

"Is it God's Will in This Business?": Will on Query in William Golding's *The Spire*

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Abstract

William Golding's fifth novel, *The Spire*, set in the fourteenth century, tells the story of Dean Jocelin, who desires to erect a spire on the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary. As Dean Jocelin claims that his will is the God's will that has been inspired to him by vision, he adheres to his will acquiescingly. However, all of the people around him, especially the master builder Roger Mason who doubts the endurance of a 400-foot-high spire, are against the idea of constructing it.

The problematic proposition in the novel is whether Dean Jocelin is right or wrong trying to actualize his will that is going to result in material and spiritual losses. Is Dean Jocelin an especially faithful servant of God? Is he a latent or overt solipsist, sacrificing many lives for his will? Or is he just an ordinary person and as such, in possession of the human nature that is considered inherently evil by William Golding? This study will try to answer these questions by adopting the eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant's ethics, which use good will, reason, and duty as measures of moral action, and which claims that all of these together bring freedom for human beings.

Key words: William Golding, *The Spire*, Kantian ethics, good will, freedom

"Bu İş Tanrının İstenci mi : "? William Golding'in Kule Romanında İstencin Sorgulanması

Özet

William Golding'in on dördüncü yüzyılda geçen beşinci romanı *The Spire*, Virgin Mary Katedrali'ne bir kule dikmek isteyen başrahip Jocelin'in öyküsünü anlatmaktadır. Başrahip Jocelin, bu istencinin kendisine bir vahiy ile iletilen Tanrı'nın istenci olduğunu öne sürerek, istencine sorgusuzca bağlanır. Fakat etrafındaki tüm insanlar, özellikle 400 fit yüksekliğindeki bir kulenin mukavemeti konusunda şüphe eden yapı ustası Roger Mason, bu kulenin inşasına karşıdır.

Romandaki sorunsal önerme, Başrahip Jocelin'in maddi ve manevi kayıplar ile sonuçlanacak istencini gerçekleştirmeye çalışmasının doğru mu yanlış mı olduğudur. Başrahip Jocelin gerçekten Tanrı'nın sadık bir hizmetkârı mıdır? İstenci için birçok yaşamı feda eden gizli ya da aleni bir tekbenci midir? Yoksa William Golding'in tabiatı gereği kötü olarak tanımladığı insan doğasına sahip sadece sıradan biri midir? Bu çalışma, on sekizinci yüzyıl filozofu Immanuel Kant'ın hepsi bir arada olunca insan için özgürlük getirecek iyi

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niyet, akıl ve ödev duygusu üzerine kurulu ahlâk felsefesini kullanarak bu sorulara cevap vermeye çalışacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: William Golding, *The Spire*, Kantçı ahlâk felsefesi, iyi niyet, özgürlük

Introduction

The Spire (1964) by William Golding, the Nobel Prize-winning English writer, as described on the cover of Faber’s 2005 edition, is “a dark and powerful portrait of one man’s will, and the folly he creates”. This man, Jocelin, is the dean of a medieval English cathedral of the early Middle Ages. He wants to add a 400-foot spire to the cathedral despite the building not having a strong enough foundation to hold it. Jocelin, who claims that he is actualizing the will of God, spearheads the construction, going forward even at the cost of losses and sacrifices both material and ethical. To build a spire taller than any other building, “he sacrifices people (...) to achieve his ambition, justifying it on the grounds that his ambition is a vision of God’s will”¹. Although the story is narrated from Jocelin’s point of view, Golding casts doubt on the righteousness of his steady conviction to construct the spire, and puts his will in the first order of scrutiny. In the novel, “the only proof that the erection of the spire is carried out in response to God’s intention is Jocelin’s word, but frequent doubts are cast on his sanctity and his very sanity”². Indeed, Golding’s main question in this novel is whether Jocelin’s will originates from good intentions and if it does, whether it is a moral deed, given that his deeds result in many losses. In its questioning of ethical issues in terms of good will, reason, duty, freedom, egoism, and altruism, *The Spire* can be examined within the realm of ethics and especially that of the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

Kantian ethical system, as a deontological ethical theory, is based on the idea that good will is the only intrinsic good. Kant’s ethical questioning was shaped by several influences, one of which is Pietism, a Lutheran Church sect to which his parents adhered. “Pietists emphasized honesty, deep feeling, and the moral life rather than theological doctrine or orthodox belief”³. In this respect, he established his ethical thinking on good will or inner goodness: “The idea is that if we live within our lights, we will be given more light and that God judges us not on how lucky or successful we are in accomplishing our tasks but on how earnestly we have lived according to our principles”⁴. Furthermore, to Kant, an action is good if its maxim is valid within reason-governed ethical law, not only intuition. Kant argues that good will and reason together result in freedom and moral action in life.

