

Conference Paper

The Downfall of the Protagonist in Christopher Marlowe's Play *Doctor Faustus*

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of the downfall of the protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's drama *Dr. Faustus*. It talks about a scholar named Dr. Faustus who feels unsatisfied with all the branches of knowledge he has acquired so that he turns to the devil to quench his thirst to reach the level of a deity. The goal of this study is to analyze the causing factors of his downfall. The basis of the research method applied in this research is the qualitative research proposed by Baum (2009). The theory of the downfall is taken from Sinclair (1987) who states that downfall is the failure or ruin of an institution or person when he has previously been successful or powerful. The result shows that Faustus's downfall is caused by his insatiable passion, inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and uncontrollable praxis of necromancy, which later bring his ruin to damnation. The conclusion shows that Faustus appears as a tragic hero of the story, but in reality he is a man who meets his downfall.

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1. Introduction

Doctor Faustus is a tragic drama written in 1592 by Christopher Marlowe, a great English innovator of blank verse to whom Shakespeare owes considerable debt for achieving a leading dramatist of England. It is a story of a great German scholar and magician, Johann Faust, born in 1488, making a pact with the devil to obtain great authoritative power, influence, and magical might. Faustus, though a great scholar, continues to prize knowledge without acquiring wisdom. He distracts himself with questions about heavens, but does not understand the nature of God's heaven. He understands the forms of the heavens, but not the force behind them. Because he is human, and flawed, he fails to understand the divine mystery of God's forgiving nature. He believes himself damned, and so he finally gives in to the devil's pageantry of sin, and tries to enjoy being damned.

Doctor Faustus is a lesson of morality. The never ending conflict between good and evil is vividly exposed in the play and until today every person could still see and

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experience such a conflict. Having read *Doctor Faustus*, one would surely make a deep contemplation of all the negligence ever made instead of expressing gratitude to God, the Almighty. When divinity is abandoned damnation is sure to come, crushing all to a total demolition and when such a time comes, atonement will be of no use. Even today the name 'Faustus' has become familiar to anyone engaged in English Literature with an idiomatic expression of 'Faustus Bargain', which means a deal made to quench thirst of earthly possessions with a high risk of short-lived benefits and a hell of a price. Dr. Faustus, as a scholar and play, is not an epitome of achievement but an easily-obtained damnation. Faustus leaves God and abuses religion without realizing that religion, apart from being concrete or not, helps individuals interpret life events, acquire a sense of meaning and purpose and understand their relationship to a larger whole, in both the social and cosmic sense. Without religion maturation and ongoing growth will not be fostered and by this everyone should know that by the existence of religion people become more fulfilled and complete.

With his rejection of God's authority and his thirst for knowledge and control over nature, Faustus embodies the more secular spirit of the modern era where technology becomes an idol and money opens all the doors of bureaucracy and everybody deliberately, if embraced by this concept, will rush for a seat in hell.

The focus of the study goes to the downfall of the protagonist, named Dr Faustus in the play which was written hundred years back but the echo and atmosphere could still be felt till now and the play has become a topic of discussion in various academic surroundings with simple grounds that supernaturalism such as magic, spells, necromancy and some other sorts have got a special station of interest in nearly every person's life, be he/she a theist or an atheist as these things are filled with amazing matters of insatiable passion, fantasy, reality and praxis of metaphysical objects [8].

This study is to analyse the causing factors of the downfall of Doctor Faustus, the protagonist in the play. The causing factors are Insatiable Passion, Inability to Distinguish between Fantasy and Reality and Uncontrollable Praxis of Necromancy. All the three aspects become the sub-titles of discussion, conducted by means of descriptive qualitative method proposed by Baum (2009).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Downfall

Downfall is classified into two categories: personal downfall and general downfall, both of which have different causing factors. The first deals with the intrinsic and the second with extrinsic factors. The first usually comes from within and the second from without. In the first part, man becomes the creator and in the second man powerless being [5].

