

# “The Journey to Redemption: An Examination of the Relationships in Goethe’s *Faust*”

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## Introduction

A perfect mirror shows a perfect image of what it reflects. When a person looks in a mirror they see themselves clearly, but they see a reflected image. When viewing themselves as others see them, as in photos, they may think themselves partially unrecognizable, as they are not used to seeing the image this way. In Goethe's play, *Faust*, Goethe uses characters as mirrors so as to explore the question of whether Faust is good. Mephistopheles, a devil, is a distorted mirror to Faust and he magnifies Faust's unfeeling reason and his casual indifference that leads him to seek a deeper kind of knowledge. The relationship between the director, and the poet in the "Prelude in the Theater" mirrors that of God, Faust, and Mephistopheles, but in a surprising way. The voices of the director and poet in the Prelude serve as parallels in various ways to the Lord and Mephistopheles, Faust and Mephistopheles, and Faust and Margaret, the woman he falls in love with.

Mephistopheles calls Faust's morality into question before the Lord. Faust is bored with the very things that make him human. He has studied all there is to study and learn about, but he cannot find entertainment or enjoyment in his life, and so he turns to the spiritual and demonic to find the deeper knowledge he is seeking. Mephistopheles accompanies him, trying at every turn to damn Faust, but his better nature prevails and angels bear him to heaven. The Lord saw something in him from the beginning that prevails at the end.

The relationship of Mephistopheles and Faust mirrors the one between the Director and the Poet in the "Prelude In The Theater." With Mephistopheles'

attempt to create a permanent change in Faust and to show the Lord that Faust can be corrupted, Mephistopheles is similar to the director of the play who feels satisfied if his audiences feels a certain way. He does not have the rest of the cast and the poet to manage, but he does oversee many factors of Faust's life. Faust, with his desire for a deeper knowledge than the earth can provide him is like the poet who seeks beauty and higher meaning. Both strive for meaning and reach to create meaning from within themselves.

The play is prefaced by two sections, a "Prelude In The Theater" and a "Prologue in Heaven." In the Prelude the players and production team speak to what is most important in poetry and performance. In the Prologue the Lord and Mephistopheles speak of Faust and the deal they strike with each other. Both of these prefaces exhibit a relationship between two characters that will mirror other relationships we see later on in the play.

### **Part 1: The Director and the Poet**

The "Prelude In The Theater" precedes the play and introduces the audience to three characters who discuss the purpose and intent of *Faust*. This prelude is particularly interesting because it is a glimpse behind the actual play, a break in the "fourth wall." It is a source of clarity that allows the audience to understand the play from both the poet and director's point of view before the play starts.

The director's opinion about what is most important speaks to his need to view the play for both plot and audience response:

Above all, let us have a lot of action!  
They want a show, that gives them satisfaction.

The more you can enact before their eyes,  
 The greater is your popular acclaim;  
 And if the crowd can gape in dumb surprise,  
 You gain a celebrated name.  
 Lines 89-94

The director thinks that the goal of a play is to satisfy the audience – action, comedy, and overt irony illicit an immediate response from an audience and is an apparent tool in judging the success of the work. He thinks that occupying the audience's minds will gain the players fame. But he does the audience discredit if he thinks that they all want action or to be shallowly satisfied with a cathartic or dramatic moment.

The mass is overwhelmed only by masses,  
 Each like some part of what has been presented.  
 He that gives much, gives something to all classes,  
 And everybody will go home contented.  
 You have a piece, give it in pieces then!  
 Write a ragout, you have a pen;  
 It's easy to invent, and easy to unroll.  
 What good is it, if you construct a whole?  
 The public takes it all apart again  
 95-103

The director works with what the poet has already written and his job is to oversee the production and unify all the elements of the play including the actual script as well as the stage props, actors, and lighting. Because the director is the one able to look at the play from the viewpoint of the audience and he is concerned with running the play as smoothly as possible, he must take the audience's thoughts into account. For him, a successful play is one that evokes an emotion from the audience. Whether they laugh or cry or have fun, if the public "takes it all apart again" then he can just give them small pieces and not worry about if the whole of the play demonstrates unified and coherent action as

long as it fits with the director's overall vision. He says, "To please crowds is what I desire most, for they not only live, but let live, too" (69). The director's attitude of the audience is what is visible to him. Their faces, whether laughing or crying, show him if he is doing his job well, so he considers appearance very important.

