

**Paradise Shall Remain Lost:
Readdressing Deschooling through a Miltonian Lens**

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Abstract *As deschooling re-enters mainstream discourse, this article examines aspects of Illich's infamous text Deschooling Society through the lens of Milton's Paradise Lost. Partly this is to yield a new way of talking about the concept of deschooling to ensure its continued discussion. But further, through the application of hauntology, this article demonstrates how other aspects of both Milton's poem and Illich's polemical continue to haunt us even now. Through a broad analysis of Milton's cosmology, I posit that the poem may symbolise the broader structures of schools and education, and therefore the characters within the poem are representative of teachers and students. With the establishment of this symbolic structure, I analyse the language of the poem to explore the implications for deschooling. Two main areas are uncovered: first, the way in which the rebellion of Lucifer and his fall to hell exemplify ideas about school discipline, and second, how Adam and Eve's treatment by god in comparison to Lucifer's reveals the mythical nature of meritocracy. To conclude, I posit that the language of Milton is another way of providing a case for deschooling. But further, I propose that, like Adam and Eve in the poem, a strict maintenance of faith is essential in the educational structure of discipline and meritocracy, something that even Illich exemplifies.*

Keywords Poetry; Milton; Meritocracy; Discipline; Faith; Deschooling; Hauntology

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Deschooling and Paradise Lost

... him who disobeys
Me disobeys, breaks union, and that day
Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
Into utter darkness, deep engulfed, his place
Ordained without redemption, without end. (Milton, 1667, V.607-615)

They are excluded from Heaven because, once baptized, they did not go to church... (Illich, 1971, pp.44-45)

Undeniably, deschooling “is back on the educational agenda” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2020, p. 68) and has even, of late, started to re-enter mainstream discourse. Amidst the demands for the abolition of societal institutions, those such as the police or the legal system, supposedly radical voices call for “de-growth, decolonising, anti-capitalist, autonomous, ecological and indigenous pedagogies and social movements” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2020, p. 69). These calls have extended into the “messianic movements” (Bruno-Jofré & Zaldívar, 2012, p. 573) of the educational sphere too, as a growing desire for critical pedagogy is called for to combat the ills of the world. It seems no surprise then that Illich’s concept of deschooling has returned, as made famous by his text *Deschooling Society* during the 1970s. Despite Illich’s later claims that this idea was naïve (Illich, 1995, vii), a claim I dispute here, his original proposal has been enthusiastically revisited in the current agenda.

In short, Illich proposed that society is ‘schooled.’ By this, he meant that the logic of formal education pervades different layers of our existence, logic such as that of “teaching... grade advancement... [and the value of] a diploma... [or academic] fluency” (Illich, 1971, p. 1). Indeed, even our “imagination is ‘schooled’” (p. 1), thus, like Fisher’s concept of capitalist realism (2009) where we cannot think of the world outside of the frame of capitalism, for Illich, schooling too becomes a totalising lens. Quite so, “social reality itself has become schooled” (Illich, 1971, p. 2), as the logic of schooling is “alienating, disempowering and dehumanising” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2020, p. 70). It is not difficult to glean why: it inherently “polarizes a society” (Illich, 1971, p. 9), reproducing injustice and inequality at every level. We educationalists know this better than most, of course. The academic discipline of education is largely dedicated to the analysis and criticism of schools; we have enough evidence to irrefutably prove the failure of schooling many times over, oft capably despatching both its carceral, disciplinary nature (Foucault, 1991; Ball, 2013; Allen, 2014) that chews up and spits out students that do not “fit,” and its blind faith in meritocracy (Allen, 2011; Littler, 2017) despite it continually reproducing inequality. And yet, this research often

remains “dedicated to [education’s] general improvement” (Flint & Peim, 2012, p. 97). Consequently, what “we need [is] counterfoil research to current futurology” (Illich, 1971, p. 2), another espousal of the abolition of schooling as Illich proposed half a century ago. Despite deschooling rearising in some circles, many, especially in the field of education, still hold onto the school and the logic of schooling as some sort of sacred dogma.

I do not use the word “sacred” by accident. Many of us have a quiet faith in schools and in education more broadly, a faith that seems akin to a belief in some sort of almighty god (Stock, 2019). It thus seems as if an argument for “why we must disestablish school” (Illich, 1971, p. 1) still needs to be made, and perhaps it needs to be made in different terms from Illich’s. In turn, this article proposes that there is another argument for deschooling to be excavated from Illich’s *Deschooling Society* if we view it through a different lens—a Miltonian one (or perhaps it is the reverse; this article might be viewing *Paradise Lost* through the lens of Illich). Ostensibly, I contend that Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost* not only structurally haunts Illich’s argument about deschooling, but also aids us in developing Illich’s proposal for deschooling. As the lines of verse above demonstrate, *Paradise Lost* is, when read a certain way, a poem that explores issues of discipline and meritocracy. Although these themes are not examined explicitly by Illich in *Deschooling Society*, we can find traces of them throughout his text, themes that continue to plague us now. It is as if the ghosts of Milton haunted Illich, and in his failure to exorcise them, continue to haunt us today. By excavating these ghost-like themes, perhaps a new case for deschooling can be put forward in a frame more relevant to twenty-first century schooling.