Webster (1981: 299) defines the term downfall as a sudden descent or fall from a position of power, wealth, fame, or the like. On the other hand, Sinclair (1987: 425) defines downfall as the failure or ruin of an institution or person when they have previously been successful or powerful. Based on the definitions of downfall quoted above, it can be inferred that downfall is the thing that causes a person or thing to ruin or fall.

Downfall simply means misfortune or great loss, either caused by internal factors or external factors. In the case of Dr Faustus, the dominant factors come from within Dr Faustus, as he is unable to identify his standing. He is a man of high learning having specification in Theology. He should have known all the things pertaining to the knowledge of God: what to do and what not to do. He faces his tragic downfall by what he has done. Several theories and concepts are taken to support the analysis of the subject matter.

In general, downfall could be applied either to human beings or inanimate objects. Some downfall is on the edge of natural and non-natural. Famines, the chronic lack of food, may be caused by a combination of natural and human factors. Two space-originating categories of natural disaster, both of which rarely effect humans on the surface, include asteroid impacts and solar flares. Although the risk of asteroid impact in the short term may be low, some scientists argue that in the long term, the like hood of death by asteroid is similar to that of death by traditional natural downfall such as disease.

2.2. Passion

According to Christian (2011, 87) passion enables us to overcome obstacles. Whether those obstacles are actual or imagined, with passion you will overcome them and see the world as a place of infinite potential. The power of passion also enables us to have self-confidence, trust ourselves and to take the risks required to live every day to its fullest. But on the other hand, too much passion will surely ruin a person as happened to Faustus. He is over energetic that he does not realize that as a human being, he is weak physically and mentally.

Passion is a term applied to a very strong feeling about a person or thing Passion is an intense emotion compelling, enthusiasm, or desire for anything. The term is also often applied to a lively or eager interest in or admiration for a proposal, cause, or activity or love to a feeling of unusual excitement, enthusiasm or compelling emotion, a positive affinity or love, towards a subject. It is particularly used in the context of romance

or sexual desire though it generally implies a deeper or more encompassing emotion than that implied by the term lust. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passion_emotion).

2.3. Fantasy

Fantasy is a way to tell stories about the fantastic. When set in this world, it tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it (perception), when set in an otherworld, that otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there may be possible in its terms. (Clute, 1996: 338)

Until now we have considered the use of fantasy as part of human life, but of course there are extremes too. Fantasy can drive some people to act out immoral, even illegal, things.

Fantasies, like anything which creates excitement and pleasure, can be addictive and so too can the acts which feed them. Like any other addiction, fantasies can be classified as such when they impact detrimentally upon our life and we cannot simply stop indulging, even though it is causing us and this is what happens to Faustus. His fantasy to rule the world is so great that he cannot think properly.

Like everything in life, there are needs to be balance. Having an imagination and filling it with things that feel good can be, in many ways, a great blessing. But if these fantasies become misplaced if they consume and create barriers between what we have and what we want, we can indeed become dissatisfied with, and desensitized to, reality and this will cause a downfall.

2.4. Reality

Reality is the state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear or might be imagined (Ubani, 2012: 243). In a wider definition, reality includes everything that is and has been, whether or not it is observable or comprehensible. A still more broad definition includes everything that has existed, exists, or will exist. Philosophers, mathematicians, and other ancient and modern thinkers, such as Aristotle, Plato, Frege, Wittgenstein, and Russell, have made a distinction between thought corresponding to reality, coherent abstractions (thoughts of things that are imaginable but not real), and that which cannot even be rationally thought. By contrast existence is often restricted solely to that which has physical existence or has a direct basis in it in the way that thoughts do in the brain.

Reality is often contrasted with what is imaginary, delusional, (only) in the mind, dreams, what is false, what is fictional, or what is abstract. At the same time, what

is abstract plays a role both in everyday life and in academic research. For instance, causality, virtue, life and distributive justice are abstract concepts that can be difficult to define, but they are only rarely equal with pure delusions. Both the existence and reality of abstractions is in dispute: one extreme position regard them as mere words, another position regard them as higher truths than less abstract concepts. This disagreement is the basis of the philosophical problem of universals. The truth refers to what is real, while falsity refers to what is not. Fictions are considered not real.