In contrast to the director, the poet replies:

You do not feel how bad it is to please the rabble,  
 how artists spurn such craft and cheap applause.  
 The manner of the hacks that dabble  
 has furnished you, I see, with laws  
 104-107

The poet's purpose in writing what he does is to create beautiful art. He does not consider the director an artist because the director oversees how the entire play looks and is very concerned with the audience's reactions and not creating content. He works with what the poet has supplied, while the poet's job is to create from nothing. The poet needs to understand the audience as a section of humanity if he wants his art to be received well. He appeals to sympathetic and sometimes unwanted aspects of the natures of humans. The poet's work is sacred to him and he acknowledges that it is not a quick or easy process when he says:

What deep in our breast was thus inspired,  
 What shy lips babbled in a quiet hour,  
 Clumsy perhaps, and rarely as desired,  
 Is swallowed up by a savage moment's power.  
 And years may pass before it has acquired  
 Its perfect form and opens like a flower.  
 Glitter is coined to meet the moment's rage;  
 The genuine lives on from age to age  
 67-74

The poet cannot stage or imitate inspiration. The spark to create is not constant and it could take a long time for him to come up with something he considers

beautiful or meaningful. That “savage moment of power” he speaks of can be found in his writings of true catharsis, the deep emotional journeys his characters undergo, and the self-understanding he and his characters experience. Unlike the director, the poet seeks to not just imitate a profound story but to create it. The perfection mentioned brings about the idea of wholeness that the director does not care about but that the poet does. The poet is able to work his words together to create something that blooms like a flower in the audience’s mind. The “glitter” is what is trendy or flashy. It is not designed to last and will become out of fashion once something else comes along that captures the public’s attention.

These two contrasting ideas of mass appeal and philosophical value show a push and pull that may be found throughout *Faust*. Faust’s plight of boredom is interesting and powerful because it is ironic. He has gone through his life seeking and attaining knowledge and yet he sits in his study at the outset of the play and bemoans how unfulfilled he is. His seeking knowledge conforms with a conventional view of intelligence and yet because he has pursued philosophy he is filled with deeper questions about nature and himself that he cannot fulfill on his own.

The dialogue between Faust and Mephistopheles is often witty and humorous. As the poet disdains “cheap applause” he turns the ending into an unexpected image: Faust redeems himself and is welcomed into Heaven. The poet regards the uneducated, unappreciative crowd as “rabble” because they do not appreciate the work that goes into creating the play. If they are satisfied and

provide “cheap applause” they do not understand the underlying message the poet is trying to convey and they view his art as mere entertainment.

Later on, it is even more apparent where the poet and the director’s intentions lie. The director goes on to say:

Why do you dream on your poetic height?  
 What gives a crowded house delight?  
 One half is cold, one half is raw.  
 After the play, one hopes to play at cards,  
 Another for an orgy in a harlot’s bed.  
 With such an aim, you silly bards,  
 Why plague the muses?  
 121-128

