Freedom of Choice:

A Christian and Kantian Analysis of John Milton's *A Masque* and *Paradise Regained*

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Tarkastelen tutkielmassani pahuuden käsitettä kristillisen teologian ja kantilaisen filosofian näkökulmasta. Analysoin John Miltonin teoksia *A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634* ja *Paradise Regained.*

A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634 on naamionäytelmä, joka esitettiin ensimmäistä kertaa vuonna 1634 Bridgewaterin jaarlin perhepiirissä. Jaarli oli myös tilannut näytelmän. Juoni kertoo kolmesta lapsesta (kaksi veljestä ja heidän siskonsa), jotka ovat matkalla vanhempiensa luo synkän metsän halki. Lady joutuu Comus-nimisen velhon vangitsemaksi ja veljet pelastavat hänet taivaasta lähetetyn varjelijan (Attendant Spirit) ja vedenneito Sabrinan avustuksella.

Paradise Regained on jatkoa Miltonin eepokselle *Paradise Lost* (suom. *Kadotettu paratiisi*). Se kertoo Raamatun tarinan, jossa Jeesus viettää 40 päivää autiomaassa, jonne Saatana tulee häntä koettelemaan. Molempien teosten keskiössä on vastustajien suorittama viettely (temptation) retoriikan keinoin. Molemmissa teoksissa sankarit selviävät koettelemuksistaan vahingoittumattomina vedoten totuuteen ja Jumalan varjelukseen.

Perehdyn ensin kristilliseen teologiaan ja etenkin vapaan tahdon kysymykseen. Käytän lähteinäni Miltonin proosatuotantoa sekä kirjallisuudentutkimusta Miltonin töistä. Syvennän käyttämääni teoriapohjaa tiivistämällä Immanuel Kantin moraalifilosofian keskeisiä ajatuksia pahuudesta. Nämä kaksi teoreettista lähestymistapaa ovat hyvin lähellä toisiaan ja käytänkin niille yhteisiä konstruktioita hyväkseni. Näitä konstruktioita ovat vapaa tahto, pahat teot, ja perisynti. Kantin mukaan ihmisillä on aina taipumus valita paha maksimi jossain vaiheessa elämäänsä. Tämä taipumus johtuu itsesuojeluvaistosta, joka pakottaa ihmiset puntaroimaan asioita oman hyvinvointinsa näkökulmasta.

Tutkielmassani pyrin todistamaan, ettei ketään teosten hahmoista voi kutsua puhtaasti pahaksi, vaan pahuuden nimitystä voi ainoastaan käyttää viitatessa tekoihin. Hyvien hahmojen kohdalla pyrin osoittamaan, kuinka vaikeaa on tehdä oikea valinta, ja että nämäkin hahmot joutuvat puntaroimaan valintojaan itsesuojeluvaiston kautta.

Avainsanat: pahuus, Milton, Kant, kristinusko

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1 Introduction

What is ‘evil’? The easiest way to answer this question is to quote *Oxford English Dictionary* on the meaning of the word:

> The antithesis of good adj., adv., and n. in all its principal senses. In Old English, as in all the other early Germanic langs. exc. Scandinavian, this word is the most comprehensive adjectival expression of disapproval, dislike, or disparagement. In mod. colloquial English it is little used, such currency as it has being due to literary influence. In quite familiar speech the adj. is commonly superseded by *bad*; the n. is somewhat more frequent, but chiefly in the widest senses, the more specific senses being expressed by other words, as *harm*, *injury*, *misfortune*, *disease*, etc. (*OED Online*)

In my thesis I will mainly use the term as referring to something extremely unpleasant – the usual modern way of using the word ‘evil’. I try not to make qualitative distinctions on the unpleasantness of a certain phenomenon or act because of consistency in my analysis, so I will refrain from making a distinction between ‘bad’ and ‘evil’. This is a conscious decision, and based on the fact that making that distinction is purely subjective: all human beings have their own boundaries on the matter. I would not feel comfortable to rely on a subjective scale. I will clarify my view on evil in the course of this thesis and attempt to be as objective as possible relying on Kantian rigorism.

The existence of evil has perplexed thinkers throughout history. Religion and philosophy have tried to solve the problem of evil in multiple theories about origins. “From its inception, Christianity was deeply concerned with questions of evil. This concern crystallized in two questions that have remained central to the Christian tradition. Where did evil come from, and what can be done about it?” (Gillespie 2006, 30). Christianity has produced different views on the matter ranging from the Manichean view of God being both good and evil to Augustinian view of evil as nothingness, a lack of the good. This need to explain evil results from the fundamental problem Christianity has with the very concept of evil: how can there be evil in the world created by a good, all-powerful God? But not only Christianity has struggled with evil and its existence. Philosophers have also tried to explain evil in different ways, ranging from Aristotle’s view of evil as failing to fulfill the purpose of human nature to Nietzsche’s nihilism. I will not examine different views on evil very thoroughly in my thesis, as I will be focusing on Christianity and Kantian philosophy. I

will mainly utilize these two views on evil in my interpretation of two texts by John Milton, *A Masque* and *Paradise Regained*. I will also examine how closely related Kantian philosophy and Christianity are, if at all, in the regard of the question: what can be considered as evil?

As for the originality of my pursuit; I am well aware of the fact that Milton studies is a very large field of academic work and I do not claim to have any completely original ideas and interpretations on my chosen subject, but I do believe that my thesis is not altogether pure repetition of old ideas either. The subject of evil in Milton is indeed very thoroughly studied, but, as of yet, I have not found works that combine Christian and Kantian views on evil to the extent I do. Dennis Danielson utilizes Christian theology in his study of Milton in his outstanding book *Milton's Good God*, and I have used his work as a starting point with the Christian part of my thesis. Danielson goes very thoroughly through Christian theology focusing on the Free Will Defense and utilizes it to interpret Milton's work. I would also like to mention C.A. Patrides and his extensive look into the matter of Christian heroism in *Milton and the Christian Tradition*. He has a firm Christian approach to Milton and refreshingly does not solely focus on *Paradise Lost*. A lot of Milton studies have focused on *Paradise Lost* as is expected; it is an epic and has many nuances to study. Among others, Stanley Fish[1] and Neil Forsyth (*The Satanic Epic*) have written excellent books on the matter of sin in *Paradise Lost*. Historically speaking, there was a long debate between Satanists and anti-Satanists on whether or not Milton wanted the reader to emphasize the heroism of Satan or Christian mores in *Paradise Lost*. Famously the Romantics were on the Satanist side of the argument along with A.J.A Waldcock and William Empson (Carey 1999, 161). The opposing side of anti-Satanists has been represented by Stanley Fish, C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams (Carey 1999, 161). Luckily criticism has moved on from this narrow division and we have a much more rich field of research, such as Nancy Rosenfeld with her account of the character of Satan in literary history and Claire Colebrook with her excursion to the subject of evil. Even though the subjects of these

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[1] Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in* Paradise Lost, 1967, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. I am not using Fish in this thesis because his work is focused on *Paradise Lost* so thoroughly that I found it impossible to use his otherwise excellent book as a source in my work on *Paradise Regained* and *A Masque*.

two books suggest that the two critics are only occupied with Satan and might be thus erroneously labeled as Satanist, they are not. Both of them study the character of Satan without downplaying the protagonists of Milton's works nor do they raise the character of Satan on a pedestal, like some of the previous critics have done. I will try to follow the example set by Rosenfeld and Colebrook and read Milton's protagonists and antagonists as equally necessary characters for the texts I use. As for the Kantian side of my thesis, I use Kant's texts as well as articles by different scholars to clarify the philosophical issues relevant for my thesis. Milton and Kant have been extensively paired together by Sandford Budick in *Kant and Milton*, but he focuses on Kant and writes about how Kant used Milton as an example. Claire Colebrook's book *Milton, Evil and Literary History* uses Kantian philosophy among others to analyze Milton's works. She draws some parallels between the two, but does it in a way that does not focus on any single text but looks at Milton's career as a whole. Her work is indeed groundbreaking as she does not adhere only to the traditional Christian reading, but finds novel ways to examine the legacy of Milton. But even though Colebrook uses Kantian philosophy extensively, she does not analyze the particular texts I use very thoroughly. This is where my thesis may be of use in the field of Milton studies. I intend to do as comprehensive analysis as is possible within the confines of a Master's thesis of these two works and place them in the frame of the choice between good and evil.

I intend to examine the evil represented in the two texts mainly by analyzing the characters and the choices they make. My analysis will focus on the main characters of Comus and the Lady in *A Masque*, and the Son and Satan in *Paradise Regained*, although I will mention some of the other characters as well. I have chosen these works by Milton in order to avoid *Paradise Lost*, because it is nearly impossible to be original when burdened with such huge amounts of literary criticism and a lot of it concerning evil in the epic. However, I will not completely ignore *Paradise Lost*, since the topic of the epic does relate to the topics of *A Masque* and *Paradise Regained*. The two texts I have chosen do bear some similarities, such as that they are both temptation-narratives (Rosenfeld 2008, 81-82). I intend to explore this and other similarities in the two texts in order to create a coherent

analysis of evil in these works. I would also like to mention that because the two texts were written in completely different stages of Milton's career, some development in Milton's views might be present.

I am intrigued by the way Milton mixes the two apparent opposites of good and evil and this is the main reason for my choice of topic and, in this thesis, I will be mainly concerning myself with the questions about whether or not the characters are to be viewed as either good or evil. I will not limit my analysis with using only Christian theology on the seemingly one-dimensional nature of some characters, such as the Son and Satan, because they are not to be viewed solely through their Christian counterparts. Even though they are obviously based on the Christian figures, they are still characters in a poem. Milton presents the reader with his own version of the story from the Gospels where Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-14). The characters I am dealing with are Milton's creations and as such not the biblical ones. "A poetic character is created in the human imagination; the figures that emerge therefrom cannot be any less human and fallible than their creators" (Bryson 2002, 89-90). Literary criticism is after all mainly an interpretation of a text through the critic's ideology, and in the case of *Paradise Regained* and *Paradise Lost*, a sort of a double interpretation, as the critic interprets Milton's interpretation of the Bible (Danielson 1982, 20). Milton's depiction of the characters is in itself controversial "because so many people still believe in, or worry about, the actual existence of his most important ones: Adam, Eve, Satan, Jesus" (Danielson 1999, 144). Even though Milton wrote about the struggle between good and evil, are there such things as completely evil beings? And how does intention affect how an act is judged morally? Are moral choices easy to make? Are we even able to determine anything concrete about evil?

As the reason for utilizing Christian doctrine to interpret Milton is a fairly obvious one – him being extremely set on his task to "justify the ways of God to men" (*Paradise Lost*, I.26)[2] by writing two epic poems with topics taken straight from the Bible and producing a long account of

[2] From here on *Paradise Lost* will be referred to as *PL*. I am using the second edition of *Paradise Lost*, originally published in 1674.

his personal view on Christianity (*Christian Doctrine*)[3] – my choice of using Kantian philosophy to widen the scope of my analysis needs clarification. After all, Milton died in 1674 and Kant was born 50 years later. It might seem odd to use one theory that was present at the time of Milton's life and another that was developed long after he passed away. I have chosen Kant because of his philosophy's overlap with Christianity. I also do not want to rely solely on Christian theology because I want to create a more vibrant picture of the characters than would be possible if I would only use theology. There is also the fact to which I hinted earlier: Christianity has been used extensively in previous Milton studies, but Kant's philosophy has not been utilized as much in the study of Milton's work. My endeavor is not a random choice; there are similarities between the two theoretical frameworks which I will point out in the thesis. There is also the issue that the Kantian definition of evil is relatively close to Milton's view of evil. As Claire Colebrook (2008, 64) notes: "[o]ne of Milton's achievements in *Paradise Lost* is to combine the earlier Augustinian sense of evil as privation or non-being – falling away from the good rather than a positive existence – with the modern Kantian conception of evil as an act of the will that freely decides to will." There is also the matter that Kant himself appreciated Milton and his work very much: "Kant's Miltonic aesthetics and Miltonic moral reason, firmly linked to his direct comments on Milton, constitute the most penetrating account ever written of the inner workings, and the inner impact on the reader, of Milton's poetry" (Budick 2010, 4).

The first text I will deal with in this thesis is John Milton's *A Masque*, a masque first performed in 1634. The original name given by Milton to the masque is *A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634*, but I will refer to it as *A Masque* in order to save time and space. The spelling I use is taken from the printed version I use. I will not be referring to the masque as *Comus* even

[3] *De Doctrina Christiana* (*Christian Doctrine*) was first published in 1823, which is 149 years after Milton died. This date might seem odd, but the manuscript was found in the State Papers Office in 1823 and only then was it published. *Christian Doctrine* contains heretical opinions, such as Milton's clear anti-trinitarian view of God, and this might be the reason for it not getting published after Milton's death. That might also explain why some critics have claimed that this could not be Milton's writing and why it became a very controversial issue. In 1996 a report produced by a committee assembled to investigate the matter titled 'The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*' came out stating that the majority of it is Milton's work, but that he could not have worked alone. This is hardly surprising, as the poet became completely blind at roughly the same time he began the work on *Christian Doctrine*. For more discussion see Dobranski 1999, 20-21 and Bradford 2001, 43-45.

though many of my sources do, because "calling *Comus* 'Comus' may be tantamount to calling *Paradise Lost* 'Satan'" and "[m]odern editors and critics would rather call the masque *A Mask*" (Flannagan 1989, 21). The general audience and previous literary criticism refer to the masque as *Comus* even if I do not. This will become clear when I quote some of the earlier work done on the masque. On Michaelmas night 1634 *A Masque* was performed for the Earl of Bridgewater, who had also commissioned the masque. The Earl's children – John, Thomas, and Alice Egerton – performed the parts of the children in the masque. *A Masque* tells the story of the three children, who are on their way through a menacing forest to see their parents. The Lady gets separated from her brothers in the woods and is deceived and captured by the sorcerer Comus. He tries to tempt her into drinking a potion that would turn her into a monster but with the help of her own reason, the Attendant Spirit sent from Heaven, and the goddess Sabrina, the Lady is eventually saved.

The second text I have chosen for this thesis is John Milton's *Paradise Regained*. It was published in 1671 together with *Samson Agonistes*. It is often referred to as a brief epic since it only has four relatively short books compared to his "proper" epic, *Paradise Lost*. The story is of the temptation of Christ found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. He spends forty days in the desert and is visited by Satan who tries to tempt the Son to bow down to him. Jesus refuses to be fooled by Satan, and finally Satan is conquered. But as Mary Ann Radzinowicz (1999, 202) notes, the gospels were not the only biblical influence on *Paradise Regained*, which is "a debate poem like Job, with a plot taken from Luke, expounding an interpretation of Christ's redemptive work drawn from Hebrews, framed by angelic hymns, and foregrounded by human laments modeled on Psalms." I will now turn my attention to the manner in which Christianity has attempted to explain evil in a world created by a benevolent God and return to these biblical allusions later.

2 Christian Theology and Evil

According to Danielson (1999, 144):

> The so-called theological problem of evil . . . can itself be seen as a problem concerning how to balance three fundamental propositions to which virtually all Christians, and perhaps others, assent:
> 1 God is all powerful (or omnipotent).
> 2 God is wholly good.
> 3 There is evil in the world.

