together with the whole Essence of all Essences, are but one body,



But more important for Blake than the mental gymnastics involved in a concept such as this was the practical consequences which it held for everyday human life. What mattered was the intensity of the communion which man could have with a universe which was contained within him, or, to put it differently, which he was vast enough to encompass. For the unfallen Albion, the universe was as close to him as his own thoughts, as precious to him as his own limbs, as vital to him as his own blood. He was himself infinite, and reached out to embrace an infinite cosmos, much as Blake described his own 'first Vision of Light' in his letter to Thomas Butts:

My Eyes more & more  
Like a Sea without shore  
Continue Expanding,  
The Heavens commanding.

(Letters, K805)

Blake's description of the extraordinary intimacy between Albion and the life of the cosmos was surely stimulated by Boehme's account of the paradisiacal man, who had the entire universe within his reach. Adam, with his vision pure and unobstructed, was able to see into the heart of the creation, to feel its 'signatures' and to know it as his own, because whatever is contained within can also be known in its manifestation without. It was only when Adam lost this intimacy (ironically, in a miscalculated attempt to enhance it) that, for the first time, he perceived the outward world in isolation, quite divorced from himself. It then appeared as a completely hostile power, alien to a being still tinged with the memory of paradise. No longer did Adam, or,

in Blake's terms, Albion, hold the world in immediate embrace. On the contrary, it was the world which now held him, as human life 'fell to the Stars' (M.M. 29:29), and these are the same 'starry heavens' which escape from Albion's limbs and torment him throughout Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup>

This can be looked at from another angle, in the context of the three designs by Dionysius Freher which were included at the back of volume three of some copies of the 'Law edition', and which were praised so highly by Blake. Each design represents man in one of his three possible states: pristine, fallen or regenerate. All the designs are multi-layered, and a series of flaps can be lifted up to reveal progressively more inward states of existence. The first design (of man in his pristine condition) shows, before the flaps are lifted, the zodiac and the planets, including earth, but does not reveal man. According to the extracts from Freher's explanation which were included with the designs, this was because man was not to appear 'within the Limits and Bounds of the Zodiac'.<sup>17</sup> In other words, although man had the universe in him, he was not bound by it. What Blake would have noticed as he examined the Freher diagram was a spiral line, which starts at the outermost point of the zodiac, and winds inwards, as the flaps are lifted, via earth and the other planets, which are also equated with the seven properties. In this way the figure of man is gradually revealed, and the spiral line continues to wind, 'through all the Circumvolutions of Time'<sup>18</sup> directly into him. More

flaps lift up from within the man himself, to reveal, successively, Fire, Tincture, Majesty, Ternarius and finally 'that incomprehensible Point, which is most significantly called NOTHING and ALL',<sup>19</sup> where the spiral line ends. From a Blakean point of view, if a 'traveller thro' Eternity' (M. 15:22, K497) were to take up the spiral line from its outermost point (the end of the golden string of Jerusalem, Plate 77, which leads into heaven's gate?) and wind it into a ball as he journeyed inwards, the planets would one by one be collected up until eventually he would find himself standing at the Point within man's heart, which would also contain the entire universe. From this point of view, the universe itself can be seen as opening out from within man, as an emanation of his own heart, rather as Blake describes it: 'In every bosom a universe expands as wings' (J. 38:49, K665). The passage in Boehme on which Freher based his design can be found in chapter nine of The Threefold Life of Man. The planets and the zodiac are described as the 'wheel of nature' which 'windeth itself from without inwards into itself' towards the Heart of God, the 'Eternal Center' in which the 'whole Power of the Majesty of God' is concentrated, and is 'held or shut up by nothing'. In this place stands the regenerate human mind (T.F.L. 9:67-70) - also the mind of Blake's Albion. In Plate 25 of Jerusalem Blake depicts a process similar to the above but with opposite implications.<sup>20</sup> Albion's universe, rather than expanding as wings, is forcibly extracted and separated

from him as Vala, Rahab and Tirzah combine to draw out the living fibres, seen as a cord, from his body. The cord will eventually draw with it the sun, moon and stars which are still contained within him. The second Freher design, which contrasts with the first, suggests something similar. Fallen man is now enclosed by, yet unconnected with, the zodiac, which forms a circle around him. However, his body retains its planetary equivalents; the heart corresponds to the sun, for example, and the brain to Jupiter, and this suggests a contrast with Blake, who shows man losing the stars from his own body as he falls. However, the difference is more apparent than real. In effect, Boehme says exactly the same thing as Blake, although he describes it rather differently. For Boehme's fallen man, the stars were no longer the means by which he could gain knowledge of the cosmos; no longer could he, like Los and Enitharmon'...stretch across the heavens & step from star to star' (F.Z. 2:298, K288). The stars had acquired a malevolent character. The innermost representation of man in the second Freher design shows, in his 'Dark Soul... the former Characters of the Seven Planets, all black and coloured'.<sup>21</sup> Now active in their selfhoods (see M.M. 20:32), the stars pick up their spears, and it is man, not they, who must flee naked away, enslaved by what he formerly ruled. It is not that man loses the stars from his own body in the way that Albion does. On the contrary, he becomes unpleasantly aware of them. Whereas before, they had lain quiescent within him, now they assault

him. Nevertheless, the result is exactly as in Blake. Man relinquishes his power of communication with the universe, and the stars, no longer recognizable as his friends, conspire against him.

A final point to be observed in connection with this series of designs by Freher is Blake's illustration at the bottom of plate 91 of Jerusalem, which shows the process of 'What is within now seen without' (F.Z. 2:55, K281). The externalizing of the seal of Solomon is particularly interesting, since the seal appears (in the flap marked Tincture) as one of the innermost aspects of Freher's unfallen man. In the Hermetic tradition the seal normally signifies the synthesis of the four elements, and therefore the union of opposites;<sup>22</sup> Albion's loss of it clearly indicates his divided state. The seal reappears in the third Freher design, signifying both the union of fire and water, and of darkness and light, within the heart of the new born man.<sup>23</sup>

Thirteen more designs by Freher, in the form of diagrams, were included in volume two of the 'Law edition'. Kathleen Raine has drawn attention to three of these,<sup>24</sup> but a fourth, number nine (Fig. 3), can be added and compared with Blake's design for Jerusalem, Plate 14. Freher depicts the fallen Adam lying on his side (signified by a large A written sideways), chained to Satan, with the earth, sun and stars above him, and Sophia at the very top of the diagram, quite beyond his reach. Freher comments:

SOPHIA has forsaken him, or rather he, having dealt treachorously, has forsaken Her, and the Holy Band of the Marriage-Covenant that was between them is dissolved.<sup>25</sup>

Blake's design shows Albion lying on his side, with the sun, moon, earth and several planets above him and beyond his sight. What he does see is a representation of Jerusalem, his lost emanation, who resembles the Sophia of Boehme's Adam. However, his mournful expression suggests that, as in the text, he still regards her as a 'deluding shadow' (J. 23:1, K645), and his rejection of her is a major theme of the first chapter of Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup> Thus both Freher and Blake depict in similar fashion a stricken man, a universe which is external to him and to which he is subject, and a departed heavenly woman.

Blake was certainly inspired by Freher's designs, although it is impossible to say whether he knew that they were by Freher rather than William Law, to whom they were attributed. Blake may have known of Freher, since his works were circulated in manuscript form during Blake's lifetime,<sup>27</sup> but if he did not, the designs might well have stimulated him to investigate Law's own works, had he not already done so.

It seems, then, that in spite of the undoubted influence of Swedenborg and the Kabbalah, one strand in Blake's idea of the Eternal Man is directly traceable to Boehme, or to Boehme as seen through the eyes of Freher. As for the other influences, it is uncertain whether Blake had any detailed knowledge of the Kabbalist tradition of Adam Kadmon; he may just have

known the basic outline. Most of what is sometimes attributed to Kabbalist influence can also be found in Boehme.<sup>28</sup> As for Swedenborg, the same points which were made in relation to The Marriage of Heaven and Hell remain valid. We do not notice in Swedenborg's works the same tones which animate the pages of Boehme: the urgent quest for power over nature, the striving to rediscover a lost sovereignty. Boehme, for all his humility, had something of the Faust in him. Swedenborg, in spite of the strangeness of his 'memorable relations', is less heady and less daring. His vision stays within bounds, whereas on occasion, Boehme's knows none. The long passages in which Boehme extols the paradisiacal man, and which appear in almost all his major works, are not found in Swedenborg, and in these accounts Boehme always emphasizes man's power and lordship over creation:

And thus thou mayest understand what thou art, and what thou wast before the Fall, for thou couldst rule over the Sun and the Stars, all was in thy power; the Fire, the Air, and the Water, together with the Earth, could not compel thee: no outward fire could burn thee, no Water could drown thee, no Air could suffocate or stifle thee, every living thing feared before thee, thou hadst thy own food of the Paradisaical fruit to give to the outward life, and the Verbum Domini to the inward life of the soul: thou hadst lived Eternally without woe, or feeling of any sickness or disease, in mere joy and delight, and besides, without care and toil...but all a sport of love.

(T.F.L. 11:19)<sup>29</sup>

This seems to me to be the mood of the closing lines of The Four Zoas, where Blake's all-seeing, new born man finds his oppressive universe transformed at a stroke:



Urizen is therefore less directly culpable for the fall than in Urizen; he is not its sole agent. The pattern here resembles Boehme's myth, in which Vernunft is not the cause of the fall but the result of it. Its ascendancy stems from the failure of man to maintain the higher intelligence of Verstand. As in Blake's version, as man falls, Vernunft arises, and like the 'faded radiance' (F.Z. 1:437, K276) of Urizen, gives what partial light it can. Ultimately of course, the failure is one of the imagination, which must reassert its positive function if Verstand is to be regained. Morton Paley has demonstrated, with reference to Boehme, that it was exactly this theme, in the form of the regenerative role of Los, which Blake worked into the revisions to Vala, as he transformed it into The Four Zoas.<sup>32</sup>

The failure of Albion's imagination can be seen from the third distinguishable element in the fall narrative, which concerns Albion's direct responsibility for his own fall: 'Turning his Eyes outward to Self, losing the Divine Vision' (F.Z. 2:2, K280). The same theme is stated, succinctly and in very similar words, four times in the first two nights,<sup>33</sup> and the line quoted was originally the first line of the poem,<sup>34</sup> indicating the central importance which Blake attached to it. It is quite clearly Behmenist doctrine, and Behmenist language, as the discussion of Urizen has demonstrated. It is inextricably linked with the fourth and last element of the fall, Albion's seduction by Vala, since the assertion of selfhood goes hand in hand with



World; and he became feeble as to the Kingdom of God, and so fell down and slept.

(T.P. 17:54)<sup>35</sup>

Boehme then connects Eve, as the 'Woman of this World', with the 'Spirit of this World', since she had been formed by God through its agency (T.P. 17:55). Although the Spiritus Mundi is not an exact analogue of Vala, since it is not personified as a woman, the pattern is the same as in Blake. In each case the representative of the outward world deliberately ensnares the unsuspecting Eternal Man. It will be noticed also that Boehme has a third figure in this passage : the Virgin Sophia. In Jerusalem Blake describes a similar threefold relationship between Albion, Jerusalem and Vala, and since it clarifies the relationship between Albion and Vala, as well as providing a close parallel with Boehme, it will be useful to consider it now.<sup>36</sup>

Vala is identified as the mother of the material substances, and Jerusalem of the spiritual (J. 18:7, K640). In Albion's mind we are taken back to a time when harmony prevailed between them, and we find Jerusalem 'soft repos'd / In the arms of Vala, assimilating in one with Vala' (19:40-1, K642). Jerusalem recalls their paradisiacal union, when she was caught 'in the bands / Of love' (20:31-2, K643) and Vala refused to let her go. Boehme describes in very similar terms the conjunction of inner and outer, spiritual and material, in the unfallen Adam:

These two Beings, viz. the inward Heavenly, and the outward Heavenly, were mutually espoused to each other, and formed into

one Body, wherein was the most holy Tincture of the Fire and Light, viz. the great joyful Love-desire, which did enflame the Essence, so that both Essences did very earnestly and ardently desire each other in the Love-desire, and loved one another: the Inward loved the Outward as its Manifestation and Sensation, and the Outward loved the Inward as its greatest Sweetness and Joyfulness, as its precious Pearl, and most beloved Spouse and Consort; and yet they were not two Bodies, but only one, but of a twofold Essence, viz. one inward, heavenly, holy, and one from the Essence of Time; which were espoused and betrothed to each other to an eternal [Being].

(M.M. 18:8)

Although this is a description of the different levels within Adam's own constitution, the same relationship between inner and outer prevailed in the wider environment. Just as Jerusalem, who is identified with the light which emanates from each individual form in eternity (J. 54:1-3, K684), had overspread the nations in ancient time (J. 97:1-2, K744), the light principle - which is also Sophia's element, since hers is the tincture of light (M.M. 25:14) - shone in and through the material third principle, glorifying it:

Now the third Birth or Geniture, is the Comprehensibility or Palpability of Nature, which was rarified and transparent, lovely, pleasant and bright, before the Time of God's Wrath, so that the qualifying or fountain Spirits could see through and through all. There was neither Stone nor Earth therein, neither had it Need of any such created or contracted Light as now; but the Light generated itself every where in the Center, and all stood in the Light.

(Aur. 18:34-5)

This can be compared with Jerusalem's recollection to Vala: 'The Veil shone with thy brightness in the eyes

of Albion' (J. 20:34, K643 ). At this stage, the outer reality as Boehme describes it recalls the regenerate Vala of the ninth night of The Four Zoas, the 'sinless soul' (9:455, K369). It could also be said, as another way of looking at the same situation, that the celestial Virgin Sophia - the repository of the divine archetypes - was perfectly served by the alchemical 'genetrix' or 'pregnant Mother' (S.R. 14:16): earth was manifesting the divine ideas. (Blake's equivalent of the 'genetrix', the 'nameless shadowy female', is identified with Vala in the seventh night of The Four Zoas (7:327-31, K328), although Vala is there no 'sinless soul' but a 'wonder horrible'.)

What follows in the relationship between Albion, Jerusalem and Vala is crucial. Albion is enchanted by Vala's beauty, rends her veil, and loves her. All appears to be well, as this was 'a time of love' (J. 20:41, K643), and the rending of a veil always has positive implications in Blake's work (e.g. J. 69:38-40, K708). But in this case the act is also a dangerous one. It divides Jerusalem and Vala. Albion in effect sets a trap for himself by turning his back on Jerusalem, and so denying his own divinity and freedom. As a result, Jerusalem 'redounded from Albion's bosom' in her 'virgin loveliness' (20:38, K643), and was received by the Lamb of God as his bride, just as in Boehme, Adam's hungering for the material and temporal nature caused the Virgin Sophia to depart into her principle, remaining as the bride of Christ. This was the first

indication that the unity of paradise and earth was being sundered. Blake's account has similarities with the two stages in Boehme's version of the fall; even after the loss of the Virgin, Adam and Eve enjoy an unfallen relationship in Eden, as Albion and Vala do in their 'time of love', but in both cases the loss of the divine element means that the honeymoon can only be brief. Albion's error is his failure to appreciate the true cause of Vala's beauty, which Jerusalem knows: 'Beautiful thro' our Love's comeliness; beautiful thro' pity' (20:33, K643). In Blake's interpretation, pity, being the contrary of wrath, must also form part of Boehme's light principle; the veil is therefore beautiful, through the presence in it of another principle. The troubles that subsequently afflict Albion arise from the intrinsically deceptive and dual nature of the lover he has chosen. In seeking for an explanation for his plight, Albion wrongly assumes that his act of love itself was the cause, and he therefore repudiates it as sin. But as always in Blake, it is not morality which is important, but knowledge. Los, for example, has no interest in whether a man is good or evil, but only whether he is wise or foolish (J. 91:55-6, K739). As Los enjoins his Spectre, so Albion also should put off Holiness and put on Intellect. It is his interior state of being which counts, not his actions, which must necessarily flow from that state but which cannot be judged of themselves. All judgement belongs to the 'Wastes of Moral Law' which Albion, in a brief period of lucidity, realizes that he

has fallen into (J. 24:17-24, K647). Had Albion been wise, it does not mean that he would have foregone his love for Vala - for love is no crime - but it does mean that, loving her, he would still have remained within himself, always inner, enjoying what he truly possessed (he contained all things within himself), but not embracing it in such a way that it gained the power to destroy him. But Albion, as fool, insists on making his trek to the outward, and where his treasure is, there, to his cost, he finds his heart also. He might well address Vala in complaint, 'Why have thou elevate inward, O dweller of outward chambers' (J. 34:10, K660), but in reality it is not she, but Albion who has moved: 'He recoil'd : he rush'd outwards : he bore the Veil whole away' (J. 23:20, K646). Blake often counsels man to turn once more within,<sup>37</sup> and Boehme has an identical message. Had Albion possessed a copy of the Signatura Rerum, he would have read the caution 'let none think that the outward is divine, only the divine Power penetrates and tinctures the outward [Being]' (S.R. 8:24). When this power withdraws into itself, the 'outward being' reveals its intrinsic duality, and fire and light take on their new and unharmonious guise of evil and good (which before they never were) and wrestle for supremacy. Such is Vala's domain, where the modest rose puts forth a thorn, and she herself is both woman fair and woman dark.<sup>38</sup> It is vain for Albion to lament that she is not pure (J. 21:12, K643); purity is not her 'principle', she is mixed, and he should not expect



dark World: But seeing the outward Body was created out of the Time, therefore the Time, viz. the Constellation with the four Elements, presently obtained the Dominion in him; the divine Property, viz. the Desire of the Deity (which ruled and tinctured Time, so that there was a holy Life in the Creature out of the Time), was vanished; its own peculiar Love in the divine Desire was turned to Water, and it became blind and dead in the Will and Desire of God; and the Soul must help itself with the Sun's light.

(S.R. 5:8)

In Blake's terminology, Albion now finds himself in the desolate, dehumanized world of the Ulro. Ulro is first named in the first night of The Four Zoas, as the space allocated by the Daughters of Beulah to the 'Circle of Destiny' (F.Z. 1:101-2, K267). It is therefore the material world, but seen in its most unimaginative and sterile form. It is associated with death, cruelty, error and delusion;<sup>40</sup> its inhabitants are ignorant of the spiritual causes which underlie natural events (M. 26:44-6, K513). Ulro also represents the Newtonian universe, functioning with a vast mechanical regularity, beyond the control of man and rendering him small and insignificant, lost in the giant spaces. Such a universe forces even God to sit in exile beyond the skies. But Blake believed that 'Man must & will have Some Religion : if he has not the Religion of Jesus, he will have the Religion of Satan' (J. 52, K682) and the fallen Albion is quite prepared to become a Deist, and so discover the only God that Ulro can comprehend: 'God in the dreary Void/Dwells from Eternity, wide separated from the Human Soul ' (J. 23:29-30, K346).



ready to wreak vengeance on man for his disobedience and to condemn half the human race (the line of Esau) to damnation before they even see the light of day.<sup>41</sup>

According to William Law, those who held such a view were

...miserable Mistakers of the Divine Nature, and miserable Reproachers of His great Love, and Goodness in the Christian Dispensation. For God is Love, yea, all Love, and so all Love, that nothing but Love can come from him; and the Christian Religion, is nothing else but an open, full Manifestation of his universal Love towards all Mankind.<sup>42</sup>

The wrath which separated man from God belonged not to God but to 'the dark Fire of our own fallen Nature'.<sup>43</sup>

Now to move from these general considerations to an analysis of the structure of the fallen world in Jerusalem, where a pattern which has been made familiar by The Book of Urizen can be discerned. The theme of the poem is announced as

Of the sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through  
Eternal Death! and of the awaking to Eternal Life.

(J. 4:1-2, K622)

'Eternal Death', although it sounds like a Biblical phrase, does not in fact occur there, but it is frequently used by Boehme to describe the first principle.<sup>44</sup> In Jerusalem, Albion has inherited Urizen's mantle, and has himself become the contractive force of Boehme's first property. His brooding introspection in the design for Plate 41 can be compared to Urizen in similar pose in The Song of Los, Plate 1.<sup>45</sup> The atmosphere of Urizen is also retained: Albion is 'darkening, cold' (J. 4:35, K622), either sleeping on

his rock or fleeing in 'petrific hardness' (J. 38:1, K664). His spectre is 'hard cold constrictive' (J. 54:25, K685). Hand, one of Albion's sons, finds his own scorn and pride freezing around him into steel and rock (J. 7:71-2, K626), and his emanations condense into '...hard opake substances, / And his infant thoughts & desires into cold dark cliffs of death' (J. 9:1-2, K628). Of course, these descriptions of the deadness and rigidity of the fallen world cannot be wholly ascribed to Boehme's influence. The Newtonian universe has been described by a modern historian of science in exactly the terms Blake uses.<sup>46</sup> However, Blake was adept at piling up multiple allusions, and since his use of this imagery in Urizen was so clearly Behmenist, it is fair to suggest that his retention of it in Jerusalem shows a continuing debt, whatever other contributory streams there may have been.

