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and that it should be retained and extended; the events of the period from 1830 to 1860 showed that in preserving and extending it the South was willing to infringe upon basic civil and personal rights, free speech, free press, free thought, and constitutional liberty.³⁵ The Calhoun-Fitzhugh school of thought, that slavery was a "positive good," was more than a defense of slavery; it was a counterattack upon free society, one which commanded excellent support in the South and, the abolitionist believed, significant support in the North. While the "conspiracy" of which the abolitionists warned was no doubt a natural alliance of common political and economic interests, its threat to liberty, North and South, was more than idle. There were too many public utterances of policy (emanating often, it is true, from extremists, but at the same time from Southern leaders) for the times to disregard William Goodell's warning that "*the South is thoroughly in earnest. She is no land of shams. There is reality, terrible reality there.*"³⁶ The alliance itself was motivated by and founded upon the cardinal principle of slavery—the master principle³⁷—and the abolitionists were not so far wrong in believing that its existence seriously jeopardized, for the first time since the founding of the republic, the American tradition.

³⁴ See C. S. Boucher, "In re that Aggressive Slaveocracy," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (June-September, 1921), p. 13-80.

³⁵ See R. B. Nye, "Civil Liberties and the Antislavery Controversy," *SCIENCE & SOCIETY*, IX (Spring, 1945), p. 125-147.

³⁶ *The American Jubilee*, June, 1854.

³⁷ See the admirable analysis of the political thought of John C. Calhoun, one of the most influential of Southern leaders, by Richard N. Current, "John C. Calhoun, Philosopher of Reaction," *The Antioch Review* (Summer, 1943), p. 223-34.

East Lansing, Michigan

DOCTOR FAUSTUS: TRAGEDY OF INDIVIDUALISM

Christopher Marlowe lived during the infancy of modern individualism. To the nostalgic it has sometimes seemed an angel infancy, when it was heaven to be alive. A new world was arising—a world that, on the whole, probably seemed better to the ordinary Englishman than the one it was superseding. Whether better or not, it was certainly different from the old one, and based on different premises, one of the most important of which was that, within rather ill-defined limits, the individual, like Adam Smith's later *laissez-faire* individual, was in duty bound to pursue his own interest. Thus Marlowe's Faustus pursues his own interest, reckless. In doing so, he brings disaster upon himself. We of the twentieth century can understand this outcome better than Marlowe could possibly have done. We have seen this grandiose cult of the omnipotent individual play itself out. In the light of the recurrent failure of individual endeavor lacking social implementation, the tragedy of Faustus assumes new meaning. Marlowe is not the only writer who has said more than he meant.

Insistence upon the individualistic significance of *Doctor Faustus* does no violence to the fact that the play depicts one phase of the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It runs counter, certainly, to the naive notion that the Renaissance succeeded all at once in overthrowing a wholly bad state of things and in setting up in its place a wholly good one. If such a revolution had actually occurred, it would be hard to explain how a Renaissance man like Marlowe ever came to consider the Faustus story fit for tragedy.¹ If Faustus is a type of enlightened and heroic Renaissance rebel; if his revolt is good because it is directed against a benighted medieval system, he obviously ought to go to heaven, not to hell.

It may be objected that Faustus suffers because he is a *transitional* figure who has not entirely freed himself from the superstitions against which he is in revolt, and that he falls back in the end on the very super-

¹ The eighteenth-century Lessing, when he sketched a scene for a Faust play, revealed his intention of giving it a happy ending. See *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*, 1592, modernized and edited by William Rose (New York, 1930), p. 51-53.

stitutions rejected by him in the beginning. Actually, as I hope to show, he does not do this. His tragedy is neither the simple one of the sinner who repents too late nor the equally simple one of the half-hearted reformer who, because of a lack of stamina or of real conviction—such as Marx suspected in the Faust-like Byron—re-embraces the system he attempted to reform and is thereupon handed over to the storm-troopers of the established order. His tragedy is rather that of the extreme individualist who does not, and in the historical circumstances cannot, grasp the full implications of unqualified freedom; who violates the mores, as such an extremist must, and “goes it alone” until the disaster inherent in his program overtakes him. When at last he is faced with the ultimate penalty, he tries to make Christ his scapegoat: not the social, Catholic Christ, but the individualist, Protestant Christ. The attempt reveals his lack of principles, for it is a *formal* violation of his individualism. His lack of principles, however, is in a sense not his fault but the fault of his age: “the life-blood of [Marlowe’s] epoch ran in the Faustus story as it came to him.”²

