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The Iconographical and Theological Context of the Problem of Freedom and Determinism in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Szabadság és determinizmus Shakespeare *Macbeth* című drámájában:
ikonográfiai és teológiai kontextus

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In my dissertation I do not wish to point out that Shakespeare was a theologian or that his intention was to preach any religious doctrine through his dramatic art. Yet, there are several instances in which it can be clearly shown that Shakespeare drew on the Scripture and that his dramas reflect the general Christian doctrines of his age. In my dissertation I do not wish to point out either that Shakespearean drama was utilized as a medium for expressing Christian doctrine or theological theses. I share the view of G. Wilson Knight, however, that Christ's sacrifice can be seen as central or focal point of Shakespearean tragedy.¹ In this present dissertation I would like to point out the references of Shakespearean drama to widely discussed religious topics. The connection of Shakespearean text to religious doctrines are apparent, moreover, as I will point out, too striking as not to take them into account. The question of free will and supernatural influence on human fate has always stirred up human anxiety, and Shakespeare, with his philosophical sensitivity, referred to these anxieties.

Battenhouse points out that the dramatic form creates the logic of a parable similar to those of Jesus', who challenged his audience to distinguish good and evil.² Christian allusions, however, might be misleading, and the "truth of the drama can be overlooked by readers who look to Shakespeare simply as a storehouse of moral sentiments".³ Concerning the justification of Christian interpretation of Shakespearean drama today, Battenhouse claims that the Christian dimension to those resisting Christian mystery is similar to the Paulian scandal of the cross.⁴ In the followings, I will attempt to interpret Shakespeare's Christian allusions as "more than decorative"⁵ and I will try to highlight the referred religious dimension, to be more specific, the awareness of a supernatural power operating in the universe in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

We do not, however, know much of Shakespeare's Christianity, but that he was baptised and was well-read in the Bible presumably via listening to readings and

¹ Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*. (New York: Oxford University Press) 7.

² Roy Battenhouse, "Preface," in *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension*, ed. Roy Battenhouse (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xi.

³ *Ibid.*, 3

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

homilies weekly. Shakespeare was well versed in the English translation of the Scriptures, the book that was read by common people.⁶

As for the supposition that Shakespeare recited the passages read aloud in church weekly, Steven Marx notes that the passages cited in his plays reflect the widely distributed 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible, proving that Shakespeare read and studied the Bible in private as well. Indeed, when Queen Elizabeth reinforced the Protestant faith, she announced Bible reading as a religious and political duty.⁷ There are however, remarkable connections between the King James translation and the Folio, published more than a decade later, such as the dedicatory prefaces. The Bible's dedication raises James to the divine sphere as a "*sanctified Person, who, under God, is the immediate Author of ... true happiness*", in the same manner as the Folio's dedication depicts the monarch.⁸ Shakespeare's works would not be construable without the Bible and Christian doctrine. The ever upcoming question, viz., Shakespeare's view on the Bible, and whether he supported, challenged or satirized Christian doctrine, Marx points out that answers must remain tentative, citing "Shakespeare took his politics, like his religion and his philosophy, to his grave with him."⁹

According to Bryant, the definitely religious and Christian Elizabethan audience might even not have been aware of Biblical allusions, probably because these were commonplace.¹⁰ It takes courage to "remain in contact with Shakespeare's text", through which the critic can actually find out that allusions, besides pointing to theology, philosophy or politics outside of the play, actually extend the depth of the play.¹¹

To mention a historical religious interpretation, the prophetic powers of the witches, for instance, can be identified with Protestant stereotypes of Catholicism. The Tudor Church of England officially stated that miracles took place only in the apostolic times.¹² However, English Protestants still believed in the occurrence of divine prophecies in dreams. As the prophecies in *Macbeth*, such as Macduff's birth of a woman or the moving of Birnam wood turn out to be equivocal, they reflect the contemporary opinion of prophecies, which might be associated with Catholic

⁶ Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹ Alvin Kernan quoted by Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, 6-7.

¹⁰ J. A. Bryant, Jr. "Typology in Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension*, ed. Roy Battenhouse (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹² Maurice Hunt, "Reformation/counter-reformation Macbeth" *English Studies*, Vol. 86 Issue, 5 (Oct 2005) 385.

misleading.¹³ As the Marlowian concept of the scourge of God accomplishing the divine punitive will can be applied to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the concept of the evil man subject to God's Providence can also be applied to *Macbeth*. His figure can be interpreted as God's agent showing the fate of the violent and morally corrupt humans. The character can also show that God allows evil in the world in order to carry out God's greater providential concept.¹⁴ In this case, the little Macduff and his mother were providential sacrifices and were killed in order to foster the operation of the scourge, who eventually works in the direction to place a beloved, providential king on the throne.¹⁵ The character of the scourge of God in early English drama usually originated in Protestant and Calvinist thought. However, Hunt points out that these associations would reduce the importance its place in a Judeo-Christian Providence: the "divine scourge formula ... operates as a deep religious structure of *Macbeth*, determining the play's metaphysical dynamics more profoundly than the Protestant, anti-Catholic, and Catholic allusions and motifs".¹⁶

Even if we cannot clearly claim that Shakespeare was a practicing religious person, which should not be of concern now, it can be shown that there was God, a personal creator in the centre of his world-view, as well as the personal creator's providence and care for humans, that is, created beings with a personal soul and will;

"There's a special
providence in the fall of a sparrow" (*Hamlet* V.ii.205-206)

Sin and morals were viewed in a divine dimension: with consequences and a possibility for reconciliation. The Bible and Christian doctrines, such as justice, mercy, providence, sin, redemption indeed, are the essence of what we call Shakespearean universe today.

The intentions of including Biblical references to the plays are yet unknown, but allow the critic to claim that Shakespeare punned on the common ground, proverbial stories and expressions that were organic parts of the culture. Marx points out that views of both the orthodox and secular critics allow for a hypothesis that Shakespeare read the Bible with interpretive responses, that is, Shakespeare imitated scriptural models. The biblical narrative of Jesus' stay with the disciples in Emmaus, for instance, has a dense

¹³ *Ibid.*, 387.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 395.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 396.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 397.

dramatic texture, which Shakespeare surely appreciated.¹⁷ As for representations of God on stage, Shakespeare chose several ways to refer to the divine. The euphemism “Heaven” was frequently heard from main Shakespearean characters, but pagan gods, such as Juno, Hymen and Apollo appeared as ‘*dei ex machinis*’ in the comedies. It can further be pointed out that the Biblical God is represented by Shakespeare disguised as a man or a woman, like eg. Prospero has godlike attributes, such as creator and destroyer.¹⁸

To Marx’s argument I would add that Shakespeare represented God in the manner of the Jahwist narrative: God is anthropomorphic and thus can be related to by finite physical beings. Prospero, the self-revealing creator overhears the “first couple’s” conversation in the “Garden of Eden”; the Duke of Measure for Measure dresses in disguise and sets out tests, which Jacob was to face; King Lear shares the destiny of Job and venerates the will of the creator. God steps onto the stage in “disguise”, viz. theatrical costume, in the same manner as the Logos put on the costume of the carpenter of Nazareth.¹⁹ Like the Jahwist narrative, the playhouse brings the audience closer to the mystery of the creator and the creature.

Shakespearean drama places a personal creator with its providence in the centre. This God takes care of his creatures, who have a personal soul and an individual will. They step on the stage within the supernatural dimension of sin and morality, where consequences and a possibility for retribution exist. The Shakespearean universe is built upon the Biblical Christian doctrine of justice, grace, providence and forgiveness.

The Biblical pedagogy works in the same manner as the “chess player” acts like God.²⁰ It takes combination of concealment and revelation to teach the truth to humans, as direct instruction fails. Adam and Eve are overheard in the garden of Eden and are interrogated, Abraham, Jacob and Job are tested with tricks. Shakespeare’s theological metaphors draw on the theatre’s hierarchical order. The relationship of the human and the divine is represented by the relationship between the author and character, in many cases involving concealment and revelation.

Playwrights, indeed, have a godlike control on actors, actions, as well as on the audience. Shakespeare himself might have taken his own playwriting as godlike,

¹⁷ Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p11

directing characters according to his own will.²¹ “*Totus mundus agit histrionum*” – the whole world is a playhouse, the proverb inscribed on the entrance of the Globe Theatre was proverbially paraphrased as

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players” (*As You Like It*, II.vii.142-143)

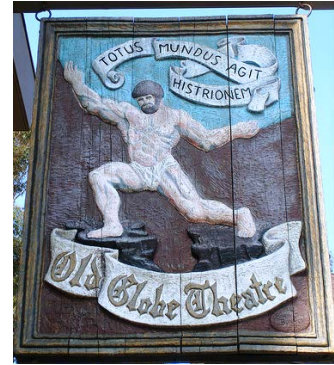


Figure 1.
“*Totus mundus agit histrionem*”

In this manner, the fall of man appeared in *Henry V*, the flood is mentioned in *As You Like It*, the ten commandments appear in *Measure for Measure*, Herod’s slaughter of infants in *Henry*, the prodigal son’s welcoming in the *Comedy of Errors*, Pilate’s handwashing in *Richard III*.

There was certainly a firm world-view shared by all: that there is a personal supernatural power that is capable of influencing the course of the universe, which humans are a part of. Moseley points out that *Macbeth* is a “fundamentally religious play” as it presupposes a universe like that of Christian philosophers. In this universe, created beings have their own purpose, whereas objecting to it is sin.²² The only question was, in what degree humans are influenced in this created universe. To this simple question many solutions arose, ranging from the operation of the proverbial fortune, to the church doctrines of free will or predestination. My dissertation focuses on Shakespeare’s approaches to the abovementioned concepts in *Macbeth*.

Theatre can be viewed as the emblem of the world where the tragic hero sits on the wheel of fortune, which viciously turns up and down and casts out the protagonist when he cannot hold on to it anymore, which can be observed in e.g. *King Lear*. Likewise, it can be seen as a Christian drama where Providence works against evil and maintains humanity, which, however, fails with the tragic death of Cordelia and Lear.²³ Accordingly, *Macbeth* can be interpreted as the tragedy of free will and its fight with evil in the world. Fortune, as I will point out, is an influencing power playing tricks on man, who is already puzzled by his inclinations that makes his will seem enslaved to evil.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p12

²² Charles Moseley “Macbeth’s free fall” in *Critical Essays on Macbeth*, ed. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (Harlow: Longman, 1988) 24.

²³ *Ibid.*, 64.

My thesis also will focus on visual devices, allusions and references to such concepts in *Macbeth*. Concerning the interpretation of visual and dramatic art parallel, Szőnyi points out that there is a common literary background which allows the critic to come up with parallels and analogies. He quotes Chew:

"an awareness of the parallel is not necessary for an understanding of the dramatic situation but adds to it a richness and subtlety of allusion. ... I believe that the dramatist, while not puzzling his audience with misplaced erudition, sometimes provided for the happy few an enriching suggestiveness not discernible upon the surface of the dialogue, action and characterization."²⁴

I would not consider today's critics members of the "happy few", but in the followings I would venture to interpret some "messages" of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, may they be puns on Biblical text, considerations of Christian dogma, references to Christianised pagan symbols or to visual art. Considering dramatic references to Fortune and her inconsistent operation, Shakespeare follows the classical tradition, with the presupposition of her existence and unavoidable operation. The dramatic references are not in accordance with theological teaching, however, which preached the operation of divine Providence in the universe. Yet, 16th century literature employed opposing ideas on the grounds of scientific literary references, or even as ornament. The ideology was sometimes inferior to the literary, e.g. Shakespeare refers to Providence in the traditional theological sense parallel with Fortune, expressed in a poetic form.²⁵

Although an emblem cannot be applied to a dramatic work as a whole, it cannot be stated either that the two do not stand in correlation whatsoever. Mehl points out that the relationship between the drama and the emblem is not merely a result of external influences or mimesis but it is the nature of Renaissance drama.²⁶ In the following chapter, I will highlight the main focal points of the Christian interpretation of Shakespearean drama, i.e., the theological interpretation of free will and determinism relevant to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

²⁴ György E. Szőnyi "The 'Emblematic' as a Way of Thinking and Seeing in Renaissance Culture", *E-Colloquia* 1 (2003) <http://ecolloquia.btk.ppke.hu/issues/200301/> Accessed

²⁵ György E. Szőnyi "Vizuális elemek Shakespeare művészetében" in *A Reneszánsz szimbolizmus* ed. Tibor Fabiny et al. (Szeged: JATEPress, 1998) 74-75.

²⁶ Dieter Mehl "Emblémák az angol reneszánsz drámában" in *A Reneszánsz szimbolizmus* ed. Tibor Fabiny et al. (Szeged: JATEPress, 1998) 133.

Chapter 2

Religious concepts in Shakespearean tragedy

2.1 Biblical reading of Shakespeare's work

From the hypothesis that Shakespeare interpreted the Bible freely and that his works were influenced by it, follows that the allusions of the dramas require a thorough knowledge of the Scripture. According to Battenhouse, Shakespearean tragedy uses Biblical language or refers to Biblical paradigm many times even if the dramatic setting is pagan.²⁷ Shakespeare's works, nevertheless, are fully understandable without a familiarity of the Bible. A study excluding Biblical reading would thereby, however, exclude a reading highlighting the genius and originality of the playwright, who invites us for a hermeneutical conversation between the Bible, the drama, the playwright and the critic.

The allusions, as suggested by Steven Marx²⁸, create a 'strong reading', defined by Bloom as a deliberate clearing of imaginative space of for a creative and powerful misreading of a precursor text. The emphasis, therefore, is not on whether there is a misreading, but rather on how creatively and imaginatively it is done. A "correct reading" might exist on an uninteresting level, claims Bloom. Bloom's invitation for such an approach is: "let us give up the failed enterprise of seeking to 'understand' any single poem as an entity in itself. Let us pursue instead the quest of learning to read any poem as it's poet's deliberate misinterpretation, as a poet, of a precursor poem or of poetry in general".²⁹

The alluded text and the new system of meaning are thus created by references, citations, paraphrasing or echoing. These may be found in a reference to a phrase or reference to the precursor work's overall theme and might correspond to or might

²⁷ Roy Battenhouse, "Shakespeare's Augustinian Artistry," In *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension*, ed. Roy Battenhouse (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 44.

²⁸ Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, 13.

²⁹ Harold Bloom, "Anxiety of Influence", quoted by Robert M. Fowler, *Let the reader understand: reader-response criticism and the Gospel of Mark*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 237.

subvert the original text.³⁰ The allusions are coded hidden meanings requiring the reader to be familiar with the precursor text.³¹

Shakespearean drama featuring allusions to Biblical phrases and religious doctrines can thus be viewed as Midrashic interpretations.³² Midrash is a creative exegesis of the Jewish tradition, explaining the Scriptures, rephrasing and elaborating doctrinal teachings. Midrashic writings contain the explanations of rabbis, who interpret and reinterpret the books of the Torah in order to make them more comprehensible. Midrash aims to bring the Scriptures closer to the readers in order to “be understood in relation to the growing complexity of the times”.³³ Midrashic works traditionally are written according to the consecutive passages of the Bible, eg. the books of the Pentateuch or the Five Scrolls, however, there are Midrashim on individual Biblical books, as well.³⁴

The word ‘*midrash*’ is derived from the Hebrew word ‘*darash*’ meaning “to search” or “to investigate”. Midrashic explanations seek to explain the Bible, that is, to illuminate the ‘spirit’ of the Scriptures via homiletic explanations and to point out interpretations which are not immediately obvious. Midrashic works are written in a poetic language and thus are often referred to as literary works.³⁵

The popular literary tradition covers not only the Pentateuch and individual Biblical books, but several topics, e.g. the wanderings of the Israelites, but also on subjects, such as ethical teachings, social behaviour and history.³⁶ The popularity of Midrashic literature continued during centuries of the Renaissance, influencing other literary works. Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, for instance, contains Midrashic allusions and interpretations, as well as elements of Midrashic works.³⁷ Although Shakespeare did not create literary works in the manner of Milton’s, the wordplays and interpretations of phrases and doctrine echo many passages of the Bible, as well as the teachings of the Church Fathers and humanist thinkers.

The tragedy of *King Lear*, for instance, elaborates a creative exegesis, that is, a Midrash of the *Book of Job*. The Biblical book is explained and commented in *King*

³⁰ Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, 13.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³² *Ibid.*, 17

³³ Menahem Mansoor, *Jewish history and thought: an introduction* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1991) 152.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 154

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 152

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Lear with the search for reconciliation with God and “a way of imparting contemporary relevance to biblical events”³⁸ Shakespeare’s commenting and elaborating Biblical stories playfully is a kind of creative exegesis, a Midrash, marrying wordplay and interpretation with knowledge.³⁹ Steven Marx points out that by interpreting Shakespeare we find multiple interpretations of the Midrashic manner instead of a single truth encoded in the text.⁴⁰

Another Midrashic interpretation is a play constructed like a Medieval allegory, *Measure for Measure*. At first, the deliberate choice of the title suggests a representation of a Biblical parable. The play’s plot, moreover, draws heavily on the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and of the vineyard (Matt 21:33-43)⁴¹ A parallel between the God of the New Testament and the character of Vincentio can be drawn, however, it is disputable whether Shakespeare intended him to represent divine power on stage, its evil manipulator or a fallible human being playing God.⁴² Likewise, there are several readings of the Bible providing a similarly wide range of interpretations. True for the interpretation of *Macbeth* as well, “given the shifting religious, political and theatrical grounds ... the only lines one can draw with full confidence are (Biblical) parallels”⁴³

2.2 Midrashic *Macbeth*?

I have demonstrated above how Shakespeare’s works can be viewed as interpretations of Biblical teachings in a Midrashic manner. It would be far-fetched, however, to claim that Lady Macbeth is the Jezebel of the Shakespeare-canon, although, there are striking parallels between the two individual women of extraordinary force and character. Referred to as the ‘Lady Macbeth of Hebrew history’, Jezebel is in possession of such a forceful intellect and will like no other woman in the Bible. It is similarly hard to find a more strong-minded female character in the Shakespeare-canon than ‘The Lady’.

Jezebel’s intention was to “cut off the prophets of the Lord” (1Kings 18:4) threatening Elijah with taking his life too. The *Book of Kings* keeps up the trust in Jahweh and his maintaining his prophet and thus Israel, which trust is expressed in

³⁸ Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 102.

Malcolm's decision to flee to England until time arrives for the wise return to gain victory over evil. The dominating wives, Jezebel and Lady Macbeth played with their husbands like puppeteers. The fearful husbands' choice was no other than to yield to the domination of the ruthless women. Both women abused their power by exercising an evil influence upon their husbands forcing them to act upon the wives will.

Evil female ambition paired with the political power lying in weak men's hands is a lethal combination. The wives are given the authority and the husbands are assured of a determined power of will to carry out the wicked plots of murder. Ahab is devastated for he desires a vineyard he cannot acquire without illegal measures.

“Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.” (1Kings 21:5-6)

Similarly, Macbeth acquiesces that his ambitions are bigger than he is able to achieve:

Prithee peace:
I dare do all that may become a man,
Who dares do more, is none” (I.vii.44-46)

The women, nonetheless, take advantage of their powers effective on their powerless husbands, up to questioning their masculinity.

Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? (1Kings 21:7)

“Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?
And wakes it now to look so green, and pale,
At what it did so freely? From this time,
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act, and valour,
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would',
Like the poor cat I'th' adage?” (I.vii.35-45)

... Why worthy thane,
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brain-sickly of things – go get some water ...”
(II.ii.43-45)

I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” (1 Kings
21:7)
“Leave all the rest to me” (I.v.65)

Influenced by his wife Jezebel, Ahab killed the king of Israel with tricks and lies and attacked Elijah, the Lord’s prophet. The theological teaching of his story in the *Book of Kings* reveals the punishment of disobedience: to fight against the will of Jahveh with tricks and lie results in a severe punishment: „Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel” (1 Kings 21,21). Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* reveals a law or theological teaching that brings similar punishment to those who act against the will of the supernatural: those who manipulate powers higher than that of humans’ and those who take the life of the sovereign monarch cannot avoid their destiny: their end is a tragic fall.

As for the question of freedom and determinism, *Macbeth* does not explicitly employ one whole book of the Bible nor draws on selected passages either of the Hebrew or the Christian Bible. Rather, a wide range of allusions, images or references can be traced back to support theological teachings of the Church Fathers and Renaissance humanist thinkers.

It can be thus concluded that Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* can be viewed as a Midrashic writing in a manner that it tries to *darash*, that is, to search and to investigate how divine power operates in the lives of human beings. The drama employs homiletical teachings discovering a pertinent rule or a theological truth on the human struggle against the supernatural. There is a moral dimension to the homiletical interpretation in *Macbeth*, namely, the ontology of evil is also discussed.

2.3 Theology and tragedy

There has been a long debate among critics concerning a religious concept behind Shakespearean tragedy. In the followings, I will discuss whether the allusions to a theological concept are sufficient to make a literary criticism possible. According to Morris, Shakespearean references to a supernatural order are abundant enough so as to

invalidate a secular criticism.⁴⁴ These references are concepts such as heaven and hell or the operation of angels and devils. Moreover, Shakespearean characters act in accordance with religious concepts, who “would seem to display a proper theological apprehension of the devil’s power to ‘betray’ and ‘abuse’ mankind into damnation”.⁴⁵

Concerning Shakespearean tragedy, according to Morris, the question, whether the human being is fated or not, carries less significance. Thus, tragedy should encompass a larger truth, i. e., facts governing humans: free will, the inability of the free will to escape the necessity of sin and its consequences, and the "subjection of man's will to Providential disposition in conformity to which man finds his true freedom".⁴⁶ Therefore, the reader is to examine "whether the idea of man's freedom implied in tragic necessity can be reconciled to a theological estimate", i. e., human will under Divine Providence.⁴⁷

The Augustinian concept of the freedom of the will, which will be discussed in detail, is that the human being is free for sinning. Morris claims that the tragic hero is subject to a similar necessity. That is to say, the tragic character is not aware of this condition and in his 'self-assertion' he carries his tragic destiny.⁴⁸ Further emphasis will also be put on the Thomist concept of the providence working within the free human will. This view is in correlation with Morris's view of tragedy and theology, namely, tragedy and the theological examination of the human condition are in correspondence, for both tragedy and theology find reconciliation. Yet, theology examines what is beyond man, whereas, tragedy is concerned with human creation. Therefore, the criticism of tragedy is not to use systematic theological categories, but is to examine a larger question: "whether existence is limited in a Divine universe"⁴⁹.

2.4 Christian approach to tragedy?

We have concluded so far to that it is impossible to examine Shakespeare objectively, that is, regardless of implied emotions, opinion and philosophy. It might also be true that Shakespeare did not involve in his dramas the philosophical questions

⁴⁴ Ivor Morris, *Shakespeare's God. The role of religion in the tragedies*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972) 23.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 263-264.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 303.

of his age, yet, the Elizabethan audience shared a common Christian worldview accepting and omnipotent power in the universe helping and guiding humans, i. e., Providence and Divine Justice. In the followings, I will present different kinds of approaches to *Macbeth* in the light of my investigation, i. e., free will and determinism.

2.4.1 The tragic plot

As regards Aristotle's analysis, according to Crane,⁵⁰ the plot of *Macbeth* involves tragic elements, which, in the end lead to the tragic downfall and death of the protagonist, since Macbeth's character is that of good men making wrong decisions. Crane adds that the flow towards a tragic end is a change from a good state of character to an evil state, which is not the change of fortune.

This type of interpretation allows only the examination of the characters, however. Macbeth goes along the referred changes and we always should see our heroes with the spectator's mind. Indeed, Crane points out that it is not right to apply the strict Aristotelean terms,⁵¹ for the emotions felt for and not with respect to the protagonist make the terms, such as pity and fear inapplicable.

It is true, however, that our feelings towards Macbeth are somewhat mixed. There can be no doubt that he is aware of the nature and consequences of his deeds. He commits guilty deeds, but with puzzling motives. Macbeth sins to encompass a higher state, for which, the good character is to act morally wrong. Is thus Macbeth evil?

For the catharsis the tragic characters must die. Those who have committed advantageous crimes for the sake of a higher state, those appearing as villains in the spectator's eye, those suffering and falling, and therefore, those deserving pity. To sum up, there might be other elements than the character in relation to the plot to raise the tragic effect.

⁵⁰ R. S. Crane, "Tragic Structure" In *Shakespeare's Tragedies. An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. Laurence Lerner (Baltimore: Penguin, 1968) 208.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

2.4.2 Future contingents

Macbeth embodies foreknowledge of the future, prophecies about the future, which come true. This suggests, according to Auden,⁵² that the future is latently present, that is, there is no real future. Auden adds that if the riddles of the prophecies are solved, they are to be taken as statements, not as promises. The bases for Auden's thesis is a comparison of the case of *Macbeth* and *Oedipus*, according to the following idea.

The question that comes up is, whether Macbeth can choose not to act so. Many of the thinkers dealing with the issue of determinism in drama refer to the Greek tradition and dramatic system of Fate. Many of these investigations use the terms Chance and Necessity.

However, according to Williams, Fate and Necessity are issues, which are not in a system. These issues are beliefs, practices and feelings, "but not (...) systematic and abstract doctrines we would now call a theology of a tragic philosophy".⁵³ Williams adds that nevertheless, to abstract Necessity and place it above human will is a commonplace, the limits of Necessity are in real actions, rather than in general deeds. Therefore, the factors that characterise Necessity are 'translated' as determinism or fatalism.⁵⁴

Schlegel claims that fate in Greek tragedy, a fundamental motivating idea, is an ancient religious belief. He defines determinism as the dramatic character is influenced by other characters' actions, which actions are not dependent on him. In other words, tragedy represents human destiny, not only human characters. In this sequence, chance is not a regulating principle behind human destiny. However, the Greek characters are to obey their destiny, that is, the inevitable, but are only the "blind agents of its decrees".⁵⁵

Bradley's lecture on the substance of Shakespearean tragedy investigates the "nature of the tragic aspect of life as represented by Shakespeare".⁵⁶ The Medieval tragic essence was that man was an object of an inscrutable power, viz., Fortune. Bradley makes it clear that Shakespeare should not be viewed from a theological point

⁵² W. H Auden, "Macbeth and Oedipus" Laurence Lerner, *Shakespeare's Tragedies. An Anthology of Modern Criticism* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1968) 219.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁵ August Wilhelm von Schlegel, "Ancient and Modern Tragedy" R. P. Draper, *Tragedy. Development in Criticism* (London: Macmillan, 1980) 104.

⁵⁶ A. C Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1904) 5.

of view. Shakespeare, the person, might have had a religious faith, yet, his tragic view is not in contradiction with his faith, which should not be abolished, though, but supplemented. Bradley adds that the idea of fatality in Shakespeare is wrong, that is, there is a power governing the drama, but it is not to be named fate. Although, this power governs Shakespeare's tragic view, we should not isolate this aspect from the unbroken unity of the character, will deed and catastrophe. That the hero is a doomed man, would emphasise fatality, however, we should view this as the inescapable power. To grab the essential tragic effect, we should view the actions as the hero's thoughts, but not what he had intended.⁵⁷ The action of a Shakespearean tragedy, according to Bradley, is not only a sequence of human deeds, but the deeds are actions, viz., characteristic deeds.

To sum up, Bradley re-defines fate as 'a mythological expression; the individual characters form an inconsiderable part; which seems to determine their native dispositions and their circumstances and their action, (which) they can scarcely control and which produces changes inevitably and without regard to men's desires'.⁵⁸

If we examine the philosophy behind *Oedipus* as to how prophecies function in the dramas, we are convinced that, however, these phenomena are only future contingents of the Neo-Platonic kind, the course of events somehow must be determined accordingly. The spectator is now left with a series of questions. If prophecies function so, what are the choices the characters can make? Where is tragedy if the protagonists are foreordained to carry out the already known end?

Auden's example gets us closer to the problem of future contingency, viz., the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament depended on believing them, and, God also could postpone the fulfilment to the next generations.⁵⁹ Auden therefore points out that the problem of the modern protagonist is that he takes the prophecies as promises, with which he has to co-operate. In this case, the inevitable fall of the hero is that he listened to them, taking actions having immediate effect upon him. It also might be concluded that the past is pressuring the present, which, in no way is necessity.

This philosophy also suggests an open future for the protagonists. As I will point out later, the prophecies Macbeth is given are ones he himself chose to co-operate with. He, regardless of the prophecies, or regardless of God's or other forces' will, freely

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

chose to carry out his own plan to fulfil the foreordained future. Macbeth also yielded to the temptations of the future, otherwise, he "would not have become a king, and (they) would have been proved to be what (they) were, lying voices."⁶⁰ This suggests a conclusion that people of free choice of action make themselves determined by an external factor, the roots of which to be found in the characters themselves.

2.4.3 The tragic equilibrium

So far we have seen the possibility that the foreseen future operates within the character. It is true, however, that the spectator's knowledge is different from that of the characters. This interpretation suggests that the character's situation is unconsciously determined by his own creation of an 'external' force. Still, we speak of tragedy. According to the Hegelian view, the tragic conflict lies within the character, to which Schelling adds that freedom takes on sin as destiny. It is also claimed that fate is within the character, who, therefore is not free anymore.

According to Leech,⁶¹ the tragic universe presupposes a free will. Man is, nevertheless, responsible for the initiation of a chain of latent evil events. What is more, the character controls his feelings, emotions and thoughts. Likewise, we see how Macbeth is aware of his weakness. Therefore, some degree of the characters' free will is essential in tragedy.

Leech also adds that in Elizabethan tragedy there is a greater degree of free will than in ancient tragedy,⁶² for modern protagonists are not bound to an established pattern. As regards prophecies, Shakespeare employs supernatural devices indicating future events. The characters therefore are created in a way that only one choice of line of events stand in front of them. This tragic situation is the 'doom-in-the-character'.⁶³ Moreover, seventeenth-century English tragedy implies the feeling that the universe is controlled by external forces, far away from men. These forces, i.e., gods are indifferent to the individual's fate, however.

Thus, Leech adds, in Elizabethan tragedy gods intervene less directly than in ancient tragedy. Furthermore, he explains how actions are determined in Elizabethan

⁶⁰ Auden, *Macbeth and Oedipus*, 220.

⁶¹ Leech, Clifford. "The Implications of Tragedy" In: *Shakespeare's Tragedies. An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, edited by Lawrence Lerner, 285-298 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968): 295.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 296

⁶³ *Ibid.*

tragedy. The justice of the gods is within the consequences of actions, that is, the consequence is determined, by the deed itself. Causation, the doctrine the tragic writer believes in, is a determined end. In this chain the human will is powerless, i.e., not free to act.

If these forces work this way in a tragic situation, the spectator is, again, to face upcoming questions. Where is the sophisticated balance of powers that creates the tragic effect? We can claim that some of Macbeth's acts are consequences of his previous acts. It is also true that there is justice in the final consequences of his actions. But how is this seemingly stoic concept of tragedy in agreement with what we have claimed in this chapter earlier, i.e., tragedy presupposes free will? Leech's answer is that the equilibrium of tragedy is the balance of Terror and Pride.⁶⁴ In other words, it is the balance of the revelation of evil and the hero who knows his fate and tries to contemplate it.

However, Lawlor claims that Shakespearean drama works through the co-existence of the opposites, such as, man as agent and patient, as well as the probable and the necessary. Theologically approaching, the questions of the age are reborn in the dramas, e. g., Faith and Works, Free Will and Predestination, which questions are to be answered by the individual. The centre of the drama, nevertheless, is the human placed between opposites, which might lead either to salvation or to damnation. This human is to decide between alternatives, which carry consequences, that is, the character is to be moved between fate and free-will.

2.4.4 Christian Tragedy

Having discussed the balance of powers in tragedy, it is also to be mentioned, that, according to Leech, the tragic equilibrium of Terror and Pride is incompatible with the Christian faith. Furthermore, the author adds that the tragic picture is incompatible with any form of religious belief, for it negates the existence of a personal and kindly God.⁶⁵

Since my investigation focuses on determinism and freedom in the Shakespearean universe, the topic is to handle with religious subjects. Many disputes in history of

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 295

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 297

philosophy and theology have been raised focusing on this problem, which is why my investigation tries to find answers in relation to Shakespearean tragedy.

To answer the puzzle above, we should, once more, return to Schelling. Contrary to Leech's conclusion, Schelling claims that the answer lies in the poet himself. As I have referred to earlier, the poet himself, that is, the Christian Shakespeare, placed the external force, i.e., fate within the character. This is why the character's freedom and the subjective necessity operate as two balancing sides in Shakespearean tragedy. This philosophy also corresponds with Auden's concept of the characters' necessity in terms of future contingents.

Siegel points out that the spectator should notice that prophecies, ghosts and dreams, however doubted and disregarded, are always vindicated in Shakespearean tragedy. That is, the characters realise that God is not to be mocked, although, at first they do not recognise the indications of the supernatural. This is to be explained by man's blindness to the divine powers, which operate in the universe. This fact gives the Elizabethan spectator the feeling of superiority, not questioning the divine powers and that they govern human fate, but meditating on how these powers function in the course of events.⁶⁶ Thus, the spectator eagerly watches Macbeth yielding to those prophecies, which are advancing, and ignoring those with a less advancing outcome, viz., a fruitless kingship. That is, Macbeth is blind to what the spectator already knows about the external power guiding Macbeth's fate. But what might be the reason that the spectator trusts a power that controls human destiny?

The answer might lie in the fact that Shakespeare's worldview embodying external powers was an organic part of the contemporary Christian humanist belief. Indeed, Siegel claims that Shakespeare's audience commonly accepted the indications of divine providence, for the contemporary worldview saw man as a part of a divine scheme, he workings of which were beyond humans.⁶⁷ Henry Hitch Adams also claims that

"Divine Providence intervened in the lives of men to assure the operation of divine justice. Divine Providence is a specific power of God which employs (...) coincidences (...), accidents, natural or unnatural phenomena (...) according to His laws, either through His direct action or through His agents. The phrase 'Divine Providence' (...) was seldom employed by playwrights. For this reason, providential operations have

⁶⁶ Paul N. Siegel. *Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise* (NYUP, 1957) 83.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

commonly gone unrecognized in investigations of the drama of the period."⁶⁸

It can be concluded, therefore, that Shakespearean tragedy operates with a divine power, assuring divine justice, which is in command of the universe. It also can be concluded that man's will is given the power to choose, that is, man is given freedom. Siegel concludes that the omnipotent power "(holds) more things in itself than are dreamed of in the philosophy of Renaissance sceptics or in the metaphysical speculation of medieval scholastics".⁶⁹

We have examined Shakespearean tragedy from the poet's point of view above, whereas tragedy from the point of view of the audience also should be briefly examined. Tragedy is the form where reconciliation must take place in the audience. For the tragic effect, reconciliation is essential, which Aristotle deals with under the term 'katharsis'.

According to Ribner, having understood religious affinity towards tragedy, the audience will see that man's redemption from evil is a basic element in Christian Renaissance. Spiritual victory in tragedy is like Adam's overcoming the evil by God's grace. Nevertheless, Macbeth does not attain salvation, to the contrary, the hero is damned. That is why reconciliation takes place in the audience. Ribner adds that the audience must undergo a symbolic rebirth by 'katharsis', in spite of the fate of the protagonists.⁷⁰ Moreover, Ribner comes up with a conclusion that Shakespearean tragedy cannot be measured against one single formula, like e. g., Bradley did. The Aristotelean, Hegelian, etc., formulas cannot be applied to all of the tragedies, for Shakespeare developed and experimented with various themes and characters. Therefore, Shakespeare should be approached as a dynamic poet.⁷¹ The collision of the inner and outer world encompasses the Elizabethan picture of God's universe, to be more specific, "Shakespeare's universe (...) is the conventional cosmos of the current Christian faith".⁷²

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 84

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960) 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 12

⁷² H. B. Charlton, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (CUP, 1948) 31.

2.4.5 The Christian Fate

We have seen that the Aristotelean Necessity can be translated into a theological fate or destiny. The tragic fate in Shakespearean tragedy is also investigated by Schlegel. Schlegel claims that the Christian religion is in opposition with the Greek concept of fate. Nevertheless, Christianity has replaced fate with providence. Therefore, it would be impossible to compose a Christian tragedy, since providence always punishes the wicked and makes the good prosper. However, providence is inscrutable. On the other hand, the meaning of fate is only characterised by the Greeks: man destined to commit crimes serving to fulfil the oracles. Yet fate, as a means of gods' will can "show itself fair and just - in the guise of providence", e. g., in *Oedipus*.⁷³

As regards Shakespeare, tragedy implies a philosophy of human destiny, e. g., Hamlet's meditation on this subject. This meditation is without conclusion, however, it is a "meditation of which the Gordian knot is at last severed by death". Concerning *Macbeth*, the drama "is founded on the same principles as classical tragedy. Fate is the dominant power; we (find the) ... same prophecies ... as the instigators of the events: treacherous oracles which, ... betray the hopes of the man who puts his trust in them".⁷⁴

While Aristotle claims that the tragic hero commits a sin by necessity, therefore the human is a sinner not by the sin, but his destiny, according to Schelling, freedom comes over the consequences of sin and takes it as destiny. Schelling also adds that that in modern drama the opposing sides, pointed out above that is, freedom and necessity are united: the two factors are different from each other and the poet is mastering both in *Macbeth*.

The investigation of fate, i.e., whether there is fate, the answer is to be sought from the poet's point of view. Since, according to Schelling, Shakespeare shared Christian views, in his view the temptation of evil is not invincible, but it is an accident. Therefore, its necessity is in the subjective. This way, fate is replaced with the character, in which itself there is fate, therefore, the character is not free any more. As a conclusion, *Macbeth* lacks objective necessity, for Banquo does not yield to the vision. Therefore, the necessity of sin is placed in the character.⁷⁵

⁷³ Schlegel August Wilhelm von, "Ancient and Modern Tragedy" In *Tragedy. Development in Criticism*. edited by R. P. Draper (London: Macmillan, 1980) 106

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 108

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 377

Hegel claims that it is not the misfortune of evil will that produces the collision in Greek tragedy. Greek tragedy also lacks in moralising on fate, deeds of private interest or thirst for power. However, an individual decision carried out in a particular way implies in itself the possibility of conflicts, which violate the sphere of human will.

Like Schlegel, Hegel claims that the concept of fate is given by Greek tragedy, such as *Oedipus*: actions of self-conscious will fated by gods, viz., unconsciously and unwillingly done. Therefore, these deeds should not be regarded as the character's own deeds. Notwithstanding, the character takes responsibility for these subjective deeds without separating himself from the objective case. Hegel also adds that the necessity of the outcome is not blind fate, on the contrary, "fate drives individuality back within its limits and destroys it if these are crossed".⁷⁶

Hegel's investigation of modern tragedy focuses on *Hamlet*, however, whose personal character is forced to violate the ethical order. The Greek characters are confronted by circumstances and are necessarily in conflict with an equally justified ethical power in the opposite. The modern character, on the other hand, is placed in accidental circumstances, in which he is given a choice to act. Therefore, the conflict lies in the character. While the Greek individuality is of necessity, it is chance that might drive the modern hero into crime and he is to make his own decisions according to his own will or to external influences. Hegel's conclusion is that character and ethics may coincide, but "since aims ... and the subjective inner life are all particular, this coincidence is not the essential foundation and objective condition of the depth and beauty of a (modern) tragedy".⁷⁷

In Schlegelian terms, the tragic hero is tossed out in a world of two poles, namely, inward liberty and external necessity. The hero is fated to destruction and "the power that works through (him) makes (him) the instrument of a design which is not (his)".⁷⁸ The fated character is nevertheless a responsible agent "freely choosing disaster", which is "essential to all tragic experience". This "comprehensive destiny" allows for the free initiative of man.⁷⁹

In the tragic universe there operates the "trinity of fact" that governs the human condition: 1. the freedom of the will, 2. man's incapacity to escape the necessity of evil-

⁷⁶ Schlegel, "Ancient and Modern Tragedy," 115.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 119

⁷⁸ Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 263.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 263

doing, 3. the subjection of man's will to Providential disposition, which in conformity to his freedom.⁸⁰

As for Macbeth's coping with tragic necessity, whether he is subject to the operation of an external fate, it can be said that "his liberty of free choice is determined more and more by evil inclination and that he cannot choose the better course. Hence we speak of destiny or fate, as if it were some external force or moral order, compelling him against his will to certain destruction"⁸¹ This Augustinian-Lutherian enslavement of the will results in his freedom only to do evil. He is well aware of the good and the evil but, with Augustine's words "seeing he would not what he might, now he cannot what he would".⁸² Thus, the tragic hero is the victim of himself, the victim of his own tragedy. This experience is alike the Christian one as man's freedom and fate is beyond the capacity of the human mind.

That man is free and fated at the same time, is a tension that can be resolved by divine control and according to Morris, tragic pleasure is the recognition of a spiritual order over the freedom it grants and the control of the wills by its inscrutable providence of good workings but with permission to evil.⁸³ The religious task of tragedy arises from the recognition of the above.

2.5 The Christianity of *Macbeth*

Shakespeare, according to Morris, "recognizedly treat(s) the theme of supernatural evil", as far as diabolic images and choice of words are concerned.⁸⁴ These images do not distract the viewers' attention from the metaphysical theme, to the contrary, they serve the purpose of the poetic drama. *Macbeth's* religious vocabulary and religious analogies also underline the protagonist's awareness of his sins and evil deeds, as well as foreseeing his punishment. However, critics still do not agree whether there is a religious significance in the play, as Morris quotes: "although Macbeth's career recalls a descent into hell, it is not presented openly as a descent into hell."⁸⁵

Macbeth, indeed, is explicitly Christian and explores evil in Biblical terms genuinely. Macbeth is a damned soul, who trusts the weird sisters and is spiritually

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 264

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁸² De Civitate Dei XIV. xv in *Ibid.*, 265.

⁸³ Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 272-273.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

unprepared to resist temptation. The appearance of the witches is “a device which gives good and evil a transcendental position in the tragedy.”⁸⁶

2.6 The need for a theological interpretation

We have seen so far that Shakespeare’s dramatic creativity makes use of religious concepts. It is up to the artistic freedom whether the drama follows the pattern of explanation of human nature and its relation to theology or whether it only relies on theological concepts to highlight the vision of human nature. As for the case of *Macbeth*, Frye claims that Shakespeare pushed the drama in the scope of theological definition: “In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare has created one of the most magnificent presentations of the degeneration of the human soul which our culture affords, and he has done so in reference to Christian theology, but his purpose is still to keep the mirror up to human nature and to show the course of human life in this world”⁸⁷ to which Morris adds that “any claim that theological interpretation is essential for this play must first demonstrate that the experience of *Macbeth* is beyond the reaches of the secular imagination of man.”⁸⁸

2.7 Immediate religious impressions

Religious instances of Shakespearean tragedy are in most cases difficult to identify. Morris calls this phenomenon a “general lack of definiteness in their expression” and identifies an essential difference between the dramatic and the conceptual, which hinders religious interpretation. The interpreter would narrow or distort a play by claiming that it embodies a religious concept or a scheme. Religious suggestions work on the level of “immediate impression” as a reflected thought and action. The ‘religiousness’ of these suggestions are more likely created in the critic’s mind converting them into theological principles.⁸⁹ Impressions created by viewing the Shakespearean tragedy, however, might support religious teaching without creating a

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁷ Roland M. Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* quoted by Morris *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

theological concept behind the tragedy. Religious concepts thus can be observed but it cannot be clearly stated that they direct the drama's world.⁹⁰

Similar conclusion can be drawn concerning the application of Christian ethics in Shakespearean tragedy. Christian ethics extend to a realm which the drama cannot enter. The consistent application of Christian ethics to Shakespearean characters would result in ignoring the drama's immediate effect. A Christian moralisation would thus result in a detachedness from the dramatic effect, which proves that the drama was not created on the bases of a formal scheme of belief: "the ethics of the plays partake of Christian ethics, but they are not based as Christian ethics in fact are, upon the eschatology of the Christian system."⁹¹ The criticism of qualities and motives thus reflect the critic's own schemes of thought rather than Shakespeare's.

2.8 Religious interpretation as the examination of the human condition

If we view Shakespearean tragedy as a realisation of a human experience shared by each individual, the question of a transcendental experience arises too. The critic's task would be to show the meaning of this experience with the help of Christian doctrine. There is, however, another incongruity here, namely, that between the theological concept and the process of dramatic creation.⁹²

Tragedy seeks to represent and reveal the human condition and expose the viewer "to feel what wretches feel."⁹³ It also demonstrates the limitations which mortals are to face in their own shortcomings. However, tragedy originates both in secular life and religion, as human beings necessarily are in relationship with the Divine. Tragedy is necessarily concerned with man, "Thus the dispassionate inquiry into man's secular condition, as it is the proper undertaking of the tragedian, must also be a true religious function."⁹⁴

Even if we do not find answers to the questions Shakespearean tragedy raises, it definitely deals with the ultimate interrogation into human existence. Macbeth's destruction of life and its moral retribution strengthens the conviction that a moral order exists. Shakespeare, however, employs only an artistic pattern as opposed to an

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

ideological pattern and offers “a commentary on human existence in all its terror and in all its glory.”⁹⁵ The commentary of human existence is an effect of the whole rather than of a commentary of a part using a certain concept or doctrine. The playwright is thus not committed and does not formally tribute a doctrine but the effect of the play serve rather as revelations from life itself and not as exemplification of a theological understanding.⁹⁶

The human situation represented by Shakespeare is shared and experienced both by pagans and Christians. Arising from the secular situation, the Christian truth is foreshadowed and can be experienced by a “virtuous pagan”. Shakespearean tragedy cannot be proven to be based on religious concepts. However, a common experience and understanding of the human condition can build a ‘bridge’ toward reaching ultimate conclusions.⁹⁷

As we have seen above, there is a danger in interpreting the Shakespearean tragedy in terms of doctrinal presuppositions. Rather, the critic should interpret the play “in terms of itself”.⁹⁸ The drama, however, is an interaction of consciousness, but one should always bear in mind that apparent references are systematically used and there should be drawn no significance from their absence or accumulation. The religious concept cannot be proven, but should not therefore be disregarded either, even if it is less apparent or provable.

