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The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus: Between Forbidden Pleasures and the Torment of Consequences - An Analytical and Philosophical Study.

Abstract

This paper offers an examination of Doctor Faustus and explores the various dimensions of the tragedy, focusing particularly on the ascent and total immersion in desires and pleasures, followed by the downfall and the unavoidable dreadful conclusion. And the philosophical aspect behind it. Marlowe is acknowledged as a prominent playwright in tragic drama during the Elizabethan period. The paper highlights how Marlowe's unique style of crafting tragedy distinguishes him from other dramatists of his era. This study delves into multiple facets of the tragedy and imparts the moral that humanity should never defy divine will, as well as the inevitable consequences of a misguided path. Even those with extensive education should avoid the arrogance tied to power and wisdom. The pursuit of authority and knowledge must ultimately serve the greater good of humanity; otherwise, one may encounter severe repercussions, as starkly illustrated by the tragic fate of the esteemed scholar, Doctor Faustus.

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مأساة الدكتور فاستوس: بين الملذات المحرمة وعذاب العواقب – دراسة تحليلية فلسفية

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الملخص:

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية مسرحية *الدكتور فاستوس*، وتستكشف أبعاد المأساة المختلفة، مركزةً على الصعود والانغماس الكامل في الشهوات واللذائذ، يتبعه السقوط والنهاية المروعة الحتمية، إلى جانب البعد الفلسفي الكامن وراء ذلك. يُعدّ مارلو واحدًا من أبرز كتّاب المسرح التراجيدي في العصر الإليزابيثي، وتبرز الدراسة أسلوبه الفريد في صياغة التراجيديا الذي يميّزه عن معاصريه من الكتّاب المسرحيين. تتعمق الدراسة في جوانب متعددة من المأساة، وتقدّم مغزى أخلاقيًا مفاده أن البشرية يجب ألا تتحدى الإرادة الإلهية، وأن الانحراف عن الطريق القويم لا بد أن يؤدي إلى نتائج وخيمة. حتى أولئك الذين يمتلكون أعلى درجات التعليم ينبغي لهم أن يتجنبوا الغرور الناتج عن السلطة والحكمة. فالسعي وراء السلطة والمعرفة يجب أن يكون في خدمة الخير العام للإنسانية، وإلا فإن العواقب قد تكون وخيمة، كما يظهر بوضوح في المصير التراجيدي للعالم الكبير الدكتور فاستوس.

مجلة لارك للفلسفة واللسانيات والعلوم الاجتماعية

Introduction:

Doctor Faustus is one of Marlowe's most significant dramatic works, distinguishing itself from his politically-driven plays such as *Edward II* and *Tamburlaine the Great*. While those plays focus on themes of sovereignty and power, *Doctor Faustus* explores the limits of human ambition, knowledge, and desire. The play challenges the audience to consider the consequences of exceeding these boundaries and asks what might unfold when an individual attempts to transcend the natural order. Through the character of Faustus, Marlowe presents a powerful philosophical exploration of human limitations, the pursuit of forbidden knowledge, and the repercussions of defying divine authority.

Qualitative Approach: This study will employ a qualitative research design to analyze literary texts, focusing on themes, character analysis, and philosophical implications.

Faustus' Passion:

Faustus, who is regarded as the most intelligent man on the planet, loses faith in religion at the beginning of the play and comes to believe that all people are condemned, regardless of their deeds. He feels he has mastered every subject after curing a hamlet of the plague, which frustrates him. He resorts to magic and necromancy in an attempt to learn more than is humanly possible. To learn the dark arts, Faustus calls upon two magicians, Valdes and Cornelius. A hideous creature named Mephistophilis emerges after his first magical attempt. Mephistophilis complies with Faustus's shocked demand that the devil return as a friar. He reveals that the reason Faustus has appeared is because his summons has cursed the Holy Trinity. Faustus gives his soul to Satan in return for 24 years of unrestricted power after realizing the tremendous power he possesses. Faustus seals the covenant with his blood, despite warnings from a Good Angel and other warning signs. (Waswo, 1974).

Faustus' Luxuries:

For the next 24 years, Faustus enjoys unparalleled power, with Mephistophilis serving him. However, instead of using his powers for meaningful purposes, Faustus indulges in trivial acts of magic. In Rome, he becomes invisible and mocks the Pope and monks. He demonstrates his abilities at the German court, summoning the ghost of Alexander the Great to impress Emperor Carolus. When a knight mocks him, Faustus places horns on the knight's head. Later, he tricks a horse courser by selling him a horse with the condition that it must not be taken near water. The course returns in anger when the horse turns into a pile of hay in

the lake. Finally, Faustus conjures Helen of Troy for the enjoyment of his fellow scholars. (White, 1659: p. 268).

