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Morality within the Cosmos of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*,  
as explained through orientational and conceptual metaphors

Many authors and poets use metaphors as a literary tool for creating a concrete image out of abstract ideas to help a reader better understand a concept. However, few rely on the basis of metaphors. Within the metaphor category is conceptual metaphors, and inside conceptual metaphors are orientational metaphors. The purpose of a conceptual metaphor is to use two basic human experiences and project one concept onto another concept using aspects of the associated linguistic phrases. The concept a writer uses to describe another concept is called the source domain, and the concept that needs describing is the target domain. Writers use linguistic phrases associated with the source domain to describe the target domain, thereby connecting the two and solidifying the target domain. One type of conceptual metaphor is the orientational metaphor. The orientational metaphor uses movement and direction, a basic human experience, to make a target domain coherent, and associate a direction with a certain aspect of the target. Both conceptual and orientational metaphors are present in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Milton uses the metaphors to explain the reasons of God to man in a basic understanding every man knows, through human understanding and conviction. In order to explain the reasons of God to man, Milton must first organize the cosmos, and then explain morality. Milton intertwines the cosmos and morality through metaphors, using conceptual metaphors in morality within orientational metaphors in the cosmos.

*The Cosmos and Orientational Metaphors*

Oriental Metaphors are directional metaphors primarily based on basic human experiences in spatial orientation. One of the first scholars to explore this type of conceptual metaphor, Zoltán Kövecses, states:

Upward orientation tends to go together with positive evaluation, while downward orientation with a negative one. But positive-negative evaluation is not limited to the spatial orientation up-down. It has been pointed out that various spatial image schemas are bipolar and bivalent. Thus, whole, center, link, balance, in, goal, and front are mostly regarded as positive, while their opposites, not whole, periphery, no link, imbalance, out, no goal, and back are seen as negative. (Metaphor 40)

Oriental metaphors are not limited to those stated above, as there are many other opposites that are included under the category of orientational metaphors. Milton uses the orientational metaphors and human's predispositions to innately understand them to his advantage. This type of metaphor is universal, where every person, despite culture and time period, makes the links between the target and source domain without conscious recognition. According to Treip in her book *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic*, Milton needs to justify the ways of God to man through human understanding and conviction, and he does so through unconscious absorption. For this reason, Milton uses orientational metaphors to organize his cosmos in a high-low, up-down, and center-periphery arrangement.

The orientational metaphors always come in pairs of opposites; thus, because Milton uses orientational metaphors to organize the cosmos, he creates a bipolar cosmos: Heaven and Hell, where Heaven is high, up, and center, while Hell is low, down, and periphery.

Milton explains Hell in Book I through a series of appositions to Heaven, meaning Hell is an inverse perversion of Heaven. “Perversion” is the key word here, as “perversity” in the definition of “deviation”, is “understood by Milton as backsliding, a ‘falling off’” (Treip 154). Milton places the physical Hell (and there is a distinction between physical and mental hell and heavens) in a vertical alignment at the bottom of the cosmos. Hell is a fiery place where the lake burns with “ever-burning Sulphur unconsumed” and the land burns as well (I. 69). Although there is fire, there is no light. The narrator states in lines 72-75:

in utter darkness, and their portion set  
 as far removed from God and light of Heav'n  
 as from the center thrice to th'utmost pole.  
 O how unlike the place from whence they fell

Hell is in “utter darkness,” darkness so pure it is “darkness visible,” an oxymoron Milton uses to contrast dark and light, Hell and Heaven (I.63). In a passage describing Heaven, Milton details the light of God as so pure it creates a cloud of fog around him, and the angels’ light is less pure than God’s, but still pure, describing Raphael as “colors dipt in Heaven,” meaning his light is shone through a prism (III. 378-9, V.283). The narrator continues to describe the location of Hell as far away from Heaven as possible, from which it took nine days to fall, and how crooked Hell lies. Hell does not lie in the center, it lies in the periphery— “as far from the center thrice to th’utmost pole.” Milton uses an epic simile to first contrast the darkness of Hell to the light of Heaven, then he shows the location of Hell as a distance and as a metaphor.

By knowing the pure darkness of Hell, a reader can understand Hell is an infinite distance from Heaven, as pure darkness is the exact contrast of pure light. By showing that Hell is in darkness, the reader automatically begins to associate negative aspects to Hell. Milton reinforces

the negative aspects in setting Hell in the periphery, another opposition of Heaven. At this point in time, Milton has only described Hell with contrasting details to Heaven, showing how Heaven is the opposite of Hell.

