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MILTON'S LEARNING: COMPLEMENTARITY AND DIFFERENCE IN *PARADISE*  
*LOST*

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

MILTON'S LEARNING: COMPLEMENTARITY AND DIFFERENCE IN *PARADISE**LOST*

Peter Spaulding, B. A., M. A.

Marquette University, 2023

When we consider, in the vein of Golda Werman's Milton and Midrash, the idea of Milton's *Paradise Lost* as self-consciously responding to the Bible, the question of why he makes the changes and additions that he does comes to the fore. This dissertation explores the middle books of *Paradise Lost* as Milton's midrashic interventions that, among other things, emphasize the presence of education in the Garden. These scenes shed some light on Milton's own views of education. Specifically, these interventions show a theory of education that conceives of difference as non-combative, a distinctly non-Hobbesian view of difference. Using Aristotle's four causes as a means of anatomizing education in the poem, I find that education is a model for the way that differences are treated as complementary entities in Milton's unfallen world. However, temptation intervenes and succeeds in leading agents to fall via "unlearning," a concept developed in the fourth chapter, in which difference itself is deemphasized. In the end, sin and temptation are alike in their insistence on singularity. This insistence, in Milton's postlapsarian world, creates competition in difference, making complementarity problematic if not impossible.

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“As soon as the single individual wants to assert himself in his particularity, in direct opposition to the universal, he sins, and only by recognizing this can he again reconcile himself with the universal. Whenever, having entered the universal, the single individual feels an urge to assert his particularity, he is in a state of temptation, from which he can extricate himself only by surrendering his particularity to the universal in repentance.”

—Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

## INTRODUCTION: MILTONIC PARADIGMS AND SYNCRETISM

In Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, he establishes the difference between "normal science" and the kind of scientific thought germane to the bringing on of intellectual revolutions. "Normal science" functions within a set of "paradigms" or basic assumptions about the known and knowable universe. These "paradigms," which are the result of scientific revolutions, generate an enormous amount of "mop-up work" for scientists in the same community of later generations: "Few people who are not actually practitioners of a mature science realize how much mop-up work... a paradigm leaves to be done or quite how fascinating such work can prove in the execution" (24).<sup>1</sup>

This distinction of Kuhn's works as a useful metaphor for positioning this project on education as a theme in *Paradise Lost*. Taking this basic principle derived from material scientific inquiry and applying it to intellectual inquiry generally, we can understand this project, that of using *Paradise Lost* as a means of better understanding Milton's ideas about education, as a work of "normal science" in the world of Milton criticism, that it functions within the bounds of quite a number of important Miltonist paradigms, namely, (1.) Milton's Arminianism, (2.) monism, (3.) idealism, and something I would call (4.) syncretism.

### 1. The Arminian Paradigm

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

I would like to spend most of the space in this Introduction on Milton's idealism, given that the other two are enumerated at great length in the chapters that follow. But some introductory discussion on these topics should help later reading as well.

This project assumes that, by the time of the composition of his later epics, Milton had left the fold of Calvinism and taken on a much more Arminian understanding of the freedom of human will. Central to the mainstream understanding of *Areopagitica* is the idea that it contains the seeds that will eventually flower into the Arminianism of Milton's later years (expressed both in *Paradise Lost* and more explicitly in *De Doctrina Christiana*). Its insistence on the freedom of the conscience, on the almost sacred status of the human conscience in the individual, and the connection that the book makes explicitly to the Garden of Eden, shows the through line more explicitly.

The Arminian paradigm is convenient for my argument about education, which seems to function in the poem as an essential component of the alleged freedom of Adam and Eve. Milton's Arminianism works to create a view of difference that is non-competitive (as will be explored more in the section on his "syncretism" and in greater detail in all four chapters). It sets up Calvinistic views of predestination as coercive and problematic from a theodicean perspective: would God condemn beings that did not have agency?

This unwillingness of Milton's to abide by orthodox Calvinist views has its limits, however. This project does also assume a "Puritan" Milton. Some scholars, for one reason or another, are interested in emphasizing the radicalism of Milton's puritanism



(Christopher Hill), whereas others emphasize his “orthodoxy”<sup>2</sup> (C. S. Lewis, Dennis Danielson). I believe that Milton’s true “Puritanism” is what creates this conflict among modern scholars. On the one hand, the moral seriousness of Protestants in the years leading up to the Civil Wars was a conservative reaction to Cavalier decadence.<sup>3</sup> However, the association of “puritanism” with political radicalism is also not out of place: “Charles I and the prelates saw the puritan rejection of... rituals as subverting the structure of the social relations they embodied” (21).<sup>4</sup> In other words, Hill’s notion of Milton as rubbing shoulders with the most radical thinkers of his time (i.e., Levellers, Diggers) is obviously not completely unfounded. There was a revolutionary attitude inherent in the anti-hierarchical impulse in lower-church Protestant denominations. Even the more organized Presbyterians rejected the papacy on the grounds of its hierarchy, of its unjustly putting one man over others. The application of such an ecclesiological view to politics could only have negative implications for the monarchy. Milton’s true “Puritanism” embodies both of these attitudes, appearing at once radically progressive and reactionary. Here, I hope to tease out something of Milton’s views of education that works does not contradict either of these Puritan tenets of radical humanism and staunch conservatism.

## 2. The Monism Paradigm

Tangential to this idea of theological freedom is Milton’s scientific views, namely, his commitment to the rejection of the mind/body problem as such. As edgy as Milton’s

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<sup>2</sup> One of the potential issues with this view is already suggested: to be an orthodox Calvinist means to be unorthodox or even heretical by other denominational views. Is Milton a “good Christian”? Is he a “good Protestant”?

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder* is an adequate example of precisely this kind of Puritan disgust with the artifice and superfluity of court life.

<sup>4</sup> Achsah Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth Century England*, Cambridge UP, 1998.

Arminianism was in his time, among his Presbyterian colleagues especially, his views about the mind/body problem were equally as disturbing to a group of Christian thinkers whose defining common denominator was *sola scriptura*. Paul's lengthy discourses on the "flesh" and the "heart" or the "mind" had been feeding into Neoplatonic Christian theology for quite a while by Milton's time, and it was especially influential at Cambridge during Milton's time.

Milton's rejection of the mind/body problem was not a rejection of Paul as such, but a means of dramatizing the unfallen life (more on this in the section on idealism). Milton's fallen world is one full of divisions and strife. It is a world in which divisions necessitate strife, where difference necessitates violence. In his unfallen world, however, the ecosystem is not marred by the differences in its varieties of species. Rather it is a symbiotic space, where both material and spiritual differences abound without contradiction and contradistinction.<sup>5</sup> The means by which he does this—which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 1—is through synecdoche and metaphor.

Milton's monism isn't just a matter of symbiosis, but it also contains a more controversial assumption of unfallen life as trajectorial, as leading towards a kind of theosis. Adam and Eve are said to be on a path that will lead them up towards the heavens, even potential to a position more valued than that of the angels.

### 3. The Idealist Paradigm

This paradigm, which I don't spend an enormous amount of time developing in other sections of the dissertation, is more implied than explicitly in Milton scholarship.

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<sup>5</sup> This is, at least, the intent of his portrayal. A lot of readers, Stanley Fish for example, will question this. Many, Fish included, would at least admit that Milton's intention may very well have been to show such a harmony. But their conviction is often that this intention fails, and many modern readers can attest to that failure.

Milton's idealism is central to understanding the unfallen world in which this dissertation spends most of its time. At the same time, however, it is very difficult to conceive of given the rigidity of his other convictions (and, consequently, the rigidity of other paradigms of Milton scholarship).

Milton differentiated himself from the Cambridge Platonists of his time by rejecting that the mind and the body were so distinct from each other, asserting instead that they were two parts of a whole that should not necessarily be reduced in such a way. His idealism, however, is fairly Platonic in some respects. His beliefs about human conscience mentioned already, are indicative of something akin to a view of the soul as being laden with some gifts from its creator, much in the same way that Plato's soul is remembering the perfect forms in its encounter with reality. In this sense, the Garden, for Milton, is an ideal place, it exists within our collective memory, and it can be expressed (through him in the form of poetry) and received (for us in the form of reading) to an extent.

Milton's invocations pointedly draw readers' attention to this conviction of his. There is the appearance, at least, that Milton believes the Holy Spirit to be interceding on his behalf for the process of writing the poem, a poem which he believes to be better than its pagan equivalents perhaps because of its inspiration: just as Christendom proved its superiority to the pagan world into which it was born, so his poem will prove its superiority. Aside from the obvious problems this creates in terms of taking the poem seriously as a work of Protestant literature, it also shows a relatively characteristic Puritan and Protestant belief in the sincerity and reality of connecting with God through prayer.

His depiction of ideality itself in his portrait of life in the Garden can thus tell us something about his views, something about what any number of institutions—in our case, namely, education—look like in their ideal forms.

#### 4. The Syncretist Paradigm

The most important Miltonist paradigm in which this dissertation functions is an idea becoming of greater interest to Milton scholars lately which I have here called Milton's syncretism. The notion of "synthesis" in Hegelian dialectic as the child of "thesis" and "antithesis" is somewhat reminiscent of what these Miltonists have noted in his views and cosmology. The whole can be arrived at via the interactions of different things. But Hegel's dialectic is noticeably combative at its root: "The valor that struggles is better than the weakness that endures"; "It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; . . . the individual who has not staked his or her life may, no doubt, be recognized as a Person; but he or she has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness."<sup>6</sup> At root of his proto-Romantic notion of synthesis is the strife between thesis and anti-thesis.<sup>7</sup> Both Philipp Donnelly and Stephen M. Fallon contextualize the importance of strife in seventeenth century England with Thomas Hobbes, arguing that, in *Leviathan*, he constructs a view of natural human culture as a world in which difference is necessarily followed by strife and violence.<sup>8</sup> This "state of

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<sup>6</sup> G. W. F. Hegel. *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Trans and Intr. J. B. Baillie. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1931, 228-31.

<sup>7</sup> There is, of course, very serious debate surrounding the application of the terms "thesis," "antithesis," and "synthesis" to Hegel, as most of those terms are thought to have been attributed to his writing posthumously by others. The "triadic" form referred to explicitly by Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is associated there with Kant and ridiculed. A useful primer on the subject is Gustav E. Mueller's "The Hegel Legend of 'Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis,'" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19.3 (June 1958): 411-14. Regardless, the point to be made is that strife is an essential component of the articulation of "synthesis" as a child of "thesis" and "antithesis" in Hegelian and post-Hegelian thought in part because of the inheritance from Hobbes of difference as inherently violent and competitive.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapters 1-2 for an unpacking of Donnelly and Fallon's views.

war” is essential for Hobbes’s justification of absolutism. Milton’s view of humanity’s natural state is one much more rooted in the Bible and relatively harmonious.

Milton’s Garden is the scene, not just of much of the poem, but of almost all of the educational moments of the poem. Also, difference abounds. From Satan’s vantage point on the tallest tree of the Garden, he can see far and wide:

Beneath him with new wonder now he views  
 To all delight of human sense exposed  
 In narrow room nature’s whole wealth, yea more,  
 A heaven on earth: for blissful Paradise  
 Of God the garden was, by him in the east  
 Of Eden planted...

All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste... (4. 205-17)

Two fallen perspectives here are important: Satan and the reader. And we are introduced to the Garden, in part, through the eyes of a fallen being for particularly this reason. The abundance of diverse forms of life, enumerated at length throughout Book 4—our first encounter with the Garden—serves to contrast the Garden both with Heaven and Hell’s textural uniformities. This contrast is further heightened by the perspective of the individual fallen angel who is at the top of the rebel angels, but has also just recounted at Book 4’s beginning his loneliness in the context of their all having fallen from heaven. On some level, the experience of perfection in *Paradise Lost* should be as one and through the eyes of one who is an Other relative to it. Satan’s experience of jealousy toward the end of Book 4 is also a condition of his being different from perfection: he

does not have a companion of the same sort that he views in Adam and Eve and even between them and their inferiors.

Even though perfection is on some level always an Other in the poem especially with regard to the reader,<sup>9</sup> it is nonetheless presented explicitly by Milton as mankind's natural state, a place in which the abundance of difference works to create harmonious relations between beings. Eve's reluctant attraction to Adam—covered in greater detail in Chapter 3—is a case-in-point of this feature of Milton's Garden. Even though Adam is less beautiful than she is—a fact which she is made aware of through seeing her own reflection in water—it is precisely the difference in their features that she articulates as ultimately attractive.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Milton's particular rearticulation of Judeo-Christian prelapsarian paradise insists on, among other things, the difference of a variety of perfect beings. Rather, the equation of strife and difference, for Milton, is pointedly the result of the fall and temptation's artificial imposition on the natural state, which was perfect. Milton would view Hobbes's cynical articulation of natural humanity as more artificial than authentic, and he would do so out of a Protestant insistence on the ultimate authority of the Bible over philosophy, theology, history and the like. Or, perhaps, Milton is using his Protestant view of the ultimate authority of the Bible as the precedent for his understanding of philosophy, theology, and history. What he intends to create in the

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<sup>9</sup> More on this in the Conclusion.

<sup>10</sup> Credulity here is certainly dubious, and the extent to which this “perfection” of Milton's is communicable is certainly up for grabs. As will be explored in greater detail later, the extent to which Milton's perfection is perceived as genuine perfection is hotly debated and beyond the scope of this project. What is most important for my argument is the way that difference is articulated in Milton's idea of unfallen community.

prelapsarian books of *Paradise Lost* is a convincingly symbiotic, perfect, and not-yet-finished living environment.<sup>11</sup>

In the context of the broader intellectual climate of Milton's time, many scholars have attempted to articulate this "symbiosis" present in Milton's Garden as the presence of tension and or paradox in his views. Guibbory contextualizes something like the Edenic symbiosis in the broader terms of Milton's own intellectual climate:

Though Milton separated from orthodox puritanism, the puritan concern with idolatry shapes all his writing. His major poems reveal both the value and cost of puritan individualism. But *Paradise Lost* also shows Milton's puritan stance complicated by his effort to find a place for the body in worship. We see in him the persistence of desire for ceremony, for a ritual experience that might integrate body and spirit and connect human beings. (*Ceremony...* 10)

Whether this aspect of Milton's Paradise is an extension of this particular dilemma or vice versa, their collective force on readers and scholars is one of an insistent syncretism. Milton's radical politics and heterodox views are not, he believes, at odds with his commitment to other fundamental orthodoxies. Something similar is expressed in Stephen M. Fallon's exposition of Milton's philosophical views (See Chapter 1 for the full unpacking of this). Fallon argues that Milton's monism resists many of the broader intellectual categories available in his time, while also attempting to bring the best of them together in a kind of whole.

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<sup>11</sup> As I've alluded to before and will make reference to again, how convincing he is in this attempt is not of interest to me. Rather, I am using the poem to prove that he is trying to show natural humanity in a state of symbiosis. Most scholarship has a very difficult time not slipping into an argument about the successfulness of Milton's attempt to depict perfection. I am using the attempt as a means of inquiry into what it is particularly that Milton thinks of perfection as. See my Conclusion for more expostulation as to the potential effects this could have for biographical Milton criticism.

These more historicizing accounts of tensions in Milton's intellectual framework help to articulate the Edenic symbiosis in the terms of education that we'll be exploring here. There is a direct connection between the biological diversity of Milton's Eden and the intellectual and pedagogical frameworks in which prelapsarian education takes place. By analyzing these educational moments, we can get a clear sense of Milton's ideas about education in the ideal. These conclusions will be unpacked in terms of debates surrounding humanist education in Milton's own time, as well as his own writing on the subject.

This project makes use of Aristotle's four causes as a means of anatomizing the educational moments in *Paradise Lost*, in part, because the four causes make up (or aspire to) a sort of etiological whole. Although a more thorough defense of that choice will be made in Chapter 1, I wanted to mention here the usefulness of these etiological categories as a means of understanding education.

They are useful because of Aristotle's conviction of their relevance for both physics and metaphysics,<sup>12</sup> both of which are of central concern to *Paradise Lost*. Furthermore, causality is a, if not the, central theme of the poem: the cause of the fall, the cause of all our woe. Repeatedly, especially in the poem's dramatic opening, firstness, causality, and origin as beginning of history and time are evoked. The poem's insistence on multiple and varied forms of invocation, from Urania and the Holy Spirit in particular, further puts emphasis on the etiological nature of the poem, on Milton's own

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<sup>12</sup> See *Physics* 2.3 & *Metaphysics* 5.2.



preoccupation with causality in the process of writing the poem itself, not to mention the subject of the poem.

Although Aristotle was not a champion of the Puritans or of Protestant politics/polemics at all, his position as a cataloguer, as the first scientist, and as an etiologist make the choice of his etiology pertinent for this project. Aristotle was the champion of Thomas Aquinas, the public enemy number one of Renaissance humanism, of which Milton believed he was a part. Aquinas's Christianizing of Aristotle was central not just to the Scholastic project, but to the philosophical maintenance of the Catholic Church as a whole. Similarly, the middle-of-the-road approach of episcopal apologists like Bishop Joseph Hall were much more moderate (à la the Golden Mean) and therefore more Aristotelian than the polemic of the Puritans of which Milton engaged with thoroughly.

However, as is the case with all Classical subjects and Milton, he appeared both quintessentially Puritan in his rejection of political hierarchy and images, while also appearing deeply committed to the literary imagination of the pagan ancients. His interest, which bordered on an obsession at times, in Ovid, for example, is baffling. Milton rejected certain Platonic doctrines (see the future sections on S. Fallon and the Cambridge Platonists), but was also very Platonic in his conception of the ideal (as I've argued already). Similarly, Aristotle's view of logic as a tool of rhetoric was repugnant to the Ramist in Milton. But, at the same time, Aristotle could not be cut out so simply as the images and icons of Anglican worship could be. There are moments in which Milton's Puritanism flare up to see all of his work as in contrast and superior to the pagan work of the pre-Christian West (see the opening invocation for the most poignant and

famous example). And other times, in letters and in poetry particularly, he expresses an infinite indebtedness to the ancient pagans.

Similarly, Aristotle works as a means of analyzing Milton: not as a means of understanding him completely, but as *an* avenue of exploration. Such is my project here. What's more, I believe that using Aristotle as a framework for understanding education in the poem will have "findings" that are biased towards Milton's Humanism and Classicism. As important aspects of his convictions about education, however, the bias shouldn't necessarily render the "findings" irrelevant or erroneous.

Beyond the use of Aristotle for the structure, the chapters of this project are divvied up by characters along the hierarchy of Milton's cosmos: Abdiel, Adam, and Eve. Chapter 1 looks at Abdiel as a learner and as learned, shallowly exploring some of Milton's angelology, as well as the monism and its relevance to the overall cosmological structure. Chapter 2, perhaps the longest and most exhaustive chapter, studies Adam as a learner. Of all the poem's learners, Adam is focused on the most in the poem, so his chapter seeks to fill out Milton's notions of education fullest. In Chapter 3, we turn to Eve, asking the question of whether or not Milton's project allows her to be a learner and, if so, under what circumstances and limitations. As well as looking into Milton's gender bias in his assumptions of education, the chapter also, along with all the others, attempts to complicate Eve's hierarchical position in the context of Milton's unique monism. Chapter 4, finally, unpacks the ways in which learning breaks down in the temptation scenes, attempting to understand something about Milton's views of the relationship (or lack thereof) between temptation and education. In the Conclusion chapter, we will

revisit Stanley Fish (discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 at length) in terms of the postlapsarian implications of this study of Milton's prelapsarian world.

## CHAPTER 1: ABDIEL'S LEARNING

Abdiel's learning, like that of everyone else's in *Paradise Lost*, is necessarily both an active and a passive process. As we'll see more in our exploration of the material cause of his learning, it involves both the passive perception and acceptance of received information—which is also an act of momentary faith—followed eventually by the trial of that received knowledge and the action of discursive life-practice. Interestingly, Milton gives us the image of this process of learning even in the prelapsarian world, a world in which lying is, as yet, incompatible with the fabric of the universe. The value of new knowledge in an already perfect world, a seemingly superfluous adjunct to perfect happiness, appears to be complex, cropping up everywhere throughout the prelapsarian scenes of the poem and comprising most of the content of the middle books. Though the process of learning in the poem is not exactly “skeptical”—as it could be figured in a postlapsarian context—it is from the very beginning social and rigorous, involving push-back of a variety of kinds. The social and rigorous characteristics of Milton's educational model only make sense, however, in the context of his perfect world.

This world, though perfect, appears unfinished. Some kind of improvement on perfection is possible, implying that created beings, while perfect, are unfinished or that levels and hierarchy can still exist within perfection, and that greater perfection could still be life's teleological end.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as I'll later argue, Miltonic perfection is diverse and dynamic, fluid and tense. Whereas Miltonic sin takes the form of regression, stagnation,

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<sup>13</sup> There is the possibility that “ends” are problematic in the prelapsarian world, given the lack of finality implied in being immortal. However, Milton's unfallen agents—humans and angels—are still presented dramatically, having destinations of sorts. This characteristic is a part of what proves the traditional reading of Milton as orthodox problematic and what encourages so many readers to intuit or project a kind of predestination to sin in the poem.

sterility, uniformity, and singularity. It is marked by a refusal to progress both in mind (learning) and in body.

This project will unpack these educational scenes in the Milton's perfect world as a means of understanding what his view of education in the ideal is. I have modeled my analysis after the structure of Milton's cosmos: starting with the highest rational creatures (angels), then moving on to human creatures and following the hierarchy Milton imposes on them as well (first man, then woman). This process will also, therefore, involve an in-depth look at Milton's monism as it pertains particularly to education in the poem because of how integral the physics/physical makeup of the cosmos (as expressed by Raphael, see below) are to this hierarchy. Then I will move on to a thorough unpacking of the learning's anatomy via Aristotle's four causes (efficient, material, formal, and final) to argue that Milton's notions of education in the ideal show differences interacting with each other in a state of pure complementarity.

This project looks generally to use *Paradise Lost* as a means of understanding Milton's view of education, arguing that his desire was to create a coherently Arminian (free) universe that could be engaged with metapoetically in a similarly Arminian way. Unlike other scholars (see especially Danielson and Fish below), this project is not interested in trying to understand whether the poem's characters or readers are or are not truly free. Rather, in assuming a degree of freedom based on Milton's theological and political views, I look to use the poem as a means of better understanding his educational views, ultimately arguing that education works to show a complementary relationship between objects and subjects of difference in Milton's Garden.

Where my argument intersects with debates about the legitimacy or lack thereof of Satan's cause is that I am arguing Milton describes the movement toward fallenness as a process of unlearning (which will be explored in Chapter 4). I do not wish to make an argument against Blake's notion that Milton may have been of the devil's party nor with Fish that there are far-reaching effects of this depiction of learning for readers. But I do assume that Milton's notion of the Garden, as he depicted it, is indicative of his ideas of ideality/perfection, and that the loss thereof does make for a genuine sense of loss and tragedy.

### 1. Literature Review

Given Milton's monistic views, learning is a material as well as spiritual act, the actual changing of a mind from one thing to another, via a process of transfiguration. This feature is true of Milton's angels as well as his humans, given his peculiar angelology. Joad Raymond points out how Milton is generally following the Protestant tradition in his desire to put limitations around angels' knowledge (68).<sup>14</sup> Milton believes that the knowledge of the fallen angels "is great, but it is a torment to them rather than a consolation" (349).<sup>15</sup> Along with Raphael's description of angels in *Paradise Lost*, we can assume that Milton views angels as a smarter version of humans, being simply more spiritual than physical, but nonetheless physical. N. K. Sugimura in her book on substance in *Paradise Lost* argues that "Milton, like Aristotle whose philosophy he chose to think 'with,' prefers to work with open, not closed, systems of thought. As a result, Milton's thinking is characterized at every stage of his career by an interest in fluid structures of thought that embrace competing claims and even court philosophic

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<sup>14</sup> Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> *CPW*, Vol. VI.

contradictions” (2).<sup>16</sup> Later, with regard to Milton’s angelology specifically, Sugimura claims that Milton attempts to create a unity between divergent traditions of angelology so as “to bring into view the poem’s larger attempt to assert a totality of oneness within which differences nonetheless abound” (159). Throughout her book, Sugimura will resist the common “monist materialist” tag in an attempt to emphasize both the poem’s twin preoccupations with “oneness” and “differences.” Nevertheless, Milton’s angels are material and of the same “one first matter” as mankind, and so their learning process will have, as Raphael argues, a difference only in degree, not kind, and—crucially, for my purposes—have structural similarities.

Abdiel’s place in the poem itself is meant as a kind of logical fail-safe against a perceived error in the poem’s logic: that the fallen angels are unworthy of condemnation because they were merely following orders. As Danielson describes it, “Abdiel’s presence itself is an immediate reminder of the neglected dimension of love, or adoration, without which questions of obedience inevitably appear legalistic in the worst sense” (113-14). Milton uses Abdiel to attempt a display of the compatibility of love and obedience in a truly just and perfect world. Milton appears to need to prove angelic freedom by including at least one of Lucifer’s followers among those who do not choose open rebellion of God. In this sense, their fate is meant to mirror that of the humans: they are similarly “without excuse.” Burden phrases it this way: “The fact that [Abdiel] is shown to have made his own decision (V, 809-848) means that all the other angels must have made their own too. Their fall is thus wholly of their own will” (38).<sup>17</sup> But the poem goes well out of its way, in the depiction of both angelic and human lapse, to prove this

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<sup>16</sup> *Matter of Glorious.*

<sup>17</sup> *The Logical Epic.*

“knowing better” through central educational moments. Education is meant to act as a good enough means of keeping agents from sinning.<sup>18</sup> For Abdiel and the fallen angels, however, these moments in which they must have been thoroughly educated appear off-stage, wrapped up in layers of telling, with some of the important details left out. Though Milton is intent on showing the similarity of angelic and human education before their respective falls, the angelic education is not nearly as central to the poem as the human education is, which occupies the heart of the poem. What is more, the prelapsarian human educational scenes are followed up by a lengthy postlapsarian education scene towards the end. However, the angels’ knowledge—whether learned didactically or through intuition—is the chronological and intellectual precedent for understanding the prelapsarian human situation.

Most would believe, along with Durham, that Abdiel’s purpose in the poem is to “[dramatize] truth’s superiority to falsehood in *Paradise Lost*, and in doing so... [remain] consistent with those earlier statements in *Areopagitica*” (65),<sup>19</sup> but there is in this the obvious question of the fact that Milton himself appears to need to come to the defense of truth in his depiction of Abdiel and the writing of the poem itself generally. This dilemma is central to the problem of education in the abstract, that learning is at once both an act that frees learners and something that binds learners to itself, restricting belief to the truth, and can be seen sometimes as indoctrination. In other words, the conversation surrounds whether or not the truth will set the rational creatures in Milton’s world free.

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<sup>18</sup> As will be touched on elsewhere throughout this project, there is an interesting tension that comes up here. Milton’s engagement with the original Hebrew scripture is one predominantly preoccupied with emphasizing the point that knowledge is not equivalent with sin, that the Garden was not a mechanism of God’s for keeping humanity uneducated.

<sup>19</sup> Charles W. Durham, “‘Suffering for Truth’s Sake’: The Conflict Between Abdiel and Satan in *Paradise Lost*,” *Cea Critic* 68.1/2 (2005): 60-66.



Milton's agential "learning," as opposed to the mental situation of non-agential creatures, is meant to instill and nurture the reality of freedom in the mind—assuming that indoctrination is not genuine education. This learning, which is related to the process of reasoning generally, can be contrasted sharply with Fish's "faith" outlined in his discussion on readers' responses to Adam's fall (269-72).<sup>20</sup> Fish defines this "faith" as "The inner resource... which is what remains to Adam and the reader (and to Eve) when circumstances and their own intelligences misinform them. Faith supplies the strength of will that enables us to recall the simplicity and inclusiveness of the moral issue ... in the face of the more immediate claims of subordinate and, in some sense, illusory, issues" (270). The important departure here from Durham is Fish's conviction that the as yet unfallen "intelligences" of the poem's characters are capable of being misinformed and that in the unfallen meeting with the fallen there arise issues that can be in some sense illusory. Interestingly, both Fish's "faith" and the "learning" described above are capable of the totality that strips apparent agents of choice. Whereas faith, broadly speaking, could easily be thought of as the freeing counterpart to reason's authority, in Fish, faith works as a means of trapping the reader into an awareness of his or her sin. In other words, for Fish and others, reason and faith have a complicated and exclusivist relationship, even in Eden. Whereas for others like Thickstun,<sup>21</sup> Nardo,<sup>22</sup> and Danielson,<sup>23</sup> reason and faith are necessarily complementary in the abstract, but especially so in Milton's perfect world.

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<sup>20</sup> Stanley Eugene Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, Harvard University Press, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Thickstun, *Milton's Paradise Lost: Moral Education*, Springer, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Anna K. Nardo, "The Education of Milton's Good Angels," *Arenas of Conflict*, ed. Kristin McColgan and Charles Durham, Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP (1997): 193-21; see also "Academic Interludes in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 27, ed. James D. Simmonds, Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1991, 209-42.

<sup>23</sup> Dennis Richard Danielson, *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

Although in Fish's example he is referring explicitly to Adam, the categories of "faith" and "intelligence" are equally relevant to the problem of angelic learning as emblemized in Abdiel's story. Abdiel must have faith in God—faith enough to defy his superior. But he must also utilize his reason, both what he has learned and the present act of learning, if he is to escape Lucifer's implied criticism that Abdiel is subservient merely to a story.<sup>24</sup>

In order to attempt a distinction between "learning" in the Miltonic ideal and Fishian "faith"/indoctrination, there must be something of a complementary interplay between reason and faith, one that can vacillate between the two in a state like Donnelly's "peaceful difference" or the abovementioned "totality of oneness within which differences nonetheless abound" from Sugimura. Milton's cosmos is hierarchical, like the medieval Great Chain of Being, but it contains elements that are upwardly mobile in a similar way to the political and economic changes endemic to the early modern world he is living in. Furthermore, from the perspective of what *Paradise Lost* teaches us about Milton's philosophy of education, these two dominant cosmological pictures (the Great Chain of Being and upward mobility) relate to each other complementarily, just as reason and faith in the ideal.

## 2. Milton's Monism

At the outset of his study on Milton's humanism, David Reid describes Adam and Eve's "task" in the Garden as "to stand in the nature in which they have been created, and

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<sup>24</sup> This will jar interestingly with what I will later discuss as Lewalski's insight into Milton's growing elitism with the slow decline of the Commonwealth. Of great import is the extent to which Milton can be believed to be affirming of submission of the will to the right authority—which he would think could only be determined in the postlapsarian world through scripture and reason.

not to exceed it, far less to fall below it" (6).<sup>25</sup> This depiction of Reid's is useful for describing a common reaction that readers have to the seeming blandness of the Garden. Adam and Eve appear to spend most of their time in Paradise trimming the hedges. What is more they also appear to be held by a series of arbitrary rules and laws. However, Reid's assertion that they are not "to exceed" the Garden is technically incorrect. Adam and Eve are explicitly commanded to continue as they are so that they can exceed the limits of the Garden and materiality more broadly. Furthermore, the symbolically weighted and literal act of sin, the eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, is not framed an ascent of any kind in the poem except by those already "fallen." Rather, it is materially, from the outside at least, no different from the regular act of eating. Had Milton altered the biblical account of the Garden to put the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil at the top of a mountain, outside of the Garden, or anywhere else other than the exact center of it, presumably at a place of relative ease and convenience, the taking of the forbidden fruit could be seen, from the prelapsarian perspective, as a kind of ascent or an exceeding of bounds.

