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**JEANE ÉLEN BARBOSA GALDINO DE ALMEIDA**

**FREEDOM, OBEDIENCE, AND COERCION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POWER  
RELATIONSHIPS IN *PARADISE LOST*, BY JOHN MILTON**

**GUARABIRA - PB  
2024**

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Programa de Graduação em Letras da Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Licenciado em Letras Inglês.

**Área de concentração:** Estudos Críticos de Literaturas Anglófonas

**Orientadora:** Prof<sup>ª</sup>. Ma. Aline Oliveira do Nascimento

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Aprovada em: 20/06/2024.

**BANCA EXAMINADORA**

Aline Oliveira do Nascimento

Prof. Ma. Aline Oliveira do Nascimento (Orientadora)  
Universidade Estadual da Paraíba (UEPB)

Auricélio Soares Fernandes

Prof. Dr. Auricélio Soares Fernandes (Avaliador)  
Universidade Estadual da Paraíba (UEPB)

Waldir Kennedy Nunes Calixto

Prof. Me. Waldir Kennedy Nunes Calixto (Avaliador)  
Universidade Estadual da Paraíba (UEPB)

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## FREEDOM, OBEDIENCE, AND COERCION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POWER RELATIONSHIPS IN *PARADISE LOST*, BY JOHN MILTON

Jeane Élen Barbosa Galdino de Almeida<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyse the power relationship between God and the angels in the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton, considering how the divine omnipotence can affect the freedom of the angels, potentially conditioning them to eternal and compulsory servitude. For this, a methodology with a qualitative and explanatory approach was used through bibliographic studies. The main theoretical basis was the studies of Arthur Schopenhauer (1960), to conceptualise the different forms of freedom, Michel Foucault (1995), to understand the processes of unquestionable obedience, and Dennis Wrong (1995), to explain the importance of coercion in the exercise of power. Finally, through this study, it was concluded that there are different ways in which governments can use force to make subordinates remain submissive and obedient, including the use of punishment and coercion to exert physical and psychological force. Thus, it was understood that God uses Lucifer's rebellion as a way of exercising power both physically, punishing the rebels with exile, and psychologically, ensuring that any future rebels are intimidated by the consequences of disobedience.

**Keywords:** *Paradise Lost*. Power. Freedom. Obedience. Coercion.

### RESUMO

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar a relação de poder entre Deus e os anjos no poema épico *Paraíso Perdido*, de John Milton, considerando como a onipotência divina pode afetar a liberdade dos anjos, potencialmente condicionando-os à servidão eterna e compulsória. Para isso, utilizou-se uma metodologia com abordagem qualitativa e explicativa por meio de estudos bibliográficos. A principal base teórica foram os estudos de Arthur Schopenhauer (1960), para conceituar as diferentes formas de liberdade, Michel Foucault (1995), para compreender os processos de obediência inquestionável, e Dennis Wrong (1995), para explicar a importância da coerção no exercício do poder. Finalmente, através deste estudo, concluiu-se que existem diferentes maneiras pelas quais os governos podem usar a força para fazer com que os subordinados permaneçam submissos e obedientes, incluindo o uso de punição e coerção para exercer força física e psicológica. Assim, entendeu-se que Deus utiliza a rebelião de Lúcifer como forma de exercer tanto o poder de forma física, punindo os rebeldes com o exílio, quanto psicológica, garantindo que quaisquer futuros rebeldes sejam intimidados pelas consequências da desobediência.

**Palavras-chave:** *Paraíso Perdido*. Poder. Liberdade. Obediência. Coerção.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The presence of power and its hierarchies is noticeable in all social formations, even when there is a search for greater equality, because once an individual's position or role is

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<sup>1</sup> Graduanda em Letras – Inglês pela Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, Campus III, Guarabira – PB. E-mail: jeane.almeida@aluno.uepb.edu.br

defined, they gain power over those around them. Nevertheless, depending on the social organisation, some individuals may exercise greater power over others. In monarchies, for example, no one is socially above the monarch and, therefore, they are given the power to govern or even control the lives of their subjects.

In the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, written by John Milton in the seventeenth century, heaven is divided into different hierarchies of power. The angels themselves serve as an example, as they are divided into nine levels: the common angels occupy the lowest level at the base of the hierarchy, while the seraphim are situated at its pinnacle. Furthermore, it is essential to highlight the power relationship between God<sup>2</sup> and the angels — regardless of their hierarchical position — as depicted in the poem.

God is portrayed as the holder of all power, and due to this, the angels obey all His commands, trusting His judgement and decisions to be the wisest. Notwithstanding, there were some angels — most remarkably Lucifer — who disagreed with the divine order and decided to organise a rebellion against Him. Yet, God, in His omnipotence, easily subdued the rebellious angels, condemning them to hell, where they would live in eternal punishment.

The power hierarchy in heaven, concerning the relationship between God and the angels as represented in Milton's poem, establishes God at the top and all others subject to His will. Consequently, His absolute power may lead the angels to believe that submission is the only acceptable behaviour for them, as any disagreement would be futile, given that He has complete control over the lives and destinies of all.

Moreover, with the condemnation of the rebels serving as an example of what could happen to those who attempt to challenge God's authority, the other angels may fear experiencing the same fate or facing something even worse than being banished to hell if they express any discontent. Therefore, they submit to servitude out of fear of severe punishment.

The lack of freedom may have instilled in Lucifer and the angels who followed him a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction, as they were discontented with God's decision to elevate the Son to an equal hierarchical status in heaven and desired more autonomy to oppose such a decision. Thus, placed in such an oppressive position, they had no alternative but to rebel against God.

Comprehending this context, this work aims to delve into discussions regarding how God's omnipotence can impact the individual freedom of the angels, conditioning them to a life of eternal servitude. Additionally, it aims to understand why some individuals choose submission and believe in the cause they serve, while others revolt against the system, even if they are part of the same society and the same social class. Finally, it aims to analyse God's government and how His forms of punishment can result in a fear-inspired submission.

As a theoretical foundation, Arthur Schopenhauer's (1960) concepts of freedom were used to better understand the different forms of oppression. Studies by Michel Foucault (1996) were also considered, in which he asserts that oppression can engender resistance and conflicts. Additionally, the analysis of how power is exercised in different ways and how it can serve as a form of indirect control was based on the studies of Dennis Wrong (1995). Furthermore, theories from Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish* (1995) were key to conceptualising the ideal form of punishment and explaining how individuals become obedient and submissive to a government through disciplinary processes.

This study presents a qualitative research approach, as it is concerned "with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing on understanding and explaining the dynamics of

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<sup>2</sup> Most religious terms must be capitalised, including the names of religions and their followers, the titles of certain important figures, the names of important events, the names of sacred books, and the names or titles of divine beings. Yet, it is important to note that the word 'god' must not be capitalised when it refers to a deity other than the Christian God (Trask, 1997).

social relations” (Silveira; Córdova, 2009, p. 32, translated by the author<sup>3</sup>). In this sense, it also has a basic nature, since “it aims to generate new knowledge, useful for the advancement of Science, without anticipated practical application” (Silveira; Córdova, 2009, p. 34, translated by the author<sup>4</sup>).

