

FAUSTUS. THE MYTHICAL MEMORY

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Abstract: The figure and story of Faustus is part of the European cultural heritage, and as it usually, even inevitably happens with legends, it lives further in the adaptations of later periods and authors². It is mainly linked to Goethe's name, his figure became well known and immortal in his works. Ever since Goethe, all authors – who respect themselves – in German literature must write a new Faustus, while in other nation's literatures newer and newer paraphrases were born, which on their turn gave rise to further adaptations, and the scientific, aesthetic etc. literature also has gotten richer. However the canonized, more precisely, classicized framework of interpretation is not transgressed by any of the newer writers and poets of the past centuries, moreover it is only the form of the legend that is rewritten – naturally with the aim of modernization. All of that as part of the literary heritage. As far as the problem of original sources is concerned: what can be regarded as a source and what is adaptation, which are the works that motivated writers, are just a matter of the preliminary work of the interpretation. On the other hand the problem that within the ancient, mythical tradition there is an original, ancient Faustus legend, does not raise any attention as that is “mere raw material”. The truth is ... that the beginning that has been preliminarily, yet directly definitory for centuries, is that original force that is given in the topic and thus it is difficult to bring it to the surface, preferably independently from the heritage that was built upon it. As far as the time dimension is concerned, we are searching in an undefineable, open past, moreover it is most probable that the legend itself is not entirely original, so to say, but it is the adaptation of a more ancient idea or topic. And by this its symbolism and hidden semantics lose their European characteristics.

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² It was written by Goethe, Heine, Lessing, Thomas Mann; through their works did his figure become part of the public knowledge, but we could continue the enumeration of names of classical writers and their followers with contemporary authors as well.

Keywords: Faustus – origins of the legend; “Sin” – the knowledge of the deviation from the divine conception; Presence of the idea in the mythologies; Literary adaptations; History of the idea before Goethe’s masterpiece.

Thinking in the perspective and dimension of millenniums, it is not only the “message” but its “presentation” that is primary, although there is a vast philosophical, aesthetic, literary literature and who knows what other kind of analysis on the topic of “what” and “how”, about the figure and story of Faustus, its symbolism, hidden semantics etc., etc. But the heavy message that is unperceivable for the mind is the fact of the rebirth itself, that is why was the subject adapted and why precisely then, around the year 1500, in the renaissance.

Who is Faustus?

When going through the literature, there is one common feature in all of them, that is that they deal with Faustus as a cultural problem, a specific renaissance literary topic. His figure was deduced from Prometheus³ – however what Faustus did was not a sacrifice for others. Faustus is exclusively driven by the will of *personal* cognition – he might be considered an estranged Prometheus-descendant.

Ioan Petre Culianu in his book entitled *Éros et magie á la renaissance. 1984*, written with great erudition according to Umberto Eco, follows the origins, the migration and the adaptations of the topic, presents the renaissance context in the relation of eros and magic. He analyses two original versions of the legend, the sources of the Spiess-folkbook are traced back to the antiquity, while the German historical tradition is followed back to earlier centuries. According to him, Johan or Jorg Faust is the symbol of the renaissance conquered by reformation.⁴ According to Hans Biedermann the story of Faustus reflects the simple renaissance person’s fear from science.⁵ Kurt Selinmann describes the example of Teophilus, the “Faustus of the Middle Ages” in *Höllenzwang* (The constraint of hell), which is an occultist collection of black magicians and associates of the devil.⁶ Lutz Röhrich, in his paper *Az ördög alakja a népköltészetben* (The figure of the devil in folk poetry) comes to the conclusion that Faustus represents the

³ E.g.: M. Moroianu: *Marii damnați*. Editura muzicală, București, 1983; or see the entire literature on Milton etc., etc.

⁴ I. P. Culianu: *Éros et magie á la renaissance. 1484*. Flammarion, Paris, 1984.

⁵ H. Biedermann: *A mágikus művészetek zseblexikona*, Kentaur Könyvek, Budapest, 1989.

⁶ K. Seligman: *Mágia és okkultizmus az európai gondolkodásban*. Gondolat, Budapest, 1987, 146, 192-193, 197.

entire frustration of consciousness of the science that becomes emancipated from theology.⁷ According to Serge Hutin's book, *L'alchimie*, alchemy was a means to understand nature, whereas the alchemist, the magician can be regarded as a forerunner of the later renaissance scientist.⁸

Authors, works, theories.⁹ Do we have only theories?

