

فناء الروح في مسرحية (الدكتور فوستس) للكاتب المسرحي (كرستوفر مارلو)

كلمات مفتاحية (الهلاك، الرشدية، الروح)

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Mortalism in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore Christopher Marlowe's prima facie implausible view of the mortality of human soul as reported by his contemporaries and implicitly expressed in *Doctor Faustus* and its similarity with Averroes' concept of the mortality of the Individual passive intellect as conveyed in his commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima*. Averroes is known to have three types of commentary on the *De Anima*: The Long, The Middle and the Epitome. The most important commentary was *The Long Commentary on Aristotle's "De Anima,"* which was available to Marlowe in Latin translation in 1575. The paper also examines the probable channels in which Averroes' philosophical views passed through to reach the Elizabethan scholars in the sixteenth century.

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المخلص

يحاول هذا البحث ان يستكشف رأي الكاتب المسرحي كرسنوفر مارلو حول فناء الروح الانسانية والذي يبدو رأياً غير مقبولاً ، كما نقل عنه معاصرة وعبر عنه مارلو ضمنياً في مسرحيته (الدكتور فاوستس) وتشابه هذا الرأي مع مفهوم فناء العقل السلبي الفردي لأبن رشد كما جاء في شروحه لكتاب (الروح لأرسطو). ولقد كتب أبن رشد كما هو معروف عنه ثلاثة أنواع من الشروح وهي:- (الشرح الطويل) و(الشرح المتوسط) و(الشرح المختصر). ويعتبر (الشرح الطويل لكتاب الروح لأرسطو) من اهم شروحه والذي كان متداولاً في زمن مارلو بترجمته اللاتينية التي نشرت في عام ١٥٧٧. كما يتناول البحث القنوات المحتملة التي مرت بها آراء أبن رشد الفلسفية ووصولها الى المثقفين الألبانين في أقرن السادس عشر.

(الكلمات المفتاحية: (الرشدية، فناء، الروح)

Mortalism in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

“*And live and die in Aristotle’s works.*”¹

(Act I, Scene i, 5)

This paper attempts to explore Christopher Marlowe's familiarity with (Ibn Rushd) Averroes's (1126-1198) philosophical concepts and their affinities with the dramatist's "monstrous views," especially the belief in the mortality of the soul of which Marlowe was accused during his life and is clearly expressed in "*Doctor Faustus*". It also examines the channels in which Averroes' views might have reached England during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and how Christopher Marlowe came in contact with Averroes. Averroes is known to have written commentaries on all Aristotle's works with the exception of the philosopher's *Politics* which was inaccessible to him and to fill the gap Averroes wrote commentaries on Plato's *Republic*. Averroes wrote thirty-eight commentaries in total on Aristotle's works, which are: *The Organon*, *De Anima*, *Physica*, *Metaphysica*, *De Partibus Animalium*, *Parva Naturalia*, *Meteorologica*, *Rhetorica*, *Poetica* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He wrote various versions of commentary, i.e. long, middle and epitome to suit the various levels of understanding of his readers. He wrote on some works, which he deemed very important, all three versions of commentary. As he deemed Aristotle's *De Anima* a very important book, he, therefore, wrote long, middle and epitome commentaries to make it easily comprehended for his various levels of readers.

Averroes' commentaries were translated from Arabic into Latin in Spain in the thirteenth century by four Latin scholars: Michael Scot, Hermanus Alemanus, William of Luna and John of Spain. Michel Scot translated seven commentaries including *The Long Commentary on "De Anima."* There were also other translations made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Jacob Mantino (d.1549), for instance, translated *The Long Commentary on De Anima*" in Rome in 1521; he entitled his translation: "*Paraphrasis Averroes de Partibus et Generatione Animalium*". Both Scots and Mantinos' Latin translations of the long commentary were published in the Junta edition of Averroes' commentaries in 1575.² Averroes held that the human soul consists of two parts, the active intellect and the passive intellect. The active intellect is impersonal,

immaterialistic and immortal and that it will go to heaven after death, and because of these three qualities it will not be set to account on the Day of Judgement, and hence it will never incur reward or punishment in the second life. The passive part, on the other hand, is acquired, materialistic, personal and mortal and that it will die with the death of the body.³ To the active and personal intellects, Averroes added the Possible Intellect, which, he held, is one for all human beings. In other words, he believed in the unity of the Possible Intellect and that all humanity shares a single intellect. Paul Cantor comments on this Averroistic concept saying: “*when we think a rational truth, such as $2+2=4$, we all think alike in that sense participate in the same intellect.*”⁴ Averroes held that our souls are eternal by virtue of apprehending eternal truths, such as those of mathematics. This concept informs the immortality of the human soul without the survival of the individual soul after death. He upheld the notion of species immortality for the human race. Averroes argued that when we die our thought will survive our death once they are recorded during our life. Hence, the thoughts of the authors of books are immortal because their thoughts will be comprehended and reflected upon by people of later generations. Averroes believed that the ancient philosophers are immortal and they converse with each other through the thoughts, which are recorded in their books; and that is why Averroes is thought, by Medieval Latin scholars in the west, to have said: “*My soul be with the old philosophers.*”⁵ He means that the classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle are immortal and that his soul will join their souls after his death. This saying is very important because it was mentioned in *Doctor Faustus* as we shall see later.

