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Ambition as a destructive path to achieve power in Dr. Faustus

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Abstract

Power, in general, has two sides. It is either to build and get prosperity or to destroy. Ambition is the motive that controls power. It is the determination to achieve success and reach the desired aim. The main purpose of this paper is to deal with the theme of a bad ambition and damnation in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. The paper falls into two sections and conclusion. Section one Focuses on the source of Doctor Faustus and the conflict and the main kinds of conflict. Section two deals with Doctor Faustus as a morality play designed to teach its spectators about the dangers of excessive ambition. Also it sheds light on Faustus' ambition, his greed and pride. Then a conclusion that sums up the findings of the study.

Keywords: Destructive path, achieve power, ambition

1. Introductions

1.1 The source of Doctor Faustus

During the first millennium of the Christian era, there were many stories of people tried to receive supernatural gifts or powers by signing a contract with the Devil. One of the earliest and most widespread of these legends told of a bishop's seneschal named Theophilus who, in the reign of the Emperor Justinian, was wrongfully dismissed from his office. In his resentment, he sealed a contract renouncing Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary and acknowledging Satan as his lord. His restoration to his office followed immediately. But Theophilus soon became terrified at what he had done. For forty nights he fasted and prayed to the Virgin; at last she appeared and listened to his plea. Reassured of the divine mercy, he made a public confession of his sin and proclaimed the miracle of his preservation. The contract was burned, and Theophilus shortly afterwards died in a state of grace, becoming known as Theophilus the penitent. His story is representative of many, for interest in the theme persisted throughout the middle Ages (Jump, 1965: 1) ^[12].

The fact that Faustus, an actual historical person, existed in Germany in the sixteenth century is proved by documentary evidence. His name is generally stated as Gerog Faustus or Jeorg Faustus; and only Melanchthon, the sixteenth century theologian and educator, speaks of him as Johann Faust, probably confusing the name with that of the Heidelberg student Johannes Faust (Kassir, 1977: 6) ^[5].

The old legend that a man could obtain supernatural power by selling his soul to the devil found its climax in sixteenth century in the person of Doctor Faustus who really lived in the first half of that century. This man was a wandering scholar who became notorious as a necromancer, brag art, and super – quack, who, abandoning the disinterested pursuit of knowledge in favour of its worldly exploitation, and attaining some temporary success, ultimately met disaster (Lall, 2009: 21) ^[13].

Faust is the historical Faustus, who lived when the Renaissance was at its elevation. His life was the more Common tragedy of the misapply and decay of great intellectual gifts. The knowledge of historical Faust is taken from some dozen references in little _ read evidence by men biased in his disfavour (Osborne, ND: IV).

The legend of Faust is sorrowful in its disappointed promise of greatness. Why this or that historical figure is chosen to be the center around which legends congregate. It is seldom possible to say, Faustus was probably a more typical representative of that popular "spirit of the age" which creates legend though not literature, than the greater figures who have come down to historical fame (ibid).

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Faustus is the protagonist of a classic German legend based on the historical Johann Georg Faust. The story was popularized in England by Christopher Marlowe, who gave it a classic treatment in his play *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (Laurens, ND: 2).

After his death, a book called *Faust buch* (or, *Faus _book*) appeared in German in 1587. This book was supposed to contain the experience and adventure of Doctor Faustus. It was translated into English under the title: *The Historical of The Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*. Marlowe must have taken the material for the writing of his play from his English translation. He has the distinction of being probably the first in any country to see the dramatic possibilities of this striking story (Lall, 2011: 21)^[10].

1.2 The Character of Faustus

Faustus is the sort of personage of whom Aristotle would have approved as the hero of a tragedy. Aristotle's conception of a tragic hero was that of a man essentially human and noble, but led astray by some excusable vice or error. Marlowe's public would see in Faustus a man and a Christian like themselves, carried too far by ambition and the love of pleasure. He is no radical unbeliever, no natural mate for the devil, he is not conscienceless, nor is he a heathen. On the contrary, he is a good protestant, and holds manfully to all these parts of the creed which express his spontaneous affections. He is an essentially good man driven against his will to despair and damnation because in a moment of infatuation, he had signed his soul away (Lall, 2011: 28)^[10].