2.5. Praxis

Praxis is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realised (Rees, 2012: 140). "Praxis" may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas. This has been a recurrent topic in the field of philosophy, discussed in the writings of many great philosophers. It has meaning in the political, educational, and spiritual realms.

2.6. Necromancy

Necromancy is a form of magic involving communication with the deceased either by summoning their spirit as an apparition or raising them bodily for the purpose of divination, imparting the means to foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge. The term may sometimes be used in a more general sense to refer to black magic or witchcraft. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Necromancy>)

Necromancy is more generally used as a term to describe the pretence of manipulation of death and the dead, often facilitated through the use of ritual magic or some other kinds of occult ceremony. Contemporary séances, channelling and Spiritualism verge on necromancy when supposedly invoked spirits are asked to reveal future events or secret information. Necromancy may also be presented as sciomancy, a branch of the Ugric magic.

There is much in this life that remains unseen. In Necromancy what is beneath our vision is brought to eye level and frozen in time, offering us point blank an invitation to share in a moment from an unseen world. From just beyond death these citizens of a micro-cosmos whisper to us of what is precious in life. Necromancy is a celebration of intimate moments with small things and as Roy (1997: 86) reminds us, there is a special god just for small things.

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3. Research Method

This paper is a descriptive research which describes characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It addresses the 'what' question and what are the characteristics used to describe the situation or population. They are usually some kinds of categorical scheme also known as descriptive categories, [15]. This study also used qualitative descriptive method whose objective is to describe, summarize various conditions and phenomena of social reality that exist in the society that becomes the object of research and this study is an attempt to draw the reality to the surface as a characteristic, character, nature, or model of certain situations or phenomena [9].

As this is a library research, most of the data were obtained from libraries. There are some ways to collect the research data. Based on the prescribed procedures, the following steps to collect the data were conducted: (1) reading the novel and trying to comprehend the whole story, (2) identifying some passages and dialogues related to the aspects of downfall, (3) collecting the passages and dialogues related to the analysis, and (4) analyzing the story related to the aspects which causes the downfall of the protagonist of the novel.

The analysis of the data was conducted by focusing on obtaining answers to the questions stated in the problem identification using content analysis procedures proposed by Koul (1984). In this part, the first problem stated is identified and analyzed by finding some lines related to the indicators of downfall found in the novel. In the next step, the second problem was analyzed by finding out the causing factors of the down fall of the protagonist.

4. Discussion

The focus of this study goes to the downfall of the protagonist of the play Doctor Faustus. Three causing factors of downfall emerging from the study are insatiable passion, inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and uncontrollable praxis of necromancy. These three causing factors, based on some theories presented before are categorized negative in the sense that they are destructive and there are not much

expected from those aspects as they are associated with devilish qualities and surely to be strictly avoided.

4.1. Insatiable passion

The first causing factor of Dr Faustus identified in this study is his insatiable passion. He is never satisfied with whatever he has achieved; he wishes more and more. He is like a drinker of sea water. The more he drinks the thirstier he is, until finally the sea water brings a fatal destruction on him.

Passion simply means a feeling of great intensity toward a particular person or activity. To love something or someone with a passion means a person feels almost a burning drive to be involved. Passion is something very basic found among humans from years unknown. Passion is imbibed, it has to be revived. Money is also one of the answers that one could come across. In the short term, materialistic aspirations can help one lead one's life, but in the long run, it is only the passion that will help one survive, inspire one to live one's life. But if passion is not put under control then disaster will surely come.

Insatiable passion originates from a controlled internalization in the individual's identity and leads people to experience an uncontrollable urge to engage in the activity. It is hypothesised to predict less adaptive outcomes, which could be conflict with self, others, competing activities, thus leading to possible dissatisfaction, stress and burnout. Insatiable passion may be displayed as a rigid persistence toward the activity, as with such passion, one cannot be unable to engage in the activity. This happens because ego-invested rather than integrative self-processes are at play with insatiable passion leading the person to eventually becoming dependent on the activity.

