“Worthiest to be obeyed”: Right learning and pedagogy in *Paradise Lost*

Alexander Richard Slansky
Poway, California

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Abstract

Instructors and their practices are so essential to the project of *Paradise Lost* that the text uses explicit instruction at essential stages of its narrative progression. As a text that is therefore not just poetic but also pedagogical in nature, *Paradise Lost* provides key examples through Adam and Eve, who must venture into the wider world beyond Paradise, of an education that prepares its pupils for social integration. However, because knowledge can be an instrument of both obedience and rebellion, as Milton's *opus* repeatedly demonstrates, mere learning is insufficient for this end. Instead, the poem argues that instructed reason proves essential to proper learning. This, then, is the instructor's role in a Miltonic pedagogy: to help instruct reason by serving as a preparatory guide and inuring students against the inevitable trials of their sojourn into the wider world.

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Justifying his call for large-scale educational reform, John Milton declared in 1644 that "The end … of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents" ("Of Education" 322). A letter-turned-essay, "Of Education" retained only minor influence relative to his other prose works, such as his condemnation of print censorship in *Areopagitica*, or his polemic defenses of divorce and regicide in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *Eikonoklastes*, respectively. And yet, his interest in education lingered to inform some of his most important works.

Indeed, Milton's *magnum opus* describes that same ruin from such a pedagogical perspective. Facing the monumental task of "assert[ing] Eternal Providence, / And justify[ing] the ways of God to men" (I.25–6), the poem's narrator asks his muse to "what in me is dark / Illumine, what is low raise and support" (I.22–3). Before the poem can even begin in earnest, its poet-narrator expresses a need for support and light in service to the epic poem that he sets out to tell. Dividing an even earlier entreaty to "Instruct me" (I.19), this request suggests that this instruction is what will allow his project "to soar / Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues / Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" (I.14–6). The nature of such instruction remains to be seen as the poem progresses to its narrative content, but the foundation of pedagogical investment laid by this invocation underlies the poem's entire project.

Milton's interest in education was, of course, not isolated. The English Renaissance at large saw a renewal in pedagogical theory, producing several texts that would become influential instructional resources for centuries. These texts each offered a "Playne and perfite way of teaching" (Ascham, Title page), presenting techniques both for teaching and for learning to help instructors better adapt their pedagogy to their teaching objectives. The "Perfitnesse in learning" (Mulcaster ¶ii) that they sought to instill in students demonstrated a general interest in learning

not as an isolated activity, but as the development of students' intellectual ability beyond the classroom. With special attention to "truth of Religion, honesty in liuing, [and] right order in learning" (Ascham B.iv) and consisting "in right education of chosen wits, in right method of best matter, in full time both to learn & digest" (Mulcaster ¶ii), an early modern education in this tradition was envisaged to produce well-balanced students through the development of a variety of socially useful skills. Such an education was characterized as being "the instrumet of quietnesse, considerate in publishing hir own opinion, with warrant for truth, with warinesse for peace" (¶ii), and these qualities—embedded in their pedagogy—were expected to be transferred by schoolmasters to scholars through the techniques outlined in these texts to produce individuals of high social quality and socio-political ability.

To this end, Milton found common ground with many contemporary political theorists in calling for educational reform at all levels. These theorists thought that "the problem [causing social unrest] was not an educated populace *per se*, but rather that their miseducation had left the people lacking in virtue" (Bejan 610). To wit, according to Richard Mulcaster, a poor education "corrupts, where it cannot gide: it worketh dissension, when it is not resolued" (¶ii). He uses this corrupted thinking to address perceived failures of the political climate by attributing them to personal failings and attributing these failings in turn to citizens' upbringing and educational development. But even attempts to root out such corruption "cannot staie the quisiluer, which at the first push it hath poord in peples heads, an enemie to concorde" (¶ii). For some, the proper antidote to the poison affecting a misinformed and badly educated populace "was closer attention by the government to the further expansion of education and its scrupulous regulation" (Bejan 610).

Such an authoritarian sentiment may have stemmed from the prior influence of Queen Elizabeth I who, having taken a particular interest in public education during her reign, ensured "the state of learning in hir time, that it went in right course, for the right maintaining of a peaceable gouernment" (Mulcaster ¶ii). This reinforced a direct connection between government and education, suggesting that just as "peaceablenesse is the end of all gouernment," so too "learning is the mean" (¶ii). With education as the medium by which the Queen exerted her influence on her subjects, it followed that the successful performance of the instructor's charge "should please God, benefite your countrie, and honest your own name" (Ascham B.iii). Indeed, one preface to Lily's Grammar claims, in the name of Queen Elizabeth I herself, that "thus endeuoring your selues towardes the fruitfull bringing vp of your sayde Schollers in good literature and vertuous conditions, you shall deserue of Almightie God condigne reward, and of vs worthie commendations for the same" (Lily).[1] These commendations demonstrate, not just through immediate personal rewards but also divine and royal approval, the augmented importance of education in early modern English political theory. It was, in other words, essential for the monarchical project at the time to have the means whereby to instill its ideological tenets in its citizens, and pedagogy became the perfect vector by which to do so.

[1] I was unable to find an appropriate citation for this document. The source from which I discovered it says that it is a "Fragment (leaf A2 only) of an unidentified edition of Lily's A short introduction of grammar" located in the British Library. Lacking any evidence concerning its veracity, I have trusted this statement for the purposes of this essay. I wish anyone seeking to track down the document's origins the best of luck, and I hope they succeed where I did not.

To indoctrinate students into the monarchical system in which they lived, early modern classrooms "worked as a political ritual, in which the pedagogue both assumed and reinforced the sovereign authority of the monarch or magistrate" (Halpern 26). This was likely by design; as Raashi Rastogi argues, these roles were built into even grammatical study:

> Latinate syntactical practice, itself termed regere ["to rule"], was believed to inculcate young boys into social, political, and theological hierarchies [by] implicitly collaps[ing] the role of king or ruler with the function of the schoolmaster. [In this way,] The classroom ideally represented an important mechanism for teaching and instituting hierarchical order and obedience, modeling on a microscopic scale the regulation and discipline required to be a good subject, citizen, and member of society" (100–1).

This interaction between the schoolmaster-king and scholar-subject is characterized by roles "hierarchically organized into distinct strata" (Iannaccone 468) with "the character of a caste society" (469), where no mobility between classes is permitted. As "subjects who are neither citizens nor have the opportunity ever to become citizens" (469), students in this system were subject to instructors' policies with no direct recourse to alter them. Such an arrangement mirrored the monarchical situation of pre-Civil-War England, thus preparing students by teaching them early to relent to authoritarian rule.

However, some early modern pedagogical theorists saw instruction as more than a political crutch. As Ross Knecht argues, these theorists viewed education as an "irreducibly social interaction between student and master" (Knecht 40). As such, the character of that interaction became essential to its function. In this tradition, Milton observed that students in the monarchically sanctioned system "do for the most part grow into hatred and contempt of

learning, mocked and deluded all this while with ragged notions and babblements while they expected worthy and delightful knowledge" ("Of Education" 324). Complaining that schools and universities would often teach "such things chiefly as were better unlearned" (324), Milton suggested that the authoritarian model would coerce students' acquisition of information, producing questionable results at best. But, while instruction would continue to become "a means of cultivating and refining the virtues and passions of the schoolboys in their charge" (Knecht 42) for many early modern schoolmasters and pedagogical theorists, Milton argued for an education that additionally "may lead and draw them in willing obedience, inflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue" (326). By instilling in them such high-minded qualities, which were apparently absent from their current political climate, Milton hoped that students in his new system would be "stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God and famous to all ages" (326), and that their abilities would set aright the many wrongs of the early modern world. Indeed, as John Locke would later declare, it remained of paramount importance throughout the seventeenth century for "the Welfare and Prosperity of the Nation" to "produce vertuous, useful, and able Men in their distinct Callings" (A3-reverse). By producing citizens of strong moral standing and sufficient skill, the educational reforms that Milton proposed would, he hoped, institute just such "a complete and generous education … which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public of peace and war" ("Of Education" 325). The outcome of learning would be, in Milton's view, a total transformation of students' intellectual, moral, political, and spiritual capabilities such that they would go on to become productive and effective instruments for social edification against the strictures of authoritarian rule.

