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Apostasy and Phenomenology of Desire in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

Marlowe'un Doktor Faustus'unda Dinden Dönme ve Arzunun Fenomenolojisi

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ABSTRACT
The present article posits that the employment of sacred language by Faustus can be interpreted as a manifestation of his existential defiance of both theological determinism and the narrative of salvation. Faustus's work is characterised by a juxtaposition of two contrasting figures: Christ's sacrificial submission and the self-authored descent into damnation. Within this framework, Faustus constructs a pseudo-theological temporality that effectively collapses the eschatological promise of Christianity. The present study draws on exegetical interpretations of John 19:30 to explore how Faustus' selective and distorted use of scripture constitutes a wilful rejection of grace. The study goes on to situate Faustus' trajectory within both doctrinal and phenomenological frameworks, examining his descent into despair through Gerard H. Cox's theological model of sin against the Holy Ghost (1973) and Edward W. Snow's ontological account of subjectivity and lack (1977). In this way, Faustus emerges not only as a figure of intellectual and spiritual hubris but also as a tragic cipher of early modern secularity, suspended between the collapse of metaphysical certainty and the unfulfilled promise of agency. The analysis contributes to contemporary debates in theology, Renaissance tragedy and phenomenology by tracing how the undoing of salvation in Doctor Faustus reveals the limits of free will, the aesthetics of despair, and the unresolved tension between divine order and human desire.

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The predominant perspective among Christian theologians is that the utterance "*consummatum est*" signifies the fulfilment of every minute detail of Old Testament prophecy, and this assertion is substantiated by the words of Jesus in John 19:30, which reads, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished.'" The phrase "and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" encapsulates the progression from John 4:34 ("My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work") to John 17:4 ("I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do"). The utterance of these words by Jesus signifies the fulfilment of the divine will and the attainment of salvation for humanity; that is, Jesus fulfils the prophecy he has made himself, in accordance with the will of God, which establishes a plan that has already been set in motion.[1] Consequently, the inclusion of additional elements or the repetition of those that are already present is rendered unfeasible. The anguish experienced by Jesus on the cross, and the manner of its ultimate conclusion, signifies a defeat

[1] For more on the theological implication of the utterance, see Hylen, S. E. (2015). John 19:30—'It is finished:' A rhetorical and theological reading. *Biblical Interpretation*, *23*(4-5), 599-612; and Konradt, M. (2014). Jesus' death as the fulfilment of Scripture in the Gospel of John. *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, *90*(4), 737-760.

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and loss of power on the part of Satan. An additional noteworthy element of John 19:30 is the verb form *tetelestai*, which carries both secular and religious connotations and plays a pivotal grammatical role. In the original Greek text, the verb is in the perfect tense, indicative and in the passive voice, leading to a profound conclusion at a specific point in time with an effect in the present. In contrast to the sacrifices described in the Old Testament, Calvary was the ultimate sacrifice that provided salvation for humanity. It is also noteworthy that the verb was employed in a variety of contexts, including as a servant's word (used upon the completion of a task), a priest's word (used upon the approval of a sacrificial animal), a farmer's word (used upon the birth of a perfect specimen into the flock), and a merchant's word (used upon the conclusion of a transaction and the resolution of all negotiations).[2]

The two figures of Jesus and Faustus are distinguished by their shared tendency to repudiate their respective spirits; nevertheless, a discernible distinction emerges between their actions: Jesus voluntarily offers his spirit as a ransom or sacrifice to God, whereas Faustus voluntarily enters the realms of the damned and sins by doing so. A Christian interpretation of the play would arguably posit that Faustus' downfall was a consequence of his own volition. Prior to Scene V, in which Faustus "ends his bill" with Satan, there have been numerous instances where Faustus arrives at the conclusion that his actions are the only viable option (*che sera sera*), and that his aspiration is too human to be that of a demigod. Right at the beginning of the play, he acknowledges his limited position in the world and indicates his aspiration to be like a god on earth, which is further elaborated in his "*consummatum est*" speech: "Nevertheless, you remain Faustus, a mortal man. The question is posed to him: "Could you create a means of sustaining life forever, or resurrect those who have perished? If you could do so, your profession would be held in high regard" (Act I, Scene I, 24-27).

