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TRANSHUMANISM AND GnosticISM IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S DOCTOR FAUSTUS

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ABSTRACT

The quest for immortality, which has been featured even in the oldest of myths, is as old as the history of humanity. It has its roots in the occult tradition, which stems from an idea (Gnosticism) that puts humans at the centre of all creation. According to Gnosticism, the God who created the physical world is himself flawed, and that is the reason of all the imperfection that surrounds us. In order to reach to the true God of all creation, who has our essence, humans have to break all the boundaries that were put up by the false Creator God, and reach beyond the limits that bound them. Transhumanism, deriving from such occult ideas, tries to come as close to the true God as possible, by aiming to merge every being in the world within one singular consciousness. In Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the academic anxiety of an accomplished scholar turns into a quest for immortality, as Faustus strives to achieve those very ends which have been sought after for ages. In the end, Faustus loses his eternal soul and fails miserably, however, his true intention marks his struggle as an extraordinary quest for knowledge and eternity. The aim of this paper is to prove that Faustus strives to achieve a much bigger ideal by selling his soul to the Devil, which is the attainment of immortality, and therefore he can be considered one of the earlier exponents of transhumanism. For that purpose, various motifs and symbols that are featured throughout the play will be closely examined, as many of them have close affinities with the dominant occult ideologies of the play's period, Renaissance.



STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Humans have been trying to correct the imperfections of the world that surrounded them: they invented tools to defend themselves and built shelters against outside dangers, cultivated the land and built ships to cross vast waters, and so on. They continued to seek after the ways to make their lives better, however, the main goal has always been the same: to have “control over not only the nature that surrounds us, but also the nature that we are ourselves” (Hauskeller 43). There is no end to humans’ capabilities. And seeing that they can do better and better without limits, humans set their minds to achieve the highest of all ambitions: to get to a point where they can have absolute control of their existence, by becoming immortal. This article will examine from where such human ambitions originated, how those ambitions were tried to be actualised through the means of magic and alchemy (and later, science and technology), and how they were all accumulated and transformed into an ideology called “Transhumanism”. In Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, many of Transhumanism’s traits can be observed, and both the play and the title character are perfect examples of this ideology.

There is a huge mythology behind Faustus’s ambitions of immortality, and the idea that humans can become immortal because they have the essence of God, is an occult idea, and it is based on “Gnosticism” (Livingstone, 2015). “Gnosticism” equates “knowledge” with “magic”, and the acquisition of both, brings humans to “the status of God”, and “transhumanism”, deriving from the same sources, virtually aims at achieving that end through usage of “modern science” and technology (Livingstone). In Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, the title character Faustus turns to the practice of magic to achieve immortality and become like God. Gnosticism, which is one of the founding tenets of Transhumanism, contends that the Creator “God” is malevolent, whereas Lucifer (or Satan) who introduces humans to eternal “knowledge” is benevolent. So, Faustus as a man who values infinite knowledge over anything, it is only natural that he sees Lucifer as his lord, not the Creator God. Lucifer, one of Satan’s many names, means “the morning star” which brings light with it (Livingstone). Faustus yearns for the light of knowledge which “Lucifer” would bring to him. As a result, he denounces his religion and accepts Lucifer’s lordship over him. Just like his lord, Faustus also suffers from excessive pride, resulting from relying too much on his capabilities as an intelligent and accomplished academician.

The philosophy behind the ambitions of transhumanists can be traced back to the “prisca theologia or the ancient theology”, which has a common theme (Farrell and de Hart, 2011): the first creation of God(s) was closer in its capabilities and knowledge to its creator, and this feared the God(s). As a result, God(s) divided this being into “polarities”, causing dissent among the separated parts, and eventually stunting their development. This resulted in the divisions of beings into “animals”, “plants” and “minerals” today theme (Farrell and de Hart). What the transhumanists are trying to achieve is “the unity” between all beings in an advanced state of “human consciousness”, merging in one perfect “singularity” (Farrell and de Hart). Transhumanists believe that, “man the microcosm” will evolve into the “macrocosm” in this state of “singularity”,

as humankind will be in harmony with all of creation, and finally achieve “immortality” (Farrell and de Hart).