In order to achieve the objectives, explanatory research was used which, according to Gil (2002, p. 42, translated by the author<sup>5</sup>), is mainly concerned with “identifying the factors that determine or contribute to the occurrence of phenomena”. In addition to having a bibliographic character, as “it is developed based on already prepared material, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles” (Gil, 2002, p. 44, translated by the author<sup>6</sup>).

Thus, it was discussed how forms of oppression can have different faces and can affect beyond the physical freedom, and can also penetrate the psychological, so that the individual would feel free, but would be subconsciously controlled. Furthermore, it highlighted how people tend to fight for their right to freedom, sometimes preferring to be in less comfortable conditions, but where they can exercise their free will more directly.

## **2. THE SOCIOPOLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE CREATION OF PARADISE LOST AND MILTON’S LASTING LEGACY IN THE WORLD**

### **2.1 The sociopolitical influence on the poem *Paradise Lost***

When analysing literary works the historical and sociopolitical context in which they were written must be considered. For instance, the epic poem *Paradise Lost* was written by John Milton in 1667, but it is possible to establish a connection with the political context of England at the time. Notably, two decades before the poem’s composition, England went through a nine-year civil war in which Milton played an important part.

Among the numerous factors that contributed to the outbreak of the English Civil War (1642 – 1651) were religious tensions, economic problems and political disputes. King Charles I’s actions, such as imposing a considerable increase in taxes without parliamentary consent and converting to a Catholic church in a Puritan Protestant nation, generated a deep antipathy throughout the country.

Religious tensions escalated as England grappled with the division between the already established Anglican church and various Protestant groups. The King Charles I’s marriage to a Catholic princess and efforts to enforce religious conformity, heightened fears of a return to Catholicism. Moreover, his unwavering conviction of possessing a divine right to absolute power eventually led to an armed conflict that culminated in his execution in 1649 (Milton, 2013b).

Additionally, political disputes arose from the tensions between Charles I’s conviction in the divine right of kings and Parliament’s will for greater authority and control, resulting in a protracted power disagreement. Supporters of the king became known as the Royalists or Cavaliers, while those who aligned with Parliament were called Parliamentarians, Roundheads, or even members of the New Model Army.

Although his involvement was primarily through his literary works, political pamphlets, and personal convictions, Milton had an important role in that context. As a pamphleteer and political theorist, he supported the parliamentary and began to write prose in

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<sup>3</sup> Original: com os aspectos da realidade que não podem ser quantificados, centrando-se na compreensão e explicação da dinâmica das relações sociais.

<sup>4</sup> Original: objetiva gerar conhecimentos novos, úteis para o avanço da Ciência, sem aplicação prática prevista.

<sup>5</sup> Original: identificar os fatores que determinam ou que contribuem para a ocorrência dos fenômenos.

<sup>6</sup> Original: é desenvolvida com base em material já elaborado, constituído principalmente de livros e artigos científicos.



response to the Bishop's War, which served as a precursor to the English Civil War (Milton, 2013b). One of his notable works was *Areopagitica*, an acclaimed piece that advocated for freedom of the press and speech. According to Milton (2013a, p. 181):

Milton published *Areopagitica* unlicensed and unregistered in November 1644, a response to Parliament's Licensing Order of June 1643, which required that appointed officers examine books before their publication. During the Personal Rule of Charles I (1629–40), when the king had dispensed with Parliament, there had been strict censorship; censorship, however, collapsed with Parliament's abolition of the Court of Star Chamber (the court of law maintaining royal authority during the Personal Rule) in July 1641. The Long Parliament did try to introduce a system of censorship – the Licensing Order of 1643 was one attempt to do so – but it did little to diminish the great outpouring of print during these years of the English Revolution. As Milton addresses Parliament in the form of an oration, he challenges it to seize the great historical moment to further reform and shows a keen awareness of the capacity of print to fuel political and religious debate with “much arguing, much writing, [and] many opinions.” He is likewise acutely aware of the power of print to influence ideas in a more radical direction and to contribute to the making of free citizens. The tract conveys the sense of excitement about the possibility for national renewal generated by the voicing of new political and religious ideas during the upheavals of the early 1640s. Simultaneously, it expresses Milton's keen sense of authorship: the power of the visionary writer to help forge, by means of his own controversial writing, the godly English nation during a period often characterized by heady expressions of apocalyptic exhilaration.

Thus, it is clear how Milton was remarkable for the time as he actively defied King Charles I's orders using his writings to fight against censorship. His work provided a powerful defence of the principles of both the press and speech freedom, as well as intellectual liberty and individual rights, during a significant political and ideological conflict.

Milton also held the position of Latin Secretary for the Commonwealth of England during the Civil War era, working under Oliver Cromwell's administration. He composed official documents and letters, effectively serving as propaganda against King Charles I and the Royalists. The English Civil War ended in 1651 with the decisive Battle of Worcester, where forces loyal to Oliver Cromwell defeated the Royalists. Following the civil war and the king's death, Cromwell assumed the title of Lord Protector and governed England from 1653 until his passing in 1658, attributed to a urinary infection (Milton, 2013b).

Furthermore, although the poem was only published in 1667, Milton began to write *Paradise Lost* around the time of Cromwell's death. The core theme of the epic poem is the Fall of Man. Nonetheless, before Adam and Eve succumb to temptation, there is a war over heaven, which culminates in Satan and his supporters being exiled to hell by the Messiah, God's son. While *Paradise Lost* primarily explores religious themes, it is indeed possible to draw parallels between the poem and the political and social situation in England at the time, considering that:

There is evidently a parallel in Milton's mind between the Angelic War and the English Civil War. He sees King Charles I as Satan incarnate and Oliver Cromwell as the Messiah, come to purge the nation of those with a sense of entitlement. Milton had the wisdom to realize that the population, although relieved of the king's tyranny, still has a lot to learn about following the path to divine redemption, which is why he reminded England through his poetry that humanity remained banished from paradise (Milton, 2013b, p. 6).

According to this perspective, Milton portrayed Charles I as a tyrannical and oppressive ruler, drawing a direct parallel to Satan's defiance of God within the poem. Following this interpretation, Cromwell's mission was an effort to cleanse England of what

was perceived as the tyranny and corruption associated with Charles I's reign, which corresponds to Messiah's actions in the poem as he banished Satan from heaven.

Nevertheless, there are other diverse ways to interpret how Milton depicted England's situation in his poem, since "John Dryden, in 1671, was the first writer to adapt Milton's epic to the stage. He associated the anti-hero, Satan, with Oliver Cromwell, as he disdained servitude and tried to overcome monarchy; the archfiend was, in Dryden's adaptation, the real hero" (Read, 2008 *apud* Meints-Adail, 2009, p. 4).

*Paradise Lost* has ten thousand lines of blank verse<sup>7</sup> and each line is structured in iambic pentameter. The poem offers the potential for a range of interpretations, including how the political landscape in England influenced its composition. Therefore, it is conceivable to interpret that Milton drew parallels between the English Civil War and the celestial war within the poem. Different readers can have opposing interpretations and attribute different meanings to the text, which makes it a rich and complex literary work, that always remains relevant.