Firstly, the protagonist, Faustus, is compelled to reverse his misfortune at any cost, despite the necessity to confront the unavoidable. The double bind constitutes the tragic aspect of the situation, thus placing Faustus within the realm of tragedy. In this study, the concept of "volition" as explored by Faustus is situated within the broader context of early modern self-authoring. This phenomenon, as described by Renaissance studies, can be understood as the emergent pressure to "fashion" a self under the influence of moral, institutional, and theological constraints.[3] Consequently, the theological underpinnings of the play serve as a technological apparatus for the formation of the subject. To act, he must be blind to certain facts, leading Faustus to act in a manner that is contrary to the predetermined will of the Christian God. Within the framework of tragedy, it can be posited that Faustus' tragic flaw lies in his belief in a larger plan devised by God, a belief that is beyond his human comprehension. It is important to note that this "belief" functions as an unstable rationalisation rather than a consistently held theological doctrine. This is a more accurate representation of Faustus's inconsistency and uncertainty across scenes. Despite this, he elects to disregard God's plan, and to a certain extent, aspires to transcend it through his own actions.

As previously discussed in relation to John 19:30, Faustus refuses to accept the established order and is held accountable for this deliberate act of defiance that defines his tragic downfall. By entering into a covenant with Satan, Faustus renounces the divine law and the prospect of salvation, seeking to rewrite his own destiny; nevertheless, he is incapable of transcending the divine and achieving that which God has not done for him. Faustus' quest for salvation is inextricably linked to a state of despair and his temporary world is the only context in which he can construct a new temporality aligned with his own purposes. Consequently, the assertion can be made that "it is finished" signifies both a conclusion and the inauguration of a new purpose, irrespective of its "human nature." This notion of aspiration is a recurring theme throughout the course of the play:

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[2] See Kuwornu-Adjaottor, J. E. T. (2019). The meaning and significance of *tetelestai* in John 19:30. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337415360

[3] The terms "self-authoring" and "fashion" used here draw on Stephen Greenblatt's influential account of Renaissance self-fashioning (Greenblatt, 1980).

> *Consummatum est*: the bill is ended.
> And Faustus hath bequeathed his soul to Lucifer.
> But what is this inscription on mine arm?
> *Homo fuge*! Whither should I flie?
> If unto heaven, he'll throw me down to hell.
> My senses are deceived: here is nothing writ
> Oh yes, I see it plain. Even here is writ
> *Homo fuge*. Yet shall not Faustus fly. (73-80)

This speech marks the conclusion of a process of eroding credibility that has already been initiated for Faustus. From the commencement of the theatrical piece, the notion of salvation is conspicuously absent from Faustus's perspective. This is evidenced by his selective quotation of Romans 6:23, which omits the crucial reference to redemption. Consequently, Faustus' loss of faith results in his loosening of the bonds that bind him to God. The latter part of John 19:30 states that Jesus surrendered his soul for the salvation of all and bowed his head in submission to God's will, yet Faustus sells his soul to Lucifer and gazes directly into heaven with aspiration, despite the resistance of his physical body. Within this paradigm, this resistance can indicate the soul represents the domain of free will, while the body remains within the sphere of faith. The interpretive claim is retained, albeit marked explicitly as a heuristic reading, and connected to theories of discipline/embodiment. In this context, the term "body" is understood to denote the inscription of institutional and theological authority, while "soul" is interpreted as the fantasy of self-authored agency.[4] The repeated use of the imagery of blood serves to highlight the replacement of Jesus' salvific and material blood with that of Faustus, which ultimately negates his salvation. The former assumes a human body to suffer the agony, whereas the latter aspires to become a deity in a human body and, most importantly, in a human mind. Despite Faustus' professed mastery of science and theology, his aspirations blind him to the impending damnation that Mephistopheles has foretold as outlined in Act I, Scene III, 75-80.