Rather, height is crucially associated with holiness in Milton's cosmos and Garden. Raphael describes Milton's cosmos through the example of a flower, a synecdochic microcosm which at once describes a traditional, medieval view of the Great Chain of Being and also revises it with a vitality that results in a kind of modern, upward mobility:

...So from the root

Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves

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<sup>25</sup> David Reid, *The Humanism of Milton's Paradise Lost*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993.

More aery, last the bright consummate flower  
 Spirits odorous breathes: flowers and their fruit,  
 Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,  
 To vital spirits aspire, to animal,  
 To intellectual; give both life and sense,  
 Fancy and understanding; whence the soul  
 Reason receives, and reason is her being,  
 Discursive, or intuitive; discourse  
 Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours,  
 Differing but in degree, of kind the same. (5. 479-90)

In describing the leaves as “more aery” than the stalk, Raphael invites the disorienting equation of body and spirit that will come to define Milton’s monism—the leaves are completely material, but somehow also less so than the stalk, and the same applies to the stalk with regard to the roots, and so on. Though nothing is imperfect, nothing is finished. The hierarchy of spirit and body is not a rule of one over the other, per se, but a sliding scale meant to indicate closeness to the ultimately holy or sacred, closeness to God.

Margaret Olofson Thickstun in her book on *Paradise Lost* and education uses feminist psychologist Jean Baker Miller’s notion of “temporary inequality” as a corollary and interpretive tool for understanding Milton’s cosmos (18).<sup>26</sup> Everything is on its way towards becoming as good as everything that is better than it, and all of life is a journey up the Great Chain of Being.<sup>27</sup> The monism is a literalization of the mythos of mankind’s

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<sup>26</sup> *Milton’s Paradise Lost: Moral Education.*

<sup>27</sup> This is posited unproblematically for Thickstun. Her argument is relevant to the apparent “justice” of Milton’s cosmos, engaging with a conversation that will be more relevant to the topic of Chapter 3. Suffice

being created from dust—it is only after the Fall that mankind learns that it will become dust again as a result of sin.

The hierarchy of Milton's cosmos is in direct, if not intentional, contrast with Dante's in its predication on progressive mobility. What is a matter on which the notion of divine justice hangs for Milton, is a matter of course in Dante's cosmos: eternally some will be farther away from God than others. Dante the pilgrim is baffled by Piccarda, a lady in the first ring of heaven, that furthest from God, that she does not wish to be closer to God than she is, that she is content in her place on the outermost ring. Piccarda responds:

Brother, love's virtue sets our will at rest,  
and makes us wish for only what we have,  
and doth not make us thirsty for aught else.  
If higher we desired to be, our wishes  
would be discordant with the will of Him,  
who here discerneth us, which, thou wilt see,  
can in these circles not occur, if love  
be necessary to existence here,  
and if love's nature thou consider well.  
Nay more, essential to this blessed life  
it is, that we should be within the Will  
Divine, whereby our wills become one will;  
and so, even as we are, from grade to grade

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it to say here that Thickstun's idea of "temporary inequality" will not disabuse all readers of the question of the justice of Milton's Paradise.

throughout this Realm, to all the Realm is pleasing,  
 as to its King, who in His Will in-wills us;  
 and His Will is our Peace; and that  
 the Ocean is, whereunto moveth all  
 that It creates, and all that Nature makes.<sup>28</sup> (3. 28-45)

In this cosmos, love is such that it generates not the energy that invigorates the zeal of Milton's unfallen, rational agents, but contentment that allows for rest. For Dante the Poet, Dante the Pilgrim's surprise at Piccarda is a result of his being fallen; whereas for Milton, a "slavish" acceptance of one's lot such as Piccarda's is itself a condition of being "fallen." But the extent to which Milton's heaven resembles Dante's is central to the major debate among Miltonists: is he trying to show us a heaven that is in fetters or one in which servants are contented serving a good master? Dante's heaven is perhaps too exclusive, even to those in it, whereas Milton's is subject to the criticism that it is too informed by a kind of Protestant work ethic, connected intimately with the rise of capitalism, that is restless even in Paradise. Milton revises the traditional Great Chain of Being with the modern notion of upward mobility—no doubt informed by his bourgeois upbringing and career—so as to protect his understanding of the greater Christian cosmos from potential criticisms in his time and later.

Raphael also makes clear that angelic and human knowing are different, in degree not kind, in the reliance on intuitive rather than discursive reasoning. So, mechanically at least, his mental processes should not be seen as categorically different from those of

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<sup>28</sup> Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. The Italian Text with a Translation in English Blank Verse and a Commentary by Courtney Langdon, Vol. 3 Paradiso*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1921.

Adam and Eve, just weighted more towards one side. Further, in God's commanding Raphael to go educate Adam and Eve on the history of the cosmos and to warn them about the coming danger, it amounts to little more than a metaphor of educator and learner, the former being what he is mostly by virtue of just having lived longer and having proven himself learned. Learning, therefore, is also a method by which Milton's monistic progressivism happens. Learning improves the already perfect mind but also makes it more like God and makes the body more like God.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas Danielson and Thickstun give us a view of his cosmos as an upward progression, Stanley Fish's depiction of the interaction between the poem and the reader—an already “fallen” setting—precludes the possibility of perfection, depicting the interplay's authoritarian finger-wagging at the reader. For my interests here, I assume the legitimacy of the prelapsarian world long enough to understand why education is happening, or needs to, in that cosmos. In other words, I do not disagree with Fish's argument—I do not think that I have very much of a conception at all of what is happening in the mind of “the reader”.<sup>30</sup> Rather, I am arguing that it is not the intention of Milton for his poetry to have a reprimanding effect on his readers because such a view of education would have been repugnant to him. Christopher Hill,<sup>31</sup> though approaching Milton from an entirely different perspective, similarly sees a Milton who is not

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<sup>29</sup> The extent to which Milton believes that any or all of this also applies to postlapsarian life is dubious. A more materialist-critical view would argue that, in his Garden, Milton is only dramatizing both the onset of liberal capitalism and the Protestant work ethic. It could also be argued that these are the fallen or corrupted versions of what Milton was trying to depict as the prelapsarian cosmos or that salvation through the sacrifice of the incarnate Son is the necessary equivalent of the upwardly mobile prelapsarian progressivism because, either way, people end up in heaven.

<sup>30</sup> In the Conclusion, I will attempt to talk about potential meanings for reader response.

<sup>31</sup> See especially *Milton and the English Revolution* in which he argues, among other things, that Milton's political interests were not far off the radical fringe of his time and that this can be seen and understood in his poetry also.

interested at all in a kind of inclusive wholeness, or a marriage between the traditional Christian cosmos and modern notions of progress. Rather, he would, as others would also, problematize the notion of temporary inequality as in itself an indictment on the goodness of Milton's God.<sup>32</sup> Fish and Hill both do much for justifying the skeptical approach to accepting Milton wholesale, as Danielson and Thickstun do, by pressing what is perceived to be Milton's assumptions.

What differentiates my approach from Danielson and Thickstun, however, is that I want to inquire into what we can know about what Milton thought he was doing through his poetry—more specifically, *how* he thought his poem was educating people—by investigating the poem itself.<sup>33</sup> Danielson and Fish are divided on the issue of the poem's reception, whether or not Milton's God appears just to the poem's readers, whereas I am interested in a biographical-historical experiment in attempting to understand something about Milton's view of education based on his poetry. In doing this, I hope to illuminate some of Milton's philosophical assumptions about difference and complementarity, not so much what his relationship to his God is (conscious or not) as what he assumes is important in human social relationships.

Steven Fallon in his book on Milton's indirect engagement with major philosophical problems of the day argues something akin to Sugimura's point about the "totality of oneness within which differences nonetheless abound" that will help to

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<sup>32</sup> See footnote 14 for more on the conversation of the justice or lack thereof of this cosmos.

<sup>33</sup> An underlying assumption of this project, then, is that the use of the epic first person in *Paradise Lost* is occasionally Milton unproblematically asserting himself and his voice (see the portion on the intentional fallacy in the Introduction). This is obviously incorrect in at least one respect. On a philosophical level, it is difficult to argue that anyone could actually communicate himself, given that the communication of a self-identity is always in some respects constructed and/or non-essential. All of these questions, just like the assumption of Raphael's reliability as a narrator (see footnote 24), challenge some of my arguments basic assumptions.



elucidate the problem of education in *PL*. Milton's monism was certainly radical, but it was not radical in the same way that Hobbes's materialism denied the existence of spirit altogether. Donnelly also makes the point that Hobbes's view of human nature makes violence an inherent characteristic of difference, but Milton's understanding of human nature allowed for "peaceful difference": "...the root difference between Hobbes and Milton is the difference between imagining that strife is reality, indeed the basis for goodness [Hobbes], and imagining that humans were made to embody a good that does not necessarily depend on violence [Milton]" (15).<sup>34</sup> Fallon also argues, however, that Milton is not radical in the same way Descartes was, positing a pure mind-body dualism. Rather, the radicalism of his monism should be seen as more like Anne Conway's solution to the mind-body problem and the question of materialist monism:

In his animist materialism, Milton finds a philosophy congenial to his temperament: he does not share in his mature works the distrust of the body and of physical pleasures rightly used that is pervasive even in *More* ... and that is so prominent in the Christian tradition. In enjoying the world, Milton enjoys not a dangerous and tainted substance, but a substance for which God is the material as well as the efficient cause. (135)

Conway and Milton sidestep the mechanism of Hobbes and the dualism of Descartes by revivifying created life with the divinity of its creator. For them, to view creation as a mechanism is an error in logic because the two are metaphysically separated from each other. Creation is a creation of God's, and machines are the sub-creation of humans. The materiality of creation is essentially good—though it is fallen—because its creator was

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<sup>34</sup> *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*.

good. Milton, of course, will eventually go further to say that it was created out of its creator, as opposed to nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). As Maurice Kelley puts it, “Milton argues, God created not from nothing but from a pre-existent material that the Father produced out of himself at sometime between the generation of the Son and the creation of heaven and the angels” (88).<sup>35</sup> In Milton’s words, “So the material cause [of creation] must be either God or nothing. But nothing is no cause at all” (308).<sup>36</sup> The orthodox doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* brings creation too close to a Manichean view of materiality as the cage of the soul, encouraging a Platonic notion of the superiority of the soul that would also make the Garden a less than perfect paradise.

Furthermore, as John Reichert points out, the greater cosmology is intimately connected to God’s design for learning: “Raphael teaches them, in Adam’s words, about ‘the scale of nature,’ and how, ‘in contemplation of created things / By steps [they] may ascend to God’ (5.509-12)” (2).<sup>37</sup> So Milton’s cosmos is also intellectual, while being both hierarchical and upwardly mobile. This tension between the hierarchical and the upwardly mobile is an essential component of Milton’s monism. The relationships between discourse and intuition, body and spirit, and possibly also woman and man are evolutionary and progressive, not dialectical. In this context, difference can abound without a kind of primordial, Hobbesian state of war between objects and subjects of difference nor a rigidly medieval hierarchy informed by a Platonic view of spirit as superior to body.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *CPW*, VI.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Milton’s Wisdom*.

<sup>38</sup> Again, whether Milton succeeds in depicting this as a real possibility is a different question beyond the scope of my present concerns. I am arguing that, in this creative process, he was searching for that possibility or attempting a logically legitimate complementarity between these differences.

Milton rejected the trinity on logical grounds,<sup>39</sup> but in his putting God materially into creation, his giving creation a wide variety of species and plants, and his insistence on the rise of rational creatures, Milton implies that God, which is the height to which all aspire, is multiform, differing greatly from Thomistic tradition. Materiality, rather than spirituality, is simple. Milton's preference for thought over feeling—which will be discussed more later—is another instance of this conviction. Thought is not basic nor plain, it is multiform, diverse, and high.

Milton therefore depicts the Fall and the steps toward the Fall in similar terms, as a mere absence of the process of learning, an absence of the activity of understanding, not a genuine desire to learn positively “the knowledge of good and evil.” In sinning, therefore, creatures embrace stagnation, singularity of mind and view, absence and simplicity. Fallenness is baseness, in this cosmos, not because the base or the material is bad or sinful—it is in fact divine—but because it symbolizes the rational agent's refusal to become what it is *in potentia*. When Abdiel confronts Lucifer after his fall, these characteristics become apparent, but in a way that is considerably more confident and, in that sense, intuitive from how Adam and Eve will learn, not learn, and fall later on. Ultimately, they are all on an upwardly mobile trajectory toward a multiform God unless they should choose to stagnate. The logic of salvation and restoration will not even become relevant until after the entire trajectory of the unified cosmos has been fractured by sin and, in the context of the majority of *Paradise Lost*, only optional for the rational beings of Earth.

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<sup>39</sup> See *CPW*, VI., 47-73.

### 3. The Efficient Cause of Abdiel's Learning—Perception<sup>40</sup>

In Book 5, when Raphael is telling the story of Lucifer's fall to Adam and Eve, he shows an Abdiel who disputes Lucifer's claim of God's injustice by first appealing to "experience": "Yet by experience taught we know how good, / And of our good, and of our dignity / How provident [God] is..." (826-28). Lucifer responds with, "We know no time when we were not as now" (5. 859). Abdiel's understanding of the angelic psyche is that it is fed by perception and inductive reasoning, receiving from the world around it premises that it can use to infer something of the reality of the world and the world before. Lucifer's already fallen understanding, however, is that perception is not applicable to matters of historical inquiry. Otherness functions not as an understandable thing or a learning opportunity, but as a thing "cut off," completely separate from the realm of knowing.

As is the case with Eve and Adam's early experiences too, perfect beings were created with enough maturity to make inferences based on their perceptions. This is what makes the opportunity for and the mechanism of learning in its most primitive form. Immediately after Lucifer's introductory speech to his underlings, in which he suggests that the Son's elevation over them is illegitimate, Abdiel appeals to one of the very means of perception itself: "Oh argument blasphemous, false and proud! / Words which no ear ever to hear in heaven / Expected" (5. 809-11). This is a reference to the recurrent theme of "ears for hearing" and "eyes for seeing" from the book of Isaiah and Christ's parables.

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<sup>40</sup> Speaking of perception, all of what follows assumes, to a degree, that Raphael's relation of the history of the cosmos is functionally reliable. I have no doubt that a more thorough investigation into the potential of his unreliability would undermine my greater argument and project. Although such an investigation is necessary and would have fascinating and far-reaching consequences for this chapter, it is outside of the immediate scope of this project.

Psalm 115 verse 8 also elaborates on this theme in its argument that “those who make” idols will become like them, having eyes but not seeing and having ears but not hearing. In the prelapsarian state, creatures are not only perceptive, but their perception is guided by and drawn towards otherness. The fallen state, as Lucifer demonstrates in his “we know not,” is marked by a failure of perceiving generally and perceiving otherness especially. This characteristic is both the cause and the symptom of sin; it is an Augustinian absence.

The fallen state then attains an anxiety of the ability to perceive, which is why, for Satan, the locus in creation of all that is divine is the sun, that which provides light on earth. It is the sun’s property as light-giver that reminds him both of his previous splendor and the splendor of heaven; Lucifer means literally “light bearer.” The writer of the Gospel of John argues similarly that “light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Satan’s emotional response to light, however, is complex. He is nostalgic for his own emanating light, already a kind of self-consciousness that is uniquely postlapsarian, but he also appears to be torn, at least partially nostalgic for his role, accepted once unproblematically, as servant of God: “nor was his service hard. / What could be less than to afford him praise, / The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks, / How due!” (4. 45-48). The fallen condition, for agents, however, is one in which it becomes not only difficult to live in light, but also to tell the difference between light and dark. Satan constantly dips in and out of this nostalgia—not exactly repentance—showing a restlessness that effects a restlessness in his perceptive organs also. Thus his, “we know not” is a reflection further

of this new anxiety born out of a questioning of his body's ability to perceive, which he extends also into the bodies and the stories of others.

But the unfallen's view of the fallen, at the beginning, must be met with at the point of perception—in the case of Abdiel, the ear. At once, Abdiel claims to be incapable of actually hearing the sounds that will not join in the process of improving him, and so he interrogates his means of perception. But, at least to an extent, he is not immediately perceptive of the otherness of fallenness itself. Rather than perceiving it as other things are, it is rejected almost *a priori*. The hearer desires to shunt the sound waves themselves somewhere during the process of perception. Abdiel's ability to perceive it, so the argument would go, would be dragged up by the root by the immateriality of Lucifer's position. But Abdiel does hear what is said, even if it is in a metaphorical way “unsubstantial,” and he has to respond in kind. So, in Milton's monism, the insubstantiality of sin—according to Augustinian theology—does not manifest itself as nothing (i.e. Satan's words can still be heard, he can still be seen, and—to press the point further—he can deceive precisely because innocent people are unknowledgeable of deception as a thing, which is the case with Uriel). The efficiency of learning is at the point of perception in the agent's body, but Milton's God has not designed the unfallen body to be incapable of perceiving fallenness. Rather, there is in the perceiver a skepticism and a desire to un-perceive that which is perceived as a material thing but violates its own thingness. Furthermore, it is the shape of the thing being communicated by the fallen angel that the unfallen angel perceives and rejects. The rejection of it is precisely what keeps him, the unfallen angel,<sup>41</sup> from falling. So, he can perceive it is a

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<sup>41</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 3, this is not the case with humans. Eve does not fall when she believes the lies of the serpent because her reasoning, like that of all humans, is more discursive than intuitive. For

fallen or hollow thing, and it is therefore in the choice to accept it as or believe it to be substantial that the others fall.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. The Material Cause of Abdiel's Learning—Mind

Milton puts forward his argument that the angelic mind relies more on intuition than discursive reasoning by showing us angels who are much more certain of the things they hold to be true. In a sense, “intuition” is what happens with what has already been perceived (and, then, to that extent, learned), and “discursive reasoning” is more a part of the learning process, more a part of perceiving truth. We are given so many instances of Adam and Eve's learning process because their learning has to be more of a process itself, and the angels are presumed to have known what it is they are already *discoursing* about. As was mentioned above, however, when Lucifer claims that the angels do not know what existed before themselves, he is making a statement about the impossibility of chronological, teleological deduction based on the material evidence available; he thinks the inferences made from them are suspect. As is the case with the way sin works elsewhere in Milton's cosmos, Lucifer's sinning doesn't cause him to become non-substantial. Rather, it causes him to become stagnant in the process of rising upward towards God, the upward mobility version of Milton's Great Chain of Being mentioned

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her, falling happens at the moment of eating from the tree, and her “unlearning,” or the absence of her active learning, is the process towards which temptation is made possible. Again, though, to call the absence of something a process is problematic. This difference in reasoning is also what Milton uses to justify God's offering of salvation to fallen man but not to the angels: the fallen angels should have known better (through their intuition). Furthermore, the fallen Satan appears to believe that he could repent and be redeemed still—that he wouldn't necessarily need the intercession of the Son in order to be “saved”—in his soliloquy in Book 4.

<sup>42</sup> As the argument would go, the fact that God has built into agential reasoning the capacity to perceive fallenness as such reveals that it was always his intent for some to fall, and he is therefore culpable in the Fall and/or a kind of cruel tyrant (Cf. Empson's *Milton's God* or Bryson's *The Tyranny of Heaven*). The other argument is that God has built a means to protect the freedom of agents into the agential mind, whether they choose to fall or not (this is Danielson's “Arminianism”).

above. In this instance, he reverts to lower, discursive reasoning, refusing to progress beyond it. In other words, he refuses to view moving on towards an understanding of the universe as teleological, based on inductive reasoning as intellectual progress.

Angels being “more intuitive” does not, however, make them omniscient. The angels are assumed to be merely more learned versions of humans. Angels often learn, as is the case with Uriel’s interaction with Satan, so it cannot be the case that angels are more intuitive because they already know everything, nor even that their knowledge is sufficient perfectly to do the work given them to do by God. It can also be inferred from Abdiel and Lucifer’s debate that some form of educational process through language happened and or continues to happen for all angels. Raymond in his exhaustive work argues, “Take away the angels from *Paradise Lost*, and you would be left with a linear, expository narrative. So although its concern is with, and its focus upon, humankind, angels are central to its design.”<sup>43</sup> The angels offer a corollary to the humans; they help us understand their trajectory, their changes, and their development. Their position is still that below the divine (or divinized, in the case of the Son) characters. Milton’s adding in the Raphael lectures to the Genesis myth must have had some kind of corollary in angelic learning as well. But perhaps—and this is what Abdiel seems to suggest—it is the Word, in a mystical sense, that the unfallen angels claim is present in the world that comprises their correlative lecture in history, a lecture too advanced, as yet, to be understood plainly for the humans:

Thyself though great and glorious dost thou count,

Or all angelic nature joined in one,

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<sup>43</sup> *Milton’s Angels*, 9.



Equal to him begotten Son? By whom  
 As by his word the mighty Father made  
 All things, even thee, and all the spirits of heaven  
 By him created in their bright degrees,  
 Crowned them with glory... (5. 833-39)

In the case of the angels, intuition of mind, the perception of reality through the Word seen in nature, is meant to be sufficient for their physical and metaphysical education. But there is less of a sense of adventurous exploring through intellectual inquiry. That which is perceived, in some sense, rings true with their pre-existing intuitions; whereas for humans, all learning is progression, expansion, growth. Paul seems to suggest to his postlapsarian audience something like this idea of the angelic perception of the Word when he discusses “the things that have been made” (*ποίημα*) in the first two chapters of Romans. So, Abdiel and Lucifer’s interchange is not just a demonstration of Abdiel’s learning and Lucifer’s lack thereof, but a learning opportunity for all parties involved: Lucifer and his fellow fallen (or falling) angels, Abdiel, perhaps Raphael himself, Adam, and Eve.<sup>44</sup> Much in Adam’s questions that he relays to Raphael betray a degree of anxiety about his ability to see the Word of nature as a sufficient education in history.

The material cause for learning, then, which is unique to all agents and present in each *in potentia*, has two progressive steps. Whereas the efficiency of learning is perception, the first step in the process, the materiality of it, is in what happens to the perceived things that are received by the mind. This process is intuitive and discursive reasoning, or, in other words, individual and social thinking. As has been explained, these

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<sup>44</sup> Though this won’t really be considered until later, perhaps it is a learning opportunity for “the reader” as well. For Fish, it certainly is.

do not just represent the materiality of learning, but they are also in a hierarchical relation to one another in Milton's cosmos. Less developed or learned beings (agents) rely more on discursive than intuitive reasoning and vice versa. But neither aspect of the process is ever completely left behind. Just as bodies progress in Milton's cosmos from base to spirit, from the roots of the flower into its spiritous odor, without ever leaving behind bodiliness completely, so learning minds become more intuitive and less discursive, while never completely leaving behind discursivity. Furthermore, Satan, after his fall, rejects the notion of the superiority of intuition, just as he or other fallen agents would reject the spirit's superiority over the body.

The parliament of Hell in Book 2 is a case in point of Milton's idea of discursive reasoning without intuition. Every one of the posited options is given very clear expression for a polity of Hell, and there is very little talking over each other; the disagreement is generally civil, and there is nothing of the chaos associated etymologically with "pandemonium." They are all socially intelligent, capable of bouncing ideas off one another in polite disagreement. But progress has to be moved forward with deception and the appeal to Satan's apparently arbitrary authority. They have become, to use Milton's pejorative for the English people—as will be elaborated on below—"slavish" in their serving of Satan, forfeiting their ability to learn individually or engage with social learning critically.

Abdiel's defiance of Lucifer in front of all his followers represents a kind of intellectual ideal—though not necessarily a postlapsarian human learning ideal—for Milton, therefore, because it displays intuition that is not subservient to discursive reasoning. The epic narrative voice tells us after his rejection of Lucifer's statement that

“None seconded, as out of season judged, / Or *singular* and rash” (5. 850-51, emphasis added). He has already apparently held discourse with the angels and the cosmos, and he has tested his intuition recursively against the intuitions of others. This emphasis on the importance of a singular intuition for the progression of a learner is no doubt connected to what Lewalski identifies as Milton’s growing elitism during the waning of the Commonwealth in her exposition of *The History of Britain*: “The overarching lesson Milton derives from his history is that the British people from earliest times have displayed a troubling, innate characteristic: though valorous in war, they sadly lack the civic virtues needed to sustain free governments and their own liberties” (217). His use of the term “slavish” as a pejorative of the English people in their recurrent desire for a king—a characteristic he compares with the ancient Hebrews of the Old Testament—helps to elucidate the border of servitude’s usefulness. But Milton had limits to his capacity for accepting the desires of the people generally. Many of the Roundheads considered their revolution democratic, appealing to “the people” in the early years of the conflict. But it is undoubtable that the Restoration of the king was far preferable to the lower classes of British society than the Commonwealth was at that point, and that, in part, the Civil Wars were themselves brought on by an abundance of new bourgeois voices.

However, it is still the interplay of intuition and discursive reasoning that acts as a buffer against the pride associated with and endemic to radical independence in the poem. Milton’s abovementioned use of the term “slavish” as an insult is almost Nietzschean at times, and it betrays his bias toward individualism and defiance at the expense of democracy. But Abdiel nonetheless goes out of his way to point out the primacy of

discourse. His defiance takes the form of conversation at first and violence later. Although that which is more like God will always be becoming more intuitive, the process of progression is intermittently recursive, given that the two are essential parts of the overall whole. Not only is Milton's Great Chain of Being progressive for the individuals traveling along it, its component parts are complementary in the sense that Charles Taylor describes in his use of Bakhtinian "carnival" for depicting premodern social hierarchy:<sup>45</sup> the two coexist, occasionally reversing their roles in a "topsy-turveydom," but one is still ultimately elevated over the other in a position of divinely validated authority. Just as the parliament of Hell in Book 2 gives us an image of fecund discursivity, in Satan/Lucifer's pontificating, both at the end of Book 2 and in his debate with Abdiel, we see intuition that is either knowingly or ignorantly dishonest as evidenced by an abundance of intuition and a lack of genuine discursivity. As will be discussed in greater length in the formal cause of Abdiel's learning, discursivity is communal and social, and the appeal of Lucifer/Satan's argument is its radical independence from God. Although there is a sense of unease or coercion in the Satanic ranks, Abdiel, however, is meant to characterize the complementarity of the independent and social forms of thought in harmony, even if the success of the attempt is suspect.

##### 5. The Formal Cause of Abdiel's Learning—Community

If Milton's idea of the material cause of learning is the interplay between the individual and communal in reasoning, then the formal cause of learning in his world, the actual shape it takes, is communal and social. That being said, Milton goes out of his way, in the conflict between Abdiel and Lucifer, to give two different forms of education,

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<sup>45</sup> See *A Secular Age*, 45, 47, 80-81.

one of which is much more socially defined than the other. Although Abdiel's argument is circumstantially independent (as argued above), his appeal is to a larger community of agents and objects comprising the fabric of the cosmos.

At the ceremonial coronation of the Son, when all the angels gather, we see that they "bear imblazed / Holy memorials, acts of zeal and love / Recorded eminent" (5. 592-94). Keith Stavely argues that the meritocratic hierarchy could possibly engender pride,<sup>46</sup> and Fowler points out how this display contrasts with the heraldry of Hell.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, like the heraldry of Hell, they similarly portray a language of shared value in community. Unlike Hell, they show the unity lacking in Pandaemonium. They also show a paired value of merit and authority, the melding of hierarchy and upward mobility referenced above.<sup>48</sup>

Lucifer's rhetoric at this pivotal moment for him and his followers betrays, not just a more independent pedagogy, but a fractured epistemology that reflects itself communally in misunderstanding and confusion:

But what if better counsels might erect  
 Our minds and teach us to cast off this yoke?  
 Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend  
 The supple knee? Ye will not, if I trust  
 To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves

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<sup>46</sup> *Puritan Legacies: 'Paradise Lost' and the New England Tradition, 1630-1890*, Ithaca, NY, 1987.

<sup>47</sup> Ed., *Milton: Paradise Lost*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Longman; see pp. 319, footnote to line 593.

<sup>48</sup> The success or failure of this complementarity hinges interestingly on interpretation as well. Is either the hierarchy or the upward mobility problematically absent? Is heaven actually rigidly authoritarian? Or is heaven a scene of arbitrary promotions and demotions? Satan variously will suggest both. These questions can also be framed positively: perhaps it is a beneficent monarchy or an atmosphere of stimulating competition. For my purposes, I want to suggest that, qualitative questions aside, heaven and its critics appear to see these two seemingly contradictory characteristics present at the same time and in the same place.

Natives and sons of heaven possessed before

By none, and if not equal all, yet free,

Equally free... (5. 785-92)

Lucifer begins this portion of his address in the first person plural, “Our minds,” and eventually turns to second person plural, “ye submit,” before he stumbles into unsureness as to the extent of his knowledge of them, “I trust / To know ye right,” then, a more forward appeal based on his knowledge of their own self-knowledge “if ye know yourselves,” which almost suggests his confidence to know them better than they know themselves. Whereas in other instances, sin works to keep knowledge in a state of stagnant discursivity, in the mouth of Lucifer, because he is their sole leader, it manifests as its opposite. This is why he posits at first the inability to know that which can’t be immediately perceived (“Rememberst thou / Thy making, while the maker gave thee being?”) and proposes immediately after that they must have been “self-begot, self-raised / By [their] own quickening power” (8. 857-60). Rhetorically, he puts his argument into the hands of the power of their appeal to the agents in hearing, sacrificing the solidarity of communal knowledge for the moment or replacing simple solidarity with the kind of solidarity that can be found in agents who are united in their unknowing of a thing.<sup>49</sup>

Abdiel, however, appeals first to “experience” as teacher (5. 826), but he also looks to argue the Son’s superiority through an understanding of the beings he created:

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<sup>49</sup> Later, after they have been cast into Hell, he will appeal to their group identity. In that instance, their solidarity is as important to them as the kind that Plato mentions between confederates (Donnelly has pointed this out in “Homer Writes...”); for more on this see footnote 51. The difference in the rhetorical situations is also a difference between Lucifer’s attempt to educate his followers in heaven (Book 5) and Satan’s desire to rally his subjects together for a common cause in Hell (Books 1 & 2). My point here is that fallen education is *formally* individualistic, not that fallenness in *Paradise Lost* is always individualistic nor that education, fallen or unfallen, in *Paradise Lost* is in every one of its aspects social. Rather, that unfallen education is such that difference functions complementarily.