For instance, contrary to the traditional view, the poet William Blake saw Satan as the true hero of the story, as shown in his poems *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *Milton*. Although some say that Milton intended to portray Satan as a powerful but disobedient and rebellious figure, Blake saw him as a revolutionary agent who went against established norms and authoritarianism. Noud (2013, p. 23) adds that:

According to Blake, one of Milton's imperfections in *Paradise Lost* is that Milton approved of the devil instead of the Christian God. Milton's approval of the devil can be seen in *Paradise Lost* with Satan's grandiose speeches, vivid descriptions, and characteristics. Milton should have realized that the readers of *Paradise Lost* would be fascinated and drawn to Satan since he is more appealing than the traditional alleged hero, the Son of God.

From this perspective, Milton intended for the Son to be the poem's hero, but he did not give the character many opportunities to convince readers. On the other hand, Satan is represented in a much more charismatic and intriguing way, making the readers pay more attention to his character and become more involved with him.

Stanley Fish (1971) offers another point of view about *Paradise Lost*'s meaning. In his book *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, Fish explains how the reader plays the most important role in shaping the poem's meaning. To him, readers will see the characters and the narrative based on their experiences, beliefs, and cultural background. He also suggested that departing from conventional interpretations could offer deeper insights. In his own words:

I would like to suggest something about *Paradise Lost* that is not new except for the literalness with which the point will be made: (1) the poem's centre of reference is its reader who is also its subject; (2) Milton's purpose is to educate the reader to an awareness of his position and responsibilities as a fallen man, and to a sense of the distance which separates him from the innocence once his; (3) Milton's method is to re-create in the mind of the reader (which is, finally, the poem's scene) the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity, that is to say, 'not deceived' (Fish, 1971, p. 1).

Thus, Fish believed that Milton positioned his readers at the epicentre of his poem, aiming to instruct them about their condition as a fallen human, emphasising the eternal gap

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<sup>7</sup> According to Abrams and Harpham (2013), a blank verse is made up of lines with iambic pentameter (five-stressed iambic verse) and lacks rhymes. Of all the English metrical forms, it is the closest to the natural rhythms of English speech, while also being adaptable to various levels of discourse. Consequently, it has been more used than any other form of versification.

between humanity's current state and their original innocence. According to Fish's interpretation, the reader's critical reflection on their own existence and moral responsibilities is what gives the poem its sense.

## 2.2 Milton's influence through the centuries

Although Milton was a controversial figure during his lifetime, it was the transformation of plain-spoken English into an art form that brought his stories and allegories to life in the imagination of people and turned his work into a legacy. Despite having plenty of political enemies, he was highly respected as an intellectual. Considering this, his critics had to admit the achievement of *Paradise Lost*, both as a creative masterpiece and as an allegorical commentary on the human condition after the Civil War (Milton, 2013b).

Milton's significance was so profound that, as noted by Taş and Durmuş (2014), during the eighteenth century, both the literate elite and the people from the lower classes had access to his works and were familiar with Milton's poetry. Taş and Durmuş (2014, p. 60) further assert that:

*Paradise Lost* was published over a hundred times after the poet's death between 1705 and 1800 whereas other masterpieces such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* saw only thirteen publications in the whole eighteenth century. Other than *Paradise Lost* Milton's masque, *Comus* were published and performed in the stage more than thirty times. Moreover, *Paradise Lost* had the honor to be sold by subscription and to appear as the first poem in a critical edition that time. These facts indicate one thing to the interested reader of Milton that he surpassed many famous writers during the eighteenth century. John Wesley thought that *Paradise Lost* was the only work to which preference has generally been given of all the poems appeared until that time in the world. Milton's genius and the subject of his epic poem, his conduct of the poem were considered to be above example or comparison. His minor poems too were thought to be the finest ones of their type in English literature; one of the admirers of Milton said that *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were the most exquisite and accurately descriptive poems in his own or any other language and will probably remain unrivaled forever. As it has already been implied by the above passages Milton's greatness as a poet was already accepted from the very beginning of the eighteenth century.

Milton's influence continues to resonate even centuries after the publication of his masterpiece. According to Milton (2013b), in the nineteenth century, novelists like Thomas Hardy aspired to achieve an elevated level of literary craftsmanship in their poetry and turned to Milton's work for inspiration. This disciplined focus on selecting the most precise and meaningful words also permeated Hardy's prose writing, resulting in his novels possessing a distinctive quality that lent them a purposeful and contemplative dimension that might have been otherwise elusive.

In contrast to the previous centuries, the influence of writers such as Milton started to diminish during the twentieth century. This occurred because literary genres in both prose and poetry no longer actively sought direct inspiration from Renaissance<sup>8</sup> writers like Milton. Despite this changing literary landscape, Milton retained a distinguished and revered status as

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<sup>8</sup> "The 'Renaissance' (meaning 'rebirth') describes the movement which saw renewed European interest in classical culture between the late fourteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. Having initially sought to emulate the achievements of the Greek and Roman empires, Renaissance scholars and artists later sought to out-do their ancient predecessors, and therefore engaged in fresh intellectual and artistic exploration. The origins of the 'Renaissance' have been hotly debated but most scholars agree that it originated in late fourteenth-century Italy, where it was fostered by a new generation of humanist scholars. Its influence was gradually felt all across Europe, reaching England by the early sixteenth century" (Keenan, 2008, p. 1).

a significant figure in English and world literature. His enduring legacy, characterised by his profound contributions to the literary canon, ensured that he remained a foundational and respected figure even as literary trends evolved in new directions (Milton, 2013b).

In the twenty-first century, Milton remains highly relevant and continues to exert a noteworthy influence on research and academic articles. Well over fifty scholarly works focus on either Milton himself or his literary creations. In 2004, Wallerstein referred to Milton in his essay exploring theology, philosophy, revolutionary theorising, and social science. Within the context of discussing the dilemma of determinism versus free will, the author invoked Milton's name, highlighting the relevance of *Paradise Lost* in discussions concerning social questions. Wallerstein (2004, p. 68) brought up the following questions:

The good Calvinist, John Milton, wrote *Paradise Lost*, a marvellous poem extolling this remedy. There are many readers who have said that, behind Milton's ostensible vindication of God, his real hero was Lucifer, and that Lucifer's rebellion represented humanity's attempt to rise up against the constraint of the will of an unseeable and unknowable God. But the remedy seems almost as bad as the malady. Shall we praise Lucifer? After all, in whose interests does he act?

Due to its complexity, *Paradise Lost* remains relevant centuries after its first publication. However, the historical and cultural context in which it was written must be considered to understand the impact and ongoing relevance of the poem fully. In the seventeenth century, when the poem was published, Europe and America were still highly religious. The Inquisition held much power, and faith and religious orthodoxy issues were remarkably relevant to public and intellectual life. In addition, demonology was a recurring theme since many people were concerned about the manifestations of evil and sin. Therefore, it is understandable how the different interpretations of Lucifer in *Paradise Lost* could have resonated with readers at the time.