¹ Jean E. Kennard, “William Golding: Island”, (Ed. Harold Bloom), *Sin and Redemption*, New York, Infobase Publishing, 2010, p. 128.

² Jesús Saavedra-Carballido, “Will, Suffering and Liberation in William Golding’s *The Spire*”, *Atlantis Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies*, 2014, p. 72.

³ Louis P. Pojman and James Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, Boston, Wadsworth, p. 122.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

So, as a novel that discusses the morality of the protagonist Dean Jocelin's action, *The Spire* reveals some Kantian concepts of ethics, of which good will is the most prominent.

The main question in the novel is that of whether Jocelin is right or wrong for trying to make a spire built on a medieval cathedral, despite its predicted lack of proper foundation. Kantian ethics dictates that the first thing that should be examined is the intention of the doer; whether the deed springs from good will or not. In the novel, Jocelin tries to justify his plan by calling it God's will: "You'll see how I shall thrust you upward by my will. *It's God's will in this business* [emphasis added]"⁵. So certain of his righteousness is Dean Jocelin that when he overhears the conversation of workers below, he does not even imagine that they are talking about him:

"Say what you like; he's proud."

"And ignorant."

"Do you know what? He thinks he is a saint! A man like that!" (13)

He responds by saying, "Who is this poor fellow? You should pray for him, rather" (13). His belief in his own will is so strong that he does not anticipate the possibility of the sacrifices that occur later on. Based on Golding's intended theme of human nature as mostly solipsist and evil rather than altruistic and good, many critics problematize Jocelin's will and mention the wrongness of his deeds. Erkan states that "[i]n *The Spire* Jocelin's will is a false will"⁶. Saavedra-Carballido indicates "[f]or everyone except himself, it is soon obvious that behind his conscious motives lies a demonic impulse that tends towards excess and disruption, an almighty drive that takes no account of human morality and needs"⁷. Hallissy defines "the key element of the novel's medieval background [as] the theology of sin"⁸. The data in the novel direct many critics to comment on Jocelin's will as a false will. Thus, if his will and his later deeds to accomplish it are examined in terms of an ethical questioning based on Kant's "categorical imperative", a similar but more detailed analysis which illuminates Golding's ethical stance emerges.

Kant's emphasis on "good will" and its power to decide the rightness or wrongness of an action goes parallel to his notion of moral law. In this process, the prominent determinant is referred to as "categorical imperative" or "absolute

⁵ William Golding, *The Spire*, London&Boston, Faber and Faber, 1990, p. 40. Subsequent references to *The Spire* will be to this edition and will be included in the text in brackets.

⁶ Mukadder Erkan, "A Critical Study on Golding's Novels, 1954-65: 'Literary Features and Human Conflicts' ", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Edebiyat Bilimleri Araştırma Dergisi*, Erzurum, 1999, Number 25, p. 202.

⁷ Saavedra-Carballido, "Will, Suffering and Liberation in William Golding's *The Spire*", p. 81.

⁸ Margaret Hallissy, " 'No Innocent Work': Theology and Psychology in William Golding's *The Spire*", *Christianity and Literature*, 1997, Vol. 47, No. 1, p. 37.

command”. Instead of a hypothetical imperative related to certain conditions, Kant defends a categorical imperative that universalizes principles of morality. Kant, affected by some versions of intuitionism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, adopts a rule-intuitionism in his ethics. Rule-intuitionism

maintains that we must decide what is right or wrong in each situation by consulting moral rules that we receive through intuition. Rule-intuitionists accept the principle of universalizability as well as the notion that in making moral judgements we are appealing to principles or rules.⁹

Although it may seem incoherent to bring intuition and rule close together, Kant, “a rule-intuitionist of a special sort”, believes that “moral knowledge comes to us through *rational* intuition in the form of moral rules”¹⁰. So, his notion of intuition is strongly related to his belief in the power of reason. To test the moral validity of a deed, Kant forms his categorical imperative based on good will, reason, intuition, and duty. In Kantian ethics, “[c]ategorical imperatives are the right kind of imperatives, because they show proper recognition of the imperial status of moral obligations. Such imperatives are intuitive, immediate, absolute injunctions that all rational agents understand by virtue of their rationality”¹¹. In this sense, the categorical imperative (the formula for which is simply “Do X”) that universalizes principles of conduct is to: “Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law”¹². The maxim is the general rule according to which the actant will act. So, Kant establishes the categorical imperative as the determinant of any action’s being moral or immoral. In this process, he suggests first to form the maxim of action, second to universalize the maxim, and third to accept a successfully universalized maxim and to reject unsuccessful maxim. Given this ethical system, is Jocelin’s will, which he identifies with the will of God, a good will, and does it justify his deeds? Kant’s categorical imperative can be applied to this problem. As the first step, the maxim of Jocelin’s action can be formulated as follows:

“When I believe that something is God’s will, I should do whatever is necessary to actualize it.”

