

song. Man is his interest, and he finds him "as queer as on creation's day." That very reason on which he plumes himself only helps to make him more brutish than the very brutes. As for Faust, the poor fool is eternally yearning after the remote and unattainable. "Only give him up to me during his earthly life, and I will bet anything you like that I will lead him to destruction." It is man's lot on earth to be tempted of the devil, and leave is given to Mephistopheles to do his worst; the high aspirations of Faust are pleasing to the Lord, and he will at last be led from darkness into light: the devil may disquiet an aspiring soul, but cannot permanently entice him into the path of sin and error.

The only character difficult to understand in the First Part of Faust is Mephistopheles, "der Schalk," the rogue, as he is called in the Prologue. It is manifest that Goethe here meant to represent, not a personal devil, but a tendency in human nature. Mephistopheles is a spirit "which ever denies." Beauty, harmony, ideal perfection produce on him no impression. He is a cold unsympathetic realist, to whom the vision of the 'might be' is a blind and foolish distortion of the "is." He is always calling a spade a spade, or, in other words, characterising things only in their superficial and unideal aspects. He is entirely destitute of reverence, or, as we may say, of religion. As Goethe represents him he has also a singular gift of satirical speech, a waggish knavery, and an unimpassioned spitefulness and malice, qualities that serve to individualise the character, and which are quite compatible with its radical vice of irreverence. With this mocking, coldly intellectual, irreverent being are strongly contrasted the higher spirits, the true sons of God:

But ye true sons of Deity enjoy
The ever-loving and abounding beauty;
Let that which, self-renewing, works and grows
For ever clasp you in love's tender bands—
And all that in a wavering semblance hovers
Do ye with perdurable thoughts secure.

The sons of light, that is, because their whole being is filled with reverence, contemplate the universe not as a cold dead identity, but as a living self-active organic whole, every part of which strives towards ideal perfection. The Love which is the inner principle of all things, works in them and reveals all finite things to their penetrative gaze as but a "wavering semblance" or sensuous symbol of the divine. Thus the archangels express pure reverence for the Eternal Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Mephistopheles the cold irreverence and blindness of mere intellect. Man, again, as embodied in the character of Faust, is neither pure angel nor pure devil: with thoughts and aspirations that wander through eternity, he is yet continually led from the true path by the deceptive light of the finite, the seeming, the sensual. Yet, as Goethe teaches, the reverence which impels him to seek for ideal perfection can never be quenched, and, however,

he may "eat dust" and grovel in the mire, nothing short of the divine can for a moment still the cravings of his immortal nature. The lures and wiles of Mephistopheles may confuse and bewilder him, but they never lead him to say: Now I am content. The devil must cheat himself, because he cannot extinguish the ineradicable craving for the divine. The tragedy of human life consists in the war between these two conflicting tendencies of the human soul. It is this tragedy which Goethe seeks to portray in the temptation of Faust. The issue, as he intimates in the Prologue, cannot be doubtful. The aspiring soul, although it fall seventy times seven, learns from its fall wherein the true good does not consist. Men rise "on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things." They are saved "so as by fire." Thus Goethe believes not only in original evil, but in original goodness, but in the goodness as more fundamental than the evil.

In the opening scene we have the poetic expression of the revolt of the modern spirit against the formal spirit of the middle ages. As Luther held that religious truth must be a matter of personal experience and not of external authority, so Goethe would record his protest against the attempt to satisfy the desire for knowledge by the blind acceptance of traditional beliefs and dogmas. So far he is in accordance with the negative result of that movement of enlightenment, which in England expressed itself in the scepticism of Hume, in France in the negatives of Voltaire, and in Germany was summed up in terms of the intellect by Kant. But, just as Kant was not contented with the mere rejection of external authority, but went on to maintain that reason must be able to answer at least negatively all the questions which it is able to raise, so Goethe exhibits Faust, not only as dissatisfied with a blind traditional learning, but as consumed with a desire to read the "riddle of the painful earth." The parallel with Kant is even closer still; for, as the Critique of Pure Reason sought to show that, strive as we may, we can never break through the charmed circle within which the speculative intellect is compelled to move, while yet we are dimly aware of a great super-sensible reality against which the bounded circumference of the known world stands out in relief and makes our darkness visible; so Faust, foiled in his attempt to grasp the ultimate truth of things, yet does not doubt that there is a region of eternal truth if only the human mind could penetrate to it. We may even say further, that as in Kant reason is the faculty of the infinite, and only in the sphere of the moral consciousness can abiding satisfaction be found; so it is Goethe's conviction, as we learn from the close of the poem, that only in action, in devotion to the good of others, can the infinite and finite sides of human nature—the desire to know and experience all, and the necessary limitations of the individual—be permanently reconciled.

Mephistopheles next presents himself to Faust. He exhibits that mocking humour which is one of his char-