The Renaissance, as we know, was a crucial and experimental age. It could no longer rely on the set of principles that had been previously satisfactory, but it had not yet found a set on which it *could* rely. It was an age, moreover, that because of its brand of individualism could have no truly social principles—no principles even as social as those of the mediæval Church.

Its failure in this respect is clearly discernible in economic life. In sixteenth-century England, feudalism was on its death-bed, with the upsurging bourgeoisie, eagerly supported by the Tudors, vigorously seeing to it that the old system did not recover. The success of the new bourgeois, however, though on the whole a good thing for England as well as for himself, produced insecurities and economic dislocation. The Reformation, one phase of the crisis, although of immense spiritual significance, had its roots deep in economic struggle. Spiritual emancipation, indeed, was sometimes no more than a profitable pose, as when some who benefited by Henry VIII’s seizure of the Church lands suddenly abandoned the religion of their fathers and became ardent reformers; or as when some Catholic business men supported the break with Rome because the Papacy was allied with their economic rival, Spain.

Humanism, the second phase of the spiritual crisis, illustrates the contradictions of the time. Even so faithful a Catholic as Sir Thomas More was a leading Humanist. More’s career proves that a man could be a defender of the social order represented by the Church and also a friend

² F. S. Boas, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (New York, 1932), p. 46.

of reform. He was capable not only of dying for his faith but also of serving as spokesman for a section of the London merchant class. This versatility combined Humanism and Catholicism. His Humanism taught him that the worldly advancement of the individual is good, his Catholicism that the individualism of the Protestant is bad. The socialism of his *Utopia* sought to unify the two teachings by reconciling private and social good.

There can be no doubt that Humanism fostered the growth of the individual, that is to say, his knowledge of, and consequent power over, the world in which he lived. In short, it promoted his happiness on earth. The crisis engendered by Humanism lay, not in the Humanist’s conviction that earthly happiness is good, but in his premises, which were in conflict with Catholic doctrine; with the belief, that is, that the individual, despite possible worldly success, cannot, by splendidly isolated action, achieve success in eternity.

That More and other Catholic scholars were at once Catholics and Humanists merely reveals that they could not see the contradiction as clearly as we can see it, after three hundred and fifty years of individualistic development. It was historically impossible for them to see that Humanism contained, *in ovo*, a deadly challenge to the premises on which Catholic doctrine was based; that it threatened to atomize the centuries-old unity of the Church and to lodge in personal will the power of control that the Church had so long exercised. In brief, they could not see that Protestantism and Humanism were cousins. Thus Milton is a more understandable phenomenon than More or Erasmus.

Marlowe’s Faustus epitomizes the individualistic phase of the Renaissance crisis. When, in his first speech, Faustus rejects not only medicine and law but also logic and divinity, and chooses in their stead the “metaphysics of magicians,”³ he is doing more than to reject old and honored disciplines in favor of one that is untried. He is choosing atomistic wilfulness instead of organized control, anarchy instead of order, despair instead of blessedness. For his rejection of divinity and logic is a rejection of the hypotheses, deductions, and conclusions on which the world had hitherto been based. Most significant is his rejection of divinity; for divinity, as perfected in the *Summa Theologica*, was the final set of conclusions deduced from the ultimate premises of Catholic Christianity. He who rejected them declared his lack of faith, not only in the premises, but also in the entire system based upon them.

When Faustus asks Mephistophilis to torment the Old Man who has tried to dissuade Faustus from his wicked ways, Mephistophilis replies:

³ *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. F. S. Boas, I, i, 1-64.

His Faith is great; I cannot touch his soul;
But what I may afflict his body with
I will attempt, which is but little worth. (V, i, 95-98.)