By him created in their bright degrees,  
 Crowned them with glory, and to their glory named  
 Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers  
 Essential powers, nor by his reign obscured,  
 But more illustrious made, since he the head  
 One of our number thus reduced becomes,  
 His laws our laws, all honour to him done  
 Returns our own. (5. 838-45)

Not only is the Son's superiority known through his creations, but to praise him because of his creations creates a closed loop that almost implies a kind of heavenly self-love or self-regard. Every being's self-knowledge will furthermore praise the creator. This is the mirror image of Lucifer's argument of their being united in unknowing; for Abdiel, all of creation is united in its knowledge of itself and others, which manifests in worship of its creator and, thereby, a greater appreciation of oneself and others. There does not appear to be a closed system of value, knowledge, or love, nor does there appear to be competition (as there does in Hell) for love or attention and admiration from leadership. Abdiel's rhetoric of education is therefore formally communal. That he argues at all, as opposed to fleeing or going straight into acts of violence, betrays also that he sees this rhetorical moment as potentially educative, that he believes as of yet in the reasonability of what he is slowly coming to understand as "fallen." If his first encounter with it causes him to doubt his senses, hot on the heels of that doubt is an impulse to win over via rhetorical argument and reasoning.

In the politics of heaven, also, Abdiel represents the longing for knowledge communities in that he is the only angel in heaven who rejects the authority of his immediate authority. The reason Milton needs Abdiel to betray Lucifer's authority is to protect the theodicy surrounding the damnation of the angels. Not only are they more intuitive in their reasoning, they must all actually be choosing individually, for themselves, to defy heaven. Furthermore, none of Gabriel or Michael's followers disobey their authority in order to join Lucifer's confederacy. Apparently, for Milton, there is not as much of a need to show how obedience to God has its exceptions among the ranks of the unfallen archangels. Perhaps they are also given a choice—Abdiel is meant to be sufficient evidence of the free will of all the angels—but because Lucifer's argument (through his second in command) is unappealing to those who are not immediately under him. Lewalski's exposition of *Eikonoclastes* shows Milton's distaste for the slavish tendency of Britons to long for a king or to give the status of deity to an individual person.<sup>50</sup> This is not just an echo of the Israelites wrongfully asking for a king so that they can be more like the other nations, it is also the effect of sin generally: to find and serve something or someone other than God.<sup>51</sup> So Gabriel and Michael's communities are the only that remain fully intact, a further metaphor of Milton's conception of learning's form as communal.

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<sup>50</sup> *The Life of John Milton*, 237-76.

<sup>51</sup> Donnelly discusses this point further in "Homer Writes Back: Rhetorical Art and Biblical Epic Justice in *Paradise Lost*," *The Edinburgh Companion to the Bible and the Arts*, Edinburgh UP, 2014. There he unpacks the significance for the rebel angels of the Platonic notion of a confederacy. A group of criminals, even though they have all stepped outside of the pale of the law, still has to be bound by something, so they are bound by themselves alone, by the confederacy itself, the authority of leadership or the group itself. The fallen angels are united in a community, but it has no final cause, or the final cause of the group is the group itself. A corollary of this lack of final causality can be found expressed in the words of the character Christopher Moltisanti in *The Sopranos* (Season 1, episode 2, "46 Long"): "We have to stick together. [Otherwise,] why be in a crew? Why be a gangster?"



## 6. The Final Cause of Abdiel's Learning—Infinitude

The final cause of learning for Abdiel, as opposed to other characters we'll examine, is not immediately very clear because the purpose of the angels generally is less clear than mankind's purpose, both in Milton's conception of the universe and in that of *Paradise Lost*. The upward mobility of Milton's cosmos is, on the surface, much more imaginatively fruitful for the human consciousness than it is for the angelic. Furthermore, the Westminster Assembly had recently redefined man's purpose as to "glorify God and enjoy him forever," but as for angels, the ends are less certain.<sup>52</sup>

Raymond's work points out the liminality of angels in religious traditions—they are central to the geneses of Islam and Mormonism as well as the Judeo-Christian tradition. Biblically, angels are certainly messengers of God, but, in Milton's epic, they are also the precedent of mankind, as created rational beings. For the sake of my argument here, I will treat them, more or less, as agents of the same kind as humans, though more "advanced" in the progressive monist project. Thomas Festa's *The End of Learning* helps to clarify the cosmological significance of learning for the poem's rational agents:

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<sup>52</sup> Angels are mentioned seven times in the Westminster Confession of Faith, but their ends aren't mentioned. They are invoked in Chapter 2, Section 2 ("Of God, and of the Holy Trinity") to show that praise is due to God from them. In Chapter 3, Sections 3 & 4 ("Of God's Holy Decree") they are mentioned to be, similarly to their human counterparts, "predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." A similar point is made in Chapter 4, Section 4 ("Of Providence"): "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God." The fifth mention, in Chapter 8, Section 4 ("Of Christ the Mediator") surrounds the fact of Christ's coming back to judge men and angels. In Chapter 21, Section 2 ("Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day"), for some reason, the point is reiterated that angels are not to be worshipped. Finally, in Chapter 33, Section 1 ("Of the Last Judgement") the point is asserted that on the last day of judgment the apostate angels (presumably having already been judged) will not be judged, but people will.

Against the idea that natural inclination toward learning provokes an impious curiosity, Milton repeatedly emphasized the way in which inquiry into the universe could breed knowledge that is both natural and godly. Receptivity of this aspect of what is perceived as the divine intention informs the idea of learning in Milton's paradigm. Indeed, attentiveness to God's design for the universe demands that education be pursued so that God may be more deeply understood and therefore more profoundly worshiped. (11)

Worshipping God more effectively is the main goal. His estimation of Milton's idea of the end of learning is not too far separated from the Westminster Assembly's notion of mankind's end. I largely agree, except that I believe Milton's monism, and the above-cited speech of Abdiel about worshipping the Son, creates an end of learning that is more like the Eastern concept of *theosis*<sup>53</sup> than mere worship or "enjoyment," especially as described by the Assembly.

Milton's belief in *ex deo* creationism combined with his idea of upward mobility through materialist monism creates an end, a projection or journey, even for the unfallen humans. Scholars have had a very difficult time with understanding Milton's Garden precisely because of a tendency to think of perfection as entailing the completion of an end. Milton goes well out of his way to portray a Garden and creatures in it that are far from finished. G. K. Hunter believes that, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton "tends to stress the

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<sup>53</sup> This is a loaded term, and its sources are many. Its patristic roots are found in Irenaeus in his preface to *Adversus Haereses*, but there are similar mentions of it or like ideas in the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and many others. The primary biblical citations appealed to are 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, John 10:34, and Psalms 82:6. The Eastern Orthodox church, though not in doctrinal writing, ran with these texts in their understanding of it. In contemporary protestant theology, Jordan Cooper has recently written a book called *Christification* which is a Lutheranzed take on the Eastern concept, emphasizing the less controversial components of the doctrine, emphasizing more the human *imitatio Christi* rather than the more radical notion that believers will slowly become a part of God or divine in some other mystical way.

continuity... of life before the Fall and life after the Fall, just as he stresses the continuity between life on earth and life in heaven” (182).<sup>54</sup> This pithy statement can be interpreted any number of ways, but, for my purposes, I can use it to mean that this continuity manifests in a depiction of human and angelic teleological ends in a pre-fallen world, meaning that the rise of mankind, which, as Raphael implies, will result in their elevation to at least the level of angel, has a destination *in* God. In Book 3, when the Father is praising the Son for his future work in redeeming the future-fallen world, he claims that, eventually, he will put down his scepter because “God shall be all in all” (3. 333-43), which is itself an allusion to 1 Corinthians 15:28. In *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton also points out that in scripture and elsewhere “the name of God is not unfrequently ascribed... even to angels and men” (245).<sup>55</sup> Alistair Fowler mentions the similarity between this kind of rising, or *theosis*, and Satan’s “presumptuous use” of the term “God” or “gods” to describe himself and his followers (187),<sup>56</sup> making a mirror of the unfallen version and bringing into question the legitimacy of both logically. Regardless, in *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere, Milton risks heresy and heterodoxy—at least certainly by Western standards in his time—to make a parallel rise to Satan’s fall that is centered around worship and involves the opportunity for the constant approach of the divine for unfallen agents.

For the angels, and for Abdiel in particular, *theosis* may exist in a kind of abstract sense. Their already being spiritual creatures, their ability to shape-shift and even transcend sex, express their unique advancement along this process relative to the

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<sup>54</sup> G. K. Hunter, *Paradise Lost*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980.

<sup>55</sup> *CPW*, VI.

<sup>56</sup> Alastair Fowler, ed. *Milton: Paradise Lost*. Routledge, 2014.

humans. However, in Abdiel's insistence on zeal and obedience and the angelic community at large, it should be inferred that their process of *theosis* is ongoing as well, equally as directed towards the infinite. In Abdiel's interactions with others, this *theosis* and infinite approach of the infinite is also intimately connected to his understanding of right reason and learning. N. K. Sugimura argues that the angels, "In their deathless state of intellection... appear to act with an immediacy akin to thought" (166), implying, as has been done before, an immediate connection between materiality and thought in Milton's monism. Thought becomes an integral component of the process of *theosis*.

Although the poem does not make explicit in graphic detail this gradual approach of God, it is aware of the tension being created between godlikeness and the desire to displace God, as well as that concept's history. Abdiel's abovementioned assertion of worship's cyclical effect on a rational being's notion of self-worth ends logically in an edgier notion of human goodness than was typical of British Protestantism in Milton's time<sup>57</sup> and was different from Milton's other heresies in its almost pagan openness to deification.

## 7. Conclusion

Milton's self-conscious determination to defend the justice of God as he understands it is intimately related to his inclusion of education as a theme in the poem, but it also informs his understanding of the poem's use itself as an object of education. Inasmuch as Maurice Kelley's argument rings true,<sup>58</sup> Milton saw the theological world of

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<sup>57</sup> Certain exceptions exist, as Christopher Hill has pointed out. But the contrast between Milton's views and the *Westminster Confession* serves to show how different his ideas were from the run of mainstream Protestantism, especially Presbyterians, in his time.

<sup>58</sup> Maurice Kelley, "*This Great Argument*": *A Study of Milton's de Doctrina Christiana as a Gloss Upon Paradise Lost*, (1941).

his epic as similar to if not exactly the same as the theological world he believed himself to be in. We know from *Of Education* that Milton thought education in the postlapsarian context was designed in some way “to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection” (366-67),<sup>59</sup> and we have seen marginally in the angelic context, how it was designed to work in the prelapsarian context, but what then would be the effect or the purpose for the postlapsarian readers of considering the end of learning in a prelapsarian context? Is Milton’s purpose merely conservative, to try to restore or preserve some notion of perfection from humanity’s ancestral past? Or is he experimenting with sanctification and spiritual refinement in his time as well?

In exploring closer prelapsarian, human education in Milton’s poem I will try to chip away at these questions, but there is undoubtedly something also experimental in his project. When the Holy Spirit is invoked as a muse for the poem, Milton appears to be flirting with the possibility that it could have a sanctifying effect on his readers. I am content to leave this question for now, though, that Milton is interested in experimenting with perfection, building up these prelapsarian agents and environments as an attempt at perfection, though he would likely have admitted to some degree the impossibility of that. The poem’s invocations, especially the first (l. 1-27) in which he claims to be writing something superior to the pagan epics, imply that he believes the poem is at least in part written by the Holy Spirit rather than his own hand. He appears to be also

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<sup>59</sup> *CPW*, IV.

interested in experimenting with what the perception of perfection would be like to the imperfect mind, attempting to create a kind of environment, in microcosm, similar to that of the Garden.

## CHAPTER 2: ADAM'S LEARNING

Whereas, in Abdiel's case, the application of learning is constantly on display, in the case of Adam and Eve, it is the process of learning that is constantly on display. Abdiel's "learning" here means "that which he has already learned," but Adam's "learning" in the poem is often more active, depicting how learning happens in the day-to-day activity of rational beings. Milton is concerned with showing us these instances which are almost indistinguishable from the prelapsarian mind itself. If virtuosity marks Abdiel's learning, curiosity is meant to mark Adam's, in the same way that intuition is meant to mark angelic reason and discursivity humankind's. In part, this distinction is the result, as Danielson has pointed out, of Milton's theodicean priorities. He is filling in gaps of the Bible—in a potentially Midrashic way—in order to assuage either his own or what he perceives to be other people's anxieties about the possible injustice of the Bible's depiction of the prelapsarian world.<sup>60</sup>

When it comes to the matter of human as opposed to angelic learning in *Paradise Lost*, the method of interrogation becomes more grounded, in part, because *Paradise Lost* itself—the reading process of which the poem goes out of its way to draw attention towards—is and was considered a means of human education. The hiddenness and the otherness of God become much more pronounced, and they become important factors in the learning process. Humans are meant to be learning about God, but the extent to which that demystifies him is debated. For Burden, Milton's project is precisely this, to show the logical coherence of the Biblical narrative. I, however, would like to suggest that

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<sup>60</sup> It's not hard to see the impetus for, as an extension of this thought, the argument coming from Blake that goes on through Empson, Forsyth, and others, arguing that Milton was actually undoing the work of the Bible more than coherently defending it.

Milton is interested in showing also the otherness of God in the biblical narrative, not just to bring God's reason down to humanity, but to also inspire wonder in the form of learning moments. In other words, the question of whether education is freedom can also be understood in the terms of whether education is a simplification or demystification of the object of study. The rationalist thesis would have it so: Milton's project clarifies God's purposes in the Garden and elsewhere—Burden notes in passing how *Samson Agonistes* is addressing one of the more problematic parts of scripture for Milton's project of clarification (4).

Rather, Milton is also interested in human education generally and in its psychological effect on mankind. Adam's general response to Raphael's history of the cosmos is wonder. Though I do not wish to put forward an exact reversal of Burden's claim, which would be to argue that education in the poem functions so as to mystify God completely, I do want to argue that the experience of learning does not create the kind of psychological calm that would come from a clear understanding of the logical coherence of all things. Logical analysis is not entirely incongruous with wonder, and I would go so far as to say that the wonder Adam feels towards the growing knowledge of God is in part inspired by his awareness of God's apparent logical coherence, but the kind of wonder Milton wants to show the learner experiencing is one both of a coming understanding and a kind of gentle distancing from the totality of understanding God. For humans, logic leads them toward understanding, but logic also expresses a resistance toward the totality of understanding as a completed thing. The more they learn, the more they know, but they are also repeatedly humbled by the limitation of their knowledge with each coming thing to know.



The distinction between God and his creation complicates their learning. God as object of human understanding is metaphysically and categorically different from creation as itself an object of human understanding in that knowledge of God results primarily in wonder, whereas knowledge of creation results in confidence and mastery. Milton's *ex deo* creationism certainly draws attention toward the similarity in human learning about creation versus learning about God, but the moments of wonder and the moments of mastery help to distinguish the variety of modes as well as the ontological difference between any being (in this case, God) and its creation (in this case, Milton's universe/cosmos).

As agential, rational beings progress up the ladder of Milton's cosmos, they also approach the mind of God. Wonder and mastery, like—as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3—body and spirit, work together and circle back on each other recursively, but are ultimately stuck in a hierarchy of Milton's own understanding. As beings' active learning is echoed by wonder, ultimately, their learning will become a kind of mastery or certainty that, although never being fully without wonder, limits and qualifies that wonder into “appropriate” places. Adam's sense of wonder about the stars and Eve, for example, is not yet attributed fully to God because he has not yet come to see that all that is fully good is pointing towards a higher thing. A thing can be wonderful in itself, and, as he grows in his unfallen state, he will come to see a greater connectedness between that which is higher and that which is good in the base. However, all learning will presumably always contain an element of wonder in the same way that all rational beings will presumably always have a body, even as they become “more

spiritous.” Perhaps this element is meant to emphasize the ontological and metaphysical difference between God and his creation until God “is all in all.”

What initially appears as Adam’s wonder at the apparent imbalance of creation, how incredibly distant the stars are from them and from one another, Raphael praises as a form of genuine and good inquiry (8. 66-67). Raphael seems to know that the question Adam is asking is not primarily one of creation but one of the knowledge of God through his creation, the blurry line between the totality of God and Adam’s view of God through the limitation of his presence in creation. Adam’s question also implies the interpretive argument that creation may be too wonderful for Adam’s good. But Raphael’s response is that creation is not too wonderful if one can focus on the parts of creation at hand and appreciate the parts farther away as a limitation for the present moment, a promise of greater learning to come, and present evidence of God’s greatness/otherness. Learning can thus be both calming and invigorating, both practical and wonderful, even physical and spiritual. Note also how the goal of learning is to see these disparate, different, and othered things as compatible in a complementary cosmos.

As for the character of Adam particularly and his capacity for learning, there are obviously a variety of scholarly opinions. Fish’s exposition of “faith”—discussed in Chapter 1<sup>61</sup>—de-emphasizes the importance of education and mental power in the actions and decisions of Adam and Eve. Tillyard, less controversially, in shifting the moment of crisis from the Fall to the conclusion in the later books, elevates the mental faculties of Adam and Eve to the status of heroism.<sup>62</sup> Kurth disagrees, putting the heroism of the Son in a position to displace that of Adam, thereby making education itself not a major factor

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<sup>61</sup> See *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, Harvard University Press, 1998, pp. 269-72.

<sup>62</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard, “The Crisis in *Paradise Lost*,” *Studies in Milton* (1951): 11-60.

in the “crisis” of the poem.<sup>63</sup> Nyquist in her discussion of the divorce tracts and Genesis obliquely argues that the mental faculties of Adam and Eve is what gives them their subjectivities and, thereby, connects them in their unfallen state to the ideal talked about in the divorce tracts.<sup>64</sup>

As for Milton’s view of tolerance and its relevance to human learning, Woods’s notion of “invitational poetics” and Donnelly’s of “peaceful difference” help to situate Milton and his views of mind with regard to the prelapsarian humans of the poem. Milton’s unfallen world is as marked by difference (of opinion, of kinds) as the fallen world. So, a kind of doctrine of tolerance is still present. Fallenness does not bring about the need to appreciate otherness. Rather, otherness and difference are *a priori* facts of life, and the tension between the two creates, among other things, a world of radical and unfallen learning, an environment in which beings are constantly learning, a world, in other words, in which “perfection” is still, and possibly always, unfinished.

This articulation of a poetics that generates opportunities for positive encounters with otherness can be summarized by the following quote from Woods:

What establishes true knowledge for any person, and at the same time, Milton believed, fulfills God’s will, is that person’s careful attention to a wide range of learning and a thoughtful approach to experience followed by the use of reason and the act of choosing. Milton, more than any previous English writer, centers freedom in the act of rational, knowledgeable choice. In this he set out to change how his readers thought about freedom and liberty, and to change not only the

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<sup>63</sup> Burton O. Kurth, *Milton and Christian Heroism: Biblical Epic Themes and Forms in Seventeenth Century England*, Berkeley, 1959.

<sup>64</sup> Mary Nyquist. *The genesis of gendered subjectivity in the divorce tracts and in Paradise Lost*, New York: Routledge, 2019.

meanings associated with the terms themselves, but to invite a more questioning and individually assertive habit of mind. (3)<sup>65</sup>

The invitation of the poetry itself, for Woods, functions within this matrix of experience, reason, and choice, but the process is non-coercive and, in the ideal, freeing as well as educating. Donnelly's position is "that Milton views reason as the poetic gift of peaceful difference and that he does not share in the modern [Hobbesian] assumption that reason is intrinsically coercive" (vii).<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, human learning in the ideal, for Milton, will occur in a space absent of the coercive edge familiar to postlapsarian argumentation and rhetoric.<sup>67</sup> Donnelly also applies this notion of "peaceful difference" to Milton's later poetry specifically: "In effect, his mature poetry models a kind of biblical intertextuality that unites literary means and ends in a fruitful tension, in order to show the extent to which divine love can be intelligible to finite human beings as a gift that is neither merely coerced order nor chaotic" (2).<sup>68</sup> Although Milton is not a pacifist, his understanding of educable ideal in the Garden is informed by a poignant sense of wholeness in diversity.

Understanding the way logic and/or reason work in the Garden and what this says about both Adam and Eve's capacity to learn and Milton's position on ideal learning, can be summarized by three general approaches. The one extreme, which holds that Milton's preoccupation with logic in no way jars with the poetry, is emblemized by Dennis Burden's *The Logical Epic*, which argues not just that the general world of Milton's

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<sup>65</sup> *Milton and the Poetics of Freedom*.

<sup>66</sup> *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*.

<sup>67</sup> Later, temptation of the unfallen by the fallen will not be absent of this coerciveness, but—as Donnelly stresses—Milton remains anxious to portray that coercion as not efficiently totalizing, not so overpowering as to take away one's ability to choose.

<sup>68</sup> Donnelly also justifies this position via an exposition of Milton's Arminianism: "Thus, according to Milton's critique, both Calvinist theology and Hobbesian philosophy legitimize state-sponsored coercion of religious conformity among Protestants; but, more importantly, they both do so as a result of similar assumptions regarding the necessity of evil" (16-17).

cosmos is logical but that Satan (and fallen beings generally) fall into illogic. Robert Hoopes, in his exhaustive study of right reason, identifies Milton as “the last great literary voice of the concept of right reason, indeed of rational and ethical Christianity itself” (199-200).<sup>69</sup> On the other end of the extreme, however, is a view of Milton’s poetry as in some major ways antithetical to Milton’s commitment to logic generally or Ramist logic (and his *Ars Logica*) in particular. Fish’s abovementioned conversation about “faith” complicates a tidy bringing together of logic and poetry, especially as it plays out in the poem for Adam. Walter Ong Jr. qualifies Burden’s use of the word “logic” in his title,<sup>70</sup> while also suggesting that Milton himself drew a distinction between Ramist logic and the rhetoric of poetry.<sup>71</sup>

Occupying the middle ground—and corroborating my view of Milton’s monism—are those who distinguish between various kinds of logic as they pertain to Milton’s Eden, especially N. K. Sugimura<sup>72</sup> and Richard Arnold.<sup>73</sup> Arnold’s distinction between “pure reason” and “right reason” helps to disentangle the complications aroused by Ong’s critique of Burden. The “pure reason” Arnold associates with fallenness is disintegrated from the other arts and from life itself, hovering around in the world of

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<sup>69</sup> *Right Reason in the English Renaissance*.

<sup>70</sup> “Because its title might suggest some special relevance here, it should be noted that Dennis H. Burden’s *The Logical Epic*... does not treat Milton’s *Logic* at all or any of the logical tradition as such out of which Milton was operating; the ‘logical’ in the title apparently refers simply to general intellectual consistency” (CPW VIII, 201, n. 121).

<sup>71</sup> “Milton reproduces part of Ramus’s text on this cryptic method and adds only this comment of his own to close the issue and the *Logic*: ‘But to the orators and poets should be left their own account of method, or at least to those who teach the art of oratory and poetry.’ This completely overturns the Ramist cart. Ramus had insisted that all method of any kind belonged not to rhetoric or to poetry but to logic and to nothing else. It appears that Milton is not so sure” (CPW VIII, 204). See also John Curran’s “Milton and the Logic of Annihilation” for an argument about Milton’s determined effort to use poetry logically, in a Ramist vein.

<sup>72</sup> “*Matter of Glorious Trial*”: *Spiritual and Material Substance in Paradise Lost*.

<sup>73</sup> *Logic of the Fall: Right Reason and [Im]pure Reason in Milton’s Paradise Lost*.

abstractions, and “right reason” is attuned to everything else. His distinction is expressed clearly at the beginning of the work:

In *Paradise Lost* Milton clearly identifies the Aristotelian method of reasoning with *pure reason*, which for Milton is an immediate or *a priori* contradiction in terms, since pure reason alone is—paradoxically but necessarily—an impure form of reasoning. In Milton’s poetic terms, the pure ratiocinative activity of mind is characterized as “dry light,” “studious thoughts abstruse,” or “notions vain,” which force one into and retain one “in wandr’ing Mazes lost.” Set against this pure syllogistical or enthymemeic reasoning is another kind of reasoning—itsself a venerable tradition dating back even further than Aristotle, that of *right reason*; or, in Milton’s poetic terms, “prime wisdom,” “better knowledge,” or “umpire conscience.” This form of reasoning simultaneously unites the intellectual or ratiocinative faculty *and* the moral or spiritual sense; it is animated and sustained by (and operates according to) one’s higher conscience, moral sense, or, in theological terms—and certainly in the case of *Paradise Lost*—the holy spirit or religious conscience. This form of reasoning is directed toward and exists precisely to dispose one toward appropriate action, unassailable belief, and edifying behavior: it is the highest faculty in the human being, certainly higher than the more limited pure reason. (ix)

His conflation of “right reason” and “conscience” conveniently unites much of Milton’s poetic and prose writings on the subject of knowledge and sin. The distinction helps to situate reason that is integrated into life and that which is removed from it.<sup>74</sup>

Sugimura helps to elucidate the apparent tension between what Arnold identifies as Milton’s perception of Aristotle’s mark on logic (pure reason) and the aspects of Aristotle that influenced Milton’s views of education and nature positively. Sugimura argues that “Milton, like Aristotle whose philosophy he chose to think ‘with,’ prefers to work with open, not closed, systems of thought. As a result, Milton’s thinking is characterized at every stage of his career by an interest in fluid structures of thought that embrace competing claims and even court philosophic contradictions” (2). In other words, Milton’s interest in Aristotle doesn’t just show his Humanist dismissal of Scholasticism; it also shows his investment in thought structures in which differences coexist non-competitively and an idea that the Bible and logic are not inherently opposed to much of the pre-Christian pagan philosophical and literary traditions.

Adjunct to these arguments is Stephen M. Fallon’s historicization of Milton with his philosophical contemporaries,<sup>75</sup> touched on in Chapter 1. Fallon’s differentiation of Milton from his contemporaries in the Cambridge Platonists, as well as Hobbes, helps to clarify Milton’s apparent comfort with the body as a genuine vessel of learning as well as divinity. As far as this pertains to human learning, the material cause of learning is endowed with a kind of dignity not common in the Christian tradition but also not

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<sup>74</sup> Shakespeare’s meditation on learning, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, is a useful dramatization of the tension between the Early Modern take on the Scholastics (pure reason; or learning removed from life) and Humanist notions of education and learning (learning that serves and is integrated into life).

<sup>75</sup> *Milton Among the Philosophers*.

necessarily antagonistic to it.<sup>76</sup> This argument complicates the tidy notion of Eve's fall as an act of genuine physical learning, as she herself claims immediately after eating (IX. 795-833). However, it also troubles the notion of a purely Augustinian view of evil/sin as unsubstantial, which, in turn, creates more logical problems for a purely orthodox reading of *Paradise Lost*. Ultimately, for our purposes, Fallon's argument establishes learning as an act of proto-theosis, not just paving the way for Adam and Eve's capacity to learn further, but also for that capacity's approach to the divine from an earthly if unfallen starting point.

# 1. Human Intellectual Monism: Alterity, Difference, Complementarity, and Creativity.

The effect of Milton's unique style of monism, when seen in a human context, can be understood as a sort of universal truth—not in the sense of a kind of twentieth-century “objectivity” versus “subjectivity” epistemology, but that truth is a place to which any person can go should they choose.<sup>77</sup> This natural law, or space of truth, for Milton, is located historically before, around, and after the special revelation through the Scriptures. He can justify his obsession with pagan poets and edgy figures like Ovid only through the radical assertion that general revelation is not just of value, but the primary step in the intellectual path towards special revelation and the knowledge of God. Wolfe's description of Milton's self-revelation in *The Reason of Church Government* touches on this point:

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 135.

<sup>77</sup> I don't want to harp too much on this, but I think it is important to note the pervasiveness and importance of choice, what he would think of as free choice, in his scheme of learning and intellect. Milton comes from the same burgeoning middle class that will shape modernity's capitalist economics, which emphasizes choice as a fundamental feature of human relationships.



Milton releases his own meditations about himself: a man superbly confident of his poetic genius, conscious of himself as a part of two great traditions: Jeremiah and Tiresias; David and Homer. In his union of two traditions Milton was a unique Englishman: No other Puritan prophet had his vision of himself as a great national poet; and no Cavalier poet combined in his background Milton's vast humanistic learning and his zeal for root and branch reformation. (*CPW* I, 203)

It's important furthermore to realize that Milton's obstinate allegiance to the pagan and religious, his obstinate refusal to see their incompatibility, was apparently incongruous to his peers even in his time. A post-Enlightenment reading of Milton only highlights even more its uniqueness. It is in this sense also that we can see Wolfe's assertion that Milton was, in some ways, still living in an Elizabethan mindset, that he Romanticizes the period as a time in which these two worlds could be unified under some kind of commonly understood doctrine of nature:

When Milton was born, Raleigh was fifty-six, Bacon forty-seven, Shakespeare forty-four. In a creative and broadly intellectual sense Milton was one of this company. His eagerness to know reached back to the same humanistic learning they had studied; his imagination, like theirs, played over the whole range of the world's past. (*CPW* I, 2)

On this subject, Milton's *Prolusions* are relevant, even if we should read them with a grain of salt, not as official Miltonic doctrine but as more of an educational exercise. However, they do tend to portray early seeds to later patterns of thought. In his seventh, arguing that "Knowledge Makes Men Happier, etc.," he seems particularly keen to tie together theology and a concept of mind:

God would indeed seem to have endowed us to no purpose, or even to our distress, with this soul which is capable and indeed insatiably desirous of the highest wisdom, if he had not intended us to strive with all our might toward the lofty understanding of those things, for which he had at our creation instilled so great a longing into the human mind...The more deeply we delve into the wondrous wisdom, the marvelous skill, and the astounding variety of its creation (which we cannot do without the aid of Learning), the greater grows the wonder and awe we feel for its Creator and the louder the praises we offer Him, which we believe and are fully persuaded that He delights to accept. (*CPW* I, 291-92)

Here we see a pattern characteristic of Milton's thought throughout his life: observations about nature are intimately tied with larger theodicean questions. Throughout all of the late poetry, but especially in *Samson Agonistes*, the fragility of the eye becomes problematic from a theodicean point of view (Cf. lines 70-97). Similarly, here, the mind's ability to rove is evidence that God has designed it to be so. Whereas in *Samson*, the fragility of the most important organ causes him to cry out in bitter frustration, here, at the outset of his career, the apparent cause of the mind is united to its design and function. What is a crisis in Samson is so devastating to the speaker, if not the author, because there is an apparent break in a chain of unity between nature and truth, hinting at the possibility of a break between nature and scripture too. Indeed, Milton's preoccupation later in life with reforming scripture into verse is also a reflection of either an anxiety about the potential disunity between these two or a desire to prove to doubters that there is an indelible connection between the two. Whether fragile, reactionary, or otherwise, this is the same mental state in which *Paradise Lost* is written. Furthermore, in

*Samson Agonistes* he is drawing our attention to the effect that sin has on the world, namely that it separates the design and the end/purpose. *Paradise Lost*, especially in the portions set in the Garden, is evidencing what he believes the ideal to be.