Faustus is not the victim of a straight forward temptation he is in danger of persecution at the beginning from nothing but his own sense of frustration. It can be argued that this is only a subtle form of temptation. But that would be a sophisticated way of arguing. Faustus' self – damnation is due, not to a failure of his will _ power, but to an assertion of his will power. And he accuses Mephistophilis of being feeble (when Mephistophilis dwells upon the tortures which he has to undergo as a result of his fall from heaven) (ibid.). Marlowe introduces his Faustus – figure to the audience through the prologue. He describes Faustus' humble birth, his successful study in Wittenberg and its culmination in the graduation as doctor of divinity. He further tells of Faustus' fascination with necromancy, which is the cause of his down fall and destruction (Kassir, 1977: 23)^[5].

1.3 Conflict

Conflict is as old as mankind. It is a salient feature of the human society. It is agreed that conflict is difficult to define, because it occurs in many different settings. The essence of conflict seems to be disagreement contradiction or incompatibility. Thus conflict refers to any situations in which there are incompatible goals, cognitions, or emotions within the self or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition or interaction (Hellriegel, 1989: NP)^[3].

In literature, conflict is the central issue and makes the story moves. Short stories have one conflict, while novels or plays have many literary conflicts include internal conflict– man versus self –, and external conflict, also called man versus man, man versus nature, man versus society and man versus fate (www. Suite lol. Com).

1.4 Kinds of conflict

1.4.1 Internal conflict

Man vs. Self: Internal conflict is that which exists inside the character. It is a struggle with morality, fate, desire and

belief. This form of conflict is central to the character, or characters and must be resolved by the character alone (ibid.). Before signing the deed of gift with the devil, Faustus is again gripped by inner conflict. Sitting in his study he ponders upon his return to God in order to save himself from damnation. "O, something soundeth in mine ears,/ Abjure this magic, turn to God Again!" (I, v.: 20-21)

1.4.2 External conflict

Unlike internal conflict, external conflict deal with the problems of the world. Characters will struggle against the circumstances of external conflict. They may even suffer internal conflict resulting from the issues of external conflict, but this is not as simple as internal conflict. External conflict occurs when characters are involved in the world's woes, such as man versus man, man versus nature, man versus society and man versus fate.

Man vs. Man: Is the most fundamental type of external conflict. This form of external conflict occurs when a character struggles against another character. These struggle may be born from moral, religious or social differences and may be emotional, verbal or physical conflicts. Man versus man is almost always the conflict which is presented when a hero fights a villain. This form of conflict is presented alone, or in conjunction with other external conflicts.

Man Vs. Nature: Man versus nature conflicts occur when a character, or characters, find themselves at odds with forces of nature. A character struck by lightning, characters whose boat sinks in a storm and a character who struggles against hypothermia in a snow storm are all characters experiencing man versus nature conflict.

Man vs. Fate: Man versus fate occurs when a character is compelled to follow a known destiny.

As an example of external conflict, Faustus said: "The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite" (I, v.: 21). Here, "good and bad angels appear and externalize his combat with his conscience. Good angels reveals upon him that contrition, prayer and repentance are means to reach heaven" Evil angel, on the other hand, states these means as illusion and fruits of lunacy. "The inner conflict is rekindled by Mephistopheles refusal to say who made the world. This refusal sparks doubts in Faustus mind and he thinks of repenting".

Doctor Faustus is often joined by two angels, the first one is good and the second one is bad. The two angels try to advise him to choose a path action. The bad one usually being more effective over his mind. These two angels personify the inner conflict that is raging inside of Faustus. From one hand, he has a greed thirst for knowledge and great power. On the other hand, Faustus realizes that it is insanity, abandon heavenly pleasures for momentary mortal happiness. Faustus choice to go with the desires takes him into completely desolation, therefore; evil wins the upper hand in the life of Faustus (Issn, 2016: 61).