To test the ethicality of the action after formulating the maxim, this maxim should be universalized as:

⁹ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 125.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, Cambridge & New York, Cambridge UP, 2006, p. 31.

“When anyone believes that something is God’s will, s/he should do whatever is necessary to actualize it.”

Kant believes that if the maxim can be universalized, the action in question proves itself as a moral action; otherwise, it is immoral. So, if the universalized maxim above is correct, then Jocelin’s action is moral according to Kantian ethics. Kant formulates his categorical imperative on three principles which are tied by the theme of universalizability. In order to evaluate the validity of this universalization, three principles which are tied to the Kantian theme of universalism –the principle of the law of nature, the principle of ends, and the principle of autonomy– will be utilized.

The Principle of the Law of Nature

The categorical imperative principle of the law of nature is: “Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature”¹³. “The emphasis here is that you must act analogous to the laws of physics, specifically insofar as such laws are not internally conflicting or self-defeating”¹⁴. When the maxim of Jocelin’s action is considered, it would be morally right if everyone would act on the maxim without any conflict or self-deception and vice versa. Then, let us consider this maxim: “When anyone believes that her/his will is the God’s will, s/he should do what should be done to actualize this will”. What happens if this maxim is practiced? In fact, the answer lies in the novel: chaos.

Golding structures *The Spire* on several contradictions, two of which are “Jocelin’s Christianity versus the workers’ pagan rituals” and “God the Father versus Dia Mater”¹⁵ (Saavedra-Carballido, 2014: 82). Those contradictions conflict with each other throughout the novel and as a result, a terrible sacrifice occurs –the murder of Pangall. Dean Jocelin employs the pagan workers to construct the spire on the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary in order to actualize his will. These workers, who do not share Jocelin’s Christian belief in the essentialness of a spire, continue to build it just with the lure of money: “The will itself opened Jocelin’s lips and promised them more money among the flames of love; and they hugged the lean body that was the vessel of the will” (152). However, even more money is not able to make them carry on the nearly impossible task and so they activate their own pagan belief that results in a sacrifice. “As the spire rises and the risk increases, the absence of Christian ritual coupled with a lack of belief in Jocelin’s personal faith lead the workmen to resort to a substitute ritual”¹⁶. The pagan workers choose Pangall, the impotent caretaker, as a scapegoat, to propitiate their pagan gods and

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 129.

¹⁵ Saavedra-Carballido, “Will, Suffering and Liberation in William Golding’s *The Spire*”, p. 82.

¹⁶ Margaret Hallissy, “Christianity, the Pagan Past, and the Rituals of Construction in William Goldings’ *The Spire*”, *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 2008, No: 49-3, p. 326.

to strengthen the structure. The sacrifice scene in which the pagan workers put the model of the spire between their legs is a clear representative of the ritual sacrifice to a phallic deity that happens on the pagan holy day of Midsummer's Eve. Besides, "the mistletoe used in the foundation sacrifice of Pangall underlines the relationship between infertility and the spire"¹⁷. In this ritual, where "Misshapeness and Impotence are ritually murdered", "the sacrificial victim is built into the pit to strengthen the inadequate foundations"¹⁸. Thus, the pagan workmen's anxiety about the foundation of spire, in other words its physical impotence, is relieved in a way. It is apparent that "[t]he atmosphere in *The Spire* [which] is both pagan and spiritual"¹⁹ is conflicting and results in a disastrous sacrifice.

In this sense, the maxim of Jocelin's action and its universalizability should be reconsidered in relation to the action (sacrifice) by the pagan workers. The maxim "When anyone believes that her/his will is the God's will, s/he should do what should be done to actualize this will" can be read as "When the pagan workers believe that their will is their pagan deity's will, they should do what should be done". Actualization of this maxim brings in the sacrifice of Pangall. To please their deity against the evil showing itself with the church's groaning and creaking under the surplus weight, they "do what should be done" and sacrifice Pangall. To Korsgaard, with the principle of the law of the nature, Kant implies "a *practical contradiction*, where my action would become ineffective for achieving my purpose if everyone tried to use it for that purpose"²⁰. Similarly, Jocelin's maxim becomes ineffective for achieving his goal when the pagan workers use it for the same purpose, namely to actualize their will, identified in their case with that of their deity. So, the categorical imperative of Jocelin presents a practical contradiction in his action as it shows that he is trying to get away with something that would never work if others did the same thing, because "it exposes unfairness, deception, and cheating in what [he is] proposing"²¹. Thus, the maxim of actualizing a will that is identified with that of God or any accepted creator fails the universalizability criterion. As the society will be dragged into chaos and anarchy like in *The Spire*, this maxim tested with the principle of the law of the nature is clearly immoral. Now, the second principle –the principle of ends– should be applied to Dean Jocelin's assumed maxim to evaluate his actions.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹⁸ Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study*, London, Faber, 1984, p. 211, quoted in Margaret Hallissy, "Christianity, the Pagan Past, and the Rituals of Construction", p. 327.