Milton portrays Lucifer as a complex character, whose rebellion can be interpreted in several ways, from a direct affront to God's authority to a battle for freedom and autonomy. The debate over whether Milton secretly praised Lucifer as a tragic hero or condemned his rebellion continues to echo through the centuries and maintains the poem relevant. Thus, *Paradise Lost*'s moral ambiguity allows a variety of interpretations, sparking discussions in social, philosophical and political spheres. The poem challenges conventional ideas of good and evil, will and determinism, and the power balance between God and his creations, which encourages readers to reflect upon what it means to be human and what it means to be free.

A few years later, in 2008, Escobedo wrote an article named *Freedom, the Fall, and Milton*. The author affirms that: "The treatment of the freely-chosen Fall in *Paradise Lost* continues to fascinate because Milton's notion of the will, inherited from a host of Christian sources, is essentially our own: the will asserts its autonomy by eschewing determinism" (Escobedo, 2008, p. 205). Undoubtedly, when authoring an entire article centred on Milton, and more specifically focusing on the theme of freedom, it becomes clear how *Paradise Lost* exerts a profound influence in discussions about this topic since the poem itself deals with this concept constantly.

In 2015, Demirci mentioned Milton in his paper concerning the theme of terror<sup>9</sup> in literature. While not the paper's central focus, Demirci (2015, p. 4) pointed out that: "Burke<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> To the Gothic writer Ann Radcliffe (1826), the difference between terror and horror resides in their functionality. In her perspective, terror is a feeling of dread focused on the unknown, the fear of what may happen. While horror is the feeling of revulsion after experiencing the horrible. Therefore, it can be concluded that horror comes after terror, when the feared event is materialised.

<sup>10</sup> In his book *A Philosophical Enquiry in the Origin of Ideas of Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke explores the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. He defines the sublime as a way of thinking about excess

had elucidated sublime, the source of terror and delight, by impersonating it in Milton's Satan". This is relevant to his research because "Burke's association of sublime with Satan and Chesterton's with the Supreme Being, the careless God, anticipate the manifestation and creatively manipulation of 'sublimity,' albeit both transcends beyond the aesthetic and artistic meaning of sublime" (Demirci, 2015, p. 5).

Alison A. Chapman, in 2020, published a book entitled *Courts, Jurisdictions, and Law in John Milton and His Contemporaries*, in which she aims to introduce readers to an early modern world whose jurisprudence was much less standardised than the current one. She argues that reading Milton's works is "one of the best ways for modern readers to understand the jurisdictional variety of seventeenth-century England—and the challenges and opportunities this variety presented for those committed to justice and to social, religious, and political change" (Chapman, 2020, p. 2).

Furthermore, the author also proposes to answer some questions posed by herself to answer some questions that readers might have. Among them, the reason why she chose to focus on Milton in her text, as shown in the following excerpt:

Another, related "Why?" question is "Why Milton?" In other words, why have I chosen to zero in on this particular author, out of all the early modern writers who had a pronounced interest and competence in legal matters (Shakespeare, Donne, and Jonson spring immediately to mind in this regard)? To this, I make three answers. First, while this book is focused on Milton, it is not only about Milton. [...] Second, Milton is my primary subject of study because he simply had an outsized interest in the way that different systems compared with one another. Arguably more than any other major figure of the seventeenth century, he thought a lot about questions of jurisdiction, about the boundary lines that divided different spheres of influence and collections of legal norms. Third, Milton lived through exceptionally tumultuous times, and as a politically engaged citizen and then as an employee of the Interregnum government, he left behind a huge volume of treatises probing the relative rights of individuals, church, and state. As a result, a critic such as myself interested in his views of civil justice and jurisdiction has a deep and wide archive in which to search (Chapman, 2020, p. 3).

Wherefore, Chapman chose Milton as her work's main author due to his strong influence during the English Civil War. Since he always took a political stance and was directly and indirectly involved in the political issues of his time, he became an important figure beyond literature as a reference even in legal and political matters and law studies.

However, this is not the first Chapman book to establish a relationship between Milton and the law. Focusing more specifically on his epic poem, Chapman wrote a few years earlier, in 2017, her book *The Legal Epic: Paradise Lost and the Early Modern Law*. As previously discussed, some studies and interpretations associate the poem with the political events of England in the seventeenth century, but she is more interested in exploring how Milton uses the law in his book to explain his characters' actions and make the readers reflect upon the law in the real world. In her own words:

For Milton, law is like the Ark of the Covenant: its highest function is not to draw attention to itself but rather to that which it contains and expresses: the will of God. Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Milton pairs theology and law not to exalt the law itself but rather to emphasize the way that the law indexes something larger and more important. Sin occurs when people focus on the law and forget what stands behind it. For instance, as I suggested in chapter 6, Adam and Eve fall in part because, faced with a situation in which the voice of the law seems to say "eat" and the voice of God says "do not eat," they choose to listen to the law. As a result, Milton's use of

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as the key to a deeper form of subjectivity, and beauty as something tempered more reassuringly. Burke mentions that the more sublime description we can meet is Milton's portrait of Satan.

law in the poem is simultaneously a tacit statement about the limits of law. Milton's reminder that law does not of itself embody truth seems intended to counter an accelerating change in his contemporary world, one that helped to form the conceptual bedrock of the modern understanding of law (Chapman, 2017, p. 246).

In this way, Chapman successfully establishes connections between the poem and Milton himself concerning the law, by positioning Milton at the centre of legal history in the late seventeenth century. This is due to her belief that *Paradise Lost* represents the culmination of the early modern period's profound interest in law and legal processes. The author believes that in Milton's viewpoint, law and religion were seen as closely intertwined, with both expected to reflect the divine will. Notwithstanding, excessive focus on the law can cause people to forget the greater purpose behind it, resulting in sin. Thus, according to Chapman, Milton's involvement in the political issues of his period offers valuable insights for the study of modern law.

Therefore, Milton's literary works have undeniably stood the test of time, leaving an indelible mark on literature across the world. Their enduring influence is evident as they continue to resonate across centuries, addressing a wide array of thematic discussions, and impacting researchers from diverse areas within the field of literature.

Nevertheless, while Milton's work has served as a wellspring of inspiration for many writers and artists, there is also a pervasive fear among those who attempt to engage with his literary legacy: the fear of merely copying or emulating, rather than innovating or surpassing his contributions. That happens because any new poet might feel inhibited from trying to write something like what Milton had previously written; they would suffer from the constant fear of doing what had already been done before, being a copy of a poet that already existed, and never reach originality (Meints-Adail, 2009).

### 3. FREEDOM

The power hierarchy in heaven establishes God as the supreme authority, holding absolute power over all others. Additionally, His omniscience allows Him to know even the thoughts and actions that have not yet occurred. This social organisation, with such an immensely powerful figure as the ultimate leader, can result in compulsory submission, where the angels feel obliged to obey without questioning divine authority. This hierarchical formation can obstruct the angels' exercise of free will, as their obedience is considered the only acceptable behaviour.

However, before delving into the discussion about whether the angels are or not free, it is essential to first understand what freedom is. Although at first glance it may seem like a simple question, it can be tricky to define it. According to Schopenhauer (1960), the concept of freedom has three very different subspecies: physical, intellectual, and moral; and each one must be defined separately.

