

# Existence of God: Antithetical Themes in “Dr. Faustus” and “Waiting for Godot”

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*Abstract*—This paper is about the antithetical themes regarding the existence of God in two plays “Doctor Faustus” by Christopher Marlow and “Waiting for Godot” by Samuel Beckett. Both the plays represent two different ages and religious orientations. The former is a tragedy of a doctor of philosophy who pledges his soul with the Devil for the sake of attaining the power of necromancy in a flagrant disregard to God’s commandments and is damned to hellfire whereas the latter is tragicomedy that projects meaninglessness of life through characters questioning the very significance of God’s existence. Hence it is presumed that heterogeneous themes running parallel to each other might arouse different emotions in the reader. In order to examine whether such opposing themes in two different dramas exist or not, textual excerpts were analyzed, literature was reviewed, critics views were collected, and opinion of the experts in teaching literature were gathered. Finally, it is concluded that both the plays do have themes which run into opposite directions regarding the existence of God leading to the arousal of unlike emotions.

*Keywords*—*Antithetical themes; Renaissance play; Existentialism; Theater of the Absurd; “Dr. Faustus”; “Waiting for Godot”*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Doctor Faustus” and “Waiting for Godot”, the two well celebrated plays have been selected to carry out a doctoral level comparative research in order to examine the emotional effect on the readers. One of the objectives is, therefore, to examine the contradictory themes which run parallel to each other and in turn arouse different feelings. A perusal of both the plays conveys contrasting messages to the audience or the readers. “Doctor Faustus” accentuates the belief that the existence of God is unquestionable and everybody is accountable to Him for his deeds. Therefore, we need to lead a life as enjoined by the Heavenly teachings. Those who defy these teachings are liable to be punished in this world and the hereafter. Conversely, “Waiting for Godot” delivers a totally inverse message. The themes of this play arouse suspicions in the mind of the reader regarding the

existence of God. The term 'Godot' suggests multiple entities. However, a perusal of the text establishes that it is synonymous to 'God'—an entity that that never comes to rendezvous to fulfil His promise. The pathetic people keep on waiting for Him in a false hope that they will be saved from trial and tribulations and they will have a better life. Nothing happens as is wished for. Futile waiting goes on incessantly. Time hangs heavy. Frustration prevails that leads the character to commit suicide. The emotional impact is nothing but consternation and depression that arise out of the ideas and entire life has not purpose and no meaning. "Dr. Faustus" belongs to the Elizabethan era – an era in which tragedies were a very popular genre of literature. Most of these tragedies represent Christian point of view concerning the idea of God. So, there is no questioning about the belief that God exists and hence no suggestion toward atheism. On the contrary, "Waiting for Godot" is a pure product of the "Theatre of the Absurd" which engenders the concept that this life purposeless and meaningless. This notion breeds nothing but a feeling of dissatisfaction and misery that emanates from the refutation of the presence of God.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 "Doctor Faustus"

"The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus" was written by Christopher Marlowe. This play is popularly recognized as "Doctor Faustus". Initially it was brought out in the year 1604. "Doctor Faustus" has been built on a German folktale "Faust" (Yirinec, 2013). Despite this fact that the story relates to the fifteenth century, it has stayed in literature for hundreds of years in the guise of different treatises (Schuler, 2013). The play depicts a great contemporary philosopher from Germany, who opts for learning sorcery to wield power over others. In order to accomplish his ambition, he enters into a contract with the villain. As per the agreement, Lucifer promises to help the doctor in materializing his lofty ambitions for a period of twenty four years. As the time of this agreement elapses, Lucifer will take control of his spirit take it to hellfire. Despite the fact that he was a specialist in religious affairs, he was overwhelmed by the idea of the power enchantment in such a way that he completely became oblivious of the consequences. Rather he suspected that no agony or loss will there in the hereafter (Zysk, 2013). The stipulated time passed rapidly, the last moments ensued and the great doctor then understands the folly that he has committed. Dr. Faustus had to reap what he had sown for pride and at last confronted ghastly outcomes (Li, 2012). He begins atoning and demonstrates his most profound laments in the concluding discourse of the play. And it is his final speech that is known as the brilliant segment of the tragedy. Interestingly, it is very close to what Quran states that each person calls God when he or she is in peril or approaching death. There is a clear message in the play that 'cross the limits and to practice more than what the Providence allows implies everlasting punishment' (6:40-41 Sura Al-An'am: The Quran). The truth is that most significant religions preach that the wages of sin are inevitable if one begs no pardon (Vadapalli, 2015). Steep in religion, the play has the following themes that fortify the belief in God.

#### 2.1.1 A Christian Play

"Dr. Faustus" as a Christian play dwells upon the themes which rest in the core of Christianity regarding the world view about God and His attributes. Any action that goes against the will and commandments of God is a sin. When Dr. Faustus makes a Pact with Lucifer, not only does he commit a sin, but also openly denounce the obedience to God (Ornstein, 1968). However, according to Christian belief a man can be forgiven by Jesus Christ, the son of God, even for a great sin subject to the condition of penance because Jesus, died on the cross to redeem humankind's sins (Koenig, Al Zaben, & Khalifa, 2012). So, the chances of redemption are always there for Faustus however disastrous his pact with Lucifer may be. Only he needed to beg for his atonement (O'Brien, 1970). Faustus does think of having recourse to God in scene 12 when the good angel and the old man try to persuade him to change his mind. These two entities may be taken either as messengers of God, an embodiment of 'Faustus's inner self', or both. Such Christian notions convince one to believe that the gates of repentance are never closed irrespective of the fact that the nature of some sins is too grave.