The director questions why the poet would bother the muses by asking them for inspiration if the intent is only to please the crowd. The crowd does not focus on the message or the beauty of the play – they have other things on their mind, the night ahead, their wishes and wants, and the play serves merely as background to their own lives. This outlook the director has makes sense when the audience bears in mind that his purpose is to orchestrate all parts of the production. The poet on the other hand looks to be inspired and create beautiful works that he would like to be appreciated by a crowd but also by others who would see his work as it truly is and not just as a form of entertainment. With *Faust*, Goethe seeks to say something about humanity and redemption through the play and not just provide his audience with entertainment. There is also a push and pull here with how the audience wants to see the play end. If Goethe had merely written it for entertainment, there might be no need for Faust’s redemption because the audience would be satisfied with Faust’s damnation after all of the deeds he commits with Mephistopheles as his companion. At the same time, an audience

usually wants a happy ending and might want Faust saved because they will leave the theater with a sense of completion and nothing to ponder afterwards. The audience may feel uncomfortable with the fact that Faust interacts with Mephistopheles. This could make him an instantly unappealing and unsympathetic character to an audience as the poet has written him, but the director is able to get the audience to care about Faust because he is interesting and causes the audience to think deeply about themselves.

### **Part 2: The Lord and Mephistopheles as Directors**

After Goethe explores what an audience wants he moves on to the “Prologue in Heaven.” This section introduces The Lord, some of the angels, and Mephistopheles. This is also the first time the reader hears about the play’s main character, Faust. Goethe describes him thus:

He serves you most peculiarly, I think.  
 Not earthly are the poor fool’s meat and drink.  
 His spirit’s ferment drives him far,  
 And he half knows how foolish is his quest:  
 From heaven he demands the fairest star,  
 And from the earth all joys that he thinks best;  
 And all that’s near and all that’s far  
 Cannot soothe the upheaval in his breast  
 300-307

Because Mephistopheles is a devil and says that he likes to meddle in the lives of humans, it would make more sense if he had taken a particular interest in a human, namely Faust. But the Lord brings Faust up first, asking if Mephistopheles knows him. This highlights an interesting relationship between The Lord and Mephistopheles. The end of the prologue has Mephistopheles saying,

I like to see the Old Man now and then  
 And try to be not too uncivil.  
 It's charming in a noble squire when  
 He speaks humanely with the very Devil  
 350-353

The Lord allows Mephistopheles into His presence for the sake of a greater purpose, much as in the Old Testament, just as the devil tests Job with permission from God. However, because Goethe was not dogmatically Christian, it can be assumed that he takes liberties with his depictions of The Lord and Mephistopheles. The relationship, then, of Mephistopheles and The Lord appears to be one less of opposition or contradiction and more of a friendly rivalry. In contrast, the end of the work shows Mephistopheles' devils at war with the Lord's angels for Faust's soul. The similarity that presents itself is that the Lord tests both Job and Faust to bring out some good in them and reward them for it as well.

Since the exchange between the Lord and Mephistopheles marks the very first characterization of Faust that the audience hears, this is the impression they will have of him when they finally meet him in "The First Part of the Tragedy." From this description from Mephistopheles, a devil, Goethe reveals Faust to be driven and insatiable in his curiosity and quest for knowledge: "from heaven he demands the fairest star" (304). We see that he is driven and dedicated but what he finds in his endeavors is emptiness. He always looks past what he can easily get and he wants what is difficult or impossible. He cannot possibly get the "fairest star" from heaven, but if he sees it and thinks it is beautiful, he deems it worthy of the toil. Faust has inner turmoil and unrest for yet unrevealed reasons.

All of these descriptions Goethe leaves for the audience to decipher. How Faust is described here sets the tone for how they will perceive him later on.

### **Part 3: Faust's Lack of Direction**

Much in line with the characterization of Faust that the audience gets from the "Prologue In Heaven," Faust is introduced as bored and aloof. Even in the stage directions before his first monologue starts, the actor playing him is given instruction to be "restless." Faust has studied,

...philosophy,  
 Jurisprudence and medicine, too,  
 And worst of all, theology  
 With keen endeavor, through and through—  
 And here I am, for all my lore,  
 The wretched fool I was before  
 354-359