The play is filled with transhumanist motifs, as Faustus, not being content with the traditional and limited ways of learning, searches for the knowledge through unconventional practices, which would give him great potency. He believes that human mind has an unlimited potential that could transcend its boundaries, and achieve innumerable and marvellous deeds. To use one's mind to shape the reality is the starting point of science and technology, and Faustus, being a Renaissance man, is thrilled by the possibilities arising from the new developments in this period, which can be described as “an impulse towards emancipation, a spirit of inquiry, and an assertion of individualism” (Jump, 2002).

According to Livingstone, one of the defining traits of Renaissance is the veneration of magic as a means to get to the divine knowledge (Livingstone, 2015). And, in contrast with general belief, “science” owes its superior status now to its occult roots in that age (Livingstone). Mitchell argues that advancements in “technology” were achieved through the application of “occult traditions”, such as magic, into practice, and consequently, “[t]he Magus metamorphosed into the engineer”. Taming the forces of nature and establishing control over it were the dreams of Europeans in Renaissance, and they started to actualise it through their efforts in exploring the rest of the world: they built ships to cross the oceans and machines to do the work of many men, and so on. All their efforts were, at the core, to manipulate nature and create a reality that best fits to their interests. Therefore, it can be said that for the Renaissance men, obtaining mastery over nature was the purpose of life, and it came about as a result of placing knowledge (science and technology) above everything else. Marlowe's Faustus, as a representative of his age, struggles to achieve that end.

According to Farrell and de Hart, “the goals of modern science and technology are indistinguishable from alchemy and Hermeticism” (Farrell and de Hart, 2011). Because both “alchemy” and “science” have the same purpose: “the mastery over the physical medium” (Farrell and de Hart). Transhumanists believe that, after eliminating the obstacles in merging humans both with each other and with their environment, all the existence on earth will achieve something called “singularity”. This “singularity” will come as a result of uniting humans with the rest of the nature. Francis Bacon states that “marriage between Mind and Nature” would result in this marvellous creation (quoted in McKnight, 2006). And, towards the end in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus achieves something of this kind with Helen of Troy, who is the personification of “nature” and “wisdom” (Nuttall, 2002). After his union with Helen, Faustus is complete, and he seals his fate.

However, Marlowe is not consistent in making Faustus either a hero with the highest aspirations (such as gaining the eternal knowledge and reaching immortality), or a damned soul who finally gets to the horrible end that he deserves. Faustus, in his quest for fame, knowledge and power, is led astray both by his “arrogance” and the deceptions of the devils (Jump, 2002). In the end, he met his horrible demise, however the answer to the question if he reaches immortality in hell with Lucifer, is not certain. One thing is sure though: his search for immortality and eternal knowledge is common in humans all throughout history. His

struggle marks an important point in Renaissance Europe, where and when great changes took place to shape the fate of not just Europeans, but all of humanity.