#### 2.1.2 Good and the Evil Angels

Appearance of angels on the shoulders of Faustus have great thematic significance. The good angel goads him to pursue the right path by repenting upon his sins and serving God whereas the evil angel compels him to go for the lust of power and devote himself to the Lucifer's service. These two angels represent the division of his will – an internal conflict in which the battle goes on between and good and evil intentions. So, belief in good and bad angels itself shows a divorce from atheism. An atheist never believes in angels which are after all the creation of God. Likewise, the Devil or Satan turned out to be there when he blatantly refused to obey God's commandments (Bartlett, 2014).

#### 2.1.3 Marlowe's disputed Atheism

In his article, Nicole Smith (2011), declares that in spite of proclaimed lofty message of morality that comes out at the end of play, in-depth perusal of the text seems to propagate atheistic philosophy. Although Faustus is punished and the evil condemned ultimately, the message of the text does not lie in the end, rather is should be found in the "body's subtext". Robert Ornstein, however, in his article titled "Marlowe and God", says that the views about Marlowe's atheism are disputed (Perry, 2013). A deep

scholarly examination demonstrates Marlowe's orthodoxy and it is actually the end of the play that reflects his moral fabric of his mind (B. L. Parker, 2011). No doubt, the spirit of Renaissance was marked by the lust for power and wealth and strong craving to use knowledge for sensual pleasures regardless of moral limitations and Marlowe was greatly influenced by this trend (Bianco, 2012). But soon he realizes the futility and the perils of the spirit of Renaissance and his soul becomes alive to moral values. Conclusively, the terrible consequences that Faustus has to face in the end show that Marlowe, in fact, reinforces the medieval doctrine of Christianity that preaches not to cross the limits set by God. Otherwise, 'eternal damnation' will be the fate. Therefore, J. A. Symonds, therefore, comes to a conclusion that Marlowe illustrates the inner tug-of-war when a believer experiences while running after worldly pursuits without being oblivious of fear of God at the same time (McAlindon, 1981).

In her article titled "Dr. Faustus – A sermon against Atheism", Iftikhar Shabnum (2014) opines that nevertheless of having a boisterous and licentious life, all Marlowe's tragic heroes end up in a miserable plight. Particularly, Faustus makes a pathetic appeal of salvation when he was in the clutches of death. This removes all the suspicions about Marlowe's atheism. She arrives at a conclusion that, in fact, Dr. Faustus is "a sermon against atheism" because evil does not succeed whatsoever. However, it is extremely ironical to some critics that Marlowe who was himself imbibed with the spirit of Renaissance plans to show virtue as victorious and evil as defeated. Specifically, the play's ending illustrates the influence of Reformation on Marlowe (Afzal & Hassan). In spite of all accomplishments, Marlowe like his protagonist Faustus arrives at a conclusion that a debauched soul cannot be subjected to salvation since it is cut off from sustaining source of faith in God. It is an unflinching belief in God that can save from being damned forever (Iftikhar, 2014).

#### 2.1.4 *Faustus's last speech portrays God*

Sophie (2012) also elaborates Doctor Faustus's tragedy from a Christian point of view. The confusion for seeking forgiveness primarily emanates from the concept of God given in the Old Testament (vengeful) and the New Testament (merciful). There are critics who think that the text does not support this fact. Faustus's talk with the Old Man demonstrates an avowed impression of Christ as the representative of a compassionate, pardoning God. Moreover, Faustus's concluding soliloquy stands a clear testimony to the fact that God is loving and always willing to grant pardon (Gray, 2012).

“FAUSTUS. See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!  
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ!—  
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!  
Yet will I call on him: O, spare me, Lucifer!—  
Where is it now? 'tis gone: and see, where God  
Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!”