Innocent and often devout men are tortured at Faustus' delight and command. He participates in many pleasures with devils and is even shown the seven deadly sins in person. Thus, Faustus is described as doomed from the very beginning. Although he has moments for regret, he quickly

trusts a side thoughts of God and transition to evil. Marlowe tried to express to his audience that while prayer and contrition are the paths to heaven, sin and mortal pleasure are very hard temptations to pass over

The dominating feature, which Marlowe's Faustus figure presents in the exposition of the play, is the expression of conflict. Faustus is consumed by an one word desire to satisfy his intellectual curiosity, to command the world he lives in, to become lord over life and death ((as far as does the mind of man)) (Kassir, 1977: 29)^[5].

At the same time he realizes that conventional means deny the fulfillment of these longings and therefore rejects them. This rejection in itself does not constitute the conflict. The conflict is brought about the fact that traditional thought has sufficient hold over Faustus to make him feel obliged to justify discarding orthodox opinions. His attempt of justification takes the form of reversing the aims of orthodox studies. As has been shown, he replaces the contemplative search for truth in the study of philosophy by the theory of argument for argument's sake and he substitutes the gains of external trash for the ideals of justice. Medicine becomes a means of obtaining fame instead of attaining a new lease on life and the means to relieve pain, and the study of divinity concentrates on man's salvation through Christ (ibid.).

Section Two

2.1 Doctor Fasutus as a Morality Play

Pity and fear are the emotions that, according to the Greek philosopher

Aristotle, are aroused by the experience of watching a tragedy. Doctor Faustus, a late sixteenth-century play, is considered a morality play, designed to teach its audience about the spiritual dangers of excessive learning and ambition.

Morality play is a dramatic genre, also called morality, popular in Europe especially during the 15th and 16th centuries, in which the characters personify moral qualities (such as charity or vice) or abstractions (as death or youth) and in which moral lessons are taught. Together with the mystery play and the miracle play, the morality play is one of the three main types of vernacular drama produced during the middle Ages. The action of the morality play centres on a hero, such as Mankind, whose inherent weaknesses are assaulted by such personified demonic and devilish forces as the Seven Deadly Sins but who may choose redemption and enlist the aid of such figures as the Four Daughters of God (Mercy, Justice, Temperance, and Truth). Morality plays were an intermediate step in the transition from liturgical to secular drama, and combine elements of each. Dr. Faustus lives a good life in virtue and then comes the powers of evil that tempt him. The conflict between the good angel and the bad angel represents his both selves, purity and vice. Although the significant side of the morality play is the protagonist's repentance; yet, Faustus, as a human being with weaknesses, is afraid from facing the torture in his death. At one moment he is about to repent especially when the old man appears to him, but Mephostophilis is aware to Faustus' intention. Thus, he threatens him and makes him accept his destiny as a slave to Satan, Lucifer. (Blog, T. (2014)^[2].

Old Man

O, gentle Faustus, leave this damned art, this magic that will charm thy soul to hell, and quite bereave thee of salvation.

Though thou hast now offended like a man, Do not persevere in it like a devil.

Yet, yet, thou hast an amiable soul,
If sin by custom grow not into nature;
Then, Faustus, will repentance come too late, Then thou art banished from the sight of heaven; No mortal can express the pains of hell.

Faust

Where art thou, Faustus? Wretch, what hast thou done?
Hell claims his right, and with a roaring voice
Says, Faustus, come, thine hour is almost come,
Mephostophilis gives him a dagger
And Faustus now will come to do the right.

Old

O stay, good Faustus, stay thy desperate steps.
I see an angel hover o'er thy head,
And with a vial full of precious grace,
Offers to pour the same into thy soul, Then call for mercy,
and avoid despair.

Fa

O, friend, I feel thy words to comfort my distressed soul.
Leave me a while to ponder on my sins.

Faust

Accursed Faustus, wretch what hast thou done?
I do repent, and yet I do despair,
Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast.
What shall I do to shun the snares of death?

Mephostophilis

Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul,
For disobedience to my sovereign lord.
Revolt or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh.

