

Prof. Folena – Lesson on Milton's Paradise Lost (8/4/2025)

PART 1 The Power of the Word

The text of the **Bible** will be analyzed: the Bible of **King James I's version**. It came out in 1611 and became the authorized version. It was meant to strengthen the King's absolute power. This is the Bible used by English people from that time onwards.

Genesis 1. 1-4

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

God is alone, he has not created the universe yet, he is one (not one and three: the Holy Spirit and the Son do not exist yet) and he speaks to himself.

IT IS A WORD that CREATES. Why does God speak to himself? It is not explained in the Bible. What is sure is that THE WORD in the Bible PRECEDES ANYTHING and CREATES the WORLD.

Seduction is an attempt to repeat God's act and creates something too.

Genesis 1. 26-27

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

God creates man (intended as man and woman, human beings (reference to "them", fish in the sea, birds in the sky, cattle (animals that walk on the earth) and animals that creep (serpents).

God speaks to himself again. **He creates humans in his image**, that is, they are physical bodies and images, there is a coincidence between referents and images, differently from images in general, which are just signs whose referents are outside them.

Of course, God is represented as the only thing that has no referent but himself. All created things mean something else, but God is the only entity whose meaning is complete, ultimate, self-standing. He possesses all of his meaning in himself.

All theologians agree on this, whether they are Catholic or Protestant or Puritan. St. Augustine claimed that everything is a sign (or image) of something else (a referent). Only God has full and complete meaning, does not refer to anything else but himself.

The same importance to the word is given by **St. John in his Gospel**. He capitalizes the term Word because it is the same as God. It is God's Word.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (...)

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

In line 14 there is a reference to the incarnation of God into his Son, Jesus, who is the object of the Gospels.

The term Word is LOGOS in Greek, VERBUM in Latin and DABAR in Hebrew.

The versions of the four Gospels that we have are written in Greek; the Old Testament is written in Hebrew. But if we had St. John's version in Hebrew, he would have used Dabar, which means "the word that creates, that has effects on the world". A word that "means" and "is" or "makes be", at the same time annulling the gap between sign and referent, representation and reality, image and truth. This is God's Word (capital letter).

N.B.

Le quattro lingue della Palestina

Va detto innanzitutto che al tempo in cui si svolsero gli eventi descritti nei Vangeli **quattro erano le lingue parlate in Palestina**. Quella ufficiale (ma anche la meno diffusa: usata solo da un ristretto numero di funzionari pubblico) era il **latino**. Quella religiosa era l'**ebraico**, parlata nelle sinagoghe, dove si leggevano i testi della Torah, e dai farisei che erano gli ebrei più osservanti. Quella della vita quotidiana era invece l'**aramaico**, che il popolo aveva adottato dopo il ritorno dall'esilio babilonese (VI sec. a.C.). E infine il **greco** della koiné, che era un po' come l'inglese di oggi, parlata ovunque. Ebraico e aramaico erano lingue semitiche, imparentate tra loro come ad esempio l'italiano e il napoletano, dato che l'aramaico (nell'VIII secolo a.C. lingua delle comunicazioni internazionali nella Mesopotamia) era diventata sorta di dialetto.

Gesù parlava solo l'aramaico?

Tra queste quattro lingue è ormai certo che **quella usata da Gesù per la predicazione e per i colloqui con i discepoli fosse l'aramaico**. Come ricorda Rinaldo Fabris, nel suo "Gesù il Nazareno" (Cittadella Editrice), sono almeno una ventina i passi dei Vangeli canonici (scritti in greco) in cui vengono citate parole o espressioni aramaiche. Per limitarci a quelle che riguardano la Settimana Santa: "**Abba**" (**Padre**), usato da Gesù nel Getsemani; "Eloi Eloi lemà sabachtani" (Dio mio, Dio mio perché mi hai abbandonato) cioè le ultime parole di Cristo sulla croce secondo Marco e Matteo; il toponomastico Golgotha ("Luogo del cranio") per indicare l'altura della crocifissione; e infine l'appellativo "rabbunì" (maestro mio) con cui Maria di Madgalà chiama Gesù dopo la risurrezione. E a proposito di vittoria sulla morte, possiamo citare ancora il "talità qum", (ragazza alzati) con cui Cristo riporta in vita la figlia di Giairo.