Faustus has obtained the degree of doctorate in Theology, but remains a Theologian only in outward appearance and at the same time he lets his ambition lead him to go deep into that supreme knowledge to which all arts lead up. Faustus always has a concept in his mind that magic is a supreme knowledge and no other discipline of knowledge could compete. This conclusion is taken based on some comparisons among other disciplines of knowledge to present some argumentative remarks on philosophy.

The preservation of physical health is the chief aim of medical science. Faustus has already achieved that aim. His ordinary talks of medical advice are regarded as wise maxims. His medical prescription is valued and preserved as great treasures or memorials as they have saved great cities from the clutches of epidemics and have cured so many fatal diseases. In spite of all those achievements he is still the same

Faustus, just an ordinary person and pitifully again Faustus feels dissatisfied with this medical science.

A wonderful gift presented to humans is medical science. Actually it depends on how people use it. If people use it in a right way, it is a boon or if people use it in a wrong way, it is a bane. With medical science, people can heal simple cold to serious malady. Medical Science answers people to many of their questions. Everything around sickness is touching medical science. Medical science is actually a science or simply stated as a part of science. There is nothing wrong with science as long as it is used in a correct way. But Faustus does not side this concept as he thinks that science will never help him to be superhuman being.

If only Faustus could realize that science has given much to human achievement, he probably would not be away from science. Human beings are in the age of science and technology. Man cannot live without the aid of science. Science has so much engulfed life that nothing can take place in a day to day work without the help of science. Food, transport, learning, administration, recreation and social life are all linked with science in various ways. Faustus wishes to find truth but science itself is truth.

His insatiable passion has also brought him to individualistic standing. He begins ignore people although at the very beginning of the play he seems to be a social being in the sense that he cares of others. This bad conduct of Faustus at the end of the course brings him death, a real tragic death. And finally as he is urged by his own insatiable passion, he surrenders himself to the grasping of Satan.

Faustus thinks of wealth. By reaching it he will soon become the lord of Emden, a rich and reputed commercial town. The problem concerning his insatiable passion is never settled until the last day of his life. From this illustration Faustus could be said to have a certain fear. He has fear of the loss of what he has obtained and again this is linked to the matters of faith.

4.2. Inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality

Faustus actually has been blinded by fantasy and he is apt to be named a great dreamer. But unfortunately he tries to realize his fantasy into reality by the dint of wicked manners; that is, making a pact with Satan.

Somewhere deep within the subconscious of everyone's mind there is a door that separates the world of fantasy and reality. Fantasy is the dream-like, hurt-sparing liar. People see what they wish to be there, but is not. All of these things are not with them but floating throughout their most passionate desires. This is a world of blissful ignorance and illusion. Fantasy is a blind place filled with the never-ending longings of

man. On the other side of the door, reality pounds its fist, demanding to be noticed. Reality is the blunt, truthful cousin of Fantasy. Reality cares not if what he says will wound you. Reality will present you with what is there, whether it is right or wrong. It is a place unlike Fantasy, Reality is usually not beautiful. It symbolizes the struggle of a man who strives to recover what he is looking for in life. The world is an enormous place filled with people who are spread throughout the vast expanse between Fantasy and Reality.

The foolish will run from the ugly Reality and submerge themselves within the mind numbing images of Fantasy. Fools are terrified of Reality's truths. They flee upon being forced to open their eyes to see what really lingers within Reality's boundaries. Fools eyes have not been developed properly to envision truth. They do not comprehend, therefore they are scared. Shutting their eyes to the real world, they slam the door on Reality and pretend that Fantasy is all that there is. The biggest fools will convince themselves that Fantasy is Reality. They disguise it and refuse to believe o he brave will scold Fantasy and push it away, seeing it as a burden, too heavy to bear on the road to success. The brave shut the door on Fantasy, and open it wide to accept Reality's bitterness. Sometimes, the pain they must endure is brutal. But they carry on nonetheless. Eventually their eyes will open and they are able to cope with what Reality pushes at them. Although Fantasy keeps knocking, whispering words of affection, the wise will not let Fantasy in. They will take the harsh blows that Reality thrusts upon them. They will overcome all, but without true happiness, lacking the ability to feel emotions.

