MAN'S QUEST FOR MEANING AND THE FAUSTIAN PROGRESS

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During the antiquity, the myth was the one and same thing rather than being on the horizon of man or a cliff between him and the life. One used to think with myths, or even explain its universe with mythical notions. The hero of antiquity, through the plays, draws his audience into a sacred cycle by representing a totally new merit, emerging from the clash of the two positive merits which one of them destroys the other; and by integrating the audience, he were able to continue his journey without cutting off the dramatical tie between himself and the audience. The wheels of time had turned and the process yield to an adventure that cannot define itself, cannot name its ground or position when we entered the modern era out of the traditional one. Even in this adventure, humankind sought for a meaning to make sense of itself as he reverted to his roots or by sailing in the infinity of knowledge within his endless desire for knowing. Assessing the past with nostalgia, in his yet undefined life that he could not make a sense of, he tried to bridge the gap. He attempted to explain the very meaning of man or the humanity itself by virtue of historical processes that already shaped and created in history. The sole and holistic mythical universe was demolished; leaving the humankind that could not integrate itself, the process of mythicising the newly emerging values. In our contemporary era, creation of a new mythical universe is seen through the attribution of meanings such as 'knowledge as a myth', 'reverting to the roots as a myth' or 'history as a myth'. Goethe's play Faust presenting the coexistence of ancient and new, the clash of old and new merits, traditional vanishing or transforming into the modern, can be regarded as the most tangible example of the man's seek of meaning.

FAUST; THE ABYSS BETWEEN THE PAST AND PRESENT WORLD

> *The figure of Dr. Faust resigned his soul to dark powers for knowledge and power in return, have been kept its place in the modern imagination since the sixteenth century. With its marginality, scepticism and cooperation with underground powers who are the representatives of a daemonic, vulgar, destructive creativity emerging from turning its back to God, it is almost a prophetic narration of the relation of the modern intellectual with the world.*[1](Oğuz, 2012)

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The social prophets (leader of a society or heroes acclaimed by a community, knowledge, science, history, ideology) rising from the amalgam of the passions of intellectuals, progressionists, revolutionaries and the newly arising social identities in the beginning of the nineteenth century, took their parts on the stage of history as new myths leaving their mark on the era.

"As how the ruling classes formed by the emerging and becoming apparent of classes, struggle to seize the power, the nations have been engaged in a similar struggle for the domination of universe. These two identities (classes and nation), either in the sense of their emergence or their meanings cannot be separated from one another.

> *History elucidates the advance of nations with people's struggle and domination; as how Karl Marx explains the same phenomenon with the struggle and domination of classes. Though these two are new players who pull the strings. These newcomers need fresh world views."*[2](Bonnafoy, 2008, 791)

The public and social classes, now the heroes of new kinds of struggle, need exemplary and grand narratives, i.e. new myths, that define and recall their functions to each other. Yet, the age of grand narratives, epics and legends was closed and those new myths that were needed was tried to be established by imitating or facsimiling them (but the creation would always remain as fiction) observing the history of humankind. Fictive ideologies were about to be the grand narratives of men. Those ideologies and world views became a part of our daily life as the new myths defining the lives and universe of men. Newfangled myth of ideology requires mythic hero that will show up among the contemporary intellectuals or national heroes. How the Prometheus and Spartacus were heroes of the past, national heroes/heroins of today like Jean D'Arc or Marat are the mythic symbols of new epoch. Thus, they took step on the stage of history as mythical heroes coherent to the ethos of time with traditional meanings.