Keywords: Faustus, Gnosticism, Transhumanism, Immortality, Magic, Technology

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'UN DOKTOR FAUSTUS ADLI ESERİNDE TRANSHÜMANİZM VE GNOSTİSİZM

ÖZET

Ölümsüzlüğü arayış en eski mitlerde bile görülebilecek, insanlık tarihi kadar eski bir olgudur. Köklerini, insanı tüm yaratılışın merkezine koyan doğaüstü bir akım olan Gnostisizm'den alır. Gnostisizm'e göre, çevremizdeki tüm kusurların sebebi, yaşadığımız dünyayı yaratan Tanrı'nın kendisinin özünde kusurlu olmasıdır. Özümüze sahip olan gerçek Tanrı'ya ulaşabilmek için insanların, sahte Yaratıcı Tanrı tarafından konulan tüm sınırları yıkmaları ve kendilerini bağlayan limitlerin ötesine çıkmaları gerekir. Bu tür doğaüstü düşüncelerden yola çıkan Transhümanizm, dünya üzerindeki her varlığı tek bir singüler bilincin içine katarak, gerçek Tanrı'ya mümkün olduğunca yaklaşabilmek için çabılıyor. 16. yüzyılda yaşamış olan ünlü İngiliz oyun yazarı Christopher Marlowe'un Doktor Faustus adlı eserinde, başarılı bir bilim insanının akademik endişeleri, insanların yüzyıllardır ulaşmaya çalıştığı ölümsüzlüğün bir arayışı haline geliyor. Faustus en sonunda ebedi ruhunu kaybedip sefil bir halde başarısız oluyor, ancak gerçek niyeti sayesinde bu mücadelesi, bilgi ve sonsuzluk için yapılan sıra dışı bir arayışa çevriliyor. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Faustus'un ruhunu şeytana satarak aslında görünenden çok daha büyük bir ideale, yani ölümsüzlüğe ulaşmaya çalıştığını ispatlamaktır. Her ne kadar Faustus bu savaşında başarısız olsa da geçirdiği süreç önemlidir. Bu sebeple, Faustus Transhümanizm'in edebiyattaki ilk örneklerinden biri sayılabilir. Bu çalışma boyunca, söz konusu oyundaki pek çok motif ve sembol incelenecek ve oyunun yazıldığı dönem olan Rönesans'a damgasını vuran doğaüstü ideolojilerin izleri araştırılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Faustus, Gnostisizm, Transhümanizm, Ölümsüzlük, Sihir, Teknoloji

Introduction

Humans' aim of achieving immortality is as old as the history of humanity, and to seek after a longer and better life stimulated us to go to the extremes of our capabilities as humans, which can be seen even in the oldest myths (Bostrom, 2005). For example, *the Epic of Gilgamesh*, which is one of the earliest literary works, tells the story of a legendary Mesopotamian ruler, Gilgamesh, who searches for eternal life. Humans' pursuit of "immortality" has never ceased since Gilgamesh though, as many people have ardently forced the constraints of their existence by such practices as "magic" and "alchemy" (Bostrom). Later, technological and scientific developments in many disciplines enabled humans to make their lives better, and the possibility of living forever always remained the highest target of all the achievements.

The first step of mankind towards achieving immortality is the acquisition of the knowledge of God. Man has the essence of God, therefore he has the ability to be like God, to create and give life (Livingstone, 2015). Making decisions, either “bad or good”, comes as a result of the exercise of “free will”. (Acar) And God has the will to create or destroy his creation in whichever way he pleases, therefore man aspires to be like him. Such ideas are best characterized with “the occult” tradition in which the pursuit is to transcend the binding earthly conditions and become one with God (Livingstone). And, one of the forming tenets of occultism is “Gnosticism” which derives from a heretical interpretation of the Creation myth in the Judeo-Christian tradition (Nuttall, 2002). “Gnosis” stands for “knowledge” in Greek, and Gnostics are in endless pursuit of attaining it (Nuttall). They believe that the world we live in is full of agony, misery and cruelty, and this is because the God who formed it, the “Creator God” or the “Demiurge”, is flawed himself. However, away from the “Creator God”, the real deity who has our true essence exists, and this is the real God to whom humans must aspire to reach. Some Gnostics believe that the “serpent” in the Garden of Eden, which is actually Satan, frees mankind from slavery by leading them to “knowledge”. By the way of eating from “the tree of knowledge”, Adam and Eve gained “the knowledge of good and evil”, and thus, they became “as God”. So, in one respect, Satan or (“Lucifer”) can be said to be the real God who gives humans the gift of “knowledge” and frees them from the bondage of their creator. Both in Gnosticism and Transhumanism, the aim is to break free of the confinements of the earthly body and mind, and to transcend to the plane of God. And this is only through attaining the divine knowledge of God, by becoming immortal like Him.