The concept of the mortality of the individual soul, which by definition, denies the materialistic existence of hell and paradise in the afterlife, alarmed the Islamic clerical authorities in Andalusia, and Averroes was accused of atheism; his books were burned and he was banished outside the Spanish peninsula to Marrakesh on the order of the Caliph who felt that he needed to take such action to appease the clergy. The Averroistic concepts of the mortality of the human soul and the unity of the human intellect disturbed the Roman Catholic Church in the thirteenth century because not only university scholars upheld and defended such notions, ordinary people admired them and refused the Biblical concept of the immortality of the soul and the reward and punishment in the hereafter. An anecdote was reported by William of Tocco from a book by Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), who was alarmed by the influence of the Averroistic Possible Intellect on ordinary people in Europe, that a French soldier “*who was unwilling to atone for his sins because, as he put it: ‘If the soul of the blessed Peter is saved, I shall also be saved; for if we know by one*

intellect, we shall share the same destiny.”⁶ The Roman Catholic Church condemned Averroes and urged Albertus Magnus (1206-1280) and Thomas Aquinas, who were Professors of Theology in the Faculty of Theology of Paris University, to repudiate his theses in their lectures at Paris University and in books. In response to the Roman Catholic Church, Albertus Magnus wrote in 1269: *De Unitate Intellectus Contra Averrista* and Thomas Aquinas wrote a book in 1270 entitled: *On the Unity of Intellect Against Averroist*”. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church issued a condemnation of 219 Averroistic theses in 1277. The condemnation was directed against the Latin Averroists such as Siger de Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, who were Professors of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts of Paris University. The main ideas of the Latin Averroism may be summed up in the following:

- The double-truth theory which stresses that truth can be reached by two means: religion and philosophy.
- The eternity of the world
- The human soul consists of three parts: the active intellect, the passive intellect and the possible intellect
- The resurrection of the dead is not possible.
- All humans, at the basic level, share one and the same divine soul.
- The attainability of happiness is only in this world.

In fact, in the Middle Ages, the universities of Paris, Oxford and Padua became the centres of intellectual and philosophical debate which focused primarily on Aristotle’s philosophy as interpreted by Averroes and the relationship between philosophy and religion which was also initiated by the Arab philosopher. A group of scholars who embraced Averroes’ philosophical concepts appeared at the University of Paris. These scholars, who called themselves “Averroists”, sparked a controversy about the involvement of theology with philosophy at Paris University. The Paris Averroists were accused of promoting atheistic views such as the unity of human intellect and the mortality of soul and the Averroistic double-truth doctrine which states that there are two truths, one for philosophy and one for religion and that they are both valid, though they look contradictory, as they belong to two different spheres of knowledge. The University of Paris and the University of Oxford, which were the ecclesiastical centres of the Roman Catholic Church set a ban on the study of Aristotle and Averroes in the thirteenth century. The condemnation and the ban set by the universities did not halt the interest in Averroism in later centuries as many of Averroistic views were upheld by John of Jadian (c1285-1323), the French philosopher, theologian and political writer who defended Averroes in France. Italian Renaissance thinkers such as Dante Alighieri (c. 1265-1321), Pico Della Mirandola (1463-1494), Giordano Bruno

(1548-1600) and Cesare Cremonesi (1550-1631) adopted many of Averroes' philosophical concepts.

Paul A. Cantor investigated the influence of Averroes on Dante and found out that the latter defended Averroes' view of the Possible Intellect. He argued that *Dante "places Averroes with the ancient philosophers Dante greatly admired, thus giving an honour position to perhaps the most feared and hated thinker in the Christian Middle Ages."*⁷ In fact, Dante was accused of being Averroist in 1327, six years after the Italian poet's death, by a contemporary scholar, Guido Vernani in his *De Reprobatione Monarchia*. It would appear that Vernani wrote his book to criticize Dante's position on the Possible Intellect which was praised by the latter in his *De Monarchia* (The World-Government). In fact, Dante was daring in mentioning Averroes by name so many times in his works and placing him in Limbo in the *Divine Comedy* along with Aristotle and Plato. Dante stated that:

It is clear that man's basic capacity is to have a potentiality or power for being intellectual. And since power cannot be completely actualized in a single man or in any of the particular communities of men above mentioned, there must be a multitude in mankind through whom this whole power can be actualized.... With this judgement Averroes agrees in his commentary on [Aristotle's] *De Anima*.⁸

Pope John XXII, aware of the threat of the Averroistic Possible Intellect, ordered the burning of Dante's *De Monarchia* in 1329 in Bologna. He also instructed the Catholic Church to ban the treatise and put it on the Church's Index of Forbidden Books in 1554.

