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Balance and Harmony

Contraries, such as black and white or night and day, must co-exist for the world to be in harmony. To put it simply, a fox and a squirrel must co-exist to ensure the essential cycling of elements and nutrients. Without one the world becomes unbalanced, due to a lack of resources, thereby resulting in a domino effect of problems. The concept that contraries co-exist is amplified in William Blake’s poem “The Human Abstract”, in the comparison of “The Lamb” and “The Tiger” and in the prose *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

In the poem “The Human Abstract,” Blake describes characteristics of humans that have been introduced over time due, in part, to greed and selfishness. In particular, Blake writes “Pity would be no more/ If we did not make somebody poor…” (1-2). Therefore, without the rich there would be no poor. This is true; if the wealthy did not hoard all the money and power then the poor would be nonexistent. As a result, class status would be abolished and the world would, theoretically, be a better place. However, a successful classless society has yet to exist because a classless society lacks contraries or opposites. Contraries are essential because they provide the balance and the harmony that make a society successful. A realistic and functional society requires those individuals described in Blake’s poem because they provide a balance between innocence and experience. Therefore, the poor and the rich are two social classes that co-exist, thereby bringing balance and harmony to the people around them.

Like people in a society nature requires balance as well. In the poem “The Lamb” Blake describes an innocent lamb that is gentle and loving, thereby creating a peaceful image in the eye of the reader. Then, six years later in *Song of Experience,* Blake writes about “The Tiger,” a savage beast that kills the innocent lamb. Morally, one can question how is it possible for the same divine being to create such contradicting animals? For instance, Blake questions:

When the stars threw down their spears,

And watered Heaven with their tears,

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the lamb make thee? (17-20)

However, in nature there are predators and prey. Predators were created to regulate prey and prey were created as food source for predators. If either the predator or the prey was removed then harmony in nature would cease to exist. Therefore, what one needs to understand is that there are certain elements that are required for the proper functioning of a society, whether that is in nature or not. So, instead of an individual believing that the tiger was created to instil fear and terror one could believe that the tiger was created to add stability to a cycling environment.

In addition to the poems previously described, William Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* states that “without contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate are necessary to human existence,” (74) and in particular is the contrary of reason and energy. Reason is believed to come from the body and energy is believed to come from the soul. Reason is good and energy is evil. Therefore, if one associates good with heaven and evil with hell then energy is hell and reason is heaven. However, Blake disagrees with these statements because he believes that body is a component of soul made up of the five senses. Therefore, without reason an individual could not progress or evolve spiritually because energy requires reason. Interestingly enough, in 1790 those individuals that were creating prophecies were poets. In order to be prophetic, that is thinking in a divine point view, a poet would have to look beyond his five senses and use his energies. Poets are incapable of restraining their energies and thoughts and that’s why they come across as misunderstood, but in actuality poets are creating opportunities and beliefs that otherwise would not exist. Therefore, reason and energy must remain in co-existence because without one there is no progression or growth as a society. Without reason there is nothing to base energy on and without energy there is no spirituality or religion. This is why energy and reason must co-exist to allow society to grow spiritually and mentally.

As William Blake has shown in “The Human Abstract,” “The Lamb,” “The Tiger” and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, contraries must co-exist indefinitely to ensure balance and harmony in a society. A classless society will not prosper because there are limited contraries. There is no basis for comparison and no reason to become better and as a result the society becomes unbalanced. The same happens in nature, when a key component is removed from a cycle the cycle stops. Once the cycle stops nature shifts out of harmony. When nature is out of harmony the entire world is out of harmony, thus it necessary to have death in a reoccurring cycle for it to remain harmonious. Lastly, without reason there is no energy and without energy there is no progression. Therefore, all contraries are linked in a single pathway. Without one the other will not exist but with both the end product will always be reached.

Works Cited

Blake, William. *Selected Poetry*. London: Oxford UP, 1996.