Faust

I do repent I e'er offended him.
Sweet Mephostophilis, entreat thy lord
To pardon my unjust presumption,
And with my blood again I will confirm
The former vow I made to Lucifer. (V, I, 70-72)

2.2 Seven deadly Sins

Instead of showing scene after scene of Faustus engaging with the sins individually, Marlowe takes the abstract concepts of the sins and displays them before the audience. They are intended to demonstrate that within Faustus' twenty – four years, he would indulge in all of them in his various experiences. They are presented by Lucifer in the same way a medieval morality play would personify broad religious and philosophical concepts. They would have been costumed for comedy (Roohi. 2016)^[14].

2.2.1 Pride

Pride was considered to be the most serious of the sins. It is identified as excessive self – esteem, especially when the proud person does not accept his/her proper position in the Great chain of being. Lucifer was thrown from heaven because he would not accept the son of God being placed at God's right hand, which he believed to be his own rightful place. Those guilty of pride were destined to be broken on

the wheel in Hell. In Doctor Faustus pride appears when he feels that he is more superior to others (ibid.).

Faustus: I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked,
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest.
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss. (V, i, 72-73)

Faustus compares himself to the great Greek heros, claiming that he is going to kill Achilles in battle, making himself deserving Helen. His comparison of himself to Paris accentuates his pride.

2.2.2 Greed

Greed, also known as covetousness, is, like just and gluttony, a sin of desire. However, greed is applied to an artificial, rapacious desire and pursuit of material possessions. Greed is inordinate desire to acquire or possess more than one needs, especially with respect to material wealth. Like pride, it cannot lead but to evil. In Doctor Faustus greed appears when he wants to get more and more. His greed is shown clearly by his desire to have Helen, a woman of astronomical fame, as his lover instead of an earthly woman. (Lall, R.2011)^[10].

2.2.3 Wrath

Wrath can be defined as uncontrolled feelings of anger, rage, and even hatred, often revealing itself in the wish to seek vengeance. Wrath, in its purest form, presents with injury, violence, and hate that may provoke feuds that can go on for centuries. Faustus' wrath appears when he is not able to do anything in his life though he was intelligent (ibid.).

2.2.4 Envy

Envy, like greed and lust, is characterized by an insatiable desire. It can be described as a sad or resentful covetousness towards the traits or possessions and severs a man from his neighbor. In Doctor Faustus envy appears when he saw the power of God (ibid.).

2.2.5 Gluttony

Gluttony is the over – consumption of food and drink to the point of waste. In Doctor Faustus gluttony appears when he wants much more power and position than others (<https://www.cliffsnotes.com>).

2.2.6 Laziness

Laziness is idleness, the failure to utilise the talents given to you by God. Those guilty of laziness were destined to be thrown into snake pits. In Doctor Faustus laziness appears when he got all kinds of knowledge and he feels laziness from over knowledge (ibid.).

2.2.7 Lechery

Lechery, could also mean simply desire in general. Thus lust for money, power and other things which are sinful Show, L. & (Waiker, M. 2015)^[16].

2.3 Ambition

Ambition is a motivational formation that represents aspiration of a person to be a significant and recognized

personality to other people (Barsukova, 2014). In other words, ambition is a desire of the person:

- To improve the status, position in the world;
- To find popularity, glory, power;
- To succeed, reach a certain result and heights (www.windsongcastlecottage.com).

Everyone has the right to be ambitious. Yet, ambition has two kinds, one of them is good for motivation in order to set goals and achieve aims.

The other kind is the bad ambition which means an excess of ambition. This one can be dangerous, putting the person at risk of burnout and a shorter life.

Good ambition is a desire to achieve ends, especially ends like success, power and wealth. There is a motivational process at works, oriented toward the attainment of outcomes (Muller: ND, 5, 6). Scott Cairns said " ambition for great things is itself a great thing, an honorable thing, and worthy of those who are shaped in the image of God, those called to a quire his likeness. I would have to say that this sort if a good ambition is, itself something of a gift " (Cairns: ND, xii).