David Livingstone argues that “transhumanism is the quest to use all the advances of modern science to augment human potential, and ultimately, to achieve immortality” (Livingstone, 2015). Livingstone states that transhumanism has its roots in the “occult” culture, which has “mysticism” at its core, that is, it asserts becoming one with “God” through the use of “magic”. Mystics believe that the most essential source of “knowledge” is “magic”, so it can be said that the practice of magic (or alchemy) brings forth the “divine” knowledge to man, thusly “elevating man to the status of God”.

Ancient Myths

In many of the “ancient myths”, such as the Old Testament, the Mesopotamian *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, the Mayan *Popol Vuh*, and the Indian Veda *Bagavad Gita*, there is a common theme: a primeval and basic “unity” of all things (Farrell and de Hart, 2011). The first “creation of God(s)” is something closer to its creator, in “knowledge” and capabilities (Farrell and de Hart). However, out of fear that this “creation” might reach him (or them) in heavens, the God(s) decide to break this “unity” by creating confusion within this creation. For example, in the Old Testament, when God sees that humans are reaching unto him in heavens with their tall tower, the “Tower of Babel”, he confuses them by giving them different tongues so that they cannot communicate with each other, thusly breaking their “unity”. In the Mesopotamian *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, the same theme can be seen, as humans live “in a primordial unity” and they speak the same “language”. However, again, the gods fear this “unity” of people and they confuse them by giving them “different languages”, again breaking their communion and stopping them from perfecting their “technology”, which is “alchemy”. In Mayan *Popol Vuh*, there is a perfect “primordial unity” in all creation, and again Gods fear it, and set them apart by giving them different “sexes”. The “Indian Vedic” traditions also have a similar theme: again, the whole creation is in a perfect harmony with each other, and God(s), again, out of fear, cause dissent among them by dividing them into different “polarities”, including the opposition of sexes. As a result, this “communion in consciousness and love” is broken and the creation is rendered weaker. According to Farrell and de Hart, what is common in all those ancient myths is “the ‘Tower of Babel-Fall of Man’ moment of history”, when God(s) fear the unity of their creation and decide to set them apart by giving them either different “languages” or “sexes”. The reason for God(s) to take such an action is the “advanced knowledge” of all creation in this stage

of existence, or having too much of the essence of the God(s). Farrell and de Hart argue that this theme, which is common in many ancient mythologies, is what “Mediaeval and Renaissance Hermeticists [and/or Gnostics]” thought to be “the prisca theologia, the ‘ancient theology’”.

Transhumanism aims at merging all “human consciousness” together, and reaching a “singularity” among all the creation by blurring the difference between man and other animals, plants, and minerals (Farrell and de Hart). And the way to do this is through “science and technology”. What the alchemists and magicians tried to do centuries earlier is being made possible through the magic of “modern science” today, which has “the alchemical goals for the transformation of mankind” into quantum singularity. The ultimate aim for transhumanism is “the transformation of the entire cosmos into the model of human consciousness”, thusly becoming one perfect unity again, as in the first stage of existence. If this unity is achieved, humans would transcend to the level of God(s), and eventually become one with it (or them).

In Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, the title character Faustus turns to practice of magic and necromancy in his pursuit of infinite knowledge and fame. The play opens “with the glittering image of Icarus who flew up towards the sun” (Nuttall, 2002). The mythological figure of Icarus symbolises the man who tries to reach beyond his capabilities and eventually fails. In the prologue, we can see the layout for the character of Faustus: he excels in his learning of “divinity”, but being still not content, he turns to the forbidden practice of magic by engaging in the “cursed necromancy” (*Doctor Faustus* Prologue 17-25). Being an accomplished physician is not enough for him, as he aspires to do more than just to heal “maladies” of the sick: he wants to “make men to live eternally” or to bring the deceased back to life (1.1.22-26). According to Livingstone, the most basic tenet of transhumanism is “to achieve immortality” (Livingstone, 2015). So, it can be said that Marlowe makes it clear from the very beginning that Faustus is seeking after one of the oldest ambitions of humanity: he (Faustus) wants to transcend the boundaries of mortal life and aims at accomplishing immortality.