***Paradise Lost* as an Educational Treatise**

There are many good arguments that could be made for viewing *Paradise Lost* as an educational text, especially as Milton published work on education himself (*Essay on Education*, 1644), and because Christian education certainly does hold vital significance in the history of Education’s formation, particularly in the chivalric and monastic schools of the middle ages (Painter, 1999) or the works of Aquinas and Luther. These contextual elements are important, as they bring weight to the integrity of studying Christian literature in conjunction with educational discourse, but this is not the right way to think about Milton’s verse when trying to triangulate literary study, philosophical questioning and deschooling. As stated previously, we should more consider *Paradise Lost* in its hauntological (Derrida, 2006; Fisher, 2012) sense, meaning we seek the trace presences of Milton’s poem in *Deschooling Society* and in today’s schooling that are not *quite* there. What Miltonian spectres still pervade educational discourse; what “haunting presence of the past” (Stock, 2021, p. 148) seems to affect the future of education; how does the structure of Milton’s fictional cosmos allude to the structure of school examined by Illich and

how does that sit with us now? I will endeavour to answer such questions in this paper alongside analysis of parts of the verse; we must imagine the poem and an image of the school side by side, with lines and threads drawn between them. Indeed, on some occasions, it will be unclear whether I am describing *Paradise Lost* or education, but that is of course intentional.

Before exploring the deschooling elements of the poem, it is important that we understand how *Paradise Lost* could conceivably be a text about education at all, at least in some symbolic way. If we look to the first stanza of Milton's epic, we might see how this is so: "That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed, in the beginning..." (Milton, 1667, I. 8-9). The "shepherd" (I. 8), in this case quite clearly the Lord, is given the attribute of teaching; he is a *teacher*, and as this is "the beginning" (I. 9) of the text and the narrative, we should understand that the remaining ten thousand or so lines may have an educational bearing. An inspection of the structure and language that form Milton's epic poem certainly reveal educational ideas, and undoubtedly there are intended lessons that abound throughout the text. Indeed, we may treat the Miltonian cosmic model of *Paradise Lost* as a metaphor for other, earthly models—as above, so below, after all. What if we were to say, for example, that the Miltonian cosmos (fig.1) of heaven, hell, and a World amidst Chaos, are in fact symbolic for the structures of contemporary, formal education, the kind castigated by Illich? Figuratively speaking, education presents its adherents with comparable cosmology to Milton's: there is a 'vertical imaginary' (Meyerhoff, 2019, p.15) structure in the learner's pursuit *upwards* (progress towards a heavenly future), or their descent *downwards* (the hell-like existence of failure—more on this later), and the chaotic daily toil of teacher and learner alike (certainly a facet of the World amidst Chaos). If we were to engage with such a symbolic order, we could posit that the beings in *Paradise Lost* represent the beings in education—students, teachers, researchers, policy makers, and the paths Milton's characters take must represent the paths available through being formally educated.

We also see that "God who is Light" (Curry, 1957, p. 156) presides over the entire cosmos, the "ultimate teacher" of the narrative, thus we must consider the "God" of education too. This is a more problematic piece of symbolism, and requires some flexibility to capably discuss *Paradise Lost* in educational terms. For some, this ultimate teacher may of course simply be the individual teachers that enact schooling. It is they who stand atop the classroom like god on the mountain, after all. But perhaps, teachers are only conduits for the "true" god of schools. As Illich says: "For the child, the teacher pontificates as pastor, prophet, and priest—he is at once guide, teacher, and administrator of a sacred ritual" (Illich, 1971, p. 31). The child in education is always confronted by a teacher that mirrors the clergyman, the one who channels "the sacred ritual" (p. 31). This sacred ritual in schools is the very logic of schooling itself, the belief in "teaching... grade advancement... a diploma... [and academic] fluency" (p. 1). Indeed, Peim affirms this notion as he

proposes “the ontotheological force of education” (2020, p. 5), whilst I have elsewhere capitalised “Education” (2019, p. 411) to signify its god-like status. We may therefore be able to read *Paradise Lost* as presenting both the *teacher* and the *logic of schooling* as the god of Milton’s narrative, and perhaps it is important that it is always both. School, its teachers, and even education more broadly, like “God who is Light” (Curry, 1957, p. 156), claim to be the bringer of light—the provider of “visions of a shining future” (Stock, 2021, p. 152).