The critic should regard that referred instances are not exclusively Christian, but they are a part of the “religious consciousness” of the ages.⁹⁹ This religious consciousness is part of the human condition and is necessarily reflected in the Shakespearean tragedy. Morris suggests that theological interpretations be omitted from detailed interpretations, adding that if a “revelation of further meaning may be gained – a basis is found for bringing theological concepts into relation with tragedy.”¹⁰⁰ A religious point of view applies theological concepts with reference to the human existence, which stem from faith. A religious interpretation therefore examines “whether the human condition as it has appeared in Christian thinking can approximate

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

to the experience of life which the great tragedies have shared, and Shakespearean tragedy reveals.”¹⁰¹

2.9 Religious awareness of the critic

Morris has shown the existence of a correspondence between literary tragedy and a theological interpretation of the human condition. Theology examines the realm beyond man, whereas tragedy is a creation of the human mind limited to secular terms and thus can only be viewed in accordance. The correspondence, however, does not allow the reader to use theological categories for criticism, but rather to examine “whether, in a Divine universe, the significance of secular existence and event can remain limited to themselves.”¹⁰² Tragedy exemplifies the human condition instead of explaining it by theological concepts, thus criticism should represent what the dramatist describes in the literary piece. The critic cannot but adhere to a system of ultimate standards or a common category of good and evil, right and wrong. Given these certain values, “a critic who is not ‘religious’ in some sense of the term can hardly exist. ... (t)o equip the reader for the fullest response (to an inflexible destiny within the manifest scope of human freedom), a religious awareness in the critic is indispensable.”¹⁰³ In the following chapter I will analyse the concept of fate and fortune, with an awareness referred to above. I will also analyse the "Christianised" pagan concepts of supernatural powers having influence over earthly beings.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 307.

Chapter 3

Approaches to fate, fortune and free will

The age of Renaissance was packed with change: travel, discovery, trade and commerce, and it saw the trials of individuals to make their living and thus making the foundation of their identity. A whole new continent was discovered and astrological discoveries expanded the known world up to the point of turning it upside down by realising that it is the Earth that revolves around the Sun. Families and individuals were in the centre of attention and the social arrangements were rearranged accordingly. Patch claims that in addition to the changes that marked the coming of a new age, the failure of a systematized religion that would give explanations to the new phenomena occurred.¹⁰⁴ And when a new phenomenon occurred, it happened quickly due to the rapid expansion.

No wonder that the Renaissance man was trying to grasp on something to understand and accommodate to this striking new world with its quick shifts affecting his life sometimes abruptly. The fix point to grasp to was ironically the idea of an ever changing, moody Fortune, whose operations explained everything, or, at least, provided a satisfying answer to the “why” and “how” of the Renaissance man.

According to Walter Haug,¹⁰⁵ Fortuna should not have had existence in the Middle Ages. She does not have anything to do in the world where "even the fall of a sparrow" cannot happen without God's will. Even so, the concept of Fortune not only existed but played a prominent role for centuries. From the 11th century onwards, book illustrations, murals, sculptures and church facades were full with her representations in the widest variations. The iconographic tradition overlapped the literary tradition of the goddess.¹⁰⁶ It was Boethius who formulated the new concept of the goddess and gave a brief description of the ancient Fortune.¹⁰⁷ As an ancient cultic figure, she was available for all social groups and thereby she turned into an omnipotent goddess of luck. From this cultic tradition emerged the literary figure, whose omnipotent force is

¹⁰⁴ Howard Rollin Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Philosophy and Literature* (Kessinger Publishing 1922) 219.

¹⁰⁵ Walter Haug, "O Fortuna. Eine historisch-semantische Skizze zur Einführung" Walter Haug & Burghart Wachinger (Eds.) *Fortuna* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995) 1.

¹⁰⁶ Haug, *O Fortuna*, 2

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

acknowledged, and on the other hand, whose power people tried to reduce to conquer.¹⁰⁸

The Christian church fathers tried to cut an end to the Fortuna tradition systematically. The power of chance is incompatible with the Christian faith, since everything lies in God's hands. Still, Fortuna lingered in the literary tradition as a poetic-literary figure of the contingent, surprising good and bad luck, everything that seemed inexplicable.¹⁰⁹

"Fortune is the "Energiesymbol" par excellence that balances a Christian submission to God against the humanist faith in self ... Neutralizing fear by framing it as image, affording individuals autonomy and inward composure in the face of new and sometimes threatening situations, mediating between the past and unknown future, Fortuna is not merely a product of Renaissance art, but is synonymous with art itself. Art ... functions to liberate man from his submission to an inexorable destiny, from a servitude to things",¹¹⁰

3.1 What/who is Fortuna?

The allegoric figure of Fortune was a Roman goddess, who distributed her favours according to chance. The corresponding Greed goddess was Tyche, the protectress of cities. In the Hellenistic period she was identified with the Egyptian goddess Isis.¹¹¹ In the Roman times, she became one of the official gods of the city. She then became the patron of the social happenings of the city and thus "sneaked" into the everyday life of the Romans. She also was a subject of a syncretic mixture with other peoples' fate gods and demons, e.g. the Egyptian Isis. This is the lineage that made this woman, the anthropomorphic goddess Fortuna, the goddess of the whole world, the ruler of the spheres. As the goddess of all goddesses, she represented a unity of the chaotic antiquity, which faded away and was revived later.¹¹² The popularity of the goddess swept through Rome and she gradually became the goddess of the state and virtually every individual within it regardless of social standard or sex. Pliny even

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹¹⁰ Aby Warburg's view on Fortune as summarized by Koerner in Haug, *Fortuna*, 256.

¹¹¹ Irene Aghion, Claire Barbillon, Francois Lissarrague, *Gods and Heroes of Classical Antiquity* (Paris, New York: Flammarion, 1996) 128.

¹¹² Doren, Alfred. "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance" *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 2 (1922-1923): 73

complains ¹¹³ that Roman people allowed too much space for Fortune and the general notion was to believe in a kind of fatalistic world governed by the deity. This Roman goddess reappeared in Renaissance thinking. Doren claims, those who investigated the course of life without naive fear to discover the inner freedom covered themselves with the Roman shield of the gods.¹¹⁴ The rising of a new era did not make this goddess fade away but more likely sought a mighty helper.

3.2 Christian concept of Fortune

As the Roman Empire vanished, Christianity rose with the idea of a rational God. There were many, however, whose worldview reflected more likely the old one and probably many people still believed in chance. This belief in chance made a common cause with the goddess Fortuna, which was convenient and widely well known. The image and the attributes, as well as visual representations were common, which made this goddess linger throughout the Middle Ages. People with limited familiarity with theological and philosophical disputes shared a belief in occult powers such as fortune or astrological influence that might have been contrary to Christian belief.¹¹⁵

The Medieval Fortune was a shape-shifter, an obscure, elusive figure, an inconceivable concept. The pagan idea of Fortune survived during the centuries, but for the philosophers, who grasped onto the rational and tried to stay in the realm of the ordered world, there was no justification for the goddess.¹¹⁶ Still, chance as an element in human life, which everybody experiences at some point, needed to be explained clearly.

Patch's solution is that the Medieval philosopher took chance as an element of the "*causa per accidens*", the theory of hidden causes. Thus, it was acceptable for the rational mind to see Fortune more as a personification of the pagans, who is sub-ordered to God. That Fortune was allowed to enter the world as a subordinated, personified figure of the pagans, satisfied both reason and faith. The pagan figure survived dressed in Christian robes, but her attributes and title were kept.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ D. M. Robinson, "The Wheel of Fortune" *Classical Philology* (XCI, 1946) 212n.

¹¹⁴ Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance," 75.

¹¹⁵ cited by Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, 15.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

According to Patch,¹¹⁸ it was actually Dante who united the Christian faith and the pagan traditions in his *Inferno*, where Fortune becomes God's ministering angel. With literature, the vernacular was spread in Italy, out placing Latin language and pushing it to theological and philosophical treatises. In other words, the vernacular, which represented the everyday speech with the general everyday ideas, made works of thinkers more profane expressing less the sacred, especially in the case of Dante and Petrarch.¹¹⁹

It was Boethius who can be related to the revival of the tradition of the goddess Fortune the most, as he chose her as a dialogue partner in philosophy, who teaches him that she has power over the material, the transient things. She can take away what she gives and thus put humans to a trial: she can prove what really worthy is. Fortuna thus reveals through Boethius's *Consolatio* that she is an agent of God subordinated to the divine Providence. The vicissitude of all earthly things thus belongs to the divine plan.¹²⁰ Boethius, in short, invokes the antique Fortune tradition as he depicts her as the representative of earthly instability and the antique concept of global power and chance.

While many writers had the views of both Fortune and God without even reconciling them, Boethius was the thinker who gave his contemporaries an influential attempt. He thoroughly described the operations of Fortuna with a convincing faith in God. He, nevertheless, fails to give a concept of reconciling the two, either. The *Consolatio* shows that Boethius had many sources, such as Aristotle, who claimed that the existence of chance in the universe allows for free will. Fate and chance, indeed, are but servants of God.¹²¹ Free will is granted to man: he can decide for himself if he climbs the wheel of fortune, if he lets it take him to the highest point.¹²²

Fortune is thus not a goddess anymore but a personification representing the natural law of infirmity. She has a relative freedom, as she is subject to divine law and works in a providential manner. The Christianised Fortune releases God's direct responsibility for all happenings with a relative autonomy.¹²³

She is to provide an explanation to the incalculability of the world and she is to serve as the agent of God. However, she is not merely the arbitrary providential agent,

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 204

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Haug, *O Fortuna*, 6.

¹²¹ Patch 1967 p18

¹²² Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance," 97.

¹²³ Haug, *O Fortuna*, 8.

but is equipped with a device: the wheel rotating with a determined direction.¹²⁴ Many resources claim Boethius as the first to introduce the concept of Fortune's wheel, but this symbol was in fact used in antique literature, such as works of Cicero and Horace. What is important in Boethius' legacy is that he was the personality who built a bridge between the spirituality of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. He introduced the wheel of Fortune as an ethical symbol, which became widely known through his popular work, the *Consolatio*. According to Boethius, people who entrust the workings of Fortune as the turner of the worldly causes, should obey to their ruler and must not try to stop the turning of the wheel with their human weakness.¹²⁵

In Doren's words, the Christian Middle Ages found its Archimedes' point with conceptualising Fortuna within the pure religion. It is a foreknowledge, which cannot be reached by humans, it is in accordance with the demonic "middle-beings" and it is anthropomorphically depicted. This being has a human soul and apparently has been elected by the church into the realm of those beings, where later as an angel dwells. It soon acquired an important role for mediating between humanity and God.¹²⁶ According to the concept of the divine providence, Fortuna does what she has to do not by her free will but by serving. She accomplishes her necessary function, a duty ascribed by God.¹²⁷

There are representations of the wheel of fortune in several Medieval cathedrals just above the entrance, by the rosette, to which Doren calls our attention. The wheel is present in Medieval castles, just as in codices, in church drama, morality plays and in the proverbs, it is not missing from the political-social satires, moreover, it is featured on play cards, as well.¹²⁸ The concept of Fortune and its constant presence possessed almost every layer of Renaissance life and thinking from ecclesiastical and religious through humanist-

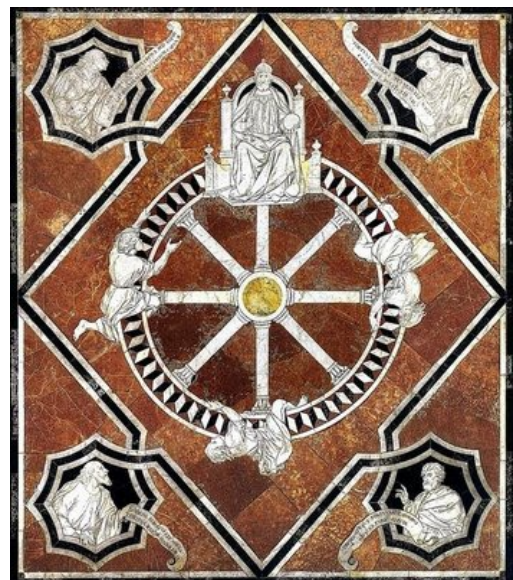


Figure 2.

The wheel of Fortune in the cathedral of Siena

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁵ Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance," 84

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 78

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 71-72

erudite to politics and to the Renaissance every days.

As for the question how a pagan symbol can have a place in a Christian cathedral, the answer is that the Renaissance worldview did not give much attention to it. The symbol was embedded in a new environment where the people were concerned with questions such as fate, freedom and necessity, which are very pronounced questions. As clarity was sought, they were represented by these depictions.¹²⁹

The servant of a higher will turns her wheel incalculably, according to the will of a higher being, whom she does not even know and thus she herself cannot calculate. This reconciliation of the Church makes her an agent of divine foreknowledge. Her attributes were reinterpreted as to set trials before humans.¹³⁰ The Church, on the other hand, saw Fortune as an enemy, against which it stood in war. Indeed, the goddess was an agent of the evil, for it stemmed from the pagan times. There were even writers who shared the both the views of God and Fortuna, without trying to reconcile them.¹³¹

Fortune's power is also spatially determined. The fallible human strives to stay between the constantly changing world and the calmness of the eternal divine world. He tries to reach the highest point possible to reach the divine heights. The closer he is to God, the less he is moving with the turn of fortune's wheel. The centrifugal power effects those one more, who are farther away from God, i.e. the sinners.¹³²

The so-called new awareness of life, the new worldview, gained place very slowly with the transition of the Medieval to the Renaissance. This is also true for the relationship to the ever-changing course of the world and man's view of it. Fortuna kept her place in the universe during the changing of the times. She lingered as the answer for the fates of individual men as the unforeseeable, demonic turner of her wheel in harmony with God. She was more likely pictured as the one who places humans on her wheel with its up and down turns individually conceived.¹³³

As individual concepts differ, her image differed through the countries of Europe too. Nevertheless, there are basic similarities, on the bases of which a general trend, a development in her figure can be observed. When it comes to using the classical and the Medieval conceptions, they are not directly taken, or borrowed, but they are

¹²⁹ Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance" 72.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 84

¹³¹ Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, 17.

¹³² Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance" 96.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 101

used individually, independently, marking their own way.¹³⁴ The transition of the figure of Fortune is due to the world-view where all things on earth lie in God's hands. The ways of God are inscrutable, but Fortune fills in the gap of the contingent. She serves Providence, no matter what direction it takes.¹³⁵ In the followings, I will present a highly selective overview of the individual concepts of fortune, fate, free will and providence.

3.3 Poggio and the revival of the moody Goddess Fortune

When Poggio Bracciolini, the early-Renaissance historian was standing on the Capitoline hill in Rome watching over the ruins of the ancient Rome, he meditated over the mutability and cruelty of fortune, which caused such a devastation of the city that once was the centre of culture. The designers and dwellers of Rome had thought that this city would resist the adversity of the times, but it got into the hands of Fortune, who destroyed it in the same manner as she governs the destinies of kings and empires.¹³⁶

Poggio's views were influenced by his deep superstition. His observations lead him to the conclusion that the ways of destiny can be evaded through awareness. He observed the birth of his children and their education and came up with the idea that a right education and later their developing free will can guard them against the workings of supernatural influences. According to Poggio, the sometimes even evil influence of the stars are not the outflow of divine will, but it is an independent power that works wickedly on earth.¹³⁷

The operation of this wicked power is explained in the "*De varietate fortunae*", for which Poggio made research in the Medieval writings, which he presented to his friends during his visit to England.¹³⁸ The work is a philosophical text of four books on the transience of luck. Poggio's work digs deeper than the religious beliefs as he examines the fear from the supernatural that is closely linked with superstition.¹³⁹ In the first book, he describes the above-mentioned lamentation over the ruins of the ancient Rome and the power of Fortune that was able to destroy such richness. The unwelcome

¹³⁴ Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, 26.

¹³⁵ Haug, *O Fortuna*, 21.

¹³⁶ Malcolm Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods* (Oxford University Press: 2005) 2 Vasari claims in his prologue to the lives of the Renaissance artists, that according to the turn of Fortune's Wheel, as she once destroyed Rome, she will revive it too.

¹³⁷ Ernst Walser, *Poggius Florentinus. Leben und Werke* (Leipzig, Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1914) 236.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 237

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 235.

and unexpected direction might lead to such a destruction, but historical examples can prove that there are expected and hoped victories indeed.¹⁴⁰ Whether fortune is an expression of god's will, Poggio replies that she chooses the corrupt and foul persons to elevate into highness and to overthrow dreadfully. Poggio's conclusion is that fortune is a fearful, moody, capricious being floating between heaven and earth and possesses supernatural force. She can, however, be overcome with education and virtue.¹⁴¹

Poggio does not mention the wheel of fortune, but his depiction closely resembles the concept. He deliberates upon the fates of people who are unexpectedly elevated into the golden light by fortune's favour and thrown into the abyss again. He mentions examples of kings and popes besides mentioning unlucky shipwrecks to illustrate his concept. He also comes up with the example of England's Richard II, whose wicked star overthrew him into a dark dungeon from fortune and fame.¹⁴² The destinies of the popes are similar to kings and princes, although they represent the holy seat of St. Peter's. In fact, according to Poggio, Christ's earthly residents fall out of the realm of fortune, but as earthly rulers, they still are subject of the capricious goddess.

Poggio is quite pessimistic: fortune is wicked, moody and unfaithful.¹⁴³ But as he mingled his concept with the question of divine providence, Poggio comes up with the question of the destiny of those tyrants who believe in the just and wise divine providence subject to the operation of fortune, to which he replies that God's justice lies beyond the realm of human understanding and decree.¹⁴⁴

In the final book of the "*De varietate fortunae*", Poggio does not mention a direct effect of fortune's power over the seas, but still links the two together based upon his observations. He closely examines the heroes who travelled to the far-east and discovered unknown cultures. These heroes were brought home safely by their luck. As foreshadowed in the closing book, after his works on fortune, Poggio turned to the exciting discoveries of geography and ethnography.¹⁴⁵

To sum up Poggio's concept of supernatural influences on destiny, he represented the 15th century view of the belief in stellar influence and the Medieval pessimistic concept of the moody goddess. Poggio was also concerned with the cyclical shaping of destinies of kings and popes, as well as the ever changing fortunes of the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 237-238.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 240.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 242.

travellers on sea. The sentimental philosopher never gave up the thought of the reappearing of the cultural flourish Rome once brought to the world. His life was marked by the struggle between the thought of Fortune's power that is independent of God, his own deeply implanted faith in God, and a fatalistic astrological influence on the world.¹⁴⁶ Probably these struggles made him come to the concept of the human life that is adversity against Fortune besides Virtue, which can call for God's providence, who wants only the good for man.¹⁴⁷ Fortune, the executor of God's will, the terrible and moody being hovering around between heaven and earth is cast down but possesses transcendental power.¹⁴⁸

3.4 Petrarch: the popular view of fortuna in the Renaissance

Petrarch's use of the vernacular allowed him to let in the ideas of the everyday concepts. With the appearance of the vernacular in Italy, Latin was restricted to education and the Church, and gave way to a free expression of the general beliefs and thoughts. Petrarch used both Latin and the vernacular, a blend of which marks the transition. Petrarch's works were popular and thus influential, thus spreading the common ideas in written works.

In the preface to the *De Remediis utriusque fortunae* (Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul), Petrarch describes the fortune-problem as "*bellum perpetuum*" (constant war)¹⁴⁹ This is the fight of the two ancient enemies, Fortuna and Virtus, which lead the ways of human beings, therefore, we should be concerned about and with it. As Heitmann points out, *De Remediis* is only a link of the long chain of debates concerning the evil fight of Fortuna and Virtus. It was Petrarch, who introduced the topic in the Renaissance.¹⁵⁰ Doren adds that when it comes to terms of its new relationship to humanity, it lays emphasis on the conscious war against the goddess Fortuna resulting in a stronger belief in the power of man's virtues.¹⁵¹

According to Petrarch, Fortuna is a forever young Goddess. She changes the good and bad happenings in the world without a ground, exclusively according to her

¹⁴⁶ Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance" 111.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 112

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Klaus Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus. Eine Studie zu Petrarcas Lebensweisheit* (Köln und Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1958) 15.

¹⁵⁰ thus worthy of the name "The Father of Humanism" *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵¹ Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance" 107.

mood.¹⁵² She is therefore mutable and not trustworthy at all. However, she can be defeated with sober thinking, intelligence, eloquence and learning. Thus, Fortune is not an unchangeable supernatural power, which operates with the course of events in the universe, but rather, a power working against humans to achieve their goals the divine order and they set before themselves. Therefore, Fortune should rather be seen as Prosperity and Adversity, than a divinity casting a lot on human's fate.

The operation of Fortune arose the interest of many people, including political leaders. In a letter to a friend, Petrarch wrote about his presentation on Fortuna in the Parisian court. He recalls:

“there was nothing so inerasable an effect on the King and the whole court as my lectures on Fortuna. ... The Son of the Monarch, the Prince of Normandy, with some educated men, took the occasion of the banquet given for me to start a dispute with me, which would develop the whole theme of Fortune from the beginning again. So much was the Prince into the subject...”¹⁵³

Petrarch explained the monarch that for his mistakes and faults, Fortune is to be blamed, which seemingly disturbed his audience. Petrarch, indeed, was glad to have escaped the interest of the French King. He did not escape the interest of the learned men of the court though, but in his later work he could finally summarize his view. Referring to the Aristotelean and Augustinian tradition, he did not give existence to Fortuna. With this annihilation, we cannot but say that Petrarch followed the classical tradition, as well as that of the Church Fathers. It is striking however, how many times Petrarch used the symbol of Fortuna.¹⁵⁴

It can be concluded, therefore, that Petrarch was indeed interested in the operations of chance or chance-like operations in the world, which he identified with Fortuna. He was certainly concerned with choices, which men command. The striking instances of mentioning fortune's power and its operation shows his concern with a supernatural element affecting human life, which he probably only named with the common term Fortune.

¹⁵² Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus*, 26.

¹⁵³ Petrarch, "Seniles" *Ibid.*, 39., my translation from German

¹⁵⁴ Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, 209.

3.4.1 The “golden chain of necessity”

Petrarch writes to Giovanni Boccaccio:

“If they talk of the movements of the heavenly bodies, of winds and rain, hot and cold spells, storms; if they predict eclipses of the sun and moon, certainly they may be listened to with interest, and sometimes with profit. But when they prate of men’s affairs, of men’s future lot, which God alone knows, they are to be rejected as mere fabricators of lies. ... to the point of shamelessly alleging that the impossible is easier to know.”¹⁵⁵

Petrarch goes on describing a scandalous event in Milan. During the attack against Pavia, a man was employed as a “forseer” to forecast the outcome of the war. He stopped the attack and called the army back saying that the fated hour for the battle had not yet come. However, in spite of a drought, which was going on for month at that time, a heavy rainfall came down and almost flooded the army. Petrarch comments:

“It was only by divine favour and by the valor and luck of the leader that some time later the attack was renewed under better auspices, and the city captured with no help from the stars”.

In this statement, Petrarch, explicitly, though unaware, calls a difference between divine help, i.e, providence and an influence of the stars on earthly events and the ability to foresee it. Petrarch then snapped:

”weather predictions depend on natural causes; man’s fate on supernatural ones, with God decreeing to each his lot ... Certainly it is easier to know man’s fate’ (the astrologer) said; but he had a shamefaced look. He knew that I was speaking truly, and I don’t think he would deny any of my words.”

Petrarch eventually understood the divine governance of the world’s course: “I was suddenly aware of the golden chain of necessity; and in pity I uttered no further word.”¹⁵⁶ Petrarch realized that in the course of events, the workings of nature and the workings of the supernatural in the world are two separate things, which are not to be

¹⁵⁵ Petrarch, *Excoriation of Astrologers Book III.1 To Giovanni Boccaccio, from Venice, 7. September* (1363) selected and translated by Morris Bishop (Indiana University Press, 1966)

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

mistaken with each other. To foresee the operation of the supernatural, that is, the divine plan, it is evident that one needs to understand the “golden chain of necessity”, which explains all future happenings in the world.

3.4.2 War against Fortune

“We wage double war with Fortune”¹⁵⁷ Petrarch writes in the preface to *De Remediis*. She is wicked, but Reason can come up with the antidote against her adversities. We are subjects to Fortune’s powers, who, according to her own whims plays with us, human beings as toys. Fortune’s wheel can turn according to how she might will, but the divine order in the world and the task set thereby to humans, remains unchanged: to fight the adversities of Fortune with the Christian virtue.¹⁵⁸

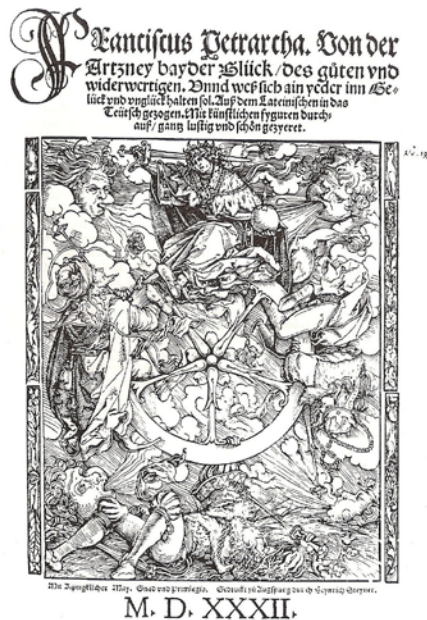


Figure 3.

The title page of the German edition of *De remediis utriusque fortunae*

In the very beginning, Petrarch makes it clear that his book is written “for ordinary readers and not for philosophers”, explaining that in the book the general, (perhaps, that is what we are searching for) concept of Fortune is explored, “adhering closely to the common and generally known manner of speech”.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, we can deduct from the book that the concept of Fortune was an everyday topic in Petrarch’s time, which he put down on paper “out of the common course of mans life”.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Petrarch, “De remediis utriusque fortunae” *Four Dialogues for Scholars*, edited and newly translated into English by Conrad H. Rawski (Cleveland, OH: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1967) 4.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 7.

3.5 Salutati's view on human freedom

Coluccio Salutati deals with the problem concerning human choice and decision making in his manuscript entitled *De fato et fortuna*. The manuscript has not yet been published, however, there have been some studies issued concerning its theses. Salutati, just as many Renaissance thinkers, employed Augustine's thoughts as a guideline and was against the pagan usage of the term fortuna.¹⁶¹ According to Ullman, Salutati's writings did not have great impact on thinkers of the next generation, but his influence on his contemporaries through his personal contacts and his vast collection of books was remarkable. He taught many disciples, who spread the newly acquired wisdom of humanism all over Italy. He had two influential disciples, Poggio Bracciolini and Leonardo Bruni, who even succeeded him in the chancellorship of Florence.¹⁶²

The *De fato et fortuna* was a well-read treatise as it was circulated in "heavy rotation" among his contemporaries. The work was copied to at least thirteen manuscripts,¹⁶³ which widely spread the views of the Florentine thinker. Salutati, whom Trinkaus refers to as the Petrarchan humanist chancellor of Florence and the patron of the inauguration of Hellenic studies in Italy,¹⁶⁴ was probably well informed of his contemporaries' theological and philosophical works that circulated via manuscripts in Florence, and he even might have met many of them.¹⁶⁵ Salutati used traditional views hierarchy, but his concept of divine omnipotence and its compatibility with contingent events, as well as his views on astrology provided a "new and different structuring of the universe."¹⁶⁶ He focused on contingencies and divine providence, which his fellow humanists also laid emphasis on, but it was Salutati to open the way for them.¹⁶⁷

3.5.1 Christian optimism

The Augustinian theology Salutati relied upon, lead e.g. Calvin to a pessimistic view but it did not lead Coluccio to see the universe as fatally determined. On the contrary, from Salutati's writings a new Christian world-view emerged that focused on

¹⁶¹ Berthold. L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1963) 30.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 31.

¹⁶⁴ Charles Trinkaus, "Coluccio Salutati's Critique of Astrology in the Context of His Natural Philosophy" *Speculum* Vol. 64, No. (1 Jan., 1989) 46.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*,

Gods omnipotence and benevolence. According to Salutati, we do not see the world as it is but we are revealed only its mirrored counterpart. Thus, we only see the effects but do not see into the causes, in reality, we do not have any knowledge on them. This is why everything seems bad and unjust. However, we may see that whatever comes from God is good and just.¹⁶⁸

The earthly pessimism is thus dissolved by the breakthrough of a victorious supernatural optimism: Adam's sin corrupts everything but everything is good, for it comes from God. God governs the universe according to his eternal plan and thereby it is assured that everything that exists is good. Whatever direction God's plan goes, it is eventually going in the right way.¹⁶⁹ The universe works like a well-composed musical piece: parts of it may sound dissonant, but on the whole, everything works in harmony.¹⁷⁰

3.5.2 Fate and fortune

Ronald G. Witt's study of Coluccio Salutati's *De fato et fortuna* gives a thorough overview on the Renaissance thinker's concept of the granted freedom of the will, which is totally compatible with fate and necessity of the universe. Salutati personally experienced the operation of divine decree and the ironies of fortune: on the same day he buried his beloved wife, he swore in as a new prior in Florence.¹⁷¹

As a therapy of consolation he began to systemise his thoughts on the divine order, man's will, the operation of fate and necessity, and stellar influences. The result of this reflection was the treatise *De fato et fortuna*, completed within one year after her wife's death. Although Salutati does not mention her in his book at all, he contemplated upon his situation set in given circumstances, such as her death or the plague affecting many around him.¹⁷²

Although Salutati does not come up with original ideas, his summary of ideas of e.g. Augustine highlight the importance of the topic of the freedom of the will in his age, as Witt concludes, the question is dealt with in the context of current philosophical

¹⁶⁸ Paul Kluckhohn, "Die Populärphilosophie des florentiner Humanisten Coluccio Salutati" Walter Goetz and Georg Steinhausen (eds) *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* (Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd, 1965) 450.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 451.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 452.

¹⁷¹ Ronald G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham, Carolina: Duke University Press, 1983) 313.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 315.

and theological debates.¹⁷³ Salutati analyses the principle of causation, the relationship of natural cause and effect and concludes that although a proof of connection cannot be shown up, the causal principle is implemented in humans. It is also shown in his treatise that the order of causes is ordered according to a divine decree, which is compatible with free human will and a contingent universe. Regarding stellar influences, Salutati integrates the phenomena into the operation of the universe moved by divine providence.¹⁷⁴

3.5.2.1 Divine necessity, relative necessity and contingency

The *De fato et fortuna* explains God's decrees for an operation of causes and effects. God, the first cause of all operation, created immense causes from the beginning, which obey the necessity of the process of cause and effect. However, God does not remain irresponsive to human deeds. Everything happens according to God's will in the universe, thus everything happens necessarily. Salutati defines necessity resulting from God's providential governing of the universe as fate. Witt refers to this fatal necessity as "universal energy", which urges matter to desire the lacking form.¹⁷⁵

God decreed the chain of cause and effect from the beginning, which is nevertheless contingent. The necessity of cause and effect is a relative necessity, in other words, a "qualified necessity"¹⁷⁶, since God can decide whether to create them or not and whether to extinguish them or not. It requires God's decision for an effect to be called forth, which is thus necessarily produced. Salutati goes on with the logic of necessity even to claim that the existence of God is necessary for he cannot not be.¹⁷⁷

Some natural causes are contingent in a way that e.g. either male or female offspring is conceived. This contingency is applied to the human will: the will freely can decide whether to will or not to will. The will is free to follow a course of action created by God since the beginning.¹⁷⁸ Since God is the first cause and is active in the created causes and effects, and in further activities, everything adheres to God, however, Witt observes Salutati's firm assertion of the freedom of the will, which is

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 319.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 320.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

referred to as “*mirabile quiddam*”¹⁷⁹ (amazing thing) in the *De fato et fortuna*. To sum up, divine providence gives necessity to things, which contingently take the form they desire. It can also be asserted that the essence of man’s nature is absolutely free.

3.5.2.2. Fortune Christianised

During his early years, Salutati treated the conflict of fortune and virtue as a dramatic element overflowing into his ethics. Salutati heavily relied on ancient thinkers, but Witt points out that the proportional usage of ancient sources and popular, traditional and contemporary literary elements is unclear.¹⁸⁰ As regards early works of Salutati, fortune is a deceptive, cruel and treacherous power, which man cannot discipline. Man led by his passions is subject to fortune’s mood. Witt describes through Salutati’s works the early-Renaissance approach toward the concept of fortune, which was more than a poetic concept describing the adversaries of humanity. Salutati, moreover, was socialized “in a century in which belief in fortune was almost universal”.¹⁸¹

The pagan ethical concepts of virtue and fortune acquired a Christian interpretation with Salutati, who wrote in one of his letters: “to live well is peculiar to a human being and is the mark of a good and virtuous man. This capacity is not within our power alone but is acquired by us through the cooperating grace of God, the virtues, and a good disposition of mind.”¹⁸² This Christian analysis is viewed by Witt as Salutati’s new personal interest, through which ethics became Christianized, the first evidence of which is his theory of special Christian providence working in the papal election.¹⁸³ Witt adds that the re-analysis of the virtue-fortune formula was to follow in his later works, but the inclusion of Christian elements, such as grace and divine providence is significant. His later correspondence gave evidence to this shift when Salutati claimed that man is no longer on his own in the fight of virtue and fortune, but is aided by the Christian God.¹⁸⁴ Salutati’s earlier concept of the pagan fortune gradually disappeared from his letters and writings, which gave way to its equation with

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 323.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

the divine will, by the elaboration of which Salutati heavily relied on the theology of Augustine.¹⁸⁵

The Augustinian concept is apparent in Salutati's *De seculo*, in which he describes man's cooperation with grace. The inherent original sin dims the reason but divine aid governs the reason towards the election of the good, for which man's cooperation is needed, "provided we wish it, provided we abhor the deformity of sin and are moved through love to desire the beauty of divine justice".¹⁸⁶

The compatibility of the freedom of the will with divine governance is also described in the *De Seculo*:

"We have command of our wills so that we can turn them whither we desire and draw them whence we have focused them. For thus God moves our wills that he not impede freedom of choice and not only does he not impede but he increases the good we properly wish to do ... For the grace of God precedes our willing the good, it helps us willing, it cooperates with our willing".¹⁸⁷

The granted freedom of the will is later elaborated in Salutati's *De fato et fortuna*, which further explains the compatibility of divine necessity, universal fate and freedom of the will.

3.5.3 Goddess Fortune is Divine Providence

Witt points out that Salutati never rejected his earlier definition of the blind and savage fortune, but he never held the faith that it was just an empty name. He equated fortune with divine providence. Significantly affecting the individual, Salutati defines fortune as "the hidden and accidental cause of rare, notable, and unexpected effect happening in a way other than intended by the agents", whereas chance is interpreted as "the accidental and hidden cause of a natural effect happening rarely and contrary to the inclination of nature."¹⁸⁸

Divine providence operates in a way that in accordance with God's commands the indeterminate potentialities are employed in order to carry out the divine plan. "Therefore", writes Salutati, "if one considers and understands the matter properly, one

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Salutati, "De fato et fortuna", *Ibid.*, 324.

should not be reluctant to give the names ‘arbiter’, ‘mistress goddess’, to this Divine Providence, to which it is right to refer both chance and fortune”.¹⁸⁹

Salutati shows up Biblical proofs for the existence of fortune and chance operating in the miracles. The instruments of God act out in a way that they break the normal series of cause and effect processes, resulting in miracles. Witt points out that in Salutati’s argument “the first cause and its spiritual agents are always ‘legitimate’ at any level of the hierarchy of causes and effects.”¹⁹⁰

3.5.4 Stellar influence

Though contingency is present everywhere in the universe, the supernatural powers can affect its course any time unexpectedly in the form of chance and fortune. God’s absolute freedom is in this cause and effect relationship granted, which further supports the freedom of the human will. As we have seen, everything is necessarily dependent on the divine decree, from which the celestial bodies are no exception. Witt adds that for Salutati it was impossible to imagine that God merely ornamented the sky with the spheres.¹⁹¹

Fatal necessity has been proven to be equal with divine providence, which directs and maintains everything in order to issue the desired effects. The stars influence the course of events as fate part of the divinely ordained necessity. Therefore, Salutati does not refute the stellar influence on human life but leaves the question open due to ineffective measuring tools.¹⁹² He placed the stellar influences parallel to the free will as independent phenomena. One cannot really tell the effect of the stars as they are mutable according to their constellation.¹⁹³ Salutati refers to the case of Jacob and Esau, who were twins, that is, born at the same time, nevertheless, their fates significantly differed.¹⁹⁴ God, who stands above nature and human will, and sets everything into work, could also change the effect of the stars, or even cause them to cease to have any effect at all. God’s decision is unforeseeable, which makes the effects incalculable

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 325.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Alfred v. Martin, *Mittelalterliche Welt- und Lebensanschauung im Spiegel der Schriften Coluccio Salutatis* (München/Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1913) 112

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

too.¹⁹⁵ As only God knows the future, predictions or fortune telling from the stars is foolish and unreligious and would only lead to a view of God as if he were in the automatism of a wheel-machine.¹⁹⁶

3.5.5 Predestination

Salutati repeats thoughts of his predecessors concerning the *presciti* (the damned) and the *predestinati* (the elected). God's predestination to eternal life is a proof of his mercy, whereas his damnation and punishment is a proof of his justice. The compatibility of this doctrine with the asserted freedom of the will is concluded by Witt:

“Despite the fact that God saves and damns men in an eternal now, the actions of men's free will still have significance on the outcome of the judgement. How such contingency and necessity cohere in the same actions appears a ‘marvelous secret indeed’.”¹⁹⁷

Trinkaus points out that Salutati stood against those opinions that implemented God's injustice. For Salutati, God's omnipotence and just nature was the source of justification for predestination.¹⁹⁸

3.6 Alberti: Fate and Fortune discussed at the dinner table

Leon Battista Alberti, the poet, architect, art theorist, artist, who is widely known as “The Renaissance Man”. His *Intercenales*, known in English as Dinner Pieces, gives an overview on family entertainment and moral education of the Renaissance Florence. As its Latin name suggests, these short writings were meant to be read during dinner, as Alberti explains, “I have begun to collect my Dinner Pieces into short books so that they may more easily be read over dinner and drinks (*inter cenas et pocula*)”¹⁹⁹ Erasmus's *Diatrobe* is a work of this genre deliberating on a given topic. Dinner was the time that all members of the family got together, regardless of age. According to Marsh, Alberti wrote the Dinner Pieces on the antique pattern of dinner discussions of moral and

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁹⁷ Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads*, 329.

¹⁹⁸ Trinkaus, *Coluccio Salutati's Critique of Astrology*, 57.

¹⁹⁹ Leon Battista Alberti "Dinner Pieces" translated by David Marsh, *Medieval & Renaissance Tests & Studies In conjunction with The Renaissance Society of America* (Binghamton, New York: 1987) 5.

philosophical questions. The point, why the fables are meant to be read over dinner, is taken from the antique explanation that “during meals and drinks (*inter mensas et pocula*) ... anger is lightly aroused”. Alberti’s autobiography touches upon this subject, as he explains that the Dinner Pieces are meant to be a sort of entertainment, leisurely improvisation.²⁰⁰ Although they did not get published, a number of manuscripts were circulated.²⁰¹ The Dinner Pieces demonstrate that the question of fate and fortune could have served as entertainment and moral education at the same time.

The fables of Fate and Fortune give us a comprehensive summary of Alberti’s visions on concepts, which were an organic part of trends of domestic philosophy. Most fables resemble the Aesopic fables, which are also meant to be read by all ages and social classes. The themes Alberti employs cover a wide range of topics, from happiness, wealth, to religion, love, marriage and love affairs. And sometimes very heavily relies on classic traditions, but often consciously avoids it, creating a new kind of moral fable.

3.6.1 The river of life

Virtue and its struggle with fortune is featured in the Dinner Pieces, in the way as Petrarch already elaborated them. The glory of the virtuous man and his victory over the ever-changing power of fortune is proclaimed by Alberti, although not as definitely as Machiavelli, which will be demonstrated later. Alberti valued the study of liberal arts higher than being ‘simply virtuous’, that is, being faithful to one’s ruler and being honest in all deeds. He has a very unique conclusion concerning the operations of Fate and Fortune, which he explains in the end of a vision of a philosopher, which is a Hell-like dream depicted with a lot of suffering and insight into human nature.

Alberti begins his moral story explaining that the operations of Fate and Fortune can be understood by analyzing a very vivid dream. He claims that this dream can reveal the truth, for “during sleep men’s minds are often released and set free”. Alberti invokes the help of the philosopher to understand this vision, since they are both “at leisure”, referring to the aim of the Dinner Pieces, as well as the attention the complexity of the question requires.

²⁰⁰ David Marsh (trans) "Leon Battista Alberti. Dinner Pieces", *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies In conjunction with The Renaissance Society of America* (Binghamton, New York: 1987) 5.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

In the very beginning, the philosopher distances himself from the ancient tradition of fate and fortune, minding the reader that something new is to come and the former lengthy explanations turn out to be unsatisfactory, “the ancients had written about fate, and although I valued many of their remarks very few of them seemed to satisfy me. For I still keenly desired something – I know not what – in my reflections on this matter.”

Right after the philosopher denounces the ancient concepts of fate and fortune, a Medieval vision appears in front of the readers’ eyes.²⁰² The centre of the vision is a high mountain surrounded by “countless shades that seemed human”. Everything can be observed from the peak of the mountain, the sides of which are so precipitous that they make the mountain “virtually inaccessible on all sides”. There is but one narrow path that allows climbing up the mountain. The mountain is surrounded by “the swiftest and most turbulent river imaginable, which flowed into itself”.

The scene is in itself a Hell-like vision, especially that “countless legions of those shades descend (into the river) ceaselessly by the narrow path”. Reading these lines in itself means suffering, moreover, the shades falling into the river take on an infant’s face and limbs.²⁰³ As these infants begin their tribulations in the river, the observer can see them grow in their age. The shades can communicate with the philosopher and reply to his question that the name of the river is Bios, “(i)n Latin, the river is called Life (Vita) and the age of mortals, and its bank is called Death (Mors).”

On this river there are floats, with the help of which “some rise above the water ... while in contrast others are so roughly tossed by the waves and beaten on the rocks that they can barely keep their heads above water ... beneath its (the river’s) surface the whole river is full of jagged and dense rocks”. These floats are but “proud ostentation” and are of no use when they are clashed against these jagged and dense rocks.

²⁰² The mountain and the rivers, which, not only the scenes of the Otherworld, but these are Fortune’s Medieval dwelling places as well. (Patch 1967 p17) It is on the top of a mountain. (Patch Otherworld p607) The mountain’s rock further transformed into a crystal mountain through Medieval folklore, as Patch suggests, which, seen as a rock of ice, symbolizes the lack of durability. (p608) The slipperiness of the mountain where Fortune dwells, even demands that the ones who climb it have a guide. (Patch 609) This already might foreshadow a preparation for a combat, which Petrarch later turned into the war of Virtue and Fortune. She has a forelock and the back of her head is shaved. Although she is not double-faced, as many descriptions picture her, one half of her face is laughing and shiny, the other is crying, referring to her fickleness, mutability, and deception, as we will investigate it later. She is equipped with a wheel, too. She dwells between two rivers, one sweet and one sulphurous, which represent her mutable nature.

²⁰³ Marsh, *Leon Battista Alberti. Dinner Pieces*, 23.

3.6.2 Humans thrown out into Life

The shades floating in the river of life are “(l)ike you, we are celestial sparks destined for human life”. It seems that they are beings thrown out to fight against the currents of life. They are celestial, of an origin not known by earthly mortals, but which is supposed to be supernatural, that is, definitely a stronger power than what humans possess. They are destined for life, that is, they do not have a choice if they want or chose to swim in the river of life. In short, humans are thrown out against the adversities of life and destined to take its course from their birth.

Humans should not rely on any floats, i.e., external help in their lives. “Unfortunate are those who rely on such floats!” cries out the philosopher, as he witnesses what happens with those who cling to their damaged floats in midstream and clash into the rocks as they let the float go. Therefore, those are only successful, “who from the beginning rely on their own strength in swimming to complete their passage through Life”. It takes a skill in life to be witty enough to recognize when external help comes as an aid in the struggle in the form of a boat. This help comes from the supernatural or it is what life just brings.

Here and there, boats arrive to swimming shades, who cling to them. These boats have rulers, who are “distinguished by their character and virtue”. They steer the boats in order to watch over peace. To avoid shipwreck, we find an exact prescription. Those ones, who stay in their place and are alert to face any emergency. They should be vigilant, faithful, diligent and have a sense of duty. Those who cling to planks and look in all directions and try to find the safest course are called the “exceptional few”. These planks are the liberal arts. That is, those educated, who rely on their knowledge and are circumspect with their acquired wisdom, are the exceptional few, who lead their lives the right way. Those ones, who choose not to swim, are the worst. These are greedy and avaricious, dishonest and impudent, lustful and gluttonous, corrupted by sloth.