Christianity has, among other explanations, developed the ideas of personified evil, Satan, and free will in general to try and explain how there could be evil in the world created by a good God. Cabrera (2001, 19) lists some ways of trying to explain suffering, which she sees as basically synonymously with evil, from a Christian standpoint: "to show that this suffering is justified, believers defend (and occasionally combine) the following four answers: (1) suffering is a punishment; (2) suffering is a test or trial; (3) suffering is the prelude to eternal life; or (4) suffering is a mystery." She discusses the problems associated with these answers, and fails to give a single complete answer to the problem. The problem with suffering as punishment arises from the guilt of the person suffering: "[t]o think that suffering is a punishment is to suppose that any afflicted person is guilty – even a newborn – and we cannot accept that this should be so" (Cabrera 2001, 20). Of course we can claim that all human beings are guilty, but it does not seem to justify the suffering of a baby. The second answer is used to get rid of some unsolved cases of suffering that are not deserved (Cabrera 2001, 20). Job is a famous example of this, but there is a problem with this explanation as well: what about those who die as God is supposedly testing them (Cabrera 2001, 20-21)? The third explanation is used for just this purpose. If a person has led a good Christian life, he will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven (Cabrera, 21). The last point is the most interesting one. It includes the basic "God works in mysterious ways" reasoning, but also tries to explain how God has the universe in mind and suffering is sometimes good in a universal scale (Cabrera 2001, 21). But this mystery-explanation seems to be one that covers just about everything and makes discussion about the problem futile:

> God knows why he does things, although for us this remains a mystery. God acts knowingly and freely, but his reason and his will are unfathomable mysteries. Pointing out this possibility leaves us just as we were: without understanding and without being able to help thinking that the suffering we undergo, and for which we as a species are not responsible, is a senseless evil that appears entirely gratuitous. (Cabrera 2001, 21)

There have also been different explanations according to what kind of evil is being discussed. As Danielson (1982, 3) notes: "[t]raditionally, three kinds of evil have been distinguished: 'metaphysical,' natural, and moral." Danielson (1982, 5) defines metaphysical evil as less good than the supreme good, God, thus it is not actual evil, it is just "the essential dependency, finitude, imperfection, and limitation of all created things." This view on evil arises from the belief that God created everything out of nothing and thus the created beings are in some way flawed from the beginning (creatio ex nihilo). It has been most prominently supported (or even created) by Saint Augustine: "[i]t will then be found that the evil choice takes its origin not from the fact that the man is a natural being, but from the fact that his natural being is created from nothing" (*City of God*, XII.6). The idea of evil as nothingness is still defended when speaking about metaphysical evil because no one has provided a better theory: "the definition of evil as absence, which the Middle Ages inherited from Augustine, seems inadequate to express anything about contemporary horror, no other metaphysical definitions have been – perhaps mercifully – proposed" (Neiman 2001, 29). Metaphysical evil is dependent on the material itself of which human beings are created and is not a suitable explanation when talking about genocide for example. It seems like a catastrophically inadequate reason for murdering millions of people for their race alone. What about the other types of evil? Natural evil, on the other hand, is the evil that exists in the world without someone causing it, such as natural disasters, and moral evil is something caused by a person's rational and free choice (Danielson 1982, 3-4). Natural evil is something that is present in our world, but we cannot really control it. We can only try to adjust after a hurricane has destroyed New Orleans or an earthquake shakes Japan. This type of evil has been traditionally said to be caused by divine wrath upon people, but after the developments in science, we can now somewhat understand the mechanics behind these incidents. Finally we come to moral evil, which is my main focus in this

thesis. Moral evil stems from an act a person does willingly which is considered as immoral. We have different moral values we want to uphold and morality is in a lot of ways subjective. But there are mutually agreed principles that form laws in our societies. This common ground includes among others property crimes, murder, assault, and slander. There have to be some common rules for a society to function. There also has to be some way of evaluating these according to their severity in order to punish the people committing these crimes and this is where the justice systems around the world come in. The people working in the justice system have the horrible task of deciding what is a crime, who is a criminal, and how they should be punished. I will not go further into the discussion on law and moral judgment, but move on to the actual matter at hand: what is seen as evil from a Christian point of view.

2.1 Sin

Sin is basically a morally evil act in Christian terminology. Sin is caused by a rational being exercising his or her free will and is defined by Milton (*Christian Doctrine*, 382)[4] as breaking the law, law meaning "primarily that law which is innate and implanted in man's mind; and secondly it means the law which is proceeded from the mouth of God." C. A. Patrides (1966, 85-86) quotes a passage from *Paradise Regained* during his lengthy discussion about the natural law, or Milton's innate law:

> he who receives
> Light from above, from the fountain of light,
> No other doctrine needs, though granted true;
> But these are false, or little else but dreams,
> Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm. (*Paradise Regained*, IV.288-292)[5]

The passage is part of the Son's retort to Satan concerning Greek philosophy. Jesus claims that the knowledge from God is true and the knowledge of the ancient philosophers was "built on nothing firm," although occasionally correct. Patrides (1966, 86) claims that

> Here is no self-righteous assertion that Christians will inevitably conduct themselves in a

[4] From here on *Christian Doctrine* will be referred to as *CD*.
[5] From here on *Paradise Regained* will be referred to as *PR*

morally upright manner, but the expectation that they are more capable of attaining the highest standards of morality because their moral code comes . . . from God while that of the others is merely 'natural' . . . and so subject to error.

Patrides (1966, 85) argues that the written law, i.e. the law coming from the mouth of God, is indeed more important than the natural law. Natural law is the law that resides within our conscience and does not necessarily have to be written down, or our own internal moral scale by which we deem things as either moral or immoral. The written law means the commandments God gave Moses or to Adam and Eve in Paradise. Milton (*CD*, 352) seems to agree with Patrides's point about the written law being more important than the natural law, at least when it comes to the matter of original sin: God forbade Adam and Eve to eat from a single tree, an act "which was in itself neither good nor evil" to test which law they would place above the other. They chose to listen to their internal, natural law instead of God's commandment. Obviously this choice was not the one that was hoped for by God. Even though Milton might agree with Patrides, he (*Reason of Church-Government*, 764) does note that we need both to be moral: "That which is thus morall, besides what we fetch from those unwritten lawes and Ideas which nature hath ingraven in us, the Gospell, as stands with her dignity most, lectures to us from her own authentick hand-writing, and command." Leading a morally good life requires both; listening to your conscience and seeking guidance from the Bible.

The Christian concept of original sin is another matter in the discussion of sin in general. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).[6] The recently created Adam and Eve eventually chose to eat from the tree even though God specifically told them not to, and with them the whole of the human race fell. This tree became known as "the tree of knowledge of good and evil because of what happened afterwards: for since it was tasted, not only do we know evil, but also we do not even know good except through evil" (*CD*, 352). Milton seems to think that this is an important point, as *Christian Doctrine* is not the only text where this matter is discussed:

[6] All of the quotations from the Bible are from the King James Version.

> Good and evill we know in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involv'd and interwoven with the knowledge of evill, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discern'd, that those confused seeds which were impos'd on Psyche as an incessant labour to cull out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixt. It was from out the rinde of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evill as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to say of knowing good by evill. As therefore the state of man now is; what wisdome can there be to choose, what continence to forbeare without the knowledge of evill? (*Areopagitica*, 514)

Milton (*CD*, 389) dislikes the term original sin and protests against it, but he does agree with the basic meaning of the term. He (*CD*, 382) divides sin into single acts of sin and the sin that is "common to all men." This common sin is passed on to every human being "[f]or Adam, the parent and head of all men, either stood or fell as a representative of the whole human race" (*CD*, 384). According to Milton (*CD*, 388)

> [e]ach type of sin, common and personal, has two subdivisions . . . evil desire, or the will to do evil, and the evil deed itself. . . . It was evil desire that our first parents were originally guilty of. Then they implanted it in all their posterity, since their posterity too was guilty of that original sin, in the shape of a certain predisposition towards, or, to use a metaphor, a sort of tinder to kindle sin.

Every human being has this tendency to sin, only Christ is free from this burden (*CD*, 389-390). The early Protestants claimed that this idea of people being prone to sin was a key point in Christianity (Patrides 1966, 102). Milton being a Protestant, this is an important point. Milton wrote an epic about the matter, so it can be assumed he thought this as a key event in the history of the human beings. The Roman Catholics view the matter of original sin slightly differently from Protestants. The Catholics believe that there is something called concupiscence, which is exactly this tendency to sin, but they disagree with Protestants, because they believe that the actual original sin can be washed away by baptism (Harent 1911). Protestants believe that the two things are inseparable, and that the inclination to sin is a part of original sin. It is reasonable to assume that for Milton, this is an important feature of Christianity as he claims in the quotation above that we all share the guilt of Adam and Eve. But what is God's role in all this? Did God not create human beings foreknowing that they would fall? Is God then ultimately responsible for sin?

2.1.1 Evil and God

According to Christianity, God has created everything, then it must logically follow that God has created at least the sinners, if not sin itself. Forsyth (2003, 47) raises the issue of the origin of Satan: was he, as the New Testament claims, "a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44), or was he an angel who fell, like the Judeo-Christian tradition tells us? If Satan was evil from the moment he came into being, it would mean that God did indeed create evil, and this is exactly what Christianity is trying to deny (Forsyth 2003, 47). If we follow the traditional explanation of Satan's origin as an angel who fell, we still face the problem of God being responsible for his creation in the first place. This dilemma has been explained by the notion of creatio ex nihilo, an idea that God created everything out of nothing and it follows that everything is less good than God, thus metaphysically evil (Danielson 1982, 29). But, as I hinted earlier, metaphysical evil cannot really be called evil, since the creature cannot be blamed if the matter from which it was created is flawed in itself. And as Danielson (1982, 40) notes: "[t]he problem for theodicy is that, given this doctrine, the creation and thus the individual creature are seen as coming from the hand of the creator in an already imperfect state; and he, therefore, not the creature, is responsible for it." But Milton refuses to entertain such an idea and replaces it by creatio ex deo (Danielson 1982, 39); according to his interpretation of the Scripture, all things were created from God because the Scripture suggests that everything was made out of matter and there cannot have been matter existing prior to God (*CD*, 307). This does away with some of the blame that was put on God.

Slotkin (2004, 102) claims that Milton in the *Christian Doctrine* argues "that God actually bears a certain kind of responsibility for certain kinds of evil." Milton (*CD*, 330) does in fact write: "God either merely allows evil to happen, by not impending natural causes and free agents, . . . or else he causes evil by administering chastisement, and this is called the evil of punishment." So God does have some part in evil existing, or as God himself states in the Bible: "I form the light, and

create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Isa. 45:7). I am not claiming that Milton saw God as evil, he most certainly did not, he saw God as completely good: "God, who is supremely good, cannot be the source of wickedness, or the evil of crime: on the contrary he created good out of man's wickedness" (*CD*, 331). There is always a problem with trying to blame God for evil, the Christian go-to-response: "God works in mysterious ways." We cannot make any moral judgment on the Christian God, as he is outside the realm of justification. Cabrera (2001, 24) raises an interesting question: "if God is freed from concerning himself with the human yearning for justice, then in what sense can religious faith help to resolve the problem of suffering?" This is true when we fall back on the explanation of 'human beings could not understand anyway'. That is why I will try to avoid stating this in my thesis and actually try to look past religion by using Kantian philosophy.

According to the Free Will Defense, God does not interfere with free choices or natural causes, he might even bring about good from the evil acts someone performs. As Adam realizes in *Paradise Lost*, good comes out of his fall:

> O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
> That all this good of evil shall produce,
> And evil turn to good; more wonderful
> Than that which by creation first brought forth
> Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,
> Whether I should repent me now of sin
> By me done and occasioned, or rejoice
> Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
> To God more glory, more good will to men
> From God, and over wrath grace shall abound. (*PL*, XII.469-478)

This might still seem acceptable, but Milton goes on to write: "[e]ven in sin, then, we see God's providence at work, not only in permitting it or withdrawing his grace, but often in inciting sinners to commit sin, hardening their hearts and blinding them" (*CD*, 331). Milton (*CD*, 331-332) quotes different passages from the Bible to prove his point and, at last, specifies what he means by this dubious inciting to sin:

> God does not drive the human heart to sinfulness and deceit when it is innocent and pure and shrinks from sin. But when it has conceived sin, when it is heavy with it, and

> already giving birth to it, then God as the supreme arbiter of all things turns and points it in this or that direction or towards this or that object. . . . Neither does God make an evil will out of a good one, but he directs a will which is already evil so that it may produce out of its own wickedness either good for others or punishment for itself, though it does so unknowingly.

God has created everything, including sin, and he has foreknown the evil that was to be when he created the world, but "we should feel certain that God has not decreed that everything must happen inevitably. Otherwise we should make him responsible for all the sins ever committed, and should make demons and wicked men blameless" (*CD*, 164-165). Louis Arnaud Reid (1925, 28) explains his view on the matter of God's responsibility: "the limitation of God's will by the evil which is the corollary of finite development is his self-limitation, willed by a perfect will which sees that the best of all possible worlds is not a ready-made perfect world, but a perfecting world, where creatures with freedom pursue their chief end, which is the progressive glorification and enjoyment of God." God has created the imperfect world we live in, so that we would make his work more glorious as we sin. But this still seems a bit questionable: did God create human beings, knowing that they will fall, just to bring more glory to him? I would hazard a guess that no true Christian would claim this, or acknowledge the problem with it: every created thing is proof of God's glory and goodness, and the meaning of life is to serve God. I will now discuss the concept of free will which tries to explain why God is not responsible for moral evil.

2.1.2 Arminianism

In Milton's time the Reformation was still making its way through Europe. One of the most influential people to this movement had been John Calvin, who became a leading figure in this new movement in 1533 (*Webster's* 1999, 181). According to his doctrine the life of human beings was predetermined by God (*Webster's* 1999, 182). One of the basic assumptions of Calvinism is that even though God decides everything before the creation of the human beings, including whether or not they receive salvation, evil is still in no way God's doing. Calvin and his followers tried to deny God's responsibility for sin against those who criticized their view by stating that God is just even if

we do not understand how it is so (Den Boer 2011, 78-79). Among others, a Dutch priest called Jacob Arminius began criticizing Calvinism and its teachings on this question. There were (and still are) two ways to view predestination. One view is that there are those who were elected by God to receive salvation, but even though one is not elected, one can follow Christ and lead a morally good life to be saved ("Predestination"). The other view, called double predestination holds that there is nothing one can do to receive salvation if one is not elected by God ("Predestination"). Arminius, who did not agree with double predestination, was taught by Theodore Beza, a leading figure in Calvinism (Den Boer 2011, 73), and he did admire his teacher, and Calvin as well, very much even though he could not accept their explanation of God not being responsible for sin. "Arminius is particularly concerned that sin committed entirely by the free will be considered in the object of predestination. He sees no other way to escape the conclusion that God is blamed for sin and is considered the author of evil" (Den Boer 2011, 76-77). Arminius saw that human beings need to have free choice in order to retain the guilt of sin. Both Calvinism and Arminianism have summarized their main teachings in five items. The Calvinist five points were devised at the Synod of Dort, which was held to address the problem of the rising Dutch movement of Arminianism. Arminians presented their five key issues as:

> 1. Conditional election--Election to salvation is contingent upon God's foreknowledge of one's response to generally offered sufficient grace.
> 2. Unlimited atonement--Christ died for all, and not for the elect only.
> 3. Total depravity--Without the aid of divine grace, human beings can choose and do only evil.
> 4. Resistible grace--Human beings are free to accept or reject divinely offered grace.
> 5. Mutability of saints/non-perseverance Election is certain only at the end of life; individuals may choose to reject previously accepted grace. (Fallon 1999)[7]

The Calvinist points are:

> 1. Unconditional election--Election is the result of God's free and arbitrary choice, without regard to foreknowledge of merit of any sort.
> 2. Limited atonement---Christ died only for the elect.
> 3. Total depravity.
> 4. Irresistible grace--All those to whom grace is offered must accept it; they and only they are saved.