Discipline

It is hard to speak of formal education without considering the role of discipline. Indeed, some even troublingly believe that discipline (and inherently punishment) are “a necessary feature of school life” (Hand, 2020, p. 20). Illich does not use this precise word often, but his portrayal of “the authoritative eye of the teacher... [for every student] transgression is made to be felt as a multiple offense” (Illich, 1971, p. 32) certainly exudes a disciplinary strand to his critique and contributes to why deschooling should be taken seriously. Illich believes students are “physically incarcerated” (p. 32) in the school, and his carceral lexis is not incidental. Similarly, *Paradise Lost* exhibits a model of discipline and punishment that mirrors that of the school. Its narrative depicts the fall of Lucifer, charting his position as an angel, his rebellion against god and his punishment to rule over hell for all eternity. We also see the temptation of god’s most prized creation, man, and through dramatic mirroring, the subsequent fall. This image is of course not exclusive to Milton; it is Biblical in origin. However, the vivid characterisation at play in Milton’s narrative helps demonstrate more clearly the technological functioning of educational discipline.

Lucifer’s Rebellion

Lucifer is introduced to the reader as dwelling in “penal fire” (Milton, 1667, I. 48) as a punishment for his rebellion, an “ambitious aim/Against the throne and monarchy of God” (I. 41-42). Our first impression is one of villainy, but perhaps we should revisit the tragic heroism of Lucifer’s rebellion and see valiance in this attempt to topple the hierarchy, to overthrow the clear hegemony of “the throne and monarchy” (I. 42). It is now generally accepted that Lucifer is the sympathetic character of the narrative (Empson, 1979)—infamously Blake called Milton a member of the devil’s party for this act, but certainly with some degree of irony. This is a hierarchy into which Lucifer is *thrown* [*geworfen*] after all, to borrow from Heidegger (2010), and we must remember, he does not ask to be born: “...remember’st though/Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?/We know no time when we were not as now” (Milton, 1667, V. 857-859). Much like the beings in Heidegger’s ontology, bound to their thrownness, Lucifer finds himself amidst “orders, and degrees” (V. 591). He is not atop this hierarchy, and he is also

to discover that god, the clear sovereign power and ultimate teacher of this cosmos, has created a being that he loves greater than all others—the Son.

Milton depicts the Son as a clear embodiment of hegemonic power: “To Him shall bow/All knees in Heav’n” (V. 607-608). The verb “bow” in unison with the symbolic servitude of “knees” emphasises Lucifer’s inferior position here, and he has done nothing to warrant this servitude. Like a serf born on a vassal’s land, it is merely the being he was born to be. As is conventional in a master and slave narrative, though, just like Shakespeare’s Caliban, Lucifer recognises his chains. He gains consciousness of his enslavement, signified in his acknowledgement of an existential time “not as now.” He has always been a slave, and he perhaps justifiably wants no more of “the easy yoke/Of servile pomp” (II. 256-257).

This tragic depiction of Lucifer presents us with a structure that may pertain to formal education as we know it today; the world of “orders and degrees” that Lucifer finds himself within manifests palpably. After all, school “groups people according to age” (Illich, 1971, p. 26) through key stages, year groups and so forth. But further, through this casting of age another order is designated to the young and the old: “By definition, children are pupils” (p. 28) and adults are teachers. Already we have an order that may cause distress, or even rebellion, but of course the order does not end here. Many, like Lucifer, find themselves at the bottom of a hierarchy within this educational order. I do not need to restate the findings of the wealth of research that has been conducted concerning students from working-class backgrounds (Reay, 2002; 2006; 2017) or of so-called BAME students (Bhopal & Maylor, 2014; Bhopal, 2018). We know that “even with schools of equal quality a poor child can seldom catch up with a rich one” (Illich, 1971, p. 6). Needless to say, there are large portions of society that “fail to fit” (Allen, 2014, p. 112) into the school, and thus are not thrown into an anointed position; they will struggle in education for their whole lives, both within it and “after” it (if there could be such a time when we have truly left it behind). With no alternatives, they are told to obey or be excluded, and perhaps, like Lucifer, they are right to rebel.

But what is the student, thrown into the school that does not fit them, to rebel against? The head teacher, policy makers, or the school itself? Chairs have been thrown and fights started, admittedly. But we know this to be just as futile as Lucifer’s “vain... rise in arms” (Milton, 1667, VI. 135-136) against heaven, because the “real” power in education, the god of this cosmos, is the logic of schooling, the structure itself (Foucault, 1991). It is in the very orders and degrees themselves that the power of the system is maintained, and thus when a student wishes to rebel against education, they are vainly pushing against a structure, not an individual. Perhaps now we can see why the logic of schooling becomes the god of this analysis. When a student rebels against the structure into which they are thrown, physically, they have only the teachers and buildings to attack. But as I said

previously, these things are only conduits for the logic of schooling, “academic priests” (Illich, 1971, p. 44) that enact the educational ritual.