3.6.3 Fortune and other powers

In the harsh dream strange creatures with wings and winged sandals appear. As it will be dealt with in the next chapter in detail, winged sandals are symbols of Fortune/Occasio. Alberti comes up with a new approach toward these well-known symbols, namely, there are shades too, whose sandals and wings are not perfect. They

are very hard to separate from the masses of shades floating in the river, there are some shades with wings and winged sandals gliding easily over the waves. Why they are outstanding and do not belong to the masses, the shades explain:

“Their wings signify truth and candor, and their winged sandals, contempt for transitory things. They are rightly considered gods both for their divine traits, and because they first fashioned as a great aid to swimmers the planks which you see in the river, inscribing on the various planks the names of the liberal arts. The others, who are quite similar to these gods, do not rise entirely above the water, and their wings and sandals are not perfect. They are semigods, worthy of honor and veneration second only to the gods. ... O man, give them due thanks, for by these planks they have lent excellent aid for completing the toilsome journey of life.”

Alberti claims that in this dream Fate and Fortune were “nicely depicted” in a way that one can finally understand their operation. He explains:

“... if I interpret it correctly, I learned that Fate is merely the passage of things in human life, which is carried along by its own sequence and descent. I observed that Fortune is kinder to those who fall into the river where there chance to be whole planks or a boat. By contrast, I found that Fortune is harsh to those of us who have plunged into the river at a time when we must continually overcome the waves by swimming. But we shall not be unaware that prudence and diligence are of great value in human affairs.”

If we interpret Alberti correctly, the river Life is Fate, with everything it carries along. Life happens according to its own course, humans are thrown into it and it is up to them to cope with their life, i.e., their fate. Fortune is a divine power which is there to help out or hinder humans, according to their merit. Those who educate themselves are prudent and diligent and are willing to lead their lives honestly, are favoured by Fortune. They can trust Fortune that they will be helped in their lives. Those, however, who are lustful



Figure 4.
“Fortune leads the merchants
safely to the Hill of Virtue” by
Pinturicchio

and dishonest, cannot wait Fortune's favour, but life will simply overcome them. It also takes chance to win Fortune's favour. Virtue alone is not enough to survive, but there must be a chance for education (planks of liberal arts) and a place in society (boats steered by a ruler).

3.7 Ficino's truce with Fortune and Fate

In his letter *Della Fortuna*, Ficino explains, sharing the thought of Petrarch, that Fortuna can be overcome. This can be done however, only by the clever men and not by the general public. This cleverness, on the other hand, is a gift of nature, or more likely, a gift of God. Thus, it is God, who equips us for the war against Fortune. Furthermore, Fortune comes from nature, and nature comes from God, to sum up, the opposing forces come from the same origin.²⁰⁴ Therefore, Ficino comes up with a wise solution, or rather, a counsel: it is good to fight against fortune with the weapons of wisdom, but it is best to withdraw and make truce or ceasefire.²⁰⁵ For Ficino, we can say, life becomes a playground of wit, though it is advised to make an inner peace with Fortuna and stop the hopeless war.

The war against Fortune embodied her in the adverse world as a sinister wind demon, who is capable of letting the ship of life perish or embark. Ficino's correspondence with the Florentine Rucellai family father touched upon the subject war against Fortune. Ficino's advice is the following: one should shield himself with the armour of caution, patience and wittiness to fight against Fortune. It is advisable to make truce and peace and adjust one's will to hers so that she does not force her will on us. This is possible only if human power, wisdom and will are united.²⁰⁶ Providence is the remedy against Fortune and can influence the course of events regardless of humans.²⁰⁷ The Platonic philosopher. refers to John 19:11, "Thou couldest not have this power except it were given thee from above", Ficino claims that the provident man has power against Fortune. Fortune is thus a power that can be combated with the weapons of Providence, but the best suggestion is to make peace and truce with her.

²⁰⁴ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Die Philosophie des Marsilio Ficino* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972) 280.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Warburg, "Francesco Sssetti's letztwillige Verfügung", 140.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

3.7.1 Wisdom against bodily fate and circumnavigating the whirlpool of fortune

In a letter entitled "*On constancy in the face of fortune*", Ficino shares his views on providence and fate. It is providence that "gently" moves the soul toward God and the material body is dragged by the forces of fate.²⁰⁸ The forces of fate, however, affect the mind only when the mind is submerged in the body, which is subject to fate. Therefore, claims Ficino, one should always be centred in the mind, as fate affects only the body: "The wise man will not struggle pointlessly with fate". The wise man therefore, lets go of the attachment to the body and concentrates on the cultivation to his soul. To be free from bodily attachment is becoming like God, which is freedom.

The freedom of becoming like God can be attained through three virtues: prudence, justice and piety and so the free person will follow "the golden rule": "(he) freely commits to the guidance of divine providence". As a conclusion, Ficino adds: "with the wind of heaven behind us we shall circumnavigate successfully this vast whirlpool of fortune, and, quite untroubled, sail safely into harbour."²⁰⁹

3.7.2 Movers of the universe and humble acknowledgement of man's place

Concerning the principal causes, that is, the primal movers of the universe, Ficino differentiates four principal causes. The first cause is divine providence helping humans to stay close to the divinity. Secondly, the fateful laws of heavenly bodies are regulated by divine providence, which also affects the movement of "the everlasting and unresting course" of the planets. Natural order is also subjugated to the divine order and can be witnessed in the movement of the spheres, as their finite nature regulates their movement. Finally, the "fickle soul of mortals", that is, the human cause, which can easily be inflated by vanity resulting in a false placement of human destiny. The arrogant and unjust men sometimes rank their destiny higher than that of other humans, which is wrong. This is what Ficino calls the "beast" that can be fed like the bodies of the animals, but their soul is never content.²¹⁰ It follows from this that the desirable

²⁰⁸ Marsilio Ficino "On constancy in the face of fortune." Members of the Language Department of the School of Economic Science (trans) *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino. Volume I.* (Fellowship of the School of Economic Science, London, 1975) 95.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Marsilio Ficino, "How false is human prosperity" *Ibid.*, 76.

attitude toward human destiny should be a humble acknowledgement of one's place in the universe.

3.7.3 We make Fortune a goddess and set her in heaven

Ficino also gave views on the observation that fortune is fickle, that is, she is hostile to people. He claims that the hostility of fortune might be due to her vanity. Her vanity lies in her claim that remarkable actions should be credited only to her and not to human virtue. It is "poisonous pride" she creates in humanity, which creates a tyrant out of a great man. These persons, moreover, "cause a belief, ... that the universe is not moved by divine providence, nor mankind by human prudence, but by chance".²¹¹ Divine providence, on the other hand, sometimes opposing fortune, topples those men of high rank, but other times, even if fortune tries to precipitate them from their high esteem, it raises them high. Persons, nevertheless, have been raised up by divine providence and not by the operation of fortune. These persons do not let chance operate, and do not rely on their virtue, either, but solely on divine virtue. Fortune must not be relied upon, for she is blind, moreover, her promises must not be heard because she is not faithful to anybody. Fortune's threats should not be taken into account either, as Ficino addresses: "Fortune, you cannot do anything to us that we ourselves do not wish whenever we make you a goddess and set you in heaven. No one is more pitiable than he who places true happiness in fortune".²¹²

3.7.4 Escape or overcome fate?

If we try to dig deeper into the layers of the philosophy of fate, we necessarily encounter the question: is it written in one's fate that he tries to flee from his fate? Would he have fallen into his own trap if he had not been revealed his future? Ficino claims that escaping fate only strengthens necessity. One who escapes, tops it with his own struggles. Ficino claims on avoiding fate and necessity: "If all things come from fate, those who strive to avoid what is an unavoidable necessity fall more heavily into fate, for to it they are adding their own labour. ... divine providence ... puts unreasonable

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

²¹² Marsilio Ficino, "For evil men good fortune is bad, but for good men evil fortune is good" *Ibid.*, 78.

chance in order, and gently tempers stern fate in accordance with the good”.²¹³ Those persons, who seek the unification with the divine will, can experience how things turn to good and ordered. People, moreover, blame the stars and God for their bad fortune, although they have sown the bad seeds of bad actions. The earthly sowing cultivated rightly eventually bears heavenly fruit.²¹⁴

On the general human attitude of endeavouring to investigate earthly and heavenly things, Ficino, quite ironically, claims that “whatever presents itself on the ground, they attempt to grasp with nostrils, lips and fingers.”²¹⁵ In breadth of view, Mankind is scolded: “wretched ones, almost all of us foolishly subject the head of the soul, that is reason, to the senses. ... with the mind thus abased to the level of earth, we trust that we may gain knowledge of things celestial as well as earthly”.²¹⁶ The foulness of trying to understand the course of the universe is an “insane misery”, just like to bewail fortune. The foolish attempt to try to alter fortune or the course of fate is wrong. According to Ficino, we should change ourselves and thus we can change our fate and fortune. In an another letter, however, an explanation is given concerning the means to overcome fate. The predetermination of the stars and the astrologic prophecies can be overcome, as stated earlier, moreover, fate can also be easily opposed: “by that very opposition one may immediately overcome what one wishes. A close examination of universal phenomena is a kind of transcendence, which is coming near to God, that is, the free decision. The freedom of the mind and divine providence are above the celestial realm. Not any habitual action following from celestial movement, that is, fatal action, follows from the force of the stars, but “they flow from providence and freedom itself, by whose grace we have spoken against fate”.²¹⁷ Will and reason are thus not moved by the stars but by God. Fate can thus be overcome by divine freedom.

The evil that is happening to humanity is deserved, according to Ficino, for humanity “chases after” evils. Concerning the deliberate escape from deserved punishment, the Florentine philosopher’s opinion is the following: “The more wilfully we flee from human justice, the more does divine justice overtake us, whether we will

²¹³ Marsilio Ficino, "No one can be envied, who can see how many times we all are driven both inwardly and outwardly by the Furies" *Ibid.*, Volume III. 3.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹⁵ Marsilio Ficino "In order to change your lot for the better, change the form of your soul for the better" *Ibid.*, 12

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

²¹⁷ Marsilio Ficino, "As soon as we strive to oppose fate, we overcome it" *Ibid.*

or no. In the very crime is the punishment of the crime”.²¹⁸ A right tempering of the movements of the mind, is the right judgement of the course of events, which is the desirable way to live. One who tempers his mind, thus tempers all things around himself. Ficino’s philosophy is centred around discord, which holds the universe together. The same implies to evil, the spirits of which stand in opposition to angels. We have seen earlier how he juxtaposes divine providence with bodily fate, other times with vain fortune. Philosophising over discord, Ficino sets fortune and fate in opposition to the body and the bodily humours, just as vice against virtue, and, the vices against each other. These kinds of discord held the universe in place.

3.7.5 Divine foreknowledge and the "foolish advocates of the Fates"

Concerning the misinterpretation of the human course of events, as well as free will and divine providence, Ficino affirms that the “vain” astrologers are wrong in denying free will and providence.²¹⁹ They deprive God of his omnipotence and sovereignty in the universe, moreover, these astrologers do not acknowledge the justice of angels. The astrologers also deny free will because they make it seem as men are driven like beasts.²²⁰

Regarding foreknowledge, Ficino claims that the fate of men can be foreseen but “to no purpose. Yet, if they can be avoided by some method, the inevitability of fate is falsely maintained by the astrologers.” The conclusion thus is: “we are not moved not so much by the Fates themselves as by the foolish advocates of the Fates”.²²¹ The “fools who veil (falsehoods) in obscurity”, equate themselves with God by fortune telling. It is an act of taking away God’s direction, who is the highest freedom, since it is God who moves the spheres and heavens.²²² Foreknowledge, however, does not imply determinism. God is the sole fore-knower of all things and whatever is indicated, that is, foreseen in the heavens are not caused by them, as for example, God cannot be the source of evil happenings. The heavenly signs are thus not causes. The cause of everything is in God, who rules and moves the spheres, which indicate the forthcoming events. Similarly, “through the wisdom of the divine mind”, the human causes are

²¹⁸ Marsilio Ficino, "As each is in himself, so to each are those things which he receives" *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹⁹ Marsilio Ficino, "To the very degree that astronomers measure, astrologers misrepresent" *Ibid.*, 48.

²²⁰ Marsilio Ficino, "A disputation against the pronouncements of the astrologers by Marsilio Ficino of Florence" *Ibid.*, 75.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

²²² *Ibid.*, 77.

foreseen also and can be read from heavenly signs e.g., the globes, heavenly bodies, spheres are agents of God. The governing power is divine providence, which can be seen in the operation of the spheres.²²³

3.7.6 The will determined to the ultimate good

The advisor of the Florentine families claimed that the ultimate good, to which all of the objects are measured, is in the intellect and it takes a logical thinking to apply the measurement of the object to this original good, which is the process of making a decision.²²⁴ The will, therefore, is able to choose between the possibilities offered by the intellect. However, the will is determined in a sense that as an original object, it is the good, that it craves for.²²⁵ The will's object is originally good and measures its objects to the perfect, the original good, thus, the essence of Ficino's theory of the will is that the will and the intellect can find only in setting its aim in God.²²⁶ Ficino employs the Augustinian terms, will and intellect, in an entirely contrary theory: whereas Augustine claims that the human will got corrupted by the fall and therefore can only sin, Ficino is the most optimistic above all claiming that the human will can only set the ultimate good as its aim. From this theory of the will develops his theory of love. Love of God means following his will.

3.8 Machiavelli's concept of fortune

Machiavelli's political theory incorporated chance, fortune and free will. He was concerned with the war of free will and fortune while investigating chance, the unpredictable element of everyday and political interaction. Fortune thus became the enemy of the free willed and virtuous human: "that our freewill may not be altogether extinguished, I think it may be true that fortune is the ruler of half our actions, but that she allows the other half or thereabouts to be governed by us."²²⁷

²²³ Marsilio Ficino, "Divine Law cannot be made by the heavens, but may perhaps be indicated by them" *Ibid.*, Vol IV, 2-28.

²²⁴ Kristeller, *Die Philosophie des Marsilio Ficino*, 240.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 243.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 244-245.

²²⁷ Niccoló Machiavelli "The Prince" quoted by Paul McLean *Chance in Renaissance Florence* (Department of Sociology, Rutgers University) 9. Accessed September 2010.
<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~pmclean/mclean%20ccacc%20paper%20final.htm>

Niccoló Machiavelli is known as a controversial political thinker, who, without a doubt, contributed to political theory and theory of the state remarkably. His controversial writings have been a hotbed of misreading and misinterpretations, to put it into more specific words, “Machiavelli has been characterised as the champion of fatalism as well as the champion of free will against Fortune; it all depends on the interpretation given to his words”.²²⁸

In the followings, we will see that Niccoló Machiavelli is the champion of Fortune: we will see how he operates with the concept in order to support his political theory. It also will be clear, however, that it is up to the reader to establish the concept of Fortune itself: we are given examples and thoughts on the subject embedded very thoroughly, and not without intention indeed, in the political texts. The investigation will also convince us that the Machiavellian universe does not throw out the human between the powers of will and Fortune, as some would claim.²²⁹

Our two main sources of Machiavelli’s idea of Fortune are *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy* (Discourses). Both sources employ Fortune as the part of the development of the state, from which the ideas in question are to be postulated. It is probably *The Prince* that gave the term ‘Machiavellian’ a negative connotation. In fact, it is a piece of work written in the time of a Florentine political situation that called for a strong need for stability. Machiavelli’s thought on keeping up stability via all means, made his prince striving to establish his state a sinister figure in further references. However, acquiring skills such as virtù, that is virtue, and fighting with the adversities of fortune, allows for a stable moral treatise.

3.8.1 To outwit Lady Fortune

„As fortune is changeable whereas men are obstinate in their ways, men prosper so long as fortune and policy are in accord, and when there is a clash they fail. I hold strongly to this: that it is better to be impetuous than circumspect; because fortune is a woman and if she is to be submissive it is necessary to beat and coerce her. . . . Always, being a woman, she favours young men, because they are less circumspect and more ardent, and because they command her with great audacity.”²³⁰

²²⁸ Vincenzo Cioffari, "The Function of Fortune in Dante, Boccaccio and Machiavelli," *Italica* 24 (March 1947): 11.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11

²³⁰ Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince* translated by George Bull (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1986) 35, 90, 135.

Machiavelli reaches the point with the depiction of Fortune that the goddess reaches heights she has never seen before. She is philosophically proven, for her existence is essential to have brave warriors in the world, who come over her power. He even describes the goddess with full details. She is a power, whom everybody fears.

The Machiavellian concept of Fortune corresponds to the Renaissance concept in terms of its personification and depiction. Fortune is an intelligent being, a woman, controlling humans and their affairs. She watches over human actions and sometimes intervenes. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli comments Roman history and claims that Rome “is very notable for demonstrating the power of heaven over human affairs”²³¹ She can also be seen as one of the “intelligences” which the air is full of “that foresee future things by their natural virtues, and they have compassion for men, they warn them with like signs, so that they can prepare themselves for defense”²³², that is, she is a willed being governed by her own emotions toward humans basically with a positive approach.

Other instances, however, show the merciless, cruel woman playing with men like puppets or chessmen. She is capricious, instable, symbolised by the ever-changing winds, other times depicted with the figure of the wheel, which Machiavelli suggests stopping with a nail. She pushes back the sailor in storm just at the time that he thinks he has reached the shore. Her changing nature requires humans be prepared for adversity. She strikes now and again, to an extent that she is even compared to a hammer.²³³ Machiavelli’s writings suggest the human attitude towards Fortuna: that man is to fight against her, showing his virtù, ability to withstand her. The Machiavellian hero is to show his power against the seemingly inscrutable and vain woman. She is undoubtedly the ultimate enemy of humankind, we might even dare to claim, the enemy of the state or public enemy, since she is depicted through political affairs.

Machiavelli also depicts Fortune not only with one wheel, but more of them. The wheel of life, existence symbolising useless human efforts are multiplied, which stand

²³¹ Niccoló Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* translated by Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 197.

²³² *Ibid.*, 114.

²³³ Cioffari, "The Function of Fortune in Dante, Boccaccio and *Machiavelli*" 3-4.

for the changing situations.²³⁴ The virtuous human is to defeat Fortune by jumping from one wheel to another, this way outwitting her power of turning the wheels.

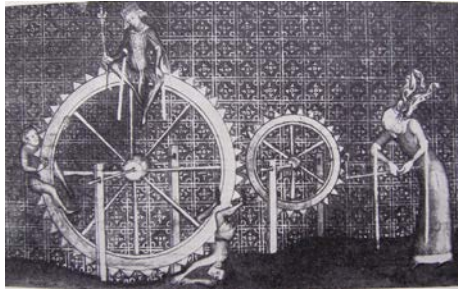


Figure 5.
Mechanical wheels

“You get the best lot of all .. if you take one wheel according to the will of Fortune. So it corresponds to her passion, which drives you to act according to her will, so you are happy ... But you cannot count on her ... because while you jumped on the back of the wheel which was happy and good, she changes in the course of turning its direction. But you

can never change nature and inclinations. ... If you conceive and realise this, so you will be happy, you can jump from wheel to wheel.”²³⁵

The acrobatic challenge of jumping from wheel to wheel anticipates humans’ adopting to the changing situations of the times to be discussed later.

Although Machiavelli announces war against Fortune and calls for the abilities (virtú) of the politicians and everyday people to outwit her, the mutable enemy is not a woman to be feared, but she is a woman to be conquered. Overcoming Fortune results in a harmonic life, but to achieve this harmony is depicted quite violently, referring again to human’s desperate fight against her.

“As for me, I believe this: ... Fortune is a woman and it is necessary, in order to keep her under, to cuff and maul her. She more often lets herself be overcome by men using such methods than by those who proceed coldly; therefore always, like a woman, she is the friend of young men, because they are less cautious, more spirited and with more boldness master her”²³⁶

3.8.2 The operation of Fortune

We have seen above how Machiavelli sees Fortune as a woman to be mastered and conquered by force, who lets herself be overcome by the bold. Personified fortune

²³⁴ Wolfgang Kersting, *Niccoló Machiavelli* (München: C. H. Beck, 1998) 109.

²³⁵ my translation, *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince* translated by Alan H. Gilbert (Durham/London: The Duke University Press, 1989) 92

is vicious, malicious and the utmost enemy of humanity. In the followings, Machiavelli's concept of fortune is discussed, namely, how this force works without a persona and what powers are able to oppose it.

In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli deduces his political theory and through this his concept of fortune from the history of Rome claiming "we could bring up some modern example in confirmation of the things said, but because we do not judge it necessary since this can satisfy anyone whatever, we will omit it" Still, the reader is not every time convinced that it is history that proves theory or the other way around. Machiavelli quotes Titus Livy on fortune in the *Discourses*, "Fortune blind(s) spirits where it does not wish its gathering strength checked". This adaptation of the concept recalls Fortune's, a woman's vanity in the game of powers. Still, humans are thrown out as toys, even more so as means of history to carry out fortune's plans,

"when it wishes to bring about great things it elects a man of so much spirit and so much virtue that he recognizes the opportunities that it proffers him. ... when it wishes to bring about great ruin, it prefers men who can aid in that ruin. And if anyone should be there who could withstand it, either it kills him or it deprives him of all faculties of being able to work anything well."²³⁷

Thus, fortune chooses a, so to say, medium, a human to carry out its plans. This operation is very similar to the concept God of the Old Testament choosing, for example, Nebukodnesar to carry out his punishment on the Hebrews. All in all, in the course of history we see that

"men can second fortune but not oppose it, that they can weave its warp but not break it. They should indeed never give up for, since they do not know its end and it proceeds by oblique and unknown ways, they have always to hope and, since they hope, not to give up in whatever fortune and in whatever travail they may find themselves"²³⁸

The advise not to give up against fortune finally raises the question, whether fortune is really or conquerable or, rather, insurmountable. We should first and foremost

²³⁷ Niccoló Machiavelli "Discourses" In: Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli's God* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010) 32.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

keep in mind Lukes' statement, "Fortune is always operative but must be practically treated as if it is not"²³⁹

As a starting point of the discussion concerning human competence, we should keep in mind Machiavelli's statement:

"the cause of the bad and of the good fortune of men is the matching of the mode of one's proceeding with the times. ... For a man who is accustomed to proceed in one mode never changes, .. and it must be of necessity that when the times change not in conformity with his mode, he is ruined. ... we are unable to oppose that to which nature inclines us. Hence it arises that fortune varies in one man, because it varies the times and he does not vary the modes"²⁴⁰

That is, it is only a desperate aspiration to come over one thing that is in course with fortune and influences the outcome, called human nature.

Nevertheless, the Renaissance virtuous man is to show the quality of adaptability to the winds of fortune. In spite of all his efforts, this man is to fall, as well. Machiavelli comes up with the example of Cesare Borgia again and again in *The Prince*, placing him on the pedestal of *virtú*, that is, ability. The defeat of Borgia against fortune is to be sought in his human nature. Had he been in good health, he would have overcome every difficulty. Here another aspect of fortune is revealed, namely, its insurmountability due to the natural fact that we are ontologically subjects of fortune, we cannot overcome death, and that is one thing not even the brightest scholars would argue.²⁴¹ Our finite existence is furthermore in the hands of fortune, whether we try to oppose it or not. But "if anyone should be there who could withstand (fortune), ... it kills him".

Furthermore, nature and fortune constantly work in humans in a way that both are undefeatable. The two forces intertwine in our lives, with an outcome we cannot help,

"human appetites are insatiable, for since from nature they have the ability and the wish to desire all things and from fortune the ability to achieve few of them, there continually results from this a discontent in human minds and a disgust with the things they possess. ... you could not work because of the malignity of the times and fortune, so that when many are

²³⁹ Timothy J. Lukes "Fortune Comes of Age" *Sixteenth Century Journal* XI. 4 (1980): 35.

²⁴⁰ Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 239

²⁴¹ Lukes "Fortune Comes of Age" 49

capable of it, someone of them more loved by heaven may be able to work it.”²⁴²

It is still not clear, however, if fortune as a chance or nature operates, whether we are dealing with fortune’s wit or durability.²⁴³ There is one thing constant in Machiavelli’s works, namely, that fortune is always to be battled, by all means.

Fortune for Machiavelli is something that is beyond the power of the individual, especially in politics, for instance, Cosimo de Medici’s personal fortune cast an influence on the fortune of all those who depended on him.²⁴⁴ Fortune is thus relative, personal fortune is subject of change, referring again to the mutability of the Goddess Fortuna. In the intertwining powers it seems that nothing is stable or objective in the universe, neither humans, nor their fortune.

In this universe, where supernatural forces work on humans, little is mentioned of God. Equating God with the Church in *The Prince*, makes it clear why forces beyond humans do not carry any of the attributes which could be ascribed to God, due to political reasons. God’s Providence is thus opportunity, occasione, which fortune creates.

“when there is great opportunity, there cannot be great difficulty ... we see marvelous, unexampled signs that God is directing you: the sea is divided; a cloud shows you the road; the rock pours out water, manna rains down, everything unites for your greatness. The rest you must do yourself. God does not do everything, so as not to take from us free will and part of the glory that pertains to us.”²⁴⁵

Moses, in many instances is referred to as a man, who is a means of fortune to carry out its plans. Moses is a person, who, through his own ability and not through fortune has been transformed into a prince, the desirable hero.

“He was a mere executor of things laid down for him by God ... we see that (he) had from fortune nothing more than opportunity, which gave (him) matter into which (he) could introduce whatever form (he) chose, and without opportunity, (his) strength of will would have been wasted ... It was then,

²⁴² Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 424

²⁴³ Lukes "Fortune Comes of Age" 46

²⁴⁴ Cioffari, "The Function of Fortune in Dante, Boccaccio and Machiavelli" 6

²⁴⁵ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 94.

necessary for Moses that the people of Israel be in Egypt ... so that to escape from bondage they would prepare their minds for following him”.²⁴⁶

Moses thus becomes a politician, a prince to be followed, and his people the subject of his fortune. The providential God in good times and in adversity, such as the God of the Exodus or the God of the Babylonian Exile is now veiled under the mask of occasione furnished by fortune. Our free will is covered under the mask of the one thing that can ease the discontent and disgust of our minds: virtù. The stronger virtù is, the lesser power fortune has. Virtù, on the other hand, is not equal to will, indeed, not even to free will. It is the ability to resist and fight powers beyond our control, like outwitting Fortuna or adopting oneself to the given situation, for “who depends least on fortune sustains himself longest”. Virtù and fortune are always in contrast,

“whoever considers well the order of ... wars and the mode of their proceeding will see inside them a very great virtue ... mixed with fortune. Therefore, whoever may examine the cause of such fortune will easily recover it. ... everyone can know better how much more virtue could do than ... fortune in acquiring (an) empire”²⁴⁷

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli ascribes half of man’s activities to fortune and half to virtue. Regardless of the outcome of the investigation, his starting point is a granted human free will, “in order not to annul our free will, I judge it true that fortune may be mistress of one half of our actionas but that even she leaves the other half, or almost, under our control.”²⁴⁸ Even the title of the chapter is “*Fortune’s Power in human Affairs and how she can be forestalled*”, that is, he does not cast even a shadow of doubt on the freedom of humans against the power of fortune. Furthermore, in the first paragraph outlines the debates and his personal standing point,

“many have believed and now believe human affairs so controlled by fortune and by god ... that men have no recourse against the world’s variations. ... they need not sweat over man’s activities but can let chance govern them ... I myself now and then incline in some respects to their belief”.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁴⁷ Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 127

²⁴⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 90.

With a dykes-metaphor, Machiavelli depicts how powerful fortune is, like a river sweeping away everything with the flood and human precautions against it are like embankments and dykes securing us and avoiding damages. The relationship of nature and the changing of the times, as well as *virtú* and fortune is concluded in this chapter the following way:

“any prince who relies exclusively on fortune falls when she varies. ... a prince succeeds who adapts his way of proceeding to the nature of the times ... one does not succeed whose procedure is out of harmony with the times. ... the nature of times is harmonious or not with their procedure. ... on this depend variations in success .. if times and affairs change, he falls, because he does not change his way of proceeding ... if he could change his nature with times and affairs, fortune would not change. I conclude then (with fortune varying and men remaining stubborn in their ways) that men are successful while they are in close harmony with fortune and when they are out of harmony, they are unsuccessful.”²⁴⁹

We are therefore subjects of an ever-changing fortune, our situation is subject to the changeable nature of times, with an ontologically determined nature and temper, which can generally be called the human nature. But we should never give up most of all by developing our *virtú*, our abilities to adopt ourselves to our changing situation and since we are free to battle the powers beyond our control, which we can generally call fortune, we are strongly encouraged to do so.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

Chapter 4

The mutable faces of Fortune

The reinterpretation of the classical images involved a merging with the surviving Medieval traditions. Leaving behind the Medieval representation of the images, the representations were aimed at referring to their original counterparts. As Panofsky puts it, this pseudomorphosis is the carrying over Medieval elements into the content of the new image. As a result of this pseudomorphosis, some Renaissance images carry a meaning, which their classical originals were not endowed with. The novelty of the Renaissance was that it was able to carry through meanings that the previous eras did not manage to.²⁵⁰

4.1 From Kairos to Fortuna

Time had two aspects in classical antiquity: the eternal and the fleeting moment. The latter was represented by the figure of Kairos, a youth with a lock of hair falling over his brow (a forelock by which time may be seized) holding a razor on which a pair of scales is balanced (the crucial moment, the turning point when affairs hang in the balance). He has winged-heels and his feet rest on a globe. In the early Renaissance, it was superseded by the female figure of Fortune, with affinities with Opportunity. Opportunity on his unsteady globe was contrasted with a figure, wisdom, or other figures, standing on a stable cube.²⁵¹

The Greek idea of Kairos is wholly represented by a statue of Lysippos. The epigram on the bronze statue is a treasury in the researcher's eye. The epigram explains in detail the symbols of Kairos, most of which transferred to the symbolism of Fortune. The text was the following:

“who are you? Time who subdues all things.
Why do you stand on tip-toe? I am ever running.

²⁵⁰ Erwin Panofsky. *Studies in Iconology: Humanist Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: OUP, 1939) 70.

²⁵¹ James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974) 229.



Figure 6.
Kairos

And why do you have a pair of wings on your feet? I fly with the wind.

And why do you hold a razor in your right hand? As a sign to men that I am sharper than any sharp edge.

And why does your hair hang over your face? For him who meets me to take me by the forelock.

And why, in Heaven's name, is the back of your head bald? Because none whom I have once raced by on my winged feet will now, though he wishes it sore, take hold of me from behind.

Why did the artist fashion you? For your sake, stranger, and he set me up in the porch as a lesson.”²⁵²

The moralising epigram together with the statue calls the attention of the observer, who wishes to solve the mystery of opportunity, chance and time. Time/Opportunity is an unstable concept, flying with the wind, whom men chase, but can never catch from behind. That is, it cannot be misused, for it is wittier than humans and runs/flies away by human mistake. The sharp edge is the thin way which humans can follow to take advantage of. Indeed, if one succeeds to pass its sharp edge, they can grasp opportunity by its forelock and seize it.

It was the Greek goddess, Tyche, the goddess of luck, who was also represented standing on a ball or wheel. A Greek depiction describes her: “Some have placed Tyche on the razor’s edge, others on a ball, others have given her a rudder, others a cornucopia, the ball or sphere indicating that change of fortune is easy”²⁵³ The Greek Tyche was adopted by the Romans as Fortuna, to which Medieval and Renaissance texts, emblems and representations refer.

Kairos-Opportunity, the decisive moment, was represented as a young man with wheels on both heels and shoulders carrying a pair of scales balanced on the edge of a razor or a knife, sometimes with wheels and with the proverbial forelock. Patch points out²⁵⁴ that due to its oblique allegory, it intrigued the Medieval man. The image thus

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Cited by Robinson "The Wheel of Fortune" 213

²⁵⁴ Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, 72.

survived and merged into the image of Fortuna, who became a nude woman with the attributes of Kairos.

Time and forelock?
Let's take this instant by the forward top;
For we are old, and on our quickest decrees
The inaudible and noiseless foot of time
Steals, ere we can effect them.
(*All's Well That Ends Well* 5.iii.40-42)

In the followings, I will present several interpretations of Fortuna, her personification and her images. The “set of symbols” the researcher has to deal with in the analysis of Fortune’s representations are: tip-toe on a “ball” or wheel, wings, wind, razor, forelock and bald nape, rudder, cornucopia and the scales. The Renaissance artist, indeed, does not fail to represent her with the wide variety of these symbols. My investigation will try to analyse the symbols and the ideas and the Renaissance world-view.

Panofsky points out that the development of Kairos “illustrates the connection between mere ‘iconography’ and the interpretation of intrinsic or essential meanings.”²⁵⁵ This intrinsic meaning is exactly what the following investigation aim at.

4.2 Fortune’s properties

By your patience, Aunchient Pistol, Fortune is painted blind, with a muffler afore her eyes, to signify to you that Fortune is blind; and she is painted also with a wheel to signify to you, which is the moral of it, that she is turning and inconstant, and mutability and variation; and her foot, look you, is fixed upon a spherical stone, which rolls and rolls and rolls. In good truth, the poet makes a most excellent description of it. Fortune is an excellent moral. (Henry V., III.vi.26-34)

²⁵⁵ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 93

4.2.1 The Wheel of Fortune

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the image of the Wheel of Fortune presumably comes from Boethius, who pictured her as turning the wheel causing the downfall of the noble and the elevation of the humble. As for the image of Boethius's *Consolatio*, the turning wheel was often represented with four figures clinging to it with

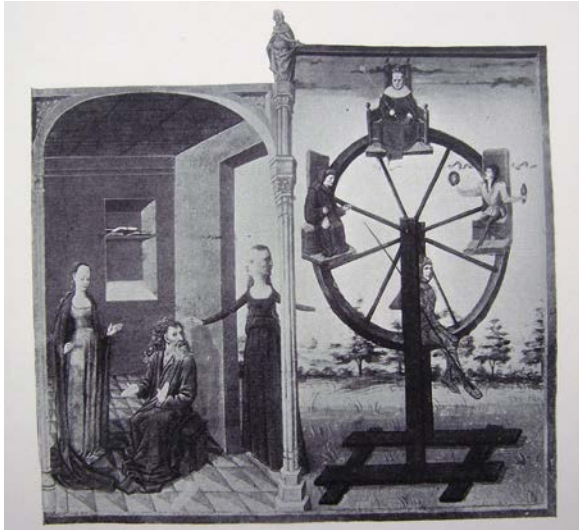


Figure 7.
Boethius and twofaced Fortune

the inscription "I will reign, I reign, I have reigned, I am without reign"²⁵⁶, as seen on the representation of Boethius and Fortune above.²⁵⁷ Doren, however, adds, that it is true that it was Boethius who employed the wheel as the symbol of Fortune in the Middle Ages in his *Consolatio*, but the image of the wheel was already the symbol of Fortune way before Boethius.²⁵⁸ What Boethius made

popular with his influential work, is the concept of the goddess of luck, who turns her wheel up and down together with the

humans on it around a fixed axis without aim. In the depictions of the goddess Fortune it is unmistakably clear that there is a functional relation between the goddess and the wheel. It is Boethius, however, who gives the wheel a plasticity of an ethical meaning in a way that the person Fortuna remains active in a way that her wheel gets an ethical symbolic meaning.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, 2-3.

²⁵⁷ The metamorphoses of the twofaced Fortune (*Fortuna Bifrons*) will later be analysed in detail in relation to the pilgrim's choice.

²⁵⁸ Doren, Alfred. "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance" *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 2 (1922-1923): 80

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 82. As for Doren's remark, the symbol, or the metaphor of the Wheel of Fortune, can be traced back to the Greeks. Robinson claims that the first instance in which this symbol appears is Greek literary works. Representations, however, can only traced back to the Romans, but the idea definitely is of Greek origin. The idea was taken by Vergil adding the attribute "rota", turning the wheel for the first time. The Greek wheel was probably a symbol of the sun. The solar symbol is to be found on wine and oil amphoras as a sign of hope in a fortunate commerce. Coinlike small bronze wheels were also found, which were strung on a cord in the middle. Adopted by the antique city of Rome, the Wheel of Fortune soon became blurred with an idea of the goddess Fortuna.

4.2.1.1 Stage property with Virtues

A Medieval French artist, Villard de Honnecourt even went so far as to design a wheel of fortune, which could have been built. The built wheel of fortune would have functioned, whirled around, as it was technically put down. The figure in the middle would have been responsible for rotating the wheel with their two hands, where instead of the traditional four, six people would have stayed.²⁶⁰

Nelson lists ten actually built wheels of fortune in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, which were in most cases stages properties. The persona Fortuna would be represented as a persona with the wheel, as a character of a morality play. For other instances, the wheel was an accessory for the festivities, not once designed for princes, rulers, monarchs. A privately built wheel, for instance, had the seven virtues fastened to the rim of the wheel in a way that

“when the wheel turned, all the Virtues moved, and they had weights at their feet which kept them upright. Possessing with some acquaintance with the Latin tongue, he (Giovanni Cellini) put a legend in Latin ... to this effect: ‘Whithersoever the wheel of Fortune turns. Virtue stands firm upon her feet’: Rota sum: semper, quoque me verto, stat Virtus”²⁶¹

The Virtues played a key role too in the fifth pageant of a Spanish play, which represented king Charles on the throne, at whose feet was a wheel. Two virtues stood at both sides of the wheel holding it and thus arresting its motion. The sceptres this time are carried by the monarchs, the central figure “above” the wheel and the two rulers sitting on the left and right side of the scene. The symbolic message cannot be clearer: virtues hinder the turning of the wheel, which allows the monarch to rule.



Figure 8.
Two Virtues prevent Fortune's wheel
from turning

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 86 All the six figures on the wheel carry a scepter, two of them dropping it on the way down, and have crownlike objects on their heads, which suggests that they are kings, perfectly sitting in the tradition of the reigning figures, but their number.

²⁶¹ quoted by Alan H. Nelson "Mechanical Wheels of Fortune, 1100-1547" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980) 231.

Nelson does not analyse, however, the three woman figures in the foreground, especially the middle figure. She is blindfolded and caught by her long forelocks. She is the captive of the two figures surrounding her. The woman blindfolded and caught by her forelock is possibly a representation of Fortune, whose wheel is hindered from moving by two Virtues in the background. This instance is represented again in the foreground by human figures and together they compile a clear message: Fortune can indeed be overcome.

4.2.1.2 Representations of the Wheel of Fortune

The nature of the mechanical representations do not have any symbolic meanings, they are only the scientific accomplishments represented within a symbolic framework. It is remarkable on the other hand, that the first representation of the Wheel of Fortune appeared in a clerical setting, in one of the codice of the Benedictine monks of Monte Cassino.²⁶² The conceptual change in the representation involved a strong individualising of Fortune's power subordinated to God's will and affecting each and every individual's life. Accordingly, instead of the kings, who reign, have reigned, will reign and are without reign, more often individuals were depicted on the wheel of fortune.²⁶³ Thus individuals took kings' place on the everlasting trip of life. Their elevation and downfall became specifically the way of an individual. There appeared mixed pictures with different human beings, as well as animals, up to nonsensical representations to emphasise the senseless game that is played upon humans, that is, as Doren puts it, the Renaissance representation of the wheel of Fortune overgrew the simple clarity of the Medieval pictures. There appeared circles of ideas, which represented the elevation and downfall of a life, which flourished in mixing them in a wheel of Fortune, or rather, in a wheel of life.²⁶⁴

The wheel of life is based on a diagonally parted circle in the centre of which is the world, viz., God in the Christian world-view.²⁶⁵ Humans strive to get into the middle of Fortune's wheel and try to hold on to the fixed point of the wheel to escape the centrifugal power that casts them among the sinners as if they sense the archaic attraction of the middle point sharing the general conviction that there in the centre

²⁶² Nelson, "Mechanical Wheels of Fortune," 227.

²⁶³ Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter," 101

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 102

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

point must be something definitely unique. The view reflected here is that man tries to get close to God in his whole life and getting closer, he turns less with Fortune. Those, who are far away from God, i.e., the sinners, are more subject to the operations of Fortune and turn around with the wheel.

Whitney's emblem combines the images of the Wheel of Fortune with Fortune on the sea. The emblem of Fortune with a forelock standing on her wheel actually resembles those of Occasio standing on an unstable globe.



Figure 9.
Fortuna by Whitney



Figure 10.
Occasio-Fortuna

4.2.2 The Globe

Dante's *Inferno* was the first piece of work that featured Fortune with her wheel together with the antique symbol of the rolling ball. The globe and the wheel turn in the same direction. It is a self-spinning globe rolling in eternity.²⁶⁶ The Ball of Fortune later became interpreted as the globe or the spheres. It is, however, different from the wheel. The idea of representing Fortune with the spheres goes back to Lysippus and his statue Kairos (Time, Opportunity, Chance)²⁶⁷ The epigram cited above does not mention the Ball of Fortune but the statue represents Kairos standing on it tip-toe, which is explained that he is ever running. It is unknown whether the round object the figure is standing on is a ball or on a wheel,²⁶⁸ nevertheless, both symbols had their own life remaining in the circle of Chance and Fortune.

²⁶⁶ Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter," 99

²⁶⁷ Robinson, *The Wheel of Fortune*, 213.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*,

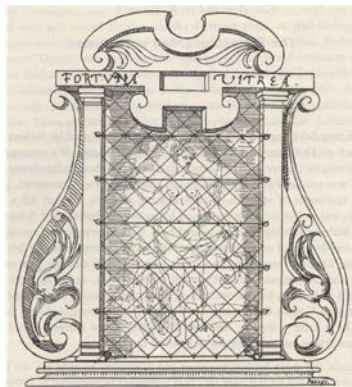
The Machiavellian idea of the opposition of *virtu* and *fortuna* is visually represented by the contrast of the cube and the ball. The constantly rolling ball of Chance-Fortune is balanced by a rectangular pedestal symbolising constancy and firmness of character. The Platonic cube stands for stability and the gravity of the earth.



Figure 11.
The round seat of Fortune and the seat of Virtue

4.2.3 Nude and air-like

A French manuscript of 1568 describes Goddess Fortune as fragile and perishable. The inscription is the following:



*"The greater and more brilliant happiness and prosperous fortunes are, the less enduring are they, and for this cause they may reasonably be compared to a transparent glass, or a frail flower, because both one and the other perish and quickly pass away. So prosperous Fortune endures but for a little while, and we could find no other way of painting this Fortune of glass"*²⁶⁹

Figure 12.
Fortuna Vitrea

Fortuna Vitrea appears neither painted on the window, nor stationed behind it, thus she is consubstantial with the glass. According to the artist, she is capricious and fortuitous. Koerner claims that as Fortuna Vitrea is neither behind nor before the window, in the manner of the transition of the deity herself to the Renaissance was.²⁷⁰ Dürer's Fortune of 1496 is the first treatment of this classical subject. It is the first time she had been represented nude and painted following mostly Italian sources.²⁷¹ She is quite mysterious, obscure and inaccessible. The sphere beneath her feet symbolizes her instability, however, traditionally placed on the ground beside her, the globe symbolized

²⁶⁹ Joseph Leo Koerner. "The Fortune of Dürer's Nemesis" in *Fortuna*, ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995) 239.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 243.

not her fickleness, but her global power. Dürer's choice of representation depicts her instability in a comic way, as she balances on it and tosses the world here and there. One of Dürer's disciples even parodied Lady Fortune as a nude woman balancing on two small spheres aided by two canes.²⁷²



Figure 13.
Dürer's Great Fortune
(Nemesis)

Dürer's Nemesis, or Great Fortune depicts the goddess as a woman dominating the whole world. The proportions of the engraving are immeasurable and the image takes a bird's-eye view. The worldscape vanishes into bifurcating valleys and the roads, rivers fan out from one another as they pass into space. It seems that the artist missed the horizon and the proportions, but it is more likely that the landscape symbolizes the Pythagorean Y, which represents a higher measurement and scale.²⁷³ The dwarf world is the world of the Pythagorean bivium, to be discussed in detail in chapter 7.

4.2.4 The shipwrecked human destiny on the sea

Antique Fortune was also depicted as holding a rudder, a representation of her association with the uncertainties of sea travel. Her representation in nautical subjects in the Renaissance is a nude woman standing on a shell, framed by a sail. Because Horace made her the "mistress of the ocean", she appeared in many instances in connection with nautical themes.²⁷⁴ The Ciceronian image of a woman causing shipwreck in life while humans are trying to sail the winds of heaven, was picked up by Petrarch. Thus, the Renaissance Fortune is often seen as a nude woman on the sea. She stands on a boat, a ball and she holds a sail.

In figure 4 referred to above, there is a representation of Fortune in connection with a shipwreck. Fortune stands with one foot on a ball on an island and with the other in a boat. The boat has been left by its passengers for it has been wrecked by the adverse winds. She holds these winds in a sail, which she carries in her hand. According to Bull,

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 247.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 290.

²⁷⁴ Bull *The Mirror of the Gods*, 2.

it is Fortune, who brought the passengers onto this island, too, who now standing on safe ground, turn their back on her and climb the mountain of Wisdom. The figure turning toward Fortuna is a man who is willing to take chances and to sail out with her again.²⁷⁵

4.2.5 Blind Fortune

The blindness of Fortune, who strikes all humans regardless of age, social standard or any circumstances, was proverbial. The way she got blindfolded, on the other hand, is more unique.

Dimness and night were associated with the symbols of evil, thereby with the personification of Death. Plunging into darkness was represented with missing eyes, later with the bandage. The blindfolding of Death appeared Soon, the personification of which was grouped with Fortune and Cupid. They were grouped together because these three personifications represent active forces striking randomly, i.e., blindly affecting the earthly courses of humanity.²⁷⁶

An emblem represents the blind Fortune blindfolding Cupid. The boy Cupid is put on the ball by Fortune herself. This time the ball might represent the mutability of love or the idea expressed by Helena cited above. She is equipped with two of her traditional symbols too: the rudder and the sail blown by the wind.