In addition to Heaven and Hell's attribution to degree of light, Milton uses the orientational metaphors CENTER IS GOOD and PERIPHERY IS BAD. Milton uses the orientational metaphors of center-periphery to begin exploring the morality of the physical settings and force the reader to start associating direction with morality. He also begins to combine metaphors. In the epic simile, Milton shows light is attributed with Heaven and Heaven is associated with the center, therefore readers begin to unconsciously acknowledge the connection between light, Heaven, and center; as well as the opposite—darkness, Hell, and periphery.

Where the arrangement of Hell in retrospect of Heaven shows a center-periphery contrast, the occupants of each reveal a high-low perspective. The inhabitants of Hell are a parody of Heaven showing how high Heaven is by juxtaposing the lowness of Hell. For example, Satan, who Milton describes as “equaled the Most High,” fell to “bottomless perdition” (I. 40, 47). The epithet, “Most High” references God, who “sits high throned above all height” (III. 58). Satan was said to have been closest to God before he fell; thereby making him the parody of God in Hell. He becomes the ruler of Hell and raises Pandemonium with a hill and throne that suspiciously mirrors God's throne on a hill from Book III. In addition to the Satan/God parody, the angel hierarchies also mirror each other. In Heaven, Milton ranks the angels through the traditional Hebrew hierarchy: archangels and angels, where archangels are the angels closest to God. However, Milton also uses the names of the traditional Christian thought: seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominations, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, and angels; but

where in Christian theologies, each choir has a different rank on the hierarchy of who is closer to God, Milton interchanges the names, revealing a smaller hierarchy. In a similar way, Milton describes the fallen angels in Hell: the highest-ranking demons, and the first to rise out of the Lake of Fire, are the closest ones to Satan; these include Beelzebub, Belial, Moloch, and Mammon. However, in Hell, all demons are equal. Where the angels and God give off different lights, all the demons are in the same “visible darkness.”

Milton combines the metaphors of high-low and light-dark to create a new understanding of the cosmos. Heaven is higher than hell, and within its height, there are different levels of light. There is God’s level of light so pure it is obscured by clouds, and the level of light from the angels, which is a pure light shown through a prism. In Heaven, there is a hierarchy, and it is organized. However, in Hell, all beings are equal. There seems to be a hierarchy in the order of who rises from the lake, but this hierarchy is due to Milton’s use of the epic, revealing the more important characters first. The demons that arise first are the ones who make philosophical statements regarding morality and what actions to take. Therefore, despite the appearance of a hierarchy in hell, there is none. The demons act on their own accord, and the scene that carries the demons out of the lake seems to be chaotic. The combination of the low and dark conceptual metaphors shows that beings low in the scale are essentially equal. They all exist in the same “visible darkness” and none shine with distinct levels of darkness; and after the fall of man, they are all snakes. Equality and disorganization is the opposite of hierarchy, dark is the opposite of light, and low is the opposite of high. Milton employs conceptual metaphors regarding these oppositions to further convey the cosmos. Underneath the level of metaphor, the reader continues to connect the opposites and define morality of good and evil. Heaven is good, high, light, center, and hierarchy, while Hell is evil, low, dark, periphery, and equal/disorganization.

Heaven and Hell contrast each other through metaphors of high-low, light-dark, and center-periphery. Within this organization is a juxtaposition of movement between the two, an up-down movement presented in Earth's construction. The Son constructs Earth out of Chaos and Night, and hangs it by a golden chain. Earth lies vertically between Heaven and Hell, Hell on top and Hell below. When the Son creates Earth, he has in mind that eventually, man will work his way up to Heaven, and Paradise and Heaven will merge, and Man and Earth will replace the fallen angels in Hell. It is hard work to pull a golden chain, as if on a pulley. Yet, Sin and Death build a bridge to Hell, and it is easier to walk down a bridge than it is to pull a planet up a chain. Milton combines the motion of up-down with the difficulty of each to show how it takes challenging work to join Heaven. He connects Heaven and Hell once again through opposites. Subconsciously, the reader sees Heaven, good, light, center, high, hierarchy, up, and difficult as one entity, and Hell, evil, dark, periphery, low, equality/disorganization, low, and ease as another entity. Milton continues to set up morality within the cosmos by connecting each positive and negative association.

