



# THE CONSEQUENCE OF MAN'S FALL INTO SIN- WITH REFERENCE TO NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S

## *THE MARBLE FAUN*

**AUTHOR 1:** Mrs. V. Vasantha Kumari, Ph.D Research Scholar (PT), Gobi Arts & Science College, Gobi

**AUTHOR 2:** Dr. S. Parveen Sulthana, Assistant Professor of English, Gobi Arts & Science College, Gobi

### ABSTRACT

“Moral responsibility was seen to develop the individual’s character, and such responsibility is impossible where virtue is not a matter of conscience but of constraint, of outer rather than inner compulsion” (Hall 175). This philosophical aspect of the book is centered in the character of Donatello in the novel *The Marble Faun*. This last novel of Hawthorne was published in 1860. Hawthorne’s stay in Liverpool as an American consul general provided him with the concept and background of the novel. It introduces four characters who are artists by profession. They are Donatello, Miriam, Kenyon, and Hilda. Donatello is an innocent, faun-like creature, who has grown in a rural arcadia in the company of nature.

**KEY WORDS :** Spiritual Maturity, Sin and Education, Moral Consciousness and Suffering and Humiliation.

In the pre-Adamic state of existence, he is not conscious of sin, “had no conscience, no remorse, no burden on the heart, no troublesome recollections of any sort . . .” (MF597). At this stage, the question of restraint by any external mandate is insignificant to him. He is a kind of simpleton whose innocence has kept him outside the periphery of any formal rules and restraints. He encounters evil for the first time when he confronts the monk Antonio in the evil and corrupt city of Rome.

Antonio is a vicious creature who is Miriam’s evil genius. He knows the past of Miriam and malignantly dogs her steps. The mysterious and frightful circumstances of a past event points out that she was “accomplice in the crime” (MF 838). Antonio threatens her with the disclosure of that event in which

she was implicated as a murderess. He says, “men have said that this white hand had once a crimson stain” (MF645). It makes her restless and miserable as she is haunted by the frightful memories of her past. She implores to him to deliver her from his bondage but he says, “we are bound together, and can never part again” (MF 644). He asks her to leave Rome with him and warns her, “You are aware of the penalty of a refusal” (MF 643).

Donatello is deeply in love with Miriam. He cannot bear her suffering and humiliation in the hands of the monk. His attachment to her offers him a possibility for a moral education. He kills the wretched monk by flinging him down from the Tarpeian Rock to rescue her from his pestering presence. She unconsciously, assists in transforming him from an unthinking animal like existence into a thoughtful human being. On the instinct of natural justice, voiced by her, he slew her prosecutor with her consent. He did what her eyes bid him to do, while he was holding the wretched over the precipice.

After this incident, a kind of transformation takes place in him. Donatello is bewildered with the novelty of sin and grief. His conscience is evolved which torments him day and night; yet, this torment is preferable to the bliss of ignorance. This transformation in his character depicts an evolution of good out of evil. “. . . the fierce energy that had suddenly inspired him. It kindled him into a man; it developed within him intelligence which was no native characteristics of the Donatello whom we have heretofore known” (MF 689). It leads to the working of a moral consciousness resulting in the disappearance of that simple and joyous creature.

The coarse animal part of his nature is eventually thrown into the background. Donatello’s friend Kenyon speculates on his changed behavior, and the recently developed astonishing mental and moral maturity in him. Kenyon perceives a perceptible difference in his character after the murder of Antonio. It seems to Kenyon that “from some mysterious source,” as sculpture feels assured, “a soul had been inspired” (MF741) in him. Donatello loses his natural impulsiveness and acquires, “the power of dealing with emotions” (MF737). Kenyon finds that he has gained a far deeper understanding to deal with higher subjects. The customs, rules and regulations of society become meaningful for him. He gains an insight into the moral mysteries of the world. “It was perceptible that he had already had glimpse, of strange and subtle matters . . . life forever afterwards” (MF 740-741).

The irrefutable connection between sin and education as revealed in the novel *The Marble Faun* is similar to Emerson’s views as expressed in his essay “Compensation”, “When he is pushed, tormented, defeated,

he has a chance to learn something; he has been put on his wits, on his manhood; he has gained facts; learn his ignorance; is cured of insanity of conceit; has got moderation and real skill” (69).

The fierce primitive energy of Donatello on the verge of spiritual maturity develops only after the commission of sin. After passing through an agonizing phase, he is inspired by a new soul and intellect. Sin proves a means for his education; guilt leads to the evolution of the conscience. The guilt torments him with his crime and guides him towards a spiritual maturity. Miriam observes, “He has traveled in a circle, as all things heavenly and earthly do and now comes back to his original self, with an inestimable treasure of improvement won from an experience of pain . . . was the crime a blessing in disguise?” (MF 840) The deed has performed its office. No proof of Donatello’s commission of the murder remains, but the pang in his heart constantly reminds him of his guilt. He lifts his hand to his breast and says, “I have a great weight here” (MF 703).

It is followed by repentance and regeneration of soul. It kindles in him a mature man and develops intelligence. Miriam says, “Here is Donatello haunted with strange remorse, and an immitigable resolve to obtain what he deems justice upon himself” (MF 839). The right conduct is not enforced upon him to reveal an evolution of moral responsibility in him. He remains restless and is constantly haunted by his conscience until he subjects himself to the jurisprudence, on his own accord. The price of his guilt is the loss of his innocence and the peace of his mind.

“In seeking of his own accord to bring justice upon himself, Donatello becomes the fictional proof of Emerson’s theory that formal government is rendered unnecessary by the growth of private character” (Hall 175). Transcendental ideas, which chiefly occupy Hawthorne’s thoughts in the present tale, are expressed by Emerson in his essay, “Circles”, “Valor consists in the power of self-recovery, so that a man cannot have his flank turned, cannot be out generalled, but put him where you will, he stands. This can only be by his preferring truth to his past apprehension of truth, and his alert acceptance of it from whatever quarter” (183).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century thinker and philosopher Thomas Paine’s political and moral thoughts also raised questions pertaining to the self-governing society consisting of self-governing individuals. It referred to the willingness of an individual to constantly choose and hold to the principles or ideals yet flexibly applying that deal in diverse situations. Paine was an offspring of the enlightenment who framed the American constitution. He focused on the application of the power of reason as an inner check upon the

conduct of a free individual. Paine believed that natural law was inscribed in the divine order. It emanated a cosmos of a beautiful harmony and order which had existed prior to history or governments and it was superior to them. The natural law was at least partially knowable through the moral disposition in man and the depth of his conscience. Paine wrote, "As for moral, the knowledge of it exists in every man's conscience" (*Age of Reason* 185). If you break natural law your conscience will tell you if you practice being attuned to it. In this regard, Paine quoted Cicero, "the true law is right reason, comfortable to the nature of things, constant, eternal diffuse through all, which call us to duty by commanding, from sin by forbidding, which never loses its influence with the good" (*Social and Political Thought* 93).

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