¹⁹ Erkan, "A Critical Study on Golding's Novels, 1954-65", p. 199.

²⁰ Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Formula of Universal Law", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 1985, Vol: 66, 24, quoted in Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 130.

²¹ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 130.

The Principle of Ends

In Kantian ethics, the principle of ends is: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means"²². To Kant, because human has dignity and worth as a rational being, s/he should not be used as a means for any end. "In accordance with this principle a human being is an end for himself as well as for others, and it is not enough that he is not authorized to use either himself or others merely as means (since he could then still be indifferent to them); it is in itself his duty to make man as such his end"²³. In terms of the notion of value, Kant not only evaluates human as the source of values but he also accepts her/him the maximum value²⁴. Furthermore, "[w]e, as valuers, must conceive of ourselves as having *unconditioned* worth"²⁵. When this second principle is applied to the maxim of Jocelin, both his intention and his deeds can be evaluated from other-oriented point of view.

Although Jocelin tries to justify his deeds both to relieve himself and to legitimize his mistakes sounding in the words of an Easter song as "*This have I done for my true love*" (137), his solipsism unveils itself before long. "Jocelin chooses to be an instrument of his vision, and he chooses others to be his instruments"²⁶. His treating all people, even the closest to him, mostly as means not as ends shows itself in many cases. Primarily, as Hallissy mentions, "Jocelin acts alone, in violation of the communal rituals of a communal activity. Jocelin's behavior shows not only his self-absorption but also his isolation from the group"²⁷. Though he is the dean of the cathedral, he overlooks the cancelling of services by laity who did not "dare to worship" (165) in the cracking cathedral. "Priests and congregants alike are diverted from their routines of worship by [the master builder] Mason's 'army' of workers who all but take over the cathedral"²⁸. Dean Jocelin claims that he strives at a spiritual aim but he ignores the spiritual rituals or any other spiritual aims in the cathedral. Just to sustain the construction, he ignores first the warnings of Pangall who foresees that the pagan workers will do him harm, and second the adultery between Goody Pangall (the god-daughter of Jocelin) and Roger Mason, believing that Goody will keep Roger in the Cathedral. His ignorance of the advice of his former friend Father Anselm results in a falling out and Anselm airs his grievances when Jocelin is in his deathbed saying:

²² Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 38.

²³ Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, Cambridge&New York, Cambridge UP, 1991, p. 198.

²⁴ Ahmet Arslan, *Felsefeye Giriş*, Ankara, Adres Yayınları, 2009, p. 173-4.

²⁵ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 135.

²⁶ Julianne Fowler, *William Golding's Definition of the Irrational: A Study of Themes and Images* (Master's Degree Thesis Kansas State Teachers College, 1970, p. 96, <https://esirc.emporia.edu/bitstream/handle/123456789/2785/Fowler%201970.pdf?sequence=1> (13.08.2015))

²⁷ Hallissy, "Christianity, the Pagan Past, and the Rituals of Construction", p. 329.

²⁸ Lawrence S. Friedman, *William Golding*, New York, Continuum, 1993, p. 88.

(...) to see you dean of this church when you could hardly read Our Father; and to be tempted, yes tempted—for where the horse goes, the wagon must follow—and one must admit that the great world is necessary since we're none of us saints—tempted towards a sort of ruin. I admit it freely. I might have remained where I was and done some good. You tempted me and I did eat. (201-2)

Father Anselm accuses Jocelin not only of tempting him but also of using him and the others as means to actualize his vision. Father Anselm knows the most about Dean Jocelin as he is Dean Jocelin's confessor: "And after that, to have to hear your confessions, your partial, self-congratulatory confessions— (...) What about Ivo, Jocelin? A boy canon. Just because his father gave timber for the building" (202). Dean Jocelin noticeably behaves in an unfair and careless way towards the people around him which results in heavy losses including a workman's falling through the hole above the crossways, Goody's death when she is giving birth to her illegitimate baby, Roger's becoming an alcoholic, losing his dignity as a master builder and so attempting to hang himself, and his wife Rachel Mason's being left with the responsibility to look after Roger, "blind and dumb like a baby" (220). In this sense, "[o]ther people are similarly regarded as extensions of himself rather than as valuable in themselves. Tools to be manipulated in a self-aggrandizing project (...)"²⁹.