#### 2.2 *“Waiting for Godot”*

“Waiting for Godot” is a two-act tragicomedy. It is a play marked by absurdity written by Samuel Beckett in 1952 (Esslin, 2015). Irish by origin, Samuel Beckett migrated to Paris. “En attendant Godot” was the name of original play that was written in French. Later, it was translated to English by Beckett himself (Beckett, 2012). The play begins with two homeless individuals, Vladimir and Estragon, who are endlessly engaged in waiting for someone called “Godot”. As the sunset approaches, a messenger from Godot tells that he is not coming today. However, he will definitely arrive tomorrow. The two characters of the play, Vladimir and Estragon, keep on waiting without leaving the meeting place. They have come there in the belief that Mr. Godot will come and they will be relieved of the miserable situation and their life will get better. Simultaneously, a fear hovers their mind “what if Godot never turns up”. At the point the hopes for Godot's arrival fade away, they think of perpetrating suicide to get rid of the unbearable monotony (O'Nan, 2014). Ever since its production, the play has an awesome achievement, and it is recognized as one of the best English play in the twentieth century literature (Iliev and Scordilis, 2011). Critics have tried to understand it at various levels. Among others there is a religious interpretation in which "Godot" symbolizes God. As indicated by such an understanding, God does not go to the destitute but He deposes some people who guarantee His imminent coming. Beckett derides the entire typical custom of Christianity in the play in question (Hooti and Torkamaneh, 2011b). Another more forceful perspective is that the individuals that maintain to observe in Beckett indications of a Christian approach or indications of empathy are basically declining to acknowledge what actually exists there. The perspective of faultfinders of such a class might summarized as: "God is dead" (Cohn, 2014). Samuel Beckett was an Irish conceived avant-garde playwright, theater executive and a stands out amongst the most powerful authors of the twentieth century. He ventured in writings both in French and English and was awarded the Nobel Prize in writing in 1969. He is viewed as Modernist who appeared at the last moments of this trend. So, to be more accurate he possesses dual tendencies of modern and postmodern eras and these components are manifest in "Waiting for Godot" (Hooti and Torkamaneh, 2011a).

##### 2.2.1 *The Plot of the Play*

The plot and character of the play are totally unconventional; rather there are activities that trickle down to the choice of waiting only. Even the setting consists of uncovered street with two homeless guys sitting tight for waiting some Mr. Godot (Ahire, 2016). There are five characters: Estragon and Vladimir, the two men caught up in futile waiting, their possible companions,

Pozzo and Lucky, and the boy, who is solely in communion with Godot. It is likely that even Godot exists as a character though he is not visible (Salvatore, 2015). As an enigma, his presence can be felt even during his absence as he coordinates and dictates others life. Chaplain and the American Vaudeville are two famous comical characters. Vladimir and Estragon, the two tramps, are reminiscent of these two members of the satire team. Time is another confusing element in the play. It is straightaway linked to act of continuous waiting on the part of miserable characters (Akhter & Hayat, 2012). It stands for nothing but stagnation and inactivity. Only a few small changes occur. Leaves grow on the tree, Pozzo loses his seeing faculty, and night overtakes them abruptly. There is an engulfment of time in which there is nothing but unending waiting that sinisterly resumes each day. So each coming day commences afresh like the universe in black out. Time is absolutely incomprehensible. Even its existence is dubious. It is a psychological phenomenon in the inexplicable universe. The element of time in "Waiting for Godot" is not a measurement, it is progressively a subjective view of every character (Барнап, 2013). Didi and Gogo are trapped in a period that passes so sluggishly that Estragon can't recall something from the earlier time. Each coming moment is transforming into a dead past, and he loses any feeling of progress. His faculty to recall is totally broken down, as though he is drawing nearer to agelessness – a juncture where the past merges into the future and an unbounded present. Vladimir is still fairly submerged in time, as yet recollecting the gone by time. As opposed to Estragon, Pozzo is there, whose presence is monitored by "natural" time. In any case, when he meets Vladimir and Estragon, his temporal link breaks down. Pozzo gets blind in Act II losing his temporal and spatial familiarization.

### 2.2.2 *Theatre of Absurd*

Theater of Absurd is a theatrical development rose somewhere around 1950 and 1960. The theatrical development links Beckett with altogether different journalists like Vaclav Havel, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, Eugene Ionesco and Edward Albee. In their treatises they propagated that Man's existence is meaningless and purposeless and, therefore, all communication is cut off. A few characteristics of this treatise are: dreadful or tragic scenes, recurrence of meaningless action by the characters, nonsense conversation, absurd plots, either a parody or dismissal of realism. The Absurd is reflected in Man's reaction to a meaningless and purposeless world or his being a puppet that is controlled by some forces that are invisible (Chandra, 2011). The western man's connection to his key Center (God) finished in 'absurdism', which had started with Fredrich Nietzsche's idea of the 'death of God' (Dar, 2015).

### 2.2.3 *Existentialism*

Existentialism, additionally, remained a most loved subject in Theater of the Absurd. It is a philosophical term presented by Fritz Heineman in 1929, used to depict the total of all developments in logic managing the issue of human presence. There is no purpose in absurd. It is divorced from religion. There is no belief in the metaphysical or transcendental. Man is completely lost and all what he does is aimless, absurd and futile. Theater of Absurd is a branch of the customary statements of existentialism (Michelman, 2010). It expresses that people are unequipped for discovering reason or significance for their life because of some type of mental or philosophical impediment. Thus, adherents of this school of thought trust that humankind is sentenced to total absurdity of presence in absence of natural reason. Albert Camus who is an existentialist essayist opines that fatigue or holding up, for example, appeared through two noteworthy famous characters Vladimir and Estragon, and tries to uncover the existential catastrophe (Shahidullah and Shibli).

