

William Blake:

William Blake was considered insane while he lived, but has come to be an important and influential figure. He was a painter and a printmaker as well as a poet, and he exemplifies the Romantic spirit in a number of ways, perhaps most importantly in his belief that the real world or "reality" could only be understood through imagination.



- A mystic, he does not reject the world, but rather worships it whenever it displays energy and rejects it when it is dull and vegetative.
 - In his book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he argues the superiority of energy over reason and says that "everything that lives is holy."
- Contraries factor strongly in his art and world view.
 - He opposed dualism, the Western, Neoclassical idea that everything is made up of warring opposites.
 - Additionally, he opposes the Western tendency to judge those opposites and to call one good and the other evil.
 - He says, "Without contraries is no progression" and believes that mankind should reconcile the contraries into mutual acceptance.
 - His book *Songs of Innocence and Experience* is subtitled "Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.:"
 - The poems in *Songs of Innocence* suggest simplicity and the joys of infancy which don't last long. He sees innocence as a necessary beginning, but one through which everyone must pass.
 - The poems focusing on experience are darker, but Blake believes that experience is a necessary thing.
- Disliked the Church and organized religion. He said that ""Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion./ As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys."
 - He didn't believe that the body and soul were opposites with the soul more important than the body. His dislike of religion arose from its urging that people repress desires. He said, "Better murder an infant in its cradle than nurse an unacted desire."
- Imagination: Blake is associated with the Romantic emphasis on imagination.

- He wrote two books--*There is no Natural Religion* and *All Religions Are One* which emphasized imagination over rationalist philosophy.
- He believed that "Nature is Imagination itself" and exercising imagination leads to wisdom and insight.
- He invented his own mythology, a consequence of his emphasis on imagination and creativity and his dislike of organized religion.
- He didn't agree with much of Christianity so he invented his own mythology, which combined the Bible and Greek mythology.
 - He used this mythology to argue that without contraries is no progression.
 - He disagreed with Christianity in its insistence that natural desires be repressed. The church thought that natural desires were evil, but Blake thought they were good and that there should be a synthesis of contraries because contraries are necessary for humans to move from innocence to experience.
 - "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" argues that existence requires an equal amount of Good and Evil. For Blake, Good is the passive that obeys Reason" and Evil is "the active springing from Energy. That would mean that "good" is passive and reflective while "evil" is active and energetic.
 - He associates Christianity with stagnation and inactivity, since Reason encourages a person to stop before finding out what his limits are. He believes that Good and Evil need to live together to form a perfect existence
- Social conscience
 - He protested the exploitation of children by the church (which hated singing, except for hymns, and dancing; society, and even their impoverished parents.
 - He disliked slavery and believed in equality among genders.
 - He believed that political and social problems were all because of a central failure of humanity and he created a new mythology in *The First Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania* and *The Four Zoas*.
 - In this mythology, he argues that the world had fallen away from holiness by creating a world in which the demands for purity and holiness and the creation of a law based on them were the real corruption because it took people away from the original harmony of vision and desire and isolated the self as the center of the world.

<http://www.keithsagar.co.uk/Blake/index.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Blake

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/674215/william_blakes_personal_mythology.html?cat=4