He has done much in his lifetime and yet he feels unsatisfied, as if he has come back to where he started. With all the knowledge that he has accrued and the experiences he has undergone, he longs for something more. These first musings do feel a bit childish and fit-like, but also show how fearless he is, and just a bit further on, he says "No scruple nor doubt could make me ill, / I am not afraid of the Devil or hell" (93). Just as Mephistopheles describes him in the Prologue, Faust has exhausted his education and for all his extensive knowledge and the journeys it took him to acquire such knowledge, there is emptiness within him. For all that he has learned, he longs for some knowledge that is greater, and he realizes that he is greater as well. Education and the path to attaining knowledge are predictable and formulaic, and Faust has experienced them multiple times over. This point is where he begins to turn to the supernatural to

rekindle his curiosity and wonder. He also laments, and wishes he could cast off the burden of knowledge:

Oh, that up on a mountain height  
I could walk in your lovely light  
and float with spirits round caves and trees,  
Weave in your twilight through the leas,  
Cast dusty knowledge overboard  
And bathe in dew until restored”  
392-397

The luminous language about the moon and nature in general is starkly contrasted with the “dusty knowledge” and his study, what he describes as an “old dungeon.” He likens his studies to a tomb and feels buried in his boredom and the burden of knowledge. The way he lingers on his woes at the very introduction of the play sets him apart as hard to please, and allows for Mephistopheles to easily persuade him.

But Faust is deeper than the audience is led to believe. Because he has all of this knowledge and education, he is clearly smart, but he also possesses the hunger for something more. He can see around all his knowledge and know that he lacks something higher. But because the audience has thus far not seen him interact with anyone else, his boredom masks his cleverness and intelligence. He complains of his boredom while in his study, surrounded by books and tokens of his accomplishments. At this point, he is alone and because he does not interact with any other characters, Goethe is unable to show Faust’s fullness and depth.

As he reads a book written by Nostradamus Faust is full of wonder:

What jubilation bursts out of this sight  
Into my senses – now I feel it flowing,  
Youthful, a sacred fountain of delight,  
Through every nerve, my veins are glowing  
430-433

Much as a child is fascinated with fairy tales and fiction, Faust is taken with Nostradamus' writings. What he seeks is not quantifiable. His language describing nature clearly shows that. He is struck by the beauty and mysticism of the words, sharply contrasting with his disdain for his previous studies. Rather than education which answers questions, this book he is reading provides questions in which *he* is left to answer, or not. Faust has exhausted seeking knowledge because there is only so much to learn about earthly things and after pursuing all he is interested in, he wants something bigger. This something bigger could come from Faust connecting and utilizing his already-acquired knowledge but he is unable to do so or he does not know how. This realm unknown to him presents a question, and to Faust, someone who has spent his whole life seeking out answers to questions, he cannot help but be interested and frustrated. Because he has studied so many things and coming across Nostradamus' writings is something so far from the realm of higher education, he likens it to nature:

Stars' orbits you will know; and bold,  
You learn what nature has to teach;  
Your soul is freed and you behold  
The spirit's words, the spirit's speech  
422-425

Just before this passage he describes being "oppressed by an unfathomed agony" and being stifled by his own humanity. Faust can learn all he wants about anything but he is limited by being human and not having access to the means to accomplish what he thinks will fulfill him, namely some higher form of knowledge that he sees when he looks at the stars and thinks about his soul. Faust has lofty

aspirations which he only realizes after he has searched his whole life to be fulfilled with knowledge. Learning and the pursuit of knowledge are often described as never-ending, and here clearly Faust disagrees. The teaching he describes here is teaching things to the soul that transcend the earthly, material sense of the word. His “unfathomed agony” stems from his inability to see the wonder in anything but mysterious writings and supernatural experiences. Faust does not see the wonder in any of his earthly knowledge because it is just that, earthly. It grounds him to materialism and shallowness, while if he ponders the stars, the devil, or spirits, the quest for that kind of knowledge would enlighten him, broaden his perspective on his own humanity, and give him a sort of fulfilling satisfaction that his previous studies could not. While contemplating his own suicide, Faust hears a choir singing a beautiful hymn and he is taken by the beauty and harmony of the song. He is invigorated by the thought that the Lord would prevent his death and the song fills him with nostalgia and hope. The unearthly choir and his thoughts about the Lord connect him to his earlier interest in the stars and nature. His experience is a fleeting one, for while he is among the people celebrating Easter day, he can understand wonder and happiness as they do, but once he is back in his study, that feeling is replaced by his normal melancholy contemplation. His reliance on Mephistopheles to provide him with something fulfilling shows this, and it leaves him open later to being so blindsided by his love for a woman, Gretchen. And yet, this love is an earthly thing he experiences and a connection to nature, which he expresses his profound interest in earlier. This love he feels for her is something he could have