[7] I am using an online version of the article that does not have page numbers.

5. Perseverance--The elect cannot fall away from grace and salvation. (Fallon 1999)

The main issue where Calvinists and Arminius differ is free will. Arminius maintains that human beings are created free and thus can choose to accept God's grace or not. This also does away, at least to some extent, with the problem of God being behind all evil deeds in the world. Milton obviously agrees with Arminius on the free will issue, and he has been called Arminian in many cases. I will refrain from making such limited decisions as labeling Milton as strictly Arminian, mainly because he himself has sometimes criticized Arminius very strongly (*Areopagitica*, 519-520). Even though Milton's thoughts about free will obviously echo those of Arminius's, it is difficult to claim him as being purely Arminian, when he might not have always identified himself with the doctrine. But I agree with many critics (e.g. Danielson 1982, Bradford 2001) and believe that if Milton was not completely of the Arminian persuasion, he certainly came very close to it.

2.1.3 Free Will Defense

According to Dennis Danielson (1999, 148), the Free Will Defense is "the model or argument according to which God, for reasons consistent with his wisdom and goodness, created angels and human beings with freedom either to obey or disobey his commands." "The Free Will Defense is a traditional model to explain how God's omnipotence and goodness might indeed be asserted, even given the fact that this world contains evil, particularly moral evil" (Danielson 1982, 92-93). God limited his control over human wills because, if he had created humans without free will, "no honesty or loyalty or love could ever have been predicated of such beings" and the amount of good from free will ultimately surpasses the amount of evil (Danielson 1999, 148-149). There are people who find this questionable: "[h]ad [God] more generously distributed rationality, grace, and faith, or even manifested himself frequently in clear and unmistakable ways (and these need not be painful, unjust ways), and also more clearly revealed the truth about morality, we should be much more prone to virtue. Yet our wills would remain as free as ever" (McCloskey 1962, 194). Milton (*CD*, 164), on the other hand, obviously supported the Free Will Defense: "[b]y virtue of his wisdom God

decreed the creation of angels and men as beings gifted with reason and thus free will. At the same time he foresaw the direction in which they would tend when they used this absolutely unimpaired freedom." Foreknowledge does not imply predetermination: "nothing happens because God has foreseen it, but rather he has foreseen each event because each is the result of particular causes which, by his decree, work quite freely and with which he is thoroughly familiar" (*CD*, 164). This means that God cannot be blamed for the rational free choices people make, but he is responsible for providing the freedom: "by giving man free will, God not only allowed him to choose evil, but also gave him power to create it. Hence, with regard to the evil that man creates, God is responsible for its possibility, man for its actuality" (Danielson 1982, 201). In addition to *Christian Doctrine*, Milton discussed the matter of free will in *Paradise Lost*. God says to the Son:

> Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
> Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.
> So without least impulse or shadow of fate,
> Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
> They trespass, authors to themselves in all
> Both what they judge and what they choose; for so
> I formed them free, and free they must remain,
> Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
> Their nature, and revoke the high decree
> Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
> Their freedom, they themselves ordained their fall. (*PL*, III.118-128)

The notion of free will was obviously very important to Milton, as he addresses it, not only in the two works mentioned, but in many others. In *Areopagitica* (527) he states:

> many there be that complain of divin Providence for suffering Adam to transgresse, foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had bin else a meer artificiall Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. We our selves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force: God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence.

God gave Adam free will to choose himself what to do, it is not God's fault that Adam misused his freedom. In Christianity's view, and Milton's, God will not do evil since he is wholly good, and thus, if he incites evil in people, there must be a righteous reason behind it.

For an act to be qualified as sin, it requires volition. Debora Shuger discusses the meaning of

wet dreams and rape in connection with sin. In her discussion, she uses *A Masque* as an example of chastity being under a threat that has nothing to do with volition (Shuger 1997, 2). Shuger (1997, 10) claims that "Christian theology . . . focuses, at times almost obsessively, on this liminal zone of autopiloting thoughts and desires." Saint Augustine (*City of God*, I.25) argues that involuntary occurrences (wet dreams, rape) cannot stain the purity of the mind: "disobedience of the body is not to be blamed when one is asleep, still less when there is no consent." Shuger (1997, 3), following Saint Augustine, reasons that "[t]he lust that moves one's members in sleep to do that which he would not testifies to the flesh's rebellion against the spirit with shameful clarity and yet, because the dreamer does not consent to his own pollution, these nocturnal accidents are not sins." She (1997, 3) continues with this line of reasoning and compares, as does Saint Augustine, wet dreams with being raped, and this is where *A Masque* comes into the picture: "a woman thus violated, even if she found herself sexually aroused, incurs no guilt" because she has not consented. Shuger (1997, 2) sees the Lady under the threat of rape as Comus has bound her into a chair and tries to tempt her into drinking the potion, because he could easily force her physically to drink. I am not convinced with her interpretation of the scene as a rape in progress, but the question of sin and volition is a sound one. It is true that Comus could force the Lady to drink, but it is not really necessary to bring sex into the equation. Violence does not inevitably mean rape. Shuger (1997, 4) comes to the conclusion that the Lady "although ensnared, . . . remains guiltless." Milton's other works seem to support this notion. After a disturbing dream Eve has had, Adam condoles her:

> Evil into the mind of god or man
> May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
> No spot or blame behind: which gives me hope
> That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,
> Waking thou never wilt consent to do. (*PL*, V.117-121)

The dream was planted by Satan but this does not diminish the importance of Adam's utterance; dreams are not willed by the dreamer. The Son also dreams in *Paradise Regained*. He has been soliloquizing and ends with:

> from the sting of Famine fear no harm,

> Nor mind it, fed with better thoughts than feed
> Me hung'ring more to do my Father's will. (*PR*, II.257-259)

Right after this he goes to sleep. And he does not dream of doing his Father's will, he dreams of food. This is not in any way a slur against him, it only proves that even the Son of God cannot control dreams.

2.2 Classical references in a Christian masque

"*A Masque* has been described as a 'Puritan masque', since it seems to contain at least oblique references to the Puritan mistrust of rowdy popular games, together with other references to empty and wasteful displays of luxury and even to unequal distribution of wealth" (Flannagan 1989, 24). Flannagan (1989, 24) also notes that this Puritan reading must be done very carefully since Puritans were not a unified group at the time. The stage directions are useful here: when Comus first appears, his entourage is depicted as "making a riotous and unruly noise" (*A Masque*, p. 181) and later, his abode is "a stately palace, set out with all the manner of deliciousness" (*A Masque*, p. 209). When Comus and his rabble appear they

> welcome joy and feast,
> Midnight shout and revelry,
> Tipsy dance and jollity. (*A Masque*, 102-104)

This is more than enough to raise the suspicions of good Christians. And when it comes to "empty and wasteful displays of luxury" (Flannagan 1989, 24), the Lady accepts the offer made by Comus, dressed as shepherd, to find safety in his humble cottage:

> Shepherd, I take thy word,
> And trust the honest-offered courtesy,
> Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
> With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
> And courts of princes, where it first was named,
> And yet is most pretended (*A Masque*, 320-325)

A Christian reading of the masque is in fact available through the character of Comus without it being necessarily Puritan:

> Comus seeks to tempt the Lady to drink his "orient liquor" and join him in sins of

> intemperance, pride, and lust, just as Satan would tempt Eve into similar failings with the apple. Here the Christian allegory is readily apparent. Comus lurks with other deities of night and debauchery, (Coytto and Hecate, for example), and the true Christian must ever be wary of the traps they provide ("Blending Classical, Pastoral, and Religious Imagery in *Comus*").

The claim that *A Masque* is a Christian story is valid, but to over-simplify and state that there are no other nuances in the masque would be dubious. As the above quote hints, there is an abundance of classical deities found in *A Masque*. This is typical of Milton's writing; in his discussion about *Paradise Lost*, Forsyth (2000, 518) states: "[t]his uneven mixing of classical and Christian sources is characteristic." When it comes to evil, Forsyth (2000, 518) offers a relevant point for this thesis: "[t]he problem of evil itself might be Judeo-Christian, but Milton's means of representing it to the imagination are often classical." I will now bring up some of those classical references connected with the two main characters in the masque.

2.2.1 The Character of Comus

A Masque is full of allusions to Ancient Roman and Greek mythologies. Even the etymology of the name of the main character comes from Greek: "The Greek *komoi* meant 'a revel'" (Flannagan 1989, 21) and *Brewer's Concise Phrase and Fable* (1999, 237) gives it the etymology of *komos* meaning 'carousal,' both meaning a loud, noisy festivity. There is an apparent intermixing of classical and Christian references and themes in *A Masque* that goes beyond etymology. The classical allusions connected with the character of Comus emphasize his evil side:

> Within the navel of this hideous wood,
> Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
> Of Bacchus, and of Circe born, great Comus (*A Masque*, 519-521)

Bacchus is of course the god of wine in Roman mythology and the counterpart of the Greek Dionysus, and the word Bacchus "was originally merely an epithet of Dionysus as the noisy and rowdy god" (*Brewer's* 1999, 62). The mother of Comus, Circe, was the sorceress who turned the companions of Ulysses into swine (*Brewer's* 1999, 212). In an earlier quotation, Comus was connected with Cotytto and Hecate. He invokes these deities in his first speech:

> Hail goddess of nocturnal sport
> Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
> Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame
> That ne'er art called, but when the dragon womb
> Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
> And makes one blot of all the air,
> Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
> Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
> Us thy vowed priests (*A Masque*, 128-136)

Cotytto is a "Thracian goddess of immodesty and debauchery" (*Brewer's* 1999, 248) and "whose midnight orgies were so obscene that they disgusted even the goddess herself" (*Brewer's* 1999, 71). Hecate on the other hand was not always connected with the dark side of life. She was the Greek "goddess of ghosts and black magic. Originally represented as a beneficial goddess with the power to grant good fortune, she was later associated with evil and the underworld" (*The New Webster's International Encyclopedia* 1999, 486). There are, therefore, hints within these classical allusions that Comus might not be identical with evil.

I argue that the character of Comus is not to be seen as wholly evil, as there are ways of reading him as multidimensional. There are in fact people who do see Comus as a flat character. One of them is Cheryl Rogers Resetarits (2006, 86), who argues that Comus is a secondary figure in the masque. She (2006, 86) claims that "[s]econdary figures often mirror aspects of the protagonist(s)." With this claim I can agree, Comus represents darkness when the Lady can be read as good. Resetarits (2006, 83) claims that the reason Milton's masque has these flat characters is the following:

> The narrowed, one-dimensional nature of characters and actions is, of course, due partly to the age of the principals and the straightforward, non-ambivalent virtue that their parents would want to see displayed at a family entertainment, but it is also in keeping with the fairy-tale effect of *Comus*, for in all fairy tales polarization of character is the rule, a very functional rule.

It is true that Milton probably did want to emphasize the goodness of the Lady and the evil in Comus, but it does not follow automatically that Comus is one-dimensional. Furthermore, Resetarits (2006, 86) claims that the Lady is a primary figure. I do not follow her reasoning how Comus can be one-dimensionally evil but the Lady would be multidimensional. It has to be noted

that Resetarits interprets *A Masque* from the standpoint of it being a fairy tale. Her reasoning leaves unanswered questions as *A Masque* is written as a masque, not a fairy tale, so aspects of it may not conform to theory used to interpret actual fairy tales. But I would hope that a critic would see beyond the theoretical framework and not try to force a text into a set of ideas based on completely different genre of literature. I will now try to refute what Resetarits is saying by delving more deeply into the character of Comus.

It has to be highlighted that, although Comus is surrounded by references to dark gods and goddesses, these divinities are not unequivocally evil: "Circe, though she is the personification of sensual corruption, is also the daughter of the sun; her son Comus is also attractive in an evil way, mixing images of goodness with evil intentions, in the same way that the angel of light, Lucifer, becomes Satan" (Flannagan 1989, 32). Comus is known for

> Offering to every weary traveller,
> His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
> To quench the drougth of Phoebus. (*A Masque*, 64-66)

Comus is mixing evil intentions with goodness, as he offers to quench the thirst of the tired people who are traveling through the woods. Although the travelers should know better, they drink from the ominous crystal glass, "most do taste through fond intemperate thirst" (*A Masque*, 68), and turn into monsters. Comus is a tempter, he does not force people to drink, and it is possible to make a morally sound choice of not drinking. I will return to this possibility later in this thesis.

As we can see in the the earlier quotation from Flannagan (1989, 32), Lucifer and Satan are traditionally thought to be the same being before and after his fall. This is not quite the case according to modern thinking, the famous passage in the Bible – "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Isa. 14:12) – is actually spoken to a king of Babylon (Forsyth 2003, 80). The connection to Satan was created by the Church Fathers (Forsyth 2003, 51). Milton willingly exploits the tradition and connects his Satan with this tradition:

> Lucifer from heaven
> (So call him, brighter once amidst the host
> Of angels, than that star the stars among)

Fell with his flaming legions through the deep (*PL*, VII.131-134)

In *Paradise Regained* Satan speaks about his former state: "I have lost / Much lustre of my native brightness" (*PR*, I.377-378). Comus, on the other hand, is connected with the evening star, Hesperus – "The star that bids the shepherd fold, / Now the top of heaven doth hold" (*A Masque*, 93-94) – but it is "[t]he name given by the Greeks to the planet Venus as an evening star. As a morning star it was called Lucifer" (*Brewer's* 1999, 499). But the morning star is not only used to refer to Satan or Comus, it is also used in connection with the Son in *Paradise Regained*: "So spake our morning star" (*PR*, I.294). Even the Bible refers to Jesus as the morning star: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:169). Milton drawing on these matters seems to hint that there is some sort of connection between the Son and Satan. I will investigate this further in a later chapter. The main point about the character of Comus being a mixture of light and dark objects remains valid.

2.2.2 The Chaste Lady

Whereas most of the allusions connected with Comus are evil, the ones connected with the Lady highlight her virtues:

> Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow
> Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,
> Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
> And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
> The frivolous bolt of Cupid, gods and men
> Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
> What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
> That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin (*A Masque*, 440-447)

Moon-goddess Diana and the goddess of wisdom Minerva are both Roman deities. The Greek equivalents are Artemis and Athena (*Brewer's* 1999, 443). Artemis was the virgin goddess of hunting and a protector of chastity (*Webster's* 1999, 71). *Webster's* (1999, 79) defines Athena as the "goddess of wisdom, war and peace, who sprang fully grown from the head of Zeus." The

goddesses seem to create an image of the Lady as firmly chaste and completely ready to defend herself if the need for it arises. But this is not as self-evident as one might first be tempted to think. Minerva is "fabled to have sprung, with a tremendous battle-cry, fully armed from the head of Jupiter" (*Brewer's* 1999, 676) and she "came to symbolize military prowess" (*Webster's* 1999, 709). The "snaky-headed Gorgon shield" Minerva, or Athena wore is called Aegis (*Webster's* 1999, 709). It has the head of a Gorgon mounted on it (*Brewer's* 1999, 12) and thus has the power to turn people into stone (*Brewer's* 1999, 450). But Aegis does have an interesting and relevant symbolic meaning for this thesis: it is a symbol of divine protection (*Brewer's* 1999, 12). As with all classical gods and goddesses, it is never simply a question of good or evil, but a mixture of both as the Greek and the Romans saw their gods as fallible as human beings are. They get jealous, angry, and vindictive, and might take it out on the poor humans inhabiting the earth. I am not implying that the Lady is evil, only that rarely are things as simple as they first seem.

