**Reading Group 6 – Paradise Lost – Discussion Leader**

**Question 1 – Hope + Purpose**

* What Does Satan Cling to in this story to keep him moving forward with his plan? Why does he cling to this? What is the meaning we can draw from this as compared to actual reality?

Throughout the entire story Satan Clings to his hope of revenge. He plans to enact his revenge on God the almighty by taking over and corrupting the good Paradise that God has made and his perfect creation, Mankind. But the one thing that Satan clings to is not actually revenge, but *hope.* It is a bit ironic to think as such but in this story the devil’s every action is fueled by a hope that his life and his destiny will someday improve. Satan clings to this because without it his life is literally nothing but eternal suffering. Without a chance at revenge and glory, his lowly life of pain is without purpose. Satan holds on to a rather absurd hope (considering the all-powerful nature of God) because, just like us humans, he needs some sort of way to cope with all of the suffering. I think the meaning we can draw from this when comparing it to actual reality is that everyone needs to have some sort of hope or purpose in their life, in fact it is our very nature to find such a hope or purpose, otherwise we just cannot cope with the pain and suffering.

**Question 2 – God, Fortune and Fate,**

* Throughout this whole story, how is God and his power described? Is there ever a situation that unfolds that god is not only prepared for, but did not plan himself? How does god relate to Lady Fortune?

Nearly every time God is described in this story, we are reminded of his ultimate power and glory. Whether it be through words like incorruptible or all-knowing, one thing is for certain, god is running the show. In this story, however, I believe that God is synonymous with fate and fortune. God is seen as a deity that no matter what you throw at it, is always in control. Much like other ideas that we have seen in this such as lady fortune, many of the demons in the story admit that God is so all-knowing, that there is no possible way to beat him outright. All you can do is to try your best to avoid his wrath, do what you can to claim your happiness, and *hope* that he decides to favor your pitiful existence in the end. Very much like other older ideas and interpretations of how to deal with Lady Fortune such as Machiavelli (do what you can to hold on to power, try your best to avoid fates clutches.) But ultimately at the end of every story, we see that Lady Fortune has the ultimate control over the situation, just as God has control. In fact, within the story even Satan himself in the story speaks briefly of the power of fate and fortune, comparing it to God hoping that maybe God himself is under fortune’s will, although in the end it seems that God dictates fortune itself.

On a side note, In a way this is a very romantic and attractive notion For when you view god as a personification of Fortune, paired with the humanization and justification of Satan that occurs in this story (as described in my third question). This story no longer becomes a battle of Good vs. Evil, but about a story of a simple man battling fortune himself, doing whatever he can to avoid his terrible and eternal fate. This is an idea that fate is destined to screw you no matter what you try to do is an idea that is seen all throughout many older stories, especially tragedies (Oedipus, Hamlet, Etc.)

**Question 3 – Evil is justified – Good is Unjust?**

* Do you find Satan to be a relatable character? Do you find his cause and reasoning as to why he wishes revenge on God to be Just? If Satan is just, does that mean God is unjust? What does this say about the nature of Good vs. Evil?

I believe that Satan is a VERY relatable character in this story. Rather than him being a personification of evil itself, I believe that he is more of a character that has been consumed by evil, but is still yet justified in his actions in a way. In this story I believe Satan to be more like a man than a beast, a man who is trying his best to understand and cope with the terrible hardships of his bitter existence. He has been consumed by evil because he views God’s goodness to be unjust. He does not agree with the idea that since he wanted more than what he was given, that his entire existence should be doomed to eternal suffering and pain. But if Satan can be seen as just, is God’s perfect Justice unjust? This is a very interesting idea, which in a way reflects Yin and Yang. Even though God is purely good and the creator of all that is good, we as readers can see find some moral error in his plan, and even yet Satan – the unholy ruler of all and the breath of evil and death himself – seems to be justified in his actions. Maybe there is a bit of good in Satan and a bit of bad in God.

**Passage 1 - Page 2756 – Lines 134-169**

In this Passage Belial is speaking out against Moloch’s plan to go to war with God, greatly expressing God’s glory and how there is no way they could possibly win. I chose this passage because It heavily reflects mainly the second question and theme I had mentioned concerning how God is a force that no matter what happens, You cannot overcome it. But it also somewhat reflects the third passage, the idea that maybe God isn’t the purest source of all, that maybe Satan has some morality and is justified in his actions. In this passage the Demon Belial describes how hell itself is far better than God’s focused wrath. To rephrase that, God himself inflicts punishment on those that is so severe that Demons would rather be in hell that endure God’s wrath directly. So how can a divine being who supposedly is made of nothing but good inflict so much pain?

**Passage 2 - Pages 2749-2750 – Lines 84-155**

In this passage we see whom I believe to Be Satan and Beelzebub conversing with one another and questioning there eternal fate and deciding to get revenge. I chose this passage because more than anything it questions God’s choice to condemn Satan and Beelzebub and the other fallen angels to hell on a moral level. It also questions the reasoning for God’s success. “Fearless, endangered Heav’ns perpetual King; and put to proof his high supremacy, whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate.” In this passage we see reflected my first point, the hope that God himself is ruled by fate and that through his revenge Satan may come out the victor in the end. This idea that Satan must hold onto in order to understand the never ending pain and suffering of his existence. This passage also questions God’s actions on a moral level, tying once again into my third point that maybe god is as pure and good as he seems.