

GOETHE'S FAITH AND FAUST'S REDEMPTION

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The end of Goethe's *Faust* has always aroused special interest. It is fraught with difficulties of interpretation, which were to some extent deliberately contrived by the poet,¹ but no line-for-line exegesis will be attempted here. The present essay aims rather to throw light on the overall significance of Faust's redemption and its relation to Goethe's own remarkable faith.

The religious setting of the last scene poses the first great problem. For Goethe had often pictured himself as a pagan; his earlier dramas, epics, lyrics, ballads, and elegies — and the conception of Mephistopheles in *Faust* itself — were not informed by any great reverence for Christian traditions; and in his Venetian Epigrams, as well as many of his conversations and letters, he actually referred to Christian symbols with the utmost disparagement. His last letters to his friend Zelter alone — intended for publication by Goethe himself² — would be sufficient to prove that the end of *Faust* does not represent the poet's renunciation of his previous "paganism" or a *rapprochement* to a Catholic version of Christianity comparable to Novalis' later poems, F. Schlegel's conversion, or perhaps Wagner's *Parsifal*. Thus Goethe refers to the cross as "the painful torture wood, the most disgusting thing under the sun [which] no reasonable human being should strive to exhume" (June 9, 1831); and in another passage, which is no less representative and could easily be amplified by others, he explicitly scorns Schlegel's conversion: "Friedrich Schlegel suffocated in the end of his rumination [*Wiederkäuern*] of ethical and religious absurdities . . . he fled into Catholicism . . ." (Oct. 20, 1831). Such utterances from the poet who had just completed *Faust* have made some critics wonder whether his creation of the medieval heaven of the last scene was not a hyperbolic blasphemy — the more so, seeing that the poet had no sooner completed this scene than he turned to writing the fourth act which ends with a spiteful and sarcastic treatment of the Catholic Church. Any such criticism of the conclusion, however, seems as wide of the mark as the opposite suggestion that it represents an obeisance to traditional religion; for Goethe was certainly in earnest. Swedenborgianism, finally, while providing the poet with some of the mystifying symbolism of the last scene, was of course not accepted by him either:³ his faith, as we shall see, was different.

¹ Cf. the letters to H. Meyer, July 20, 1831, and to Zelter, June 1, 1831: ". . . wrap a few mantle folds around the finished product that it may altogether remain an evident riddle, delight men on and on, and give them something to work on." All translations in this article are the author's.

² Cf. the letters of Oct. 31 and Nov. 23, 1831, and Jan. 3, 1832.

In a letter to Zelter (Aug. 4, 1803), Goethe wrote:

“One does not get to know works of nature and art when they are finished; one must catch them in their genesis to comprehend them in some measure.⁴

We shall take our clue from this observation, but can confine ourselves to a few pertinent aspects of the development of Goethe's conception of *Faust*.

The fact that he worked on this drama during a period of sixty years does not prove, as is sometimes supposed, that its hero represents the poet's conception of himself. Faust's redemption is not a dramatization of Goethe's confidence in his own ultimate salvation by grace. And it is significant that Goethe's attitude toward both the play and its hero was marked by a striking ambivalence, and that, in one important work after another, he projected himself into radically un-Faustian lines and characters. Wilhelm Meister, who occupied him almost as long as Faust, is the most important among these; while Egmont, though certainly no faithful self-portrait, is the quintessence of Goethe's un-Faustian traits:

“That I am gay and take things lightly, that is my good fortune . . . Do I live but to think about life? Should I rather not enjoy the present moment . . . ?”

“And if I were a somnambulist and walked on a ridgepole, would it be friendly to call me by my name to warn me, and thus to awaken and kill me? Let every one go his own way and take care of himself.”

These central passages explain why, when Oranien wisely leaves, Egmont stays behind and falls victim to the plot which Oranien had foreseen.⁵ And while Egmont's naive way of living and delighting in the present moment cannot be attributed to Goethe, Faust's scorn of the here and now should not be ascribed to him either.