Whereas Milton's idea of the purpose of postlapsarian education can be taken from the beginning of *Of Education*, his definition of this end creates problems for understanding the final cause of education in Milton's prelapsarian world: "The end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection" (*CPW* II, 366-67). However, hints for the final cause of Milton's prelapsarian learning can be grasped at between the lines. He outlines a progression—in the postlapsarian context, a regression—moving from knowing God aright, to loving him, to imitating him, to being like him. This chain is similar to the monistic chain outlined briefly in Chapter 1, which is emblemized in the synecdoche of the flower. That which is reparative and conservative in Milton's postlapsarian scheme of learning is progressive in the prelapsarian. The idea of progression is itself important to the structure of Milton's educational scheme and his critique of universities and schooling mechanisms generally:

And that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind, is our time lost partly in too oft idle vacancies given both to schools and Universities, partly in a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose Theams, verses, and Orations, which are the acts of the ripest judgement and the final work of a head fill'd by long reading, and observing, with elegant maxims, and copious

invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings, like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit... (CPW II, 371-73)

He goes on later to offer what he views as corrections to the very curricula of materials that are taught at particular ages and times for learning boys.<sup>78</sup> Milton believes that requiring too much work from boys too early can create in them an aversion to learning that lasts a lifetime. So, although a term like ‘hierarchy’ could easily be considered distasteful or even irrelevant in the conversation of Milton’s educational philosophy, he is preoccupied with the process of progress in learning, and it is something he views as vulnerable to the influence of sin and evil in the postlapsarian world.

The line of thought concerning lapse and learning is more thoroughly fleshed out, however, in *Areopagitica*, which finds its relevance to the conversation of education in its attempt to defend intellectual liberalism. In an act of wild hermeneutical invention, Milton makes the passage of Jesus appearing to Peter in a dream, telling him to rise, kill, and eat unclean animals in Acts 10—which, as is broadly understood, legitimizes the general disregard of Old Testament dietary law and restriction for Christians—as a justification for broad reading in a variety of subjects. Here we have again a powerful emblem of Milton’s materialist monism: in the conversation of what it is permissible or beneficial for a good Christian to read, Milton cites biblical passages on food. Milton reasons,

...yet God in that unapocryphall vision, said without exception, Rise Peter, kill and eat, leaving the choice to each mans discretion. Wholesome meats to a

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<sup>78</sup> Balachandra Rajan expounds on the relevance of the traditional Great Chain of Being to Milton’s curriculum in “Simple, Sensuous, and Passionate,” *Review of English Studies*, 21.84 (October 1945): 289-301.

vitiated stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome; and best books to a naughty mind are not unapplicable to occasions of evill. Bad meats will scarce breed good nourishment in the healthiest concoction; but herein the difference is of bad books, that they to a discreet and judicious Reader serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate. (CPW II, 512)

Milton here already has a decidedly material and embodied sense of knowledge in just his assumption that the passage from Acts is of any relevance at all to the question of what it is suitable or not for a Christian to read.<sup>79</sup> He then directly connects the prelapsarian world and the situation in the Garden with the problem of censorship and free press:

If every action which is good, or evill in man at ripe years, were to be under pittance, and prescription, and compulsion, what were vertue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what grammercy to be sober, just or continent? many there be that complain of divin Providence for suffering Adam to transgresse, foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had bin else a meer artificiall Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions... God therefore left him free, set before him a

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<sup>79</sup> In *How Milton Works*, Fish's Milton is Puritan in his insistence on the internal over the external, starting from a position of faith, using an unverifiable axiom as the means of explaining all of the external and verifiable world. Education, in his scheme, is always radically deductive, rather than inductive. I would like to posit, however, that Fish does not take into consideration how important and heretical (by the standards of the considerable majority of his Roundhead peers) Milton's *ex deo* creationism and monism were to the metacreation that is his cosmos in *Paradise Lost*. Although I believe Christopher Hill often takes the argument too far, he is right to contextualize Milton as a radical in a historical moment in which longstanding, hard theological lines in the sand were shifting. But Fish also underestimates the classical and Humanist influence on Milton, seeing him instead as a Puritan in the now caricatured sense of the word, overlooking, for example, the importance of the influence of Ovid on his poetics and even on the sensuality of his unfallen world. For a Puritan, Milton's theology is wildly deviant from standard Calvinism, and the most important deviation for our conversation here is his understanding of matter as a means of not only pointing learning, rational agents toward God but also as a literal manifestation of God. *Areopagitica*, therefore, functions awkwardly in Fish's scheme. The "puritan" caricature fits only a portion of how we are to understand Milton's convictions.

provoking object, ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he creat passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly temper'd are the very ingredients of vertu? They are not skilfull considerers of human things, who imagin to remove sin by removing the matter of sin; for, besides that it is a huge heap increasing under the very act of diminishing, though some part of it may for a time be withdrawn from some persons, it cannot from all, in such a universall thing as books are; and when this is done, yet the sin remains entire. (*CPW* II, 527-28)

The oft-mentioned “artificial Adam” appears to be one who is stripped of the ability to reason and choose. The authentic Adam, who is characterized and framed as a learner in the ideal, is therefore engaging with all things in unity, though he is still choosing, discriminating, and reasoning. My conception of learning as activity for humans is completed by this negative image of the “artificial Adam” who is more automaton than agent. Therefore, the passivity of angelic “learning” could perhaps be achieved one day by the progressive, unfallen humans only through a period of active learning and reasoning.

What Milton means in the above quote from *Areopagitica* about “a discreet and judicious Reader” is obscure and quintessentially so for much of the fallout from the Reformation’s *sola scriptura*. His liberalism encourages wide reading but remains somewhat non-committal regarding the hermeneutic. This unwillingness to elaborate, in part, shows his confidence in the one-ness of readers generally and the reading process. At this point in his career, he still has an enormous amount of confidence in the average

reader and the lay people. Later, with *Eikonoclastes*, he will wind back some of the liberalism of *Areopagitica*, now that the Commonwealth occupies the seat of power and is facing a threat from the masses. By the time of the writing of *Paradise Lost*, however, the quality and extent of his liberalism are up for debate, and so much of the controversy in Milton scholarship comes from exactly this issue.

To make an argument for the relevance of *Areopagitica* to *Paradise Lost*, I would like to point out that, at least, his interest in the effect of sin on education remains somewhat unchanged in at least one point. In *Areopagitica*, he makes the odd, though not necessarily heretical, assertion that the knowledge of good and evil as it is depicted in Genesis is better thought of “knowing good *by* evil” (*CPW* II, 514-16, emphasis mine). In the poem, he rephrases this point slightly, but the meaning is still the same: “knowledge of good bought dear by knowing ill” (IV. 220). If nothing else, readers can assume at least that he is in the same mind-space writing about the Garden in his post-Restoration world that he was in the 40’s or that there is at least some kind of meaningful connection. There is a sense of anxiety in the poetic rephrasing. In *Areopagitica*, however, he is describing postlapsarian learning, and in *Paradise Lost*, he is describing the Fall. The implied third, learning in the prelapsarian world, would be to learn good by good, not necessarily attaining knowledge—which is a word whose baggage contains in itself the Fall—but growing more spiritual, ascending the cosmos, through the process of interacting with God through it. The prelapsarian learning of the poem is less possessive (in a material sense) and more transformative. And yet, there is some sense that the prelapsarian good and learning therein is capable of coming into contact with evil without being stained by it, as Adam tells to Eve after her Satanic nightmare: “Evil into the mind

of God or Man / May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave / No spot or blame behind” (V.117-119). Learning in an intact and perfect world, for Milton, involves progress but not necessarily greater gravity. The goddess Melancholy in “Il Penseroso” illustrates the gravity of postlapsarian knowledge in her garb:

But hail thou Goddess, sage and holy,  
Hail divinest Melancholy  
Whose Saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the Sense of human sight;  
And therefore to our weaker view,  
O'er laid with black, staid Wisdoms hue.

An unfallen version of Wisdom, the poem implies, could be seen in her glory and “light” in both senses of the word.

But, to push the matter further, Milton is engaged in the same theodicean issue—that God would keep the knowledge of good from his prelapsarian humans. He wants us to all be sure that what is meant by “the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil” means that all prelapsarian knowledge—which, it has to be admitted, there was—was simply knowledge of the good. There was therefore no need for the conception of any kind of knowledge that wasn’t good. With the Fall comes the distinction and the birth of epistemology—the possibility of knowing something not good or “knowing” something that is not true or real, as is the case of Uriel with Satan. In other words, both texts, *Areopagitica* and *Paradise Lost*, betray Milton’s anxiety that there wasn’t enough education happening in the book of Genesis. He feels that a gloss ought to be made in



order to rectify his love of learning and his Protestant conviction of the perfection of scripture as God's word.

The rhetorical situation of the depiction of prelapsarian human education, as opposed to angelic, is that, in a metapoetical sense, his readers are to be taking from this prelapsarian condition what they are to believe Milton thinks ideal human education looks like. So, his theodicean anxiety is resolved with his project of ideality generally, his desire to create a near-prescriptive pedagogical setting, with ideal learners, teachers, and environment, that teaches readers something about the nature of reading itself, especially the way we are to read the Bible and his own poem. (See the conversation on the ideal in *Paradise Lost* in the Introduction Section for more context). Although Raphael's education of Adam is also an attempt to answer the theodicean question brought about by Genesis, it also depicts proto-theodicean questions of Adam's own which are the result of the limitations put on human knowledge in the prelapsarian world. Festa explains Milton's paradigm of education as such:

Against the idea that natural inclination toward learning provokes an impious curiosity, Milton repeatedly emphasized the way in which inquiry into the universe could breed knowledge that is both natural and godly. Receptivity of this aspect of what is perceived as the divine intention informs the idea of learning in Milton's paradigm. Indeed, attentiveness to God's design for the universe demands that education be pursued so that God may be more deeply understood and therefore more profoundly worshiped. (11)

Donnelly's reflection on Miltonic "reason" is also emblematic of the educational paradigm that I want to argue Milton is intending to depict: "Milton views reason as the

poetic gift of peaceful difference and ... he does not share in the modern assumption that reason is intrinsically coercive" (vii).<sup>80</sup> Lewalski's take on *Paradise Lost* as it pertains to Milton's biography further emblemizes the metapoetic effect of the human education in the poem:

That antinomianism in Milton's humanist version is also central to the educative issues of the poem, as Milton foregrounds for his characters and his readers the problematics of interpreting God's decrees and his works, and the validity of appeals to reason and experience in probing their implications and responding to them. Not blind obedience to law, but thoughtful discrimination is all. (476)

This statement also tidily draws in the *Areopagitica* to *Paradise Lost*. Freedom must be granted the seeker of truth, but that does not in itself (for Milton) compromise the oneness of the truth. The monism, as it pertains to education, means just that: difference can exist in freedom only if there is a kind of complete oneness that makes up the backdrop.

John Morgan articulates the historical context of Puritan education by bringing together three important concepts for Puritanical learning: reason, faith, and experience (28).<sup>81</sup> He argues that reason and faith had to be balanced together and that Puritans generally were fairly suspect of reason (28-61). But Milton's Puritanism, which was farther along than Elizabethan Puritanism and mixed with a large dose of late Humanism, was not as oppositional towards reason as that of the early Reformers, like Luther, nor the later English Puritans.

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<sup>80</sup> *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*.

<sup>81</sup> John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986.

Milton's thoughts on education can be further contextualized, at length, by Festa:<sup>82</sup>

Milton makes the case in *Of Education* that all knowledge of God proceeds from observation of the 'sensible' to the 'intelligible': 'Because our understanding cannot in this body found it selfe but on sensible things, nor arrive so cleerly to the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be follow'd in all discreet teaching' (YP 2:367-69). This passage makes explicit the epistemological assumptions underlying the educational system at work in *Areopagitica*. The intellect moves from material observation toward theoretical assertion, from inductive perceptions toward deductive demonstrations of truth. Insofar as the theoretical takes the form of the theological in Milton's formulation, his logic descends ultimately from Aquinas: 'All creatures, even those lacking intelligence, are ordered to God as to their ultimate end, and they achieve this end insofar as they share some similarity with him. Intellectual creatures attain him in a more special manner, namely by understanding him through their proper activity. To understand God then must be the end of the intellectual creature. (36-37)

Intellectual creatures are, obviously, given a special place in *Paradise Lost*'s Eden, and that place is not permanent. In other words, Milton is not stepping as far out of bounds from the late medieval notion of learning (as it pertains to human/divine relationship) as Fish and Hill assume. There are certainly sharp edges to his heterodoxy that by Calvinist

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<sup>82</sup> *The End of Learning: Milton and Education*.

standards are clearly heresy, but the extent to which those heresies define the entirety of his relationship to the received cosmos of traditional Christianity is not absolute.

For Milton, reason and faith, like prose and poetry, had a relationship that was—in the ideal—non-competitive and complementary. Indeed, if anything, Milton erred on the side of reason over faith and of truth over poetic creation. His *Ars Logica* details his commitment to Ramist logic:

Milton's endorsement of logic was pretty sweeping. His use of logic as a principle of curriculum design, noted above, results from the persuasion that everything in existence should be made as 'logical' as possible, a persuasion widespread in Milton's age for far-reaching historical reasons... (CPW, Vol. VIII 197)

However, this commitment to logic did not have, Ong argues, a competitive relationship with the poetry or his poetic creative process:

Milton's poetry is, by and large, more 'logical' than most of his prose. The poems are, somewhat paradoxically, generally less impassioned and more carefully composed than his prose, their feeling, however high, under more rational control. (200)

As is the case with reason and faith, intuition and discursive reasoning, and so many other binaries in Milton's commitments, prose and poetry interact with each other in a way that is characterized not just by Donnelly's "peaceful difference," but also by a kind of essential need for each other.<sup>83</sup> If, as Ong argues, Ramist logic is marked by its

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<sup>83</sup> A central argument to be made for "the orthodox view" of Milton is in this vein. Milton's commitment to logic betrays his partisanship in the Satan/God dilemma. Ong makes this argument: "Satan, for example, reveals his duplicity by his conspicuous misuse of 'consentany' and 'dissentany' arguments" (CPW, Vol VIII 201). So, as Ong admits, all of this is up for debate. Suffice it to say that there is considerable overlap between those who view Milton as exclusively "of the devil's party" and those who view the influence of logic on Milton's poetry and thought generally as overblown or having a negative relationship with it.

totalizing effect on human behavior, its potential to crowd out all other forms of thought and feeling, then Milton is more reserved: he did “not go the whole way with Ramist logic” (203).<sup>84</sup> Poetry was Milton’s logical home, and his best prose was more poetic than Ramist. Again, Milton’s Humanism interferes with his ability to accept the fullness of Ramus’s radicalism, just as it had with the Puritan/Lutheran anxiety of reason. It is precisely a kind of Humanism that would cause his rejection of both extreme positions on the issue of reason: regular, human emotion rejects the Ramist logic as the universal principle, and the regular, human mind rejects blind faith. Or, in the positive assertion, no one can pretend to such radical positions as are expressed in Ramus and Luther because these goods (reason, faith) give and receive from each other constantly in the individual human consciousness and especially so in the prelapsarian mind.

Interestingly, as it pertains to the presence of complementarity in the educational moments of *Paradise Lost*, it is from the voice of the poem’s most central pedagogue, Raphael, that we hear how the gates of Hell were particularly reinforced during the creation of earth. He longs to hear Adam’s creation story because he was otherwise detained:

For I that day was absent, as befell,

Bound on a voyage uncouth and obscure,

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<sup>84</sup> For greater context, the whole quote is as follows: “Milton did not go the whole way with Ramist logic, which in theory and actuality is about as unpropitious for poetry as any noetic theory could well be. Ramist poets are few and far between. Milton’s wide reading guaranteed in his sensibility and in his works a strong reserve of Ciceronian, and rationally controlled rotundity, basically oratorical in cast, which is to say rhetorical in the traditional, non-Ramist sense. Milton had more feeling for sound than the typographically styled Ramist noetic and poetic allowed for. And his *Commonplace Book* reveals a preoccupation with proverbial and anecdotal wisdom uncongenial to the obsessively analytic Ramist mind” (203-04). In other words, Ramist influence on Milton’s poetry is considerable, even though Ramus himself would have thought that poetry is something categorically non-logical.

Far on excursion toward the gates of hell;  
 Squared in full legion (such command we had)  
 To see that none thence issued forth a spy,  
 Or enemy, while God was in his work,  
 Lest he incensed at such eruption bold,  
 Destruction with creation might have mixed. (8. 229-36)

Here Raphael details exactly what will befall in order to create the conditions for temptation proper: a spy will issue forth from Hell, with the passive allowance from the all-knowing God, and take a deceptive form in order to tempt Adam and Eve. However, in this context, what God hopes or intends to prevent is the intervention of “destruction” into the process of “creation.” The preconditions for the creation of the natural world must occlude “destruction,” or the impulse to reduce or erase, in order to create the conditions necessary for freedom. Once those conditions are in place, there becomes adequate space for the allowance of temptation, even deception. What appears initially as an exception to the rule of complementarity and freedom in Milton’s epic (God does not allow Satan to have a say in creation of the universe) is ultimately the precondition which will allow for natural freedom to exist later, in other words, for Satan to have his say. A critique of the existence of freedom in Milton’s Garden would be justified in pointing out the fragility of the freedom *in potentia* at the moment of creation, but the later temptation—the words of Satan in the mouth of the apparent serpent—are, in some capacity, the poem at large points out to us, the product of the necessary preconditions of a divine act of creation unimpeded by the ingredient of destruction. Creation and creativity cannot be mixed with their opposite in a complementary fashion because their

opposite, “destruction,” is also oppositional to complementarity itself; it, in itself, cannot compromise or take on or tolerate alterity. From the point of creation itself forward, however, the potential of destruction has to exist in a free Garden. Education interferes with this process in order to allow for the continuation of creation/creativity as well as free choices, even if this should mean choosing not to be free or—if it is not a paradox—creating destruction.

## 2. The Efficient Cause of Adam’s Learning: Perception

In response to Raphael’s curiosity about the creation narrative from Adam’s perspective, Adam echoes inversely Satan’s epistemological skepticism:

For man to tell how human life began  
 Is hard; for who himself beginning knew?  
 Desire with thee still longer to converse  
 Induced me. As new waked from soundest sleep  
 Soft on the flowery herb I found me laid  
 In balmy sweat, which with his beams the sun  
 Soon dried, and on the reeking moisture fed. (8. 250-56)<sup>85</sup>

From the humble position of not having knowledge of before oneself, Satan infers that sentience is evidence of self-creation. From the same position of epistemological limitation, Adam comes to different conclusions. His first attempt is still to understand,

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<sup>85</sup> My argument likewise assumes that Adam, albeit desiring to impress Raphael with a show of rhetoric, is sincere in his recreation of his early experiences. Though his recreation is artificial in a literal sense, I assume, him having not fallen yet, that he is either not capable of or not interested in deceit. So, what follows below—namely, Adam’s recreation of his own perceptions mirroring that of creation—is considered not deception. If it isn’t necessarily exactly factual—it’s being a verbal and narrative reconstruction of real events as opposed to documentary evidence—it is certainly what Adam believes happened, not what Adam wishes would have happened in order to impress Raphael or something along those lines.

and he attempts to understand via an exposition of his perceptions. He continues on to notice the plants, the animals, and finally himself: “Myself I then perused, and limb by limb / Surveyed, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran / With supple joints as lively vigour led: / But who I was, or where, or from what cause / Knew not” (8. 267-71). The evolution of his consciousness obviously mirrors that of the Genesis creation narrative itself, an iteration of which he has just heard from Raphael, beginning with light and vision, earth and water, the living creatures, and finally mankind himself. Human learning, then, is again different from the intuitive reason of the angels, which appears to know—or, in the case of the fallen angels, to assume to know—already. Humans must make inferences, experience, and perceive smaller, other things first. Knowledge must pass through nature, through themselves even, before they can know themselves or their process of knowing. The discursivity of human reason, in other words, does not rely in its primacy on discourse with other humans: this discourse can happen between an individual human consciousness and light, earth, water, plants, creatures, and oneself.

Satan’s fallen self-consciousness does not think back to its first few moments—indeed he *forgets* his first moments just as he forgets his having begotten and violated Sin—its first images, or perceptions, but Adam’s conclusions are not entirely humble in contrast to Satan’s pride: Adam assumes that his knowledge of what is around him is authoritative and sufficient.

...to speak I tried, and forthwith spake,  
 My tongue obeyed and readily could name  
 Whate’er I saw. Thou sun, said I, fair light,  
 And thou enlightened earth, so fresh and gay,



Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,

And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,

Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?

Not of myself; by some great maker then,

In goodness and in power pre-eminent; (8. 271-78)

As is the case with his thoughts, his first use of language similarly follows the narrative trajectory of creation. There is a certain degree of confidence if not over-confidence in his own abilities. He assumes the authority over creation, in his desire to name things, that God will eventually give him, even before he is aware that the other creatures are not sentient. His conclusion of a good, powerful, and pre-eminent maker is equally as confident and stems from his sense of wonder at the world around. Furthermore, it is his embodiment, his having been a part of a creation narrative that is embodied that gives him such a sense of himself as integrated in the world around him.<sup>86</sup>

The extent to which Adam is even capable of perceiving a lack of perception from the very beginning is also telling of his capacity for learning.

While thus I called, and strayed I knew not whither,

From where I first drew air, and first beheld

This happy light, when answer none returned,

On a green shady bank profuse of flowers

Pensive I sat me down; there gentle sleep

First found me, and with soft oppression seized

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<sup>86</sup> For now, this just means that his perceptions are heightened. Later on, this can be seen also as part of what Raphael means by discursive reasoning. Adam's oddly immediate rationalization of the existence and holiness of God will be covered in greater detail in the Material Cause section of Adam's learning.

My drowsed sense, untroubled, though I thought

I then was passing to my former state

Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve... (8. 283-91)

Adam's reconstruction of this moment now, to Raphael, after much enlightening conversation and living, appears suspect. He now knows more of the negative, lapse or lack, than he did at the time of the story he is telling. But he wants Raphael to know that—and he insists with adjectives like “soft” for “oppression” and “untroubled” for his “drowsed sense”—there was certainly a sense of a lack that he felt himself approaching, but that it was a kind of pleasant lack. Indeed, sleep as a prelapsarian entity would have to be something of the sort—as work is prelapsarian, a kind of exhaustion (though without the biblical “toiling by the sweat of one's brow”) and respite must also be legitimately prelapsarian, for Milton, too.<sup>87</sup>

However, assuming the prelapsarianism of the whole rhetorical situation between Raphael and Adam already, what we can begin to see in creation—as opposed to the world of Heaven before and during Lucifer's fall—is the potential for an understanding of, if not uncreation, then recreation and relaxation that absents itself from what is. Indeed, rest, as it is understood by Adam at the time of his telling of his creation to Raphael, functions in a complementary relationship with work and action in the Garden. This rest is extracanonical, too, being a sleep that presumably precludes the sleep that creates Eve (Genesis 2:21; 8. 452-64), and it thereby enters the realm of a kind of

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<sup>87</sup> At the risk of harping too much on an irrelevant subject, the major scholarly debate here, as before, circles around the legitimacy of Milton's prelapsarianism. The work of Milton's world could conceivably delegitimize its perfection to some. Whereas the adherence to quotidian life is, to others, what gives the prelapsarianism its legitimacy. For my argument, the legitimacy of Miltonic prelapsarianism is assumed so as to get a better sense of what education in the ideal looks like for Milton as a person. (See Introduction).

Christian midrash<sup>88</sup> as a means of theodicy. One of the effects of this first sleep as an insertion—“a reading between the lines of scripture” is a popular definition of midrash—is to give a sense of the pacification of absence in a created world, which, in turn, creates a sense of otherness as a good by making the most othered thing in a created world—absence—a reprieve from the perceptive life.

But perception as a starting place creates a tension in Adam’s learning process that must be relieved through other, more advanced means. Adam’s ears are still ringing with the “divine Historian”’s words when he expresses that some “doubt remains”: he has seen the great cycles of the stars above and intuited from this that the universe is large. He wonders, essentially, if the stars shine only for him. Here his vision and his hearing present an apparent incongruity that has to be resolved through reasoning and conversation.

### 3. The Material Cause of Adam’s Learning: Reasoning

Unlike Abdiel’s learning—and, by assumption, all angelic learning—which problematically relied overmuch on intuition, human reasoning contains a balance of discursive and intuitive reasoning as it approaches, along the monistic trajectory elaborated above and in Chapter 1, the angelic and “superior” form of reasoning that is purely intuitive. Here, again, we can see a clearer sense of Milton’s ideal for *human* education, which, as I will argue, relies more on the complementarity of difference. In this instance, that will mean the complementarity inherent in intuition and discourse.

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<sup>88</sup> See Golda Werman, *Milton and Midrash*, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995; see also John Rosenblatt, *Torah and Law in Paradise Lost*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994; William Kolbrener “Milton’s ‘Bestial Hebraism’: A Reappraisal,” *Judaism* 47.1 (Winter 1998): 115-20 gives a good review of new approaches to the implications of Milton’s traditional Hebraic biblicism and contemporary reading.

Adam's abovementioned question regarding the stars and his senses represents the unfallen desire for a degree of explicable oneness (monism) that transcends or binds together difference without erasure:

When I behold this goodly frame, this world  
 Of heaven and earth consisting, and compute  
 Their magnitudes, this earth a spot, a grain,  
 An atom, with the firmament compared  
 And all her numbered stars, that seem to roll  
 Spaces incomprehensible (for such  
 Their distance argues and their swift return  
 Diurnal) merely to officiate light  
 Round this opacous earth, this punctual spot,  
 One day and night; in all their vast survey  
 Useless besides, reasoning I oft admire,  
 How nature wise and frugal could commit  
 Such disproportions, with superfluous hand  
 So many nobler bodies to create... (8. 15-28)

In a manner, Adam's earlier perception following the narrative flow of creation has here been reversed: the latest observation of his is of the night sky, the unearthly lights, and he has turned his reasoning mind toward the fourth day of creation. As is the case with the abovementioned sleep, this is another occasion for Milton's theodicean midrash to address potential issues of the biblical account. However, the rhetorical situation is different. Whereas in the case of Adam's narrative to Raphael his motives may be mixed,

here Adam's curiosity appears genuine, surrounding an apparent issue with God's perfect cosmos, and his first inclination is to reach out for guidance. In other words, his intuition flows into discourse and vice versa because a dipping recursion is important in the scale of progress and not incongruent with ultimate progress.

Raphael responds in kind, ultimately with a soft injunction to "be lowly wise" (8. 173), at the beginning with, "To ask or search I blame thee not, for heaven / Is as the book of God before thee set" (8. 66-67). In this first responsive statement Raphael verbally affirms that which is endemic to creaturely learning already covered: "search[ing]," which in my argument here takes the form of the efficiency of learning (perception) and "ask[ing]," which here takes the form of both the materiality and formality of learning (reasoning and community). Raphael's later injunction to pay closer attention to that which is closest to him (Adam) comes only after an affirmation of his curiosity and the forms of learning generally. The apparent incongruities of perception and reason that Adam has brought up and Raphael has, debatably, put to rest, are also allowed room to breathe in Raphael's final injunction to be lowly wise in that some room for temporary mystery must be allowed given the fact of learning's processes. As will be argued later, the attempt to rush through to a conclusion with insufficient time for learning's process is the primary means of unlearning (see Chapter 4), which allows for temptation's triumph into transgression.

The stars present Adam with an opportunity for confronting this characteristic of God's (or Milton's) cosmos. If Adam progresses along the monistic hierarchy that stretches out before him into eternity, the stars will most likely themselves become that which he is closest to, that which Raphael in the scheme of the Garden wants Adam to be

“lowly wise” to. At which point, the heights and disproportions of high heaven or God himself could potentially create the same “problem” that the stars present to Adam in Book 8. So, that which is above is meant to inspire wonder and a sense of awe or mystery, but it is not meant to do so at the expense of the fabric of the quotidian world around nor the work at hand. In this sense, Adam’s reasoning in the Garden is meant to draw him upward intellectually along the trajectory of Milton’s monistic hierarchy but only in a way that is recursive and complementary to the world around.

The key moment of human reasoning fleshed out in Book 8, however, comes from the *tete-a-tete* between God and Adam in Adam’s retelling of his creation. In this scene, Adam’s capacity for reasoning, in the vacuum of an artificial test via a greater Other, leads him from discourse to intuition, but even his intuition’s conclusion is for a partner, which would result in greater discourse. He reasons that each of the animals beneath his station have partners, that he could not himself partner with an “unequal,” and furthermore that he could not, like God, subsist on the company of himself alone. Reasoning, even in the isolation of the individual, begs for discourse, which in turn helps to create the impetus for community which is the formal cause of learning. Adam’s reason for telling Raphael his own story comes from a desire to maintain their discourse, and the above analyzed interaction between Adam and God is itself a manifestation of the manner in which the materiality of learning overlaps directly with the formality of learning.

#### 4. The Formal Cause of Adam’s Learning: Community

Adam reasons with God for a partner, an equal, with whom he can have rational discourse because he fears to be in solitude: “In solitude / What happiness, who can enjoy

alone, / Or all enjoying, what contentment find?" (8. 364-66). Furthermore, in response to God's mock-claim that Adam could potentially be content alone since God himself is content alone, Adam asserts,

...To attain  
 The height and depth of thy eternal ways  
 All human thoughts come short, supreme of things  
 Thou in thyself art perfect, and in thee  
 Is no deficiency found; not so is man,  
 But in degree, the cause of his desire  
 By conversation with his like to help,  
 Or solace his defects. No need that thou  
 Shouldst propagate, already infinite;  
 And through all numbers absolute, though one;  
 But man by number is to manifest  
 His single imperfection, and beget  
 Like of his like, his image multiplied,  
 In unity defective, which requires  
 Collateral love, and dearest amity. (8. 412-26)

Here we see more of the reasoning that makes space for an Other. He infers from his station that companionship would be preferable. It is left unsaid, perhaps given the rhetorical situation, the extent to which Adam's true desires for an Other were impulsive or emotional. Perhaps he wishes to make himself appear more angelic to the angel Raphael, in order to impress him. What we learn about Adam's love for Eve later on

would seem to suggest that there was a kind of sweet longing in the vacuum of his pre-Eve life. But, here, the automatic learning of the individual in Paradise seems to lead inevitably and immediately into the realm of companionship, to create an environment in which even greater learning can be had. Oddly enough, in the above passage, Adam doesn't formulate creation as a companionable Other. Milton's Puritan commitment to the sufficiency and omnipotence of God makes him squeamish about any such complementarity on that front,<sup>89</sup> but Adam creates a metaphysical distinction between him and God on that front, via some kind of discriminating reasoning. This metaphysical distinction, aligning mankind with the animals more than with God himself, also places learning in a position of humility, even if that humility's end is elevated. Adam's wonder inspires him to understand God as other and himself as created.

