

MSB- INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEACH ASSOCIATING RESEARCHERS; NOURISHING INNOVATION Peer Reviewed Vol. 1, Issue 1, Sep.2022-Nov.2022, 8-17, MSB-IJIR

The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus- A Psychoanalytic Reading

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Abstract

Doctor Faustus is one of the most prominent literary figures in the world of Tragic Plays and one of the most dramatic plays ever written by an Elizabethan Playwright. Owing to an inherent sense of pathos, Doctor Faustus has been a constant subject of scrutiny and criticism in academic circles all around the world. Doctor Faustus was a learned man, an overachiever, a stalwart of arts, natural law and sciences. However, his excessive pride led to his penultimate hamartia- He was the author of his own damnation and tragic demise. This damnation is in many ways not just physical damnation, but a spiritual and a metaphysical one. From a Psychoanalytical perspective, Faustus was a 'persona', an extension of the playwright's mind. One unconventional perspective could be offered to explain the play as not being performed by and on a scholar turned necromancer but the series of events as they occur, happening predominantly in the mind of the protagonist. In this paper we have attempted to view Faustus through the lens of Jung and Freud, whose psychoanalytical theories have formed the basis of psychiatry and psychosomatics. For Jung, conflict is not only inherent in human psychology, but is necessary for growth. In order to become more conscious, one must be able to bear conflict. This conflict is integral in Doctor Faustus, as Faustus is clearly unable to bear the burden of this very conflict and succumbs to it inadvertently. Thus, the Jungian model of the psyche serves as an apt metaphor for analyzing the labyrinth that is Faustus.

Keywords: Doctor Faustus, Elizabethan Playwright, conflict, scrutiny and criticism

Introduction

Acclaimed by critics as Marlowe's best play in which the leaven of fertile poetry and fearless imagination works wonders, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* follows after *Tamburlaine*. Critics spend their vitality assessing the play, solely against its immediate historic context and barely view it as a prescient work promulgating substantially to the modern existential dilemma. Hazlitt argues that the character of Faustus can be considered as "a personification of the pride of will and eagerness of curiosity, sublimed beyond the reach of fear and remorse" (Hazlitt, 1820), which is a straightforward explanation concerning why this character would act upon his emotion and not his reason considering the unusual and supernatural circumstances.

Doctor Faustus was written and performed at a time of great social upheaval and reordering. The boundaries of human knowledge were being enlarged upon at a rapid rate. New ideas, discoveries and explorations abounded in navigation, biology and botany, technology and the natural sciences. Not on the concept of atheism, rather the essence of human potential for discovery through constant persuasion of knowledge were being propounded by philosophers and this doctrine was largely perceived with criticism by most practicing Christians who thought of humans as trespassing and transgressing esoteric perception and understanding, which ought to be God's juridiction.

According to Jung, the mystical symbols of Christianity were in the process of disintegration during the Renaissance-Reformation period of *Doctor Faustus*' time. Humans tend to forgo something of utmost importance to his psychic well-being. Jung was of the opinion that, "Mankind has never lacked powerful images to lend magical aid against all the uncanny things that live in the depths of the psyche,"(Jung, 1959) But Mystical charms of religion and Christianity lost all its significance to Faustus while he was facing major setback in life. However, they continued to manifest in an outré way, in a neurotic nature.

Element of the Unconscious in Doctor Faustus

The unconscious has been seen as a timeless realm, or to put it simply as one containing the past, present and the future by both Jung and Freud. In her essay, *Myth, Psychology, and Marlowe's Doctor Faustus*, Kenneth L Golden describes, "Faustus' neurosis—the split, dissociated nature of his psyche...a match for any of the "double-thinking" of the modern mass mind." (Golden, 1985) Faustus is a true representative and a fitting archetype of the 'Renaissance Man'. His longing for supreme knowledge and his lengthy monologues in Act I Scene I, dramatises his command of and impatience with the sphere of worldly knowledge and his underlying yearning to transcend above all. This yearning on one hand is commendable, exemplifying the extreme type of human capacity. The portrayal of such knowledge in the play is menacing, leading Faustus to his inevitable doom, through sorcery and the deal with Mephistopheles.

