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## CONFLICT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL- DOCTOR FAUSTUS AS A MORALITY PLAY

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*Abstract:* The morality plays have a long history in literature beginning with the fifteenth century and lasting the whole of the sixteenth century. The fundamental issue of the morality play is always the same, and it is by definition a serious one. The dramatic thrust of the morality play was towards a slapstick in order to demonstrate human frivolity. The present study aims to prove how Christopher Marlowe, the intellectual playwright of the Elizabethan age, portrayed the conflict between good and evil in his morality play Doctor Faustus. He uses in the play eminently fits in to the morality form, for the necromancer, Faust, who sells his soul to devil for worldly pleasures, effectively illustrates the human damnation in the morality plays. The morality structure of the play minus the morality kind of a submissive hero but one with an individualistic conceit builds up the tragedy of Faustus.

*Index Terms* - Slapstick, Necromancy, Damnation, Interlude, Sybaritic, Soliloquy, Repentance , Diabolic

Christopher Marlowe (1565-93) is considered as the most intellectual playwright during the Elizabethan age in English Literature. He was a great predecessor of Shakespeare in Drama. Even though he died very young he left about half dozen tragedies all written in a period of five years. A very striking personality and a powerful dramatist, he is a significant part of a still greater tradition of the Elizabethan drama. It was Christopher Marlowe who burst upon the English literary scene with his Tamburlaine The Great in 1587 and ushered in the great age of Elizabethan drama. His Edward II not only brought the history play to maturity but also with Doctor Faustus marked the true beginnings of English tragedy. The play Doctor Faustus has no real imitators in English drama and it is considered as a tragic masterpiece of all time. This morality play depicts the damnation of a human soul with tragic power and it had never portrayed in a drama before.

The morality plays have a long history in England beginning with the fifteenth century and lasting the whole of the sixteenth century. In the fifteenth century, the religious contents in the English plays were replaced by allegory and were called the Moralities, in which the characters were abstractions like Love, Life, death, Greed, Repentance etc. The comic element introduced in the Moralities, to keep the audience in good humour, soon developed in to a regular dramatic composition called interlude. The representative morality plays of the early Tudor Period survey human life from birth to death through the conflicts occurring between one of the cardinal virtues and the seven deadly sins. Social reality of human life was beneath the concern of the early

morality play. It leads to the inevitable victory of good over evil. There is nothing new about the dramatic story of Doctor Faustus - the story of human presumption, temptation, damnation and fall being – the essential morality plays. There is little drama in the divinely ordered destiny of man expecting the allegorical interplay between the forces of good and evil. The dramatic thrust of the morality play was towards a slapstick in order to demonstrate human frivolity. Christopher Marlowe presents Doctor Faustus in a morality comedy form, the protagonist sells his soul to the devil for swinish pleasures and thus illustrates the human predicament in his morality play. While being subordinate and adherent to doctrinal Christianity, Marlowe's protagonist, Faustus has grown privy to the national and cultural self assertiveness characteristic of the Elizabethan's. In recasting the Faustus legend, Marlowe infused a heroic element in the Faustus narrative. The forces of good or of Christianity are made part of the internal being of the protagonist. Man is not a passive recipient of good and evil but can actively pursue them. Apparently, the human protagonist exercises choice and assumes responsibility but the choice does not negate the responsibility.