Faustus' Dilemma:

As the play reaches its conclusion, Faustus begins to comprehend the irreversible nature of his actions and acknowledges that death, which he once believed did not exist, is inevitable. Several times, Faustus is urged to repent. For instance, an older man appears and tells Faustus that repentance is still possible, having once been a sinner himself. Yet Faustus continues to disregard these opportunities. As the clock strikes twelve, signaling the arrival of his fate, demons appear and drag Faustus away, while he cries out for mercy. (Denton, 1698: p. 103).

Faustus as a Renaissance Hero:

After reading or watching the play, one can conclude that Faustus is a portrayal of a Renaissance protagonist. Indeed, some academics argue that the play exemplifies fundamental Renaissance values like independence and an insatiable curiosity. "Doctor Faustus symbolizes the desire for power that led to the excesses of the Renaissance—the founding of the English Church, the conquest of Montezuma, and the initiation of the Armada" (Shipley 404). Faustus's rebellion of the medieval viewpoint is best illustrated by his choice to give his soul to Satan in return for gaining more learning. He embodies the spirit of the Renaissance by challenging the limitations imposed by earlier ideologies. (Logan, 1973).

A Medieval Tragic Hero stereotype:

Like other figures of the Renaissance, Faustus strives to go beyond the constraints of his era. However, his readiness to jeopardize his eternal soul in exchange for knowledge renders him a tragic character. In this sense, God can be viewed as the antagonist for establishing boundaries on human understanding and condemning Faustus to eternal damnation for attempting to exceed them. The irony lies in the paradox that man, created by God and endowed with a yearning for knowledge, is

punished for pursuing it. This divine irony is a key theme in Marlowe's work.(Logan, 1973).

Marlowe's Dark Philosophy:

Although the play is fundamentally a tragic drama, it embodies a dark philosophy. The author employs the character of Faustus to illuminate a crucial and intrinsic aspect of human nature: our materialistic and animalistic tendencies. What would happen if a person could fulfill any desire, no matter how unusual or unconventional, at any moment? Would they wish to continue living, or would they seek death? Faustus's repeated regrets throughout his life alongside Mephistopheles reflect this dilemma. He longs to return to a path of righteousness and faith in God, not out of genuine love or remorse, but rather from a fear of hellish torment after his death when his pact with the Devil concludes. (Keefer, 1991).

This encapsulates the philosophy of existence and human contradictions: Should one live fully, embracing all aspects of life while defying God and risking eternal suffering? Or should one strive to live righteously, avoiding actions contrary to their true nature, in hopes of divine reward in paradise after death, where they can enjoy their deepest desires?

In essence, human beings are inherently flawed, driven by instincts, whether deemed righteous or sinful by societal and religious standards. Philosophy posits that even the devoutly religious are motivated by a desire for pleasures in the afterlife, making them patient hedonists. In contrast, those who pursue their desires in this life without religious constraints are seen as normal; they are impatient hedonists.

The play illustrates how individuals behave when they are given the chance to acquire everything their heart desires. In this case, the character is not just an ordinary person but an educated and knowledgeable figure—Faustus. What would an average person do? Instead of using this opportunity to benefit humanity with helpful or comforting contributions, he often becomes absorbed in his selfish desires, whether intellectual, instinctual, or rooted in his insecurities.

Faustus serves as a poor representation of greedy and self-centered human nature, prioritizing personal gain while neglecting the well-being of society and humanity as a whole. If he had chosen to prioritize the collective good over his interests, his fate might have been different. Ultimately, through his good deeds, he could have left a lasting legacy as a unique and generous individual rather than being remembered as someone who sold his soul to the devil for fleeting pleasures, culminating in a tragic end.

Contemplations on Hell and Heaven:

The irony that permeates the entire drama is emphasized by this last aspect. Faustus is given numerous opportunities to turn from his sins and turn back to God. The Good and Bad Angels offer conflicting perspectives: the Good Angel forewarns of divine vengeance, while the Bad Angel entices Faustus to seek necromancy, suggesting it will unlock the mysteries of nature. Faustus initially rejects the Good Angel, and he subsequently disobeys this advice when he is persuaded to concentrate on heavenly affairs. Faustus' inability to understand the lesson found in the Book of Romans—that "for the wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"—is the ultimate irony. Faustus ignores the verse's central Christian meaning and only recognizes the first part of it. He ignores God's mercy in favor of concentrating only on God's anger. Faustus has the opportunity to change his ways to the very last, but his reluctance to do so guarantees his terrible fate.