Giordano Bruno

Giordano Bruno, is another scholar, who is very important for this study because he spent two years, from "*approximately April 1583 to October 1585, during which he published some eight books.*"⁹, and lectured at Oxford for some time. At the beginning a lot of scholars, including the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, attended his lectures but later when they found how much radical he was, they stopped coming in spite of Bruno's claim that he is a "*proclaimer of a general philosophy.*"¹⁰ So, it is not surprising that Fulke Greville, whose house is the setting of Bruno's *Ash Wednesday Supper*, the first of the Italian dialogues never mentions the name of the author at all in his biography of Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney, to whom Bruno dedicated two of his Italian dialogues the following year, likewise, does not anywhere mention

Bruno's name. This deliberate negligence of Bruno is due to the fact that neither the church nor the state were at ease with the Italian's radical religious, philosophical and political ideas. He was looked upon, like Averroes, an anti-Christ thinker, and the scholars took pain to disassociate themselves of them in their writings. Mordechai Feingold, who investigated Bruno's debt to Averroes, held that Bruno "*has become a symbol of the courageous philosopher who paid the ultimate price-his life- for daring to challenge authority, combat obscurantism, and advocate the freedom to philosophize.*"¹¹ At Oxford, Gabriel Harvey stated that Bruno debated John Underhill, the rector of Lincoln College of Oxford University, '*as much in theology as in philosophy, brought all questions back to Aristotelian axioms and commonplaces: and then discussed any topic whatsoever.*'¹² Bruno held that philosophy is superior to religion, because religion is directed to the common people whereas philosophy represents a superior knowledge which is comprehended by the few wise people in the society.

Bruno refers to Averroes when he speaks about the practice of philosophy and how it leads to happiness. He states: "*It seems to me that the Peripatetic [Philosophers], as Averroes explained, mean it when they say that the highest happiness of man consists in the perfection by the theoretical sciences. It is true and they are right.*"¹³ Miguel Angel Granada, on the other hand, argued that Bruno, like Averroes, held that the perfect man is the natural man who combines philosophy with religion: once Giordano Bruno had assimilated the Averroist-Aristotelian rationalism and after re-working the topic of *man's dignity* as described by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, he proposes a new theory of *man's dignity* "quite apart from any representation of man as a microcosm or a *copula mundi* and from any salvific mediation by Christ".¹⁴ Park Honan, a biographer of Marlowe, thought that "At that time, Bruno was electrifying Europe, and, to judge from 'Faustus', Marlowe himself was intrigued by the Italian philosopher of magic."¹⁵ Honan added that Bruno picked up the ideas of Averroes "who in expounding the Koran had founded a Muslim Philosophy of religion."¹⁶

The end of the soul after the death of the body entailed the controversy over the nature of the soul and the materialistic existence of hell and death in the second life which led to the emergence of sectarian mortalists in the west. Nicholas Mcdowell defined "mortalism" as the doctrine that "*the soul sleeps or dies with the death of the body to be awakened or resurrected at the Last Judgement.*"¹⁷ Mortalism was an important feature of radical religious reform in the west in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Nicholas Mcdowell placed "*mortalist thinking in relation to competing historiographical narratives of reformation and secularism in early modern England.*"¹⁸ The Anglican Church was very much influenced by John Calvin (1509-1564), a French Protestant reformer, whose religious views came to be known as Calvinism and had formed the basic tendencies of the Protestant dogma in England. Calvin defended the immortality of the human soul and man's predestination.

The Church of England drew up 39 articles in 1563 and ordered the clergymen to be abided by them by Act of Parliament in 1571. Articles X and XVII are concerned with the doctrines of free will and predestination. According to these two doctrines, man has no free will and that "*he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good work pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God....*"¹⁹ The Church of England taught that man is predestined in this life. His life and deeds are already planned and destined for him by God. Article XVII which is entitled "Of Predestination and Election" clearly confirms the belief in predestination: "*Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.*"²⁰ The Church of England defended the belief in the materialistic existence of hell and paradise in the second life, and that in the hereafter, people would either be rewarded or punished depending on what they have done in this life. It also upheld that on death their soul will go back to God waiting for the Day of Judgement and the eternal life after death.