Blake also maintains the rhythm of contraction and expansion which is so basic to Boehme's system, where it operates in two distinct ways. Firstly, in the interaction of the first two properties in the dark world. Secondly, at a wider level in Eternal Nature, where the properties of the dark world taken together form a contracting, enclosing force; they 'keep their own Center to themselves' (T.F.L. 2:74), isolating, restricting, holding in, whereas the qualities of the light world are outflowing. The relationship is well brought out in one of Blake's illustrations to Milton, 'Christ Offers to Redeem Man',<sup>47</sup>

which contrasts the expansive, open-armed Christ with the closed, Urizenic figure of God the Father. In the early plates of Jerusalem a veritable battery of expansive forces attempt to reverse the direction that Albion is taking. The Saviour calls upon him to expand; Los works furiously at his furnaces, but to no avail (J. 9:26-7, K628); even Blake's own voice breaks through to announce his task of opening man to eternity (J. 5:16-20, K623). All these elements represent the expansive leaven of Boehme's light world, but at this point none can force a way into Albion's mind. The ideal rhythm must therefore take on a negative, perverted form: as Albion shrinks, the world, no longer his own, enlarges; the limbs that formerly contained heaven and earth metamorphose into 'a Human Polypus of Death' (F.Z. 4:268, K304), which grows directly from Albion and proliferates over the entire earth (J. 15:4-5, K635). This sprawling, parasitic creation is a cancer to the divine body; like the Covering Cherub, it represents the devil's parody of the divine embrace, for 'He who will not comingle in Love must be adjoin'd by Hate' (J. 66:56, K703). Expansion in this context can mean only the acquisitive hunger of contending selfhoods in their desire to possess and subdue each other.<sup>48</sup>

All that this accumulated activity can produce in the fallen world is the circular motion of the 'terrible starry wheels of Albion's sons' (J. 12:51, K632), or the 'dark Satanic wheels' (J. 12:44, K632),<sup>49</sup> which is the development of the 'rolling of wheels' in Urizen, and

refers to the oppressive nature of the Newtonian heavens. But it is likely that Blake also had Boehme's first three properties, the wheel of anguish, in mind.

William Law had specifically linked the two:

...in these three properties of the Desire, you see the Ground and Reason of the three great Laws of Matter and Motion lately discovered, and so much celebrated; and need no more to be told, that the illustrious Sir Issac ploughed with Behmen's Heifer when he brought forth the Discovery of them. In the mathematical System of this great Philosopher these three properties, Attraction, equal Resistance, and the orbicular Motion of the Planets as the Effect of them, etc., are only treated of as Facts and Appearances, whose Ground is not pretended to be known. But in our Behmen, the illuminated Instrument of God, their Birth and Power in Eternity are opened.<sup>50</sup>

Law's claim that Newton derived his laws from the study of Boehme is probably unfounded,<sup>51</sup> and in fact, the 'Attraction, Resistance, and Whirling' - Law's description of Boehme's properties - are not directly related to Newton's laws of motion, but only to the application of those laws to celestial mechanics.<sup>52</sup> But the significant point is that Law puts Newton's philosophy of nature to unusual use. Contrary to the Christian and Deist interpretation, for whom Newton's system had demonstrated God's providential design, Law uses it to support his view that nature is in a fallen rather than perfect state. For Law, nature left to itself was a maelstrom of torment and frustrated desire, due to the activity of the first three properties, and anything in the material system of the world which possessed a circular motion was an example of Boehme's wheel of anguish.<sup>53</sup> Law chose to see his thesis confirmed in Newton's discoveries.

It is highly probable that Blake, since he was also transforming Newton's system into a symbol of chaos, a sign of a fallen mind perceiving a fallen world, also made this connection between Newton and Boehme, with or without the help of Law. The link has further implications. According to Law, the grossness of matter was the result of the preponderant activity of the first property, and this was caused by the fall. But if nature were to be reborn into the divine light in which it had first subsisted, the grossness would disappear and the universe would once more resemble the 'glassy sea' which surrounded the throne of God in the Revelation.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the properties which constituted the wheel of anguish would function to different effect. The Revelation had, after all, promised a new heaven as well as a new earth. Blake was certainly alive to the implications of this. Since the 'starry wheels' were external manifestations of man's inner Angst, the transmutation of the Angst into love would mean that the 'Erring Globes' would wander no more (F.Z. 9:831, K379); the 'dull round' (N.N.R. K87) of planetary orbits would cease immediately, as if it had never been. This brings us back to the pristine man of Freher's diagram, where the planets can be successively gathered up until they disappear into, or are contained within, the man's heart. The heart is the appropriate place, since it is the seat of love, Boehme's fifth property, which he links with the third. When love cannot flow, the wheel of anguish turns; but when love emerges, the anguish is nowhere to be found.

Boehme also describes the Angst as the 'wheel of Nature' (F.Q. Appendix, 2). It is responsible for wars and the desolation they cause. However, the peculiar feature of the wheel is its self-defeating nature; locked within its own principle, it can only feed upon itself:

This is the Third Form of Nature, whence arise Wars, fighting, strife, destroying of country and city, envy and anxious vexations, Malice and Wickedness; whereas always one would have the other dead, willeth to devour all and draw it into itself; it wills to have it alone, and yet there is nothing profitable to it, but hurtful.

It does as the fierce wrath of Nature does, that swallows itself up into itself, and consumes and breaks itself, and yet it generates itself also thus.

From this all evil comes.

(Inc. 2:8:62-4)

As Morton Paley has noted, Blake adopts this idea, and uses the same vocabulary.<sup>55</sup> In The Four Zoas, as Orc is transformed into a serpent, he becomes 'A Self consuming dark devourer rising into the heavens' (F.Z. 7:156 K324), and the Polypus is described as a 'self-devouring monstrous Human Death...' (M. 34:26, K524). Boehme also writes of the 'sharp devouring nature of the first three Properties' (Cl. 87), and of the 'fierceness and consuming nature' (T.F.L. 3:46). The serpent that Orc becomes is of course the traditional alchemical symbol of the uroboros, the dragon which devours its own tail, and thus appears as a circle. A representation of it appeared in the 1730 German edition of Boehme's works,<sup>56</sup> although it was not reproduced in the 'Law edition'. However, Boehme clearly describes it:





seems to envisage a process similar to the circulatio of the alchemists, through which this is accomplished (S.R. 13:49).<sup>57</sup> The wheel of the outward life could then be experienced in its completeness and harmony as the instrument of the 'Mother' (S.R. 14:5), 'from whence she continually creates and works' (S.R. 14:15). The mother is the prima materia, and her products are the stars, planets and elements, seen as tangible expressions of the original patterns contained in the eternal wisdom (S.R. 14:15). This wheel, in its unity and completeness, is likened to man's own mind (S.R. 14:16). Jung compared this passage to the traditional symbolism of the mandala, as a 'concept for wholeness',<sup>58</sup> and Kathleen Raine suggests that such a pattern can be discerned in Blake's work. She notes that both Albion himself and the city of Golgonooza have the form of a squared circle,<sup>59</sup> in the centre of which stands the gate of Luban, where Enitharmon builds her looms and weaves human forms for those lost in Ulro (F.Z. 8:36-7, K342).<sup>60</sup> Blake twice refers to the 'Wheels of Enitharmon' (M.6:27, K486, J88:54, K734), and describes the Daughters of Los 'Hour after hour labouring at the whirling Wheel' (J. 59:32, K691). These wheels stand in contrast to the 'starry wheels', and it is interesting to see them as a parallel to Boehme's smoothly functioning outer wheel, wrought from the divine centre by the eternal mother, which also stands in contrast to the wheel of the Angst.

Two final points need to be made about Ulro and its link with Boehme. The first concerns the degeneration

of human forms into animal. This is described in the sixth night of The Four Zoas, which is an extended version of Urizen's exploration of his dens in The Book of Urizen, and gives greater detail of the 'reptile forms' that he had there encountered. As he journeys through his 'ruin'd world'

...he beheld the forms of tygers & Lions,  
 Many in serpents & in worms. dishumaniz'd men,

(F.Z. 6:116-7, K314)

So too the fate of Boehme's fallen angels:

For you must know, that as soon as the  
 divine Light went out in the Devils,  
 they lost their beauteous Form and Image,  
 and became like Serpents, Dragons, Worms  
 and evil Beasts.

(T.P. 4:64)

This also occurs in Paradise Lost (Bk. 10:105ff.), but Boehme, like Blake, also describes fallen man undergoing the same process:

...bestial Men... [who] will bear no angelical  
 Image, therefore they must bear the Images of  
 Lions, Dragons, and other evil Beasts, and  
 Worms.

(T.P. 8:15)

These are Blake's 'dishumaniz'd men', able to bear such animal forms because originally all animals lay within them (J.27 , K652), a fact which Boehme confirms as he explains how the animal properties gained the upper hand:

...the outward Spirit of the outward  
 Astrum and four Elements presently  
 domineered in them... moreover, the  
 Properties of all evil and good Beasts:  
 All which Properties before did lie  
 hidden.

...the precious Image was corrupted,  
 and became according to the Limus of  
 the earth, a Beast of all Beasts:  
 Whereupon there are now so many and  
 various Properties in man; as one a

Fox, Wolf, Bear, Lion, Dog, Bull, Cat,  
Horse, Cock, Toad, Serpent; ...as many  
Kinds of Creatures as are upon the  
Earth, so many and various Properties  
likewise there are in the earthly Man.

(M.M. 20:33, 34)

Leopold Damrosch has noted the 'often weird combinations of animal with human forms' in Jerusalem,<sup>61</sup> which suggests Blake's continued interest in this kind of symbolism. It should also be noted that in the Aurora, Boehme blames Lucifer for the 'wild fierce and evil Beasts in this world' (Aur. 15:98). They result from the 'fiery and poisonous Forms and Images' (Aur. 15:97) which he and his fellow angels introduced into the divine salitter, or substance.<sup>62</sup>

The second point concerns Blake's concept of the different levels of vision, in which he was undoubtedly stimulated by Boehme.<sup>63</sup> Here is Boehme as he hectors Vernunft: 'Beloved Reason, behold! open both your eyes, and look not with one eye only' (T.F.L. 11:11). After the fall, the world 'hath but one Eye' (T.F.L. 9:107), and as long as man continues to seek only in the stars and elements for knowledge of the mysteries of nature, his effort will forever be wasted: 'you find no more but one Eye, and see with but one Eye' (T.F.L. 10:1). Thus Ulro becomes the world of 'single vision'.

#### iv) Clouds of mercy

The nature and purpose of the created world must be further examined. Although Albion's rocks of 'opaque hardness' (J. 67:5, K704) seem solid enough, Blake affirms a Neoplatonic paradox: that which appears



of the holy, and then also out of the dark World... and is only as a Smoke or misty Exhalation; in reference and respect to the spiritual World.

(M.M. 6:10)

Blake uses the terms cloud and smoke in a pejorative sense, since they both imply a certain shapelessness, a midway point between the perfection of eternity, and the complete formlessness of the region he calls 'Non-Entity'. Boehme's usage is neutral; he simply states the fact. The same symbol recurs in Freher's commentary on his figure of the regenerate man, and he views it in a sinister light, describing how the serpent tries to approach man

by a continual incessant Breathing out of his poisoning Mist, and infectious Smoak, arising as the Smoak of a Furnace, darkening the Air... This Smoak is chiefly and summarily a real Generation, or coagulated Outbirth of the Four Elements of Hell.<sup>67</sup>

However ambivalent may have been Blake's feelings about the smoke of the material world, he nonetheless believed that creation was 'an act of Mercy' (V.L.J., K614):

Thus were the stars of heaven created  
like a golden chain  
To bind the Body of Man to heaven from  
falling into the Abyss.

(F.Z. 2:266-7, K287)

The spectre of the formless abyss, or non-being, regularly haunts the prophetic books, and is drawn from Neoplatonic discussions about the nature of matter, which was considered to be without any inherent qualities of its own.<sup>68</sup> Blake decided that any form of creation was preferable to non-existence:



with which the spirit of the world clothes man (T.P. 17:60) is better than no garment at all. This is exactly Blake's view. It is more fortunate to have a 'Generated Body' (M. 26:31, K512), jointly prepared by Los and Enitharmon, than to be numbered with the 'spectres of the dead' (F.Z. 8:213, K346) in Ulro. The outward body and the outward world are therefore at once a mercy and a restriction; they put limit to Eternal Death (F.Z. 4:275-6, K304) but must themselves be put off in favour of the spiritual body and the eternal world at the final awakening.

In this aspect of his thought, Blake combined a Neoplatonic framework - the descent from the perfect form of the One to the shadowy indefiniteness of non-entity, and the clothing of the descending souls with mortal bodies - with the Christian concerns of mercy, salvation and the redemptive value of the body, as Boehme had presented them. In doing so he was able to present a more optimistic view of the material world. Furthermore, his concept of the 'limit', instituted by the Saviour to put bounds to man's physical disintegration and to the duration of his exile from eternity, is also taken from Boehme, as Kathleen Raine has demonstrated.<sup>70</sup>

v) Transition (1) : Los and the lightning-flash

The fall of man has now been traced to its lowest point. He is caught in the Satanic wheels of the Angst, deluded by single vision and the darkness of Vernunft, and lost in the clouds and smoke of the material world. However, the setting of the limits has given hope;

fragmentation and despair can endure only for a time, and the divine body continually seeks to reclaim that which has been lost. Now therefore, the ascent to the Divine Vision can begin, initially through a consideration of the fires of Generation and the redemptive work of Los, leading into the moment of the lightning-flash. It will be useful to look first at the Freher diagram entitled 'The Tree of the Soul' (Fig. 4), some copies of which were in colour, and which appeared in volume one of some copies of the 'Law edition'. It shows four circles, each of which intersects the one above it. They are labelled, in descending order, 'Light of Majesty', 'Paradise', 'Fire World' and 'Dark World'. The material world is represented as a smaller circle at the base of the diagram, and appears to be completely encircled by the dark world, thus giving the impression of being the lowest form of manifestation. This may well have strengthened Blake's identification of Ulro with the dark world, as John Beer has suggested.<sup>71</sup> Beer also conjectures that this diagram may have given Blake a framework in which to develop his ideas of the four states of being, or levels of vision. It is noticeable that Freher separates the fire world from the dark world, just as in Blake, the fires of Generation represent a higher state than Ulro. It is also of interest that at the base of the fire world circle, and behind the tree which passes through it, is what appears to be a rising sun, shedding forth beams of light. It recalls a number of Blake's designs where a prophetic figure is shown with the sun of the Divine Imagination rising behind him.<sup>72</sup> In Boehme, it is the

fourth property, fire, becoming active on the fourth day of creation, which produces the sun of the outward world (M.M. Ch. 13). The twin aspects of fire and light which this property represents are expressed by Blake in the figure of Los, who is both the inner, divine sun - the creator of the material sun - and, by means of his furnaces, the temporal agent of the divine fire. It has often been remarked that his name is a reversal of the alchemical Sol, a term which Boehme uses often, notably in the following cryptic passage from the Mysterium Magnum, which concludes a disjointed chapter about the creation of the inner heaven and the outer world, and the relationship between them:

The Punctum of the whole created Earth belonged to the Center of Sol, but not any more at present: He is fallen who was a King; the Earth is in the Curse, and become a peculiar Center; whereunto all whatsoever is engendered in the Vanity, in the four Elements, does tend and fall; all Things fall to the Earth...  
 ...But when the crystalline Earth shall appear, then will be fulfilled this Saying, it belongs to the Punctum of Sol. Here we have hinted enough to the Understanding of our School-fellows; further we must here be silent. (M.M. 10:60,62)

Boehme equates the 'Punctum of Sol' with the dimensionless point of eternity from which the manifest creation springs; it is therefore the cause of all life and motion (M.M. 10:43). But because of man's transgression, the earth has lost contact with this divine centre, and Boehme implies that even the Punctum of Sol itself is thereby diminished, since it is prevented from shining out in its full glory. The term 'sol' occurs widely in works that were known to Blake,<sup>73</sup> therefore Boehme cannot be his only source, but it is tempting to visualize Blake pondering

over this very passage, just as Coleridge had 'conjured over' the Aurora during his school days.<sup>74</sup> Sol, to whom the 'earth belonged', might have suggested Urthona (with the pun on 'earth-owner'),<sup>75</sup> and Sol, the king fallen from his original estate, might have suggested Los, 'The labourer of ages in the Valleys of Despair!' (J. 83:53, K728), who attempts to recreate in the fallen world the structures of eternity. In this role, Los also represents the imagination, and resembles the reduced capacity of the fallen soul in Boehme:

the corrupted Soul works or endeavours continually to bring forth or frame heavenly Forms, but cannot bring that to Effect, for the Materials for its Work are only the earthly corrupted Salitter, even a half-dead Nature, wherein it cannot image or frame heavenly Ideas, Shapes or Figures.

(Aur. 15:56)

The 'Punctum of Sol' is surely also, in Blake's language, the 'Gate of Los' (J. 39:3, K666), which Satan cannot find, where the temporal world opens into eternity. It is here that Los becomes once more the 'earth-owner', and the 'crystalline earth' reappears.

The discussion is converging on the eternal moment, the meeting point of time and eternity, the significance of which Blake described in Milton:

For in this Period the Poet's Work is Done:  
 Events of Time start forth & are conceived  
 Within a Moment, a Pulsation of the Artery.  
 and all the Great  
 in such a Period,  
 (M. 29:1-3, K516)

In Boehme, this is the moment of the lightning-flash, at whatever level it strikes. Within Eternal Nature, it is

the moment when the divine freedom penetrates the dark properties and the divine body is born; in temporal existence it is the moment in which nature is released from its bondage and paradise returns to earth. In terms of Blake's mythology, the task of kindling this apocalyptic moment falls to Los. In Jerusalem, his furnaces are clearly distinguished from the desolate world of Ulro. It is he who creates '...a World of Generation from the World of Death' (J. 58:18, K690). He must tend seven furnaces, which are 'Seven-fold each within other' (J. 53:10, K684). Boehme writes similarly of his fountain-spirits: 'the seven are one in another' (Aur. 10:66), and just as they, functioning harmoniously in Eternal Nature, serve to reveal the wonders of eternity, so the seven furnaces of Los must become instruments not of suffering, but of revelation. So it is that when Los first realizes his task of building Golgonooza his furnaces are transformed: '...look, my fires enlume afresh/Before my face ascending with delight as in ancient times!' (F.Z. 7:444-5, K331). This resembles the effect of Boehme's lightning-flash, which so enlivens the seven properties that they all become fiery, each burning according to its own peculiar nature (T.P. 3:16)

It should also be noted that Boehme always sees the lightning-flash, at whatever level of existence it manifests, as the herald of Christ. The fire is not itself the eternal freedom of the divine, but its agent, the means through which the unity manifests itself (Cl. 87) and Christ makes entry. Blake sees Los in exactly this



printing them, as analogous to the alchemical work, with the finished product capable of eliciting a lightning-flash of understanding from the observer:

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination, approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought...then would he arise from his Grave, then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy.

(V.L.J., K611)

Blake also appears to have had a profound personal experience which resembled Boehme's lightning-flash, and in Milton he gives an extended description and interpretation of it. The flash becomes the 'falling star' (M. 15:47, K497) of Milton as he descends from eternity to redeem the errors of his earthly life. Milton passes the Spectres 'swift as lightning' (M. 15:18, K496); the inhabitants of Hell perceive him in a 'trail of light' (M. 15:19, K497), and Albion feels the 'electric flame' (M. 20:26, K502) of the descent. In Plate 30, which opens the second book, the descent is pictured as two forks of lightning. The most vivid portrayal of the flash is in the two matched plates, numbers 32 and 37,<sup>77</sup> which show the star entering the left foot of Blake, and the right foot of his brother Robert. Plate 32 'acts as a pivot for the whole work, for all the events in Milton a Poem radiate forwards and backwards from it.'<sup>78</sup> Both 'William' and 'Robert' have a series of ascending steps behind them; three in Plate 32, and usually four in Plate 37, although there are only three in Copy A.<sup>79</sup> Looking at the two plates as one, the falling star forms a central point between these two

sets of steps, again suggesting the possibility of movement backward into time or forward into eternity. In addition, the background of the 'Robert' plate suggests night, whereas for 'William' the setting appears to be daylight. A further comparison can be made between Plates 19 (Pl. 17, K498) and 48 (Pl. 41, K533). The first shows Milton's 'Sixfold emanation' in two separate groups of three figures. The daughters dance against a bright reddish-yellow background; the wives sit huddled against a dark background, looking away from the daughters. In Plate 48, after the lightning-flash has struck, the six are linked together in harmony against a common background of yellow flame, representing the 'waters of Life' described in the text.<sup>80</sup> The evidence of these four plates suggests a basic Behmenist background. It will be remembered that in Boehme, the lightning-flash is the pivotal point for any act of creation - 'In the Salnitral Flagrat lies the Possibility backwards and forwards' (S.R. 14:59) - it produces balance and harmony between two separated ternaries, and so reconciles darkness and light, or in the context of Milton, Wrath and Pity. Of course, Blake is also using so many symbols from his own mythology that the parallels can form no more than a general outline, but nonetheless the Behmenist echoes are plainly there.

In the text of the poem, as the lightning-flash of the descending Milton enters Blake (and later it is revealed that Los too is part of this union (M. 22:4-14, K505)), it elevates him to eternity:



battles with the devil, which resemble the struggles of Los and his Spectre in Jerusalem, he gives the following account of the moment of illumination:

For when the Flash riseth up in the center, one sees through and through, but cannot well apprehend or lay hold on it; for it happens to such a one as when there is a Tempest of Lightning, where the Flash of Fire openeth itself, and suddenly vanishes. So it goes also in the Soul, when it presses or breaks quite through in its Fight or Combat, then it beholds the Deity, as a Flash of Lightning; but the Source, Quality or Fountain of Sins covers it suddenly again: For the Old Adam belongs to the Earth, and does not, with this Flesh, belong to the Deity.

(Aur. 11:145-6)

As when Milton enters Blake's foot, there is a visual experience of great intensity, which the newly awakened soul cannot evaluate fully until the climactic moment has passed. The return into the body of the 'Old Adam' recalls the aftermath of the final epiphany in Milton, when Ololon and Jesus have descended and the four Zoas sound their apocalyptic trumpets:

Terror struck in the Vale I stood at that  
immortal sound.  
My bones trembled, I fell outstretch'd upon  
the path  
A moment, & my Soul return'd into its  
mortal state  
To Resurrection & Judgment in the  
Vegetable Body,  
And my sweet Shadow of Delight stood  
trembling by my side.