Marlowe defines the nature of that which is "tragic" in the play by creating a character who is antithetical to Jesus Christ and representative of the limits of human cognition. While the play is dominated by Christian theology, it is also possible to derive highly secular conclusions from Faustus' tragedy in that Faustus' predicament, characterised by a dichotomy between a desire to repent and an inability to do so, serves as a symbol of the human condition, marked by the pervasiveness of human blindness, error, and vulnerability. Faustus' internal conflict, stemming from his struggle with religion, can be interpreted as a metaphor for the various forces that impose constraints on human behaviour. His distinct individuality, setting him apart from the rest of humanity, also evinces a secularisation that situates him in an uncanny space and time preceding his damnation in hell. Consequently, following the dissolution of the concept of salvation, Faustus undergoes a profound loss of meaning. His profound despondency, his desperate need for repentance, and his ultimate submission to Satan are indicative of his inability to make sense of his new status as a quasi-deity in the world. In this state, he finds himself incapable of rekindling his faith and of repentance and in an attempt to address this void in his comprehension of the world and his role within it, Faustus reverts to a worldview rooted in the traditions of antiquity. A notable instance of this is when he concedes that his heart has become so hardened that it is incapable of repentance:

> And long ere this I should have done the deed,
> Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair
> Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
> Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death? […]
> I am resolved, Faustus shall not repent. (Act II, Scene I, 25-32)

[4] For further reading on this topic, refer to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (especially to the section on the body as the surface of inscription).

In one instance, he evinces reluctance to repent, deeming it an unacceptable course of action, in another he requests that Helen be provided with solace by Mephistopheles and subsequently, the old man makes a final appearance, issuing a curse and ascending to his deity in a manner reminiscent of Jesus' ascension. These instances can be regarded as moments when he endeavours to ascertain a rationale within his novel, temporal and spatial context, which is devoid of the divine and its associated tenets. The denouement of the play suggests that the world and its structure are beyond the comprehension of Faustus as a mortal being. In the context of a traditional tragedy, a clear distinction is often drawn between the protagonist, representing a high status, and ordinary people. Such instances are numerous within the long tradition of tragedy; however, by focusing on a 'base-born' intellectual in his play, Marlowe appears to have shifted the focus from the courts of kings and lords to the everyday lives of the common people. However, despite this shift, Faustus continues to be regarded as a man of high status, a which is a consequence of his intellectual capabilities and privileged upbringing. Within the broader context of the rise of self-sovereignty and progress, Marlowe's work offers a nuance on the interplay between reason, necessity free will. The juxtaposition of these two concepts creates a state of internal conflict for the individual, who is compelled to choose between them and is driven by a sense of intellectual superiority. Extending beyond the individual of Faustus, the intellectual hubris embodied in *Doctor Faustus* thus illustrates the intellectual dilemmas of the age and dramatizes them as a collective form of suffering.

The play might have very well evoked feelings of fear and wonder in its Elizabethan audience, which would have been contrary to the Aristotelian concept of "purification." A further noteworthy point is that the play is set in a context that is more aligned with Catholic Christianity than Protestantism and in this vein, the notion of Faustus being predestined to be damned is rendered moot. Instead, he exercises his free will in defiance of the established order previously outlined, suggesting that the effectiveness of the play in evoking fear can be partly attributed to the unshakable belief that Faustus would be saved if he repented. This absolute knowledge would be inevitable in a Protestant context, where men are mysteriously elected or damned. The theological drama of apostasy in Doctor Faustus also enables a theorisation of subjectivity in which the "modern" self emerges not as a sovereign interior essence but as a precarious effect of competing authorities (divine command, institutional mediation, and the subject's own drive to author itself). In a sense, Faustus's rebellion cannot be explained by doctrinal error alone. It also reveals a crisis of self-grounding, as he tries to establish a sense of agency without the assurance of salvation.

The play's use of the language of covenant, confession and repentance thus functions as a scene of subjectivation: Faustus' actions and behaviours demonstrate a complex relationship with authority; on the one hand, he actively resists established power structures, yet on the other, he simultaneously seeks validation and acknowledgement from these very systems. This ambivalence changes between autonomy and subjugation, which reflects an internal conflict between personal desire and external societal demands. This is illustrated in the play by the relationship between the theological question "Can grace still be received?" and the phenomenological question "What happens to desire when salvation is undone?" Cox helps clarify the doctrinal logic through which repentance gradually becomes unavailable to Faustus, while Snow is more attentive to what that condition feels like from within: lack, projection, and a disturbed relation to time. If we take them together, these readings make it possible to see Faustus' apostasy as a theological renunciation and as a struggle over the grounds of the self.