Who is Faustus?

One can regard his lifestory as a mere cultural handhold, or one could discuss it just as a renaissance thought, a literary topic that can be re- and rewritten – however the truth is that it far exceeds the areas of all human disciplines.

Who is Faustus?

While searching and analyzing the “topic”, we have to go back to the antiquity to the B. C. period, as the name or nickname Faustus appears frequently from Greece to Spain. Where does this take, lead the researcher?

Who is Faustus?

His figure and story must be approached, tackled and interpreted as the nature of a vector, as one must speak about its direction. It is not a new metaphor-theory, but we follow the line of rebirths. The direction is senseless and chaotic, undefinable, without it the latter is the concept. We say, “fate” ... The basic idea, that is shaped with and in this topic cannot be linked exclusively to the renaissance or to one specific period, for that matter. If we purify it from the characteristics of the different periods, we can see that the Faustus variants – the stories of Trithemius, Maximus, the magician Simon etc. – are the embodiment of the same idea. Faustus is a symbol. The Faustus idea is an important part of the christian tradition, it is its core.

Who is Faustus?

Faustus as known from the legend is a typical renaissance figure – more precisely he became part of the general knowledge as such. However the human character that he “symbolizes” has been part of the human nature for ever and the renaissance just reshaped it, gave a new human shape to it in Faustus, that is that it was antropomorphized by means known since the beginnings of hu-

⁷ L. Röhrich: *Az ördög alakja a népköltészetben*, Etnographia, 1966. 2.

⁸ S. Hutin: *L'alchimie*. Presses Universitaire de France, Paris, 1951.

⁹ E. M. Butler: *The Fortunes of Faust*. Cambridge, 1952; V. G. Meek: *Johann Faust: The Man and the Myxt*. Oxford, 1930; P. M. Palmer, R. P. Moore: *The Sources of the Faust Tradition*. London, 1966; L. Kratzenbacher: *Teufelsbündler und Faustgestalten im Abendlande*, Klagenfurt, 1967; R. Nye: *Faust*, Európa, Budapest, 1988. etc., etc.

man culture. It is a character, one of the first criteria that are called “fateful” by the early written documents. For instance the Bible writes: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” (Moses 1, 2, 16-17). “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened (Moses 1, 3, 1-7). The story of the fall has been interpreted in several ways, starting from the literalist interpretation up to the explanation that as almost all the skulls of the ancient skeletons have a hole in them, that means that the brain was eaten and thus the story can be regarded as an early description of cannibalism, many theories have been created. But we must notice that the events gravitate around “knowledge” and “wisdom”, and not around “fate”. As it did happen right after the Fall, the knowledge primarily transmits materialistic, direct information about the world instead of matters of fate that are experienced as convictions and cannot be directly perceived. The story says that the desire of knowing is accompanied by weakness, and as a matter of fact the man chooses the “easiest way”. This is where and how “temptation” works. At this moment the person – naturally we have to disregard the difference in sex – does not believe anymore, but observes, searches, meaning that the wrongly interpreted freedom, the departure from the divine and the dominance of rationalism become the sin, the “luciferic” change and the way. We often say that humanity develops based on a wrong model.

The Faustus-legend is the continuation of the story of the Fall. Moreover, the two stories are virtually the same, their starting point is the same, their basic categories, like “knowledge”, “wisdom”, unpronouncedly “desire of knowing”, then later “temptation”, “damning” as well as their basic conflicts are the same, the

differences that result from the fictive space and time dimensions, and the long centuries between the time of their creation are merely formal and stylistic. "(...) and desirable is that tree for wisdom" – can be read in the Bible. "But there lived in his (that is Faustus who was initially conceived in sin) head some sort of folly, some pride beyond reason, which is why he was always called by his fellows the critical one." "(...) and he wanted to search the basis of the sky and the earth, as he was driven by his curious and pride nature, and once he decided that he would summon the devil cum vocabilis, figuris et conjurationibus, that is with words, signs and charm."¹⁰

A further metaphor remains, thus – today more because of necessity and not by choice – Faustus, the remains or if you prefer the fraction of Adam and Eve, because he is closer to us and as such we believe his legend to be more understandable.

