Title

Adam and Eve are fortunate enough to reside in Earth's paradise, the Garden of Eden. In this original human home, the air is pure, the trees are "loaden with fairest fruit" (IV, 147), and man and beast get along swimmingly, playing and chasing one another. The humans who reside in this paradise would find it rather perfect, if only it didn't bore them. For although Eden is 'perfect,' living there for all of eternity is a static, confining existence, especially to Adam and Eve, who reject stasis and embrace motion. For instance, despite the fact that her only experience of 'weather' is the temperate atmosphere of Eden, Eve expresses her preference for the fluctuating conditions of the year's seasons: "All seasons and their change all please alike" (IV, 640). Likewise, the text's angels and Satan himself represent the excitement of movement on a basic physical level. Satan is often flying around the universe, or creeping and roaming, as in his first visit to Eden, "Through wood, through waste, o'er hill, o'er dale his roam" (IV, 538). The angels of heaven, who frequently chase Satan are echo his universal movement (as summarized by the footnote to IV, 862): "Starting in the east of Paradise, they encircle the garden on either side and meet again in the extreme west, where Uthuriel and Zephon conduct Satan." Images of the excitement and vitality of change and movement saturate this text.

It is Adam who proposes a theory for why humans (and, by extension, demons and angels) desire such kinetic change. Those other than God can never achieve a state of true, complete satisfaction; because their state is naturally deficient (whereas God's is

naturally complete), they will always yearn for something outside of themselves. God alone is able to achieve perfection of himself: “To attain / the heighth and depth of Thy eternal ways / All human thoughts come short, Supreme of Things. / Thou in Thyself art perfect and in Thee / Is no deficience found” (VIII, 412-416). Adam then notes the human instinct to yearn for such perfection: “Not so is Man [perfect], / But in degree, the cause of his desire / By conversation with his like to help / Or solace his defects” (VIII, 416-419). Everyone in the universe, apart from God, is unable to enjoy stasis, because no one apart from God is perfect (and satisfied) in a motionless state. That is not to say that these creatures are able to attain perfection in their motion; indeed, they will be imperfect regardless of their actions. But, as Adam states, movement toward something outside one’s own deficient self (in his case, movement toward Eve) is an attempt to further approach the type of perfection that God enjoys. The best example of this movement toward perfection is the fact that Adam and Eve have the potential to one day become angels themselves, a significant step up on the scala naturæ.

Coupled with this emphasis on movement and change is an emphasis on cognitive relativism. That is, the way realities are perceived in the book is dependent on the experience of the character. Satan, rather portentously, is the first to mention this idea of experience as not an absolute, but rather a subjective notion that hinges on past experiences: “Me Miserable! Which way shall I fly / Infinite wrath and infinite despair? / Which way I fly is Hell, myself am Hell, / And in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threat’ning to devour me opens wide, / To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav’n” (IV, 73-78). He expresses a similar sentiment when he spies on Eden’s humans and imagines them in hell: “More woe the more your taste is now of joy!” (IV, 369)

Eve expresses the same relativistic preoccupation, albeit in a much more innocent sense, as she worries that the beauty of Eden is wasted while she and Adam sleep: “But wherefore all night long shine [the stars]? For whom / This glorious sight when sleep hath shut all eyes?” (IV, 657-8) The footnote to this line further illuminates Eve’s meaning: “things are not of value in themselves but only as they are perceived and shared” (pg 95). Whereas Eve merely ponders such relativism, Adam notes his experience of it, noting that his perfect Eden became even more perfect with the addition of Eve: “what seemed fair in all the world seemed now / Mean” (VIII, 472-3).

This relativism is linked with the text’s emphasis on movement in an important way – it is the human desire for change that allows us new and different perspectives. This link is also crucial for Eve’s sense of her own reality and experience. As one who has acquired, in her entire life thus far, only one state of being (in her case, the joy of living in Eden), she is utterly unable to appreciate this happy state. She lacks the crucial variety of experience that allows one to feel not only *appreciative* of happiness, but to truly *understand* happiness – for to understand happiness is to experience comparative unhappiness.