What are we to make of this? Should we be good boys and girls, accept our place, and follow our teachings, like the angels who “know/That one celestial Father gives to all” (Milton, 1667, V. 402-403)? Or should we, like Illich, sympathise with Lucifer’s defiance and thus rebellious learners in the same way? If we are to be sympathetic with Lucifer, then we should be concerned about his expulsion from heaven.

The Mark of the Fallen

For Lucifer’s recognition of his slavery, he is punished by being cast out of the system he resides in—cast out of heaven and sent “there to dwell/In adamant chains and penal fire” (I. 47-48). Illich uses similar lexis, stating that some unfortunate students “are excluded from Heaven” (1971, p. 44) simply because they did not “accumulate years in school” (p. 45). Clearly this is figurative, implying that being out of, or without schooling, is akin to that of hell. It is not unheard of to exclude a “naughty” student after all. English schools alone exclude forty students a day (DfE, 2018) if they cannot follow the rules, and indeed send them to dwell in a metaphorical “penal fire” where they have no results or learnings to enable their future. But we should consider that Lucifer, and similarly certain students in question, may have no choice but to rebel. Being thrown into education is painful for some, and the only way to respond is to try and topple the hierarchy; bully other students, abuse the teachers, deface the property—*snap* (Meyerhoff, 2019). These may be acts of Luciferean rebellion against the arbitrary cosmos they find themselves within—“Goofing off” becomes the only poetry at hand” (Illich, 1971, p. 108).

Lucifer’s punishment, though, is greater than exclusion. It is not just to be cast out into a fiery realm; it is to carry the mark of the fallen:

But O how fall’n! how chang’d
From him, who in the happy Realms of Light
Cloth’d with transcendent brightness didst out-shine
Myriads though bright... (Milton, 1667, I. 84-86).

The demons of hell look to Lucifer and see how he is “chang’d” (I. 84)—his form has become hellish and he describes himself as such: “myself am Hell” (IV. 73). When Illich speaks of a student being “excluded from Heaven” (1971, p. 44), perhaps he is describing something far more insidious than just school exclusion. The punishment for Lucifer, after all, is not just to be excommunicated from heaven, and analogously out of school, rather, it is to carry the mark of the fallen. Effective punishment “will be infallibly the sign of the crime that it punishes”

(Foucault, 1991, p. 105). A student excommunicated from education must *carry* that exclusion with them, perhaps in the form of their record, their (lack of) grades, their feelings of failure; their very Being is tarnished by the act of expulsion. We place such enormous emphasis on the need to do well in school, to be educated, that when one does not possess that ubiquitous yet vital education, they are projected into a “nothing.” They carry a mark of the fallen:

To be without education is to be naïf, crude, Other: primitive, savage, even, uncultivated “chav,” hapless consumer... education is essential for personal fulfilment, but also for economic survival or puiissance. Everyone must see themselves in relation to its ranking and ordering practices. (Peim, 2020, p. 6)

Those of us who work in schools and universities like to think of ourselves as better than this, telling ourselves that students who are not fully educated are equal to those who are not. And yet, by maintaining the essentiality of being educated, an essentiality that is purported by our very role, such perceptions of the *uneducated* are allowed to perpetuate. For as long as schooling continues to saturate our imagination, we shall continue to deem those without education as Other.

Good Boys and Girls

Milton depicts the fall not once, but twice, thus we are reminded that there is no escape from this punishment as it will always return. It starts the narrative, and then repeats, creating a cyclical pattern of punishment for those who would choose to rebel, thus it *must* happen twice. Yet more intriguing is the characterisation of the protagonists involved in the second fall. Adam and Eve are in Eden, a space described with rich symbols of wealth and vitality: “goodliest trees loaden with fairest fruit/Blossoms” (Milton, 1667, IV. 147-148). Adam and Eve therefore seem to have fewer excuses than Lucifer for their “rebellion.” They are thrown into a completely different world, and one in which they seem immediately blessed. For them, it is easy to learn that “to obey is happiness entire” (VI. 741), as they do not have to pull at their chains when blissfully ignorant in the realm of Eden. Perhaps they represent “a kind of universal pupil” (Bundy & Bundy, 1922, p. 129), that is, a “fortunate” and “well-behaved” pupil. Adam initially speaks in declarative statements of servility to indicate as such: “For we to him indeed all praises owe” (Milton, 1667, IV. 444), directly contrasting the interrogative rhetoric of Lucifer. These pupils of god have learnt the most important lesson: not just to behave, but to worship the system in which they reside and not question the structure. They are the students who have imbibed the logic of schooling, the teachers who know they make a difference, or the researchers who speak of its redemptive qualities (Peim,

2020). They are the worshippers of god, schooling, in its entirety. Or at least they are to begin with...

