

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## **FAUST - A German Folktale (1926)** F.W. Murnau (1888-1931)

### OVERVIEW

*Auteur:* Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was a German film director, screenwriter, and producer. Murnau had an obsession with film since his childhood. He studied philology at the University of Berlin; and art history, and literature at the University of Heidelberg. In WWI, Murnau served as a company commander. He joined the Imperial German Flying Corps and flew missions. After the end of WWI, he established his film studio with Conrad Veidt. His noteworthy films are *Der Januskopf* (1920), an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922), an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; *The Last Laugh* (1924); *Faust* (1926), Murnau's last German film which draws on legendary tales of *Faust* as well as Goethe's 1808 version of *Faust*; *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927); *City Girl* (1930); and *Tabu* (1931). Murnau died in a car accident in 1931.

*Film:* *Faust - A German Folktale* is a 1926 German silent film directed by F.W. Murnau. The film is an example of German expressionism and was praised for its special effects. The film production company first wanted Ludwig Berger to direct the film, however, Murnau eventually convinced the company to direct the film himself. *Faust* stars Gösta Ekman, Emil Jannings, and Camilla Horn respectively as Faust, Mephisto, and Gretchen. Frida Richard, Wilhelm Dieterle, and Yvette Guilbert star as Gretchen's mother, the brother Valentin and Frau Schwerdtlein respectively. The film is about a bet that is between the archangel and the devil about whether the devil can destroy the divine essence of a virtuous, learned scholar called Faust. The film focuses on the themes of good and evil, pleasure and virtue, faith and heresy, optimism and nihilism, the finiteness of human perception, and the infinity of knowledge.

*Literary/Historical Background:* Faust is a legendary figure of a German tale that is based on the historical Johann Georg Faust (c. 1480–1540) who was an itinerant alchemist and astrologer. According to the legend, Faust is a learned man who is nevertheless dissatisfied with life and makes a pact with the devil where he trades his immortal soul for infinite worldly knowledge and material pleasures. This early figure of Faust was frequently damned and turned into a figure of vulgar fun as he preferred worldly, human knowledge over spiritual values and knowledge.

Regarding the historical Faust, there is not much information known that is held to be true with certainty. He is purported to have received a Master of Arts degree in Heidelberg. For the year 1506, there is a record of him performing magical tricks and horoscopes in Gelnhausen. There are similar accounts of him appearing as a magician, an alchemist, and a physician over the following 30 years in different parts of southern Germany. He was accused of being a fraud and was denounced by the church for signing a pact with the devil.

Goethe's rendering of *Faust* is a tragic play consisting of two acts. It is considered to be his *magnum opus* and one of the greatest works of German literature. In the first act of the play, the devil Mephistopheles makes a bet with God, saying that he can entice the righteous Faust away from his noble pursuits. In the next scene, we see Faust despairing at the vanity of material knowledge. He turns to magic as a last resort. Frustrated even with magic, he ponders suicide. However, afterward, he goes for a walk with his assistant and is followed home by a poodle. The poodle transforms into Mephistopheles in Faust's study room and offers him a wager so that if he can accomplish to grant him a moment of transcendence, then at that moment Faust will die and go to hell. Because Faust does not believe in Mephistopheles' power, he accepts the wager. He then goes on a few excursions and meets Gretchen to whom he is attracted. With Mephistopheles' help, he seduces Gretchen. Gretchen's mother dies because of a sleeping potion that Gretchen administers to her so that Faust can visit her. Gretchen becomes

pregnant. Gretchen's brother condemns Faust but dies while he fights him. Gretchen drowns her child and is convicted of murder. Faust tries to free her from the prison, but she refuses to escape. As Faust and Mephistopheles flee the prison, the voices from heaven announce: "Sie ist gerettet" meaning that she is saved.