"Being the modern intellectual archetype of Germany whose nation-state building process have been undertaken lately, Faust profoundly pictures the function of the intellectual in a society heading towards enlightened capitalistic mindset from a paternalistic one on the exact instant of rupture. Faust is not only an important narrative of late German enlightenment, but also the narration of the adventure of a society (in macro scale, all European society pursuing the same path) that turns its back to the ancient world and had to become destructive in order to 'progress, to seize power and to be modern'. Faust, somehow, succeeded to catch the belated modernisation train. His

sense of belatedness and his hurry to catch up makes him even more destructive; and finally he gets what he wants. He was not alone during this journey, stands history all with its mythologies, traditions and concepts behind his choice, his 'success' he achieved or will achieve. Faust is the sum of this grand, long journey. He is a project maker who designs the steps offering the world to humanity. All belongs to past should be overthrown and a new world should be built for upcoming generations. This modernist project that legitimise all the means for its goal transforms the world into a place where the reason was rendered a mere instrument, the tradition was mythicised and nullified, everything was considered as a crutch for a future design."[3] (Oğuz, ibid.)

The verification of modern reasoning that toppled down the gods and grand narratives, and the rise of rationalism in every dimension of daily life undergo a change in the history, time, perception and the interpretation of myth. The traditional myth of polytheistic religions, the 'sacred saga' that occurs in an ancient time and predicates human progress along with the protection of men and universe is over. Yet this end redefines with historical myth. Therefore, the description of the relation between myth and time, its artistic narration was transformed. Re-narrated historical time has some similarities with the sacred time it imitates. But the narrative of time vacillating between before and after also contains within itself the sacred time. On the other hand 'the myth of modern ideologies' have become almost tangible. A history of myth, in which realty, truth, men, universe and life was not anymore verified by gods, was formed. Notions superseded the gods and grand narratives. In every circumstance the myth continue to be considered as a peculiar arrangement of time. "One of the most important properties of mythos is its relation with remembering and recalling. In the traditional societies, the remembrance of mythical phenomena is a matter of question. One has the impression that life cannot be renewed but can be recreated by reverting to the roots in contrast with the archaic societies. Here, the idea of remembrance is crucial; because in the current situation even the structure of traditional society is reordered, the principle of remembrance is still valid for both types of society. Everything is subjected to that principle for what happened in modern world and/or historical time. However, both types of remembrance 'throw man out of his historical moment'. The consequence and the effect of being thrown out of time would be unalike due to the deep qualitative differences between the means – mythos on the one hand, history and its mediums on the other."[4] (Etöz, 2011, 157-176) The life regulating informations are now shaped around arguments, not the gods. In every case, myth would be evaluated as the peculiar regulation, interpretation and remembrance of time. In the Faust [5](Goethe, 2000) version of Goethe, the subject and the object of the above-mentioned transformation, progress is not only the protagonist of the plot but also whole world in presence of him. What Faust reminds us is the precipice between past and present world.

"At first sight Goethe does indeed seem to submit to such supremacy. Faust is a kind of Europe in verse, full of ruined castles and pointless conflicts, and literally invaded by the past: characters, places, metres, stories, allegories, and phantasms… The present invaded by the past. Therefore, Faust is an epoch-making work because it lightens antiquity, so neutralises what might threaten the spiritual wellbeing of the modern world. In the Classical Walpurgis Night, all the forms of ancient history and myth are released from their traditional positions and transformed in their very essence. It is the de-functionalisation of myth […] the emancipation of the past from the petters of necessity. If the past must be allowed a form of existence in the present […] then it must abandon the mode of Reality for that of Possibility. The Past as archive of the ages is a storehouse of poetical and historical memories to be manipulated as you please."[6] (Moretti, 2005, 44-45) This process of reasoning and historical progress affected the writing adventure of Faust. *"Goethe's Faust expresses and dramatises the process by which, at the end of eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth, a distinctive modern world-systems comes into being.*[7] (Berman, 2000, 64.)