Christopher Marlowe- A life, rife with internal conflicts

Before, we attempt at analyzing Faustus' life which was sketched as one rift with internal and external conflict, it is important to consider the biographical details of Marlowe's short, yet controversial political and personal life.

Interpreters of *Doctor Faustus* have been overwhelmed by the complexity of conciliating the tempestuous and blasphemous Marlowe of contemporary record with the

playwright of the damnation of Faustus. As a Canterbury shoemaker's eldest child, Christopher Marlowe attended the King's School in Canterbury, as a scholar on January 14, 1579.Unfortunately, little is known of his early schooling. He was an alumnus of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Continuing his stay at Cambridge, after having obtained his B.A. degree in 1584, implies that it was his intention to take Anglican orders. In 1587, the university's reluctance of granting him the Master's degree was apparently settled. This happened when the Privy Council sent a letter declaring that he had been employed "on matters touching the benefit of his country" (Leech, 2021)-apparently in Elizabeth I's secret service and explicitly stating in a letter that, 'He had done her majesty good service, and deserved to be rewarded for his faithful dealing' (Leech, 2021). Marlowe was referred to as 'The Muses' Darling' by his fellow poets. Doctor Faustus was the last of his plays, since it unquestionably dependent on the English Translation, The Historie of the damnable life, and deserved death of Doctor John *Faustus*, which appeared in 1592. After 1587, when Christopher was in London, writing plays for the theatres, and occasionally getting into serious brawls with the authorities because of his aggressive and disreputable behavior, and probably also engaging himself from time to time as an undercover government agent (Leech, 2021). He achieved a threatening reputation for "atheism," (Leech, 2021) but during the time of Elizabeth I, it could possibly indicate a mere maverick belief. Marlowe is referred in, Robert Greene's deathbed tract, Greenes groats-worth of witte, as a "famous gracer of Tragedians" and is admonished for having said, like Greene himself, "There is no god" and for having studied "pestilent Machiuilian pollicie."(Leech, 2021). Evidence of his unorthodoxy is available in the denunciation of him written by the spy Richard Baines and in the letter of Thomas Kyd to the lord keeper in 1593 after Marlowe's death. (Leech, 2021) which alleged Marlowe of, "denying the deity of Jesus Christ" in some papers found in his room which belonged to Marlowe, who had shared the room with Kyd two years ago (Leech, 2021). Baines and Kyd suggested on Marlowe's part, atheism in the stricter sense and have reported Marlowe taking a persistent delight in blasphemy (Leech, 2021). Whatever the case may be, on May 18, 1593, the Privy Council issued an order for Marlowe's arrest; and it was only two days later that the poet was ordered to give daily appearance before their lordships "until he shall be licensed to the contrary." (Leech, 2021) Marlowe was killed, On May 30, however, by Ingram Frizer, in the unsettled company of Nicholas Skeres and Robert Poley, at a lodging house in Deptford, where they had spent most of the day and where, it was alleged, a fight broke out between them over the reckonings (Leech, 2021)

Faustus' psyche and Jungian archetypes

This essay attempts to assess Doctor Faustus' psyche from the principle of the Libido, the Unconscious and the Jungian archetypes formulated by Carl Jung. Jung disagreed with Freud's contention of the role of sexuality. libido was not just sensual energy according to Jung, but instead generalized psychic energy (McLeod, 2018). For Jung, psychic energy stimulates and drives the individual spiritually, intellectually, and creatively. It is also a source for deriving satisfaction and minimizing dispute (McLeod, 2018). Marlowe's Faustus uses his psychic energy to motivate himself into taking up "*Sweet Analytics*" (Datta, 1965) before he swiftly dismisses it, followed by medicine, law and finally dismissing the Bible justifying himself with the contention- "*sipegassenegamus, fallimur, et nullaest in nobis veritas*" (By twisting Scripture, Faustus argues that as man must inevitably sin, so they must be damned). Faustus' psychic energy manifests itself, working its way through logical reasoning with intellectuality, spirituality and creativity, in various fields of human knowledge (medicine, analytics, law and theology). The pursuit of each of these disregarded as base and not befitting the reverence of a learned doctor such as himself, Faustus goes on to find solace in "*These metaphysics of magicians*" (Datta, 1965) considering "*necromantic books*"(Datta, 1965) to be