Who is Faustus?

What was his life like?

Remaining within the frames of the classicized interpretation: is Faustus really a victim? Even martyr? ... He is thus the one and maybe the only modern offspring – even if more with the idea and not the method of making a sacrifice – of his smaller-caliber antique – Sumerian, ancient Greek – ancestors. Losing his soul makes the knowledge possible and real, that will call itself "superior". His figure is the only archetype that became the core of our way of thinking and of our thoughts, and that appears dressed as stylish metaphor in different periods, and as the basic stones of our culture fade away, it becomes a gate on the mapping of understanding the realm of the topic that can be rebuilt in all periods. From the point of view of what kind of semantic dimensions it has, many prestigious works prove to be quite earth-bound in their concept. Such a perception of the figure and story of "Faustus", or rather of our self-image is either too narrowed down and incomplete, or it is completely wrong – I would say.

Is there anything more in the fact that Faustus is a renaissance figure? At the dawn of the modern age the intellect of the renaissance man opened to eternity, and this filled him with the consciousness of his own greatness in the moments of the early centuries, and not with the fear of tinyness and vertigo. The great earthly harmony of man and the world was desired, as the sense of incompleteness that suddenly became cosmical, that is the desire for knowledge, stimulated,

¹⁰ The Spiess folk book, Frankfurt, 1587, the translation of the scholar Károlyi György.

called, tempted him to his own realization. After the dogmatically religious Middle Ages, on the verge of such a great change, the renaissance, more precisely the early renaissance – that was basically still reliant on the religious, biblical, Jewish-Christian tradition¹¹ – chose, or warned itself in the story of Faustus, then “having sold his soul”, it continued its renewal being determined by the ancient, mainly Greek tradition of rationalism. That is that the history of the renaissance philosophy was in fact written in that of the initially theologian Faustus, whereas his story can be found in the story of the Fall. The story of our renaissance thinking ... “what happened at the turning point of the Middle Ages and the Modern Age, if there is no sense of talking about the collapse of the Christian culture, and it is unjustified to regard the Middle Ages as the only and most pure form of Christianity? – asks Fejér Ádám. – What should we think about these changes, if the renaissance cult of antiquity did not mean the rebirth of ancient culture, but it satisfied the intellectual needs of Christianity that was shaping its newer story line? The Middle Ages are usually regarded as an aristocratic society and as its opposite the modern ages as the beginning of bourgeoisie. If the phenomena of the modern ages are considered from the point of view of the history of politics and of economy, that is from the point of view of event-history, and we link our statement to these, then there is no need to contest it. However if we attempt to capture the intellectual-cultural basis of the Middle Ages and the modern ages, from the point of view according to which it is impossible to affirm that the antique culture was renewed and that Christianity became weaker or even died out, then we obtain a different picture: we would regard the Middle Ages as a bourgeoisie society and the modern ages as an era based on the primacy of aristocratic intellectual-cultural society.”¹² – Analysing and concluding from the proper level of abstractions of epistemology, a partial conclusion is the following: from the rapid, humanity-wide absolutization of rationalism, a – so called – modern parable, myth, legend was born that used specific metaphors. About what exactly?

Man is a rational being – according to the old commonplace. After the century-long philosophical theories and explanations, it is unnecessary to rediscuss this matter in depth, it is enough to say that conscience came to realize its killer character in time. In our train of thought – directly or indirectly – we have followed the philosophy that denies the primacy of thought and that propagates the

¹¹ See Á. Heller: A reneszánsz ember.