Marlowe and Averroes

*Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
Resolve me of all ambiguities,
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?* (Act I, Scene i, 79-82)

Doctor Faustus' dilemma as well as Marlowe's is summed up in the above-mentioned lines uttered by Doctor Faustus. Faustus sold his soul to the devil in order to clear a lot of theological ambiguities, especially the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul, the materialistic existence of hell and paradise, and other issues such as the attainability of pleasure is only in this life and the ultimate end of human knowledge. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is undoubtedly better understood if it is read in the context of the polemics of his contemporaries. Robert Ornstein held that "*we do not arrive at a more just and scholarly interpretation of 'Doctor Faustus' by ignoring contemporary opinions about Marlowe and by putting aside the ideas attributed to him by contemporary accusers.*"²¹ So, it is essential to consider the accusations of atheism by his contemporaries as well as his education at Cambridge University and some Italian thinkers who visited England during Marlowe's life and their impact on the English thought in the Renaissance. Marlowe's "atheism" is, in my view a form of the Medieval Averroism. Actually, Averroes was held to be, in Canton's words, "*probably the most widely condemned thinker in the medieval Christian world. He was generally regarded as a free thinker, subversive of all religious orthodoxy and the term Averroism became virtually synonymous with atheism in the late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance.*"²² It seems to me that Marlowe became familiar with Averroes' concepts through the following channels: his study programmes at Cambridge University; his contemporary scholars; and the Averroistic views of some radical Italian thinkers (Dante and Bruno's views were already discussed.)

Marlowe's study programme at Cambridge University

Christopher Marlowe was born in Kent in 1564 and when he grew up, he was, due to his poor family-his father was a shoemaker- and intelligence, granted a scholarship in 1578 by Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury to study music, religion, Latin and Literature at King's School in Canterbury. So, the young Marlowe became "*a scholar maintained by the revenue of Eastbridge Hospital in Canterbury. This scholarship was founded by Matthew Parker in*

1569, and those who are awarded the scholarship are: 'the lads must be of their School and Natives of Kent.'²³ In 1580, as his scholarly potential and intelligence were recognised by John Parker, then Archbishop of Canterbury, he was granted another scholarship to study theology, philosophy and history at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He was awarded the B.A. degree in 1584 and the M.A. in 1587. After graduation, instead of going back to take the holy order and become a priest as it was planned for him by the Archbishops, he went down to London to join a group of young dramatists to write for the theatre and get engaged in spying operations for Sir Francis Walsingham, who sensed the threat of the Roman Catholic Church and the English Catholics to Queen Elizabeth and the Church of England. Marlowe's long absences from his study at Cambridge were ascribed to having travelled, on the pretence of being converted to Catholicism, to Rheims and France. When he was denied the award of the M.A. degree on being converted to Catholicism, the Queen intervened on his behalf and her Privy Council addressed a letter of recommendation to the University on 29 June 1587 to award him the degree:

*... in all his actions he had behaved himself orderly and discreetly, whereby he had done Her Majesty good service, & deserved to be rewarded for his faithful dealing...because it was not Her Majesty's pleasure that anyone employed, as he had been, in matters touching the benefit of his country, should be defamed by those that are ignorant in th' affairs he went about.*²⁴

The Privy Council's letter clears Marlowe's name of acting against the Queen and the Anglican Church and confirms his loyalty and good service while he was still a student at Cambridge. But, six years later, the Privy Council, as it will be demonstrated later, welcome his tragic, untimely death.

Richard F. Hardin investigated the impact of Marlowe's Cambridge education on the writing of his plays. He referred to the B.A. study plan of Corpus Christi College during Marlowe's time which stressed the study of Aristotle every Monday of the week. Hardin stated that the following plan was "most probably drawn up by the master of Corpus Christi College, Robert Norgate, who signed Marlowe's petition for the M.A. degree in 1487, a few years before Marlowe's enrol."²⁵ The Corpus Christi College focused on studying Aristotle:

*The exercises of Learning in Corpus Christi Colledg
In Cambridg every daye in the weke from the
Beginning of the terme until the ending thereof.
On Mondaye after morning prayers, be red in the hall at vi of the
Clock, these the lecturs 1. Aristotles Natural Philosophy. 2. Aristotlells
Organon.*²⁶

Hardin commented that the plan shows that "*Marlowe was receiving a medieval 'scholastic' education.*"²⁷ He held that in Marlowe's time there was a conflict between the practical and spiritual ends of education.

Another scholar, G.M.Pinciss investigated the influence of Marlowe's study and sojourn at Cambridge from 1584 to 1587 on *Doctor Faustus*. He held that while the young Marlowe was at Cambridge, there was a heated controversy over the importance of salvation, prayers and repentance as Faustus asks: "*Contrition, prayer, repentance: what of them.*" (Act II, Scene i, 16) He argued that Faustus' question "*echoed the uncertainty over religious beliefs and practices felt by many of Queen Elizabeth's subjects*"²⁸ He held that Cambridge, in the late 1580s, was the centre for debate and controversy between Calvinist and anti-Calvinist advocates which might have influenced Marlowe's writing of *Doctor Faustus*. He thought that the most important Calvinist during Marlowe's time at Cambridge was William Perkins (1558-1602), who stressed the physical torture of the body and soul of the sinner in the second life. In his *Foundation of Christian Religion gathered into six principles* (1590), Perkins stated:

Question: What state shall the wicked be in after the day of judgement?

Answer: In eternal perdition and destruction in hell-fire.

Question: What is that?