The virtue of chastity is very strongly emphasized in the masque:

> O welcome pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
> Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
> And thou unblemished form of Chastity (*A Masque*, 212-214)

"By thus clearly evoking and altering the traditional biblical trio of faith, hope, and charity, Milton places strong emphasis on the Lady's chastity as a central characteristic of her identity" ("Blending Classical, Pastoral, and Religious Imagery in *Comus*"). These Christian virtues are found in the Bible: "[a]nd now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13:13). This hints that in *A Masque*, the greatest virtue is chastity instead of charity. This creates the image that the Christian love is left out from the great virtues. And it does seem to be so as chastity is emphasized so much in *A Masque*. One has to rely only on himself or herself in order to be safe. The Elder Brother claims that the Lady is quite safe as she has:

> but yet a hidden strength
> Which if heaven gave it, may be termed her own:
> 'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
> She that has that, is clad in complete steel (*A Masque*, 417-420)

The image of being fully armored ties in with the image of Minerva/Athena and the protective force of chastity can be seen to be granted by God, as the image of Aegis was linked to the Lady. This view is also emphasized with the Attendant Spirit being sent to protect the children from Comus. The trust in the protective force of chastity is not shared by the Second Brother: he fears for his sister's safety:

> But O that hapless virgin our lost sister
> Where may she wander now, whether betake her
> From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
> Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now
> Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
> Leans her unpillowed head fraught with sad fears,
> What if in wild amazement, and affright,
> Or while we speak within the direful grasp
> Of savage hunger, or of savage heat? (*A Masque*, 349-357)

The Elder Brother tries to calm his brother: "What need a man forestall his date of grief, / And run to meet what he would most avoid?" (*A Masque*, 361-362). He tries to keep the Second Brother from imagine the worst that could happen before they actually know what has happened. This does not work, the Second Brother is convinced that the Lady is in great peril because she is beautiful:

> For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
> His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
> Or do his gray hairs any violence?
> But Beauty like the fair Hesperian tree
> Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
> Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,
> To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
> From the rash hand of bold Incontinence. (*A Masque*, 389-396)

The Elder Brother responds that their sister is "Secure without all doubt, or controversy" (*A Masque*, 408) because she has chastity. The Second Brother shows signs of doubt in divine providence, even though the Elder Brother tries to calm him. The Elder Brother shares the Lady's unshakeable belief in the force of chastity, but the Second Brother is not quite convinced: "Heaven keep my sister, again, again and near" (*A Masque*, 485). He is praying, but does not have the courage of his brother and sister to give himself completely to the providence of God. This, of course, does not make him evil, only human. As the Attendant Spirit speaks to the parents of the

children after he has gotten them home, he claims:

> Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
> Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
> And sent them here through hard assays
> With a crown of deathless praise,
> To triumph in victorious dance
> O'er sensual folly, and intemperance. (*A Masque*, 969-974)

But this does not really describe all of them. The Brothers did not display really strong signs of patience. The Second Brother refuses to rely on divine protection of their sister and they fail to do as they are told when they attack Comus and his rabble with swords. The trial did not prove the Brothers to be unquestionably worthy, but luckily for them, the Lady remained obedient and chaste. The "sun-clad power of chastity" (*A Masque*, 781) is the thing that ultimately keeps the Lady safe. For Milton, chastity was the purity of life in general, it did not merely mean virginity, and it concerns both sexes (Patrides 1966, 165-166). Thus the Lady is doing what God expects from her, she remains true to the Christian values and will obtain grace and salvation. The Lady has chosen to remain chaste, even though she knows Comus might force her to drink his potion:

> Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
> With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
> Thou haste immanacled, while heaven sees good. (*A Masque*, 662-664)

The protective strength of chastity seems to dwell with God:

> So dear to heaven is saintly chastity,
> That when a soul is found sincerely so,
> A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
> Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt (*A Masque*, 452-455)

This echoes the Bible: "[f]or he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11). God's divine providence will keep those safe who believe and are worthy. This divine providence can be seen as an argument for predestination, but this is a fallacy. God does help those who are worthy, but only because they have been foreseen by God as worthy. The people who believe in God and free will would argue that God's decisions are, and will be, beyond human comprehension. This aiding of the worthy seems to be the case for Milton as his God sends the Attendant Spirit to guard righteous travelers from Comus:

> Therefore when any favoured of high Jove,
> Chances to pass through this advent'rous glade,
> Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star,
> I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy. (*A Masque*, 78-81)

Both the masque and the poem do in fact highlight virtues and virtuous people. But this emphasis is done in a way that necessarily does not immediately appeal to a reader, Satan and Comus are very amusing and colorful characters while the Lady and the Son seem somewhat plain. But behind this plainness hides virtue. Both the Lady and the Son do not stray from the path of good decisions for the duration of the texts, they resist temptation. "He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian" (*Areopagitica*, 514-515). It is the hidden strength of these characters that makes a subtle impression. "Milton in *Comus* is concerned with moderation in general but selects temperance for particular treatment" (Patrides 1966, 115). According to Milton (*CD*, 724), "[t]emperance includes sobriety and chastity, modesty and decency." In Stein's (1965, 24) view "[t]emperance is for Milton primarily the virtue of self-mastery, discipline." It does not mean abstinence, even though Comus thinks so:

> O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
> To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
> And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
> Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
> Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth,
> With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
> Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
> Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
> But all to please, and sate the curious taste? (*A Masque*, 705-713)

After he has pleaded that the things Nature provides are meant to be enjoyed, the Lady responds:

> Imposter do not charge most innocent Nature,
> As if she would her children should be riotous
> With her abundance she good cateress
> Means her provision only to the good
> That live according to her sober laws,
> And holy dictate of spare temperance. (*A Masque*, 761-766)

Moderation does not strike one as particularly exciting, but it nonetheless is the thing Milton would like the reader to pick up from the text.

Milton has an interesting way of making the reader to think about the choice between good and evil. The enticements of Comus are not plain or boring, or even without reason. In the temptation about using natural resources, Comus appeals to the glory of God:

> The all-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
> Not half his riches known, and yet despised,
> And we should serve him as a grudging master,
> As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
> And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons. (*A Masque*, 722-726)

After all, even the Bible teaches that all of nature was created for human beings to use:

> And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. (Gen. 1:28-30)

This is disturbingly the same argument used in current debate about using natural resources without regard to global warming or the fact that we are using up these resources faster than they can renew themselves. It is depressing that we use the Bible – which is not by any means universally seen as the word of God, nor is it to be taken literally in modern time as life has changed drastically since biblical times – as reasoning behind a seemingly rational argument over the welfare of our planet. The Lady believes in even moderate distribution of wealth:

> If every just man that now pines with want
> Had but a moderate and beseeming share
> Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
> Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
> Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed
> In unsuperfluous even proportion. (*A Masque*, 767-772)

This is exactly the Christian thing to do: charity includes sharing your good fortune with those in need. But it is a completely different matter whether or not the Lady personally is prepared to share her wealth with her servants, as one might expect after this speech, but this matter is not discussed in the masque, nor is it to be expected from a text written in a time where the relationship between the ruling class and the common people was nothing like it is today, so I will not go into the matter

any further. I do want to state that of course the Lady believes what she says, otherwise it would not be considered true, but I cannot help but to wonder if she (the Lady in the masque) would actually do the socially unacceptable thing and actually distribute her wealth among the farmers and servants of her house.

Patrides (1966, 205) claims that the Lady and Jesus are ready and willing to listen to God and this is the only way of obtaining grace. On the other hand, Satan and Comus do not choose to open themselves to God's word. Satan is constantly abusing the Bible in his temptations; he picks up certain details from it whereas the Son sees the bigger picture and quotes a more significant passage from the Scriptures. The Son wins because he knows how to interpret the Bible correctly. He argues for reason and truth, thus must win. "But let them chaunt while they will of prerogatives, we shall tell them of Scripture; of custom, we of Scripture; of Acts and Statutes, stil of Scripture, til the quick and pearcing word enter to the dividing of their soules, & the mighty weaknes of the Gospel throw down the weak mightines of mans reasoning" (*Reason of Church-Government*, 827). The last temptation serves as a perfect example; Satan has just placed the Son on top of the temple in Jerusalem and says:

> Now show thy progeny; if not to stand,
> Cast thyself down; safely if Son of God:
> For it is written, He will give command
> Concerning thee to his angels, in their hands
> They shall uplift thee, lest at any time
> Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone. (*PR*, IV.554-559)

The passage Satan is referring to is the one I quoted earlier in connection to the Lady being protected by God – "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:11-12). The Son answers: "Also it is written, / Tempt not the Lord thy God" (*PR*, 560-561) and wins the argument. Comus is also depicted as deaf to God's word when the Lady scolds him for lying to her: "Thou hast nor ear, nor soul to apprehend / The sublime notion, and high mystery" (*A Masque*, 783-784). This echoes the Bible's "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). Satan and Comus

have both closed their ears to God and thus have abandoned the hope of being saved.

I will now turn to the more obviously Christian work, *Paradise Regained*.

2.3 The Judeo-Christian Tradition and Paradise Regained

The main plot in *Paradise Regained* is taken from the gospels of Matthew and Luke. After his baptism Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he is tempted by Satan. Apart from the gospels, *Paradise Regained* is a lot like the story of Job, who is also tried by Satan. The main part of the Book of Job is a debate between Job and four of his friends about Job's situation and this is the key to the similarity noted by Mary Ann Radzinowicz (1999, 202) that I mentioned earlier: *Paradise Regained* and the Book of Job are both debate poems. *Paradise Regained* is mainly a debate between Satan and the Son, where Satan sets the action into motion by trying to persuade the Son to accept what he has to offer. The Son answers and supports his arguments with Scripture. This discussion repeats itself until the Son finally conquers Satan who has exhausted all his wiles.

There is an interesting detail in the role of Satan described in the Book of Job: he acts as a servant of God (Rosenfeld 2008, 6); "the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1:6). Satan claims that Job obviously loves God since God has blessed him with happiness: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands" (Job 1:9-10). Satan claims that God has chosen Job to receive grace and thus Job has been blessed with a good life. God wants to prove Job's obedience and gives Satan permission to try Job's faith: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job 1:12). Satan "is a kind of prosecutor or attorney general who is granted God's permission to act as the tempter of man after a dialogue with God about the source of Job's virtue" (Forsyth 2003, 37). Job does not curse God, he remains faithful and is finally rewarded by God's providence. According to Milton (*CD*, 338), the temptation of Job was a good temptation "which God uses to tempt even righteous men, in order to prove them." The matter of

Job being blessed in the beginning of the story can be seen as God having chosen him to receive grace, but it does not diminish the freedom of Job's choice, when he keeps his faith even in times of dire circumstances. As for the authorship of evil, it seems logically plausible that God is in fact somewhat responsible for the suffering of humans, at least the suffering of the righteous ones; but for a true Christian, God is always right, even though human beings do not understand God's reasons.

As I have been arguing, there are no completely evil characters in Milton's work. Even though the character of Satan is based on the Christian equivalent, he still is not evil personified. I believe that this is somewhat intentional from Milton's part: "[t]he ambivalence of Satan's relation to evil is important for the meaning of the poem" (Forsyth 2003, 188). Even though Forsyth refers to *Paradise Lost*, the same goes for *Paradise Regained*. If Satan was personified evil, surely his evil would know no limits; "Satan has nothing to offer but man's power over man or nature, for the sake of power. As a victim of self pursuing an inevitable course, Satan illustrates, or rather surveys and establishes the *limits* of evil, so that the captive minds may cease to admire" (Stein 1965, 132). Stein (1965, 58-59) discusses this limiting aspect as Satan being forced to tempt in the way he does "because of something essential in the general character of evil which is brought out by this particular drama." Satan might be seriously limited in his evil. "Satan can neither become fully evil, because he always evidences some degree of brightness and virtue, nor, despite all his efforts, can he ever bring about the negation of life; all his designs pervert and delay but ultimately serve the good" (Colebrook 2008, 84). Satan is stuck in a sort of eternal limbo between good and evil, because he is human enough to be capable of both. In the course of the shift from the Satan in *Paradise Lost* to the Satan in *Paradise Regained*, his self is changing. The one seen in *Paradise Regained*

> is 'human.' The term is of course not precise, but we have a rough standard to go by. Back of this Satan we may have an idea of Evil, and it is not entirely misleading to remember the dramatizing of that idea in *Paradise Lost* – if we remember this is a standard, and do not confuse the characters as interchangeable. Besides, we have a standard – mythic, philosophical, and literary – for the role of cosmic evil engaged in a

> universal conflict. But we have already seen signs that in this, the second stage of the conflict, cosmic evil has become recognizably more domestic in character. (Stein 1965, 52)

Satan has reached a point in his "career," where he has become almost human, as he drifts further away from God and his power. This all results from his evil desire to rebel and his choice of letting his self-love rule over morality.

As Satan is humanized in *Paradise Regained*, so is the Son. He is considered as fully human as Jesus: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1. Tim. 2:5). As the Son is human when he roams the desert, he is not God. "The Son, that is, partook of the divine nature, and substance, but his portion of divinity was not total" (Rosenfeld 2008, 86). Even though he is not God in every sense of the word, he is unquestionably the hero of the poem. As I noted earlier, the Son's heroism is not active and violent, he fights Satan verbally. "For Jesus, knowledge, language, and action are synonymous" (Goldsmith 1987, 132). He represents more a hero from the Middle Ages, than the heroes of the classical epics. "The legendary or epic hero of the Greeks is a man of great physical might (Hercules), passion (Achilles), or cunning (Ulysses). . . . In the Middle Ages, the ideal of physical (or even mental) prowess is replaced by an emphasis on spiritual valor" (Kahn 1953, 106). The Son exemplifies true heroism by his constant displays of obedience and virtue (Patrides 1966, 161). Satan tries to tempt the Son with riches and power to rule:

> Therefore, if at great things thou wouldst arrive,
> Get riches first, get wealth, and treasure heap,
> Not difficult, if thou hearken to me,
> Riches are mine, fortune is in my hand;
> They whom I favour thrive in wealth amain,
> While virtue, valor, wisdom sit in want. (*PR*, II.426-431)

The Son refuses this with a list of rulers with humble origins, which I will discuss in the next chapter: Gideon, Jephthah, and David. The Son also refutes that wealth has any importance for him, and states that self-discipline is the key:

> Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
> Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;

> Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
> And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
> Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes,
> Subject himself to anarchy within,
> Or lawless passions in him which he serves. (*PR*, II.466-472)

The Miltonic view of temperance is certainly present here. Moderation is the road to victory. Even though the refusal of the Son seems easy, Satan might have hit a nerve when he began the temptation: "For no allurement yields to appetite, / And all thy heart is set on high designs" (*PR*, II.409-410). The Son wants to do his Father proud but, nonetheless, he resists temptation.

