

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 Mephistopheles : 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
 - 2. Helen, 1797: *Helena. Classic-Romantic Phantasmagoria. Interlude to Faust*, 1825 (II:124 -133)
 - 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