"heavenly" (Datta, 1965). He yearns to seek pleasure through necromancy as the demonic entity makes lofty promises of making Faustus, "Lord and commander of these Elements" (Datta, 1965). The driving force or libido, in this case, for Faustus is the art of necromancy and devilworship, the psychic force of which leads him to his inevitable and imminent doom. Marlowe's inner understanding of Faustus' problem has provided him the potentiality to rise above moralistic didacticism to true tragic awareness. As a result, historical or theological studies,

while they may be valuable in their own way, have been sometimes felt to miss the ambiguities in Faustus and his play.

Jung and Freud were of the same opinion that the composition of the psyche as developed with separate but interactive systems. These are primarily the ego, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious (McLeod, 2018). The ego depicts the conscious mind as it constitutes the thoughts, memories, and emotions, which a person is acquainted with and is majorly responsible for feelings of identity and continuity (McLeod, 2018). The personal unconscious compromises of temporality-forgotten information and repressed memories. He demarcated an important feature of the personal unconscious called 'complexes'. A complex is an amalgamation of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and memories that focus on a single concept. It has been observed that the more the elements attached to the complex, the more and more is its influence on the individual (McLeod, 2018). We can elaborate that the level of unconscious shared with other members of the human race consisting of dormant memories from our familial and evolutionary past is referred to as the collective unconscious (McLeod, 2018).

The images and thoughts which have universal meanings across cultures and which may show up in dreams, literature, art or religion can be termed as archetypes. Jung considers symbols from non-identical cultures are often very homogeneous because they have evolved from archetypes shared by the whole human race which are a part of our collective unconscious (McLeod, 2018). According to Jung, our pre-historic past becomes the platform of the human psyche, guiding and channelizing our current behaviour. Jung paid specific attention to four types of archetypes-the Self, the Persona, the Shadow and the Anima/Animus (McLeod, 2018).

Projection of Marlowe's persona through Faustus

Faustus is an extension of Marlowe's 'Persona' the outward face he presents to the world, concealing his true persona and Jung elaborates it as the "conformity" archetype. Faustus, "was grac'd with doctor's name" (Datta, 1965) by "the fruitful plot of scholarism" (Datta, 1965) and "profits in divinity" (Datta, 1965), "born, of parents base of stock" (Datta, 1965). So, this 'persona' is a mask conveniently worn to conceal the true self of the protagonist which allows him to lead a conforming professional life. Gaining a state of identity (similar to self-actualization) is the furthest aim of any individual, as Jung perceived. In this regard, Jung (like Erikson) progressed in the direction of a more human-centered acclimatization. Faustus thirsts for esoteric knowledge drives him to invoke and embrace his 'Shadow'—through the incarnation of Mephistopheles and practicing the art of necromancy. Faustus believes that it is only by means of witchcraft and black magic that he can attain secrets of universe. Like the id in Freud, Jung felt, the shadow is the bestial side of our persona also the origin of both our innovative and catastrophic energies.

Those who wrote books on magical practices also thought of the magician as someone who, far from worshipping demons, masters and commands them through the power of God. The theologian Thomas Aquinas, however, represents this apparent power gained over the devil-world as illusory. One unconventional perspective could be offered to explain the play as not being performed by and on a scholar turned necromancer but the series of events as they occur, happening predominantly in the psyche of the protagonist.