Del resto è naturale: cresciuto ed educato in una modesta famiglia della Galilea che abitava a Nazareth, villaggio di poche centinaia di abitanti, Egli certamente aveva come lingua materna l'aramaico occidentale che si parlava nella sua terra. Tra l'altro connotato da accento diverso da quello in uso a Gerusalemme, come attesta il "riconoscimento" di Pietro, nella notte dell'arresto di

Gesù (Mt 26,73) proprio a motivo di come parlava. (Mimmo Muolo, "Pasqua. Aramaico, ebraico, greco, latino... in che lingua Gesù parlò con Pilato?", *Avvenire*, 7 aprile 2020).

PART 2 Milton

The creation in Milton depends on the son. He is the active force of God or his interface. God is so perfect, bright and self-enclosed that nobody can interfere with Him. It is his son that interacts with all the other beings and the angels as well. God is not accessible, cannot be approached.

"Paradise Lost" begins in medias res, as the epic. Satan is already in hell, so "Paradis Lost" does not begin with God's creation of the universe. This is narrated in the account of the archangel Raphael to Adam when he is still in Eden, in books 5-6-7. Raphael tells Adam that it was God in the person of the son (Jesus) who created the universe. The son is his interface, his active face. The universe Milton refers to is the Ptolemaic universe, the one that is described in the Bible, although Milton knew about the new scientific discoveries. He had visited Galileo Galilei in Fiesole and had learnt about his theories.

According to Milton initially in the universe there was just Heaven (the place where God and the angels lived) and Chaos. After the angels' rebellion (a part of them led by the angel that will be later called Satan), the son, Jesus, created Hell and the physical universe (as in the Ptolemaic version) attached to Heaven by a chain (see the picture).

Creation means giving form to raw matter. See the image of the engraving showing Chaos and the motto: "Sine Iustitia, confusio" (without justice, is confusion). Distinction and definition are given by God (Iustitia) to matter (confusio) in the creation, which gives shape to matter. Chaos is a container of indistinct matter.

Chaos corresponds to "When fire and air and earth and water, all were one. Before that work divine was wrought, which now we look upon"

Form corresponds to what may be called Reason, the ability to distinguish and discriminate (not necessarily moral reason), for example to distinguish between fire and air, but also good and evil. In the morality play *Everyman* it is called "discretion" (discernimento): the ability to discriminate things and to distinguish.

In Eden, before the Fall, all language works as indicated by the word "dabar" in Hebrew. There is no difference between signs or images and their referents or realities (signifier and signified). This is the Edenic language or divine language (not possible on the earth). This idea of an ideal language where sign and referent coincide is present in many philosophical theories, for example Francis Bacon's thought (one of the first empiricists).

Originally, the universe was monistic, a complete whole. For Milton, the creation occurred through a word that defines and distinguishes but, still, things belong to the same essence. Only after the fall, things are completely divided (light and darkness, for example).

N.B. Monism

Monism is the philosophical idea that all things in existence are part of the same essential oneness or whole. Monism is opposed to dualism, which holds that there is a fundamental difference between the mental realm and the physical realm.

Seduction = Separation and division. This is what Satan does: he separates and seduces.

The first tangible act of separation is the division of the angelic population of Heaven into 2 opposed parties: the rebel angels, led by Lucifer, and the ones that side with God. Lucifer seduces them thanks to his enormously specious (*fazioso, specioso*) and misleading rhetorical ability. When he addresses the angels in heaven to persuade them, Satan uses many rhetorical devices, as narrated by the archangel Raphael to Adam in the 5th Book.

Satan is actually not interested in freeing his fellow angels from the “tyranny” of God, but is interested in dominating them and becoming the king of Heaven himself. He addresses them with words such as “freedom”, “liberty” and “equality” and can sound like a revolutionary hero. This is one of the reasons why the Romantics and pre-Romantics thought Milton had turned him inadvertently into a hero. Satan is successful in seducing one third of the angelic population with his rhetoric but he uses those words in a very misleading way. He also uses wrong syllogisms, semantic shifts etc.