To do this, pedagogical practices needed to change. There were complaints that not only was rote learning not as effective as late Medieval pedagogical theory had suggested but especially, as John Hewes noticed in 1624, "that many Teachers … haue farre more regard, that their Pupils learne much without [i.e. out of] the Booke … then that they make any good or profitable vse of that they doe learne" (B). The use of texts as authoritative sources had so much eclipsed the real-life experiences, emotions, and practices which they described that they had begun to do the same in the classroom as well. Under this pedagogical model, the materials that were read became more important than how they were read, leading pedagogical theorists like Desiderius Erasmus to assert as early as 1550 that

> muche more pleasure, and profit hathe he whiche vseth arte and iudgement, then the other, whiche with greate studye indeed turneth them ouer but for lacke of the knowledge of preceptes wanteth also the fruite and delectacyon that he more amplye myghte obtayne. (A.viii-reverse)

It was insufficient to dedicate oneself to "greate studye;" what was important were the "preceptes" by which to best apprehend and appreciate the materials to be studied. Erasmus argued that without a foundational knowledge of precepts—that is, things to be understood or "taken before" reading—students fail to develop critical skills of "arte and iudgement," resulting in a poorer understanding of the things they did read. Replacing an earlier passive pedagogy where students—as containers ready-made for knowledge—were expected to learn as if by osmosis, the idea that students could be made capable of their own learning informed much of Erasmus's pedagogy; his assurance that people "be not borne, but fashioned" (D.iii), coupled with the notion that "Reason maketh a man" (D.iii), suggested that those precepts most conducive to "the fruite and delectacyon" of right learning were to be obtained not from texts but

by reason. In this way, it was essential in an Erasmian pedagogy that students be made capable of implementing the knowledge they acquired from reading by applying reason as a tool of individual study rather than as a retrospective confirmation of others' thinking. To this end, the previous authoritative models of deference to particular texts, while not useless, would be insufficient for developing the skills necessary to "fashion" able-minded citizens from these students.

One important technique popularized during this period was the addition of experience. While previous pedagogical models relied on reading, lecture, and rote memorization to instill knowledge, humanist ideas such as those that "located meaning in linguistic use" (Knecht 26) led to instructional strategies also targeting application. Rather than defer to an idealized version of the material not actually in use—as, for example, ancient Latin—it was vital for these instructors "to join this instruction to experience in conversation and reading so that the rules of the grammar book were understood in practice" (Knecht 40). With a foundation laid through lecture and other traditional methods, the next step in these lessons would be to implement "such practices as imitation, translation, commentary, and discussion" so that each student "gains experience in a language and comes to understand its use" (Knecht 39). For Milton's educational project, as for others, such practices would help to not only embed knowledge but instill strategies of learning in students. By helping them to know not just the present utility of classroom recitation but the effective manipulation of information, early modern pedagogical theorists hoped to demonstrate a viable alternative to the rote work expected of students in traditional settings that instead would mold those students into the sorts of citizens that would make the world better.

As I argue, *Paradise Lost* adopts these techniques to demonstrate its essentially pedagogical nature on both sides of the student-teacher relationship. When the poem has Adam declare to Michael at the end of the poem's final book that "Greatly-instructed I shall hence depart" (XII.557), it positions Adam as a student who, having learned what Michael has come to teach him, must then set off into the mortal world. The anguish in this scene at the dire prospect of departure from Paradise mirrors what Andrew Wallace has observed of Virgil's poetry, that such despair is "fully internal to pedagogy: not because this despair has some therapeutic force, and not because there is much to learn from it, but because it really is an ineradicable component of teaching" (31). The despair of Adam and Eve at leaving Paradise cannot be removed from their need to be prepared to do so any more than the fall necessitating this departure relies on them having been instructed beforehand. It is essential, so that the poem can "assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (I.25–6), that Adam and Eve both be afforded the full extent of their agency at the poem's crucial moment, even if that moment has already been foretold and foreshadowed. The addition of Raphael and Michael to the biblical precedent only allows the poem to explore such despair more fully through its examination of both sides of the pedagogical relationship. While the angels as instructors must grapple with the inevitability of their students' failure, Adam and Eve must come to terms as students with the consequences of their actions. It is the objective of *Paradise Lost*, then, to reconcile the disobedience of the mortal pair and its attendant despair by demonstrating through the poem's plot and narrative structure that correct living is only made possible through right instruction.

Adam's failure

Despite seeming to promote total fealty to divine-monarchical rule, the poem instead engages in a careful negotiation of the space between obedience and rebellion. While Satan

personifies disobedience and the angels (such as Raphael and Michael) represent the opposite, the poem's primary interest in its human characters cannot explicitly take either side. After all, Adam's failure precedes him thanks to the biblical precedent—and yet, though Adam does eat the fruit, it is unclear why he does so.[2] For this purpose, *Paradise Lost* inserts a record of his thoughts before he eats, wherein he first observes that, since "past who can recall, or done undo?" (IX.926), Eve is already lost. It may seem redundant for Adam to declare the causality of the situation, and in some ways it is. Straightforwardly, no matter what Adam does, his actions cannot change the circumstances in which the pair find themselves: on opposite sides of God's good graces. At the same time, for his overall argument, it is essential to be precise in positioning Eve as the transgressor. Already, her chance has passed, and now it is his turn to be tempted. This argument not only places the pair in opposition, which is already a dangerous deviation from their previous relationship; it leverages Adam's neutral obedience—having not yet been tempted—above Eve's disobedience and imbalances the relationship in his favor, all while disavowing any participation in the matter.

Even so, his efforts to understand the terms of the temptation lead him not to the decision that he must make, but to hers. He infers, like the serpent, that "Perhaps thou shalt not die;" but, when he further rationalizes that "perhaps the fact / Is not so heinous now" because the "foretasted fruit" was "profaned first by the serpent, by him first / Made common, and unhallowed, ere our taste" (IX.928–31), he does so not in consideration of the consequences that Eve must face but to shield himself from them. Quibbling about the fruit's condition or whatever

[2] The book of Genesis offers some elaboration on Eve's calculations, but only suggests of Adam that she "gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3.6).

qualities it may or may not circumstantially possess is immaterial to the simple fact of Eve's disobedience.[3] Adam seems to assume, in a manner of speaking, that the fruit had been toxic and therefore banned from their consumption before the serpent had ironically cured it of its toxin.