4.3 Strategies against Fortune

4.3.1 Witty governance: the impresa

The representations of Fortune were diverse but all represented the role of Fortune in the Renaissance, which Aby Warburg sums up: “(she) belonged to the religious powers of the Christian Europe as cosmic demon since the

*Love looks not with the eyes but
with the mind.
And therefore is winged Cupid
painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any
judgment taste—
Wings and no eyes figure
unheedy haste.
And therefore is Love said to be
a child,
Because in choice he is so oft
beguiled.
(A Midsummer Night's Dream
I.i.234-239)*

Figure 14.
Fortune blindfolding Cupid

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁷⁶ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 110.

end of the antiquity. (She) was a determining factor of the shaping of every days”²⁷⁷

Leon Battista Alberti was employed as an architect in Florence and designed the Rucellai Palace in accordance with the family’s vision of Fortuna reflected in their “impresa” in its complexity. As Fortune’s representations changed, it gave way to the impresa, i.e, coat of arms that decorated several Rucellai buildings. The Rucellai impresa displayed on the facade gives a civic slogan not only of the family mediated by the architect, but shows a general attitude of the merchant and educated class toward the adversarial-merciful Fortune.

The design of the Rucellai “impresa” put on the facade of the Rucellai Palace on purpose is a statement reflecting the view of the world surrounding a Florentine merchant family. It shows the everyday concerns of merchants, who, at that time, were one of the most determining social class not only in Florence but in the emerging urban



Figure 15.
The sail-impresa
(the Rucellai coat of arms)

societies. Alberti, with his widespread experience and revolutionary visions, took the commission of designing in accordance with the Rucellai vision.

The impresa marks a shift in the concept of Fortune. It suggests that man can adjust to the powers of Fortune. Fortune is represented with her forelock suggests that humans thus are able to use her

power and benefit from it.²⁷⁸ As the word “*fortuna*” in the Romance languages referred to wind, the image of the sail referred to its powerful winds. The sail signifies man’s capacity to adjust himself to her force, which is a concept in harmony with Christian faith: behind her stands God as the veer.²⁷⁹ This choice of coat of arms is a conscious projection of the conflict between the power of the individual personality and the power of the puzzling destiny. The artist of the coat of arms formulated answer to the question

²⁷⁷ Aby Warburg, *Pogány-antik jóslás Luther korából* (Budapest: Helikon Kiadó, 1986), 8.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁷⁹ Gosbert Schüssler, “Die Tugend auf dem Felsenberg. Eine Komposition Pinturiccios für das Paviment des Domes von Siena” in *Zeichen – Rituale – Werte*, ed G. Althof (Münster: Rhema-Verlag, 2004), 454.

whether human reason and practical wittiness can be positioned against the accidental destiny, that is, Fortune.²⁸⁰

The Fortuna depicted by Pinturicchio in the Siena cathedral is served by the merchants who are subject to her destroying winds: she is the mast holding the wind-blown sail. The Rucellai coat of arms, on the other hand, represents a sail mast fastened to the ship next to Lady Fortune. She holds the sail and the mast is damaged but not broken. Schüssler suggests that Fortune thereby took a position of promising luck. The broken mast of the Pinturiccio painting suggests that Fortune promises neither security nor hope. The small ship moreover is not the vessel of the goddess and therefore represents destruction and calamity.

There is an architectural speciality on the façades of at least four of the Rucellai owned buildings, such as their palace, church or the family shrine chapel: the *vela-imprese*, which Warburg called as the background of the formation of the new fortune symbol.²⁸¹ The black and white marble inlay ("*zibaldone*"²⁸²) depicting a wind-blown sail without the personification of Fortuna is a representation of her not as a partner but as an absolutely negative symbol of perishability of earthly goods. Thus, the Rucellai concept of Fortune breaks with the Medieval attitude. Fortune turned into an enemy, against whom man was to fight. The Medieval man fled from Fortune into the *vita contemplativa*, whereas the new man took up the *vita activa* to earn goods as steady property. Alberti thereby created a new symbol, the "witty governance" (*buon governo*),



Figure 16.
The veil-imprese of the Rucellai

²⁸⁰ Aby Warburg, "Francesco Sasseti's letztwillige Verfügung", in *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen* ed. Dieter Wuttke (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1980), 140.

²⁸¹ Volker Herzner, "Die Segel-Imprese der Familie Pazzi", in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 20 (1976): 15.

²⁸² Chapter Fortuna in his *Zibaldone*, which is a commonplace book giving valuable insights into contemporary Florentine life

making a compromise with Fortune as he firmly believed that success depended only on her.²⁸³

4.3.2 Virtue as guide, Fortuna as companion

Petrarch declared war against Fortune with the help of the virtues, Ficino, Alberti and Pontano recruited human skills into this army to master her, whereas Machiavelli did not always place fortune and virtue on the battlefield. Fortuna and Virtue are indeed not always two opposing powers, but reconciliation between them is possible. On the occasion of the re-establishment of the Medici, a medal of Giuliano II de' Medici was issued. On the back of the medal there are two figures. On the left, the veiled figure, Virtue is joining hands with the figure on the right, who is represented with a cornucopia, rudder and a forelock. Virtue and Fortuna-Chance are in alignment. The medal's message was well-known: Giuliano, brother of the pope Leo X, became the head of the state. This was an achievement, indeed, which could only be attained with the alliance of chance and virtue. The inscription states: "*Duce Virtute Comite Fortuna*", Virtue as guide, Fortune as companion.²⁸⁴ This is Ficino's *Fortuna Audax* and a Machiavellian victory: the virtuous, skillful human can achieve success only with the help, with the companion of Fortune.

The war and truce, according to Warburg, is a typical development of the culture of Renaissance: the unification of pagan experience, the antique artistic phantasy and the theological humanism, expressed in a concept and shape of a goddess helping the virtuous called "*Fortuna Audax*".²⁸⁵



Figure 17.
Virtue as guide, Fortune as companion
(Giuliano Medici's medal)

²⁸³ Herzner, *Die Segel-Imprese der Familie Pazzi*, 15

²⁸⁴ Wittkower, Rudolf. "Chance, Time and Virtue." *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 4 (Apr. 1938): 317.

²⁸⁵ Warburg, "Francesco Sssettis letztwillige Verfügung", 140.



Figure 18.
The wedding of Venice to the sea

4.3.3 Come over fortune: marry her

Christian commerce of Venice was under divine protection: the city had several saints including St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the sailors who calmed the sea down to ensure safe shipping. A Venetian ceremony promoting the good fortune of the sailors and merchants was called “The

wedding of Venice to the sea” and was enacted annually to mark the beginning of the sailing season. A festivity turning into a theatrical performance during the centuries featured the Doge and the Catholic principals of the city. Church prayers were sung and a wedding ritual was performed on the waters of the canal. At the height of the festival, the patriarch emptied an ampulla of holy water into the sea praying, after which the Doge cast a golden wedding ring into the water as a symbol of Venetian dependence on the sea saying: “We espouse thee, o sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion”.²⁸⁶

Taking the Venetian concept of marriage into consideration, the indissoluble dependence of humanity on the water is more apparent. The ritual

“deprived the sea of its frightening demeanour by feminising it. The men who sailed abroad could most easily imagine the sea as a female archetype: unpredictable, fickle, sometimes violent, other times passive; but assuredly she could be mastered by the resolute male. ... natural forces could be comprehended by personifying them, ... through understanding these forces one could better control them, or at least predict their influences. Through the marriage ... the sea was deprived of her mystery: men now ‘knew’ her”²⁸⁷

The symbolic wedding ring neutralised all opposites: Venice and the sea, the secular and the ecclesiastical, humanity and nature, and eventually, man and the vicissitudes of fortune, bringing harmony to the divided world.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton University Press, 1981) 122.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 133-134.

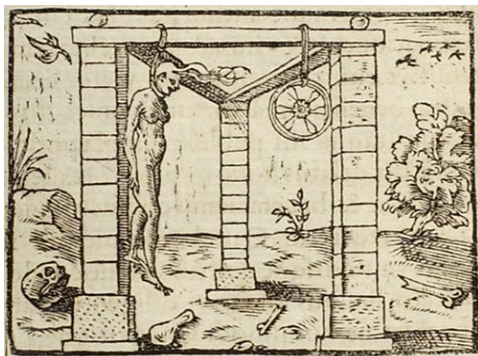
4.3.4 Seize chance by the forelock

The virtuous man can overcome Fortune. A medal of Francois I of France states: *"Fortunam Virtute devicit"*,²⁸⁹ that is, overcoming Fortune with Virtue. A soldier sitting on a horse overcomes the naked figure of Fortune. She has a forelock, but this time it is not grabbed, but the woman is trampled upon by the horse. The soldier is about to strike her down presumably with his sword. Fortune is not represented as standing on her ball, but quite the contrary: it is one of the rare moments that we see her lying on the floor and her ball is probably hopping away. This time, Fortune, the vicious enemy of mankind, undoubtedly has been defeated by man, who finally reached his seemingly elusive goal: to master his own destiny.



Figure 19.
Overcoming
Fortune with
Virtue

4.3.5 Kill Fortune



Look how Nemesis hangs in our gallows and takes the punishment for her crime. She who once (if it pleased the gods) filled both sides of the account, has paid her final debt here in France. Why are you worried about the unpredictable wheel of Fortune? What is that to you? Live wisely in your house unencumbered [i.e. by Fate; lit. alone].

Figure 20.
There is no fortune

Another method to tame fortune is a more radical one. As the concept of Fortune developed in the mid and late-16th century, the question was not anymore whether one could speak of Fortune without her necessarily implied providential power but the problem was that she stood in opposition with Sapiencia, who actually makes her redundant.²⁹⁰

An approach to Fortune's opposition with Wisdom has been shown above with the contrast of the cube and the ball. The idea, however, can get so radical as to claim "*nullam fortunam esse*" (there is no fortune). The Augustinian idea opposing Boethius' is expressed by the title of an emblem: "*Against the ancients, that there is no*

²⁸⁹ Wittkower, "Chance, Time and Virtue," 319.

²⁹⁰ Wilfried Barner "Die gezähmte und die negierte Fortuna" in *Fortuna* Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen, 1995) 333.

such thing as Fortune. After Augustine." The emblem shows the naked forelocked fortune hung with her wheel. According to the inscription, man should live wisely and shield himself with wisdom against the unpredictability of fortune and the bonds of fate. The author calls Fortune's operation a crime, and she pays for them with her life. This is the absolute victory of humanity equipped with wisdom against the adverse powers. In the war of humanity vs. Fortune, the goddess lost and pays for her war crimes (against humanity).

Chapter 5

What are these? The sisters of destiny

5.1 Methods of interpretation

The interpretation of Shakespearean plays through poetic imagery is, according to Morris, a dominant trend in Shakespeare criticism. To see the play as an expanded metaphor is G. Wilson Knight's approach analysing the metaphor, which is the play itself. The emotional experience the poetic images emphasise, as well as the mood they create, however, according to Morris, are "major elements" in a play, but "neither the play's end nor its essence".²⁹¹

Examining *Macbeth's* poetic imagery, Morris argues that "the full significance inheres in the situation, and the imagery gives further expression and emphasis to what is already there." Poetic imagery does not provide the whole significance of a Shakespearean play, but it "lends additional emphasis to the dramatic statement".²⁹² Poetry, however, is the vehicle of the dramatic intent, which should be in accordance. The examination of poetic imagery thus includes an examination of its relevance to the dramatic intent, as well as its effects on the whole, that is, the analysis should touch upon the dramatic context. There is a danger, nevertheless, in examining the poetic imagery: "to isolate groups of images and deduce character and theme from them must be to produce a 'freak interpretation'".²⁹³

Nobody, of course, would wish to come to a freak interpretation; therefore, the dangers described above should be kept in mind. My analysis of the imagery of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, therefore, will not aim to discuss poetic imagery as the basic concept behind the drama, but rather as effective means of carrying the dramatic content with significance thus not separating the drama from poetry.²⁹⁴

The danger of interest in the "how" rather than the "what" would also suppose an intent of the poet (rather than the playwright) for building up a poetic structure

²⁹¹ Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 461.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 462

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 463

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 467

independent of the drama. This interpretation would assume that "Shakespeare, like Donne, constructed an integrated system of connotation based on the iteration of certain words, to which the poet has given an arbitrary symbolic value"²⁹⁵ However, many instances show that poetic imagery supports, viz., intensifies the dramatic effect. For instance, as it will be demonstrated, the mentioning of Belzebub in the porter-scene intensifies the sinister atmosphere of the drama even if it is mentioned in a scene intended to be comic. The overall dramatic effect of the scene is thus added to the dark tone of the play. But the interpretation of poetic images should always paramount the "total response" referred to above and never slip to an abuse of poetic language as the subject-matter of the drama.

Interpretation solely through poetic imagery is what would cause a loss of sense regarding plot, character and action: "(e)ach image is to be interpreted in the context of the character, action and visual patterns within the sequence". Otherwise, the plot would only serve as a framework for poetry.²⁹⁶ "For the critic to settle down into a *purely verbal preoccupation* must imply a refusal to accept the categories Shakespeare deliberately set out to create"²⁹⁷ The critic focusing on the drama as a "developed pattern of words" does not recognise other categories related to human experience and thus ignores effects such as sympathy.²⁹⁸ This "half-aware" critic studies the pattern of images, which are very effective in the dramatic interpretation, but

"only if too much reliance is not placed on it. Imagery presents, sustains, informs and diversifies human experience in drama, but it is subordinate to the imaginative creation it helps to serve. ... it is personality, and not imagery, by which (earthly experience is) truly conveyed and received."²⁹⁹

Fabiny points out that while investigating Shakespearean references to e.g. Medieval concepts of fortune's wheel, one should avoid the "hunt for the occurrence of certain words." One should rather examine the hints at concepts or implications, e.g. "whirl'd" or "wheel'd" in order to examine Shakespearean allusions to time and its cyclical movement.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ Campbell, "Shakespeare and the New Critics" (Washington: J. Q. Adams Memorial Studies, 1948) quoted by Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 464.

²⁹⁶ Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 466

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 468

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 475

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 476

³⁰⁰ Tibor Fabiny "'Rota Fortunae' and the Symbolism of Evil in Shakespearean Tragedy", *Journal of Literature & Theology* 3 (1989): 324.

In the followings, I will try to keep up with the warnings and avoid a purely verbal preoccupation with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. I will aim at demonstrating the total response with the help of unfolding poetic images. The following analysis will attempt to examine Shakespeare's references to the presence of Fortune's powers operating in *Macbeth's* universe. I will therefore analyse Hecate's and the Weird Sisters' resemblance to Lady Fortune, their control of nature and the course of time. I also will mention allusions and puns on Lady Fortune, as well as the occurrences of the Renaissance concept of Fortune's opposition with universal powers.

5.2 Sisters of Destiny

Macbeth's natural reaction actually describes the Weird Sisters:

So withered, and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th'inhabitants o'th' earth
And yet are on't? – Live you, or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so. I.iii.40-47

The three creatures appearing to Macbeth and Banquo are often referred to as three witches. In I.iii.32 they call themselves the Weird Sisters. Brooke³⁰¹ points out that in Anglo-Saxon mythology, the Weird were the Fates. Therefore, they rather refer to a kind of divinity than solely instruments of witchcraft. They are real in a sense that they are not only Macbeth's unconscious projections, like the apparition of the murdered, which could be of the unrest guilty conscious. Indeed, the Weird Sisters appear to Macbeth and Banquo at the same time, proving their true existence and that the seers

have (not) eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner (I.iii.84.85).

The Weird Sisters' appearance on the stage creates the basic atmosphere of the whole play: ambiguity, a sense of a doomed power that humans can only attempt to

³⁰¹ Nicholas Brooke, notes to *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (Oxford University Press, 1988) 102.

describe or understand. The mere lack of understanding this power creates a sense of inability, helplessness, or lack of control already in the first scene that goes over to the whole play. As Coleridge points out, “the true reason for the first appearance of the Weird Sisters, (is to strike) the keynote ... of the whole play”³⁰²

The first scene thus sets the tone and gives the main theme of the whole play. The third line of the play, “(w)hen the hurly-burly’s done”, suggests a metaphysical “pitch-and-toss” referring to the coming play of good and evil.³⁰³

Opened by the sisters of destiny, the first scene of the play clearly sets the tone of the whole drama: a “play” of supernatural powers is to follow on stage. Thunder, lightning and rain mark the Sisters’ appearance alluding to their control even of nature, i.e., weather, which is beyond the control of humans.

The dramatist uses the Weird Sisters as the representations of fate or destiny, they are three of them, as the three fates of classical mythology:

Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again, to make up nine (I.iii.35-36)

The three witches function like the three fates of classical Greek mythology. The three Goddesses of Destiny were figures already in Greek mythology: daughters of *Zeus* and *Themis* and siblings of the Hours (Seasons, periods of time). The Fates and the Hours were in control of the cosmological order. The heavenly Fates were the “celestial versions” of the folk belief in Fate. They destined the “fates” of heroes such as Achilles or Oedipus, but negotiation was also a possibility.³⁰⁴

In chapter 3, I have demonstrated the Fates/Hours’ metamorphoses into Time/Occasio and further into Fortuna. In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, it turns out that the witches/Sisters of Destiny can also be contacted for further negotiation: according to the tragic hero’s belief, their minds can be changed (I will tomorrow / ... to the weird sisters). It is, however, written in the hero’s tragic fate that the more he believes in the possibility of altering the sisters’ prophecies, the more he drives himself into his fall.

³⁰² Coleridge, “Shakespearean Criticism” quoted by Kenneth Muir, introduction to *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare (The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1962) 3.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3

³⁰⁴ William Hansen, *Classical Mythology: A Guide to the Mythical World of the Greeks and Romans*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 153.

Banquo gives an elaborate description of creatures that are visible. They are clearly objective apparitions and not projections of either Macbeth or Banquo. The Weird Sisters are seen as supernatural beings having direct contact with the physical universe:

these ... look not like th' inhabitants o'th' earth,
And yet are on't

Since, as Banquo deduces correctly, they have intellect, they can interact with human beings. The sisters are anthropomorphic, in the same manner as the Roman goddess Fortune personifies chance and luck. As the play proceeds, the direct contact with the physical universe turns into a direct influence via prophecies and demonic magic. Moseley, however, adds that the Witches represent their power over nature that can throw human beings away from God, which is represented in an externalised form. The Witches externalise Macbeth's "black and deep desires", which he might not even realise.³⁰⁵

5.2.1 Secret, black and midnight hags

The stage directions of the play refer to '*Witches*', nevertheless, the text refers to the creatures as '*Weird Sisters*'.³⁰⁶ It is not clear either whether "these" creatures are men or women, Banquo is only concerned with their beards, probably emphasising the thought that the Weird Sisters are witches, indeed. According to Brooke,³⁰⁷ that bearded women were witches, was proverbial. The bearded Falstaff disguised as a woman in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* is referred to as a witch. When Ford finds Falstaff in women's clothes, he cries out:

A witch, a quean, an old cozening quean! Have I not
forbid her my house? She comes of errands, does
she? We are simple men; we do not know what's
brought to pass under the profession of
fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells,
by the figure, and such daubery as this is, beyond

³⁰⁵ Charles Moseley "Macbeth's free fall" in *Critical Essays on Macbeth*, ed. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (Harlow: Longman, 1988) 26-27.

³⁰⁶ Brooke, Introduction, 95.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

our element we know nothing. Come down, you witch,
you hag, you; come down, I say! (4.2.179-81)

A witch is seen as a danger to the order in society. Witches are women utterly hated by Ford, however, he admits he does not understand their operation but that they can prophesise future events. They operate “beyond (human) element”, that is, they are supernatural beings with capabilities “simple men” do not possess. Whether it is the failure of Ford’s apprehension of their nature or his bad experience of their operation that causes his ultimate disgust, is uncertain. The chubby Falstaff’s appearing as a witch is a parody of swift, air-like female creatures vanishing and reappearing whenever and wherever they wish. The comic effect is the reversal of the attributes of Falstaff, consequently, witches should be sharp-minded “posters” having an overview of human actions.

The tricked sailor’s wife tries to chase away the Weird Sisters with the phrase “Aroynt thee, witch!” I.iii.6 which is used in the same sense in *King Lear*, “And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!” (III.iv.120). Both outcries employ a term of exorcism,³⁰⁸ which implies the existence of effective supernatural powers.

According to Brooke³⁰⁹, the First Witch is angry for, besides being refused chestnuts, having been called a witch, whereas they call themselves the Weird Sisters. In *King Lear*, the exorcism refers to Flibbertigibbet, i.e., a fiend, a devil drawn from folk belief.³¹⁰ It is one of the evil spirits Edgar claims to have possessed him. This spirit is evil and “hurts the poor creature of earth”. The haunted Edgar chants a folksong about “the nightmare” who is dismissed with the phrase of the exorcist: “aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!” The nightmare can signify a demon, but also might mean the coils of a snake.³¹¹

Shakespeare uses the definitive article with the nightmare, which might allude to one serpent-like evil demon discussed in Chapter 8 in detail, who is dismissed (or, more likely, exorcised) with the phrase “aroint thee”. The “hags” might serve the purposes of stage spectacle, they even might have been included by other playwrights and be

³⁰⁸ Kenneth Muir, Introduction to *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (London: Methuen & Co LTD, 1979) 11.

³⁰⁹ Brooke, Notes to *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (OUP, 1988) 100.

³¹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, Notes to the works of William Shakespeare (New York: Norton & Co., Inc., 1997) 2418.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2418.

borrowed from contemporary traditions, but they definitely serve the dramatic effect of the tragedy of *Macbeth*.

5.2.2 Supernatural power

The witches are in possession of inverted powers: “In a sieve I’ll thither sail”, mentions the First Witch and according to Brooke, in the common mythology of the witches, to sail in a bottomless boat referred to the inverted powers of the witches.³¹² The weird sisters have control not only over the winds and the seemingly safe ports, but they can also confuse the “shipman’s card”, i.e., the compass on a ship.

I myself have all the other (winds),
And the very ports they blow
All the quarters that they know
I’th’ shipman’s card” (I.iii.14-17)

They can play tricks on astrological devices that are trusted as indicators of Nature, but if the trustworthy Nature is played tricks upon, what is to be trusted from now on? It turns out that the witches are not omnipotent, however:

Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tost (I.iii.24-25)

The weird sisters have power over the winds and the ports and can wickedly play with humans just like the capricious goddess Fortune, on the other hand, the First Witch explains her failure to have absolute control over the fate of a sailor she chose to trick. She was able to manipulate the ship’s compass and prevent the sheltering of the vessel in the harbour, however, she did not have enough power to cause a fatal shipwreck. She may cut off the thumb of a pilot drowning in a storm she caused, but she cannot kill humans at her desire.

³¹² Brooke, Notes, 100.

5.2.3 Prophecies

The weird sisters are not omnipotent, still, they are capable of seeing the future, and what is more, revealing it to humans:

FIRST WITCH:

All hail Macbeth, hail to thee Thane of Glamis.

SECOND WITCH:

All hail Macbeth, hail to thee Thane of Cawdor.

THIRD WITCH:

All hail Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter (I.iii.48-50)

When Macbeth asks the Weird Sisters to tell them about their nature, as a response, they give him their prophecies. Their identity is not revealed, but instead, they reply by prophesising. The answer to what they are is what they do: they see into the future and reveal it.

Nothing further is told of them, although human curiousness would demand further explanation. It is not certain, either, whether they really can see into the future and tell prophecies. They only greet Macbeth by his past, present and future titles: Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor and King. Macbeth is not even aware of his present title that he already holds, but the Sisters have knowledge on things even unknown to humans. To his marvel, Macbeth is informed soon that the Sisters told him the truth concerning his present state. The phrase “shalt be King / hereafter” sounds like a prophecy and clearly refers to future events. Banquo calls the third greeting as “great prediction”, whereas Macbeth claims they are “prophetic greetings”.

After receiving predictions, or rather, prophecies on his destiny, Macbeth immediately demands more information concerning his future, whereas Banquo is still concerned with “what” these “things” are. Banquo tries to find out if the apparition exists only in his mind:

I’th name of truth,

Are ye fantastical, or that indeed

Which outwardly ye show? (I.iii.52-54)

and later revealing his puzzled curiosity:

Were such things here, as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root,
That takes the reason prisoner? (I.iii. 83-85).

Seeing that Macbeth experiences the same apparition that “seem’d corporal” and appeared and vanished like bubbles, it becomes evident that the Weird Sisters are manifestations of an objective supernatural power. Their identity is still not clear, however. It is only a sense of evil that they leave behind:

Stay you imperfect speakers, tell me more I.iii.70

Although it is not explicitly revealed, Macbeth senses evil in the prophecies of the Weird Sisters. Right at Macbeth’s first meeting with the supernatural creatures, Shakespeare uses the word “imperfect”, which might mean incomplete. According to Brooke,³¹³ the word “imperfect” means incomplete but it also has a secondary sense meaning evil.

Macbeth might not formulate the evil nature of supernatural fortune-telling, but Shakespeare’s choice of word reflects a sense of evil that might be present “only” as it is present in the fallen created universe. The concept of the evil is not elaborated here, but solely mentioned, creating a possibility to develop from an original presence, just like original sin is ontologically present in the corrupted creation providing only a possibility for evil to grow. The presence of evil is not a determining factor, however, evil deeds develop from this original state. However, the Augustinian-Lutherian investigation of this present research into original sin and the inclination towards evil supports opposing views. The presence and effective operation of evil is definitely shown by Shakespeare leaving the question to be answered by Macbeth himself.

All in all, the three sisters are agents of the supernatural capable of interacting with the physical universe and capable of communicating with humans. They not only interfere with the course of events and cause disorder in humans’ lives, but they are capable of revealing the future. Their evil nature is shown right at the beginning just like the original sin is present at the very beginnings. The supernatural creatures are

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 103.

women, who appear and vanish as they wish. How they operate, however, is yet to be further deciphered by Macbeth.

5.2.4 Posters of the sea and land

The Weird Sisters, hand in hand
Posters of the sea and land I.iii.32-33

Before appearing to the brave soldiers, there is a great amount of information shared with the audience Macbeth might not be aware of. To sum up, the Weird Sisters consider themselves as taking control, or more likely, as being able to play with humans both on sea and land. These attributes resemble the operation of Lady Fortune governing the sailors into the safe harbors or causing their loss. The operation of the “posters of the sea and land” is expressed by several visual devices of the shipwrecked human destiny. To blow the wind for the sieve the First Witch sails in:

SECOND WITCH:
I'll give thee a wind
THIRD WITCH
And I another
FIRST WITCH
“myself have all the other (winds),
And the very ports they blow I.iii.13-15

All of the witches claim to have power over the winds affecting the endeavours of sailors. According to Brook, onshore winds the witches blow may prevent entry to a port. Witches here are thus like the goddess Fortune playing with humans on the ports, capriciously sporting on their wealth loaded on the sea. Arriving to the stable ports would mean a lucky ending of fighting with Nature and the elements, but the wicked sisters can prevent their landing even in the very last moment when the journey seems to have been a safe one.³¹⁴ The “Posters of the sea and land” share the attributes of Fortune: they are swift travellers, like the winds.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*,. 101.

5.2.5 Provoke questions on foreknowledge

Concerning the witches and their powers, the audience faces another puzzle. They can be interpreted as part of a popular stage tradition, but certainly their appearance on stage arises uncertainty in the audience. As Muir puts it “(Shakespeare) left it to the audience to decide whether the weird sisters were witches, or devils disguised as witches, and whether Lady Macbeth, when she deliberately chose evil, was literally, or only metaphorically possessed by demons.”³¹⁵

The operation of the witches is not a power unconditionally influencing the deeds and thoughts of Macbeth. That is, they do not change the course of events objectively. Man’s will is corrupted with evil inclinations and temptation is always present, which he cannot resist. Bradley puts aside the witches’ foreknowledge as being inaccessible to critical judgement, but the criticism of free will and predestination is, in accordance with Morris, is possible as the questions are presented but left unanswered.³¹⁶

As a conclusion, Shakespeare definitely presents and what is more, provokes questions on foreknowledge, free will and determinism. However, it also can be concluded with Morris that

“Shakespeare does not wish us to determine, whether the weird sisters control Macbeth’s fate, or whether their prophecies are a reflection of his character. ... Shakespeare will not claim a wisdom beyond humanity. It may point to his awareness of man’s ... compulsive inclination to evil and his sense of overruling destiny. ... this is a point at which humanity’s inquires vanish as breath into the wind”³¹⁷

5.3 Hecate and Lady Fortune

It is actually Hecate who eventually directs the course of events toward a “dismal, and a fatal end”. Macbeth’s destiny is thus sealed and the rest of the drama turns into a vicious game of Hecate, the goddess of destiny, the “mistress of all charms” and the “close contriver of all harms”. The fickle, vicious goddess, similarly to goddess Fortune, makes fun of humans’ suffering on earth. She masters their destiny and she

³¹⁵ Kenneth Muir, “Shakespeare: the Great Tragedies” quoted by Morris, *Shakespeare’s God*, 310.

³¹⁶ Morris, *Shakespeare’s God*, 314.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 314-315

changes them according to her own will. She laughs at Macbeth because she sees his future and she knows he foolishly trusts the prophecies:

He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear.
And you all know, security
Is mortals' chiefest enemy. III.v.30-34

The appearance of Hecate opening scene IV is somewhat more complex. According to Muir,³¹⁸ the appearance of Hecate with three additional witches might have been a non-Shakespearean interpolation. She might not have entered with a chorus of witches but solely interrupted the three weird sisters, however, Brooke insists that for the singing and dancing more other witches are needed, which the weird sisters never act out.³¹⁹ Brooke edited this scene according to Middleton's 'A Charm Song' with a chorus of witches singing and dancing leaving Hecate as a spectator.³²⁰ Macbeth then meets this chorus of witches and Hecate addressing them with a detailed description of their nature:

you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches, though the yeasty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up, IV.i.66-68

This depiction could be Lady Fortune's and her agents'. She rules the seas and arouses the storm whenever she wishes. The seastorm is her realm where humans are tossed and helplessly thrown out to. It is also Macbeth's echoing the witches' speech:

I myself have all the other (wind),
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I' th' shipman's card I.iii.14-17

Lady Fortune, on the other hand, operates just like the witches. Scott's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, indeed, claims that those who believe in these powers are all faithless:

"Such faithlesse people (I saie) are also persuaded, that neither
haile nor snowe, thunder nor lightening, raine nor tempestuous

³¹⁸ Muir, Notes, 108.

³¹⁹ Brooke, Notes, 169.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 170

winds come from the heauens at the commandment of God; but are raised by the cunning and power of witches and conjurors”.³²¹

In this sense, Lady Fortune might be the “conjuror” of the witches or a witch herself. But to sum up, it is devilish, that is, “faithless” to claim that these supernatural beings have any power on nature.

5.4 A rebel’s whore

... Fortune on his damned quarry smiling
Showed like a rebel’s whore; but all’s too weak, I.ii.14-15

The hero of the Scottish army despises this “whore”, who turned out to be weak on the side of the Irish. Fortune is personified here, just like the Roman goddess, viciously smiling, betraying, but eventually defeated. Brooke points out that this image is a reference to the contemporary proverb “Fortune is a strumpet”.³²²

The Greek fates and the Roman goddess Fortuna are referred to at the same instance in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. It is a Renaissance concept of Fortune that Shakespeare uses on his stage, the contemporary viewers might have been familiar with. Indeed, in Hamlet’s witty conversation with his friends, Shakespeare plays a pun on Fortune:

GUILDENSTERN
Happy, in that we are not over-happy, on
Fortune's cap we are not the very button.
HAMLET
Nor the soles of her shoe?
ROSENCRANTZ
Neither, my lord.
HAMLET
Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of
her favors?
GUILDENSTERN
'Faith, her privates we.
HAMLET
In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true; she
is a strumpet. What news? (Hamlet II.ii.224-236)

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

³²² *Ibid.*, 97.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* dissects in a different context the question Hamlet is wrought by a couple of lines later: whether it is noble-minded to go alongside Fortune, the capricious woman of interest, or whether it is worth fighting even if it means the end of everything. Macbeth's "nothing is but what is not" is hence echoed in Hamlet's "to be or not to be". "Fortune, as it would appear, is so securely entrenched that the impulse to denounce her is a poisonous subversion of things as they are."³²³

Through the actors' rehearsing for the theatre performance, Shakespeare repeats Hamlet's words, i.e., the proverbial "Fortune is a strumpet", and refers to the theatrical traditions and describes Fortune listing all of her properties: the "bold winds", "the orb below", "the dreadful thunder", "the spoke" (i.e., the rod), "her wheel", "the nave", and "the hill of heaven". :

But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region, so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armor forged for proof eterne
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.
Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends!" (Hamlet II.ii.483-497)

Lady Fortune is a "good housewife", i.e., hussy, according to Celia in *As You Like It*, who plays a witty verbal combat on the operations of the goddess with Rosalind just to pass the time. Fortune is able to make women slutty and ugly, and she gives away her blessings capriciously, but mostly to the wrong persons. It is actually Nature that defines things, such as the wit of the conversing women, and Fortune only has disposal of the things and makes decisions deciding their destinies. Fortune is chancy, as it is proven by the arrival of Touchstone.

CELIA

Let us sit and mock the good housewife Fortune from her
wheel, that her gifts may henceforth be bestowed equally.

³²³ Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet*, (New York: Oxford Books, 1970) 145-154.

ROSALIND

I would we could do so, for her benefits are mightily misplaced, and the bountiful blind woman doth most mistake in her gifts to women.

CELIA

'Tis true, for those that she makes fair she scarce makes honest, and those that she makes honest she makes very ill- favoredly.

ROSALIND

Nay, now thou goest from Fortune's office to Nature's. Fortune reigns in gifts of the world, not in the lineaments of Nature.

CELIA

No? When Nature hath made a fair creature, may she not by Fortune fall into the fire? Though Nature hath given us wit to flout at Fortune, hath not Fortune sent in this fool to cut off the argument?

ROSALIND

Indeed, there is Fortune too hard for Nature, when Fortune makes Nature's natural the cutter-off of Nature's wit.

CELIA

Peradventure this is not Fortune's work neither, but Nature's, who perceiveth our natural wits too dull to reason of such goddesses, and hath sent this natural for our whetstone, for always the dullness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits. How now, wit, whither wander you? (As You Like It I.ii.26-49)

Explicitly described by the actor in *Hamlet* and by the conversation of Rosalind and Celia is featured in *Macbeth*; Lady Fortune is referred to by allusions or metaphors of her instruments or proverbial attributes.

5.4.1 Equivocator

The porter scene may have been added to serve purposes such as some time for the actor playing Macbeth to get changed and wash off his hands, or, as many critics have suggested, to provide a comic relief after the very dark tone of the bloody murder.³²⁴ The Medieval comic tradition is apparent here, however, the porter's language is as multi-layered and "equivocal" as the rest of the drama. As for the punning word-plays, Muir even suggests to take those opinions into consideration too, which claim that Shakespeare used unconscious references with the speech of the porter.³²⁵ I would even suggest that the puns and references of the playwright are

³²⁴ Brooke, Notes, 130.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

conscious indeed, and may be referred to the imagery of the supernatural playing tricks on humans. The language of the porter serves well the purpose of keeping up the dim presence of the supernatural:

“Who’s there,
i’ th’ name of Beelzebub?
....
... come in,
time-pleaser; ... here’s an
equivocator, that could swear in both the scales
against either scale; who committed treason enough
for God’s sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven:
O! come in, equivocator” (III.ii.4-12)

The fickle, vicious Fortune plays a devilish game on humans. She is *Occasio*, she serves Time and flies away with it, measuring human course with her scales, which she never does justice with. She is treacherous and her equivocation is her driving force to ridicule humanity. The porter plays puns on things from politics to the French disease, but the porter’s “what are you” question strikingly echoes Banquo’s “What are these”. The porter’s exclamatory question can thus be taken as a clear and conscious pun of Shakespeare’s on his play and at the same time, a dramatic strategy to keep up the evil suspicion of supernatural operation and not to lose the sense of horror on stage, although paradoxically, the comic scene was intended to relieve it.

The porter scene, according to Battenhouse, can also be interpreted as a parody of Christian paradigm, like the ghost’s apparition as a parody of visitation in *Hamlet* or Macbeth’s “It is done” as a parody of “*consummatum est*”, i.e., Christ’s words on the cross. Battenhouse points out that the references at the beginning and end of the porter scene’s “strike upon the bell” and “The bell is sounded” actually parody a Christian service.³²⁶ The scene, according to Wickham, uses the vocabulary of Medieval religious drama, and recalls hell represented as a castle. Shakespeare might have reminded his audience of its moral meaning using emblems of Lucifer, such as the thunderous knocking at the gate.³²⁷

Hurly-burly, fair and foul prophecies have created the fertile soil for evil. Confusion is brought by the spirit of the devil, as Luther puts it: “See what a mighty prince the devil is, how he has the world in his hands and can throw everything into

³²⁶ Roy Battenhouse “Key Assessments” in *Shakespeare’s Christian Dimension* 49

³²⁷³²⁷ Glynn Wickham “Macbeth and Mediaeval Stage-plays” in *Shakespeare’s Christian Dimension* 487.

confusion"³²⁸ The dark and evil power may strike and seize humanity any time. It confuses everything just in a way Fortune viciously stirs up the human course of events: "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece".

5.4.2 Blind Fortune

Lady Macbeth invokes "spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts" to help her carry out a wicked plan.³²⁹ She makes a pact with the supernatural being fully aware that supernatural beings "tend on", that is, are superior to human thinking. She invokes agents of superior supernatural beings, which might be seen as attendant spirits or angels, as well:

Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief.

The agents of supernatural appear in "sightless substances", that, according to Brooke³³⁰ might mean blind, invisible or ugly. The weird sisters are the oracles of the supernatural, who "make themselves air" whenever they wish. These agents are sightless in a sense that they are part of the supernatural world, which exists in the universe and operates on human lives invisibly. On the other hand, "sightless" meaning blind, reflects the idea that these "ministers" share characteristics with the goddess of destiny. They are agents of a higher supernatural order and wickedly play with humans and "tend on mortal thoughts", that is, assist human will in achieving the desired goals.

5.4.3 Shipwrecking storms

The "sightless substances" govern the "sightless couriers" "invisible runners, i.e. the winds".³³¹ "Nature's mischief", according to Muir, might be a "mischief wrought by

³²⁸ Martin Luther, Admonition to Peace, In. *Luther and the Beloved Community: a path for Christian theology after Christendom*, edited by Paul R. Hinlicky (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010) 340.

³²⁹ tend on ie., help

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

³³¹ Muir highlights Warner's Albion's England (1602), ii.xi: "The scouring winds that sightless in the sounding air do fly" in Muir, Introduction, 39.

any natural phenomenon, such as storm, tempest, earthquake, etc”, which refers to storm and shipwreck blind Fortune causes.³³²

“Shipwracking storms, and direful thunders” are mentioned by the Captain, as well. The Captain praises the great deeds of the brave Macbeth reminding his audience that all in a sudden, discomfort, that is, shipwrecking storms may arise. Fortune’s incalculableness, capriciousness, moodiness and whimsiness is described with the comparison of the sudden awaking of “shipwracking storms” on calm waters to a sudden and unexpected adversities in war. But Macbeth, the virtuous fighter, stood bravely against adversity and defeated the capricious awakening of misfortune even if he seemed to be too weak against her superior numbers.

5.4.4 Rush and seize us

Shakespeare’s imagery of Fortune is weaved further in Donalbain’s speech:

What should be spoken here, where our fate,
Hid in an auger-hole, may rush and seize us?

Fate is described as a mystical, invisible yet present demonic power that may strike any time. It fills humans with fear, which adds to the horror of the scene. The supernatural forces are sensible yet invisible, which Shakespeare weaves into the image of the auger-hole. This image may refer to the sharp stabbing of the dagger, but, as Muir suggests, may refer to a passage of *The Discouerie of Witchcraft*: “they (witches) can go in and out at awger holes”.³³³

Men can be lulled into security by the invisibility of these forces, but they may strike any time and “seize” them. Chance and Fortune can be seized by the forelock with a rapid movement, similarly, unaware humans can be struck and seized anytime if they are not shielded against the operation of such fickle and vicious supernatural powers. It is fate here that may strike and seize humanity, exercising its dark and evil power.

³³² *Ibid.*, 30

³³³ Muir, Notes, 67.

5.5 The war of the virtuous and the wise

The messenger comes with the intelligence reporting on the brave deeds of Macbeth in war before he appears on stage for the first time. The elevated speech of the wounded Captain describes the virtuous fight of Macbeth against the rebellious Macdonald. Macbeth, the brave warrior, fought against the enemy who lined up the whore-like Fortune on his side.

For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name –
Disdain(ed) Fortune I.ii.16-17

The messenger reports on the bravery of the Scottish army, and in particular, on Macbeth in fighting against the Irish invaders. When describing the defeat of the traitorous McDonald, the messenger refers to nature and Fortune. “The multiplying villanies of nature / Do swarm upon (McDonald)”, as evil is justly punished. But when it comes to Fortune, already, at its/her first mentioning in relation to a human, it is the brave Macbeth, who “disdains” Fortune.

Fortune, indeed, can be defeated: the ironically smiling fickle woman, proved to be weak and could easily be defeated with virtuous deeds. Macbeth, trusting the firmness of his virtues, fought bravely against the vicissitudes and eventually defeated her. “(A)ll’s too weak”, even the operation of Fortune, against a virtuous, confident, firm and brave warrior, like Macbeth. The Captain describes the war of fortune and virtue with a quite unusual image:

As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art. I.ii.8-9

The image of two struggling swimmers as a comparison to a battle might seem strange at first. On the other hand, this image recalls the swimming battle of the “countless shades” in the river of Life. The struggling swimmers cling onto each other instead of hanging to an embankment: they choke each other instead of relying on the planks of virtue. Macbeth’s virtue and war with the operation of Fortune will be further analysed later in relation to the Herculean war with the supernatural forces.

Ross consoles Lady Macduff, who laments the flight of her husband. She is afraid he can be overcome with vicious rumours and she fears reason was overcome:

All is the fear and nothing is the love,
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason. IV.ii.12-14

Right after Macbeth's scene with Hecate, the chorus of witches, the Weird Sisters and the apparitions, Ross sanely judges all powers operating in the universe. He claims that one can shield himself against them as does the virtuous Macduff.

My dearest coz,
I pray you school yourself. But for your husband,
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o' th' season.
But cruel are the times when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumor
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea
Each way and none. IV.ii.14-22



Figure 21.
Virtue vs. Sapience

Lady Macduff thus should be aware and judge everything by sane reason and shield herself against “the unknown” that resembles Fortune, with wisdom as does her husband. Fortune is unknown, incalculable and throws out unaware human beings onto the wild sea. She tugs and tosses the vessel they float in but she can only be successful to play with those who give way to speculations and are not “noble, wise, judicious” enough to resist.

After murdering the king, Macbeth engages himself in an evil game of deception and employs a double speech. He is self-deprecating and hypocritical:

“Th' expedition of my violent love
Outrun the pauser, reason.” II.iii.89-90

Reason, the delayer, stands in opposition with the fast flying and quickly vanishing fortune. Macbeth claims that it were violent feelings that came over the sanity of his reason. Nevertheless, sane reason, that is *virtú*, had been long overcome before: the temptation of the fickle fortune won against virtuous reason in Macbeth's war, which actually turned out the other way round in Banquo's private "*bellum perpetuum*".³³⁴

³³⁴ Klaus Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus. Eine Studie zu Petrarcas Lebensweisheit* (Köln und Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1958) 15.

Chapter 6

Free will and predestination

6.1 The necessity of freedom

Freedom is the will's independence of prevenient conditions. The present, however, is full of things derived from the past, as reasons for or against a certain action can be traced back to an infinite genealogy. All in all, the will is dependent by causes and circumstances found in the physical universe taking the man prisoner. Freedom thus would presuppose a vacuum in time.³³⁵

To believe in the freedom of man means a belief that man is able to escape the bonds of calculable processes. It follows from this that freedom can only be a spiritual state surpassing even the self. Free man, however, can be defined as a creative person able to withstand the streams of necessity and who is not enslaved to circumstances.³³⁶ Freedom means an act of choice, while fate means cosmological bonds. Man is free to choose between good and evil, however, man is not free in having a choice: man must choose, thus, as Heschel points out, "all freedom is a situation of God's waiting for man to choose." Freedom is a necessary essence of being: God freely and personally maintains being. "Reality seems to be maintained by the necessity of its laws. Yet, when we inquire: why is necessity necessary? There is only one answer: the divine freedom, the divine concern."³³⁷

6.2 Free will: theology or philosophy?

As this present research focuses on the question of free will and determinism, a number of philosophical and theological sources are analysed, which casts a light on a Renaissance issue: the harmonisation or juxtaposition of theology with philosophy.