Possibly the most comprehensive of all grand narratives, the history of Homer, "is the precursor of the first communal world that Western civilisation had created for itself which had an ideological aspect too. It became an example of prudent guidance to move forward for a more advanced society as well as the faith for improvement of the present world by the hands of man itself. This faith have lasted underhandedly till the resurrection of enlightenment... Thanks to the developments from the age of Homer to industrialisation, there had been a tremendous change in sense of humankind having a collective world, yet a totally different change deviating from the Homer's ideals of being able to achieve the individual man instead of the one essentially living within tradition as a whole, with capitalistic domination over labour also took place. Modern man becoming conscious of his social existence, to find his individuality in his solitude in the middle of masses, was almost unsolved question."[8] (Oskay, 1982, 4-6.) From the moment which what we call modern culture emerged, neither the meaning of discoveries in Homer's world nor the traditional human type in his world will no longer exist. The human figure of modern culture is Faust. Faust, in modern sense, is the most subtle exemplary model of a "grand narrative" describing the aforesaid tradition and epoch. The reason behind why it is called the work of all times and its writing process took so long is hidden here. *Goethe's Faust is close to sagas of Homer in the richness and the depth of its historical perspective, in its moral imagination, its political intelligence, its psychological sensitivity and insight.*[9](Berman, ibid, 63) Therefore, Faust clearly shows us the critical points by which myth passed through as it reflects the tradition and epoch.

The meaning changes of myth can be understood more lucidly when great social events or major discoveries happen. When humanity makes a huge jump from where it positions itself (we could call it progress, development, enlightenment or else), it also changes the political and social epoch it lives in. *It is obvious that the only way for modern man to transform himself, Faust and we will find out, is by radically transforming the whole physical and social and moral world he lives in. Goethe's hero is heroic by virtue of liberating tremendous repressed human energies, not only in himself but in all those he touches, and eventually in the whole society around him. But the great developments he initiates –intellectual, moral, economic, social– turn out to exact great human costs.*[10](Berman: ibid, 66.) It is not possible one could remain 'fair and naive', could be 'good', 'honest', 'virtuous' and 'trustworthy'. Here lies the meaning of the relationship that Faust engaged with the Devil. One faces progress, being honest, good; at the same time faces the exact opposite.

When we were aware of the fact that reason superseding the mythical thought, what science leaving behind or even destroying while constantly moving forward; at last we could understand the costs that we had paid for it. This means, more perhaps in our epoch, abstaining from an overarching world view; because as the explanatory systems –mythical, magical or religious– embrace all, each fields is valid for the other and they supply overarching, complementary answers, *science moves along on a totally different path (...) Vague questions like "how is the universe created" yield ground to specific and fragmented ones like "how does a stone fall?" or "how does water flows in a pipe*?"[11] (Moretti: ibid, 42.)

Each advance goes hand in hand with destruction and we will try to run after the meaning faster as our overarching view shatters. And this will take place on the stage of history as the huge forfeit, which is obviously high for having scientific view, of 'progress' and 'development'.

DESTRUCTİVENESS OF FAUSTİAN PROGRESS

Faust is a work of art whose argument and sensation can be easily noticed by twentieth century readers. Yet, its material and social conditions commence in an epoch peculiar to Middle Ages, end in the middle of material and spiritual upheavals. Can a work succeed to cram whole history, what happened, human, act, idea into a mere text. Faust is the example of it. It deserves regarded as a grand and sacred text in the manner of "a modern epic", "a modern myth". Great artists prefer to speak in a manner knitted with allegories, symbols and dreams and prefer to build structure with such a language because in their works sacred and non-sacred, sacrosanct and obscene is

interbedded. Romanticism speaks the language of poet, not of the reason."[12] (Dellaloğlu: 2002, 16.) While the text of Faust shows us all eloquence it has, it also deliberately displays "the structures of truth and various types of existence on the world".

> *Referring to myth has a special place among the romantic strategies to re-fascinate the world. On magical crossroads of various traditions myth offers us endless symbols, allegories, fantasies and a chamber of daemons, gods and snakes. There are different ways to benefit from this treasure: making poetic or literal citations, scrutinising mythology under a 'scientific' light, and creating a fresh myth. In each of these cases, the loss of religious essence renders the myth an earthly medium of re-fascinating the world, or indeed a non-religious way of reaching the sacred.*[13](Löwy: 2011)

It is obvious that archaic myths are plain, have a facilitating effect on comprehending the reality, and on the other hand late myths cause the forms and connections to be more complicated. Even though the nineteenth century writers intensionally changed an ancient myth in order to give it a new meaning or created an original one by partially or completely using an existing one, it is most suitable to classify them in the second category.[14] (Bonnefoy: ibid, 978.)