That Adam's reasoning, which comes almost out of nowhere, seemingly endemic to mind, makes its first steps towards community also communicates the monism of human learning, that it is following the same trajectory as the humans themselves. Learning is also evolving along the trajectory of mankind in the unfallen scheme of the cosmos. Whereas for angels their process of theosis is still happening, the transition is not as dramatic. So, as Adam's sentience grows, there are dramatic jumps and leaps right away.

Immediately following the attainment of reason is a kind of interrogation. Whereas Adam's interaction with God at the beginning of his life is marked by God's Socratic interrogation of him, the larger rhetorical situation—Adam's interaction with

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<sup>89</sup> Milton's Arianist rejection of the Trinity further widens this gulf—the orthodox notion of God's internal community with the other persons of the Trinity doesn't work in his theology. There does, however, remain the possibility of God's seeking community—for reasons beyond necessity—with other created or "begotten" beings.



Raphael—consists of Adam’s interrogation of the angel. Adam is always fearful of crossing some invisible line with Raphael, but he also constantly presses against the angel’s lectures, repeatedly testing them against his own experience and reason. This characteristic of communal learning is the necessarily second step of the process: at first, Adam reasons that he should have company/community; then, he tests what is learned communally through interrogation and the recursive process of experience, reasoning, and community. A corollary of this happens between Adam and Eve—in the hierarchy of sex—both off the page and at the beginning Book 9.

The prime example of this kind of interrogation, as we see it from Adam, comes at the beginning of Book 8, in the passage already introduced earlier, as he attempts to hold Raphael’s company a little longer:

What thanks sufficient, or what recompense  
 Equal have I to render thee, divine  
 Historian, who thus largely hast allayed  
 The thirst I had of knowledge, and vouchsafed  
 This friendly condescension to relate  
 Things else by me unsearchable, now heard  
 With wonder, but delight, and, as is due,  
 With glory attributed to the high  
 Creator; something yet of doubt remains,  
 Which only thy solution can resolve.  
 When I behold this goodly frame, this world  
 Of heaven and earth consisting, and compute,

Their magnitudes, this earth a spot, a grain,  
 An atom, with the firmament compared  
 And all her numbered stars, that seem to roll  
 Spaces incomprehensible (for such  
 Their distance argue and their swift return  
 Diurnal) merely to officiate light  
 Round this opacous earth, this punctual spot,  
 One day and night; in all their vast survey  
 Useless besides, reasoning I oft admire,  
 How nature wise and frugal could commit  
 Such disproportions with superfluous hand... (8. 5-27)

This lengthy question of Adam's is enough to lose Eve's interest—though we are led to believe that she later asks Adam to relate it to her. In the space provided for Adam to discourse, he has grown a complicated desire to keep Raphael near, to keep their conversation going, and, in order to do so, to press against the angel's proffered narrative. Here he presents to Raphael a problem apparent in the fabric of the story Raphael has told him, a problem endemic to Early Modern, anthropocentric Christianity. Raphael's response is often considered dismissive, as an attempt to discourage curiosity. His response does suggest a limitation to what can be known and when, and his assertion to be "lowly wise" appears to jar with the doctrine of upward mobility. However, the process of human progression through the cosmological hierarchy happens primarily

through eating,<sup>90</sup> which itself comes about through their lowly wisdom of tending to the Garden. Again, the process of growth involves a dipping and repetition, a recursion, which itself points back toward communal interrogation and, through the passage of time, flows into the infinite and spiritual. Sense and logic, in the form of learning, create a wonder, which effects both human humility and a kind of divine aspiration to be like God and to be in heaven.

As was briefly mentioned above, Adam reasons that prelapsarian “man by number is to manifest / His single imperfection,” which is singularity. What is termed here “imperfection” interestingly draws into question the perfection of prelapsarianism. But, as I argued in the Monism section of Chapter 1, for Milton, the unfinishedness of his perfect humans in their unfallen state manifests as to put them on a path towards—in albeit unspecified language—something like the position of the angelic beings in heaven. Before mankind’s fall, God looks to create humans so as to repopulate heaven with their souls. Their falling, the consequent atonement, death, end-times, and final resurrection and ascension into heaven are all byways on the original trajectory from the unfallen humans in the Garden to heaven.

##### 5. The Final Cause of Adam’s Learning: Infinitude, Growth, and Spirit

As with many of the other aspects of Adam’s and others’ learning, there is quite a bit of overlap between the causes of learning. In some ways, community is also the form of the final cause of learning as well, becoming so enmeshed that it feels like the prime end to which learning points. As quoted earlier, in the midst of Adam’s reasoning with

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<sup>90</sup>See the sacramental meal in Book 5. See also Brown’s *Digesting Devotion: Food as Sustenance and Sacrament in Milton’s Paradise Lost* gives a helpful background on the complications of the sacramental scene.

God for a partner, he argues, “In solitude / What happiness, who can enjoy alone, / Or all enjoying, what contentment find?” (8. 364-66). He points toward community as the thing that would bring about contentment too, though it is not the kind of all-encompassing contentment of the beatific vision or the end of days. Rather, community with God—the beatific vision of the end of days—is the height of learning, the end in every sense, but, along the way, each moment of learning is marked by various moments of contentment that are the direct result of—if not coterminous with—the community. So, the extent to which the form and the end of learning are not the same for humans is hazy. A part of the process of spiritualization as it is described in the model of upwardly mobile hierarchy is the ever-growth of the participating community. Also, the theosis referred to earlier is both the end of all rational learning in Milton’s cosmos and the form in which learning takes: namely, communion with God.

In God’s first words to the newly created Adam, according to Adam, we see the abundance of creation:

...author of all this thou seest

Above, or round about thee or beneath.

This Paradise I give thee, count it thine

To till and keep, and of the fruit to eat:

Of every tree that in the garden grows

Eat freely with glad heart; fear here no dearth.

But of the tree... [etc.] (8. 317-23)

Again, it is the singularity of the forbidden tree primarily that differentiates it from the trees from which the fruit can be eaten. Proliferation of various kinds, that exist in

harmony, is also the object of focus for the “lowly wise,” and the enjoyments appear also to proliferate.

This characteristic of paradise is only a clue to how the perfection of the Garden is meant to be different from perfection in a Platonic sense. Although it is unclear whether this distinction is meant to be seen as a difference typical of Greek as opposed to Hebrew philosophy, Milton deviates from Neoplatonic philosophy in many ways and in this way in particular. The highest “form” of mankind is embodied by the Son—later as Jesus in *Paradise Regained*—but he is not meant to be the only way in which perfection can manifest. Especially regarding *Paradise Lost* as a text complete in itself, Milton is preoccupied with showing as many varieties of perfection as possible.

The end of mankind, in the teleological sense, is to replace the fallen angels in heaven. Therefore, the variety of skills and behaviors in the angels—not to mention the fact that they can “either sex assume”—would presumably be nascent in the unfallen humans, and the variety of vocations would also likely proliferate. We see foresight and strength modeled by Michael, Gabriel models reasoning in his protectiveness of Adam and Eve in the Garden, good sight modeled by Uriel, and learning by Raphael—though, of course, the interaction of these with fallenness complicates them as strengths. The fallen angels retain this differentiation of strengths, but sin interacts with them so as to unite them under the reign of a stricter oneness or singularity. Just as Uriel’s sight is weakened by Satan’s ability to mutate, so the strengths of Moloch, Belial, and Mammon are muted by Satan’s totalizing plan and the deception via Beelzebub.

Whereas for the angels, however, the celebration of proliferation functions primarily in terms of vocation, for humans, the sex act functions as not merely a means of

pleasure—as it does for the angels—but also a manifestation of proliferation that comes along with the intellectual discovery of the other. For Milton, as is evidenced by the divorce tracts, especially the capstone *Tetrachordon*, sex and intellect were intimately linked, such that divorce could be legitimated on the grounds of a lack of intellectual connection between married pairs. This was radical in his time, and he received very public criticism for this view from his Puritan/Presbyterian peers and his Cavalier enemies.<sup>91</sup> In this sense, human sexual intercourse should be procreative in the same way that human discourse is. The encounter with something other is procreative in the fabric of Milton's cosmos but especially of his unfallen cosmos, and this characteristic of his cosmos is most evident in his choice to explain mankind's creation, teleologically, in terms of filling the void that the fallen angels left. By that reasoning, God creates only two fully grown humans in order to highlight this particularly human characteristic of encountering otherness. Such is their place in the fluidity of that hierarchy.

## 6. Conclusion

A meditation on learning as a means of theodicean Christian midrash serves to highlight the awkwardness of the position of the angels in Milton's cosmos. Undeniably *Paradise Lost* is committedly Humanist, entrenched in uniquely human conversations. But the extent to which he succeeds in the theodicean project depends largely on the suspension he creates between the two beings. The closed rationality of the angels is meant to justify God's immediate and permanent rejection of the fallen angels (i.e. they

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<sup>91</sup> See Lewalski, "Milton's proposal of divorce for incompatibility moves far beyond the continental Protestant norm: it has precedent in Jewish law and in a few Protestant treatises, but was virtually unheard of in England." (*The Life*... 163)

should have known better), but the through-lines of comparison between the angelic and human falls (i.e. Satan's role in the fall of mankind) further brings them together.

"Learning" in the case of the angels is much more of a verbal-noun meaning "that which has been learned," and, for humans, "learning" is more of a gerund, implying an active, eternal, and conscious behavior that can be nourished or not. What we'll see in Chapter 4, however, is how Milton plans to introduce sin to sinless worlds through a mere absence of the action of human learning. For now, though, the differences Milton outlines between the learning habits of the sexes is more germane.

### CHAPTER 3: EVE'S LEARNING

Interestingly, we receive less information, ultimately, about Eve leading up to the Fall. Much of the story centers on Adam and the things he learns. But what little we do learn about Eve has much to do with her learning. In fact, Milton appears unusually preoccupied with her learning relative to Adam's. In some ways, Adam's learning is a given, and readers need to be educated on Eve's learning. Milton appears to think that they need a commentary for understanding fully her education.

Of central importance to the question of Eve's educability and intellectual processes are a few key details and scenes from the poem, namely Eve's self-styled creation story, the fact of her sitting out for some of the conversation between Adam and Raphael (favoring instead Adam's retelling of the story later in bed), the retelling of Adam and Raphael's conversation (not featured explicitly in the poem), her discoursing with Adam about the nature of things (and Adam's somewhat awkward and somewhat inadequate responses), and—most importantly—her as-yet-unfallen discourse with Adam at the beginning of Book 9 in which she argues for their separation. In all of these scenes, she is presented as a rational being of a lower order than Adam or Raphael. But the condition of being lower—as has already been discussed and will be addressed further in Section 1—is not unproblematically posited as categorically worse in Milton's dynamic hierarchy. As we'll see, Eve's educability is one of the more important loci of conflict for scholars engaging with her and an important launching pad for my argument, inasmuch as the monism pertains to her status as creature.

Much has been said generally on the subject of Milton and women. Of vital importance to our project is the extent to which Milton endows her with the capacity to



learn, to engage critically and intellectually with the world around her, and, thereby, to grow and ascend towards a higher plane.

Among celebrity-scholar interactions with Milton, Samuel Johnson's comment on Milton's "Turkish contempt of females" is foundational.<sup>92</sup> Much has been made of Virginia Woolf's "bogey," the notion that Milton must be exorcised in order for a woman to truly write, which Harold Bloom attempts to reformulate as the "covering cherub" in his project of figuring literary influence as a Darwinian/Freudian power struggle.<sup>93</sup> Sandra Gilbert's domestic Eve takes up the argument from where Woolf left it, clarifying the particularity of the issue with the character of Eve as a construct: she is "from the first, hollow, as if somehow created corrupt" and "a sort of divine afterthought" (371).<sup>94</sup> These accounts, made largely by figures approaching Milton peripherally, run the risk of approaching Eve herself peripherally in their attempt to prove a larger point about the "great man" or literary study generally.<sup>95</sup>

Marcia Landy's early "Kinship and the Role of Women in *Paradise Lost*" is a focused, foundational, scholarly analysis of the role of women in the poem's patriarchal hierarchy as well as a metanalysis of Milton studies generally.<sup>96</sup> There she argues mostly that Eve's role is wholly to serve Adam's needs, emphasizing the objectification of her

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<sup>92</sup> *Lives of the Poets*, Vol. 3, Ed. Arthur Waugh, Classic Publishers.

<sup>93</sup> *Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>94</sup> "Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's Bogey," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1978): 368-82.

<sup>95</sup> For example, Woolf's larger project—to make space for women in the intellectual world—identifies a fairly common experience of women readers (especially in her time) with regard to larger-than-life patriarchal literary figures. Bloom's larger project of articulating a neo-Darwinian, Neo-Freudian view of literary creation sees Milton as the Father—similarly to Champagne's view of Milton's God as the Lacanian Father—to be overthrown. When Miltonists—who are themselves all personally invested in the reputation of the poet—talk about women in Milton, there is often a defensiveness accompanying that commitment. See what follows and the conversation about Lewalski in particular for the general Miltonist reaction.

<sup>96</sup> *Milton Quarterly* (1972): 3-18.

sexuality. These and their predecessors are taking up the question of, in Douglas Anderson's words, whether or not Milton "believed in the sexual subordination of women" (141).<sup>97</sup>

In concurrence with the general thrust of these arguments, I take as granted that Milton did believe in the subordination of women and the superiority of men, using as a proof-text the infamous passage from *Paradise Lost* that touches directly on the issue: "Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed; / For contemplation he and valor formed, / For softness she and sweet attractive grace, / He for God only, she for God in him" (4. 296-99).<sup>98</sup> More specifically, Eve's subordination is connected to her domesticity, and her interestingness to readers is dependent on that domesticity. In short, from the perspective of historical feminism, we could say that Eve's femininity is uniquely Second Wave, borne out of the view of woman-as-other, offering something essentially unique to Adam's skillsets and abilities. Critiques of her as a character, as a thinker (or lack thereof), and as a masculine construct of ideal femininity come from a more theoretical, Third Wave feminist rejection of the possibility of essentialism.

These claims of Milton's depiction of women have been met by a wide variety of reactions. The strongest and most unqualified defense of Milton's portrayal of Eve from a feminist perspective came from Lewalski in her "Milton on Women—Yet Once More,"<sup>99</sup> which is a direct response to Landy. She argues, "Milton's portrayal of the first marriage reflects his abiding belief (articulated emphatically in his divorce tracts) that the prime end of marriage as defined in the Genesis story is human companionship, not progeny or

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<sup>97</sup> "Unfallen Marriage and the Fallen Imagination in *Paradise Lost*," *SEL* 26 (1986): 125-44.

<sup>98</sup> Although I've made note of it before, I'll reiterate here that I am largely assuming an unproblematic congruence between the epic narrative voice of *Paradise Lost* and Milton, in the same vein of Gilbert.

<sup>99</sup> *Milton Studies* 6 (1974): 3-20.

the relief of lust” (3). This response to Landy is notable for its excavation of the divorce tracts and its ability to read Milton’s *oeuvre* into the conversation about Eve particularly. Furthermore, the relevance of the divorce tracts to the depiction of Adam and Eve is justified on the grounds that in them he is already attempting to articulate a picture of marriage in the ideal, the ideal of which is intellectual. Lewalski’s reaction is typical of those who want to redeem Milton’s sexism by contrasting it favorably with many of his contemporaries. Her view is articulated most succinctly and summarily, however, in her statement about Milton’s relationships with women generally

This is another example of Milton’s capacity to value and enjoy the society of able women – others were Margaret Lay and Miss Davis, whoever she was – despite his concept of gender hierarchy. Milton could always qualify ideology by personal experience in particular cases, though such experience did not lead him (as it did with divorce) to call into question received assumptions about gender hierarchy itself. (*The Life...* 294)

Here, she tidily summarizes the issue. Milton appears to have had very radical views of marriage as well as politics in his assumption that there must be an intellectual connection between man and woman for the marriage to be truly consummated. But he was not, by any stretch of the imagination, close to what we could call a theory of the equality of the sexes. E. M. W. Tillyard is also emblematic of this view of Milton as ahead of his time: “It is now fairly widely recognized, I should guess, that Milton tempered a Hebraic belief in the superiority of man over woman with ideas remarkable in his day for their enlightenment” (148).<sup>100</sup> His choice of “enlightenment” is interesting

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<sup>100</sup> *Milton*; London: Chatto and Windus; 1930.

furthermore because it directs us to his relationship with the thinkers of the century to come, when Mary Wollstonecraft, in her seminal work, would make reference, not to Milton's prose, but to *Paradise Lost*'s seemingly contradictory depiction of the status of women.<sup>101</sup>

Claudia Champagne's Lacanian reading of Eve's creation helps to elucidate the concept of difference in Milton's sexual world: "Eve is thus not just a mirror image for Adam, as the 'shape' she sees in the water is for her, but a complement, completing him as a mother does her child, in a way that would have been impossible had God given him a male companion too exactly like himself in lack" (52).<sup>102</sup> In her account, Adam's fall comes about by means of his construction of a fantastic Eve—thereby destroying the difference between them. So, her argument is not to defend Eve or Milton in order to try to erase any apparent sexism, but rather to see the sexism as informing the dynamic of complementarity in the poem. The result is that, perhaps Eve is a male fantasy of an inferior being, but that her inferiority does not manifest itself as simplicity.

Ann Torday Gullen's work on Eve's wisdom is more to the present point in its depiction of Eve's intellectual processes in relation to Adam's. Eve's intellectual work—which is somewhat less emphasized in the poem—is similar in form to the loftier intellectual work of Adam in its adherence to the monistic scheme of unfallen life in Milton's cosmos: "Eve's self-assurance and understanding of temperance and her ordering of the ingredients of the meal show the way in which she, as well as Adam,

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<sup>101</sup> Earlier on in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft situates her readings of *Paradise Lost* around her conversations about "individual education" (45-47). Ed. Ruth Abbey and Eileen Hunt Bottling, New Haven: Yale University Press (2014).

<sup>102</sup> Claudia M. Champagne, "Adam and His 'Other Self' in 'Paradise Lost': A Lacanian Study in Psychic Development"; *Milton Quarterly* (1991): 48-59.

practices the ‘contemplation of created things’ which leads by steps towards a better understanding of God” (138).<sup>103</sup> As is also present in Milton’s divorce tracts, women are endowed with the intellectual heights of mankind, and the inability or unwillingness to engage with them is a consequence of fallenness, much how other forms of political inequality are the result of the fall as well. So, Eve’s life in the unfallen world is characteristically limited to certain spaces, but her intellectual powers are not similarly limited.

Without trying to diminish the sexism of Milton’s scheme or to excuse it given its context, I would like to draw out the structural similarities between Eve’s learning and that of Adam and Abdiel (Chapters 2 and 1 respectively) in order to argue that Milton’s notion of learning is of the same kind—though different in degree—across the spectra of angel, man, and woman.<sup>104</sup> In sum, “Eve stands for being absorbed in acts, without trying to find transcendent dimensions in them. It is suggested that such work is a form of oneness with God that is as valid as Adam’s” (90).<sup>105</sup> And—to elaborate on the latter portion of that quote—it is Milton’s monism specifically that attempts to make such work as gardening and housekeeping transcendent in and of themselves.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “Milton’s Eve and Wisdom: The ‘Dinner Party’ Scene in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 32.4 (1998): 137-43.

<sup>104</sup> Implicit in this argument is the idea that it is not Eve’s lack of education that leads to her fall. As will be covered in greater detail next chapter, my argument is that learning is itself an action, bound by time, that, in Milton’s scheme, is a helpful tool against the fall. In Chapter 4, I will argue that the conditions that lead to the fall—while not sins, by Milton’s standards, in and of themselves—involve putting the process of learning on hold, allowing for creativity to fill in gaps that could easily be otherwise filled by reason (via “learning”). In doing so, I hope to gain a better understanding of Milton’s humanist notions of education.

<sup>105</sup> Tzachi Zamir; *Ascent: Philosophy and Paradise Lost*; Oxford University Press, 2018.

<sup>106</sup> Whether this attempt is successful or not, again, is not very interesting to me or relevant to the project of anatomizing Milton’s ideas about education via *Paradise Lost*. Also, it is fully possible that the attempt to make such work transcendent is equally as patriarchal or oppressive as whatever alternative.

# 1. Women, Human Intellectual Monism, and the Structure of *Paradise Lost*'s Hierarchy

When it comes to understanding the uniqueness of the intellectual role (phrased optimistically, the intellectual strengths) of Milton's women, we must revisit the conversation about "discursive" and "intuitive" reasoning. If the gender hierarchy is an extension of the hierarchy of humankind and angels (see Section I in Chapter 1), then it can be inferred that Eve's form of reasoning is more "discursive" than Adam's, even if, relative to the angels, Adam's form of reasoning is itself more discursive than intuitive. In Zamir's exploration of the relationship between poetry and philosophy in the poem and in the poem's reception, he locates a very particular intellectual activity with Eve's consciousness:

[Milton] understands that the idea of seeing God in his creation, holiness in beauty, invites two possible interpretations. The first involves looking through particulars and grasping a nonsensual content. The second is sensual through and through: looking at particulars and beholding God. Adam exemplifies the first, Eve the second. Each is compelled to overcome specific challenges that Milton associates with their outlooks. *Paradise Lost* is, thus, not merely 'for' or 'against' linking poetry and religion. It is a poem that aspires to set forth the conditions under which such association is successful. Yet, because all this takes place not on the level of examined practices—poetry, religion—but on the level of world-encounter, the result also becomes an anatomy of perceptual failure that reverberates as an account of distorted aesthetic response. The justification of poetry is thereby implied by the shortcomings instigating the Fall: whatever

prevents Eve from seeing God in matter and Adam from seeing God through it threatens the reader of this religious poem as well. But these failures are possibilities, not necessities. Readers need not repeat the mistakes they are looking at. Experiencing beauty can lead one to God, rather than away from him. (14-15)<sup>107</sup>

In short, Eve's vision of God is essential, yet not as privileged in the cosmological scheme in the same way as Adam's. Even though beings in Milton's cosmos—as described by Raphael's monism—are radically upwardly-mobile, the hierarchical stratification of the world is both within and above the level of species.

In *Milton's Eve*, McColley notices how in the graphic art on the garden in Milton's time, there is a radical overemphasis on the moment of sin rather than, by way of example, God's injunction to Adam and Eve to maintain the garden. This fact, she emphasizes, has consequences for and is the product of a particular tradition of misogyny that tends to view Eve as the root of the problem. Interestingly enough, attention given to Eve's character in criticism surrounding *Paradise Lost* has also focused on Book 9—in part, for practical reasons, as it's a point of the poem's special focus on her. But, as McColley points out, these visual representations and scholarly approaches amount to a continued misogynistic view of Eve. McColley points out that Adam himself—only after his own fall—blames Eve for their plight (4-9). She argues that Milton is commenting on the sexist tradition of blaming Eve as well as distancing himself from it by showing—if we look beyond just the action of Book 9—a virtuous and learned Eve who sins by choice and considers alternatives. In her critique of the visual art of Milton's time,

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<sup>107</sup> *Ascent*.

McColley finds that Eves are often depicted as either pure, innocent, and almost, therefore, non-existent before the fall or radically provocative and, therefore, associated almost entirely with the fall, sin, and the serpent himself: “Bosch’s Eve, juxtaposed to vice and damnation, seems the innocent—perhaps deceptively innocent—source of sin and death; Raphael’s, surrounded by monuments to humanity and divinity, seems the wanton portress at the gates of divine mercy and human achievement” (8). Milton’s “challenge” therefore, is to depict a learned and virtuous Eve who is not either deceptively innocent nor flawed in her being overly seductive before her moment of first sin.

Festa’s conversation about the Law and the Gospel is a helpful analogue for difference as it pertains to gender in Milton’s cosmos: “Throughout the divorce tracts, Milton employs the metaphor of the schoolmaster to represent continuity in the relations between Hebrew and Christian scriptural traditions, referred to by synecdoche as the Law and the Gospel... This identification of Hebrew Scripture with instruction and guidance can of course be traced to the fact that the ‘Law’... translates the Hebrew title Torah, which is based on a stem meaning ‘to teach, to guide’” (*The End*... 46-47). Just as the mind-body problem is allegedly fixed by his monism, there becomes a kind of monism between the sexes as well through their progression up into angelhood and thereby into transsexuality.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the Law and the Gospel attain a similar kind of pseudo-paradoxical monistic unity that is formed directly from their not being entirely the same thing while contributing to a greater whole. With Eve—the not-quite-equal partner of the same kind and made of Adam—we see another instance of difference that contributes to a

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<sup>108</sup> This argument assumes that the notion that spirits can “either sex assume” would also apply to more spiritualized, unfallen humans as they ascended the hierarchical ladder of Milton’s cosmos.



greater whole: the radical hierarchy of the medieval cosmological scheme still hangs over, but with the modern twist of ascent thrown in casually and without a complete exposition. Perhaps these rational beings become more equal to each other the closer they come to God, but the ultimate point is left unclear.

Eve, though she will be and always is in the process of rising above her present state (and consequently every one of Adam's states), it appears that she would still always remain inferior relative to his authority. In the monistic scheme, there are still a few hazy factors. On the one hand—as alluded to before—is the question of essential sexual subordination if angels really can “either sex assume” (1. 424). Furthermore the uniquely human institution of marriage and the implied understanding of the husband's ruling over his wife becomes problematic in the ascent toward an angelic and, ultimately, divine state. If Adam and Eve are meant to be on a progression up into the spiritual/intellectual world of the angels, would their capacity to assume the alternative sex complicate that power dynamic? Indeed, we do not even know what marriage would look like for their more spiritual forms—one could imagine Milton invoking Christ's words about there not being marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:30) to describe the situation of their advanced spiritual selves. On the other hand, we see in Milton's heaven a similar kind of hierarchy—presumably based on merit—to the one on earth. But Abdiel's presence, of course, complicates that hierarchy yet again. In Milton's unfallen worlds, hierarchy is always the backdrop until or unless sin enters.<sup>109</sup> Thickstun's borrowed notion of “temporary inequality” (*Milton's Paradise*... 18) is only partially satisfactory because we

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<sup>109</sup> Consider also the demonization of hierarchical ecclesiology on the part of the Puritans. Hierarchy is not the creation of evil and fallenness, but the perversion of hierarchy in the fallen world is a worse alternative than representative politics.

do not know how Adam and Eve's relative authority will develop as they progress along Raphael's monistic trajectory.

Summarily, the text resists the idea of hierarchy's unimpeachable goodness while also refusing to let hierarchy in an unfallen world be sufficient cause for rebellion against superiors. Body and spirit, man and woman, Law and Gospel interact with each other in a hierarchy, but the hierarchy, in the unfallen world, appears to delight in upturning itself, in the younger outshining the older in the similar sort of pattern common to the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>110</sup> But I believe the dynamic can be explained as the complementarity of difference held in check by a hierarchical backdrop. Key for our purposes here is that we see a hierarchy in which subversions of political and intellectual power occur without making a blemish on the perfection of their state.

Though it is the center of much debate, to see Milton's monism as merely "materialistic," Sugimura has pointed out, is in part to misrepresent Milton's monism as a non-unified position. To say that body and spirit are not different one from the other (especially in the prelapsarian world) is different from the materialist assertion that came to the intellectual fore in Milton's time via Descartes and, especially, Hobbes,<sup>111</sup> that all is body. Sugimura's insistence on the one-ness of Milton's body and spirit without the erasure of either can be said to represent many of the Paradisal binaries in play. For Milton, this idea of complementary difference is also biblical via the eschatological lion laying down with the lamb found in Isaiah 11:6-9, a litany of predator and prey living in

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<sup>110</sup> For example, see the stories Jacob (Israel), Joseph, and David as examples of youngers favored by God. The idea of God picking the youngest out as an exception to the rule he established is a common theme in Hebrew scripture and one Milton would have had a thorough familiarity with. It is explored in greater detail in Robert Alter's translation with commentary of *The Hebrew Bible* (see especially the "Introduction to Genesis").

<sup>111</sup> See S. Fallon's *Milton Among the Philosophers*, Ch. 1, "Mechanical Life: Descartes, Hobbes, and the Implications of Mechanism," 19-49.

peace together. The metaphor, however, is an extension of two very complex biblical metaphors. In Christian interpretations, the sacrificial lamb—which may go back as far as Abel and has its most poignant meaning either in the episode of Abraham sacrificing Isaac (Genesis 22) or the tradition of Passover (Exodus 11-12)—is a forerunner of Jesus, the Messiah. The Lion of Judah—first mentioned in Israel’s blessing of his son Judah (Genesis 49:9-10) is also considered a forerunner of Jesus. So the marriage of the two in Jesus could be taken as a larger symbol or synecdoche of the hypostatic union, the eschatological marriage of the Church and God, or any number of other such Christian doctrines.

Karen Edwards’ catalogue of Milton’s use of animals for their symbolic value finds in Satan’s *blazon* of Adam and Eve (IV. 287-320) that their respective hair appears to him like certain animals and is indicative, at least, of Satan’s view of their relative positions to each other—the hierarchy in which their relationship is functioning. Adam’s hair particularly is evocative of the lion’s mane (Edwards 233).<sup>112</sup> Although Eve’s hair is not more readily comparable with the lamb’s, the symbolic weight of Adam’s mane relative to the rest of creation, as the king of the jungle, places the lamb, by its proximity to Eve, into the hierarchy. Their marriage may not have been intended as a symbol of the hypostatic union or the traditional, biblical symbol of marriage generally, but, when understood in the light of Milton’s intellectualization of marriage in the divorce tracts, still evokes complementary difference.

Furthermore, Eve as the lamb to Adam’s lion helps to clarify many of the abovementioned feminist questions about Milton’s Eve. The anthropomorphism of each

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<sup>112</sup> Karen Edwards, “Milton’s Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary,” *Milton Quarterly* 41.4 (December 2007): 223-56.

animal metaphor can be seen in the context of the hypostatic union, but questioning the unity of that marriage naturally follows. Chesterton's notion of the union of the animals without either of them losing its essence further clarifies the issue at hand: the lion lays down with the lamb not by becoming lamb-like, but it miraculously does so without losing "his royal ferocity" (90).<sup>113</sup> Perhaps an analogue like this could explain the apparent contradiction from the viewpoint of Christian theology. Furthermore, the heart of the issue rests in one's capacity for seeing the lion and the lamb together without the lambification of the lion and/or vice versa. Donnelly's investigation into the differences between Hobbes's and Milton's understanding of foundational approaches to human difference touches on a similar point:

In one sense, both Milton and Hobbes describe the social contract as arising from the need for self-preservation. It might seem that Hobbes's account simply presents a secularized version of original sin. When Peter Herman refers to the above passage from *The Tenure* as presenting a "Hobbesian state of nature," he seems to be interpreting Hobbes in just such a manner. But Hobbes actually presents something close to the opposite of the doctrine of original sin, insofar as such a doctrine presumes the goodness of creation. For Hobbes, intersubjective goodness depends upon the social contract which, in turn, arises in response to natural and blameless originary violence. Hobbes thus hypostatizes the violence and strife that Milton would locate among sin's consequences. For Hobbes, violence is intrinsic to human nature; for Milton, violence results from and constitutes a corruption of human nature which was created for participation in a

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<sup>113</sup> *Orthodoxy*.

goodness that predates and outlasts the entrance of evil into human history. (14-15)

Hobbes's "originary violence," for Milton, moves farther away from the original "good"ness of creation that God declares. In a broader sense, however, Hobbes's "originary violence" betrays a larger assumption that difference and violence are essentially inseparable.

