

Chapter Four :

Paradise Lost in the Horizon of Genesis

This chapter is divided into five parts: logos and creation, major philosophers' view of creation, major theologians' view of creation, the unity of cosmos, and logos and interpretation. Logos is the original, operational, sustaining power in the creation of God, which is well manifested in the first chapter of Genesis. And given the views of major philosophers and theologians, a historical fusion of horizons may be imminent. Furthermore, unity is characteristic of God's creation, while chaos is the essence of Satanic power. As a result, the diverse cosmology results in different ways of interpreting the text.

I. Logos and creation

The Supreme Being/Logos created heaven and the earth in sublimity and perfect order. When King David considered God's heavens, the works of His fingers, the moon and the stars which God had ordained (Psalms 8: 3), he described the beauty with all his heart, "Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens" (Psalms 8: 1). The Supreme Being measured the foundations of the earth by stretching a line upon it—"the foundations thereof were fastened, and the corner stone was thereof laid" (Job 38: 5-6). The creation was so orderly and beautiful that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38: 7).

However, due to the fall of the archangels, the earth was judged and destroyed. "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the

deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1). The first “and” in verse 1 suggests that something happened between verse 1 and verse 2. In the Old Testament, the two linguistic signs “formless” and “void” often signify the result of God’s judgment (Jer. 4: 23; Isa. 34: 8-11). In addition, the darkness upon the face of the waters also signifies that the creation of that age was destroyed under the judgment of God, for darkness is symbolic of God’s judgment. (Exod. 10: 21-22; Rev. 16: 10).

According to Ezekiel 28: 15-18, we can figure out what happened during the rupture period or hiatus between Genesis 1: 1 and Genesis 1: 2.

Thou [Satan] was perfect in thy ways from the Day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned; therefore I [God] will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Satan, the archangel, was motivated by his pride to commit sin with one third of the angels and rebel against God, which finally brought down God’s wrath and judgment on the whole earth (Isa. 14: 13-14; Rev. 14: 4, 9). This serves to account for the waste and desolation of the earth.

The supreme Being, Logos itself, however, hovered over the face of the waters, recovering the earth and creating all living creatures by His utterance (Darby, 1). The power of Logos not only conquered the subverting force of Satan, recovering the heaven and the earth, but also “proceeded from these, by minute transitions, through the successively more complex forms of plant life, passing from these to the ‘zoophytes,’ from these in turn to shells, from these to fishes, from these to higher animals, and so on in detail through the hierarchy of nature as medieval natural science conceived it” (Lovejoy, 90)

Thereupon the Word in the beginning becomes the holding center by which all things exist, just as the hub holds together the spokes of a wheel (Cor. 1: 17). All things were created by, through, and for Logos, and sustained by Logos (Col. 1: 16-17). To this is attributed the origin of logocentrism, that is, the Western metaphysical tradition. As Arthur O. Lovejoy puts it,

God is, on the one hand, “the universal Plenitude, whose happiness is consummated within his own circle, who supports himself upon the basis of his own all-sufficiency and his own end and center. (87)

II. Historical survey of the views of major philosophers

According to Plato’s *Timaeus*, the account of creation postulates three things as necessary for the process of creation: (1) an eternal plan, (2) material and space out of which the universe can be formed, and (3) a divine creator, called by Plato the Demiurge. Since Plato believes that the realm of the eternally unchanging is the location of reality, he places great emphasis on the pattern behind the universe. Although Milton also signals God’s great idea in describing God looking down on the newly-made world (VII, 554-57), actually the emphasis throughout Book VII falls on the process itself, and thus on the Creator and on the fish, stars, and trees He makes, rather than on some abstract Platonic Idea.¹

The account of the sixth day does recount that man was made in the image of God. Ascribing to the Creator the use of an image or idea is in line with the spirit of Genesis. Furthermore, creation according to a great Idea is consonant with the activities of the Biblical God who has a preconceived plan for his universe and for

¹ Milton’s use of the word Idea itself may suggest both a sense of abstract design and a sense of concrete particulars if it is correct to assume that the Greek word idea suggests shape and visible presence.

his chosen people. The presence of a controlling hand is felt throughout the Old and New Testaments² and throughout *Paradise Lost* as well. Therefore, although both Plato and Milton emphasize creation by divine plan and not by chance, I see no need to refer directly to Plato upon encountering the word Idea. Since Milton's own program was to directly rely on the words of the Bible, it is logical to refer to the Bible as the basis for Milton's additions to Genesis.