The Old Man, despite physical vulnerability, is full of blessedness because he has faith. Faustus, on the contrary, despite physical well-being, is full of despair because he lacks faith. The Old Man represents the whole set of social beliefs and institutions with which Faustus finds himself at odds. Faustus asks that the Old Man be tormented because his torment—or, better still, his annihilation—would appear like a justification of Faustus in his new ways. For if the social order is disrupted or destroyed, Faustus will automatically cease to be a rebel against it, and will thereby cease to feel the social condemnation, or sense of sin, that has tainted his egocentric peace. Such a man, however, is constitutionally incapable of realizing that the destruction of society means the creation of a state of anarchy, in which individualistic efforts tend to cancel one another out.

Faustus's rebellion is anarchic to the extent that, if successful and generally imitated, it would destroy the reigning institutions, to which his rejection of divinity and, more important, his reason for rejecting it are a clear threat.

When all is done, divinity is best:

Jerome's Bible, Faustus; view it well. *Reads*

'*Stipendium peccati mors est.*' Hal' '*Stipendium,*' etc.

The reward of sin is death: that's hard. *Reads*

'*Si peccasse negamus, fallimur*

Et nulla est in nobis veritas.'

If we say that we have no sin,

We deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.

Why, then, belike we must sin,

And so consequently die:

Ay, we must die an everlasting death.

What doctrine call you this, *Che sera, sera:*

What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!

These metaphysics of magicians,

And necromantic books are heavenly. (I, i, 37-51.)

Faustus's quasi-anarchic position follows from his rejection of religious fatalism only because this fatalism was based on the doctrine of original sin, one of the doctrines on which, in turn, was based the power of

Church and society. To reject fatalism, therefore, was to reject Church and society and to set a destructively revolutionary example.

Faustus falls short of true anarchism, however. Although he has no really *social* theory to substitute for the one he wishes to destroy, the goal of his action is not anarchy but absolutism, which is implied in his desire to "reign sole king of all the Provinces" (I, i, 95), and even to be "great emperor of the world" (I, iii, 106). Like the "anarchist" Bazarof in Turgenieff's *Fathers and Sons*, he wants everything. Absolutism is the implied, if not the conscious goal, of all extreme individualism. It can therefore be true to itself only by being false to itself, only by ultimately denying its fundamental premise, that the will of every individual is sovereign and every infringement of its freedom a case *lèse majesté*.

Hence, if the tenacious individualist, or would-be conqueror, like Hitler, is balked in the practical world, as in the end he must be, he can only plunge into psychopathic solipsism. If he remains sane he must either abandon his individualism or end in futile despair. Faustus does remain sane, and the inevitable result is despair, because his will is thwarted in every direction and because he is consistent to the end. His calling upon Christ, to be sure, is a violation of his individualism, since the Faustian man is in theory self-sufficient and recognizes no superior; but, though a violation in the formal sense, it is really a confirmation, since irresponsibility is the basic law of the seeker after absolute freedom. The king can do no wrong. He is "beyond good and evil"—not like the Nietzschean aristocratic superman, who is bound by the code of his peers, but like the top superman of the Nazi hierarchy, who is a Leader-God. This statement is not contradicted by the agonized cry:

O God,

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul.

Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransom'd me,

Impose some end to my incessant pain;

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,

A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!

O, no end is limited to damned souls! (V, ii, 169-75.)

His apparent willingness to suffer for his sins is not candid, as the last line shows. His is not the kind of sin that can be expiated, so that there is no danger of his having to suffer in its expiation. Expiation, requiring sacred and social rites, would bring atonement, that is, *reunion* with society, which he is unwilling to submit to. Faustus does not, in other words, ask to be forgiven by and readmitted into the society of the Church. He "goes over the head" of the Church and asks for a special adjudication of his case, in defiance of the terms of his Satanic contract,

which, though itself anti-social, is too social for him, since it is a contract and thus involves a foreign will.