Answer: It stands in three things especially: first, a perpetual separation from God's presence; secondly, fellowship with the devil and his angels; thirdly, an horrible pang and torment both of body and soul..., endless shall be the pain of the whole man, body and soul forever.²⁹

Marlowe's Accusations by his Contemporaries

Christopher Marlowe was murdered in 1593 at the age of 29. His death was welcomed by the Privy Council of the Queen at that time, and some contemporary moralists hailed the death as "*a manifest sign of God's judgement*" on life of impiety and debauchery. Marlowe was accused of holding atheistic views by a number of his contemporaries. He was also thought to have been a member of a secret group of scholars sponsored by Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618). Marlowe's contemporary accusers were six in number. Thomas Kyde (1558-1594), who was a fellow dramatist of Marlowe and shared a chamber with him for two years, when both writers were writing for the same theatrical company, was arrested on 12 May, 1593, after a government's raid on the rooms of various persons suspected of libels and sedition. Some papers were found in Kyd's chamber, denying the divinity of Christ. Kyd claimed that they

belonged to Marlowe and that they, unknown to him, were shuffled with his own papers. Kyd described Marlowe's behaviour: "*it was his custom when I knew him first as I heare saie he contynewd it in table talk or otherwise to iest at devine scriptures gybe at praiers, & stryve in argument to frustrate & confute what hath byn spoke or wrytt by prophets and such holie men .*"³⁰ Thomas Beard (1564-1623), was another accuser, who wrote four years after Marlowe's death that Marlowe "*as it is credibly reported wrote books against it,*"³¹ in which he denied the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Richard Baines (1564-1623), claimed that Marlowe admitted that he wrote a tract quoting some prima facie discrepancies in the Bible and gave it to some "great men," whose names will be revealed when time to do so is "convenient." Baines maintained that it was a high time that: "*the mouth of so dangerous a member may be stopped.*" On 18 May, the Privy Council issued a warrant for Marlowe's arrest. Twelve days later, on 30 May, Marlowe's mouth was stopped as he was stabbed to death by Ingram Frazer. Some critics and biographers of Marlowe think that these "great men" were Sir Walter Raleigh and the members of the "School of Night," which really included some aristocratic men. So, Baines accused Marlowe of preaching atheism and persuading people to disbelieve in the existence of devils and "*not to be feared of bugbears and hobgoblins, and utterly scoring both god and his ministers.*"³² Gabriel Harvey (1552/3-1631), who was at Cambridge University with Marlowe, published a book entitled: *A New Letter of Notable Contents*, dated 16 December, 1593, three months before Marlowe's death in which he remarked that Marlowe "*nor feared God, nor dreaded divell.*"³³

Simon Aldrich, who entered Cambridge in 1593 at the time of Marlowe's death and studied there theology and remained a fellow of the university until 1607, told the Kentish poet, Henry Oxinden, that Marlowe managed to convert two men into atheism: Richard Chomley (1574-1616) and Thomas Fineux of Dover (1574-1627); the latter was with Marlowe at Corpus Christi College in 1587. Aldridge stated that Fineux had learned all Marlowe's atheistic views by heart and books and that Marlowe succeeded in turning him into an atheist. Aldridge added that Oxinden told him the Fineux used to go into a wood at midnights falling on his knees and praying to the devil to come down so that he can meet him, "*(for hee did not believe that there was a Devil.*"³⁴ Regarding the nature of the soul, Simon Aldrich commented that Fineux "*affirmed that his soule dyed with his body, and as we remember nothing before wee were borne, so we shall remember nothing after we are dead*".³⁵ Aldrich told Oxinden that: "*Richard Chomley confessed that he was brought to atheism by Marlowe.*"³⁶ There was also a statement attributed to

Richard Chomley (1574-1616) "*that Marlowe told him that that he hath read the atheist lecture to Sir Walter Raleigh and the others.*"³⁷ It is clear that both Chomley and Fineux were influenced by Marlowe's views.

Robert Parsons (1564-1610), a Jesuit clergyman and contemporary of Marlowe expressed in his *Responsia ad Elizabethae Edictum* (Rome, 1592) that Sir Walter Raleigh took pains to lure gentlemen to his school of atheism. He stated that: "*Of Sir Walter Raleigh's school of atheism by the way, and of the conjurer that is M (aster) thereof (Marlowe?), and of the diligence used to get gentlemen to their school.*"³⁸ The school, that Parson refers to, is believed to have been a little underground academy of free thought, founded and sponsored by Sir Walter Raleigh; it was dedicated to dispute and innovate ideas in religion, science, philosophy and literature. The members of the academy were perhaps "the great men" referred to by the accusers of Marlowe : two earls, the Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632), the Earl of Derby, Sir George Carey(1541-1616), three dramatists: Christopher Marlowe, George Chapman (c1559-1634), and William Warner (1558?-1609), Mathew Roydon (c. 1580-1622), a famous poet and Thomas Harriot(1560-1626), a famous mathematician of the time. The latter was accused of atheism during Marlowe's arrest and he was questioned by the Privy Council. The academy is now known by Shakespeare's nickname "The School of Night," which is mentioned in *Love's Labour's Lost*, when the king says:

*O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,
The hue of the dungeons and the school of night,
And beauty's crest becomes the heavens wee.* *Love's Labour's Lost,*
IV. iii. 213-215

As early as 1936, M.C. Bradbrook, studied the "School of Night" and found out that "*there appears to have been a literary 'war' between this school and the faction of Essex.*"³⁹ ; she held that that the reputation of the school was "atheistic."⁴⁰ In 1594 rumours of "atheism" followed Raleigh to Dorset where he had retired to his country home in Sherbourne. His "*atheistic views*" spread so widely the Court of High Commission ordered an investigation. The examination was held on March 21st, 1594.