It is useful to first examine Adam’s creation and movement of happiness, in order to understand how Eve’s creation and existence fundamentally differ. As Adam awakens for the first time, his first act is to recognize his dependence on God: “fair creatures, tell, / Tell if ye saw how cam I thus, how here. / Not of myself: by some great Maker, then, / In goodness and in pow’r preeminent” (VIII, 276-9). His first speech thus establishes himself as the dependent, deficient creature, whose first impulse is to ‘need’ God: “Tell me how may I know Him, how adore” (VIII, 280). Yet after God speaks to him, “[he]

want[ed] still" (VIII, 355). Despite his professed happiness, he desires greater happiness, for "In solitude, / What happiness? Who can enjoy alone / Or all enjoyment what contentment find?" (VIII, 364-366)[1] Along with this relativistic pondering, Adam also dislikes the stasis of the prospect of being "alone from all eternity" (VIII, 406).

Adam's original state is one that questions the reality of his happiness and rejects a static state of being. In response to his question of "Is this happiness?" he is granted Eve, and can now 'definitively' state "*This* is happiness." The fact that he is granted two states of being – one pre-Eve and one post-Eve – is enough to allow him a measure of comparison that endows an authority to his feelings. In achieving greater happiness, he is also partially cured of his human 'deficiency,' and better able to approach perfection. Adam's idea of perfection resembles the Platonic creation story of humans, who were perfect in their cylindrical, merged state. Adam desires that Eve be his 'other half,' and "adhere/ And they shall be one flesh, / one heart, / one soul" (VIII, 498-9).

Adam is also depicted as being changed post-Eve. Not only has he reached a higher plane of happiness, but he has also evolved. As a result of Eve, he senses a "Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before" (VIII, 475). This evolution, however, isn't quite perfect enough to allow for satisfaction in stasis (which only God can achieve). Instead, Adam is subject to a now constant flow of desire: "In all enjoyments else / Superior and unmoved, here only weak / Against the charm of beauty's powerful glance" (VIII, 531-3). Desire is never at rest, but instead "sweet intercourse, / Of looks and smiles" (VIII, 538). As the footnote to this line notes, "intercourse" here means "exchange; literally 'running between'"(pg 203). Thus Adam's urge for movement is realized, as his very

[1] The answer to this rhetorical question is of course God only. Adam here further underlines his humanity in his quest for a more perfect, happier state.

desire for Eve is kinetic. His understanding of his own happiness has also been achieved, as he has experienced two states of being.

Eve's downfall is that she is not allowed the breadth of experience Adam is, nor his realization of movement. Unlike Adam, Eve is never given the opportunity to understand her own joy; it is simply what is— she is not able to judge it good or bad, as she has no experience to judge it against. Milton demonstrates Eve's lack of ability to understand her condition by portraying Satan's full enjoyment of Eden. Satan, in having the experience of Hell, can fully understand the beauty of Eden: "As one who long in populous city pent / Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air / Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe / Among the pleasant villages and farms / Adjoined, from each thing met conceives delight" (IX, 445-9). Eve is truly incapable of such an understanding of Eden, rendered ignorant in her experience of only one state of being.

Eve's awakening also fundamentally differs from Adam's. Upon realizing consciousness, Eve doesn't immediately sense that she lacks, as Adam does. She instead finds herself to be quite satisfying enough: "Pleased [the reflection] returned as soon with answering looks / Of sympathy and love" (IV, 464-5). The scenario of Eve immediately yearning for both God and a partner, as Adam does, never materializes; it is clear that her kinetic energy will be directed elsewhere. Eve then disrupts Adam's notions of Platonic union: "Yet methought (Adam) less fair, / Less winning soft, less amiably mild / Than that smooth wat'ry image: back I turned" (IV, 478-80). In fact, the language of Eve's description of encountering Adam hints at the kinetic nature of her own state, as she was initially unwilling to go to him, using phrases such as "What could I do / But follow" (IV, 475-6) and "thy gentle hand / Seized mine, I yielded" (IV, 487-9). It is unfortunate that

Eve does not desire Adam as much as he desires her; if she did, it is true she would still not 'realize' her own happiness, but the Fall would have never occurred – the two would have been united when Satan arrived.