### 2.2.4 *God and Godot*

We (who are we) should begin with the greatest inquiry in the play: Who is Godot and what does that name mean? A typical clarification was that Godot was God, with the French addition '- ot' added to be utilized as a little, for example, the French use when calling Charlie Chaplin 'Charlot', consequently making the name perhaps signify 'a little god'. In any case, following the play was composed initially in French, the name looks unlike the French word for God — Dieu. (Jeffers, 2014). To say that Godot does \*not\* mean God keeps the idea of Godot an inquiry. Godot is an image of numerous things, yet nothing (J. Akhter). There is a conspicuous insight toward religious topics in the play (however Beckett said something else, yet he was well known for lying about his work), while in the meantime, making Godot God would constrain the whole play to be about religion, which it is most certainly not. Be that as it may, "numerous see God and Godot as one and the same things" (Singh). Despite the fact that Godot is not obvious in the play, its representation and its comparability in elocution with "God" relates the group of spectators with God (Valsson, 2012). There is a conversation between Vladimir and the Boy who talk to each other. They venture to give a description of Godot's beard from their own perspectives of biblical knowledge (Beckett, 2006, P372). So, a conclusion can be drawn that Godot is also with a beard that resembles with the description of God's beard as envisaged in the Bible (Zeng, 1994, p.696). There is a stark similarity of the color of hair and the beard between God and Godot. (Wang, 2011). Even in spiritual terms, God and Godot share some similarities (Atkins, 2008). Godot in the play seems to have some attribute of God like saving, punishing and caring Man. It is the conviction of tramps that they will get salvation when Godot comes. In case they stop waiting, they will be liable to punishment. The boy tells about his brother raising sheep and goats for Godot. In the Bible, it is mentioned that when God emerges with his glory accompanying all His angels, and all the nations are brought in front of him, He will sort out the people like a shepherd who makes a distinction between sheep and goats. The sheep will be on His right side and goats will be on His left side (Zeng, 1994, p. 624). Those who follow his commandments will rejoice his glory. But the

problem is that man has estranged himself from God. Modern people have broken their association from the past religious belongings and they are groping in the darkness of spiritual wasteland. In a way, human beings are being represented by the two tramps in the play. They are an embodiment of the people of the day, who are divorced from religion. A few dialogues in the play testify this fact in this manner. The two tramps in the play are very awkwardly positioned. They are destined to wait for Godot throughout the whole play, and their waiting turns into their suffering. This gives rise to questions as to why God has abandoned his lambs and as to why modern man suffers in this way.

However, the contract between God and Man is said to be a blessing from God Himself who is the Creator. (Sun, 2006, p. 306). By that standard, man should live a life of comfort. Why is he subjected to the torments of waiting? The tramps appear to have been waiting in accordance with the promise. Godot, however, does not visit them. In fact, man first fails to abide by the contract and, as a result, unending waiting becomes their punishment. In the play, Beckett avowedly shows the violation of the covenant by man. The following extract can be produced as an evidence.

“Estragon: You are sure it was this evening?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: That we were to wait.

Vladimir: He said Saturday. (Pause) I think.

Estragon: You think.

Vladimir: I must have made a note of it.

Estragon: But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? It is not rather Sunday (Pause.) Or Monday? (Pause.) Or Friday?

Vladimir: It is not impossible.

Estragon: Or Thursday?

Vladimir: What'll we do? (Beckett, 2006, p. 246).”

The biblical version is that God created man on Saturday, and the Christ also passed away on Saturday having been crucified on Friday. His resurrection would take place on Sunday but on Saturday man has to wait for his revival. Since man has become oblivious of this important day, this tantamount to breaking of the promise. So, this lapse on his part deprives him of God's mercy and care. How can He then come to Man's salvation?

#### 2.2.5 *The Theme of Repentance and imprecation*

After deprivation of God's protection, man becomes a tramp (homeless) in spiritual term. He loses the purpose of life and he indulges in funny and ridiculous actions. Still in the inner recesses of his heart he craves for salvation. But it is not easy to make up the relations between man and God. Man's faithfulness will be re-tested. So, repentance and pray are the only options for human being now. (Wang, 2011). The dialogues given below highlight this fact:

Estragon: what?

Vladimir: Suppose we repented.

Estragon: repented what?

Vladimir: Oh... We wouldn't have to go into the details.

Estragon: Our being born? (Beckett, 2006, p. 240)

#### 2.2.6 *Waiting for salvation*

The theme of waiting runs through the whole play (Todd, 1967). Despite Godot breaks the promise, the two tramps demonstrate patience and perseverance. In spite of infliction of pain and frustration, they continue to wait because they enjoy an unflinching belief in the salvation by Godot. . How to get salvation? This postmodern world comes into being, when salvation is expected from an external entity (Hooti & Torkamaneh, 2011).

Vladimir: Our Savior. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other... damned.

Estragon: Saved from what?

Vladimir: Hell. (Beckett, 2006, p. 242).

### 3. METHODS

Since the nature of this aspect of the study is to explore and interpret the antithetical themes in two different plays, qualitative method has been chosen to ransack the previous literature, analyze the critics' views and elicit the expert opinion of those professors who have been teaching the two plays over a long period of time in Saudi culture.