Dean Jocelin's solipsism operates in his actions that conceive other people just as means who should serve for his aim. Until the end of the novel, he does not even take a step back to evaluate the material and spiritual costs in the cathedral: "He said dizzily to himself: It's the cost! What else should I have expected? And I can't pray for them since my whole life has become one prayer of will, fused, built in" (105). Saavedra-Carballido mentions that though Jocelin's vision of God may have been real and so his intentions sincere, his concern does not include the other, "worldlier modes of cognition": "For Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, this makes it extremely dangerous: under the influence of his vision, Jocelin remains oblivious of human needs, neglects his ecclesiastical duties, falls out with the other priests and the builders, and, worst of all, puts everyone's lives in danger"³⁰. So, Dean Jocelin's maxim on which he bases his actions does not satisfy Kant's principle of ends arguing that "we have unconditional worth and so must treat all such value-givers as valuable in themselves—as ends, not merely means"³¹. The maxim of "When anyone believes that her/his will is the God's will, s/he should do what should be done to actualize this will" contradicts with the principle of ends even though it aims at a good and ideal thing such as the embodying of God's will and power. When the question of "Does the maxim involve violating the dignity of rational beings?" is applied, the answer for Dean Jocelin's case is exactly yes. "[I]dentifying

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁰ Saavedra-Carballido, "Will, Suffering and Liberation in William Golding's *The Spire*", p. 73-4.

³¹ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 135.

his own will with God's, Jocelin treats other people as mere tools in order to ensure that the spire gets built"³² and his maxim cannot pass the end test of Kant. While it is not reasonable to presume that one person and her/his will has unconditional worth while another does not, Dean Jocelin asserts the contrary. He "rejects all versions of reality but his own"³³:

I have so much will, it puts all other business by. I am like a flower that is bearing fruit. There is a preoccupation about the flower as the fruit swells and the petals wither; a preoccupation about the whole plant, leaves dropping, everything dying but the swelling fruit. That's how it must be. My will is in the pillars and the high wall. (97)

His self-obsession reveals that "[a]s arrogant as he is self-righteous, Jocelin reduces his fellow human beings to building material. Alison's money, Anselm's friendship, Mason's sanity, and the lives of the Pangalls are sacrificed to the spire"³⁴. Especially by sacrificing the four people who were "nearer to him than the floor" (62), he demolishes the representative pillars of his soul and will.

At the beginning, he tries to convince Roger about the spirituality of his will declaring:

My son. The building is a diagram of prayer; and our spire will be a diagram of the highest prayer of all. God revealed it to me in a vision, his unprofitable servant. He chose me. He chooses you, to fill the diagram with glass and iron and stone, since the children of men require a thing to look at. (...) it isn't my net. It's His. (120)

However, when Roger tries to stand against the continuation of constructing the spire as he claims there are no foundations but just mud and he begs Jocelin to let him go, these following sentences pass through Jocelin's mind: "He will never be the same man again. I've won, he's mine, my prisoner for this duty. At any moment now the lock will shut on him" (88). It is clear that "[i]n Jocelin's eyes the reluctant Mason is no more than an 'animal' to be trapped"³⁵. In terms of Goody, Jocelin uses her first to satisfy his latent and oppressed sexual desire by marrying her to the impotent Pangall and so keeping her nearby. Then by shutting his eyes to the adulterous relationship between Goody and Roger for a year to make the master builder stay working, he sacrifices Goody for the sake of the spire. Only "when Jocelin realizes his men have sacrificed Pangall, he is stunned by the revelation that

³² Saavedra-Carballido, "Will, Suffering and Liberation in William Golding's *The Spire*", p. 80.

³³ Friedman, *William Golding*, p. 89.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

he has himself sacrificed Goody"³⁶. Kant's main focus on good will in terms of a moral action is problematic in *The Spire* as Jocelin's maxim does not supply the principle of ends either. In fact, Golding implies Jocelin's problematic good will at the beginning by Jocelin's own words uttered to the erection of the spire: "I didn't know how much you would cost up there, the four hundred feet of you. I thought you would cost no more than money. But still, cost what you like" (35). So, Jocelin's willingness to venture the lives of the others by using them as mere means reveals that his intentions and actions do not pass Kant's principle of ends test.

