

LANGUAGE, POWER, AND DIVINE ORDER IN THE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the intricate relationship between language, power, and divine order in the works of John Milton, with a primary focus on *Paradise Lost*, *Areopagitica*, and *De Doctrina Christiana*. Milton's oeuvre consistently presents language as both a medium of divine truth and a site of political struggle. Through depictions of heavenly discourse, demonic rhetoric, and human reason, Milton constructs a theological-political vision in which linguistic authority becomes inseparable from divine sovereignty. At the same time, his humanist commitments position language as the instrument through which individuals access truth and participate in moral agency. By analyzing Milton's conception of language as a force capable of shaping cosmological hierarchy and earthly governance, this paper argues that Milton sees linguistic power as central to the maintenance—and at times, the disruption—of divine order.

Keywords: language, power, divine order, obedience, rebellion, Milton, *Paradise Lost*

JOHN MILTON ASARLARIDA TIL, KUCH VA ILOHIY TARTIB

ABSTRAKT: Ushbu maqolada Jon Miltonning *Paradise Lost*, *Areopagitica* va *De Doctrina Christiana* asarlari asosida til, hokimiyat va ilohiy tartib o'rtasidagi murakkab munosabatlar tahlil qilinadi. Milton uchun til — ilohiy haqiqatning vositasi hamda siyosiy kurash maydoni sifatida namoyon bo'ladi. Uning asarlarida samoviy nutqning ravshanligi, yovuzlikning aldovchan ritorikasi va insonning aqliy erkinligi orqali til ilohiy suverenitet bilan chambarchas bog'langan kuch sifatida ko'rsatiladi. Miltonning humanistik qarashlari tilni haqiqatni anglash, axloqiy tanlov qilish va jamiyatdagi hokimiyat tuzilmalari bilan munosabatni shakllantiruvchi asosiy vosita sifatida talqin etadi. Maqolada Milton tasavvuridagi tilning kosmik tartibni saqlash yoki buzish salohiyati yoritilib, tildan to'g'ri foydalanish ilohiy tartibning ajralmas qismi ekanligi ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: til, hokimiyat, ilohiy tartib, itoat, isyon, Milton

ЯЗЫК И БОЖЕСТВЕННЫЙ В ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯХ ДЖОНА МИЛЬТОНА

В данной статье рассматривается сложное взаимодействие языка, власти и божественного порядка в произведениях Джона Мильтона, включая *Paradise Lost*, *Areopagitica* и *De Doctrina*

Christiana. Мильтон изображает язык как инструмент божественной истины и одновременно как арену политической борьбы. В его произведениях небесная речь отражает гармонию божественного порядка, тогда как демоническая риторика служит средством обмана и искажения истины. Гуманистические взгляды Мильтона подчеркивают, что язык является основным механизмом познания истины, формирования морального выбора и взаимодействия человека с властными структурами

Ключевые слова: язык, власть, божественный порядок, послушание, восстание, Мильтон

INTRODUCTION

John Milton, the 17th-century English poet and intellectual, stands as one of the greatest defenders of the relationship between divine law and human reason. In *Paradise Lost*, he seeks to 'justify the ways of God to men,' constructing a theological framework in which language, power, and divine order intersect. Language in Milton's cosmology is not simply communicative it is creative and moral. Power, in turn, is presented as both divine authority and human responsibility, while divine order serves as the overarching structure governing both heaven and earth.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is based on textual analysis of Milton's major works and scholarly interpretations of his philosophy. The methodology combines theological, linguistic, and political perspectives, focusing on how Milton's Christian worldview shapes his understanding of divine hierarchy and human freedom.

The literature review draws on studies by C.S. Lewis, Barbara Lewalski, Stanley Fish, and William Kerrigan, among others. Scholars such as Lewalski (2002) emphasize Milton's synthesis of Renaissance humanism and Puritan theology, while Fish (1998) highlights his use of language as a moral test for readers.