Paul Kocher investigated the accusations hailed against Marlowe by his contemporaries and commented on the claim that Marlowe wrote an atheistic tract: "*whether as manuscript or manuscripts, Marlowe's unpublished writing seems to have circulated with some freedom: it was heard by Beard, heard of or seen by Aldrich, perhaps shown to Cholmley and Fineux, and listened to by Raleigh and others from Marlowe's own lips.*"⁴¹ Marlowe seems to have written a treatise to elucidate his rational views about some theological concepts.

To sum up: Marlowe appears to have held and spread some views which do not agree with the teachings and doctrines of the Anglican Church. Marlowe's views were surprisingly adopted by the protagonists of his plays and *Doctor Faustus* is not an exception. Faustus denied the immortality of the human soul, the existence of hell and the damnation in the hereafter.

Doctor Faustus' Averroistic view of the human soul

Two main themes, in my view, are predominant in *Doctor Faustus*: the nature of the human soul and the existence of hell. Doctor Faustus disputes the immortality of the soul and raises doubts about the materialistic existence of hell and paradise in the second life. In fact, death in *Doctor Faustus* implies both the death of the body and soul. The protagonist clearly states that our death is an eternal one; the soul cannot survive death. He speculates on the nature of sin and questions the Christian religious doctrine that people should sin so that they will be punished by death in this life. He raises doubts about this Christian theological doctrine (the wage of sin is death) and he confirms that there is no afterlife as we will incur an eternal death. He says to himself:

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! (Act I, Sc. i, 47-50)

It is interesting that Faustus does not agree with Jerome's Bible and bids "farewell" to divinity (*Divinity, adieu!*), because the Bible confirms that the reward of sin is death; he holds that we are all destined to die whether we are sinners or otherwise; he really uses, in this context, the expression: "*Che sera, sera,*" which sounds more Arabic (she seer, seer), what will be shall be, which in Islamic theology confirms the people utter subjection to the will of God. It seems more likely that Marlowe was quoting from the Latin as it is consistent with other quotations in the play. We should also bear in mind that the Latin (Ch) is pronounced as the English (Sh). Whether Marlowe was quoting from

one of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's works or not is open to question and needs to be investigated.

Faustus, then, ponders upon the obscurities of life and he longs to acquire a "power infinite" which helps him to resolve and clarify these obscurities to reach the ultimate truth about the nature of the soul and other theological issues. He says I need a supernatural power to "Resolve me of all ambiguities." (Act I, Scene i, 82) He holds that by selling his soul to Lucifer, he will order the spirits which serve him, in compliance with the articles of the bond he signs with the devil, to explain "strange philosophy," of which he may imply Averroism. He says: "*I will hold them read strange philosophy.*" (Act I, Scene i, 80) He later uses the Arabic word "Gehannam" for hell: "*Per Jehova, Gehennam, et consecratam quam nunc spargo, signumque cruicis.*" (Act I, Scene iii, 19-20) The editors of the Oxford English Drama commented on "Gehannam", and erroneously thought that it was a Hebrew word. They claimed that "*Gehenna is the Jewish hell.*"⁴² In both the A-text of 1604 and the B-text of 1612, the spelling of the word used by Marlowe is "Gehannam" which clearly reflects the Arabic word for the Muslim hell and not "Gehenna", the Hebrew word for the Jewish hell. I would add that Marlowe cited the Holy Qur'an, which was available to him, in Latin translation,⁴³ at Corpus Christi College, in *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* and referred to "Zaqquum", the tree which grows in Gehannam; the dwellers of Gehennam are compelled to eat "adhareer," the bitter fruit of the tree to intensify their pain and suffering. The fruits of the tree, the Qur'an tells us, are shaped like devils' heads. Moreover, Marlowe gives a vivid picture of the torture, that Sigismund will undergo in the Muslim hell, which runs in parallel with the the Qur'anic details in Sura 37:62-68. Orcanes, King of Natolia, says:

Now scolds his soul in Tartarian streams
And feeds upon the baneful tree of hell,
That Zoacum, the fruitful of bitterness
That the midst of fire is engulfed,
Yet flourisheth as Flora in her pride,
With apples like the heads of damned fiends.
The devils there in chains of quenchless flame. Act II, scene iii, 18-25

Faustus' view of hell, we should bear in mind, is completely different from the materialistic details mentioned above by Orcanes, because the former believed in the eternity of death.

