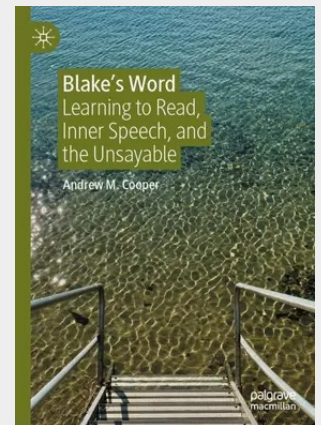


Blake's Word

Learning to Read, Inner Speech, and the Unsayable

This book explores how William Blake conceived the act of reading as an imaginative activation of Jesus the Word, the anonymous, unsayable potency of language that underlies speech. Through illuminated printing, Blake sought to incarnate this Word by re-educating his late-Enlightened audience in the fundamentals of reading – not through morality tales but at the level of physiology and synaesthesia where seen writing is turned into meaningful mental sounds. By wrongfooting the automaticity of skilled adult parsing, Blake's grammar and syntax restore a cognitive element of anticipation to semiotic decoding and prophetically open the immediate future to interpretation. Such speaking-forth of the divine unsayability not only critiques 18th-century Deism's God-given "language of nature," it also sometimes skirts unreadability. Therefore, as this study demonstrates, Blake strove hard to develop his reading program in relation to a range of well-known philosophers including Plato and Bacon, Berkeley and Hume, Swedenborg and Rousseau, whose ideas on cognition and language his work casts in a new light even today.

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