

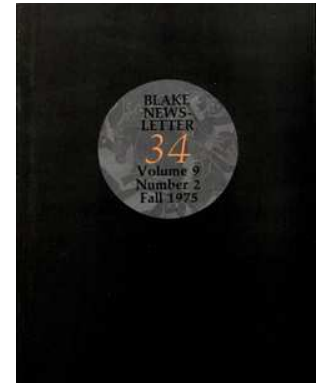
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Blake, Locke, and the Concept of “Generation”

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emblems which may have influenced Blake appear in all the editions I have seen, and since the 6th has more emblems than the 2nd but has not deleted any, I suppose that the relevant emblems are to be found in the intervening editions. The comment on the 1772 frontispiece in Erdman's footnote reads: "The frontispiece, a woman instructing children in the cultivation of 'the Human Plant' and in the importance of tree to vine, is a useful approach to the educational symbolism in the frontispiece to *Songs of Innocence*." Wynne's frontispiece shows a boy holding a book under his arm and a woman standing with her arm round a girl and pointing towards a tree supporting a vine. The lines beneath the text are the moral from Emblem 21 "Of Education":

This prudent care must rear the Youthful mind,  
By Love supported and with Toil refin'd,  
'Tis thus alone the Human Plant can rise,  
Unprun'd it droops, and Unsupported dies.

The frontispiece to *Songs of Innocence* has a woman seated with a book in her lap, two children at her knee, and a tree with an unidentifiable twining plant. Blake's sketch for this *Notebook* 55 shows the woman with one child. The standard image of Education in, for instance, Ripa's *Iconologia* has a seated woman teaching a child to read, and a young tree supported by a pale. There are, therefore, many pictures graphically closer to Blake's than Wynne's frontispiece (the closest I have seen being in J. B. Boudard's *Iconologie* [Parma: Philippe Carmignani, 1759], but I have no evidence that Blake knew this work).

To me the strongest evidence for supposing that Blake had seen Wynne's emblems seems to be the appearance in the illustration to the "Argument" of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* of the unsupported vine from Emblem 21, a detail which Erdman mentions elsewhere as belonging to the emblem tradition.<sup>1</sup> Daphne as an emblem "Of Chastity" (Emblem 35) is a commonplace with little graphic variation. I can see no thematic reason for connecting Emblem 2, "Of Silence" (a nude man standing, hand to lips, before a pyramid and obelisk) with *MHH* 21, in spite of the visual coincidence. Pyramids are a standard symbol of the glories of this world (or, in Ripa, of the Glory of Princes). The traveller in "Of the Use of Self-Denial," Emblem 24, does not move "in the manner and direction" of Blake's in *Notebook* 15, and many another pilgrim is depicted dressed like Blake's traveller. Only the serpent around the leg of Wynne's figure seems a possible influence--on Drawing 13a.

There is an emblem graphically closer to the *Notebook* Emblem 4 (later *GP* 7) than Wynne's "Of Vain Pursuits." Wynne's picture is based on Emblem 22 of Bunyan's *Divine Emblems: or Temporal Things Spiritualized. Fitted for The Use of Boys and Girls*,<sup>2</sup> entitled "Of the Boy and Butter Fly," as Wynne's emblem is in his Contents list. The only significant difference is the one that establishes the connection with Blake: Wynne's boy has his hat on his head, whereas in the Bunyan emblem the boy is using a hat, like the Blake one, to chase the butterfly.

I should add that what I have said about the Education motif involves no criticism of Erdman's view that Blake was considering from early in the *Notebook* an emblem book for children--indeed Blake's work counters the current vogue for rationalistic, moralistic, educational books for children by offering a very different concept of education. Also interpretative conclusions about *Gates of Paradise* 7, based on the assumption that the small figures are personified butterflies, are in no way changed by my citation of a different source, especially since Bunyan's and Wynne's themes are the same.

1 "Reading the Illuminations of Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*," in *William Blake: Essays in honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, ed. M. D. Paley and M. Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), p. 169.

2 This is the title of the illustrated editions of this work. The "9th edition," 1724, is the first extant one with illustrations, though the 3rd edition of 1707 was advertised as being "ornamented with cuts." This edition has crude illustrations lacking in detail. The edition I have used for comparison with Wynne is the "10th edition," 1757. I have not yet located copies of the editions of 1732 and 1770 listed in *CBEI*.

## Blake, Locke, & The Concept of "Generation"

By James C. Evans

The concept of "generation" as a level of existence in Blake's poetry has been related to its use both in the Neoplatonists and in Swedenborg. In both instances, the term generally implies a world of generative being in a material sphere as opposed to a world of continuous being in a spiritual one.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, another possible source as undeniably central in Blake's reactions to his philosophical milieu as any, John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*, and about which Blake stated he felt "the same Contempt and Abhorrence" from first reading it "when very Young" onwards.<sup>2</sup>

The particularly relevant passage in the *Essay* occurs amidst Locke's speculations about the perception of cause-effect relationships. Having defined a cause as that which operates to produce an idea or collection of ideas, he proceeds to divide effects into two categories. The first is "creation," an effect "wholly made new, so that no part thereof did ever exist before." The second category, however, is extremely interesting in the light it throws on Blake's choice of terms for a world barely human.