## CHARACTERS

<i>Devil:</i>	The evil creature who makes a bet with the archangel
<i>Archangel:</i>	The good creature who accepts the bet of the devil.
<i>Faust:</i>	The intellectual and learned man who accepts the pact of the devil
<i>Gretchen:</i>	An innocent girl from Faust's hometown who falls in love with him
<i>Valentin:</i>	The brother of Gretchen who is joyful and protective of his sister
<i>Gretchen's mother:</i>	The old, good-natured mother of Gretchen and Valentin
<i>Frau Schwardtlein:</i>	A canny and merry woman who is in the business of making love potions
<i>Duchess of Parma:</i>	The most beautiful woman in Italy
<i>Duke of Parma:</i>	The man who marries the Duchess of Parma

## SYNOPSIS

The devil makes a bet with the archangel that he can destroy what is divine in a virtuous man called Faust. If he accomplishes this task, the devil will have dominion over the world.

The devil causes a plague in Faust's town. Unable to heal the people, Faust burns his alchemy books and the Bible. In the flames, some pages open that tell him to make a pact with the devil to have glory and power. Faust summons the devil following the instructions of the book. The devil makes a bargain with Faust in that he will serve Faust for one day after which the pact will be canceled. Faust first tries to help the sick people with his people, however, because he cannot look at people with the cross in their hands, he is shunned by the people as an evil man. Faust wishes to commit suicide, but the devil stops him saying their trial day is not over. The devil offers Faust infinite pleasure and his youth as another bargain which Faust accepts. From then on, his soul will belong to the devil. They visit the Duchess of Parma, the most beautiful woman in Italy at her wedding feast. The devil kills the Duke, while Faust makes out with the Duchess. However, the trial day is over. If Faust wishes to have more pleasures, his soul must belong to the devil forever. Faust accepts this bargain. Later in the film, Faust grows tired of the life of pleasure and wishes to go back home. There he meets Gretchen and falls in love with her. The devil tricks her into loving Faust utilizing a magical gold chain. At night, Faust visits Gretchen in her room. The mother, woken by the devil, drops dead from shock at their sight. The brother is provoked by the devil to run to the house and fights Faust. The devil stabs the brother in the back and shouts that a murder has occurred. Afterward, Faust and the devil flee. The brother condemns both Faust and his sister Gretchen as he dies. Gretchen put in the stocks and becomes the laughingstock of the town. She has a baby by Faust months later. In wintertime, Gretchen hallucinates a cradle in the snow. She puts her baby there who soon dies. She is declared a murderer by the people of the town and put at a stake. Before being burned at the stake, she cries for help from Faust. He goes there immediately and wishes he had never asked for youth in the first place. The devil turns him into an old man again. Faust and Gretchen burn at the stake as Gretchen recognizes the young Faust and their spirit goes to heaven.

The archangel declares that he has won the bet because love has triumphed over all.

## SCENES

### **The betting between the archangel and Mephistopheles**

The film begins with the presence of flying, evil beings who are responsible for the plague that has befallen humankind. They have supernatural qualities and demonic faces. Next, we see the archangel with impressive, white wings. The archangel and Mephistopheles or the devil start talking about whether humankind is corruptible. The devil claims that the earth belongs to him. In response, the archangel says that he can never own the earth as humans are inherently good because *they strive for the truth*. Next, we see the scholar Faust as he gives a lecture to the people. He says that everything that is of the sky and the earth is wonderful. However, the most wonderful thing of all is the freedom of a man that is the freedom to choose between good and evil. The devil thinks that Faust is a slave or has a slavish nature like all other human beings. He is an alchemist who tries to turn metal into gold and has a greedy nature himself. At that point, the devil says he bets he will wrest Faust's soul away from God. The archangel accepts the bet: If the devil can destroy what is divine in Faust, then the earth truly belongs to him. The devil says that no one can resist evil. And thus the bet is on. This scene has significance in that the viewers see the juxtaposition between good and evil. Man's striving for truth, free will to choose, and devotedness to the spirit of the divine is what is seen as good whereas what designates evil is his greed for power and wealth.