Hence it is that the extreme individualist carries his own private hell around with him. He is anti-social on principle, and yet man is man only when he acts in harmony with social laws. "Faustus has never accepted the conditions of his human nature," writes Miss U. M. Ellis-Fermor.⁴ Actually he did accept them once, but does not accept them now, and it is only his awareness of the differences between his former and his present state that makes him capable of suffering from his isolation. The suffering of Mephistophilis, representative of the arch-individualist Lucifer, results from his awareness of a like difference.

Faust. Where are you damn'd?

Meph. In hell.

Faust. How comes it then that thou art out of hell?

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

Think'st thou that I, that saw the face of God,
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (I, iii, 76-82.)

Hell is not a place but a state of mind, a condition, like that of Faustus.

But if

Faustus hath incurr'd eternal death

By desperate thoughts against Jove's deity, (I, iii, 90-91.)

he has also, he thinks, opened up the possibility of a new heaven—as, Milton thought, Adam makes possible "a Paradise happier far within himself" by the very act that causes his expulsion from the Paradise of ignorance.

The Paradise that Adam stands to win will be happier because genuinely free. In Eden he was "free" merely to obey or disobey God, who, for Adam, was universal law. He was not free to choose between good and evil, for until he sinned he did not know evil, and could therefore not choose it. He could only blindly stumble into evil, as a man ignorant of chemistry blows himself to bits. For Adam, universal law was tyrannical and apparently whimsical, because it was cloaked in mystery. Things were in the saddle and rode mankind. After the Fall Adam is destined to make informed choices: real choices, based on a knowledge of what he *must* do if he is to gain happiness. His choices are to be dictated only by what Hegel calls "the knowledge of necessity," which is freedom. The world lies "all before him where to choose." Nothing is

⁴ Christopher Marlowe (London, 1927), p. 64.

simply *verboten*. Nothing is to prevent the acquisition of an ever-greater knowledge of necessity. Power—intelligent, scientific, humane—is in prospect. The relationship between himself and God is broken and mended by the same act. Or, rather, a new relationship is established. The Fall is really an ascension from ignorance and subjection toward knowledge and freedom. Through knowledge he achieves unity with the world.

Faustus's vision of the way to power, freedom, and happy adjustment is far dimmer than Milton's. He feels the need for a new unity to replace the one he has broken. He realizes that only a new knowledge can effect his purpose. But, unlike Milton, he fails to see that the new knowledge must be painstakingly acquired. Impatient of labor, Faustus takes a primrose-strewn shortcut to truth—the "metaphysics of magicians."

Faustus's failure, therefore, is due, not to his substitution of falsehood for truth, but to the fact that, although, like Francis Bacon, he recognizes the fruitlessness of the old method, he has, unlike Bacon, no fruitful method to take its place. The magic in which he places his faith is just as fruitless as the method he rejects, and much less satisfying, because to reject the old method means also to reject the society of his time and to isolate himself from his kind. The relation between the individualist and society is reciprocal: Faustus's rejection of society entails the rejection of him by society, of which the Old Man, on the one hand, and Christ and God, on the other, are variant symbols. The Old Man symbolizes the integrated social result of faith in primary hypotheses. Christ and God symbolize the primary hypotheses themselves. The decrepitude of the Old Man—"that base and crooked age"—reflects Faustus's poor opinion of the chances of survival of the society for which the Old Man stands. Therefore, Faustus does not appeal to the Old Man's Christ but to his own individualist, scapegoat Christ.

Christ's failure to respond is inevitable, whichever Christ the appeal is directed to. The Christ of the Church cannot do so without self-contradiction, since he is a social God. The scapegoat Christ cannot do so, because he does not exist. The extreme individualist can have no God but himself, and Faustus has helped himself as much as possible. He has eaten his cake, his four-and-twenty years of "all voluptuousness"; he cannot have it again. Actually he does not want it again, for it has been flavored with the gall and wormwood of isolation and frustrated ambition. He does not wish to avoid *going* to hell, the place that Mephistophilis has shown him to be non-existent. He wishes to avoid *being* in hell any longer. This is why he uses the name of Christ in his appeal for succor. The name, is, for him, a kind of magical formula by means of which he hopes to escape from his hell, but, like his other formulas, it is individualistic in intent, and, like them, merely plunges him deeper

into hell. The name to be efficacious must *mean* the mores. But since Faustus has utterly rejected the mores, he does not mean them and cannot be saved by them.