The Principle of Autonomy

Kant's third formulation of the categorical imperative is the principle of autonomy. He declares that the principle of autonomy is "to choose only in such a way that the maxims of your choice are also included as universal law in the same volition"³⁷. In other words: "So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its maxims"³⁸. This principle indicates the significance of ethical autonomy. "That is, we do not need an external authority—be it God, the state, our culture, or anyone else—to determine the nature of the moral law. We can discover this for ourselves"³⁹. In this respect, Jocelin's maxim of "When I believe that something is God's will, I should do whatever is necessary to actualize it" ought to be evaluated in terms of its autonomy. To Kant, autonomy is "the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature"⁴⁰. So, his emphasis on the universalizability of a maxim is related to its autonomousness; as "the Kantian faith proclaims, everyone who is ideally rational will legislate exactly the same universal moral principles"⁴¹. However, when a maxim depends on outer forces instead of the inner rationality of a person, it is not possible to obtain the same universal moral principles. In this case, instead of autonomy, it is heteronomy that emerges. Yet Kantian ethics warns that heteronomy should be abstained from; because "the heteronomous person is one whose actions are motivated by the authority of others, whether it is religion, the state, his or her parents, or a peer group"⁴².

Analysis of Dean Jocelin's actions makes it clear that he is much more heteronomous than autonomous. Contrary to establishing his own moral principle by using his reason, he is blindly subservient to the illusionary will of God with whom he identifies. When Dean Jocelin once climbs to the growing point, the top of the spire, he feels "the same appalled delight as a small boy feels when first he

³⁶ Kevin McCarron, *William Golding*, Plymouth, Northcote House Publishers, 1994, p. 23.

³⁷ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 47.

³⁸ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 137.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 43.

⁴¹ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 137.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

climbs too high in a forbidden tree" (101) and in a short while he identifies with God eyeing the outer world and even making decisions to punish the ones whose actions Jocelin detects from the tower as sinful. The God-eye position he adopts is the source of his actions originating not from his rational decisions but from the illusion that his will is somewhat in line with that of God. When he tries to convince Roger that his will to erect a spire is pious and necessary, he says, "I am about my Father's business" (67). This is also problematic according to Kantian ethics, as it does not fulfill his notion of good for goodness' sake. Dean Jocelin asserts that he serves primarily to the will of God, and not to good will itself, which is the main determinant in Kantian ethics. By claiming that what he does is the will of God; he consciously or unconsciously frees himself of the responsibility of his actions. The vision Jocelin describes as "[w]hat's closer than hand and mouth, closer than the thought to the mind" (85) is the justification of his obsession to erect the spire. He clearly says that the responsibility of his actions belongs to God, not to him:

The net isn't mine, Roger, and the folly isn't mine. It's God's Folly. Even in the old days He never asked men to do what was reasonable. Men can do that for themselves. They can buy and sell, heal and govern. But then out of some deep place comes the command to do what makes no sense at all—to build a ship on dry land; to sit among the dunghills; to marry a whore; to set their son on the altar of sacrifice. Then, if men have faith, a new thing comes. (121)

By identifying himself with a prophet, even with Jesus Christ (he frequently uses Father for God and your son for himself), Jocelin tries to assure his faith and his deeds. "Most striking, and most damning, of all is Jocelin's certainty that he, like Oedipus, possesses knowledge so privileged as to be more divine than human"⁴³. Kant, a believer and a follower of Pietism, asserts the idea that God does not charge people of accomplishing the tasks or not but He mainly evaluates the good will and honesty in their actions. So, instead of carrying out a given task, the person should evaluate it using her/his rationality and grounding it on good will. In this sense, even though it is accepted that Jocelin's vision of God is real, Kantian ethics would not find his actions morally justifiable as they are motivated by the external authority of this will, in other words the authority of God, rather than by his own rationality and good will.

In fact, Golding throws great suspicion on the purity of Dean Jocelin's vision in *The Spire*. Although Jocelin presents the construction of the spire as "ultimate prayer", there are many indications implying that his desire to accomplish his will is just the result of his pride, hubris and lust for power. E. R. A. Temple mentions that Jocelin "knew himself to be imbued with the cardinal sin of Pride, from which

⁴³ Friedman, *William Golding*, p. 90.

he was praying to be delivered immediately before receiving his 'vision' "⁴⁴. To William Friedman, *The Spire* "records the dire consequences of pride" and "his pride so estranges him from his flock and from his priestly duties as to drive him to enact the very tragedy it is his vocation to prevent"⁴⁵. That being the case, the motivation behind his will appears as his pride much more than his vision. When he sees the stone model of the spire that is carved by the mute sculptor at the beginning of the novel, his comments on the craving of his own image which will be "built in, two hundred feet up, on every side of the tower" (24) reveal his latent hubris which he attributes to the sculptor by asking "Don't you think you might strain my humility, by making an angel of me?" (24). Here, the presented humility that "he had all along professed in theory but denied in practice"⁴⁶ appears as a pseudo humbleness when his later actions are considered. His denial of the details on the face of the image asserting he is "not as beaky" and has not got "as much air as that" (24) reveals his misconception about himself. Furthermore, "the wide, blind eyes" (24) of the craved profile stand as a metaphor not only for the wrongness of his vision but also for the later sacrifices he clearly shuts his eyes to. When he thinks about "the sermon he was going to preach when the spire was finished, and the pulpit built against the pillars he would preach it from" (154), his pride, not God's will, rises to the surface. In simple terms, Dean Jocelin, whose actions are motivated by his pride rather than his reason to which Kant attributes great significance for moral actions, does not act according to Kantian principle of autonomy. Rather, in Kant's words, "it is heteronomy and dependence of practical reason upon sensibility, namely upon a feeling lying at its basis, in which case it could never be morally lawgiving"⁴⁷.