In addition to the up-down motion of Earth, Milton also begins to explain the optimistic moral of the story, that good comes from evil. He explains how Earth came from Chaos and Night, and Earth is essentially good before the fall. One critic calls this Milton's "quiet persuasion," where he explains the ways of God to man through human understanding (Treip 163). Milton associates the positive concepts of Heaven to Earth before the fall, giving it light, having it reside in the center of the cosmos, positioning high on a Hill, providing a hierarchy from man to animal to plant, and showing the work Adam and Eve put in every day in naming the animals and plants. Milton also shows the negative concepts of Hell in Chaos and Night, mainly in the definition of chaos, as in Hell where everybody is equal, there is also

disorganization and chaos, and in Night which people associate with darkness (and darkness is a factor of Hell). Because of the conceptual metaphors Milton works on through explaining the bipolar cosmos, the reader unknowingly associates Earth with good and Chaos with bad. Milton, thus, allows the reader to first see how good comes out of bad, how Earth came out of Chaos.

Through juxtaposing the cosmos, Milton teaches that good comes from evil. He uses the orientational metaphors because this type of metaphor is purely associated with basic human spacial experiences. On an innate level, the readers already knows the concepts Milton describes, but by reiterating and reattributing the negative and positive connotations, Milton shows how humans started associating the positive aspects to Heaven and the negative aspects to Hell.

#### *Morality and Conceptual Metaphors*

The orientation of the cosmos is the beginning of man's perception of morality, and serves as the underlying source to the choices of morality that need to be made at each fall. Both Satan's and Man's fall are a result of the same sin, but the outcomes differ because of the mindset of each. Milton explains the mindsets through conceptual metaphors. These conceptual metaphors are different from the orientational metaphors, as they depend on a specific target and source domain, not just associations. The readers use the orientational metaphors as a guide to depict which side with good and evil, but the conceptual metaphors allow the reader to solidify morality and choices.

Satan and Man fall as a result of sin, and their sins are the same. Satan's sin is motivated by pride manifested as envy. As told by one critic, Arnold Williams, who discerns Satan's motivation and the origin story Milton chooses, "the common explanation of Satan's fall is, then, that puffed up with pride and ambition, he sought to equal or surpass the Almighty" (256). However, Milton knows how weak pride is compared to envy, therefore, he creates envy from

Satan to the Son and Man. When God introduces the Son on Zion hill, Satan chooses to rebel.

*Paradise Lost* is based off the Old English Genesis B, where Satan's reason for fall comes from the prophesy of Isiah, which is sanctioned by St. Augustine. Milton chose the popular thought of Satan during the time he was writing in the seventeenth century. In this time, "Satan's sin was refusal to subject himself piously to the Almighty" (Williams 257). However, the reasons behind rebelling are compounded. The events surrounding God's introduction of the Son, Satan's rebellion, and creation of man are so close, they become intertwined to the point where the "chief grief of the fallen angels is the knowledge that man is to take their place in Heaven" (Williams 265). On the chain of being, man is lower than angels, yet man has the opportunity to rise higher, whereas the fallen angels do not.

Satan envies Man's ability for movement, where he cannot, and he also envies the Son in Man's form. Williams explains the envy from Satan to the Son explaining Satan's perception of the chain of being: "by choosing man as the form which the Son was to take, God degraded the angels below the dignity of man" (262). Satan was too prideful of his status, to put himself below man, and so he refuses obedience. Instead of seeing how man would equal him in the long run, Satan sees the status of man at the time he is told. Satan's choice depended on his limbic-executive system, where the limbic system is short term desires and the executive system is the long-term needs. Satan bases his rebellion on his limbic understanding, falling to put his desire before God's will.

Satan assigns himself a fixed mindset, and Milton demonstrates this through the conceptual metaphor HELL IS A MINDSET and CHAINS ARE A MEANS. In book IV Satan accepts a hellish mindset, described as "The Hell within him, for within him Hell / He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell" (20-21). He brings Hell with him where ever he is because

Hell is in his mind. Hell is a mindset. Attributed to this mindset is darkness, low, down, equality, chaos, periphery, and evil. There is no growth, or room for learning, in a fixed mindset. But this mindset, is not entirely to Satan's choice; he was predisposed to it through the conceptual metaphor CHAINS ARE A MEANS. After his fall, Satan, and the other fallen angels, are chained to Hell, in "adamantine chains" (l. 48). The chains were God's creation when he them "hurled headlong flaming from th'ethereal sky" (l.45). The chains in hell are strong and immoveable, and they contrast to the chains of Earth that were made to move. Because the chains hold Satan in physical hell, they are also the chains that hold Satan in a mental hell. The immoveable chains keep Satan in the fixed mindset.