(M. 42:24-8, K534)<sup>81</sup>

Blake would probably have read the biography of Boehme by Durant Hotham which prefaced volume one of the 'Law edition'. It records the incident of Boehme's glance at the pewter dish, which led to his second experience of enlightenment:

After this, about the Year 1600, in the twenty-fifth Year of his Age, he was again surrounded by the divine Light, and replenished with the heavenly Knowledge; insomuch, as going abroad into the Fields, to a Green before Neys-Gate, at Gorlitz, he there sat down, and viewing the Herbs and Grass of the Field, in his inward Light he saw into their Essences, Use and Properties, which were discovered to him by their Lineaments, Figures and Signatures.<sup>82</sup>

It was from this experience, according to the biographer, that Boehme wrote his Signatura Rerum. Had Boehme been a poet not a mystic, he might instead have written the long visionary passage which closes the first book of Milton, where the union of Blake, Milton and Los results in the revelation of the 'inward form' of the world of time and space. In the Clavis, Boehme expressed it thus:

For there is not anything substantial in this world, wherein the image, resemblance, and form of the Inward spiritual world does not stand; whether it be according to the wrath of the Inward ground, or according to the good virtue; and yet in the most venomous virtue or quality, in the Inward ground, many times there lies the greatest virtue of the Inward world.

(Cl. 171)

Hence, after the lightning-flash in Milton, Blake is able to penetrate beyond the surface appearances of the 'venomous quality' to the inner core; he sees the 'tender maggot' as an 'emblem of immortality' and the 'cruel Scorpion...The Gnat, Wasp, Hornet & the Honey Bee, /The Toad & venomous Newt' rejoicing 'in all their beauty' in the wine-presses of Luvah (M. 27:16-29, K513). Boehme's doctrine has been transformed into poetry, as again here:

And every Generated Body in its inward form  
Is a garden of delight & a building of  
magnificence.

(M. 26:31-2, K512)

Boehme would later complain that since the loss of paradise 'we see the World but half' (E.G. 3:92), and





which will be influenced by the personal and cultural background of the experiencer. This distinction between experience and interpretation is of great importance in the analysis of mystical experience.<sup>84</sup> In Blake's case, he had certainly been reading Boehme at various times for a number of years prior to the experiences recorded in Milton. The idea of a transition from time to eternity by means of the lightning-flash had lodged itself deeply in his mind, and it is likely that when he came to reflect on his own moments of heightened consciousness, all that he had assimilated from Boehme came to the fore. This does not invalidate the genuineness of the experience, or diminish Blake's independence of mind. What it does suggest is that one seer, Blake, was inheriting the language and thought-forms of another, Boehme, with whom he felt a close spiritual kinship. He then used the insights he had gained in service of his own mythology.

#### vi) Transition (2) : Self-annihilation

Both selfhood and self-annihilation have been mentioned several times in passing; now is the time to examine them more fully. Self-annihilation, which is the dominant theme of Milton, is an immediate consequence of the lightning-flash. As the flash arises, and if it is received aright, the selfhood subsides. Several plates in Milton illustrate this. In Plate 18 (Pl. 16, K497), Milton splits the word 'Self-hood' into two parts with his right foot, and in the 'William' and 'Robert' plates mentioned previously (nos. 32 and 37), both men are shown thrusting themselves

backwards in self-annihilation as the star that is Milton descends. The word 'selfhood' was first introduced into the English language in John Ellistone's translation of Boehme's letters, which was published in 1649.<sup>85</sup> It occurs so frequently in Ellistone's translation of the Signatura Rerum that even a casual reader could not fail to notice it, and John Sparrow also used it in his translations. The word did not come into common usage until the middle of the nineteenth century; Blake's use of it is therefore fairly isolated, and Boehme seems to be the likely source.<sup>86</sup>

Dying to self is the pattern of behaviour in Boehme's Eternal Nature. At the instant of the flash, the dark properties form themselves into a cross, the eternal symbol of sacrificial death, and become resigned to their penetration by the light:

In the enkindling of the Fire in the Flagrat ...the Essence, which the first Desire has coagulated or amassed, is consumed in the Fire Flagrat; that is, it does as it were, die to its self-good [Selbheit] and is taken into the Only Spirit, which here hath manifested itself in the Fire of the Wrathfulness, and in the Light-fire of the Kingdom of Joy.

(M.M. 4:18)<sup>87</sup>

Each of the seven properties follow this example, and 'give up themselves into a great Love in and towards one another' (E.G. 2:105), losing themselves in order to find themselves. A similar pattern occurs in Boehme's description of the relationship between the fire-spirit and the water-spirit in Eternal Nature:

Thus the fire in its Devouring must beget the Water, viz. its Death, and yet must again have it for its Life; else neither the Fire nor the Light could subsist.

And thus there is an Eternal Generation,  
 devouring, receiving, and again  
 consuming; and yet also it is thus an  
 Eternal Giving; and has no Beginning nor  
 End.

(M.M. 7:4)

This is an interesting passage because it suggests the superficial resemblance between fallen and unfallen life, the one being a reversed version of the other. The 'generation', 'devouring' and 'consuming' represents the predatory life of Boehme's dark world and Blake's Polypus; like Blake's Covering Cherub, it is 'a reflexion/Of Eden all perverted' (J. 89:14-5, K734). The eternal giving and receiving, however, is the higher version of this: self-annihilation in love for another. Passages such as the above made an important contribution to Blake's vision of the co-operative and mutually dependent life in Eden, as the earlier discussion of The Book of Urizen briefly demonstrated. In Eden there is continual dying and rising (F.Z. 1:528-9, K278), giving and receiving, and forgiveness of sins (J. 38:22, K665), and this forms the 'Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity' (J. 61:23, K694).

Boehme applies the same principles to the life of the unfallen man:

All the Properties of the inward holy Body, together with the outward, were (in the first Man) composed in an equal Harmony, none lived in Self-desire, but they all gave up their Desire to the Soul, in which the divine Light was manifest, as in the holy Heaven.

(M.M. 16:5)

But fallen, selfhood arises:

This is the Death and Misery of Man and all Creatures, that the Properties are divided, and each aspiring in itself, and powerfully

working, and acting in its own Will;  
whence Sickness and Pain arise.

(M.M. 11:17)

For he [man] stood in equal Essence;  
but now, every Astrum of every Essence  
of all the Creatures depart from their  
mutual Accord, and each steps into its  
Selfhood; whence the Strife, Contrariety  
and Enmity arose in the Essence, that  
one Property opposes itself against the  
other.

(M.M. 20:33)

It was, of course, the assertion of selfhood that had helped to dethrone Albion (F.Z. 2:2, K280), and by the second chapter of Jerusalem he has been transformed 'From willing sacrifice of Self, to sacrifice of (miscall'd) Enemies/For Atonement' (J. 28:20-1, K653).

Boehme regarded the selfhood as the cause of all sin and suffering, dividing man against himself and bringing him to destruction (S.R. 15:5-9). It was opposed to the 'resigned' or 'regenerate' will, which sought to act only in accordance with the universal will. Selfhood was therefore the will to separateness, the assertion by an individual of his own independence and self-sufficiency. Boehme, like Blake, groups a number of almost interchangeable terms around the same idea:

for every willing of Evil is a Devil, viz.  
a false compacted Will for self, and a Rent  
or Splinter broken off from the entire Being,  
and a Phantasy.

(E.G. 2:39)

Here we can recognize not only Urizen but also the Satan of the Bard's Song in Milton - the two are explicitly identified (M. 10:1, K490) - and Milton's own realization that 'I in my Selfhood am that Satan : I am that Evil One!'



All self-ful seeking and Searching in  
Self-hood is a vain thing; Self-will  
apprehends nothing of God, for it is  
not in God, but without God in its  
Self-hood.

(S.R. 15:21)

The nature of the selfhood confirms the central paradox of all mystical thought: that the way of knowing must be by unknowing.<sup>89</sup> The self-will loses the knowledge and power which it seeks at the very instant it asserts itself; it is here that 'the Lye is generated' (E.G. 3:79). Kathleen Raine's comment confirms that Blake's thought follows similar lines: 'When Satan assumes autonomous existence, he falls from the Divine Humanity, and his real existence is lost at the very moment he claims it.'<sup>90</sup> Of course, the Satanic mind could never accept such an explanation, since for the rationalism that it represents, a paradox is a problem which demands a solution, rather than a truth which can be immediately apprehended and lived.

The only way out of the web of deceit and ignorance that is woven by the selfhood is to renounce it, to do on earth as is done in heaven. Not only does this redeem Milton, but it is the central act which saves Los and sends him out on his regenerative work ('...by Self annihilation back returning/To life Eternal' F.Z. 7:344-5, K328). In like fashion, history is redeemed only by the self-sacrifice of Jesus, the Seventh Eye of God, after Lucifer, the First Eye, had 'refused to die', and his successors had been more willing to sacrifice others than themselves (F.Z. 8:398-406, K351). It is only when Albion, by casting off the Covering Cherub, follows Jesus in this

most positive of acts that the 'Furnaces of Affliction' are transformed into 'Fountains of Living Waters' (J. 96:35-7, K744). What the act of self-annihilation does is to free the rational intellect from the illusion of self-sufficiency, making it aware once more of the true ground of all being. Like the fallen Satan in the Bard's Song, who must be 'new Created continually Moment by Moment' (M. 11:19-20, K491-2) the derived nature of temporal existence becomes clear:

When the Branches shall know that they stand in the Tree, they will never say that they are peculiar and singular Trees, but they will rejoice in their Stem, and they will see that they are altogether Boughs and Branches of one Tree, and that they do all receive Power and Life from one only Stem.

(M.M. 30:52)

Blake has this truth spoken by Bath, the healing city, whose knowledge he declares to be infinite (J. 46:2, K676):

...however great and glor<sup>o</sup>rious,  
 however loving  
 And merciful the Individuality, however high  
 Our palaces and cities and however fruitful  
 are our fields,  
 In Selfhood we are nothing, but fade away in  
 morning's breath.

(J. 45:10-13, K675)<sup>91</sup>

What, then, is the final status of the Selfhood? Is it simply swept away, leaving no trace, or does it rise transfigured? The speech of the regenerate Milton is seemingly unequivocal:

All that can be annihilated must be annihilated  
 That the Children of Jerusalem may be saved  
 from slavery.  
 There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary:  
 The Negation must be destroy'd to redeem the  
 Contraries.  
 The Negation is the Spectre, the Reasoning Power in  
 Man:

This is a false Body, an Incrustation over my  
 Spirit, a Selfhood which must be put off & <sup>Immortal</sup>  
 annihilated always.

(M.40:30-6, K533)

For Boehme, the Christian could possess an 'Own-hood' which was not false (S.R. 15:36); it was possible to live a life in time which was pleasing to God. In this sense, the 'Own-hood' would be the equivalent of the correctly functioning Nein, the contrary will, in Eternal Nature, which either through voluntary sacrifice or forced submission serves to reveal the Ja. Without it there would be neither world nor creature. The apostate selfhood is the equivalent of the 'elevated' or 'kindled' Nein; by taking an independent life and denying its source, it obscures what it is intended to reveal and becomes, in Blake's terms, a Negation, the 'Incrustation over my Immortal Spirit'. In truth, the selfhood has neither reality nor permanence; it fulfills its function only in its own extinction, as Los's spectre realizes:

Life lives on my  
 Consuming, & the Almighty hath made me his  
 To be all evil, all reversed & for ever dead: <sup>Contrary</sup>  
 And seeing life, yet living not; how can I <sup>knowing</sup>  
 And not tremble? how can I be beheld & not <sup>then behold</sup>  
 abhorr'd? <sup>abhorr'd?</sup>

(J. 10:55-9, K630)

And yet this is not the entire truth. Hidden within the despair of the Spectre is the key to the selfhood's true function, for function it does have, neither evil nor abhorred:

Judge then of thy Own Self : thy Eternal  
 What is Eternal & what changeable, & what <sup>Lineaments explore,</sup>  
 Annihilable.



keeps man in the world, can be seen as a true Contrary, not a Negation. The point is a subtle one, but it is surely what Blake's statements imply. His views were, I suggest, powerfully stimulated by Boehme's insistence, first, on the necessity of self-annihilation, and second, on the possibility of a redeemed individuality becoming a perfect reflector of universality, the self-will and the universal will becoming one and the same.<sup>93</sup> Blake also came to believe, with Boehme, that the assertion of selfhood, although in itself undesirable, was nevertheless not only inevitable but also necessary, as will be demonstrated later.

Two final points should not be overlooked in this discussion. Whilst Boehme and Blake ascribe to the selfhood an identical metaphysical status, they differ totally on the question of morality. Boehme's selfhood, as we might expect, consists of the traditional deadly sins; Blake, however, names the 'iron pillars of Satan's throne' to be the four Cardinal Virtues, 'Temperance, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude' (M. 29:48-9, K517). But we would expect Blake to be more radical than Boehme in this respect, continuing to reverse conventional ideas such as he had done in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. It does not undermine the extent to which he was influenced by Boehme's concept. A second difference becomes noticeable in the following quotation from Boehme, which is Blakean in all but one respect:

Now if any Thing shall be freed from this  
Self-hood, viz. from the wrathful Death,  
and be again brought into the Universal,  
viz. into the highest Perfection, then it

must die wholly to its Self-hood, and enter into the Stillness, viz. into the Death of the Resignation at Nature's End.

(S.R. 12:20)

The need to sink back into the regenerative silence of the Ungrund, where not only selfhood but consciousness of individuality of any kind ceases, is an important element in Boehme's philosophy. It is the purifying experience, which paves the way for the opening of the heavenly gates, such as Boehme himself had experienced in the fields at Görlitz. Blake, however, was more interested in the latter experience than the former, and he therefore ignored the Ungrund. His way of self-annihilation leads directly into the 'triumphing joyfulness' of Boehme's light world, without any 'nothing' to complicate or obscure the process. In this respect he has simplified Boehme's thought, although at the expense of one of its essential ingredients.

vii) Transition (3) : Opening the Centers

The belief common to Blake and Boehme that 'all is in all' must now be examined. It is a Neoplatonic doctrine,<sup>94</sup> which Boehme states in a number of different contexts:

Let not Reason fool thee ... as little as God dwells alone in one only place, but is the Fulness of all things, so little also has God moved himself in one Sparkle. For God is not divisible, but Total everywhere : where he manifests himself, there he is Totally manifest.

(Inc. 1:8:38-9)

Similarly, Adam was

...not a divided sparkle, as a piece of the whole, for he is no piece, but totally

all, as there is a Total in every Punctum.

(T.F.L. 6:49)

Boehme's expressions, like Blake's, often bear the stamp of living experience rather than abstract doctrine:

When I take up a Stone, or Clod of Earth  
and look upon it, then I see that which is  
above, and that which is below, yea the  
whole world therein.

(M.M. 2:6)

Hence Blake can 'open the center' and see a world in a grain of sand. Blake took the phrase 'opening the centers' directly from Boehme, as Dr. Raine has demonstrated.<sup>95</sup> What follows is intended only to supplement her exposition, to which the reader should refer.

Boehme defined the centre in the Clavis, which he wrote in the last months of his life, intending it as a brief and clear guide to his thought:

By the word Center, we understand the first beginning to Nature, viz. the most Inward ground ... the Point or Ground of the self-reception to something; from whence something comes to be, and from thence the seven Properties proceed.

(Cl. 54)

'Centre' and 'point' are identical concepts in Boehme, and as Dr. Raine explains 'According to tradition, the atom or punctum is the point of intersection of time and the timeless'.<sup>96</sup> In Boehme's system, the supreme centre is God himself, and when this divine centre opens, eternity pours itself into time, light enters darkness, the one streams into the many:

...God...in the eternal Matrix, in the longing Will, he opened the Center or Birth of Life; and there (after the manner of the Deity, as the Eternal Deity from Eternity has always generated,) arose [and sprung up] the third Principle.

(T.P. 8:3)

In the Mysterium Magnum, Boehme describes creation as a series of separations and opened centres,<sup>97</sup> and his frequent use of terms such as 'birth', 'gate' and 'principle', already discussed, express the same idea: the fecundity of the divine being, continually developing from within itself new avenues for its manifestation and self-expression, as so many radii displayed from a single centre. This applies also at the human level. In the unfallen Adam, the wisdom of God 'discovered herself (erblickte sich) in him, and with the Discovering opened Adam's Center, in [or to] many thousand Thousands' (T.P. 15:15). The whole drama of creation is of centres opening and closing, like the ventricles of an enormous beating heart. The fallen angels, for example,

generated a fiery Will, when they should have opened their Center to the Regeneration of their Minds, and so should have generated an angelical Will.

(T.P. 10:48)

In the temporal realm, as the centre closes, the kingdom of darkness descends upon the world (M.M. 10:45). But such is the rhythm of life that every closing of a centre demands a corresponding opening. When darkness covers the face of the earth, 'the divine eternal Word manifests itself in the Light of Love, and opens another Center in the love-desire' (M.M. 23:45).

There are <sup>^</sup>may echoes of this in Blake. As Albion falls, his '... Circumference was clos'd : his Center began dark'ning' (J. 19:36, K642), but on the other hand, it is Jesus who '... Opens Eternity in Time & Space' (J. 76:22, K716), just as in Boehme the 'Holy Word' 'opened the name Jesus out of the Center of the deepest





has suggested that each 'Minute Particular' of the poem can function as an 'opened center', revealing the design of the whole. Reading Jerusalem demands a 'continuous exertion of the imagination', whereby a broad and simultaneous comprehension of the entirety of the poem is juxtaposed with a 'focussed attention which sees the total form of the poem crystallized in the individual moment.'<sup>99</sup> Each part therefore reveals the whole. This seems to me to be Boehmian philosophy applied to poetic theory. It is conceivable that Blake was influenced by Boehme's 'language of nature', in which the totality of existence is condensed into the 'Minute Particulars' of individual words, which are capable of opening their centres to reveal infinite dimensions of meaning. For Boehme, language itself was a microcosm, and his method of linguistic analysis basically consisted of a number of variations on the theme of opening (Ja) and closing (Nein) of centres. Each word contains the totality. To pronounce the word Sprach, for example, is to recapitulate the entire process of creation (See Aur. 18:100ff.). This aspect of the 'language of nature' surely represents the ultimate development of the idea which, according to Professor Mitchell, Blake was attempting, and I think it is likely that Blake was attracted to it. It not only endorsed his belief that the whole was present in any one of its parts, but also demonstrated that the doctrine applied equally to language itself. Language, after all, was the 'stubborn structure' (J. 40:59, K668) precisely because it had to be forced to accommodate the infinite. In the 'language of nature' Blake would have found the

whole range of existence compressed into the smallest of linguistic containers.<sup>100</sup>

viii) Memory, History and the Seven Eyes of God

The three major transition points have now been discussed. Although they have been considered sequentially, they in fact occur simultaneously, fused into a single apocalyptic moment. As the lightning-flash strikes, the selfhood is annihilated and a centre opens. Ulro and Generation give way to Beulah and Eden; the dark world gives way to the light. This has further consequences. Self-annihilation frees the individual from the bondage of the 'perishing Vegetable Memory' (M. 26:46, K513), and the opened centre gives him a new view of history.

Memory had been the only way in which man as selfhood could maintain his sense of identity; to the Spectre, the 'fortuitous concourse of memorys accumulated & lost' (J. 33:8, K659) made up the entire man. But the problem with memory is that it is too fragile, and an identity which is based solely on it has no permanent foundation. Its basis is continually being eroded. Only the inhabitants of Ulro are sustained entirely by memory, since they can neither communicate with each other nor enjoy living, spontaneous experience. Blake applied the same criterion to both art and religion, comparing the 'daughters of memory' unfavourably with the 'daughters of inspiration' (M. 14:29, K496). This has a distinct parallel in Boehme's view of salvation. He contrasts the 'Children of the History' (W.C. 3 (Of Reg.) 5:116) - his Ulro-dwellers - with the children of Christ. The only knowledge of God which the

children of the history possess is what they have heard from their ancestors (M.M. 35:65). They are entirely memory-bound, content to believe in an external, historical Christ, and relying on a superficial, merely intellectual assent to the articles of faith. But if they would become true children of Christ, they must put aside the merely historical, and clothe themselves with the living spirit, because as Blake put it, 'Imagination has nothing to do with Memory' (Ann. Wordsworth, K783). Milton's decisive act confirms the same truth:

To bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off  
the Not Human,  
I come in Self-annihilation & the grandeur of  
Inspiration,  
To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in  
the Saviour,  
To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by  
Inspiration,  
To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albion's  
covering,  
To take off his filthy garments & clothe him  
with Imagination.

(M. 41:1-6, K533)

As Milton frees himself from memory, he also serves notice on the Nobodaddy of Paradise Lost, who is a God suitable only for the 'children of the history'.