Adam and Eve do not rebel as such, but they disobey their teachings by wishing to know more than their "lot" grants them. Eden is bliss and beauty, but parts are forbidden as "God so demanded" (Milton, 1667, IX. 652); to obey this command is the central tenet of their teachings. They have learned that "To pray, repent, and bring obedience due" (III. 190) is essential. When Lucifer ascends to Eden and contacts Eve however, her lessons seem to become less clear to her. She begins to mirror the rebel when "she plucked, she ate" (IX. 781) the forbidden fruit. To want to know of beyond Eden is to want to know of their maker, their purpose, the structure in which they reside. Eve's consumption of the apple incurs that she grows "mature/In knowledge" (IX. 803-804), and its effect is "To open eyes" (IX. 866). This common literary symbol represents the "truth" gleaned from her actions, the truth that stands outside of the world of Eden she has been thrown into. She too sees her chains, just as Lucifer did before her. Lucifer's rhetoric echoes this:

Hence I will excite their minds
With more desire to know, and to reject
Envious commands, invented with design
To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt
Equal with Gods... (IV. 522-526)

We could read the text as a fable of the naughty child who led the good one astray, and thus the educative model is simple: don't misbehave and you will go far. But if we look more closely at Lucifer's language, we see his persuasion is intended to free them from the "yoke/Of servile pomp" (II. 256-257), from god's totality. Their "knowledge" (IV. 525) of the world is ordered by the one that created them, and thus allows them a simple and predictable path. We envisage a pleasant life in Eden, much as we envisage the pleasant future for students who are thrown into Edenic positions in school, those for whom "grace is reserved" (Illich, 1971, p. 45). Lucifer encourages them, these fortunate students, to peer behind the curtain, perhaps to *see* the orders and degrees that all revolves around in the Miltonian cosmos. To see these things would be to expose the logic of schooling, to gain consciousness of the hierarchy at play and thus acknowledge the easy comfort of their position, exemplified by their actions after eating the fruit: "naked left/To guilty Shame" (IX. 1057-1058), their nudity representing the ignorance of their position until this point and the "shame" their acknowledgement of it. They even divulge in "carnal," animalistic desires, refusing to act within the strict confines of their educational paradigm. Inevitably, they too must fall.

Adam and Eve's punishment may not be quite as severe as Lucifer's, but it is similar. They desired to know more than the system gave them, and thus they had to

be disciplined. But of course, as they are the “favourites,” their punishment still grants them hope and a chance at salvation. A “better life” (XI. 42) is open for them if they remember their teachings. The Son requests of the Father that they may return to Paradise if they retain their faith. “All thy request for Man, accepted Son” (XI. 46) replies god. The simplicity of this statement implies their forgiveness was always to be granted, and as such we are reminded of students whose positions in education are more secure from the beginning and through to the end. As they “accumulate years in school” (Illich, 1971, p. 45), they remain in the grace of god.

Meritocracy

More troubling images of schooling can be found in *Paradise Lost*, particularly in its embodiment of the myth of meritocracy. The myth that “society ought to offer enough opportunity and mobility for ‘talent’ to combine with ‘effort’ in order to ‘rise to the top’” (Littler, 2017, p. 1) has been perpetuated as conventional wisdom surrounding education for many years, and the formal schooling system continues to be the primary agent in the pedalling of this wisdom. Illich does not critique meritocracy verbatim due to the decade in which it was written. True, meritocracy is not a contemporary phenomenon, but its rise in mainstream educational thought over the past three decades in particular has been tangible (2017, p.35). This perpetual rise means that deschooling now “needs to be situated within the broader context of changes in the global capitalist economy” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2020, p. 80), a system that prides itself on its meritocratic ideals.

Illich’s concerns in 1971 came at a time where “doubts were growing about the ability of schools to promote social justice and equality for all” (1971, p. 70). As such, the late-twentieth century response to such concerns was an embracing of meritocratic ideology: “1990s UK’s New Labour under Tony Blair had adopted a non-satirical idea of a meritocratic society with gusto” (Littler, 2017, p. 35). Consequently, for many educationalists meritocracy may have “solved” the issue of the need to abolish the school. This is not to say that Illich knew nothing of meritocracy. Young’s *The Rise of Meritocracy* made the term famous in 1958, thirteen years before *Deschooling Society* was released (though Young always intended it to be ironic (Allen, 2011; Littler, 2017)). But the *logic* of meritocracy, or at least its bogus posturing as a fair and just system, is far more ancient, and as such, is embodied in *Paradise Lost*. It is because of these ancient meritocratic traces that I believe we can posit its haunting nature in Illich’s work. Indeed, as Illich says, “Institutional wisdom tells us that children need school. Institutional wisdom tells us that children learn in school” (1971, p. 28). Still this “wisdom” holds true, as we often believe that only through the mode of schooling can children socially climb, thus aiming for a more just and fair society.