The second passage in *Paradise Lost* to which critics refer in order to demonstrate Milton's reliance on Platonic Ideas describes the earth as the shadow of heaven³ :

What surmounts the reach
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
By lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms,
As may express them best, though what if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heav'n, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on Earth is thought? (V, 571-76)

Here, Raphael is describing correspondences between different aspects of the universe, correspondences which exist because God created everything and because spirit and matter are opposite extremes of an unbroken chain of being. The passage emphasizes the similarities between heaven and earth. Raphael is able to compare heaven and earth because one is so like the other. As Adam's earlier use of the word shows, "shadow" does not necessarily indicate illusion; describing his dream of Eden Adam says that he wakes to discover that everything he dreamed was real—"as the dream/ Had lively shadow'd" (VII, 310-11). Whether Raphael's comparison of heaven and earth can be called Platonic depends in part on whether Plato stands behind western man's view of reality as a great chain of being. According to Arthur

² For example, God intervenes to part the Red Sea or guide his people to the promised land, and sends his son to redeem the sinful.

³ See M. M. Mahood, *Poetry and Humanism* (Lodon, 1950), p. 204: "The Platonic concept of the visible world as the shadow of an unseen reality is used by Milton to justify his very substantial account of the wars in heaven."

O. Lovejoy, Plato contributed two contradictory tendencies to western thought: a tendency to separate the transcendent realm of Being from the physical world of Becoming, and a tendency to view this world and all of its creatures as the necessary product of a transcendental Being (Lovejoy 45). In *Paradise Lost* Milton seems to rely less on the account of creation in the *Timaeus* and more on Neo-Platonic philosophy which emphasizes the great of being. Although Milton's God chooses to create, He does extend himself into chaos, communicate with the world He has created, and fashion a universe whose various parts are all connected along a great chain of being.

It should be noted that the chaos pictured in *Paradise Lost* is quite similar to the chaos in the *Timaeus*. Plato conveys a sense of chaos first by describing its physical attributes. In general, it is a vast space filled with neutral material out of which sensible objects are formed. Since chaos is composed of the four elements, it is hot, cold, dry and wet, and quite varied in appearance. There is always constant movement as the contents of chaos separate and join, rise and fall. Each element is itself composed of tiny geometric shapes, of which the triangle is the most basic; these shapes determine the qualities of the elements themselves: for example, fire is hot since it is formed from small and sharp-edged triangles. And Plato also describes chaos metaphorically, comparing it to a winnowing basket and to a similar implement for cleaning corn. Plato's most frequent image for chaos is that of a mother, a fecund source for all beings.

One cannot say, besides the Bible, from which of many sources Milton derived his ideas and his language, but the *Timaeus* certainly contains many suggestions for his picture of chaos. The chaos of *Paradise Lost* also lacks coherence and stability; the elements are in constant motion; and chaos is hot, cold, dry and damp. Both Plato and Milton recognize that without a guiding force the activity of the elements is futile and sterile. Especially striking here too is Milton's use of the image of a womb to describe the spaces of chaos out of which worlds can

roll at God's command; this image of chaos as a mighty, watery womb bearing the earth as if it were a giant egg appears again in Book VII. The use Milton makes of the image is, however, more extensive and systematic than Plato's.

The earth itself is pictured as a great womb; often it assumes anthropomorphic characteristics or takes the shape of a huge woman, and frequently, as in the passage preceding Raphael's arrival, it is named the great mother or womb:

Him through the spicy Forest onward come
Adam discern'd, as in the door he sat
Of his cool Bow'r, while now the mounted Sun
Shot down direct his fervid Rays, to warm
Earth's inmost womb, more warmth than Adam needs...