He shows his ability as a rhetorician and speaker. But he has his own personal interest, he wants to become king over them in place of God. After Satan has persuaded a part of the angels, there is a war between his party and the one of the good angels. But the good angels are unable to defeat Satan and his followers. Only the intervention of the son (God in the form of son, Jesus Christ), will lead to the rebellious angels’ defeat. The son builds Hell at the bottom of the universe and throws them into it. Hell is a sort prison meant to enclose them.

This separation is accompanied by another separation, described in Book 2: the one between sign and referent, the image and the body or reality.

Satan’s Idolatry

Satan and Sin: (a passage from Book 2, 746-67)

To whom thus the Portress of Hell-Gate replied:--

“Hast thou forgot me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eye so foul, once deemed so fair
In Heav'n, when at the Assembly, and in sight
Of all the Seraphim with thee combined [750]
In bold conspiracy against Heaven’s King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surprised thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast

Threw forth, till on the left side opening wide, [755]
 Likest to thee in shape and countenance bright,
 Then shining Heavenly fair, a Goddess armed
 Out of thy head I sprung; amazement seized
 All the Host of Heaven back they recoiled afraid
 At first, and called me Sin, and for a Sign [760]
 Portentous held me; but familiar grown,
 I pleased, and with attractive graces won
 The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
 Thy self in me thy perfect image viewing
 Became enamoured, and such joy thou took'st [765]
 With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd
 A growing burden. Meanwhile Warr arose,

In this section, Satan is acting as a king who has a meeting with his best counsellors, the chief rebel angels (the devils: Beelzebub, his second-in-command, Mammon, Belial etc.). Satan has decided to leave Hell, passing through Chaos, and reach the earth at the centre of the universe (Ptolemaic universe) because he has heard that God has created some creatures and placed them on the earth. He wants to take vengeance on God by acting on those new creatures. So, he reaches the gates of Hell but he finds out that the gates are closed. There are two guardians who confront him. One of them addresses him angrily. The guardian has the appearance of a woman in the top part of the body, but she has a scorpion tale with a long stinger in the lower part and the other one has an undefinable shape, that is impossible to describe.

The former addresses Satan and speaks to him. She reminds him that she is his daughter. (Have you forgotten me?). She was once beautiful to his eyes. She remembers the time of the meetings with all the Seraphs to organize the conspiracy against God. And for the first time, Satan (but his name was Lucifer at the time, the best and brightest of all angels) felt a physical pain (angels don't usually feel pain). Once he has conceived the rebellion he starts feeling pain. To conceive, literally, means "to give birth to" (concepire, generare). What she is referring to is a conception similar to that of the Greek Goddess Athena from Zeus' head (he is also called Jupiter in Latin). Lucifer has a terrible pain in his head, which splits and from the opening she comes out. She is like him in shape, as bright as he is in luminous expression. Lucifer is described, in Milton and in the Bible, as originally the best and brightest of all angels. She says she was as beautiful as him at the time, shining with heavenly beauty, armed as a goddess. Athena, in the mythological account comes out armed as a warrior. All the rebel angels were initially amazed and stepped away from her and called her "Sin". They considered her as a portentous (negative) sight. Essentially, they were afraid of her. But then they started seeing her as a familiar entity or presence. They started liking her because she was attractive even without speaking. So, she succeeded in winning all the angels, even the ones that were the most averse to her, with her attractive look. She is extremely seductive with her physical attractiveness. In particular, she says that she conquered Lucifer because he viewed himself in her (an image of mirroring). He mirrored himself in her, who was his perfect image. He felt in love with her and took such pleasure with her secretly that she became

pregnant. He took joy in secret (they had sexual intercourse). The other guardian that Lucifer sees with her is her (and his) son, Death