What Marlowe attempts in Doctor Faustus is a tragic vision of heroic human possibilities. Here Faustus is not like the protagonists of the morality plays. His predecessors were passionless, but Faustus tried to mount above his reach. If morality heroes are self effacing human beings, Faustus is superhuman in his ambitions. Though the condition is human, man could be as omniscient as God by virtue of his learning and, reasonably, should be as omnipotent as God. "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man" whereas his power should reach out "as far as doth the mind of a man" ( Act I, Scene I 22 and 58). The gap between the power Faustus can reach out to by virtue of his learning and the power of God could be filled by the 'heavenly necromancy', the black art opposed to God and forbidden to man. Necromancy is no tribute to human excellence and if there are no limits to human learning or excellence, it is no reflection on the cherished humanist goals of the times. In his infinite ambition, Faustus degrades the human condition and his religious sacrilege is an accentuation of his human degradation. Though as a dramatic narrative, one can assure that Doctor Faustus is a Christian morality play, the evolution of Doctor Faustus as an intensely heroic protagonist begins the refashioning of the morality play. It is clear from the beginning of the play that Faustus is tragically deficient or too distracted for the great art of transformation he sets up for himself and for which he is well-equipped with his qualities of mind, temperament and training. Faustus has no respond to what the Good Angel has to say but the words of the Evil Angel are always appetizing. He was not ready to follow the words of Good Angel but he is easily "glutted with conceit" with the words of Evil Angel. Desire and conceit do not generate determination. Faustus was not able to realize his learning, he has to begin his education after his learning is over. Experience is a great teacher than the books could ever be. Indeed Mephostophilis, the great champion of Christian heterodoxy, begins to teach Faustus, not the virtues of religious revolt but those of the orthodox religion. Faustus never realized that the hell is no land of freedom and aspirations but simply the agonizing loss of the eternal joys of heaven and its everlasting bliss.

Faustus has damned himself through his egocentric indulgences and is beyond repair. The incorrigible state makes Faustus despair in God, a despair that makes him continue his self indulgence for which the king of devils provides fascination and the means. It clearly depicts in Act II of the play.

Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub:  
 Now go not backward: no, Faustus, be resolute:  
 Why waver's thou? O, something soundeth in mine ears,  
 ' Abjure this magic, turn to God again!  
 Ay and Faustus wil turn to God again.  
 To God ? He loves thee not;  
 The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite...  
 Wherein is fix'd the love of Belzebub:  
 To him I'll build an alter and a church,  
 And offer lukewarm blood of new born babe's

( Act I Scene I 5-15)

Actually Faustus does not express faithlessness in God. He wants to be like Him, and, as despair sets in, he only feels that God would not love him and wonders whether He could harm him after he has deserted Him for the company of Mephostophilis. As despair leads to the self indulgent believe that divine providence as well as the divine wrath cannot reach him, Faustus signs the pact with the devil giving away his soul in return to his services. His "blood congeals" when he sign the pact and feels his arm inscribed with a divine warning \_ "Homofuge", Man flee, but there is the self assurance that his senses have deceived him and, even if he were not deceived, he would not flee from the pact. As Faustus fluctuates between despair and repentance so does he flee from the devil, and surrender to the devil alternately renewing his contact with the devil after every bout of repentance. Faustus feels that divinity is unsatisfying and frustrating and he depends the devil for his needs. But the devil also unable to answer or give everything he asks for . He could retain his faith in God in spite of despairing and rejecting him. He is born and bred in the realm of God but has chosen to live obstinately and sybaritically in the realm of devil. The morality structure of the play minus the morality kind of a submissive hero but with an individualistic conceit builds up the tragedy of Faustus. Surprisingly, both Marlowe and Faustus never touched the point of faithlessness in God.

The dramatic tension of the Faustus story as Marlowe presents it lies primarily  
 In the fact that Faustus is determined to satisfy the demands of his nature as  
 God had made him to be himself a deity and that is forbidden: and it can only  
 Be achieved by a conscious rejection of God who created him in his own.  
 Image but denied him fulfillment of that image.

[ Brooke 100 ]

Faustus insurrection is a desperate one for it loses more than it gains. But Faustus is " resolved" and shall " never repent". For all its deprivation, his human condition has its own promise :

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me  
 Of Alexander's love, and Oenon's death ?  
 And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes,  
 With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,  
 Made music with my Mephostophilis ?

( Act II Scene II 25-30 )

The tragic dilemma in Faustus does not rest in his choice between God and the Devil but in their inseparable coexistence within his human condition. Though humans have fear of God and damnation in their mind, it tends to trust devil and his temptations. God is the heavenly joy of human limitations and the devil is the appetite of human aspirations. Both good and devil define man in a mutuality and confront him with an acute tragic dilemma. God calls upon him to return to him but the devil manipulates him to retain his contractual bond with him. The equality of God and the devil is only a stage in the human predicament of Faustus and does not last long. Faustus didn't reject God in favour of Devil but he replaced God by the devil even though he has the awareness of his being. He devoted his soul to God in the early stages of his life but later he gave it to the devil raising an altar and building a church. He would complete the bond with the devil using the same words "It is finished" what Christ uttered from the cross. But the devil do not ask him to deviate from his divine awareness, on the contrary intensifies it and generates deep despair.

