



Psychological depth in doctor Faustus

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Abstract

Doctor Faustus seems to be the real depiction of the genius and spirit of the Renaissance. His character reveals a great wandering for limitless knowledge and power. A thirst for sensual pleasures of life, A challenging spirit of atheism or asceticism and also a spirit of rebel against conventional religious doctrines, and Christian theology. The psychological dimensions of *Doctor Faustus* will be discussed in the following paper.

Keywords: psychological depth, *Doctor Faustus*

Introduction

The Elizabethan period introduced two beliefs to England: the supremacy of the individual, and Calvinist theology. Doctor Faustus embodies the ambitions of the sixteenth century people of England as generated by the Renaissance movement. It also embodies religious and moral attitude of the people of the same century. Marlowe presents in this play the most awful doctrine of Medieval Christianity, namely that any person dabbling in forbidden knowledge like the knowledge of necromancy must be penalized in long run with damnation in hell. In *Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlowe, through his exploration of Faustus' crisis caused by these contradictory notions, exposed the fears of the devout and challenged the religious authorities of England in the sixteenth century. Marlowe wrote *Doctor Faustus* during a period of "extensive religious doubt and occasional orthodox investigation. By emphasizing the overt moral and Christian tone of the piece. Christopher Marlowe Doctor Faustus is a depiction of the conflicts between body and soul, mind and matter, faith and rationality. Marlowe creates a series of formal and stylistic oppositions, a simultaneously grand and intimate drama, concerning both the power struggle and the inner turmoil of a human mind. Faustus is able to be hero and fool, victim and sinner. Human vice and folly are exposed but equally so are man's high ideals and aspirations. The warring over Faustus' soul by higher powers provides a frame for the inner drama within his psychology. Faustus is so crazy for power and knowledge that without realizing the dangers or evils of necromancy he signs a contract with the Devil for granting him twenty four years of perfect freedom and privilege to use his knowledge for any purpose and in any manner that he likes. But Faustus' story is constructed as a classical tragic fall from respectability to damnation. Marlowe immediately constructs his protagonist as a tragic hero. Marlowe both inhabits and manipulates theatrical traditions, constructing ambiguous plays that concern the conflict between an omnipotent cosmological order and human free will, revealing inner conflicts within his protagonists common to all mankind. In *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe presents a divided and mentally fascinating individual, who struggle and motivate to make a crucial understandings of

the play. The psychological layers to Faustus render the entire drama in fact a psychology, it is often seen as primarily a study of the mind of Faustus himself.

Psychological Depth

Doctor Faustus is Marlowe's greatest and most personnel tragedy in the sense that it treats a great psychological theme and also that it offers the reader and the audience a great moral lesson. This great psychological theme is the theme of the great struggle of a human soul that has the noblest ambition of acquiring unlimited knowledge; but as knowledge is power and that power is a positive evil if knowledge is abused or misused. So, Doctor Faustus who pursues false knowledge. Necromancy in bad manner, is given the severest penalty in the form of mental unrest through and till the end of his life.

Faustus' fear of eternal damnation is the first component of his crisis of conscience is his fear of eternal damnation. Marlowe disguises the debates of his time surrounding the correct Protestant doctrine of predestination in Faustus' lamentations over the possibility of his salvation. Marlowe explore the ethical issues of salvation according to Lutheran and Calvinist theologies. In the early period of the English Reformation, Lutheran theology was the dominant Protestant doctrine. Luther's doctrine of salvation relied on his interpretation of Romans. He determined that justification by faith would lead to salvation, and not by way of any of man's works. simply having faith, then this fundamentally undermined Christ's role in salvation. Cranmer's counter-argument reflects the Calvinist stance that justification is not the office of man, but of God; for man cannot justify himself by his own works. Calvinism continued to flourish in England and, by Marlowe's time there was hardly one of the Elizabethan bishops who was not a Calvinist. Calvinist doctrine dictated that salvation was predestined for some, and the rest were left to fall as a result of the inherent sinfulness of man's nature. In *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe adapted the German Faust legend to reflect these religious anxieties of the English. Faustus' greatest fear reflects the most intimate fear of sixteenth-century Protestants of predestined damnation to eternal torment. Marlowe explores the ethical issues surrounding

the Calvinist doctrine of salvation through Faustus' narrative and questions the possibility of individual agency in regard to destiny.