A similar Miltonic paradox, related in political terms, is the grand scope of Milton's commitments to democracy (as evidenced by the anti-prelatical tracts) and his persistent elitism outlined by Barker (174-82).<sup>114</sup> With the Levelers and Diggers, Milton wanted to endow the individual with the capacity for right reason and regeneracy, such that he could justify beheading the king for treason. Yet, from as early as the *Defensio*, Milton argued "none can love freedom heartily but good men."<sup>115</sup> Later on, in *Eikonoklastes* and the *History of Britain*, Milton will rail against the slavish lower classes of society on the grounds of their desiring a king. Suddenly, a distinction between "good men" and whatever alternative creeps into his politics, leaving him a backdoor out of which to escape when the Commonwealth falls.<sup>116</sup> In a similar way, Milton's view of women appears at once both wildly liberal—asserting that any marriage based on legal grounds that does not include a marriage of true minds is illegitimate<sup>117</sup>—and also as hierarchical and patriarchal as so many of his contemporaries (as McColley argues above) and forebears—"He for God, she for God in him" (4. 299). The coexistence of

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<sup>114</sup> *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma*.

<sup>115</sup> *CPW*, Vol. 4.

<sup>116</sup> I mean this in the sense of an intellectual backdoor. Milton was likely spared a violent death after the Restoration only because of the intercession of the likes of Andrew Marvel and John Dryden.

<sup>117</sup> It should also be mentioned, of course, that Milton's doubling and tripling down in defense of his initial divorce tract may have its roots in the kind of mercenary intellectual project of legitimizing his first attempt at divorce with Mary Powell.

these anomalies legitimizes a wide variety of opinions on the subject of Milton and women, but they also show, at least, a rhetorical complexity.

I am sympathetic to Sugimura's view that some ambiguity as to what this unity is must be maintained in our understanding of the poem, and that Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, when he asks to be "resolved of all ambiguities," is truly representing what was to Milton the demonic impulse of flattening out all to simplicities (for more on this see Chapter 4). Rather, Milton desires that we ponder and question Raphael's cosmic scheme, parceling out the problems and implications of it for, for example, sexuality of spirits. Furthermore, to approach Milton's poetry as of the same intellectual vein as his prose (à la Maurice Kelley) is tempting given Milton's own totalizing views of "truth" and "nature," but the extent to which he is successful in creating a unified intellectual whole is always up for debate, and Milton's own assertion that he is writing prose with his "left hand," taken in the same breath as Jesus's command to not "let not they land know what thy right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:3), suggests at least a precedent for seeing Milton's prose and poetry as, in some way, intellectually different, even if their difference is not necessarily combative.

For now, it is important to acknowledge the impact that Milton's unique kind of monism depicted in *Paradise Lost* has on the status of the hierarchically inferior—in this case, on Eve and the would-be other women that she would bear. Zamir succinctly summarizes the difference between Adam and Eve's understanding of the presence of God in nature through an analysis of Eve's farewell to the flowers of the Garden ("Who now shall reare ye to the Sun, or ranke / Your Tribes, and water from th' ambrosial Font?" [XI. 278-79]):

Adam [already fallen] would smilingly infantilize her question. He will perceive nothing but her failure to fathom the workings of a providential power that sustains the flowers without requiring human assistance. What he thereby misses is that God, for her, was woven into those flowers, not an entity peeking through them... It is the quality of the relationship [she has with the flowers] ... that both complements God's impersonal nourishment of these entities and reflects the imperceptible divine ongoing nurturing of human beings. (*Ascent...* 88-89)

In other words—as is the case with humanity relative to the angels in Milton's cosmos—the lower beings possess something that the higher beings somehow lose without ceasing to be higher or perfect. The ascent of humankind through the monistic ladder of the unfallen world recursively understands the value of the earlier rungs via its interaction with lower things, just as Job is still in need of humbling though he is “without fault.” Once Adam falls, however, he ceases to be able to appreciate Eve's concerns for the lower things—the manifestations of the divine in the seemingly unimportant manifestations of prime matter—in the same way.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, Eve's status as lower than Adam attunes her to the presence of God in the initially unfallen matter of the Garden.

However, the feminist grievance with Eve problematizes my argument of the complementarity of difference in Milton's Eden. Eve appears to fall into temptation almost immediately after being created, which implies that her being underneath Adam

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<sup>118</sup> The transsexuality of the angels, connected with the implied ascent of humankind up through the spiritual world, may imply that gender/sex barriers are to be overcome. Do created beings, as they ascend through the unfallen world to repopulate heaven, remain hierarchically encased relative to each other? Perhaps an argument could be made that the meritocracy of Milton's political writings could come in to play. But I tend to think that this is to whitewash the problems of hierarchy inherent in the poem. Milton's cosmos is tangled and not inerrant.

does not merely make her a not-yet equal but that being lower brings one closer to sin—which is similar to Lucifer’s justification for his own fall, namely that the elevation of the Son over him is unjust, though the connection is fraught with problems. The poem does not, however, maintain this trope of the sinful as base and lowly. Sin works its way up the earthly hierarchy—not content with the low—in the same way that Satan works his way out of Hell and into the Garden by manipulating his inferiors. Eve’s unfallen reasoning at the beginning of Book 9 is not closer to sin, even if it does lead up to putting a pause on learning (as will be covered next chapter).

In Eve’s debate with Adam at the beginning of Book 9, we can see an adherence to the notion that freedom, ultimately re-paired with restraint, and individuality, ultimately re-paired with the community, must be strengthened and improved just as restraint and community must, implying a greater, larger complementarity. In other words, we are not led to believe that her defense of individual work is a necessary cause of her fall, given how quickly Adam falls after her prompting. It is their individuality not paired complementarily with their community that creates the conditions propitious for their individual falls, implying again the importance of both of those impulses (to be together, to work alone) in Paradise. It is actually the fallen Satan who first asserts that Eve’s isolation from her husband would make her more vulnerable to fall.

The primary difference between the divine ascent (that of the unfallen humans attaining a spiritual and possibly physical unity with God in heaven) and the demonic ascent (that of the fallen angels in competition with each other, attempting to reach the height of paradise or heaven through force, coercion, and deception) is that the height of the divine ascent is “individual” in the sense that all are united in God at its height,



whereas, the height of the demonic ascent is individual in the sense explained to us by Satan at the beginning of Book 4: loneliness. Satan's rule in the poem is marked by loneliness at every point after the initial rhetorical flare of Books 1 and 2 separate him from the other fallen angels.

Furthermore, the hierarchically lower position of Eve (as well as the status of all lower things and beings in Milton's cosmos) is a poetically incarnated rendering of the doctrine of *kenosis*. Many scholars have pointed out the importance of the biblical corpus as a whole to Milton's project of reanimating Hebrew scripture.<sup>119</sup> Importantly, the gospel and the incarnation especially are, in some ways, a precedent for the project of Milton's later poetry in their insistence on "the Word"'s having come into the world and in the hermeneutical work that Jesus himself does with the Hebrew scriptures. Milton's poem is incessantly typological in its project—popular among early church fathers and reformers—of reading "the Son" and "the Spirit" into the Old Testament. But the doctrine of the lowering of the Son to the humility of mankind and the criminal's death on the cross (as described in Philippians 2, the touchstone passage for the doctrine of *kenosis*), is one of the intellectual precedents for Milton's monism and his heterodox notion of the original sacredness of matter.

Eve's status as a learner works along the same lines. Her original position as lower has a complexly plastic relationship with the universe around her. Just as the Jesus of the New Testament is humble and lowly while intellectually and internally divine, so Eve's status as lower does not necessarily imply spiritual lowness or moral baseness in

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<sup>119</sup> See Lewalski's comments on Milton's apparent ignorance, in the divorce tracts, of Christ's restrictions on marriage (*The Life*... 167, 188) and Donnelly's comments on Milton's "biblicism" (throughout *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*) as two examples.

the biblical/cosmic structure within which Milton's poem is working. The poem does objectify her in the way that Landy describes, but her learning is also more "objective" than Adam's. Whereas Adam is focused on the stars and other larger cosmological concerns, Eve is focused on the Garden, and, as we'll see, this focus is present both before and after the fall.<sup>120</sup> That learning for men and women is different but essential to their communion with each other is a staple of Milton's understanding of men and women and of the status of women as inferior. Eve's objective learning helps her, in some sense, to see the greater cosmological fabric in a way that Adam can't because she has less anxiety. Adam's unfallen learning is concerned with becoming more like God via the ascent. Eve is content to become more like God via an in-depth interaction with God through his presence in the material of his creation.<sup>121</sup>

## 2. The Efficient Cause of Eve's Learning: Perception

From the very beginning Eve's learning is more attuned to otherness than any of the other rational beings we have seen or talked about so far. Milton's radical reformulation of Narcissus in the unfallen mind of Eve works not to show an Eve that is more self-interested than the unfallen Adam, but an Eve who, from the very beginning, is more integrated into the material world around her than Adam. Assuming Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as an adequate source for the scene in *Paradise Lost*, we can see the lengths Milton goes to depict the scene as an unfallen version of the myth. Alastair Fowler believes that in this retelling of the myth of Narcissus, the "Genders are

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<sup>120</sup> In the next chapter I'll argue against the idea that Eve's objective learning leads to her fall. She really does appear to enjoy the forbidden fruit itself more than Adam, but she is tempted by Satan in immaterial desires. After the fall, Adam and Eve have sex not because it is wrong or because they associate it with some kind of wrongness latent in the perfect world, but because they are longing for the more basic, the less elevated and spiritual.

<sup>121</sup> See again the above quoted Zamir, *Ascent*, 14-15.

transposed: Eve does not take Echo's role,"<sup>122</sup> but her experience as Narcissus is similar to Echo in some senses. On the one hand, although she is visibly attracted to herself, she thinks that she is visibly attracted to an other in much the same way that Echo is.

“...I thither went  
 With unexperienced thought, and laid me down  
 On the green bank, to look into the clear  
 Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.  
 As I bent down to look, just opposite,  
 A shape within the water gleam appeared  
 Bending to look on me, I started back,  
 It started back, but pleased I soon returned,  
 Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks  
 Of sympathy and love...” (4.456-65)

In her retelling, she thinks of her earlier self as “unexperienced,” introducing what follows as a moment of learning. Immediately she sees in the water “another” sky, one that is, in some way, distinct from the one she has just become familiar with. In this retelling, she refers, even after her later enlightenment, to the shape as an “It,” assuming also its agency, or, rather, not jumping too quickly to assume its subjection (as a mere reflection) to her reality. Just so, Echo, in Ovid's formulation, attempts to broach the other, Narcissus, but is cursed to do so only through repetition of his words. Milton's refiguring of Ovid here is to attempt to make Echo's postlapsarian curse prelapsarian by, in some way, combining Echo and Narcissus in Eve. Her reflection is very much an echo

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<sup>122</sup> *Paradise Lost*. Longman Annotated, Second Edition. Ed. Alastair Fowler. Note to lines 460-71.

of sorts, but it is truly delightful, unlike the unfulfilled echoes that Echo is forced to recite. Furthermore, her delighting in her own beauty—which we are led to believe could have stagnated had God not intervened—was not a lapse and was therefore rooted in the truth of her beauty. Narcissus has an interest in himself that is stagnant but also vain, whereas Eve’s experience involves genuine learning of the truth, an education that she can later apply to her work.

What many scholars figure as Eve’s pre-Fall fallenness, the weaknesses inherent in her that lead to her eventual (or inevitable?) Fall, is alternatively read as the stage that is set for more materialistic forms of learning. In other words, what’s really at stake in the conversation about Eve’s learning is whether her inferiority to Adam keeps her down or offers more opportunities to be raised. Satan’s argument—which will be examined in greater detail next chapter—assumes that her position is low, by the standards of rational beings, and that it is designed to keep her low, so her refusal to stay low will be an effective means of foiling the plan. But what he recommends is actually similar to the monistic process laid out in these chapters, only radically attenuated or occurring over radically less time. Satan’s flight metaphors are just a faster version of the idea that they will eventually become angels, with all of their attendant powers.

Milton’s positioning of Eve as both Echo and Narcissus is indicative of his view of women generally and their capacity to learn. The only thing “wrong” with the image is that there is a lack of materiality involved. God’s rerouting her—at least almost against her will—to Adam, whose original sight is not as pleasing to her, is a means of materializing her learning. In this sense, God is very much intervening in order to keep her from accessing a potential spirituality (her own image, rather than Adam’s flesh). But

her image is not an elevated spirituality, and the pool is stagnant. It may very well be the case that God's action is an indictment on the perfection of the world, that Eve is dictating a kind of Stockholm-Syndrome-like event. But there is also a sense in which she is being redirected towards power through the form of higher learning, at least "higher" in the sense that Milton understands it to be.

### 3. The Material Cause of Eve's Learning: Reasoning

A very underrated element of Eve's relationship with Adam, especially in the scene leading up to their separation in Book 9, is the rational work at play in their conversation. It is easy to jump from this scene into an assumption of marital strife or unhappiness, but, in understanding Milton's sense of the scene, we have to imagine that there are kinds of difference—especially intellectual kinds of difference—that do not cause genuine strife, unhappiness, or misery before the eating of the fruit. Furthermore, the presence of difference and disagreement in Milton's perfect world is indicative of the place that learning has in the maintenance of paradise. Only when learning stops, when the activity of discovery is stunted somewhere in the process, does genuine temptation become possible. Weber's notion of the "protestant work ethic" is possibly not irrelevant, in this context, to Milton's conception of reasoning and right reason in an unfallen world.

Eve's recounting of her first encounter with Adam shows the importance of reason to her "yielding" to his "manly grace" (4. 489-90). Although there remains the possibility that Adam's words were, in the moment of their first meeting, the exact same as those of her recounting, the rhetorical moment between them is one of a doting on their past, of reminiscing, and it is therefore, in some sense, her rehashing what about the moment was most meaningful and interesting to her. In her act of remembering, her reconstruction of

their first moments, she emphasizes his own discursive nature, his turn towards rhetoric, logic, and reason as a means of winning her attention. Her choosing to emphasize the rationality of Adam's argument for her to stay is indicative of the intellectual marriage that Lewalski talks so much about in Milton's marriage tracts.

"...back I turned,  
 Thou following criedst aloud, Return fair Eve,  
 Whom fly'st thou? Whom thou fly'st, of him thou art,  
 His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent  
 Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart  
 Substantial life, to have thee by my side  
 Henceforth an individual solace dear;  
 Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim  
 My other half: with that thy gentle hand  
 Seized mine, I yielded, and from that time see  
 How beauty is excelled by manly grace  
 And wisdom, which alone is truly fair." (4. 480-91)

Here is plainly visible Milton's construction of an almost comically submissive helpmeet, who does not get to keep "beauty" and "grace" as her feminine strengths, but even those are exceeded in the masculine, or at least according to "Eve" herself. And yet Eve's preoccupation with this moment is key to understanding the intellectual component of marriage Milton espoused in the divorce tracts. A part of Milton's male fantasy is an Eve who remembers fondly Adam's use of reason and even metaphor in his attempt to win her over. He connects the materiality of the rib to the metaphor of being "by [his] side." Also

of interest is the stark monism in the association of his rib with his soul, of which Eve is now a co-possessor. So, while Eve is meant still to be the fulfillment of his masculine fantasy, the centrality of argument and reasoning in Eve's recounting of their first union is at least, in McColley's sense, different from the visual misogyny of contemporary artistic renderings of Adam and Eve in Paradise and/or in the process of falling. Her reasoning is particularly responsive to the material, and this awareness shows her essential purpose in the Garden, not her essential failure to maintain it.

In Book 9, her proposition to work separately and their subsequent argument is more than just a simple longing for momentary separation from her husband. It is also a kind of higher integration with him, a desire to engage with her husband on the field of reason. So, while what she argues for is a kind of physical separation, it is purchased by intellectual communication in the form of (spiritual) argumentation, and it concerns itself with the immediate needs of the material world around, a world that Adam's elevated status makes him less aware of and concerned about.

Borne of a perception of the Garden's lush growth, Eve rationalizes that their work may be better spent separately (9. 205-12). She requests that Adam "hear what to [her] mind first thoughts present," admitting that her idea is humble, open to the engagement of difference, and that it is merely a "first" thought. She argues,

"Let us divide our labours, thou where choice  
 Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind  
 The woodbine round this arbour, or direct  
 The clasping ivy where to climb, while I  
 In yonder spring of roses intermixed

With myrtle, find what to redress till noon:  
 For while so near each other thus all day  
 Our task we choose, what wonder if so near  
 Looks intervene and smiles, or object new  
 Casual discourse draw on, which intermits  
 Our day's work brought to little, though begun  
 Early, and the hour of supper comes unearned." (9. 214-25)

On the surface, it appears that her argument is that community and communing are the impediments to an "earned supper." She blames "casual discourse" and "looks" and "smiles" that would "intervene" with their work. But her proposal is itself an argument meant, as suggested above, to plumb Adam's thoughts, at least originally. Furthermore, her suggestions of their complementary work—Adam's seeing to the vines and hers to the roses intermixed with myrtle—are both symbolic of her suggestion. On the one hand, she still represents submissiveness: she will tend to the lower plants, the more base, while he to the higher. On the other hand, she is asserting their difference and recommending, consequently, different work. Their work is intimately connected to growth and rising, as we have seen, and the way she describes their work is to bring the variety of species into harmony with each other. She is also pointing out how Adam wants to stay with her—perhaps this is something she has already intuited from his love—in her analogy of the vines and the trees. There she is pointing towards the way in which difference works in tandem with mutual growth, Adam's position. And for her, she suggests, in separating the myrtle and the roses, she is reestablishing difference or not allowing for the oneness of everything to erase difference completely. In this modest analogy, she is proposing a



complementarity of both difference and similarity, togetherness and individuality, and it all goes to movement forward.

What makes their discourse unique and striking is that it does not function within a strictly logical dichotomy of right and wrong.<sup>123</sup> Inasmuch as difference can abound without violence or argumentation without strife, such a discourse can be understood without a winner or a loser and without one who is right or one who is wrong. Without seeing this discourse in this way, readers are left to conclude (1) that Adam was right and Eve should not have gone off on her own, and that is why the fall happens or (2) that Eve was right, and she won the argument, and that the fall, though unfortunate in many ways, was roundaboutly the beginning of her freedom. But both of these conclusions misunderstand the content of Eve's argument entirely. She is concerned about "overgrowth," but she is also concerned for Adam, that he remain focused on the work more accustomed to his strengths (namely, his presumed height and attention to the vines' ascent). Central to her capacity to reason is her capacity not to collapse the difference between themselves, another aspect of their Garden that Adam in his elevated status tends to not emphasize as much.

#### 4. The Formal Cause of Eve's Learning: Community

But Eve is not so intent on their difference that her argument is to mean they should separate in any lasting sense. Her recommendation is not that they compete in their work with each other either. Rather, she suggests that their work *may* be a way of understanding each other better by being a clearer reflection of their difference. So, the meditation on difference works, paradoxically, also to clarify their interdependence, their

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<sup>123</sup> Donnelly associates this approach to difference with Modernity and Hobbes (see again *Milton's Biblical Reasoning* "Introduction" and "Chapter 1").

separate strengths, and the complementarity of those strengths. Furthermore, this characteristic of hers shows, in some small way, that she is aware of something in God's larger scheme that Adam is, at least, less aware of, being himself a hierarchically higher being. In Book 9, she tests the limits of Adam's authority as a means of understanding better their relationship with each other and its dynamic, its capacity for change and growth, and its temporary limitations.

Earlier, however, we can observe many instances in which Eve's capacity to reason communally is much less complicated or roundabout. Eve's ode to Adam, proto-Romantic in style, is telling on this front:

"My author and disposer, what thou bidst  
 Unargued I obey; so God ordains,  
 God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more  
 Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.  
 With thee conversing I forget all time,  
 All seasons and their change, all please alike.  
 Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,  
 With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun  
 When first on this delightful land he spreads  
 His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,  
 Glistening with dew; fragrant the fertile earth  
 After soft showers; and sweet the coming on  
 Of grateful evening mild, then silent night  
 With this her solemn bird and this fair moon,

And these the gems of heaven, her starry train:  
 But neither breath of morn when she ascends  
 With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun  
 On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower,  
 Glistening with dew, nor fragrance after showers,  
 Nor grateful evening mild, nor silent night  
 With this her solemn bird, nor walk aby moon,  
 Or glittering starlight without thee is sweet.” (4. 635-56)

This Eve is undoubtedly shaped by Milton’s fantasy of womankind as submissive and docile. And she shows that she is knowledgeable of both her place in the world and the world beyond her. It also appears at first that she disdains knowledge: “to know no more [than her husband’s law] / Is woman’s happiest knowledge and her praise.” But what she is communicating is also the dependence of her learning on the community of the Garden, which does itself extend well beyond Adam, as her winding ode shows. Then her love for Adam, in its purest expression, becomes complicatedly enmeshed with all the rest of creation, starting with the other high things (sun, His orient beams) and descending lower (tree, fruit, flower, fragrant and fertile earth), before reascending the heights at evening (fair moon, the gems of heaven). Whereas Adam’s love for Eve is almost problematically singular, Eve’s love is outwardly whole and connected.

She concludes this ode with an odd and seemingly incongruous question: “But wherefore all night long shine these, for whom / This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?” (4. 657-58). Again, as with later in the separation scene, she demonstrates how her reasoning is always pushing up against limitations; it is experimental and, in that

capacity, deeply intertwined with the greater community. The concern with the largeness of the universe that the nocturnal presence of the stars evokes, one which Adam later translates in his own way to Raphael, shows Eve's concern with limitations, characterizations, as well as an intellectual curiosity similar to Adam's. However, Adam's articulation of this problem, one of physical scale (he sees humankind's presence on the earth as impossibly insignificant compared to the motion of the stars), takes on a very different form in Eve's articulation. She wants to know who the stars are shining for at night. In one sense, her thinking appears to be an earlier form of Adam's later articulation. But it is also one that suggests, again, careful thought for the community of the Garden at large, especially the animals below them. She question implies, among other things, whether or not there are nocturnal animals for whom the stars shine. Adam assumes that her question, like the one he will articulate to Raphael later, is about the apparent justice or not of the universe. But her emphasis on the viewers seems to be more integrated with the Garden itself and with the Garden as a home for more creatures than just the rational.

##### 5. The Final Cause of Eve's Learning: Infinity

Although Eve is farther removed from God than Adam is in the hierarchy, she is much more intimate with the tendency of life towards fecundity than Adam is both because she is herself the location of that process in human sexuality but also as evidenced by her role as gardener and the specificity of that role relative to Adam's (as expressed in the above quote). Whereas she identifies Adam's work as involving the vines and the trees, she identifies her work in the myrtles and the roses, not just

separating them out, but attending to their rapid growth. Given that death is a consequence of the fall, the proliferation of human life falls to Eve for the oversight.

The final cause of learning in Milton's unfallen world is difficult to understand or conceive, in part, because the fall happens so quickly. There is suggestion from multiple sources that humans were made to repopulate the portion of heaven that the fallen angels left vacant. In the regular, postlapsarian story of the repopulation of heaven, people must be saved from sin, resurrected from the dead (which is the consequence of sin), and then brought up into heaven. In Milton's unfallen monistic cosmos this process is left somehow still intact, still possible—especially if Milton's Arminianism is given—and yet mostly undescribed and unexplored. Adam and Eve appear to have little interest in their final destination.

However, as has been alluded to already, Adam and Eve's joint interest in the stars functions synecdochally as the primary mode of understanding learning's final cause in their world. Eve's curiosity about it stems from a curiosity about nighttime generally: why would there be lights in the sky at night if everyone sleeps? Adam's response, which is good, is mostly just that there are other eyes than humans', and the angels delight in the stars too. But he doesn't answer another question implicit in Eve's question, namely, why are we seeing them right now, also? The stars have a human as well as an angelic function. They are meant to inspire praise in the angels and humans. They are also meant to inspire spiritual growth and maturation, through a wide variety of processes in humans and to lead them ultimately toward their end. It is for this reason that the stars inspire such curiosity in both Eve and Adam.

## 6. Conclusion

Ultimately, Eve's subjection, her status as a fantasy of Milton's, is helpful for giving us a fuller sense of the way education works in the poem and of what Milton thought education's larger purposes to be. Even in her status as lower, Eve is a reflection of the growth of all things and of the potential for spiritual growth in rational beings. Raphael's use of the flower in his instruction to Adam and, roundaboutly, Eve on the monistic structure of the universe is less exhilarating than the stars—a question that Raphael ultimately coaches Adam away from pursuing too far, too fast—but perhaps a more important lesson for Adam, the more elevated, to learn from. In this way, Milton's monism becomes recursive again, cycling back to “the fertile earth” before reaching skyward again.

## CHAPTER 4: HUMAN UNLEARNING

“Evil into the mind of God or Man  
 May come and go, so unapprov’d, and leave  
 No spot or blame behind.”  
 —Adam to Eve (V.117-119)

Learning, as I have discussed it here, becomes a problem in the world of Milton’s cosmos. If, as I’ve argued, learning works to build creatures, especially humans, up towards heaven and God, towards spiritual heights without the erasure of embodiedness, why, then, do they fall, and why, some would say, do they fall so quickly?

The answer to this question has to have something to do with the fragility of learning and/or the capacity for the learning mind to stop. This process, as I’ll argue, is primarily about singularity, the narrowing down or honing in of the attention at the expense of the greater surroundings themselves. This process is both reminiscent of sin and not sinful in and of itself, at least not by the rules established in the poem. This characteristic is also an inversion of the learning process thus far, which has been marked largely by the sense of wonder at an encounter with difference. Here, as we’ll see, fascination with a particular thing—usually ocular fascination—results in an isolating that thing from its surroundings, seeing it as having all of its meaning and value as an object separated from its context.

Another articulation of the abovementioned issue is built up in the fabric of the poem itself and of the question of why Milton sets out to write the book that he does. In William Kolbrener’s popular primer on *Paradise Lost*, he asks facetiously “why go on?” after reading aloud the opening twenty-six lines, implying that Milton has already

communicated all he meant to there (0:31:10).<sup>124</sup> But, more fundamentally, why would a protestant and Puritan Christian feel the need to reformulate the first three chapters and then some of the Bible in the genre of pagan epic?

As touched on earlier, there are two ready answers to this question. On the one hand—which can be represented by Danielson—*Paradise Lost* can be seen as a work of earnest theodicy, attempting to aid the curious mind in the exploration of the ways of God, though this view often slips into the position that it is a successful theodicy. Positions of relative extremity exist on that line, with those unwilling to admit any potential weakness of the argument on the far side. Their explanation is that the fall happens quickly so as to show the fragility humankind relative to the majesty of Milton's God. The other common answer to this question is that *Paradise Lost* is a reworking, correcting, or subversion of the Genesis myth. Varieties of extremity exist on this line as well and the position can be exemplified by William Empson's touchstone work, *Milton's God*, to which Danielson is responding.<sup>125</sup> Here, the quickness with which Adma and Eve fall is reflective not of their own, internal fragility so much as of the fragility of the Garden, the cosmos, or the general design of all of it by his God, who may importantly (or may not) resemble the God of Genesis.

These two answers can be compared also with the issue of how “Modern” or iconoclastic Milton is as a thinker and poet and what those views have to do with our interpretation of the poem. On the one hand, Milton was undoubtedly a political radical, as Christopher Hill has argued. His earlier polemic and his theological edginess work as

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<sup>124</sup> "Prof. William D. Kolbrener, Lecture on John Milton's *Paradise Lost*." *YouTube*, uploaded by Bar-Ilan University - אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, Feb. 2011 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GcY5WrMIWs&t=1024s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GcY5WrMIWs&t=1024s).

<sup>125</sup> I have elsewhere described *Paradise Lost* as a kind of anxious attempt at theodicy, which I think takes something of both views.



major pillars upholding this argument. On the other hand, it is hard for readers of any stripes to contextualize “Puritanism,” in Milton’s time, in the way that Hill demands we do, as a forerunner of bold free thinking and living. Radical as it was ecclesiologically and politically in its time, there is still a kind of moral conservatism endemic to the Puritan movement, as evidenced, for example, by the Presbyterian discomfort with Milton that came to the surface after the publication of his divorce tracts.

This “dilemma” is the central contention depicted in Barker’s *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma*. His contextualization of Puritanism marks the seminal formulation of the above difficulty of engaging with Milton from the perspective of modern readers in the actual ideological and theological frameworks of Puritan thinkers of the time. Because it is controversial—Hill would certainly take issue—it is worth quoting at length Barker’s distinction between radical groups like the Levellers and Milton:

Ireton told the Levellers at Putney that the consequence of trusting to ‘that wild and vast notion of what in every man’s conception is just or unjust’ would be, not the achievement of liberty, but the destruction of civil rights. More than that, he argued that the effect of an unrestricted suffrage would be to put liberty ‘into the hands of those men that will give it away when they have it.’ Though he thought in terms of established civil rights less than Ireton, that was Milton’s view. It was impossible to trust the government of the commonwealth to men ‘who have never learnt what law means, what reason, what is right or wrong, lawful or unlawful’; for the result would be the loss of the justice and liberty so dearly won.

As we have seen, the equal right which all men possess by nature is in Milton’s opinion a right to be governed justly. But, though it is true that all men

once were born free, and that all men ought by nature to be free, it is also true that bad men are 'all naturally servile.' (177-78)

The question breached in the previous chapter of whether or not Milton believed in the equality of men and women can be reformulated on a larger scale: did Milton really believe in democratic equality? Using only *Paradise Lost* as a case text, it would be difficult to argue that he unequivocally did, at least by contemporary understandings of those terms. The quote from Ireton that Barker uses to describe the limits of Puritan views of democracy can be used to represent the critical problem of receiving Milton politically. "Milton's view" is that the freedom into which people are born in the postlapsarian world can create conditions in which freedom is willfully sacrificed for more readily available servilities that appear better. This is how Milton justifies his rejection of the more-or-less popular request for the return of an English king in the wake of the revolution and his disgust with the lower classes of Britons who remained loyal to the throne even at the cusp of achieving what he and many others believed to be real liberty.