Although begun earlier than *Egmont*, *Faust* was not finished until more than forty years later; and within limits we can distinguish the reasons for the delay of the first and second part. The Faust of Part I

³ The more than 150 volumes of Goethe's writings, letters, and conversations contain hardly any references to Swedenborg. A few times, Goethe uses the picture of the spirits' entering the seer (cf. *Faust*, 11906 ff.), and in a late “confession” he compares S's activities to Cagliostro's “juggleries” and concludes: “a certain superstitious belief in demonic men will never cease, and . . . the problematically true, which we respect alone in theory, can in its execution be coupled most comfortably with lies.” (*Werke*, A. 1. H., XXXI, 229)

⁴ This is the motto of Pniower's *Goethes Faust: Zeugnisse und Excursus zu seiner Entstehungsgeschichte* (1899) to which I am indebted. Cf. also Gräf, *Goethe über seine Dichtungen: Versuch einer Sammlung aller Äußerungen des Dichters über seine poetischen Werke*, IV (1904), 1-608.

⁵ Incidentally, the old Goethe concluded the last book of his autobiography (completed after the conclusion of *Faust*) with a quotation from this same scene: “. . . as if whipped by invisible spirits, the sun steeds of time run away with the light chariot of our destiny, and nothing remains to us but to hold on to the reins with calm courage, steering the wheels, now right, now left, from the stone here and the abyss there. Whither it goes — who knows? One hardly remembers whence one came.”

was, at first, a projection of the poet who, as usual, let both of his male leads impersonate important facets of his own character. Thus Faust and Mephistopheles correspond to Tasso and Antonio. Faust represents the young poet's profound storm and stress, while Mephistopheles reminds us continually that this style and outlook never possessed Goethe completely.⁶ That was the conception of the *Urfaust* (before 1775) — a dramatic attempt which had no peer in German dramatic literature up to that time, but was nevertheless held back by the poet, not to be discovered and published until 1887. Why was it withheld, and why only a portion polished for publication as "A Fragment" even in 1790? And why was *Faust I* not published until 1808, three years after the death of Schiller, who had ever insisted that *Faust* was a masterpiece and must be completed and published?

Faust's very excellence and dramatic power may have been partly responsible. Goethe's first great literary success — *Werther*, which inspired a wave of suicides — had taught him that a great work of art is dynamite, and he prefaced later editions: "Be a man and do not follow me." Tasso, the "intensified Werther," needed no such introduction: clearly, he was an exaggerated projection of only part of the poet and cried out to be united in one personality with Antonio. Faust, however, had come to life like Werther and gained an independent existence of his own. The presence of Mephistopheles became insufficient to suggest the crucial difference between the poet and his creature — or to counteract the intoxicating effects of Faust on the people who were soon to hail him as the incarnation of their national character.

Then around the turn of the century, Goethe conceived the Prologue in Heaven. Instead of raising the curtain on Faust's Gothic study, he introduced Faust indirectly through the Lord's conversation with Mephistopheles, modelled after the Book of Job. Mephistopheles' irreverence rules out any suggestion that the scene might represent a religious obeisance, but the Prologue is poetically grandiose and succeeds in dissociating Goethe from Faust. Yet even *Faust I* was not published for another decade. This delay must be understood in terms of Goethe's "classical" outlook. The author of *Tasso* and *Iphigenie* had just concluded *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* with admonitions which sound like deliberate antitheses to *Fausts*: "Wherever you may be . . . , work as best you can . . . and let the present be a cause of good cheer to you"; "Man cannot be happy until his unconditional striving limits itself"; and "Whoever wants to do or enjoy all and everything in its whole humanity, whoever wants to combine all . . . to such a kind of enjoyment, will only spend his time with an eternally dissatisfied striving."⁷ These last lines, of course, refer specifically to Faust's outcry:

⁶ Cf. Eckermann, May 3, 1827, and Pniower, No. 464.

⁷ Book 7.8; 8.5; and 8.7. The word rendered as "humanity" in the last quotation and as "mankind" in the following one, from *Faust*, is the same: *Menschheit*.

"You hear, I do not care for happiness.
 "For rapture I shall live, enjoying agony,
 "For loving hate, chagrin that quickens me.
 "Cured from the craving to know all, my mind
 "Shall nevermore be closed to any dole,
 "And what is portioned out to all mankind,
 "I shall enjoy deep in my inmost soul,
 "Grasp with my spirit the most high and low,
 "Pile on my bosom all their weal and woe,
 "And so to mankind's soul my soul extend,
 "Till I, as they, must perish in the end." (lines 1765 ff.)