In the early Middle Ages, the Augustinian concept of the identification of theology with philosophy was in use. However, the Scholastic philosophers

³³⁵ Abraham Joshua Heschel. *God in Search of Man. A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1955) 409.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 410.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 41213.

differentiated the two realms, although their aim was to systemise theology and philosophy into one harmonious system. The Renaissance reconciliation of theology and philosophy came with Ficino and his humanism. To find “the philosophic proof of the fundamental truths of Christianity”³³⁸ was set for his Academy, which was worked out in his natural theology incorporating church dogma. The new element in Renaissance humanism is summed up by Paul Oskar Kristeller: philosophy was independent from theology and the two did not conflict due to their common origin and content.³³⁹ Renaissance humanism included eclectic thinkers such as Pico della Mirandola, who merged religion and philosophy into one theological system. Erasmus, however, simply related the two in the manner of Ficino’s: “To be a philosopher and to be a Christian is synonymous in fact. The only difference is in the nomenclature”³⁴⁰

The Renaissance question whether free will concerned theology or philosophy is not fully resolved, however. Renaissance humanism shifted the focus away from the Church and its exclusivity to natural reason and individual approaches.³⁴¹

6.3 Origins

During the history of Western thinking, the Greek-Hellenic philosophers were among the first ones to speculate on human decisions and their relations to a supposed foreordained order of things. The Platonic concept of freedom was a rational idea. For Plato, sin was the lack of knowledge of the truth, which deprives humans of their freedom.³⁴² Freedom of the will here means freedom of choice, differentiating between freely chosen and physically coerced acts.

Aristotle, on the other hand, outlined a voluntarist approach, namely, he saw freedom as an act of will. A whole capital of the Nichomachean Ethics analyzes free will. Aristotle claims that an act is free only if the human knows good and bad and is able to choose between the two. Freedom, therefore, is choice and is filled with a moral content. Concerning a morally coerced act (under life threat), the act is still free and the doer is morally responsible. Whether one is responsible if they have bad “nature” which

³³⁸ Ernst Cassirer, "Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola", in *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol III. No 3 (June 1942), 335. quoted by Miriam Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance*, 43.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁴⁰ Desiderius Erasmus, "The Education of a Christian Prince" in *Ibid.*, 46

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁴² Pál Bolberitz, "A döntés szabadságának kérdése Aquinói Szent Tamás filozófiájában", *Teológia* 3-4 (2003): 84.

drives them to bad actions, Aristotle answers a clear yes for the lack of external coercion.

It was the Stoics that first contemplated on the freedom of the will per se, as the control over ourselves.³⁴³ Christianity brought in new concepts to the speculations on the supernatural: God's providence maintains his creation, the whole world, and besides, maintaining and taking care of the individual. The Christian concepts of freedom covered freedom from sin (St. Augustine) and freedom from necessity (St. Bernard of Clairvaux), which included speculations on God's freedom.³⁴⁴ This present survey is interested in is whether human decisions are free from any necessity resulting from, in Christian terms, God's foreknowledge or omnipotence.

6.4 The Augustinian concept of human freedom

6.4.1 Free will asserted

The Pelagian dispute in the 5th century marked the dispute of Pelagius and St. Augustine mainly on the teaching of original sin touching on the subject of human decisions blurred by inherited inclinations. The interpretation of the fall, moreover, explains divine grace, leading to the question of the freedom of the will. The doctrine infers the dispute over concupiscence's bondage of the will and election to salvation. Augustine did not explicitly teach the servitude of the will, to the contrary, in his writings he stood out for the freedom of the will: From Augustine's teaching on God's initiative of giving grace as opposed to the Pelagian concept of receiving grace according to one's merits, immediately follows God's choosing some for salvation or damnation.

According to Pelagius, the human is not a kind of being God would dispose with, but he created him with grace as free. Therefore, sin cannot be inherent or a given faculty. Augustine opposed Pelagius mainly concerning the issue of inherent original sin (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione*). These letters and treatises logically prove original sin: the inclination and sinful desire inherent from Adam. The freedom of the will, therefore, is dealt with as an influencing shadow or inclination by Augustine. The

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

dispute between Pelagius and Augustine touched on deep emotions, sometimes reaching personal accusations.

According to Augustine, Pelagius's views "was so diverse from catholic doctrine, and so hostile to the grace of Christ, that unless he had anathematized it, as laid to his charge, he himself must have been anathematized on its account".³⁴⁵ In order to close the dispute over free will, Augustine ordered his arguments and wrote a treatise on the necessity of grace and the cooperative free will:

"There are some persons who suppose that the freedom of the will is denied whenever God's grace is maintained, and who on their side defend their liberty of will so peremptorily as to deny the grace of God. This grace, as they assert, is bestowed according to our own merits. It is in consequence of their opinions that I wrote the book entitled"³⁴⁶

6.4.2 Determination

Augustine's theory of grace as the grounds for the concept of predestination did not survive in the church dogma, but influenced the teachings of Gottschalk, Luther and Calvin.³⁴⁷

Augustine's predestination theory is rather an "election theory" and not predestination to damnation, as the starting point of his theology is that God did not create evil. Indeed, God is the source of all good, he created solely good, whereas only allowed evil. Adam thus was created with an original good and righteous will inclined to God. In this original, graceful state, the human was able to avoid sin (*posse non peccare*).³⁴⁸ The fall therefore was not a weakness of creation, but a conscious opposition to God's will to live according to his own laws.

"God created me with a free decision; when I have sinned, I have sinned ... I, I, not destiny, not chance, not the Satan, because he is not coerced either, but I let myself be convinced and I gave my consent."³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ St. Augustine, *A Treatise on Grace and Free Will* trans. Philip Schaff (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 448.

³⁴⁶ St. Augustine, *Retractations*, *Ibid.*, 640.

³⁴⁷ Beyschlag, Karlmann. *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte. II. Gott und Mensch. 2. Die Abendländische Epoche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000) 88.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁴⁹ St. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmos*, quoted by Beyschlag *Ibid.*, 77, my translation from German

Thus, sin is not an objective, natural reality, but an inner movement for “liberation” as a result of self-love, which eventually lead to falling out of grace. This movement makes God’s grace needed for justification. The “liberated” will fell into its own servitude: it got weakened by concupiscence, the inclination that makes the will not being able not to sin (*non posse non peccandi*).³⁵⁰ The freely willed got too weak to turn to God and therefore needs God’s grace. The Creator, however, can conduct man’s turning toward Him, but to carry it out, man’s cooperation is needed. The giving of grace, on the other hand, works regardless of the human will and the recipients have already been chosen. In disputes centuries later, Luther relied on this Augustinian argument as well.

The Augustinian theory of predestination means God’s foreordaining some to salvation and some not to salvation regardless of the human will³⁵¹ as based on the *Letter to the Romans: 9,16*. This gave rise to Calvin’s theory of “double predestination”, namely, election to salvation, and at the same time, election to damnation.³⁵²

The inherent nature of the original sin lies, according to Augustine, in the loss of the direction towards God after committing the first sin. Thus, man fell into a graceless condition. From the state of “non peccare” became a miserable necessity, in which human is not capable of not to sin (*misseria necessitas non posse non peccandi*).³⁵³ As a result, man sins over again. Beyschlag rephrases the Augustinian idea: „he who wanted to be his own lord, just by the emancipation of the ‘free will’, loses the rule over himself”.³⁵⁴

Augustine demonstrates the inherent nature of this original sin, which casts a shadow on the free will (*liberum arbitrium*). The freedom (*libertas*) of the will fell under the control of the sin freely chosen. “Libertas” thus turned against God, for which man still bears responsibility. The freedom of the will (*liberum arbitrium*) became limited due to the inherent original sin, as a result of which man is not capable of avoid sinning any more.

³⁵⁰ Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, 78.

³⁵¹ Attila Puskás, *A kegyelem teológiája* (Unpublished lectures, 2007), 58.

³⁵² Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, 92.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁵⁴ my translation from German *Ibid.*, 79

The “war” of life takes place in our bodies: original sin planted a sinful desire into our bodies. Actions of the will, however, are still not carried out by this sinful concupiscence:

”Concupiscence... is present in the little ones at birth, though its guilt is removed when little ones are baptized. It remains for the combat that is life... (i)n the case of baptized adults who have the use of reason, whenever the mind consents to that same concupiscence in order to sin it is due to one’s own will.”³⁵⁵

Sinful lust (*concupiscentia*) thus works in man as a result of the fall, even after baptism, which is supposed to wash away all sins. This lust, however, does not abolish responsibility for sins.

”(E)vil remains in our flesh, not by reason of the nature in which human beings were created by God, but by reason of the sinfulness into which they have fallen. Now, having lost their strength, they are not healed with the same ease of will with which they were wounded.”³⁵⁶

Evil is not created objective reality, but it is a result of a free choice of man. The freely chosen evil weakens the will that actually chose it, and thereby man has to fight the “war” of life against the sinful desires.

6.4.3 Grace and free will

Freedom, viz., freedom from the bondage of sin, is the groundwork of the Christian concept of freedom. Augustine elaborated the freedom of choice in the light of this, namely, whether human choice is a result of a free decision or whether it is influenced by a greater power. We have seen so far that the fallen man, who actually wished to be the lord of himself, is in need of divine grace. Man is not capable to use his willpower against temptation as a result of inherent sin. Augustine claims, however, that it is God’s decree that the gifts of his grace liberate man from the bondage of sin.

³⁵⁵ St. Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* trans. Roland J. Teske (Augustinian Heritage Institute: New City Press, 1997), 80.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

”in order to overcome temptation in the case of some things which we desire wrongfully or fear wrongfully, we at times need the great and full strength of the will. ... the Lord gave us, even after baptism, certain salutary remedies against the guilt and the bonds of sin and willed that they be effective, namely, works of mercy”³⁵⁷

The views that man did not fall into the bondage of sinful lust resulting in a weakened will inclined to temptation, are condemned by Augustine as harmful and against religion. The view that only God’s grace can liberate the imprisoned will, draws fatalist or determinist charges. Opposing these, Augustine states that grace

“does not come from chance or fate or anything else but God. ... From servitude to this damnable lordship those are set free whom the Lord Jesus gave the power to become children of God.” ³⁵⁸

Different religious groups reacted differently to the debate on the freedom of the will. As bishop of Hippo, Augustine issued a treatise entitled *On Grace and Free Will* to settle the dispute. Quoting the Scriptures, supporting arguments one by one, he argues for the freedom of the will and the necessity of divine grace. He asserts that divine grace does not impose any limitation on the freedom of the will, but it cannot be acquired by own merits, either. Man can direct his free will towards God only with divine aid. Obedience makes sense only if the will is free; imprisoned by sin and subject to temptation, man is to make a choice: God put “fire” and “water”, that is, death and life before him. The ten commandments prescribe the rules of obedience and exactly name the sinful acts. Nevertheless, man’s free decision is not enough to make him do what he wants to, that is why God is needed to “vindicate” what man asked for in his prayer.

Our free will, however, does not always turn towards the good: it can serve sin, just as it can serve justice. The will of man, however, can only be good, since before the fall it was good and God’s grace is good.³⁵⁹ God, moreover, cooperates with man and directs his will towards the good. Many Biblical stories demonstrate that God might even direct one’s will toward the bad, e.g., hardening the Pharaoh’s heart or the betrayal of Judas. In these cases men carry out the divine will in order to try others’ faith.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁵⁹ St. Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*

Therefore, they do not get punishment, for they serve the good.³⁶⁰ It can thus be concluded that God can direct anybody's will according to his own decrees, but he does it only justly, according to his own resolution hidden from humans. The freedom of the human will remains: the cooperation of God and man is needed in order to carry out a deed.

6.4.4 Predestination

The Augustinian predestination teaching asserts that God, from his grace, has chosen some people for salvation, while he has not chosen others. In the Augustinian theology, grace and election for salvation are the main theses, which is carried over by Calvin in his "doctrine of double predestination". The doctrine of double predestination teaches the election for salvation and the election for damnation.³⁶¹

As regards foreknowledge, the object is God himself; from eternity, God knows himself and has known himself since before the creation of the world.³⁶² It is also before the "foundation of the world" that God already predestined the ones to calling while others not.

"of two pious men, why to the one should be given perseverance unto the end, and to the other it should not be given, God's judgments are even more unsearchable. Yet to believers it ought to be a most certain fact that the former is of the predestinated, the latter is not. ... they had not been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; they had not gained a lot in Him; they had not been predestinated according to His purpose who works all things. For if they had been this, they would have been of them, and without doubt they would have continued with them"³⁶³

Regardless of the committed sins, God gives his grace to those whom he has chosen before the beginning of the world. If it were not so, grace would have been reversible, which is incompatible with God's perfection. While divine goodness is cast on the chosen ones, the not elected ones (*non electi*) receive God's just judgment.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, 92.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁶³ St. Augustine, *De dono perseverantia* trans Schaff (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 532.

Puskás would even call this election “*election ex nihilo*” to the analogue of “*creatio ex nihilo*”.³⁶⁴ According to Augustine, it would also be just if God did not save anybody:

“by His righteous judgment it is shown in some what grace confers on those to whom it is given. Let us not then be ungrateful, that according to the good pleasure of His will a merciful God delivers so many to the praise of the glory of His grace from such deserved perdition; as, if He should deliver no one there from, He would not be unrighteous.”³⁶⁵

The Augustinian concept of free will and determinism can be concluded in the following way. Man, wanting to liberate himself and turning against his creator, fell into the bondage of sin. As a result, he lost his capability to avoid sin and his will got weakened. God’s freely given grace maintains humans and the world. The will blurred by sin is too weak to turn towards God, thus, in order to carry out the action freely willed by man, he needs divine cooperation. The creator, however, can govern man’s direction, but for the accomplishment, cooperation is needed: man’s free decision. The election to salvation, however, works regardless of man’s will. The election and its prescience does not determine human actions at all. Man’s will is free, but weak, and is inclined to act sinfully, it is a slave of sin. The enslavement limits the freedom of the will and carries a sinful inclination, but this nevertheless does not determine any action. God’s grace is needed for the good deeds, which are the result of human and divine cooperation.

The councils of Mileve and Carthage condemned the teachings of Pelagius, to which Augustine reacted: “*Causa finita est. Case closed. May heavens grant that the mistake be ended soon.*”³⁶⁶ The free will dispute thus reached its turning-point. The Scholastics and the Reformation theologians placed this seemingly “closed case” in the centre of their teaching, which fuelled the Renaissance disputes of faith. The predestination teaching of the *electi* and *non electi* influenced a lot of Reformation thinkers, including Calvin.³⁶⁷ The view of the bondage of the will laid the groundwork of Luther’s theology, who elaborated his teaching on grace on the bases of the Augustinian theology.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 531.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ St. Augustine, “Sermo” in: Agostino Trapé *Szent Ágoston* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2004) 202. My translation from Hungarian

³⁶⁷ Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, 92.

6.5 St. Thomas on free choice

6.5.1 Foreknowledge and future contingency

St. Thomas tried to reconcile foreknowledge and future contingency with past and present acts. Thomas explains God's omniscience, including future events, with His knowledge through vision.³⁶⁸ God exists in His timelessness and all things are known by Him through seeing them from His eternity. The contingent event, therefore, is the object of His knowledge. But, on the other hand, Thomas also claims that since future events are in potency, they are non-existent and thus cannot be the objects of knowledge.³⁶⁹

The future, according to Aquinas can be known in several ways. Firstly, a knowledge of the future can be obtained through its causes – provided that the cause proceeds only toward the given effect. A kind of foreknowledge can also be obtained by predictions, such as of a successful harvest. The future existing in the causes of equally opposite outcomes, however, is up to the freedom of choice. Aquinas claims that God's knowledge of these causes does not result in infallible knowledge.³⁷⁰

This provokingly questionable knowledge of the future that is non-existent, as well as God's unveiled omniscience, however, can be explained. Thomas uses two metaphors to help the understanding of the perfect God's relation to time and the created universe. The metaphor of the watchtower used by Boethius parallels God's watching the universe to the person standing on a high viewpoint above a marching parade. Observing the parade pass by on the ground allows only for temporal vision, i.e., knowledge of parts. Standing on the top, however, allows the observer to see the parade as a whole and thus gain knowledge about it. The parts co-exist and the observer on the watchtower knows each part of it at one time. Similarly, God views the course of events from His eternity. Boethius's metaphor suggests the co-existence of past, present and future events.³⁷¹ St. Thomas explains the parade metaphor:

³⁶⁸ William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1988) 107.

³⁶⁹ Kevin M. Staley, "Omniscience, Time and Eternity: Is Aquinas Inconsistent?" *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3 (2 Spring 2006): 9.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

“if all (the observer’s) seeing could exist at once, he would simultaneously see all the passers-by as present, even though they themselves would not all pass as simultaneously present. ... to the divine vision, however, which is not in time but outside time, it is not future but present. ... our seeing is itself measured by time; but to the divine vision, which is outside of time, there is no future. ... the fact that our sense of sight is never deceived when it sees contingents when they are present does not prevent the contingents themselves from happening contingently. In like manner, God infallibly knows all the contingents, whether they are present, past, or future to us; ... and the fact of (God’s) knowing them does not prevent them from happening contingently.”³⁷²

As Staley points out³⁷³, God here does not see the whole “parade” because He stands on the watchtower, but because God’s knowing is not divided by time. That is, the importance here is that God sees and knows the course of events as a whole, undivided. The ‘whole’ is present in front of God outside of time: in eternity.

Co-existence in eternity is explained by another metaphor: the circle. The centre of a circle does not coincide with any point in the circumference but it is opposite to all. The points of the circle is observed from the middle as a whole. Similarly, the divine intellect has a knowledge of all events as one from the viewpoint of eternity, even though these events have not yet occurred, therefore, are yet non-existent:

"Whatever therefore is in any portion of time, co-exists with the eternal, as present to it, although in respect to another portion of time it be past or future. But nothing can co-exist in presence with the eternal otherwise than with the whole of it, because it has no successive duration. Whatever therefore is done in the whole course of time, the divine mind beholds it as present throughout the whole of its eternity; and yet it cannot be said that what is done in a definite portion of time has always been an existing fact. The conclusion is that God has knowledge of things that in the course of time as yet are not.”³⁷⁴

This explanation, however, does not yet reconcile the tension God’s knowledge of things that do not exist. It takes God’s omnipotence and omniscience to comprehend

³⁷² St. Thomas of Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate/Truth*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994) 119.

³⁷³ Staley, *Omniscience, Time and Eternity: Is Aquinas Inconsistent?*, 16.

³⁷⁴ St. Thomas of Aquinas, "Summa Contra Gentiles", in Craig *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1988) 106.

them: "things that neither are, nor shall be, nor have been, are known by God as possible to His power: hence He does not know them as being anywise in themselves, but only as being within the compass of divine power." In other words, when present, God knows the course of events as a whole, which for us, temporal beings, is past, present and future. God's knowledge is not partial, successive or temporal. God knows things from His eternity, which is beyond time. He knows all events, even the ones that are yet to come. And the yet non-existent future is shaped by free choice granted by the contingency lying in the causes of equally opposed outcomes.

6.5.2 Free will granted by God

The God of the "eternal watchtower" standing in the "centre of the universe" observes the course of events that freely grow out from the seeds planted in their contingent causes. Whether the will itself is free, Thomas answers that too. It is God that moves the will of humans, but the will is granted freedom. The human will strives for the ultimate good, happiness, eventually, is inclined towards God.

There is, however, a distinction to be made between an action carried out freely (*actus elictus*) and the coerced action (*actus imperatus*). Only the ultimate good can move the will by necessity. If the object of the will is not the perfectly good, this inclination cannot be necessary.³⁷⁵

Thomas claims that it indeterminism (*indeterminismus*) that basically defines and presupposes the freedom the will. The action is carried out by the person who freely chooses to do it, although their will is inclined necessarily towards the ultimate good, i.e., God. This object is necessarily willed but the will is capable of choosing the less good, the lower ends. Sin, therefore, is the lack (*privatio*) of good (that would be possible to do).³⁷⁶

It is true, however, that the will is moved by the object, and the will moves the agent to action, but the will does not convey any kind of determinism. The object does not determine the will or influence its free choice in any way. God, the ultimate and first source of goodness and the end of all deeds, moves the will absolutely and freely. God

³⁷⁵ Pál Bolberitz, "A döntés szabadságának kérdése Aquinói Szent Tamás filozófiájában", *Teológia* 3-4 (2003): 87.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 88

does not determine deeds, but cooperates with humans granting them this partial freedom.³⁷⁷

To sum up, the human will necessarily strives for the good with the ability of free choice. Human freedom is granted by God, and the will can choose evil by the privation of the due good. To what extent one lets this freedom unfold, that is, partake of God's freedom, lies in humans themselves, who bear full responsibility for that.³⁷⁸

6.6 The Renaissance free will debate: Erasmus vs. Luther

As we have seen so far, the question of free choice and free will discussed in the Renaissance is not the first occurrence of the topic. Humanity always tried to satisfy its natural curiosity concerning its existence and to explore its relationship with the creator and thereby probably to get closer to him. The debate of Erasmus and Luther marked the dogmatic standpoints of the mid-16th century and eventually lead to Church reforming movements. The academic debate's main focal point was the question of free will, or, to be more specific, the existence or non-existence of free human will. Erasmus's work on free will, *De libero arbitrio* appeared in 1524, Luther's work on the bondage of the will, *De servo arbitrio* was published in 1525. The "great debate" can be described as "Erasmus laid the egg which Luther hatched",³⁷⁹ however the controversy did not start with the two earlier mentioned masterpieces.

Erasmus, the alumnus of the University of Paris was well-acquainted with works of Aristotle, dialectic and Scholasticism, but was only alienated from systematic philosophy during his studies.³⁸⁰ He read Lorenzo Valla's works and broadened his perspective through his trips to Italy and England. Luther, finding inspiration in St. Paul and St. Augustine, challenged Church authority, which was blaspheme and outrageous at his time, and was eventually condemned in 1520 by the pope's *Exurge Domine*. Luther's fight back was his *Assertions*, which actually started the free will debate, although, it was against Erasmus's intentions to be drawn into such controversy. He insisted on his neutrality and referred to the idea of truce.³⁸¹

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 89

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ Ernst F. Winter, Introduction to *Erasmus-Luther. Discourse on Free Will* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2002), v.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, vi.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, viii

Erasmus's *Diatribes seu collatio de libero arbitrio* (Diatribes) was written in one sitting and appeared in Basel in 1524, and was congratulated on by authorities such as the pope, the emperor and „the defender of faith”, Henry VIII.³⁸² Luther's answer, *De servo arbitrio* (The bondage of will) was an answer published in 1525 powerfully denying the freedom of the will up to the point of claiming its non-existence. The “great debate”, did not put an end to the free will dispute, as none of the participants came up with a firm solution. The controversy, however, marked a turning point in church history, but in western currents of thought as well.

6.6.1 Erasmus in the debate

Erasmus, drawn into the debate, replies in his *Diatribes* to Luther's *Assertion*. He is well aware of his position:

“some will surely close their ears and exclaim, ‘Oh prodigy! Erasmus dares to contend with Luther, a fly with an elephant?’ ... I have actually never sworn allegiance to the words of Luther. ... We are not two gladiators”³⁸³

Erasmus refers to Luther's initiation, as he confronted the teachings of church fathers, church councils and popes. It was actually Luther's publication of his opinion that made Erasmus reply likewise.

According to Erasmus, anyone can read the Holy Scriptures in order to serve a given opinion, which endangers an objective judgement. He cites 2 *Peter* 3,16: “the unlearned and the unstable ... distort the Scriptures to their own destruction”. Since Erasmus was well-taught in the traditional views on the freedom of the will, it was expected from him that he defend the standpoint of the Church. However, Erasmus did not have a definite opinion on the subject:

“I must confess that I have not yet formed a definite opinion on any of the numerous traditional views regarding the freedom of the will; all I am willing to assert is that the will enjoys some power of freedom. My reading of Martin Luther's *Assertion* ... has not yet convinced me”³⁸⁴

³⁸² *Ibid.*, ix

³⁸³ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Free Will* trans. Ernst F. Winter (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2002) 5-6.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7

He also praises Luther, the learned scholar: “Luther has more learning in his little finger than Erasmus in his entire body – which I am not now going to refute”.³⁸⁵ Erasmus maintains the possibility that he might be mistaken. He, therefore, wishes only to analyze and not to judge, neither to dogmatize. Erasmus aims at analyzing the Holy Scriptures, since their books contain divine wisdom. He also underlines the importance of Christian piety to approach the truths revealed in the Bible. The Christian man also must keep in mind that it takes Christian piety to understand and to believe that whatever happens, good or bad, happens according to God’s will for the sake of our salvation.³⁸⁶ Some things, including the mystery of the freedom of the will however, remain unknown to humans, just like e.g. the day of the last judgement “But of the day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only (*Mark 13,32*)”³⁸⁷

6.6.1.1 Erasmus on free will

The method of Erasmus was to gather instances of the Bible supporting the freedom of human will. He was, however, aware that it is a “formidable task ... wasted on Luther and his friends, particularly since they not only hold different opinions, but also contradict themselves extensively.”³⁸⁸ In his work, Erasmus concentrates on the Scripture excluding the voices of the church fathers, however, he mentions that apart from Manichaeus and John Wycliffe, all of the church thinkers shared the views on the freedom of the will. Erasmus mentions Lorenzo Valla’s authority, as well, adding that “(Valla) almost seems to agree with them, (he) has little weight among theologians”³⁸⁹

The dispute on the freedom of the will concerns the same Scripture expressed by the same divine wisdom, therefore, according to Erasmus, it is the sense of the Scripture that needs to be analyzed. There are several passages supporting free will, nevertheless, there are some that seem to support the denial of it. The Scriptures are inspired by the same Holy Spirit, wherefore it cannot contradict itself. In the followings, the analysis of passages supporting and seemingly denying free will is needed. But before that,

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Erasmus stresses the need to clarify the definition of free will: “By freedom of the will we understand in this connection the power of the human will whereby man can apply to or turn away from that which leads unto eternal salvation”.³⁹⁰

Erasmus cites Old Testament proofs supporting the freedom of the will. The first proof is from *Ecclesiasticus*: “... (God) hath set water and fire before thee; stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil, that which he shall choose shall be given him” (15:16-18) After deliberating upon the authority of the cited Biblical book, Erasmus turns to the explanation of the passage by the morality present in the creation. Adam was created with an uncorrupted reason with the ability to differentiate the good and evil. He, thus, could choose evil if he wished so. Likewise, angels were created with such a will, but those who fell with Lucifer, have a completely corrupted will without the ability to perform meritorious acts. The snake, i.e., evil was able to persuade the first couple to choose evil, which worsened the will to a degree “so that it could not improve itself by its own natural means; it had lost its freedom and was obliged to serve the sin ... But, by the grace of God, ... the freedom of the will has been restored”.³⁹¹ The sin of Adam and Eve is inherited in humanity and “Sin-absolving grace can to a degree aid in our overcoming of sin, but not extricate it” The reason, thus is darkened, but not destroyed, “Probably the same occurs to the power of the will: it is not completely extinct, but unproductive of virtuous deeds”³⁹²

The second Old Testament proof Erasmus comes up with supporting the freedom of the will, is God’s warning to Cain: “Why are you angry and why are you downcast? If you do well, will you not be accepted; but if you do not well, will you not sin crouch at the door? Its desire is for you, but you must master it” (*Genesis 4,6-7*)³⁹³ Erasmus’s argument is divine reward in prospect and punishment for evil deeds. The cited passage proves that evil inclinations can be overcome, which do not necessitate sinning at all. Erasmus strengthens his idea with the following Biblical passage: “I have set before you life and death. Choose the good and follow me”³⁹⁴ in which God sets before man the freedom of choice. “It would be ridiculous”, claims Erasmus, to set an alternative before man that is not a real choice. God’s commandments serve the same way: man is to obey them, for which he is given his just reward. Erasmus compares

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁹⁴ Free rendition of *Deuteronomy 30:19*, *Ibid.*, 32.

necessity and the enslaved will with “a man whose hands are tied ... that he can reach with them only to the left, ‘To your right is excellent wine, to your left you have poison. Take what you like.’”³⁹⁵

Further Old Testament evidence, such as *Isaiah*, 1,19, *Jeremiah* 15,19, *Zachariah* 1,3, *Ezekiel* 18,24 are lined up for supporting the freedom of the will, as Erasmus claims, “the entire Holy Scripture is filled with such exhortations ... Scripture desires nothing but conversion, ardour, and improvement”.³⁹⁶ Finding Scriptural passages proving the freedom of the will is “like looking for water in the ocean.”³⁹⁷ Erasmus finally puts up the questions whether it would make sense not to give man free will and still judge him, “Why do you blame me, when ... I am only your tool? ... Why do you implore me, when everything depends on you anyhow and can be carried out only by your will? Why bless me... What is the purpose of all the many commandments...?”³⁹⁸ Erasmus also examines the relationship of necessity and sin, that is, if necessity drives humans, bad deeds would not be sinful.

Erasmus quotes New Testament passages as well as proofs supporting the freedom of the will. The first quotation is Christ weeping over Jerusalem (*Matthew* 23,27). Erasmus even endeavours to put up ironic questions provided that the freedom of the will is not granted: “Why do you torment yourself with useless weeping? If it was your will that we should not listen to the prophets, why did you send them? Why do you blame us for what you willed, while we have acted merely out of necessity? ... (you) caused us not to wish it”³⁹⁹ Erasmus explains that actually, Jesus weeps over the acts of the Jews, because he wished they act in a way, which they refused. The personality of Christ is an apparent proof of Erasmus, as his commandments all imply a free choice. Christ appeals to the will, to conversion and sets out reward for a free turning toward him. Concerning the role of faith in the process of freely turning to God, Erasmus explains: “a reward is something God owes us, because he has pledged his will to us, in case we believe in his promise. However, faith itself is a work and the free will participates to a considerable measure in it by turning to our away from faith.”⁴⁰⁰

The Gospel is full of exhortations and parables arousing diligence and zeal, which all would be powerless if necessity worked in the relationship of man and God.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

Erasmus also comes up with evangelical threats abolishing necessity. Christ's words on the cross, moreover, would have been senseless if necessity applied – he would have justified those who “do not know what they are doing”. To sum up, Erasmus's proofs of the Old Testament and the New Testament of his *Diatribes* explain the senselessness of necessity in the light of the several quoted Biblical passages. Thus, man's will is free, man is an ethical being with a capacity of choosing good or evil.

6.6.1.2 Against Luther and the bondage of the will

The following passages of the *Diatribes* directly attack the arguments for the bondage of the will. Erasmus quotes Luther's *Assertio*, which is to be condemned: “free will is really a fiction and a label without reality, because it is in no man's power to plan any evil or good. As the article of Wycliffe, condemned at Constance, correctly teaches: everything takes place by absolute necessity.”⁴⁰¹ Erasmus first quotes apparent proofs supporting the bondage of the will. The passage of the pharaoh's hardened heart is featured in the *Book of Exodus* and is explained by Paul in the *Letter to the Romans*. Erasmus calls for the help of Origen to resolve the difficulties: “God permitted an occasion of induration but the guilt is Pharaoh's.”⁴⁰² Erasmus compares the human will to clay or wax that become soft and hard respectively in the sun, in the same manner, God tolerates sin and can cause a change of mind or the hardening of the evil. That man can will evil, is proven, which, according to Erasmus, even in the case of the Pharaoh, remains free: “In reality Pharaoh was created with a will enabling him to move in both directions. He has turned evil on his own account, since he preferred to follow his own inclination, rather than obey God's commandments.”⁴⁰³ The Pharaoh was used by God in order to reveal a higher teaching: that it is evil to oppose the will of God. In making choices, God's grace will assist: “God's mercy precedes will, accompanies it, and gives it fruitfulness.”⁴⁰⁴

The *Diatribes* also analyzes Luther's own arguments against the free will. Luther's concept of “flesh” refers to the corrupted and weak nature inclined to evil. The Biblical passage “The inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth” (*Genesis 8,21*), according to Erasmus, does not destroy the freedom of the will completely. It is true that

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

man cannot fully overcome this inclination without divine grace, which implies some degree of necessity, but the fact that man is granted time for doing penance proves the freedom of the will.⁴⁰⁵ Against the Lutheran “flesh”, the argument is that man is reason and spirit, as well, and that the human were nothing but flesh is a godless disposition. This idea is supported by Paul, who distinguishes the carnal man and the spiritual man. With the church fathers, Erasmus claims that the germinal concepts of good is inherent in every human. These germinal concepts of good enable the will to recognise the ethical good and one is not forced to do evil without his consent.⁴⁰⁶

Inclination and guidance do not represent a necessarily force. God can influence one’s thinking capacity and even deprive him of his intellect but he does not do that for the above reasons. Instead, the inclination to evil is a divine permission that man can do evil and be driven by his passions. Luther’s proofs are wrong generalisations from special cases. God did not create anything evil by its nature. Even Lucifer’s fall was voluntarily for which he deserves eternal punishment.⁴⁰⁷

Divine guidance can be seen as a safe harbouring when the mariner says God saved the ship, nevertheless, the whole thing would not have been possible without the zeal of the mariner.⁴⁰⁸ God moves the human soul with his grace and man gives himself to it willingly. “We propose ... Man is able to accomplish all things, if God’s grace aids him. Therefore it is possible that all works of man be good.”⁴⁰⁹

6.6.1.3 Foreknowledge and conditionality

Concerning foreknowledge, Erasmus, again, needs some help, but this time Lorenzo Valla’s. He claims that Valla formulated it the best way, namely, that divine foreknowledge is not a cause in itself. Things happen not because God foreknows them. Erasmus compares this phenomena to a solar eclipse. We can predict, that is, foreknow it through calculations of the astronomers, but the eclipse does not occur because they have predicted it but because it will take place anyway.⁴¹⁰

Concerning the case of Judas, Erasmus solves the question with infallible divine foreknowledge. Judas could have changed his will, but he did not. This is what God

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

foreknew. Had Judas changed his will, God would have foreknown and revealed that. Thus, in accordance with Valla, Erasmus claims that foreknowledge is not predetermination.⁴¹¹ Erasmus concludes the issue of foreknowledge and conditional necessity that necessity excludes guilt and virtue, moreover, evil does not result from God's will but only from human will.

6.6.1.4 Conclusion of the Diatribe

A moderate opinion is needed on the freedom of the will, since the Holy Spirit cannot contradict itself and scholars can only seek answer in the Holy Scriptures. All interpretations look for an answer serving their own purpose. Utterances on Christian obedience, trust, subjection to the divine will, serving as a living tool of the Holy Spirit and eternal life as a reward and God's omnipotence are all praised by Erasmus, since these concepts agree with the Scriptures. Some views of the Reformers, however, such as condemning the works of saints, merit and predestination (or, as Erasmus put it, the "already decided") against human efforts are wrong. Erasmus warns against the exaggerating of faith over the freedom of the will, especially in Luther's case, who denies free will completely: "In my opinion the free will could have been so defined as to avoid overconfidence in our merits ... which Luther shuns, ... and still not lose the advantages which Luther admires."⁴¹² Erasmus admits that "it is very little that the free will can effect" but insists on the freedom of it upon the arguments cited above. We also have seen above that God can work in good and bad works, but God would cease to be God if he were the author of evil. The exaggeration of original sin is wrong, making God cruel. Moreover, divine commandments would make God a harsh tyrant, adding that "Luther seems to enjoy such exaggerations."⁴¹³ In the end of his Diatribe, Erasmus adds a personal apology, however: "I am here not as a judge ... ,but as a disputer"⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ Winter, *Erasmus-Luther*, n8

⁴¹² Desiderius Erasmus, *The Free Will* trans. Ernst F. Winter (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2002) 85

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

6.6.2 Luther: There is no such thing as free will

According to Luther, the Christian man is the most free: he is a free lord of all things, but he is the servant of all things at the same time.⁴¹⁵ To start the dispute over the freedom of the will, Luther clarifies that „man standing before God” and „God related to man” are concerned. Freedom and bondage, as well as concealed and revealed are not mutually exclusive and can co-exist. Moreover, freedom is bondage and bondage is freedom just like divine revelation does not annul divine concealment.⁴¹⁶

Luther differentiates between the law and grace, viz., man carries out God’s decrees not by free will, but he receives enough grace to obey them for the love of God. This is the working of grace and not the working of nature.⁴¹⁷ In fact, it should be stated that “free will” is only a fiction having nothing to do with reality, for man lives according to God’s and not his own will. There is no free will before God, which seems to exist only for us and for the temporal things. This means that the annulment of the “*liberum arbitrium*” is necessary for human freedom.⁴¹⁸ “Free will” is the attribute of God and if we grant it to humans, we would make them divine. The human will is enslaved by sin against which he is helpless. Ebeling adds to it that Luther does not question the psychological freedom of decision, which enables one to choose between two options.⁴¹⁹ To the contrary, man can rule everything that is subordinated to him and can have free decision over them. The question is whether man has free will over God, that is, whether God does what man wills. Free will in relation to God obviously does not exist, since man cannot act as agent, but only as receiver and judged.⁴²⁰

The expression “free will” is a contradiction in itself, since it means non-determined “not-yet-willing”. Since the will is something decided, the absolute freedom of choice is not neutral. Therefore, the freedom of the will concerns the power of the will, since it is free to the extent of its ability to carry out what it actually wills.⁴²¹ Man’s will is never neutral, but it is always directed to something, which Luther describes with the Scholastic example of the horse: either God or Satan sits on it, and

⁴¹⁵ Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, 351.

⁴¹⁶ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther. Bevezetés a reformátor gondolkodásába* (Budapest: Magyarországi Luther Szövetség, 1997) 161.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.* 166.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.* 167.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.* 168.

the horse cannot decide who sits on its back, but the riders fight for it.⁴²² “*Liberum arbitrium nihil est*”, claims Luther, since if God intends something, it will necessarily be realized, which means that free will does not exist.⁴²³

6.6.2.1 Answer to Erasmus

The title of Luther’s “*De servo arbitrio*” can be traced back to Augustinian terminology.⁴²⁴ Luther was outraged by the meaninglessness Erasmus veiled behind his eloquence.⁴²⁵ He defies the statements of the *Diatribes* based on the Old Testament, since they only quote imperatives, which do not express our abilities but our duties, which actually reveals our impotence (*impotentia*).⁴²⁶ Luther piled the “whole Bible” against the detailed statements of Erasmus.⁴²⁷ According to Luther, when Erasmus wanted to write about free will, he actually did it about divine grace. Free will is only a title (*solo titulo*), and man is not capable of anything without God. If he were, grace would not be needed.⁴²⁸ At one point, Luther even became so upset in refuting Erasmus and listing his failures, mistakes and even misquotes that he exclaimed in German: “*Das ist zu viel!*”⁴²⁹ Luther concludes: “Your (Erasmus’) Preface complains either of the words of God or of the words of men. If the latter, it is all written in vain. If the former, it is all blasphemy”⁴³⁰ There has nothing been written in the support of free will, neither in the Scriptures, nor in the writings of any men. Free will as such is “inappropriate for Christian doctrine”. In the followings, I will present Luther’s explanations concerning the non-existence of the freedom of the will.

6.6.2.2 The enslaved will

The bondage of the will is a result of concupiscence, a perverted self-justification, turning to his self, a sin inherent in every human. The Christian man is

⁴²² *Ibid.* 170.

⁴²³ Rokay Zoltán, *Rotterdam Erasmus Diatribéje* (Budapest: JEL Könyvkiadó, 2004) 48.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.* 45.

⁴²⁷ Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, 354.

⁴²⁸ Rokay, *Rotterdam Erasmus Diatribéje*, 50-51.

⁴²⁹ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* trans. Ernst F. Winter (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2002) 104.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

sinful and justified by faith at the same time. Due to original sin we sin even with good actions. The corruption of the will is the bondage of sin.⁴³¹

Affected by the original sin, man does not have a possibility before him to decide for or against God, but “behind him”, that is, original sin is not a partial provision of humanity, but it is a total provision of human existence. With the fall man lost the freedom of willing, according to Augustine, whereas according to Luther, he lost the freedom of will. Man lost the partnership of God, moreover, God was left without a partner too.⁴³²

Luther explains that God’s working in man is the “sweet influence of the Spirit of God”, wherefore the will “desires and acts not from compulsion but responsively of its own desire and inclination”.⁴³³ If God is not present in us, we can only do evil and necessarily not strive to our salvation. With God in us, we desire and crave for love, which is good. “Thus, the human will is like a beast of burden”.⁴³⁴ The will cannot turn itself to good without God and without the grace of God the will can only be a slave. Luther adds: “I allow you to enlarge the power of free will as much as you like, make it angelic, divine, if you can. But once you add this doleful postscript, that it is ineffective apart from God’s grace, you at once rob it of all its power”.⁴³⁵ Will thus does not have any power at all. Free will without any power would be a contradiction, therefore, “free will is something which is not free”. It actually would be the best not even to use the term, because only God has free will, which rules man. Man’s will is “captive, servant and bond-slave, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan”.⁴³⁶

6.6.2.3 The need for divine grace

Luther explains the Pauline teaching that all sinners need the grace of God and we are justified freely by his grace. Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* thus supports the denial of free will.⁴³⁷ As for Luther personally, he claims:

⁴³¹ Puskás, *Kegyelemtan*, 75.

⁴³² Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte* 355.

⁴³³ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* trans. Ernst F. Winter (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2002) 111.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

“I frankly confess, that I should not want free will to be given me ... to enable me to strive after my salvation ... I should still be forced to labor with no guarantee of success. ... Whatever work it had done, there would still remain a scrupling as to whether or not it pleased God. ... God has put my salvation out of the control of my own will and put it under the control of His ... according to His own grace and mercy”.⁴³⁸

Faith, according to Luther, is not active on behalf of man, but it is an acceptance of God’s working within us. *Sola fide* (faith alone) is a reliance on God’s mercy and Christ’s redemption. Justification by faith does not depend on actions to an extent that the faith of the justified can lead to good actions necessarily. Faith proceeds action, and actions follow faith.⁴³⁹ *Sola gratia* (grace alone) is the theology of predestination: justification is independent of human actions, thus it needs to be proceeded by a divine decision. Unconditional predestination comes from the complete impotence of human action as result of the fall, and, the effectiveness of divine action resulting from his omnipotence.

Luther claims that Erasmus might have been right in ascribing the man some kind of will, but to grant freedom to this will is wrong. It would be better to assert a kind of “ability of the human will”, which is power or disposition, which can choose to refuse or disapprove, which is altogether the action of the will.⁴⁴⁰ But Luther’s “doleful postscript” is written to the presumption again. If the will could will or not will man’s salvation or perdition, we would ascribe him with divine free will and nothing would be left for the working of grace and the Holy Spirit. It is only by the power of God that one does not will to sin. “Free will is a divine term and signifies a divine power”.⁴⁴¹

The fallen will is turned toward its own desires and cannot will good. However, as the will is subject to Satan and evil, so is it subject to divine omnipotence and action. God thus necessarily works in and moves wicked men. Nevertheless, these men cannot do but evil. Luther explains this as if one were riding a lame horse. The wicked will and act according to their own nature and God’s working remains good.⁴⁴² Concerning foreknowledge and necessity, Luther claims that whatever God foreknows must happen necessarily. Otherwise, we should not believe his promises. This “truth”, according to

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ Puskás, *Kegyelemtan*, 74.

⁴⁴⁰ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* trans. Ernst F. Winter (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2002) 120.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 130.

Luther, puts an end to all questions.⁴⁴³ It follows from this that if God's foreknowledge and omnipotence is granted, man is subject to necessity. God created and preserves us. Affirming the freedom of the will would annul the divine plan from the beginning. God's knowledge is infallible, mutability and contingency are the attributes of man.⁴⁴⁴

6.7 Calvin on free will and predestination

The Last Supper was Jesus Christ's total obedience to the will of God, as Calvin claims in the closing sentence of his *Commentary on Romans*: „Obedience to the will of God”, which was his recurring phrase. It means an obedience to the word of God, that is, a reading of the Scripture word by word. In the *Commentary on Romans* he claims that living right is the absolute dependence on the will of God,

”We must constantly remember that the principle of true living is that men should depend on the will of God, and not allow themselves to move even a finger if they are uncertain or vacillating in their mind. Thoughtlessness will speedily become arrogance when we dare to go further than our conviction allows us.”⁴⁴⁵

Commenting the passage “If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord”, (Romans, 14:6) Calvin adds that living unto the Lord is

”to be conformed to His will and pleasure, and to order all things to His glory. ... both our death and our life are to be given up to His will. Paul gives us the best of reasons for this – whether we live or die we are the Lord's. It follows from this that He has the power over our life and death. The application of this doctrine is very wide. It is just that God should assign to every man his station and course in life. In this way we are not only forbidden to attempt to do anything hastily without a command from God ... a man who is not free and master of himself perverts law and order if he does not depend on the will of his Lord. Thus we are taught the rule by which to live and die”⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴⁴⁴ Puskás, *Kegyelemtan*, 76.

⁴⁴⁵ Jean Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Tessaalonians*, trans Ross Mackenzie (Michigan, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961)

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

6.7.1 Augustinianism and predestination

Calvin's theology was deeply related to the Augustinian tradition. The Pelagian dispute and the study of its texts lead him to the question of predestination and the election of grace, however, "Calvinism" became referred to as the doctrine of predestination and the bondage of the will. Calvin examined the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux on the subject matter of free will and merit, in which he found the guidelines to explore the questions. In the Reformation debates, the Augustinian tradition remained still the major reference point.⁴⁴⁷

In the dispute with Albert Pighius, the Augustinian anti-Pelagian views provided Calvin the major reference points. In 1542 Albertus Pighius published his treatise on free will and God's grace (*De libero Hominis arbitrio et divina gratia*), in which Pighius disputed Calvin's doctrines in ten books. As a response, Calvin issued a defence of the orthodox doctrine on the bondage and the liberation of the will (*The Bondage and Liberation of the Will. A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius*) As a response, Pighius published "John Calvin, Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, which he issued as a joint statement together with the Genevan theologians.⁴⁴⁸

Augustine's theory of the election of grace declares that everyone has the ability to believe, just as everyone has the ability to love, however, it does not follow from this that everyone has faith. Faith comes from God, as He prepared the wills of those whom he chose. Therefore, the ability to believe (*fidem posse habere*) is a gift of nature, whereas believing (*fidem habere*) is a gift of God, of his special grace, given only to those whom he elected.

