GOETHE OR FAUST?  
(1749-1832)

* Introduction: Goethe's impact: Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche...
  - Conversations with Eckermann: "The best German book"
  - Faustean Man: powerful modern symbol: promethean, secular, superior  (I: 54; II: 218, 223; I: 51; II: 219)

I. Crucial methodological consideration: "new perspective": life and work studied together as an organic unity and in terms of development

II. Text-analysis (1): structural, foundational

A. Vast scope of the text: (1) breadth of G's experience; (2) resultant ambiguity, complexity (‘riddle’); (3) underlying vision of reality: NATURE: all-encompassing, creativity, activity…
   - Pantheism, not monotheism (Deus Sive Natura – Spinoza)
   - Deism, agnosticism, atheism, remythologization

B. Faust and Mephistopoles: bi-polarity of Man and Nature

1. Faust: creative impulse, endless experience, ‘love’: ceaseless striving, insatiable; creator (promethean)
2. Mephisto: negative, destructive, critical; positive role in spite of himself – anti-inertia and stagnation: necessary complement, stimulus  (I: 42, 51; II: 179)
3. fundamental struggle in man and cosmos
4. no radical evil: integrate, not eliminate

C. View of Morality: what is it to be fully human? freedom?

1. Bentham: seek to maximize pleasure, minimize pain
2. Kant: duty (law): reason: human dignity, the limit of freedom
3. Faust: ceaseless striving (love): self-realization: no limit to freedom
4. Dante: natural love (a-moral) and rational love (morality)
   * Is 'faustean' morality really a-moral?

D. Preliminary conclusions about some ‘riddles’

1. Why is Faust "saved"? no radical evil; “man errs so long as he strives”  (I: 11)
2. Why a ‘tragedy’? inevitable ‘sacrifice’ of the innocent
3. What is the relationship between G and F?
   * Is G a ‘pure faustean’? F needs M: G = F + M
4. The case of Margaret (Gretchen): the “sinlessly sinning”
   * an exception to all of the above?
III  Text-analysis (2): developmental approach: exploring Goethe's complex views of man and morality

*  Three-stage evolution

A.  **URFAUST: Storm and Stress: romantic: 1773-75**
1.  anti-Wagner: 'inert' book-knowledge
2.  insatiable appetite for 'feeling' and 'experience'
3.  ends with "Margaret (Gretchen) tragedy"

B.  From URFAUST to Fragment to FAUST I: 1775-1808
1.  anti-romantic: strict classicist: noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur; lofty themes and a tireless harmony of soul: WEIMAR 1775
2.  1786: "fateful" trip to ITALY: discovered the classics: rebirth
3.  1788: return to WEIMAR: strict classicist mellowing; publishes URFAUST minus "passionate" ending (I: 122-end): Fragment 1790
4.  1797-1806: further work on F I: Prologue in Heaven
5.  anti-Faustean: "hexenprodukt": Farewell, 1800
6.  published F I, 1808: returned ending

C.  **FAUST II: 1825-1832**
1.  classicist: classic: classic-romantic as final position
3.  back to beginning... final break-through 1831: end of play... published 1832

D.  Textual illustrations of the development in G's attitude beyond the 'Pure Faustean' (romantic)
1.  F I: 28 'scenes'; F II: 5 'Acts'
2.  heaven: beginning and end: classic symmetry, order, clarity, natural love
3.  Prologue in Heaven: "I will soon lead him into clarity"; "man errs as long as he strives"
4.  F II opening scene: healing: break with S & S
5.  Poets and the Vampire (II:23): unlimited experience satirized
6.  Homunculus-Mephisto (II: 72-76)
7.  Classical (vs. Romantic) Walpurgis Night (II: 78 ff.)
8.  Helen-scenes (II:151ff.): wedding of classic with romantic
9.  Arcadia (II:163ff.): Euphorion: the fate of pure romanticism
10. Act V: ambiguity and irony: Lynceus' speech (16lines-II:214);
    Ironic Ending: freedom/ slavery; brave new world/ coffin; lowest level of heaven/ not guide, model...
E. **Further light on ‘riddles’**

1. Why is F “saved”? the 'classic' **completes** the 'romantic'

2. Why a ‘**tragedy’**?
   - **tragic blindness** not **wickedness**
   - **appearance / reality** tragic gap
   
   - **But**: does Faust do anything ‘**heroic’**? ‘**risk’**?

3. Is **G** a convinced ‘**faustean’**?
   - need consider the **whole play**
   - G's **view of morality**: romantic **vitality** AND classic **form, self-limitation, clarity**
     
     - compare with Kant: **more** place for **feeling, spontaneity**…
     - compare with F: **more** place for **reason, order, self-mastery**…

4. How G is **not** F:
   - **two types of striving**: absolute and conditional
   - **insatiability**: practically impossible, creatively wrong
     
     - **creativity and serenity**: not incompatible

* **Nietzsche** : "A Homer would have created no Achilles, a Goethe no Faust, had Homer been an Achilles or Goethe a Faust." (Genealogy. III, sec 4)

* **Faust's revenge**: The independent life of the poetic creation