Barker's point serves to ambiguate the tidier readings of Milton mentioned above. On the one hand, Milton was a God-fearing, Bible-beating proto-Evangelical who disdained his Cambridge classmates for their vices, which he associated with the brutish lower classes.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, these very convictions, in his time, in part fueled the

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<sup>126</sup> See, for example, David V. Urban's "The Lady of Christ's College, Himself a 'Lady Wise And Pure': Parabolic Self-Reference in John Milton's 'Sonnet IX'" in *Milton Studies* 47 (2008): 1-23 for an introduction into Milton's relationship with his collegiate compatriots. Of particular note is how he would proudly proclaim himself to be a virgin as a means of shaming his peers. This fact, along with the pallor of his skin from being indoors all the time, led them to refer to him as the "lady of Christ's [College]." See also the biographical introduction to Milton at the beginning of CPW, Vol. 1, pp. 1-13, especially 4: "At Cambridge Milton was not popular among the average students, who named him 'the Lady of Christ's' for his chastity and his exceedingly fair complexion. 'Why do I seem to them too little of a man?' said Milton hotly. '... It is, I suppose, because I have never brought myself to toss off great bumpers like a prize-

Puritanism that sought to level much of the ecclesiological and political hierarchy traditional in his world. And, more to Barker's point, Milton was not unique in this, but a representative of Puritanism.

This apparent contradiction can apply to the problem of education in Milton's Garden in a variety of ways. For some readers, these educational moments serve only to highlight the impossibility of prelapsarianism or the inevitability of the Fall. Even though they were warned countless times and in myriad ways about sin—and perhaps because they were warned countless times and in myriad ways—they still cannot resist the forbidden fruit because not to resist in such a way is the more human thing. According to this view, Milton, unwittingly or not, undoes the fabric of scripture or, at least, reformulates it in a manner that looks forward to Romanticism's Promethean urge to defy the gods. The considerable influence of such a religiously serious Puritan on Romantic characters like Blake and Percy Shelley can be explained that way: by reformulating Puritanism as a politically radical movement as well as a series of moral and religious strictures. Blake can see these things as unreconcilable and can thereby read *Paradise Lost* as a general condemnation of the scriptures that it is engaging with.

For my purposes, I want to dive into the moments of human temptation in the poem to argue that the "puritan dilemma" expresses itself in both the failure of Adam and Eve and in the failure of learning in a free society. Learning, as will be described in greater detail below, is an activity, in Milton's articulation, and the freedom of the Garden thus necessitates that it not be compelled. Furthermore, Adam and Eve's separate

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fighter, or because my hand has never grown horny with driving the plough, or because I was never a farm hand at seven or laid myself down full length in the midday sun; or last perhaps because I have never showed my virility in the way these brothellers do."

decisions to give in—and their respective rationales—are the result of a temporary pause in that process.

As will be covered in greater detail below, unlearning then is characterized by stagnation and fixation, they ceasing to be active, and by the consequent disassociation of an object of learning from its greater context. As a case-in-point, I will return to the problem of the stars—one presented in different ways and terms by both Adam and Eve to their superiors. I've used this problem as a touchstone for learning generally in the poem because they strike Adam and Eve as too distinct or disintegrated with the Garden and the rest of the world with which they come into contact. For them the stars present a challenge to their assumption of the integrity and the interconnectedness or complementarity of all things. They are both answered that the stars are integral to the rest of their world but in ways not readily accessible to their minds at this moment. The answer is enough to satisfy them for the moment. What we will see set up as an example contrary to that educational moment is an ocular fixation that is uniquely non-intellectual (though not exactly anti-intellectual). Unlearning, in contrast to learning, assumes the disintegration and non-complementarity of things in its persistent observation of a single thing, the lack of an intellectual need to see the things of the Garden as connected.

Many scholars have emphasized this point. McColley's view (mentioned at length in Chapter 3), which is taken up again by J. G. Moore in the context of the Lady from Comus and an extended analysis of Eve's temptation scene, shows a Milton fighting against a longtime strain in sexist Christian thought that seeks to blame Eve entirely or largely for the fall.<sup>127</sup> Both of these analyses result in a view of temptation as a genuine

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<sup>127</sup> Jeanie Grant Moore, "The Two Faces of Eve: Temptation Scenes in *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 36.1 (2002): 1-19.

depiction of strife and possibility, as an open-ended interaction. For many, as mentioned above with Danielson and Empson (and is also the case with the classic Millicent Bell<sup>128</sup>), temptation can hardly be discussed without eventually leading to a thorough explanation of the *true cause* of the fall. This interest in causality—something that this study is also deeply engaged with—has centered more around whether or not there is a naked, necessary cause of the fall in the prelapsarian makeup. The answer to this question, however, is still just a cycling around the problem of perfection: if there is a necessary cause for the Fall in the Garden, then either Milton or his God or the God of Genesis (or all three) have failed to create genuine perfection; if there is not, then the unfallenness of Milton's Garden or that of Genesis can still be genuine.

These ways of reading are also extensions of themes in the poem itself, not necessarily incorrect or correct, but different emphases in interpretation that stem from emphasizing different portions of the poem itself. The mainstream view of Milton as Arminian would insist that the poem is attempting to portray the Fall as generically tragic precisely because the choices of agents in the play were avoidable. Unlike famous Greek tragedies like *Oedipus*, Milton's modern tragic epic is centered around agents making tragic choices. Fate, therefore, is not merely *not* what's being depicted in the poem (i.e. the theory of the inevitability of the fall), it is the form that fallenness and the pathway towards it takes. The idyllic unfallen beginning, however, takes the shape of epic plurality and abundance, the various forms of life in the Garden so thoroughly enumerated and described. As the Garden's narrative progresses, however, singularity slowly becomes more prevalent. The way that we are introduced to the Garden, through the eyes of the

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<sup>128</sup> Millicent Bell, "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," *PMLA* 68.4 Part1 (1953): 863-83.

lonely Satan as he beholds the happy couple, further clinches this characteristic of the poem.

The epic form slowly becomes more attenuated as the narrative moves from spanning the scope of the universe in the first three books, to the introduction of the quaint Garden in the fourth. The Fall takes the form of a marital conflict. Although there are epic moments interspersed throughout the middle and later books (usually via the interjection of an angel or demon), they are comprised largely of the interpersonal highs and lows of the first marriage, which, although saved in the end, fails to keep both of the interested parties from tragedy. *Paradise Lost* depicts the tragic taking over of the epic.

The interplay of these characteristics is also indicative of the generic interplay of epic and tragedy as they are engaged with in the poem generally, the two genres *Paradise Lost* endeavors to be. The epic, historic mode of the War in Heaven and the Fall, as well as the scale and settings of Pandaemonium and the Garden, works to widen the original scriptural text, to expand the Judeo-Christian origin mythos to the same world-scale size of the Greco-Roman literature the poem clearly claims to be superior to (I. 1-27). In the world of the poem after its climax, however, the quaintness of the marital dispute and Michael's history lesson (added on to the original ten books in a later edition) also work to represent generically the Fall and its consequent singularity of feeling. When they are banished from the Garden and Eve laments the loss of the plants as if they were her children, the singularity of her feeling matches the colorlessness and singularity of the world into which she is going. The only tonal relief from this feeling in the last three books comes at the last moment as Adam and Eve take each other's hands, an act of

reconciliation clearly evocative of their resistance to the state of sin into which they've fallen.

It is this mood, of the tragic imposition on the epic form, that is addressed by the epic narration at the beginning of Book 9. The narration “now must change / Those notes to tragic” that were before covering the subject of

...God or angel guest[ing]

With man, as with his friend, familiar used

To sit indulgent, and with him partake

Rural repast, permitting him the while

Venial discourse unblamed... (9.1-5)

Where before the narration could cover less urgent and imposing subjects, now is compelled to cover subjects of weightier subjects, as if the lengthy Raphael books were a kind of compositional putting off of the main subject at hand because of the narrator's dread. Immediately after this observation, the narrative voice moves on to contrast the task at hand with what is perceived to be the *Iliad*'s tragic-epic subject: “the wrath / Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued / Thrice fugitive about Troy wall” (9.14-16). Alastair Fowler points out that this reference is meaningfully connected to Aristotle's analysis of epic.<sup>129</sup> The connection certainly serves to highlight the ways in which the epic narration is attempting to distance the project at hand with the early pagan work, but its reference to a poignantly tragic moment—perhaps the moment that the poem's initial invocation is referring to (the “wrath” of Achilles)—at the close of Homer's epic highlights not just

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<sup>129</sup> PL, Longman's, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p. 468.

Aristotle's connection of the two genres but also the problematic relationship that the two have with each other.

The scene evoked is symbolically loaded within the *Iliad* as well. Hector can be seen as symbolically representative of the eponymous city, and the morbid violation of his body at the hand of Achilles—his dragging the body in the dirt three times around the city—further evokes the symbolic connection. As the climactic action of the work whose recorded title evokes the city fated for destruction, it similarly mirrors the tragic conclusion of Milton's epic as well. The "turning" of "notes to tragic" is not just traditionally epic but evocative of tragedy's traditional capacity for overwhelming epic scope. Aristotle addresses something like this problem of the *Iliad* by asserting that epic can be subdivided into the categories of "simple" and "complex."<sup>130</sup> The *Iliad* is a simple epic, and the *Odyssey* is a complex epic. Similarly, simplicity and complexity can be seen as connected to tragedy and comedy, respectively, and the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as representative of tragic and comedic epic, respectively also. Either way, the simplicity of the tragic epic that Aristotle points out is similarly evocative of the way sin works in this project's conception of *Paradise Lost* (see especially the below conversation about Marlowe). Tragedy—not as a solely "dramatic" thing, in the way Aristotle (and maybe Milton) thought it to be, but as a narrative genre—thus is at work within the epic, taking the scale of the poem's "world-view" and reducing it to a kind of inevitability.

So, Milton's Fall is not "predetermined" in the sense that his God created preconditions that made it impossible for Adam and Eve not to sin. Rather, his Fall is symbolically and meaningfully connected to Fate in its insistence on itself, its

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<sup>130</sup> *Poetics*, 24 (whole section).



retrospectively apparent inevitability. Furthermore, tragedy works generically as the epic poem's conclusion because it expresses singularity like that the best.<sup>131</sup>

This generic representation of these tensions is also meaningfully representative of the way that unlearning unfolds in the process leading up to temptation. As humans approach the moment of temptation, they are drawn out of a sense of awe and wonder at the plurality of the Garden and are drawn instead towards a particular thing or, in Adam's case, person.

The sort of learning for its own sake parodied in *Love's Labour's Lost*—mentioned in Chapter 2—and connected by humanists to late scholasticism also resembles the process of stagnation that overtakes the unlearning mind in moments of temptation. In these moments, the violence that will occur between objects and subjects of difference is foreshadowed in the lack of wonder at objects and subjects of difference. This foreshadowing is different from the violence in very important ways, namely, that it isn't harmful. Unlearning, again, is not bad or fallen in a traditional sense. Milton's vision of perfection in the Garden is unfinished, but the end is still in sight. Perfect, unfallen agents stop to rest at many points along this path. Unlearning happens in those moments, and it is conceivable that it happens and/or has happened at a variety of moments in the unfallen states depicted in the poem. Learning is the intellectual process by which the unfallen ascend the path, and unlearning is the temporary cessation of that process. In the language of education, unlearning in the as yet prelapsarian moments of temptation

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<sup>131</sup> A similar argument is outlined by David Quint in *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton*. The "loser epic," starting with Aeneas's relative passivity and the choice of the defeated Trojans as the ideal founders of Rome, importantly shapes the generic decisions Milton makes in his epics as well. However, he associates the "victor epic" with necessity and the "loser epic" with a revolt against such fatalism. In my view, the tragedy inherent in what he refers to as the "loser epic" is or evokes necessity much more so than a victory through trial would. The question generated by these different views is interesting: which between the two, victory or loss, is more fatalistic?

resembles learning that is not “applied,” not integrated into the larger world around it. The uniquely unfallen learning world of Milton’s Garden is always already applied, integrated, as every other good action and thought is, into the whole of everything else and affecting every other thing. Unlearning, then, is not even the absence of thinking, but the mental processes that happen in moments of unlearning are marked by a lack of integration into the world around, as will be seen in the temptations.

In Richard Arnold’s *Logic of the Fall*,<sup>132</sup> he distinguishes between “right reason” and “pure reason.” The former, he believes, stems from the classical tradition and becomes obscured in late medieval scholasticism. It is the use of reason within the context of applied human living. The latter, “pure reason,” Arnold associates, along with Christian Humanists of Milton’s time, with the abstraction of the Scholastics and fallenness as it takes shape in Milton’s writing. “Pure reason” is learning merely for its own sake, detached from the good life:

This right reason, revealed as the “prime wisdom” in *Paradise Lost*, is divinely bestowed on Adam and Eve at their creation: God gives them “Right Reason for thir Law”; whereas syllogistic [pure] reasoning, portrayed as “notions vain,” will characterize and perpetuate Satan’s “studious thoughts abstruse,” trapping the fallen mind “In wand’ring Mazes Lost.” (24)

The inclusion of terms such as “vain” and “abstruse” as descriptions of fallen logic or reasoning is indicative of this key distinction. The human mind, when divorced from the flesh, loses its capacity to generate thoughts with genuine meaning.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Peter Lang: New York. 2006.

<sup>133</sup> This will be elaborated on in the later section on Monism.

Both Arnold (13) and S. Fallon (19-49)<sup>134</sup> distinguish Milton's view of mind from that of Descartes whose estimation of consciousness famously separated "mind" and "body." Fallon argues that this characteristic of Descartes flirts with a materialism similar to Hobbes's, in which the mind's abstractions can no longer be thought to be separate from their material cage, resulting either in a kind of Neoplatonist rejection of materiality in favor of spirit or a rejection of spirituality entirely. Rather, as has been alluded to earlier, Fallon articulates Milton's view as "animist materialism":

By the time he came to write the Latin prose *Christian Doctrine* and *Paradise Lost* in the late 1650s and after, Milton had unequivocally repudiated the dualism of [his] early poems and thus separated himself from the Neoplatonism then reigning at Christ's, his undergraduate college at Cambridge. Instead of being trapped in an ontologically alien body, the soul is one with the body. Spirit and matter become for Milton two modes of the same substance: spirit is rarefied matter, and matter is dense spirit. All things, from insensate objects through souls, are manifestations of this one substance. Like Hobbes, Milton circumvented the mind-body problem that vexed Descartes, Gassendi, and the Platonists and that moved them to construct elaborate models of two-substance interaction. But where Hobbes assimilated mind to matter and explained mental events mechanically, Milton assimilated matter to current notions of mind and moved toward the position that all corporeal substance is animate, self-active, and free. (80-81)

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<sup>134</sup> *Milton Among the Philosophers*.

In a sense, Milton remains non-committal in the philosophical debate. On the one hand, his notion of mind and body is still platonic, favoring the spirit over the soul.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, he refuses to accept the coexistence of “two-substance interaction” because it introduces a lack of unity in creation itself. Milton is attempting to articulate a radically new approach to the mind-body problem: namely, by rejecting the notion of a “problem” at all. Fallon concludes “one can describe a person interchangeably as an animated body or an incorporated soul” (95). Some distinction or tension is certainly still present, but, as soon as the distinction is acknowledged, it is rejected.

Eve’s process of unlearning during her temptation—the period of thought that is not integrated to the rest of the world around her—follows similar lines to a distinction that Hoopes makes between knowledge and right reason (similar to Arnold’s distinction between “pure” and “right” reason):

We have seen how ‘knowledge of the good,’ considered in a dynamic sense, does not mean for Socrates what it meant for the Sophists, who confused it with other kinds of professional and special knowledge. That is, to know the good is not merely to be in possession of a body of knowledge which may be put to good or bad uses, a knowledge, as A. E. Taylor writes, ‘of opposites.’ True moral knowledge ‘carries along with it the possession of the ‘good will.’” Only those who ‘are’ virtuous really ‘know’ virtue. (12)

Eve’s unlearning and unlearning generally can be understood as a degradation from Socratic to Sophist understandings of the *telos* of knowledge. A truly prelapsarian way of

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<sup>135</sup> In Chapter 3, this manifests itself in his insistence on the inferiority of Eve to Adam, as well as many other hierarchies that, even in Milton’s day, were becoming unpopular among radicals that Christopher Hill writes about.

learning, according to Milton, is to have an unproblematic and ready connection between knowledge and virtue. The effect of sin on this relationship is to draw a gap between them. What gets dramatized in Book 9 between the serpent and Eve is really a mere stagnation between knowledge and virtue or a non-complementarity that comes from (1) stalling in the process of learning and (2) not progressing along the familiar lines of turning knowledge into virtue. This is the psychological state of temptation that leads to sin according to Milton, and it is merely a halfway point between the ideal state of education, in which knowledge and virtue have an unproblematic and complementary relationship, and the fallen state of education, in which knowledge has the capacity to disrupt virtue; knowledge and virtue could be seen as competitors.

Milton's unwillingness to accept a Neoplatonic or purely materialistic view of the mind-body problem is connected to his notion of "right reason," as articulated by Arnold. Both the Neoplatonic preference of the spirit over the body and the Hobbesian articulation of mind as mechanism come too close to what Milton believes to be a Scholastic idea of the intellect as separated from real life. In order to view the intellect as properly integrated into creation—a primary subject in *Paradise Lost*—a new, poetic, and metaphorical articulation must be put forward. Raphael's use of the flower as synecdoche of creation is primarily useful (5. 479-90). By using a part of nature (i.e., the flower) to be representative of the whole of nature, Milton creates a sense of wholeness in nature at large, any given thing is a sign of the whole. The spirituality of the intellect that led Descartes to need to distinguish it from matter, in *Paradise Lost* becomes the teleological end of nature itself and, thereby, another "end" of mankind.

# 1. Unlearning in the Monistic Context: Rest and Work; Incomplete and Complete Living

When approaching the issue of learning in the prelapsarian state of the Garden, especially as I have so far, in which education is a Midrashic tool of Milton's to try to smooth over any potential theodicean issues in the Genesis narrative, the above question has to be raised again of how Adam and Eve end up falling, even after Milton has padded their experiences with these educational moments. The central issue in Milton scholarship revolves around the problem of freedom in the Garden: many see the presence of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as essential to the maintenance of freedom and choice in the prelapsarian world, whereas many others see it as exactly the opposite, the locus of God's having forced the Fall on them.

Assuming that the moment of the Fall happens when each of them eats the fruit<sup>136</sup> and that the educational moments have thus far helped only in preventing them from falling, what then is the mental state of a prelapsarian person in the moments leading up to the Fall? If Adam in this chapter's epigraph is right, could it be that evil thoughts don't necessarily leave a "spot or blame" behind in the prelapsarian mind, but they do lead the prelapsarian mind into a position of greater susceptibility to fall?

In this chapter, I want to continue my process of anatomizing the mental processes of the poem's characters so as to get a better understanding of Milton's views of education, and I will attempt to depict the attenuation of learning that occurs in the moments of temptation via a similar process of causal analysis. Looking closely at both

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<sup>136</sup> Although not explicitly analysis of precisely when the Fall happens, see Deborah A. Interdonato's "'Render Me More Equal': Gender Inequality and the Fall in 'Paradise Lost,' 9" *Milton Quarterly* 29.4 (December 1995): 95-106 for an exploration of how problematic it is to view the Fall as merely the point at which the fruit is consumed.

Eve and Adam's moments of utmost temptation, I will argue that the poem stages temptation with a backdrop of a pause in learning, a *caesura* in the action of coming to know more. In this sense, Adam and Eve do not sin as they are tempted, but, rather, they stop the process that was actively aiding in their refraining from sin, an action that some would say protects the view that they are culpable in their own fall. From this, we can infer quite a bit about Milton's place in the conversation of Weber's "protestant work ethic," in which work is a means of constantly warding off *temptation* rather than sin. So, "unlearning" here does not mean willfully or unwilfully forgetting that which was learned. Rather, it is the process of ceasing to explore all of the available means of understanding, the attitude of no longer searching for an explanation of the whole. It is also not a sin so much as an unfulfillment of ideal Miltonic reasoning.

This stagnation is not "transgression" in the sense that it does not cross a line; it is not an action, and it is not malicious. It is merely the absence of something that was an active process before (learning) and at a time when it would be expedient *not* to cease said process. Zamir describes this preoccupation of Milton's with stagnation as such: "For Milton, the fundamental concern is not what kind of life is worth living, but what it means to be alive, and how not to dwindle into incomplete living" (119).<sup>137</sup> This "incomplete living," to Zamir, undoubtedly works as a description of life after the fall, depicted in Michael's lengthy lesson in Books 11 and 12. So, "unlearning," even in this sense, is indicative of a characteristic of sin. The caesura is similar to sloth. But, as is characteristic of much of Milton's paradise, to be unfallen is not the same as being finished, and paradise is not displayed as a state of constant intellectual rigor or learning.

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<sup>137</sup> *Ascent*. 2018.

There is present a foretaste of the Augustinian doctrine of the immateriality of evil—as has been touched on before—but the state of paradise is nonetheless reminiscent of regular life in much of its characteristics and rhythm. The light does not shine so incessantly as to block out all of the shade, and the mind is not so overworked in heaven as to not be able to rest and even feel a great deal of satisfaction in doing so. Rather, what we see in the moments of human temptation in the prelapsarian world are instances that could be read as moments of intellectual rest, but at times in which the mind is not meant to be at rest.

This idea of proper rest is brought to the fore when Satan disturbs Eve's sleep. There, when Eve is at rest and at a time when it is appropriate for her to be so, Satan primes her for her later temptation by giving her an image of flying, rising above the rest, to a place that, he insists, she belongs naturally. In the argument to Book 4, the scene is described as a temptation: "there [the angels] find [Satan] at the ear of Eve, tempting her in a dream." Early in Book 5, Eve relates the story of the dream to Adam after sleeping in somewhat more than usual with a disturbed look on her face. But there are two important distinguishing factors between this temptation scene and the next. Here, Eve is immobilized by necessity, her inactivity is seen as a part of God's larger plan and structure of the Garden. In Book 9 the midday break is planned, something Adam and Eve come up with that is by no means unacceptable, but the sanction of it is not as thoroughly embedded into the natural world as sleeping at night. Also, that the temptation takes place in a dream gives ample opportunity for analysis, both her own and Adam's. Here, Eve is not only allowed to take her time with unpacking the tempter's thoughts, she is encouraged to do so by her circumstances. A part of Adam's comforting of Eve



afterward is to clarify, specifically, the difference between “fancy,” temptation, and sin. Adam attempts to encourage Eve by validating fancy as a legitimate office in the mind, only one that ought to be subordinated to “reason” (5. 100-13). Interestingly, Adam associates “fancy” with rest, sleep, and dreams. Again, Milton’s commitment to hierarchical complementarity comes out. Fancy, like womankind to mankind, is in its right place when subordinated to reason, but it is not, therefore, more sinful or closer to evil. What distinguishes the temptation’s “fancy” from other forms is that it keeps Eve from her true rest (5. 1-113). She oversleeps not because she is indulging in sloth, but because she has yet to find true rest that night. Satan’s fallen “fancy,” according to Adam, attempts to overthrow reason by skipping over its head. Later, as we’ll see, Satan’s use of “fancy” is similarly unsettling, interrupting the tired Eve’s midday rest. Instead, the “fancy” ends up not being much of an escape from reality, and it becomes restless in a few senses, disrupting her midday rest and pushing her on to an apparently unattainable future ahead of time.

The preconditions of temptation also give us a glimpse into the relationship that education has with Milton’s understanding of the ideal. In Milton’s monistic Garden, in which the “one matter” connects thoughts and feelings to the material world, the absence of the proliferation of thought is the stage on which the first sin can be conceived. To put it in positive terms, temptation has to take advantage of rest, and, in doing so, it ceases to be restful in the full sense. Rest must become distanced from work for temptation to take hold. Rather than rest and work working together, rest attains a contrast with work that is exclusive and conflicting; rest must become something averse to work at all times. The complementarity of rest and work—just like the complementarity of individualism and

community—must remain intact in the individual mind for temptation not to take hold and, thereby, remove the will to do good. The intellectual work of testing ideas—like what is modeled in the conversation between Adam and Eve immediately before they fall—has to be pushed to the fringe in order for Satan’s temptation to take root.

What we will be looking at in Eve in this chapter, the process by which her position of learning, investigating and inquiring into the wholeness of God’s image of the Garden, slows to a halt, is paralleled and exaggerated in Adam’s thought process before he eats from the fruit as well: suddenly, all that he really cares about in the Garden is Eve, so to fall with her is therefore better than to stand alone. For both, what precedes the “fall” is an intellectual caesura, a kind of honing-in on a person or thing that removes it from its context.

But the content of their temptations is importantly different. For Eve, what Satan promises is her rise, her being beheld by all the stars and gods. For Adam, he is tempted by the fear of being without her. For Eve, she is promised a rise that is much more expedient than the slow work of monistic cosmological rise. For Adam, he is promised the strength of love of his inferior. These are symbolically meaningful for understanding Milton’s cosmos, but they also portray what Milton believes to be their particular absences of learning. Much has been made of Raphael’s injunction to Adam to be “lowly wise,” but, as has been argued earlier, Raphael also encourages Adam in his astronomical studies. Adam’s overconcern with Eve—which, in the postlapsarian world, becomes tyranny—is the content of his temptation and the precondition of his fall. Eve’s no longer being “lowly wise” is hers, which is why she is so poignantly aware of the loss of the

Garden at the end of the epic, aware in a way that Adam cannot or does not understand.<sup>138</sup>

The content of each fall is, in other words, a monomaniacal vision, a zeroing in or a lack of integrating visual and intellectual phenomena with the net of the Garden and cosmos.

## 2. Marlovian Monomania as a Key to Miltonic Fallenness

Here, it is important to reiterate that Milton's "monism" is vitally distinct from the literal meaning of the word. The monism is not a preoccupation with oneness generally, but—as the Sugimura quote in Chapter 1 implies—difference and oneness in harmony with each other. Temptation and sin are not only characterized by a lack of complementarity but also by a kind of particularly aggressive and restless monomania, which I want to contextualize in the art world that surrounded Milton in his time primarily via an extended comparison of Satan's psychology and that of a few Marlovian anti-heroes.

Much has been said about the influence of Elizabethan drama on Milton,<sup>139</sup> but I want briefly to offer, as a means of distinguishing what temptation means in this chapter, Marlowe's antiheroes as a forerunner of Milton's Satan and as a key to his idea of sin/temptation. Many have noted the potential influence that Marlowe's antiheroes could have had on Milton's Satan.<sup>140</sup> The prevalence of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* plays certainly shaped much of the cultural climate of Elizabethan Drama, which Milton was clear had a big impact on him.<sup>141</sup> Undoubtedly, Marlowe's Faustus was representative of

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<sup>138</sup> Zamir points this out, as was quoted at length in Chapter 3.

<sup>139</sup> See for example Robert Elliott Bayliss's "The Contributions and Effects of the Drama on *Paradise Lost*." *Paradise Lost and the Renaissance Drama* by Gerald O. Grow attunes the theme of "fall" in Christopher Marlowe's plays with the corollary in *Paradise Lost*.

<sup>140</sup> See P. L. Thorslev's "The Romantic Mind is Its Own Place." James S. Leonard draws a through line from Marlowe's Faustus to Milton's Satan to Melville's Ahab ("Melville's Ahab as Marlovian Antihero").

<sup>141</sup> For example, Lewalski (*The Life of John Milton*) writes about how Milton's first ever published poem was an epitaph for "the 1632 Second Folio of Shakespeare's Plays" (41) and the influence of Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, and Marlowe on *L'Allegro* (49). Of course, there is a certain amount of controversy

much of the Early Modern English notion of the demonic and, in that roundabout sense at least, is a forerunner of Milton's Satan.

In articulating what he could gain from selling his soul to the devil, Faustus says, "How I am glutt'd with conceit of this! / Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please, / Resolve me of all ambiguities, / Perform what desp'rate enterprise I will?" (1. 1. 77-80).<sup>142</sup> Among plain and trite potentialities of demonic power, Faustus wonders if he could have the benefit of being "resolved of... ambiguities," as if ambiguities or the concern with them were endemic to the religiously serious or saved. Perhaps the resolution he seeks is just the resolve to commit himself to the act, but, in that case, the act itself is understood as of such a finality that it becomes unambiguously singular. Satan's move of leaving hell alone to embark on the corruption of earth himself is similarly singular. In this context, we can see "ambiguity" as the process of a legitimate parliament, unlike the one Milton shows us in hell in which Satan pulls the strings from behind Beelzebub. We can see the ambiguity expressed by the three other interlocutors (Moloch, Belial, and Mammon) resolved in the imposition of Satan's will on the at least somewhat democratic/republican process.<sup>143</sup> In Faustus we see a pre-demonic (as in just

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surrounding how "Elizabethan" Milton's writing is given the problematic tension between Puritans and the bawdier playwrights like Shakespeare and Marlowe, but the impact of that dramatic world (positive or negative) on Milton is largely considered unproblematic. See also Patrick Cheney's "Milton, Marlowe, and Lucan: The English Authorship of Republican Liberty," *Milton Studies* 49 (2008): 1-19 for a more in-depth analysis of the connection between the Marlovian and Miltonic demonic as well as a study of Marlowe's influence on Milton.

<sup>142</sup> B-Text, (*The Complete Plays* 397).

<sup>143</sup> Of interesting note to some, Robert Fallon's *Divided Empire: Milton's Political Imagery* makes brief comparison of Satan in the infernal parliament to Cromwell's Rump Parliament. It is the closest thing in the epic to a genuine, human government, and it appears to be flawed in the same ways as the recent Cromwellian alternative Parliament. Fallon insists on the humanity of Satan over the "spotless Adam in his pristine Garden or the dazzling creatures of Heaven" (59) and that "the politics of Hell, like Satan himself, is much closer to the human experience than the exalted rule of God" (60). He also, however, makes a nod to the branch of Milton scholarship comparing Satan's rule with that of Charles I or of tyrants (in the sense of the Greek *tyrannos*) generally.

before the moment of signing away his soul to the devil) desire to be united with evil that is expressed in terms of a desire no longer to have to engage with intellectual complexity, undoubtedly something he has done enough of already. Perhaps the “ambiguity” he wants to be resolved of is the engagement with difference itself, the intellectual process of coming to know via needing to make sense of things in their places, and the process of doing all of this in an intellectual community as well. In Satan we see the fulfillment of those desires in the impact that he has on the parliamentary Hell and Garden.