It is of course obligatory that Adam must assume the properties of this fruit, having not tasted it himself, not to mention vital to the dramatic tension of the scene. That the serpent "Lives, as thou saidst, and gains to live, as Man, / Higher degree of life" can only produce, once more, an "inducement strong / To us" (IX.933–5). While Eve's decision is also based on that observation, Adam's inductive assumption that he and Eve should also "attain / Proportional ascent; which cannot be / But to be Gods, or Angels, demi-Gods" (IX.935–6) results in a decision that, while in effect seems identical to Eve's, in fact corresponds more closely with the "inducement strong" that he says it is. Because it is her choice with which he must grapple, not his own, Adam's reasoning serves to induce—literally, 'lead into'—submission, whether to Eve's prior fall or Satan's temptation by proxy.

In the end, Adam seems to concede defeat before the temptation even begins. More than any of his previous sophistry, Adam's great failure is that, rather than accede to the deed as an actor in himself, he instead defers the choice to Eve. She and her marital "bond of Nature" (IX.956) direct him "So forcible within my heart" (IX.955) from without. But this is not just because, as Adam concludes, "to lose thee were to lose myself" (IX.959), it is because "Our state cannot be severed; we are one, / One flesh" (IX.958–9), and the certainty of Eve's fall drags

[3] I return to this point, but the qualities of the fruit do indeed matter in a way that is much more complex than is necessary to unpack here. With regard to Adam, the important distinction is his reasoning centering on the pure fact of obedience.

Adam along, as if by necessity. In other words, Adam does not even choose to follow Eve because she has acted; rather, he claims that his fate is decreed by her choice, abdicating all responsibility himself.[4]

Indeed, this is his claim when the Son finally finds them. Even inverting the paradigm, Adam's fear that he is "either to undergo / Myself the total crime, or to accuse / My other self, the partner of my life" (X.128) betrays his inability to divorce Eve's decisions from his own. Though perhaps chivalrously taking her blame as his own, he still does so without acknowledging his own role in the transgression. Adam fails to recognize Eve as separate from himself, and her decisions as separate from his, and so simply accepts her actions as his own. For him, his fate was decreed the moment that she partook; his 'temptation' was but a formality.

To reiterate, this string of excuses only serves to shield Adam from the choice he must make. As a result, after a lengthy digression into his feelings of guilt, shame, and resentment—feelings which should not be present in one who has not sinned—Adam finally relents in his defense and admits to the Son that "She gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (X.143). These twin facts supersede, and in fact invalidate, the rest of Adam's diatribe. It should be immaterial whether the ruin of the Garden follows from his choice, whether Eve has chosen first and so forced his hand, or even whether God is God. And indeed they are immaterial, for it is primarily to these facts that the Son responds before issuing punishment. True, Adam's excuses may have some relation to his decision, but they do not change the central question: Will Adam obey God?

[4] I admit that this is a somewhat harsh judgment of Adam, but I maintain it on the terms that he himself sets, of strict adherence to God's command. On those terms, Adam is, if attentive, still negligent.

There is, of course, dramatic irony in the eventuality of his failure, but that does not make the question any less important. In fact, despite Adam's failure, the question still serves as the near-literal crux of the poem's narrative structure, as well as many of its philosophical arguments.

Lecture: Michael's valediction

In the last books of the poem, God sends Michael to redress this failure. Contrasted with the severity of Adam's and Eve's transgression, God's response to their disobedience is expressly not one of fire and brimstone, as was the case for Satan and his followers, but one that will "send them forth, though sorrowing, yet in peace" (XI.117). Stipulating that Michael should "all terrour hide" and "If patiently thy bidding they obey, / Dismiss them not disconsolate" (XI.111–3), God's mercy suggests not just a simple tenderness toward Creation in general, but an expectation of continued development in his relationship with these two specifically. Perhaps this futurity is a retrospective certainty since even within the poem's textual framework they are mythologized as "our two first parents" (III.66); even so, the continued relationship between the mortal and the divine is necessarily one of the most important themes of the poem, by which it "justif[ies] the ways of God to men" (I.26). As such, God does not simply abandon Adam and Eve to the wilds of the world beyond the Garden; instead, he sends Michael to comfort them on their way out. To convey this consolation, God commands Michael to "reveal / To Adam what shall come in future days" as well as reveal "My covenant in the Woman's seed renewed" (XI.113–4, 116). Ostensibly, these revelations should give Adam the necessary tools with which to cope with mortal existence, though this is not clear from the command alone.

Michael, dutiful as ever, proclaims to Adam and Eve that he is sent "To show thee what shall come in future days" (XI.357) as God has commanded. But, perhaps in recognition that this alone will not serve to allay the pair's concerns about mortality, the angel appends that the

revelation will demonstrate "supernal grace contending / With sinfulness of men" (XI.359–60). Such contention has already been on display in the debacle with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This is not lost on Adam and Eve, who are thoroughly aware that they have transgressed against God, and whose prayers of contrition have summoned Michael in the first place. Nor are they remiss to notice the present perfect tense, suggesting to them as God himself did to Michael that the contention is ongoing—indeed, unceasing—and that their connection to divinity is not severed as they had feared.

But while they have not been utterly cut off from God, they also are not restored to sinlessness. Their lot is no longer innocent stewardship and maintenance of the Earth but mortal endurance and survival in it, and God intends that they should learn to do so. More specifically, God's prescribed foresight is furnished to the scorned pair so that they can "learn / True patience" (XI.360–1). As Michael explains, learning this will allow them to "lead Safest thy life, and best prepared endure / Thy mortal passage when it comes" (XI.364–6). Such preparation makes explicit the learning objective of the impending lecture and allows Michael to directly connect what Adam is about to learn with his coming travails in the mortal world.

Adam, demonstrating his grasp of this learning objective at the end of the lecture, repeats to Michael what he has learned. In this recitation, Adam says that

> Greatly-instructed I shall hence depart;
> Greatly in peace of thought; and have my fill
> Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;
> Beyond which was my folly to aspire. (XII.557–60)

The "folly" which Adam claims that he has committed recalls Raphael's earlier warning, that he should limit himself to what he "Can comprehend, incapable of more" (V.505). However,

Raphael's warning concerns not the acquisition of knowledge, but "enjoy[ing] / Your fill what *happiness* this happy state / Can comprehend, incapable of more" (V.503–5, emphasis added). Raphael's warning is that the search for knowledge might jeopardize happiness, not that Adam is incapable of understanding or even receiving more knowledge than what is furnished in the Garden's state of bliss. As such, Raphael places no bounds on what Adam can know, instead suggesting that "for thy good / This is dispensed" (V.570–1) and answering to the best of his abilities all of Adam's questions. Rather, it is Adam who, after having not just literally tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but also learned "Of things above this world" (V.455), proceeds to shield himself from all that learning by enclosing his ability to know within the bounds of "what this vessel can contain." In this framework, Adam is merely a container for knowledge, to be passively filled. Thus, he is not at fault if he overflows with knowledge and causes a mess; he simply can't contain that much, or that kind, of knowledge.