"We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illuminates God's grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others."⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ B. A. Gerrish, *The place of Calvin in Christian theology* in: Donald K McKim ed. *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (CUP, 2004) 290.

⁴⁴⁸ Wulfert de Greef, "Calvin's writings" In: Donald K McKim ed. *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (CUP, 2004) 54.

⁴⁴⁹ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ed. John. T. McNeill, trans. and ind. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975) III.21.1

Calvin interpreted this divine election so that everything comes from grace, which eventually separates people into two groups, those who come to faith and those who do not : “How much the ignorance of this principle detracts from God’s glory, how much it takes away from true humility, is well known.”⁴⁵⁰

According to Augustine and Calvin too, this doctrine can be read in the Scripture itself, however, the reason behind it remains one of God’s secrets.

“Human curiosity renders the discussion of predestination ... let them remember that when they inquire into predestination they are penetrating the sacred precincts of divine wisdom. If anyone with carefree assurance breaks into this place, he will not succeed in satisfying his curiosity and he will enter a labyrinth from which he can find no exit.”⁴⁵¹

This doctrine is said to be the “great revival of Augustinianism”⁴⁵² There are, however, as Gerrish points out, some misconceptions of Calvin’s Augustinianism. The issue of double predestination vs. “single” predestination can be solved by pointing out a difference in emphasis. Garrish points out that Augustine’s predestination of the saints is a “single” predestination, which is an election simply passing by the rest of humanity. Calvin’s double predestination differs only in its emphasis. The bases for the difference of emphasis can be found in the Scripture: John’s Gospel depicts Jesus as calling his chosen ones: “I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15,19) and “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world”, John 17.6 whereas Paul’s Epistle to the Romans refers to “the vessels of mercy” and “the vessels of wrath made for destruction”⁴⁵³

What is, then, predestination according to Calvin? Calvin’s answer is:

“No one who wishes to be thought religious dares simply deny predestination, by which God adopts some to hope of life, and sentences others to eternal death. ... We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² Warfield quoted by Gerrish, "The place of Calvin in Christian theology", 292.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.* (Rom 9.22-23)

one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or death.”⁴⁵⁴

On the issue of baptism, on the other hand, Calvin claims that predestination takes precedence over this sacrament, arguing in one of the chapters of the *Institutions* entitled “Not *all the unbaptized are lost*”: “I do not want anyone on this account to think of me as meaning that baptism can be despised with impunity... it merely suffices to prove that baptism is not so necessary.” refuting the Augustinian opinion, which stands for the damnation of the unbaptised babies who die in infancy. However, According to Augustine, unbaptized infants suffer damnation only with minor pains.

6.7.2 The voluntary will

As for Medieval influences of Calvin’s doctrine, it is Bernard of Clairvaux, whom he cited the most, especially concerning the references to the concepts of free will and merit.⁴⁵⁵ Bernard’s *On Grace and Free Choice* (c. 1128) followed Augustine’s doctrines, i.e., by the first human’s fall the whole humanity fell into sin and through the fall humanity is in servitude. However, Bernard still claims that humans have an inalienable free will⁴⁵⁶, which Calvin claimed to be a misuse of language, since “*liberum arbitrium*” means free choice, which implies two equal courses of action to choose from. But as Bernard expressed that humans are slaves of sin and therefore can only sin, Calvin saw the word free as meaning “voluntary”. Voluntary sinners cannot choose not to sin, but they are not forced to sin against their will:

“The chief point of this distinction, then, must be that man, as he was corrupted by the Fall, sinned willingly, not unwillingly or by compulsion; by the most eager inclination of his heart, not by forced compulsion; by the prompting of his own lust, not by compulsion from without. ... it is clearly expressed that man is surely subject of the necessity of sinning.”⁴⁵⁷

Further in this passage quoting Bernard and developing his ideas further, Calvin comes to the conclusion that “Afterwards he says that we are oppressed by no other

⁴⁵⁴ Calvin, *Institutes* III.21.5

⁴⁵⁵ Gerrish, “The place of Calvin in Christian theology”, 294

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, viii.24

⁴⁵⁷ Calvin, *Institutes* II.3.5

yoke than that of a kind of voluntary servitude. ... the will, when it was free, made itself the slave of sin.”⁴⁵⁸ Concerning this issue, Calvin does not wish to explore original ideas, but suggests avoiding the use of the expression free will and thus reconciling the misunderstandings, “Surely my readers will recognize that I am bringing forth nothing new, for it is something that Augustine taught of old with the agreement of all the godly”⁴⁵⁹

The doctrine of predestination in this case too, implies the question of foreknowledge. Calvin’s answer does not add any new idea to the dispute – with many thinkers, he sees God’s knowledge as a timeless, constant present concept:

“We, indeed, place both doctrines in God, but we say that subjecting one to the other is absurd. When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things always were, and perpetually remain, under his eyes, so that to his knowledge there is nothing future or past, but all things present.”⁴⁶⁰

6.7.3 Chance, fate and fortune opposed to the will of God

„Herein lies the unfathomable greatness of God: not only did He once create heaven and earth but He also guides the whole process according to His will.”⁴⁶¹ Calvin adds that those ones who recognise God as the creator, at the same time confess that God’s power is actually working in the world. Since everything in the world, humans as well as and inanimate objects, are subject to God’s will, in this world no fortune or fate operates instead of God’s power:

“we must know that God’s providence, as is taught in Scripture, is opposed to fortune and fortuitous happenings. ... But anyone who has been taught by Christ’s lips that all the hairs of his head are numbered (*Matt 10:30*) will look farther afield for a cause, and will consider that all events are governed by God’s secret plan.” (Concerning inanimate objects,) “we ought to hold that, ... according to his own purpose bends and turns them to either one action or another”⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* III.21.5.

⁴⁶¹ *Corpus Reformatorum* in Wilhelm Niesel, trans. Harold Knight, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956) 70.

⁴⁶² Calvin, *Institutes* I.16.2.

In the chapter “*Discussion of fortune, chance, and seeming contingency in events*”, Calvin fights against equating Stoic fate with the doctrine of providence, as his forerunner, Augustine did. Referring to Paul’s first epistle to Timothy, “Timothy, protect what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and absurdities of so-called ‘knowledge’”, 1Tim 6:20 Calvin also suggests to avoid using the term fate. Contrary to the Stoics, who derive all happenings from a chain of causation which results in necessary events, he advocates God’s governing the world from the very beginning and carrying out his will as he decreed. To the question if chance and necessity operate, he replies that such terms as “fortune” and “chance” are pagan ones, about which a “godly” man should not be concerned.⁴⁶³ As for fortune, Calvin warns us not to use fortune and God’s will synonymously, but rather, citing Augustine again, use words derived from the term fortune, eg. *forte* (haply), *fortuito* (fortuitously) referring to divine providence. It has been made clear before that everything in the world happens according to God’s decrees, and what is commonly meant by fortune is indeed God’s ordinance.⁴⁶⁴

6.7.4 Providence

In the discussion “*The nature of providence*” of the Institutions, Calvin examines verse 22:8 from the book of Genesis “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering”, and spots out the origin of the meaning of the word providence (*providentia*) as God’s constant care for humanity:

“providence means not that by which God idly observes from heaven what takes place on earth, but that which, as keeper of the keys, he governs all events. ... And indeed, when Abraham said to his son, ‘God will provide’, he meant not only to assert God’s foreknowledge of a future event, but to cast the care of a matter unknown to him upon the will of Him who is wont to give a way out of things perplexed and confused.”⁴⁶⁵

Further discussing providence, Calvin concludes that it is Jesus Christ who teaches us that God sustains and governs the world. Just as the ever reoccurring inability

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, I.16.8

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, I.16.7.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I.16.4

of humanity to understand God's nature, his providence and the true courses of events of the world remain hidden to us.

We have seen so far Calvin's concept on how God maintains the world and how He governs it according to His decrees. As for individuals and particular providence, we will see that, according to Calvin, as He sustains the universe, so cares for each created being, "he sustains, nourishes and cares for, everything he has made, even to the least sparrow".⁴⁶⁶

Calvin's doctrine of providence concerns several creatures in various degrees. Man is the being for whom everything has been created, therefore, the providential care is reached out towards him. The common empires and peoples, just as the lot of each individual, depend on Gods guiding providence.⁴⁶⁷ (Calvin uses the term *the lot* of men referring to the fate of men in general probably thus avoiding the misuse of the word fate.)

6.7.5 Human responsibility

We have seen so far that Calvin affirms that everything in the universe happens according to God's will and how He created things to be and with his caring maintenance he guides the course of events. This doctrine might lead to the deprivation of human responsibility in general, since everything happens according to a supernatural will, humans are but mere agents of carrying out the plan.

Calvin decisively rejected this view and stated that providence does not mean that humans should irresponsibly rely on the events that happen to them. With the heading "*God's providence does not excuse us from due prudence*", he derives his theory from the book of Proverbs, "Man's heart plans his way, but the Lord will direct his steps". (*Prov 16:9*) God has set the limits of human beings and, at the same time, cares for them with his providence. Man is able to foresee dangers, and as God protects us, it is our duty to protect our lives. God hides the future events from humans to avoid humans' speculation in advance what steps to make in order to overcome them. "I have therefore already remarked that God's providence does not always meet us in its naked form, but God in a sense clothes it with the means employed".⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, I.16.1

⁴⁶⁷ Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956) 73.

⁴⁶⁸ Calvin, *Institutes* I.17.4.

God created man with reason to use it for making decisions, indeed. If we do not use the means God has given us, we have no right to live happily in the thought of divine providence.⁴⁶⁹ Men in fact depend on the plan of God with divine providence as his control, not simply as permitting man's actions,

“it is more than evident that they babble and talk absurdly, who, in place of God's providence, substitute bare permission – as if God sat in a watchtower awaiting chance events, and his judgements thus depended upon human will”.⁴⁷⁰

Encompassing divine providence and the faith in God's decrees, Calvin sums up:

“In short, not to tarry any longer over this, if you pay attention, you will easily perceive that ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries; the highest blessedness lies in the knowledge of it”.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁹ Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956) 75.

⁴⁷⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975) I.18.1.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, I.17.11

Chapter 7

Macbeth in bivio: the enigma of free choice

In this chapter I will analyse the crucial turning point in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where the protagonist is at the crossroads of the paths of his life. The encounter with the three weird sisters urges Macbeth to make a decision. This decision is whether to subjugate himself to a destiny he does not know or to make events happen according to his own desire. The decision is made by a free or a determined will, but either way, a choice is to be made. Macbeth has a sense of possible ends of the course of events, although he does not yet know which way leads to which event. Macbeth knows that a choice is to be made:

“Two truths are told
As happy prologues to the swelling act” (I.iii.128-129)

This is a crucial psychological turning point in Macbeth's life, which eventually marks his destiny: Macbeth is “*in bivio*”, facing the byways of life.

7.1 The Choice of Hercules

Macbeth's meeting with the weird sisters parallels the Renaissance topos of the heroic Hercules. The origin of the story of Hercules can be traced back to the Roman myth, where Hercules withdraws into solitude to find the ideal way of life. He has a vision, in which he encounters the personifications of virtue and vanity (sensual pleasure). Hercules is at the crossroads of his life: he is to choose between the narrow path leading to virtue and the broad and easy way proposing pleasures with vice.⁴⁷²

The heroism of Hercules is clearly shown in his decision: with his intellectual strength and willpower he overcomes vice and chooses the narrow and difficult but eventually beneficial path of virtues. The vision of Hercules serving virtue in contrasting ways were part of the Renaissance culture including paintings, engravings, coats of arms, emblems, dramas and pageants.⁴⁷³ The situation Macbeth is facing resembles the “Choice of Hercules” since both heroes encounter personified

⁴⁷² Heiner Zimmermann, “Macbeth and Hercules” *Renaissance Studies* Vol 20. No. 3 (2006) 356.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 356. n3.

supernatural figures urging them to make a decision. These decisions eventually determine the heroes' futures.

The ancient theme of the choice of Hercules became one of the favourite themes of Renaissance writers. The first emergence of the theme was in Coluccio Salutati's "*De laboribus Herculis*",⁴⁷⁴ however, Mann claims that it was Petrarch to revive the image of Hercules for the first time in his *De vita solitaria*.⁴⁷⁵ According to Ullman, Salutati's writings did not have great impact on thinkers of the next generation, but his influence on his contemporaries through his personal contacts and his vast collection of books was remarkable. He taught many disciples, who spread the newly acquired wisdom of humanism all over Italy and even succeeded him in the chancellorship of Florence.⁴⁷⁶

Coluccio Salutati elaborated the ancient story of Hercules in his *De laboribus Herculis*, about which he wrote in one of his *letters to Giovanni of Siena*. Salutati wanted to explain the meaning of Seneca's tragedy entitled *Hercules furens* and sent his treatise in a letter to his friend to be criticised and to be commented. However, the treatise was not finished and the letter was found only after the death of Coluccio. A so-called second edition was made by Salutati's biographer, Filippo Villani, who collected Salutati's works, giving the treatise the title *De laboribus Herculis*.⁴⁷⁷ Salutati, on the other hand, gave the work the title *De sensibus allegoricis fabularum Herculis*.

It is notable that without being aware of Petrarch's coinage of the terms of the choice of Hercules with the term "*bivium*" referring to the Pythagorean concept, Salutati also made up the term "*in bivio*" in the same meaning as Petrarch did. Salutati wrote about it in the letter⁴⁷⁸ It can be assumed, according to Mommsen, that Salutati was well aware of the problems the story raises in terms of a Christian point of view.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁴ Theodor. E. Mommsen, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959) 175.

⁴⁷⁵ Nicholas Mann, "Petrarch at the Crossroads". (paper presented at the university of Warwick 1992 in honour of Donald Charlton. 2003) Accessed 23 August 2011, <http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/submissions/Mann.pdf>, 4.

⁴⁷⁶ Berthold. L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1963) 117.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁷⁸ Mommsen, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 191.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

7.2 The pilgrim's dilemma

The fable of Hercules carried a symbolism and the Pythagorean Y got associated with the “figure of human life (*figura ... humane vite*)”.⁴⁸⁰ By Salutati's and Petrarch's treatment of the moral choice symbolised with the Pythagorean letter became the symbol of human life itself.

The tale of the pilgrim soul's journey is the focal point of Du Bellay's early-16th century work, which introduces the riddle associated with the symbol. The symbol-enigma is part of the pilgrim's narrative as follows:

“I came to a fork in the road, where the way split
 Into two paths. ...
 At the entry to (one) path I discern a beautiful girl
 Who by the loveliness of her face might rival the nymphs of old;
 ...
 At the very beginning of (the other) path sat a lovely
 Maiden, albeit more inconstant by far than the waves of Euripus,
 Idle and fickle, letting her hair fall loose over her shoulders,
 Turning her eyes and proud neck this way and that.
 ...
 I asked the advice of a girls who was walking
 In the broad left-hand path; she was well-educated in her taste
 And was skilled in weaving words of truth with falsehoods.”⁴⁸¹

The narrative of the pilgrim's dilemma attributes a superior knowledge to the symbol, which the protagonist is to decipher as if it were a riddle so that he make the right choice.⁴⁸² The pilgrim meets three women, who help or hinder him in making his choice. He is given advice on which path to take, but he is also challenged by “falsehoods”. The choice whether to take the right or the left-hand path is in itself difficult, but the three women give a twist to this endeavour: the pilgrim is left confused and abandoned, he cannot rely on anything but on his own willpower. The fickle, voluptuous woman resembles Lady Fortune, who swiftly changes her mind according to her whim. The riddle “weaving words of truth with falsehoods” is like that of the Sphinx or Shakespeare's Weird Sisters, who have supernatural wisdom by which they look into the future and reveal deceitful but eventually true prophecies. As the pilgrim

⁴⁸⁰ George Hugo Tucker, *Homo Viator: Itineraries of Exile, Displacement and Writing in Renaissance Europe* (Geneva: Droz, 2003) 90.

⁴⁸¹ Du Bellay, *Peregrinatio*, Book II, quoted in Tucker p 101

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 102.

walks the way of life, he needs to rely on his own power to combat such suddenly evolving challenges. Macbeth thus faces the pilgrim's dilemma: in the very beginning of the play three supernatural woman-like creatures suddenly appear to him and reveal enigmas provoking him to make moral choices.

7.3 Bivium, the byways of life

The allegory of the letter Y is used by Petrarch as a reference to Pythagoras, who used the letter Y first as an example of human life. Its lower side signifies the beginning, without vices or virtues, which is yet but uncertainty. The upper side of the letter is called the "*bivium*", which departs in two ways at the point of adolescence. The right side reaches to blessing, though it is the thinner and hardest to take, whereas the left side is the easier one but eventually leads to fall.⁴⁸³ Discussing the allegory of the letter Y, Petrarch referred to the Christian, as well as to the classical traditions. The letter Y as the symbol of life was first worked out by Isidore de Seville claiming that it was Pythagoras who invented a symbol for life, which was probably well-known by Petrarch.⁴⁸⁴

In a letter to Giberto Baiardi,⁴⁸⁵ Petrarch gives him advice concerning his son, Giovanni:

"this young man...is in need of advice, for he is troubled by the torments of his age. As you will see, he has now arrived at the Pythagorean crossroads of his life; never has his prudence been weaker, never the danger to him greater. The left hand path certainly leads to hell, the right hand one to heaven; but the former is easy, level, very wide, and worn smooth by the tracks of many men, while the latter is steep, narrow and difficult, and bears the footprints of only very few".⁴⁸⁶

It is clear here, however, that the Pythagorean crossroad, the *bivium pythagoricum*, marks the turning point one's life marked by adolescence. It is also true, nevertheless, that by this age, man becomes indeed responsible for his choices and actions. In another letter, Petrarch gives advice also on critical decision making. He

⁴⁸³ Mommsen, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 186.

⁴⁸⁴ Mann, *Petrarch at the Crossroads*, 3.

⁴⁸⁵ Petrarch, *Fam. VII 17* In Morris Bishop, *Letters from Petrarch* ed., trans. (Indiana University Press, 1966)

⁴⁸⁶ quoted by Mann, *Petrarch at the Crossroads*, 3.

explains thoroughly how the bivium works in one's life. Petrarch very convincingly calls out for Pythagoras and his genius. Pythagoras

'forged on the anvil of his genius a new letter of the alphabet, which is superfluous for writing, but very useful in life. This two-horned and exemplary letter reaches to the heavens with its narrower right-hand horn, while with its broader left horn it seems to curve towards the earth. The left horn, they say, represents the path to hell, for the approach to it is pleasant and easy, but the destination miserable and bitter; while for those who enter the path on the right, the efforts required are huge, but the reward is of the highest'.⁴⁸⁷

The "bivium" is also known as the Pythagorean Letter Y (*Littera Pythagorae Y*), or the Pythagorean Fork (*Furca Pythagorica*) and the Ypsilon Cross. The idea of the young ones standing at the crossroads described by the Pythagoric letter Y can also be found in an epigram attributed to Virgil:

The Pythagoric Letter two ways spread,
Shows the two paths in which Man's life is led.
The right-hand track to sacred Virtue tends,
Though steep and rough at first, in rest it ends;
The other broad and smooth, but from its Crown,
On rocks the Traveler is tumbled down.
He who to Virtue by harsh toils aspires,
Subduing pains, worth and renown acquires;
But who seeks slothful luxury, and flies
the labor of great acts, dishonor'd dies. 488

It is obvious that from the Pythagorean perspective, the right-hand path is preferable. The bivium represents a choice between virtue and vice or good and evil. It follows from this that the Pythagorean Y represents the power of choice,⁴⁸⁹ a commitment and a sense of responsibility for conscious decisions. It also represents a firm control over one's life.

The Pythagorean Y thus acquires a moralistic connotation, it is judgmental and represents freedom of choice. The letter Y might also represent raising the arms in

⁴⁸⁷ *Fam. XII 3 Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ Erwin Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, XVIII (Leipzig: Teubner 1930) 66-67

⁴⁸⁹ Opsopaus, *The Pythagorean Tarot. An Interpretation of the Major and Minor Arcana on Pythagorean and Alchemical Principles*, 1996 accessed 5 August 2010
<http://www.cs.utk.edu/~mclennan/BA/PT/Intro.html>;

celestial invocation.⁴⁹⁰ To sum up, the Pythagorean Y represents a moral choice with an awareness of consequences and its relationship with the supernatural.

7.3.1 Critical crossroads

“I am at a critical crossroads” (*incipiti in bivio sum*) – writes Petrarch in one of his Letters on Familiar Mattes.⁴⁹¹ Mann highlights its critical nature as he emphasises the word “*incipiti*”, for “*anceps*”, which means two-headed, referring to the two paths of the bivium. Further on, Mann refers to Petrarch’s adventurous life full of travels.⁴⁹² It would take only one step further to compile the metaphor life is a journey but it is Petrarch who speaks out instead: “Just as there is there is nothing worse for a man than not to know what he wants ... so there is nothing worse for a traveller than not to know where he is going’.⁴⁹³ Life is full of critical crossroads, man is “in bivio” several times and needs to make decisions. The bivium, thus, is a turning point, a moment to chose, to enforce one’s ability to choose and live their life in their own way.

7.4 The “in bivio” choice

The classic interpretation of the calligraphy of the letter Y did not go as far as to refer to the left branch as an explicit downfall. It was Petrarch who drew the letter’s left branch as a downward pointing one and the right branch as a steeply rising line. It was also Petrarch who used the idea of symbolising the parting of the ways and making choices with the Pythagorean letter Y first, coining a new phrase from the Ciceronian “choice of Hercules” and the Pythagorean “in bivio”: “*Hercules in bivio*”, which became a proverbial saying in Italian and German.⁴⁹⁴ Thus, Petrarch’s reference to taking the left road meaning choosing the easy but evil alternative and taking the right road meaning choosing the more difficult but eventually glorious alternative became a general Renaissance concept of making conscious free choices in one’s life with an awareness of its consequences.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹¹ *Fam IV.4*

⁴⁹² Mann, *Petrarch at the Crossroads*, 1.

⁴⁹³ *Fam. XX 4 36*, quoted by Mann, *Petrarch at the Crossroads*, 2.

⁴⁹⁴ Mommsen, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 190.

That humans choose their way of life at a certain point of their lives represented by the bivio, is also a point of the transition from Medieval to Renaissance thinking.

“For the tale implied a basic maxim which is characteristic of one of the aspects of Petrarch’s thinking as well as of that of the generations following him: the demand that every man, on reaching in his life the fateful point of the parting of the ways, ought to choose, as Hercules had done, the right path, that of virtue, through which he will obtain fame.”⁴⁹⁵

This virtue (*virtú*), which would also develop into a Machiavellian concept, is a novelty in the Renaissance, shifting from the Medieval moral system into a new world, where it is in harmony with Christianity. Virtú goes no longer against divine omnipotence, but it places the free man in the centre of the universe gaining his freedom not any more from divine aid, but from his innate virtue.⁴⁹⁶

In the preface of his *De viris illustribus*, Petrarch claims that the great figures of human history lead a glorious life not with the operation of fortuna, but due to their own virtue and gloria. Petrarch considered virtue as the ultimate driving force of the universe, a concept of which might have been derived from the works of St. Augustine’s City of God. Hercules chose a path, which was the path of virtue, which eventually lead him to glory. Hercules was the real illustrious man, choosing the path of virtue by his own free choice.⁴⁹⁷

7.4.1 Emblems of “in bivio” choices

The Fates or witches or weird sisters Macbeth encountered with can be found in the iconographic variations of the Renaissance portrayals of the choice of Hercules. As Zimmermann has shown,⁴⁹⁸ behind Shakespeare’s three witches there are the shades of the three Fates from the text of Holinshed and the confrontation of the hero with the Fates is to be found in the iconography of the Choice of Hercules. One tradition of representing the motif of Hercules features a debate. Two supernatural figures, Virtue and Vice try to convince the hero to take their respective paths to happiness.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴⁹⁸ Zimmermann, *Macbeth and Hercules*, 370.

⁴⁹⁹ Zimmermann, *Macbeth and Hercules*, 365.

Whitney's *Choice of Emblems* features a scene depicting Hercules at the Forum Romanum between two goddesses. The emblem is entitled "*Bivium virtutis et vitii*" (The crossroads of virtue and vice).⁵⁰⁰ The two women are fighting to win Hercules, that is, to make him choose the path they offer.

*When HERCULES, was dowlfull of his waie,
Inclosed rounde, with vertue, and with vice:
With reasons firste, did vertue him assaie,
The other, did with pleasures him entice:
They longe did strive, before he coulde be wonne,
...
But heare, I yeelde oh vertue to thie will,
And vowe my selfe, all labour to indure,
For to ascende the steepe, and craggie hill,
The toppe whereof, whoe so attaines, is sure
For his rewarde, to have a crowne of fame:
Thus HERCULES, obey'd this sacred dame.*

Another tradition depicts the dream or vision of Hercules. The satire of Sebastian Brant entitled "*The Ship of Fools*" published in 1494 is a long moralistic poem describing follies and vices. Each folly or vice is undertaken by a different fool. The *Ship of Fools*⁵⁰¹ was so popular that it was translated into Latin, French, English, Dutch and Low German. Brant's poem was illustrated by a series of woodcuts, most of which is believed to be carved by the young Albrecht Dürer during his short stay in Basel in 1494. The figure "Dream of Hercules", which in fact is not proven to have been cut by Dürer, actually represents Hercules's dream showing up two alternative ways: the way of Virtue and the way of Vice. The "fool" is "in bivio", he is between two ways, at the crossroads. There is no debate here: the hero is to make a choice himself. The Pythagorean letter Y is visually represented, as well as the moral choice between the naked voluptuous Vice carrying a skeleton at her shoulder representing death and the modestly dressed Virtue.



Figure 22.
Dream of Hercules



Figure 23.
The crossroads of virtue and vice

⁵⁰¹ Das Narrenschiff in the original German



Figure 24.
Hercules and the Parcae

crossroads, Macbeth did not control his passions and desires and gave way to speculations about his future. Before standing at the crossroads, that is, before meeting with the weird sisters, Macbeth was and exemplar of “virtú heroica”.⁵⁰³ The first

characterisation of Macbeth is that of

Shakespeare’s drama and its source, Holinshed’s Chronicles is linked with the iconography of the choice of Hercules in a way that the dream of Hercules was at times represented with the same approach as Macbeth’s encounter with the weird sisters was represented by an illustration to the Chronicles. The motif of the choice between virtue and vice transformed into a choice between spiritual life and death. This “memento mori” is also implied in the carving of the Ship of Fools above.⁵⁰²

Hercules, unlike Macbeth, chose the path of virtue and demonstrated strength and courage. At the



Figure 25.
Macbeth and Banquo meeting the three Weird Sisters

the Captain’s at the very beginning of the play. “Brave” Macbeth stood out in a battle as a true soldier and made courageous decisions to fight back the enemy who “dismayed” him only “as sparrow eagles, or the hare the lion”. The “cannon overcharged with double cracks” was firm and put his life in the hands of the destiny of the country. Macbeth is “worthy” for admiration and praise as he showed outstanding human qualities. The battle is won by Justice and Fortune, the “rebel’s whore” fighting on the enemy’s side eventually got tamed:

And fortune, on (Macdonwald’s) damnèd quarrel smiling,
Showed like a rebel’s whore. But all’s too weak,
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
Disdain(ed) fortune (I.ii.14-17)

⁵⁰² Zimmermann, *Macbeth and Hercules*, 371.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 359.



Figure 26.

Herculean virtue beats the sinful
fortuna

As Zimmermann points out, Fortune's punishment by Hercules and her subjection is a cliché in Renaissance iconography.⁵⁰⁴ The following early sixteenth century plate entitled "Herculean virtue beats the sinful Fortuna"⁵⁰⁵ represents this idea.

Macbeth has thus demonstrated his Herculean power: he is a brave warrior, who dominates Fortune and who has committed himself to virtuous life. Facing the crossroads, however,

changed his whole attitude towards his destiny. The weird sisters have enkindled him with a brilliant future through a relatively easy way. He is torn between the opposing forces of good and evil. He is to make a moral choice, which is free from any determining force. Macbeth is thrown out to the moral battlefield where he cannot show up his courage. He is to choose between the wide and easy path of vice and the narrow and difficult path of virtue: "wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."⁵⁰⁶

7.5 The choice Christianised

The topos of Hercules at the crossroads was employed by Salutati to illustrate the operation of free will and the choices a Christian is to make.⁵⁰⁷ The crossroads thus acquired a moral interpretation. Petrarch writes in his *De vita solitaria* (Life of Solitude):

"(Hercules), when hesitating long and much as though at a parting of the ways, he ultimately spurned the way of pleasure and took possession of the path of virtue, and marching

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.,

⁵⁰⁵ My translation. Original title: „Herculische Tugend prügelt die lasterhafte Fortuna“

⁵⁰⁶ Matt 7:13-14

⁵⁰⁷ Tucker, *Homo Viator: Itineraries of Exile, Displacement and Writing in Renaissance Europe*, 83.

indefatigably along its course he was raised not only to the apex of human glory but to a reputation of divinity.”⁵⁰⁸

The tale of Hercules features the personifications of the good and bad, the *virtus* and *voluptas*, which, however, do not coincide with the Christian interpretation of the eternal good and evil. The reason why the story, which first appeared in Cicero’s *De officiis*, reemerged only in the Renaissance, might be, that in the story, Hercules is granted a free and individual choice of making directions of his own life and this entirely free choice, according to the Christians of the era, was not granted to humans.⁵⁰⁹

Petrarch’s „*Life of Hercules*” was a part of the first version of his „*De viris illustribus*” (On Illustrious Men). His „*De vita solitaria*” is a discussion of the life of solitude for religious meditation and deliberation of the withdrawal of social engagement. In this meditative book, Petrarch referred to Hercules and his choices he was to make in life in two passages. From these passages we get to know the short description of the dilemma Hercules was to face. These two instances give us a primarily insight to Petrarch’s concept of humans’ choice of life in general.

“It were an excellent thing, if want of counsel, the unavoidable concomitant of youth, did not stand in the way, that each one of us at the very beginning of his maturity should give careful and earnest thought to the selection of some particular kind of life, ... Hercules did so on entering manhood... (one’s) potentialities of his nature cannot be completely suppressed. If a man has been illuminated by the celestial light at his very entrance into life, when ... not a spark of judgment is active, and has been able to find a safe road or one whose dangers are slight and easily avoided, he has reason for everlasting gratitude of God. For one whose fortune has been less auspicious greater trouble is in store. Yet once he has begun to open his eyes and to understand what a crooked path he is travelling ... Though the undertaking is not particularly easy, it is notably profitable and by no means impossible.”⁵¹⁰

Petrarch quotes a passage from the Bible describing the two paths man is to choose between⁵¹¹: ‘for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to

⁵⁰⁸ *The Life of Solitude. II.ix.4* in Jacob Zeitlin *The Life of Solitude*, trans. (University of Illinois Press, 1924)

⁵⁰⁹ Mommsen, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 177.

⁵¹⁰ *The Life of Solitude*, iv.2

⁵¹¹ *Fam VII. 17*

destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it'⁵¹² Luke 13:24 echoes this idea: "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to."

Shakespeare refers to the two ways of the bivium with Ophelia's speech, which might be traced back to the idea of the Pythagorean letter Y through Matthew 7:13-14:

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven
Whiles, like a puffed and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede. (I.iii.47-52)

Du Bellay's narrative explanation of the pilgrim's tale explains humans' trials and tribulations in the Christian way:

"the pilgrim comes to a fork in the road; and proceeding along the left-hand path, where he is assailed and overwhelmed by sins, after calling the most blessed Virgin Mary to his aid, as he directs his steps toward the enclosure of repentance, he espies the Sirens, Fortune and Satan lying in wait for men in the tempestuous ocean of this world."⁵¹³

The pilgrim thus is to combat demonic powers and evil temptation the triangle of Sirens, Fortune and Satan represents, but is nevertheless guided by divine benevolence to make the right choice. The pilgrim's moral choice is thus Christianised opening way for the operation of free will and divine providence as opposed to evil. Du Bellay mixed the Herculean bivium and the Pythagorean Y with a Christian theology, touching upon the subject of the freedom of the human will and the influence of the supernatural on moral choices.

7.6 Macbeth's "Fall"

Macbeth is "in bivio": he is standing at the moral crossroads, between "two truths". The identity of the witches is blurred, they are once the three Fates, and other time they represent the moral choice between good and evil. The two paths are blurred

⁵¹² *Matthew 7:13-14*

⁵¹³ Tucker, *Homo Viator: Itineraries of Exile, Displacement and Writing in Renaissance Europe*, 107.

as well, as the ambiguous prophecies do not reveal which is the narrow and which is the wide path thus dissolving the binary opposition of “Hercules’ Choice”.⁵¹⁴

The sober and brave warrior becomes the human torn between good and evil and thirsty for knowledge about the nature of the weird sisters and his own destiny.⁵¹⁵ He wants to know more about the consequences of his actions and he becomes anxious about his lack of knowledge. His sane reason became blocked by his desires, fears and anxiety. This existential struggle is the struggle of humanity after the fall:

“And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.”⁵¹⁶

Adam’s nature became corrupted because he wanted to know good and evil, paradoxically, as a result, he is not capable of differentiating the two anymore. The shelter of the Garden of Eden does not provide security anymore and man of a corrupted nature is thrown out in the world full of ambiguity, deception and full of crossroads. By the sweat of his brow the man is to survive in this world making his own choices by his reason blurred by desires. Man is lost but he is still granted the created free will, which does not give any guidance in making choices. The idea behind Macbeth’s “Fall”, that is, the decision he made at the crossroads, represents the Augustinian theology of original sin and its relation to the freedom of the will.

7.6.1 The Free Will theology of the bivium

The free will theology of the “in bivio” choice appears in Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*. Ripa’s emblem book was first published at the end of the 16th century and was one of the most influential books in the 17th century. His emblem entitled free will depicts a young royalty and explains the following:

⁵¹⁴ Zimmermann, *Macbeth and Hercules*, 373.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 375.

⁵¹⁶ *Gen* 3:22-23

“One of juvenile Age, in a royal Habit of divers Colours; a Crown on his Head, and a Scepter in his Hand, on the top of which is the Greek Letter Y.

He is young, because Discretion is requisite, to attain to his End by due Means. The Habit, Crown and Scepter, signifie his absolute Power. The divers Colours shew his not being determin’d, and that he can act by divers Means. The Letter Y declares the two Ways in Man’s Life, Virtue and Vice, as it is divided at the Top.”⁵¹⁷



Figure 27.

Free will by Cesare Ripa

The motto of the young royalty representing Free Will can also be Luke’s 13:24: *“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”*

Macbeth, the young hero has conquered Fortune, and holds power over his decisions but his reason is blurred by desires, fear and anxiety. He stands at the critical crossroads and it is obvious that from the Pythagorean perspective, the right-hand path is preferable. The Pythagorean bivium represents the power of choice⁵¹⁸, a commitment and a sense of responsibility for conscious decisions. It also represents a firm control over one’s life.



As Pythagoras learnedly pointed out by the image of his letter Y, which is said to have been invented by him, the two modes of life, one of pleasures and vice, the other of hardship and virtue; ... so Fortune had two paths which she shows us in our life: the one on the right hand, rugged at its entrance but beautiful and spacious in the end, is virtue; the other, on the contrary, is that of vice, beautiful and broad at its entrance, but rugged and disagreeable in the end.

Figure 28.

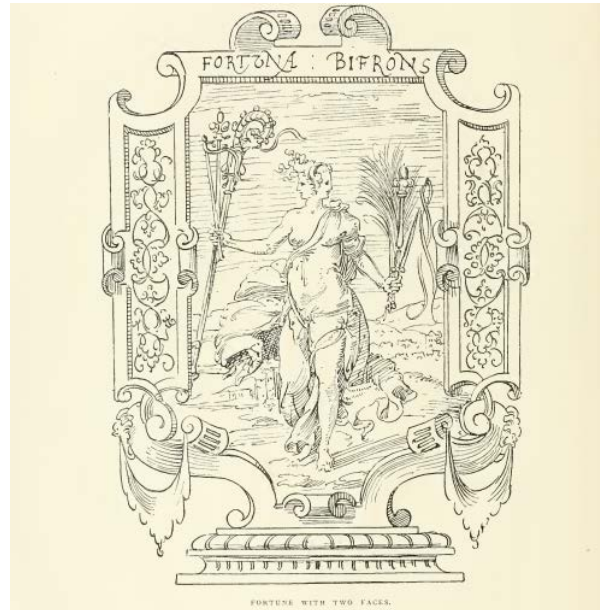
Fortunae bivium by Jean Cousin

⁵¹⁷ Cesare Ripa, *Free Will*. original highlighting

⁵¹⁸ Opsopaus, *The Pythagorean Tarot. An Interpretation of the Major and Minor Arcana on Pythagorean and Alchemical Principles*

7.7 From Fortuna Bifrons to Hecate Triformis

Fortune is depicted with the bivium, the two roads of life, below. The next plate of the emblem book shows Goddess Fortune with two faces. One of her faces is beautiful, desirable, whereas the other one is ugly. She is “*fortuna bifrons*” incorporating the *fortuna adversa* and the *fortuna prospera* referred to by Petrarch in his *Remediis* (Remedies Against Fortune Fair and Foul).⁵¹⁹ She fights against humans, for which weapons are to be sought. Above all, Petrarch gives remedies against “fair” and “foul” fortune. Fortune is equipped with prosperity and adversity and the only weapon against her is human virtue. Macbeth learns that “Fair is foul and foul is fair” in prosperity and adversity brought by the Janus-faced Fortuna Bifrons.



Who does not know how continually Fortune changes, and how she exalts or humbles human affairs? For that reason the ancient poets cleverly said that she had two faces: with one she laughs, with the other she weeps, just as this two-edged sword with which the enemy may be wounded from both sides

Figure 29.

Fortuna bifrons by Jean Cousin

The Pythagorean Y is used in the Tarot back illustrations with a metamorphosis as it has three equal branches. It can be viewed as a human with outstretched arms reaching out for the supernatural.⁵²⁰ The three branches represent the meeting of three ways, Triodos in Greek and Trivium in Latin. This meeting point is especially sacred to Hecate, one of the main Goddesses of the Pythagoreans. Hecate, the female counterpart of Janus, is also called Hecate Triformis. Shakespeare depicts the threefold nature of Hecate in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

And we fairies that do run
By the triple Hecate's team. (V.ii.13-14)

⁵¹⁹ Klaus Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus. Eine Studie zu Petrarca's Lebensweisheit* (Köln und Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1958) 28.

⁵²⁰ The three branches are the head and the two outstretched arms

The two-faced Janus can only look into the past and the future, whereas the tree-faced goddess Hecate (Triformis) can also look into the eternal present, which holds our destiny.⁵²¹ Hecate is “the mistress of (the three witches’) charms” (III.v.6). She controls the three sisters, witches or Fates, who only reveal the prophecies to Macbeth. It is Hecate who is “The close contriver of all harms” (III.v.7). Her agents, the three witches represent her three faces as they are able to look into the past, present and future of Macbeth:

FIRST WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter! (I.iii.49-51)

It was Shakespeare’s choice to use Hecate as a character and to make her three faces, i.e., the weird sisters, as her agents. Hecate, the pagan goddess possessed the secrets of Nature: the knowledge over heaven, earth and underworld, whose figure was placed at the crossroads and was worshiped as the goddess of the three paths.⁵²²

7.8 “The greatest is behind”

The proverbial “the greatest is behind” is Macbeth’s cast die: the best or worst is yet to come.⁵²³ Whether Macbeth wished to hear the witches’ prophecies or not, and whether he wants to be king or not, “*Two truths are told*” (I.iii.128) by the “*instruments of darkness*”. May they be subtle “enkindling” “honest trifles” and “spying affections”, the Devil spoke the truth, or more likely, temptingly whispered in his ears. By receiving the news that he acquired the title Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth immediately takes the prophecies as promises, not any more concerning about what or who “such things” are:

those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me,
Promis’d no less. (I.iii.120-121)

⁵²¹ Opsopaus, *The Pythagorean Tarot. An Interpretation of the Major and Minor Arcana on Pythagorean and Alchemical Principles*

⁵²² Raven Grimassi, “Encyclopedia of Wicca and Witchcraft” (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2000/2003) 210.

⁵²³ Nicholas Brooke, notes to *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (Oxford University Press, 1990) 106.

The nature of the supernatural beings is not of concern any more, neither is the dimness of the prophecies: they are truths, what is more, promises. From now on, “the greatest is behind”.

The “supernatural soliciting” has started and Macbeth is at the crossroads. He needs to step on one of the branches of the bivium: he is to make a decision. The “*happy Prologues to the swelling Act*”, the “two truths” provide fertile soil for the swelling seeds to bosom and fruit the possibilities of which they contain.

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill; cannot be good I.iii.131-132

Macbeth’s speech reveals that he is torn between good and evil, although he is not aware of the choice he makes. He senses well that it is possible that the prophecies are evil but what he does not notice is how he is “betrayed in deepest consequence” by the subtle operations of the fickle and wicked witches. He “yields to a suggestion” he cannot even decipher. Yielding suggests an underlying force that Macbeth is not aware of. He is blinded by the glittering crown and the “told truths” that pave the way towards it. Yielding to a “horrid” deed he conceptualises first time here as “murther”, projects “horrible imaginings”, which “smother”, suffocate and repress further reasoning for the sake of illusionary facts. Macbeth’s action is choked by imagination, yet he is to choose and take the first steps, not even knowing where the branches of the bivium end up: “nothing is but what is not”. He senses determination, but not the consequences determined by his choice:

If Chance will have me King, why Chance may crown me
Without my stir (I.iii.144)

Chance itself does not determine the outcome of events – rather, it is the yielding to the thought of murder. The idea of the operation of Chance in placing Macbeth on the throne by events other than murder, does not even occur. If we follow the logic of the two prophecies that have already come true, the third one should miraculously come true according to the same pattern: either by treason or unexpected events that eventually would place the crown on Macbeth’s head “without his stir”. It follows therefore, that the prophecy in itself does not determine Macbeth’s actions. Perhaps, could it be that in order to accomplish the contingent prophecy, Macbeth had

to kill the monarch? “The greatest is behind”, Macbeth seems to passively accept whatever happens to him. He faces his destiny in a stoic manner:

Come what come may,
Time, and the hour, runs through the roughest day (I.iii.147-148)

This deference to something beyond his control and beyond the understanding of his “dull brain” is a “thy will be done” or an “Amen” to his destiny.

Macbeth’s crucial moment to make a decision was at the time of meeting with the three faces of Hecate, which revealed his true destiny lying right at the intersection of the „bivium” of his path of life. Macbeth, however, did not show up Herculean courage or conscious responsibility in taking the right path of virtue, although he had the choice to make a free decision. Herculean courage can be shown at times of war but standing at the crossroads of one’s own life seems to be utterly intimidating. Macbeth in bivio encounters the enigmatic three faces of destiny that his confused mind cannot decipher hounding himself to his own tragic fall.

Chapter 8

From freedom to necessity

So far, I have analysed the theological debate on free will and predestination, as well as Macbeth's moment of decision-making marked by the *bivium*. Concerning Macbeth's choice, Moseley defines the terms: by predestination one means the inability of man to alter future events, and both future and man's action are determined by a kind of supernatural, whereas, by free will one is able to choose between alternative courses of action. Moseley points out the apparent mutual exclusion of the two terms.⁵²⁴ Shakespearean characters are free beings, indeed, they are capable of making decisions. The question therefore is the following: how did Macbeth freely fall into his tragedy?⁵²⁵ The fact that the Witches know the future, makes him assume that his fate is already determined, which, according to Moseley, is "philosophically and logically a grave mistake". He actually enslaves his own mind with the Witches' prophecies.⁵²⁶ When Macbeth realises that he has given up his "eternal jewel", instead of repentance, he falls into despair and invokes fates, which he feels to be bonded to. This is the point, as Moseley points out, that Macbeth truly loses his freedom, as he is enslaved by his own mind. He fell into the trap of his desires and ambitions, which he projected onto the Witches and their ambiguous speech understood the way he wanted.⁵²⁷

8.1 Obedience of the created man

The Biblical creation story is a prophetic narrative, which is rather a historic aetiology than a myth, although it contains mythic elements.⁵²⁸ The Jahwist narrative is centred around an anthropocentric interest: it shows that the relationship of nature and man is determined by God's will, but it got corrupted by the sin of man. The creation is a demonstration of God's caring revealing divine friendship and goodness,

⁵²⁴ Charles Moseley "Macbeth's free fall" in *Critical Essays on Macbeth*, ed. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (Harlow: Longman, 1988) 22-23.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁵²⁸ Attila Puskás, *A teremtés teológiája* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2006) 43.

a sign of which is a safe garden built as a home for man. The text also depicts an intimate relationship between God and human, and benevolent divine presence is showed for example in the scene of God's walking in the garden.⁵²⁹

The harmony, however, got corrupted by the sin of man. Man acted against the divine will and thus is responsible for falling into a miserable condition. From the createdness of man follows his obligation towards God with obedience and carrying out the divine will. The creator reveals himself through the maintenance of his creation and the moral imperative thus is try to be perfect likewise.⁵³⁰ The moral imperative implies not only obligation, but responsibility, as well. Man is responsible for representing his creator according to God's will. Denying this obligation is sin, that is, the human directed toward God defies God's will and thus becomes punishable.⁵³¹

8.2 "Be the serpent"

I have examined in Chapter 2 how Jezebel appealed to Achab's royal power and masculinity. The Biblical situation, "there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up" (*1Kings 21:25*) is shown in detail by Shakespeare through the dialogue of the couple aspiring to the throne:

LADY MACBETH

Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent flower,
But be the serpent under 't. (I.v.53-57)

The proverbial „snake in the grass” is an expression of a „subtle beguiling”.⁵³² Lady Macbeth urges her husband to deceive the world, i.e., beguile it and be the evil behind that mask. The nature of the temptress wife is revealed in the lines that parallel the story of the fall of man. Lady Macbeth actually echoes the story of the Book of Genesis depicting the fall of the first couple: “the serpent was more subtil than any

⁵²⁹ Gen 3:8 *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵³² Brooke, Notes, 62.

beast of the field which the LORD God had made." (*Gen 3:1*) and "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty". (*2Cor 11:3*) "And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat". (*Gen 3:13*)

Lady Macbeth's speech echoes words taken from the Bible describing the fall of man. This implication is more apparent as the words "book" besides "beguile", "innocent", "serpent" elaborate one complex image of a biblical echo.