On the other hand, bad ambition is reinforced by negative qualities like vanity, pride, lust, greed, etc. Bad ambition makes the person selfish, leads to aggression towards other people. It is the need for self – affirmation and recognition; i.e. greed as the underlying motive of all desires. These motives make a person exalt one self and attract the attention that flatters the narcissistic feeling (Barsukova, 2015: 8).

2.3.1 Faustus' Ambition, Pride, and Greed

Faustus ambition for power and lack of foresight are what doom him later on in the play. Arguably, ambition can be said to have caused the downfall of Marlowe himself. His violent murder in London tavern in 1593 was mysterious and historians often question possible motives for killing Marlowe; his drive to succeed may have made other people envious and resentful. In Doctor Faustus, other characters are probably envious of Faustus too. Hezal, T (2015)^[4].

In the first few scenes, Faustus outlines his reasons for wanting these magical powers. He explains his desires to learn the intricacies of the world and the universe, requesting a book containing " all characters of planets of the heavens " and " all plants, herbs and trees that grow upon the earth " all of which Mephophilis is able to provide. Faustus' scholarly ambition seems to the audience to be admirable and even commendable and the sincerity of these wishes is reinforced by the eloquence of his earlier soliloquies (ibid.).

Faustus uses his unlimited power for his own amusement and to deceive others, rather than to achieve any respectable end. His power has not turned him into a wicked and evil magician, but rather it has turned his great ambitious into petty amusements and delights (Blog, 2014: 1, 2)^[2]. He tries to do more than is humanly possible; he seeks to know, possess, and experience everything under the sun. Thus, the play glorifies ambition and Man's ambition (Blog, 2014:3)^[2].

His unlimited power has left him as nothing more than "a man condemned to die ". Because of his rejection of God and God's salvation, and because of his hardened heart and unwillingness to repent, he is condemned to mediocrity. He is lost in his unlimited power, and so his awe – inspiring

plans become trivial games and a hunger for praise. Marlowe is suggesting that power takes away all vision and ambition. He seems to have wasted his magical gifts, and that is perhaps why audiences pity him at the end of the play. He knew what he was doing when he made the pact, and he is entirely to blame (ibid.).

Pride, on the other hand, means having a feeling of being good and worthy. The word pride can be used in a good sense as well and in a bad sense. In a good sense it means having a feeling of self – respect. People can be satisfied with their achievements. They can be proud of something good that they have done. They can be proud of (or take pride in) their works (ibid.). In a bad sense, pride can mean that someone has an exaggerated sense of feeling good. This might mean that someone has no respect for what other people do, only respect for what he or she does, such a person is described as arrogant.

Faustus' greed and pride lead to his destruction. He already had everything that any person in his time could possibly need or use. Yet, because of his desire for power greater than what he was meant to have, he sacrificed his soul to Satan. Eventually, this would lead to his destruction mortally and eternally, simply to satisfy his greed and pride.

Faustus' Greed becomes apparent in the first scene. He has already gained all that he desires materially and intellectually, being very wealthy as well as a master of logic, medicine, and law. However, he is still not satisfied, he felt confined by mere human knowledge and wealth. Faustus believed that through necromancy (magic) he could have even more, "A world of profit and delight, of power, of honor, of omnipotence". It is this greed and thirst for omnipotence that leads Faustus to sell his soul to Lucifer. For only a short twenty – four years of all out power (power to satisfy his greed and pride), he is willing to spend eternity in Hell (ibid.).

3.1 Conclusion

Ambition, motivation and desire of any person are rationally accepted the time they go with the mental ability and capacity and its limits, however, when such elements detour from their right path, nobleness, honor, morality and magnanimity are changed into damnation. The most significant play Doctor Faustus has mostly considered Marlowe's utmost work is perhaps his last. Doctor Faustus supplies a nearly diagrammatic study of damnation of the decline and fall of a human soul growing out of excessive pride and overreaching ambition.

True wisdom is not rooted in great learning or in human intelligence, but in the understanding of our place before the one who created this universe i.e. ' God '. Faustus could not realize that and because of his pride he sees himself in many situations as god who is able to revive the dead. That was the mistake of judgment that he committed and made him a tragic hero. As a result, his downfall was catastrophic.

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