Improving the human condition by eliminating diseases has always been the ultimate goal of medicine, and as a physician Faustus is not content, so he asks himself: “Why, Faustus, hast thou not attain’d that end?” (1.1.1-18) He believes he is being held back by the constraints of the principles of ancient philosophy and of “divinity”, which would only serve to the menial and ordinary purposes of life but would not satisfy his intellectual curiosity (1.1. 28-35). To break free of his chains, he denounces his faith and embraces the practice of magic, which Christianity clearly forbids. His intense desire to learn can be characterized by the Renaissance period in which Marlowe wrote this play, as R. M. Dawkins calls Faustus “a Renaissance man who paid a medieval price” (quoted in Nuttall, 2002). Certainly, not knowing that the price is his ultimate damnation, Faustus pursues after wherever his curiosity leads him to.

One of the precursors of transhumanism, Paracelsus, says that “[h]uman nature is different from all other animal nature. It is endowed with divine wisdom, endowed with divine arts. Therefore, we are justly called gods and children of the Supreme Being. For the light of nature is in us, and this light is God.” (quoted in Livingstone, 2015) Transhumanists believe that there are no limits to human achievements and this is because of that so-called “divine spark” which they believe everyone possesses inside (Mitchell, 2011). This “spark” emanates from the essence of God, which brings humans closer to divinity in their capability to give life to those around them (15-36). Through the practice of the forbidden arts, Faustus believes that he would enter “[...] a world of profit and delight/ Of power, of honour, of omnipotence” (1. 1. 51-52). For him, “[a] sound magician is a demi-god” as he can harness the power of his “mind” to move the worlds below him (1. 1. 60-61). He perceives, just like other transhumanists, that he can direct his mind so as to manipulate his own reality.

Magic and Science

According to Noble, as opposed to the wide-spread belief that “science and religion” are natural opponents to each other, scientific developments actually derived from religious activities (quoted in Livingstone, 2015). Livingstone adds that today’s unquestioning general trust in science originates not from the conventional theological practice but from the practice of “the occult”, which can simply be characterized as “magic”. It is also a transhumanist conviction that scientific development is the basis of human existence and that only through science humans can actualise their potential. By his such veneration of knowledge, Faustus deeply desires to force the boundaries of his imagination and wants to explore beyond the limited opportunities that the available sciences can offer him. He confesses to his magician friends that conventional sciences do not satisfy his thirst for knowledge: “Philosophy is odious and obscure,/ Both law and physic are for petty wits,/ Divinity is basest of the three”, and it is “magic” that stirs him intellectually (1. 1. 105-109). He delights in the prospect of the power that magic would give him and he is determined to pay its price (1. 1. 80-95).

Reaching “perfection” in both the body and the mind is the ultimate goal of transhumanists, as it was so for the alchemists centuries earlier (Hauskeller, 2012). The power to transform any material into “gold”, which is the symbol of excellence in nature, is compared to the never-ending quest for obtaining eternal life, richness and knowledge. So, once a person acquires the “Philosopher’s Stone”, or “the Elixir of Life”, (s)he would also have the power to live eternally and blissfully. This idea of “transmutation” stems from the belief that humans can control nature and bend it so as to make it fit to their best interests. Faustus, just like other transhumanists, is tempted by the very idea of being the “[l]ord and commander of these elements” (*Doctor Faustus* 1.1.76). And he knows that he can only find their knowledge in the books of magic, where “all nature’s treasury is contain’d” (1.1.74). He decides to pursue the exercise of “magic and concealed arts” to find the answers to his questions and to fulfil his desires (1.1.101).