¹² Á. Fejér: Mi született újjá a reneszánszban? Korunk, 1997. 9.

elimination of the reflexive almightiness of conscience, to be more precise we have followed the hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer. The contemporary way of thinking as well as the many centuries long philosophical trend that denies the primacy of the mind do not say anything else or anything more than the Biblical story. What we affirm and how we affirm it nowadays is the following: the hermeneutics and hermeneutical analysis of Heidegger and later of Gadamer have proven without doubt the necessity of denial. – The conclusion – if correct – is very serious. Man is not a rational being originally. A series of statements. So far there is no such philosophy or rational ideology that could have answered or solved this contradiction, and the Faustus-legend, having a two-poled conflict system – man and devil – presents yet another deterrent example in the figure of the doctor, and in its conclusion it urges to practise religion. In the Bible we find a clear answer. Man was not created as a rational being – we may interpret the notion of “creation” either as a religious term, or as a metaphor of evolution –, he became rational as a result of the “fall”, as a victim of delusion, thus the paradox from above. We often say today – using the terms of social sciences – that humanity follows an incorrect model. Hence the question: what is the right way and where can we find it? Science is mute here. Lacking a proper response, we must turn to the Bible once again, because that is the only book with such a complex system of thought that can offer an answer – in the figure and actions of Jesus.

The reasoning from above supposes – even if unsaid – another, in relation to the discussed denial, superior idea. When regarding the problem of why the topic was reborn in the renaissance, we come across another question: is it possible that man was aware throughout the evolution of its civilization and culture that his was not the right way, meaning that “it was evolving based on a faulty model?” Would it be possible that the birth of the Faustus-legend, more precisely the adaptation of the story of the Biblical fall could be traced back to this latently existing idea? There is the divine prohibition in the Bible.

By linking the above sketched points, we come across the directionality of the same vector, its very concept. The figure and the story of Faustus is the rebirth of the same ancient idea that was the basic element of the human life program from the very beginning, that was only given shape by the renaissance, or rather it was given a new shape. Only when approaching it from an existential, ontological point of view can we see that the Faustus-topic, the Faustus-symbol, the Faustus-idea is in fact the rediscussion of the fall, of the original sin, of the idea of deviation from the divine concept; the rediscussion of the temptation and the

approach to the negative side; of how man became a rational being according to the Jewish-Christian tradition. The thought has lived in the depth of the human mind and soul from the beginnings and we can find it in the sacred texts called myths of other continents, cultures, nations, in the adaptations of newer ages.

After Prometheus we follow Phoroneus who was "(...) the first who found out how can the fire be used that was stolen by Prometheus."¹³ The Pāndala brothers from India, the heroes of divine origin of the Mahabharata were also fighting for the man.¹⁴ The Georgian Amiran is also enumerated in the same line with Prometheus, Samson, Heracles, Theseus, Perseus.¹⁵ The idea of the "sin", the mistake, the deviance is also present in the earliest Hebrew myths.¹⁶ The same turning point is symbolized in the upanisades by Nāciketa's fire,¹⁷ by the story of Purusa¹⁸ and in the Hittite mythology by the myth of Telepinus.¹⁹ In the Chinese mythology Fuxi and Nuwa give the fire as a gift to the people and the birth of musical instruments is also linked to them, they are the main figures of the "golden age".²⁰ The mythology of Oceania the turning point is represented by Maui's sacrifice,²¹ in the sacred book of the Mayan Indians, in the Popol Vuh, it is the resumption of the universal vision in the Book of Wisdom,²² whereas in Africa, the story of Szungyata.²³ An Indian story: a mythical being with many legs is walking gracefully, because he is of divine origin, and he thinks it is his task to get to know his own self. He imagines that the seventh pair of his legs steps forward, so what is it that the thirteenth does? It is said that in that very moment the thirteenth

¹³ Robert Graves: *A görög mítoszok*, Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1981, 282.

¹⁴ Georges Dumésil: *Mit și epopée*, Editura Științifică, 1993, 37–72, 961–962.

¹⁵ Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel: *Mitológia, Gondolat*, Budapest, 12–13, 15.

¹⁶ Trencsényi-Waldapfel: *Mitológia*, 53–54.

¹⁷ Paul Deussen: *Filosofia Upanișadelor*, Editura Tehnică, București, 1994, 56.

¹⁸ *Rig Veda*, X, 90. *Cele mai vechi upanișade*. Editura Științifică, București, 1993, 225–226.

¹⁹ *Gândirea hittită în texte*. Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1986, 185–192.

²⁰ Yuan Ke, *Miturile Chinei antice*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1978, 57–80.

²¹ Rosalyn Poignant, *Ozeanische Mythologie, Polinesien, Micronesien, Melanesien, Australien*, Emil Vollmer Verlag, Wiesbaden, 65–66.