Faustus is the extension of playwright's mind—the mask or the 'persona', Marlowe assumes to hide his true self behind. The invocation and summoning of Mephistopheles is undoubtedly Faustus becoming one with the demonic side of his personality. It is to be noted when Faustus summons Mephistopheles and he appears as a Devil, which Faustus feels "...too ugly to attend on (him)..." (Datta, 1965) and Mephistopheles reappears as a Franciscan Monk, Faustus comments— "That holy shape becomes a devil best" (Datta, 1965). Méphistophélès' appearance as a Monk is Faustus' predisposition of how devils ought to look like. Marlowe's experience as a secret double agent at Rheims may have possibly led him to hold such contemptuous opinions about godmen which becomes more apparent in his play. Faustus becomes a mouthpiece and a persona of Marlowe and Mephistopheles becomes his shadow, the animalistic unconscious side of his personality, which also corresponds to Freud's conception of id.

Faustus' personality also contains the anima/ animus archetype of Jung which is apparent in Act I, Scene I, when Faustus dreams of having devils at his command who would *"Fly to India for gold" (Datta, 1965)* and *"ransack the ocean for orient pearl"(Datta, 1965)* and also when he hopes of *"fill[ing] the public schools with silk"(Datta, 1965)*. Jung states that, "The "anima/animus" is the mirror image of our biological sex, that is, the unconscious feminine side in males and the masculine tendencies in women (Datta, 1965). Each sex manifests attitudes and behavior of the other by virtue of centuries of living together. The psyche of a woman contains masculine aspects (the animus archetype), while the psyche of a man contains feminine aspects (the anima archetype)." Therefore, through Faustus' desire of acquiring ornamental metals and gems such as pearls and gold and the regal temperament of filling public schools with silk, his animus becomes more apparent.

It is also important to note the dissatisfaction in Faustus, upon hearing the dry answers of Mephistopheles. Faustus experiences a tragic epiphany when he realizes the futility of "*these slender*" (*Datta, 1965*) answers which he feels even, "Wagner can decide!" (*Datta, 1965*) He projects his dissatisfaction with the question, "Hath Mephistopheles, no greater skill?"(*Datta, 1965*)

If we consider the contention, that Mephistopheles is actually an extension, an archetype of Faustus' personality, then Mephistopheles, being the "shadow" of Faustus, has as much access to arcane and occult knowledge, as Faustus does, which is none. Faustus' shadow belies the esoteric, occult and secret knowledge that Faustus' 'Self' seeks to attain, and this 'Self' of Faustus' psyche being unable to attain a level of selfhood(self-actualization), ceases to progress in the path of a more humanistic condition, and penetrates into the condition of several schizophrenic experiences (interchangeably 'persona', 'anima', 'shadow' and the 'self' together) suffering from chronic neurosis as Faustus describes in Act II, Scene II:-

"Swords, poisons, halters, and envenomed steel Are laid before me to dispatch myself;" (Datta, 1965)

The torment awaiting Faustus is described by the Bad Angel in Act V, Scene II as:

"Now, Faustus, let thine eyes with horror stare

[Hell is discovered.] Into that vast perpetual torture-house: There are the Furies tossing damned souls On burning forks; their bodies boil in lead; There are live quarters broiling on the coals, That ne'er can die; this ever-burning chair

Is for o'er-tortur'd souls to rest them in; These that are fed with sops of flaming fire, Were gluttons, and lov'd only delicates, And laugh'd to see the poor starve at their gates: But yet all these are nothing; thou shalt see Ten thousand tortures that more horrid be. " (Datta, 1965)

Internal conflict resulting in damnation

Faustus is an extraordinary man of letters, but he still prefers to honor knowledge without attaining sagacity. Queries and curiosity about the heavens distracted his mind. Faustus never comprehends complexion of God's heaven. He claims to thoroughly perceive knowledge about the types of the heavens. However, one can observe that he is unaware of the strength behind them. As a flawed human, he is unable to perceive the seraphic enigma of God's merciful nature. Giving up every effort of repentance because of his damnation, and finally surrendering in to the devil's exhibitionism of sin, Dr. Faustus attempt to relish his damnation. Since scholars are of the opinion that Marlowe never attempted to write the portion, which projected the Seven Deadly Sins (Pride, Covetousness, Envy, Wrath, Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery) march on the stage, the spirit at the end of the scene is similar. Faustus concurs to "*think on the devil" (Datta, 1965)*, and engrossed himself into being hell-bent.