Such abdication parallels Satan's earlier monologue in that both characters refuse accountability for their actions, but what makes this instance at least just as insidious is its apparently positive framing. Continuing his recitation, Adam tells Michael that "Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best" (XII.561). This seems to be the expected—even anticipated—outcome of this lesson, since it would fulfill the learning objective that Michael had set for Adam: that he would "learn / True patience" (XI.360–1). After all, there can be no greater form of patience than waiting on God's timing.[5]

[5] See Milton's Sonnet XIX. While the sonnet's argumentation is outside the scope of this paper, it is clear from this sonnet that Milton wrestled with obedience and patience in his own life as he came to terms with his oncoming blindness. Settling on the resolution that "They also

However, the exact relationship between Adam's obedience and Michael's patience is clarified in the next line. Where once he would have revered God with "adoration" (IV.737, VIII.315) like the angels (III.352), Adam now declares that he will "love with fear the only God" (XII.562) and offers a small list of ways in which to do so (XII.562–4). Adam says that he understands what Michael teaches him, and can recite the words of what he has learned, but it is clear from his recitation that he does not, in fact, understand what he has been taught. His professed trust in God's powers of inversion evaporates as he instead capitulates to the vicissitudes of life after the Garden, as he has foreseen them. Adam's conclusion "that suffering for truth's sake / Is fortitude to highest victory, / And, to the faithful, death the gate of life" (XII.569–70) would suggest that Adam has learned a degree of the patience that Michael is trying to teach him. But, unlike the inversive optimism of "good

> Still overcoming evil, and by small
> Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak
> Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
> By simply meek, (XII.565–9)

wherein common binaries reverse preference from greater to lesser, Adam's patience is characterized more by the resigned qualities of "suffering" and "fortitude." As a result, the outcome of his obedience is unclear. Adam has learned that "to obey is best" (XII.561) simply because God asks for obedience, not because of what obedience signifies to God. Without the

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serve who only stand and wait," these terms proved to be of continued interest to him as he worked on Paradise Lost.

terminal condition of God's desire for willing obedience specifically, Adam's interminable obedience becomes an end in itself,

This is not the kind of patience that Michael had expected to teach. Indeed, it seems that Adam has learned this not from Michael, but "by his example, whom I now / Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest" (XII.572). Having presented the Son as his primary example, Michael then adapts his teaching style to correct Adam and better represent the lecture's core principles. He begins by affirming what Adam has said correctly: "This having learned, thou hast attained the sum / Of wisdom; hope no higher" (XII.575–6). Adam has gathered the basic elements of Michael's lecture, but he has failed to grasp the effect of their mixture. Against obedience for its own sake, and compressing Adam's litany, Michael urges him to recognize the importance of application by "add[ing]

> Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith,
> Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,
> By name to come called charity, the soul
> Of all the rest. (XII.581–5)

The patience that Michael encourages Adam to adopt presents a clear and succinct antidote to the inner Hells that Satan has bequeathed to Adam through disobedience. Satan's model, for whom

> Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
> And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep
> Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven, (IV.75–8)

has become the default mode for Adam now that he, too, has fallen from God's grace. A world wherein gnawing pangs of guilt and remorse over his transgression threaten to "devour" Adam

from the inside would indeed make him feel that "myself am Hell" as Satan does. But Michael inverts Satan's lament and promises Adam that, having done what he has been taught, "then wilt thou not be loth / To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess / A Paradise within thee, happier far" (XII.585–7). Setting aside the theological implications of Christian sacrifice and resurrection, Michael teaches Adam that the world "within thee" can be, as for Satan and the countless people that Adam sees follow his example, a terrible state of suffering and pain—or, more hopefully, "A Paradise … happier far"—all incumbent on the outward expression of inward patience.

Storytime! Raphael's approach

Adam learns of this outward expression earlier in the poem, when Raphael visits him in the Garden. Like Michael, Raphael recognizes the unimportance of location relative to "A Paradise within thee, happier far" (XII.587), suggesting that Adam might eventually "at choice, / Here or in heavenly Paradises dwell" (V.499–500). But this transitive condition is incumbent on the condition that "ye be found obedient, and retain / Unalterably firm his love entire, / Whose progeny you are" (V.501–3). This is, of course, the purpose of Raphael's visit. He, like Michael, has been commanded to warn Adam about coming events—in this case, his impending temptation. Adam, confused by the implications of this warning, asks Raphael:

> What meant that caution joined, If ye be found
> Obedient? Can we want obedience then
> To him, or possibly his love desert,
> Who formed us from the dust and placed us here
> Full to the utmost measure of what bliss
> Human desires can seek or apprehend? (V.513–8)

In suggesting that he cannot conceive of a condition wherein more obedience could be required of him than he has already demonstrated, the question further compounds the evidence that Adam at best does not realize his agency and at worst disavows it. The question frames obedience as a simple product of creation and/or having been supplied with a blissful existence. In these terms, the mere fact of existence would not only demand but dictate obedience as a matter of course. Adam could not "possibly his love desert" because it would be not only inconceivable but impossible for him to do anything beyond the scope of God's creation.

Of course, this grossly misrepresents God and his attitude toward Adam, and so Raphael corrects Adam's assumptions. He, like Michael, affirms what Adam has correctly understood so far: "That thou art happy, owe to God" (V.520). Then, he expands on that foundation: "That thou continuest such, owe to thyself, / That is, to thy obedience; therein stand," clarifying that "This was that caution given thee; be advised" (V.521–3). Finally, Raphael offers the correction: "God made thee perfect, not immutable" (V.524). Adam, who has not yet experienced meaningful change, does not understand that the warning is not about condition, as he has supposed, but about endurance.

But though Adam is to persevere in goodness and obedience to God, it is clear from his earlier question that he does not understand what this might mean. Thus, Raphael continues by teaching Adam the central principle around which the answer to his question orbits. Emphasizing that "Our voluntary service he requires, / Not our necessitated" (V.529–30), Raphael's message about Adam's agency becomes as clear as it can be. Statements of mutability and agency, stories of betrayal and restitution, and even a retelling of the Creation all orbit around this point: that Adam must choose to be obedient. With this established, Raphael then turns the lesson back to Adam, asking him rhetorically "how

> Can hearts, not free, be tried whether they serve
> Willing or no, who will but what they must
> By destiny, and can no other choose? (V.531–4)

It is significant to note that this does not directly answer Adam's question about "want[ing] obedience" (V.514), instead redirecting Adam's thinking toward the purposes of obedience. Using this indirect route, Raphael allows Adam to discover the answer on his own. While this open-ended approach does leave some room for error, such as the one that ultimately claims Adam and Eve, this is by design. The question reframes Adam's earlier question, inverting the presupposition that Adam could not "possibly his love desert" (V.151) and suggesting instead that the command has more to do with trial than with obedience *per se*. Indeed, as Raphael explains, the command implies that God is more interested in trial, refinement, and improvement than he is in sheer, simple obedience. That is, the obedience that God requires leads to greater improvements, such as the ones that Raphael suggests may happen to Adam and which prompt this conversation in the first place (cf. V.493–500), rather than perfect stasis.

But Adam requires greater understanding if he is to attain such potential, and Raphael quickly discovers the difficulty of meeting that need through communicating God's will to him. Because Adam wants, and indeed needs, "to know / Of things above his world" (V.454–5), Raphael must bridge a gap of understanding. Specifically, as Raphael explains to Adam, he faces three obstacles that cascade from one into the next. First, he must "relate / To human sense the invisible exploits / Of warring spirits" (V.564–6). To the specific point of the war in Heaven between Satan's legions and God's armies, this suggests a disconnect between events as Raphael relates them and events as they 'really' transpired. Much of the subsequent war narrative does seem quite dramatic and sensational, but that is because Raphael deems this necessary to "relate /

To human sense" the relevant information behind the story. This is his second problem, for which he claims that he must recount, "without remorse, / The ruin of so many glorious once / And perfect while they stood" (V.566–8). Raphael is not just a jocund storyteller, but a messenger sent to warn Adam about his impending temptation. In this task, the angel attempts to demonstrate through narrative the sorts of failures constituent to a fall from grace, so it is important to him that he convey examples of angelic corruption to Adam.