When a thing is made up of particles which did all of them before exist, but that very thing, so constituted of pre-existing particles which, considered all together, make up such a collection of simple ideas, had not any existence before as this man, this egg, rose, or cherry, etc. And this, when referred to a substance produced in the ordinary course of nature by an internal

principle, but set on work by and received from some external agent or cause, and working by insensible ways which we perceive not, we call "generation". . . . Thus, a man is generated. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Both the language and the concepts in this passage would indeed have been totally abhorrent to Blake, for Locke presents the generative principle in man as consisting of an "agent" working "insensibly" and uncomprehendingly on another "internal principle" and resulting in a unique configuration of "pre-existing particles." There is no better description of the Blakean state of generation than this sterile meeting of two forces seemingly without communication, without emotion and even without a conscious purpose, but merely following the "ordinary course of nature." It is, in fact, man's existence reduced to its absolute natural limits in which he is seen as a combination of "simple ideas," to use a Lockean term. Now, we know that Locke intended the passage as a neutral, objective description of simple cause and effect: sexual desire results in coitus which produces a human being made up of the atoms of the mother and father. But when Blake read it, it surely seemed to him to epitomize everything that is the exact opposite of man's unified Edenic existence in pure imaginative perception. He found a ready-made image with a ready-made title to describe "the Barren waste of Locke and Newton," the "philosophy of five senses" into which the eighteenth century was securely "locked" (Blake himself makes this pun in *An Island in the Moon*). So, the two words, Locke and generation, become closely associated in Blake's poetry, and both appear in conjunction with the image of looms, a mechanical form of creation which produces the veil of nature that must be rent at the apocalyptic moment. Locke, whose way of perceiving the world continually creates and sustains such generation, becomes synonymous with that state. In using the term generation, Blake gathers up the Lockean methodology in its own epitome, imbues it with his own symbolic meaning and turns it with the deftness of irony against its own source.

Nor is this the only instance of Blake ironically borrowing from Locke to illustrate the primary Lockean error. Quite obviously, the lines from "Auguries of Innocence," "We are led to Believe a Lie / When we see not Thro' the Eye," are at the heart of Blake's rebellion against the whole physical basis of eighteenth century science and philosophy. But a point generally missed is that Blake is ironically countering Locke's statement of faith in reason by quoting a phrase from that statement. Toward the end of his *Essay*, Locke enumerates various kinds of errors that have crept into philosophy and rounds the discussion off by prescribing the only guard against such error.

Light, true light in the mind, is or can be nothing else but the evidence of the truth of any proposition; and if it be not a self-evident proposition, all the light it has, or can have, is from the clearness and validity of those proofs

upon which it is received. To talk of any other light in the understanding, is to put ourselves in the dark, or in the power of the prince of darkness, and, by our own consent, to give ourselves up to delusion, to believe a lie.<sup>4</sup>

Not only does Blake use the phrase "to believe a lie" in correcting Locke's premise that all we really know is sense data, but he follows this with Locke's own dark-light imagery: "God appears & God is Light / To Those poor Souls who dwell in Night, / But does a Human Form Display / To those who dwell in Realms of day" (ll. 129-32). As with "generation," the trouble lies in Locke's perspective. In saying that we must use reason to determine "whether [a revelation] be from God or no," Locke is placing a non-existent barrier between human and divine and binding himself to a severely limited view of the world. He fails to realize that "God is man & exists in us & we in Him." Again, Locke's definition of generation both epitomizes such a narrow, physical, totally rational concept of man and perfectly describes the mental state of those who dwell in so circumscribed a world. This is the dual role which made Locke's work so inviting a quarry from which Blake could build his image of the fallen world.

1 See, for example, George Mills Harper, *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 154; Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), I, 100-05.

2 William Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 476-77.

3 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 14th ed., (London: S. Birt et al., 1753), I, 27.

4 Locke, *Essay*, II, 323. In this passage, Locke goes on to remark of divine revelation, "When he [God] illuminates the Mind with supernatural Light, he does not extinguish that which is natural. . . . Reason must be our last Judge and Guide in every Thing. . . . Consult it we must and by it examine whether it be a Revelation from God or no. . . ." (pp. 323-24). Surely Blake would have thought this the most pernicious of all lies.

## The Catalogue of Blake's Designs Completed, & A Last-Minute Inclusion

By Martin Butlin

The typescript of the forthcoming catalogue of Blake's works in the visual arts has now been handed in to the Trianon Press, who are to publish it for the William Blake Trust, though it has not yet gone to the printer. Its scope is defined as the paintings, drawings and separate hand-colored designs of William Blake. Monochrome engravings and the illuminated books are not included, though the Small and Large Books of Designs from the books are. It has been difficult to draw absolutely precise lines of demarcation. Separate colored copies of engravings and plates from the illuminated books have been included when it seems likely that Blake himself disposed of them as individual works in their own right, but colored proofs of pages