The scene in which Jocelin embraces the model of the spire "devoutly" and caresses it "gently", "cradling it in his arms, and looking at it all over, as a mother might examine her baby" (55-6), inspires another motivation in his actions, that is the psychological lack he needs to compensate with an immortal substitute. The eighteen-inch-long model, "a typical length for a newborn", stands as a child figure that would sustain Jocelin's lineage afterwards. Hallissy suggests that "[w]ere Jocelin not rendered infertile by his vow of celibacy, he would not have to substitute the spire for a child as his claim on immortality"⁴⁸. So, "his vision of the spire [which] seemed far away as a dream remembered from childhood" (67) is again problematic and his will heteronomous as it comes from an external authority; the authority of his pride and psychological pursuit. In addition to Jocelin, Roger, who is presented as the representative of reason, behaves in an irrational way and with an external authority; his desire for Goody. Though he does not believe in either Jocelin's will or the probability of the spire's staying standing

⁴⁴ E. R. A. Temple, "William Golding's *The Spire*: A Critique", *Renascence*, 1968, Vol. 20, Issue 4, p. 171.

⁴⁵ Friedman, *William Golding*, p. 89-90, 93.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴⁷ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 64.

⁴⁸ Hallissy, "Christianity, the Pagan Past, and the Rituals of Construction", p. 328.

up, he carries on the construction. So, “[a]fter staying on the job for the wrong reasons, continuing to build against his own better judgment, and failing to impose either his will on the client or order on his workers, Roger’s life is ruined”⁴⁹. To Kantian ethics, “each of us—as a fully rational, autonomous legislator—would be able to reason through to exactly the same set of moral principles, the ideal moral law”⁵⁰. However, to accomplish this aim, people should combine good will, duty for other rational beings and ethical autonomy, all of which are problematic for Dean Jocelin in *The Spire*.

Conclusion

In an interview, Golding said: “[Y]ou might say *The Spire* is about building a spire. In fact, it’s about making anything”⁵¹. Indeed, *The Spire* might be read as about making a moral or immoral premise as well. When Dean Jocelin’s premise is applied to Kant’s categorical imperative and tested with its three principles of the laws of nature, ends and autonomy, it is clear that the maxim of “When I believe that something is God’s will, I should do whatever is necessary to actualize it” is invalid as a moral imperative. As a result of his invalid imperative, Dean Jocelin sacrifices both people around him and his own faith. Golding explains that “the book is about the human cost of building the spire”⁵² and this cost violates Kant’s principle of ends the most. “In any case, for Kant, it is our ability to use reason in universalizing the maxims of our actions that sets rational beings apart from nonrational beings. As such, rational beings belong to a kingdom of ends”⁵³. Kant’s assertion is that by using reason and good will, people can achieve freedom. In this sense, the actions resulted from inner goodness as the sole intrinsic good and duty are moral actions regardless of their results.

Kant makes an ontological distinction between the fields of phenomenon and noumenon and gives priority to the latter, in which only rationality, conscience and good will are valid. It is significant when a human enters into the noumenal field, as passions and tendencies of phenomenon disappear in this field, but the rules of reason and conscience stay, which means that following them brings freedom⁵⁴. Freedom based on ethical rules does not seem probable for Dean Jocelin. However, the end of the novel presents at least a potential for salvation and freedom for Dean Jocelin in terms of his realization of the faults he has made. The end of the novel functions as a kind of epiphany and confession in which the “Dean’s monomania

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁵⁰ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 138.

⁵¹ MaryLyn Scott, “Universal Pessimist, Cosmic Optimist: William Golding”, *Aurora Online*, 1990, <http://aurora.icaap.org/index.php/aurora/article/view/50/63> (25.08.2015)

⁵² William Golding, *A Moving Target*, London, Faber, 1982, p. 83.

⁵³ Pojman and Fieser, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, p. 138.

