GOETHE OR FAUST? (1749-1832)
[From Enlightenment to Counter-Enlightenment via Romanticism]

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

I. Text-analysis (1): developmental approach: exploring Goethe's complex views of man and morality: crucial methodological consideration: "new perspective": life and work studied together as an organic unity and in terms of development.

> Three-stage evolution

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

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

C. FAUST II (1825-1832)
- classicist/classic: classic-romantic as final position
- Helen, 1797: Helena. Classic-Romantic Phantasmasagoria. Interlude to Faust...
  1825 (II:124-133)
- 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)
- F I: 28 scenes / F II: 5 Acts
- heaven: beginning and end: classic symmetry, order, clarity
- Prologue in Heaven: "I will soon lead him into clarity"; "man errs as long as he strives"
- F II opening scene: healing: break with S & S
- Poets and the Vampire (II:23): unlimited experience satirized
- Homunculus-Mephisto (II: 72-76)
- Classical (vs. Romantic) Walpurgis Night (II: 78 ff.)
- Helen-scenes (II:151ff.): wedding of classic with romantic
- Arcadia (II:163ff): Euphorion: the fate of pure romanticism
- Act V: ambiguity and irony: Lyceus' speech (16lines-II:214);
  Ironic Ending: freedom / slavery; brave new world / coffin;
  lowest level of heaven / not guide, model...

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II. Text-analysis (2) : 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 (FI, scene 19)

B. Faust and Mephistopheles : bi-polarity of Man and Nature
   • Faust : creative impulse, endless experience, 'love' : ceaseless striving, insatiable; creator (promethean)
   • Mephisto: negative, destructive, critical: positive role in spite of himself: anti-inertia and stagnation: necessary complement, stimulus (I: 42, 51; II: 179)
   • fundamental struggle in man and cosmos
   • no radical evil : integrate, not eliminate

C. View of Morality : what is it to be fully human? Freedom?
   • Utilitarianism : seek to maximize pleasure, minimize pain
   • Kant: duty (law): reason: human dignity, the limit of freedom
   • Faust : ceaseless striving ('love'): self-realization : no limit to freedom
   • Dante: natural love (a-moral) and rational love (morality)
     ❖ Is 'faustean' morality really a-moral?

D. Preliminary conclusions about some 'riddles'
   • Why is Faust "saved"?: no radical evil: man errrs so long as he strives (FI, 11)
   • Why a 'tragedy'? inevitable 'sacrifice' of the innocent
   • What is the relationship between G and F?
     ❖ Is G a 'pure faustean'? F needs M : G = F + M
   • The case of Margaret (Gretchen): the "sinlessly sinning"
     ❖ an exception to all of the above?

E. Further light on 'riddles'
   • Why is F "saved"? the 'classic' completes the 'romantic'
   • Why a 'tragedy'?
     • tragic blindness not wickedness
     • appearance / reality tragic gap
       ❖ BUT : does Faust do anything 'heroic'? 'risk'? ?
   • 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...
   • 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
Lecture Objectives

- To situate the work within this course:
  - Romanticism as reaction to the Enlightenment
  - With respect to: knowledge, morality, political government
  - Counter-Enlightenment as synthesis
- To do justice to Goethe's conception of his work as an organic whole - FI + FII.
- To appreciate the author's developing perspective in order to grasp basic meanings in the play.

Goethe's Impact

- Comparable to Socrates on Greek philosophy
- Hegel (Marx), Schopenhauer, Nietzsche...
- Faustean Man/powertul modern icon
- promethean
- secular
- superior
- CAPITALISM and MARXISM

1: Faust (knowledge)

- Reaction to perceived overemphasis on theoretical knowledge (scientism/rationalism)
- Not anti-science / anti-reason but beyond them
- Pursuit of holistic knowledge based on human creativity/intuition/feeling/life...
- The heart has reasons that reason knows not of. (Pascal)

knowledge (evaluate)

- The Enlightenment thinkers tended to limit knowledge to what can be achieved through scientific and mathematical type procedures
- Faust stresses unlimited experience
  - think of as many types of knowledge that you may be familiar with
  - poetic, artistic, existential, relational, religious (faith), mystical...

F I,15

Faustean Man

promethean
secular
superior

2: Faust (morality)

- BASIS: Vision of reality (world-view)
  - pantheism (Deus sive Natura - Spinoza)
  - monotheism, deism, agnosticism, atheism, remythologization (FI: scene 19) . . .
  - Nature: all-encompassing, creativity, activity
- MAN in the image of NATURE (CQD) = FAUST promethean (secular, superior)
- creative impulse / thirst for
  - absolute experience / ceaseless striving / insatiability
**a. promethean (absolute)**

FAUST. I tell you, the mere pleasure's not the point! To dizzying, painful joy I dedicate
Myself, to refreshing frustration, loving hate!
I've purged the last for knowledge from my soul;
Now the full range of suffering it shall face
And in my inner self I will embrace
The experience allotted to the whole
Race of mankind; my mind shall grasp the heights
And depths, my heart know all their sorrows and delights.