If Faustus could make men immortal and could bring back the dead souls to life then only this profession could have been highly valued and respected. As this is beyond his power, he says that it is better to bid farewell to this science of medicine.

But, what is most deplorable, Faustus is not contented to endeavour to secure the aid of God and good angels, but he also aspires to enter into alliance with devils, and beings destined for his rebellion to suffer eternally the pains of hell. As Faustus is supposed to be of a character perverted and depraved, he of course applies to himself principally for purposes of wantonness, or of malice and revenge. And, in the instances which have occurred only a few centuries back, the most common idea has been of a compact entered into by an unprincipled and impious human being with the sworn enemy of God and man, in the result of which the devil engages to serve the capricious will and perform the behests of his blasphemous votary for a certain number of years, while the deluded wretch in return engages to renounce his God and Saviour, and surrender himself body and soul to the pains of hell from the end of that term to all eternity. Faustus cares nothing of the consequences of falling into the art of magic. His idea of magic, especially necromancy, has lighted his spirit.

Faustus will order the spirits to fly to India to collect gold and to search the very depth of the ocean to gather shining pearls for him. He will also send the spirits to America, the newly discovered parts of the world, for finding out for him tasteful fruits and rich delicacies. He will make them explain to him mysteries of strange philosophy, not yet comprehended by mankind and disclose to him the secrets of all foreign kings. He will compel them to build a wall of brass round Germany and to make the river Rhine divert its course to flow round the lovely city of Wittenberg. He will ask them to supply plenty of silk garments to the public schools enabling the students to dress themselves nicely. He will raise an army with the vast wealth the spirits will bring for him and drive out the Prince of Parma, The Spanish General from their country and then becomes supreme monarch of all the provinces. He makes a great focus in necromancy.

As a smart student of Theology, Faustus does not really need the tricks inside necromancy but again the obsession is too strong for Faustus to resist.

Faustus, that book of magic, his sharp intellect and their experience in this black art will make all the nations of Europe glorify and regard them as saints. As the African slaves obey their Spanish masters, so the spirits of water, air, fire and earth will be found to obey and serve all the three of them. Whenever they would like to have their services, the spirits will guard and protect them like lions, or like German cavalrymen with their lances, or like the fabulous giants of Lapland running along by their sides. At some other times those spirits will offer them pleasures appearing in the shape of women or maidens displaying, more beauty in their visionary faces than is to be found in the lovely bosom of Venus, the goddess of love. They will also bring them richly laden large merchant ships from where such costly stuffs are carried away to fill the treasury of King Philip of Spain. All those will be possible if wise Faustus remains firm in his determination. And so he starts practicing the art of necromancy. This night, before going to bed Faustus will try his skill to the best of his ability. He is going to call up the spirits of the dead tonight even though it may bring about his death in the process.

Faustus commands Mephistopheles to attend on him as long as he lives and to carry out all his orders, even if it means that he is to bring down the moon from her orbit or to flood the whole of the earth with waters from the ocean.

Even if Faustus has as many souls as there are stars in the sky, he would give them all to king of the devils to have the services of Mephistopheles. With his aid Faustus shall become the grand emperor of this world. Faustus will fly in the air through space and cross the ocean with a group of followers. He will join the hills that surround the African shores to make that country connected with Spain, so that both these countries

may submit to his rule as his satellite states. Neither the Holy Roman Emperor nor any ruler of Germany will be able to live and rule without his permission.

Faustus will be able to bring before his Majesty's very eyes such souls as will very much resemble Alexander and his queen and they will appear before him in the same glorious manner and state as they had during their life-time. Faustus hopes this will be enough to gratify his imperial Majesty's curiosity. Fantasy really can have a large effect on individuals' behaviours. Everyone is exposed to things which only seem worth looking at because of the presentation, whether it be something small like an infomercial or something like war, people everywhere are influenced by what others think, or how beneficial something is for them. A lot of commercials emphasize how good their product is by using slogans such as scientifically proven and by paying money to get someone to say that they tried the product and achieved instant results. Such things are social influences. If someone says that something is brilliant, and they have never turned back, people tend to be persuaded to try the product, because they are led to believe that something is so magnificent. People tend to look past what is real.