They were the exclusive focus of Christianity and belief; he would never realize the extent of the salvation he could have brought about. His Character's True Tragedy: Ultimately, Faustus and Mephistophilis return together, both dressed as cardinals, posing as two fathers returning from a mission. This is slapstick humor to the audience, and it's humor aimed at Faustus. He is given superhuman abilities, but he just employs them for pointless stunts. Later, while he is with Emperor Carolus the

Fifth at the German Court, he repeats similar behavior by calling forth the ghost of Alexander the Great and making horns grow on Benvolio's head. When he invokes Helen of Troy, it illustrates how his initial quest for the universe's secrets is eclipsed by his lusty, shallow illusions. Then, after being warned by the older guy, he departs with the fabled beauty. Faustus is reduced to enjoying basic pleasures in addition to being blinded by his power and turning to petty tricks. Faustus exposes the actual tragedy of his character through these necromancy-related actions. (Logan, 1973).

A message to the Human Race:

In the end, and possibly his biggest weakness, he tries to learn something that is completely outside limits to him. The medieval perspective maintains that there are limits for people that should never be crossed, in contrast to the Renaissance idea that the pursuit of such prohibited power leads to greatness and authority. God Himself established the order in which everything in nature occurs: God comes first, followed by angels, humans, animals, and inanimate objects. A man is considered to be succumbing to the "id," a phrase that Sigmund Freud created, if he makes an effort to become more like an animal and give in to his animalistic cravings. On the other hand, one could try to become superhuman in an effort to surpass human limitations. Due to his "proud and defiant nature," Lucifer—once one of the most beautiful angels—was expelled from paradise. Faustus thinks he can acquire these enormous abilities and become like God, but he is unaware that doing so will doom him to an eternity of pain. He makes an effort to overcome time, the one constraint that humanity has always tried to overcome, even as his last minutes draw near. Ironically, while being endowed with all of the universe's power, he is unable to stop time. "Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven, That time may cease and midnights never come; Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make, Perpetual day; or let this hour be but A year, a month, a week, a natural day, That Faustus may repent and save his soul!" is all he wants as his future draws closer.

This final cry, which translates to "Slowly, slowly run, O horses of the night," perfectly captures the tragic and desperate nature of Faustus. Tragically, he now understands that death and hell are the only realities he will have to deal with going forward, even if he once denied their existence. (Denton, 1698).

Dramatic Irony:

Dramatic irony slowly becomes apparent as the plot develops, demonstrating that the play is "filled with dark, dramatic irony." Following Doctor Faustus's journey after he gives his soul to the Devil, we see how his high ambitions are dashed and how his incapacity to comprehend his thoughts causes him to experience intense inner torment. With a bold declaration, "This word 'damnation' terrifies not him, For it confounds hell in Elysium," Faustus publicly rejected "the scriptures and his savior Christ" out of pride and hubris. He did not understand that he was still emotionally bound to Christian ideas, even though he rejected them intellectually. Here is where the irony resides, as Faustus succumbs to his own uncertainties and internal struggle, his thoughts are divided between God and the Devil. The irony increases as we witness the faltering Faustus, frantically pleading with the apparition of Helen to lessen his pain in an attempt to end the agony of his soul. (Keefer, 1991).

Doctrine and Art:

The play Doctor Faustus has strong religious undertones. This fact is so obvious that it hardly requires an explanation. Marlowe's use of religion in the play is the subject of a disagreement that has not yet been resolved by scholars. Is it a critique of religious orthodoxy that restricts the human spirit, as suggested by critics like Una Ellis Fermor and Harry Levin, or is it an orthodox Christian depiction of the effects of sin, as argued by others like Leo Kirsch Baum and Douglas Cole? In the 1580s, Christopher Marlowe was trained academically at Cambridge University. As a six-year student and Archbishop Parker Scholar, he was probably headed for Holy Orders. His studies would therefore have been centered on divinity. At the time, the most important topic at Cambridge was theology. Because of its affiliation with