2.3.1 The Son

In addition to being likened to Job multiple times, the Son in *Paradise Regained* is compared to many other characters of the Bible. The Virgin Mary remembers the angelic messenger who announced the birth of Jesus:

> A messenger from God foretold thy birth
> Conceived in me a virgin, he foretold
> Thou shouldst be great and sit on David's Throne,
> And of thy Kingdom there should be no end. (*PR*, I.238-241)

King David was the second king of Israel, a shepherd, chosen by God to rule Israel. His reign is regarded highly in the Jewish tradition because "he seized Jerusalem, making it the religious and political capital of Israel" (*Webster's* 1999, 291). He has traditionally been seen as the predecessor of Jesus, a type of Messiah. Jesus himself compares himself to bear a likeness to David in a passage I quoted earlier from the Bible in this thesis ("I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star"). King David's predecessor and successor are also used in relation to the Son in *Paradise Regained*. Saul, the first king of Israel, "he who seeking asses found a Kingdom" (*PR*, III.242) was searching for his father's lost asses when the prophet Samuel anointed him the king of Israel by God's command (1 Sam. 9-10). The third king of Israel, Solomon, was the cause of the kingdom's division into two, but he was considered very wise up until that point. Even though Belial suggests that Satan should tempt the Son with women, Satan is convinced that the Son will

not fall for the same enticements as Solomon:

> But he whom we attempt is wiser far
> The Solomon, of more exalted mind,
> Made and set wholly on the accomplishment
> Of greatest things (*PR*, II.205-208)

Solomon caused the kingdom of Israel to be torn apart because of his idolatry; he had many wives and concubines and he began to serve their gods instead of the one God.

> Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. (1 Kings 11:11-12)

This refusal and reference to Solomon is prompted by Belial's suggestion to appeal to the Son's carnal desires, but is quickly dismissed by Satan with "Belial, in much uneven scale thou weigh'st / All others by thyself" (*PR*, II.173-174), but it is not only Solomon who fell for the wrong women. I will return to this in a later chapter.

The period of time Jesus spends in the wilderness offers a way of referring to other biblical stories. In the beginning, Satan, dressed as an old man, suggests that the Son would turn stones into bread, after all, he must be hungry after forty days of not eating. The Son answers:

> in the mount
> Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank,
> And forty days Elijah without food
> Wandered this barren waste (*PR*, I.351-354)

Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days (Ex. 24:18) and Elijah traveled forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Neither of them ate anything for that period of time. A little later Satan tries to get the Son to admit he needs food and that God should provide it for him:

> all the race
> Of Israel here had famished, had not God
> Rained from heaven manna, and that prophet bold
> Native of Thebez wandering here was fed
> Twice by a voice inviting him to eat.
> Of thee these forty days none hath regard,
> Forty and more deserted here indeed. (*PR*, II.310-316)

The people of Israel were fed by God with manna during their forty years in the desert (Ex. 16:35)

and the "Native of Thebez" is Elijah. He was woken up twice by an angel to get up and eat so that he would have the strength to climb up Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:5-8). The Son answers Satan with "They all had need, I as thou seest, have none" (*PR*, II.318). Although the temptation is about food on the surface, there lies a deeper more significant meaning of belief in God's providence at the bottom. This ties in with the argument that even though you might need something (a drink of water or food), it matters where it comes from. Satan questions how is it possible that the Son is hungry if he does not need food and asks "Tell me if food were now before thee set, / Wouldst thou not eat?" (*PR*, II.320-321) to which the Son replies simply "Thereafter as I like / The giver" (*PR*, II.321-322). In *A Masque*, The Lady had summarized the point behind this reasoning:

> I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none
> But such as are good men can give good things,
> And that which is not good, is not delicious
> To a well-governed and wise appetite. (*A Masque*, 701-704)

The actual physical urges are not evil in themselves, but they can be if one heeds to them blindly. I will address this further when I discuss Kantian philosophy. And, as the Lady and the Son both have proven, it is possible to recognize a treacherous offer for help, if one is alert enough. "To the pure all things are pure, not only meats and drinks, but all kinde of knowledge whether of good or evill; the knowledge cannot defile, nor consequently the books, if the will and conscience be not defil'd" (*Areopagitica*, 512*)*. Temptation is indeed needed:

> Wherefore did he creat passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly temper'd are the very ingredients of vertu? They are not skilfull considerers of human things, who imagin to remove sin by removing the matter of sin; . . . and when this is done, yet the sin remains entire. Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewell left, ye cannot bereave him of his covetousnesse. Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercis'd in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaste, that came not thither so: such great care and wisdom is requir'd to the right managing of this point. Suppose we could expell sin by this means; look how much we thus expell of sin, so much we expell of vertue: for the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and ye remove them both alike. This justifies the high providence of God, who though he command us temperance, justice, continence, yet powrs out before us ev'n to a profusenes all desirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety. (*Areopagitica*, 527-528)

The tempter is not really to blame if he or she who he tempts falls. Adam and Eve fell tempted by

Satan, but they themselves are to blame, not Satan. God claims:

> so will fall,
> He and his faithless progeny: whose fault?
> Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
> All he could have; I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. (*PL*, III.95-99)

In *Paradise Regained* the way to salvation is made equally clear as in *A Masque*: obedience and humility. But the virtue of "obedience is not tainted by servility but is the free worship of God" (Patrides 166, 161-162). Milton's view of obedience as the key to serving God is made obvious when Adam realizes how he must go about serving God after the Fall:

> Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
> And love with fear the only God, to walk
> As in his presence, ever to observe
> His providence, and on him sole depend,
> Merciful over all his works, with good
> Still overcoming evil, and by small
> Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak
> Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
> By simply meek (*PL*, XII.561-569)

Danielson (1982, 90) sees that "to serve God is, as it were, but to stand and wait and to observe providence, because it is by grace alone that evil is overcome with good." He (1982, 90) calls it patient heroism. This notion is even clearer in *Paradise Regained* than it is in *Paradise Lost*: After the Son has overcome Satan, the angels sing praises to him, but the poem ends on a very humble note:

> Thus they the Son of God our Saviour meek
> Sung victor, and, from heavenly feast refreshed
> Brought on his way with joy; he unobserved
> Home to his mother's house private returned (*PR*, IV.636-639)

In his moment of victory, the Son is not referred to as heroic or great, he is "our Saviour meek" and he quietly goes home.

In one temptation, Satan claims that Jesus should gather wealth before he can claim the throne of Israel, but Jesus answers with a list of people of humble origins who had risen to power: "Gideon and Jephtha, and the shepherd lad" (*PR*, II.439). Gideon was a "leader and judge of Israel

who, by his exploits in repelling the desert raiders, the Midianites, became a national hero," he later refused the crown offered to him (*Webster's* 1999, 436). He came from a very poor family and he doubted that God could have chosen him to such a significant task, so he asked for proof multiple times and God gave proof in the form of controlling the morning dew first to dampen only a fleece put outside by Jephthah and second dampening the ground but not the fleece, and Gideon was finally convinced that the Lord had chosen him to be a champion of God (Judg. 6:11-40). After God had put Gideon's mind at ease, he followed the instructions of God and led Israel to defeat their enemy. Even though Gideon was offered the crown of Israel, he did not accept but said "the LORD shall rule over you" (Judg. 8:23). The other biblical figure paired with Gideon in *Paradise Regained* is Jephthah, a son of a harlot, who defeated the Ammonites after he had promised to sacrifice the first thing he saw when he would arrive home after the victory to God; God helped him and Jephthah was forced to sacrifice his daughter (Judg. 11). The 'shepherd lad' refers to King David, who I discussed earlier: "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds" (Ps. 78:70).

Milton used an abundance of classical references in his work, including in *A Masque*, but they are not to be viewed as equal to Christianity. "The latent antagonism between the Judeo-Christian worldview and the classical Greek has rarely been so clearly expressed as by Milton's Christ in *Paradise Regained*" (Forsyth 2000, 518). This display of antagonism is the Athens temptation in Book IV. Christ rejects Satan's proposition to search for knowledge in Athens as futile:

> he who receives
> Light from above, from the fountain of light,
> No other doctrine needs, though granted true;
> But these are false, or little else but dreams,
> Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm. (*PR*, IV.288-292)

He continues:

> who reads
> Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
> A spirit and judgment equal or superior,

> (And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek)
> Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
> Deep-versed in books and shallow in himself,
> Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
> And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge;
> As children gathering pebbles on the shore. (*PR*, IV.322-330)

Leading a purely contemplative life is lacking in its nature. "In rejecting [the Athens temptation], Christ also rejects a contemplative life as an end: Christ's aim is to redeem the world, not to live a morally sinless life, which he might conceivably have done as a philosopher" (Frye 1959, 235-236). Christianity is of utmost importance for Milton and everything must adhere to the teachings of it. Only by leading a Christian life, can one be truly free: "the only true freedom [is] the freedom of the virtuous individual to do of his own free will what he ought to do anyway" (Potter 1978, 71). Even though this seems paradoxical, human beings (and angels) are free to choose not to obey, even though they might in the process limit their freedom. Obedience must be freely chosen, otherwise it is servility (Patrides 1966, 161-162). Free obedience is also connected to the doctrine of grace. Grace is God's way of forgiving humanity for original sin. Both the Son in *Paradise Regained* and the Lady in *A Masque* accept grace freely (Patrides 1966, 205) and are thus saved by God unlike Satan and Comus who have closed their hearts from the grace of God.

2.3.2 Satan

The other main character in *Paradise Regained* is Satan. John Carey (1999, 160) recognizes that in the Bible, Satan is a very minor character: "[i]n *Christian Doctrine* Milton collects all the available biblical evidence in a few sentences. It amounts to little more than that Satan is the author of all evil and has various titles." In Milton's work, the character of Satan had appeared in *Paradise Lost* before being the tempter of the Son in *Paradise Regained*. Milton's Satan fell because he was jealous of God choosing Christ as the Son of God:

> Satan, so call him now, his former name
> Is heard no more in heaven; he of the first,
> If not the first archangel, great in power,
> In favour and pre-eminence, yet fraught

> With envy against the Son of God, that day
> Honoured by his great Father, and proclaimed
> Messiah king anointed, could not bear
> Through pride that sight, and thought himself impaired. (*PL*, V.658-665).

"This special and isolated origin of Satan within the tradition of Judeo-Christian writings is scrupulously followed in Milton's story of the rebellion in which Satan takes his origin" (Forsyth 2000, 526). Even though there is not a lot to go on in the Bible about Satan, the tradition is another matter. According to this tradition, the origin of the Christian Satan is indeed located in a rebellion against God. Forsyth (2003, 27) argues that, in Christian tradition, "[t]he figure of Satan exists, not as embodied evil, but by virtue of his opposition to the hero of the myths, whether god or man." His role "in that narrative is to be the Opponent, the Adversary, the one who motivates the plot, who drives the story into motion" (Forsyth 2003, 26). As Satan cannot be solely seen as the embodiment of evil in Christianity, how could he be seen as such in Milton? After all, as Stein (1950, 221) argues, "[o]ne need not choose between Satan's being a tragic hero or an absurd villain. Either extreme stamps us as a more restricted moralist than Milton the poet." Thus we are not limited to call Satan either evil or good, he can be a mixture of both: not really embodied evil, but certainly not good.

John Carey (1999, 160) seems to believe that Milton "presents evil as real and traceable to a single Evil One." Carey (1999, 160) continues that this "wish to isolate evil in this way argues a particular mental configuration which seems to be associated with the belief that, once isolated, evil may become containable or punishable." This seems like a valid point in general, but his suggestion that Milton wanted to depict Satan as purely evil is not. Forsyth (2003, 215) states clearly that in *Paradise Lost*, Satan "is not himself identical with evil" nor is he "responsible for human evil . . . if man is free." Even Carey (1999, 161) notices the flaw in his argument of Satan being evil incarnate: "Milton's effort to encapsulate evil in Satan was not successful." The alleged effort would truly have been wasted on countless readers who tend to prefer the character of Satan over the character of God. Carey (1999, 166) notes that "it is the moral evaluation of [Satan's] actions which generates

disagreement among readers." If there is room for different moral evaluations in Milton's work, it is unlikely that there has been a serious effort to create a single personification of evil. Satan is in many ways a human character, and that might have something to do with his appeal. I do agree with Carey (1999, 172) that "[w]e feel that by suppressing a part of ourselves we can disown and denounce Satan, but we also feel the power of that part which is having to be suppressed." This is a way of forming identities by negating something that one does not want to be a part of one's identity, and it is a human tendency. But it also connects with the idea proposed by Carey (1999, 160), that evil may be controlled if isolated: "the urge to locate evil in a single kind of being . . . has borne fruit throughout history in pogrom, ghetto, and racial massacre." Ironically, this effort to control evil, creates even greater evil. Instead of trying to refuse to believe that such evil exists in us humans, we should try to come to terms with it, even if it means that we must identify with the character of Satan. After all, according to Milton, we and the angels were created free (*CD*, 164), and evil stems from the misuse of that freedom (Danielson 1982, 49).

3 Kantian Concept of Evil

Immanuel Kant tried to get away from the religious way of thinking through his purely rational treatment of issues such as morality. For Kant (2002, 60-61) morality stemming from religion is not desirable, because human beings cannot fathom the all-perfect will of God and thus create only a reflection of this will which may be very distorted. He wanted to create a system of morality that was not to be based on interpretations of God's divine will. Despite his "implacable dismantling of rational theology" (Ricoeur 1985, 641), he actually came very close to it in some of his concepts.

What then is evil for Kant? In his (1998, 72) opinion "the good and the evil refer, strictly speaking, to actions, not to the sensuous condition of a particular person." Or to put it in another way: evil refers to an act done by a rational being by their own volition (Garcia 2002, 195). It is moral law that determines whether an act is good or evil (Kant 2002, 75), and we need morality to give us imperatives by which we can strive to do good acts and avoid evil ones (Kant 1998, 14). This sounds suspiciously like Christian doctrine I presented earlier, and the similarities do not end here.

One of these similarities lies within the concept of the Categorical Imperative. This concept is, according to Johnson (2004), "the fundamental principle of morality." It is the basic formulation of morality we can use when making choices, and it is the measuring stick used to determine whether an act is good or evil. Johnson (2004) argues that the end of an action has no relevance to the Categorical Imperative; it is simply the act itself that must be applied to the Imperative. Kant formulated many slightly different versions of the Categorical Imperative, but the basic idea is the same in everyone: "[*a*]*ct only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become universal law*" (Kant 2002, 37). This entails the idea of the Golden Rule "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" that has been formulated many times in the Bible (for example: Lev. 19:18, Matt. 7:12, Luke 6:31, Rom. 13:9). I will now turn to the actual reasoning behind an act to be qualified as evil.

3.1 Evil actions

The Kantian view on evil is based on the basic assumption that human beings have something Kant calls self-love. This self-love is aimed at the general human thought pattern of "pursue that which pleases me or makes me content, and avoid that which pains me" (Grimm 2002, 168). This self-love is not seen as totally evil, as it is innate in our species. It is a manifestation of survival instinct. Even Christianity condoles some small amount of self-love: "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). This phrase is repeated in the Bible (Matt. 19:19, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27, Rom. 13:9, Gal. 5:14), so it must be important and true.

> Where pure practical reason is concerned, it merely imposes a *check* upon this love one has of oneself, declaring it to be something natural, which is active in us even before the moral law is, the only condition laid down being that there should be agreement with the said law, the condition prevailing in this case being described as rational self-love. (Kant 1998, 89)

When this moral law is in contradiction with self-love, the person has to choose which of these takes priority. As Garcia (2002, 195) explains it: "to call something 'evil' . . . means to take *some action* as morally wrong, resulting from a direct act of the agent's will, when she wrongly subordinates the principle of morality to the principle of self-love." If moral law is prioritized, an action is good, but when one places self-love first, an act is perceived as evil.