Everything that blinds a man to the Divine Vision and excludes him from the Divine Intellect has now been discarded. The man who has thrown off the selfhood and 'opened the center' remembers nothing, but is aware of everything, and sees everything.<sup>101</sup> He has access to all memory, without being bound by any of it, and this is the status of Los the prophet:

I am that Shadowy Prophet who Six Thousand  
Years ago  
Fell from my station in the Eternal bosom. Six  
Thousand Years  
Are finish'd. I return! both Time & Space  
obey my will.



self-annihilation. The Behmenist character of this will be immediately apparent. Specifically, the Eyes as States of the human mind suggest the seven properties, also contained 'one within the other' within every individual mind. Each property contains in potential all the others (M.M. 6:24), and although one may predominate, there is constant movement and change amongst them (Aur. 11:117). The implication is that if at any moment the 'temperature' is struck, the light-eye must open, and the inner holy body be revealed. In Blake this is the opening of the Eighth Eye, the 'Eighth/Image Divine' (M. 15:5-6, K496) which is the true form of Milton and of all men. Boehme too writes of an 'eighth number' which stands open in the 'Punctum of Sol', and he defines it as 'the Eternal Nature, the eternal magical Fire' (M.M. 11:34). Together with numbers nine and ten, tincture and cross respectively, it signifies the power of the Godhead itself, apart from its temporal manifestation in the seven properties.<sup>104</sup> Blake's 'Eighth Eye' also stands outside time, as the culmination of both individual and collective regeneration.<sup>105</sup>

Now to consider the Seven Eyes in their second sense. Morton Paley notes that there is a long tradition of dividing human history into seven ages, and he names Augustine and Luther as having done so,<sup>106</sup> although it is not known for certain whether Blake was acquainted with either of these. However, Boehme also had a scheme of seven ages, which he set out in the Mysterium Magnum, and it seems likely that Blake knew it, although he does not follow its details. Boehme in fact has two sets of seven ages. The first is the 'line of the Covenant', the 'supernatural

divine Kingdom' (M.M. 30:13), in which knowledge of the spiritual life is retained in secret; the second is the 'kingdom of Nature', that of worldly governments and hierarchies, the temporal rather than the eternal order. Both lines have sprung from a common root in Adam, and develop 'one in another' (M.M. 30:13). For the first line (M.M. 30:34ff.), Boehme follows the genealogy given in the fifth chapter of Genesis, names which Blake uses to represent the 'Giants mighty, Hermaphrodite' (M. 37:37, K528), each of which forms one of the twenty-seven Churches which cover the entire span of fallen history, and which are sub-divisions of the Seven Eyes. Boehme's first line therefore begins with the age of Adam and is followed by that of Seth, which continues until the flood. Thereafter follows the age of Enos, until the time of Abraham, when the Covenant of Christ became established 'in the flesh'. The fourth age, from Abraham to Christ, belonged to Cainan; the fifth, the period of Christ's earthly life, to Mahalaleel. The sixth age, of Jared, began with the death of the Apostles, and was the age in which Boehme believed himself to be living; the seventh was the imminent millennial kingdom, ascribed to Enoch, when the 'Prophet's Mouth' reveals 'the formed Word of God in all visible Things, and reveals all Mysteries, within and without' (M.M. 30:45). Kathleen Raine has called attention to Boehme's seventh age, in connection with a lithograph which Blake engraved about 1807, which shows Enoch surrounded by various figures engaged in artistic activities. She suggests that Blake was aware of Boehme's scheme of ages, and that he understood the New Age that

Swedenborg had inaugurated to be the Age of Enoch, where man had access to the Divine Vision through the mediation of the arts.<sup>107</sup> Blake undoubtedly felt himself to be a leading spirit of the New Age, and Boehme too, from the evidence of his letters, felt that the Age of Enoch was at hand, and that his own efforts were helping to usher it in.<sup>108</sup>

Boehme derives his second series of ages, the 'Kingdom of Nature' from the descendents of Cain listed in the fourth chapter of Genesis. After Adam and Cain come Enoch, Irad, Mahujael, Methusael and Lamech (M.M. 29:59). He analyzes both sets of ages in terms of the predominant psychological characteristics of the individual after whom each age is named. Since the Bible gives no details, Boehme has to supply his own, and this he does by analyzing the name itself, according to the 'language of nature'. He discovers, for example, that Mahujael signifies a 'self-conceited, bold, courageous, vainglorious, arrogant Mind' (M.M. 29:34), and that Irad stands for a judge and a tyrant (M.M. 29:30). This can be compared with Morton Paley's analysis of the Seven Eyes, in which, following Damon, he assigns certain characteristics, such as judge and accuser, to each Eye. He comments that they signify 'the qualities of human consciousness during successive phases of historical development.'<sup>109</sup> Boehme also states that each age contained, in hidden form, all the other ages. In the age of Cainan, for example, the divine word 'carried itself forth all along under Seth's and Enos's Time, and manifested itself with Moses' (M.M. 30:37). The age of

Mahaleel

goes secretly all along under the Ministry of Enos, under Seth and Cainan, in the Word of the Promise, through all the three Times, and manifested itself with the Fulfilling of the Covenant in the Humanity of Christ.

(M.M. 30:38)

Blake implies exactly this. What was true of the Seven Eyes, one within the other, as States of mind, is true also of the historical process; the lark of inspiration is present even within the twenty-seven successive churches of fallen history.<sup>110</sup> Although each age may be characterized by the predominance of different errors, there will always be opportunities for the community which chooses to assert its Humanity rather than its Selfhood to break through the restrictions and enter the suprahistorical life of the divine.

A further point arises. The fact that Boehme has two sets of ages rather than one, each of which pulls in a different direction whilst they remain 'one in another', may have caught Blake's attention. The title-page of his Illustrations of the Book of Job, where the Seven Eyes reappear as the Seven Angels of the Presence, suggests a similar scheme. In the fifth plate of the series, the Eyes appear in double form, as two sets of six angels, moving in opposite, circular directions, with the figure of Satan linking and completing each cycle.<sup>111</sup> As Milton Percival pointed out, the Seven Eyes therefore form two wheels, and he identified one as the Deistic, vengeful 'Wheel of Religion' and the other as its opposite, the 'current of creation' which embodies Jesus. Both are mentioned in the preface to the fourth chapter of



be able to discern for themselves the subtle deceits of Vala and Satan. Therefore if history becomes necessary, so, in a perverse way, does the selfhood, on whose back it rides. It is certainly the closest the apostate selfhood is likely to get to being a contrary. Its function remains essentially the same as has earlier been analyzed, but for humanity as a whole, its casting off occurs not at the instant of its creation (as in the man who has discovered his eternal Identity), but at the culmination of a progressive movement, necessarily accomplished in time.

Boehme shared Blake's biblical belief concerning the final manifestation of falsehood, and he combines the sentiments of Paul<sup>113</sup> with the language of Revelation:

...the Reason why so much is written of the Beast and the Whore of Babel is, because it is at its End, and shall soon be broken in Pieces; therefore it must be revealed, that Men may see and know it.

(M.M. 36:68)

The 'kingdom of nature' has allowed itself to become a vehicle of the dark world, and must now emerge into the light of day. Boehme's analysis of the event, in Chapter 36 of the Mysterium Magnum, 'Of the Antichristian Babylonical Whore of all Nations', is close enough in thought and image to Blake to suggest that Blake was acquainted with it. Like Blake, Boehme works simultaneously at the psychological and historical levels:

The Beast is the animal [natural] earthly...  
Man, who is from the Limus of the Earth,  
according to the Earth's Grossness and  
malignant Malice, which arises out of the  
dark World, and stands in the Curse of God.  
The Beast arose in Adam and Eve, when they  
imagined after Evil and Good, and came into

its Self-fulness, separate from the divine Power and Will, and is before God only as a Beast: This Beast the devil has infected with his Desire, and made it wholly monstrous.

(M.M. 36:21)

As in Blake, the beast is the outward body of each individual man when sold into selfhood, as well as the collective manifestation of the selfhood in history. The beast calls itself divine, but in reality is 'only a Monster of the true Man', formed from 'Reason's Self-will' (M.M. 36:18), just as Blake's beast, the Covering Cherub, is a 'majestic image/Of Selfhood ... a Reflexion/Of Eden all perverted' (J. 89:9-10, 14-15, K734). Within the beast lies the 'poor captive Soul, ...clothed and covered' by the whore, which is 'its own self-born Will' (M.M. 36:23), although the soul longs for the God from whom it was first created. The whore pretends that she is holy, and persuades herself that she is the 'fair Child of God' (M.M. 36:23), but her power comes only from outward nature (M.M. 36:26). Blake follows this. In The Four Zoas, as evil reveals itself, we find '...hidden within/The bosom of Satan The false Female' (F.Z. 8:291-2, K348). This is Rahab, who is equated with the great whore of Revelation (F.Z. 8:329-30, K349), and it is she who captures and enslaves Jerusalem, Boehme's 'captive soul' (F.Z. 8:597, K356). Both co-operate in their own downfall. Also significant is the fact that Blake, like Boehme and unlike Revelation, encloses his dramatis personae 'each within other'. In Jerusalem for example, beast, whore, and 'captive soul' are all contained in one figure, and the whore who 'has swallowed up...the precious Image of God' (M.M. 36:26) finds a clear echo:



re-enters the Divine Body. Blake warns that he who waits to be righteous before he enters will be permanently excluded (J. 3, K621). At root, this is little more than the familiar primacy of spirit over law, but no doubt Boehme played a strong part in shaping Blake's attitudes. He continually berates the 'bare verbal Forgiveness' (S.R. 11:137) which Babel teaches, and emphasizes the need for something more substantial:

No, you yourself must go out from sin, and enter into the will of God; for God does not stand by as a King, and forgive sins with words: It must be power: You must go out from the Fire into the Light. There is no other forgiveness...but that thou goest out from [the will of] this world, and of thy flesh also, from the Devil's will, into God's will, and then God's will receiveth thee, and so thou are freed from all sins.

(T.F.L. 11:62-3)

Anything less than this is mere 'pretended Holiness' (T.P. 21:29), like Blake's 'Fiends of Righteousness' who also 'pretend Holiness' (J.91:5-6, K738). Boehme further compares the forgiveness of sins to a basic natural rhythm:

When Christ ariseth, then Adam dyeth in the Essence of the Serpent; when the Sun riseth, the Night is swallowed up in the Day, and the Night is no more; so sins are forgiven.

(W.C. 3 (Of Reg.) 6:146)

This is exactly Blake's thought. Forgiveness is contained in the act of transition from the 'Fire into the Light', in which the rising sun of the Divine Imagination destroys the dominion of darkness.

Much the same emphasis can be seen regarding faith. For Boehme, faith is not merely the substance of things hoped for, but is 'an eating of the Divine Body' (F.Q. 7:25). What is emphasized is actual contact with the divine:

Faith is nothing else but the uniting of one's Will to God, and the receiving of God's Word and Power into the Will, that so both these...become both one Substance and Essence; that the human Will be even God's Will.

(M.M. 39:8)

Blake does not use the term often, but when he does, it is in the spirit of Boehme. It is only when Milton bathes in the 'Waters of Life' that he is able to cast off 'Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour' (M. 41:3, K533). Faith is understood as immediate apprehension, the experience of the Divine Vision, rather than the miraculous remedy for the lack of that vision. It resembles the attitude of the angels of Swedenborg's inmost heaven, who know nothing of faith, as such, because they are by nature so attuned to divine wisdom that their clear-sightedness makes such rationally formulated beliefs unnecessary.<sup>116</sup>

x) Ololon, Jerusalem and Sophia

Having reached the higher regions of Blake's mythology it is time to consider his treatment of the eternal feminine. This will act as a prelude to an account of what could be called the eternal masculine, the rediscovery of man's full creative energies in Eden.

The first figure, Ololon, appears only in Milton, and is introduced as 'a sweet River of milk & liquid pearl' (M. 21:15, K503), appearing immediately after Milton has entered Blake's foot and transfigured the 'Vegetable World'. The link is made again in Plate 35, for in the 'Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find' (35:42 K526) Ololon descends to Los and Enitharmon. It is in this

moment that the 'Fountain in a rock/Of crystal flowing into two streams' (M. 35:49-50, K526) is found. The obvious reference is to the 'river of the water of life, bright as crystal' which flows from the throne of God in Revelation (22:1), but it may well be that Boehme also stands behind Blake's thought at this point. In The Election of Grace, the lightning-flash causes the divine love to yield from itself an oil, in which the light lives (E.G. 3:42). In the Mysterium Magnum, Boehme describes the fifth quality, love or light, as 'an Oil, which is sweeter than any Sugar can be' (M.M. 10:22). It is 'pure and transparent', and when separated from the fire is 'whiter than any Thing can be in Nature'. If the 'Artist' can 'free it from the Fire of the Wrath...then he hath the Pearl of the whole World' (M.M. 10:23). The central characteristic of the oil is its 'Meekness and Sweetness' (M.M. 10:28) - the 'sweet' river of Ololon has 'mild' banks (M. 21:16, K503) - and its planetary equivalent is 'Virgin Venus' (M.M. 10:23). Ololon is also described as a virgin (M. 36:18, K527). According to the Signatura Rerum, Venus appears in her 'glorious and beautiful' virginity 'as soon as the dark fiery steam, viz. the material Devil does from the Matter' (S.R. 10:77). The opposite of the 'fiery steam' is the 'sweet pure water' with which the oil of Venus is associated (M.M. 10:28). Could Ololon, even her name itself, have been at least partially inspired by Boehme's spiritual oil, sweet, mild and virgin? There can be no certain answer, but the similarities speak for themselves; Blake had certainly perused the Mysterium Magnum

extensively, and the above passage may well have remained in the back of his mind.

John Adlard and Morton Paley have suggested similarities between Ololon and Boehme's Sophia.<sup>117</sup> The suggestion is worth following up, although Adlard is not strictly accurate when he refers to Sophia as a 'very young maiden' and a 'playing child'. As the bride of Christ and the reflection of the divine ideas, she is a more majestic figure. The similarity with Ololon is to be sought elsewhere, in the amalgam of identities which Ololon represents. She is a changeable figure; the many and the one, male and female. Her vast 'multitudes' stretch from Ulro to eternity (M. 35:37-8, K526), yet she appears in Blake's garden as 'One Female' (M. 36:16, K527). Earlier, she had the appearance of 'One Man/Jesus the Saviour' (M. 21:58-9, K505), who had become united with her. In the full-page design which closes Milton, we clearly see her as the central figure, but David Erdman is right to pursue the question of identity further. He suggests that the amalgamation of the various male figures described in the text (of Milton with Blake, Blake with Los, and all in Jesus), has prepared us to see in the final design not only the 'female Human Form Divine, a combination of Oothoon and Ololon', but also 'the human form divine that presides at the harvest as One Man, Jesus, in whom all the figures, male and female, have been consolidated.'<sup>118</sup> The freedom with which Blake treats the figure of Ololon may owe something to Boehme's habit of writing interchangeably of Christ and Sophia. They are not only bridegroom and bride, but 'one Person :

understand the true manly Virgin of God' (M.M. 50:48). Boehme worries little if his terms overlap or merge in meaning, and sometimes he refers to Sophia simply as the second principle (M.M. 25:10). He often repeats that Christ became man in the woman's tincture<sup>119</sup> and so restored the original androgyny which Adam, by losing the feminine essence, had sundered. The new born man repossesses both Christ and Sophia, and becomes a 'God-Angel' (S.R. 15:47), like Adam before the fall (and like the human form divine of Ololon/Jesus?) 'a totally fair, beautiful, bright, clear, crystalline Image, neither Man nor Woman, but both, viz. a manly or masculine Virgin' (E.G. 5:116). Boehme also states that all men are but one man in Adam; therefore the regenerate man has Adam as well as Christ/Sophia lodged unshakeably within him (M.M. 71:29-31). He stands at 'Nature's End' (S.R. 15:47) as the link and sum of all historical experience, just as for Blake, the fusion of individual identities with the one supreme, universal identity incorporates also 'the Woof of Six Thousand Years' (M. 42:15, K534), which is the sorrow of history, the 'Garment dipped in blood' (M. 42:12, K534), in its painful process of giving birth to the Saviour. It is at this point that Albion is ready to rise from his sleep.

There are also similarities between Sophia and Blake's Jerusalem, some of which have already been noted in connection with Albion's fall. The role of Sophia as that which reveals to the divine unity the inherent structures of its own being is suggestive:

The fourth Operation now is performed in the out-breathed Powers, viz. in the Divine Visibility or Wisdom, wherein the Spirit of God, which rises out of the Powers with the out-breathed Powers, as with one only Power, plays with itself.

Where it introduces itself in the Powers, into Formations in the Divine Delight and Longing; as if it would introduce an Image of this generating to the Trinity into a several distinct Will and Life, as a Modelling of the one only Trinity.

And that imprinted Image is the Delight or Longing of the Divine Visibility; and yet a man must not here understand a comprehensible creaturely Image that may be circumscribed, but the Divine Imagination, viz. the first Ground or Foundation of the Magia, out of which the Creation has taken its Beginning and Original.

(E.G. 1:43-5)

As Leopold Damrosch has pointed out, not only is this exactly Blake's '...sports of Wisdom in the Human Imagination' (M. 3:3, K482), it also suggests the ideal relationship of Albion and Jerusalem.<sup>120</sup> Boehme's divine spirit, sporting with Sophia, is yet playing with itself. A subject-object relationship has been created, which, paradoxically, remains beyond the reach of duality. The object is the subject, communing with itself. Again as Damrosch points out, Blake is attracted to this symbolism because 'like Boehme he seeks to reduce dualism to monism',<sup>121</sup> to transform the feminine from being the principle of 'otherness', a sign of man's divided condition, into an essential element in the oneness of divine, and true human, life. Applied at the human level, this means that it is through uniting with his emanation that man regains the universe as his own and overcomes 'otherness'. For Blake states that the emanation is the means by which man communicates with, and is united to, other men (J. 88:3-13, K733), and he calls this unifying



in partnership with each other, as Sophia herself says to the fallen human soul:

[Thou has] broken the Bond of Wedlock, and set thy Love and Affection upon a Stranger, and suffered me thy Bride, whom God did give thee, to stand alone in the extinguished Substance, without the Power of thy fiery Strength. I could not be joyful without thy fiery Strength, for thou art my Husband; my shining [Brightness] is made manifest by thee. Thou canst manifest my hidden Wonders in thy fiery Life, and bring them into Majesty; and yet without me thou art but a dark House, wherein is nothing but Anguish, and Torment, and an odious horrible Pain.

(W.C.I (Of Rep.)p.24)

So also for Blake: 'But now Albion is darkened & Jerusalem lies in ruins' (J. 71:54, K711). Sophia, standing 'alone in the extinguished Substance' also recalls the distress of Jerusalem '...scatter'd abroad like a cloud of smoke thro' non-entity' (J. 5:13, K623).

There are of course differences between Jerusalem and Sophia. Jerusalem also represents the fallen soul, which yet retains a sense of its divine homeland (J. 60:52-64, K693). Sophia could never exclaim, as Jerusalem does, 'I am a worm and no living soul!' (J. 80:3, K721); Jerusalem embraces Vala, to her cost, whereas Sophia must always remain in her 'principle', aloof from the 'Spirit of the World'. But as the passage quoted above has shown, Sophia cannot remain indifferent to the catastrophe that has overtaken man. Boehme himself felt her presence, as his comforter in times of need, tending him like a Daughter of Beulah tending a stricken Albion:

I rely upon her faithful Promise, when she appeared to me, that she would turn all My mournings into great Joy; and when I laid upon the Mountain towards the North, so that all the Trees fell upon me, and all

the Storms and Winds beat upon me, and  
 Antichrist gaped at me with his open Jaws  
 to devour me, then she came and comforted  
 me, and married herself to me.

(T.P. 14:52)

It should also be noted that Sophia is Adam's 'paradisiacal rose-garden'. Her presence fills him with pleasant delight; she is his ease and his rest, the balm that cushions him against the harshness of fallen existence. In this truly feminine role, she recalls Blake's state of Beulah, the '...mild & pleasant rest/... a soft Moony Universe, feminine, lovely, /Pure, mild & Gentle' (F.Z. 1:94-6, K266), which exists '...around/On all sides, within & without the Universal Man' (F.Z. 1:97-8, K266). Beulah, standing 'between every two Moments' (M. 28:48, K516) is the timeless quiet which inspires the poet's song (M. 2:1, K481). Jerusalem is also described as a sister of the Daughters of Beulah (J. 48:22, K678). This brings us to an important point.

xi) Rest and activity : the divine play

It is often stated in Blake criticism that rest and stillness were anathema to Blake, that he was interested only in activity and that his eternity consisted only of the violent clang and clash of opposing forces.<sup>122</sup> But this is not the entire truth. However ambivalent was Blake's portrayal of Beulah, the 'mild and pleasant rest', he nonetheless regarded it as a part of eternity, although not complete in itself.<sup>123</sup> His poetry too, although often 'noisom', sometimes conveys a completely different feeling. One of the most arresting moments in Jerusalem, for example, comes on the very eve of Albion's awakening. As Los, filled

with purposeful authority, tends his furnaces, the entire universe falls momentarily silent:

And thus Los replies upon his watch: the  
 Valleys listen silent,  
 The Stars stand still to hear : Jerusalem &  
 Vala cease to mourn:  
 His voice is heard from Albion : the Alps &  
 Appenines  
 Listen : Hermon & Lebanon bow their crowned  
 heads:  
 Babel & Shiner look toward the Western Gate,  
 they sit down  
 Silent at his voice : they view the red Globe  
 of fire in Los's hand  
 As he walks from Furnace to Furnace directing  
 the Labourers.

(J. 85:14-20, K730)

Furthermore, a poet who wrote the following stanza, from 'Nurse's Song', was certainly not indifferent to the moment of quietness:

When the voices of children are heard on the  
 green  
 And laughing is heard on the hill,  
 My heart is at rest within my breast  
 And everything else is still.