Having “complete autonomy” over “nature”, be it “the nature that surrounds us” or “the nature that we are ourselves”, is the absolute goal of transhumanism (Hauskeller, 2012). Transhumanists, as their predecessors in the middle ages used to do, regard science and technology as the ultimate resources of getting to truth in life because these disciplines provide the necessary tools to establish control over nature (Livingstone, 2015). According to Livingstone, the transhumanist belief that science and technology should be the sole providers of the means to live, stems from “the medieval identification of technology with transcendence”. Emphasizing such importance on science not only puts it to a status of high-esteem, but also gives it an unquestionable authority. For the laymen, not knowing how something works but still gazing at its marvels with mouths wide open, brings that very thing to an exalted position. Therefore, for the common men, technology is magic. However, for a learned man like Faustus, magic is more than real, because he can understand how it works. He and his magician friends, Valdes and Cornelius, appreciate this exalted state of magic for they know that it would “make all nations to canonize us [them]” (*Doctor Faustus* 1.1.119). With the utilization of magic, they would lord over nature as “the spirits of every element/ Be always serviceable to us [them] three” (1.1.121-122).

According to Livingstone, one of the most basic concepts that dominated the Renaissance thought and spirit, along with the reverence to the divine nature of man, is “magic” (Livingstone, 2015). Consequently, magic can be seen as a means to get to knowledge. Mitchell states that “new scientific age began not with a rejection of magic, but with a revival of interest in occult theory and practical magic”. Faustus, being a Renaissance man, is interested in magic, and he is easily tempted by the prospects it might offer him. He pursues after the world of magic as he is fascinated by the possibilities it presents to a man of “science” like himself. His magician friends, Valdes and Cornelius, tempt him with their promise of boundless opportunities magic would provide for him:

“He that is grounded in astrology/ Enrich’d with tongues, well seen in minerals,/ Hath all the principles magic doth require” (*Doctor Faustus* 1.1.137-139). Their ambition to reach to immeasurable levels of knowledge through magic reflects the desire of the “intellectual curiosity” of this typical “Renaissance man” (Jump, 2002).

The pursuit of the knowledge that would give man power over nature was one of the chief aspirations of Renaissance (Mitchell, 2006). Many technological developments that were accomplished in that era are the results of man’s efforts in taming the powers of the nature that surrounds him, a nature which is “hostile to our wills and indifferent to our needs” (Weinberger, 1986). For the purposes of conquering nature and bending it according to their needs, Europeans embarked on many missions (Mitchell, 2006). And among the Europeans, it became a widely accepted principle “that nature can be conquered and manipulated in the same way as (by analogy) simultaneously the world is being discovered and exploited by the European powers”. Making sails that cross the Atlantic with ease, building machines that do the work of many labourers, and constructing factories that produce innumerable amounts of goods, are all but fruits of the developments in science and technology. The Europeans’ success in making their dreams come true can be traced to “the change in the point of view”, with which they see the world around them. It means that they moved away from the world of abstractions of the old philosophies, and embraced the new and boundless “material reality and the external world”. By adapting themselves to the workings of “Nature” and developing new methods to overcome “her”, Europeans finally got the chance to subdue the forces of nature. Nature is personified as female by Francis Bacon, and he goes on to draw an analogy of a divine marriage between “Nature”, who is the untamed force of life, and “Man”, who has the essence and potency of God. Bacon believes this union would produce “a blessed race of Heroes or Supermen” (quoted in Mitchell, 2006). This analogy of divine marriage will be further elaborated later on.

According to Mitchell, “Bacon’s project is an increase of science for the purpose of dominating and manipulating reality”, and that fits perfectly into the most basic ideals of “magic” (Mitchell, 2006). Both magic and science-technology aim to get to the same ends: bending the forces of nature that restrain the individual and thusly, altering the real world by making life much more pleasant. Faustus fantasizes about the material power that magic would bring him, by imagining how he could control the forces of nature:

I’ll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates; (*Doctor Faustus* 1.1.81-85)