For Kant there is no middle ground in matters of good and evil: "rigorism . . . involves an uncompromisingly bivalent view of the moral life, every imputable act and morally responsible agent, must be characterized as either good or evil" (Allison 2002, 338). Even though I quoted Kant earlier to state that actions are evil, not people, Allison seems to think that a person committing evil acts is evil him- or herself. Grimm (2002, 168) shares this view: "[a]ccording to rigorism, a human being is either morally good or morally evil." I am a little torn between the two interpretations, but I will go with Kant's own writings that only the actions can be classified as evil.

In connection to the origin of evil, Kant argues that human beings possess three predispositions, which Stephen Grimm (2002, 169) defines as:

> a *predisposition to animality*, which aims at self-preservation, sexual reproduction, and

> community with other human beings; a *predisposition to humanity*, which prompts human beings to compare their own worth with the worth of others; and finally a *predisposition to personality*, which among other things makes a person capable of appreciating the moral law.

The predisposition to humanity, "whose governing principle is self-love" (Allison 2002, 339), is the predisposition where evil stems from. Grimm (2002, 169), on the other hand, argues that the first two maxims are the ones that give rise to evil: the purely animal instincts humans have are not as such the root of evil, "but rather the improper priority we grant to these needs and inclinations." But, as I hinted earlier in the discussion of physical needs, neither animality nor humanity are in themselves evil; evil arises only when they are placed above morality. If we focus briefly on the propensity to humanity, which is the propensity connected with humans comparing themselves to other humans and considered as at least one of the propensities where evil stems from; one might assume that it is only through contact with other humans that we do evil. This concept of *unsociable sociability*, as Kant calls it, would in a way create evil, since it generates envy and rivalry (Grimm 2002, 166). But it is not the case, rather "[w]e are evil due to the fact that when reason takes shape in us we subordinate its directives to the inclinations of our animal nature, and when we subsequently turn to confront our fellow human beings this tendency to favor our own happiness and pleasure gives rise to a whole new arena for vice" (Grimm 2002, 173). It is not the actual propensity that creates evil, as all of them are originally good propensities (Allison 2002, 339), it is only when we begin to develop a sense of the moral law i.e. "when we learn what we *ought* to be doing (obeying the moral law), our natural needs and inclinations . . . suddenly take on a rebellious and, for the first time, an evil role" (Grimm 2002, 171). Kant argues (as does Christianity) that we do, in fact, make a rational choice between moral law and self-love and that this choice has to be entirely free to make moral judgments on these decisions.

3.1.1 Free Will

For Kant (1996, 13), will is the choice of action a rational agent takes when he or she wants

something. As I stated earlier, Kant (1996, 149) is a firm believer in the freedom of the will: "[e]very action . . . has its end; and since no one can have an end without *himself* making the object of his choice into an end, to have any end of action whatsoever is an act of *freedom* on the part of the acting subject." And as moral law is not a law forced by some external entity, its limiting quality for this choice of action must be internal, i.e. a self-constraint that does not affect the freedom of the agent's will (Kant 1996, 145). Even though human beings are "forced" to subordinate self-love to moral law in order to be good, they are free: they can either conform to the requirements of moral law, or embrace the evil inclination of self-love. As with the Christian Free Will Defense, Kant also requires an act to be chosen freely for it to be considered as morally evil or morally good (Grimm 2002, 161), as the "locus of both moral goodness and evil must lie in the will" (Allison 2002, 338). As I have hinted, although Kant sees human choice of as being free, he also thinks that all human beings are, in some way, morally flawed. This concept is called *radical evil*.

3.1.2 Radical Evil

The basic idea of radical evil is that people, in some point of their development, choose to subordinate moral law to self-love. This action can also be referred to as adopting an evil maxim. "A rule that the agent himself makes his principle on subjective grounds is called his *maxim*; hence different agents can have very different maxims with regard to the same law" (Kant 1996, 17). Kant entertains a possibility that there might be a chance for a human being to adopt a good maxim, but "one and all, our wills opt for the evil maxim" (Grimm 2002, 163). Kant also argues that, although the evil maxim we all choose is present at birth, we are not born evil; the time related to the choosing is rational, not temporal (Grimm 2002, 163). But how can all human beings adopt the evil maxim? One explanation to it, according to Stephen R. Grimm (2002, 168), is that the human being "was naturally inclined to act *primarily out of a concern for his own happiness.*" Grimm (2002, 168) continues: "[t]he moment that we fail to act according to a subjective maxim committed to the moral law, [Kant] argues, we do not become slightly less good, as if we just temporarily lapsed

from the good maxim; rather, what this lapse shows is that we were *never committed to the moral law to begin with*". Thus, since we all are looking out for ourselves, we all adopt an evil maxim. Allison (2002, 342) makes a claim that human beings are incapable of adopting a good maxim, but "[t]his does not mean that Kant thought it impossible to subordinate self-love to duty, . . . only that we cannot do so spontaneously, without, as it were, giving self-love a hearing." This process of the original adoption of the evil maxim is what Kant calls radical evil, and "like its theological analogue, original sin, must be thought as resulting from an originary use of freedom" (Allison 2002, 343). By the term radical evil, Kant does not mean some sort of extraordinary evil, but "uses the term radical in the etymological sense to indicate the root of all moral evil" (Allison 2002, 344). "Kant's doctrine of radical evil – which holds that human beings, as a species, possess an innate propensity to evil" can be seen as "Kant's apparent endorsement of the Christian view of original sin" (Grimm 2002, 160). So, as with Christianity, the human species is somehow doomed to do evil. One thing that Kant is criticized of is that his theory of evil does not account for heinous acts of evil, such as the Holocaust (Allison 2002, 344). I will now turn my attention to Hannah Arendt, who utilizes Kantian philosophy to make sense of these horrible acts of evil.

3.1.3 Hannah Arendt

Like Immanuel Kant, Hannah Arendt did not think that there are people who are purely evil, but she did note that human beings are capable of extremely atrocious acts i.e. radical evil (Birmingham 2003, 82). It must be clarified that the term *radical evil* had different meanings for Kant and Arendt; whereas Kant used it to denote "original evil" Arendt uses the term to signify extraordinary evil:

> Arendt understands radical evil as the attempt to eliminate spontaneity from the human race; it is the attempt to reshape human nature itself by doing away with the very unpredictability that lies at the root of human freedom and action; it is the attempt to stabilize human behaviour in order to allow the law of history or the law of nature to progress. (Birmingham 2003, 87)

Even though there is this fundamental difference in the concept of radical evil, the concept of evil itself seems to be roughly the same: "The hell of radical evil lies in the refusal of symbolic

transcendence, represented by religious and moral limits, substituting instead the fantasies of immanent ideologies and omnipotent dreams" (Birmingham 2003, 84-5). Like Kant, Arendt sees substituting moral law with selfishness as evil. In Kant's view, evil is an action where moral law is given the subordinate role compared to self-love; Arendt claims that radical evil is when a person replaces the moral law with his or her ideology, thus creating a sense of omnipotence. But this apparent difference in interpretation, is really not as huge as it first seems: both Kant and Arendt see radical evil as subordination of moral law.

When Hannah Arendt was at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, she was shocked to hear Eichmann claim that he had lived according to Kantian moral law (Birmingham 2003, 85). Peg Birmingham (2003, 85) continues to report this encounter: "Upon further examination, however, Arendt grasps that what Eichmann actually did was to pervert the Kantian law, substituting the will of Hitler for the universal and *transcendent* law of reason." Thus the Third Reich had taken the Kantian Categorical Imperative and replaced it with an ideology. When one replaces moral law with some ideology, there still remains the predisposition of humanity, and the self-love it entails. In situations like Germany during the reign of Hitler, a person would logically consider it preferable – in order to protect one's sanity – to refrain from killing. Thus the new moral law would have to compete with this temptation to do good (Birmingham 2003, 85). In Eichmann's case, according to him, it was Heinrich Himmler who by "winged words" - the twisted reasoning of why the heinous acts were actually necessary – distorted Eichmann's desires to match the desires of Hitler, thus turning feelings of pity for the innocent people being murdered into self-pity (Birmingham 2003, 86).

The things that had happened in the world during the 20th Century, inspired tremendous fear in Hannah Arendt (Birmingham 2003, 82). This fear rises from the fact that human beings are capable of evil. In Arendt's view, these were ordinary people who were responsible for the horrible events that took place (Birmingham 2003, 82). Thus, there are no human beings born simply evil, who then would be solely responsible for diabolical evil. This can only mean that all human beings

are capable of this, and thus even horribly disturbing evil is banal.

One last piece of theory I want to present before I turn my attention to the actual texts I will be analyzing, is Ernesto V. Garcia's (2002, 202) definitions of four fundamental types of evil: "indifference to the destruction of the humanity of another person", "denial of the humanity of another person", "servility, or depreciation of one's own humanity", and "delight in suffering of the humanity of another person." For the first type, Garcia (2002, 202) uses Arendt's description of Eichmann's trial as his example: Eichmann stated that he was only obeying orders. Eichmann was responsible for the deaths of millions of people by being in charge of transporting them to death camps, but he did not admit to being guilty because he did what Hitler had ordered him to do. The example of the second type Garcia (2002, 202-203) gives is racism. With racist behavior the humanity of another person is demeaned by the racist, as he or she refuses to see the other person as equally human as he or she is. The third and fourth types are opposites of each other in some way:

> [w]hile servility involves depreciating or attaching a kind of negative value to one's own humanity, while attaching a positive value to the humanity of our superior . . . , in cases of delighting in the suffering of others, such as cruel cases of torture, we now attach a positive value to our own humanity . . . and take pleasure in depreciating or attaching a kind of negative value to the humanity of another person. (Garcia 2002, 203)

I have presented these types of evil as Garcia uses both Kant and Arendt to define what evil is. These types are present in John Milton's *A Masque*. A fitting example of the first type might be the fact that the people Comus has turned into monsters keep enjoying themselves even though they see the Lady captured. As for the second type, there seems to be a problem: is Comus human? The fact that no character seems to give him any human rights shows that his humanity is downplayed in the masque itself. But Comus is a rational being, and for the time being, that will suffice as the definition of humanity, thus the fact that the masque itself denies his humanity is an example of the second type of evil. Garcia does not give examples of the third type; he only presents it as being the opposite of the fourth type, which could be for example, torture. To bring up the "monstrous rout" of Comus again, they are the perfect example of someone downgrading their own humanity: they choose to stay under the control of the person who turned them into monsters, thus denying their

own humanity. An example of the fourth type in *A Masque* is obviously Comus himself who has bound the Lady to the chair without showing any kind of pity. I will now turn my full attention to the Kantian analysis of the two texts by John Milton.

3.2 Good in Evil, Evil in Good

Roy Flannagan (1989, 28) compares *A Masque* to Milton's other works: "Like *Paradise Regained* . . . , *Comus* has as one of its major themes the passive resistance of good people to evil ideas, and like all of Milton's major works it focuses on the process of temptation." They both do deal with temptation and overcoming evil by patience. The characters of the Lady and Comus can be seen as forerunners of the characters in Milton's epics; "Comus is obviously the spiritual ancestor of Satan" in *Paradise Lost* and "the Lady is an obvious ancestor of Jesus in *Paradise Regained*; both are fixed in one spot and tempted passively" (Flannagan 1989, 28). Satan in *Paradise Lost* is, in some way, the same as Satan in *Paradise Regained*. I argue this because the beginning of *Paradise Regained* refers back to *Paradise Lost* and the narrator claims to be the same one as in the previous epic:

> I who erewhile the happy garden sung,
> By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
> Recovered Paradise to all mankind (*PR*, I.1-3)

Obviously Satan has developed as a character between the two poems, but essentially he is still the same. Frye (1956, 234) notes that the evil characters in *Paradise Regained* and *A Masque* seem to get the spotlight:

> Comus and Satan get our dramatic attention because they show such energy and resourcefulness; the tempted figures are either motionless or unmoved and have only the ungracious dramatic function of saying No. Yet, of course, the real relation is the opposite of the apparent one: the real source of life and freedom and energy is in the frigid figure at the center.

This inactive refusal is exactly the way to victory by muting the opponent (Goldsmith 1987, 130). In *Paradise Regained* there are at least two instances where Satan is rendered mute by the Son:

> Satan stood
> A while as mute confounded what to say,
> What to reply (III.1-3)

and “Satan had not to answer, but stood struck / With guilt of his own sin” (III.146-7). Comus is not so much speechless as he is frustrated with his failure to win the argument against the Lady: “Come, no more, / This is mere moral babble” (*A Masque*, 805-806). Comus also recognizes that the Lady is winning the argument:

> She fables not, I feel that I do fear
> Her words set off by some superior power;
> And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
> Dips me all o’er, as when the wrath of Jove
> Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus
> To some of Saturn’s crew. (*A Masque*, 709-804)

According to Flannagan (1989, 30) “[t]he two opposing central images [in the masque] are those of light, embodied in the Lady, and darkness, in Comus.” He (1989, 32) argues that even though “the reader of the masque can quickly see that there is a battle going on between Light and Darkness . . . the images of Vice or Virtue are complicated by the appearance of good in evil and evil in good.” One of these instances is the point when Comus is depicted as having positive feelings. When Comus first sees the Lady, he is immediately taken by her singing, and proclaims:

> But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,
> Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
> I never heard till now. I’ll speak to her
> And she shall be my queen (*A Masque*, 261-264).

The reader is given the impression that Comus falls in love. He is obviously smitten since he wants to make her his queen, his partner. This seems odd as love is normally perceived as a positive feeling and somewhat a sign of capacity to compassion, so how is it possible that a supposedly evil character can fall in love? And Comus is not the only evil character in Milton’s work to be thus temporarily rendered good. After seeing Eve and her beauty Satan is struck by positive emotions:

> the evil one abstracted stood
> From his own evil, and for the time remained
> Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,
> Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge” (*PL*, IX.463-466).

Satan falls in love, just like Comus did. Being capable of these positive feelings must mean something, because falling in love is described as being completely separated from all evil desires.

"The antagonist is endowed with full personality so that we may experience his conflict with moral law. It is his inner conflict; the acute self-consciousness, the complete ignorance, and the shifting degrees of both; it is the symbolic relationship of good and evil – these give Satan's rôle its meaning" (Stein 1950, 230). But even if he is capable of good, he still chooses to tempt Eve:

> She fair, divinely fair, fit love for gods,
> Not terrible, though terror be in love
> And beauty, not approached by stronger hate,
> Hate stronger, under show of love well feigned,
> The way which to her ruin now I tend. (*PL*, IX.489-493)

Comus and Satan have a lot in common: not only are they both antagonists, they are both essentially tempters. Both can also be seen as ambivalent characters, who do not fit in with a notion of a completely evil character. Like Satan, Comus does do evil deeds, but the question whether good intentions make a difference remains somewhat unsolved.