In congruence with the myth of meritocracy, mankind’s destiny in *Paradise Lost* is ultimately to be saved; redemption is open to them, and Adam and Eve’s

mistake becomes merely a brief sojourn into darkness. We see “a continual emphasis on the preëminent nature of God’s final creation, Man, and his consequent duty as one made in the image of his Maker not to fall” [sic] (Bundy & Bundy, 1922, p. 136), and conversely see a continual emphasis on Lucifer’s *duty* to fall. If Adam and Eve listen to their teachings, learn from Lucifer, then they shall be rewarded. They are given a second opportunity by god, after all, as another teacher in the form of Michael shows Adam and Eve their futures. Their “imagination is ‘schooled’” (Illich, 1971, p. 1) to believe that “By steps we may ascend to God” (Milton, 1667, V. 512), thus giving them clear direction for how to live, akin to a student being guided through an exam question so they may attain those heavenly high grades, university places and good careers. Quite so, the “university graduate has been schooled for selective service among the rich of the world” (Illich, 1971, p. 34), thus the common meritocratic “image of the ladder” (Littler, 2017, p. 2) is used to show how mankind can work hard to reach heaven, just as meritocracy tells us that effort will allow talented students to “rise to the top” (p. 1).

But we should know that this belief in meritocracy is misplaced, and Lucifer shows us why. He finds himself in a position of servitude, while Adam and Eve are loved and adored from their very inception. The same is of course true for students in education, finding themselves either despised by the rules, exams and politics of their environment, or adored by the system in which they will likely succeed in. Illich states similarly that “Even if they attend equal schools and begin at the same age, poor children lack most of the educational opportunities which are casually available to the middle-class child” (1971, p. 6). This issue continues to haunt us now, where many students are simply thrown into a harder position than others, thus always prevented from reaping the benefits of meritocracy. As Sukarieh & Tannock say in their analysis of *Deschooling Society*:

In general, students from marginalised socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups, as well as students with special educational needs are particularly at risk of being excluded by or prevented from enrolling in schools in the first place. Black Caribbean children are permanently excluded from schools in England at a rate more than three times the national average, Gypsy/Roma children are permanently excluded at a rate six times the average, and low income children on free school meals are four times as likely to be permanently excluded as children not on free school meals. (2020, p. 80)

Schooling will always fail these particular students, and Lucifer’s position therefore demonstrates the mythical nature of the image of the ladder: “climbing the ladder is simply much harder for some people than others” (Littler, 2017, p. 5), or more troublingly, that some have *no ladder open to them at all*. We may glean that their

future is already determined from the moment they begin to be educated, doomed to grope around for the first rung or kicked off it completely.

God's language concerning the war in heaven indicates this predestined conclusion. If we examine god's words to the Son, the predetermined nature of this structure becomes clear:

For thee I have ordained it; and thus far
Have suffered, that the glory may be thine
Of ending this great war, since none but Thou
Can end it. (Milton, 1667, VI. 700-703)

"Ordained" functions as an infinitive, rooting the conclusions of this great war in the past. God, the ultimate teacher, foresaw Lucifer's rebellion and its defeat. Similarly, note the description of his expulsion: "...the gulf/Of Tartarus, which ready opens wide/His fiery Chaos to receive their fall" (VI. 53-55). Milton's allusion to "Tartarus," the Greek realm of torment and suffering, coupled with the infinitive adjective "ready" signifies the predestined nature of this punishment. Lucifer, therefore, is *always-already fallen*. But what purpose could god have for this predestined punishment, and consequently, why does Education require some students to become "fallen" beings? Why must Education operate within the "binary figures of educational value and waste (e.g., the success vs. the failure, the college-bound vs. the remedial, the graduate vs. the dropout)" (Meyerhoff, 2019, p. 15)? The reasons are twofold and intertwined. If we consider that in "modern societies it is a given that one of the main functions of the education system is to prepare children for adult work and determine who is suited; qualified to fulfil various occupational roles in the hierarchy of work" (Graham, 2014, p. 824), then we could assume that Education desires to prepare this hierarchy both in terms of the top and the bottom. The fallen learner becomes the bottom, and thus the visual example for other, more "hard-working" students if they do not maintain their faith in their structures around them. Others have no choice but to look at Lucifer and his fallen mark, then consider their own futures. They must continue to follow the rules, behave, and work hard, but more holistically, they must not question why they should be in school. If they do, they too will be cast out. Secondly, the perpetuation of meritocracy is hereby enabled by the image of the fallen learner. We *need* to see the system working in its production of failures: the "bottom" of the hierarchy needs to be seen to be able to climb, or not climb, based on their choices. Students whose likely future is to fail reiterate the structure at play, as "certain people *must* be left behind" [my italics] (Littler, 2017, p. 3). There is a palpable, vivid example for all students who do not heed the call of Education in the form of Lucifer, and thus in the form of the fallen individuals of contemporary society. Lucifer thus represents the child "placed within a likely future, a future that is a product of

statistical manipulation and population norms” (Allen, 2014, p. 228). Someone must “take the fall” for the chosen ones to climb. Illich of course knew this too:

School is a ritual of initiation which introduces the neophyte to the sacred race of progressive consumption, a ritual of propitiation whose academic priests mediate between the faithful and the gods of privilege and power, a ritual of expiation which sacrifices its dropouts, branding them as scapegoats of underdevelopment. (1971, p. 44).

We must wonder if this social desire to create fallen learners is even more insidious than the maintenance of school discipline and meritocratic faith. Remember that Illich claimed students are “physically incarcerated” (p. 32) by being forced into schools; Graham’s research of prisoners’ experiences of school prior to their imprisonment seems to demonstrate that there is an intentional desire to *create* prisoners in the schooling system, just as Lucifer seemed always intended to fall:

...the preparation for adult work roles through schooling has conceivably not been a failure on those who are pushed to the edges of the education system. Their experiences of school are perfect training for the later experience of the corresponding role of prisoner. What is usually called educational failure is conceivably successful social control. (Graham, 2014, p. 836)

What could be a better encapsulation of Lucifer’s fall into hell, dwelling in “penal fire” (Milton, 1667, I. 48), unable to free himself or challenge his existence, than those students whose time in school seemed to prepare them for prison? Graham identifies themes and experiences that prisoners faced in school, many of which mirror Lucifer’s experience. Their experiences of “Violence” embodied by the war in heaven; “Labelling” is their fallen mark; “Segregation and Educational Exclusion” [sic] (Graham, 2014, p. 829) their descent into hell. These prisoners have been thrown into the educational cosmos, and their journey was predestined.

Paradise Found?

From this reading of *Paradise Lost*, we are bringing its structure and content into contemporary contexts and pressing discussions. We have seen, however, that predestined fallenness, misplaced belief in meritocracy and totalising discipline are not problems only for our current epoch, but have been haunting us for many centuries. And yet, in the nature of hauntology, there are some lingering ghosts that must be addressed. Something lurks in Milton that exhibits an attachment to schooling that we have yet to shake off. If we take this example of Michael’s lesson

Paradise Shall Remain Lost

to Adam after his expulsion from heaven, we see the essentiality of faith in education above all:

...freely we serve
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall:
And some are fall'n, to disobedience fall'n,
And so from Heav'n to deepest Hell. (Milton, 1667, V. 538-542)

The message is clear: love god, and be rewarded. But the use of “freely” is heavily ironic. Michael’s message decrees a *lack* of freedom as there is no real choice here. To be fallen is unthinkable for most, as we cannot bear to think of a life where we are not educated. Adam and Eve’s faith is eventually challenged by the temptation to see outside their world, but eventually their faith is what saves them. They stand “in lowliest plight repentant” (XI. 2) before god, reasserting their place in servitude to the almighty, and they are rewarded with “new flesh” (XI. 4) on earth. Through the symbol of the flesh, they are afforded another chance to succeed, but their faith must remain untainted. Lucifer loses his faith, however. He remains in “the dark abyss” (X. 371), doomed to eternal punishment, even if he feels a sense of victory over god. His faith remains lost through to the end of Milton’s narrative. Adam and Eve are eventually *schooled* to see that the only, truly essential facet of their existence is to have faith in the almighty. Whether they misbehaved or not is forgotten; their faith in the system is what allows it to perpetuate the divisions that have been there since the dawn of their inception. That alone will allow them redemption in the future. In turn, we must have faith in the hierarchy and structure imposed upon us in hopeful belief that it will one day bring salvation; we adhere to a “romantic narrative” (Meyerhoff, 2019, p. 15) that depicts students as “heroic individuals, along their journey up education’s levels” (2019, p. 15). One can see the self-fulfilling nature of schooling, then, how the schooled will continue to believe in the school. What else could they believe?

We teachers and academics are no different. All criticism of schooling must happen from within it, and thus perhaps we, or too many of us, exhibit our silent faith in this institution even when we decry it. Even I, at this very moment, write within the confines of academia, undoubtedly a branch of the school. As Illich says:

Today the school system, and especially the university, provides ample opportunity for criticism of the myth and for rebellion against its institutional perversions. But the ritual which demands tolerance of the fundamental contradictions between myth and institution still goes largely unchallenged, for neither ideological criticism nor social action can bring about a new society. Only disenchantment with and detachment from the

central social ritual and reform of that ritual can bring about radical change. (Illich, 1971, pp. 37-38).