### **A plague upon the town**

The medieval town hosts a fair where people have entertainment and fun. This entertainment, however, is not to last long as the devil encroaches upon the city with all his might and evil. The devil's mighty and enormous figure surrounds the entire city and he spreads the plague. One of the performers falls to the ground as he is inflicted with the plague. Soon everything is in a state of chaos, with people running around and the wind blowing. The performer falls dead which is the first death in a series of deaths that happen because of the epidemic. Within a few days, half the town lies dying. We see how people carry the dead and the devil standing with all its might and looking at the city from above. Meanwhile, Faust has been spending day and night trying to find a cure for the plague in prayer with God. We see a page from a book he is reading where it is mentioned that a similar plague once fell upon the land of Egypt where there was no house without its dead. Faust is very frightened, but being a man of faith, he nevertheless trusts God and that a cure will be found. He believes that only God can alleviate this misery and the plague.

### **People of the town**

Mortal terror and fear of death sweep through the town. People run around. Many of them turn to religion that is Christianity, in the hopes that God will make the plague go away. A man with a cross in his hand tells the people to repent, fast, and pray and that only faith can vanquish death. People around him kiss the cross as an act and symbol of their devotion to God. There is a chaotic atmosphere as people run around in frenzy. One of the running and dancing women tells the preaching man that they cannot know when the plague will befall them and that they will live and enjoy life until that moment. Her statement and philosophy of pleasure stand in sharp contrast to the ascetic and religious statements of the preaching man. The preacher is confident that whoever has faith will live and that death will only take the sinners. However, things do not go as he wishes. The shadow of the devil casts upon him. We see the grinning face of the devil who enjoys the misery that he has created. The preacher soon falls dead. Faust sees the death of the preacher. Everybody in the town turns to Faust as they believe his knowledge of science can save them from the plague. However, Faust is hopeless himself. He proclaims that they are lost and that neither faith nor knowledge is any help. "Everything is a lie". His doubt about the potency of the spirit of God is visible in his despair.



**The devil visits Faust** Faust comes to his study room and starts burning all his books. He also takes the Bible and throws it to the flames. Before he throws the Bible, he reads a page that says: 'My Lord, you are merciful and a great goodness'. He laughs cynically and desperately as he reads these lines. Faust cannot believe how God causes this kind of plague among people and does not help those suffering. He is disappointed and helpless which turns him into a bitter cynic. As the Bible is burning, a page opens suddenly on which is written; "if you summon the prince of darkness to aid you and give you all the might and glory of the world, go to a crossroad and call on him three times". Faust does exactly as the book says and summons the devil. He calls the devil by his name which is *Mephisto*. A storm breaks before the devil appears with flames surrounding him. Faust, at first, is frightened and tries to escape the devil as he cannot believe what he has done. The devil salutes him by taking off his hat. Faust tries to escape, but wherever he goes the devil is there. The devil seems thus to be omnipresent. Faust escapes into his study room, however, even there, the devil finds him with a grinning look on his face. The devil wishes Faust to sign a pact. The pact demands that Faust renounce God and all his heavenly legion so that all the power and glory of the world shall be the devils'. Faust is shocked at this pact. He glances outside and sees how many dead bodies people carry. The devil enthusiastically tells him to try this deal for one day as the pact will be canceled after one day. We see the words glory and power in shining letters. Glory and power are the lures of the devil which he uses to deceive Faust. Faust asks him whether he can help the sick to which the devil replies that he will be his slave and do whatever he commands. As Faust agrees, the devil wants him to sign the pact with a drop of his blood. This blood represents the fact that Faust's soul has been sold to the devil and his divine essence is no more. However, Faust does not yet know what is to happen to him.