The second of Faustus' crisis of conscience is his obligation to uphold his pact with Lucifer. The intention of the act of Faustus' pact with the devil is similar to the act of taking the Oath of Supremacy, and Marlowe uses this association to imply Faustus' spiritual fate. As previously stated, the Oath of Supremacy was required by all English subjects in order to demonstrate their recognition of the temporal and spiritual supremacy of Elizabeth. The ritual required that the individual took the oath while making physical contact with a sacred object, such as "upon the Evangelist. This corporal oath forced many individuals to compromise their salvation in a demonstration of their loyalty to the Queen. The diabolical pact in *Doctor Faustus* replicates the procedure of this oath. Faustus pledges his allegiance to Lucifer, the king of hell, by writing him a "deed" in his own blood (II. i. 54-60). The pact is significant as it is at this point in the narrative that Faustus appears to have sealed his fate. By entering into a pact with the devil, Faustus entrusted his soul to the devil and compromises his chance for salvation. The language of this scene is equally significant in regard to Faustus' spiritual future. Faustus calls on his blood to be "propitious for his wish" (II. i. 58). The use of the word "propitious" alludes to Christ's own sacrifice in propitiation for man's sins; thus, the allusion between Christ's sacrifice and the blood in this scene establishes the latter as a physical embodiment of God's grace. Faustus' actions symbolically abjure this divine grace. This realization, as well as the fear of the alternative unknown predestined fate, contributes to Faustus' crisis of conscience. Marlowe leaves the interpretation of both the diabolical and divine consequences of Faustus' recantation open, with the implication that Faustus' sense of obligation to uphold this pact is purely psychological.

Faustus' fear of damnation inspires him to try to subvert his unknown fate.

The purpose of Faustus's pact with the devil and acquisition of supernatural powers is to allow him to take control of his fate. Marlowe continues to address the popular notion of predestination and, through Faustus' narrative, reflects upon the possibility for individual agency over one's spiritual destiny. The piece opens with Faustus' reflection on all the branches of scholastic study that he has mastered, and this leads to his criticism of the Scriptures. This speech demonstrates Faustus' belief that "man's nature has been warped by original sin. In an effort to liberate himself from the doctrine of predestination, Faustus rejects the Scriptures and turns instead to necromantic works. Faustus believes that the mastery of magical knowledge will make him as powerful as God, and freeing him from his predestined fate. Marlowe explores the essential irony of sin. In his desire to become as powerful as God, Faustus turns to the antithesis of God and the devil. The irony here is that Faustus' efforts to liberate himself from his fear of predestined damnation cause him to entrust his soul to the devil and Marlowe leaves no indication of the impact of this decision on Faustus' ultimate spiritual fate. Faustus does not listen to that warning but babbles in that unlawful knowledge, he pays the severest penalty by yielding up forever his soul to the Devil. The play further reflects the Medieval conception of heaven and hell, that heaven and hell lie somewhat on the opposite poles, that hell is place of darkness, torture, filth

and obnoxious things that the sinful creatures always go to hell while the virtuous souls go to heaven.

The tragic emotions of pity and fear at the plight of such a great man tug at our heart. The tragedy achieves its climatic cathartic effect in Faustus's last shriek, "Mephistophilis".

Conclusion

Doctor Faustus is a tragedy of an aspiring intellect which seeks to pierce through to the centre of all knowledge. Such ambition is doomed to failure because of its very nature, for man is a limited being. The courage of the challenge, however, is awesome. Excessive curiosity or thirst for knowledge is harmful as it leads man to adopt wrong methods to satisfy it. Marlowe's tragedy thus offers a skeptical commentary on the human propensity for the static, the human preference for being over becoming. Faustus wants to perform miracles, to do the wondrous, to transcend human frailty, fallibility, uncertainty, he wants to gain a deity. This inordinate desire to attain super-human power is absolutely in keeping with the adventurous spirit of the age of Renaissance. And to attain this Faustus makes the supreme but tragic decision of his life. But immediately after this, Faustus feels the prick of conscience as he is going to do something against the will of God. But the Evil Angel or the overriding desire carries the day as Faustus dreams of becoming powerful.

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