#### 3.1 Procedural Framework

First, the antithetical themes of Play 1 (*Waiting for Godot*) and Play 2 (*Dr. Faustus*) concerning the concepts and beliefs in God were identified from both the texts. For this purpose, certain excerpts were selected and then interpreted from both the plays to highlight their themes. Second, literature and criticism on the conceptual differences and similarities of both the plays were reviewed. The previous studies of the researchers relating the themes of the play were ransacked. Third, the views of the critics on these two plays regarding their themes were also collected from the literature. Fourth, the themes were discussed with the faculty members who had been teaching these plays for years. Opinion through structured interviews from selected counterparts in other universities, key informant survey with purposeful sampling, was also sought to accentuate the views on themes. Fifth, the identified themes were compared and contrasted in a tabulated form. Sixth, antithetical themes in both the plays dealing with the concept of God were discussed in detail. Finally, the summary and the conclusion were given. Both the plays express antithetical themes concerning the concept of God. While “*Waiting for Godot*” creates suspicions in the mind of its readers about the existence of God, “*Dr. Faustus*” assures the readers that God does exist. Naturally, the opposite themes of the plays generate opposite emotions in the readers as functionalists advocate (Campos, Mumme, Kermoian, & Campos, 1994). Figure 1 below refers to procedural framework of data collection, analysis, comparison of themes of the two divergent plays, discussion and summarized conclusion of all.

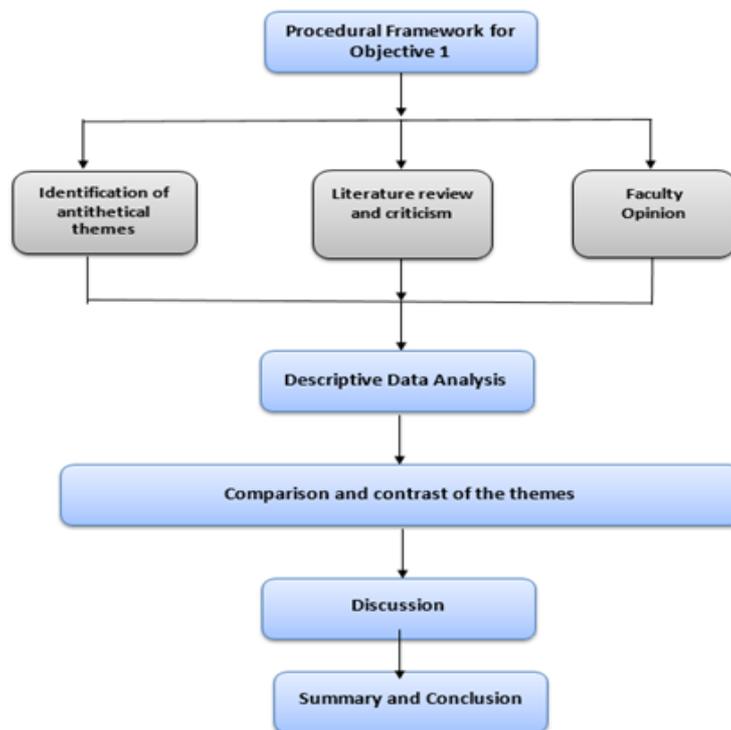


Figure 1: Methodology Flow Chart for the Collection of Data.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The antithetical themes in “*Dr. Faustus*” and “*Waiting for Godot*” are quite obvious. The former starts from the deviation in faith about God but ends up in a strong belief that God is there and those who leave His path are doomed forever if they fall a victim to hopelessness whereas the latter start from skepticism about God and ends up in unending doubts and suspicions about the existence of God. Similarly, as is clear from the literature review, there is no single opinion about the authors of these plays. Marlowe who was greatly influenced by the spirit of Renaissance is mistaken as an atheist by some critics, but most of the critics believe that actually he was reformist because the end of “*Dr. Faustus*” brings the reader to the conclusion that pride and revolt against God leads to devastation. On the other hand, Samuel Beckett who staunchly believed in the philosophy of existentialism tends to show that there is no God, and the people who believe in His existence live in a fool’s paradise.

The plot in “Dr. Faustus” does show the existence of good and bad angels, also the Devil that are obviously the creations of God. Similarly, the purpose of this life has not been denied. The play leads us to believe that we must obey God, and disobeying Him is a great sin that ultimately leads to damnation if one loses hope in God’s mercy or does not beg for forgiveness. The beliefs about God in Christianity are accentuated by the way Dr. Faustus ends up in a tragic end. However, Waiting for Godot’s plot draws the audience to nihilism – a radical philosophy of meaninglessness. “The world and the people in it exist without meaning, purpose, truth and value” (Hooti & Torkamaneh, 2011b).

Another opposite theme that is noticeable in both the plays is the mind of the characters. Dr. Faustus is caught up in a conflict of conscience and his damnation entirely comes from within (Honderich, 1973), and also as Douglas Cole remarks, he is both the victim and the executioner. Hence Marlowe succeeded in creating a great tragic hero of English drama who arouses the emotions of the audience and his image is imprinted in the mind never to be erased. There is no such conflict in “Waiting for Godot”. There is a ceaseless waiting – rather absurdity of waiting, of feeling, and that of existence. This just shows the spiritual emptiness and superficiality of modern culture in which Man has become a machine. So feelings of the characters are different, in turn the reader or the audience also differs in terms of emotions. Boredom is a big problem of the modern age.