This is another example of division and separation. Satan creates an image of himself (the daughter) and, unable to perceive this as an image of himself (not a real body, a referent), he falls in love with her. This is the sin of idolatry (i.e. regarding the statue or a painting of a saint as if it were the real saint). Idolatry is the sin or mistake that was traditionally attributed to Narcissus (Ovid's character in *Metamorphoses*). Narcissus' error was not so much that he fell in love with himself, but with an image of himself without a body. He felt in love with an image, not a real person/body, he mistook an image for reality. Even Dante in *The Divine Comedy* deals with this sin (the sin of idolatry) in the *Purgatory*. And this is the reason why Satan's son in *Paradise Lost* has no shape (Satan conceived it with his own image). Sin and Death are the only allegorical characters in *Paradise Lost*.

The evil introduced by Satan in the universe takes the form of a long series of separations and divisions. The form of idolatry into which Satan falls in Book 2 is almost the same form as the one Eve is in danger to fall into and about which she tells Adam.

Eve's Idolatry

In Book 4 (see below) Adam and Eve are in the garden of Eden and they are having a pleasant conversation. Satan is spying them in the form of a cormorant perched on a tree. Adam and Eve are having a moment of relaxation after working in the garden. She tells him what she remembers in relation to the very moment she woke up in the garden after having been created by God. She was alone, she saw how pleasant and large the garden was. Of course, she was devoid of knowledge and experience of the world, a new-born. She reached a body of water, a lake, and she looked into the water and for the first time she saw an image. She mistakes her image for a real being since the figure does exactly the same things she is doing (bending, smiling, retreating and coming back). There she had fixed (would have fixed) her eyes (on the image) until now, and pined (avrebbe languito) with vain desire (and would have languished with vain desire) if a voice had not warned her in this way (God's voice in the person of the son). He says: "what you see there, oh beautiful creature, is yourself. It comes and goes away with you, it has no existence of its own, it depends on you, it is your image. But follow me and I will take you to a place where no shadow (image) prevents your movement or soft embrace (I will take you to a place where you can embrace a real person) – you will encounter him (Adam), the person of whom you are the image, and you two shall be inseparable." God tells her that Adam and Eve are images of each other but are also real (they are not shadow or reflections). They have also been created as images of God. Then He continues: "You will generate a multitude of beings like yourself and generate other images of yourselves with him" (a prophecy of the birth of humankind and of Eve as the mother of human race). We have again this potential idolatry: Eve is about to fall into an act of idolatry (worshipping her own image) but is saved by God.

Book 4, 449-75

That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awaked, and found myself reposed

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Under a shade on flowers, much wondering where
 And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.
 Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
 Of waters issued from a cave, and spread
 Into a liquid plain, then stood unmoved 455
 Pure as the expanse of Heaven; I thither went
 With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
 On the green bank, to look into the clear
 Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.
 As I bent down to look, just opposite 460
 A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
 Bending to look on me: I started back,
 It started back; but pleased I soon returned,
 Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
 Of sympathy and love: There I had fixed
 Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire,
 Had not a voice thus warned me; "What thou seest,
 "What there thou seest, fair Creature, is thyself;
 "With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
 "And I will bring thee where no shadow stays 470
 "Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he
 "Whose image thou art; him thou shalt enjoy
 "Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear
 "Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called
 "Mother of human race." What could I do, 475
 But follow straight, invisibly thus led?

Adam and Eve are themselves images of each other and both are images of God. But they are images with a body, there is no drastic division between sign and referent, just as their language retains a trace of the original unity of words and things.

From the moment Lucifer starts the rebellion onwards, all sorts of separations/divisions gradually occur, notably that between light and darkness...

Satan and Seduction

Regarding the question of whether or not Milton was on Satan's side without being aware of it, as underlined by Romantic and pre-Romantic poets (especially, Blake), Satan is depicted as a great aristocrat, full of pride and sense of social superiority over the rest of the world (like all the great seducers of literature, starting from Don Giovanni). He is rebellious but in an aristocratic way, that is, rebellious against those who are above him, in particular the king. He regards the king in power as a tyrant. He rebels not on behalf of oppressed people, only on behalf of himself. He is acting for himself, he wants to become the king in place of God and a tyrant himself, he has a hierarchy of angels below him. He uses the term "equality" but the angels are not equal, they are arranged in

hierarchies, there are nine angelic hierarchies and they retain those hierarchies even in Hell. The word equality is therefore misused.