The secondary literature on *Doctor Faustus* has traditionally been divided into three major lines of interpretation. The first of these focuses on doctrinal orthodoxy and the theological mechanics of sin, repentance and damnation and interprets Faustus as a cautionary exemplar of Christian morality. A second line focuses on intellectual ambition, Renaissance humanism and the limits of knowledge, which situates Faustus within early modern debates on science, magic and epistemological transgression. A third approach stresses the questions of subjectivity, desire and temporality. This approach interprets Faustus's tragedy as an exploration of inward lack and

existential instability. While each of these approaches has generated important insights, they have rarely been read together in a way that integrates theological doctrine with a phenomenology of desire. The present study intervenes at this intersection by placing Gerard H. Cox's doctrinal analysis of sin against the Holy Ghost in dialogue with Edward W. Snow's phenomenological account of subjectivity and lack and argues that Faustus' apostasy must be understood simultaneously as a theological refusal and as a crisis of modern subject formation.

At this point, I find it appropriate to turn to two seminal works on the subject, the first being Gerard H. Cox's "Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and 'Sin against the Holy Ghost,'" and the other, Edward W. Snow's "*Doctor Faustus* and the Ends of Desire." Both scholars provide profound dialectical frameworks, albeit certain liminations; Snow's phenomenological interpretation of Faustus' wilfulness, for instance, does not emphasise the significance of the Christian myth and its pervasive influence on the play. Conversely, Cox's theoretical framework offers a persuasive and coherent account of Faustus' damnation; nevertheless, his analyses generally lack philosophical depth and run the risk of being reductive. As their readings align with my analysis of the play in significant ways, this article provides a comprehensive examination of their key arguments and present them in a comparative context alongside my own interpretation of the play.

Edward W. Snow's (1977) phenomenological reading of the play elucidates the ontological ambiguities underlying Faustus' pursuit of knowledge, wealth, and fame and sheds light on the phenomena that occur in Faustus' new temporality after he has undone salvation. Within this novel temporal and spatial framework, shaped by his exercise of free will, Faustus grapples with a state of internal uncertainty regarding his own desires. Snow's proposition is that the question of Faustus' desires serves to rationalise an inward restlessness (1977, p. 171). Consequently, this interpretation posits that this novel spatial and temporal framework does not offer emancipation, but rather imposes constraints in the face of recurring expressions of "lacking." Furthermore, his inquiries concerning the nature of the universe and God appear to be mere epiphenomena, as they are unable to facilitate an entirely novel understanding of the world. Conversely, he is unable to entirely sever his ties with the world he has renounced by pledging his soul to Satan. While Snow's reading may appear to be overly modernistic at first glance and would benefit from additional contextualisation, I concur with his assertion that Faustus serves as a conduit, "rather than rather merely the voice of a nameless emptiness or an impersonal rush to the void" (1977, p. 171):

> It is not so much that there are things that he wants as it is that he needs to ensure himself that there will always be some object out there, marking extension in space and time, toward which he will be able to project "his" desire, in terms of which he can experience himself as an interior distance alive in the present and stretching continuous and intact into the future. (1977, p. 172)

The conclusion of Faustus' pursuit of knowledge would signify the conclusion of his subject position and reveal that he has constructed his identity de novo. It is also noteworthy that, as Snow articulates perfectly, Mephistopheles is not promising Faustus "the unimaginable"; The positioning of Faustus in a "conceited" space between desire and possession (1977, p. 172) is a crucial aspect of the play. Snow emphasises the lack of purposefulness in Faustus and how his mind experiences time and death in this new and unknown realm (1977, p. 173). Snow's examination of the theme of "end" reveals his assertion that Faustian discourse has not yielded a novel point of view or a governing set of values. In other words, the focus of Faustian discourse is on the dialectical relationship between different discourses, rather than on understanding any one of them in isolation (1977, p. 175). Although Snow does not explicitly state it, the issue of "quoting half" also pervades Faustus' relation to the arts and sciences. It is evident that he has not attained the zenith of any art or science (including magic and theology) as a consequence of his interaction with Mephistopheles. A pivotal point in Snow's article is that, despite his inability to fully comprehend the significance of the events transpiring around him, Faustus is profoundly preoccupied with them. In addressing the disjunction between Faustus' mind and the new