Homo fuge: whither should I fly ?

If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell

( Act II Scene I 75-76)

The devil does not help Faustus to establish his ambitions of divine power on earth. Faustus cannot give wholehearted commitment to the devil as the devil do not keep up the obligations of the contract. Yet he reject God and lead a life of distraction as wounded rebels. The fundamental irony of Faustus' aspirations started by signing the contract only to undo himself totally. Faustus want to accomplish absolute power on earth through this pact but it only leads to his mental disintegration and an increased despair in God as well as in human condition. Mephostophilis was not ready to answer Faustus 'question about hell because it was his own tortured state of being. He never give the answer for the question about the creation of earth as well because the creator was his bitter enemy. Faustus' need for a wife also rejected by Mephostophilis because marriage is a divine sacrament. The period of contract of twenty four years turns out to be not only a denial of Faustus 'aspirations but one of a progressive degradation of Faustus as a man.

In not choosing the God in his desire to be as God, Faustus has provided not Only for his destruction, but also for his degradation. Instead of reaching the Stature of demi-God or even commander of the world, Faustus becomes an Imperial entertainer. The restless scholar hemmed in by the limits of morality Gains his satisfaction by playing the practical jokes on the papal court: the Man who looked forward to controlling the lives and the power of all the Earthly rulers now becomes the magician of the emperor, building castles in The air, and presenting spirits that resemble great men of the past.

( Cole 24 )

Many times Faustus attempts to seek divine grace but the devil reminds him about the punishment of breaking the contract. Though the devil provides the fascinating temptations to Faustus, sometimes turns out to be a tormentor and threatening Faustus. The devil is temptation, distraction and sovereign power but

doesn't stand by the contractual obligations. Faustus wanted to rule the world but cannot even insist on the devil's obligations much less cancel the contract for its breach but meekly assures obedience without insisting on the same from the devil.

Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul,  
 For disobedience to my sovereign Lord  
 Sweet Mephostophilis, entreat thy Lord  
 To pardon my unjust presumption,  
 And with my blood again, I will confirm  
 My former vow I made to Lucifer.

( Act V Scene I 74-81 )

No matter how many times goodness fails, it will succeed ultimately. Even the devil cannot harm or defeat a virtuous man. Faustus asks Mephostophilis to torment the old man who agonizes him with his advice and the reply of Mephostophilis is the example of this and it is very significant.

His faith is great; I cannot touch his soul;  
 But what I may afflict his body with  
 I will attempt, which is but little worth.

( Act V Scene I 85-90 )

Old man's faith in God is so firm but Faustus' not. Implicitly, Faustus could be tormented, for his faith in God is so shaky. Faith in God could be such a terrifying human strength that the devil would not dare touch him. Faustus had to understand the fact that if the human condition is

limiting, the limitation is a virtue, and a divine blessing too. Further, obedience to the devil and faithlessness to God bring the same fate. Faustus couldn't realize that the devil heaps degradation whereas God could only pose a serious limitation on his human condition. Thus he despaired in being Faustus and a man and never felt supreme confidence in his human state. This realization couldn't be farther from Faustus but the human will would rather suffer its choice than retract meekly even if the choice is degrading and torturous. Act II unfolds the total tragedy of Doctor Faustus. Both Act I and II dramatize the rigor and tenacity of Faustus' rebellion against his own rootedness in orthodox religion and against his deeply cherished heavenly joys and against his frustrating sense of their deprivation. While Faustus' rebellion is heroic in its assertion of the human spirit, the course of rebellion through the third and fourth act is totally unheroic. Faustus has no choice but to delude and delight himself in trivial and vicious pleasures. He tells Mephostophilis.