(S.I., K121)

Here sound combines with silence, and the result is laughter. It is appropriate that the scene is one of children at play, because Blake shared Boehme's understanding of play as the perfected mode of all activity and of all relationships. For the most part in Blake's work, this is recalled as a lost paradise, 'When Heaven & Hell in Emulation strove in sports of Glory' (F.Z. 9: 298, K365), which of course is sheer Behmenism. Boehme also describes the relationship between God and his creation in terms of play:

...the eternal Understanding of the Abyss introduces itself into the Byss and Essence; viz. into an eternal Generation and Devouring, wherein the Manifestation of the Abyss consists, and is an eternal Love-play; that the Abyss so

wrestles, sports and plays with itself in its own conceived [or amassed] Byss; it gives itself into the Something, and again takes the Something into itself, and thence brings or gives forth another Thing. It introduces itself into a Lubet and Desire; moreover, into Power, Strength, and Virtue, and mutually produces one Degree from the other, and through the other, that so it might be an eternal Play and Melody in itself.

(M.M. 5:3)

Adam should likewise have played with creation; he fell 'when this play became serious business',<sup>124</sup> just as in The Four Zoas the voice of Albion complains of the transformation that has taken place as a result of Vala's ascendancy: 'Once born for the sport & amusement of Man, now born to drink up all his Powers?' (F.Z. 1:278, K272). My point is simply this: although Blake had no love of the dull, static heaven of orthodox religion, he did have a very clear sense that human activity could continue as play only for as long as man remained at rest within himself, fully participating in the divine body, which combined energy and repose. For example, the title-page of The Four Zoas bears the inscription 'Rest before Labour' (K263), but this is exactly what the Zoas, for the most part, do not do - with disastrous consequences. N.V.P. Franklin has demonstrated that the 'stern debate' of the Zoas and their emanations owes a great deal to the Behmenist ideal of 'love-wrestling' amongst the properties of Eternal Nature. In both cases, the fall transforms the playful wrestling into a fierce and relentless struggle for domination.<sup>125</sup> It is only at the last, at the close of the breathless Night the Ninth, that the 'New born Man' arises to a redeemed activity, in which the rhythm



unfreedom of the body of time into its rest, man and God join forces once more, eternally active and eternally undisturbed, their union easy and burthen light. Boehme writes that any creature 'which attains Nature's End, the same is in Rest without Source Qual, and yet works, but only in one Desire' (S.R. 15:47), and at the culmination of the Signatura Rerum he again emphasizes the dynamic nature of eternity, in a passage which has a distinct Blakean flavour:

All Properties of the great Eternal Mystery of the Pregnattress of all Beings are manifest in the holy angelical and humane Creatures; and we are not to think thereof, as if the Creatures only stood still and rejoiced at the Glory of God, and admired only in Joy; not, but it is as the Eternal Spirit of God works from Eternity to Eternity in the great Mystery of the Divine Generation, and continually manifests the infinite and numberless Wisdom of God, even as the Earth brings forth always fair Blossoms, Herbs and Trees, so also Metals and all Manner of Beings... and as one arises in the Essence another falls down, and there is an incessant lasting Enjoyment and Labour.

(S.R. 16:14)

In the following verse Boehme repeats the idea that 'all is as a continual Love-Combat or wrestling Delight'. Unless this distinctive character of Boehme's concept of eternity is grasped, it is likely that Blake's debt to him will continue to be underestimated. Thus Damrosch, although he acknowledges Boehme's influence, wrongly states that the 'wrestling and fighting' applies only in the fallen world, attributing to Boehme the opinion of the alchemist Sendivogius, that in eternity 'mutual strife [is] hushed in unending peace and goodwill'.<sup>127</sup> A more thoroughgoing example is Thomas R. Frosch's study, The Awakening of Albion, in which he claims that mysticism is inappropriate

for the study of Blake. This is largely because he regards it as dualistic, involving a 'withdrawal from direct perception as a trusted mode of cognition', its main themes being 'transcendence, stasis and asceticism'.<sup>128</sup> One point he makes is particularly relevant to the present discussion. He states that

[Blake] imagines in terms of process or activity, often turbulent, rather than in purely spatial 'pictures', and the stationary is not only doctrinally inimical to him but poetically uncomfortable. To treat his formulations as static structures that can be represented in critical commentary by pictures or diagrams is a kind of reduction that runs counter to the fundamental qualities of his verse. ... His pivotal trope is that of motion stifled: a bird in a cage, the infant Orc in swaddling bands, man in his cavern. Incapable of adequate release, energy is... discharged into pre-molded patterns of an oppressive regularity, such as the natural cycle.<sup>129</sup>

As this discussion has shown, stasis is not as 'poetically uncomfortable' for Blake as might at first appear, but leaving this aside, Frosch's comments could serve equally well as an illustration of a number of points in Boehme. It is equally impossible to represent Boehme's vision diagrammatically. The Freher diagrams which show the seven properties, and the other charts in the 'Law edition',<sup>130</sup> have the same inadequacy as, for example, Damon's diagrammatic representations of Golgonooza, and of the correspondences in Jerusalem.<sup>131</sup> This is because the properties are always found doing something; they are defined only in their relationships with each other. As Franklin notes, they are 'ongoing verbs', not static nouns: 'A Quality is the Mobility, boiling, springing and driving of a Thing' (Aur. 1:3).<sup>132</sup> Movement is of the very essence, 'the elevating springing triumphing Joy in God

makes heaven triumphing and moveable' (Aur. 2:75). Frosch's comment about 'motion stifled' is a perfect illustration of Boehme's Angst, the desperate hither and thither of unenlightened consciousness, seeking the new birth but trapped in a womb that refuses to bring it forth. When at last the obstacles are surmounted, the result is the kind of infinite expansion of activity such as Blake envisaged, the impression being of a river bursting its banks, or a dam being released:

And in this great Joy the birth cannot contain itself [within its Bounds,] but expands itself, flowing forth very joyfully, and every Essence [or Substance] generates now again a Center in the second Principle.

(T.P. 4:52)

From this point of view it is the selfhood which attempts to remain still; the regenerate man, by 'standing still to God' finds himself, paradoxically, 'triumphing and moveable', his activity becoming free, joyous and unrestrained for the first time. Boehme's vision, it must be repeated, was not of stasis alone, but of life in process of growth, change and becoming, the only sin being to hold fast one's doors against it.

It is cause for regret that so many Blake critics remain ignorant of, or prejudiced against, Boehme, when an understanding of him can yield so much that is of value to the study of Blake. Professor Frosch further points out that for Blake, our present manner of perceiving ourselves and our environment was only one of many possible ways, although it had been accepted as final.<sup>133</sup> Boehme too was prepared to defy conventional opinion in defence of his

vision:

Christ hath opened the Gates into his Father; do but enter in, let nothing keep thee back; and though Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures, should say, thou canst not, believe them not, go forward, and thou wilt suddenly get in; and as soon as thou comest in, thou gettest a new Body on to the Soul, that is the body of Christ, which is God and Man, and thou wilt afterwards have ease and refreshment in thy heart.

(T.F.L. 11:56)

In remarkably similar ways, Blake and Boehme act as communicators of a new mode of existence, into which they invite us to leap, and in which life passes from a condition of strain to one of ease; from the 'Pangs of Eternal death' (F.Z. 9:742, K377) to the 'Eternal Births of Intellect from the Divine Humanity' (V.L.J., K613); from a perception of mere process to one of unity-in-process; from wailing and lamentation to the good pleasure of the 'divine working Word'. This leads directly into the final section.

xii) Albion, Los and the Word

Boehme's 'language of nature' has been discussed earlier, and it was suggested that Blake was acquainted with it. This would seem to be strengthened by the detailed account which Blake gives, at the close of Jerusalem, of the risen Albion. Boehme's theory, it will be recalled, was based on a correlation between the name of an object and its physical form, although of course for Boehme, this was not a mere theory, but a practical means of acquiring knowledge. His early biographers record occasions when, on a walk with friends, he would be able

to discern from the 'outward Signature and Formation' of flowers and plants 'their inward Virtues, Effects and Qualities, together with the Letters, Syllables, and Words of the Name inspoken and ascribed to them.'<sup>134</sup>

On one occasion his learned friend Dr. Tobias Koeber attempted to catch him out by telling him a wrong name, but Boehme replied that such a name could not possibly be correct because it did not match the 'signature' of the plant.<sup>135</sup> A consequence of this view of language is that human speech is understood to be a microcosm of the creative Word of God. Boehme must be allowed his own words:

...for the Spirit giveth everything its Name, as it standeth in the Birth in itself; and as it formed them in the beginning, in the Creation, so it also formeth our Mouth; and as they are generated out of the Eternal Being, and are come to a substance, so the human Word goeth also forth out from the center of the Spirit, in shape, property and form, and it is no other, than that the Spirit maketh such a substance, as the Creation itself is, when it expressteth the form of the Creation. For it formeth the Word of the Name of a Thing, in the Mouth; as the Thing was in the Creation: And hereby we know that we are God's Children, and Generated of God: for as God from Eternity hath had the substance of this World in his Word, which he hath always spoken in his Wisdom, so we have it in our Word also, and we speak it forth in the Wonders of his Wisdom.

(T.F.L. 6:2-3)

Boehme labours to instruct his reader that speech, even apparently feeble human speech, nonetheless shares in the original creative power. Man is here in the company of the angels; the word as it springs from his mouth helps to frame his entire world, even the food which nourishes him:

And when the Holy Ghost forms the heavenly fruit, then should the Tone, which should rise up in the Praising of God from the Angels, be also together in the forming or Imaging of the Fruit; and so on the other Side again, the Fruit should be the Food of the Angels.

And therefore also we pray in our Father, saying GIEB uns unser Täglich Brodt [GIVE us our daily Bread] so that the Tone or Word, GIEB [GIVE] which we thrust forth from our Center of the Light, through the animated, animal or soulish Spirit, out at the Mouth forth from us, into the divine Power, should in the divine Power, as a Fellow-forming or Fellow-generating help to image or frame unser Täglich Brodt [our daily Bread], which afterwards Der Vater giebet uns [the father gives us,] for Food.

And then when our Tone is thus incorporated in God's Tone, so that the Fruit is formed, imaged or framed, it must needs be wholesome or healthful for us, and so we are in God's Love, and have that Food to make use of, as by the Right of Nature, being our Spirit in God's Love did help to image and form the same. Herein stands the innermost and greatest Depth of God. O man, consider thyself!

(Aur. 13:140-43)<sup>136</sup>

In the verses which follow, Boehme further describes the powers of the angels, whose every word, even whisper, 'helps to co-image and frame or form all' (Aur. 13:145). So it is with Blake's risen Albion as, at the last, he revels in his expanded faculties:

The Four Living Creatures, Chariots of  
 Humanity Divine Incomprehensible,  
 In beautiful Paradises expand. These are the Four  
 Rivers of Paradise  
 And the Four Faces of Humanity, fronting the Four  
 Cardinal Points  
 Of Heaven, going forward, forwardirresistible from  
 Eternity to Eternity.  
 And they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic  
 which bright  
 Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous majesty, in  
 Visions  
 In new Expanses, creating exemplars of Memory and of  
 Intellect,  
 Creating Space, Creating Time, according to the wonders  
 Divine  
 Of Human Imagination throughout all the Three Regions  
 Immense  
 Of Childhood, Manhood & Old Age...

(J. 98:24-32, K745-6)

Each Zoa has extended his domain to infinity, as have each of the four senses (touch and taste being united in eternity). Albion's newly won existence has the solidity and assurance of that which 'Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably' (V.L.J., K604), and yet it possesses also a fluid adaptability which makes a world in each movement and each moment. Out of this coalescence of mighty forces pours sound. Albion, with the Breath Divine sweeping over him, recaptures in its fullness the power of speech. In the visionary conversations of the risen Zoas, which are the 'Words of Eternity' (J.95:9, K742), the uttered word and the perceived form are as one ('we have it [the substance of this world] in our Word' writes Boehme). It is the forms themselves that cascade direct from the tongue, 'Creating Space, Creating Time', and the association of the tongue with both the act of speech and the sense of touch and taste, give to Albion's speaking an extreme sensual richness. The word is not merely heard, but felt and savoured; not spoken with the mouth merely, but involving the entire being, and breathed out as a ripple of the risen, divine body. Now language is no longer the 'stubborn structure' with which Los had earlier struggled, but like the unimpeded flow of an ocean current. It is here, where the universal language of nature takes over from the inarticulate striving of the individual, that speech is transformed into poetry. Albion, raised to the status of artist and poet, now inherits his birthright, and words and worlds pour from his mouth as effortlessly as an ocean rises into a wave.<sup>137</sup> At the

climax of Albion's celebrations, Blake's own voice breaks through. He hears 'Jehovah speak/Terrific from his Holy Place' (J.98:40-1, K746), but not only does he hear the words, he sees them too, 'On Chariots of gold & jewels' (98:42), for the 'Mutual Covenant Divine' (98:41) is no less than the redeemed world, the 'all wondrous Serpent clothed in gems & rich array' (98:44), which Jehovah, in partnership with Albion, now calls into being. This brings us back to Boehme's angels, 'imaging' the heavenly forms, or to his Adam, speaking the 'signatures' of creation, or even to the mundane speech of fallen man, participating with God in the formation of his world.

I am not suggesting, of course, that Blake concocted his vision of Albion's awakening whilst poring over Boehme's accounts of the 'language of nature'. But I do think it is valid to suggest that he had read these accounts, and that they were absorbed into his understanding of the world-creating powers of the fully awakened Divine Humanity. A similar theory can be found in the medieval interpretations of the Kabbalist Sepher Yetzirah (Book of Creation). Abraham, because of his intimate knowledge of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which, as in Boehme, are the structural elements of creation, was able to repeat the creative acts of God.<sup>138</sup>

This raises several issues in its wake. In the Aurora, Boehme describes the ability of man to impress his will on his environment, and to alter it by his speech:

...if some Creature or Man look upon a Thing, it perishes because of the Poison or Venom in the Creature: on the other Hand again, some Men, as also Beasts and other Creatures, can with their Tone or Words change or alter the Malignity or Evil of a Thing, and bring it into a right Form.

(Aur. 13:146)

Professor Frosch, commenting on the central importance of speech in Blake's regenerative process, makes a remarkably similar point:

Blake believes that our words create and sustain our world and that they have, as well, the capability to change it. Vocalization is so powerful a force... that spoken words become as directly instrumental as tools or physical actions.<sup>139</sup>

This presents us quite plainly with a magical view of the universe, something which is not normally associated with Blake, but which can hardly be escaped. It needs to be considered in terms of the relationship between speech and the imagination, and the role which Blake ascribes to Los..

Theories of magic in the Renaissance allocated supreme importance to the imagination. Every branch of the magical arts, including the power of the spoken word in enchantments and incantations, was dependent upon the effectiveness of the imagination of the operator.<sup>140</sup> This of course is a view which Boehme shared. Although he was extremely wary of magic, fearing its misuse (Giordano Bruno had been burnt at the stake only twelve years before Boehme wrote the Aurora), he nonetheless accorded it a place of importance in his system. He was not interested in its practical details any more than he was interested in practical alchemy; his concern was to

make known the basis on which it operated. In the Six Mystical Points he declared it to be a 'godlike' power, essential to scholar and peasant alike (S.M.P. 5:22-4, pp. 134-5). Magia was the 'formative power in the eternal wisdom', bringing into being (Wesen) that which was modelled by the eternal will (S.M.P. 5:7, 12, pp. 131-3). In practice, therefore, it is difficult to distinguish it from imagination. Magia for Boehme was the skill, or divine gift, of being able to operate at the most fundamental, causal level of creation, to 'imagine' from the 'innermost ground'. If man was able to do this his power was virtually unlimited:

By the strong Desire (which is the magical Ground) all Things may be effected, if Man uses Nature right...

(M.M. 11:9)

The Soul's Power was so potent before the Vanity, that it was not subject to any thing; and so it is still powerful, if the Understanding was not taken away from it: It can, by Magick, alter all Things whatsoever are in the outward World's Essence, and introduce them into another Essence; but the Vanity in the outward Air's Dominion has brought a Darkness thereinto, so that it does not know itself.

(M.M. 17:43)

Any act which a man performed whilst his mind was stationed at the punctum of eternity (Blake's Gate of Los), whether desire, thought or spoken word, was possessed of a delicate yet concentrated strength. Just as the Word spoken from the depths of the Divine Imagination manifested as the physical world, human speech too was a magical power, able to affect material things, especially so when, becoming Godlike, it welled up from the level of the divine Magia, or Imagination.

It is in this sense that Blake's universe can be said to have a magical flavour, for he too realized the potency of the Word as a form of prophetic incantation. The magus of his epic is Los, the speaker of the Divine Imagination in the temporal world. To explain this fully, and to clearly establish the connection with Boehme, it is necessary to analyze Boehme's description of the process by which the Word is born in Eternal Nature, and this will draw together all the strands of argument in this section. Boehme locates the origin of speech in the second property, the bitter sting, which he describes as the 'House, Tool, or Instrument of the speech' (Cl. 121). But at this first stage, it is only a painful vibration, no more than a 'Noise from the Hardness' (S.R. 14:13). It does not come to fruition until the emergence of the sixth property, the 'Divine Mouth, the Sound or Voice of the Power' (E.G. 3:71). What has happened is this: the one Word, longing to become the 'speaking Word', has forsaken the unity in which it rested and has entered the cauldron of the Nein, submitting to the second property, the 'separator', and allowing itself to be broken into multiplicity : the consonants must be forged to give shape to the vowels. As the Word emerges from its ordeal by fire as the sixth property, the newly created multiplicity of letters and words take their allotted but ever-changing places, and in the pulsations of sound and silence, as many swirling words become aspects of the one eternal Word, sweet language is born.

It was noted in the chapter on Urizen that the second

property, as the Vulcan which strikes fire, was related to Los. In the later prophetic books this link is strengthened, because Los too is associated with speech and the Word. It is he who constructs language, '... acting against/Albion's melancholy, who must else have been a Dumb despair' (J. 40:59-60, K668), which recalls the differentiating activity of the second property against the 'still death' of the first. Paley has identified Los with the Logos,<sup>141</sup> and Frosch too has relevant comment:

Los's physical acts of vocalization, bardic song, and prophetic utterance, are creative organizations of real phenomena, and to "speak" the appearances as he does is to call them into effective being.<sup>142</sup>

The identification of Los with the second and sixth properties would seem to be confirmed by Boehme's description of them, in the Signatura Rerum, in terms of the alchemical Mercurius, by which he means three things: the chemical substance, the planet and also the world-creating spirit, the divine artificer.<sup>143</sup> Mercury is the 'true moving Life' (S.R. 8:6), containing two aspects, one 'poisonful', the other 'heavenly' or 'divine'. Two passages are of particular interest:

...he [Mercury] is the Sound in the Spirit, understand the Separator of the Sound, viz. of the Tone; also of all Pronunciations of Speeches, and all the several Cries and Notes; all whatever sounds is distinguished by his Might...

...[he] makes the Understanding in Jupiter, for he separates the Thoughts, and makes them act and move; he takes the Infinity of the Thoughts into his Desire, and makes them essential [wesentlich]...

(S.R. 9:20-1)

...he is in his spiritual Property the Distinguisher (or Articulator) of the Words, Voices and Speeches. It is written God hath made all Things by his Word: The heavenly eternal Mercurius is his Word, which the Father expresses in the enkindling of his Light, and the expressed in his Wisdom; and the word is the Worker, Framer, and Maker of the Formings in the expressed Wisdom. Now what the inward Mercurius does internally in God's Power, that likewise the outward Mercurius effects in the outward Power in the created Essence: He is God's Instrument, wherewith he works extrinsically to Death and to Life; in each Thing according to its Property he builds, and breaks down. According to Saturn's Property he builds, and according to his own Property he distinguishes and dissipates the Hardness in Saturn, viz. the enclosed, and opens it to Life: He opens the Colours, and makes Forms and Shapes, and carries in him an heavenly, and also an earthly Property.

(S.R. 4:35-6)

This is clearly Los. The Mercurius who 'builds and breaks down' in his efforts to manifest the eternal, recalls the labours of Los as he constructs Golgonooza, '...the Spiritual Fourfold/London, continually building & continually decaying desolate' (J. 53:18-9, K684), also described as 'ever building, ever falling' (M. 6:2, K485). (Mercurius is also traditionally associated with the number four,<sup>144</sup> although this is not immediately apparent in Boehme's works.) Mercurius, opening the colours and making forms and shapes, recalls both the 'translucent Wonder' of Los's works, with their gates of gold and precious stones which 'open into the vegetative world' (J. 14:16-30, K635), and the activity of the Sons of Los in Milton, 'Creating form & beauty around the dark regions of sorrow' (M. 28:2, K514). It is most certainly the task of Los to take 'the Infinity of the Thoughts into

his Desire' and make them substantial, for they are the realities of the Divine Imagination which he must reveal. His function as forger and speaker of the Word thus unites with his status as the imagination, the creator of time and space (see the description of his work in Milton, Plates 26-9). The 'starry round' can be measured by the swing of his hammer (J. 88:2, K733) because the visible universe is the product of his own words, as he stands 'in the Nerves of the Ear' (M. 29:40, K617), 'speaking the appearances' (to use Frosch's phrase), 'imagining' them into being.<sup>145</sup>

The implications of this analysis of Los must be considered in the context of the doctrine of contraries. As Damrosch states, Blake was attracted to the idea of contraries in the first place because he realized that 'an inescapable experience of pain and struggle is fundamental to any achievement'.<sup>146</sup> But Damrosch also comments that in Blake's later works, he abandoned his belief in a Behmenist 'dark "abyss"...as the fixed contrarium against which life and light can define themselves', because it no longer satisfied him.<sup>147</sup> But the identification of Los with Boehme's Mercurius surely calls this into question. As stated earlier, Mercurius has two aspects, one hellish and 'poisonful', the other heavenly. The Word of which he is the custodian must therefore travel with him through the darkness of the Nein before it can emerge into the light of the Ja, and this is precisely the journey which Los must undertake. He is not himself the 'dark abyss', but nonetheless he



K728) has won him the victory:

To whom Time and Eternity  
Harmoniously as One agree;  
His soul is safe, his Life's amended,  
His Battle's o'er, his Strife is ended. 149

Epilogue

The purpose of this thesis was to establish definitively the influence which Boehme exerted on Blake, which has been unduly neglected in Blake criticism. The connection is hard now to deny. From the early exultation of The Marriage, to the exploration of the dark world in Urizen and finally to the recapitulation of the entire range of Boehme's myth throughout the later prophetic books, the influence has been shown to be pervasive and continuous. I have tried to avoid falling into the trap which students of Blake's esoteric sources are sometimes said to do, of imposing a system on him from the outside which merely parallels in complexity what it is intended to explain, at the same time reducing it to the level of a second-rate encyclopaedia of the occult. Many of the correspondences which I have traced genuinely help not only to explicate some abstruse points of detail, but also, in a wider sense, to keep in mind the transcendent dimension of Blake's vision which is sometimes lost sight of.