(V, 298-302)

The various wombs of Milton's universe seem to fit inside one another as orbs within orbs, and to indicate therefore the ubiquity of divine matters: Eve within the bower within the garden within the earth within the great womb of chaos. As God exerts his power through them, the various wombs become independently productive, creative now even as God himself, and fulfilling his purpose.

Generally speaking, Plato's account is not as sexual in nature as is Milton's because he chose to emphasize artful design and plan. Milton and Plato differ indeed in their choice of images. Although Plato describes chaos as a womb, he most characteristically chooses images from the fields of mathematics or geometry. Since Plato distinguishes between empirical knowledge and logic or mathematical knowledge in the same way that he distinguishes the realm of Becoming from the realm of Being, it is easy to understand his preference for geometric images in the *Timaeus*. The geometric figures compose the elements which are irreducible, unchangeable, and too small to be seen. Plato defines "the unchanging form" as "uncreated and indestructible, admitting no modification and entering no combination, imperceptible to sight or the other senses, the object of thought"

(Plato 70). The basic unit for the formation of the elements is the triangles which are combined in such a way as to form cubes, which are assigned to the earth, pyramids, fire, and so forth.

Comparatively speaking, the emphasis in Book VII falls on the description of the world. Whereas Plato turns away constantly from the world of Becoming, Milton immerses his readers in it. Whereas Milton describes plants and herbs as man sees them, Plato places them in the hierarchy of being. Accordingly, Milton's God is quite different from Plato's Demiurge. One of the reasons why Milton can assert the reality of the physical universe is that his creator is absolute and unlimited, the direct and sole cause of creation. The very material of the universe emanates from God. Plato's Demiurge, on the other hand, is not able to do whatever he wishes, but only what is possible since he has limited power. According to the *Timaeus*, this world came into being from a mixture of necessity and intelligence. Intelligence controlled necessity by persuading it to bring about the best result, and it was by this subordination of necessity to reasonable persuasion that the universe was originally constituted as it is. Furthermore, the God of the *Timaeus* is not the sole creator of all things, since he hands on the task of making mortal creatures to the traditional gods of mythology.

In terms of personas the gods of Milton and of Plato are different. The Demiurge is basically an artificer who creates the world like a work of art. He forms the body of the universe as if he were making a perfect sphere, smoothing it and forcing it into a uniform shape. Milton's God is in part an artificer for, like the Demiurge, He produces order and harmony out of chaos, but He is more characteristically a vital form of energy which is derived from Logos, mighty and authoritative. So, Plato describes the Demiurge as working with his hands, while Milton presents the God of Genesis, a God who creates by His word. In addition, in discussing the creation of man, Plato considers man fallen. And he devotes several sections of his work to discussion of human diseases and decay. Such a man is

comparable to Adam after the fall. However, the earlier Adam is perfect and in harmony with himself⁴ and with the world around him. Thus, indeed, the influence of Plato on Milton is obviously a complex subject, even if one limits one's discussion of this influence to Milton's ideas about creation as expressed in *Paradise Lost*.

Both Milton and Augustine approach creation in a similar way: both rely on their own minds and on the words of Genesis to reach and comprehend the truth.⁵ Augustine seems to revel in the multitude of interpretations for certain passages that he has been able to uncover; he delights in the obscurity of scripture, since it has provoked so many different ideas. In his *Confessions*, Augustine points out that truth exists in many forms, which is reaffirmed in his *The City of God*. Each passage of Scripture invites many questions, and to each question Augustine provides several possible answers. Although Milton does not stress the obscurity of Scripture, and although he is less tolerant of theories different from his own, he does approach Genesis in a similar way. Augustine's methods may have strengthened his confidence in the credo which one finds set forth in the introduction to his *De Doctrina Christiana*:

But since it is only to the individual faith of each that the Deity has opened the way of eternal salvation, and as he requires that he who should be saved should have a personal belief of his own, I resolved not to repose in the faith or judgment of others in matters relating to God. (5)

⁴ Since Milton believed in the goodness of matter and in its having derived from God, Adam's creation from the dust does not symbolize his mortal corruption. Later, due to the fall, with sin penetrating into the flesh of man, man fell into an eternal conflict between sin and his conscience.