Physical freedom is the most basic and simple of the three subspecies since it only concerns the material world and remains outside the philosophical sphere. As stated by Schopenhauer (1960, p. 4) "in this physical meaning of the concept of freedom, animals and men are called free when their actions are not hindered by any physical or material obstacles—such as fetters, or prison, or paralysis—but proceed in accordance with their will". Therefore, if an animate being can originate movements from its own will and no material obstacles prevent them, it is possible to say that it is physically free.

Intellectual freedom exists when people have complete control over their mental faculties. Thus, it can be stated that a man is intellectually free when

his actions are the pure result of the reaction of his will to motives which are present to him in the external world as they are to others. Accordingly, actions must be charged up to him, both morally and legally. This intellectual freedom is eliminated either when the medium of the motives—the cognitive faculty—is permanently or temporarily disarranged, or when in an individual case external circumstances falsify the comprehension of the motives. The former happens in madness, delirium and innocent error (Schopenhauer, 1960, p. 100).

Given this statement, intellectual freedom means being in a clear state of mind. When someone is sane and can control their actions, they can be said to be intellectually free. This subspecies of freedom is more complicated than the first one and can be controversial in some aspects. For instance, people who commit crimes during a mental breakdown are not charged for it as usual, since they do not have full control of their minds.

Though some may disapprove, there are laws specifically for this kind of incident. When people considered unaccountable by the courts — diagnosed with a mental disorder, such as schizophrenia, intellectual disability<sup>11</sup>, or even chemical dependency, among others — commits a crime, there is a security measure that ensures they must be sent to a Psychiatric Custody and Treatment Hospital to remain hospitalised for an indefinite period in units of the Prison System. The person will only leave if an expert, in a medical report carried out once a year, certifies that they no longer present risks to society, and this time cannot exceed 30 years and must be equivalent to the time the person would serve if they received a sentence (Dias, 2023).

The fairness of this law is widely discussed since some agree with the existence of the law and fully agree with how it is executed. Others believe that there should not be a distinction between people who commit a crime during a mental episode and completely sane people. Some argue that the law is unfair, but for a different reason, which is the case of the anthropologist Sara Antunes. In an interview with Valéria Dias to the *Jornal da USP*, Antunes states that “when people in these conditions commit a crime, they are doubly punished: by being confined in a prison institution and by having no prospect of leaving” (Dias, 2023).

Moral freedom — the last and trickiest of the three subspecies — is connected to physical freedom at a certain level. As stated before, physical freedom occurs when an individual is physically able to do whatever they want without a material obstacle to stop them. But in some cases, people are prevented from doing what they please due to threats, promises, dangers, and other things that are not necessarily material. Consequently, a question was raised whether such an individual was still free, or whether their actions and their will could be prevented just as effectively by a strong counter motive as by a physical obstacle (Schopenhauer, 1960).

Defining moral freedom is rather challenging as it extends into a philosophical debate. Moral freedom goes beyond external interference, when someone’s actions are driven by necessity rather than pure volition, true moral freedom does not exist. This is because they are not acting only out of their own will, but because they feel like they need to act, otherwise there will be consequences. However, every will is not completely pure, as it is determined by something else. About this, Schopenhauer (1960, p. 8) highlights:

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<sup>11</sup> Currently, the term “mental retardation” has fallen into disuse since the *American Association on Mental Retardation* (AAMR) chose to replace the term “mental retardation” with “intellectual disability”. According to the AAMR, this disability manifests itself before the age of 18 and is characterised by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, including conceptual, social and practical skills. Based on the *American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* (AAIDD), the new term covers the same population previously diagnosed with mental retardation, emphasising its synonymy in the classification system (Veltrone; Mendes, 2012).

A free will then would be the will which is not determined by grounds—and since everything that determines another must be a ground, in real things a real ground, that is, a cause—a free will would not be determined by anything at all. The particular manifestations of this will (volitions) would then proceed absolutely and quite originally from the will itself, without being brought about necessarily by antecedent conditions, and hence also without being determined by anything according to a rule. [...] Still, there is no lack of a technical term also for this concept: this is *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*. This is, by the way, the only clearly defined, firm and positive concept of that which is called freedom of the will. One cannot therefore get away from it without involving oneself in vacillating, hazy explanations, behind which hides hesitant indecision, as when one talks about grounds that do not necessarily bring about their consequents.

Thereupon, given this explanation of moral freedom, it is possible to affirm that no one is truly morally free. Since every action is motivated or restricted by morals, ethics, laws, rules, necessities or even threats and promises, as previously mentioned, it can be inferred that moral freedom is an unachievable concept.

However, even though according to this definition of freedom nobody can be completely free, one could claim that some are more restricted than others. Social groups organise their power structure in different ways, resulting in social organisations that can be quite permissive or extremely restrictive towards their members.

As previously discussed, *Paradise Lost* portrays God as the holder of all power, making Him the ultimate authority. His omniscience enables Him to know everything about everyone — past, present and future — which makes it impossible to oppose Him. This hierarchical arrangement can make the angels feel obligated to unquestioningly obey, which potentially limits their exercise of free will.

This portrayal of the angels' submission to God and His will strongly influences the characterisation of Lucifer in the poem. As Foucault (1996, p. 224) asserts, “as soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance. We are never trapped by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy”. Consequently, Lucifer, recognizing that he could never challenge the will of the Almighty and was destined to forever occupy a subordinate position, may have felt his freedom and autonomy stifled, prompting him to organise a rebellion against God and His authoritarianism.

Expelled from heaven, Lucifer — now Satan — and his followers perceive hell as an opportunity to challenge the power structure established by God and prove their worth. Furthermore, upon arriving in hell — a place that should be seen as a punishment for their disobedience — Satan tells his companions, “Here at least/We shall be free” (Milton, 2021, I 258-259), clearly indicating that, despite hell being considered inferior to heaven, it offers them a semblance of freedom.

Another example of this preference for freedom over servitude is shown in the demon Mammon's speech, during the discussion of what to do next after the demons recover from their arrival in hell:

The former vain to hope argues as vain  
 The latter: for what place can be for us  
 Eithin heaven's bound, unless heaven's lord supreme  
 We overpower? Suppose he should relent  
 And publish grace to all, on promise made  
 Of new subjection; with what eyes could we  
 Stand in his presence humble, and receive  
 Strict laws imposed, to celebrate his throne  
 With warbled hymns, and to his Godhead sing  
 Forced alleluias; while he lordly sits



Our envied sovereign, and his altar breathes  
 Ambrosial odours and ambrosial flowers,  
 Our servile offerings? This must be our task  
 In heaven, this our delight; how wearisome  
 Eternity so spent in worship paid  
 To whom we hate. Let us not then pursue  
 By force impossible, by leave obtained  
 Unacceptable, though in heaven, our state  
 Of splendid vassalage, but rather seek  
 Our own good from ourselves, and from our own  
 Live to ourselves, though in this vast recess,  
 Free, and to non accountable, preferring  
 Hard liberty before the easy yoke  
 Of servile pomp [...] (Milton, 2021, II 234 – 257).