Where Satan has fallen to the pits of Hell, Man has the choice through free will. One critic and professor of Milton, Jon Lawry, states: "the entire work is assumed to concern human choice of good or evil" (583). The choice of Man to either ascend to Heaven or fall to Hell is presented through orientational metaphors of negative or positive, discussed earlier. Heaven is deemed positive, good, high, light, up, center, hierarchy, etc. Heaven's knowledge is already known. Adam and Eve are naming the plants and animals, they interact with the angels, and they are warned by the angels. In Book V, before the fall, Raphael dictates to Adam the history of man prior to creation; therefore, they know what Heaven offers. However, evil knowledge is unknown. Adam and Eve do not know what sin and death are, and they do not know how the cosmos were created. The tree from which they eventually eat the fruit is the Tree of Knowledge of Evil (Lowry 584-585). Through eating the fruit, they learn about Satan's original sin of envy, pride, and ambition.

Adam and Eve sin by putting their own desires before God's will, God's will being Him not wanting them to eat from the Tree, Eve's desire to gain knowledge, and Adam's desire to

please Eve. The Fall is two-fold, once in carnal desire and a second of “mutual recrimination,” Lawry’s term for the equality and chaos that ensues with the blame game and the predator-prey relationship (584-585). However, unlike Satan’s fixed mindset and permanent fall, out of Adam and Eve’s fall comes good. Although the Earth falls, and negative aspects are attributed to it, like the evil of the fruit, the disorganization, the darkness when they “found their eyes how opened, and their minds how darkened” (IX. 153-4), Adam and Eve have the opportunity to rectify their choice. They live on Earth with a moveable chain, therefore, the chain is the means they will work to get to Heaven. Just as the chain is a means of keeping Satan stationary, the chain connecting Earth to Heaven is the moveable means that Adam and Eve will use for their growth mindset. Within their growth mindset, is a heavenly mindset. As Adam and Eve are leaving Paradise, Adam states, “To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess / A paradise within thee, happier far” (XII. 586-7). Where Satan has a fixed mindset, chained to Hell, Man has a growth mindset, chained on a pulley system to Heaven. The metaphor from CHAINS AS A MEANS and HELL/HEAVEN AS A MINDSET connect the two and create a negative and positive schema that Milton uses within, throughout, intertwined in the cosmos and morality. Milton shows how to “make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n” within the mind (I. 255). All positivity is Heaven, light, high, up, center, hierarchy, and growth mindset. While all negativity is Hell, dark, low, down, periphery, equality/chaos, and fixed mindset.

Within the cosmos is the relationship between heaven, hell, Satan, God, and man. Within the morality to the free will to choose between good or evil, in this choice there is limbic versus executive and one’s own desire against God’s will. Good and evil are on their own scale of high to low because of the orientation of the cosmos. As a result of choice, two mindsets arise: growth and fixed. A fixed mindset is attributed to Satan through a metaphor of chains, and through the

numerous other metaphors attributing negatives to negatives and positives to positive. Therefore, through the uses of metaphors that humans innately understand, Milton gives an optimistic moral that good can come out of evil. If Satan hadn't fallen, and God chained him to hell, giving him the fixed mindset and the mind of Hell, then Man would not have sinned and humans would not have learned through experience how to grow, how to work our way to heaven, to be better on the cosmic scale.

Milton explores the interactions between positive and negative concepts through conceptual and orientational metaphors, incorporating them through his cosmos, and inside those cosmos, morality and mindset. Milton uses the metaphors to his advantage in explaining the reasons of God to man. Man has already made the connections Milton shows, as conceptual metaphors are subconsciously oriented in the human mind. He purposely employs the metaphors as a technique of "quiet persuasion" in showing how good can come from evil. Milton's purpose in writing *Paradise Lost* is to retell Genesis to already fallen humans, and does so by making the reader fall again. Using metaphors, Milton subconsciously leads the reader to the same choice and outcome of the fall. The reader feels how Adam and Eve felt, and they know what they knew: that good comes out of evil. Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* during a century of tyranny, after observing the cyclical nature of the good and bad in the world. He created *Paradise Lost* as an optimistic outlet to the negativity of his time. After the tyranny, good will come. After being blinded, *Paradise Lost* comes, the greatest and last English epic reverting to the beginning of history, explaining the connective metaphors we already unconsciously know.

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