He is well aware of the potential that could be presented to him, as he imagines these powers to “[...] wall all Germany with brass/ And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg;” (1.1.87-88). According to Mitchell, his such aspirations “reflect precisely the contemporary colonial preoccupations of the European powers, and Faustus’ magic dreams are of the spirit of superior technology, in ships, armaments, and so on [...]” (Mitchell, 2006). Therefore, it can be said that Faustus’s association of magic with political power is no coincidence, and in it, the unrelenting spirit of Renaissance can be seen. The assertiveness and aggression in the pursuit of the knowledge, which would bring its seeker great control over the physical realm, is embodied in Faustus: with the help of Mephistopheles he turns “into the engineer, capable of achieving total, exploitative power over the material world”. He projects the images of the deceased before other people’s eyes “as on video” of our modern day, he brings “fresh foods halfway round the globe” just as it is done easily today, and so on. He has complete autonomy over the physical world thanks to the magic of Mephistopheles,

and shows the audience that anything could be done with human will. However, the cost of his ambitions would be his soul.

In Gnostic tradition, to get to the knowledge we need, we need to first “know” ourselves (Pagels xix). According to Theodotus, we have to know “who we were, and what we have become; where we were ... whither we are hastening; from what we are being released; what birth is, and what is rebirth” (quoted in Pagels, 1991). Only through achieving this “knowledge”, we can get “to know God”, meaning that God is “within” us. For an individual, to become complete within oneself requires the harmonious unity of all the conflicting inner elements; and for Gnostics, this becomes “a union between the Gnostic believer and the divine”, or “the union between the soul and God as a divine marriage” (Martin, 2006). This union is likened to a marriage, a uniting between two halves, and it is called “bridal chamber”. Man is incomplete without achieving this unity within himself, therefore he has to seek after it all his life. And, only when he is freed from the overwhelming burden of the material world, he would achieve this state of existence. Faustus, when he starts to feel that his end is near, is freed from all his material concerns: he does not care about the tricks he has the ability to do, or the gold and riches he can get. The old man counsils him, and advises him to call the name of God and repent: “O, stay, good Faustus, stay thy desperate steps!” (*Doctor Faustus* 1.18.60) and he advises him to “[...] call for mercy, and avoid despair” (1.18.64). However, he already knows that he “cannot repent”, for his “heart is harden’d” (1.6.18). And instead, he asks Mephistopheles to bring him Helen, who is the “only paragon of excellence” (1.18.34).

According to Nuttall, Faustus's Helen is the personification of the Gnostic “wisdom”, or “Sophia” (Nuttall, 2002). She is “Luna, the Moon, who has been ‘brought down from heaven and is wisdom, the mother of all things’”. Marlowe also endows her with such brilliance, by saying “[b]righter art thou than flaming Jupiter” (1.18.114). The glorified depictions of her “beauty” are not just the conventions of “Elizabethan” poetry, but they also underline Helen's place in the story as the “wisdom” that Faustus gained through Gnosis (Nuttall, 2002). Marlowe highlights her place in Faustus's descent (or maybe ascent) into his final situation: “Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss/ Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!” (1.18.101-102). Finally, Faustus becomes one within himself by his alchemical union with Helen, or Wisdom. He achieves perfect harmony with the Divine through his union with her, and thusly crowns his descent (or maybe ascent) into hell. His unity with Helen seals his fate irrevocably as the Old Man proclaims that “from thy soul exclud'st the grace of heaven” (1.18.120).

Man can achieve complete control over the nature that surrounds him, but only if he attains a perfect unity with it, within himself. First, he has to learn how to become one with nature, to have all the opposing elements within himself at peace with each other. Then, after achieving such harmony, he can rule not only his own physical reality but all the divine reality. In doing so, he becomes divine. Francis Bacon states:

Let us establish a chaste and lawful marriage between Mind and Nature, with the divine mercy as bridewoman. And let us pray God, the Father of men and nature as well as of lights and consolations, by Whose power and will these things are done, that from that marriage may issue, not monsters of the imagination, but a race of heroes to subdue and extinguish such monsters, that is to say, wholesome and useful inventions to war against our human necessities and, so far as may be, to bring relief therefrom. (quoted in McKnight, 2006)