Based on the excerpt from the poem, it is clear the importance that the rebellious angels — now demons — gave to their freedom, as they were more willing to remain in a place considered worse than to return to a life of servitude. Thus, it becomes evident that oppression and exploitation can incite rebellion. When subordinates feel oppressed and unable to exercise their free will, they are likely to fight for change.

Another factor that can lead to rebellion is the lack of representation and participation in decision-making processes. When individuals are voiceless in matters that directly impact their lives, they tend to experience feelings of exclusion and manipulation, fostering increasing dissatisfaction that can escalate into rebellion. This can be observed in the poem when Satan declares, “Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven” (Milton, 2021, I 263). For him, there is an advantage to being in hell, as there he will reign, however, the other demons are in a less privileged position. Despite now serving a less powerful being, they still find themselves in a subordinate position. This raises the question of what the advantage would be of serving in hell instead of in heaven.

This question can be addressed in Book II when an assembly is organised to discuss the next steps of the group condemned to hell. Despite being seated on the throne and therefore in a position of superiority, Satan gives everyone who wishes the opportunity to express their opinion, as can be observed below:

With this advantage then  
 To union, and firm faith, and firm accord,  
 More than can be in heaven, we now return  
 To claim our just inheritance of old,  
 Surer to prosper than prosperity  
 Could have assured us; and by what best way,  
 Whether of open war or covert guile,  
 We now debate: who can advise, may speak (Milton, 2021, II 35-42).

Everyone being allowed to speak and express their opinions makes the demons feel equal among themselves, and more comfortable with the social organisation they are in. The lack of equality and freedom were issues raised by Lucifer himself when he was still in heaven, trying to persuade the other angels to join his cause against the Son. As shown in the excerpt below:

Too much to one, but double how endured,  
 To one and to his image now proclaimed?  
 But what if better counsels might erect  
 Our minds and teach us to cast off this yoke?  
 Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend  
 The supple knee? Ye will not, if I trust

To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves  
 Natives and sons of heaven possessed before  
 By none, and if not equal all, yet free,  
 Equally free; for orders and degrees  
 Jar not with liberty, but well consist.  
 Who can in reason then or right assume  
 Monarchy over such as live by right  
 His equals, if in power and splendour less,  
 In freedom equal? Or can introduce  
 Law and edict on us, who without law  
 Err not, much less for this to be our lord,  
 And look for adoration to the abuse  
 Of those imperial titles which assert  
 Our being ordained to govern, not to serve? (Milton, 2021, V 783-802).

In this excerpt, Lucifer raises questions about justice and freedom. He questions how one can explain dominance over others if they are all equally free, even though they may have less power and prestige. Lucifer argues that if they have the same freedom no individual has the moral right to impose their will on others.

Given the aforementioned ideas, it becomes evident how important freedom was to the rebellious angels and how its absence was crucial for them to revolt against God. Throughout the poem, Satan is shown to be highly persuasive. However, he would not have been able to convince the other angels to rebel against heaven's regime if they had not already been discontented with it. An example of this is the seraph Abdiel who, after Lucifer's speech, opposed the ideas of rebellion and remained by God's side.

Hence, it is clear how vast the concept of freedom is and how individuals can be oppressed in different ways. In heaven, the angels had a certain freedom and acted according to their wishes, but up to a certain point. They did not participate in important decisions that would directly affect their lives, such as choosing the Son as an equal to God. In hell, however, a more democratic system was instituted that allowed the demons to feel better about the social structure they were in, although Satan was clearly their leader.

It is evident, then, that oppression can lead to rebellion, as individuals, being deprived of the right to make decisions that will impact their lives, tend to seek changes. Therefore, the importance of representation and involvement of members of a society in its formation becomes noticeable, since when people feel that their opinions are irrelevant and that their voices do not matter, they will try to fight for their right to freedom.

Based on this, Milton's narrative serves as a reminder of the need for representative governance to empower individuals to guarantee their fundamental freedoms and rights. The story of the rebel angels can be seen as a reflection of the struggles for freedom and justice that occur in various societies throughout history. Since, although hell is theoretically a worse place and should be seen as a form of punishment, the fallen angels feel resigned once they are in a place where they can at least be free.

#### **4. OBEDIENCE**

Even though all angels occupy a subordinate position in the power hierarchy compared to God, not all question their status and seek a more egalitarian form of governance. Thus, it is important to highlight that, within a society, not all individuals will actively fight for their freedom and rights. Some angels may simply resign themselves to the functioning of things and see no purpose in attempting to change their reality, even if they are dissatisfied. Others may fear the consequences of defying God's will and enduring His punishments, choosing to content themselves with a submissive existence.

However, it is necessary to emphasise that some can find contentment within the existing regime, even when they belong to the less privileged side. As previously mentioned, when Lucifer shares his plan of rebellion with the other angels, one of them, the seraph Abdiel, opposes it and chooses to remain on God's side. Therefore, it becomes evident that Abdiel genuinely believes that serving the Almighty is the righteous path. He does not question his position in the hierarchy and finds satisfaction in eternal submission.

Foucault (1995) explains that governments, to maintain obedience and contentment among individuals, tend to shape them into "docile bodies". In other words, they transform individuals into beings who will not question the impositions placed upon them. According to Foucault (1995, p. 137-138):

The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely. What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.

This means that individuals have their bodies trained to be beyond skilled but also obedient and useful according to certain rules. This creates a system where individuals are physically and psychologically conditioned to do what is expected of them as obediently and efficiently as possible, as if they were machines. In this way, disciplinary training transforms bodies into instruments of power.

This process can be seen as a form of domination, as it creates a dynamic in which those with knowledge and control of disciplinary techniques have power over the bodies of those being trained. By disciplining bodies to become obedient and useful for a certain purpose, those in control of the process exercise a form of power over the individuals, as they will determine how they will be shaped and assign specific functions to each. This is because not only the physical abilities of individuals will be shaped, but also their ability to act and think per established norms.

According to Foucault's theory, it is possible to interpret that the seraph Abdiel may have gone through the process of docilisation of bodies, albeit indirectly, which would make it highly improbable that he would question his obedience to God. Unlike the other angels, even though they all came from the same society and, theoretically, went through the same disciplinary processes, there will always be those who more easily accept the regime to which they belong and those who question the way things work.

Furthermore, regarding Foucault's theory about docile bodies, it is important to define the main objective of this disciplinary process for those in power. As stated by Foucault (1995, p. 170):

The chief function of the disciplinary power is to ‘train’, rather than to select and to levy; or, no doubt, to train in order to levy and select all the more. It does not link forces together in order to reduce them; it seeks to bind them together in such a way as to multiply and use them. Instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, it separates, analyses, differentiates, carries its procedures of decomposition to the point of necessary and sufficient single units. It ‘trains’ the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements — small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, combinatory segments. Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.

It is understood that disciplinary power goes beyond punishing or controlling individuals, it is concerned with training them. So, instead of just imposing the rules and making everyone obey them in the same way, the disciplinary power analyses each individual and their particularities and trains them according to their own characteristics and abilities. This means that these individuals will not only be shaped, but also transformed into instruments that can be used to achieve some specific objective, which could possibly explain the hierarchical division of angels in heaven.