**Faust cannot help the people** The devil holds the pact with a mad look on his face. Meanwhile, people of the town call Faust to help one of the sick. Faust heals one man. However, the next sick person that the people bring has a cross in her hand and Faust cannot look at the cross. The people understand that he is in league with the devil as he cannot look upon the cross. They start to stone him. Faust runs back into his room. As he is about to take the elixir of death to be free of this suffering of having renounced God, the devil stops him saying that his trial day is not yet over, and he must live according to the pact. Faust sees the reflection of this youth on the surface of the cup holding the elixir of death. The devil says that this reflection is life that is seducing him. The devil asks him why he seeks death as he has not lived yet. Faust admits with a dreamy look on his face that he despises his life. The devil tells him that his life was only dust and the mold of the books. "Pleasure is everything." The essence of the statement of the devil stands in contrast to all the virtues that Faust has held throughout his life. The devil promises to give him his youth which Faust frantically accepts.



**Youth and a life of pleasure** Soon Faust turns into a young, beautiful man. The form of the devil changes likewise. The devil shows him a beautiful woman, and the young Faust wants to go to her immediately. They fly through the town under the cloak of the devil. They fly above forests, waterfalls, towns, and castles. Finally, they arrive at the wedding feast for the Duchess of Parma, who is the most beautiful woman in Italy. The devil opens a magical sort of light which makes the Duchess of Parma fall in love with Faust. After Faust and the Duchess leave, the groom tries to kill the devil. However, since the devil cannot be killed, the devil kills the groom. As Faust and the Duchess are making out, the devil tells Faust that the sand has run out and the trial day is over. Faust cannot let go of the pleasures his new life offers, so he accepts being enslaved for eternity.



**Dissatisfaction and going back home** Despite having run from indulgence to indulgence and lived a life of pleasure, Faust is still dissatisfied and discontent. The devil assures him that he will do whatever he commands. He offers him the king's crown. However, Faust tells the devil that he wishes to go home. It is Holy Easter in his hometown. People of the town go to the church to celebrate Holy Easter. One of the people who visit the church is Gretchen with whom Faust suddenly falls in love. He follows her to the church. Meanwhile, the devil warns Faust that she, a good Christian, is not suitable for him. However, Faust is decisive. Gretchen's brother Valentin is back home. Gretchen's mother, Gretchen, and Valentin are all happy to be back together. Meanwhile, the devil brings with him a golden chain that will magically affect Gretchen so that she will fall in love with Faust. To her surprise, Gretchen finds the golden chain in her bedroom. The golden chain starts having its effect. Gretchen wishes to visit her Aunt Marthe. Frau Marthe Scwerdtlein is someone who prepares love potions for people. Faust finds Gretchen, and although Gretchen tries to run away, the children encircle them and sing that they will be sweethearts. The devil prepares a magic potion which Frau Schwerdtlein drinks. Gretchen and Faust play and kiss each other. Frau Schwerdtlein also falls in love with the devil, she plays the game of 'he loves me...he loves me not...' So do Gretchen and the devil.



**Murder and punishment** At night, the light atmosphere transforms into a grim and evil one. The devil urges Faust to go into Gretchen's house. Gretchen takes him inside and they make out. Meanwhile, the devil finds the place where the brother Valentin is drinking and tells him that Gretchen is not pure as she is so pretty. He tells him moreover that he can catch the lover before he slips out of the house if he is quick enough. The devil creates a storm and wakes the mother. When the mother sees Gretchen and Faust, she collapses out of shock. At that moment, Valentin comes and fights Faust. The devil kills Valentin, however, he acts as if Faust has murdered him. The devil shouts "Murder!" to wake everyone in the town. As Valentin is about to die, he tells the townspeople to take Gretchen to the stocks. In her brother's mass, Gretchen is devastated. The men of the church sing: "For now before the judge, no crime can pass unpunished here..." which emphasizes the gravity of the misdeeds that were done because of Gretchen. Gretchen is at the stock, and the people of the town laugh at her hysterically. Seemingly, they are happy about her misery. Gretchen is ashamed and puts her hands in front of her face in guilt and shame. When she goes back home, she sees the imaginary reflection of her mother sitting on her chair.