Satan resembles very much a great seducer that had been created before Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Don Giovanni. Don Giovanni enjoys acting as a lesser God, by manipulating people. He exerts power over other people thanks to words. Seduction is based on words and rhetoric.

N.B. *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* is play attributed to Tirso de Molina and written in 1616. It is the first work in which the character of Don Giovanni appears and will have an immense success in drama and the opera in Europe. There are other very famous versions, in particular the one written by Moliere and the one written by Da Ponte (libretto) for Mozart's opera. Byron, too, will write a poem entitled *Don Juan*.

This is the reason why Satan results also, in part, an attractive figure, especially to the Romantics and pre-Romantics. He must be attractive in order to exert power and "seduce" the angels. Seduction is, in fact, a matter of power rather than love or sex. You become a lesser God. Games of seduction are games of power. In Satan's monologue God is represented as a tyrant who oppresses his subjects whose reason has equaled them to him. But this is not what the Bible says, because God is superior to the angels. So, his idea is in fact just to replace God himself.

Milton was a very moderate puritan in theological terms. If you read the whole of *Paradise Lost* you don't find many theological differences between the puritan view and the catholic representation of the same kind of story, whereas in politics he was definitely radical. He was a convinced republican. In a passage of *Paradise Lost*, he claims his belief that all human beings have the right to be king on the earth, so he was in favour of a republican system. The role of king belongs to God only, the only legitimate monarchy is that of God: the "heavenly monarchy". Also, the only legitimate aristocracy is the hierarchy of the angels in heaven. But humans should all be equal before God. For religious reasons he is politically a republican and an anti-aristocratic. By presenting Satan and his companions in Hell, in the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, he demonizes the earthly aristocracy. This was what the Romantics didn't catch in thinking that Milton was on Satan's side: his political perspective.

In the following passage, Satan expresses his view of God and his intention of becoming a monarch in hell if he cannot be a monarch in Heaven and the whole universe. Representing God as a tyrant is a very deliberate misinterpretation on Satan's part of the truth and of God's role. He says that God and his subjects are equal and He used force to achieve superiority over his equal. Equality is however not what is implied by the biblical story. God is a superior being and so are the angels. The idea of equality is manipulated by Satan: he uses it to justify his attempt to replace God as the ruler of the universe. The sentence "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven" is the typical manifestation of aristocratic pride: the pride of a great aristocrat who does not want to appear a servant of anybody's else.

Book I, 242-70

'Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,'
Said then the lost archangel, 'this the seat
That we must change for Heaven, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be so, since he

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Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid
 What shall be right: furthest from him is best
 Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
 Above his equals. Farewell happy fields
 Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail
 Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
 Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
 What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than he
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
 We shall be free; the almighty hath not built
 Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
 Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
 To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
 Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.
 But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
 The associates and copartners of our loss
 Lie thus astonished on the oblivious pool,
 And call them not to share with us their part
 In this unhappy mansion, or once more
 With rallied arms to try what may be yet
 Regained in Heaven, or what more lost in Hell?'

Seduction is always a matter of power rather than love or sex both in Milton's Satan and Tirso da Molina's Don Giovanni. Don Giovanni also uses sex, but his ultimate goal is having power over his partners, being a lesser God. Sex is a n instrument to obtain power. And power is also what Satan wants in *Paradise Lost*.

The seduction of Eve.

Satan knows that Eve is sensitive to beauty, is fascinated by physical beauty, as the attraction for her own image in the lake demonstrates (see the passage mentioned before, in which Eve tells Adam about it). She is also fascinated by the beauty of words. In order to seduce Eve, Satan also uses words. Almost immediately after the above-mentioned passage, Satan creates a dream in Eve, which constitutes a prefiguration of the temptation and fall. It is the end of the first day that Satan has spent hidden in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve are sleeping and Satan instils a dream in Eve in which she hears a voice calling her and saying that she should wake up, because it is a beautiful night and she should enjoy it. In this passage he uses the kind of rhetoric and language of an Elizabethan (courtly love) poet. Satan is elegant, pleasing, sweet in addressing Eve (Book V, 36-47) "why sleep'st thou' Eve?... Still to gaze?"