Sweet Mephostophilis, Thou pleasest me;  
 Whilst I am here in earth, let me be cloyed  
 With all things that delight the heart of man,  
 My four and twenty years of liberty  
 I will spend in pleasure and dalliance

( Act III Scene I 58-62 )



“Pleasure” and “dalliance” become the course of Faustarian revolt. As a scholar set to question the divine omniscience, in the beginning of the play, Faustus sought indulgent knowledge and half truths. Then he became a confirmed rebel and remains a sybaritic. The rebellious Faustus is not considered heroically but his act of rebellion, whatever may be the course of it, against God is immeasurably heroic, for few would dare such a rebellion. The irony of Faustus’ revolt does not end with its divine awareness. Lucifer and Mephostophilis whom Faustus courts, share the ironic predicament of Faustus- rejecting the God but cherishing him. Mephostophilis describes Lucifer’s revolt against God as not heroic but one of “pride and insolence” and hell is the

absence of” heavenly joy and everlasting bliss” Faustus himself looks upon his own revolt of “ desperate thoughts” against God as securing “ eternal death “. Thus his acts of necromancy and the sale of his soul to the devil are diabolic. The diabolic is the very antithesis of human as well as the divine. Faustus’ achievements through his pact with the devil are in an inverse proportion to the magnitude of his ambitions. The magician he wishes to be is a “ mighty God” and he considered necromantic books are “heavenly”. He rebels against God but the divine consciousness characterizes even his rebellion. God, always, continues to be the measure of all things for Faustus.

Faustus comes to full repentance at the end of the play. The last soliloquy is an admission of the possibility of divine grace and forgiveness. But the realization comes at a time when the devil is around to torture him to death and if only his doom could be postponed, he would gain the divine forgiveness. Faustus willed his destruction so long, now he craves for time to be able to gain his salvation. The possibility of repentance and forgiveness waited on him until he reached his end. The pain of devilish torture is so intense, Faustus cries to God to save him from the tortures of the devil:

O God,  
 If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,  
 Yet, for Christ’s sake, whose blood hath ransom’d me  
 Impose some end to my incessant pain.

( Act V Scene III 100-104 )

Faustus who sought the devil to oppose God, seeks God’s mercy and his innate forgiveness to rescue him from the devil. Even Christ cannot save Faustus, as Lucifer says, as His “justness” precludes those like Faustus who are assertive of their worth. Faustus belongs to Lucifer who championed a similar protest against God earlier and experiences heavenly deprivation but pursues his freedom. Faustus reaches his rebellious or tragic death in Act v. he dies with all the opportunities of repentance and forgiveness thrown away wantonly, what remains is the burden of the human condition that contained the germs of his degradation and destruction. For Kenneth L . Golden,

Like modern man, Faustus is the victim of a splitting of the will. He  
 Rejects Christianity because it would hamper his boundless desires,  
 Yet he cannot escape Christianity, or at least certain aspects of it-  
 especially guilt and the sense of sin that leads to despair.

For Christian theology, Faustus' predicament falls short of a tragedy for he was motivated by nothing but presumption which could have been easily remedied by repentance and, consequently he could have been rescued by divine forgiveness.

Doctor Faustus is essentially a static play of the tragic irresolution. Marlowe has a twofold aim in the play. He would write a morality play and hence the substantial stasis and comedy and the undramaticity of the play associated with the morality tradition. In writing the morality play, he would rewrite the human story which has become very thoughtful, spectacular and poignant. To the comedy of evil, Marlowe adds a heroic tragedy. With its morality structure and theme, Marlowe could prove Faustus' achievements and failures and his internal conflict between good and evil. A doctor of divinity and a master of several human sciences like Medicine and Law, Faustus is fully aware of the nature and indispensability of religious faith on the one hand, and the nature and possibilities of human excellence and achievement on the other. But he displaces human learning in the realm of religion and the power of religion in the realm of human learning and achievement. He wishes to be "divine in show" and would "live and die". The divine show, Faustus want, is not of God but of man. What happened to Faustus may justify Christian theology but what it explains are the irredeemable paradoxes of man. And for Marlowe, the immensity of the human condition forces desperate choices on man which could not justifiably be termed right or wrong but which have to be understood in terms of reality that constitutes human condition.

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