Goethe must have felt how ineffective the dry antitheses of *Meister* were, compared to such intoxicating lines; and by now he was loath to be identified not only with Faust, but with the drama itself. Thus he writes, Christmas 1797, that he is "at the moment infinitely far removed from such pure and noble subjects [as Laokoon], insofar as I wish to conclude my *Faust*, and renounce at the same time all nordic barbarism."⁸ To Schiller, too, he refers to the "nordic nature" of his "barbarous production" (Apr. 28, 1798); and in yet another letter (Jan. 2, 1799) he calls it a "*Hexenprodukt*." Finally, (according to Pniower, in 1800), he takes leave of *Faust* with a poem, *Abschied*, of which the first stanza may here be cited:

"Completed lies now my dramatic dirge,
 "Which I concluded in the end with fright,
 "No longer moved by man's tumultuous urge,
 "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."

Then, instead of preparing *Faust I* for publication, Goethe concentrated on the Helena episode of Part II. For he was not only reluctant to split up his work and bring out one part without the other, but particularly averse to publishing what he had come to consider the "barbarities" of Part I without balancing them immediately by a reflection of his own emergence to light and clarity. In this he did not succeed, and eventually consented to the publication of *Faust I* in 1808. It seems noteworthy, however, that Goethe published the Helena scenes when they had been given their final form,⁹ while, a little later, he stubbornly refused to bring out the final scene, though it was the subject of incessant inquiries.

⁸ To Hirt. For the date, cf. Pniower, No. 111.

⁹ He subtitled them *klassisch-romantische Phantasmagorie*, and commented in a letter to Iken (Sept. 23, 1827): ". . . the passionate discord between classicists and romanticists should finally be reconciled. That we should form and educate ourselves [*uns bilden*] is the most important demand; and our models would be indifferent, if we did not have to fear that we might malform ourselves [*verbilden*] by the use of false models. After all, a wider and purer vision is provided by Greek and Roman literature to which we owe the liberation from monkish barbarism [!] . . ."

He would not even divulge the conclusion to such a trusted and respected friend as Wilhelm von Humbolt.

The impossibility of equalling the beauty and power of *Faust I* was surely the main reason for the long delay of the sequel. Beyond that, however, Goethe evidently dreaded the conclusion; and when he finally completed it, he did not care to discuss or defend it. The Prologue in Heaven, which had provided a majestic opening for the drama, and the very addition Goethe needed before he could even think of publishing it, required a pendant. Without that, the work must forever remain a fragment. For a time, Goethe may have sought to evade this necessity by a *tour de force*:

“Mephistopheles may win his bet only half; and when half of his guilt remains with Faust, the right of pardon of the Old Man enters immediately, for the merriest conclusion of the whole.”¹⁰

Yet no merriment could have balanced the Prologue or provided a fitting solution, and eventually Goethe composed what is now the last scene, emphasizing the desired symmetry by numerous parallels to the Prologue. And it is as if the completion of this epilogue had broken a spell, so rapidly did Goethe then succeed in writing the fourth act, while every one of the other acts had occupied him far longer.

Goethe's reluctance to complete *Faust*, and especially the last act, may be best understood in terms of two considerations which shall form the subject of the remainder of this paper: the idea of redemption by grace was basically at odds with Goethe's own faith, and he had come to see ever more clearly that the Faustian alternative of a radical repudiation of the present moment and a “bed of sloth” is essentially false.

To begin with the first point, Goethe felt that his constant activity *entitled* him to immortality:

“The conviction of our continuance arises for me from the concept of activity; for if I work indefatigably until my end, then nature is obligated to offer me another form of existence when the present one can no longer endure my spirit.”

“I do not doubt our continuance, for nature cannot get on without entelechy; but we are not all equally immortal, and in order to manifest oneself as a great entelechy in the future, one must first be one.”¹¹

Goethe's faith in immortality was further distinguished from traditional conceptions by his contempt for any speculations about the hereafter: “Such incomprehensible things are too distant to furnish a subject for daily reflection and thought-destroying speculation.”¹² And in the same

¹⁰ Letter to K. E. Schubarth, Nov. 3, 1820.

¹¹ Eckermann, Feb. 4 and Sept. 1, 1829. Cf. May 2, 1824, and the strikingly similar letter to Zelter of Mar. 19, 1827.