This is not just for its own sake, and much less for its entertainment value, but so that the latter can see in those examples how created beings can become fallen. This process must verge into forbidden territory because Raphael admits that his task requires lastly that he "unfold / The secrets of another world, perhaps / Not lawful to reveal" (V.568–70). After all, if God's decree that Adam is "free to will" (V.235) is to be maintained, then the qualities and behaviors that can prevent such a fallen state cannot be taught directly without exerting an outside and outsize influence on Adam's agency. This concern rests at the core of Raphael's warning message: how is he to convince Adam to resist temptation without changing Adam's nature or rendering Adam's choice obsolete? He could hypothetically demonstrate the consequences of his choices, as Michael does later; or, he could alter Adam's character to render him altogether immune to enticement. However, to act on either vector would be to defy God by contradicting and manipulating the very terms of Adam's temptation. The information that Raphael is commanded to reveal to Adam must be simultaneously informative and oblique, showing Adam what he should do without forcing him to do it.

But despite all these obstacles, "for thy good / This is dispensed" (V.570–1). And so, Raphael settles on a particularly interesting technique; rather than confront Adam with a lecture on the topic, Raphael offers a story as an object lesson. Ultimately determining that

> what surmounts the reach
>
> Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
>
> By likening spiritual to corporal forms,
>
> As may express them best, (V.571–4)[6]

this approach allows Raphael to ease the situation's Saussurean tension of relating Heavenly things to Earthly ones by using metaphor. In doing so, Raphael operates on the assumption that "Earth [might] / Be but a shadow of Heaven, and things therein / Each to other like, more than on earth is thought" (V.574–6). This likeness works in both ways; not only does the effort attempt a connection to Adam's Earthly understanding, but the story contains several characters with whom Adam might resonate and from whom Adam might learn resilience from temptation. Of particular note, the disconnect inherent between the tenor and vehicle of these metaphors actually promotes Adam's learning. By allowing him space between comprehending the events as recounted (the vehicle) and learning from the actions and behaviors represented (the tenor), this

[6] For an alternate perspective, see Erasmus: "In speakynge and wrytynge nothyng is more folyshe than to affecte or fondly to laboure to speake darkelye for the nonce, sithe the proper vse of speech is to vtter the meaning of our mynd with as playne wordes as maye be" (A.vi-reverse–A.vii). Milton may be responding to the mortal impossibility of this notion when he notes almost in passing that "Our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things" ("Of Education" 323). The preeminence of the human condition, even prelapsarian, seems to necessitate the mediation of information more than such as Erasmus would like to allow. By contrast, an Erasmian form of communication can be seen in the angels, who seem to understand one another by "direct intuition" (Carver 423).

pedagogical technique encourages Adam to exercise his agency and learn for himself both what he should do and how he can do it.

Such a relaxed technique would seem to expose Adam to temptation, rather than protect him from it, and this tension continues throughout God's command to Raphael. Because God's primary concern is that Satan "designs / In them [Adam and Eve] at once to ruin all mankind" (V.227–8), Raphael's implied purpose is to avoid such destruction at all costs. However, God clarifies this objective, warning that the angel must instruct Adam "Lest, wilfully transgressing, he pretend / Surprisal, unadmonished, unforewarned" (V.244–5). While Raphael is to avoid the destruction of humanity, he is not to outrightly avert the disaster. Because Adam must be "left free to will" (V.235) and because Satan's temptation is inexorable, Raphael again cannot directly intervene without contradicting God: either God's foreknowledge of the temptation or his declaration of Adam's agency.

To resolve this, God's command also mirrors the mechanisms of metaphor. In these terms, the first part of the command—to "Converse with Adam" (V.230)—is its vehicle. This method seems tailored to Raphael, who is a "sociable Spirit" (V.221) and thus presumably inclined to bringing on "such discourse" (V.233) as will lead to the command's equivalent of a metaphor's tenor, or the contents of the message that God wants to communicate to Adam: to "advise him of his happy state" (V.234). This is how God expects Raphael to teach Adam that "Happiness in his power left free to will, / Left to his own free will, his will though free, / Yet mutable" (V.235–7), and how Raphael in turn relates to Adam not just what is necessary for him to know but even "Of things above his world" (V.454–5). In this way, he has been furnished with the tools necessary to succeed; shown how to use them; and, importantly, entrusted with their use. As God warns, Adam therefore cannot do any less than "wilfully" (V.244) transgress—even

at a lack of knowledge. If he fails, as he will, it will be no one's fault but his own that he does not know how to use the tools that he has been given.

Abdiel's obedience

To teach Adam this principle, Raphael offers none other than Lucifer as an example of this type of unfulfilled accountability. Explaining in "corporal forms" (V.573) his motivations for fomenting war in a pre-war council, the only way that Lucifer's assembly can hope to overthrow tyranny is to determine "if better counsels might erect / Our minds, and teach us to cast off this yoke" (V.785–6). However, any alternative to the divine order they may discover will lead them, invariably, to open revolt against God. Lucifer and his followers seem to have steeled themselves for this outcome, but such a situation is obviously antithetical to Raphael's objective to teach Adam how to obey God and resist temptation. So, Raphael uses Lucifer's argument about being "without law" and therefore "Err[ing] not" (V.798–9) to recall Adam's earlier question about "want[ing] obedience" (V.514). Just as the passive stance of Adam's question would strip agency from his obedience to God as a simple matter of course, so too does Lucifer's reasoning strip agency from his disobedience.

Rather than take charge of the revolution that he instigates, Lucifer insidiously wields "reason" and "right" to justify his behavior. Because "Another now hath to himself engrossed / All power, and us eclipsed under the name / Of King anointed" (V.776), Lucifer claims that such an affront to his existence, as well as that of his co-conspirators, will rob himself and his fellow angels. Having once been called "Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers" (V.772), these names become "merely titular" (V.774) thanks to the consolidation of such diffused power under the Son's singular, monarchical rule. For sovereign "Natives and sons of Heaven possessed before / By none" (V.790–1), Lucifer expects that it would be unjust to "introduce /

Law and edict on us, who without law / Err not" (V.797–9). And because, as he maintains when tempting Eve, "Not just, not God; not feared then, nor obeyed" (IX.701), Lucifer argues that God has lost his divine mandate to order and leadership by ordaining the Son as a monarch over the other angels. Thus, Lucifer and his host of followers have no choice but to right this wrong by whatever means necessary.

In response to such seemingly sound reasoning, Raphael introduces Abdiel staunchly defending God amid Satan's seditious horde. Immediately, Abdiel, "than whom none with more zeal adored / The Deity, and divine commands obeyed" (V.805–6), represents a beacon in a sea of insurgence, sustained through sheer contrast to be a role model for the obedience that Raphael intends to teach Adam. It is in this capacity that Abdiel seizes on the inconsistencies in Lucifer's "argument blasphemous, false, and proud" (V.809) that he must oppose God. Against Lucifer's claim, in summary, that it is "Flatly unjust, to bind with laws the free, / And equal over equals to let reign, / One over all with unsucceeded power" (V.819–21), Abdiel argues that Lucifer misunderstands "the points of liberty" (V.823). According to Abdiel, Lucifer's suggestion that even "if in power and splendour less," the angels can still be "In freedom equal" (V.796–7) strategically lets freedom dominate his rhetoric while arguing against its primacy. Because the angels have been created "not equal all" even if they are "Equally free" (V.791–2), Lucifer can supplant God's established hierarchy in favor of one of his own design. He may use those earlier titles to "assert / Our being ordained to govern, not to serve" (V.801–2), but this assertion only proves to reinforce Lucifer's hierarchy by limiting the freedom of which he speaks to governance. In contrast, "prostration vile" (V.782) to the Son becomes an egregious breach of the dignity due to his station and unbecoming of one such as him destined for governance.