C.S. Lewis interprets Milton's poetic language as a bridge between divine truth and human imperfection, illustrating how obedience and rebellion are linguistically symbolized. Methodologically, this research employs close reading, identifying rhetorical and semantic patterns that convey the link between divine law and human discourse. Historical context is also integrated—especially the political turbulence of seventeenth-century England, which deeply influenced Milton's advocacy for liberty of conscience

DISCUSSION

Milton's conception of language is rooted in his belief that words carry moral power. In *Areopagitica* (1644), he asserts that truth must be tested through open discourse: "Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" This shows that language, when liberated from censorship, becomes an instrument of divine justice. Milton's argument opposes tyranny whether of kings or clerics by claiming that truth is self-defending when expressed freely.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton dramatizes the misuse of language by Satan, whose rhetoric manipulates reason and distorts divine order. The serpent's persuasive speech to Eve demonstrates how linguistic

deceit mirrors moral corruption. By contrast, Adam's dialogue with God symbolizes humble submission to truth and authority. Language, therefore, is not neutral for Milton it embodies either obedience or rebellion. The power of language is the power to align (or misalign) human will with divine will. In this sense, *Paradise Lost* becomes a linguistic battlefield between divine harmony and human pride.

Milton's vision of divine order reflects his theological conviction that all creation operates under a just hierarchy. Even in rebellion, there is divine purpose. As God declares in *Paradise Lost*: "To bring forth good from evil, and greater good from man's transgression." Thus, Milton's treatment of language and power is inseparable from his doctrine of Providence the belief that God's will governs all, even human error.

Language and Divine Power: Milton's conception of language draws heavily on the Biblical principle that 'In the beginning was the Word.' For Milton, divine speech is an act of creation; it brings order out of chaos. In *Paradise Lost*, God speaks the universe into being, demonstrating that language is power incarnate. This divine language also contrasts sharply with Satan's deceptive rhetoric—whereas God's words build and sustain, Satan's words distort and destroy. The poet's linguistic style, dense with Latinate diction and elevated syntax, reflects his vision of language as a sacred tool. Milton also emphasizes linguistic obedience: Adam and Eve's disobedience is framed as both moral and linguistic rebellion against divine instruction.

Power and Free Will: Power in Milton's works operates through a tension between authority and freedom. God grants his creatures free will, but this freedom is meaningful only within the divine order. Satan's rebellion, rooted in pride and linguistic manipulation, exemplifies the misuse of power. By declaring 'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven,' Satan redefines power as independence rather than harmony. Yet Milton's theological position insists that true power lies in willing submission to divine law. The hierarchical structure of Heaven, where angels serve in perfect obedience, illustrates that power properly used sustains order, while rebellion births chaos.

Divine Order and Cosmic Hierarchy: The concept of divine order governs the moral and metaphysical structure of Milton's universe. Every being from archangels to humans has a designated place in creation. This order reflects God's justice, wisdom, and balance. Disobedience, therefore, is not merely a personal sin but a cosmic disruption. Milton's portrayal of Adam and Eve after the Fall shows the consequences of breaking divine order: alienation, loss, and the corruption of language itself. Even in their repentance, however, Milton suggests a restoration through humility and grace language once again aligns with divine intent.

RESULTS

Language functions as a medium of moral testing in Milton's works. Power is justified only when it aligns with divine law and rational freedom. Milton redefines freedom as voluntary obedience, not lawlessness. His characters illustrate the consequences of misused speech—Satan's rhetoric leads to chaos, while Adam's repentance restores harmony. The divine order Milton envisions connects theology, politics, and poetics into one moral system, where each word uttered reflects either divine truth or rebellion.

CONCLUSION

Milton unites language, power, and divine order into a single moral vision. Language serves as the instrument of divine communication; power embodies moral agency; and divine order ensures the stability of creation. The poet's message resonates through centuries: when language serves truth, power aligns with justice, and divine order prevails. Thus, Milton's theology of expression remains a timeless reflection on the ethical dimensions of speech and authority. John Milton's literary universe demonstrates the inseparability of language, power, and divine order. His poetry and prose merge theology with politics, revealing that speech is a sacred act carrying both creative and destructive potential.

By defending free expression in *Areopagitica* and dramatizing divine justice in *Paradise Lost*, Milton transforms language into a tool of moral enlightenment.

Ultimately, Milton's legacy lies in his conviction that the true power of language emerges only when it serves divine truth and moral integrity. His vision continues to shape modern understandings of liberty, faith, and human responsibility.

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