The observable reality appears sufficiently structured to speculate on some kind of design and, for some, on an unknowable designer. In this context, the fundamental dilemma of human life is that, although the cognitive limits do not allow the mind to interpret objective reality as completely meaningful, the mind cannot accept reality as absolutely meaningless. There is always uncertainty and ambiguity about the meaning of the universe and human life and Dr Faustus is taken into the corridors of uncertainty and ambiguity owing to his insatiable passion.

4.3. Uncontrollable praxis of necromancy

The art of necromancy covers far more than the raising or, more comedy, the animating of the corpses and speaking with spirits of those long since dead. Instead, it comprises of multitude discipline, each distinct and yet related. The accomplished necromancer is at least familiar with all and will strive to seek mastery of several. Such wizards are renowned for considering all matters dead as their domain. This inevitably leads to a desire to manipulate the forces of death, thus placing Faustus at odds with societies as a whole; his art seen as a perversion of the natural order of the whole.

Faustus is so glad as his power in necromancy will soon exist. And Faustus, having got a power of necromancy begins to walk in a wrong way. By means of his art of necromancy he does not respect any other person, including Pope.

Faustus will be rather glad to provide the Pope and a group of bald headed monks with some fun so that by exposing their folly and foolishness Faustus may also have some fun and pleasure at their cost. So just to make him invisible and to enable him to do whatever he likes unseen by others so long as he stays in Rome, Faustus asks Mephistopheles to do exercise some magic charm on him. Then Mephistopheles does it. Faustus may now do whatever he likes without being seen by anybody.

Pope asks the Cardinal of Lorraine to come a bit closer. But Faustus orders to start eating or the devil may stifle him if he does not. Pope does not know who speaks to him and asks Monks to find it out. The first friar says that there is none there. Then when the Pope wants to give a tasteful dish to the lord, Faustus snatches the dish. The Pope does not know who snatches away the meat from him and asks Monks to find it out. Then when the Pope wants to give a dish again, Faustus takes away the dish. Then when the Pope wants to drink, Faustus snatches the cup. Cardinal of Lorraine thinks that it may be some ghost that has recently come out of Purgatory just to seek Pardon of Pope for its sins. Then the Pope orders the Friars to start a funeral service to soothe and pacify this departed soul. Then when the Pope crosses himself for the third time, Faustus boxes his ear. Further, Mephistopheles and Faustus beat the Friars and throw fireworks among them, and then all of them go out.

5. Conclusion

Dr. Faustus, the protagonist of the play, is a man who is willing to make an extreme sacrifice for the sake of his ambitious greed to obtain power and immortality to prevent himself from seeing the destructiveness of his actions. The three significant elements of the causing factors of his downfall, insatiable passion, inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and uncontrollable praxis of necromancy, are clearly exposed in this study. This is to show the sharp contrast between a scholar and a layman. Though a scholar is always seen at a lofty rank, if emotion supersedes logic and faith is floating, the person concerned will be trapped in forbidden lust. Dr Faustus is largely a morality play as it depicts a conflict between what Christianity considers to be sin and man's desire for infinite knowledge, power, beauty and wealth. Faustus' attempts to assent his will in opposition to both God and Devil, and he fails, as it is obvious that Faustus the hero of the play is presumptuous enough to be a God, to gain a deity. All the branches of knowledge he has ever studied cannot help him reach his ridiculous goal and he enters into a contract with the devil to achieve what he wishes. His insatiable passion, inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and uncontrollable praxis of necromancy make resort to the arts of magic. He himself calls

the devil and he himself makes the contract with the devil. From the surface level, Faustus may appear as a hero but in reality he is a man who meets his downfall.

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