sphere in which he finds himself, Snow proposes that

> there is always an exasperating feeling of the inability of the mind to make contact with the sphere where its life is taking place, in spite of what would seem the stable locus of the body. This obscure sensation crystallizes in moments such as Faustus' attempt, as he watches his blood congeal, to interpret what it means, and only succeeding when he can manage to read it as a text; it is present most obscurely but intensely throughout the final soliloquy. (1977, p. 180)

In contrast, Cox's (1973) article explores the relationship between the play and orthodox Christianity, particularly in relation to Marlowe's "scepticism," which can be understood as a profound sense of uncertainty or disbelief. Cox identifies two opposing perspectives in the secondary literature on the play: those who view Faustus' ambitious nature as a redeeming quality and those who perceive Marlowe's portrayal as a representation of a man facing consequences for his unruly will. In his preliminary remarks, Cox acknowledges the potential for his analysis to be perceived as reductionist in certain instances; however, he is accurate in his assertion that the play presents an equivocal spectacle. The conclusion that Christian doctrine is a fundamental element of the play is accurate, but it must be noted that Cox's assertion regarding Marlowe's personal stance towards Christian doctrine being of lesser significance than its utilisation in the dramatic context is an oversimplification (1973, p. 119).

Cox's primary argument is that Faustus is culpable not only of presumption and despair, two of the seven deadly sins against the Holy Ghost that have been repeatedly emphasised in the play's secondary literature, but also of impenitence, obstinacy, resistance to the known truth, and envy of a brother's spiritual good. In his view, Faustus is guilty of all six of the sins traditionally categorised as sins against the Holy Ghost (1973, p. 120). In this context, he further posits that Faustus' decline is not a static phenomenon, but rather a progressive one. In addition to various sermons and the teachings of the Church Fathers, Cox presents Matthew 12:31-32 as the biblical source:

> Wherefore I say unto you, everie sinne and blasphemie shal be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemie against the holie Gost shal not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever shal speake a worde against the Sone of man, it shal be forgiven him: but whosoever shal speake against ye holie Gost, it shal not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in ye worlde to come. (1973, p. 121)

A close scrutiny of the play reveals that on each occasion that Faustus attempts to repent, he becomes increasingly attached to a lifestyle of sin. Cox asserts that this phenomenon can be attributed to a progressive transition from one sin against the Holy Ghost to another, in accordance with the aforementioned sequence. The repeated demonstration of allegiance to sin is evident throughout the play, and in terms of conventional sinfulness, Cox identifies two significant consequences of these acts: First, Faustus's damnation is inevitable and without any doubt, and second, Faustus's downfall can be defined as a tragic event.

A key point of disagreement with Cox concerns his claim that Faustus makes a rational judgment rather than a deliberate choice when he signs his soul away. Cox is right to show that Faustus moves through logic, medicine and law before declaring that "When all is done, Divinity is best." He is also persuasive in reading this moment through a variant of the *Sortes Virgilianae*, where a reader opens a text and takes the first line encountered as guidance. Yet Faustus' use of Romans 6:23 and 1 John 1:8-9 is anything but impartial. He cites only the portions that support what he already wants to do. The point is not that he reasons his way toward damnation, but that he bends scriptural authority to the service of his will. Once he treats sin as unforgivable, everlasting death appears to him not as a possibility but as a necessity. At that point, his turn toward the devil follows from a willed refusal of divine order rather than from rational judgment. The question still stands: What doctrine does he ascribe to this? Ultimately, he asserts, the outcome is indistinguishable; the notion of predestination is posited, encapsulated by the phrase, "What will be, shall be." The initial phase is concluded when the subject elects to pursue

the practice of magic. Cox defines this as the first of the six sins against the Holy Ghost, namely presumption (1973, p. 123). The second sin is committed when the individual is encouraged by the prospect of fame, miracles and wealth, leading to a hardening of the heart, which is exemplified by the following: "I shall conjure this night, even though I may die as a result." Cox's scheme indicates that Faustus does not renounce magic, and thus he is deemed to have committed the sin of obstinacy (1973, p. 123).