⁵ For a discussion of Augustine's influence on the doctrines embodied in *Paradise Lost*, see C.S.Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (N.Y., 1966) chap. X.

The difference between Milton and Augustine, however, is that Milton relies more heavily on the words of the Bible, Augustine on the processes of his own mind.⁶ Thus Milton's account of creation in the *De Doctrina* is dotted with quotations from Scripture. In discussing the passage "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. XI, 3), for example, Milton lingers over each phrase, avoiding philosophical speculation about the Word and about the process itself. The passage goes on, running via scriptural verses into another aspect of creation. Milton's presentation of creation in *Paradise Lost*, while far from imaginative, also relies heavily on the words of Genesis. It is, in fact, the absence of extraneous material about creation that distinguishes Book VII from so many accounts of creation including those by Augustine. Moreover, the structural supports behind the poetry of Book VII—the words of Genesis—are quite obvious.

Augustine, however, seems to locate truth and reality within the mind, and his characteristic movement is thus away from a literal presentation and towards an allegorical interpretation of the verses at hand. Augustine's motive, like Plato's, is to find the deeper meaning behind the historical, concrete event. Augustine, then, stands somewhere between the purely literal and the purely allegorical in his approach to Scripture. Yet, since he locates reality in the divine Being, Augustine doubts that the senses can tell us anything about the nature of reality; they can only supply information about the visible and corporeal world. Thus he is constantly allegorizing, putting aside the visible or the literal for the intelligible; as he interprets the story of creation he usually concentrates on deeper, more personal interpretations. His own comments tend to dominate his various accounts of creation. Milton, however, does not allegorize, asserting the validity of sense experience. Augustine draws analogies between spiritual experiences and physical

⁶ It should be noted that private interpretation is not the mere persuasion that a doctrine is true because it comes directly from the Spirit of God, but is a rational judgment dependent on evidence.

events, while Milton has no need to cite analogies. Thus phrases such as “hand in hand they pass’d” can stand innocently without any explanation. While it may be true that the phrase “hand in hand” means more than that Adam and Eve joined hands, no analogy is specifically drawn. The poet does not explain that the union of Adam and Eve symbolizes the union between God and man; rather, he allows the words to build up meanings as they are repeated over and over again.

Augustine’s way of thinking influences his entire presentation of creation, beginning with his description of the creator. Basically Augustine and Milton are in accord about God; for both of them, God is immortal, immutable, and incorruptible, an omnipotent creator who creates out of goodness, an object of worship, a force within man’s soul, and a divine energy filling the universe. Both Augustine and Milton recognize God as the creative energy behind all of nature. Unlike Milton, however, Augustine provides explanation for what he considers simplistic statements about God, statements such as the one which asserts that God rested on the seventh day of creation.⁷ Although Milton adds the comment that God was unwearied by his labors, he is yet willing to repeat the biblical idea that God “from work/ Now resting, bless’d and hallow’d the Sev’nth day” (VII, 591-92).

An examination of the *De Doctrina* shows that Milton’s reliance on the words of Scripture and on the physical facts involved in creation was integral to his way of thinking, and not simply adopted for the composition of *Paradise Lost*. Augustine, to the contrary, describes beauty not by referring to the physical creation but by referring to an ideal.⁸

⁷ Augustine points out, “The sacred narrative states that God rested, meaning thereby that those rest who are in Him, and whom he makes to rest. And this the prophetic narrative promises also the man to whom it speaks, and for whom it was written...if they have managed by faith to get near to God in this life shall enjoy in Him eternal rest” (*The City of God*, 352).

⁸ In *The City of God*, Augustine points out, “For there is no corporeal beauty, whether in the condition of a body, as figure, or in its movement, as in music, of which it is not the mind that judges. But this could never have been, had there not existed in the mind itself a superior form of these things, without bulk, without noise of voice, without space and time” (251).