Archbishop Parker, who gave his private collection, Marlowe's college, Corpus Christi, boasted the best theological library in the University. We know that all students attended the long Sunday sermons and that theological debates were highly valued academic exercises, even though it is unknown exactly what Marlowe read while attending Cambridge. There is no evidence to refute the reasonable conclusion that Marlowe was exposed to and influenced by theological studies while at Cambridge, despite the fact that his academic career was unusual and his later life was mysterious, ending in an atheist trial and his suspicious death before being judged. His writing of Doctor Faustus, a tragedy about a divinity scholar whose religion is insufficient to resist conflicting wants and ideals, reflects a great deal of this schooling. Faustus was hardly the only learned person to turn to the unknown benefits of magic after finding regular religion to be inadequate. Those who sought something beyond what traditional education and religion could offer include astrologers like as John Dee, William Lilly, and Simon Forman; their professions, like many others, are akin to Faustus'. For a large portion of the time, magical investigation was considered academically legitimate, therefore not everyone engaged in demonology or magical study was necessarily perceived as a charlatan, according to Thomas. Many university students engaged with magical thought and practice, and figures like Cornelius Agrippa and Hermes Trismegistus were viewed with academic reverence. An adaptation of the German original, the so-called English Faust Book (E.F.B.), serves as the primary source for the story of Doctor Faustus. Many, but not all, of the plot points in this novel were borrowed by Marlowe. The E.F.B., on the other hand, lacks a unified theological statement and is contradictory and unclear. It was stated that "Marlowe transformed its principles into something that would be entirely recognizable and easily understood and accepted by an average Elizabethan Anglican." [3] The first and most obvious are the many times Marlowe uses well-

known scriptural and liturgical terminology in the play, such as verbal echoes that are not direct borrowings, structural similarities, and customarily utilized tone. Second, there are biblical and liturgical parallels in situations, moral teachings, attitudes, and behaviors that do not really entail spoken "Echoes." [4] These show how Marlowe consistently incorporates theological lessons, which form a large part of the play's core. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Marlowe occasionally employs his theological allusions in ways that are at odds with or at least very different from what his readers may expect. Faustus' sacrificial exclamation, "Consummatum est," during the signing of the deal, is the most vivid illustration of this third kind. But this is only one example of numerous instances—both subtle and obvious—where the audience is prompted to reconsider the play's meaning and relevance due to the distortion of a theological norm. Marlowe uses the phrase "Intellectual and moral probespursuit of art" to describe his references. (Marlowe, 1998). Redemption, Mercy, and Salvation: Heaven and hell are both eternal. To be rescued from eternal damnation, a Christian only needs to accept the grace of Jesus Christ. Faustus still has the opportunity to repent and avoid hell even after he has sold his soul to the devil. However, Faustus appears unable to change his destiny after he has committed to his own damnation. Even last-minute repentance is accepted for salvation in Christianity, but Marlowe toys with this idea, maybe rejecting it for his own thematic reasons.

Faustus: Hero or Villain

Instead of making direct moral judgments, Doctor Faustus explores the human consequences of one person's agonizing attempt to push the limits of what is possible through a complex and ambiguous portrait of a man who exchanges his soul for knowledge and power. Faustus bravely and dangerously questions accepted morals by expressing his simultaneously lofty and self-centered goals in eloquent talks. One of the play's main accomplishments, as a contemporary biography points out, is its

acceptance of contradiction. Faustus seems to have power over his own fate, regardless of whether we agree with or disagree with his choices. Both the good and wicked angels keep outlining the choices he has, with the only difference being their opinions about which way he should choose. However, the play poses troubling queries about human freedom and our capacity to control our own destiny. According to the Protestant doctrine of the time, no one could save their soul.

The Inner Conflict in Modern Tragedy

This academic figure from Wittenberg never realized that, despite his repudiation of God, the Trinity, and Christian principles, his emotional ties to these beliefs were too deeply ingrained to be entirely cast aside. Consequently, even before he bargains his soul to the Devil, Faustus begins to feel the pangs of conscience. From that moment on, the drama oscillates between the forces of good and evil, each striving to dominate the other. A guilty conscience accompanies him from start to finish, allowing us to trace his tumultuous journey and the internal struggle within his soul throughout the tragedy. Typically, such inner conflict emerges when an individual must choose between two options, feeling torn between them. In modern tragedy, this reflects the exercise of human free will. Faustus makes his choice—whether right or wrong—and, in doing so, becomes the architect of his own destiny. He deliberately opts for the dark path of magic and willingly relinquishes his soul to the Devil, exercising his free will. Thus, Faustus embodies a modern individual, with his conscious desires in conflict with his subconscious, still tethered to the traditional teachings of the Christian faith. These elements contribute to defining Doctor Faustus as a modern tragedy.

Power as a Corrupting Influence

Faustus is full of ideas about how to use the power he desires at the start of the play, before he agrees to the agreement with Lucifer. He dreams of accumulating enormous money, but he also longs to change the landscape of Europe and solve the universe's riddles. But the quest for supreme power corrupts Faustus, making him

average and reducing his unbridled ambition to the fleeting pleasure of fame. "True greatness...what to do with it," Dawkins declares in the play's Christian setting.(Marlowe, 1998)

Magic and the Supernatural

Throughout the story, the otherworldly appears and penetrates Doctor Faustus. Dragons pull chariots, angels and demons arrive, magic spells are cast, and even common people like Robin and Rafe learn enough magic to call out demons. Furthermore, the play's real drama takes place in Faustus's vacillating mind and soul as he first sells his soul to Lucifer and later contemplates remorse, despite all of its supernatural adornments and spectacles. According to Dawkins, "The magic is almost incidental...good and evil" in this context.(Waswo, 1974).