Although, the scene featuring the seven deadly sins, parading on-stage is in its truest sense of the term, an allegory, Mephistopheles conjures up to enliven the weary spirits of Faustus who seems to be disillusioned by his own seeking, The scene cannot be dismissed as a mere theatrical convention of the long-standing tradition of medieval drama. The audience would immediately grasp the motif behind the recognizable costumes enacted on-stage as that belonging to a series of preceding morality plays. If one internalizes the latent motif of the parading pageant, one can perceive that it offers considerably more. The sins are in fact the psychological manifestation of Faustus' corrupted soul.

Pride denies acknowledging his parents, "*I disdain to have any parents*" (Datta, 1965). We know of Marlowe's humble parentage, featuring a cobbler for a father. Marlowe's extraordinary scholarship landed him an all-expenses paid MA degree from the celebrated institute at Oxford and Marlowe molded the character of Faustus in a similar likeness, when he introduced Faustus hailing from "*parent's base of stock*" (Datta, 1965). It is therefore only natural for Marlowe, through the character of Faustus to "*disdain to have any parents*" (Datta, 1965). Pride is the psychological manifestation of Faustus' denial of a type of belonging to a humble parentage. Pride refraining from speaking "*another word, until the ground be perfumed and covered with cloth of arras*" (Datta, 1965), is also noteworthy. Pride's utterance is a reverberation of Faustus' desire to "*fill the public schools with silk*" (Datta, 1965).

Similarly, Covetousness' desire of turning the contents of the house to gold, "*That I might lock you safe into my chest. O my sweet gold*!" (Datta, 1965) is primarily a psychological reflection of Faustus' urge to command the elements of evil to "*fly to India for gold*" (Datta,

1965). Following the appearance of Envy who is "*lean with seeing others eat*" heralding the action in Act III Sc II where Faustus' envious self snatches the delicacies out of Pope's hand. Wrath publicly declares being "*born in hell*" and subtly hints at Faustus being his father. Gluttony's description of consuming, "*Thirty meals a day and ten beavers*" (Datta, 1965) out of "*a small pension*" (Datta, 1965) perfectly befits Marlowe's biographical details of a lavish spending on food and drink out of his scholarly income and secondary source of income as a

secret government agent. Sloth personifies Faustus' physical inactivity throughout the play while Lechery is Faustus' latent sexual desire which compels him to demand Mephistopheles in Act II Sc i:

"But leaving this, let me have a wife, the fairest maid in Germany, for I am wanton and lascivious, and cannot live without a wife." (Datta, 1965)

Each of Faustus' psychological manifestations have been brilliantly paraded by the pageantry of the seven deadly sins, ultimately leading the learned doctor to his inevitable doom, despite being forewarned by Faustus' Jungian archetypal "Self" through the persona of the ministering angel and the old man. It is important to note how Faustus' "Selfhood" or as Freud would call it "Super-Ego", apparently demonstrates itself to the end in Act V Sc I during appearance of the apparition of Helen of Troy who absolutely bewitched the damned doctor-

"Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships, And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?" (Datta, 1965)

Although Faustus is inevitably and irrevocably damned, his super-ego adapted the legendary beauty, Helen of Troy and attempts to soothe his senses. We see a momentary loss of despair in Faustus as he tries to reconnect to the ideals of beauty, permanence and tranquility through her:

"Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies, Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again, Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips, And all is dross that is not Helena." (Datta, 1965)

But Faustus' resolution to forego repentance ultimately tears his whole world apart as the scholars who enter his chamber behold the wretched sight of his physical remains:

"...See, here are Faustus' limbs, All torn asunder by the hand of death." (Datta, 1965)

Faustus is consumed by his own "shadow", eternally condemned to the horrors of spiritual and psychological hell. Marlowe's masterpiece brilliantly chronicles the moral and spiritually debilitating, and eventually destructive effects of necromancy on a physical level paralleling, his psychological destruction if viewed from a Jungian archetypal and psychological perspective.