Furthermore, in terms of cosmology, Milton does not suggest that evil inherently exists yet in the world, while Augustine inserts a characteristic distinction between the precious and the vile, a distinction he makes again in referring to the separation of land and water and of light and darkness in *The City of God*. His theme of the opposition of the spiritual and the physical, the good and the evil, or the city of God and the city of the devil thus carries through his discussion of creation in both the *Confessions* and *The City of God*. Despite the absence of an eminent struggle between good and evil in Book VII, *Paradise Lost* as a whole is essentially about the struggle between God and Satan. And the reader can easily find such binary oppositions as: God's heaven vs. Satan's hell, light vs. darkness, authority vs. freedom, domination vs. subordination, reason vs. passion, and obedience vs. transgression.⁹

III. Historical survey of the views of major theologians

Milton's decision to follow Genesis and present an account of creation which is literal and which describes an essentially unfallen world, was probably influenced by the Reformation and perhaps more specifically by the accounts published by Calvin and Luther (MacCallum 397-415). Participating actively as he did in the Reformation, Milton would have resisted authoritative commentaries on the Bible and would have suspected those writings which set aside the literal account in Genesis. With the Reformation came a revived interest in the Hebrew text of the Bible.¹⁰

⁹ Contemporary critics known as structuralists have been arguing that binarism is fundamental and indispensable to human language, cognition and communication. Through binary ideas, man categorizes the chaotic world and imposes the notion of system on it. Therefore, binary oppositions help us to shape entire world-views and to mark differences in an otherwise unorganized universe.

¹⁰ Calvin says that according to the Hebrew, God's spirit can be said to have moved upon the waters, or to have rested on them to sustain them—both meanings are acceptable. Editors of Milton have often noted that Milton's choice of words may be dependent on his knowledge of Hebrew or Latin. See *The Christian Doctrine*, Columbia ed., XV, p.17.

It should be pointed out that Luther and Calvin are concerned with a simple message: all things were created by God; man sinned, and all nature lost its original state of order and perfection. Both evince an awareness of language, of the history and customs of the Jewish people, and both treat Moses as an inspired prophet (Calvin 38). Calvin concludes with the observation that Moses calls the moon the second light in the sky—though in fact Saturn is larger—because he only “propoundeth those things which are before our eyes” (38). Similarly, Luther asserts that Moses’s meaning is clear and simple, and that Augustine’s more obscure interpretations are to be rejected (Conkling 9). Like Calvin, Luther describes reality as a visible phenomenon, not in an Augustinian manner, as something allegorical and invisible (Luther 4-5). Luther and Calvin seem, moreover, to imitate the Moses they observe, since in their commentaries they seek to convey simple, useful and necessary information.

Milton is also in concert with Luther and Calvin in his focus on the realities of the creative process, that is, on what Genesis says happened to the physical universe. Luther takes the verses on the creation of light in a literal way:

I hold that it was a real light which was movable, and so moved
around the earth as does the sun (Luther 14).

The implicit protest in these lines is against allegorical interpretations which maintain that the light refers to angels or to a vague intellectual nature. The description of light in *Paradise Lost* is also of the light that eventually found residence in the sun, the light of the day which opposes the darkness of night. In a similar vein Calvin vehemently insists on the reality of Eden and refers to geographical details which establish Eden’s location on this earth (Calvin 60). Milton also takes pains to give geographical details about Eden and to establish its reality, often by the preponderance of exotic, biblical place names.