Evil subtly beguiled Eve, whose ambition, eventually, caused the fall of man. Lady Macbeth invoked "spirits", "murd'ring ministers" and concealing "smoke of Hell" to carry out her plan. She decided to be the support of her husband, whose "nature ... / is too full o'th' milk of human kindness". Macbeth and his wife both consciously chose an evil way to seize the crown but it is the Lady who insists her husband commit the sinful murder. She is his satanic temptation to sin, as it is explained in the *Bereshit Rabbah*, the Midrashic explanation of the *Book of Genesis*:⁵³³

"And the man called his wife's name Eve Hawwah ... She was given to him for an adviser, but she played the eavesdropper like the serpent. ... Another interpretation: The serpent was thy [Eve's] serpent [i.e. seducer], and thou art Adam's serpent."⁵³⁴

Rabbis gave additional meaning to the name Eve (*Havah*): one interpretation says that the name is derived from the word see (*havi*) because she caused the loss of the following generations with her eating of the Tree of Knowledge. Another interpretation, however, claims that *Havah* comes from the Aramic name of the serpent, *hivei*, "the serpent was your serpent, he showed you the fruit and caused you to sin; and you were the serpent of Adam, for he sinned because of you." (*Bereshith Rabbah 20:11*)⁵³⁵ Original sin is thus inherent in women, and the tempter, the serpent is the woman, Lady Macbeth herself.

As a consequence of the fall, losing the created harmony, man got into contradiction with himself: "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I

⁵³³ *Midrash Kabbah*, trans and ed. Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman & Maurice Simon (London The Soncino Press Third Impression 1961), 169-170.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 169-170

⁵³⁵ Kadari, Tamar, "Eve: Midrash and Aggadah." in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (Jewish Women's Archive) accessed 20 March 2009.
<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eve-midrash-and-aggadah>

would not, that I do". (*Rom 7:19*)⁵³⁶ The ability to differentiate good and evil got corrupted too, as the initial corruption reflects: „of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. ... And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.” (*Gen 2:17; 3:13*) The first sign of the corruption as the result of the beguilement is that she ate to know, i.e., differentiate good and evil as a result of which she is not able to differentiate good and evil anymore. The yielding to the “fair and foul” promises is also the first clash with the divine will “Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (*Gen 3:11*) The consequences are apparent, but where does the serpent, viz., evil come from?

The story of the fall starts without introduction: the serpent appears and starts a conversation with the woman. Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (*Gen 3:1*)

The literary composition of the Book of Genesis does not refer to anything evil but solely to a serpent.⁵³⁷ The serpent was in fact a mythic-cultic animal of the cultures surrounding the people of Israel, e.g. the straightening up cobra in Egypt or the Canaanite fertility symbol. Therefore, the theological meaning of the serpent is more than just an animal: it is the symbol of turning against the true and only God, creator of the universe. The serpent is the symbol of losing God's grace and is a reminder of temptation and the power working against the divine order. There was an objective, external evil in the fall actively working against God and man. In the Biblical tradition, this evil is called the Satan, the adversary, the accuser: “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee” (*Zech 3:1-2*) tempter and provocator: “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel” (*1Chron 21:1*) wishing to do evil to men. The apocryphal literature gives further diverse names to this demonic personal power that stands between God and man and who is God's enemy and bears malice to man.⁵³⁸ Satan, the devil (Gr. *Diabolos*) is referred to as an objective power in the allusion to the Book of

⁵³⁶ Huba Rózsa, *A világ és az emberiség eredete a Bibliában* (Budapest: Jel Kiadó, 2004) 74.

⁵³⁷ Rózsa, *A világ és az emberiség eredete* 78.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

Genesis in the Book of Wisdom: „through envy of the devil came death into the world: and they that do hold of his side do find it” (*Wisdom 2:24*)

The theology of the Book of Genesis emphasises the temptation the serpent-Satan-Devil attacks with. The Book of Genesis clearly states that the first human couple knew the commands and orders of God and was given a freedom of choice. Man knew the difference and the choice between good and evil and was aware of consequences of choice. The corrupted nature, i.e., original sin is thus a consequence of a conscious free decision.⁵³⁹ The serpent’s temptation was to show up a possibility for man to be like God: eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (*Gen 3:5*) As Rózsa points out,⁵⁴⁰ to know good and evil, that is, to decide what is good and what is bad is the right of God only. Temptation, thus offers autonomy for man to set his own norms ranking himself above God. Man has been a moral being from the very beginning of creation with free will controlling his own destiny with acknowledging the good or choosing evil. Sin is, therefore, man’s selfish setting himself before God.

The word translated as “serpent” in Genesis 3, according to Heiser, might mean other things than what is described above. The Hebrew word “*hannachash*”, can be viewed as an adjective, not as a noun. The noun in Hebrew means snake or serpent, whereas the adjective means “bright”, “brazen”.⁵⁴¹ Deriving from the adjective rather from the noun, the translation is “the shining one”. This description parallels the Old Testament’s descriptions of the figure of Satan, cf. “Lucifer, son of the morning” (*Isa 14:12*), literally translated as “the shining one, son of the dawn”. As a conclusion, Heiser claims that Genesis 3 used a wordplay with all the meanings of the (*han*)*nachash*, that is, it was not a snake Eve was in conversation with. Instead, it was a shining, bright being, which was serpentine in appearance. This bright being was that tried to “beguile” her. This being was one of the sons of God with free will, who turned against Jahweh, the Creator.⁵⁴²

The cast out “son of the morning” is paired with the image of a dragon-like flying serpent in the Book of Isaiah: “out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent” (*Is 14:29*) The notion of flying

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁴¹ Michael S. Heiser, *The Nachash and His Seed: Some Explanatory Notes on Why the “Serpent” in Genesis 3 Wasn’t a Serpent*. accessed August 2010 www.thedivinecouncil.com, 1.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

serpents working against the creation parallel the prohibition of adoring snake-like gods, i.e., Canaanite ones, as referred to Rózsa's observation above. The Book of Revelation explains who or what this snake-like nachash is: "the great dragon ... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (*Rev 12:9*)

In the Deuteronomy, Nachash is an enchanter, whisperer, cf. the following prohibitions: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter (nachash), or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer." (*Deut 18:10-11*) According to the common Hebrew interpretation,⁵⁴³ the "*nachash*" of Genesis 3 means to hiss, to whisper a (magic) spell, to prognosticate, to practice divination, to practice fortune telling. Nachash is the internalized evil in the human soul.

Fortune telling, manipulating the course of time or practice divination is evil, according to Biblical exegesis, but Banquo too senses the same when he listens to the necromancy of the Witches: "can the devil speak true?" Lady Macbeth's straightforward advice "be the serpent" is an unambiguous determination to take sides with the evil. She enchants Macbeth with her female ambition like Jezebel, whispers into Macbeth's ears "leave all the rest to me" and enters the realm of evil manipulation of the future.

Evil "subtly beguiled" Eve, which eventually caused the fall of man. She believed the snake, she trusted its promises and laid her future in its operation. Similarly, Lady Macbeth made a pact with the "dunest smoke of hell". The false promise of greatness made her make a decision similar to the first woman:

you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch,
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom. (I.v.58-61)

"Leave all the rest to me", advises Lady Macbeth to her husband. The serpent-like temptress arranges all the business: suppresses "compunctious visitings of Nature" and will be the master of deception. The brazen devilish sons of God tell the evil fortune. The *Nachash-Witches* beguile and deceive and show up the possibility to be like the supernatural. Macbeth's conscious treachery of free choice against the king

parallels Adam's treachery against God who wanted to be like the Lord, or even more. Macbeth's tragic fall is the punishment of humanity. Adam-Macbeth carries the whole humanity's tragic destiny: „for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (*Gen 3:19*)

8.3 Awareness of divine justice

Lady Macbeth invokes darkness and Hell's smoke to conceal God's sight like a blanket separating the earthly and heavenly realms:

Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry, 'Hold, hold' (I.v.49-53)

This image directly proceeds Lady Macbeth's speech referring to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden depicted in the Book of Genesis. Before the fall, the separation of light and darkness and the creation of heaven and earth took place. God created a blanket-like firmament on the second day: “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven.” (*Gen 1:14-17 Gen 1:6-8*) The six-day creation story of the Book of Genesis actually reflects a belief in an omnipotent God, who dwells above the firmament of Heaven and the upper waters. Upon the firmament of Heaven, i.e., sky, the Sun, Moon, planets and stars are hung like lanterns marking the alternation of night and day, viz., time. “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,” ⁵⁴⁴ This

543 Driver Brown, et. al. eds., *The Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*. accessed August 2010
<http://www.searchgodsword.org/lex/heb/view.cgi?number=5172>

⁵⁴⁴ Rózsa, *A világ és az emberiség eredete*, 48.

world-view can be detected in the narrative of the flood, when God opened the “windows of heaven” (*Gen 7:11*) to destroy all living on earth. The psalmist writes “Praise him (the Lord), ye heavens of heavens / and ye waters that be above the heavens” (*Psalms 148:6*) depicting the created universe according the *Book of Genesis*, as a earth surrounded by the firmament of heaven, above which God dwells and the whole universe is surrounded by water. As pointed out in the Introduction of this paper, the euphemism ‘Heaven’ was frequently used on stage to refer to the omnipotent God. The sky forming a covering shelter over the earth, however, appears in *1 Henry VI* as follows⁵⁴⁵:

The day begins to break, and night is fled,
Whose pitchy mantle over-veil'd the earth. (*1 Henry VI* II.ii.1-2)

According to Isaiah, judgement will be served when the windows of Heaven opened: „for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake” (*Isaiah 24:18*) which Lady Macbeth forebodes as Heaven crying ““Hold, hold”. Not only floods to destroy men and judgement come to earth through the windows or gates of heaven, but blessing, as well: “if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” (*Malachi 3:10*)

From the creation story of the first man, it is clear that man is meant to have control over nature and that nature was created for man: “let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” (*Gen 1:26*) and repeated in the Priestly creation story: “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”. (*Gen 1:28*) God created man in his image and likeness, that is, man is to exercise God’s dominion in the created world. Man is therefore not subordinated to nature, but, on the contrary, he is to rule the world.⁵⁴⁶ After the fall, however, human nature and the created order got corrupted and the evil was born. In the followings, I will demonstrate how Shakespeare’s images of the corrupted nature reflect the corruption of the divine will.

⁵⁴⁵ Muir, Notes, 31.

8.4 Corrupted man in the corrupted universe

Macbeth falls and commits the regicide. Immediately after the murder, all natural phenomena reflect the corruption of the natural order. Shakespeare uses Biblical images implicating the corruption of the created natural order. Ross explains:

Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
Threatens his bloody stage. (II.iv.5-6)

The heavens, that is, God and his created universe, is stirred up by this deadly sin. Evil is physically sensed on earth:

By th' clock 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.
Is 't night's predominance or the day's shame
That darkness does the face of Earth entomb
When living light should kiss it? (II.iv.11-7)

Darkness veiled earth at daytime at the moment the king's anointed, Jesus Christ was killed: "From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land." (*Matt 27:45*) But the messiah's death brought light to earth on the third day, whereas the Scottish king's death gave way to evil powers, which is seen as the violation of the natural order and is expressed by the image of the falcon, the hawking owl and eventually horses, that is, nature making war with humanity:

And Duncan's horses—a thing most strange and
certain—
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would
Make war with mankind.

'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.

...
Tis said they (the horses) eat each other. (II.iv.12-14, 18)

⁵⁴⁶ Rózsa, *A világ és az emberiség eredete*, 54.

which is the absolute opposite image of the Messianic time depicted by Isaiah of the harmonic coexistence of nature:

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together (*Isaiah 11,6*)

Ross, thinking that it was the sons of the king committing the regicide, continues to evolve the image of corrupted nature:

'Gainst nature still!
Thriftless ambition, that will raven up
Thine own lives' means! (II.iv.28-30)

Although he addresses his thoughts to Malcolm and Donalbain, the same applies to Macbeth's ambition and corruption of the natural order. At the closing of the scene, the Old Man blesses Ross and Macduff. However, it is only the second time a direct reference to God is made in this act, they both are positive: the first one is Banquo's trust in God's providence and the second is a blessing. Other references to the Christian God are only made through Biblical images. Here, the Old Man gives God's blessing to Ross and Macduff referring to the above cited Biblical Messianic time when enemies become friends:

God's benison go with you and with those
That would make good of bad and friends of foes. (II.iv.43-44)

8.5 Christian belief in divine providence

Shakespeare's drama centres the protagonist's and his thoughts and acts in relation to freedom and determinism. Characters balancing Macbeth's infatuation with the prophecies reflect opposing views, such as a firm belief in divine justice and divine providence. Among these characters are Banquo, Malcolm and the physician.

Having understood that the utterances of the Weird Sisters are heard by Macbeth as well and they are not "fantastical", that is, production of his imagination, Banquo immediately reacts to them as "great predictions" and as "royal hope", taking them as prophecies.

My noble partner
 You greet with present grace, and great prediction
 Of noble having, and of royal hope (I.iii.554-56)

Although Banquo cannot understand how it might be, he understands that the Weird Sisters have knowledge of the past, present and future: they “greet with present grace, and great prediction”. He takes the prediction as facts, just as the present state of things are facts. Banquo trusts the future-telling power of the sisters but is not afraid that they might influence him or corrupt his sober judgement, and asks for further prophecies:

Speak then to me, who neither beg, nor fear
 Your favours, nor your hate (I.iii.60-61)

Biblical prophecies are connected with revealing divine oracle and prophecy, that is, a prophet is the one who speaks on behalf of God and reveals the divine will or gives divine advice in prophecies.⁵⁴⁷ To act as an oracle implied also the seeking of the divine will strictly defined by the faith in Jahweh and the morality it determined.⁵⁴⁸ The oracles always included the possibility for a change: the prophets appealed for moral conversion and set into prospect a change of the future threat.⁵⁴⁹ The prophecies thus emphasised human responsibility in relation to sin and the completion of God’s will.⁵⁵⁰ The oracles provided an answer to humans wanting to find out God’s will. The future, however, was revealed only in relation to the present human actions, that is, moral acts securing salvation or conversion keeping off destruction.⁵⁵¹ The elected nation was reminded that unless they understand and accomplish the divine will, destruction will fall upon them. God carries out his plan even against humans’ will and his omnipotent and omniscient power is invincible but the fate of humans are not determined by objective powers but only by their moral acts as responses to the divine calling.⁵⁵²

Banquo seems to be aware that prophecies actually reveal human responsibility for free actions. At the end of the horrific scene of the king’s murder and after the devilish reminiscence of the dim presence of fate and its agents, Banquo

⁵⁴⁷ Huba Rózsa, *Az Ószövetség keletkezése. Volume 2* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1999) 19.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 37-38.

also clearly expresses his Christian hope in divine providence. He exercises the Lutheran *faith alone* in the hope that it will shield him against all evil.

In the great hand of God I stand, and thence
Against the undivulged pretense I fight
Of treasonous malice (II.iii.110-112)

Banquo's soliloquy opening Act III counterpoises Macbeth's doubts and ambition. However, Bradley suggests that Banquo became an accessory to the murder as he kept silent about the witches.⁵⁵³ I would add to it that Banquo, with this short soliloquy, sums up the questions raised so far. He too claims that the Weird Sisters promised Macbeth the crown, that is, he also believed in the power of their prophecy and knew that somehow they would come true. This, of course, implies his part of the prophecies, of which he is very well aware: his sons on the throne. His early question, "Can the devil speak true?" is echoed as "If there come truth from them" calling the apparitions oracles. Still, Banquo does not yield to a fatalistic finish: he has concerns whether fate were blind, and still thinks it is only but hope that they aroused in him.

Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promised, and I fear
Thou played'st most foully for 't. Yet it was said
It should not stand in thy posterity,
But that myself should be the root and father
Of many kings. If there come truth from them—
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—
Why, by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well,
And set me up in hope? But hush, no more. (III.i.1-10)

Malcolm concludes before the decisive war they are to fight with Macbeth:

the powers above
Put on their instruments. (IV.iii.245-246)

He is confident they can win against the evil murderer and trust that God helps them. They are willing to serve as divine agents in the war against the evil. We have seen earlier how the Macbeths made a pact with the evil supernatural. Malcolm's speech echoes this willingness to serve a greater power – this time on the side of divine justice. He is willing to serve on the side of divine agents working in the realization of God's will.

⁵⁵³ Muir, *Notes*, 72.

Divine agents, i.e., the Lord's angels are saint or chosen, and are organic parts of God's world. In the New Testament, there is a special relationship between Jesus and the angels: they belong to him and are subjugated to him and share his judgemental power, in the manner He shares the Father's power and he carries out the Father's mission and judgement.⁵⁵⁴

Speculations on equating divine agents with divine providence might also be given way. Macbeth is aware that murder is against God's will. He speaks of Duncan as part of the divine order perfectly fitting into the realm of cherubims, angels at the throne of God:

this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked newborn babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air (I.vii.16-23)

Duncan's reign is thus viewed as part of the divine plan which Macbeth wishes to corrupt. The cherubims state God's transcendence in the world and the angels reveal God's will: they will blow their trumpets against the unjust murder.

The only "sane" person with an objective view speaking from a distance is the physician examining the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth. He too senses "foul" happenings and senses that these events were "unnatural" resulting in an eventual tragedy. He reminds the audience that it is a "supernatural soliciting" taking place on stage, although the last scenes did not refer to it at all.

Before Macbeth's agony, he makes it clear that the hero can only trust divine grace and forgiveness, since he and his wife made a pact with the evil supernatural. The doctor lets the audience sense the eventual downfall that he is absolutely sure about but Shakespeare keeps up the tension with not letting the doctor speak out or "prophesise" the tragedy but only foreshadows it:

Foul whisp'rings are abroad. Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles. (V.i.49-50)

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

8.6 Thy will not be done

Macbeth complains to his wife that the “could not say Amen” when the murder happened. Amen in Hebrew means “so let it be”, which gains a new meaning in viewing Macbeth’s deed in relation to the freedom of the will. Macbeth could not reply with the sacred word “Amen” to the exclamation “God bless us” because of his guilty conscious and his awareness he is actually acting against God’s will, that is, “You shall not kill” (*Exodus 20:13; Deut 5:17*) explicitly expressed in the Ten Commandments.

Macbeth could not say “thy will be done” due to his inner conflict with a pre-written fate and his desires. At the beginning of Act II he reveals the turmoil of his soul. The monologue at beginning of the scene I.vii gave evidence of Macbeth’s awareness of divine justice and consequences of human actions. He is also confused by the witches: in his letter to his “partner in greatness” claiming “greatness is promis’d”, he described the prophecies of supernatural apparitions as promises, that is, as a firm knowledge of a determined future. At this crucial moment, Macbeth should say “so let it be” to achieve the promised greatness, however, he cannot say Amen to the destiny at such a high price of committing a murder at his own house. Lady Macbeth, keeping her temper, tries to control her husband’s stirred up emotions:

“These deeds must not be thought
After these ways. So, it will make us mad.”(II.ii.32-33)

which, eventually turned out to be her personal prophecy.

8.7 Greatness is promis’d

To get a deeper insight on Macbeth's thoughts, we also should pay attention to the circumstances in which he is to act. In the letter to his wife, Macbeth describes how he has been addressed by creatures who 'have more in them, than mortal knowledge'. Indeed, Macbeth has been given a proof of the power of the Weird Sisters, 'that look not like th' ingabitants o' th' earth, / (a)nd yet are on't' by an immediate accomplishment of one of the promises of Macbeth being the Thane of Cawdor. That is, both Macbeth and the audience are convinced of the existence of a supernatural power operating with human conditions.

However, both Banquo and Macbeth have seen the appearance of this power and both are addressed by it, they have doubts: "have we eaten on the insane root"? Banquo senses something evil not to yield to,

The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence (I. iii. 135-137)

whereas Macbeth conceives the vision-like appearance as

Two truths are told (I. iii. 139)

yet he hesitates, if the intention of the prophecies are good or evil. His hesitation to yield to the promising greeting of the Weird Sisters gives a sense of the existence of something we have called temptation. Shakespeare already in the third scene gets Macbeth utter the essence of his personal tragedy:

If Chance will have me King, why Chance may crown me,
Without my stir (I. iii. 156-157)

Turning our focus back on Macbeth's letter, in which he explains his meeting with the witches and listening to their prophecies, the audience experiences how Macbeth's fantasy has been moved. According to Clemen, the phrase addressing Lady Macbeth 'my dearest partner of greatness' already anticipates the future. Moreover, the quote of the prophecy opens up a prospect of what the future must involve.⁵⁵⁵

Macbeth interprets the prophecies as future promises, whereas, as we have seen, the words of Duncan and Banquo rather refer to possibilities of a contingent future rooted in present actions. The promises are taken for granted by Macbeth because the prophecies had been uttered by supernatural beings: "they have more in / them, than mortal knowledge". The supernatural agents gave immediate proof of their true speaking:

Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder
of it, came missives from the King, who all-hailed me
Thane of Cawdor, by which title, before, these Weïrd
Sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming-on of
time with "Hail King that shalt be. (I.v.5-9)

⁵⁵⁵ Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*. Longon: Routledge, 1987. 144

Yes, answers Macbeth to Banquo's question, the Devil speaks true. The letter refers to evidence proving that the future "enkindled" in Macbeth's mind cannot happen otherwise but how he imagined it. Macbeth thus puts his stoic trust in time mixed with "black and deep desires" to hurry the events with "horrible imaginings".

Macbeth realises the supernatural powers of the Weird Sisters and that they have control over humans. They are able to vanish into air and get in contact with humans only when they want to. Macbeth called the sisters imperfect, viz., evil, as we have examined it earlier "Stay you imperfect speakers, tell me more" (I.iii.70), whereas, in the letter describing them to Lady Macbeth, in time, or after a little deliberation on the events and how the future might come true, the adjective of the Weird Sisters had been transformed into "perfect'st".⁵⁵⁶ Macbeth's sense of evil thus grew dim in the light of the "promis'd greatness". The evil has successfully beguiled Macbeth through its subtilty, cf. *Gen 3:1*.

The Lady's reaction to the news of the prophecies and the already accomplished facts is twofold: she also thinks Macbeth needs to carry out immoral deeds, and, on the other hand, she trusts that the prophecies are supernatural promises that will eventually come true. She definitely refers to evil deeds with lamenting on Macbeth's lack of the "illness" to carry out deeds in order to fulfil the prophecies. Macbeth "must do" fearful things and needs encouragement from the Lady to be strong enough to seize the "golden round", i.e., the crown. However, she takes every prophecy for granted: "(thou) shalt be / What thou art promis'd" (I.v.14-15). Shakespeare uses the word Fate for the first time, allowing for a deterministic interpretation of the Lady's concept: "Fate and metaphysical aid" will operate to carry out the plan to make Macbeth king. Her language invokes all kinds of supernatural forces: "spirits, / That tend on mortal thoughts". These spirits, whatever they may be, not only influence, but direct human thoughts and intentions. The raven "croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan" spirits will help oppress the natural order of guilty conscious, "murd'ring ministers" and satanic forces are asked to cause chaos to create ideal circumstances and to cover the divine omnipresence of Heaven, that is, God. Everything is determined and set for the perfect plan.

Lady Macbeth invokes devilish supernatural help:

⁵⁵⁶ Brooke, Notes, 111.

That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th' effect, and it (I.v.44-46)

The purpose is clearly set: to make Macbeth king by all means, even if it is immoral or evil. The purpose and the effect had been commuted: the reign, the prophesised effect of unknown happenings became the purpose to achieve. "The King comes here to-night", reports the messenger, perplexing further the sane percept: is a prophetic announcement that Macbeth the king arrives?⁵⁵⁷ The Lady echoes the confusion with interchanging the future and the present:

"Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant" (I.v.55-57)

The interchanged purpose and effect determine the outcome of King Duncan's visit even before he arrives:

"MACBETH: Duncan comes here tonight.
LADY MACBETH: And when goes hence?
MACBETH: Tomorrow, as he purposes." (I.v.57-59)

But the effect of any purpose is already determined: "O never / Shall sun that morrow see" (I.v.59-60)

The conversation between Malcolm and Donalbain can also be read as oracles of Macbeth's fate: they talk about the death of the treacherous Thane of Cawdor but also foreshadow the tragic death of a hero:

"Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it. He died
As one that had been studied in his death
To throw away the dearest thing he owed,
As 'twere a careless trifle" (I.iv.7-11)

Lady Macbeth knows the ambitions and wishes of her husband, yet she is aware of his fears, as well. For this sake, she trusts the supernatural powers, i. e., 'Fate and metaphysical aid', that should accomplish the advancing prophecies. This utterance also allows the audience sense the tragedy, again. Clemen also points out that Lady

⁵⁵⁷ In the Terrors of the Night, Nashe concludes that everything should be interpreted backwards as Witches say their Pater-noster, good being the character of bad, and bad of good, thus "Fair is foul, and foul is fair (I.i.11), Knights similarly remarks that the "reversal of values" is one of the main themes of the play, cf. Brooke, Notes

Macbeth is also aware of Macbeth's self-deception that there can be action without consequences.⁵⁵⁸

Lady Macbeth's second soliloquy reveals more, by prospecting and anticipating further. In this monologue, Lady Macbeth addresses the supernatural after having been convinced by her husband's letter of the existence of such powers. Lady Macbeth invokes black, evil powers of 'direst cruelty'. She also invokes powers of her femininity, anticipating situations in which she comes over with the help of her feminine power, viz., a wife's influence on her husband, recalling the first woman's influence on her husband.

According to Clemen, the word 'hell' suggests that Lady Macbeth is aware that she pacts with infernal powers. Yet, she is well aware of the judgement in heaven, though, she represses this knowledge. For Macbeth, these divine powers are 'heaven's Cherubins'.⁵⁵⁹

We have already been given an impression of Macbeth's flittering ideas. For instance, almost immediately after the appearance of the witches, Macbeth utters

"Stars hide your fires,
Let not light see my black and deep desires"
(I. iv 60-61)

without having revealed his plans or wishes, he already feels guilty for listening to voices and taking them as prophecies. However, the thought of murder has already been conceived:

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical (I.iii. 151).

But in his first soliloquy his hesitation, desires and thoughts are given a light. It is clear that we listen to Macbeth's thoughts and not to thoughts driven by forces or influenced by other persons. Macbeth's soliloquy is almost like a speech of an advocate, not having revealed the side to speak for. The speech is strongly argumentative using convincing phrases, such as 'in these cases', 'strong against the deed', 'besides', showing a professionalism of argumentation.

His thoughts are hypothetical steps: "If it were done", - he consciously assesses the consequences he is well aware of. His first hypothesis is that the objectively viewed 'it', i.e., the murder, the assassination could be carried out without

⁵⁵⁸ Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, 145.

consequences, as if there were no punishment or judgement afterwards. In this case, the easiest but impossible, no responsibility should be taken, yet, Macbeth knows it is nothing but a utopian wish. The following chain of arguments is a conscious list of facts against the deed, soberly presented in more than 20 lines, whereas, his lingering ambition is still there, in the final 4 lines of the soliloquy. Therefore, the reader is still to face the question if Macbeth will do 'it', viz., the deed, or not, but the impression is that Macbeth cannot give an answer, either.

According to Clemen, Macbeth's state of mind is like that of a vision, in which images are amassed, conjoined and fused.⁵⁶⁰ The soliloquy provides the proof of the awareness of goodness and positive values in Shakespearean tragedy. Macbeth's acknowledgement of the murder and its consequences make him question his own motives. Clemen adds that Macbeth has only spoken of what is against the deed, i. e., what warns and deters him.⁵⁶¹ Since the monologue lacks in reasons for advancing further, Macbeth's 'black and deep desires' seem to have been suppressed. It is Lady Macbeth who utters what Macbeth feels:

... Art thou afear'd
To be the same in thine own act, and valour,
As thou art in desire? (I. vii. 45-47)

but hints a temptation,

and live a coward in thine own esteem? (I. vii. 49)

Finally, against his fears and hesitation, Macbeth is convinced to commit the crime. At this point we might claim that so far, it is only the protagonist's free will that operates in the drama.

Moreover, the soliloquy reveals Macbeth's awareness of the consequences of every deed, his awareness of the reality of punishment and his awareness of his own ambition that is the sole driving force behind his actions. Macbeth is also aware of the future contingent evil deeds, as the following Biblical allusion suggests. Muir's suggestion is that⁵⁶² the phrase "It were done quickly" might refer to *John 13:27*: "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." Both Duncan and Jesus have "almost supped" when the betrayer leaves

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

the room. The allusion is reinforced by the image of “our poisoned chalice”, which may have been suggested to Shakespeare by the allusion to the Last Supper.

Macbeth is aware of consequences of deeds. To “trammel up the consequence”, which he deliberates upon, however is quite ambiguous in his speech. On one hand, the assassination of the king could trammel up, that is, entangle as in a net and catch, that is, fish out the problems. This would “surcease”, that is, put an end to the “success”, the successive events that are not favourable to Macbeth at all. The murder would thus put an end to all of the whole affair and prevent any further consequence leading from the king’s existence. The fishing metaphor is elaborated by the phrases “trammel the consequence”, “catch” and “upon this bank and shoal”, all condensed into the first 5 lines of the speech. To sweep away all problems, is what should be done quickly.

On the other hand, trammel up the consequence, that is, to tie it up and disable its incomputability, would be Macbeth’s aim by carrying out a smooth and easy assassination of the king. To trammel up means to have absolute control over the course of events, which would be the ideal situation for Macbeth. Thus, he would guide all happenings just like teaching the trammelled horse to amble. With the trammelled horse of consequences Macbeth would “jump the life to come” and try to stay on top with his vaulting ambition, which might result in his falling on the other side of the horse.

The vivid image of jockeying the horse of consequences recalls the similarly vivid Machiavellian image of jockeying the rotating wheels of fortune. The virtuous human can overcome Fortune and outwit her power of turning the wheels by jumping from one wheel to another. The wheels move up and down, which demands skill to stay on top and not to fall on the downward moving side. The acrobatic jumping from wheel to wheel is driven by “vaulting ambition” and enables humans to adapt to the changing circumstances.

Macbeth’s monologue is full of lively images and the “bank and shoal of time” is no exception to it. Critics, however, do not agree on how this image fits into the soliloquy interwoven with metaphors. According to Muir,⁵⁶³ a correction to “schoole” is the generally accepted interpretation of the word “shoal”. Similarly, the “bank” is the schoolbench. Bank, on the other hand, might also mean judicial bench, which was

⁵⁶² Muir, Notes, 36.

⁵⁶³ Muir, Notes, 37.

current in this sense in Shakespeare's time and Shakespeare often coupled the two words together. Muir adds that Shakespeare might have intended "shoal" but an unconscious pun suggested "bank" to mean "judgement" and "schoole" to "teach". It is also widely accepted that "bank and shoal" might also refer to sand-bank and shallow,⁵⁶⁴ a poetic image of Fortune, which I have examined in detail earlier.

Immediately preceding the murder, Macbeth stops for a while, again, and the audience experiences a shift in Macbeth's thoughts and intentions. (II. i. 31-64) Macbeth is torn: he is already suffering from his guilty conscience in the image of the dagger (of the mind), which, Clemen claims, the modern audience would see as a psychological projection of his desires, whereas, the Elizabethan audience would have seen it as a temptation by supernatural powers.⁵⁶⁵ No doubt that Macbeth is standing in the middle of a vicious circle of prophecies, temptations, hesitations and consequences. He is to act now, upon nothing else, but his own decision and his free will.

Shakespeare resented a tricked and deceived Macbeth on stage, who sees the murder weapon in his 'fatal vision' of the already decided act. Moreover, Macbeth knows that this vision is a foreshadowing of the murder he is about to carry out.⁵⁶⁶ Macbeth's calling the horrible murder a 'bloody business' suggests that he observes his deeds from an objective distance, which, probably feels less guilty, and, which, probably drives him more into the deed.

Macbeth revealed in his 'dagger-monologue' how he is affected by his conscience. He soberly thinks through the deeds he has done and possibly, its consequences, when he utters

I am afraid, to think what I have done:
Look on't again, I dare not.
(...)
Will all great Neptune's Ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? (II. ii. 64-65, 75-76)

Lady Macbeth, the serpent-like tempter, to calm down his husband's conscience replies,

A little water clears us of this deed (II. ii. 83)

⁵⁶⁴ Brooke, Notes, 118.

⁵⁶⁵ Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, 159.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 160

trying to dismiss the charge of responsibility, borrowing the Pilatian image of not having committed a sin.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd: "I am innocent of this man's blood." The washing off the sins appears in the Book of Acts as a reminiscent of the ritual washing: "wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (*Acts 22:16*), which was an act of relief from physical and moral filth, that is, sin. Water cleans from the cultic uncleanness and washes off sins but only if the cleaning is done with repentance. The Macbeths show a false invocation of divine forgiveness without true repentance.

Duncan's figure was examined in reference to the freedom of acts above as a divine agent-like figure. Jorgensen, on the other hand, refers to the interpretation of Duncan's figure through his Christ-like qualities. Macbeth thus is Judas-like preparing for the betrayal and serves the Satan. Jorgensen predicts from this "the calculated risk of further proliferation of Christ figures in Shakespeare", ⁵⁶⁷ which I would not attempt, but only to view Macbeth in this context as the fallen man serving evil and thus acting necessarily. Both Judas and Macbeth fall tragically without noticing the possibility of repentance as they view themselves as mechanical accomplishers of a diabolic plan. The evil yoke can only be released by their free repentance and divine grace.

Pilate washed off his responsibility for the death of the innocent Messiah. The physical cleaning of Macbeth's hands with "great Neptune's ocean" would not be enough to wash off the guilt of a regicide. The „filthy witness" can be washed off with a „little water" but whether „a little water clears (him) of this deed", raises doubts in Macbeth. The whole order of the world has been corrupted with the disobedient man: the seas turn red and Macbeth's sin overflows everything he touches. God turned the rivers into blood to show his power to the Egyptians and thus to carry out his plan throughout history: "I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood" (*Exodus 7:17*) God's will works throughout his creation and those who work against his will are warned by signs such as waters turned into blood.

⁵⁶⁷ Paul Jorgensen "Macbeth's Soliloquy" in Shakespeare's Christian Dimension p 482-485

8.8 Victim or agent?

Battenhouse cites the earliest Shakespearean literary criticism, which analyses Shakespearean tragic heroes as victims misled by what seems good. The idea recalling those of Augustine's is explained by Luis de Granada's *The Sinners Guide* as a "big mistake" (*hamartia*) of the wrong choice:

"(man are) beset by 'endeavor to color evill with good, and to sell vice under the show and semblance of virtue, and so to hide the temptation, that it seemeth not temptation, but reason. For if they assault any man by ambition, by covetousness, by wrath, or desire of revenge, they persuade him that it is altogether agreeable unto reason to desire this... they pretend reason, that they may so much the more easily deceive them, who are ruled by reason.'"⁵⁶⁸

According to the critic, Macbeth is a victim of his own mistake that he took sin as virtue and was misled by tempters who wanted his downfall.

Macbeth's concept in the third scene, as the course of events develop, seems to be that he is to suffer the course of events, i.e., he is solely the victim of some inscrutable powers,

...they put the name of King upon me,
(...)
Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown (III. i. 64, 67)

Macbeth sees his deeds as if they had been governed by the 'Sisters'. As a result, he is not concerned with the consequences of his deeds any more, since, as he thinks, he is just the victim of the events. At this moment, Macbeth pacts with 'Fate', like Lady Macbeth made a pact with "Fate and metaphysical aid". Therefore, this would mean that Macbeth is to accept everything Fate brings to him. However, the plan of Banquo's murder is nothing but a repugnance to Fate, i.e., to Macbeth's barren kingship.

Aristotle claims that tragedy is a nexus of "incidents (which) occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another".⁵⁶⁹ The emphasis here is on 'probable' and 'necessary', for Necessity is claimed to be an ultimate compulsion or a power, which governs inevitably the chain of events, whereas the Probable is

⁵⁶⁸ Roy Battenhouse „Introduction to Tragedies" In *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension* 361.

⁵⁶⁹ Lawlor, John. *The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960) 74.

unexpected, but nevertheless seen to be necessary. Its relevance to our observation is that, according to Lawlor, Aristotle's term for Necessity is in a theological terminology what is called fate or destiny. In relevance to the question whether the character is an agent or a patient of the events, Lawlor declares that the 'probable' is known and observed with man as agent exercising a choice with real consequences. 'Necessary', is, on the other hand, outside the run of experience, where man is a patient undergoing forces beyond his control. The tragic experience, therefore, is the tension between the 'probable' and the 'necessary'.⁵⁷⁰

However, the audience is to witness another sober moment of Macbeth, replying to the *Richardian* sense of "sin will pluck sin",

"Blood will have blood" (III.iv.128)

and

... I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far (III. iv. 147, 162-163)

acknowledging the lack of choice and the awareness of that he is determined to fall. Macbeth acted as an agent of his own deeds, however, his choice should also be examined. Therefore, Lawlor puts up the question: if man is to fall, to what extent does he exercise a choice which is recognisably free?⁵⁷¹

If we investigate free will in the drama, we must mean the activity of choice. Therefore, a distinction should be made between the ability to choose and the field of choice. That is, the character is shown as a chooser and he is given the power to choose. In the scene meeting the Witches, Macbeth is foreshadowed as a patient, first, and only then is he characterised as an agent.⁵⁷² Macbeth, the man assessing alternatives, consequences in his monologue is definitely an agent, whereas, later, in the chain of events, the patient is the man without choice, which I have pointed out above. According to Lawlor, the universe has narrowed to one choice for Macbeth: to have the crown and to the impossible alternative, to cease to desire it.⁵⁷³

As far as the Witches are concerned, Lawlor points out, they make the human agents aware of the impiety they would undergo. They deal with Fate ambiguously,

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 75

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 108

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 113

that is, in a 'double sense'. In the field of choice they show that double-dealing and tactics lead to inevitable disaster. Therefore, to cross the limits of humanity is to place oneself outside the sphere of humanity, which can offer no true choice.⁵⁷⁴

Hecate's wrath is aroused by her three servants, or to be more specific, her three agents when she finds out they had told Macbeth his fortune without her permission. Hecate is angry both at Macbeth, the wayward son and the "wayward" Sisters for they made connection with him. By calling Macbeth wayward, Hecate equates his nature with that of the sisters, which leads us to the observation of G. K. Hunter, that Macbeth became the agent of the Weird Sisters by asking them to tell him more about his future.⁵⁷⁵ Macbeth is on his way to meet them for the second time and to try to alter his destiny: "thither he / will come to know his destiny"

Macbeth rushes to find out the intention of the powers that were able to see his future. He decides to get in contact with them and try to amend what was revealed to him as the unchangeable future. He thus needs to make a pact with the black, evil powers.

"Come spirits" invoked Lady Macbeth the evil supernatural and made a pact with the dark agents of the heavens earlier to carry out the murder of the king. But Macbeth was in the belief that he might have been a victim of the Weird Sisters' operation. When Macbeth decides that he will go and meet the Weird Sisters, he deliberately chooses to use the power of the black demons to try to alter the outcome of his destiny. We can also see this act as suggested earlier that he became their disciple. He thus offered his service to carry out their vicious plan. From this moment on, the drama turns into a desperate „hide-and-seek" with Macbeth's inevitable fate. Through his desperate attempts to alter his destiny, Macbeth eventually fulfils it.

By making a pact with the black powers, Macbeth wishes to "take a bond of Fate". He is given new prophecies that he reads only one way: he thinks he was able to shift the first prophecies into a more favourable destiny and thus becomes blind to the truth and loses his sense of reality. He becomes a tyrant living in his own world, in his own devilish faith created by the wicked "filthy hags". He purposely deceives

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 119

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 120

⁵⁷⁵ quoted by Dr Edward H. Thompson, *Macbeth, King James and the Witches* (paper presented at the conference 'Lancashire Witches - Law, Literature and 17th century Women' in the University of Lancaster in December, 1993) accessed <http://homepages.tesco.net/~eandctomp/macbeth.htm>

Lennox, who did not see the apparitions at all: “damn’d all those that trust (the Weird Sisters)”.

Forgetting his lack of choice, Macbeth forces the agreement with the supernatural powers, which means to him that his deeds are not governed by his intentions anymore. Macbeth's tragic flaw lies in this moment: driven by his own 'black and deep desires' he tries to 'take a bond of Fate' in the belief that this 'could trammel up the consequences'. Macbeth is blind: this way he drives himself into another murders. Even in the last hour, in the name of Fate he commits another sins to achieve what is in opposition with Fate. In this last hour, when the blindness of his desires falls down of his eyes, with his last breath still justifies his deeds, yet in awareness of his situation he falls into his tragedy:

Yet I will try the last (V. vii. 79)

According to Booth, Macbeth's tragedy lies in his ignorance. On one hand, he does not know the nature of the Witches and their prophecy. However, he chooses to misinterpret the prophecies intentionally. Macbeth also should have realised that all of the prophecies are to be fulfilled. It is also true, claims Booth, that this kind of a knowledge of the supernatural would throw off any man's moral balance. That is, Macbeth's misunderstanding is forgivable.⁵⁷⁶ Another phenomenon Macbeth misunderstood was Lady Macbeth's temptation. Therefore, Macbeth's tragic error is three-fold: the misunderstanding of the two external forces, and, that he does not understand his own character. That is, the hero is aware of the wickedness of his act, still, commits it. These three factors, claims Booth, cause the regret felt by the spectator.⁵⁷⁷

8.9 Evil or tragic hero?

According to Morris, Macbeth, the tragic hero is immoral and evil, nevertheless, our pity for him does not subside at all.⁵⁷⁸ Therefore, we should view Macbeth in the Bradleyan terms as a tragic hero rather than a hero-villain. Macbeth willingly acts against the moral law who is at the same time conscious of the

⁵⁷⁶ Booth, Booth, Wayne. "Shakespeare's Tragic Villain." In: *Shakespeare's Tragedies. An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, edited by Lawrence Lerner, 180-190 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968) 189.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 310.

punishment this law prescribes. According to Ribner,⁵⁷⁹ Macbeth is at war with humanity and the natural order, moreover, he knowingly denies God and his natural law. The play thus is a reflection of Shakespeare's view of evil in the universe.

As for the audience's sympathy, Macbeth is not conscious of what a deliberate denial of the moral law brings. He is hence a victim: a victim of his own operation. Ribner⁵⁸⁰ sums up the play as a statement of the deceptive nature of evil – it is only the end of the play that Macbeth realises the nature of evil operation.

The enslavement of the will is explained by Ricoeur from three aspects: that it exists positively, that is, not as a privation; it is external, that is in the form of temptation; through a bad choice man can actually enslave himself.⁵⁸¹ Fabiny points out that even if Macbeth is passive in the beginning, he identifies himself with evil. With the external, objective evil, Macbeth enslaves his mind and is subject to sin.⁵⁸² According to Moseley, the Augustinian problem of evil, i.e., the reality of evil, is staged by Shakespeare with the theatrical device of the Witches, which, at the same time, satisfied popular audiences and their preconceptions.⁵⁸³

By meeting the Weird Sisters, Macbeth is to face the challenge of evil. Banquo senses the evil nature the prophecies may bring to them:

That trusted home
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides, the Thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange;
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence. (I.iii.121-127)

Banquo senses evil and, according to Moseley, through his warning Shakespeare expresses his freedom of choice that Macbeth is equipped with as well. He too is subject to temptation, but he resists: "Restrain in me the cursed thoughts".⁵⁸⁴

The puzzled Macbeth and Banquo haven't even woken up from the vigilant nightmare the Weird Sisters dragged them into, when Angus and Ross arrive with the most bizarre news: the witches, in fact, told the truth. The Second Witch's hail to the Thane of Cawdor is indeed Ross's hail to the most worthy Thane. The dim

⁵⁷⁹ quoted by Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 310.

⁵⁸⁰ quoted by Morris, *Shakespeare's God*, 311.

⁵⁸¹ Tibor Fabiny "A Macbeth és a 'Gonosz' szimbolizmusa" *Protestáns szemle* 3 (2000): 142.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 145.

⁵⁸³ Moseley, "Macbeth's free fall," 25.

foreshadowing and its sudden accomplishment water the root of insanity. Banquo understands the accomplishment of the prophecy given to Macbeth as evil: “What, can the Devil speak true?”

Shakespeare’s reference to the proverb “the devil speaks the truth” clearly indicates Banquo’s awareness of the prophecies’ evil operation and possible consequences.