experienced even without Mephistopheles. But because he has surrendered himself to the supernatural, he believes that it is something new.

Mephistopheles first appears to Faust in his own house. Likewise, he also appears much more sinister than he did when he conversed with the Lord in the “Prologue.” The tone in the Prologue is playful and feels like an exchange between equals or at least acquaintances. The first conversation between Faust and Mephistopheles makes Mephistopheles appear omniscient. He tells Faust about himself while also describing Faust perfectly even though he has just appeared in his study. He plays into what he knows will fascinate Faust when asked for his name, saying,

This question seems minute  
 For one who thinks the word so beggarly,  
 Who holds what seems in disrepute,  
 And craves only reality  
 1327-1330

Mephistopheles becomes even more dramatic in describing who he is. Faust has already stated that he is unafraid of the devil and hell and he has no problems interacting with Mephistopheles at first. Mephistopheles’ words are somewhat softened by the readers’ knowledge that he is merely playing with Faust and that he will not kill him, as per his bet with The Lord. Later on in the dialogue, it seems as if Faust is playing with Mephistopheles. His verbal jabs grow more ambitious as he speaks with the devil. Mephistopheles is playing coy or he really does want to go but their first interaction is rushed by Mephistopheles’ desire to leave. Mephistopheles states that he cannot leave unless Faust lets him out because there is a pentagram near the door where they entered from and he says he must leave the way he entered. Faust seems intent

on keeping him because he says, "Who holds the Devil, hold him tight! / He can't expect to catch him twice" (1428-1429). Faust seems to realize that Mephistopheles can provide him with the sort of fulfillment he is looking for: the supernatural, exciting kind. Other than this encounter, he has sought enlightenment and relief from boredom in contemplated suicide and translating the Bible into German. In his translation he gets as far as the first line, where he ponders the appropriate words to use. He settles on "In the beginning was the *Act*" (1237). His translation is indicative of his restlessness. He is not satisfied with *word*, *mind*, or *force* as translations for *logos*. He chooses *act* as his choice because he is unable to think of anything but his restlessness. The decision to go with *act* demonstrates the push and pull within him once again, and his internal conflict between the forces of nature he longs to study and the knowledge he has already acquired that bores him. His dissatisfaction with the world around him and the way he has lived his life permeates into his studies, which he previously enjoyed. It has tainted what once brought him happiness, and Mephistopheles, eavesdropping as a poodle, observes and is able to play into Faust's desires. Mephistopheles may or may not be any of the things he says he is, but Faust cannot know if he was lying.

Still, Faust knows how to manipulate too. He successfully traps Mephistopheles and immediately knows what he wants from him, as if he had been planning or dreaming about this day. He states many times that he is unconcerned with what happens to him after death, so he is free to accept a proposition with the devil and not have the fear of consequence hanging over his

head. Anyone educated, anyone familiar with Christianity, knows the potential devastating harm the devil can create, and yet Faust, arguably one of the most educated men, strikes up a deal with him anyway. He is fearless because of his knowledge and his power over his will. He is the one to bring the deal up, not Mephistopheles, mirroring the exchange between the Lord and Mephistopheles in Heaven.. He taunts Mephistopheles. He keeps him in his house just because he knows he can. And Faust seems set on what he wants. The language when the pair discusses what Faust wants and the terms of the contract are rather vague: “*Here* you shall be the master, I be bond, / And at your nod I’ll work incessantly; / But when we meet again *beyond*, / Then you shall do the same for me” (1656-1659). Mephistopheles offers to be Faust’s companion, for what that is worth, and though Faust attempts to decipher what that means, he ultimately does not press Mephistopheles for more details than he deems necessary. Here again he states that he does not care for what happens to him after death. In fact he supplies Mephistopheles with what he should do if he does not fulfill his side of the deal:

If ever I recline, calmed, on a bed of sloth,  
 You may destroy me then and there.  
 If ever flattering you should wile me  
 That in myself I find delight,  
 If with enjoyment you beguile me,  
 Then break on me, eternal night!  
 This bet I offer  
 1692-1698

Faust thinks that merely his word will create the deal but Mephistopheles insists that he sign with a drop of his blood. This is more serious than Faust realized before but he quickly supplies a flippant response.

Only when Faust is with Mephistopheles do we see him interact with women and find something worth pursuing again. Previously, his passion was knowledge and he systematically and precisely attained it throughout his life. But when Margaret (Gretchen) passes by he falls in love in a way he can barely understand. It is with the aid of a witch's potion that he finds her so lovely. But when he asks Mephistopheles to help him, Mephistopheles says

She saw her priest just now,  
And he pronounced her free of sin.  
I stood right there and listened in.  
She's so completely blemishless  
That there was nothing to confess.  
Over her I don't have any power"  
2621-2626

Faust is so taken with Margaret because he allows himself to feel irrational love that is unpredictable and chaotic. Faust's love grounds him and provides him with the means to broaden himself in ways that knowledge cannot. When he asks Mephistopheles, he simply asks, "Get me that girl, and don't ask why?" (2619). This is not the command of someone who knows the devil will do what he asks, but rather, Faust asks, *implores* Mephistopheles because he feels desperate to know her. Mephistopheles suggests waiting for the perfect time to seduce her but Faust is almost too infatuated to listen to his advice. He has to drink a potion from a witch and have Mephistopheles do most of the work even to talk to Gretchen. Mephistopheles inserts himself into not only Faust's life but his personal affairs and interactions and is partly or wholly responsible as a catalyst for Faust and Gretchen's relationship.

### Part 4: Faust's Redemption

A major difference from other versions of the tale, and arguably the most important difference, is Faust's redemption. He goes to Gretchen, who is locked in a dungeon and attempts to rescue her. But when she embraces him he meets her with stoicism – a change starkly contrasted with Faust's first feelings for her:

MARGARET:

What? You cannot kiss any more?  
 My friend, you were not gone longer than this –  
 And forgot how to kiss?  
 ...Kiss me!  
 Else I'll kiss you. (*She embraces him.*)  
 Oh, grief! Your lips are cold,  
 Are mute.  
 Where  
 Is your loving air?  
 Who took it from me?  
 (*She turns away from him.*)

FAUST:

Come, follow me, dearest, and be bold!  
 I shall caress you a thousandfold;  
 Only follow me! That is all I plead  
 4484-4500

Faust is rigid and cold when Gretchen kisses him. This is a critical moment in their relationship because it is the beginning of a change in Faust or a part of a change that has already occurred. He offers his help to Gretchen without expecting anything in return. It is not a deal. It comes with no terms of agreement. He extends his help because either Mephistopheles is not with him to tell him he needs something in return or because he understands that helping Gretchen without reciprocity is the right thing to do.

Part 1 of this essay discussed the intentions of a poem and performance, and in this scene between Gretchen and Faust, Goethe utilizes what both the

poet and director think are most important. The audience sees Faust's kindness-for-the-sake-of-kindness as satisfying. It is a moment of clarity for his character, characteristic of the play's genre, tragedy. The scene is not a compromise as the poet sees it. It does not only spur "cheap applause" (73) as the poet loathes. It is part of the craft that shapes the surprising end of the play. Goethe's intention becomes clearer in this scene as the audience sees Faust's change of character. He also foreshadows a large part of the ending in showing that Gretchen is judged and saved by the Lord:

MARGARET:

Judgment of God! I give  
Myself to you...  
Thine I am, father. Save me! ...  
Heinrich! I quail at thee.