Since the mythical universe of archaic world is not the one and same thing considering the universe of nineteenth century. A lot like 'real', 'truth', 'perception', 'meaning', 'existence', 'idea' have changed. In précis man has changed. Therefore, myths have recently been created and those that will be, only appear in imagination or creation as a mere 'voice' or 'image' of the former. *"Faust is a work in which the hero ranges freely across the 'grand world'. Loudly proclaiming his desire to be at one with all humanity*".[15] (Moretti: ibid, 14.)

Goethe widened and enriched the Faust and Mephistopheles figures which he borrowed from history and created the most prominent Faust literature of all times. So, who is Faust? Initially we know him in the words of Mephistopheles: "*Forsooth! He serves you after strange devices: No earthly meat or drink the fool suffices: His spirit's ferment far aspireth; Half conscious of his frenzied, crazed unrest, The fairest stars from Heaven he requireth, From Earth the highest raptures and the best, And all the Near and Far that he desireth Fails to subdue the tumult of his*

breast."[16] (Goethe: ibid, 18.) In the next episode Faust speaks in an affirmative manner: (A lofty-arched, narrow, Gothic chamber. Faust, in a chair at his desk, restless): *I've studied now Philosophy And Jurisprudence, Medicine,— And even, alas! Theology,— From end to end, with labor keen; And here, poor fool! with all my lore I stand, no wiser than before*."[17] (Goethe: ibid, 21.)

All these restless intellectual efforts do not yield results. He has a malcontent soul. He even devote himself to sorcery, seeks entering the realm of spirits. Hearing this malcontent soul, Mephistopheles, "in the age of modernisation is the image of malignancy which was appeared as 'Evil' in the antiquity, as 'Devil' in the early period of Christianity, as 'Lucifer' in the middle ages. And he asks permission from the Lord to be seen to Faust. Mephistopheles' plan is to deceive Faust by filling him up with lust and to win the bet against the Lord. Hence, he sent his spirits to provoke lustful dreams and images on Faust.

> *Mephistopheles makes Faust believe that the only way man to change himself is to transform the social and moral world fundamentally in which he lives. So Faust appears before our eyes as a conscious 'expansionist' who does not hesitate tearing the world apart without even asking the possible outcomes of this infinite development on the nature and on human at the expense of a boundless expansion."*[18](Kahramanoğlu: 2012,)

Faust draws his path in the sense of being 'expansionist', 'progressionist' and 'developmentalist' and sets foot on a grand journey. On his way, he will augment itself, but while he was magnifying he will drag everyone around him into a catastrophe. Walking or even running in a godless world in accompany with Mephistopheles, so-called references of evil, Faust will be the true responsible of 'evil' as he brings more and more destruction to himself, to everyone else, to the world on his every step he takes. [19] (Karacabey: 2011)Hence Faust transits to the sphere of action from the sphere of idea.

> *Faust is a cult text. It reflects many of Goethe's thoughts on religion, romanticism, the nature of progress, man quest for "eternal harmony" etc, some explicit, some implicit. Inarguably the central notion accompanying the receptions of Faust are the passion of man which is reborn from the ashes of the middle ages for surpassing*

> *himself and his fearless fling into the counterpart of divine light to enter the dark passages of knowledge. Here lies a nonrigid, enlighten version of the Christian God that understands Faust and his endeavour, compassionately embraces him. Specifically in Faust II, things get complicated and the plot that once could be understood more easily as it focuses on the ruin of Gretchen, leads into a strange detour and Faust, in a sense, makes a transition from the micro universe to the macro one of his searches. In the first part the goal moves along the individual, sensuous line of passions, in the second part it gravitates to plural line of seizing the power and "a succession of wreck" becomes Faust's story*.[20] (Karacabey: ibid)