As for atheism in “Dr. Faustus”, Iftikhar (2014) branded the play as “a sermon against atheism” delivered by Marlowe who, like Faustus, arrived at a conclusion that nothing can protect the soul of proud and mislead people when they lose faith in the mercy of God. There are researchers like Zeng (1994) who are convinced that there are Christian beliefs in “Waiting for Godot” as is evident from the Biblical references given in the play. But majority of the critics are of the opinion that Samuel Beckett was convinced of the absurdity of this life where God is in waiting never to come.

Even the discussions with the faculty members at the University, revealed that the dissimilarities, rather contradictions, in both the plays are clearly discernible. All the teachers who had ever taught the plays in question agreed that both the plays are antithetical to each other in terms of many themes. At least there is consensus on one point that “Dr. Faustus” eventually fortifies the faith in God whereas “Waiting for Godot” leaves the audience in skepticism about the presence rather existence of God, and it is this skepticism that ultimately leads to atheism that renders everything purposeless. Cohn (2014) goes to the extent of saying that “God is dead”. So, mostly the teaching of these two plays revolves round the contradictory themes if and when the comparison between these two plays is made.

The outcome of the key informant interviews with the expert faculty members who have been teaching English literature over years largely came in favour of existence of antithetical themes in both the plays barring Dr. Gamal Algezeery who was of the view that theme of the play was not religious, it is about waiting...waiting for anything in life, and Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Butt who was of the view that existence of God is there in "Waiting for Godot" as we wait only for the person or thing who/which exists.

The researcher himself has been teaching these two plays for the last fifteen years. It entirely needs a different moods and techniques to teach the two plays. Particularly in Muslim world “Dr. Faustus” generates different emotions because its theme is very close to Islam – a religion that also propagates obedience to God and abstinence from indulging in necromancy. Similarly, the concept of angels, the Devil and its disciples arouse the same feelings as is seen in Christianity. So, when Dr. Faustus suffers for his deviations in faith, the Muslim students feel some accentuation of their own faith. On the other hand, “Waiting for Godot” is generally not hailed by the Arab students. Emotionally they feel bored while going through this play, Atheistic philosophy does not move their heart. So, even the students of literature experience entirely different emotions while studying the two plays in questions. The proposition that antithetical themes develop antithetical emotions holds water particularly in view of the literature reviewed, the opinion of the faculty members, experience of the researcher himself and the impact on the students while studying the two heterogeneous plays. Table 1 below gives a clear picture of the opposing themes that have been identified during the course of the study.

Finally, the number of themes was restricted to five from each play in order to see the emotional impact on the readers. These *themes* are detailed below:

#### 4.1 Key Themes “Dr. Faustus”

The following five themes from “Doctor Faustus” with illustrations from the text support the idea that God does exist. The concepts of Christianity, redemption, Good and Bad Angels, consequences of pride all lead to a belief that existence of God is an inevitable reality.

Table 1: A Comparative Statement of Antithetical Themes in “Dr. Faustus” and “Waiting for Godot”

<b>DR. FAUSTUS</b>	<b>WAITING FOR GODOT</b>
Sin, redemption and damnation	Existentialism – no concept of sin, redemption or damnation
The Good Angels and Evil Angels	Nothing supernatural
A sermon against Atheism	Breeds skepticism about the existence of God
Last Speech – God is there	Ends in waiting – Godot doesn’t come – False promises
Pride and Power	Absurdity – work, work, work, and die
Accountability after death – Heaven and Hell	No concept of accountability – No Hell or Heaven
A religious play	Disputed in terms of religion
Tragedy	Tragi-comedy
Regular Plot	No Regular Plot
Reformation	Nihilism
Spirit of Renaissance – conflict between conscience and passion – lofty hopes	Purposelessness - hopelessness
Meaningfulness	Meaninglessness
A lot of action	Less action – ordeals of waiting, ignorance, impotence and boredom
Message and meaning are clear	Different meaning for people
Emotions of pity and fear – resultant catharsis	Mixed feelings, doubts and debates

#### 4.1.1 A Christian Play

O, I’ll leap up to my God! – Who pulls me down? –  
 See, see, where Christ’s blood streams in the firmament!  
 One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ! –  
 Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!  
 (Marlowe, 1950)(Act 5, Scene III, line 78-81)

Christianity does believe in existence of God whatsoever. The tragedy is interpreted by Sophie (2012) with reference to Christianity. The conflict to get pardon on the part of Doctor Faustus arises from the concept of God as envisaged in Old and New Testaments. The former portrays God as vengeful and the latter as merciful. There are critics who think that the text does not support this fact. Faustus's talk with the Old Man demonstrates a clear impression of Christ as the emissary of a merciful, forgiving God. Moreover, Faustus's last soliloquy stands a clear testimony to the fact that God is loving and always willing to grant forgiveness (Gray, 2012).

#### 4.1.2 Redemption

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,  
 A hundred thousand, and at last be sav’d!  
 O, no end is limited to damned souls!  
 (Marlowe, 1950)(Act 5, Scene III, 102-103)

The themes in “Dr. Faustus” may concluded as the doors of forgiveness are always open whatever may be the gravity of one’s sins. The eternal damnation is the result of the belief that God will not forgive us. (Karim, Fathema, & Hakim, 2015). The concept of redemption in the play actually emanates from this belief that Jesus, according to Christian faith, embraced death on Cross for the redemption of sins of the mankind (Patil & Khan).