Close at mine ear one call'd me forth to walk [36]
 With gentle voice, I thought it thine; it said,
 Why sleep'st thou Eve? now is the pleasant time,
 The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
 To the night-warbling Bird, that now awake [40]
 Tunes sweetest his love-labor'd song; now reigns
 Full Orb'd the Moon, and with more pleasing light
 Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
 If none regard; Heav'n wakes with all his eyes,
 Whom to behold but thee, Natures desire, [45]
 In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment
 Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze.

It is a cool and silent night except when silence is interrupted by the beautiful song of a nightingale (usignolo), which being awake now is tuning in the sweetest possible way a song which expresses his love suffering and pains. The nightingale is a typical bird whose song is mentioned over and over in poetry, in Petrarch's and Elizabethan sonnets. Now the full moon (with a full orb) reigns high in the sky and with more pleasing light (because it is milder and less strong than that of the sun) produces shadows that show the shape of things. All this in vain: the song of the nightingale and the full moon's beautiful light are however vain if nobody is there to look at/hear them. Heaven is awake with all its eyes (the stars), all its eyes are open, only to contemplate you, who are Nature's desire. In your sight all things rejoice, attracted by your beauty; when they see you they continue looking at you because of the ravishment they experience.

Satan succeeds in complimenting Eve, idealizing her and representing her as a central figure of the beauty in the universe. This is the language of poetry. In the dream, the voice comes from a figure similar to an angel, who tells her to follow him and she does. Eve follows him until the tree of knowledge, is offered the forbidden fruit and eats it. Soon she is lifted up above the earth until she looks down and starts falling.

The experience of this dream troubles her, in particular the fact of eating the forbidden fruit. She tells Adam about it. Adam reassures her, saying that dreams often happen because, when one sleeps, reason is also sleeping and another faculty is awake: the faculty of fancy which tries to imitate reason by associating things but in the wrong way. Fancy creates false images. Of course, Adam is not aware of the presence of Satan.

A dream is made of images without reality, this is what Adam suggests. But images here "produce" reality, which is also what seduction does. This is the first stage of **Eve's seduction by Satan**. The immediate consequence is the physical **separation between Adam and Eve** (however temporary) making the completion of the latter's seduction possible. For the first time she starts considering separation from Adam. She had never had that idea previously. Up to this moment they had always worked side by side.

In Milton, Adam and Eve do **work** in the garden of Eden, differently from what is narrated in the Bible. In the book of Genesis Adam and Eve don't have to work in Eden before the fall, they get everything from nature spontaneously. Conversely here they do. They don't have to cultivate edible things, because nature is also generous and produces everything they need but they have to organize nature and impose some order/balance on nature. Nature lacks the principle of reason, it is so good that it produces too much. Therefore, they need to contain and control nature. A symbolic way to represent reason: they have, for example, to cut some branches, pruning the trees, supporting the stalks of the roses so that they don't fall to the ground, making paths and alleys. This corresponds to Milton's puritan perspective. Humans should work, because it is the role given them by God, their commitment.

Book IX, 206-225

At this point Eve decides to go and work in another part of the garden of Eden on that day. Eve is also able to use language skillfully, as if she had learnt by Satan. She uses rhetoric to convince Adam that they should work in two different parts of the garden because there is a lot of work to do and, if they worked together, they would waste time talking to one other. Adam accepts even if he is afraid that something bad may happen (he has been warned by the archangel Raphael that Satan is going to try something against them). He accepts not because he is convinced this is a good idea, but out of the fact that he loves Eve so much that he does not want to displease her. This is also the same reason why he also eats the fruit later. He does not want to be separated by Eve. If Eve dies, he wants to die too. This is wrong from Milton's point of view, because love should always be controlled by reason, love should never take priority over reason in human beings. This is typical of the stories of seduction: the victim (Eve) herself becomes a "seductress", an agent of separation and persuasion who uses her rhetorical ability to manipulate Adam.