The main reason why Calvin and Luther refuse to speculate about matters which they cannot understand is that man's reason is fallen and thus he cannot hope to comprehend the ways of God. As Luther says, concerning the matters of divine providence, "Human reason indeed is put to shame, for what is order before God appears to us as disorder and confusion" (Luther 17). Since the awesome event of the creation is absolutely beyond man's comprehension, he should simply accept what God has provided for his use—the words of Genesis. Since fallen man is nothing before almighty God, he must be obedient. In his account of creation Luther emphasizes the weakness and depravity of man and his loss of the divine image. This conviction of man's depravity after the fall leads Calvin and Luther to embrace the simple truth of Genesis without attempting to discover anything about divine or natural processes through philosophy or science; it also leads them to emphasize the dichotomy between the world before the fall and the world after the fall. To dramatize man's current corruption, they portray Eden as wholly good, and original man as perfect (Calvin 70). Before the fall flesh and spirit were in harmony, both separately and with each other; only afterwards did flesh oppose and pollute man's soul. Luther also praises the wisdom, righteousness and knowledge of Adam before the fall; then, he says, Adam lived in spiritual purity like the angels. The Adam described by Calvin and Luther is thus quite similar to the Adam of *Paradise Lost*, for he too is unfallen, pure, and yet wholly physical in nature. The change in man and in his life is rapid and absolute in the accounts of all three authors; with the fall come death, the ferocity of animals, the violence of the intemperate seasons, the growth of briars, insects and all things harmful to man, and the disordering of man's own nature, although at the outset the essential similarity between Milton, Calvin and Luther stands, for they all picture creation as a divine process by which a perfect world was brought into being.

Milton's description of creation, while essentially simple and literal like those of Calvin and Luther, is permeated as well by a sense of the fertility and joy which accompanied creation. Book VII displays the natural world and takes great pleasure

in the grace and fragrance of nature. We see not only God's activity in forming the earth, but the activity of the earth as well: the sort of movement in the lines from the specific words of God's commands to a focus on a particular object—a stag's branching horns, for example. Once it has been set in motion by God, the earth seems to assert itself by countering and paralleling the activity of God. Both Calvin and Luther omit this bountifulness and beauty of created nature. The difference is based on a difference in appreciation and approval of the existent world. Although Calvin and Luther say that creation was wonderful and that the world is good, they only say it. The tone of the accounts is flat and cool. They find no joy in the world, but are interested in God's absolute control over chaos and over the created world. Such a focus works to magnify God's power over all things. It is in obvious harmony with the Reformers' view of man and with their belief that God is the source of all things; it serves, therefore, a didactic purpose.

Thus a final fundamental difference between Milton and Calvin or Luther is that although Milton solemnly presents the fact of evil and the certainty of retribution, he also insists on the value of man, of the earth and of humanistic concerns. James Holly Hanford argues that Milton's affinities were with Renaissance humanism and such writers as Spenser and Donne, rather than with Puritanism (Hanford 143). Although Milton chooses many specific details from traditional sources, his poetry about the created world is more like the *Faerie Queene* and the Bible than any of the other sources. In fact, Milton's whole world is broader, more flexible and more inclusive; faith and reason, body and soul, earth and heaven do not oppose one another. Rather than to an ascetic spiritualism, *Paradise Lost* is dedicated to the fullness of human experience.

IV. The unity of the cosmos in *Paradise Lost*

After surveying the cosmology of major relevant philosophers and theologians, I will further discuss a prominent feature of creation, that is, the unity

of the universe. A reader is made aware of the unity of the universe when he recalls that God created the dawn which sows the Earth with Orient Pearl and that God created the sun which is constantly seen penetrating the earth, spreading its beams over the land, or impressing the clouds. In these descriptions Milton becomes part of the historical tradition which uses light to describe God and to suggest the close relationship between God and earth. In the prologue to Book III the poet uses light as a symbol for heavenly inspiration. Within a single prologue, then, we see the light of God specifically affect the entire universe. Since light can touch both the surface and depths of the universe, since light can warm Adam and Eve and at the same time provide spiritual inspiration for the fallen poet, and since the rays of light can travel far from its source, light is a good image both for God specifically and for conveying his connection with all parts of the physical universe.

