**The Tyger vs. The Lamb**

**Comparison**

The main poem from this collection, "The Lamb," epitomizes innocence and the relationship between the young and the divine. In singsong verse, a curious child questions the nature of a gentle lamb, and he learns what he already knows: God created the lamb. World events and life itself greatly affected Blake. In *Songs of Experience* (1794), the sequel to *Songs of Innocence*, he addresses his loss of "faith in the goodness mankind" (Wikipedia) caused by the fall of the French Revolution. The outstanding poem from this collection, "The Tyger," seeks the answer to the unknown: how can the god who created the peaceful lamb also be the creator of the fierce, destructive tiger? The speaker asks many questions, but receives no answer. That same year, Blake combined the two contrasting works into*Songs of Innocence and Experience* (Wikipedia).
 *Songs of Innocence*, specifically "The Lamb," shows how innocence, though originally exclusive to infancy, contributes to the inherent, distinguishing traits of hope and imagination. In contrast, *Songs of Experience*, particularly "The Tyger," reveals how experience flows from innocence and how it aids human development as well. The extreme contrasts between innocence and experience work together to create a well-balanced individual. In *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, William Blake illustrates how conflicting states of existence play equal, vital parts in the progression of humanity.

Many critics disregard *Songs of Innocence*, especially "The Lamb," for its simplicity in structure and vocabulary. However, Aubrey states, "[the depth of "The Lamb"]…demands a visionary leap…to feel the uncommon (for the adult) reality that the child…lives so naturally." The poem's simplicity enables the audience (children) to understand it, but the simplicity also leads to disadvantage. The innocence conveyed in the poem does not burn eternal; it is exclusive to infancy. In addition, this innocence sometimes only endures through ignoring the ever-pervading experience (Aubrey).

Innocence gives humans hope. The naïveté of childhood does not spring from "dependency or ignorance but [from] spiritual vision" (Aubrey). "The Lamb" portrays this precisely by using the lamb as a metaphor for Christ, the Son of God. The child in the poem asks, "Little Lamb, who made thee?" Upon learning that the same one who created the lamb also created the child, a sense of unity establishes itself "between the human self, the natural world, and the divine kingdom" (Aubrey). This "oneness" can also be seen as the connection between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. By putting both the child and the creation of God on the same scale, by calling each a "lamb", the child experiences a sense of protection in being as important as Christ himself is (Aubrey). Without the "manifest spontaneity of…mystical insight," the poem's simple "theme, diction, and metre" thrust it into "unthinkable depths of feebleness" (Ward).

Innocence breeds trust, though often blind trust, because the child is convinced of the protection by the Divine. Though "characterized by the…spiritual resilience of childhood" (Furr), innocence does not thrive on energy. Instead, it embraces passivity and acceptance of the unknown, or acceptance of incredibly simplistic answers. "There are no real questions, since questions are the result of uncertainty or lack" (Aubrey). Innocence does lack one thing however: energy. The child starts to realize that he does have other needs to fulfill. When the child recognizes this insufficiency, the circle of trust among himself, nature, and the divine begins to deteriorate.

For fear of the consequences of this sudden loss of faith, the child only asks the question to which he knows the answer. In answering his own question "Little Lamb, how made thee?" with "Little Lamb, I'll tell thee," (Blake) he crushes his curiosity and reveals its falsity. The child strives in vain to uphold his "uncommon reality" that contributes to the trickiness of innocence; it is harder to grasp in comparison to an adult's view of reality (Aubrey). Sagar addresses the consequences of the child's decision:

To choose only…innocence is to leave oneself open to justifiable mockery, since that position, paying no debts to reality, is sentimental, opposed to the glaring evidence…fanciful in allowing itself to resolve all problems by recreating the world as it ought to be or perhaps once was…by direct intervention from the world of spirit.

Once the child realizes his faults and recognizes the difference between right and wrong, his curiosity to explore the unknown tempts him into experience (Furr).
 *Songs of Experience* illustrates how the child, more aware of himself now, begins his development into an individual. Though the child in "The Lamb" demonstrates curiosity by questioning nature, he contradicts himself by answering his question, thus proving that he had experience to know the answer (Bussey). Experience flows from its counterpart, innocence, in the same way that the strength of "The Tyger" flows from preying upon its counterpart, "The Lamb." In powerful contrast to "The Lamb," "The Tyger" admits its uncertainties by recognizing experience as a state of confusion and darkness. The poem also addresses the contrast between innocence by acknowledging the influences of divine concepts.

The energy of "The Tyger" thrives on its satire of "The Lamb" just as, in reality, a tiger prowls out of sight to feed upon a lamb. The fierce experience that stalked innocence for so long finally makes itself known (Sagar).

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright/ In the forests of the night; / What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame they fearful symmetry? (Blake)

"The Tyger" opens with an assertion that develops into a sort of chant by way of poetic devices (rhyme scheme, diction, and meter), contrasting with the singsong passivity of "The Lamb." The sudden changes in light and dark, from "burning bright" to "forests of the night," works to complete the framing of the "fearful symmetry." The poem goes so far as to suggest the "creator smiling at destruction (Smith)" upon completion of this symmetry that is, ironically, fueled by innocence, yet feared by the child. The creator's violent creation proves that the divine does not always mean good; the creator can also bring destruction and evil (Hirsch).