But does the intention behind an act matter? The short answer is no. In his discussion about the Categorical Imperative, Johnson (2004) claims that Kant dismisses the importance of the intent behind an act. If this is the case, then the fact that Comus is in love makes no difference. He does choose to fool the Lady by disguising himself and bind her to a chair in order to tempt her into drinking the potion that will turn her into a monster; it does not seem that the actions are any less evil. Love cannot be a reason for doing a morally erroneous choice. It might make it more understandable, but a person cannot value one life higher than another. If that would be the case, how could we decide who is more valuable? Almost all human beings are someone's daughters, sons, sisters or brothers. Or is it that if you do not have a family, you are considered of having less worth than someone who has children? Are we really ready to make this into a universal law? And what about the Brothers in the masque? Are we really any more prepared to deem everyone evil, who has ever done questionable things for love? The Attendant Spirit tells the Brothers to take the magic wand away from Comus when they are about to rescue the Lady. He actually instructs them twice; first by warning not to use brute force, since it does not good:

> Alas good venturous youth,

> I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise,
> But here thy sword can do thee little stead,
> Far other arms, and other weapons must
> Be those that quell the might of hellish charms. (*A Masque*, 608-612)

The second time he clearly states that they have to take the wand instead even if

> he and his cursed crew
> Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
> Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke. (*A Masque*, 652-654)

When the time comes, the Brothers lunge straight at Comus with their swords drawn and he escapes with the wand. They are of course motivated by the love for their sister, just like Comus is. They should have had temperance and done as they were instructed. Of course, they did not know what was going to happen when they did not follow the orders, but they still made a choice to break the rules. So, neither Comus nor the Brothers are totally evil, but the actions are; it follows that Comus is not the only one doing bad things in the masque. I deem the act of the Brothers as evil because the one done by Comus cannot be anything but evil, he holds the Lady imprisoned, and I most certainly am not ready to make judgments on shades of gray. If we are to make public judgments, we must have some objective, clear-cut way of looking at things.

> So following the logic of Kant's rigoristic analysis, there does not seem to be any way to avoid the conclusion that a benign sympathetic person (who gives the incentive of sympathy priority over the moral law in his maxim), Hitler, and even Eichmann (whose maxims presumably did not give priority to respect for the moral law) are all morally evil. (Bernstein 2001, 62).

My intention is to question the black-and-white picture of Comus as evil, not to completely deny that he commits evil acts – he most certainly does. A few cases of evil acts by Kantian standards arise from the masque. For example, Comus chooses self-love over moral code – or jollities over morality – in his first speech:

> What hath night to do with sleep?
> Night hath better sweets to prove,
> Venus now wakes, and wakens Love. (*A Masque*, 122-124)

He also makes insinuations to pagan rites on the following lines, thus presenting himself as opposed to religious code. Before Comus hears the Lady, he is portrayed as plotting against the humanity of

another person:

> I under fair pretence of friendly ends,
> And well-placed words of glozing courtesy
> Baited with reasons not unplausible
> Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
> And hug him into snares. (*A Masque*, 160-164)

The Lady proves to be quite capable of standing up for herself and she even confronts Comus and his dehumanization:

> Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
> With vizored falsehood, and base forgery,
> And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
> With liquorish baits fit to ensnare a brute? (*A Masque*, 696-699)

If this is the reaction to someone lying and deceiving, how can the lying of someone else be a good thing? An interesting case of this is the one of the Attendant Spirit. He is sent by God to aid the children on their perilous journey, but he must for some unknown reason disguise himself before he lets the humans see him. This is exactly what Comus does when he meets the Lady; the only distinction is that the two have different motives. Again the question about intention rises, but since the matter is clear when we follow Kant's Categorical Imperative, there is no logical way of deeming this to be a desired universal rule of "lie and deceive when you feel it is necessary." We can see that again the actions are evil, not Comus nor the Attendant Spirit. It is emotionally hard, though, to actually accept that the motivation behind an action really does not matter. But if we pursue the analysis with Kantian rigorism, we must admit that this really is the case. A lie is a lie. "Both Comus and the Attendant Spirit look like innocent shepherds, both tell lies that sound like truth. How can you know the good lies from the bad ones?" (Orgel 2003, 35). The heavenly guardian is beginning to look a lot like the evil sorcerer. Orgel (2003, 34-35) raises further problems with the Attendant Spirit, who

> is not around when you get lost, has difficulty finding you himself, warns the boys about Comus but not their sister (who is the one who needs the warning and could profit by it); and though he is in charge of the rescue operation is unaccountably not there when it happens, so the boys muff it by driving Comus and his minions off but not seizing his wand. The Lady still is not free, and the Attendant Spirit blames the boys – he told them to seize the wand – and they are too well mannered to ask him where he

was when the action started.

He might not be blamed for the eagerness of the boys, he actually instructs them twice, but when the time comes, the Brothers lunge straight at Comus with their swords drawn and he escapes with the wand. To their defense, they love the Lady and want to rescue her as soon as possible, but the reason behind an evil action does not in any way change the act into good – not even if you are a guardian from Heaven and have to fool the children you are protecting into thinking that you are a shepherd. Orgel (2003, 38) notes that this is exactly what the poet had in mind: "Milton's masque is precisely about how complicated the choice of virtue is as soon as it stops being treated as an abstract question." The Attendant Spirit displays alarmingly poor judgment as well as somewhat failing in his job to protect the innocent. When he finds the Brothers, he tells how he knows what has happened to the Lady:

> Too well I did perceive it was the voice
> Of my most honoured Lady, your dear sister.
> Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear,
> And O poor hapless nightingale thought I,
> How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
> Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste
> Through paths, and turnings often trod by day,
> Till guided by mine ear I found the place
> Where that damned wizard hid in sly disguise
> (For so by certain signs I knew) had met
> Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
> The aidless innocent Lady his wished prey,
> Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
> Supposing him some neighbour villager. (*A Masque*, 562-575)

After hiding out for a while, the Attendant Spirit skulks off to find the Brothers to go and save the Lady. If he is sent from Heaven to protect those who God wants to keep safe, how is it possible that he does not actually protect those people? Why does he send two adolescent boys to fight against a powerful wizard? Even if he wanted to remain in his disguise, he could have swooped in dressed as a shepherd and just talked his way out of the situation. He makes a conscious choice to leave the one person he is sent to protect to fend for herself and gets the Brothers to do the actual saving, or at least make an attempt at it. This choice is costly to the Lady, as she is bound to the chair and must

endure Comus's temptations. The Attendant Spirit's goodness is not to be taken for granted.

Both *A Masque* and *Paradise Regained* highlight the power of words, and, of course, truth. Victory is achieved by overturning lies with undeniable truth. In both texts the antagonists use the same kind of "winged words" Eichmann claimed Himmler used to distort the reasoning behind the choice to murder millions of innocent people. Unlike Eichmann, the protagonists in *A Masque* and *Paradise Regained* do see behind the false logic. The Lady is furious at Comus for twisting the truth:

> but that this juggler
> Would think to charm my judgement, as mine eyes
> Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb (*A Masque*, 756-758)

This echoes the Son's retort to Satan when he tries to make himself pitiful by stating "'Tis true, I am that spirit unfortunate" (*PR*, I.358) and making a long speech about how he has been wrongly labeled evil. The Son replies:

> that hath been thy craft,
> By mixing somewhat true to vent more lies.
> But what have been thy answers, what but dark
> Ambiguous and with double sense deluding (*PR*, I.432-435)

It is hard to not to be fooled sometimes when there is a seed of truth behind the lie. This is exactly the mixture on good within evil intentions I mentioned earlier; it makes the tempter seem ambivalent instead of creating an image of a totally evil character. They do know good, they just choose to twist it to make the choice a little more difficult for the protagonist.

If we examine whether or not the characters in the masque have adopted an evil maxim, we find out something interesting. Comus obviously has adopted such a maxim, as he has captured the Lady and is trying to entice her into drinking his strange potion. But the fascinating thing lies in the fact that, although Comus is responsible for the seduction of the people that have turned into monsters, they themselves are to blame for their present state, as they

> boast themselves more comely than before
> And all their friends, and native home forget
> To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty (*A Masque*, 75-77)

and do not seek salvation. Thus they have freely chosen to embrace their newly formed state and enjoy the life Comus provides for them under his service. As I stated earlier, servility is frowned upon in Kantian philosophy: "[b]ut one who makes himself a worm cannot complain afterwards if people step on him" (Kant 1996, 188). But why do these people stay under Comus's influence? Why do they not try to get away from servility? At least part of the answer might lie in the fact that they are enjoying themselves. Comus tries to get the Lady to appreciate the pleasures in life:

> Why are you vexed Lady? why do you frown?
> Here dwell no frowns, nor anger, from these gates
> Sorrow flies far: see, here be all the pleasures
> That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts. (*A Masque*, 665-668)

It is not so strange that the rabble does not want to leave, if their life is like this. They consciously choose to heed to their self-love and brush morality aside.

3.3 Sympathy for the Devil

Like the Book of Job and *A Masque*, *Paradise Regained* deals with temptation. Satan is the person doing the tempting, but he operates with the permission of God: God says

> this man born and now upgrown,
> To show him worthy of his birth divine
> And high prediction, henceforth I expose
> To Satan; let him tempt (*PR*, I.140-143)

Satan, although doing the tempting willingly, "must be a reluctant agent of the will of God" (Frye 1956, 230) – or as Milton (*PR*, I.126-128) puts it:

> unweeting he fulfilled
> The purposed counsel pre-ordained and fixed
> Of the most High.

I do not really wish to go into the problem of predestination in detail, but as I pointed out earlier, Milton seems to refute predestination (*CD*, 164). Dennis Danielson (1999, 150-152) is much more concerned with this issue, since he wishes to explain how free will exists and predestination does not. Danielson (1999, 151) argues that "for Milton . . . God's *fore*knowledge is no more indicative of any kind of determinism than is that certainty which an event proves to have once it becomes *fait*

accompli." One can argue that "The purposed counsel pre-ordained and fixed" in the quote from *Paradise Regained* suggests some form of determinism, but as I quoted earlier Milton (*CD*, 164) believes that "nothing happens because God has foreseen it, but rather he has foreseen each event because each is the result of particular causes which, by his decree, work quite freely and with which he is thoroughly familiar." So God decrees free will and at the same time sees how it affects what takes place after this decree. This omniscience of God creates an illusion of determinism.

Even though Satan is obviously evil in the poem, he cannot be viewed as evil personified.

> I came among the Sons of God, when he
> Gave up into my hands Uzzean Job
> To prove him, and illustrate his high worth;
> And when to all his Angels he proposed
> To draw the proud King Ahab into fraud
> That he might fall in Ramoth, they demurring,
> I undertook that office, and the tongues
> Of all his flattering Prophets glibbed with lies
> To his destruction, as I had in charge.
> For what he bids I do; though I have lost
> Much lustre of my native brightness, lost
> To be beloved of God, I have not lost
> To love, at least contemplate and admire
> What I see excellent in good, or fair,
> Or virtuous, I should so have lost all sense. (*PR*, I.368-382)

He is still clinging to remnants of his former being and has not lost the ability to admire the good and the beautiful. He is also painfully aware of the fact that when he tempted Job, he was being used by God as a tool to test Job's faith. Even if Satan is doing what God wanted him to do, he still chose freely to inflict pain upon Job, as the Son points out:

> Wilt thou impute to obedience what thy fear
> Extorts, or pleasure to do ill excites?
> What but thy malice moved thee to misdeem
> Of righteous Job, then cruelly to afflict him
> With all inflictions? But his patience won? (*PR*, I.422-426)

You cannot blame God for the choices you make if you believe in free will.

I addressed the subject of God's responsibility for evil in the chapter on Christianity and I will now return to the subject briefly. Although Christianity teaches that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are essentially one God, in Milton's epics God the Father and God the

Son are separate characters. I will not go into the debate about whether or not Milton believed in the Holy Trinity as Christianity teaches[8], but it has to be noted that in the *Christian Doctrine* (1973, 264) he very clearly states his opinion:"[i]f Father and Son were of one essence, which because of their relationship, is impossible, it would follow that the Father was the Son's son and the Son the Father's father. Anyone who is not a lunatic can see what kind of a conclusion this is."[9] I will now present the different types of God present in Milton's *Paradise Regained*.

Earlier I quoted *Paradise Lost* (V.117-119)

> Evil into the mind of god or man
> May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
> No spot or blame behind

stating that sin requires volition. I still stand behind this claim, but if we were to examine the quote more closely, we will notice that the mind of God might not be as pure as we would hope: Michael Bryson (2002, 87) calls this "a disturbingly thin thread upon which to hang the idea that one's creator is wholly good." I would like to note that in Paradise Lost, only the capitalized word 'God' refers to the Father and otherwise it is taken to mean the angels. I still wanted to add Bryson's point here because it is possible to read the character of Father as somewhat evil. As I hinted earlier, in the *Christian Doctrine* "Milton insists on God's goodness, but he does so by explicitly entertaining and rejecting hypotheses that produce an unjust God. He admits the theoretical possibility of an evil God and therefore implies a standard of values that transcends God's will" (Slotkin 2004, 102). In the Old Testament, God even repents what he was going to do to his people: when the chosen people have made a golden calf to worship and God becomes enraged, Moses scolds God for planning to wipe them from the earth – and it actually works: "And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (Ex. 32:14)[10]. God feels remorse for his thoughts.

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8 This debate over Milton's belief in the Trinity remains unsolved. The disbelief side of the argument was very heavily based on the *Christian Doctrine*, but the authorship of it was under heavy debate. After a lot of discussions about the authorship, it is mostly agreed on that it is actually Milton's work. See footnote on page 5.

9 Milton has been called an Arian mainly because of this view on the Trinity. Arianism teaches that God created Jesus and thus Jesus cannot be considered as equal to God (*Webster's* 1999, 67). This belief system appeared first in Alexandria in the 3rd and 4th Centuries and derives the name from the priest who taught it, Arius. Arianism was declared as heretical by the first Nicene Council in 325 (*Webster's* 1999, 769).

10 It has to be noted that the word 'evil' in the quotation from the Bible might refer to the unpleasantness of

Intending is, of course, not the same as acting. If we would punish people for intention alone, there would not be people left on this earth who were not guilty of thinking of doing an evil deed. This problem arises from time to time in the discourse of crime and punishment. Most recently it has been present in the War on Terror the United States are waging against Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. Can we truly punish people for intent alone? How do we measure what is an intent that would have led to action? Or are we prepared to wait for a person to commit heinous crimes before we interfere? Usually the problem has been solved by punishing intent when the person has taken some steps to actualize his intention, but this is not a clear-cut case either. Does it count as a step when a terrorist has taken flying lessons? Or when he or she has made internet searches on how to make bombs? These are questions that will never be answered fully, because of the subjective nature of the evaluation process and the changing moral norms in society, but this does not mean that discussing them is futile. Milton draws on the tradition of a temperamental God in the Old Testament: "Milton creates a passible and morally ambiguous character in the Father, a character with the rich personality of Yahweh as a model" (Bryson 2002, 91). The Old Testament God, or Yahweh, is the one who claims he has created everything, including evil (Isa. 45:7). Slotkin (2004, 119) defines this problem of God's responsibility for evil in the following manner:

> God's relationship to evil is something like that of a theatrical director. He shapes the sinful wills of his creations to bring forth particular forms of evil action. From those actions, or directly from himself, he produces punishments that are constructed according to sinister principles. These punishments serve as allegories, rendering abstract moral lessons in a concrete, sensual, and symbolic form.