²² *Popol Vuh*, *A maya-kicse indiánok szent könyve*, Helikon, Budapest.

²³ *Szungyata, az oroszlán fia. Mandinka hősenek*, Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1983.

pair of his legs cramped. Ever since that moment it was not the spontaneous life program, but his will.²⁴

One thing is certain. In the Jewish-Christian tradition there is only one story for the topic in question. The first, monumentally simple nine lines of Genesis. The others are just models, mute adaptations.

The example of John Milton

Who is Faustus?

We follow the history of an idea, the reality, the birth, the existence of fiction as the abstraction of collective consciousness, that is we do not primarily describe, interpret and evaluate that creative invention through which the authors of literary works, humanity-poems processed, transformed into literature the idea that survived and was renewed over and over again throughout centuries and millenniums and that was readily handed to them, inherited, bequeathed throughout generations. Milton's *Paradise lost* is the *how* of the reoccurrence, its English renaissance version, the interpretation focusing on the literary characteristics is not enough for its understanding.

The first most important question would be: why is there the idea again, the idea of the existential turning point, that is the core matter of all nation's texts based on the ancient knowledge. Naturally the renaissance itself tried to answer this question – that is how the story of Faustus was born.

Who is Faustus?

What happened in the renaissance? Because here and only here is it possible to truly grab the Aristotelian goals, in our case the intention to refine morality and the effort to strengthen faith. Of course we keep saying that the antique Greek tradition renewed itself – but this phrasing is blurry, thus leading to major mistakes. This verb form is tricky, almost like suggesting that the Greek tradition – who knows why? – simply took actions in its own hands and renewed itself. No, that age was the age of a series of genius authors, those people lived the experience of existential depths and used the cultural treasures of previous centuries for self-expression. For an artist it is self-expression that is important, when the creator ego reaches cosmical size, its intellectual space can be measured to the

²⁴ The text is a ten thousand year old forerunner of the contemporary discoveries of psychology.

universe. The antique Greek tradition, one of the peaks of the European culture, they found an excellent foundation. "Life". That is what interests Salamon, Dante, Petrarca, Bocaccio, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Chaucer. And later Andrej Tarkovskij as well. It is clear, the idea, the ancient idea becomes actual through the intellectual experience of the existential turning point from the once actual and by now the deepest, most universal layers of culture. The big group develops until the present of the author through the level of the small group to the personal level. Let's take a look at the road the idea has travelled: it all loses its time-boundedness and becomes timeless, more precisely eternal. Or rather in its historical definiteness it appears in different ages in various trendy forms.

The English – and the whole Western-European – philosophy is a continuation of the Greek tradition, so at a first glimpse it seems to be correct to derive the figure, the topos of Satan from the revolt of Prometheus.²⁵ The titan mediates between the divine and the human world, but with the turning point the man got into the possession of something that was forbidden by God. Satan moves against God and against man, he does not turn against God for man, but for his own victory. He just uses the man, the man is only a medium for him. Faustus mustn't and can't be derived from Prometheus, because knowledge, more precisely rational knowledge, or self-reflection, the ability, function, activity of Rationalism spelled with capital letter, the activity of the "Satan" is the story of becoming a *creator*, of imitating God. This is what Prometheus wants, according to some myth variants. He creates the man, that is for man he is the creator. For Faustus through the Jewish-Christian tradition the one called Satan also became a creator.

Milton?²⁶ He dramatized the inherited idea that survived until his age, the first great topic of humanity and its antecedence-structure. These roots are important, defining. At first we must state that they are *beyond literature, rather: they are pre-literature*. As the existence states itself. Is it literature already? No, definitely not, this is the level of ontological foundation. Only after the analysis of this becomes it possible to evaluate the linguistic presentation, the authorial invention, the poetic performance, and following that the literary interpretation can start to live when conscious about the precedents.

²⁵ John Broadbent: *Paradise Lost*, Books I–II, Cambridge at the University Press, 1972.

²⁶ He thinks in Biblical terms, talks about the existence, does not say anything new, does not want to uncover anything new in fact.