Bacon takes a much more practical look at this union with the Divine, as he believes that the “marriage between Mind and Nature”, that is Soul and Wisdom in Gnostic terms, would produce boundless opportunities for humans. Faustus's Helen, the personification of “Wisdom” and “Light”, represents “Nature” in Bacon's analogy (Nuttall, 2002). Bacon identifies “Nature” as feminine and subordinate to man, and he argues that man can tame her and yield her to his service; he asserts that man can make “Nature”, “with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave”

(Mitchell, 2006). Faustus becomes “immortal with a kiss” from Helen, as he achieves the harmony of the Soul-Mind and Wisdom-Nature with her (*Doctor Faustus* 1.18.101). As a result, the analogy becomes complete in Faustus’s person in his quest to achieve eternity.

Faustus’s union with Helen, the Light, the Wisdom, or the Nature, seals his alchemical transformation from man to immortal God, or Devil. After becoming one with her, becoming the whole that he is supposed to be, he achieves immortality, but with great pain. As Mephistopheles takes him to his Lord Lucifer in hell, he completes his transformation. However, did Faustus really achieve his much-sought after immortality? According to Jump, Faustus is blindly “arrogant” in his aspirations and the prospects that he is likely to achieve with the help of Satan (Jump, 2002). The stunts he gets to do with the help of Mephistopheles, such as growing “horns” on one of his adversaries’ forehead, or playing tricks with the Pope in Vatican, or fooling a “horse-dealer” just for some material gain, are but just silly tricks at the price of the eternal damnation of his soul. He (Faustus) is so “arrogant” that when Mephistopheles describes him the horrors of hell and the pain he has been suffering, Faustus simply dismisses them, as Mephistopheles says:

Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.

Think’st thou that I, who saw the face of God

And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,

Am not tormented with ten thousand hells

In being depriv’d of everlasting bliss? (*Doctor Faustus* 1.3.78-82)

Faustus does not just ignore Mephistopheles’s cautions, but he also denies them out of his “arrogance” as he says: “What, is great Mephistopheles so passionate/ For being deprived of the joys of heaven?/ Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude” (quoted in Jump, 2002). He even dismisses the coagulation of “his blood” while inscribing his name on the contract with Lucifer. Although he is not aware of it, his body rejects his deeds: out of this “arrogance”, he “denies the existence of hell” (Jump, 2002).

Conclusion

Faustus yearns and searches for the ultimate purpose of humanity, which is immortality. In many civilizations and in various periods of time, there is a common theme: all the existence on earth has the same substance at its core, which is the essence of the God(s) that created them. Humans have been aspiring to reach to the unity that would merge every opposition and polarity of every being, and in order to achieve that end, they have been trying to tame the nature that surrounds them, both their environments and their bodies, and shape their reality into the perfection they deserve. Among many periods in literature, Renaissance is remarkable for its goals and endeavours, for in this period Europeans started to accomplish many of the oldest human ambitions, such as circumnavigation around the world, going to places where no European had been before, and so on (Mitchell, 2006). And today, what medieval Renaissance people deemed “magic” started to become reality with the help of “science” and “technology”. Faustus, being not just a Renaissance man, but also an aspiring scientist with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, embodies the ideals of humanity in its long quest for the perfect unity with God(s).

All in all, Marlowe is not consistent on making Faustus either the perpetrator of a perfect crime or the victim of it. Even though his aspirations can be considered highly, Faustus fails to materialise them in the end. He spends his 24-year-period with the Devil in vain, pursuing after vain efforts to amuse himself with trickeries, and occasionally entertaining those around him. He gets horribly dismembered, however, in the end, maybe he reaches immortality by becoming one with the Wisdom in hell (in the personification of Helen). Or maybe, what he thinks to be the Wisdom

(Helen) is just an apparition, a deception caused by his new master in hell, Lucifer. However, his desires to get to the eternal knowledge of God(s) is common to all humanity. Although the answer to the question if he really reaches immortality is not clear, his efforts in trying to attain that end marks him as a martyr in mankind's long quest for perfection, unity and immortality. And in our age of cutting-edge technology, the magic he sought after could (or maybe, will) be accomplished eventually.

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