Faustus's inability fully to understand the saving power of social integration is illustrated by his address to the phantasm of Helen, to him seemingly so wonderful and mysterious. He realizes that from the real Helen the Greeks had somehow derived the capacity for unified action, like that derived from the Virgin by medieval Catholics. But he cannot understand how they did it.

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? (V, i, 107-108.)

Can it be, he seems to be asking, that a whole nation of men were possessed of so powerful and steady a conviction that they were able to fight a ten years' war in its defense? He knows that it was so and that the Greeks became immortal in consequence. Perhaps, he thinks characteristically, her magical phantasm can transmit their secret to me. "Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss." But again his means are wrong. He wants the result without submitting himself to the social discipline necessary to achieve it. Like his other magic, her phantasmal kiss fails, except for the illusory moment of the kiss itself.

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. (V, i, 110-13.)

For an instant he repossessed his soul. Now it is gone again. His heaven vanishes with the kiss, and he is left with his accustomed hellish dross. The heaven realized by the Greeks was a concomitant of harmonious social action. It is not for Faustus, the seeker out of easy and lonely ways to self-fulfillment. The Old Man, who overhears Faustus as he speaks to the phantasm, emphasizes the folly and blindness of Faustus's plea by saying with concentrated scorn:

Accurs'd Faustus, miserable man,
That from thy soul exclud'st the grace of Heaven,
And fliest the throne of his tribunal-seat. (V, i, 127-29.)

Faustus is "miserable" because, though a real heaven is "all about him where to choose," he seeks it rather in a phantasm, unaware that blessedness cannot be imported from another place and time or achieved by

one man working alone. Blessedness was not an exclusive possession of the Greeks, but the Greeks knew where to seek it, and Faustus the individualist does not.

CLARENCE GREEN

New York City

BENEDETTO CROCE AND HIS CONCEPT OF LIBERTY*

Turi Penitentiary, April 13, 1932.

... As soon as I have read Croce's book I shall be very happy to be of service to you by jotting down a few critical notes on the subject, but not a thorough review, as you desire, for it would be a difficult thing to dash off on the spur of the moment like that. However, I have already read the introductory chapters of the book that appeared in the form of a separate brochure some months ago, and am now in a position to begin to clear up certain points that may be helpful to you in your researches, and to provide you with better information, if you wish to give your study a certain organic character and breadth of comprehension.

The first question that may be raised, as I see it, is this: What are the cultural interests that today are predominant in Croce's literary and philosophic activity; are these of an immediate character, or are they more general in scope, corresponding to deeper exigencies than those that are born of the passions of the moment? There is no doubt as to the answer. Croce's activity is of distant origin, dating, to be precise, from the period of the war¹; and in order to understand his most recent works, it will be necessary to have another look at his writings on the war, as gathered in two volumes (*Pages on the War*, second enlarged edi-

* These notes on Croce's *History of Europe (Storia d'Europa)* are taken from the prison letters of the late Antonio Gramsci, Italian Communist leader and intellectual, which were recently published in Italy in book form. Gramsci's sister-in-law, who was writing a paper on the subject, had asked him for his opinion of the work in question and of Croce's conception of history in general. In replying, he was compelled, like Lenin and others, to resort to certain linguistic subterfuges by way of evading the prison censorship. This will account for the use of the term *praxis* for Marxism. Following the letter of June 6, in which the writer sets forth his views on the "objective collaboration," as the Italian editor puts it, "between the idealist philosopher and those who officially opposed him," Gramsci was forbidden to continue the discussion. In 1937, after eleven years spent in jail, Antonio Gramsci died because of the ill-treatment he had received during his imprisonment. The footnotes to the present letters, with the exception of those expressly attributed to the Italian editor, are by the translator, Samuel Putnam. The translation was made from the text as published in *La Rinascita*, Rome ed. Palmiro Togliatti, 1, no. 1 (June, 1944).

¹ World War I.