¹² Eckermann, Feb. 25, 1824.

conversation with Eckermann, Goethe relates how he would dispose of troublesome interlocutors:

“I should like to stipulate that I should not encounter in the beyond any of those who had believed in it over here. Else my troubles would have only just begun. The pious ones would surround me and say: Were we not right? Did we not predict it? . . . The preoccupation with ideas of immortality is for the upper classes and especially for the womenfolks who have nothing to do. An able human being, however, who would amount to something over here, and hence must strive, fight, and work daily, leaves the future world to take care of itself and is active and useful in this one. Further, thoughts about immortality are for those who did not get the best of things over here . . . And I should wager: if the good Tiedge had a better lot, he would have better thoughts.”

One recalls Faust's retort to Mephistopheles, in the pact scene:

“Of the beyond I have no thought;
 “When you reduce this world to naught,
 “The other one may have its turn.
 “Out of the present earth springs my delight,
 “And this sun sheds his rays upon my plight;
 “When I must leave behind this site,
 “What happens is of no concern.
 “I do not even wish to hear
 “Whether beyond they hate and love,
 “And whether in that other sphere
 “There be below and be above.” (1660 ff.)

And toward the end, Faust repulses the spectre of Care:

“The earthly sphere is well known unto me,
 “But into the beyond we cannot see.
 “A fool, that squinting tries to pierce those shrouds,
 “And would invent his like above the clouds!
 “Let him survey this life, be resolute:
 “Unto the able this world is not mute.
 “He need not fly into eternity,
 “For he can seize what he can see.
 “Thus he may wander through his earthly day;
 “Heedless of spooks let him pursue his way,
 “In his progression joy and agony,
 “Dissatisfied at every moment, he!” (11441ff.)

Goethe felt an instinctive aversion to the otherworldliness and the preoccupation with death which were characteristic of many of the German romantics and which he considered morbid. It was of the very essence of his genius to experience here and now, during his earthly career, “how death is ever swallowed by life.”¹³ This recurring death and rebirth was

¹³ Letter to Nees von Esenbeck, Sept. 27, 1826.

the heartbeat of his creative existence, and he celebrated it in one of his finest poems which ends:

“And until you have possessed
“Dying and rebirth,
“You are but a sullen guest
“On the gloomy earth.”¹⁴

This constantly renewed experience of the triumph of creative life inspired Goethe's faith in immortality:

“No lapse of time nor any force dissolves
“A form once stamped, which through its life evolves.”¹⁵

And in one of his very last poems, *Legacy*, he writes:

“No substance can to nothing fall.
“The eternal moves on throughout all.
“In present being find your pleasure!
“This being is eternal: laws
“Preserve fore'er the living treasure
“From which the cosmos beauty draws.”¹⁶

If this was Goethe's faith, how is it reflected in Faust's redemption? The poet himself called attention to two lines in the last scene as a clue: “Who ever exerts himself in constant striving, Him we can redeem.”¹⁷ That was indeed Goethe's faith; but without further qualification the dictum does not adequately describe Goethe's own conduct. What he embodied was not the “unconditional striving” which is so characteristically Faustian, and another form of which Oscar Wilde presents in *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. We have already cited the explicit repudiation of such striving in the *Lehrjahre*, and the *Wanderjahre* were even subtitled *Die Entsagenden*. Nor could Faust have written *Faust*. Goethe's characteristic striving was not that of an undisciplined will, pushing on into infinity without hope of satisfaction, like the basic principle of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, or what Hegel condemned as the “Bad Infinite.” Rather it was the relentless determination to educate and to give form to himself. Thus Goethe's passion for classical culture was not a romantic flight from the present, but the will to realize such culture here and now in his own person.

If the lines, “Who ever exerts himself in constant striving, Him we can redeem,” require this qualification to characterize the poet's own striving and to do justice to his ethics, there is another sense in which they reflect Goethe's faith without any qualification whatever: having redeemed himself in his own eyes, he had faith that all of the cosmos — which he pictured as a universe of constantly striving monads — was also redeemed. In that sense, the first of the two lines is all-inclusive,

¹⁴ *Selige Sehnsucht*. (Line 2: “Dieses: Stirb und werde!”)

¹⁵ *Urworte*. *Orphisch*.

¹⁶ *Vermächtnis*. Cf. Eckermann, Feb. 12, 1829.