Milton also demonstrates the unity of the universe by repeating key themes and motifs throughout the poem. Although the process of creation itself is delineated in Book VII, it goes on continually until the very end of *Paradise Lost*: waters continue to flow, the trees blossom, and order is maintained. Because life constantly reasserts itself, a reader gets the impression that the rhythm of life is cyclical. Creation is not confined to the six days of the nominal creation or even to the creation of new flowers and trees, but extends beyond physical renewal to spiritual rebirth: the resurrections of Adam, Christ and man are also results of God's creative activities. Significantly, one of the major ways in Christianity by which man is called to God for the process of resurrection is by his experience of the physical creation.¹¹ Although man is saved ultimately through Christ, man can be in contact with God and salvation through the manifestation of God in this world. Milton suggests his belief in this doctrine in *Paradise Lost* by certain image patterns.

¹¹ See Romans 8: 29-30, "Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestined, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified."

That is, he associates salvation and creation by means of the images of seeds and water, and thereby implies that God's creative activity is behind both, and that God's natural creation can lead man to God.¹²

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that "seed"¹³ is the most important word for establishing the link between the creation and the resurrection of life and between the divine and the human. The importance of the word derives partly from its Biblical origin and thus also from its prominence in commentaries on Genesis, for in the Bible God warns that there will be enmity between the serpent and Eve. Milton's handling of the word "seed" confirms its significance for *Paradise Lost*. It appears at first in the account of God's creation of herbs and trees, an account which closely parallels the words of Genesis:

And God say'd, Let th' Earth
Put forth the verdant Grass, Herb yielding seed,
And fruit tree yielding fruit after her kind;
Whose seed is in herself upon the Earth... (VII, 309-12)

These few lines present a skeletal but inclusive outline of the cycle of nature. Of all the elements, the seed gathers to itself special importance. Since an actual seed contains within it, the root, the shoot, the tree, and the fruit with its own seeds, the word represents the growth of a living thing across time. It also draws attention to the cyclical pattern of life and thereby to the unity of the world,¹⁴ since the reappearance of life in a seed signals the reassertion of divine providence in and through the material cosmos.

¹² See Romans 1:20, "for from the world's creation the invisible things of him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both his eternal power and divinity,--so as to render them [the wicked] inexcusable."

¹³ The basic imagery that accompanies the resurrection and the creation is that of birth, of seeds, of water, and of fruit.

¹⁴ See Ephesians 1:20-21, "in which he [God] wrought in the Christ in raising him [Jesus Christ] from among the dead, and he set him down at his right hand in the heavens, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come."

V. Logos and interpretation

Compared with the unity of the cosmos derived from the intrinsic nature of logos, Satan's great energy often persuades a reader that the world of *Paradise Lost* is fragmented and polarized, and the power of evil may be virtually equal to the power of good. Two such kinds of world view would lead to diverse angles from which to interpret the text. Indeed, as was shown regarding Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the Christian world view would later greatly influence the reader's interpretation of the text. Classic hermeneutics as mentioned in the first chapter, especially in the part devoted to the historical review of the major hermeneutic theorists, has been rooted in logocentricism, which is believed to be deeply associated with the Christian view of the genesis of the universe, well reflected not only in the Bible but deliberately elaborated in Milton's writing. So, departing from the interaction between logos and creation, I will further elaborate on the interaction between logos and hermeneutics, especially on aspects relating to the interpretation of the text.

The Western metaphysical tradition was conceived in logocentricism, which is commonly believed to be derived from the world view of the Bible. In Hebrew culture, the universe is considered to have been created by Jehovah, a universal Being, Who used the power of His word to create the universe. And it is to be noted that the Word in Genesis is actually the Word depicted in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. According to John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the beginning, God dispensed His Word to create the universe as well as human beings. The eighth chapter of *The Great Chain of Being* echoes the first chapter of Genesis, explicitly describing the history of God's creation.¹⁵ Arthur O. Lovejoy holds that the essential excellence of God consists in His limitless creativity—that is, in an unstinting overflow of His own being into the fullest possible variety of beings. And the being of the

¹⁵ God is "the universal Plenitude, whose happiness is consummated within his own circle, who supports himself upon the basis of his own all-sufficiency and his own end and center.