#### 4.1.3 Good and Evil Angels

G. Ang. “O, Faustus, lay that damned book aside,  
 E. Ang. Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art  
 Where all Nature treasure is contain’d:  
 Good Angel: Faustus, repent! Yet, God will pity thee.  
 Bad Angel: Thou art a spirit. God cannot pity thee.  
 (Marlowe, 1950)(Act 1, Line 68, 71-72)

Appearance of good and evil angels at Doctor Faustus’ shoulders in the early part of the play is established. Even the role of these angels is analyzed by the critics in terms of universal divine scheme in which the conflict between vice and virtues is perennial. Literature review also ratifies this fact. Then existence of good and evil angels itself confirms the existence of God. Satan (Bartlett, 2014) who was also an angel was damned on disobedience of commandments of God.

#### 4.1.4 *The Results of violation of limits set by God – Pride*

“And, melting, heavens conspir’d his overthrow;  
For, falling to a devilish exercise  
And Glutted now with learning’s golden gifts,  
He surfeits upon cursed necromancy”  
(Marlowe, 1950)(First Chorus, line 22-28)

“Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight” .....  
“Faustus is gone: regard this hellish fall,...  
Only to wonder at unlawful things, ...  
To practice more than heavenly power permits.”  
(Marlowe, 1950)(Act 5, Scene V, Last Chorus)

Pride which is one of the deadly sins is at the core of the play in question. Intellectual folly of Doctor Faustus took place because he was puffed up of his knowledge and fame. This devilish urge made him cross all limits set by God to be on the right path. Such a self-indulgence as pride leads to a deadly end. This deviant behavior in Marlowe’s time was in common, and it this behavior that the author wanted to rectify (J. Parker, 2013).

#### 4.1.5 *The concept of existence of God is accentuated*

Supremacy of God is a fact that is universally acknowledged. Individuals like Dr. Faustus may be misled by evil ambitions but the futility of devilish pursuits like black magic or sorcery eventually reverts the evil pursuer back to the acknowledgement of God Who is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. Awe and repentance are the feelings that overwhelm a sinner

“My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!  
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!  
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!  
I’ll burn my books! ---- Ah, Mephistophilis!  
(Marlowe, 1950)(Act 5, Scene III, line 120-123)

Shortly before Faustus died, he acknowledged the superiority of God. Earlier he was frantically running after his greedy wishes. Just before his death he utters a few words to save his soul, —”Or let this hour be but a year, a month, a week, a natural day, that Faustus may repent and save his soul” (—Dr. Faustus V.ii.134-136). By uttering these words, Faustus shows that he has seen for himself the power of God, and becomes a symbol or a lesson for others to strengthens their belief (De Carlo, 2012).

#### 4.2 *Key Themes “Waiting for Godot”*

The following are the five signled out themes from “Waiting for Godot” that run antithetical to the aforementioned play. These involve theatre of the Absurd, skepticism about God, atheism, meaninglessness of life and diminutiveness of the names of God and extracts from the text of the play have incorporated as illustrations to support the proposition.

##### 4.2.1 *The Theatre of the Absurd*

As already mentioned in literature reivew, there was a theatrical movement in the backdrop of World War II, that projected the futility of life and religious thoughts. The demotivation of the characters shows that they have lost faith in the presence of God and life to them is entirely senseless, meaningless and purposeless. Even religious rituals seems to without any real substance.

“In an instant all will vanish and we’ll be alone once, in the mist of nothingness!”  
(Beckett, 2006)(Act II, Page 232)

“Nothing happens, nobody comes ... nobody goes, it’s awful!”

Vladimir:- Oh . . . nothing very definite.

Estragon:- A kind of prayer

Vladimir:- Precisely

Estragon:- A vague supplication. (Beckett, 2006)(Act 1).

Waiting for Godot is a play that strikingly influenced everyone as a pioneer of the “theater of the absurd” trend. In fact, Samuel Beckett composed this play in deviation of traditional theatrical fashion. It turned out to be one of the most extraordinary plays of the post-second world war era. It is for this reason Esslin declares it “one of the successes of the post-war theater” (1980, p. 3). As a product of the theater of the absurd “Waiting for Godot” is an exceptional play about incessant waiting, intermittent repetition, distressed meaninglessness, and stark absurdity of waiting. Besides, purposeless hanging on in time instead of heading into a meaningful direction, just waiting for waiting, and finally being locked up in one’s mind are also at the core of the play’s message (Hooti & Torkamaneh, 2011a).

#### 4.2.2 *Skepticism about God*

Skepticism about God is another theme in “Waiting for Godot” that tend to influence the reader. Nobody make a direct discussion on this theme. The conversation between Boy and Estragon idirectly creates suspicions in the mind of the audience.

Boy: “Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won’t come this evening but surely tomorrow.”  
(Beckett, 2006)(Repeated at Page 170, 254 and 258)

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Estragon: And if he doesn’t come? (Beckett, 2006)(Page 186)

Dogmatic beliefs are shaken by questioning. In ‘Waiting for Godot’ Beckett questions the dogmatic belief of “God’s existence by posing universal and timeless questions such as: Does God truly exist? Do we matter to Him? Beckett poses these questions without providing answers. Even in some of his interviews, when he was asked about his intention of putting such a crux in his plays, Beckett answered as if he did not know more than the audiences about the questions (Shobeiri)”.