¹⁷ Cf. Eckermann, June 6, 1831, and May 6, 1827, where Goethe insists, however — and the lesson should be noted — that this “is no idea which might be called the foundation of the whole and of every single scene.”

and the whole quotation is an expression of world-embracing tolerance. Thus Nietzsche said of Goethe that he "created himself" as

"the man of tolerance, not from weakness but from strength, because he knows how to use to his advantage even that of which the average nature would perish . . . Such a spirit which has *become free* stands amid the universe with a joyous and trusting fatalism, having *faith* that only the particular is loathsome, and that in the whole all redeems and affirms itself; *he does not negate any more*. Such a faith, however, is the highest of all possible faiths."¹⁸

Against this background, one may appreciate Falk's report of a conversation in which Goethe said, after expressing his general dissatisfaction with the public:

"When, in the sequel of *Faust*, they should come to the place where even the Devil finds grace and mercy before God — that, I should think, they would not easily forgive me!"

Pniower, who cites this conversation (#973) and determines that it must have taken place between 1808 and 1816, comments in part:

"Goethe's utterance . . . represents either one of those mystifications which were not rare with him, and with which he would allow himself a joke, now to an individual, now to the whole public, or a passing mood which we cannot follow up."

Surely, it was a passing mood — but one springing from the very depths of Goethe's *Weltanschauung*, and a fair sample not only of that "divine spitefulness"¹⁹ without which [Nietzsche] cannot imagine perfection,²⁰ but also of Goethe's affirmation of all being, without reservation. Of course, he did not write a scene depicting Mephistopheles' redemption; but one need only survey the cosmic setting of the drama to see that such a conclusion was unnecessary and would have been inconsistent. For the Prologue (especially the Lord's last speech) and Mephistopheles' description of himself as "a part of that force which ever wants the evil and creates the good" (1336f.) show how Mephistopheles is, from the very beginning, redeemed in the total design of the cosmos.

Thus the clue to Faust's redemption should be sought in Goethe's cosmic faith and not in Faust's moral merits or demerits. Faust's salvation signifies neither Goethe's endorsement of his deeds nor, as has recently

¹⁸ *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Part IX, 49. The following, and final, sentence of this aphorism — "I have baptized it on the name of *Dionysus*" — is an important clue not only to Nietzsche's later conception of the Dionysian, and indeed to his whole philosophy, but also to Goethe's tremendous impact on him. Cf. my forthcoming book on Nietzsche and my article on "Goethe and the History of Ideas" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, October 1949.

¹⁹ In the same conversation with Falk, Goethe said: "For thirty years almost they have plagued themselves with the broomsticks of the Blocksberg and the monkeys' conversation in the witch's kitchen . . . , and the interpreting and allegorizing of this dramatic humorous nonsense has never gone too well. Indeed, one should in one's youth indulge more often in such jokes . . ."

²⁰ *Ecce Homo*, Why I am so Clever, 4.

been suggested, Goethe's opinion that Faust has in the end reached the lowest point of his career — a view quite inconsistent with his words to Care and his last speech — and is hence in dire need of immediate supernatural intervention. Faust has not reached a nadir, but neither has he perfected himself. In the Prologue, the Lord said of Faust:

“Wenn er mir jetzt auch nur verworren dient,
“So werd ich ihn bald in die Klarheit führen.”²¹

And in his previously cited poem, *Abschied*, Goethe wrote:

“Wer schildert gern den Wirrwarr des Gefühles,
“Wenn ihn der Weg zur Klarheit aufgeführt?”²²

We must conclude that Faust did not attain clarity in *this* life, as Goethe did. The Lord — on this note the drama closes — will fulfill his promise in heaven. Thus Gretchen is told in the last scene:

“Come raise yourself to higher spheres,
“When you he senses, he will follow.” (12094 f.)

And the drama ends: “The eternally feminine draws us upward” — lines which were inspired, as is well known, by the poet's own earthly experience. The *Marienbader Elegie* comes to mind:

“We call it piety. — Such blissful height
“Is granted me when I am in her sight.”

“No doubt! She steps into the heaven's portal
“And in her arms lifts me to life immortal.”²³

What Goethe lets Faust find only in heaven, he himself had not only *sought* in *this* life, but he felt that he had found it: redemption.