Thus, examining Faustus as a modern individual, Carl Jung's model of archetypes can be used to gain a more comprehensive view when compared to conventional methods of analysis. At the play's opening, Faustus possesses many qualities of a "wise old man," the Jungian archetype characterized by intellect and pride; a character usually depicted as a "magician, master, teacher, [or] moralist". Faustus, however, cannot truly be considered a "wise old man" because he never integrates his anima. In developing the anima, one must progress through four stages: Eve, Helen, Mary, and Sophie, before ultimately becoming in tune with emotionality and spirituality. Throughout the course of the play, Faustus shows that he has great difficulty with anima development and frequently succumbs to his desires, indicative of the Eve stage. Additionally, Faustus surrenders to the flaws inherent to the "wise old man." Faustus falls victim to ego-inflation, a dangerous by-product of great intellect in

which knowledge is valued for authority. This ego-inflation impairs Faustus' judgment and causes him to desire power. Also, Faustus cannot come to terms with his shadow, the repressed weaknesses within his psyche. This manifests as Faustus' wasted potential and his failure to repent and end the contract between himself and the devil. Ultimately, Faustus' lack of integration with his anima, tendency to succumb to ego-inflation, and inability to conciliate with his shadow side lead to his eventual demise.

Conclusion

Finally, Faustus' inability to come to terms with his shadow secures his fate. If Faustus most closely resembles a "wise old man" without an integrated anima, his shadow most closely resembles the "pueraeternus" or eternal boy. The archetype of a "pueraeternus" is characterized by an adolescent man, unable to grow up and tackle life's challenges. Faustus' twenty-four years of possessing his powers represents his shadow side, which stands in stark contrast to his previous, studious life. This shadow seems to manifest itself as Faustus' lack of taking any significant action with his powers. In the beginning of the play, Faustus brags of how he will implement significant changes with his powers, yet in the conclusion, Faustus has simply used his powers to entertain himself and others. A notable example of this occurs when Faustus chooses to summon the spirits of Alexander the Great and his paramour for the king. Faustus summons spirits not to learn from them but to shows others that he has such power. Faustus takes his frivolous deeds to a new level when he uses his powers to humiliate a knight who had quarreled with Faustus in front of the king. Faustus places a pair of horns on the knight's head for the sole purpose of embarrassing him. Shortly thereafter, Faustus returns him back to his original state at the request of the king (McCullen, 1956). Faustus could have used his powers for meaningful acts instead of wasting them on frivolities if he had come to terms with his shadow side. This is ultimately the undoing of Faustus. Faustus was provided several opportunities to act and repent, yet he is unable to make a conscious decision to go forward with the act of repentance. Since Faustus was unable come to terms with his shadow, this becomes his undoing.

To conclude, the psyche strives to preserve equilibrium between contrasting qualities while synonymously actively searching its own development or as Jung termed it, individuation. The theory of individuation for him is the exploration for wholeness within the human psychology. It may be expressed as a procedure of circumambulation around the persona as the center of human identity.

According to Jung, conflict is not only innate in human psychology, but is essential for psychological development. Conflict gives a steady platform for awareness. Internal and external opposites is predominant in the world. If the conflict between the opposites can be braced, then this tension would give birth to something new i.e., innovation. In Jung's opinion, 'something' is a symbol which will subscribe to a new dimension which does fairness to both sides of a conflict and which is a result of the unconscious rather than of cogent thought. This conflict is integral in Doctor Faustus, as Faustus is clearly unable to bear the burden of this very conflict and succumbs to it inadvertently. Thus, the Jungian model of the psyche serves as an apt metaphor for analyzing the labyrinth that is Faustus.

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