**Gretchen's fate** Months later, Gretchen gives birth to a baby in the wintertime. Gretchen does not have a place to stay anymore. She tries to save her baby from the cold and harsh weather; knocks on the windows of houses. However, no one answers her as no one wishes to care for the baby and Gretchen-who-stood-in-the-stocks. She and her baby collapse in the snow. She starts hallucinating at the end of a cradle and puts her baby on the snow believing that she is putting him in a cradle. Hours later, a group of men finds them. Seeing that the baby has died, they declare her to be the murderer. Gretchen cries for help from Faust. Faust is in the unknown about Gretchen's condition and suffering. Hearing her cry, he demands that the devil save Gretchen. However, the devil grins and says that it is too late, as the people already have prepared her funeral pyre. Gretchen is waiting in the dungeon, half-mad. People take her to the stake. Faust sees her funeral pyre and wished that he had never asked for the youth that brought this misery. He curses the delusion of youth. Hearing his cry, the devil hysterically laughs and says that his wish will be granted and thus Faust turns into an old man again. Faust wishes that his sins be forgiven. As Gretchen is about to burn at the stake, Faust runs to her. She recognizes that the old man is the young Faust. As they burn at the stake, their spirits fly up to heaven.



**The result of the betting** We see the archangel and the devil once again. The devil says he has won the bet, however, the archangel says that the pact is broken because of one word. A word *that wings joyfully throughout the universe, the word that appeases every pain and grief, the word that expiates all human guilt, the eternal word* which is love. Thus, the winner of the wager is the archangel. Love has triumphed over all pain, misery, suffering, and evil. The archangel burns the pact that the devil is holding in his hand, and stands victorious.



## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **FAUST** (Conscientious)

Faust is a learned scholar who practices alchemy, and tries to turn metal into gold. He gives lectures to people and students. He seems to be an ethical person who gives a lot of importance to man's inherent freedom to choose between good and evil. However, his courage and determination weaken as a result of the plague that befalls the town. The viewers learn later how susceptible he is to the temptations of worldly pleasures. His debauchery and poorly made decisions wreak havoc in the lives of the people he comes into contact with. Nevertheless, the love he has for Gretchen serves as a protective shield for both of them.

*Learned:* Faust is an intellectual who has spent his life reading and researching. He is first seen in the film as giving lectures to the public. When the plague befalls the town, people hope that Faust will be able to find a cure. Thus, Faust is not only a learned scholar but also an alchemist who practices magic and medicine. His learnedness can be easily seen in his library in his study room. He is someone who devoted his whole life to books and learning all the knowledge available to humankind.

*Dissatisfied:* Even though Faust has lived the life of the mind by fully devoting his life to education, he is dissatisfied. He is in particular disappointed at his failure to find a cure for the plague. That is the reason why he impulsively burns all his books, including the Holy Bible. He is not happy with the limitations of human perception and mind. It is his very dissatisfaction that causes him to accept the pact of the devil. It is again his dissatisfaction that propels him to agree to continue to be the devil's slave forever. He wishes to have infinite material pleasures. However, even material pleasures are not enough for him. Thus, finally, he wants to go back home. Only in the unconditional love of Gretchen does Faust find rest.

*Good:* Faust is essentially a good person. He does everything he can to help people who fell sick from the plague. One of the reasons why he accepts to sell his immortal soul to the devil is likewise because he wishes to save people from the plague by the power once he agrees to the bargain. Even though he has weaknesses, and falls into the trap of worldly pleasures; as soon as he understands the suffering he has caused Gretchen, he goes to her and burns at the stake with her. This courageous act shows us how devoted to Gretchen he is and how pure his love for her is. Thus, he is essentially a virtuous person and has a good heart.