God incites sin and punishes them without any moral dilemmas. I am in no way suggesting that punishment is wrong, it is certainly needed in a law-abiding society. It is a way of making sure, or at least attempting to make sure, that people follow the rules. I am merely suggesting that God first inciting something and then punishing the person who was helpless before his inciting, might not be morally acceptable. Although, as I stated earlier, Milton (*CD*, 331-332) argues that this inciting can

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punishment. This does not really demean my analysis, since what I am claiming is, that God has a conscience which does not always agree with the actions he takes or considers taking, not that God is evil in the demonic sense. And since Moses manages to change God's mind, the action God was about to take must be immoral as he reconsidered the matter.

only be done to human beings who already are on the verge of sinning, it still seems like a disturbing image of God pushing a sinner over the cliff, it only makes God seem petty, mean, and vindictive. And punishment in itself is a problematic subject. How do we limit the punishment only to the person who is guilty of a crime? If someone steals a car and is sent to prison, his family will bear a certain amount of suffering as well. The incarcerated person might be the one providing for the family and now they are left suddenly without the means to survive with no fault of their own. There is also the emotional suffering the family has to go through, and this is not by any means insignificant. In the Book of Job, the first trial he has to go through is that his livestock is stolen, his servants either captured or dead, and his sons and daughters have been killed (Job 1:14-19). The trial is on Job, but his sons, daughters, servants, and livestock have to bear an even heavier burden. And all this is done so Yahweh can prove to Satan that Job is his loyal servant. It would not be unreasonable to wish for a more efficient solution to the situation. But in *Paradise Regained,* the Father has not reconsidered the need for trials of faith. When he speaks about letting Satan tempt his son, he is described as smiling (*PR*, I.129). Of course the Father is certain that the Son is going to win, but I do not think he should be smiling at the prospect of his son being tormented by Satan, nor is it recommendable behavior to exhibit schadenfreude at the expense of Satan. The character of God is not pleasant in the Old Testament nor is he in *Paradise Regained*.

Luckily we have a champion on our side against a morally ambiguous God: "the Son . . . fights – through reason, self-sacrifice, and self-denial – to overturn heavenly kingship, to refuse thrones both earthly and heavenly, and to abolish kingship itself by reclaiming a Miltonic, internal definition of glory, heroism, and true government" (Bryson 2002, 89). The Son offers himself freely as ransom for the salvation of men:

> Behold me then, me for him, life for life
> I offer, on me let thine anger fall;
> Account me man; I for his sake will leave
> Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
> Freely put off, and for him lastly die (*PL*, III.236-240).

As he sacrifices himself, he is sent on earth in a human form to die for the sins of Adam and Eve.

This display of grace makes the character of the Son a much more likeable character than the Father. *Paradise Regained* begins with an invocation, as is customary in the genre of the epic:

> Thou Spirit who led'st this glorious eremite
> Into the desert, his victorious field
> Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence
> By proof the undoubted Son of God, inspire,
> As thou art wont, my prompted song else mute,
> And bear through highth or depth of nature's bounds,
> With prosperous wing full summed to tell of deeds
> Above heroic, though in secret done,
> And unrecorded left through many an age,
> Worthy t' have not remained so long unsung. (*PR*, I.8-17)

The Son is praised as being "glorious" and doing "deeds above heroic," but it seems that regarding the plot, the Son is fairly passive. He refuses Satan's enticements by resorting to rhetoric. But this is actually what true heroism is: displaying virtue in the face of temptation. "*Virtue* is the strength of human being's maxims in fulfilling his duty. . . . Strength of any kind can be recognized only by the obstacles it can overcome, and in the case of virtue these obstacles are natural inclinations, which can come into conflict with the human being's moral resolution" (Kant 1996, 156). Even though refusing Satan's temptations seems to be easy for the Son, the matter might not be as simple as that; the Son has had his moments of uncertainty. It is not clear to him what he is supposed to do when he enters the desert:

> Musing and much revolving in his breast,
> How best the mighty work he might begin
> Of saviour to mankind, and which way first (*PR*, I.185-187)

This lack of clarity results from being cut off from the immediate presence of God as a result of original sin all humans share, but the Son is open to God's providence and eventually finds his way:

> now by some strong motion I am led
> Into this wilderness, to what intent
> I learn not yet, perhaps I need not know;
> For what concerns my knowledge God reveals. (*PR*, I.290-293)

These instances of original sin being present in the brief epic, which may also be seen as instances of Kantian radical evil, as the concepts are so closely related. Another instance of this is present in the way Jesus has not been above hopes of doing aggressively heroic deeds:

> victorious deeds
> Flamed in my heart, heroic acts, one while
> To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
> Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
> Brute violence and proud tyrannic power,
> Till truth were freed, and equity restored:
> Yet held it more humane, more heavenly first
> By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
> And make persuasion do the work of fear. (*PR*, I.215-223)

Jesus is unable "to subordinate self-love to duty, . . . spontaneously, without, as it were, giving self-love a hearing" (Allison 2002, 342), though he does manage to choose to do the right thing in the end. If the Son had given in to his urges, his story would have been completely different. One could imagine that he would share the faith of Solomon, David, or Samson, who were all once champions of faith, next punished because for displeasing God. All of their downfalls can be accounted to be caused by women: Solomon's concubines worshiped their own gods, David committed adultery and Samson was deceived by Delilah. It seems like the temptation that was discussed earlier, where Belial suggested that Satan "Set women in his eye and in his walk, / Among daughters of men the fairest found" (*PR*, II.153-154) is not so far-fetched as one might first assume.

Despite their apparent dissimilarities, the Son and Satan do share certain aspects, as Milton gives the role of "equivalent or narrative double of the Son" to Satan (Forsyth 2003, 13). I have already drawn attention to the matter of the morning star used to refer to the Son and Satan (and Comus) alike, but there are further examples of this doubling, for example in Satan's speech:

> I among the rest,
> Though not to be baptized, by voice from heaven
> Heard thee pronounced the Son of God beloved.
> Thenceforth I thought thee worth my nearer view
> And narrower scrutiny, that I might learn
> In what degree or meaning thou art called
> The Son of God, which bears no single sense;
> The Son of God I also am, or was,
> And if I was, I am; relation stands;
> All men are Sons of God. (*PR*, IV.511-520)

Satan argues that even though the Son is called the Son of God, it might mean only that he is human, and "Satan is indeed quite right to say that the phrase 'Son of God' bears no single sense"

(Forsyth 2003, 179). The humanity of both characters is also noted by Nancy Rosenfeld (2008, 122); she also raises the issue of Lucifer as the morning star, and how this image is connected with both the Son and Satan and concludes: "[t]he poet chooses to emphasize a similarity between Satan and Christ just as he is about to portray them both as humans." The passage she refers to is in the first Book of *Paradise Regained* where Satan and the Son meet for the first time. Satan is described as "an aged man in rural weeds" (*PR*, I.314) searching for lost sheep or gathering sticks for firewood. Incidentally, Jesus describes himself in the Bible as a vine with people as his branches that do not survive without him: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). There is also the well-known reference to Jesus as the Good Shepherd (for example, Ps.23 which begins: "The LORD is my shepherd") and fallen people as lost sheep (Jer. 50:6, Matt. 10:6, Luke 15:4). Satan can therefore be argued to be roaming the desert collecting souls of sinners as he goes.

Satan sees the Son as human: "For that to me thou seem'st the man" (*PR*, I.327). When Satan first discovers the Son at his baptism, he goes straight to his council of fallen angels to propose the best course of action. The fallen angels decide to send Satan "their great dictator" (*PR*, I.113) to tempt the Son.

> Milton seems to have been directed by two main ideas. The first is that the Son who is a human should be tempted by an opponent who also bears the character of a man. The second is that the Son's stance as an individual man, one who has not yet accepted leadership role similar to that which he had so easily undertaken in the battle against the fallen angels . . . , a young man struggling alone with issues of individual identity, should be counterpoised by an antagonist who is the leader of a group. (Rosenfeld 2008, 81)

All humans have faced the difficult decision between doing what is morally righteous and doing whatever they want and are aware of the immense perplexity of emotion one has to face in such a situation. Peer pressure is a very influential thing as we are social beings. But why is evil so enticing? Simply because humans are selfish, we want things that give us pleasure. To err is human. This is just what Milton utilizes in the temptations of his evil characters.

The lush enticements of Comus, the fine heroic speeches of Satan in *Paradise Lost* and

> his even more moving weariness and despair in *Paradise Regained* . . . – all of these may be designed to enhance our admiration for the characters who successfully resist such temptations, but they also force us to make a choice between good and evil and to recognize that this choice is much harder for us than for Milton's heroes. (Potter 1978, 74)

Satan's free will has caused his fall, as it caused the fall of Adam and Eve. The same free will enables human beings to place self-love over morality again and again. Rosenfeld (2008, 2) argues that the character of Satan in *Paradise Regained* "is indeed characterized by his humanity: the character is no longer an archangel or larger than life, no longer the embodiment of evil in the abstract, but rather embodies those impulses of the human that, though not necessarily evil in themselves, can lead one to commit evil." The choice between good and evil is much more difficult for humans since the fall because of the distance from God. The fall caused a separation from the knowledge of the perfect will of God and thus it is much harder to keep one's heart open to the word of God. Satan fell even harder, and he is, in some ways, unable to receive grace. We feel pity for a character who is so completely delusional and defeated that he, even after he has been muted, chooses to keep fighting a losing battle:

> Satan stood
> A while as mute confounded what to say,
> What to reply, confuted and convinced
> Of his weak arguing, and fallacious drift;
> At length collecting all his serpent wiles,
> With soothing words renewed, him thus accosts. (*PR*, III.1-6)

He has already lost and he knows it, but he still refuses to give up. This only adds to the pity the reader feels. The distance and isolation is exactly how "we recognize Satan as human because he is an individual, an entity who is aware of his separation from others" (Rosenfeld 2008, 103). In addition to this, we feel sorry for Satan who is fighting windmills even though there might be a way to, at least partial, salvation by repentance and obedience. We are forced to make our own way in the world. Religion and philosophy have developed for just this reason; we are constantly searching for guidance: "human beings are creatures created in God's own image as rational animals. As such, they seek the good, that is, they seek to realize their potential, to be human in an essential way.

Unfortunately, each of them is also a child of Adam and his sin. This sin, which damaged (though it did not destroy) human reason, makes it difficult for humans to find their way" (Gillespie 2006, 32). This is what makes us human.

> This Satan figure suffers pain, both physical and mental; he finds it difficult to maintain one specific emotion over a given length of time; he is noted for the ability to entertain opposing emotions simultaneously, both loving and hating the same object at the same time; his viewpoint is necessarily limited, as he lacks the omniscience of a god. His understandable confusion as to his – humanity's – place in the cosmic hierarchy is productive of sin. (Rosenfeld 2008, 129)

As Kant teaches, all humans do evil at some point. Rosenfeld (2008, 103) reasons that this impossibility to be perfectly good results from the human tendency to be dynamic in nature. Human beings are forced to make the choice between moral law and self-love on a daily basis, and no one can avoid making the wrong choice at least once.

4 Conclusion

The definition of evil is slippery and difficult to make. If we take the Kantian definition as the basis we come to the conclusion that every one of us does commit evil acts, but this does not make us evil. This seems to be hard to accept on an emotional level as applying to everyone; we tend to refer to Hitler, Charles Manson and Stalin as evil people. Even non-violent criminals, like Bernie Madoff, are labeled evil. But when it comes to the fact that we all do selfish things which are evil, we are extremely reluctant to call ourselves evil. So what is the difference? There is none according to Kant. He (Kant 1996, 189) argues that no man is without a conscience. Even Hitler was human, and we must treat him as one. “I cannot deny all respect to even a vicious man as a human being” (Kant 1996, 210). We cannot rationally regard some people as monsters according to the degree of evil they commit. If we did, who would then decide where the line is drawn? If murder is evil, how can the execution of that evil person be somehow less evil, as he or she is as human as was their victim? The human tendency to isolate and eradicate unfamiliar entities is not by all means a thing of the past. Although I have mentioned the Holocaust several times, racism and extremism are in no way gone from the world. The recent public discussion in Finland has been dominated by people who claim to be critical of immigration. This has only proven to be a socially acceptable way of displaying racism. The frightening movement towards isolation and nationalism in politics is not only found in Finland. The True Finns party is not the only one of its kind in the Nordic countries: Sweden has also been battling with the growing support of Sweden Democrats and Denmark has the Danish People’s Party. With the global depression, many countries in the European Union have been displaying signs of Eurosceptisms. This can only be a result from selfishness and fear of the unknown. People tend to look back to the good old days when everything was better than it is now, even though the economies of these countries were not in any way separated from the rest of the world. We forget too easily what the truth is. The evil known is not in any way better than the evil unknown. This is why we should be concerned with the study of evil even in the modern rational times we live in. And we should not be afraid of the conversation about evil, even though there is no

universally accepted origin for evil or solution for the problem of it. Despite the large variety of theories available and even though the views on evil differ greatly from each other, they do share some common ground: “Christian and non-Christian now believe that, even if we do not share a common belief in God, we can at least agree about actions that are evil” (Hauerwas 2006, 36). The debate over the problem of evil has helped to reinforce socially acceptable moral code, which is often enforced with law. If we cannot agree on why evil exists, we can still create a set of moral values we want to uphold.

Although I have used the Kantian concept of evil here as some sort of a competitor with Christianity, I want to emphasize that Kant did not try to deny the existence of God, he was merely trying to offer a philosophical explanation for the problem of evil. And as one notices very early, there are a lot of similarities; the different theories of evil are mixed together. It does not, then, come as a surprise that Kant actually used Milton’s works in illustrating his newly formed philosophical concepts (Budick 2010, 12). Claire Colebrook (2008, 64) has also noticed the connection, but from another perspective: Milton’s characters willingly (in a very Kantian fashion) choose evil.

When one applies the Kantian approach to *A Masque*, it becomes clear that there are other characters beside Comus, who do evil things in the masque. After a close examination of *A Masque* – whatever one’s concept of evil might be – one stumbles on to the fact that the masque is not a clear instance of the battle between good and evil. It reveals that it is extremely difficult to label people as either good or evil, but a lot of the actions done are selfish, thus evil: “[n]o being is in itself evil or marked by evil as a quality, for evil is that capacity for any being to turn away from its proper potential” (Colebrook 2008, 80). This represents a grim worldview, where all people do evil things. But, as Danielson (1982, 174-177) argues, we need evil in order for good to appear.

> As man, though perfect, Christ’s first intuition was of goodness. One may think that he did not need to know good through evil; but his mission requires acting in the world, and evil has helped, or else the drama means nothing. Evil has provided the opportunity, and the apparatus, for the soul descended into self to define that self in terms of the world; to recover the common likeness of the soul to the God transcending and uniting

> all souls . . . Satan has got the control of some of the worlds enterprises, but his power is 'usurped,' and not complete; nor is the world incorrigibly rotten. Christ is not the first to refuse the false allurements of Satan (Stein 1965, 130-131).

There is something soothing in this passage after deeming all human beings as the same as Stalin. It is indeed vital that we see the good as well as the evil in the world or the hope in humanity would surely be lost. And, as Milton (*Areopagitica*, 515-516) claims:

> I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary. That vertue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evill, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank vertue, not a pure; her whitenesse is but an excrementall whitenesse.

We need our virtue tried, just like Kant suggests (1996, 156), or else it is not really virtue.

The question remains why would Milton go to such lengths to create such villains that make it easy for the reader to identify with? Is he, as Blake (2001, 1380) suggested "of the Devil's party without knowing it?" I agree with Neil Forsyth (2003, 71) on the matter as he suggests that Milton did not want to make the choice between good and evil as easy as possible for the reader, and thus created such complex and appealing characters. Be as it may, this thesis has been an excursion to the battle between good and evil in literature and I have not been making any effort to solve the problem of evil; as it happens, "the problem of evil remains a challenge that is never completely overcome" (Ricoeur 1985, 644). I have merely been trying to create a novel approach to Milton's works in a more modern way. Without adhering to conventional Christian reading of a 17th Century writer, we will discover new possibilities in literature studies. Very few ideas are completely original, the way to progress depends on the ingenuity of application of those ideas.

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