The third sin is despair, which is most evident in Faustus' contemplation of divine mercy: "Now, Faustus, must thou inevitably be damned?" "Is there no possibility of your salvation? (390-391)." These questions mark the initial stages of Faustus' repentance (1973, p. 124); however, it appears that Cox does not place sufficient emphasis on the role of despair in the context of the protagonist's overall melancholic disposition. The phrase "Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub" represents one of the most compelling motifs in the play, exemplifying the tragic aspect of Faustus' predicament. Faustus' despair is the source and manifestation of the melancholic disposition and his inability to relinquish his bonds with the past and his faith, and concomitantly, his struggle to fully embrace his new existence and heresy, are indicative of his melancholic disposition. This interpretation aligns with Cox's progressive scheme to delineate the formal structure of the play, which underscores the inevitability of Faustus's damnation. Despite the unambiguous indications from God, Faustus is unable to demonstrate unwavering commitment and strays from the path to salvation.

The necessity for Faustus to be rendered deaf and to be repeatedly called back in order for the tragedy to be effective and powerful is evident. Cox's article provides valuable insight into the ways in which Faustus attempts to achieve redemption and the analysis posits that this phenomenon serves to dramatize the prevailing orthodox belief that the inclination towards sinfulness in man is only superseded by divine intervention. The auditory phenomena experienced by Faustus can be interpreted as manifestations of God's prevenient grace, which provides a basis for hope of salvation; however, as previously observed, presumption had previously removed the fear of God's justice—in this instance, despair removes the hope of God's mercy, leading to the question whether this is attributable to a divine cause. As such, the notion of divine love is called into question, and the deity to which worship is directed is, in fact, the appetite of the worshipper, which is the object of worship because it represents the love of Belsabub (447-449) (1973, p. 124).

It is important to note that Cox's analysis fails to consider a crucial aspect: it is only in the depths of despair that Faustus ultimately relinquishes his soul. In this state of despair, he surrenders his soul and his downfall occurs through his own volition and as a deliberate choice. In accordance with Cox's proposed sequence of sins, the fourth sin is defined as impenitence, which is defined as the deliberate refusal to repent (1973, p. 126).

> Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven.
> Swords, poyson, halters, and invenomb'd steele,
> Are laid before me to dispatch my selfe: And long e're this,
> I should have done the deed,
> Had not sweete pleasure conquer'd deepe despaire.
> Why should I die then, or basely despaire?
> I am resolv'd, Faustus shall not repent. (590-594, 600-601)

Faustus tries to relieve his despair by convincing himself that the pleasures gained at the price of his soul are still worth having, yet the play repeatedly suggests that these pleasures function only as distractions. The very fact that he must cling to them in this way shows that they do not satisfy him in themselves; they matter mainly because they offer temporary escape from despair. When Faustus asks, "Why should I perish, or indulge in despondency?" the line makes clear that despair remains active beneath these attempted consolations. Each return of despair drives him further from repentance: "I am resolved that Faustus shall not repent." At this stage, despair has hardened into impenitence. In order to reinforce the notion of damnation, Marlowe appears to

be doing something that is contrary to his usual style: portraying a version of Christianity and its God that is not only forgiving but also does so on numerous occasions throughout the play. Each opportunity represents an additional transgression on the part of Faustus; for instance, when Faustus is encouraged by an angel to repent, promising that if he does so, the devils will not harm him, Faustus begins to express remorse. Despite an initial invocation to Christ as his "Savior," Faustus ultimately renounces his repentance when Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistopheles make their appearance.