The repetition of the eternity of death three times in the course of play cannot be ascribed to a mere coincidence, but, rather, it demonstrates that the dramatist intends to convey a message by driving us to a very delicate question which baffled philosophers and theologians alike in all cultures over the ages. The eternal death is repeated again in Act I and Act V:

Seeing Faustus hath incurred eternal death (Act I, Scene iii, 89)

....., *but now I die eternally* (Act V, Scene i, 4)

The Averroists, we should recollect, held that the only immortal part of the soul is the divine intellect through a brook which is compared to a drop of water which reaches the ocean by passing a brook first, then a river and a sea. This Averroistic image⁴⁴ of the soul as a drop of water which returns to the ocean after death is uttered by Faustus at the end of the play. Faustus says:

O soul be changed into little water drops,
And fall into ocean, never be found! (Act V, Scene ii, 109-110)

Faustus denies any distinction between the Christian hell and the Pagan paradise, i.e., the Elysian fields, thereby refuting the notion of punishment in the afterlife. Faustus states:

*This word "damnation" terrifies not him,
For he confounds hell in Elysium:* (Act I, Scene iii, 59-60)

Then, he utters a well-known saying "*Sit anima cum philosophis*"⁴⁵ attributed to Averroes and is related to his doctrine of the eternity of the human intellect and how the works of the ancient philosophers immortalize them through the reading and reaction of later generations. Averroes thinks that the Greek philosophers are alive and that they dispute with each other through the reflection of their readers, and this kind of immortality urged him to long to keep his soul with them. "*My ghost be with the old philosophers!*" (Act I, Scene iii, 61-62) Faustus perceives that his soul cannot survive his death as it will perish with the body and what remains immortal is only his thoughts. It seems that Doctor Faustus, just like Averroes, thought that he will be immortalised by reading Aristotle's works and that his soul will join the Greek philosopher's soul after his death and get engaged in discussing their philosophical concepts. He expresses his interest in Aristotle at the very beginning of the play: "*And live and die in Aristotle's works.*" (Act I, Scene i, 5) Though he later prefers magic over philosophy, theology and other sciences, his interest in Aristotle's works is firm, because he realises that it will give him eternity. His belief in the eternity of the Averroistic Possible Intellect, encourages him to sell his soul to the devil because its value is trivial compared to what pleasure, glory and power he would gain from the devil for the trivial price of his soul: "*But leaving these vain trifles of men's souls,*" (Act I, Scene iii, 62).

Faustus questions the significance of prayers, contrition and repentance in the absence of hell and hereafter. The bad angel appeases him saying that

they are “illusions” which are found in the minds of lunatic people. Faustus is convinced that hell is a “fable”. When Mephistopheles reminds him that he has signed a contract to give his soul to Lucifer, Faustus replies that he will give him his “body too”. Then he speculates on the torture of the sinners in the “hereafter” to deny its existence. He says:

Think'st thou that Faustus is so fond

To imagine that after this life there is any pain?

Tush, these are trifles and mere old wives' tales. (Act II, Scene i, 133-5)

Faustus is convinced that hell and paradise are in this life only. Lucifer confirms that hell is in this life and that it is full of “*all manner of delight.*” (Act II, Scene iii, 158). Mephistopheles’s account of his own spiritual condition might seem to encourage a metaphorical notion of hell as a state of mind rather than a place of physical torment. Mephistopheles says: “*why, this is hell, not am I out of it*” (Act I, Scene iii, 77). Faustus also reiterates his belief that paradise is in this life when he says after kissing the shadow of Helen of Troy that “*here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,*” (Act V, Scene iii, 95). At the end of the play he realizes the danger of infinite knowledge and the quest for the ultimate truth, he therefore burns his books of necromancy.

To conclude: Christopher Marlowe was an intellectual who longed for knowledge due to his university studies and his contacts. He studied theology and philosophy at the University of Cambridge and he could have participated in the theological, philosophical and scientific discussions as a member of Raleigh’s group of intellectuals and scientists. He refused to take the holy order and become a priest which was the objective of granting him the scholarships by the archbishops of Canterbury John Parker and Matthew Parker. His “monstrous views” which included many Averroistic concepts are very well-documented by the state and his contemporaries, and that he not only strongly believed in these ideas, but he spoke publicly about them and tried to gain some converts. We should also remember that he descends from a poor family and he, in the prime of his life, might have sought attention to himself, because he had a strong conviction of his intellectual potentials and that is why he worked for the state as a spy against the English Catholics at the Catholic seminary in the Rheims which he visited and sojourned for some periods which were attested by his absences from the study programme at Cambridge.