#### 4.2.3 *Atheism*

Atheism that negates the existence of God moves believers and non-believers in a different way. Like skepticism there is no direct talk about atheism. It is, in fact, projected in the mind of the characters who are frustrated with the religious ideology and wish to revert to Nature that is goverened by some physical and metaphysical laws.

Estragon: No, I was never in the Macon country. I’ve puked my of a life away here, I tell you! Here! In the Cackon country!

Vladimir: But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called .....

Vladimir: We could start, all over again perhaps.

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Estragon: We should turn resolutely towards Nature.

Vladimir: We’ve tried that.

Estragon: True.

Vladimir: Oh, it is not the worst, I know.

(Beckett, 2006)(Pages 188)

“All my life I’ve compared myself to him” (1:1539): this statement by Estragon reverberates atheism in Waiting for Godot. Although the names like Adam, Cain, Abel, The Bible, Gospel, Christ, and Saint have been mentioned in the text, the characters intend to commit suicide, taking life as an unbearable burden and time as a tormenting factor, and undermines the existence of God (Azam). Samuel Backett in his highly celebrated play, “Waiting for Godot”, rattles the very foundation of Christian beliefs about God (Brzeska & Wadowska). The playfulness with which the supernatural being called Godot has been dealt with throughout the play in relation to the waiting of two vagabond tramps depicts the clear atheism in in-depth analysis (Rokem, 2014). Although a number of critics try to absolve Backett of not propagating the atheism of the kind Nietzsche who declared “God is dead”, yet common readers decode the message in terms of absence of God’s existence.

#### 4.2.4 *Purposelessness and meaninglessness*

Vladimir: There is nothing we can do. (Page 204)

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Vladimir: That passed the time.

Estragon: It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly.

Estragon: What do we do now?

Vladimir: I don’t know.

Estragon: Let’s go.

Vladimir: We can’t.

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot. (Beckett, 2006)(Page 164)

Vladimir: We wait. We are bored. No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it.....

Seen in the backdrop of Absurdism, existentialism and the skeptical or atheistic philosophy regarding the existence of God, the theme of meaninglessness and purposelessness of life is quite obvious in "Waiting for Godot". Beckett ventures to convey absurdist ideals by means of showing the meaninglessness and purposelessness of life (Shobeiri). Waiting in the play is meaningless, absurd and purposeless (Shahidullah & Shiblu). Life is meaningless and this a purposeless world devoid of all ultimate objectives (Oteiwey, 2016).

#### 4.2.5 Diminutiveness of the names of God

Diminutiveness refers to smallness or littleness to reduce the importance of something. Using diminutive names for God denotes that God is not as important as is exalted in religion. This tantamounts to ridicule the very existence of God to generate skepticism or atheism.

Pozzo: ".....what happens in that case to your appointment with this ....Godot....Godot....Godin....anywhere you see who I mean, who has your future in his hands..... (pause)...at least your immediate future." (Beckett, 2006)(Page 122)

Hence, this theme in "Waiting for Godot" also runs antithetical to the one in "Doctor Faustus" pertains to diminutiveness of the names of God. "Gogo and Didi are waiting for a mythical figure called Godot – a secular term for God" (Vahanian, 1957). The identity of Godot looks ridiculous in the presence of names that lead to diminutiveness of God. For instance, analogous names such as Pierre/Pierrot, Charles/Chariot (that reminds of French clownish figure Charlie Chaplain) and the similarity to a certain character in a play by Balzac, a character much talked about but never seen, called Godeau. His arrival is eagerly awaited as an event that will miraculously save the situation. Yet all agree in the end that the identity of Godot is of secondary importance (Roos, 1981).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research was as to whether opposite themes with reference to the existence of God exist or not in the two plays. After rigorous exploration, the answer is emphatically yes. The identification of antithetical themes in the two plays – 'Doctor Faustus' and "Waiting for Godot" came to the fore without any ambiguity. Both the plays belong to two different ages representing the prevalent strains of literature. The former upholds the spirit of Renaissance and the latter is steep in the Theatre of the Absurd and existentialism. One leads to the conclusion that there is God beyond any doubts and any deviation from the right path (Satanic pursuits) ends up in disaster and damnation whereas the other leaves the reader in with mind boggling skepticism that tends to shake the belief in the existence of God. The textual references from the plays in question also made it clear that the mood and the themes also run into opposite directions. Doctor Faustus is essentially a Christian play whereas Waiting for Godot breeds anti-Christianity feelings. This in turn paved the ground for our study that the Muslim readers in Arab world are emotionally bifurcated while reading the two divergent plays. The majority of the critics and philosophers in the realm of English literature agree that both the plays run apart in themes and emotions. The results again show thematic divide in terms of age, prevalent literary trends, religious beliefs, and emotional orientations.

Since literature review reveals that there is hardly any comparative study that exclusively focuses on the antithetical themes in the two plays, it will be interesting for the future researchers to explore this particular area.

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