The play's plot is introduced by the Chorus, a lone performer. Instead of concentrating on war or love, it will describe the "form of Faustus' fortunes." The Chorus tells the story of Faustus's humble beginnings in the small village of Rhode, his journey to Wittenberg to live with his relatives, and his education at the esteemed German university of Wittenberg. The Chorus goes on to say, "Faustus has studied." An elderly guy approaches and tries to persuade Faustus to change his ways as the scholars leave. Mephistophilis gives Faustus a dagger when he becomes upset. But, saying, "I see an angel hovering over thy head / And with a vial full of precious grace / Offers to pour the same into thy soul," the elderly man exhorts him to ask for God's mercy. After the elderly man leaves, Mephistophilis threatens to rip Faustus to pieces unless he renews his devotion to Lucifer. Faustus accepts, cutting his arm and branding it in blood to reaffirm his commitment. He then requests that Mephistophilis punish the elderly man for attempting to talk him out of being in Lucifer's employ; Mephistophilis responds that he will curse the man's body but cannot touch his soul. Then Faustus asks to meet Helen once more. After giving a

lengthy speech praising Helen's beauty, Faustus kisses her and declares, "Now hast...I'll burn my books—ah, Mephistophilis!"

Flaws and Limitations of Marlowe as a Playwright:

Naturally, being referred to as "the most individual, the most gifted of the pre-Shakespeareans" does not mean that his entire body of work is flawless. He unquestionably made major contributions to the popular drama of his era, which are worthy of being acknowledged as one of his strongest points. Before we address his limits as a theatrical artist, it is necessary to briefly highlight these strengths. He transformed blank verse into a potent medium for fervent romanticism, ambition, emotion, and lofty ideals. He produced...

Poetic Lines as the Handmaid of Dramatic Expression:

Marlowe imbued each of his plays with the presence of a powerful figure—someone who defies death, a determined and singularly focused individual. In *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe establishes the foundation for the concept of tragedy emerging from internal conflict, a struggle that takes place within the mind of the protagonist, Faustus. In this sense, Faustus stands as perhaps the most significant tragic figure of the sixteenth century, second only to the characters in Shakespeare's works. When it comes to plot construction, character development, and the natural flow of the story, Marlowe displays early mastery of these elements, particularly in his chronicle play *Edward II*. Whether this demonstrates Marlowe's growing brilliance or reflects the limitations of historical drama that pushed him toward a more restrained style, the play showcases signs of genuine dramatic progress. The development of characters is also evident in the large and diverse cast. (Waswo, 1974).

(A)The less importance of Minor Characters:

Creating a dominant, larger-than-life character who is motivated by a single, overwhelming desire inevitably results in the other characters losing their individuality and becoming virtually nonexistent. "All his heroes, because of their sheer greatness, stand alone," writes Nicol. We get the impression that there are no

moral forces opposing them. They are isolated individuals in a world full of unimportant creatures. Shakespeare constantly gives his supporting characters greater nuance than Marlowe did, however this may also be a characteristic of Shakespearean plays.

(B) The Deficiency of Female Characters

Marlowe's focus on the central male figure, which is consistently dominant, leaves little space for the inclusion of female characters. This absence raises questions about Marlowe's ability to fully capture the essence of women. Traits such as gentleness, feminine beauty, the warmth of love, and the nurturing qualities of women lie beyond Marlowe's limited scope of understanding. This preoccupation with male perspectives not only marginalizes women but also restricts the emotional depth and complexity that could enrich the narrative. As a result, the plays often reflect a singular viewpoint that overlooks the multifaceted nature of human experience, particularly through the lens of femininity. (White, 1659).

Conclusion

This paper presents a thorough examination of various facets of the tragedy. The playwright's message suggests that humanity should never defy God, as God is the ultimate and supreme power. Additionally, human beings are flawed, regardless of their education or sophistication. One's passions should be directed toward the welfare of humanity. Unfortunately, for Doctor Faustus, it is too late. He ultimately yearns to embrace religion, God, and Christ, but by then, time has run out. He must confront a tragic end. This reflects the lamentable fate of the learned hero, whose boundless ambition for knowledge, power, and immoral deeds ultimately leads to his downfall.

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