The play's effectiveness as a tragedy hinges on resolving the apparent contradiction between the protagonist's anticipation of his imminent demise and the knowledge that this is a foregone conclusion, as stipulated by the signed contract. In his distress, Faustus acknowledges the inevitability of his demise in the following words: "What, then, is Faustus if not a man sentenced to death?"/ "The appointed moment for thy demise draws nigh; despair engenders distrust in my thoughts" (1546-48). Disregarding this perception of his imminent demise, Faustus maintains his impenitent stance, as evidenced by his subsequent remarks: "Let these passions be banished by the solace of sleep" (1549). Furthermore, the notion that Christ himself called the thief upon the cross serves to emphasise that rest is to be found in quiet conceit. Faustus reiterates the same information he previously presented, as evidenced by his quotation from the Romans. In this passage, Faustus explicitly disregards the historical fact that there were two thieves during the crucifixion, and that only one of them was addressed by Christ. The final two sins against the Holy Ghost are committed when Faustus seeks solace in the arms of Helen. The character of the Old Man serves as an exemplar of Christian virtue, the measure of Faustus' actions that encompass resistance to established or divine truth and envy of a brother's spiritual well-being. The significance of the Old Man figure and these final two sins lies in their role in symbolising the potential for forgiveness, which is indicative of Faustus's obstinacy and deliberate actions, as previously mentioned. The Old Man functions as a reminder to Faustus of the impending wrath of God, which he is keen to avoid:

> Though thou hast now offended like a man,
> Doe not persever in it like a Divell;
> Yet, yet, thou hast an amiable soule,
> If sin by custome grow not into nature:
> Then Faustus, will repentance come too late,
> Then thou art banisht from the sight of heaven;
> No mortall can expresse the paines of hell. (1816-22)

In response to this appeal for love and compassion, Faustus further resists to the truth. He continues to be consumed by a state of despair concerning the possibility of divine clemency: "Where is Faustus? This individual has committed a heinous act. What has he done?" The infernal regions assert their prerogative and proclaim that Faustus' appointed time is near at hand. They urge him to "come, for it is almost thy hour." Faustus' simultaneous trials to atone and to succumb to despair prevents his ability to transcend the temporal constraints imposed by his own actions. This dynamic perpetuates a cyclical pattern of behaviour in which Faustus is repeatedly drawn back by his despair, ultimately leading to the reoccurrence of his past transgressions: "I do repent of my transgression against thee, sweet Mephasto. I beseech you to intercede with the Lord on my behalf, to absolve me of this unwarranted presumption, and with my blood I will renew the vow I once made to Lucifer" (1850-54).

Following the second blood bond offered to Lucifer by Faustus, the blood in question fails to congeal, which signifies that Faustus' damnation is approaching its conclusion. Faustus is not forewarned by Mephistopheles' admission that he is unable to cause the Old Man the slightest harm. Faustus seeks solace and purpose in Helen's embrace, and forgoes repentance for the final time. The Old Man's final appearance serves to corroborate this assertion and he elucidates the theological ramifications of Faustus' despair and rejection of repentance. The Old Man's words, "The damned Faustus, wretched man, who has excluded the grace of heaven from his soul and flees from the throne of his tribunal" (1377-79), underscore the gravity of Faustus' actions and

the profound consequences of his decision to reject repentance. Upon departing the order, Faustus is no longer able to repent. However, upon being damned, he is promptly returned to the order, where he is now free from the influence of his previous wilfulness and is able to attempt to repent. Consequently, the opportunity for repentance in his new temporal reality is eliminated. He is thrust back into the domain of the divine where he is confronted with an abrupt revelation: "On the deity whom Faustus has renounced and denounced?" The speaker expresses a desire to weep, but is prevented from doing so by the Devil. Instead of tears, let there be blood, and let there be life and soul. Moreover, let there be no utterance: "I would extend my hands in supplication, but they remain firmly clasped" (1950-54).

Marlowe's depicts a profound anguish in the person of Faustus in that he endures the torments of hell while still alive, which suggests that he is experiencing distress in response to this new revelation, and that he has been enduring this anguish in a concealed manner following his departure from God's order and the reversal of Christ's salvation. Cox's compelling proposition asserts that Faustus' tears are not a consequence of divine displeasure, but rather, a consequence of the forfeiture of the prospect of eternal bliss. This suggests that his anguish stems from a self-centred perspective (Cox, 1973, p. 134). As previously stated, Cox's approach offers valuable insights into the structure of the play and the gradual and progressive damnation of Faustus, which is achieved by demonstrating the irreversible nature of his transgressions against the Holy Spirit. The ultimate resolution of Faustus' character is that he wishes he did not exist.