Goethe faces a new world order while creating his work. Neither the defined world of Ancient Greek, nor the world of supermen, noble emotions, and extraordinary events exists anymore. The protagonist of the ancient world behaving with ethical and ideological concerns, showing the qualities of a character now gives its place to times where mediocre men appear, the noble and well-bred are impossible to be found. The mediocre man of the nineteenth century is discovered. *"To Faust, who would like to 'embrace/The experience allotted to the whole/Race of mankind', Mephistopheles replies, with a sneer, that between the individual and the species there now exists an unbridgeable gulf. Better drop it, dear 'Mr Microcosm': 'such totality/Is only for a god'. A god, a superman, a being above ordinary mankind?"*[21](Moretti: ibid, 78.) How would man integrate himself in an epoch where the wholeness is disappeared? Being one and a whole, not to fall into pieces, sticking to a value and fighting for it; the nineteenth century man was individualised, became flat and lost its sense of integrity. The universe containing the sense of integrity was cut off from the whole, from its universe and nature during the journey of mythical hero had made to reach the self-conscious. The hero of the antiquity used to re-find its cycle through being purified or paying the price as a consequence of its actions and used to move on. Oedipus Rex plunges gold pins into his eyes when he find out the man he killed was his father and the woman he married to is his mother; and by offering this price to the gods he re-establishes his integrity. In the case of Shakespeare's King Lear, turning his back on Cordelia by judging her words literally, he would have lost his mind to be able understand her, on the very moment of madness he would have seen the truth. But in the world of mediocre man, of ordinary one, this forfeit cannot be paid with a superhuman action which is only belong to supermen or gods. Man of the epoch lives in an irreversible world at this point and will decide the quality of his action accordingly. The protagonist completed the cycle in his journey and left his place

to the issues of the time and mediocre man, anyhow Goethe walks Faust in almost every epoch. Our hero experiences an infinite, grand journey. Faust is the man of all ages, has all 'blue ribands'. "A distinguished and respectable scholar, jurist, theologist, scientist, professor and an university administrator." Nonetheless he is constantly in a state of complaining, all that he possesses means nothing. They are not enough for him and he keeps saying that he has never lived.[22] (Berman: ibid, 66-67.) Neither being engaged with a socially meaningful work, or inventing something is satisfactory. He wants anything and everything. Being drowned in the immense sea of knowledge yet not knowing what to do with it. He is a starveling of knowledge. He has a culture accumulated by being detached from the integrity of life. Once again, Faust "*craves a connection with the world that will be more vital, at once more erotic and more active".*[23](Berman: ibid, 67.) He is in search of surpassing his inertia. His first move is the desire to be extinguished by poisoning himself. But he could not succeed. On the very moment he denies his past, confronting the traditional, the sound of bell and chorus calls him out, to street, to life, to the traditional. Not being fond of the moment he lives, returns to a world that belongs to the past, goes out, but he sees that he does not belong there.

> "*Two souls, alas! reside within my breast, And each withdraws from, and repels, its brother.*"[24] (Goethe: ibid, 48.)

This emotion tags along Faust; he, who starts the day with fresh hope finds himself in the middle of despair. He could not survive in a world he renounced, with an aimless mind. He has to unite his past and present life, has to gather up opposite poles.

> *He both carries the contrast of soul and flesh, superior and inferior, good and evil, black and white in his existence and he makes them dominant over the text in which he is the protagonist of, like the conflict between the Devil and the Lord.*[25] (Güçbilmez: 2006, 60.)

Mephistopheles appears out of nowhere on the Easter when Faust feels himself most devoted to the Lord. Striving to gather all the forces of creativity and discover, Faust summons up all his destructive force now with his 'devil'.

> *He won't be able to create anything unless he's prepared to let everything go, to accept the fact that all that has been created up to now –and, indeed, all that he may create in the future– must be*

> *destroyed to pave the way for more creation. This is the dialectic that modern men must embrace in order to move and live.*[26] (Berman: ibid, 75.)