For Abdiel, the binary in Lucifer's rhetoric of governance and servitude contains a significant contradiction. Lucifer's admission of inequality produces precisely the conditions by which God may confer kingship, "who made / Thee what thou art, and formed the Powers of Heaven / Such as he pleased" (V.824–5). Having "circumscribed their being" (V.825), God remains forever unequal to the sort of vaunted ambition to which Lucifer aspires; and yet, the subjugation to God that Lucifer dreads has, in the past, proved only to "exalt" (V.829) those same subjects. Unlike Lucifer, who would rather assert that "Our puissance is our own; our own right hand / Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try / Who is our equal" (V.864–6), Abdiel maintains that the angels' condition is vouchsafed by God's grace. As one of the qualities by which the angels "know how good, … How provident he is" (V.826, 828), it is this grace—the "supernal grace" (VII.573) of a superior God—that provides the angels with the exalted state that they have enjoyed.

Returning to Lucifer's claim that there can be no wrong where there is no law, Lucifer's aversion to centralized power—referring to the angels' previous self-governance—seems to form the basis for his argument, as when he argues that "reason" or "right" cannot support "Monarchy over such as live by right / His equals" (V.795–6). But while Lucifer's decentralized freedom would seem to be synonymous with autonomy, that kind of sovereignty can only be possessed by a sovereign. Indeed, as Abdiel points out, Lucifer has been blurring the kinds of equality and freedom at stake. Inverting Lucifer's assumptions that it would be "unjust, / That equal over equals monarch reign" (V.831–2), Abdiel asks if "Thyself, though great and glorious, dost thou count, / Or all angelick nature joined in one, / Equal to him begotten Son" (V.833–5). Following the comparison to God's excellence, comparing to the Son allows Abdiel to expose Lucifer's scheming for what it is; as Satan himself admits, "I 'sdeined subjection, and thought one step

higher / Would set me highest" (IV.50–1). For all his rhetorical skill, Lucifer's ultimate objective has nothing to do with equality among angels so much as hierarchical supremacy. Responding to Abdiel's accusation, his insistence that "We know no time when we were not as now; / Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised / By our own quickening power" (V.859–61) only compounds his repeated complaint that God is imposing laws and monarchs on otherwise 'free' beings and suggests, as Abdiel uncovers, that Lucifer expects to be free of those limitations not by demolishing that hierarchy but by surpassing it.

In so opposing Lucifer's rhetoric, Raphael presents Abdiel as an ideal model for Adam to emulate. Foiling Satan's absolute disobedience, Abdiel represents a clear and simple example of obedience in the face of adversity. Because Abdiel has been "Among the faithless, faithful only he" (V.897), his ability not "To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind, / Though single" (V.902–3) becomes the primary means whereby Raphael intends to teach Adam about correct obedience. The power to resist temptation is as much Adam's as it is Abdiel's, and it is this parallel that Raphael hopes to instill in his student.

To redouble the lesson, Raphael has God affirm this assessment within the narrative. Though God did not need to be defended, he still proclaims of Abdiel that "well hast thou fought / The better fight" (VI.29–30). Even in the guise of narrative, God's commendation is the strongest confirmation that Raphael can provide to support his efforts and convince Adam of the absolute necessity of obedience. But it would not be enough to simply persuade Adam to obedience; he must also know how to be obedient. So, Raphael adds God's distinction that Abdiel has been "in word mightier than they in arms" (VI.32) to include the means of such resistance to disobedience. Abdiel resists Lucifer's temptation by wresting right (V.813–8) back from the latter's argumentation; giving rational counterarguments for each of Lucifer's reasons,

point by point (V.822–45); and ultimately exposing Lucifer for his logical inconsistency with God's will as one of those insurgents who "reason for their law refuse" (VI.41). Likewise, Satan will wield reason against Adam, who must also take it back and untangle the tempter's lies and deceptions from the truth. Then, using truth, reason, and right, Adam can actively "stand" (V.522) against the allure of disobedience.

Eve, rebellion revisited

But it is not Adam who successfully learns this lesson. Even having been taught by both Raphael and Michael, Adam still struggles to comprehend the significance of agency. He defaults again and again to passivity in the face of decision, whether in deferring to Eve in his choice to partake of the fruit or in resigning himself to mortal suffering while waiting for a Savior. Adam remains, to the poem's conclusion, an example of passive, negative obedience. Of course, this is no obedience at all, since it renders him utterly defenseless against Satan's temptation through Eve. Thus, her role in Adam's temptation might make her seem at least complicit in, if not responsible for, their shared fall from grace. With his choice following from hers, she retrospectively proves to decide both their fates—not just her own—when she eats the fruit. However, this is precisely why she is of such importance to this argument. Indeed, and because Adam's reasons are so lacking, it is of paramount importance to understand why Eve decides to act as she does.

A distillation of Satan's temptation will provide the basis for understanding the process by which Eve decides to eat the fruit. In brief, if Satan can convince Adam and Eve to transgress God's commands, then he expects that he will have successfully frustrated God's designs and so dealt a blow back to his Punisher (cf. II.354–76). So, noticing that "All is not theirs, it seems" (IV.513), Satan begins plotting by surveying the limits of Adam's and Eve's permitted behavior.

To Satan, the fact that there is a tree whose fruit bestows "Knowledge forbidden" seems "Suspicious, reasonless" (IV.516). While Adam's retelling of his creation, and a myriad of other sources in the poem, declare that

> The day thou eatest thereof, my sole command
> Transgressed, inevitably thou shalt die,
> From that day mortal; and this happy state
> Shalt lose, expelled from hence into a world
> Of woe and sorrow, (VIII.329–33)

it remains unclear why this punishment is associated with the consumption of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil specifically. It seems reasonable to assume that there is some relation between the fruit, the knowledge that it imparts, and mortality, even if the exact nature of that relationship is uncertain. Such uncertainty creates a "fair foundation … whereon to build / Their ruin" (IV.521–2), so Satan pursues this line of thinking to wonder, "Can it be sin to know?" (IV.517). It seems plausible that this could be the case; not only have Adam and Eve just recently been created, but Adam's interview with Raphael shortly after Satan's arrival confirms that he is filled with boundless curiosity and a fervent desire "to know / Of things above his world" (V.454–5), and Eve's pleasure at having that interview recounted (VIII.50–7; cf. VII.50–1) would suggest hers as well. If it is indeed "sin to know," then they both seem strongly predisposed to sin; all it would take to undermine their obedience is a little "excite[ment]" (IV.522) in the wrong direction. Eager for knowledge, which Satan infers "might exalt / Equal with Gods" (IV.525–6), it would be easy to convince the pair to eat the tree's fruit. But that exaltation would prove their undoing as, "aspiring to be such, / They taste and die" (IV.526–7).

This, then, is the trial that Satan poses to Eve, to Adam, and ultimately to God. Satan surmises that, without the fruit's catalyzing effect, "The proof of their obedience and their faith" is merely a matter of not knowing any better because "they only stand / By ignorance" (IV.518–20). Satan is convinced of his assumptions—after all, "what likelier can ensue" (IV.527)?—but the question remains whether obedience and knowledge are as antithetical as Satan posits, or whether they can be, in fact, complementary. If these are antithetical, then rising above their station will doom them, as Satan intends; the inflexible hierarchy, which Satan has experienced firsthand and which he thinks God maintains, would not allow such insolent behavior to go unpunished.