There must be a radical “detachment” from schools to allow any sort of change, something that seems unlikely when so many of us are so deeply schooled. And still, Illich believes in radical change. Is paradise out there somewhere beyond the confines of the school? It is true, Illich provides a blueprint for a “learning web” (1971, p. 72) as the next step for a deschooled society. I have always felt there is an irony to this section of *Deschooling Society*, as like Lucifer, Illich’s rebellion is still within the confines of god’s cosmos. That is, Illich is schooled just like those that he intends to free. His and “our vision is mostly constituted by that which occurs through and within Education” (Stock, 2019, p. 408). Can we truly deschool, if the dominant forces in the world are schooled? Have we not become “reduced to a tool of [our] tools” (Illich, 1971, p. 109), now unable to see anything outside of our schooled imagination? Won’t any version of education now contain traces of schooling? Has education, in fact, not come to “hegemonically, dominantly and problematically” (Lees, 2012) *signify* school?

Indeed, Milton’s ghosts, “the not yet of the futures...which never materialised” (Fisher, 2014, p. 27) for Illich, that is, the future he and many like him envisioned that has not come to pass, linger for us too. What else is there, after all, for the likes of Lucifer, or indeed for Illich, beyond that of the school? Illich’s implication is that deschooling will open up a space where we can “begin a reform of education” (1971, p. 38). Like Illich, many of us cannot shake our faith in a purer version of Education out there somewhere. We still hold onto the notion that “although it is not yet perfect and ‘times are changing,’ more meddling and refinement will allow us to reach... light through Education” (Stock, 2021, p. 153). It is as if we can still reach heaven if we work harder, and thus we must maintain our faith in education, even if schools have failed us. Fundamentally, we see “education [in the mode of schooling] as essential for the salvation of the world or as standing in need of redemption from its fallen, bureaucratic contemporary condition in order to fulfil its properly redemptive mission” (Peim, 2020, p. 4). As the school has failed us, we look to other educational “messianic movements” (Bruno-Jofré & Zaldívar, 2012, p. 573), just as Lucifer looked to Eden. Yet perhaps, Education cannot reach Eden. This version of Education may just be a haunting presence that remains as tangible as any ghost—almost real, but not quite there. Ghosts appear regularly enough for us to maintain our faith. But we should own up to the possibility that paradise, at least for most, is *lost*, and so it shall remain.

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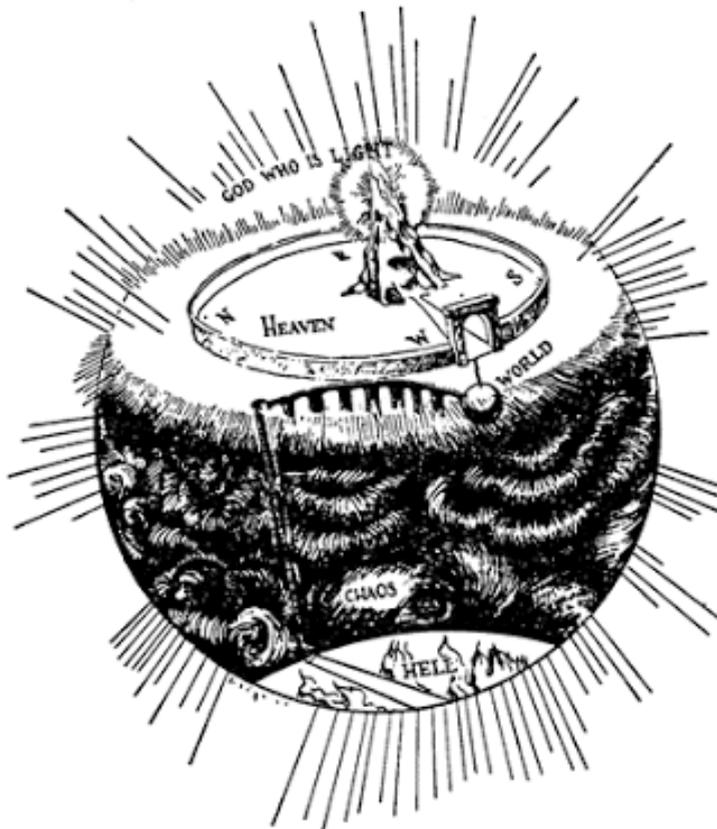
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Figure Legends

Figure 1: Curry's image of Milton's Cosmos (1957, p.156), depicting God who is Light, Heaven, the World amidst Chaos and Hell.



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