MEPHISTO:

She is judged.

VOICE (*from above*):

Is saved

4605-4611

Gretchen, although she commits the horrific act of drowning her own child, is very much the victim of the story. She is seduced by Faust and driven nearly to madness by her grief when he abandons her. She killed her mother with a sleeping potion, killed her child by drowning, and believes that she will be judged harshly by the Lord for what she has done while with or waiting for Faust. In a way she is also a mirror of Faust while he is with Mephistopheles, except that Gretchen was nearly unwilling while Faust was eager to make the deal with Mephistopheles. Faust influences her the same way Mephistopheles influences Faust, but Gretchen is wholly repentant for the things she has done. Although she is swept up in her romance with Faust and he casts her aside for a time, she

becomes deeper for having endured Faust's boredom. Being around Faust also influenced her and she became bored with her religion and morality. She questions herself when she goes to pray, hearing devils whispering to her. Because of Faust she can rid herself of some of her naivety and broaden her simple view of the world. For most of their relationship he treats her like a thing he could cast aside at any moment, and he does. For all of this she endures, she realizes that her own actions have consequences she must bear and she accepts them with conviction, and this allows her a place in heaven.

Only after he learns that Gretchen is locked away does Faust begin to realize the things he has done. He rides day and night to reach her, the sobering ride with Mephistopheles allowing him to think on his deeds. Faust is the corrupting influence to Gretchen as Mephistopheles is to Faust. We cannot say that Faust and Gretchen are exact mirrors though because Faust quite literally asks for what he wants from Mephistopheles and is eager to have him as company, while Faust seeks out Gretchen and seduces her. Her despair is because of his influence. While Mephistopheles accompanies Faust throughout the rest of his life, many of Faust's experiences could have been achieved without Mephistopheles, and many of Gretchen's woes are specifically because of Faust and could not have occurred without him. She does learn to pursue things deeper because of Faust though, and it is shown in her questioning of her faith as she prays. Whether she meets Faust or not, she is either stuck as simple, naive, and happier, or profound and unhappy.

The end of the work leaves the reader with the question “why?” Why is Faust saved? What about this version of the story makes our Faust redeemable? The answer to the first questions is one of two things: Faust was never really evil at all and Mephistopheles’ attempts were in vain the whole time, or that he was working towards being good and Mephistopheles helped him realize that he wanted to be good. It is obvious that he feels remorse towards Gretchen’s situation and it could be that because she seeks forgiveness for her wrongs she allows Faust to do the same. As Faust dies, Mephistopheles ponders the journey the two have made and says:

Fie!  
 No pleasure sated him, no great bestowment,  
 He reeled from form to form, it did not last;  
 The final, wretched, empty moment,  
 The poor man wishes to hold fast  
 469

In attempting to save Gretchen, Faust realized that even their love was a routine, just as his studies were. Within his journey for knowledge before the work begins, Faust sought out knowledge and pursued until he obtained it. With Gretchen, Faust lets his conscience tell him what is objectively right and wrong, and he goes to save her because it is what he *should* do. Once he makes this realization and as he tries to convince Gretchen to leave the dungeon with him, the excitement and intrigue of the relationship wears away until he is left unsatisfied with even that. As Faust dies, Mephistopheles realizes that he could not change Faust in the way he wanted. Faust has sought and found what he wanted in Gretchen: a deeper connection to nature and his soul and so he can die and be satisfied with his journey. Mephistopheles was hoping to create a change in

Faust, but while he provided entertainment and excitement, and gave Faust an illusion of power over his own world, Mephistopheles was unable to fulfill Faust in enough of an impactful way. Faust found a more personal kind of fulfillment in his journey.

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