What is the philosophical framework within which it is possible to grab Milton's work? First of all it is important the way he handles the symbols, the way he adapts the ancient tradition submerging to its archetypal levels. The symbolic characters, situations, changes, the whole "story" seems to be a mere retelling of what is in the Bible at first. In the characteristics, relations and hierarchies of the characters there is no change, the archetypes and the symbols are well known. So why does Milton write it and tell it again? Many consider that it was a revolt against the "usurper", but to derive the work from the system of society or from its relation to society is not enough.

As far as the creation of symbols is concerned, the first and most important aspect is that he rewrites the well known, inherited story from the point of view of the Satan – and when regarding this it is not only important what many have emphasized so far, that is that he became a hero, because he unites the properties of other heroes.²⁷ But this is how it becomes clear that the loss of paradise is the repetition of his fall at a smaller, more human scale. Two points define a line in this case, too, because in Milton's work with the appearance of the Faustus legend the paradigmatic axes, which leads our way of thinking, which feeds the reality of fiction, which leads the superior reflection, is clearly drawn. The author continues the Greek tradition, this is the Platonic philosophy, in which the earth is the imitation of heaven and this is the shadow world. Thus we find the continuation of the Greek tradition in the way of the rethinking as well. The fate of man is the repetition, the shadow of what happened previously in heaven, says Milton.

²⁷ John Boradben: *Paradise Lost*, Books I–II, Cambridge at the University Press, 1972; John Milton: *English Minor Poems. Paradise Lost. Samson Agonistes. Aeropagitica.* William Benton Publisher, Enciclopedia Britanica, Inc., Chicago, London, Toronto, 3.; Stepford A. Brooke: *Milton Maximillian and Co. Ltd.*, London, 1909, 87-91., 140.; Carl Eilmer: *Miltons Das Verlorene Paradies*, Bibliographisches Institut, 14-15.; *Paradise Lost and Other Poems* edited, with introduction by Maurice Kelley, published by Walter J. Black, New York, (1943) XIV.; *Milton's Paradise Lost*, Edited with Introduction and notes by C. F. Gregory, N. A. G. Ball and Sons Ltd., London, 1915, XII., XXVIII.; *Outline of 17th Century English Literature*, Edited by John Henderson, N. A. Forum House Publishing Company, Toronto-London-Sydney-Auckland-Capetown-Singapore, 1969, 104-105, 112-124; George Williamson: *Milton and Others*, Faber and Faber, London, 1965, 15-16, 42-65.; etc. – we could continue the examples. Until the end of the 20th century the scientific analysis was carried on within the same philosophical frame.

Is the renaissance Milton then? He rewrites one of the most frequent, most characteristic topics of the age in an English renaissance way, in a way that is based on the Greek, Platonic, Jewish-Christian tradition with great poetic power. The further interpretation already becomes literary, the analyses of the motifs, the rhythm etc. has been done for centuries by many researchers. So the above statements are not really a continuation of these but they can be considered as their precedents.

The prefiguration of the story of Faustus is the story of Satan in heaven and it is this prefiguration that is written, dramatized by Milton in his work with the title *Paradise Lost*. The “sin”, the idea of deviating from the concept of creation was dealt with at length in the renaissance, many excellent writers came to the conclusion that the only option is to find some kind of way back. And in the end we say: “the renaissance”. What happened? Why? The question is basically related to historical philosophy, but ... can we find an answer from Milton?²⁸

Thus the story is the same, so what was that basic dynamism that brought to light this thought again? There seems to be an answer getting shape as we can observe that – during the whole time it is the other tree, the other tree standing in the middle of the garden that the story is about. This forbidden tree is one of the first time-metaphors, it has a correspondent in all nation’s mythology. This concept, the experiment to find the way back was parodied by George Bernard Shaw in his “metabiological pentateuch” with the title *Back to Methuselah*. The two basic human desires, motivations, the two basic dynamisms that determine the existence. And based on these two motivations the searches, the mistakes, the losses of measure – and their consequences, that entirely fall back on the person himself. “Sin” and “penance”, perhaps “absolution” and “clemency” as the Book states, are the concepts that lead this way of thinking, enlightenment as the philosophy, that calls itself scientific, names it.²⁹

²⁸ In the famous allegory of the second chapter, yes, which is from the apostle Jacob I. 15: Then when desire was conceived, sin gave birth to sin, and sin, when it happens, conceives death.