If, on the other hand, obedience and knowledge can be complementary, then other possibilities arise. Perhaps the fact of knowledge acquisition is irrelevant to God's command after all. That is, the injunction itself might be far more important than the fruit of this particular tree. Recognizing the command as having been built on such a coincidence would seem to separate obedience and knowledge, if not for God's insistence that there are certain things that Adam must "know, / Lest, wilfully transgressing, he pretend / Surprisal, unadmonished, unforewarned" (V.245). This calls into question one of Satan's earlier assumptions. That "they only stand / By ignorance" (IV.518–9) would suggest that Adam and Eve would be better served with less knowledge, not more. And yet, clearly, they require knowledge of some kind and by some medium if they are to be obedient, even as the talisman of knowledge—the fruit—is forbidden them. Hence, Raphael's and Michael's visitations produce the fruit's same effect without any attendant disobedience; rather, they themselves are examples of obedience as much as they are messengers of the same.

Decoupling obedience from the acquisition of knowledge in this way frees the tree from the command's fatal overtones, allowing its fruit to become otherwise beneficial. Indeed, the knowledge imparted by the fruit seems necessary for Adam's and Eve's continued growth, their mortality thus an expected consequence of further development. Satan's insistent assumption that they "shall be as gods" (IX.708, 710; cf. IV.525–6, V.71–3) would suggest this to be the case, if not for God's injunction against the fruit—not to mention the fact of Satan's endorsement. But then, those are Satan's terms; as Raphael teaches Adam, God has decreed that he will create humanity such that,

> by degrees of merit raised,
> They open to themselves at length the way
> Up hither, under long obedience tried;
> And Earth be changed to Heaven, and Heaven to Earth,
> One kingdom, joy and union without end. (VII.157–61)

While this does not validate Satan's assumption that humanity will "be as gods," the unification of Heaven and Earth does still suggest some type of ascent "Up hither" from Earth below. Satan, of course, presumes that any upward mobility can result in taking godhood for oneself, but the important mutual affirmation from both God and Satan is that Earth's, and by extension humanity's, condition is not static or permanent.

Of course, "long obedience" (VII.159) is key to humanity's foretold transformation. By divine design, both Earth and humanity are as "mutable" (V.237) as the human will, so God therefore issues commands to guide humanity along "the way / Up hither" (VII.156). For example, as the poem plentifully reiterates, Adam and Eve are commanded to not partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And, as the poem is painfully aware, this is the

command that they ultimately transgress. But, as Adam has recounted to Eve, they have a second command: to

> Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth;
> Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold
> Over fish of the sea, and fowl of the air,
> And every living thing that moves on the Earth. (VII.531–4)

It is this stewardship with which Eve must contend when Satan tempts her. She and Adam need skills to "subdue" and hold "dominion" over the Earth if they are to fulfill this command, but it seems unclear what skills will be necessary to do so. Instead, while conceding to Satan that God "left that command / Sole daughter of his voice," Eve asserts that "the rest, we live / Law to ourselves" (IX.653–4). While referring in this instance to the injunction against the tree of knowledge, such a sentiment applies just as well to this second command. God's commands constitute the bedrock of permissible behavior, but they do so as isolated and infrequent statements of moral law. Meanwhile, the menial decisions of day-to-day life are left to the commands' recipients, so long as those decisions do not conflict with the commands' interdictions. Informing those decisions, she continues that "our reason is our law" (IX.654). Repeating God's condemnation of Satan's army, "who reason for their law refuse" (VI.41), Eve's declaration indicates not only that she has heard Raphael's lesson as well as Adam, but also that she has learned that this is their stop-gap measure. Adam and Eve are to use reason in the absence of direct intervention from God.

This is not to say that Satan is so keenly aware of their responsibilities or related instruction as to focus on either. He overhears that she and Adam have "dominion given / Over all other creatures that possess / Earth, air, and sea" (IV.427–32), but all his temptations pursue

instead their curiosity and the fruit's potential to satiate it. Intending to tempt Eve in this way, Satan misses the real core of the problem that she faces. Eve has already learned that her curiosity can be sated without the fruit through angelic visitation; Raphael has already proven as much. Thus, knowledge itself does not truly capture her attention. Instead, when Satan tempts her, she, "yet sinless" (IX.659), must apply what she has learned about obedience; about living "law to ourselves" (IX.654); and, most importantly, about how to reconcile the two.

Satan, noticing this, changes tactics. Dubbing the tree "wisdom-giving Plant, / Mother of science" (IX.679–80), he claims that it allows him "not only to discern / Things in their causes, but to trace the ways / Of highest agents, deemed however wise" (IX.681–3) and so reorients her perception of the tree from mere knowledge acquisition to apparently 'true' understanding. Framed in this way, the tree does not teach, it invites discernment; those who eat its fruit do not merely know, they who do so become wise. To demonstrate the sorts of wisdom that the fruit supposedly confers on its consumer, Satan then ventures into questions about the ways of God—"trac[ing] the ways / Of highest agents" (IX.682–3). He reasons that to eat the fruit would be but "a petty trespass" (IX.693) and not to do so would "keep ye low and ignorant" (IX.704); that not only is eating the fruit not fatal (IX.685) but leads to "life more perfect" (IX.689) and "a happier life" (IX.697); that, although death by the fruit is "to be wished / though threatened" (IX.714–5), knowledge gained from the fruit should be harmless (IX.727.8); and that ascension by the fruit would be "but proportion meet" (IX.711).

Closing the act by asking "wherein lies / The offence, that Man should thus attain to know" (IX.725), the spectacle of Satan's mental gymnastics enthralls Eve. More than the fruit itself, "which to behold / Might tempt alone" (IX.735–6), it is "his persuasive words, impregned / With reason, to her seeming, and with truth" (IX.737–8) that raise in her "an eager appetite"

(IX.740). Such mental agility and flexibility show promise in resolving her dilemma. In the skills that Satan flexes, she sees fulfilled "our want" (IX.755)—not of knowledge, per se, but of its use. Not only does the fruit "G[i]ve elocution to the mute" (IX), Satan's ability to "trace the ways / Of highest agents" (IX.682–3) by weaving through ostensible reasons behind God's commands seems to be just the solution Eve needs to consistently resolve "law[s] to ourselves" (IX.654) with divine commands. Satan's claim, in short, that "he hath eaten and lives, / And knows, and speaks, and reasons, and discerns, / Irrational till then" (IX.764), coupled with his attribution of those traits to having eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, serves ironically to link the tree with obedience, pitting one command against the other.