Despite an initial perception of individualism, Faustus' actions are representative of the human condition and the limitations of human perception. In a period when some believe that tragedy as a genre has reached its conclusion, Marlowe introduces new possibilities from a philosophical perspective. The narrative portrays Faustus' downfall, which can be interpreted as a consequence of his hubris and opposition to the prevailing order, which he perceives as oppressive. The futility of this struggle and the unavoidable nature of the events that ensue are themes with ancient Greek precedents. The initiation of action by Faustus marks his immediate immersion into the domain of tragedy, which is characterised by a distinct and uncanny dimension. Faustus' fate is analogous to that of numerous other tragic heroes throughout history. It is reasonable to posit that, despite the fear that Marlowe's work arouses, he does not intend to leave a purely fearful effect, but rather to evoke the promise that is a common feature of both ancient and Renaissance tragedies.

The notion of promise in question differs from its conventional Christian connotation of salvation. Marlowe's idea of promise suggests that personal inspiration begins to claim an authority once reserved for the divine. The absence of repentance on Faustus' part cannot be attributed merely to coincidence, despite the emphasis on forgiveness; it functions as a paradigm. Moreover, the idea of promise also helps us think about Faustus's condition after damnation has been, at least temporarily, undone. Until the final scene, where Faustus is brought face to face with the reality of damnation, his audacity retains a certain exhilaration, yet the play shows that this audacity is inseparable from a deeply human temptation: the desire to assert the self against divine order. Faustus does not act in ignorance; on the contrary, his rebellion is marked by a painful awareness of the fate toward which he moves and this awareness gives the tragedy its particular force. It also shapes the new temporality he inhabits, which invites the kind of phenomenological reading Snow develops. The violence here is primarily psychological, since Faustus cannot accept the temporal condition created by his own act and repeatedly tries to fill it with worldly desires and projects. In this sense, Faustus stands between obedience and self-assertion, fear and freedom, knowledge and submission. His tragedy lies in acting against a divine order whose authority he recognises, even as he refuses it.

Faustus' ultimate condition (damned, disillusioned, and suspended between metaphysical recognition and existential paralysis) is the manifestation of a tragedy that is not merely a form of retribution but rather an ontological failure. The author's invocation of "*Consummatum est*," which was formerly a symbol of divine promise fulfilled, now signifies the deliberate erasure of

grace and the establishment of a temporality detached from the redemptive narrative. As demonstrated in the preceding analysis, Marlowe positions Faustus at the intersection of free will and theological finality, where the protagonist's resistance to repentance gives way to a progressive damnation, as contended by Cox. Although Faustus' quest for omnipotence is superficially driven by a desire for knowledge and mastery, the narrative ultimately reveals that his agency is insubstantial, performative and ultimately in service of despair.

Snow's phenomenological reading of the concept underscores this condition as a failure of temporal and spatial coherence, a "conceited space" where desire perpetually projects outward without anchoring in redemptive purpose. Faustus' fall thus enacts not only theological error but a metaphysical dislocation: the inability of the subject to inhabit a coherent relation to time, meaning, or salvation. In undoing Christ's salvific act, Faustus writes himself into a new temporality that is both autonomous and unbearable. It is important to note that the act of "undoing" does not entail a literal negation of the Gospel; it represents Faustus's attempt to employ counter-writing as a means of addressing salvation within the play's symbolic economy. Marlowe's tragedy thus presents a radical vision: that the true horror lies not in eternal damnation per se, but in the subject's full awareness of that damnation, in a world where divine silence is absolute and irrevocable. In reconfiguring the tragic form around the collapse of divine intelligibility, Doctor Faustus dramatizes a crisis of theological modernity. In this context, the freedom to choose comes at the cost of existential coherence, and the promise of self-fashioning becomes indistinguishable from the certainty of annihilation.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Declaration of AI Use

Any AI-assisted tools, if used, were limited to language editing. No AI tools were used for data collection, analysis, or interpretation of findings. The author(s) assume sole responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and final content of the manuscript.

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