When individuals are trained by disciplinary power, they become part of a larger system of control and manipulation. Their identities, skills and behaviours are suited to serve the interests of those holding disciplinary power. Besides, they are also likely to adopt and begin to promote the beliefs and ideologies of the ruling regime. Once they see these ideas as natural and legitimate, individuals may become active defenders of the system that controls them. This further strengthens the dynamics of domination and subordination, as those individuals will not only obey the rules of the dominant power, but also internalise and actively promote its ideology.

Consequently, it can be concluded that, for God, it would be highly advantageous for the angels to be “trained”, as Foucault suggests. By doing so, they would not only be completely obedient and submissive to His will but also be instruments for spreading His ideals and the benefits of serving Him. An example of this is Abdiel himself, who refused to participate in the rebellion and attempted to convince the other angels that serving God was a pleasure, urging them to abandon the idea of rebellion and seek forgiveness for even considering it, as can be seen in the passage:

Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute  
 With him the points of liberty, who made  
 Thee what thou art, and formed the powers of heaven  
 Such as he pleased, and circumscribed their being?  
 Yet by experience taught we know how good,  
 And of our good, and of our dignity  
 How provident he is, how far from thought  
 To make us less, bent rather to exalt  
 Our happy state under one head more near  
 United. But to grant it thee unjust,  
 That equal over equals monarch reign:  
 Thyself though great and glorious dost thou count,  
 Or all angelic nature joined in one,  
 Equal to him begotten Son? By whom  
 As by his word the mighty Father made  
 All things, even thee, and all the spirits of heaven  
 By him created in their bright degrees,  
 Crowned them with glory, and to their glory named  
 Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers  
 Essential powers, nor by his reign obscured,  
 But more illustrious made, since he the head  
 One of our number thus reduced becomes,

His laws our laws, all honour to him done  
 Returns our own. Cease then this impious rage,  
 And tempt not these; but hasten to appease  
 The incensèd Father, and the incensèd Son,  
 While pardon may be found in time besought (Milton, 2021, V 822 – 848).

It is possible to associate this discourse of the faithful angel among the infidels with Foucault's theories in several ways. In it, it is notable how Abdiel is portrayed as an example of conformity to divine norms and expectations, despite Lucifer's attempts at persuasion. This can be seen in the lines: "[...] Cease then this impious rage,/And tempt not these; but hasten to appease/The incensed Father, and the incensed Son,/While pardon may be found in time bethought" (Milton, 2021, V 845 – 848), in which Abdiel asks the rebellious angels to cease their anger while there is still time for forgiveness, highlighting his obedience and submission to divine authority.

Another example can be found in Abdiel's arguments against Lucifer's attempts to incite a rebellion against the Almighty. He defends God's authority and emphasises the importance of obeying His laws and will. As shown in the following: "Yet by experience taught we know how good,/And of out good, and of our dignity/How provident he is, how far from thought/To make us less, bent rather to exalt/Our happy state under one head more near/United.[...]" (Milton, 2021, V 826 – 831). At this moment when the faithful angel highlights God's goodness and providence in elevating and uniting his servants under a single authority, it becomes clear how there was an internalisation of authority and norms, which he sees as legitimate.

Thus, Abdiel's choice to remain faithful to God, despite Lucifer's arguments, reflects the dynamics of domination and subordination described by Foucault in disciplinary power. He represents those who conform and obey the norms and expectations of the dominant power, even when offered the chance to challenge the established authority. Although he also lacks the freedom that Lucifer and the rebellious angels desire, Abdiel does not see the need for it, as he trusts God to guide him and is satisfied with what he has.

## 5. COERCION

When analysing the power relationship between God and the angels, it is noticeable that the Father's omnipotence and omniscience can be an obstacle for the angels to express any disagreements they may have about this relationship. Nevertheless, as shown in the poem, the mere existence of an authority figure is not enough to prevent individuals from rebelling and trying to fight against the established system. Therefore, to maintain power, these authority figures must have different means of exercising control.

Among the various ways of controlling a group, one of the most efficient is coercion, that is, making it clear that there is the capacity and possibility of punishing those who go against the system. According to Bierstedt (1974, p. 231 *apud* Wrong, 1995, p. 21), "Power is the ability to employ force, not its actual employment, the ability to apply sanctions, not their actual application". Therefore, the mere threat of punishment can be as effective as the act of punishing itself.

In fact, the use of physical force can be seen as a demonstration of weakness on the part of those in power. This is because it becomes explicit that there is no true domination and, therefore, true power since it can be seen as the last resort for the wielder of power who did not initially achieve compliance through softer and more cooperative means (Wrong, 1995). Regarding the use of force, it is also important to note that:

Force is more effective in preventing or restricting people from acting than in causing them to act in a given way [...] Force can eliminate a man's freedom to act at all by killing him, starving or maiming him, confining him within four walls or otherwise removing him from the scene, or placing physical obstacles in his path. Force can achieve negative effects: the destruction, prevention or limitation of the possibility of action by others. But one cannot forcibly manipulate the limbs and bodies of others in order to achieve complex positive results: the fabrication or construction of something, the operation of a machine, the performance of a physical or mental skill. Force, however, is often employed not just to eliminate someone's capacity to act, but to establish in the mind of the power subject the future credibility of the power holder's willingness and capability to use force, or, in effect, to create, or recreate, a power relation based not on force but on the threat and fear of force (Wrong, 1995, p. 27).

In view of this, it is understood that force can be used to limit someone's freedom, but it is not effective to directly manipulate someone's complex actions, such as building something, operating a machine or performing physical or mental abilities. Despite this, force is useful in establishing in the individual's mind the future credibility of the power holder's willingness and ability to use force. In this way, a power relationship is created based not only on physical strength, but also on threat and fear.

Consequently, it is necessary to establish the difference between real punishment and coercion within a power relationship, as the former involves the direct use of force in the physical realm, while the latter relies on threats, operating within the psychological realm. According to Easton (1958):

I distinguish here between force and the threat of force. In the latter case we have an example of the exercise of authority. There is a significant difference between actually eliminating a person from the political system by jailing him and merely threatening him with incarceration. When only threats are made, the individual may be inclined to obey, thereby participating in an authority relationship, whereas in the case of pure force the individual continues to refuse to obey but is nevertheless compelled to conform to the decision of the authorities (p. 183 *apud* Wrong, 1995, p. 27).

Coercion becomes a more efficient tool of domination, as it acts on the individual's psychology, as it generates fear. Furthermore, another psychological way coercion can influence an individual is when they observe someone else being punished and, therefore, associate the crime with the punishment.

From the point of view of psychology, the approach of observational learning, by Albert Bandura, explains the importance of observation for the learning processes. To Bandura, an individual is much more likely to learn through vicarious reinforcement, observing how other people's choices affect them, than by experimenting on their own (Schultz; Schultz, 2017). In this way, when observing punishments being applied to others, an individual becomes less inclined to do the same, as the consequences of that action are already known.