²⁹ The concept independently from the different ways of stating it is one and the same. We could enumerate the examples following the adaptations of this concept up to Esterházy Péter’s novel with the title *Fuharosok*, up to Steven Spielberg’s film *The Duel* and up to Francis Ford Coppola’s last film.

The example of George Bernard Shaw

Who is Faustus?

The diversion from the devine concept began at the Greeks, in the world of titans, on the mediating level between the devine and the human world, Prometheus, the titan, the mediator is the only one who expiates, he bares the consequences on his own. The man – enjoys the blessings of the recieved gift and then there is no mention of the man in the story of Prometheus. The king of the gods could have punished the man in some form as well, could have taken back the gift from Prometheus etc. The turning point described with the metaphor of the stealing of the fire and offering it as a gift is a change in the great process of human and earthly life – which could have been corrected in some way by Zeus or another creator god. However there is no allusion to any such interference anywhere in the world, in any nation’s ancient mythical traditions. The way back? The possibility does not even occur in the Greek and Roman traditions, in the prechristian period until the turning point registered in the Jewish-christian tradition, until Jesus. Following the christian philosophy, the European self-reflection, we must mention Shaw’s work with the title *Back to Methuselah*. With the fruit from the tree of wisdom the lifespan of man becomes shorter – in the “metabiological” text the way back is represented by man’s will. Following the rebirths of the Faustus concept: it is probably the only literary, artistic experiment to find a way back in the 20th century. The work is the story of the absolutization of man’s will, in fact its parody, because it exaggerates to such an extent that it can only be a parody. The “solution” does not come from heaven, it is not the grace of god, just human striving. The story of Faustus leads from a fictive into an imaginary “solution”. The “metabiological pentateuch” with the title *back to Methuselah* can only be a parody. George Bernard Shaw thinks consequently.

The example of Franz Hodjak Prometheus from Middle-Eastern-Europe

Who is Faustus?

Let’s say in Middle-Eastern-Europe ...? An offspring of Prometheus?

It’s a fact that *this* Prometheus, ours, has little to do with *that* Prometheus, the “real one”. But here in fact *this* is the real one, the other one is just a Greek idea,

let's see, how does this work ... André Gide in his almost-prose,³⁰ *Prometheus Il-lbound*, correlated to the 20th century background comes forward consequently with this concept and carries it through: "But sir, we all have an eagle." However in the relation individual–Titan–world he only grabs a fraction of the changes. The changes of the Prometheus and Faustus concept are more important, because when looking at and analysing the world through the symbol, all relations start and return to it.

The true nature of our Prometheus, the Prometheus of Middle-Eastern-Europe could only be reflected by such a poet ... who could create under the pressure of the most fascist "order". Franz Hodjak was a poet from Kolozsvár (Cluj), and in fact he fulfilled his poetic, existential, human obligation when he wrote his poem.

Prometheus II

now look
the birds die out
in crowds
gather the new thoughts
of prometheus

what comes
if one day
do not maul
do not hurt other eagles

so with eternal fate
does he shape
man to his own image
so he becomes
himself in the end
like he

amongst doubts
he is pressed

³⁰ Due to this "almost" character, it is very difficult to identify the genre of this text.

thrown into the anonimity
of joys
problems
thoughts

and from the ever-gloss
just like consolation
the martyrdom remains
you must never
you mustn't
become a martyr ever³¹

In the case of *this* Prometheus the tragedy is the smothery identity-change that is due to a changed existance in which the Prometheus symbol forms a crossing from an epistemic, cognitive character³² towards a gnostic Prometheus notion. Thus he is forced to withdraw from his original place fixed by the determined characteristics, from the boundary of the situation- and type-motif into the sphere of some situation-motif. He had lost all the characteristics of his rebellious type, that is he is forced to undergo the rules of any given life situation. As a consequence of all these, there are two parallell, but opposite eternities suggested by the theme: the relationship between the titanic martyrdom and being closed into our everyday life is changing. In the works of Aeschylus, Shelley etc. in the relation titanic existance versus human existance, the eternity of the titanic martyrdom presupposes the eternity of the *compulsorily* everyday martyrdom, yet they remain in opposition. Reading Franz Hodjak's poem we realize due to the excellently formed, ironically estranging effect and it becomes clear that one might, very well might be the continuation of the other! From the three levels, spheres of the initial world order or better said world model the devine is not present anymore, it is not even mentioned – yet grave in its absence too –, and we just observe the titanic sphere disappearing. While the other Prometheus faces up to the devine to defend the man even at the expense of his life and immortality, here we see another Prometheus, the consequences of his action: he is eaten up by the small, well-protected world. Expressed or unexpressed, but there is an

³¹ The poem was translated into Hungarian by Józsa István. Korunk, 1994, 11. 3.