"The Tyger," however complete the establishment of experience may seem, expands to address the unknown. The poem accepts and conveys the desperation, confusion, pain and darkness brought on by experience (Furr). Though the child asks many questions, none of them implies an answer, which "increases the inconceivability of an answer (Sagar)" and reflects the ambiguous nature of experience. The duality of "The Tyger" presents more uncertainty just as a tiger instills both fear and awe in humans who approach experience the same way they would approach a tiger: full of fearful awareness blended with admiration at its complex beauty (Sagar).

The question of faith goes unrequited, but the questions do imply answers because Blake's state of mind "assumes that there must be an answer…the Tyger itself constitutes an answer, could one [person] but get one's mind round it, get past the mental block of terror" (Sagar). By using allusions to classic Western mythology and religion, Blake recognizes the influence of divine concepts upon human values.

Blake associates the creator with…characters from Western mythology: Daedelus and Icarus ["On what wings dare he aspire?"], the…Greek god Prometheus ["what the hand dare seize the fire?"], Vulcan the blacksmith ["What the hammer? What the chain? /In what furnace was thy brain?"], and Lucifer and his angels ["When the stars threw down their spears, /And watered Heaven with their tears/]. (Furr)

The stars wielding spears to protect heaven suggest the cold light of reason attempting to control the rebellion of the unknown or evil. However, reason proves to be no match for desire and energy, as the creator, perhaps Blake himself, brings his desire and energy to fruition by creating the tiger (Sagar). This defiance of reason shows a divine being's capability to create violence as well as peace. By ending with a vague answer, "The Tyger" confronts its own unresolved conflict between the divine, who smiles at his creation, and man, who shudders at the creation (Hirsch).

The extreme contrasts between innocence and experience work to balance the individual. Innocence brings hope and faith, and experience works to educate the individual in dealing with despair and ambiguity. Because both "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" question the reality of a divine creator, whether knowing the answer or not, demonstrates the common characteristics between the two and the possibility of an alliance to benefit mankind. However, because both are consequences of dualism, they tend to concentrate on a single portion rather than the whole, what Blake referred to as "single vision" (Sagar).

Innocence, being the initial stage of human life, sets the foundation for experience. In "The Lamb," Blake wrote to provide moral instruction for life, just as adults teach children religion (specifically Christianity) and the difference between right and wrong (Bussey). By referring to the creator of the lamb, "Christ, in both the past and present tense ("He is…/He became…"), [Blake] indicat[es] the timelessness of the subject" (Bussey). Morals and dogmatic systems instituted during childhood have a tendency to remain with the individual throughout his or her development, providing a basis upon which to judge situations and people. The stability of religion lends a hand in establishing hope, which creates a backbone that the child can always rely on to when needed. As Aubrey states, "Joy isn't something that happens to the soul, it's the essential nature of every soul."

Without experience, however, innocence cannot be fully appreciated. Rather than attempting to defy or cancel out the vitality of "The Lamb," "The Tyger" works to explore the other side of a person (Smith). Blake confronts and acknowledges the contrary to see if he possesses the ability to come to terms with experience (Sagar). He realizes that without the fall of innocence into what Aubrey calls "despair [that] can only be caused by an error in the perception of the way things truly are," redemption would not be possible (Furr). The individual learns to see from different standpoints and learns that his light and heat thrive from within. Experience is seen as the creative process that fulfills humanity because individuals learn their capability to shine without the sun (Sagar). People become enlightened to the fact that a tiger preying on a lamb does not constitute evil, for survival is a part of nature.

Blake indicated the correlation between innocence and experience best when he released *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, subtitled "Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" (Sagar). Just as innocence led to experience, experience leads to newfound innocence. In this newfound innocence, the matured individual chooses to live with childlike vision and trust (Furr). The person, now mentally and spiritually reborn, rediscovers the hope and faith he or she once held. Another indicator of their balance is the subtle use within each poem of the word "bright." "The Lamb" uses it to illustrate the beauty of the lamb's wool coat, just as "The Tyger" uses it to illustrate the beauty of the burning tiger. In the artwork for "The Lamb," two saplings intertwined with one another at the tops of their branches, indicative of youth and the final growing together of innocence and experience (Aubrey). "The Tyger" recovers innocence by giving way to what Blake called "four-fold vision," in which "single vision" becomes extinct "Fourfold vision" opens the gates between innocence and experience because it "is imagination, which is simply how we see when our vision is whole, not fragmented; [it is] how we function when all our subtle senses are fully operational. It is the divinity of fully realized humanity. (Sagar)"

With his collections *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, William Blake analyzes the relationship between conflicting states of the human soul to show how each relies upon the other to benefit the progression of humanity. "The Lamb" recreates the innocence well known to infancy and originates the hope and morals that blueprint the basis of an individual. "The Tyger" then rectifies the assumed simplemindedness of its counterpart, "The Lamb," by asserting the importance of experience in developing humanity. Blake demonstrates how, through the varying distinctions of innocence and experience, two contrary states depend upon each other, though sometimes unknowingly. A person should not feel compelled to choose between the two, or label one as good and the other as bad. Learning and understanding the significance between the two, be it love and hate, war and peace, or something as mundanely simple as going and coming, enables individuals alone to comprehend their lives. As a whole, humanity could put itself at a greater advantage upon recognizing the balance of creation.

Fitzsimmons, Samantha. "The Lamb and the Tyger: A Closer Look at William Blake." *Yahoo Voices*. Yahoo, n.d. Web. 21

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