In addition to that, for a punishment to be truly effective it must be proportional and directly associated with the crime, so that those who observe the punishment immediately associate it with the crime that is being punished, serving as a clear symbol of the illicit act being punished. As stated by Foucault (1995, p. 104-105):

The ideal punishment would be transparent to the crime that it punishes; thus, for him who contemplates it, it will be infallibly the sign of the crime that it punishes; and for him who dreams of the crime, the idea of the offence will be enough to arouse the sign of the punishment.

Accordingly, the ideal punishment would be directly related to the crime being sanctioned, being clearly recognized as a response to the specific crime committed. For those who might have thoughts or fantasies about breaking the same law, the mere idea should evoke the idea of the legal retaliation that would be applied. Thus, Foucault argues that ideal punishment should be transparent and inevitably associated with a certain illicit act so that everyone knows exactly the consequences of committing it.

Based on the aforementioned, the difference between the punishment applied to the rebellious angels and the coercion exercised over the remaining angels becomes evident when analysing the context of the angels in *Paradise Lost*. Lucifer was indeed punished for his defiance of God's expectations, and having the example of what happened to Lucifer and the other angels who opposed God's decisions, any other angel who might have reservations about their position in the social hierarchy would remain silent to preserve their own well-being.

Aside from that, the punishment did not make Satan or the demons repent their actions and conform to the expected standard of obedience. On the contrary, after being condemned to hell, they actively seek alternative ways to oppose God's will, as shown in the following excerpt, where the demons debated their next step in their eternal war against the Most High:

What fear we then? what doubt we to incense  
His utmost ire? which to the height enraged,  
Will either quite consume us, and reduce  
To nothing this essential, happier far  
Than miserable to have eternal being:  
Or if our substance be indeed divine,  
And cannot cease to be, we are at worst  
On this side nothing; and by proof we feel  
Our power sufficient to disturb heaven,  
And with perpetual inroads to alarm,  
Though inaccessible, his fatal throne:  
Which if not victory is yet revenge (Milton, 2021, II 94 – 105).

Thus, it is clear that demons do not care about God's punishments, since they have already suffered the worst retaliation and no longer fear anything. However, for those who remain in heaven, the prospect of going to hell is still frightening, making any possible discomfort minimal compared to this. Nonetheless, it is important to be careful when punishing figures who represent strong ideals, at the risk of them becoming a martyr, which would influence others to follow in the same footsteps. Even though Lucifer's rebellion may serve as an example for others to question authority, it is essential for God's governance, because without it, there would be no demonstration of the consequences awaiting those who disobey divine orders.

Therefore, fearing a fate similar to their former equals, the angels who sided with the Father during the war against the rebellious angels choose to fit into the imposed social hierarchy, even if they have some opposition to the orders they must follow. And once they find themselves in a position where they only live under the threat of punishment, they are more inclined to conform to their current position.

Since the outbreak of war in heaven occurred due to the elevation of the Son to the same level as the Father — therefore above all the angels — it was important that God let the war happen not only to ensure his dominance but also to prove the power of the Son. As shown in the following passage:

Infernal noise; horrid confusion heaped  
Upon confusion rose: and now all heav'n  
Had gone to wreck, with ruin overspread,

Had not the almighty Father where he sits  
 Shrined in his sanctuary of heav'n secure,  
 Consulting on the sum of things, foreseen  
 This tumult, and permitted all, advised;  
 That his great purpose he might so fulfil,  
 To honour his anointed Son avenged  
 Upon his enemies, and to declare  
 All power on him transferred: whence to his Son  
 The assessor of his throne he thus began (Milton, 2021, VI 668 – 679).

According to the above, it is possible to affirm that God, in his omniscience, used the angelic war to achieve his purpose of unquestionably establishing the Son as equal, above all angels. Since he could have stopped the war at any time, but he decided to wait for some time to pass and only then order his Son to end it.

Based on this, the war and its consequences for the rebellious angels were also important for the Almighty to prove his power and show his strength, and to put an end to any possible future rebellion. According to Foucault's concept of perfect punishment, the exile of the rebellious angels to hell is a punishment completely associated with the crime they committed, since the idea of one will always be linked to the other, and any idea of rebellion would be subconsciously associated with exile in hell.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through the analysis of the behaviour and speeches of the rebellious angels in *Paradise Lost*, it was possible to understand how important freedom is within a society and how its deprivation can lead to revolts and rebellions. Lucifer and the other angels who decided to turn against God felt oppressed and had no prospect of changing their realities within the political system of heaven, especially when they found themselves forced to worship another of God's creations as equal to Him.

As theorised by Schopenhauer (1960), freedom can be divided into three subspecies — physical, intellectual, and moral — and, although all angels are physically and intellectually free, their moral freedom becomes more restricted when living under the command of an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent figure. Consequently, they found themselves obliged to find a way to go against divine impositions and were exiled to hell, where they found, in a way, the freedom they so desired.

Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that not all individuals in a society will go against the political regime they are in, as some are in fact satisfied and happy with their reality. A clear example of this is the seraphim Abdiel who listens to Lucifer's speech while he was trying to convince the others to start a rebellion, but decides to remain on the side of the Almighty, as he trusts in His government and decisions.

In his theory on "docile bodies", Foucault (1995) states that governments transform individuals into obedient and submissive beings who do not question or evaluate the orders they receive. In this way, it is possible to analyse Abdiel's determination as a process of docilisation, as he is not only content with the system in which he is inserted, but is also an instrument of propagation, as he also tries to convince the other angels to remain alongside the Father, claiming to be the best path for everyone.

It is also important to highlight that, even though He could have ended the angelic war before it even started, God waits for it to happen for a while before sending the Son to intervene. This is because He uses the war to prove his authority and the power of His Son, in order to put an end to any possible future rebellions. Foucault (1995) highlights that a perfect punishment must be forever linked to the crime committed, which is the case with the exile of rebels to hell, as other angels will always associate hell with disobedience.



Therefore, Easton's (1958 *apud* Wrong, 1995) theory that coercion is a better form of control than the use of force itself is proven. He asserts that when individuals are punished for their actions and do not necessarily come to terms with what is expected of them, as is the case with demons who, with nothing left to lose, continue to look for ways to go against God's will. Those who only observed the punishments live with the threat of consequences and therefore in fear of suffering the same as the disobedient, becoming more malleable and submissive, willing to do whatever is necessary to maintain their comfort and well-being.

This study shows that the lack of individual freedom and participation in decision-making in a society can lead individuals to rebel against the system they are part of, seeking ways to make their opinions valid. Furthermore, it also shows how a government can make the population malleable and uncritical, through training that will not only make it easier to control, but will also make its components means of propagating the ideals established by those in power. This is because the members of this society will actually believe that they are part of a fair and egalitarian system, without seeing the negative sides and without seeking their rights.

Moreover, it shows how coercion and the threat of punishment are used as psychological instruments not only to maintain social order, but also to shape individuals' beliefs and behaviours in ways convenient to those in power. This psychological aspect highlights the complexity of power and authority relationships within a social formation, as it shows how control systems can operate using more than physical force, but also through the manipulation of individuals' perceptions and emotions. In this way, the importance of remaining critical in power relations and authority within a society becomes clear, in addition to seeking rights despite the possible consequences, as this is the only way to change reality.

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