The devilish villain, Richard of Gloucester, is depicted by the wooed Anne during a witty combat in Richard III as ⁵⁸⁵

Villain, thou know’st not law of God nor man.
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.
...
O, wonderful, when devils tell the truth! (I.ii.73)

The satanic villain manipulates and deceives and is neither divine, nor human. Banquo’s observation is a warning to stick to rational decisions and not to yield to devilish deception. Likewise, James I’s *Daemonology* warns against it:

“for that old and crafty serpent being a spirit, he easily spies our affections, and so conforms himself thereto to deceive us to our wrack”⁵⁸⁶

Macbeth is warned for having enkindled to being a monarch with Banquo’s repeating the proverbial sentence:

The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray’s
In deepest consequence. (I.iii.125-127)

Evil is indeed hidden in the golden glittering everywhere: the „old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, ... deceiveth the whole world” (*Rev 12:9*)

The Thane of Cawdor fought on the enemy’s side and probably provided them “hidden help” and vantage. Norway might have received “hidden help” from somewhere else, too, but how it happened, “I know not”, claims Angus. It is this subtleness that insidiously destructs, feigning creation: “the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” (*Gen 3:1*) and ”beguiled

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁸⁵ Brooke, Notes, 105.

⁵⁸⁶ James I, “*Daemonology*” quoted by Brooke, Notes, 106.

Eve through his subtilty” (2Cor 11.3) The subtle danger of Macbeth’s beguilement with ”enkindling” ”honest trifles” and ”spying affections” is paradoxically tangible on stage.

Banquo sees his thoughts stirred up by the Weird Sisters as cursed. He cannot let go of his nightmares and still senses the evil nature of the supernatural apparition:

Merciful powers,
 Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature
 Gives way to in repose. (II.i.7-9)

Muir⁵⁸⁷ suggests that Banquo refers to the order of angels and divine providence that God assigned to deal with the “Powers”, that is demons and their restraint and coercion. R. M. Frye points out that Macbeth subjugates himself to powers superior to divine justice. Macbeth’s faith is in the Weird Sisters and their prophecies, “(w)e may go even further and say that he relies upon being an instrument supported by the powers below, so sure is his trust in the predictions of his supernatural counselors.”⁵⁸⁸

Banquo’s Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature might also echo the *Hymn of Compline*.⁵⁸⁹ Banquo’s lines quoted above echo the second stanza of the compline.

To Thee, before the close of day
 Creator of the world, we pray
 that with Thy wonted favor, Thou
 wouldst be our Guard and Keeper now.

From all ill dreams defend our eyes,
 from nightly fears and fantasies:
 tread under foot our ghostly foe,
 that no pollution we may know⁵⁹⁰

In the dialogue with Macbeth, Banquo goes on to refer to their meeting with the Weird Sisters:

⁵⁸⁷ Muir, Notes, 45.

⁵⁸⁸ Roland Mushat Frye ”Macbeth and the Powers of Darkness” in *Shakespeare’s Christian Dimension*, 479.

⁵⁸⁹ Muir, Notes, 45. The Compline is the ancient hymn to be found in ancient English and German monastic books. The compline was prayed at the end of the day and was sung till the end of the 19th century.

⁵⁹⁰ Compline in J. R. Watson ed., *An Annotated Anthology of Hymns* (OUP, 2002) 33.

I dreamed last night of the three Weird Sisters;
To you they have showed some truth (II.i.21-22).

Muir claims that the idea that Banquo's words are veiled incitement to Macbeth might be right, but they are also words of an innocent partner.⁵⁹¹

Although Macbeth, at first, is sceptical of the nature of the greetings and he does not take them as prophecies, he does not even understand how and why things should happen. He appears to trust the "prospect of belief", that is, he lets things happen the way they naturally are. But the fact that the witches appear and vanish and do not answer questions and talk only when they want to, already implies their control over human beings.

what seem'd corporal,
Melted, as breath into the wind (I.iii.81-82)

and the seers are left in the middle of confusion and their doubts. Macbeth himself puts up the question humanity wishes to answer: "why .. (do) you stop our way / With such prophetic greeting?" The 'leitmotif' of the drama is thus set: why do supernatural beings play with humans? Why do they want humans to know the future concealed under dim prophecies? What do they want to achieve with it? Is it a part of a larger plan or is it only their entertainment to play with humans and leave them in anguish and despair? Are they testing humans how they react to a possible future? Do the prophecies reveal an already set future? From Macbeth's "why" the "hows" and "whats" emerge: how does the supernatural influence the human course of events and what is happening with defenceless humans who are thrown out in the universe as puppets of a higher order.

Whether it is a higher "order" we wish to understand, is, again, doubtful:

(H)ave we eaten on the insane root,
That takes the reason prisoner?

asks Banquo, after the Weird Sisters suddenly vanish. Macbeth and Banquo were definitely not under the influence of any root, i.e., narcotic herbs, since the witches appeared to both of them in the same way, both of them were "stopped with such prophetic greeting". The root of insanity, however, can be found here, just as the

root of evil is to be found in the “imperfect speakers”. The root, that is, the seed of insanity is sown by the prophetic greetings. The Augustinian *ratio seminalis* of sin is sown, which eventually grows evil. The root can be predicted to grow in time and overpower Macbeth and “take the reason prisoner”.

Macbeth’s also analyses the situation and convinces himself of fate’s actual workings. Macbeth is reasoning probably to further convince himself on the operations of fatalistic powers. He sees the events as solely happenings – he is a “victim” of all the course of events. He convinces himself of the danger Banquo represents. He sees himself as a device of the Weird Sisters: “they put the name of King upon me”. All future happenings are seen by Macbeth as prophecies: Then, prophet-like,

They hailed him father to a line of kings.
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown
And put a barren scepter in my grip (III.i.62-65)

The sceptre is a symbol of kingship, as well as a symbol of Fortune. The sceptre is barren: the supernatural forces operate effectively but Macbeth is thrown out helplessly against their power. Macbeth’s realisation of the operation of the prophecies is fatal. He actually realises that the wheel of fortune must turn and the time of the “I have reigned” will soon arrive:

If ’t be so,
For Banquo’s issue have I filed my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered (III.i. 67-69)

Macbeth’s realisation is striking: is it possible that he will eventually accomplish Banquo’s fate? The brave warrior, who is now king, is fully aware of the nature of the prophecies and the consequences of his dark deeds. He let himself fall into the realm of the common enemy of man, the devil.

(I) Put rancors in the vessel of my peace
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings! III.i.70-73

He is well aware that he will descend to Hell as a just punishment for his crimes, which he would accept if it had not been for Banquo’s elevation to the throne.

⁵⁹¹ Muir, Notes, 46.

It is now his human vanity that is hurt: he loses only to make others win the crown. This is exactly the point he calls the devilish fate to a final war try to turn the foreseeable destiny:

come fate into the list,
And champion me to th' utterance. (III.i.74-75)

When Macbeth reminds the two murderers about their bad fortunes, he claims that bad fortune does not just happen to them but there must be a cause for it: Banquo is responsible for the adversities. Macbeth now clearly states that one's fortune depends on external factors. The second murderer echoes the view of fortune's adversities on human life:

And I another
So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance,
To mend it or be rid on 't. (III.i.114-116)

Tugging with fortune is a form of wrestling, that is, it rhymes with the concept of humanity's war fought with fortune and accordingly, Macbeth's war against fate. The scuffling humanity is reflected in Shakespeare's *Winter's tale*:⁵⁹²

let myself and fortune
Tug for the time to come (IV.iv.508.)

Macbeth is challenging fate to fight to the very end. He wages war against fate, although he is aware of his odds in this fight but the "brave warrior" stands out even if he is to lose. The *bellum perpetuum* must be decided and the outcome will be not surprising.

Macbeth drives himself into believing that Banquo is the enemy to be destroyed. The adversities and the hatred towards Banquo are thus discussed by the despotic monarch and their faithful servants. Macbeth eventually is convinced of the need for destroying his foe:

I could
With barefaced power sweep him from my sight (III.i.121-122)

⁵⁹² Muir, Notes, 78.

Macbeth, however, needs to „Mask the business from the common eye”, which at first was to murder Duncan in order to make himself a monarch, next, to cling onto fate and try to carry out a beneficial end in spite of the seemingly true prophecies. The whole “business” of the murder is a situation that determines itself. The more Macbeth tries to avoid his fate, the more he gets closer to accomplishing it. Still, he tries to justify his acts:

I am in blood
Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er. (III.iv.142-144)

as if it were only the circumstances that made him commit horrible deeds. His reflections only follow the course of events that he himself carried out.

8.10 The determination of sin

Macbeth’s seeming necessity to fall can be concluded with Battenhouse’ observation that Macbeth’s tragic character can be described by a quote from Augustine’ Confessions: “Of a forward will was lust made, and a lust served became custom, and custom not resisted became necessity” Thus, Macbeth’s “sin will pluck on sin” is a custom as he serves his lust. Battenhouse adds that for Macbeth, the mass murders seem to be a necessity.⁵⁹³ “Returning were as tedious as to o’er” marks the point that is only close to the point of no return, which Macbeth has not passed yet, but this is not an alternative for him. Returning would require repentance, which he does not even consider.⁵⁹⁴

The Augustinian concept affirms that humans were created good, as God cannot create anything but good. Adam, the man, therefore, had a freedom of will with and toward God. The possibility of not to sin (*posse non peccare*) was thus the the original state of human. The original state was a state of grace and the first sin was a conscious act of will that turned against God to live according to his own will.⁵⁹⁵

The sinful turning away from God is an exercise of autonomy as a result of which man fell out of grace. Loss of divine grace tossed man into the miserable necessity of not being able not to sin (*misera necessitas non posse non peccandi*). In

⁵⁹³ Roy Battenhouse “Macbeth. Comment and bibliography” in *Shakespeare’s Christian Dimension* 473

⁵⁹⁴ Roland Mushat Frye “Macbeth and the Powers of Darkness” in *Shakespeare’s Christian Dimension* 478

this graceless misery, Macbeth-Adam commits crimes again. Sin became a „perverted habit”⁵⁹⁶ that Macbeth is to agree with freely. Augustinian bondage is not a dependance on something external, but it is an enslavement of the self, which Macbeth actually experiences: he blurs the difference of his „perverted habits” and his fate.

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which must be acted ere they may be scanned. (III.iv.145-146)

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Only the Augustinian "grace of paradise" would lead Macbeth out of his own enslavement but he does not choose to ask for it.

8.11 The temptation of predestination

I have pointed out so far that humans are subject to temptation, the worst of which is the spiritual temptation (*tentatio spiritualis*). The highest level of spiritual temptation is the fear and doubt resulting from the idea of double predestination. This "*tentatio praedestinatione*" is described by Luther based on his own experience. According to Puskás, the existential centre of Lutheran theology is to be found here, where the zeal to conquer doubt and fear starts. The tormenting despair needs a firm security in faith looking at Jesus Christ.⁵⁹⁷

Macbeth's tragic flaw lies in his doubts and fears mixed with a false security in the determined future. Banquo, on the other hand, listened to the prophecies but his firm faith in virtues was not shaken. Macbeth's first thought was murder after the future was revealed to him, moreover, he tried to alter it and negotiate with the oracles

⁵⁹⁵ Beyschlag, *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte*, 77.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵⁹⁷ Puskás, *A kegyelem teológiája*, 122.

for a better outcome. Banquo's firm faith, it can be said, *sola fide* saved him for his eventual victory in securing his offspring to the throne.

In his *De servo arbitrio*, Luther suggests that instead of ferreting out the "concealed God", one should concentrate on the revealed God. In Jesus Christ, the concealed God of predestination (*Deus absconditus*) turns into the revealed God of salvation (*Deus revelatus*). Those clinging on with faith to the God revealed in Christ, are with the most certitude (*certissime*) predestined.⁵⁹⁸

The Calvinist doctrine of predestined course of actions of the elect and the reprobate can also be read in the experience of Macbeth's imprisoned will, which is the instrument of external forces. Stachniewski quotes G. Wilson Knight's observation on the will of the characters in *Macbeth*: "They lack will-power: that concept finds no place here. Neither we, nor they, know of what exactly they are guilty: yet they feel guilt."⁵⁹⁹

Calvin's *Institutes* serves as an explanation for the evil nature of the Weird Sisters:

"man's will is 'subject to the rule of the Devell, to be stirred by him': 'being bewitched with the deceits of Satan, it of necessitie yeldeth it self obedient to every leading of him. For whome the Lord vouchesaveth not to rule with his Spirit, them by just judgement he sendeth away to be moved of Satan'"⁶⁰⁰

This suggests that Macbeth, a reprobate, is a tool of evil powers and thus plays an active part in the divine plan. Macbeth is very well aware of consequences of evil action but he seems to be a tool of demonic powers, which seem to manipulate his will up to the extent of governing it completely.

Tragedy seems to serve as the best device for placing Calvinist determinism on stage: the character is driven by an evil necessity he cannot control but he is well aware of it. It seems that this time the "authors" of the play are the wicked sisters writing the plot according to their own mood.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

In my thesis, I have examined Shakespeare's *Macbeth* from the scope of freedom and determinism in with an iconographical and theological approach. The dramatist does not explicitly rely on the whole the Bible, nor draws on selected Biblical passages, but rather, a wide range of allusions, images or references can be traced back to support theological teachings of the Church Fathers and Renaissance humanist thinkers. A creative and imaginative reading of *Macbeth* reveals a theology of evil, as well as the consequences of human trespassing against the divine will. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* can be viewed as a *darash*, that is, an investigation into how divine power operates in the lives of human beings. The drama discovers a theological truth on the human struggle against the supernatural: those who manipulate powers higher than that of humans' and those who take the life of a sovereign monarch cannot avoid their destiny: their end is a tragic fall.

Having investigated the Shakespearean tragic universe in the scope of freedom and determinism, I have shown that there is an inevitable power constantly balancing free human actions. Nevertheless, during my investigation, it has also been pointed out how inevitable fate can be replaced by tragic character. It has also been shown that in the tragic flow of events, freedom and necessity are constantly in opposition. Consequently, in theological investigations we are to speak of divine providence in balance with human freedom, and, in the investigation of tragedy we should examine freedom balancing necessity.

It is also to be noted that besides the examination of the Shakespearean universe, we also are to view the Shakespearean audience. It is without doubt that the Elizabethan audience shared Christian views, that is, a belief in a universe endowed with divine providence giving divine justice, in other words, punishing the sin resulting from the tragic 'flaw' of the character. This means that evil powers in the universe are defeated in all cases, for which Christianity and the tragic balance are not in correlation. From the point of view of the poet, moreover, as we have seen, we should not speak of Christian tragedy, either, rather, a tragic collision of the character and an external power in the universe. The dramatist, therefore, is to present a fatal limitation of the choice of

actions, where the character fails because of the consequences of his sins; causing the tragic effect. Since the knowledge of the character itself implies responsibility for the deeds that were carried out, the hero is to fall inevitably, that is, tragically. This responsibility of his knowledge is not only a responsibility in the *Hamletian* sense, but the knowledge of the fulfilled tragic destiny, consciously apprehended by the character.

Tragic necessity can be viewed as fate or human destiny, which governs the chain of events, in which the human being is a patient of the actions. Fate, the Greek term for the power driving the actions, being incompatible with the Christian belief, might also be viewed as the Medieval concept of Fortune, an agent of God, who interferes with human actions and guides the hero into rise or fall. The concept of Fortune, eventually was reconciled with Christian belief. A Christian moralisation, however, would result in a detachedness from the dramatic effect. The drama viewed as the commentary of human existence is an effect of the whole rather than of a commentary of a part using a certain concept or doctrine. Shakespeare does not draw on a theological doctrine, nevertheless, the whole effect of *Macbeth* provides an added theological understanding. During my research, I have also shown attempts to define the Christian concept of divine ordering. According to the Thomist view, man is free to take part in divine providence. Nevertheless, the choice of actions of all humans might result in sin because of original sin. In many ways, freedom can be viewed as choice, that is, a choice to act, resulting in free deeds. Free choice and free deeds are consequences of the human will, that is, man acts as an agent. The omnipotence of God means that He has a foreknowledge of the events in the universe, which however, does not necessarily deny the freedom of humans, for God, outside of time can view all the actions in the universe without interfering.

Concerning the Lutheran enslavement of the will, man has freedom only to do evil. Macbeth is well aware of the good and the evil but, with Augustine's words, "*seeing he would not what he might, now he cannot what he would*". Thus, the tragic hero is the victim of himself, the victim of his own tragedy. The operation of Fortune and pagan devices of the supernatural allow a further investigation of the topic of human freedom and determination. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* thus becomes the *bellum perpetuum* of virtues and vices, similar to Medieval traditions. Shakespeare puts forward a clear message: Fortune, indeed, can be overcome. The drama of the evil, unstoppable and determined turning of the wheel of life represents the human struggle to try to hold on to a fixed point of the wheel to escape the centrifugal power that casts

even royals down among the sinners. The attraction of the centre point where God dwells, can also be described by the Thomist createdness for the ultimate good. Macbeth, confused by prophecies, makes the dramatic *hamartia* of choosing the "fair and foul" good. He is thus tossed even further from the centre of wheel, i.e., God, and is more subject to the operations of Fortune. Macbeth's realisation of the operation of the prophecies is fatal. Too late, but he realises that the wheel of fortune must turn and the time of the "*I have reigned*" will eventually arrive.

Fortune, as God's ministering angel, unites the Christian faith and the pagan traditions, moreover, the reconciliation of the Church made her an agent of divine foreknowledge. Subordinated to divine Providence, Fortune represents global power and chance. The Christianised Fortune thus releases God's direct responsibility for all happenings with a relative autonomy. The unforeseeable, demonic turner of her wheel is in harmony with God. Macbeth, trusting the firmness of his virtues, fought bravely against the vicissitudes and even defeated her at times of war. "(A)ll's too weak", even the operation of Fortune, against a virtuous, confident, firm and brave warrior, like Macbeth. The protagonist's capacity to adjust himself to her force is well known, but this time he does not show a firm belief in God's providence. Fortune turned into an enemy can be overcome by witty governance, or even, her annihilation with shielding oneself with virtues and wisdom. Yet, Macbeth's virtue had been long overcome before: the temptation of the fickle fortune won against virtuous reason in Macbeth's war of life.

I have also analysed how Renaissance thinkers approached the problem of freedom and determinism. It was generally agreed that developing virtues and thereby freedom can guard humans against the workings of supernatural influences. Poggio's conclusion is that fortune is a fearful, moody, capricious being, floating between heaven and earth and possesses supernatural force, who can, however, be overcome with virtue. The goddess possesses transcendental power but is still cast down and fights the Petrarchan *bellum perpetuum* with humanity: it is the war of the adversities of fortune with the Christian virtue. I have also analysed the compatibility of the granted freedom of the will with fate and necessity of the created universe. Coluccio Salutati claimed that the operation of the granted free will is a *mirabile quiddam* (amazing thing). The free will needs the cooperating grace of God, the virtues, and a good disposition of mind. Divine providence operates in a way that in accordance with God's commands, it employs the indeterminate potentialities in order to carry out the divine plan. Thus,

‘arbiter’, ‘mistress goddess’, do not apply to Divine Providence. Fortune-telling is foolish and unreligious and would only lead to a view of God as if he were in the automatism of a wheel-machine. Alberti’s Fortune observes the course of earthly actions from the peak of her mountain, just like God observes everything from his eternity from St. Thomas’ watchtower. God, according to Ficino, equips us for the war against Fortune. It is good to fight against fortune with the weapons of wisdom, nevertheless, it is best to withdraw and make truce or ceasefire. Heaven’s winds help humans to circumnavigate the whirlpool of Fortune. Macbeth actually showed his arrogance and injustice Ficino warned against: he ranked his destiny higher than that of other humans, and acted as the “beast” that can be fed like the bodies of the animals, but his soul was never content. Macbeth did not show up the desirable attitude toward human destiny, that is, a humble acknowledgement of his place in the universe. Rather, he challenged fate to fight the final war, which eventually lead to his fall. Fortune created a “poisonous pride” in him and made a tyrant out of a great man. He did not rely on divine virtue and did not let chance cooperate: he wanted to avoid fate, through which he actually accomplished it. Evil thoughts always surround us and evil violently attacks humans anywhere they go. For Ficino, Fate can be indeed overcome by divine freedom, since actions follow providence and the provident men have powers against Fortune and Fate. Macbeth chose evil, as a result of which he became the victim of the evil. Banquo, on the other hand, rightly judged the happenings around him: he did not yield to the evil inclination of prophecies out of nowhere, nor did he rearrange his plans according to them. Ficino calls this a right tempering of the movements of the mind, which is the desirable way to live. One, who tempers his mind, thus tempers all things around himself. It is necessary to beat and coerce Fortune, according to Machiavelli, since she is a merciless, cruel woman playing with men like puppets or chessmen. Man is to fight against her, showing his virtue, that is, ability to withstand her. The Machiavellian hero is to show his power against the seemingly inscrutable and vain woman. Macbeth demonstrated an acrobatic challenge of jumping from wheel to wheel, which might have shown his ability to adopt to the changing situations of the times. Yet, he tragically failed, for he did not rely on his own virtues. The stronger *virtú* is, the lesser power fortune has. Virtue, on the other hand, is not equal to will, indeed, not even to free will. It is the ability to resist and fight powers beyond our control, like outwitting Fortuna or adopting oneself to the given situation.

I have also analysed the nature of the Weird Sisters, as powerful supernatural beings operating in the Shakespearean universe. I have shown that they rather refer to a kind of divinity than are solely instruments of witchcraft: they are the sisters of destiny. Their minds can be changed like those of the three classical fates, and they also can interact with human beings. The sisters are anthropomorphic, in the same manner as the Roman goddess Fortune personifies chance and luck. As the play proceeds, their direct contact with the physical universe turns into a direct influence via prophecies and demonic magic. They trick on nature leaving a puzzle: what can be trusted if not the trustworthy Nature. They are not omnipotent, however. They can wickedly play with humans just like the capricious goddess Fortune. What they are is what they do: they see into the future and reveal it. The Sisters have knowledge on things even unknown to humans.

The play is the vicious game of Hecate, the goddess of destiny, the “mistress of all charms” and the “close contriver of all harms”. The fickle, vicious goddess, similarly to goddess Fortune, makes fun of humans’ suffering on earth. She masters their destiny and she changes them according to her own will. She laughs at Macbeth because she sees his future and she knows he foolishly trusts the prophecies. Hecate-Fortune is a strumpet: she is the “*supernatural solicitor*”.

The hurly-burly and fair and foul prophecies have created the fertile soil for evil. Confusion is brought by the spirit of the devil, as Luther observed. The confuser-equivocator evil turned everything upside down just in a way Fortune viciously stirs up the human course of events by turning her wheel: “Confusion now hath made his masterpiece”. Evil enters the play as it entered the universe. This original dramatic presence is like original sin present in the corrupted creation providing a possibility for evil to grow. The presence of evil is not a determining factor, however, evil deeds develop from this original state. This presence and effective operation of evil is shown by Shakespeare on the tragic stage.

Macbeth’s inclination to evil made him *non posse non peccandi* (not being able not to sin). The brave warrior stepped into a *misseria necessitas non posse non peccandi* (miserable necessity of not capable of not to sin). The “war” of life takes place in our bodies: original sin planted a *concupiscentia* (sinful desire) into our bodies. This lust, however, does not abolish responsibility for sins. Macbeth would need divine aid to be able to direct his free will towards God. He might have served as an agent of God to try others’ faith (e.g. Banquo’s) just like Judas. The enslavement of the weak will limits the

freedom of the will and carries a sinful inclination, but this nevertheless does not determine any action. The future existing in the causes of equally opposite outcomes, however, is up to the freedom of choice.

I have also presented the theological debate on the freedom/bondage of the will through the works of Erasmus, Luther and Calvin. “It would be ridiculous”, claims Erasmus, to set an alternative before man that is not a real choice. In this sense, Macbeth might have been a divine instrument, like the Pharaoh, in order to reveal a higher teaching: that it is evil to oppose the will of God. Keeping up with Biblical examples, Macbeth, just like Judas, could have changed his will, but he did not, which was exactly the object of foreknowledge. Luther, on the hand, suggests that man can have power only over things subordinated to him. Macbeth became the Scholastic horse and God and Satan fought over him to ride on his back. The captive, servant and bond-slave Macbeth was thus either subordinated to the will of God, or to the will of Satan. With the fall, man lost the partnership of God, moreover, God was left without a partner too. Macbeth’s “partner in greatness” was the Devil, the temptress herself. Luther would assert a kind of “ability of the human will”, which is power or disposition, which can choose to refuse or disapprove, which is altogether the action of the will. Affirming the freedom of the will, nevertheless, would annul the divine plan. Shakespeare also showed the Calvinist necessity of sinning: the will made itself a slave of sin. The *lot* (not fate) of Macbeth is governed by God through Providence but God hides the future to avoid human speculation. Macbeth’s another mistake was the speculation with time, foreknowledge and his lot. Ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries, which lead Macbeth into fall, whereas Banquo’s faith saved him.

I have also analysed the crucial turning point in Macbeth’s life: the puzzle of the byways of his life, where he needs to make a decision. Macbeth is challenged by the “falsehoods” of the witches and he cannot rely on anything but his own willpower. The riddle is like that of the Sphinx: the Weird Sisters have supernatural wisdom by which they look into the future and reveal deceitful but eventually true prophecies. As the pilgrim walks the way of life, he needs to rely on his own power to combat such suddenly evolving challenges. Macbeth thus faces the pilgrim’s dilemma: in the very beginning of the play three supernatural woman-like creatures suddenly appear to him and reveal enigmas provoking him to make moral choices.

The *bivium* Macbeth faces represents a choice between virtue and vice, or good and evil. The *bivium* affirms the power of choice, a commitment and a sense of

responsibility for conscious decisions. It also represents a firm control over one's life. The *bivium* is thus a turning point, a moment to choose, to enforce one's ability to choose and live their life in their own way. Macbeth is torn between the opposing forces of good and evil. He is to make a moral choice, which is free from any determining force. Macbeth is thrown out to the moral battlefield where he cannot show up his courage and gets lost.

The pilgrim's moral choice Christianised opens way for the operation of free will and divine providence as opposed to evil. As the shelter of the Garden of Eden does not provide security and man of a corrupted nature is thrown out in the world full of ambiguity, deception and full of crossroads. By the sweat of his brow the man is to survive in this world making his own choices by his reason blurred by desires. Man is lost but he is still granted the created free will, which does not give any guidance in making choices.

The divinity at the crossroads, the tree-faced goddess Hecate (*Triformis*) can look into the past and future, as well as into the eternal present and can see Macbeth's destiny. Hecate is "the mistress of (the three witches') charms": She controls the three sisters, witches or Fates, who only reveal the prophecies to Macbeth. It is Hecate who is "The close contriver of all harms". Her agents, the three witches represent her three faces as they are able to look into the past, present and future of Macbeth.

Macbeth is "betrayed in deepest consequence" by the subtle operations of the fickle and wicked witches. He "yields to a suggestion" he cannot even decipher. He is blinded by the glittering crown and the "told truths" that pave the way towards it. Macbeth's action is choked by imagination, but he must choose and take the first steps, not even knowing where the branches of the *bivium* end up: "nothing is but what is not".

I have also analysed how Shakespeare represented the nature of temptation on stage. Original sin is inherent in men women, and the tempter, the serpent is the woman, Lady Macbeth herself. She enchants Macbeth with her female ambition like Jezebel, and whispers into Macbeth's ears "leave all the rest to me" and enters the realm of evil manipulation of the future. The *Nachash-Witches* beguile and deceive him and show up the possibility to be like the supernatural. Macbeth's conscious treachery of free choice against the king parallels Adam's treachery against God who wanted to be like the Lord, or even more. Adam-Macbeth carries the whole humanity's tragic destiny: „for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (*Gen 3:19*)

Banquo's virtues and belief in divine justice balances Macbeth's infatuation with the prophecies. He trusts the future-telling power of the sisters but is not afraid that they might influence him or corrupt his sober judgement. He is also shielded with virtue to fight against the fortune-like Witches. He exercises the *faith alone* in the hope that it will shield him against all evil. He too believed in the power of the prophecies and knew that somehow they would come true. Still, Banquo does not yield to a fatalistic finish: he has concerns about fate and knows it is only but hope that they aroused in him.

The *tentatio predestinatione* (temptation of predestination) results from the existential anxiety where one is to fight doubts and fears. The tormenting despair needs a firm security and faith. Macbeth put his *sola fide* in prophecies and evil temptation instead of the just divine governance. Without God and without the grace of God, Macbeth is only a slave of his desires. His tragic flaw lies in his doubts and fears mixed with a false security in the determined future.

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Korzenszky Emőke

**Szabadság és determinizmus Shakespeare *Macbeth* című drámájában:
ikonográfiai és teológiai kontextus**

Összegzés

Disszertációm során Shakespeare *Macbeth* című drámáját a szabadság és determinizmus tekintetében vizsgáltam. A *Macbeth* kreatív olvasása a gonosz teológiájára, valamint az isteni akarat ellen irányuló emberi vétkekre vet fényt. Megvizsgáltam, hogy a drámaíró nem hagyatkozik bibliai szövegekre, hanem inkább széleskörű utalásokat, képeket, referenciákat fedezhetünk fel a tragédiában, amelyek teológiai tanításokat, illetve reneszánsz humanista gondolkodók, egyházatyák eszméire világítanak rá. Shakespeare *Macbeth*-je *derasként* is olvasható, azaz olyan tanulmányozásként, nyomozásként, amely Isten emberek életét befolyásoló hatalmát tárja fel. A dráma olyan teológiai igazságot fed fel, amely az ember természetfeletti elleni működéséről tanít: mindazok, akik önmagukon túlmutató erőket manipulálnak és Isten akarata által trónra helyezett uralkodó életére törnek, nem kerülhetik el végzetüket, a tragikus bukást.

A shakespeare-i univerzum fenti szempontok szerinti vizsgálata során bemutattam a szabad emberi cselekedeteket egyensúlyozó erőket. Vizsgálatom során bemutattam, hogy a megváltoztathatatlan sors a tragikus karakterrel helyettesíthető. Bemutattam továbbá, hogy az események tragikus sodrásában a szabadság és szükségszerűség állandó ellentétben állnak egymással. Teológiai értelmezésben ugyanakkor isteni gondviselésről beszélhetünk, amely az emberi szabadságot kiegyensúlyozza. A fent említett shakespeare-i univerzum vizsgálata mellett a shakespeare-i közönség vizsgálatára is kitértem. Az Erzsébet-kori nézőközönség keresztény világképe általános volt, tehát olyan hittel rendelkezett, ahol jelen volt az isteni igazságosság, gondviselés, valamint a bűnök büntetése. A gonosz erők ebben az univerzumban megsemmisülnek az isteni jószág következtében, ami nem ad teret a tragédiának. A drámaíró szempontjából tehát nem beszélhetünk keresztény tragédiáról, hanem inkább a karakter és az univerzum külső befolyásoló erőinek tragikus összeütközéséről. A karakter tudatos tettei az azokért vállalt felelősséget is magukba foglalják, melyből elkerülhetetlen tragikus bukása ered. A görög sors, amely az

eseményeket irányítja és nem egyeztethető össze a keresztény hittel, a középkori Szerencse koncepciójában él tovább. A keresztény hittel összeegyeztetett Szerencse Isten irányítása alatt áll és az emberi cselekedetekbe beleavatkozva vezeti a hőst dicsőségre vagy bukásra. A keresztény moralizáló megközelítés ugyanakkor a drámai hatástól eltávolítana. A dráma, mint az emberi létezés magyarázata az egész drámából ered és nem kiragadott doktrínák vagy gondolatok elemzéséből. Shakespeare nem alkalmaz egy kifejezett teológiai tanítást, ugyanakkor a *Macbeth* vizsgálata a teológiai tanítást kiegészíti. Szent Tamás szerint az ember szabadon részt vesz az isteni gondviselés működésében. A döntések ugyanakkor bűnös cselekedetekhez vezethetnek az eredendő bűnből kifolyólag. A szabadság a döntés lehetőségében nyilvánul meg. A szabad választás és a szabad cselekedetek az emberi akarat képességéből erednek. Isten mindentudása előrelátását is magába foglalja, amely nem korlátozza az emberek szabadságát, mivel Isten az időn kívül szemléli a világ történéseit anélkül, hogy beleavatkozna annak folyásába. Luther szerint viszont az ember szabadsága a rossz megtételére irányul. Macbeth ismeri a jót és a rosszat, de mégsem tudja meghozni a helyes döntéseket. A tragikus hős így önmaga áldozata, saját tragédiájának hőse.

A Szerencse és pogány természetfeletti eszközök megjelenítése a drámában további vizsgálatra ad lehetőséget a szabadság és determinizmus tekintetében. Shakespeare *Macbeth*-je így az erények és bűnök *bellum perpetuum*-ává válik. Drámájában Shakespeare egyértelműen állást foglal: a Szerencse legyőzhető. Az szerencse és az élet kerekének gonosz, megállíthatatlan és determinált forgása bemutatja az ember küzdelmét, amint megpróbál egy stabil pontba kapaszkodni, hogy legyőzze annak centrifugális erejét, ami még a királyokat is a mélybe taszít a bűnösök közé. A középpontban Isten áll, melynek vonzása a Szent Tamás által tanított alapvető jóra való teremtettséggel is leírható. Macbeth – a próféciák által keltett zavarodottsága közepette – elköveti a „szép és rút” jó választásának drámai *hamartiáját*. Így még messzebb kerül a szerencsekerék középpontjától és ezért még inkább hatással van rá a Szerencse működése. Macbeth felismerése a próféciák valódi természetéről végzetes. Túl későn, de végül rájön, hogy fokról fokra átélte a kerék különböző állomásait: „uralkodni fogok”, „uralkodom”, „uralkodtam” és „vége az uralmamnak” (*Regnabo Regno, Regnavi, Sum sine regno*). A drámai események csúcsán megérti, hogy a szerencse kerekének tovább kell forognia és a „vége az uralmamnak” elkerülhetetlenül bekövetkezik. Bűnbánat helyett viszont utolsó csatára hívja ki a sorsot és szembe néz tragikus bukásával. A Szerencse legyőzhető, sőt, megsemmisíthető az erények

gyakorlásával. Macbeth erényesen harcolt a háborúban, de erényeit félretéve engedett a csalfa szerencse csábításának élete csatája során, amelyet végül elvesztett.

Kutatásom során bemutattam néhány reneszánsz gondolkodó releváns munkáját szabadság és determinizmus kérdéséről. Az erények fejlesztése és ez által a szabadság elnyerése általános vélemény szerint hatékony fegyver a természetfeletti befolyása ellen. Poggio szerint a szerencse félelmetes, szeszélyes, önfejű, akik a menny és föld között lebeg, és természetfeletti erővel rendelkezik, de legyőzhető erények által. Az istennő természetfeletti ereje legyőzhető a keresztény erényekkel vívott csatájában. Megvizsgáltam emellett az emberi akaratszabadság esetleges összeegyeztethetőségét a sorssal és szükségszerűséggel, amit Coluccio Salutati csodálatos dolognak (*mirabile quiddam*) nevez. Ez a szabad akarat pedig Isten kegyelmére szorul. A jóslás ezért Isten mechanikus működését feltételezi. Alberti Szerencséje a hegycsúcsról szemléli az emberi cselekedeteket, hasonlóan, mint ahogy Szent Tamás bemutatta Isten előrelátását, amint örökkévalóságából, mint egy torony csúcsáról szemléli és ismeri a világ eseményeit. Ficino szerint Isten felkészít minket a Szerencséével vívott háborúra. Az emberiség harcolhat a szerencse ellen bölcsességével, ugyanakkor a legkíváncsiabb lenne tűzszünetet hirdetni. Isten segít a szerencse örvényeinek kikerülésében. Macbeth azt a magatartást tanúsította, ami ellen Ficino figyelmeztetett: önmagát mások elé helyezte és így „állatként” viselkedett, de lelke sosem nyugodott meg. Nem fogadta el helyét az univerzumban, hanem kihívta maga ellen sorsát. Ez „mérges gögöt” keltett benne, így egy nagy emberből zsarnok vált. Azzal, hogy sorsát el akarta kerülni, valójában beteljesítette azt. Machiavelli szerint a Szerencsét le kell igázni, mivel ő egy kegyetlen nő, aki az emberekkel sakkfiguraként játszik. Az emberiség feladata, hogy harcoljon ellene demonstrálva képességeit. Macbeth bemutatta képességeit azzal, hogy a szerencse kerekeit meglovagolva saját képességeire hagyatkozott. Erényeket ugyanakkor nem mutatott fel, melyek segítették volna a szerencse kikerülésében és a helyzethez való alkalmazkodásban.

Disszertációmban a boszorkányok természetét is megvizsgáltam, akik a shakespeare-i világegyetem természetfeletti hatalommal bíró lényei. Bemutattam, hogy hasonlítanak olyan istenségekre, mint a sorsistennők, mivel döntésük megváltoztatható és az emberek képesek velük kapcsolatba lépni. A boszorkányok Szerencse istennőhöz hasonló megjelenésűek. Kapcsolatuk a fizikai világgal a dráma során közvetlen befolyássá átalakul ördögi mágia gyakorlásával. Ezek a lények ugyanakkor nem mindenhatóak. Látják, ismerik a jövőt és ki is nyilatkoztatják azt, emellett tudomásuk

van olyan dolgokról, amelyekről emberek nem tudhatnak. A dráma Hecate gonosz játéka: ő a sors istennője, aki „száz csodát kieszel” (*mistress of all charms; close contriver of all harms*). A csalfa, gonosz istennő Szerencséhez hasonlóan viccet csinál az emberek földi szenvedéseiből. Uralkodik sorsuk felett és kénye-kedve szerint megváltoztatja azokat. Kineveti Macbeth-et is, mert látja jövőjét és tudja, hogy balgán bízik a homályos próféciaikban: Hecate-Szerencse egy „rima” (*fortune is a strumpet*).

A zavarkeltés (*hurly-burly*) és a „rút és szép” (*fair and foul*) próféciaik termékeny talajt teremtenek a gonosz növekedéséhez, a zavarkeltő pedig maga az ördög. A zavarkeltő-csürcsavar (*equivocator*) gonosz mindent a feje tetejére állított, csakúgy, mint ahogy Szerencse gonosz módon felforgat minden emberi eseményt kerekének forgatásával: „Megalkotta remekművét a rontás” (*Confusion now hath made its masterpiece*).

A gonosz úgy lép be a drámába, ahogy a világba is belépett. A gonosz drámai jelenléte az eredendő bűnhöz hasonlóan termékeny talajt teremt a gonosz növekedéséhez. A gonosz jelenléte ugyanakkor nem determinál. Ezt a jelenlétet és kifejlődést Shakespeare tragikus színpadán mutatta be. A *non posse non peccandi* állapotból Macbeth a *misseria necessitas non posse non peccandi* állapotába zuhan. Az eredendő bűn elhíttése a *concupiscentia* jelenléte testében. Ez a vágy ugyanakkor nem törli el bűneiért vállalt felelősségét. Macbethnek isteni segítségre lenne szüksége, hogy szabad akaratát Isten felé irányítsa. Akaratának rabszolgasága korlátozta képességeit, de nem determinálta az eseményeket. Disszertációm során bemutattam az akarat szabadságának/rabszolgaságának teológiai vitáját is Erasmus, Luther és Kálvin munkáiban. „Nevetséges lenne”, írja Erasmus, ha olyan alternatíva állna az ember előtt, ami nem valódi döntési helyzet. Ebben az értelemben Macbeth csak egy eszköz lenne Isten kezében, aki egy magasabb cél véghezvitelének eszköze. Luther állítása szerint pedig mindenki csak olyan dolgok ügyében hozhat döntéseket, amelyek nála alacsonyabb rendűek. Macbeth így a skolasztikus ló, akinek meglovaglásaért Isten és a Sátán harcol egymással. A szolga Macbeth így Isten vagy a Sátán akaratának van alárendelve. Az akarat szabadsága az isteni terv tagadását jelentené. A bűnbeeséssel az ember elveszítette Isten partnerségét, csakúgy, ahogy Isten is partner nélkül maradt. Macbeth partnere (*partner in greatness*) a gonosz csábító, maga az ördög. Shakespeare bemutatta a kálvini bűn szükségszerűségét: az akarat önmaga szolgájává tette magát. Macbeth sorsa (nem *fátuma*) Isten kezében van, amit gondviselése által vezérel. Isten a jövőt elrejt a spekulációk megelőzése érdekében. Macbeth hibája az idővel, isteni

gondviseléssel és sorsával való spekuláció. A gondviselés mellőzése minden nyomorúság forrása, ami Macbeth vesztét is okozta, míg Banquo-t megmentette hite.

Tanulmányomban foglalkoztam az ember életét meghatározó morális döntéshozatal szabadságával, mellyel Macbeth is szembesül. A *bivium* (útélágazás) Macbeth életében az erény és bűn, illetve jó és rossz közötti választást jeleníti meg. A *bivium* a döntésre való képességet, illetve a szabad döntésekért vállalt felelősséget mutatja meg. Az útélágazás ezért egy olyan fordulópont, amikor az embernek döntést kell hoznia, illetve élnie kell döntéshozatali képességével. A vándor morális döntése keresztény értelmezésben a szabad akarat és isteni gondviselés gonosszal szembeni értelmezését teszi lehetővé. Az édenkert védő pajzsa elveszett és a megromlott természetű ember a félreérthető, félrevezető és útélágazásokkal teli világba került. Az ember homloka verejtékével kénytelen túlélni a világ viszontagságait szabad akaratával meghozott döntései által úgy, hogy értelmét elhomályosítják gonosz hajlamok és vágyak. Az elveszettnek tűnő ember számára mégis megadatott a szabad akarat, ami ugyanakkor önmagában nem ad semmi útmutatást a döntéshozatalban.

In bivio, Macbeth találkozik *Hecate Triformis*-szal, aki a sors enigmatikus arcait mutatja meg. A Jánusz-arcú *Fortuna Bifrons* csak a múltat és a jövőt látja, míg a három arcú istennő az örökkévaló jelent is ismeri. Hecate, aki „száz csodát kieszel”, uralja a három nővért, boszorkányt, illetve Sorsot, akik a próféciaikat csak közlik Macbeth-tel. Hecate szolgálai, a boszorkányok az istennő három arcát mutatják meg, amint a múlt, jelen és jövő homályos próféciait nyilatkoztatják ki. Macbethnek döntést kell hozna úgy, hogy nem világos számára, hogy a *bivium* útjai merre vezetnek: „már csak az van, ami nincs” (*nothing is but what is not*). Macbeth a vándor dilemmájával szembesül életének útélágazásánál a *bivium* előtt. A dráma legelején a természetfölötti nőszerű teremtmények egyszercsak megjelennek előtte és enigmatikus kijelentéseket tesznek, amelyek morális döntések meghozatalára provokálják. A döntés, hogy vajon a jobb vagy bal (jó vagy rossz) oldali ösvényt válassza, önmagában is nehéz, de a három nő még csavart is visz a helyzetbe. A vándor összezavarva magára marad és nem bízhat semmi másban, mint saját akaratának erejében. A rejtvény a szfinx rejtélye: a boszorkányok természetfölötti tudást birtokolnak, látják a jövőt és félrevezető, de végeredményben igaz próféciaikat nyilatkoztatnak ki. Amint az ember életének útján vándorol, saját erejére kénytelen hagyatkozni, hogy hirtelen előbukkanó kihívásokkal szembe tudjon szállni. Herkulesi bátorság felmutatható a háborúban, de az élet útélágazása ijesztő kihívásokat rejt. Macbeth az erkölcsi harcmezőn nem képes erényeit

felmutatni. A jó és a rossz között vívódik, morális döntése pedig minden szükségszerűségtől mentes.

Macbeth szabad döntésből elkövetett felségárulása Ádám Isten elleni lázadását idézi fel. Az első ember Istenhez hasonló akart lenni és még annál is több. Megromlott természete, azaz az eredendő bűn a tudatos, szabadon elkövetett tettének következménye. A kígyó csábítása abban állt, hogy felmutatta az embernek azt a lehetőséget, hogy Istenhez hasonló lehet. A kígyó-boszorkányok csábítása és félrevezetése Macbeth előtt felmutatta azt a lehetőséget, hogy több lehet önmagánál, és ennek a csábításnak ő engedett. Macbeth tragikus bukása az emberiség büntetése. Ádám-Macbeth az egész emberiség tragikus sorsát hordozza: „por vagy és a porba térsz vissza”. Banquo erényei és az isteni gondviselésbe vetett hite Macbeth próféciaik által keltett mámorának ellentéte. Banquo a gonosz ígérek, a sors kihívásai közepette hittel és bizalommal néz az isteni igaz jóságra, hogy megharcoljon a gonosszal. Banquo hisz a boszorkányok jövőbelátásában, de ez nem tölti el őt félelemmel, hogy bármilyen módon befolyásolhatnák őt vagy megváltoztathatnák józan ítélőképességét: az erények pajzsával védekezik a szerencse-szerű boszorkányok hatalma ellen. Tudomásul veszi, hogy a boszorkányok a trónt Macbethnek ígérték, de elhiszi emellett azt is, hogy természetfeletti előrelátásuk valamilyen módon beteljesül. Mindezek ellenére Banquo nem a fátum-szerű befejezést várja: alkalmazkodik a kihívásokhoz, erényeket és hitet gyakorol. A csábítás jelen van az ember életében. A predestináció kísértése egzisztenciális szorongásból ered, ahol az embernek kétségeivel és félelmeivel kell szembe néznie. A gyötrő kétségbeesésből a hit a kiút. Macbeth a próféciaikba és gonosz csábításba vetette hitét az isteni gondviselés helyett. Isten és Isten kegyelme nélkül Macbeth csak saját vágyainak szolgája. Macbeth tragikus hibája kétségeiből és félelmeiből ered, mivel hamis biztonságot talált egy determinált jövőben.