

Motif of the Fall

The fall motif in the drama results from two sources, one Christian and one classical. The classical motif is presented in the beginning of the play by the image of Icarus and his fall. Icarus was trapped in a labyrinth and his father made him a pair of wax wings so that he might escape by flying over the confusing maze. In his pride at being able to fly, Icarus flew too close to the sun, melted his wax wings, and fell to his death in the ocean. Thus, the image or allusion to Icarus should evoke the idea of pride bringing about a person's fall and ultimate death.

In conjunction with this classical image is the Christian image of the fall of Lucifer. Lucifer, because of his pride, revolted against God and fell from heaven. In both images, the emphasis is upon pride bringing about a fall. The images comment also upon Faustus' situation in that he is likewise a man of pride who aspires to rise above his human limitation and as a result plunges to destruction. His descent from a possible state of salvation into one of eternal damnation is prepared for by the many illusions to a "fall" throughout the drama.