The conflict catches Eve off-guard. Though "replete with guile" (IX.733), Eve repeats Satan's insinuation that "what forbids he but to know, / Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise" (IX.758–9). Rightly, Eve observes that "Such prohibitions bind not" (IX.760) because they would be nonsensical against prior experience. Again, Raphael's visitation proves that knowledge itself is not forbidden to the pair, just the tree and its fruit. However, what is at stake is not knowledge but obedience (III.96). Eve has determined that knowledge is necessary for obedience; but, after conversing with Satan, she finds herself in a position where knowledge and obedience are in opposition. Rather than recognize the absurdity of the conflict, she takes the side of knowledge, partakes of "the cure of all" (IX.776), and violates the command to not touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The instructor's role

But, while her choice to eat the fruit and violate one command to observe the other is—per God's judgment—flawed and transgressive, it is not necessarily wrong. Eve's simple reply to the Son's question ("Say, Woman, what is this which thou hast done?" (X.158)) that "The

Serpent me beguiled, and I did eat" (X.162), surprisingly seems almost to stay his judgment because of her accountability, and her recognition of the faulty assumptions that undergirded her reasoning. Indeed, the Son does not berate her as he does Adam, instead simply beginning judgment. After giving the verdict on Satan, he pronounces "the instant stroke of death" (X.210) on the now-mortal pair, the curse of mortality that was sworn as the price for violating the commandment to not touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But, while the Son prefaces Adam's portion of the judgment as having been "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife" (X.198), Eve's has no such preamble. Alongside the poem's alteration, that "to thy husband's *will* / Thine shall submit; he over thee shall rule" (X.195–6, emphasis added),[7] the text seems to suggest at most that her curse of subservience is a direct result of her mistake and a restriction on her reasoning and executive abilities—or it would, if not for the leniency the Son gives to Eve relative to Adam, berating him at every possible moment. Such relative leniency affirms that, even if her reasoning rests on faulty assumptions, her exercise of reason matters. Both Adam and Eve, for better and for worse, must implement what they have learned for themselves, and Eve has exercised reason to the best of her ability using what knowledge she has gained. Thus, however flawed her reasoning may have been, Eve's choice and ability to choose remain of paramount importance.

Nor is it the fault of their teachers that Adam and Eve both fail to observe God's command. God is insistent that they be "left free to will, / Left to his own free will, his will

[7] Cf. Gen. 3.16: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy *desire* shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Emphasis added).

though free, / Yet mutable" (V.235–7), and the poem's pedagogy reflects this. While commanding Raphael and Michael to instruct the pair (V.229–45, XI.112–7), God refrains from including anything more in these commands. The angels are only to teach, to "advise" (V.234), to "warn" (V.237), and to "reveal" (XI.113)—but never to compel. This, despite God's other decree that the students' fall is inevitable (III.93), raises questions about the teachers' role. It seems contradictory, if not pointless, to teach Adam and Eve the importance of obedience if they ultimately fail such a test. Similarly, teaching them again afterward, when they are fallen and no longer retain ready access to divinity, suggests a motive behind their instruction other than instilling simple obeisance.

Indeed, the angels' pedagogy requires a paradigm different from one which would instill such simple obeisance. Hence, God's pedagogy in *Paradise Lost* begins, like Erasmus's, with "Good orderynge or teachyng, I call doctryne, whiche stondeth in monicions and preceptes" (E.v). The warnings and techniques that Raphael teaches Adam through narrative, as well as those which Michael conveys through historical foresight, all serve to 'indoctrinate' Adam in the correct methods of obedience to God while cautioning him against those circumstances which would serve to hinder or obstruct those methods. And, while the conveyance of this information remains paramount to God's ability to have "fulfilled / All justice" (V.246–7), its independence from the means of transmission allows the angels to impart mercy without violating the finality of that justice. Thus, Raphael's jovial storytelling and Michael's more austere lecturing both iterate on divine commands to "advise" (V.234), to "warn" (V.237), and to "reveal" (XI.113), allowing each in turn to teach Adam and Eve what they must know to best obey God.

However, the pitfalls that await Adam and Eve remain. Echoing Erasmus's caution that "Nature requyreth good order and fashionynge: exercyse, except it be gouerned by reason, is in daunger to manye perylles and erroures" (E.v), Adam warns Eve that

> God left free the will; for what obeys
> Reason, is free; and Reason he made right,
> But bid her well be ware, and still erect;
> Lest, by some fair-appearing good surprised,
> She dictate false; and mis-inform the will
> To do what God expressly hath forbid. (IX.351–6)

Reason itself cannot—indeed, does not—protect the pair from temptation, nor from their fall, any more than the knowledge that Raphael has brought can or does. Rather, reason and knowledge must be joined together and work in tandem to ward off such dangers. It is in this capacity that Michael offers his lecture to Adam, to which the latter accepts by requesting that the angel lead on as a "safe Guide" (XI.371). This is also an apt description of Raphael's "commission from above;" not only is he to "answer thy desire / Of knowledge," he is to do so "within bounds" (VII.119–20). These bounds are the ones that Adam and Eve transgress; they seek knowledge that God forbids not because it should not be known but because, as Eve discovers, it conflicts with God's will and so encourages rebellion. This is why Raphael says of what he conveys to Adam that "for thy good / This is dispensed" (V.570–1). Against such an overreach of sub-divine will as the transgression of Adam and Eve, Raphael and Michael teach Adam not just what to know but how to know it safely, without contradicting God.

As such, the most important part of God's pedagogy is its application. It is clearly insufficient that the pair be warned; they must act on that warning to the best of their abilities. To

this end, while Raphael's prelapsarian lesson "fulfilled / All justice" (V.246–7), Michael is to afterward "send them forth" (XI.117). Fulfilling this command to drive them from Paradise, especially under the stipulation that they be "sorrowing, yet in peace" (XI.117), Michael offers Adam a prospective approach. Rather than simply eject them, Michael asks Adam to "endure" (XI.365) by placing hope in future events. In so doing, Michael helps Adam to prepare for his impending mortal sojourn through what Erasmus calls "exercyse[:] the vse of that perfitenes which nature hath graffed in vs, and that reason hath furthered" (E.v). In fact, from the start—with the fall of Adam and Eve foreseen (III.93–6)—it was necessary to prepare them in this way for the inevitable. Michael's lesson, and Raphael's as well, anticipate such an outcome and are therefore preparatory for it; they are not justiciars, condemning Adam and Eve with too much knowledge to be anything but accountable. Rather, they assist the pair through their instruction in coping with divine mechanisms unknown (and perhaps unknowable).

In this way, Raphael's and Michael's instructional practices assert the independence of Adam's and Eve's ability to reason, which remains a core element of the argumentation and, in turn, pedagogy of *Paradise Lost*. It may seem extremely pedantic to note in closing that Adam and Eve represent a platonic ideal of people who "be not borne, but fashioned" (Erasmus D.iii), having been literally formed by God directly rather than through any kind of sexual generation. And yet, reading God's actions as a careful 'fashioning' of that ability to reason, rather than as an inevitable judgment of human nature, renders the last lines of the poem in a much warmer light. Even if Adam and Eve leave Eden "with wandering steps and slow" (XII.6478), their "solitary way" (XII.649) is paved with the lessons they received from God through Raphael and Michael. Thanks to the angels, and equipped for the task with "Providence [as] their guide" (XII.647), the now-mortal pair knows what path to take. With "The world … all before them"

(XII.646), they are faced not with the daunting task of mor(t)al discovery but with the relatively simple duty of obeying God and the promise of Christian reconciliation.

Having been faithful to what they have learned in Paradise, as Michael explains to Adam, "then wilt thou not be loth / To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess / A Paradise within thee, happier far" (XII.557–87). While they must be evicted, Adam and Eve can still retain the peace of Paradise by implementing what they learn from these angels. So long as they commit to what they have learned in Paradise, "that to obey is best," and demonstrate this learning through "Deeds to thy knowledge answerable" (XII.581–2), Adam and Eve are promised the inward support of Paradise. This allows them to be inwardly "happier far" no matter their outward situation—but only through this instruction and their correct application of it.

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