Whilst highlighting Boehme's contribution to Blake, I have not intended to deny, or treat in too cursory a fashion, other influences on his work. The complex strands of the tradition in which he placed himself have by no means been fully unravelled, and several areas could still be explored with profit. The precise relationship between Swedenborg and Boehme has, to my knowledge, never been fully examined, and a more detailed comparison than I have been able to attempt of Boehme's

links with, and divergences from, Neoplatonism would also be useful; a few more questions regarding the precise origin of Blake's ideas might then be capable of solution. Furthermore, Blake's knowledge of the Kabbalah, and of Indian traditions, has yet to be evaluated thoroughly; no-one, for example, has attempted to track down the actual translations of the Zohar which would have been available to him. Further study of the intricacies of alchemical processes and terminology, such as N.V.P. Franklin has contributed, would also be welcome.

Future Blake criticism should include a more positive evaluation of his links with the mystical tradition, seen as a means of transcending the duality of knower and known in an all-embracing unity. On this point, Northrop Frye's comments, in a note on 'Blake's Mysticism' appended to Fearful Symmetry, remain valid. He states that the Blakean endeavour to realize

in total experience...the identity of God and Man in which both the human creature and the superhuman Creator disappear...seems also to be the basis of the great speculative Western school which forms a curiously well-integrated tradition at least between Eckhart and Boehme, and which is often called mystical.<sup>1</sup>

Although this may be taking the majority of Christian mystics rather further than they wished to go, it is a valid interpretation of many of Boehme's statements. (Sometimes of course he is more cautious, and one senses an element of self-censorship, as if he feels constrained to draw back from the full implications of his vision in order to stay within the fold of orthodoxy.) The recurring theme of this thesis, that man contains within himself all things in heaven and on earth, is



works and does even the same that ever  
it did from Eternity; it labours for the  
Light and for the Darkness, and works in  
great Anguish; but when the Light shines  
therein, then there is mere Joy and  
Knowledge in its Working.

(T.P. 7:6)

Although the esteem and popularity which Blake enjoys has steadily increased over the last fifty years, it may well be that only now, in the late twentieth century, can he and Boehme be fully understood in the way that they wanted to be understood. Boehme in particular should now be accorded the respect and honour to which his life's work entitles him, and his seminal influence on the entire English Romantic tradition, from Blake and Coleridge to Yeats and D.H. Lawrence, belatedly recognized.

My final point is reflective. There is a peculiar irony in compiling an academic thesis on the work of two men who insisted with such vehemence that true knowledge was not accessible to 'reason' but must be sought 'in the center of the birth of your life'. Boehme's 'doctors' and 'masters', 'wrangling and jangling' in a Babel of confusion, and Blake's '...idiot Questioner who is always questioning/ But never capable of answering' (M. 41:12-3, K533) reveal a supreme contempt for the value of the kind of learning which we tend to take for granted. It has been remarked that The Book of Urizen 'is a book written to liberate us from books',<sup>3</sup> and the structure of Jerusalem, in Professor Mitchell's analysis, 'is a denial of our usual ideas of structure',<sup>4</sup> its purpose being to lead us away from time into eternity, or, to put it in a different way, out of the book into the expanded human mind, itself the

container of all books. In such a view, much Blake criticism, including this thesis, might be seen as little more than a Urizenic exercise in numbering and categorizing, or, at best, a game attempt by Vernunft to pass itself off as Verstand. Boehme's experience in the fields at Görlitz once more gives us pause:

...the Gate was opened to me, that in one Quarter of an Hour I saw and knew more, than if I had been many Years together at an University...

Notes to Introduction.

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4. Milton O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny. Columbia University Press, 1938. Reprinted, Octagon Books, New York, 1977, p.36. See also pp.149-50, 166-7, 209.
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12. G.E. Bentley, Jr., Blake Books. Annotated Catalogues of William Blake's Writings. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977, p.743.

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16. Morton D. Paley, Energy and the Imagination. A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970, particularly pp.67-9, 92, 110-11, 116-9, 146 ff.
17. Hirst, op.cit. p.93.
18. Michael Davis, William Blake. A New Kind of Man. Paul Elek, London, 1977, p.37.
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20. *ibid.* p.26.
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22. *ibid.* p.249.
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26. *ibid.* p.269.
27. *ibid.* p.109.

28. *ibid.* p.119.
29. *ibid.* p.120.
30. *ibid.* pp.139 ff.
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Princeton University Press, 1947. Reprinted, 1974, p.431.
34. Damon, *op.cit.* pp.2-12.
35. Helen White, The Mysticism of William Blake. University of  
Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No.23. Madison, 1927.
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37. Schorer, *op.cit.* p.69.
38. *ibid.* p.84.
39. *ibid.* p.70. Schorer rejects Damon's attempt to fit Blake into  
the five classic stages of the mystic way (pp.76-88.).
40. Thomas R. Frosch, The Awakening of Albion. The Renovation of  
the Body in the Poetry of William Blake. Cornell University Press,  
Ithaca and London, 1974, p.26.
41. *ibid.* p.10.
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49. Percival, op.cit. p.47.
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53. Damrosch, op.cit. p.166.
54. ibid. p.175.
55. Ronald L. Grimes, 'Time and Space in Blake's Major Prophecies', In S. Curran and J.A. Wittreich, Jr. (editors) Blake's Sublime Allegory : Essays on The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1973, p.66.
56. ibid. p.66.
57. Denis Saurat, Blake and Modern Thought, Constable, London, 1929.
58. Margaret Lewis Bailey, Milton and Jakob Boehme. A Study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England. New York, 1914. Reprinted, 1964, Haskell House, New York.

59. William Law, The Way to Divine Knowledge, London, 1752.  
Reprinted in The Works of the Reverend William Law, M.A., in Nine Volumes, for G. Moreton, 1893.Vol.VII, p.254. (Future references to Law's works will be to this edition, unless otherwise stated.)
60. Boehme confesses to his 'very deep Melancholy and heavy Sadness' (See Aur.19:5 ff., F.C.4:113 ff.). Damrosch, op.cit. pp.307 ff. gives an interesting account of the psychological difficulties faced by Blake, particularly during the Felpham period.
61. See Mona Wilson, The Life of William Blake, Nonesuch Press, 1927. Reprinted, edited by Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp.364-5. Francis Okeley, Memoirs of the Life, Death, Burial and Wonderful Writings of Jacob Behmen. Northampton, 1780, pp.23-4.
62. Raine, op.cit. Vol.1, pp.3-4.
63. Henry M. Pachter, Paracelsus : Magic into Science. Henry Schuman, New York, 1951, p.344.
64. D.P. Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella. The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1958. Kraus Reprint, Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1976, p.96. Walker takes seriously the report of Paracelsus' secretary, Oporinus, that Paracelsus was hardly ever sober (p.101).
65. Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim) Philosophy Reformed and Improved in Four Profound Tractates ... Discovering the Wonderful Mysteries of the Creation, by Paracelsus : Being his Philosophy to the Athenians. Translated by H. Pinell, London, 1657.

66. Damon, William Blake, pp.166-7 ; Raine, op.cit. Vol.1. pp.10-11, 272-3, Vol.II, pp.15, 156.
67. But this does not apply in every case. Beer, op.cit. p.191, suggests that Blake 'draws on Boehme for his nine hermaphroditic giants of the first world', pointing out that Boehme's list in the preface to the Aurora is almost exactly the same (p.361). But the Biblical list (Gen. 5:1-25) is identical to Blake's, and therefore seems the more likely source.
68. For more complete surveys of Boehme's reception in England, see Rufus M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries. MacMillan, London, 1914. Reprinted, 1928, pp.208-34. Serge Hutin, Les Disciples Anglais de Jacob Boehme, aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Paris, 1960. Désirée Hirst, op.cit. pp.82 ff. Arlene A. Miller, Jacob Boehme : From Orthodoxy to Enlightenment. Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1971, pp.381-555.
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75. A.L. Morton, The Everlasting Gospel. A study in the sources of William Blake. Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1958, p.35.
76. Stephen Hobhouse (editor), Selected Mystical Writings of William Law. London, 1938, p.231.
77. William Law, The Way to Divine Knowledge. p.195.
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79. For more details of the circumstances of the 'Law edition' see Christopher Walton, Notes and Materials for an Adequate Biography of the Celebrated Divine and Theosopher, William Law. London, 1854, p.45.
80. Charles A. Muses, Illumination on Jacob Boehme. The Work of Dionysius Andreas Freher. King's Crown Press, Columbia University, New York, 1951, pp.22-3. For more on Freher, see also Miller, op.cit. pp.524-55.
81. G.E. Bentley, Jr., and Martin K. Nurmi, A Blake Bibliography. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1964, p.199.
82. Reported by Crabb Robinson. See Morley (ed.), op.cit. p.6.
83. Hirst, op.cit. pp.227 ff.
84. Jacob Duché, Discourses on Various Subjects. Two volumes, London, 1779. The link with Blake was suggested by David V. Erdman, Blake, Prophet Against Empire. A Poet's Interpretation Of The

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is compounded clearly demonstrated by Experiments. Bristol, 1771.  
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Bath; T. Mills : Bristol, 1775.
88. Okeley, op.cit.
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London, 1795.
90. Bentley, William Blake and the Alchemical Philosophers. pp.130-7.
91. Erdman, op.cit. p.144.

Notes to Chapter One : Jacob Boehme.

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Historischer Bericht von dem Leben und Schriften Jacob Böhms,  
1651. Reprinted in Jacob Böhme, Sämtliche Schriften, edited  
by Will-Erich Peuckert, Fr. Frommanns Verlag, Stuttgart, 1961.  
Vol.10, pp.5-31.

2. Will-Erich Peuckert, Das Leben Jacob Böhmes, 1924. Reprinted in Böhme, Sämtliche Schriften, Vol.10.
3. Franckenberg, op.cit. p.10f.
4. ibid. pp.7,9.
5. John Joseph Stoudt, Sunrise to Eternity. A Study in Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957, pp.49-52.
6. On Luther's influence, Arlene A. Miller, 'The Theologies of Luther and Boehme in the Light of their Genesis Commentaries', Harvard Theological Review, Vol.63 (1970), pp.261-303, concluded that 'Boehme's writings would have been impossible without Luther' (p.302). They shared the view that the fallen, natural reason of man could not reach God, and that salvation was through grace; their view of faith and their 'Christocentrism' were also similar. But Boehme's anthropology and metaphysics included 'a host of non-Lutheran elements' (p.303). See also Stoudt, op.cit. pp.147ff.
7. See Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries. pp.46-87, 133-55; Stoudt, op.cit. pp.150-2.
8. For the influence of Paracelsus, see Peuckert, op.cit. pp.218ff. (Deals largely with the terminology Boehme borrowed.)
9. See Miller, From Orthodoxy to Enlightenment, pp.78-93.
10. '... he [Boehme] was in reality a young dreamer who thought he had been given special, divinely inspired knowledge.' Stoudt, op.cit. p.68.
11. Letter to Caspar Lindnern, 1621, in The Epistles of Jacob Behmen, translated by John Ellistone, London, 1649, p.21.

- (Theosophische Send-Briefe, Br.12, Sect.14, p.46, in Böhme, Sämtliche Schriften, Vol.9.)
12. Quoted from the above letter by Durant Hotham in The Life of Jacob Behmen, which was reproduced in the 'Law edition' of Boehme, Vol.1, p.xv.
  13. The Epistles of Jacob Behmen, 1649, p.21. (Theosophische Send-Briefe, Br.12, Sect.13, p.45.)
  14. Quoted from the above letter in The Life of Jacob Behmen, 'Law edition', Vol.1, p.xv.
  15. Hegel's Lectures on The History of Philosophy. Translated by E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson. In three volumes. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1896, Vol.3, p.193.
  16. Bishop Warburton, quoted in W.R. Inge, Christian Mysticism. The Bampton Lectures, 1899. Methuen, London, 1899, p.278.
  17. Alexander Koyré, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme. J. Vrin, Paris, 1929, p.175.
  18. Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion. Translated from the French by Willard R. Trask. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1959, p.165.
  19. Koyré, *op.cit.* p.69.
  20. Too much emphasis can be put on Boehme's development. For example Stoudt (*op.cit.* p.22), claims that by 1622 Boehme had rejected the 'foolish jargon of alchemy'; the 'pansophist' had given way to the Christian (pp.146-57). But whilst it is true that in Boehme's later works the alchemical terminology is less prominent, there is no sea-change; he did not repudiate the alchemical vision. The dichotomy which Stoudt posits

- between Boehme's 'alchemical search' and his 'search for Christ' (p.146) is not one which Boehme would have acknowledged; he saw them as entirely complementary (see T.F.L.6:96 ff., 7:9).
21. See Gershom Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism. Translated by Ralph Manheim, Schocken Books, New York 1965. Reprinted, 1977, p.41.
  22. Accounts of the unfoldment of the Trinity, and of Wisdom can be found in : E.G.1:10-45, M.M.7:6-11, Cl.17-23, 31-43, T.Q.2:1-8. Wisdom makes her first appearance as the divine ideas in T.P.14:86 f. H.H. Brinton, The Mystic Will. Based on a Study of the Philosophy of Jacob Boehme. MacMillan, New York, 1930, pp.183-202, traces out the development of Boehme's Wisdom figure, and the various roles assigned to her.
  23. The seven properties appear in the Aurora, and are named as astringent, sweet, bitter, heat, love, sound and body (8:21 ff.). They are therefore fundamental to Boehme's thought from the outset, although he later revises the account of the first four, renaming some of them and giving a clearer picture of the generation of the dark world. They reach a fixed form in the Signatura Rerum (4:4-13). The account given here is based on E.G.Ch.3, M.M.Chs.3-6 and Cl.60-132.
  24. Koyré, op.cit. pp.401 ff. regards Boehme's doctrine of the Trinity as awkward and inconsistent, imposed on his thought rather than growing from it.
  25. This account of the Sefiroth follows Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, Schocken Books, New York, 1974 edition, 207 ff., who also notes (p.237 f.) the similarity with Boehme.

26. René Guenon, Symbolism of the Cross, Translated by Angus Macnab, Luzac, London, 1958. Reprinted 1975, pp.23-4.
27. These comments on the gunas are based on Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, On the Bhagavad-Gita. A New Translation and Commentary, Chapters 1 to 6. Penguin Books, 1971, pp.128, 269, 481. See also S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy. George Allen & Unwin, London, 1951, Vol.1, pp.501-4.
28. See also M.M.Ch.9.
29. R.T. Wallis, Neoplatonism. Duckworth, London, 1972, p.61.
30. See M.M.Chs.12-15. In the Aurora (19:99 f.; 20:2) he declares the Biblical text to be obscure, from which he deduces that Moses was recording a received tradition, and was not its original author.
31. Limbus is a term Boehme borrowed from Paracelsus, and denotes the primal seed, out of which all things are created. See Arthur Edward Waite (editor), The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus. In Two Volumes. James Elliot, London, 1894. Reprinted, Shambhala Publications, 1976, Vol.1, p.66. Boehme first uses the term in T.P.Ch.10.
32. See for example Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic. Book One, Natural Magic. Reprinted, The Aquarian Press, London, 1975, p.33 f., where the idea forms the basis of Agrippa's theory of magic : man can manipulate each link in the chain of being.
33. On soul, see T.P.13:30-2, 19:5-11, M.M.15:14-31. In E.G.5:100-4, Boehme's view is that the soul is breathed into man from the dark and light worlds simultaneously.

34. Boehme gives long and almost identical accounts of the fall in most of his major works, particularly T.P.Ch.17, Inc.1, Chs.5-6, E.G.Ch.6 and M.M.Chs.17-21.
35. Tincture is another Paracelsan term. Boehme first uses it in T.P.12:21 ff. and defines it as '... a Thing which separates, and brings the Pure and Clear from the Impure;' (T.P.12:25). Paracelsus defines it as '... the noblest matter with which bodies, metallic and human, are tinged, translated into a better and far more noble essence, and into their supreme health and purity.' Paracelsus, Concerning the Nature of Things, in Waite, op.cit. Vol.1, p.155.
36. cf. Theologica Germanica, translated by Susanna Winkworth, Stuart & Watkins, London, 1966, Ch.XLVI, pp.115 f.
37. See for example Agrippa, op.cit. pp.207 ff.
38. See his analysis of the word Schuff (T.F.L.5:101 ff.)
39. See his analysis of the words Erden (Aur.18:80 ff.) and Sprach (Aur.18:100 ff.)
40. See for example the vastly influential Kabbalist text Sepher Yetzirah, translated by Wynn Westcott, Samuel Weiser, Inc., New York, 1975 particularly chapter 2. Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, p.168, notes the connection with Boehme. See also Wolfgang Kayser, 'Böhmes Natursprachenlehre und ihre Grundlagen', Euphorion, Vol.31 (1930), pp.521-62.

Notes to Chapter Two : 'Morning Redness in the Rising' :

'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'.

1. Raine, Blake and Tradition, Vol.II, p.49.
2. Martin K. Nurmi, Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell. A Critical Study. Kent State University, 1957. Reprinted, Haskell House, New York, 1972, p.28.
3. Erdman, Prophet Against Empire, p.180.
4. Paley, Energy and the Imagination, p.13. Damon, Blake Dictionary pp.40f. June K. Singer, The Unholy Bible. A Psychological Interpretation of William Blake. 1970. Reprinted, Harper Colophon Books, 1973, pp.30ff., 59ff. The only exception has been G.R. Sabri-Tabrizi, The 'Heaven' and 'Hell' of William Blake. Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1973, who denies that Boehme has any 'special prominence' in The Marriage, although his knowledge of Boehme's work appears to be slight.
5. Nurmi, op.cit. pp.33f.
6. Martin K. Nurmi, William Blake. Hutchinson, London, 1975, p.73.
7. Robert Fludd, Mosaicall Philosophy, grounded upon the essential truth or eternal sapience. London, 1659. Sect.II, Bk.I, Argument, p.131.
8. Paracelsus, The Philosophy Addressed to the Athenians, in Waite (ed.), The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus, Vol.II, p.253.
9. Emanuel Swedenborg, A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell, London, 1778, Sect.541, p.373.

10. The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats. MacMillan, London, 1934, p.362.
11. Swedenborg, op.cit. Sects. 536-7, p.371.
12. Bentley, William Blake and the Alchemical Philosophers, pp.141f.  
notes this parallel.
13. Raine, op.cit. Vol.I, p.369 suggests that Blake took the term  
Devourer direct from Boehme, who uses it to describe the dark world.
14. This of course is one of the themes of Paradise Lost (Bk.XII, 470-2)  
and is linked to the tradition of the 'fortunate fall', although  
neither Blake nor Boehme extend their argument that far.
15. Damrosch, Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth, p.177.
16. Quoted in Muses, Illumination on Jacob Boehme, p.147.
17. Quoted in Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death. The Psychoanalytical  
Meaning of History. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1959, p.175.
18. Nicolas Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man. The Centenary Press,  
London, Second edition, 1945, p.36.
19. Strictly speaking, it is incorrect to attribute 'desire' to Boehme's  
God. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Boehme describes the  
tendency of the divine to overflow as 'will' rather than desire,  
desire being the opposition which will must subdue. But sometimes  
he uses the terms almost interchangeably, referring to the will as  
an 'eternal desiring' (T.F.L. 1:25), and also to the 'divine desire'  
(S.R. 6:11, 16:1).
20. Paracelsus, in Waite, op.cit. Vol.I, pp.4,90.
21. Paracelsus, The Aurora of the Philosophers, in Waite, op.cit.  
Vol.I, p.69f. See also Thomas Vaughan, Lumen de Lumine, in  
Arthur Edward Waite (editor), The Works of Thomas Vaughan :  
Eugenius Philalethes. London, 1919. Reprinted, University Books,

- New York, 1968, p.279.
22. Vaughan, Anthroposophia Theomagica, in The Works of Thomas Vaughan, p.26.
  23. The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus. Translated from the Arabic by Dr. Everard [1650]. With introduction & Preliminary Essay by Hargrave Jennings, London, 1884. Reprinted, Wizards Bookshelf, San Diego, 1978, p.27.
  24. Stoudt, Sunrise to Eternity, p.116.
  25. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II pp.202-4, 315 (fn.53).
  26. See Bentley, op.cit. pp.146f. Bentley's statement that in Boehme, Jehovah stands for both the God of anger and for the total God is not strictly accurate. Jehovah is always the complete form of God. Sometimes Boehme states that God, in the dark properties, is not even called God (M.M. 8:25), although elsewhere he does refer to an 'angry God' according to the properties of the fire world (M.M. 7:14).
  27. See M.M. 26:33. Boehme is fond of a passage from Psalm 18, which illustrates his point : 'with the pure thou dost show thyself pure; and with the crooked thou dost show thyself perverse'.
  28. Swedenborg, op.cit. Sect.569, p.390.
  29. Raine, op.cit. Vol.I, pp.364-6.
  30. ibid. Vol.I, pp.364f. Swedenborg (op.cit. Sects.35-7, pp.22-3), has a similar idea : each angel is confined to its own heaven - there being three heavens in all - and cannot communicate with an angel from another heaven.
  31. Raine, op.cit. Vol.I, p.273 notes the link between the 'nameless shadowy female' and Paracelsus' 'Great Mystery'. Boehme also uses the latter term to describe the primal source, out of which nature arises (S.R. 15:1).

