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Goethe the Rosicrucian

HIS FAUST AND SUB-FAUST

By Peregrinus

The general concensus of opinion seems to agree that the life of Goethe is an open book, accessible to everybody, depicted in his biographies as completely as possible. There are indeed but few men in history, whose everyday life is so fully on record, down to the minutest details, as is his. All events in his outer life, all manifestations of his mind in written or spoken words are conserved, there is no difficulty to restore an animated image of him, as he lived and loved, thought, wrote, acted. The outer

as well as the inner man is still present with us.

But the outer and the inner man are not yet the whole man. The main spring which moves the whole image of the gods is hidden in the inmost man, in the Ego. And unfortunately the chapters which should reveal this part are the most incomplete ones in the biographies of Goethe. Of course, the branches of philosophy, science and art, as studied and practiced by him are carefully registered. There is even much prying into the sources of his thoughts, and commentators never fail to point out: this or that idea originated from this picture, statue, landscape or book, location, chapter and verse precisely quoted. The sources of his emotional life, his loves and friendships are also laid bare. But the real source from which his soul drew its inspiration, its daily breath and bread, the manna for his intellect is not plainly in evidence. Consequently, while all the notes and bars of an admirable symphony are conserved for posterity, the key in which it was played seems to be missing. Here and there a few notices concerning his religious and meta-Physical views, his opinions about the soul and future life, his relations to secret societies, to individual mystics, are in evidence, but all this is fragmentary only and far from being sufficient to establish beyond doubt the identity of the guiding light of his soul, of the sapientia agens, manifesting itself in him, and thus making him a genius. This individual mysterium magnum, the ultmate cause of all his thoughts and acts, still remains a mystery, unrevealed by the immense amount of work done by biographers, commentators and special Goethe-Forscher, busy throughout a whole century. But fortunately the guiding light of this great and divinely human soul shines through his works sufficiently to everybody who can reason from effects to causes. It reveals itself to the earnest seeker, and enables him to draw

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from the same source to the full measure of his own individual capacity. For the same light is still with us, a living, eternal light, the light of the Holy Gnosis.

Yes, Goethe was a Gnostic in the loftiest sense of this word. The evidence justifying such a conclusion is abundantly prescrit especially in Goethe's most esoteric work, the Faust. Consequently it is necessary to study it first and to analyse this

masterpiece.

There is no work of art on record which occupied so long the mind of its author as the Faust did. Between its start and finish nearly sixty years elapsed. After the original first pair was published and found a very enthusiastic reception all over. the world, the much larger second part progressed more slowly. Sometimes it was laid aside for years until the right inspiration: came, then taken up again, with much deliberation, changing of plans, rewriting whole passages, polishing lines some of which were remodeled eight or ten times over. In the last period of his life the patriarch-poet, long after passing the three score and ten limit still worked with increasing passion on if and called in his diary the work on the Faust his main-business "even main-purpose" (Hauptgeschäft, Hauptzweck). If their ever was a labour of love, the Faust is surely one. But some parts and fragments of the second part, published in the lifetime of the poet, evidently did not meet the degree of understanding expected by their author. Consequently when the second part became finished shortly before his passing over, Goethe sealed up the manuscripts as his literary testament, and gave them into the custody of a friend. Why this strange secrecy about it?

After the latest of the true Minnesaenger was gone to the West, and the whole tragedy published, the admirers of Goethe, in and outside of Germany, even his closest friends were greatly. disappointed. They did not see any logical connection between the first and second parts of the tragedy, they objected to the —in their shortsighted opinion—planless accumulation of incoherent scenes in the second part, and the best experts became lost in this labyrinth in which antique, medieval and modern, heaven and earth are fantastically mixed up. Surely they appreciated the incomparable mastership displayed in the details, but nobody seemed nor seems to understand the fundamental idea of the composition taken as a whole, the message it intends to convey to the reader, the real purpose for which so much and careful work was done. The second part of the Faust is still much more admired than understood indeed and is considered as a product of a genius affected by old agen-While 1 the himself considered this very second part 45. incomparably superior to the first. Whence this strange controversy?