Similarly, Marlowe’s Tamburlaine reformulates the art of divination as an exercise singularly useful for the reading of his greatness. Rather than reading the stars over his advent as a sign of his greatness, he projects greatness onto the stars at his birth:

Now clear the triple region of the air  
 And let the majesty of heaven behold  
 Their scourge and terror tread on emperors.  
 Smile, stars that reigned at my nativity  
 And dim the brightness of their neighbour lamps!  
 Disdain to borrow light of Cynthia,  
 For I, the chiefest lamp of all the earth,  
 First rising in the east with mild aspect  
 But fixed now in the meridian line,  
 Will send up fire to your turning spheres  
 And cause the sun to borrow light of you. (4. 2. 30-40)

All of the potential meanings that can be read in and/or inferred from the stars through divination come to point only to him. In his mixed metaphor, he becomes the sun that

pales the stars at dawn, furthering his imposition on the “stars that reigned at [his] nativity” to the stars that reign at all nativities. He makes a zero-sum game of the power that divination has over people, and, in so doing, creates an arena of competition between his meteoric rise to power and those of lesser gods. The game can only have one winner—the sun, Tamburlaine—in order for it to reach its natural conclusion. Tamburlaine’s defiance of his fellow men is connected to his disdain for their gods.

Milton’s Satan conceives of divine authority similarly in his own very different meditation on the sun:

O thou that with surpassing glory crowned,  
 Lookst from thy sole dominion like the God  
 Of this new world; at whose sight all the stars  
 Hide their diminished heads; to thee I call,  
 But with no friendly voice, and add thy name  
 O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams  
 That bring to my remembrance from what state  
 I fell...” (4. 32-39)

Even in an unfallen world, Satan sees the stars as “diminished” by the sun, implying the competition rather than complementarity of their relationship. Though not as explicitly as Tamburlaine, he also uses the presence of the sun as a means for understanding himself, seeing there, at first, “the God / Of this new world” and then the state from whence he fell. The heavenly bodies of the stars outpaled by the sun are placed in competition with him.<sup>144</sup> For both Satan and Tamburlaine, then, the sun is evocative of them because of

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<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, if the stars are meant to be read as the heavenly bodies of ancient and medieval cosmology (i.e. Sol, Luna, Jupiter, etc.), the rearticulation that these anti-heroes express of themselves as the sun that

that distinctive characteristic: that it causes the stars to hide from view. Neither character conceives of a sunset either. Both are fixated on the “rise” of the sun, preferring not to think beyond the “meridian.”

Furthermore, Milton’s conception of Hell (and later on of Paradise as well) as an internal, psychological state is famously heralded by Marlowe’s Mephistopheles. Faustus, convinced that Hell does not exist, asks how Mephistopheles can be “damned” if he is in Faustus’s study, rather than Hell itself. To which Mephistopheles responds:

Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it  
 Think’st thou that I, that saw the face of God,  
 And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,  
 Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,  
 In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (1. 3. 75-79)

Faustus, of course, is incredulous because, among other reasons, it is difficult for him to understand how someone serving him could be suffering so. Mephistopheles equates Hell with absence, rather than singularity, but his location of Hell within the individual is

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blots out the others could also be engaging with much larger questions in their time regarding new views of the cosmos. A heliocentric view of the cosmos is framed in terms of its competing with the benighted heavenly beings. In this sense, the atheism nascent in much of Marlowe is very much associated both with the demonic but also perhaps with modernity in a broader sense. The sun’s position as in competition with the stars, as articulated by Satan and Tamburlaine, is evocative of Hobbes’s view of difference as inherently violent. Nicholas Davidson’s “Christopher Marlowe and Atheism,” *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 129-47 contains an exhaustive account of this accusation and of Marlowe’s own self-proclaimed views as presented after his death by Thomas Kyd. As always, in Elizabethan England, it’s hard to tell the difference between “atheism” as a relatively generic insult (i.e., “godless”) and as a genuine, personal conviction. For more context on the confusion between insult and genuine meaning, see Alan Bray’s *Homosexuality in Elizabethan England*, especially conversation about “sodomy.” See also Jonathan Goldberg’s “Sodomy and Society: The Case of Christopher Marlowe,” *Southwest Review* 69.4 (Autumn 1984): 372-78 for more on “homosexuality,” “sodomy,” and “atheism” as terms used both as vacuous insult as well as meaningful terms signifying and damning “anti-social behavior” (371). In sum, Marlowe was certainly not an identitarian homosexual in the post-Wilde sense, but it’s hard not to see his apparent commitment to theological, political, and sexual edginess as having some integral relevance to his art and anti-heroes.

singular in itself. Absence and singularity appear similar, here; absence now lives within the singular person, and the other damned and their misery are not a balm to the individual, damned soul. Hell, the place, is itself bad, but being unable to leave it because of its location in the mind or soul is more indicative of true evil, as it is conceived by Mephistopheles. Similarly, the epic narration in *Paradise Lost* tells us that the fallen Satan carries hell within him:

...horror and doubt distract  
 His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir  
 The hell within him, for within him hell  
 He brings, and round about him, nor from hell  
 One step no more than from himself can fly  
 By change of place... (4. 18-23)

Both Mephistopheles and the epic narration insist on Hell as a psychological state, rather than, in the traditional view, merely a place that exists below the surface of the earth. The nature of fallenness (and, for Milton, Paradise as well) is to be a condition of the mind or soul as well as, presumably, a real physical place. Here the effect of sin is to locate the monomaniacal drive within the individual, rather than as imposed upon from without, as its own punishment and/or reward.

This Marlovian monomania is critically distinct from the prelapsarian monism discussed here and in earlier chapters. Milton's monism views subjects of different forms as non-combatively engaged in the process of becoming spiritual, ascending a ladder of change from root to stem to flower to scent/spirit. Present there is difference, hierarchy, and complementarity. In the articulation of the fallen soul in Marlowe is the existence of



hierarchy and the elimination of it—as well as difference and complementarity—via the meteoric rise of an individual. In both the temptations of Eve and Adam—though Adam’s is often expressed in different terms—there is a promise of an erasure, not just of hierarchy, but of difference as well.

Temptation thus resembles sin in some important ways, but it is not exactly a pre-fall Fall. Temptation rather is an unfallen mirror image of sin, taking out the plurality of unfallen harmony between objects and subjects of difference as fixation mirrors the destitution of the Fall. In a way, this mirroring could be conceived as a warning sign in a more Arminian view of the poem, but it can also be seen as a slippery slope leading to an inevitable fall in a more Calvinistic or fatalistic reading of the poem.

Also, temptation’s characteristic as a fixation on a singular object is pointedly oppositional to Milton’s monism, even if etymologically or literally they should seem similar. Whereas Milton’s monism represents a complementary relationship between subjects and objects of difference, his monomania manifests itself as obsessive singularity that, in fact, creates a Hobbesian view of difference as violence and competition. Although this will be explored in greater detail below, by way of example, the “second Eve” that Adam imagines during his moment of temptation is precisely an example of this. He creates an alternative in his mind that he then pits in competition with the first Eve, then erases.

Now, I would like to explore “unlearning” in the context of the above. However, the four-part causality of unfallen learning is difficult to make work in a world where temptation resembles the radical singularity of the evil that it precedes. On the one hand, temptation, to an extent, mirrors fallenness in its being relatively unsubstantial in an

Augustinian sense (Fiore 42-60).<sup>145</sup> The poem constantly refers to death as the immediate consequence of sin in part because of how important and sacred materiality is in Milton's cosmos. Death does not just mean the decay of flesh and materiality, but also the oncoming of unsubstantiality and loss in its most basic and general sense. Chapter 12 of *De Doctrina Christiana*, entitled "Of the Punishment of Sin," enumerates the full weight of death as the consequence of sin (CPW, Vol. 6, p. 393-98). So, unlearning in this sense, and in the Aristotelian language I have been using for cataloguing learning, resembles Miltonic sin in that it has only one "cause." I have described this cause as the "efficient," but it may be more of an "instrumental" or "helping" cause. The end is possible without it, but, in the contexts we're given, it is adjunct to the process that brings about the end. Furthermore, this "efficient" or "helping" cause is still important to the "form" or the process of temptation in that this individualism is represented in the way each individual person is tempted, but, again, the nature of the temptation as individual overrides any real "formal" analysis of the structure of temptation. Unlearning, like sin, can't have a "material" cause because it is non-substantial, and its "final" cause is simply death. The complexity of cause in regular, Miltonic, prelapsarian learning evaporates as agents encounter the desire to be "resolved of ambiguities." "Efficient" is here meant as being in contrast with "necessary" cause in that it creates preconditions for an event that do not

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<sup>145</sup> Peter A. Fiore, *Milton and Augustine: Patterns of Augustinian Thought in Paradise Lost*, Pennsylvania State UP. Augustinian doctrines of original sin and its consequences are presented in *Paradise Lost* "strong[ly] and persistent[ly], without any theological theorizing, throughout the poem" (42). For more complicated interpretations of the influence of Augustine on Milton see J. C. Warner's *The Augustinian Epic, from Petrarch to Milton*, W. E. H. Rudat's "Milton, Freud, St. Augustine: 'Paradise Lost' and the History of Human Sexuality," and J. B. Potts' "Milton and Augustine: the Rule of 'Charity.'" Most writers like to emphasize Augustine's unproblematic acceptance as a church father and authority in Protestant traditions, as opposed to, for example, Origen or later fathers. Of primary importance here is Augustine's notion of the non-substantiality of sin/evil, derived from an interpretation of the "and He saw that it was good" refrain in Genesis 1.

necessitate it. In Milton's world, unlearning, like sin, has an efficient but not a necessary cause.

### 3. The Efficient Cause of Unlearning: Singularity/Fixation

As we've explored earlier, "cause" can be thought of in many ways. For any given thing, according to Aristotle, all four causes can be discerned. But when it comes to describing the causes of the fall, at least in terms congruent with Milton's theological and physical convictions, it is difficult to ramify a process that is essentially singular or, in Marlovian terms, monomaniacal.

If the material cause of the Fall is the fruit itself, the material cause of unlearning would be the capacity for unfallen humans to stare. The narration cycles back again and again to this feature in both Adam and Eve's temptation scenes. For Eve, the fruit is enticing for its delicious taste and because she is hungry, preparing to eat a midday meal. For Adam, he rationalizes eating the fruit on the grounds of his fixation on Eve.

Fixation, of itself being an unfallen characteristic, is also a kind of unfallen mirror of the way sin functions in Milton's world. John Reichert contextualizes Miltonic temptation and the Fall in terms of disobedience in a way that highlights singularity and fixation as central:

That voice [of God], which Adam and Eve are free to remember or to forget, is the equivalent of conscience, which the Father himself describes as a 'guide' placed within them... Conscience, the voice of God within us, is then, the aural counterpart of inner illumination. Disobedience, etymologically, is a failure of hearing, a hearkening to the wrong voice, or the crowding out of one voice by another. (33)

“Conversation” attains a disharmony in the context of forgetting and disobedience. But what Eve and Adam do leading up to their respective falls is not quite forgetting in the passive or active senses. There is rather a focusing or fixating on an object or person, and, in that sense, the opportunity for mental over-rest. Temptation is the crowding out of one thought by another, and it is also the willingness to let a thought become central in one’s intellectual processes, drawing all of the mind to the object or subject of attention. This fixation also, in the case of both Adam and Eve, involves a preoccupation with a creature lower on the progressive hierarchy, in Adam’s case Eve, in Eve’s case, the serpent and/or the fruit itself. But the preoccupation with each of these, as we’ll explore in greater detail, is still, ultimately, a preoccupation based on the imagined effect these creatures/objects have or could have on the tempted. Temptation involves, therefore, not just the fixation of the individual person on another object or subject, but a fixation that in the end becomes largely a concerted effort to assume such an object or subject’s value for the one who is doing the fixating. This kind of fixating is meant to be an inversion of the positive kind of perceptive learning explored in earlier chapters, like that modeled by Adam on the stars, in which the object of attention inspires worship—a central component in the monistic ascent—and adoration both of God and the object/subject itself.

With Satan’s rhetoric of hell, we see an overreliance on the more basic forms of reasoning (according to Raphael’s assertion on angelic intuition and human discourse). In the parliament of hell, discourse abounds, relatively speaking, but intuition has to be stymied at every turn. Eve’s case in the temptation scene is similar, even if not exactly the same. What we see is her (as yet unfallen) skill at discursive reasoning. She even puts the serpent’s reasoning to the test, partially resisting the temptation with her mind in a way

that Adam really does not. But this discourse does not, in turn, as it does elsewhere, activate her intuition, which—presumably—in this case, could inspire any number of doubts or alternative hypotheses to the serpent’s about the fruit having given him the gift of speech.<sup>146</sup> So, even in her moment of greatest temptation, she is still reasoning in an unfallen way. Only, what we observe, is a stalled reasoning, or the end of learning in the other sense. We see the cessation of the desire to continue learning.

In the moments before she eats, as she is speaking with the serpent and to the fruit itself, she is asking genuine intellectual questions about the fruit, but her questions remain unanswered and uninvestigated before she eats. In short, her investigation resembles the kind of rest that does not have a complementary relationship with work.

In plain then, what forbids he but to know,  
 Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?  
 Such prohibitions bind not. But if death  
 Bind us with after-bands, what profits then  
 Our inward freedom? In the day we eat  
 Of this fair fruit, our doom is, we shall die.  
 How dies the serpent? He hath eaten and lives,  
 And knows, and speaks, and reasons, and discerns,  
 Irrational till then... (9. 758-66)

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<sup>146</sup> Interestingly, Satan claims that the fruit’s effect on the serpent is to give it a capability above what a creature of the serpent’s status is to have. This opens up questions about the poem’s monism. Are all beings in the Garden on the path toward heaven that Adam and Eve are on? If so, is the serpent’s temptation merely a promise to skip a leap in the monistic hierarchy. If, as will be discussed in the Conclusion, the Fall brings about a sense of competitiveness and violence among all kinds of difference, the content of the serpent’s temptation is evocative of that as well.

Eve's rationalizing here is incisive, but not as incisive as in other places. Her reasoning here is contrast with that in the earlier conversation/argument she has with Adam in this same Book by the sheer speed with which she ultimately acts on some of the conclusions she has drawn from questions just asked. Her question "How dies the serpent?" seems rhetorical or sarcastic. But, assuming that her as yet unfallen state is incapable of such a thing and that her question is sincere, she does not give very much time for investigating that process. His apparent ascent to rationality has taken the form of speech, but she doesn't observe much else in the serpent himself, nor inquire into the nature of language as evidence of intelligence. She has already questioned some of the serpent's reasoning, so she is not so credulous as to believe without question everything he has told her so far. Perhaps her question would, in an intellectual attitude of learning as opposed to unlearning, investigate the extent to which he may be dying at that moment. What does he know about himself now that he did not before? Where is he staying? Does he now want to join in the community of Adam and Eve, now that he has joined the ranks of the rational? We have seen, also, at times, God respond directly to questions asked by Adam. These apparent shortcomings are not, again, wrong or inherently sinful. Each of the questions she asks in her moment of temptation are legitimate questions of inquiry brought about by the introduction of new information into her world (the speaking animal). Rather, it is the speed with which these questions are asked matched with a lack of interest in plumbing their true depths that characterizes her unlearning. Intellectual work is happening without rest, and the real intellectual work that such questions demand is separated from the rest she is enjoying.

For Adam in his temptation, the questions and rationalization are similarly rushed.

...for with thee

Certain my resolution is to die;  
 How can I live without thee, how forgo  
 Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,  
 To live again in these wild woods forlorn?  
 Should God create another Eve, and I  
 Another rib afford, yet loss of thee  
 Would never from my heart; no no, I feel  
 The link of nature draw me: flesh of flesh,  
 Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state  
 Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe. (9.906-916)

Although his argument seems much more resolved, having dived into the possibility of life without Eve more completely than she imagined fallen life before eating, his questions are equally valid, and they can also be read as either rhetorical/sarcastic or sincere. He does not attempt to imagine in too much detail what a life without her would be like, except for how that world would be most immediately impactful on himself, his actual body (“and I / Another rib afford”). Again, this is not the kind of sinful solipsism we see emblemized by Satan’s soliloquys, but it betrays a lack of willingness to engage a thought into the fabric of the rest of the universe. By the end of his thoughts, we can see more of how his inquiry into life without Eve is also an understanding of Eve mostly as she exists primarily in relation to him. She becomes the “flesh of [his] flesh” more so than the caretaker of the flowers that she has come to love like her children. Again, this is not evil itself and his thoughts are not dishonest or untrue, just incomplete thoughts of

Eve as a person in the Garden, as a caretaker on whom the Garden itself depends for its own improvement.

Prelapsarian goodness is modeled in the Garden in the form of the many other trees: obedience is rewarded with multiplicities or pluralities that form a complementary whole, whereas disobedience is figured in the singular tree and the temptation that Adam and Eve experience similarly takes forms of singularity.

Fixation as the form of unlearning also, as has been vaguely alluded to earlier, applies to time in the poem. In his unpacking of Lucifer's prelapsarian beauty before his destruction and deformation in the fires of Hell, Donnelly notes:

As readers of Book 1 (specifically 1.84-87), we know that over time the appearance of Satan and his companions will indeed change to reveal their corrupted state of infidelity. But the consequences of sin require time to unfold, at least for human understanding. One could argue that Abdiel is simply mistaken to think 'That he who in debate of truth hath won, / Should win in arms' (1. 122-23).

But in the same way that deception and sin unfold intelligibly only through temporal narration, the victory of truth is actualized only through time. This central emphasis upon temporal unfolding explains the failure of the faithful angels to vanquish the rebels in the first two days of battle. (130)

In much the same way, Eve after having eaten the fruit starts to praise "experience," but she is, at least in some literal ways, mistaken. Aside from having tasted a new, delicious fruit—in the bigger picture—she has, unwittingly or not, sacrificed eternity for a limited lifetime, significantly reducing the ultimate quantity of experiences she would be capable of having. Eve's first spoken word after her fall is a kind of repression. Afterwards, the



acceptance of death as an inevitability, without a despairing undue obsession, becomes a virtue in the rest of the poem in part because it recontextualizes their theology in the form of the narrative passage of time or time in the more holistic sense described by Donnelly above. After the temptation and the fall, Adam and Eve become aware of this attenuation, but only over the cast of time. Learning becomes more difficult after the Fall, and repression as opposed to hunger for learning becomes the new reality. Toil enters the work of learning and the toleration of ambiguity; work of the mind as well as of the body becomes toilsome and, at times, unrewarding. The introduction of death brings the concept of time into a poignant reality, becoming both the consequence of fallenness's fixation on singularity but also the means by which virtue and goodness can be carried on. In creation, as opposed to heaven, there is an immediate effect of the action of sin upon nature, but the delay of some of the effects of sin results not only in the maintenance of unfallen beauty in the sinful (as is the case with Lucifer) but also in the repression of the reality of impending loss and attenuation. Later on, Eve and Adam will have to confront this reality without leaning too much into it—Eve suggests suicide. The acceptance of aging and death, as a result of sin, become virtuous only when patience—the virtue most intimately associated with the passage of time—can be considered as well.

Unlearning also interacts interestingly with prelapsarian time. On the one hand, it fails to embellish the timelessness of eternity, which would allow for plenty of time to think and talk things through. By this mirroring of sin, temptation can yield to sin more quickly. Again, we can see Milton's preference for thought over feeling, masculinity over femininity. The eating of the fruit is also the beginning of time in the poem, the passage

of time is suddenly felt, so temptation needs to be rushed. Eve does not, for example, think to take the fruit to Adam, for them to share the special moment together, in part because of sin's non-communal nature in Milton, but also because of its being in a hurry.

Although it does not qualify technically as a temptation scene, Adam and Eve's interaction/debate at the beginning of Book 9 is integral to how the poem conceives of fixation and singularity. Again, the question arises: is Eve's suggestion that they split up their work a sign of her pre-fallenness, the weakness inherent in her? Satan, in choosing her as a target, certainly seems to think so. Eve's argument with Adam communicates something categorically different from Satan's rejection of his peers and authorities, as well as from his desire to be resolved of ambiguity via fixation. Most importantly, her reasoning is wholistic, engaging with the entirety of life in the Garden in a way, perhaps, that Adam is unaware of:<sup>147</sup>

...what we by day  
 Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,  
 One night or two with wanton growth derides  
 Tending to wild. Thou therefore now advise  
 Or hear what to my mind first thoughts present,  
 Let us divide our labours, thou where choice  
 Leads thee, or where most needs... (9. 209-15)

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<sup>147</sup> This point hearkens back to Tzachi Zamir's argument about Eve mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 3 (*Ascent...* 14-15). In short, Eve's position as lower in the hierarchy also illuminates aspects of perfection in the Garden that are beyond Adam's immediate sight. This validation of inferiority is only possible if there can exist diversity in perfection (or unfallenness) and, in Satan's words, "orders and degrees / Jar not with liberty, but well consist" (5. 792-93).

What appears at first as a veiled excuse to evade the incessant contact of her verbose husband, in the context of her rhetorical choices betrays a sense of the differences in their strengths. This quote also puts into right light Eve's much-referenced mourning scene at the end of the poem. She is more integrated into the life of the Garden than Adam, and the poem credits this to her as a virtue.

Another difference between pre-fallen attention-paying and fallen fixation in Milton's world—as alluded to briefly before—is the degree of choice. Michael's lecture to Adam later on shows how sin makes mankind more slavish in many senses: being inclined to subdue and enslave others, being drawn to subservience to bad masters, and, in several respects, becoming less free. Satan, as is the case in his soliloquy at the beginning of Book 4, vacillates between insight and self-deceit in the moments leading up to his temptation of Eve. Ultimately, however, he works himself up into a state of resolution with regard to these ambiguities. His freedom to choose does not appear to be impaired, but his willingness to keep those options open fades.

To return to the process of unlearning itself however, it works most devastatingly in agents when it takes the form of isolation. Because of how communal learning is in Milton's world, this doesn't come as much of a surprise. However, the poem goes well out of its way to insist that isolation, or at least the kind of individual working endeavor Eve proposes in Book 9, is not inherently flawed, nor does it either create preconditions that necessitate fall. As was noted and argued earlier, these conditions create a scenario in which the Fall is possible. Isolation is losing its complementarity with community when Eve is drawn away to the tree by the serpent rather than reunited with Adam for lunch as they planned. In the temptation scene, isolation works as a means of signaling unlearning

while also setting the stage for the process by which the Fall becomes possible and more likely.

Just before he sets out to tempt Eve, Satan expresses his disdain for Adam and Eve:

“... if they at least  
 Are his created, or to spite us more,  
 Determined to advance into our room  
 A creature formed of earth, and him endow,  
 Exalted from so base original,  
 With heavenly spoils, our spoils: what he decreed  
 He effected; man he made, and for him built  
 Magnificent this world, and earth his seat,  
 Him lord pronounced, and, oh indignity!  
 Subjected to his service angel wings,  
 And flaming ministers to watch and tend  
 Their earthly charge...” (9. 146-57)

Satan’s relationship with Adam and Eve is disdainful because of the monistic project of elevating the base/material into the realm of the spiritual. He is offended by the notion that the spoils of heaven could be offered to beings of “base[r]” stock than angels. So, when he tempts Eve by offering her great heights, he is also attempting to deceive her into believing that falling will cause an elevation in her status. Perhaps because of the pain he feels as a result of his own fall from Heaven, he disdains the rise of other creatures. This antipathy to the monistic progressivism is not only indicative of the

singularity of sin in the poem but also of the relationship between otherness/difference and violence in the postlapsarian world and consciousness.

#### 4. Conclusion

The approach I have been using thus far, analyzing education as a legitimate means of resisting temptation and explaining temptation by “unlearning,” shifts into unknown territory after the Fall in part because the exploration of Milton’s ideal forms of education can’t be as nakedly displayed. However, in this project’s Conclusion, I hope to elaborate a little more on how Milton sees complementarity and difference functioning in a postlapsarian world and how that difference shapes many of the conclusions of this project generally.

## CONCLUSION: IDEALITY AND LEARNING IN EDUCATION NOW

Stanley Fish's abovementioned analysis of "the reader" in *Paradise Lost* contrasts interestingly with this project in that it is a study of what Milton would have understood as an "already fallen" space: the mind of the reader as it engages with the poem. I have here been trying to engage with the prelapsarian parts of the poem as meaningfully communicating something about Milton's views of education in the ideal. Looking forward now, I am left with the question of what a study of "the ideal" is actually good for in the context of an un-ideal world, both that out of which the poem was born and that in which the poem is read. I am also left to wonder about the poem as itself a tool of learning. Is the poem's emphasis on learning a clue as to its usefulness as an educationally edifying thing? Or is it only as successful as a tool of education as the perception of its ideality in the mind of the reader suggests?

### 1. Milton's Ideal Learning and the Un-Ideal

Given my conversation in the previous chapter about the poem as a tragic epic or an epic in which tragedy comes to hold more importance in the long run, the subject of the state of mind of the author is relevant to the question as well. Milton was undoubtedly either embroiled in or just coming out of a state of utter despair. The failure of the Commonwealth, an entity he talked about as the eschatological Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, meant a failure on levels beyond just his political views. His blindness, something his critics attributed to his defiance of God (as in the case with Saint Paul), exacerbated the situation when he was finally imprisoned, after the Restoration. His being connected with influential people near the throne like Andrew Marvel and John Dryden was likely

pivotal in his escaping execution by being drawn and quartered. His brief stint in jail—roughly six months—was likely worse than most given his blindness.

These factors, this setting, and what we can assume of his internal state of being are the context of the creation of the poem. It was now no longer appropriate for him to write his epic out of Arthurian legend because his faith in his country was shattered. The people's slavish longing for a king all but cemented his conviction that these were *not* the true people of God. The imposition of the tragic on the epic had started long before his composition of the poem began.

Aside from these biographical characteristics, Milton's other prose obsessively draws our attention to the divide between ideal and un-ideal learning, not just in the works engaging explicitly with education (*Areopagitica* and *Of Education*), but in a variety of other places as well ("Lycidas" and *Comus*, for example). The biblical subject may have been of interest precisely because of his preexisting fascination with ideality.

The poem is itself, not ideal in many ways that the author appears to have been self-conscious about. At times, our epic narration appears confident in the poem, that it will, "with no middle flight," fly "Above the Aonian mount" (l. 14-15). Other times, especially during invocations, the epic narrative voice expresses hesitation or even nervousness: "If answerable style I can obtain / Of my celestial patroness, who deigns / Her nightly visitation unemplord, / And dictates to me slumbering..." (9. 20-23); the similar situation at the beginning of the epic, "what in me is dark / Illumine" (l. 22-23), puts emphasis on the speaker's inadequacies and shortcomings, relying only on the influence and intervention of the Spirit. The Spirit comes to him in his blindness and his sleep, in his places of passivity.

These moments of personal weakness are a smaller part of the larger story of Milton's ideas about the fallenness of the world. The fallen world can legitimately interact with the unfallen, prelapsarian world, in his view, and gain something from it, if not perfection, some form of virtue, and if not the eschatological Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, some meek step toward it. But these questions are also derived from Calvinistic ideas of human agency that Milton had turned back on a while ago. So, what is the cause of the ideality in *Paradise Lost* if not to improve people?

Milton's idea of matter's progression up through the material world into the world of spiritual communion with God (see future chapters' sections on monism), is, I think, a clue to answering this question. Progress in the fallen world is tainted, but the extent to which it can be won from the strife with fallenness is still a matter of open conversation at the end of the poem. The psychological satisfaction that Michael promises to Adam and Eve, "happier far" than what they'd known before, implies something of this notion of progress through history with an end tied up in the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth, however vague such a notion is in the poem and (possibly) the rest of Milton's writing. Autobiographically, the poem represents an attempt at a kind of eschatological hope after the collapse of the Commonwealth, thus the epic narration's soaring heights and crashing insecurities.

## 2. *Paradise Lost* and Education Now

In terms of "the reader," there remains the complicated issue that Fish wants to draw our attention to: this struggle for understanding historical progress expressed by the epic narration is not siloed off from readers. In fact, he would say, the struggle is no



different from the readers themselves, and there is no idealized boundary between the struggle of the epic narration and the mind of the reader.

I would like to posit that Fish's view of the poem has far-reaching consequences for understanding *Paradise Lost* as a tool of education. Fish's view of the poem as engaging in a kind of trapping that surprises its readers with their own sin implies either that the poem is not useful for genuinely and edifyingly educating readers or that genuine education, at least as it was understood by Milton (or Puritans or Calvinists generally), is nothing more than an education in one's own sinfulness. Does the poem imply that it is useless to know anything at all if not one's own sinfulness or that knowledge is vanity without an understanding of one's own sinfulness? The subject of the poem and its obsession (so I have argued) with education would appear to be saying as much.<sup>148</sup>

The humbling of readers is not, however, Milton's main goal as a writer. We've touched on many times already his bitter frustration with the British people—most explicitly enumerated in his *History of Britain*—was not their inability to see themselves as fallen but almost quite the opposite: their slavish insistence on a fallen, human savior (namely, a king) whom they could submit to without fear of culpability. Indeed, what in his earlier writing is a seemingly unshakeable belief in the individual conscience, later on in life, becomes bitter outrage at the British people's inability to access or unwillingness to exercise such conscience in the face of adversity.

In other words, Fish's analysis of what the poem is doing (he does not have much interest in autobiographical analysis) can and should be augmented or hedged in by what

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<sup>148</sup>For a more in-depth conversation on the historiographical context of *History of Britain*, especially its connection with the Galfridian narrative, see John E. Curran Jr.'s *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530-1660*.

we know of the project from Milton's other writing. Fish's analysis is cut off from autobiographical analysis, most likely, because of the intellectual waters of the New Critics in which he was swimming, namely, their insistence on "intention" as a lower or erroneous form of criticism.

The idea, implied in Fish's writing, that the reader is more real than the poem or the author, both of which are constructs at best or non-existent at worst, is informed by a consumer model of reading, in which agency only exists meaningfully at the point of sale. Education, unlike consumer behavior, involves three, at least, parties: the educator, the content, and the learner. This model for reading *Paradise Lost* is, I think, important for understanding its potential as a tool of education. If these parties interact with each other competitively, in a place in which there is a zero-sum game between themselves—as, I think, Fish's analysis does between reader and text—then the process of learning becomes violated from the outset.

Similarly, in more traditional forms of engaging with *Paradise Lost* as a tool of education, the poem has an authoritative position over the reader that is consumptive in the reverse form. In that construction, which is similar to Fish's understanding of the poem, education is stifled by the imposition of one force over another: the Great Book over the regular person. Years and years of this process have resulted in the books alienating authority, its inaccessibility for lay readers and readers of popular fiction. Bloom's aforementioned caricature of literary influence argues that this is the *a priori* process of literary influence generally. The poem's status as long and challenging contributes to this view, but the educators with this view rely on this fact too much merely to prop themselves up as masters of the difficult thing.

Instead, if the poem can be interacted with non-competitively, in a manner in which all of the involved parties can coexist without competition resulting immediately from their differences, then, perhaps, the poem could be reinvigorated as a useful tool for educative purposes again. Aside from this view of the poem as being helpful for reattaining some relevance in educational spheres, it is also an important view of the poem itself for understanding the world that it creates.

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