* * * *

In Faust's last speech, we find the lines:

“Unto the moment I might say:
“Abide, you are so fair!
“The traces of my earthly days
“No aeons can impair.”

To Goethe it had been given to say to the present moment: “Abide, you are so fair!” And Lynkeus' famous song in the last act seems to have no other function in that place than to remind us of this:

“In all things I see
“The eternally bright,
“And as they please me,
“In myself I delight.”
“You blessed eyes,
“What you saw, whensoever,
“It be as it may,
“It was, oh, so fair.” (11296 ff.)

²¹ “Though but confusedly he serves me now,
“I shall soon lead him into clarity.” (308 f.)

²² Translated above (lines 5 f.). Lines 2 f. of this poem contain another allusion to the Prologue in Heaven (328 f.).

²³ The last line: “Zu ihren Armen hebt sie dich empor.”

We have already cited Goethe's *Legacy* — "In present being find your pleasure" — and in the *Marienbader Elegie* he describes how his love instructed him in *this* life:

"It is as if she said: 'Hour after hour
 "Life is in friendliness to us committed,
 "What happened yesterday has fast turned sour,
 "To know tomorrow we are not permitted;
 "And if I ever feared the dusk of night,
 "The sun would sink and see yet my delight.
 "Thus do as I do: gay and sensibly
 "Face every moment. And do not delay.
 "Meet it at once with kindness and esprit,
 "And act, whether for love, whether for play;
 "But where you are be all, and childlike be,
 "Thus you are all, invincible and free.'" ²⁴

Faust, however, is "dissatisfied at every moment" (11452) and scorns the here and now until the end: "The accursed *here!*" (11233) Even in his last speech he appreciates the present moment only as a foretaste of things to come; and here Goethe's vision was inspired by the death of Moses. Fifty years before the poet completed *Faust*, he wrote the painter Friedrich Müller (June 21, 1781):

"In the Old Testament it is written that Moses died after the Lord had shown him the promised land, and was buried by the Lord in a hidden place. This is beautiful. When, however, especially as you have treated the subject, I behold the man who has only just before been shown the grace of the divine countenance . . . under the Devil's feet, then I am wroth with the angel who should have hurried there a few moments earlier . . . If one does want to treat this subject, it could not, I think, be done in any other way, but that the holy man, still full of the vision of the promised land, dies in delight, and angels are engaged in lifting him up in a glory . . . and Satan could, at the most, serve as a contrast in a corner in the foreground with his black shoulders, without laying hands on the anointed of the Lord . . ."

It seems entirely characteristic that Goethe's conception of the last three scenes of *Faust* should have been influenced so largely by his creative response to a Biblical narrative and a picture — in fact, more than by any abstract speculations.²⁵

Faust's wager with Mephistopheles had been based on the false assumption that one could not appreciate the present without becoming a Philistine. Goethe, however, found that "every moment is of infinite value, for it is the representative of a whole eternity," and exhorted us:

²⁴ The same message is the leitmotif of *Meister*, but in a limited space these verses may furnish a more adequate balance to *Faust* than such prosaic epigrams as: "The sensible man need only learn moderation, then he will also be happy." (*Wanderjahre*, Book 2. 4.)

²⁵ Cf. my previously cited article, "Goethe and the History of Ideas."

“ever hold fast to the present.”²⁶ He had the faith, and demonstrated, that one can live in the present without betraying one's striving. Since Faust did not learn this lesson in this life, he cannot find fulfillment here and is in need of redemption and further instruction beyond; but in the four lines from his last speech which we have quoted, Goethe hints at another kind of redemption. Even as Tasso and Antonio could be redeemed if only nature would “form *one* man out of the two of them,”²⁷ Faust could find salvation by being reabsorbed into the poet's character. He would then transcend the false alternative of his repudiation of the present and the “bed of sloth”; he would be permitted to say to the moment, “Abide, you are so fair!” and to share Goethe's faith—for it was no mere confidence in fame, but a cosmic faith: “The traces of my earthly days no aeons can impair.”

*“Zum Augenblicke dürft ich sagen
“Verweile doch, du bist so schön!
“Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdetagen
“Nicht in Äonen untergehn.”*

²⁶ Eckermann, Nov. 3, 1823. Cf. Goethe's last letter to Zelter.

²⁷ *Tasso*, Act III, Scene 2.