Faust, who wants to embrace his abandoned past, leaves behind the traditional and a lost culture lies in the past with his first action. Even though the childhood days grabbing him in the deepest hour of despair, revives Faust with the sounds of bell; they cause him to encounter a world that he will destroy completely. In this little world, first person he meets and ruins, later his first love and in the end the first victim his actions would be Gretchen. She is a figure that belongs to a world he already left behind and lost, or perhaps an image of all he lost in his former world. Faust fascinates Gretchen so that she could not return to her outmoded, small, closed world. He encourages her to challenge herself, the world she lives. The love of Faust takes away her innocence and more importantly, her virginity.

> *As her new feelings clash with her old social role, she comes to believe that her own needs are legitimate and important, and to feel a new kind of self-respect. Love makes her grow up*.[27] (Berman: ibid, 83.)

Still, this expansion or development is the death of her. The Christian call, interpreted by Faust as the symbol of cheer and life, have had a lethal meaning and brought her wrath and torture. *The bells that saved her lover's life now tool her doom*.[28] (Berman: ibid, 86.) Faust, a progressionist in the name of the eradication of the past, knows that creation must go hand in hand with destruction. The merits of the new world clashes with of the ancient one and the closed, integrated world of the past is shattered one more with the death of Gretchen. The death scene of Gretchen makes an acrimonious judgement on Gothic world in general –on which a century later conservative thinkers pour it, especially in Germany– with its dark and gloomy intenseness. Once, perhaps, the Gothic vision might have offered mankind an ideal of life and activity, of heroic striving toward heaven; now, however, as Goethe presents it at the end of eighteenth century, all it has to offer is dead weight pressing down on tis subjects, crushing their bodies and strangling their souls. [29] (Berman: ibid, 86)

The text of Faust, wandering through ages, unveils a journey of humanity, as well as a history of progress and ravages. The grand and closed world of the past is been destroyed through destruction and transformation. "Each new voice is a new presence: autonomous, self-aware, clearly

delineated. Voices of today, and of antiquity; real and imaginary; sacred and profane; alone, in groups, in chorus".[30] (Moretti: ibid, 66.) Everything is an echo of change, renewal and destruction.

> Mephistopheles: *Gossip! the times thou badly comprehendest: What's done has happed—what haps, is done! 'Twere better if for novelties thou sendest: By such alone can we be won.*[31] (Goethe: ibid, 173.)

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CONTENTS

MAN'S QUEST FOR MEANING AND THE FAUSTIAN PROGRESS 969
Tülay Yildiz AKGÜL

A CRITICAL TEXTUAL ANALYSIS ON DESCARTES' CONCEPTION OF FACULTIES 978
Ümit ÖZTÜRK Ayşe Gül ÇIVGIN

V. PHYSİCAL EDUCATİON AND SPORTS

TALENT SELECTION IN SPORTS..... 991
Ramiz ARABACI

SPORT MANAGEMENT..... 1009
Cemali ÇANKAYA

THE PHYSICAL– PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TAEKWONDO PLAYER'S 1028
Fatih ÇATIKKAŞ Cem KURT

THE COMPARISON OF THE SELF-CONFIDENCE LEVEL OF THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO DO SPORTS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT 1034
İlhan ADİLOĞULLARI Hakkı ULUCAN Erkan BİNGÖL

VI. MUSIC AND MUSIC EDUCATION

THE APPROACHES IN TRAINING TEACHERS OF MUSIC IN TURKEY FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE REPUBLIC TILL TODAY 1045
Ayhan HELVACI

AN OVERVIEW OF MUSIC THERAPY 1049
Bilgehan EREN

MUSIC CURRICULUM AT IPTIDAI SCHOOLS (PRIMARY SCHOOLS) IN THE OTTOMAN PERIOD IN 1330 (1911/1912) 1059
Ömer DÜZBAKAR R. Erol DEMIRBATIR

A PSYCHOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE MEASURING OF AUDITORY SKILLS IN MUSICAL SKILLS EXAMINATION 1072
Ahmet Serkan ECE Sevilay KILMEN Özlem ÖMÜR

ABOUT THE AUTHORS 1091