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* attempts, it seems to me, to encourage the audience to contemplate on many theological concepts through logic. Averroes offered help to Marlowe to discuss, dispute, argue some theological views to reach conclusions which agree with reason. Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle's works were available to all students of Aristotle at the European universities during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The affinities between Marlowe's documented irreligious views and the views expressed in the play, on one hand, and Averroes' philosophical concepts on the other, cannot be ascribed to a mere coincidence. A man with an inquiring mind, like Marlowe, should have looked for sources of inspiration and information outside what was allowed for him by the state and the church. The Averroistic school of thought, which was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church, should have been attractive to a man with his intellectual quality and over-reaching personality.

Notes

1. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (eds.), Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Act I, Scene i, 5. All subsequent textual quotations will be taken from this edition and referred to in the body of this paper.

² Wolfson, Harry A, " Revised Plan for the Publication of a Corpus Commentarium Averrois", *Speculum*, Vol. 38, 1963, p. 92.

³ Averroes (Ibn Rushd) of Cordoba, Long Commentary on the *De Anima* of Aristotle, (ed., tr.) Richard C. Taylor (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009, P. 273.

⁴ Paul A. Cantor, "The Uncanonical Dante: The Divine Comedy and Islamic Philosophy," *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 20, No.1, 1996, p. 144.

⁵ J.C. Maxwell, "Two Notes on Marlowe's *Faustus*," *Notes & Queries*, Vol. 114, 1949, 334-5.

⁶ Paul A. Cantor, Op. Cit., 145. For the French soldier's story, see Beatrice Zedler's Preface to the translation of Aquinas' book "*On the Unity of Intellect Against the Averroists*", (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1968).

⁷ Ibid. P. 144.

⁸ Dante Alighieri, *On the World-Government (De Monarchia)*, trans. Herbert W. Schneider (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949), p.6.

⁹ Mordechai Feingold, "Giordano Bruno in England, Revisited", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 67, No. 3 (September 2004), p. 329.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 330.

¹² Ibid., p. 331.

¹³ Bruno, Giovanni, *De Geli Eroici (The Heroic Frenzies)*, tr., Paulo Eugene Memo, 1964. Available on line: <http://www.esoteriarchive.com/Bruno/furori.htm>. Accessed on 11.06.2013.

¹⁴ Miguel Angel Granada, *El umbral de la modernidad* (Barcelona: Herder, 2000), p. 259.

¹⁵ Park Honan, *Christopher Marlowe, Poet and Spy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 140.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁷ Nicholas Mcdowell ' Dead Souls and Modern Minds? Mortalism and the Early Modern Imagination, from Marlowe to Milton', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 40(3), 2010, pp. 559-592.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The Victorian Web, "The 39 Articles of Religion" (1562), 1-8, available on Line in:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/39articles.html>, (Article X: Of Free Will). Accessed on 15/07/2013.

²⁰ Ibid., Article XVII.

²¹ Robert Ornstein, "Marlowe and God, the Tragic History of Doctor Faustus", *Publication of Modern Language of America*, Vol. 83, No. 5, October 1968, p. 1379.

²² Paul A. cantor, The Unconical Dante: The Divine Comedy and Islamic Philosophy, *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 20, Issue 1, 1996, p. 144.

²³ Arata Ide, "Christopher Marlowe, William Austen, and the Community of Corpus Christi College", *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 104, 2007, p. 61.

²⁴ Park Honan, Op. Cit., p. 154.

²⁵ Richard F. Hardin, "Marlowe and the Fruits of Scholarship", *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 63B, summer 1984, p. 387.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 387-88.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 388.

²⁸ Pinciss, G.M., "Marlowe's Cambridge years and the writing of Doctor Faustus", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 1993, p. 249.

²⁹ Ibid. P. 255.

³⁰ Paul Kocher, "Marlowe's Atheist Lecture", printed in *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Clifford Leech (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), P. 163.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p.164.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ M.C. Bradbrook, *The School of Night: A Study in the Literary Relationships of Sir Walter Raleigh*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1936), paperback edition, 2011, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.8.

⁴¹ Paul Kocher, Op. Cit., p. 166.

⁴² David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, (eds.), *Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, Op. Cit., p.435.

⁴³ The most possible source of "Zoacum" is a twelfth-century Latin translation of the Qur'an by the English scholar, Robert of Chester. The translation was printed as *Machumatis sarracenorum principis*, (Basel: Joannes Oporinus, 1543). The Parker Library of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, has a copy of the second edition of 1550. This translation of the Qur'an is listed in the Parker Register of books bequeathed to Corpus Christi by Archbishop Parker in 1575. I am indebted for this fact to John Michael Arber, "Islam and Tamburlaine's World-Picture," printed in *A Companion of the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, ed., J.G. Singh, (London: Blackwell, 2009), 67-82.

⁴⁴ Steadman, J.M., "AVERROES AND DR. FAUSTUS: SOME ADDITIONAL PARALLELS," *Note & Queries*, Vol. 9, Issue 9, 1962, 327-329.

⁴⁵ J.C. Maxwell, "Two Notes on Marlowe's *Faustus*," *Notes & Queries*, Vol. 114, 1949, 334-5.

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