32. In addition, the illustration to Plate 15, which shows an eagle with a serpent in its claws, is clearly alchemical, as Bentley, op.cit. p.144 notes. Similar representations of the completion of the alchemical work are reproduced in Titus Burckhardt, Alchemy, Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul. Translated from the German by William Stoddart, Penguin Books, 1974, Plate 6, p.129 and Plate 8b, p.145.
33. Plato, Timaeus. Translated by Desmond Lee, Penguin Books, 1965. Reprinted, 1974, p.50.
34. Swedenborg, op.cit. Sect.89, p.53.
35. Vaughan, Anthroposophia Theomagica, op.cit. p.7. Paracelsus, in Waite, op.cit. Vol.I, pp.73, 244.
36. Vaughan, Anthroposophia Theomagica, op.cit. p.8.
37. William Law, The Spirit of Love, Works, Vol.VIII, pp.15f.
38. ibid. p.21.
39. H.H. Brinton, The Mystic Will, p.10.
40. Paley, op.cit. p.24.
41. From his poem 'An Acre of Grass'.
42. This was certainly Boehme's view throughout his life. Blake emphasized it more strongly in his later work ('I am really sorry to see my Countrymen trouble themselves about Politics.' From the Public Address, written about 1810, K.600 ) but it is also present in The Marriage. The Song of Liberty, celebrating the downfall of monarchy and empire, is significantly placed after the main body of the work has liberated the individual from a false metaphysics.
43. Swedenborg, op.cit., Sect.531, p.365.

44. Emanuel Swedenborg, True Christian Religion; Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church. Third Edition, London, 1795, Sect.283, p.280. Swedenborg follows this statement with a long exposition of each of the Commandments.
45. Blake's poem 'The Garden of Love' in Songs of Experience, contains a few echoes of this passage. Compare also : ' ... the Devil has built his Chapel close by the Christian Church, and has quite destroyed the Love of Paradise' (T.P. 20:28).
46. See Brinton, op.cit. p.98.
47. See the Ranter documents in Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millenium, 1957. Revised and expanded edition, Temple Smith, London, 1970, pp.287-330.
48. For Blake and Enthusiasm, and the Enthusiast attitude to reason, see Bentley, op.cit. pp.64ff.
49. cf Meister Eckhart : 'No one can strike his roots into eternity without being rid [of the concept] of number'. Meister Eckhart. A Modern Translation, by Raymond Bernard Blakney. Harper & Bros, New York, 1941. Reprinted, Harper Torchbooks, 1957, p.192.
50. See for example Heaven and Hell, Sect.597, p.409.
51. The numbering of sections in the German edition of Boehme's works sometimes differs from that of the Law edition. This reference can be found in Böhme, Sämtliche Schriften, Vol.9, Clavis, Sect.49, p.90.

Notes to Chapter Three : The 'Angst' of Unfulfilled Birth :'The Book of Urizen'

1. Damon, William Blake, pp.120-1, suggests the influence of the Timaeus. C. Emery, The Book of Urizen. University of Miami Critical Studies No.68, Second Printing, 1969, examines the Gnostic background, which is very broadly defined to include Boehme and Law. Emery briefly sketches the possible areas of influence on Blake.
2. There are a number of exceptions : Damon, Blake Dictionary, was the first to notice that Urizen's activity in the first chapter of the poem resembles that of Boehme's God (p.53). Eugene J. Harding, 'Jacob Boehme and Blake's "The Book of Urizen" ', Unisa English Studies, Vol.8, June 1970 attempted to show the full extent of Boehme's influence, but his knowledge of Boehme was heavily dependent on secondary sources and on translations which differ from those in the 'Law edition'. The essay is therefore full of loose generalizations, and in consequence, the case for Boehme's influence appears far less persuasive than it really is. P.H. Butter, 'Blake's "Book of Urizen" and Boehme's "Mysterium Magnum" ', in Le Romantisme Anglo-Américain. Mélanges offerts à Louis Bonnerot, Paris, 1971, pp.35-44, is more useful, although still limited. Butter briefly discusses parallels regarding Blake's use of contraries, his idea of sleep as a fall into time, the division into sexes and the creation of the four elements. He stresses, however, that Urizen 'is a new creation, with a story and characters different from anything to be found in Boehme'

(p.36). He makes the point that, unlike Boehme's account of the creation of Eve, the creation of Enitharmon contained signs of hope and should not be interpreted merely as another aspect of the fall. (Boehme's account could equally be interpreted in this way, however.) Butter concludes that Blake took only a 'limited amount' from Boehme, and that this 'has been incorporated in a structure very different from Boehme's ' (p.43). Paley, Energy and the Imagination, and Stevenson, The Poems of William Blake, also mention Boehme as a source for Urizen.

3. J.P. Frayne (editor), Uncollected Prose of W.B. Yeats. MacMillan, London, 1970, Vol.I, p.402.
4. cf. Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell, Sect.56, p.33. The co-existence of diversity and unity was an early concern of Blake's. See his annotations to Lavater, K76, K81.
5. The Spirit of Love, Works, Vol.VIII, p.12.
6. Paley, op.cit. pp.66-7.
7. See for example Raine, Blake and Tradition, Vol.II, pp.62-6.
8. In the first chapter of Genesis there is no suggestion of conflict. The Hebrew verb bārā (create) implies 'complete effortlessness'. Light emerges 'immediately and without resistance' (Gerhard von Rad, Genesis. A Commentary. Revised edition, SCM Press, London, 1972, pp.48-9). It therefore differs from the mythologies of other ancient Eastern cultures. The epic of Gilgamesh, for example, relates a primaeval battle in which the creator Marduk was victorious over the monster of chaos, Tiamat, out of whose slain body he created the world. This finds a distant echo in Genesis, where tehom (deep) is connected linguistically with Tiamat (von Rad, op.cit. p.50)

but this is only a remnant, and the sense has been altered. Creation by the omnipotent Word is also the dominant note of Paradise Lost. Milton, unlike Blake, had no wish to revolutionize Genesis. His 'chaos' is not a power set against God, but a shapeless matter which merely waits to receive from God the impress of form. There is no suggestion of a conflict within the creator, such as Boehme and Blake describe.

9. Brinton, The Mystic Will, p.185.
10. Quoted in Robert F. Brown, The Later Philosophy of Schelling. The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809-1815. Associated University Presses, 1977, p.275.
11. Quoted by Harold Bloom in The Visionary Company : a reading of English romantic poetry. Faber & Faber, London, 1962, p.75.
12. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, p.261.
13. Robert Fludd, Mosaicall Philosophy, grounded upon the essential truth or eternal sapience. London, 1659. Sect.1, Bk 3, Ch.4, pp.48-9. Blake's knowledge of both Behmenist and Kabbalist theory suggests that he was intending more than just a simple parody of Milton's God ('I uncircumcised myself retire', P.L.Bk VII, l.170), although this was Harold Bloom's view (Blake's Apocalypse, p.166). Denis Saurat's theory, that Milton was himself using the Kabbalist theory of retraction (Milton : Man and Thinker. J.M. Dent, London, 1944, pp.236ff.) has been refuted by several scholars, notably A.S.P. Woodhouse, 'Notes on Milton's Views on the Creation : The Initial Phases', in Philological Quarterly, Vol.28 (1949), pp.211-36.
14. Scholem, op.cit. p.263. The theory of tsimtsum, including Boehme's version of it, gives a more satisfactory explanation of the origin of evil than can be gained from the doctrine of creation ex nihilo,

which has been orthodox Christian doctrine since the time of Augustine. Nor does the doctrine of creation ex deo favoured by Milton serve any better; Woodhouse (op.cit. p.229) notes Milton's 'hesitant and embarrassed treatment of evil at its metaphysical level'.

15. Law, op.cit. p.13.
16. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, pp.73-77 notes these parallels, and others in Fludd.
17. Edward Taylor, Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy Unfolded. London, 1691. p.4.
18. John Beer suggests that the alchemical salt corresponds to Blake's single vision, and sulphur and mercury to twofold and threefold vision respectively. He discusses this in relation to Tiriell, suggesting Paracelsus and other alchemical writers (although not Boehme) as a source. See his article 'Influence and Independence in Blake', in M. Phillips (editor), Interpreting Blake. Cambridge University Press, 1978, particularly pp.251-57.
19. The Illuminated Blake. Annotated by David V. Erdman, Oxford University Press, 1975. p.183.
20. Plates 7,8,9 and 10, following the Keynes model numbering, which is based on Copy D and is also used by Erdman in The Illuminated Blake.
21. W.J.T. Mitchell, Blake's Composite Art. A Study of the Illuminated Poetry. Princeton University Press, 1978. p.150.
22. Mitchell, op.cit. pp.142-4 analyzes this pattern in detail.
23. It was issued separately, with this caption, in A Small Book of Designs, 1796 (see Keynes, p.262).
24. Law, op.cit. p.18.

25. Paley, op.cit. p.69 notes this.
26. Bentley, Blake Books, pp.173-4.
27. Examples from Gnosticism can be found in Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion. The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity. Second edition, revised. Beacon Press, Boston, 1970. pp.68-9. One of Blake's illustrations to Paradise Lost, 'The Creation of Eve', confirms his interpretation of sleep as a fall into time. It shows the sleeping Adam stretched out on a giant leaf, 'vegetating', i.e. becoming immersed in the material world.
28. This Platonic idea can also be found in Swedenborg, op.cit. Sect.136, p.83.
29. Similar left-right symbolism occurs in the Theologia Germanica (Translated by Susanna Winkworth, Stuart & Watkins, London,1966, pp.43-4), where it is applied to the soul of Christ, which contemplated eternity with the right eye, and nature with the left eye. In the Kabbalah, the left hand of God pertains to wrath, and the right to love and mercy (Scholem, op.cit. p.237). Boehme also uses the symbolism to categorize Christ and the prophets (right hand) and Moses and all teachers of the Law (left hand) (F.Q. : 30:84). Blake does not apply the symbolism consistently in Urizen - Urizen has his right foot forward in the title-page, but his left in the final plate - but the caption referred to, and the occurrence of the symbolism in Boehme, suggests that he was aware of it. See also John Adlard, 'A 'Triumphing Joyfulness' : Blake, Boehme and the Tradition', in Blake Studies, Vol.I, No.2, 1969. pp.112-3.

30. Mitchell, op.cit. p.159.
31. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p.209 for these differences.
32. George Mills Harper, in The Neoplatonism of William Blake, University of North Carolina Press, 1961, pp.214-5, suggested that Blake's description of the elements was indebted to the Timaeus, but the argument is unconvincing.
33. See The Philosophy Addressed to the Athenians, in The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus, Vol.II, particularly pp.263ff.
34. Mitchell, op.cit. p.139.
35. ibid. p.146.
36. Paley, op.cit. p.101 calls it a 'Neoplatonist conceit'. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, p.319, calls it 'characteristic mystical teaching'.
37. Mitchell, op.cit. pp.151-2.
38. ibid. pp.115,119,155.
39. ibid. pp.140-2.
40. Kathleen Raine's discussion of Blake's poem 'A Poison Tree' (Blake and Tradition, Vol.II, particularly p.40) is relevant here.
41. see above, p.32.
42. Mitchell, op.cit. p.124.
43. ibid. p.128.
44. ibid. pp.147-50 for a full analysis of this plate.
45. As Mitchell notes (ibid. p.150), in Urizen this is implied rather than fully developed. Blake enunciates it more clearly in his later work.
46. Its occurrence in the Kabbalah is noted by Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion. Translated by Rosemary Sheed. Sheed and

- Ward, London and New York, 1958, p.423. Leslie Tannenbaum, 'Blake's Art of Crypsis : "The Book of Urizen" and Genesis', Blake Studies, Vol.5, No.1 (1972), p.145, suggests that Blake draws on Philo's interpretation of Adam's fall.
47. See for example Europe 3:1-6, K237. Sex is understood to be one of the 'five windows' into eternity. See also Damon, William Blake, pp.101-2.
48. Jones, *op.cit.* p.44.
49. Morton D. Paley, 'The Figure of the Garment in "The Four Zoas", "Milton", and "Jerusalem" ', in Curran and Wittreich, Blake's Sublime Allegory, p.123.
50. Butter, *op.cit.* p.43.

Notes to Chapter Four : 'The End Finds the Beginning' :

'The Four Zoas', 'Milton', and 'Jerusalem'

1. Robert Gittings (editor), Letters of John Keats. Oxford University Press, 1970. p.65.
2. At the beginning of both The Four Zoas (1:14-23, K264) and Jerusalem (4:1-2, K622) Blake outlines his myth in terms of a fall from an original state of unity into one of division and strife, followed by a return to unity. Paley, Energy and the Imagination, pp.149-50, notes that this resembles the way Boehme summarizes his own understanding of Christianity in his treatise Of Regeneration (W.C.3, 8:180-2).
3. Frye, Fearful Symmetry. p.259.

4. 'Flagrat' is Ellistone's translation of Schrack, which Sparrow normally translates as 'terror', 'crack' or 'shriek'. It is virtually synonymous with the 'lightning-flash' (Blitz or Blick).
5. Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell, Sects.63-4, pp.38-9.
6. *ibid.* Sect.96, p.56.
7. Emanuel Swedenborg, The Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. Second edition, London 1816. Sect.18, pp.10-11.
8. Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell, Sect.99, p.58.
9. Swedenborg, Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, Sect.52, p.26.
10. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, p.215.
11. Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, p.115.
12. *ibid.* p.162.
13. *ibid.* pp.160-1.
14. See Frye, *op.cit.* p.287.
15. *ibid.* p.349.
16. Paley, *op.cit.* p.55, observes that Blake inherited his view of the oppressive nature of the stars, and also man's ability to rise above them, from Paracelsus and Boehme.
17. An Illustration of the Deep Principles of Jacob Behmen, the Teutonic Theosopher, in Figures, Left by the Reverend William Law, M.A., p.26.
18. *ibid.* p.25.
19. *ibid.* p.25.
20. Raine, Blake and Tradition, Vol.II. p.253 notes the connection between this plate and the Freher designs, and also (p.257) the connection between Jerusalem, Plate 91, and the last of the thirteen Freher diagrams in Volume 2 of the 'Law edition'.
21. An Illustration of the Deep Principles, p.29.

22. Titus Burckhardt, Alchemy. Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul. Translated by William Stoddart, Penguin Books, 1974, pp.68-9.
23. An Illustration of the Deep Principles, p.35.
24. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, pp.9,24,25.
25. An Illustration of the Deep Principles in 13 Figures, left by the Rev. W. Law, M.A., p.30. (These should not be confused with the three designs in Volume three; the titles are very similar.)
26. J.4:27, K622 ; J.22:26-23:40, K645-6 ; J.18:5-35, K640. (The last reference is to the rejection of Jerusalem by Albion's twelve sons.)
27. Hirst, Hidden Riches, p.186.
28. See Asloob Ahmad Ansari, 'Blake and the Kabbalah', in Alvin H. Rosenfeld (editor), William Blake, Essays for S. Foster Damon. Brown University Press, Providence, 1969, pp.199-220. Asloob notes (pp.199-200) that there were 'innumerable translations of the Zohar ... in vogue in the eighteenth century.' Concerning the points he makes : Blake may well have followed the Kabbalah in his account of the physical diminution of man which took place at the fall, which Boehme does not mention. The masculine and feminine structure of the Kabbalistic Sefiroth can serve as a model for Blake's Zoas and their emanations, since Boehme's seven properties, which in other ways resemble the Sefiroth, are not described in terms of male and female. However, most of Asloob's remaining points could equally be made with reference to Boehme : the relationship between Albion and Jerusalem parallels that between Boehme's Adam and Sophia as well as the relationship of God and the Shekhinah. The Kabbalist idea of the fall being caused by lack of equilibrium between the Sefiroth, leading to a process of externalization and

materialization, is equally Behmenist.

Similarly, all five of Blake's 'Kabbalistic positions' identified by Harold Fisch, 'Blake's Miltonic Moment', in the same volume of essays (pp.427-8), are closely paralleled in Boehme.

29. I have omitted one sentence here, part of which reads 'Thy mind was as the mind of a child that playeth with his father's wonders'. Boehme often states that Adam should have kept 'only a child-like mind' (M.M. 17:12). This is the one aspect of Boehme's portrayal of Adam that would not have attracted Blake. It could well have reinforced his interpretation of the Biblical paradise as a state of undeveloped innocence, on a lower level than the highest state of Eden.
30. The four strands are distinguished in Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson, Blake's Four Zoas. The Design of a Dream. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1978, p.32. I follow their classification. They also include a summary of all fourteen references to the circumstances of the fall, as presented in The Four Zoas (pp.255-60).
31. Paley, op.cit. p.94 describes the 'psychology of Vala' as 'a version of medieval and Renaissance accounts of how mind and body act in relation to each other'.
32. See Paley, op.cit. pp.142-61.
33. F.Z. 1:274, K271 ; 1:290, K272 ; 1:558, K279 ; 2:2, K280.
34. Wilkie and Johnson, op.cit. pp.38,267 fn.1. What now forms the first line of the second night was a late addition.
35. The reference to the mother marking the child in the womb refers to Boehme's belief that the imagination of the mother was responsible

for birthmarks on the child. See S.R. 7:52, T.F.L. 4:30. It was a common belief, shared by Agrippa and Paracelsus. See Paley, *op.cit.* p.234.

36. See also Raine, *op.cit.* Vol.I, pp.207-12.
37. e.g. J. 5:18-20, K623 ; J. 44:41-2, K675.
38. 'Vala is repeatedly mentioned or invoked ... in ambiguous ways : as both a soft-sighing seducer of Albion and a chaste warlike Amazon releasing "rage on rage ... out of her crystal quiver".'  
Wilkie and Johnson, *op.cit.* p.105, on Vala's appearance in the fifth night of The Four Zoas.
39. The fall of Satan in the Bard's Song in Milton follows the same pattern : 'And Satan not having the Science of Wrath, but only of Pity, / Rent them asunder, and wrath was left to wrath, & pity to pity' (M. 9:46-7, K490).
40. M. 21:46, K504 ; M. 17:9, K498 ; J. 46:10, K676 ; F.Z. 2:112, K283 (cf. M. 26:45-6, K513), respectively.
41. The Election of Grace was written solely to refute such a view.  
See also M.M. chs. 26 and 61.
42. Law, The Grounds and Reasons of Christian Regeneration. Works, Vol.V, p.156.
43. *ibid.* p.156.
44. e.g. T.P. 4:48,71 ; T.F.L. 6:64, 7:81, 8:38.
45. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p.316. Blake's use of inner and outer perhaps needs some explanation, since earlier, Albion 'rush'd outwards', to his own cost. 'Inner' is healthy when it means realizing the infinity within the mind of man, the indwelling Christ and the eternal Ideas. It is bad when it is merely selfish

introspection. 'Outer' or outward, is good when it denotes an expansive mental attitude, outflowing in love for another; bad when it is associated with the material, the bestial and the transitory.

46. 'The really important world outside was a world, hard, cold, colourless, silent and dead - a world of quantity, a world of mathematically computable motions in mechanical regularity'. Professor E.A. Burtt, writing of the emotional implications of the Newtonian universe. Quoted in Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background. Pelican Books, 1972, p.18.
47. Reproduced in Martin Butlin, William Blake. Tate Gallery, 1978. (Catalogue for the exhibition of Blake's work at the Tate Gallery, 1978) p.113.
48. See Frosch, The Awakening of Albion, pp.68-9.
49. Blackstone, English Blake, pp.216-7 notes this rhythm of contraction, expansion and rotation, but does not connect it with Boehme.
50. Law, The Spirit of Love, Works, Vol.VIII, p.19.
51. See Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, The Foundation of Newton's Alchemy, or "The Hunting of the Greene Lyon". Cambridge University Press, 1975. pp.9-10.
52. See Arthur Wormhoudt, 'Newton's Natural Philosophy in the Behmenistic Works of William Law'. Journal of the History of Ideas. Vol.X, (1949) p.414 .
53. Law, op.cit. p.18. Wormhoudt, op.cit., gives other examples where Law uses Newton's philosophy to support his thesis that nature is in a fallen condition.
54. Law, op.cit. p.9.

55. Paley, op.cit. p.116.
56. Reprinted in Böhme, Sämtliche Schriften, Vol.4, p.203.
57. Explanations of the alchemical circulatio can be found in F. Sherwood Taylor, The Alchemists. Heinemann, 1952. Reprinted, Paladin, 1976, pp.112-3, and C.G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy. Second Edition, translated by R.F.C. Hull, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968. Reprinted, 1980. pp.164-5.
58. Jung, op.cit. pp.165-6.
59. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, p.266.
60. ibid. p.272.
61. Damrosch, Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth, p.175.
62. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, pp.11-12 notes this passage in connection with 'The Tyger'. Elsewhere (T.P. 18:7), Boehme traces the origin of such 'evil Beasts' to the cursing of the earth after the fall, thereby blaming Adam rather than Lucifer.
63. Bentley, William Blake and the Alchemical Philosophers, pp.228ff., and Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe, p.30, note this point.
64. See Wallis, Neoplatonism, p.49, on Plotinus : ' ... what men take to be the most substantial realities are the least so; evidence is the fact that the heaviest and most solid-seeming bodies are the most fragile. A similar reversal of the views of unreflective common sense will be found at all levels in Plotinus' universe.'
65. This was a remark made by Blake to Crabb Robinson. See Morley, Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb Etc., p.9.
66. Raine, Vol.I, pp.272-3.
67. An Illustration of the Deep Principles, ('Law edition', Vol.3), p.34.