³² Hesiodos Theogonia, VI. century B.C., Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound, 470 B.C.

entire history, an entire world order in the tragedy of this other Prometheus, only a poem can become a world model in such few words. There is only one sphere, one and only one – is it clear? – one and only one. Our Prometheus has to come down from above, or he just falls from above; his road from the titanic otherness leads from unselfishness to selfishness, to the martyrdom of a selfish nation. “and from the ever-gloss / just like consolation / the martyrdom remains / you must never / you mustn’t / become a martyr ever.”

From martyrdom to martyrdom. But what a difference!

Is this process irreversible?

What did Faustus understand from this?

The example of Mikszáth Kálmán

Who is Faustus?

The text entitled *A hályogkovács* by Mikszáth Kálmán reformulates the same answer. The work is a frame-story, “Rahmennovelle”, a characteristic genre of German romanticism, and due to the German-Hungarian, Hungarian-German relations, it is not rare in the Hungarian literature either. The frame: the young author writes a letter to the Master. It is possible, that it is real, it happened once, but it is also possible that the Master was thinking once about the genesis of the thoughts and created a fictional frame. It is not important in the end, as Mikszáth Kálmán himself wrote a few thoughts about fiction that are still actual. The image: the story of the “cataract smith”, in the way that consciousness means the end of the miracle. The main character is by no means the cataract smith, but Mikszáth Kálmán himself, as he speaks about his author-self all through the short story. But in fact not even him – but the embodiment of the idea. The contemplation and meditation about the process of creation is written in prose.³³ The main character is in fact the creative spirit and when sketching the hierarchy of its manifestation, we describe character structure, system of motifs etc. The interpretation of the basic idea is more important, however, the work has to be regarded as a compound sentence, an answer given to an eternal question. How should one write a masterpiece? The main clause: I don’t know, says the Master. The main sentence: I don’t even want to know. The clause that explains the cause:

³³ As Novalis, Goethe, Schiller, Balzac, the great minds of the European romanticism and realism recorded this idea.

because the same would happen to me, as ... Following the relationship of frame and image: the frame is important, it does not protect, hold the picture as usually, but the picture exists for the frame. Indian myth, Central-American holy book, Indonesian, Chinese wisdom, African tales – the text of the Hungarian realist writer, Mikszáth Kálmán, is in fact the opposite of what is written in the first book of Genesis. It is a monumental, cosmic idea that all nations and authors have dealt with regardless of race, continent, culture, age, distances in space and time. The short story of a single figure recorded in prose with aristocratic simplicity. The creation of the master. The work is in the same time text and meta-text, the human figures who process the text, “hold” the meta-text, and thus the text is in fact the history of an interpretation. Moreover, the history of *the* interpretation. Wisdom after Moses.

Is it a 19th century work? A realist work? It would be a sign of shallow analyses, methodological unpretentiousness to simply regard it as a representative piece of a certain literary period. The text can be truly understood and analysed within the framework of the Faustus-paradigm, while the work as a metatext, because it is primarily that, the assessment and mapping of the mental space of the Faustus-paradigm. The Master, as all great creators, reaches the final frontiers of human cognition, the furthest point ever reached by human mind. There is no road leading forward in myths or in the ancient knowledge of different nations either.

Mikszáth Kálmán worked out the only lively alternative. His answer is always relevant and valid, no matter where and how.

Partial conclusion

Who is Faustus?

Adam and Eve’s mistake was a momentary, transitory, temporary indecision, Faustus however firmly rejects the Creator, and makes an alliance with the devil. Faustus is the most extreme example of man, who – as we know – after the first human pair was conceived in sin – and perished in sin. As the self-satisfied Ration lives, develops, leads its own road. Tat twam asi. In all centuries of history, no matter where and how.

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