Two of Eve's conditions essentially caused the Fall to occur. The first is Eve's inconstancy of desire. Her tendency toward movement differs from Adam's – it is not continually directed toward him, but instead ebbs and flows. She moves from not desiring Adam (above), to desiring him, as when Satan views them in their conjugal bliss: "Nor gentle purpose nor endearing smiles / Wanted, nr youthful dalliance as beseems / Fair couple linked in happy nuptial league" (IV, 337-9). She then moves from desiring Adam to tiring of him, when she suggests that they part: "Let us divide our labors" (IX, 214). The second condition is that Eve is denied the opportunity to understand her own happiness, and will thus move toward change with even more urgency, for she desires a basic measure of comparison.

For Eve, parting from Adam is an attempt to experience the change she yearns for, as is evident in the way she presents her argument. She first expresses frustration with the lack of meaningful change in Eden, calling it a "narrow circuit" (IX, 323) (certainly no evolution or progress can be tracked on a circuit). She then questions the reality of her happiness: "And what is faith, love, virtue unassayed, / Alone, without exterior help sustained?…Frail is our happiness if this be so / And Eden were no Eden thus exposed!" (IX, 335-41) Although her argument attempts to persuade Adam that their faith should be tested, she also wants to explore if the state of her happiness is in fact frail, or if it is happiness at all. Despite the narrator's earlier warning, "Sleep on / Blest pair and O yet happiest if ye seek / No happier state and know no more!" (IV, 773-5), the

fact that Eve has been pondering relativism leaves her susceptible to an agent who might propose change. And such an agent soon presents himself.

Satan, who we have previously seen flying around the universe in a prolonged burst of kinetic energy, represents Eve's wish for movement and change. As he tempts Eve, he casts her as one "Deterred not from achieving what might lead / To happier life, knowledge of good and evil?" (IX, 696-7). Intriguingly, Satan doesn't promise that such knowledge *will* lead to a happier life, but only that it *might*. This doesn't discourage Eve, however – she only seeks an altered state in order to experience more fully, not necessarily a happier one. Indeed, she doesn't even truly understand what happiness is. Therefore, it only a matter of course that Satan's promises "too easy an entrance won" (IX, 734) for he offers exactly what she is looking for. Perhaps surprisingly, Satan's promise holds fast, and Eve experiences the different state that she sought: "Experience next, to thee I owe, / Best guide. Not foll'wing thee, I had remained / In ignorance" (IX, 807-9). Finally, Eve has the experience be her own judge of happiness and sadness, as she has experienced two states of being: obedience and defiance.

This episode, however, emphasizes the fact that the reality of events is next to irrelevant; it is only Eve's experience of reality that matters. When Eve eats the apple, the narrator notes her pleasure is "*Regarded*, / such delight till then as *seemed* / In fruit she never tasted whether true / Or *fancied* so" (IX, 787-9, emphasis mine). The amount of relativist modifiers Milton managed to pack in this one crucial line is impressive in itself. He wants to be certain we understand that Eve's 'knowledge' of good and evil only exists on a subjective personal landscape, unlike God's absolute notions of good and evil. Unfortunately, this type of discernment is the only kind available to humans. Adam was

able to experience such discernment in pleasing God with his questions and being granted the gift of Eve. Eve, however, obtained the ability of discernment only by disobeying God. Thus, both acquired the knowledge by altering their states of being.

The Fall is not fundamentally a conflict of love, but rather the unshakable human desire for change and understanding. As this perpetual desire for change is but a byproduct of humans' lack of perfection, the solution to the Fall is almost redundant: humanity fell because of its imperfection.