68. See Harper, The Neoplatonism of William Blake, pp.151-3, Wallis, op.cit. p.48.
69. Koyré, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme, p.470.
70. Raine, op.cit. Vol.I, pp.404-5.
71. Beer, op.cit. p.26. The diagram could also be seen, however, as an extended concertina rather than a ladder, in which case the material world would simply be the 'outermost birth' of the Godhead, and not necessarily the lowest form.
72. e.g. M. Pl.16, M.H.H. Pl.21.
73. Raine, op.cit. Vol.I, pp.223-5 gives examples from Vaughan as well as Boehme.
74. See Kathleen Coburn (editor), The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957, Vol.I : Notes, 174:4.
75. Paley, op.cit. p.64.
76. J. 42:5-8, K669 ; J. 62:35, K696 ; J. 95:19-20, K742.
77. This follows the numbering of the plates in Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, since the Keynes edition does not number the plates without text. All further references to the designs for Milton will follow the Erdman numbering, with the Keynes equivalent, where there is one (i.e. in plates where there is text as well as design) in brackets.
78. David Bindman, Blake as an Artist. E.P. Dutton, New York, 1977, p.175.
79. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p.253.
80. Reference is to the colours of Copy B, reproduced in Milton, edited by Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson, Thames and Hudson,

London, 1979, where the two plates are numbered 16 and 43.

81. It is possible that Blake's frequent use of 'vegetable' and 'vegetating' to describe man's 'natural' existence derives from Boehme, who writes of the 'outward Man' as the 'vegetable Soul' (S.R. 9:55), and of the 'vegetable Life' of the child in the womb until it receives soul and spirit (S.R. 7:54-5). He also describes the vegetable life as that from which 'Copulation and Multiplication arise' (S.R. 14:60) (cf. Blake's state of Generation).
82. Hotham, The Life of Jacob Behmen, 'Law edition', Vol.I, p.xiii. Paley, op.cit. pp.243-5, notes this passage in connection with the general similarities between Boehme's experiences, the lightning-flash, and Blake's experiences as recorded in Milton.
83. Paley, op.cit. p.248 notes the importance of the dawn in Boehme, and in mystical literature generally. See also his comments on Blake's notebook poem 'Morning' (pp.152-3).
84. See Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy, particularly pp.31-8.
85. The Epistles of Jacob Behmen. Ellistone uses 'self-hood' to translate Meinheit, Ichheit, Eigenheit and Selbheit.
86. This is not always acknowledged, however. John Howard, Blake's 'Milton'. A Study in the Selfhood. Associated University Presses, London 1976, pp.177-8 suggests that 'the terminology for self-annihilation is [Thomas] Hartley's.' But Hartley, the translator of Swedenborg, may well have discovered the terminology first in the translations of Boehme.
87. Selbheit is of course normally translated as 'self-hood', 'Self-good' is surely a slip, either by translator or printer. In the 1924 reprint of the Mysterium Magnum (edited by C.J. Barker and published

by John M. Watkins, London, Reprinted 1965) it is amended to 'selfhood'.

88. Bentley, op.cit. pp.172ff. notes this point.
89. e.g. Dionysius the Areopagite, The Divine Names and The Mystical Theology. Translated by C.E. Rolt, SPCK, 1979, p.194. The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers. Three Volumes in One, Burns and Oates, London, 1964. Vol.3, p.75.
90. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, pp.221-2.
91. ibid. p.214. Raine notes the importance of this concept in Swedenborg. The 'proprium' exists only by 'influx'. This is obviously a parallel influence on Blake at this point.
92. J. Middleton Murry, William Blake. Jonathan Cape, London, 1933. Reprinted, 1936, pp.41-2.
93. See W.C. 4 (S.S.L.) 30, 'thy will becometh its [the universal love's] Will'. From one point of view the selfhood dies, but from another, it expands - to universal status.
94. See Wallis, op.cit. pp.33, 54-5.
95. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, pp.151-71.
96. ibid. p.152.
97. See M.M. Chs.12 and 13.
98. Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, pp.157-66, has considered Blake's 'imagery of the minute', the fly, worm and tiny flower in which is eternity, and compared them with several passages in Boehme, to which this passage should be added.
99. Mitchell, Blake's Composite Art, pp.176-7.
100. c f. ibid. pp.191-2. Mitchell's comment about the structure of

- Jerusalem recalls Boehme's method of exposition : 'We go from Chapter I to Chapter II not to find out what happens next, but to go deeper into what has already happened, and to come at it from a different perspective.'
101. Discussing this same point, Kathleen Raine, op.cit. Vol.II, p.217, comments : ' ... one might say of the imagination that it knows nothing yet is omniscient.'
102. This and other similar passages (e.g. J. 13:59--14:1, K634 ; J. 16: 61-9, K638) suggest Blake's debt to Plato's Ideas (see Harper, op.cit. pp.94-6), but can also be seen as Blake's development of Revelation, where at the Last Judgement the dead discover that every act of theirs has been recorded (20:12). In Boehme, Blake could have found not only the concept of Wisdom, in which the 'idea of angels and souls have been seen from eternity', but also a number of passages (e.g. T.F.L. 7:80-1) which refer to the continued existence of all created things after the third principle has been dissolved at the end of time.
103. Paley, op.cit. p.143.
104. Damon, William Blake, p.389, suggests a possible source for Blake's 'Eighth Eye' in Paracelsus. Boehme's ten numbers are related to his 'ten forms of fire' elaborated in F.Q. (and no doubt are also linked to the ten Kabbalist Sefiroth). Blake sometimes echoes them. In America, 'red Orc' is in 'tenfold chains' (1:12, K196) ; in The Four Zoas - Orc again - 'the Demon's rage flam'd tenfold' (5:105, K708), and in Jerusalem, Los anticipates the 'tenfold bright' rising of Albion (7:56, K627).
105. Paley, op.cit. p.140. Paley states that the eighth eye refers only to the consummation of the historical process. But surely Blake

also intended it to apply at the individual level.

106. *ibid.* p.138.
107. Raine, *op.cit.* Vol.II, pp.114-5.
108. See Miller, From Orthodoxy to Enlightenment, p.69.
109. Paley, *op.cit.* pp.136-7.
110. *ibid.* p.248.
111. The Book of Job Illustrated by William Blake, with a new introduction by Michael Marqusee, Paddington Press, New York and London, 1976.  
See also Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, p.245.
112. Percival, *op.cit.* pp.242-6. There is a parallel in Swedenborg, Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, Sect.270, p.148. The natural mind moves in a spiral formation from right to left; the spiritual mind moves in the opposite direction, left to right.
113. See 2 Thessalonians, 2:3-4.
114. Raine, *op.cit.* Vol.I, pp.329-32, points out further similarities in the use which Boehme and Blake make of the symbol of the Covering Cherub.
115. Emanuel Swedenborg, The Apocalypse Revealed. Swedenborg Society, London, 1909 edition, p.554, where the beast signifies the Word, and the whore, the Roman Catholic church.
116. Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell, Sect.270, p.162.
117. Adlard, 'A "Triumphing Joyfulness" : Blake, Boehme and the Tradition', p.111. Paley, *op.cit.* pp.247-8.
118. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p.266.
119. e.g. M.M. 19:17, 23:45, 38:23.
120. Damrosch, *op.cit.* p.188.
121. *ibid.* p.190.

122. For Karl Kroeber, for example, 'stasis is nonentity' in Blake. All existence, even sleep, is continuous movement. ('Delivering Jerusalem', in Curran and Wittreich (eds.) Blake's Sublime Allegory, p.354.)
123. Blake distrusted Beulah because it was a feminine realm, and he sometimes associates it with 'delusion' (M. 2:3, K481). See Damrosch, op.cit. pp.220-33 for a discussion of the ambivalence of Beulah.
124. Brinton, The Mystic Will, p.218.
125. Franklin, His Most Hideous Pilgrimage, pp.103-44.
126. This assumption lies behind Anne Kostelanetz Mellor's comments in Blake's Human Form Divine. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1974, p.326. She argues that Blake believes in an 'infinite energy that exists only as motion'; his metaphysics, *therefore*, cannot be Platonic. He 'does not believe in a static, objective, ideal world of permanent forms or ideas that are manifested in a lesser "reality" in nature.'
127. Damrosch, op.cit. p.235.
128. On the first point, Frosch comments (p.188) on the 'dualism of inner and outer man that runs through Boehme', but these distinctions occur equally in Blake, and can bear the same interpretation, as has been shown. On the second point, it depends what is meant by 'direct perception'. Boehme insisted as firmly as Blake on the necessity of direct experience of reality, although he was not of course referring to ordinary five sense perception. But then neither was Blake. As Frosch states (p.9), he was concerned with the 'remaking of its [the body's] sensory organization.' i.e. transforming the senses into fit vessels to receive the infinite. But Blake believed, with Boehme, this could only be done through direct contact with that which lay prior to sense, the Divine Imagination.

129. Frosch, op.cit. pp.30-1.
130. For example the Four Tables of Divine Revelation, in Vol.3.
131. Damon, A Blake Dictionary, pp.163, 212.
132. Franklin, op.cit. p.107.
133. Frosch, op.cit. p.94.
134. Okeley, Memoirs of the Life, Death and Burial of Jacob Behmen, p.117.
135. ibid. p.118.
136. The German phrases are retained in the 'Law edition'.
137. See Frosch, op.cit. p.146 : 'The activity of Albion's fully awakened body is a kind of speech, presented as the mode of the Zoas interplay; and in this Edenic conversation, the action of all the faculties at once, the tongue creates thundering, visionary forms. It is a speech like poetry, with the difference that it is poetry actualized and the universe is directly created by the tongue.'
138. See Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, pp.169-70.
139. Frosch, op.cit. p.106.
140. See Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella, pp.76-7.
141. Paley, op.cit. p.65.
142. Frosch, op.cit. p.107.
143. This is the usual range of meanings applied to Mercurius in the alchemical literature. The term is also used to refer to Hermes, the god of revelation. See Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.15.
144. Jung, op.cit. p.132.
145. The view of Los in relation to Boehme's 'separator' presented here follows up N.V.P. Franklin's analysis (op.cit. pp.226-72) of the same link in The Four Zoas.

146. Damrosch, op.cit. p.177.
147. ibid. p.179.
148. ibid. p.318, Damrosch points out the self-sacrificial nature of Los's task, with reference to these passages.
149. Written by Boehme as an autograph, and quoted in The Life of Jacob Behmen, 'Law edition', Vol.1, p.xxii.

#### Epilogue

1. Frye, Fearful Symmetry, pp.431-2.
2. Kathleen Raine, Blake and the New Age. George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979, p.vii.
3. Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson, (editors), The Book of Urizen, Thames and Hudson, London, 1979. p.88.
4. Mitchell, Blake's Composite Art, p.165.

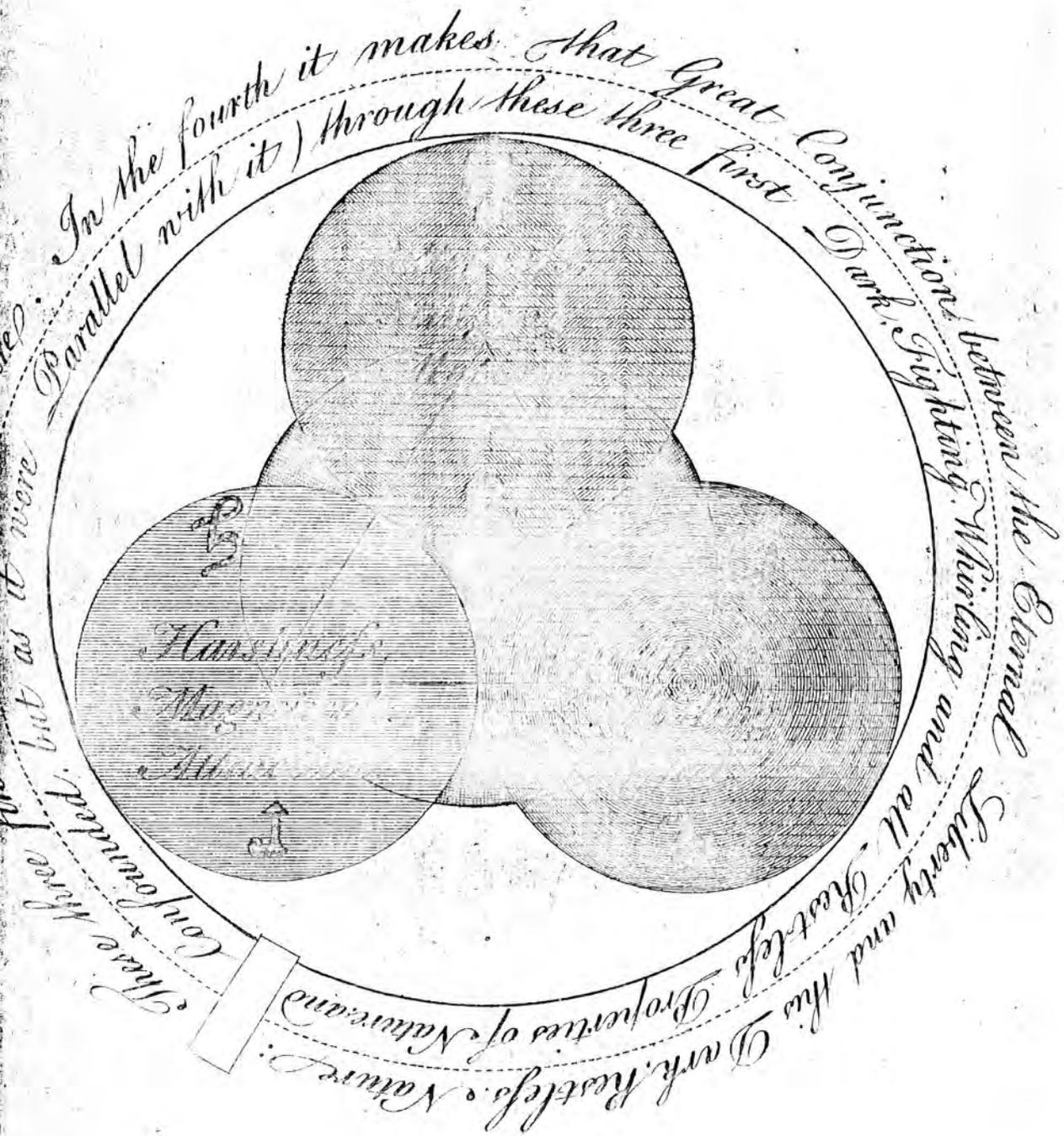


Fig. 1



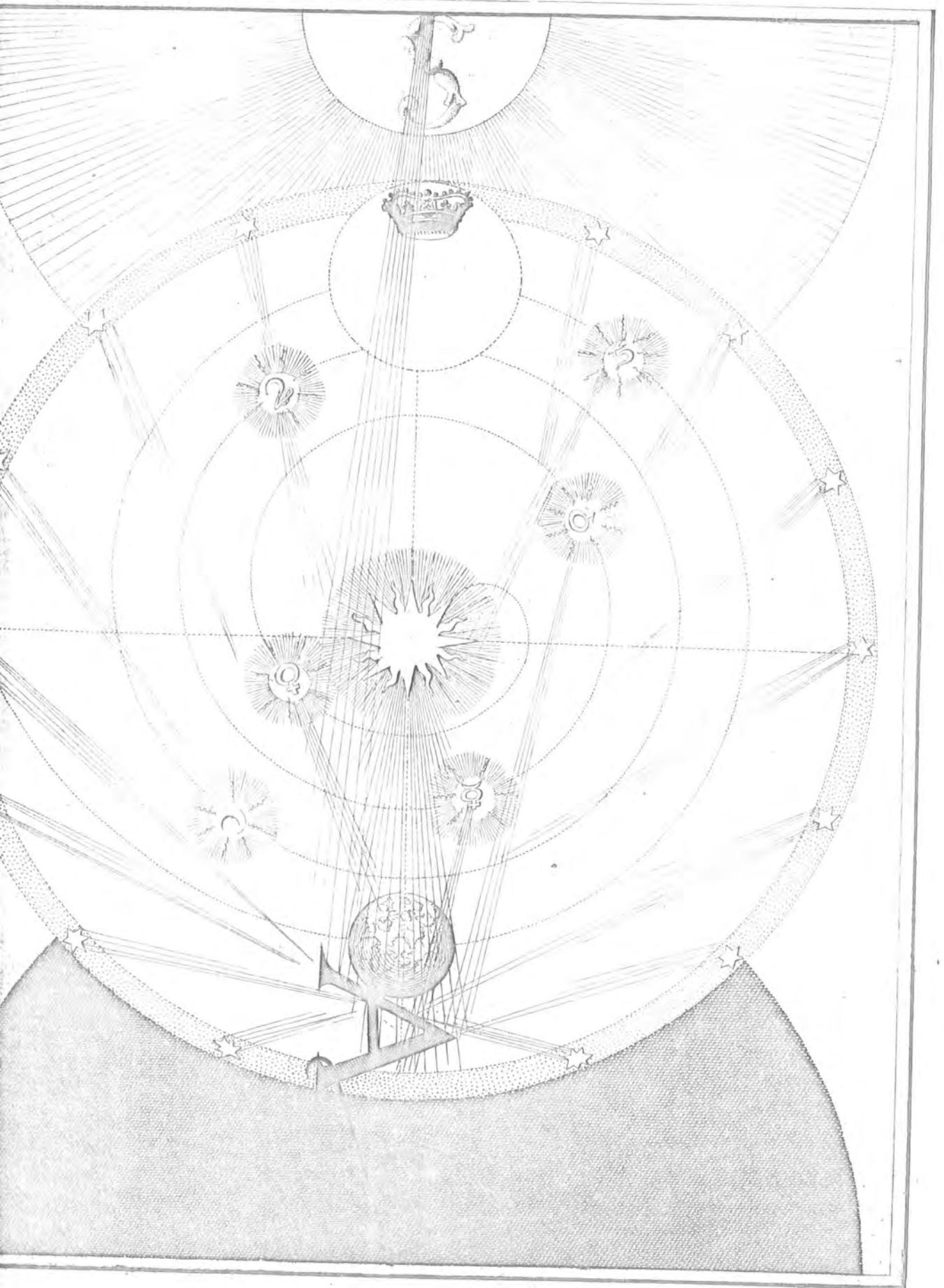
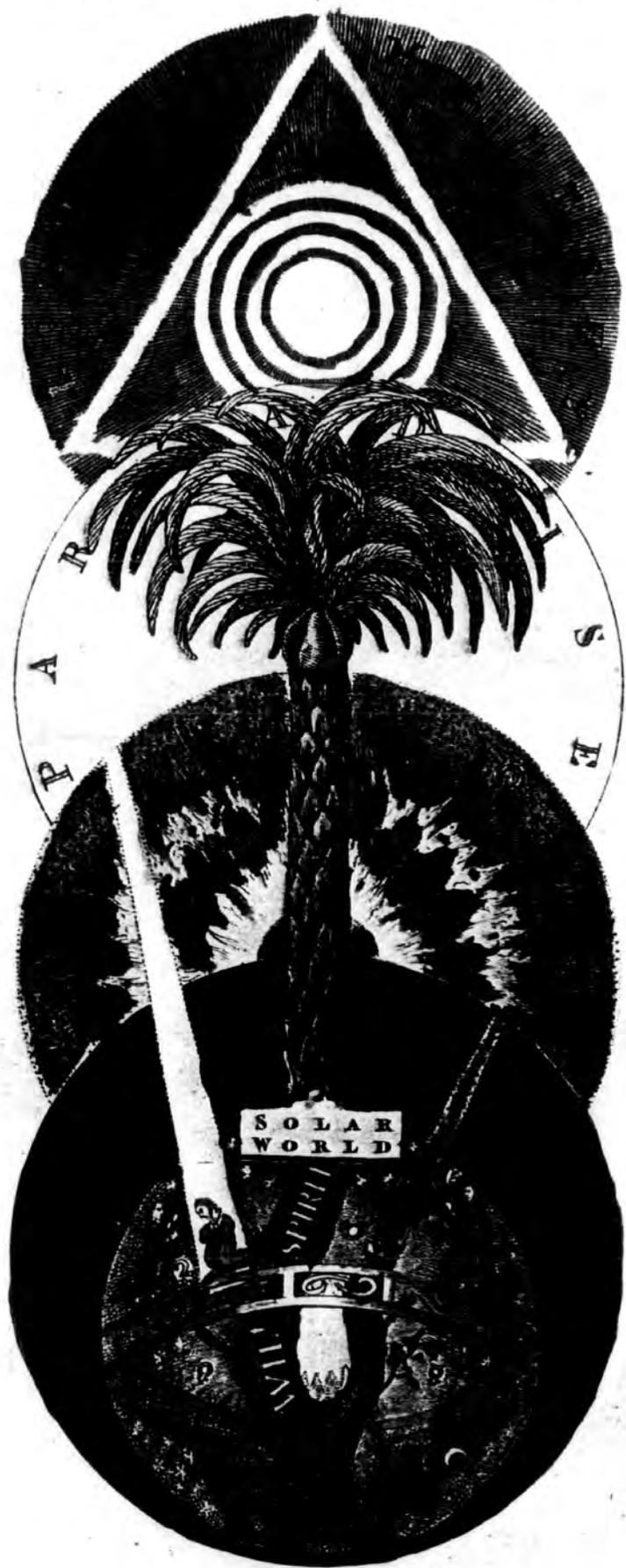


Fig. 3

*The TREE of the SOUL.*



Richards's,  
Library,  
79, Cornhill,  
London.

Fig. 4

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