Thus 'I'll expand myself, and their self I shall be,
And perish in the end, like all humanity.  FII. 54

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**b. secular (this world)**

Many meanings today: not necessarily anti-religion
Focus on common ground in a pluralistic context

Faustean morality: do not waste your time on anything beyond this world

(F:1660-1670; FII:11,442; F: scene 19)

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**c. superior (beyond good and evil)**

Conventional morality is for the masses
The great human defines morality in accordance with one's creative genius
What further the promethean nature is good, what hampers it is evil
No radical evil: conventional evil is actually a necessary complement to achieve the goal of creativity: Mephisto and Faust are both aspects of true humanity

(F:1335-6; F:1675-87; FII:10,192-5)
morality (evaluate)
- Compare faustean morality with Bentham's Utilitarianism and Kant’s reason-based moralities
- “fully human” / ‘freedom’ ...?
- A function of pleasure/pain?...reason?... ceaseless striving?... empathy?...
- Is faustean morality ‘a-moral’...?
- RESPONSIBILITY ????

3: Faust (government)
- The implied mandate for political government would appear to stress providing constant unrelenting danger and challenge, to enhance the emergence of a race of faustean humans (F:11,574-580) (cf. Nietzsche’s übermensch)
- Compare this with Hobbes’ and Locke’s concern for security, and Utilitarianism’s maximization of pleasure for the maximum number...

Riddles ?!?!
- Why is Faust ‘saved’ ?
- ...a ‘tragedy’?
- ...is Goethe a pure faustean ?
- ...is Margaret an exception (a christian hangover !) ?
- no radical evil / no ‘Hell’ !?!
- necessary price of promethean creativity !?!
- G = F + Mephisto (Voltairean critic?) !?!
- Margaret = ‘sinlessly sinning’ !?!

Goethe versus Faust
- Text-interpretation: life and work studied together as an organic unity and in terms of development
- Three-stage evolution (see fliesheet)
  - Romanticism (Storm and Stress)
  - Classicism / Classics (“fateful trip” to Italy)
  - Classic-Romantic (Weimar Classicism)

Goethe’s Classicism phase
Completed lies now my dramatic dire,
Which I concluded in the end with fright,
No longer moved by man’s tumultuous urpe,
No longer by the power of the night.
Who likes depicting the chaotic surge
Of feeling, when he has emerged to light?
And thus be closed, with all its sorceries.
This narrow circle of barbarities.
Abschied
(Farewell)

The finale: classic-romantic
Counter-Enlightenment: Weimar Classicism

The passionate discord between classicists and romanticists should finally be reconciled.
That we should educate and give form to ourselves [uns bilden] is the most important demand;
and our models would be immaterial if we did not.

(Letter to Brent, Sep.27,1827)
THE ENEMY!

Care make its nest in the heart's deepest hole
And secretly torments the soul;
Its restless rocking motion mars our mind's content.
Its masks are ever-changing, it appears
As house and home, as wife and child, it will invent
Wounds, poisons, fires and floods—from all
These blows we flinch before they ever fall,
And for imagined losses shed continual tears.

FAUST \textit{(blinded)}.

Night seems to close upon me deeper still,
But in my inmost soul a bright light shines.
I hasten to complete my great designs:
My words alone can work my mastering will.
Rise from your sleep, my servants, every man!
Give visible success to my bold plan!
Set to work now with spade and with spade;
I have marked it all out, let it be made!
With a well-ordered project and with hard
Toil we shall win supreme reward;
Until the edifice of this achievement stands,
One mind shall move a thousand hands.

Riddles !?!

- "SAVED": the "classic" completes the "romantic"
- "TRAGEDY": "blindness" not "wickedness";
  "appearance/reality" tragic gap
  ➢ BUT! ...does Faust risk anything (heroism?) ?!?
- "G & F": romantic vitality energizing
  classic self-mastery and rational serenity
  ➢ "striving": conditional \textit{not} absolute
  ➢ "insatiability": practical impossibility /creatively wrong
  ➢ creativity and serenity \textit{not} incompatible

Bottom line

- \textit{Nietzsche}: attended my lecture and agrees with this interpretation
- \textit{Faust's revenge}: the independent life of the poetic creation
- Have a \textit{faustean} life (apologies to \textit{Goethe}) !?!!?