Word/Logos is the holding center by which all things exist, just as the hub holds together the spokes of a wheel (Col. 1:17). As David, that most famous Hebrew poet, put it in Psalms 8,

“O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory above the heavens....When I consider thy
heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which
thou hast ordained; ...Thou madest him (man) to have dominion
over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:
All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of
the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through
the paths of the seas....”

This poem is characteristic of the Hebrew biblical world view. Just as God is the center of the universe, man is dominant over all creatures.¹⁶ The created world is confined to an absolutely patriarchal power frame.

All things were created by, through, and for Logos, and are sustained by Logos (Col. 1: 16-17) This accounts for the origin of logocentricism, which is the essence of the Western metaphysical tradition. This cosmology affects the projection of consciousness because human beings write and interpret texts in terms of their cosmology.¹⁷

After explaining the existence of a resurrecting God as the center of the universe and the influence of this cosmology, I will later discuss how the decentering of logocentricism has affected postmodern literary writing, which is based on the assumption that God, as proclaimed by Nietzsche, is dead. Indeed, under Nietzsche's influence, Jameson, in “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of

¹⁶ In the twentieth century, however, these centers were destroyed. In the resulting universe there are no absolutes or fixed points, so that the universe is decentered. Derrida embraces this decentered universe, as does Barthes in “The Death of the Author.”

¹⁷ Since, according to Aristotle, art is the manifestation of Nature, and Nature is the manifestation of the perfection of God, it follows that “your art is a grandchild of God.”

Late Capitalisms,” brings up the concept of “the breakdown of the signifying chain” to account for the decentered subject. According to Saussurean structuralism, the function between Signified and Signifier is arbitrary. But once the one-to-one relationship between Signified and Signifier breaks down, we will have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated Signifiers. This linguistic malfunctioning threatens to usher in the non-identity of the subject.

Nietzsche’s “eternal recurrence,” for example, contributed to the formation of the literary technique of stream-of-consciousness, which is primarily structural, “involving the chronological order of the presentation of a mind in flux and a careful consideration of narrative perspective” (Frye, 444). In fact, this interpretation of stream-of-consciousness is closely associated with the synchronic or present-moment structure.

In addition, Jameson employs the concept of “the breakdown of the signifying chain” to explain “schizophrenic writing” and the “reconstruction of real history.” He asserts that with the breakdown of the signifying chain, “the schizophrenic writing is reduced to an experience of pure material Signifiers, namely a series of pure and unrelated presents in time” (72). The effect of unrelated present moments leads to the broken and fragmented phenomena of isolated Signifiers, which account for schizophrenic fragmentation, the fundamental aesthetic nature of schizophrenic writing.

Furthermore, in postmodern literary writing, Nietzsche’s declaration “God is dead” forged the premise of logical reasoning for the construction of the theory of metafiction, a dominant form of postmodern writing. Since God was dead, the monism¹⁸ of the centered subject derived from the biblical cosmology, would be deconstructed. Accordingly, the biblical God-centered cosmology would be

¹⁸ On the axis of succession appeared monism, dualism, and pluralism, showing the decentering tendency of the new cosmology, which produced a historical effect on language, in terms of its aspects of writing, reading, understanding and interpreting.

decentered, becoming unrelated fragments. It follows that because of the death of the author, a conception deduced from the death of the creator, the arbitrary but steady relationship between Signifier and Signified would be decentered, resulting in the breakdown of the signifying chain. Thus, the fusion of horizons/dialogues between the author and the reader, would be deconstructed, bringing about, in Derrida's words, *differance*.

In terms of the death of the author, the absolute intention of the author must become relative, undecidable, and reader-oriented. The subject-centered author is now decentered, so the traditional narrative strategies of fiction will be transformed, producing such new narratives as "self-reflexive narration," "parody," and "pastiche." This is how such phenomenon, the decentering phenomenon of Logos, profoundly affects the ontology of the constructive theory of metafiction.

This chapter began with the creating power of logos, proceeded through a historical survey of the views of key philosophers and theologians, and finally ends with the influence of cosmology on the interpretation of the text.