Their separation makes it possible for Satan, who has taken the appearance of a serpent in the meantime, to go to the place where Eve is working and to seduce her, as narrated in the biblical account too. This happens in a very long passage, in which **Satan is able to create desire in Eve.** This passage shows **Satan's great rhetorical ability.** He generates desire, not sexual desire but as de-siderium, i.e. sense of lack and incompleteness, desire of something that she does not possess. This corresponds to the original etymology of de-siderare, which in ancient Latin was not referred to physical desire, but was used by Roman haruspices (astrologers). It and means to be distant from the stars. When the stars were covered by clouds and no prediction was possible (sidus: star). Desiderare = il mancare (l'assenza) delle stelle. Sidney too may have been aware of this etymology in naming his beloved Stella. **Desire: sense of missing, of lack.**

Actual seduction: Book 9.532-732.

What is missing is quality. She realizes that she has been created by God as inferior to Adam, he is the head of the family and he is represented as having a greater degree of rationality. He is less sensitive to aesthetics like Eve but is more sensitive to the appeal of reason. Since reason is the chief faculty of human beings, Adam is presented as superior to Eve. **She starts desiring to be Adam's equal.**

Satan starts addressing her with epithets like empress of the world, queen of the universe etc., flattering her, using the language of Elizabethan poets, but in this case he even exaggerates, using hyperbolic expression. Eve pays attention to the fact that the serpent speaks human language, unlike the other animals. Adam and Eve understand their languages but in Eden animals speak different languages. Eve asks him how this is possible and he replies that he has acquired the knowledge of human language through eating the fruit of a certain tree. Of course, she later discovers that it is the tree of knowledge whose fruit is forbidden to them. She answers that they will die if they eat that. But Satan stresses this fact: if he, a serpent, that was an inferior creature (creeping on the ground and not walking) learnt to speak and had become superior to the other animals that were up in the hierarchy, what kind of portentous effect could the fruit have on Eve? It could make her like gods. He uses the word in the plural to suggest the idea that all the spiritual beings are the same (God and the angels), they are all gods, they are equal. Another example of his specious (fizioso) use of language. Eventually, she eats the fruit then she goes to Adam who is initially shocked but then does the same thing.

Satan's role is represented as **an actor and a director** in a theatrical performance, manipulating the other actors (as Jago). Actually, Milton originally intended to write a **tragedy**, not an epic. As a matter of fact, *Paradise Lost* is full of dialogue, often in direct speech, much more than any other poems, almost like dramatic works.

methought [35]

Close at mine ear one call'd me forth to walk

With gentle voice, I thought it thine; it said,

Why sleepest thou Eve? now is the pleasant time,

The cool, the silent, save where silence yields

To the night-warbling Bird, that now awake [40]

Tunes sweetest his love-labor'd song; now reigns

Full Orb'd the Moon, and with more pleasing light

Shadowie sets off the face of things; in vain,

If none regard; Heav'n wakes with all his eyes,

Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire, [45]

In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment

Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze.

In Book IV, 131-42, when Satan reaches Eden, the garden is described as being on the top of a mountain, surrounded by high trees of any kind (Cedars, pines and firs). Nobody can see inside it except if you fly to the tops of the tree, and as a "sylvan scene and... a woody theatre", a theatre made of trees. Theatres, in previous times, were made of wood and were circular so that Eden is

like a theatre and the word scene is also related to theatre. So, Satan becomes first a spectator, then an actor because of his repeated transformations into different animals first a cormorant then a toad and other animals and eventually a serpent, an actor changing costumes depending on his roles; but he is also a director because he succeeds in manipulating the other characters. This is similar to what happens in many other Shakespeare plays, for instance with Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Duke Vincentio in *Measure for Measure*, Prospero in *The Tempest*. or Jago in *Othello*.