When the real character of the poem, not yet understood though much in evidence, is well recognized, the whole controversy becomes at once self-solved, and the undeniable fact is established that Goethe was a far better judge of art-values than his critics. After such recognition the strong and strictly logical tie which unites the first and second parts becomes at once clear, also the strict coherence between the apparently loose acts and scenes of the second part, each of which stands at its right place as the only possible sequel to the precedent one. What seemed to be a labyrinth is transformed by this recognition into a well arranged garden, where each

way and path is laid out in plain view.

The magic word of recognition, which causes the whole change is: Esotericism. The Faust—both parts of it—is a strictly esoteric poem, not only a poem, in which there are, as is generally admitted, some esoteric details. The whole composition is worked out on the basis of esoteric philosophy, it is intended to be an exposition of a part of this philosophy. Consequently it sannot be thoroughly understood by the general public not versed in that philosophy. For it depicts the mysterious ways and means, by which a human soul initiates itself into the knowledge of the mysteries and reaches perfection working by its inherent forces, also guided and assisted by what is esoterically termed: Love. Not the sexual attraction, commonly called love, but the love, the cosmic force, which according to Dante moves the sun and the other stars or as personified by Plato, is the great daemon, who connects heaven and earth, men and gods.

But the subtile development, the unfolding of the human soul, so well dramatised in the Faust, proceeds mostly amidst the universal life, on the subconscious and superconscious planes of manifested existence and only the lesser part is worked out by conscious effort, although the effects realised on higher planes are reflected also in the waking consciousness. Consequently the largest part of the Faust-tragedy is enacted also in the astral world. And this is the crucial point not realized. by critics and commentators, whence the general misunderstanding of the poem. It is regarded as a fine work of art only, With no other purpose than to delight the reader and eventually make him think. But the prepared student shall find there also an esoteric instruction, far more complete and practical than can be found in other similarly composed masterpieces of the world's literature, except perhaps the Bhag. Il Gita.

An analysis of the chief dramatis personae will facilitate the

understanding.

Did there ever live Dr. Johannes Faust (1480?-1540?)? Or does the whole folklore built up around him refer only to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) the most famous esotericist of his time with the reputation of an arch-magician Erzzauberer? The latter hypothesis seems to be the more probable one. In Goethe's tragedy the first great monologue of Faust is surely but a short recapitulation of characteristic points of Agrippa's life and from his biography was composed also the scene in which countryfolk express their gratitude to the doctor for the assistance given to them during the plague.

Nevertheless in the Faust-tragedy of Goethe the poet himself is the real hero, and the work is but part of his autobiography, a dramatisation of the development of his own Ego. He points this out with sufficient clearness, and there is ample internal evidence to prove this claim. The unfoldment of the human soul follows an unvariable general plan, but in the details there is so much variety with each individual, that nobody could describe another person's experiences. Accordingly we see, that while each scene in Goethe's work is contained at least as a nucleus in the older versions of the Faust legend, his composition is strictly original and far superior to the medieval tales.

But for the right understanding of the Faust the question on whom was the work modeled, is of secondary importance only. The main question is: what does Faust as a type represent,

what is the innermost, the essential in him?

The seeker who not only reads but analyses also, will find it rather strange that Mephistopheles, whose regular and legitimate business is the tempting of men, has to ask the Lord for a special permission to tempt Faust. Why this exception? Is Faust something higher than the average human? It seems so. Mephistopheles complains in his last monologue that the angels cheated him by snatching away "the high soul" that pledged itself to him. Consequently the soul of Faust is considered as a "high" one and not of the common garden-variety, whence the necessity of the special permit, and also the special treatment this soul receives from Above.

(To be continued)