⁵⁴ Takiyettin Mengüsoğlu, *Felsefeye Giriş*, Ankara, Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2013, p. 321.

endures (...) when he acquires sight and finally insight"⁵⁵. By confessing his faults first to Roger then to Father Adam, saying that he thought he was doing great work but all he was doing was bringing ruin and breeding hate (209), he begs to be forgiven: "Once you said I was the devil himself. It isn't true. I'm a fool. Also I think—I'm a building with a vast cellarage (...) I injure everyone I touch, particularly those I love. Now I've come in pain and shame, to ask you to forgive me" (210-11). In fact, Jocelin begs "[n]o forgiveness for this or that, for this candle or that insult"; he wants forgiveness for "being what he is" (203). It is at this point where the ideas of Kant and Golding come to common ground in order to analyze the tension between human nature and ethical behavior. The question is: if human nature is essentially rational and if the ethical imperatives result from reason, then why do people object to them? Kant's answer is: humans are not only rational beings but sentimental and emotional, and ethics requires the obedience of the latter aspect of human beings to the former⁵⁶. Similarly, although Golding defines the irrational tendency of human beings mostly towards evil, he distinguishes "between the universe, as the sum of man's empirical knowledge, and the cosmos, as the totality of all there is, including God and man"⁵⁷. These recall Kant's phenomenon and noumenon fields. To deprive of the illusion of the universe, or phenomenon, humans should always remember the cosmos, or noumenon, in which good and evil contradict, but the probability of the sovereignty of goodness does always exist. In this respect, though *The Spire* reveals Golding's central theme of "the original sin or the intrinsic human depravity"⁵⁸ once more, it also depicts the conflicting nature of human being; good and evil, rational and irrational together. In this novel, "[l]ife itself is a rickety building" (190) in which humans try to find their way.

The Spire, based on the building of the spire of Salisbury Cathedral in the 14th century that is 404-foot (the tallest in Great Britain) and visible from Bishop Wentworth's School for Boys, where Golding worked as a teacher, ends with the scene of dying Jocelin observing the finished spire. To Friedman, "[b]uilt on human sacrifice but also on human faith, the spire is emblematic of man's dual nature"⁵⁹, a theme Golding states frequently in his fiction. By realizing "his true nature on the verge of death", Jocelin dies as "the victim of his own vision and self-obsession" and "[a]t the end he understands that man is alone in the universe and there is no guide in chaos"⁶⁰. At this point, the only guide according to Kantian ethics could be goodwill, rationality and feeling of duty which Jocelin cannot comprehend until his deathbed. Hereafter, he is aware of the fact that "no matter how high he rises" (221)

⁵⁵ Saavedra-Carballido, "Will, Suffering and Liberation in William Golding's *The Spire*", p. 74.

⁵⁶ Arslan, *Felsefeye Giriş*, p. 172.

⁵⁷ Scott, "Universal Pessimist, Cosmic Optimist: William Golding".

⁵⁸ Erkan, "A Critical Study on Golding's Novels, 1954-65", p. 196.

⁵⁹ Friedman, *William Golding*, p. 102.

⁶⁰ Erkan, "A Critical Study on Golding's Novels, 1954-65", p. 202.

materially like in the biblical story of Tower of Babel, human will not achieve spiritual ascent if s/he does not behave in a moral way. At the end, realizing the cellarage, the “filthy” pit of his nature, Jocelin captures “a gesture of assent” (223) symbolized with bluebird and apple tree. “*The Spire* is a view of existential man not damned by God not saved by God; it is a view of man damned by his own Self and his illusion of choice”⁶¹ and Jocelin comprehends his wrong choices on his deathbed mentioning: “If I could go back, I would take God as lying between people and to be found there” (220). When “he no longer senses God’s presence in the spire”⁶² and is now totally aware of his pride-rooted sin, Jocelin utters the headstone sentence of the novel: “*There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be*” (222). As Kennard mentions, “[f]or Golding, to forget oneself in another reality is the chief good; it is indeed necessary for salvation”⁶³. By realizing his irrationality and the reality of other people sacrificed by his will, Dean Jocelin achieves a kind of salvation and freedom. Golding states that when the spire is finished, Dean Jocelin “cannot bear to look at it because of the folly and wickedness the job forced on him. Only when he is dying does he see the spire in all its glory; and the sight reduces him to understanding that he had no understanding”⁶⁴: “Now – I know nothing at all” (223). To have the knowledge of human imperfection but also human potentiality, like the view of the stumbling but still standing spire, brings an illuminating knowledge for Dean Jocelin and “[o]nly the present knowledge [becomes] a kind of freedom” (221) at the end of the novel.

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⁶¹ Fowler, *William Golding’s Definition of the Irrational*, p. 96-7.

⁶² Friedman, *William Golding*, p. 102.

⁶³ Kennard, “William Golding: Island”, p. 129.

⁶⁴ Golding, *A Moving Target*, p. 83.

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