### **ARCHANGEL** (Agreeable)

Archangel is a good angel who accepts the bet of Faust as he has utter faith in the goodness of humanity. He thinks humanity is good because humans strive for truth and justice. At the end of the film, he declares that the devil has not won the bet, because Faust's pure love for Gretchen is enough to show that he was not a slave to the devil all along.

*Good:* Archangel is a symbol of the good, and everything that is associated with goodness such as truth, striving, justice, morality, and love. His impressive white wings symbolize these qualities in all their magnitude and might. The reason why Archangel accepts the bet is because he believes humans to be inherently good and virtuous. Even though humans have weaknesses, they are not corruptible by the devil.

*Passive:* Archangel has a rather passive role in the whole film. He only appears in the beginning and at the very end of the film. It seems that he does not interfere when the plague strikes the town. He also does not interfere when the devil kills the Duke of Parma and Valentin. Thus, he seems to be a passive figure who lets the devil have free reign. One of the reasons why he does this might be because of his utter faith in humanity, and that even though humans may suffer tremendously, they will never be slaves to the devil.

## **GRETCHEN** (Emotional)

Gretchen is an innocent girl from Faust's hometown who is inexperienced and falls in love with him. Her goodness is visible in the way she helps her mother, in being a good Christian who attends the celebrations of the Holy Easter, and in the way she plays with the children. She is a human symbol of goodness in parallel to the archangel who is a divine symbol of goodness. Her burning at the stake at the end of the film shows us the viewers how a society can judge even the virtuous and good ones among them.

*Innocent:* Gretchen is an innocent girl as she cannot predict what horrible consequences will come to be because of her relationship with Faust. When she finds the golden chain in her drawer, she happily goes to Frau Schwerdtlein to show the chain, unaware of the evil intentions of the one, that is the devil, who prepared this magical chain.

*Loving:* She is loving and gentle. Her affectionate nature is seen in her interactions with her family, children, and Faust. She protects her baby to the very end. She does not try to escape burning at the stake when people condemn her as a murderess who killed her own baby. Thus, she takes responsibility for her actions. Even as she burns, her love for Faust is intact. In a nutshell, she is a symbol of what is virtuous and good in humanity. In the very end, it is *love* that makes the pact of the devil invalid. The relationship between Gretchen and Faust shows us how unconditional and self-sacrificing love can be.

## **DEVIL** (Disagreeable)

The devil is a fallen angel who is evil, greedy, and cunning. He wants to dominate the earth and wants the earth to belong to him. Moreover, he has no respect for humans as he believes them all to be mere slaves to material pleasures. That is the reason why he makes a bet with the archangel to destroy what is good and virtuous in Faust. He does not believe that there is anyone who cannot fall into the traps prepared by him, as everyone has their vices and weaknesses. The devil is an expert at exploiting these weaknesses.

*Greedy:* The devil is greedy as he wishes the earth to belong to him. He is determined to win the bet. He does not care about the suffering and the pain he inflicts upon others as long as he can make the earth to become his possession. Because he is such a greedy being, he projects that quality onto all the other beings such as humans and thinks that they are just as corrupt as he is. Therefore, he offers Faust infinite, material pleasures; assuming the inherent corruptibility of human nature.

*Sadist:* The sadistic quality of the devil first comes to the forefront when he wants Faust to sign the pact with a drop of his blood. This drop of blood not only foreshadows the deaths that are going to occur because of Faust's greed, but also the sadism of the devil. Other than this symbolic event, the devil also commits two murders. He murders the Duke of Parma, and Gretchen's brother Valentin by stabbing them. He does not care that these humans wanted to continue their lives, and he takes pleasure in the suffering he causes.

*Mischievous:* The mischievous part of the devil is apparent in his interactions with Frau Schwerdtlein where the film takes on a lighter, and more playful quality. The devil uses a golden chain to trick Gretchen into falling in love with Faust. Likewise, he gives a necklace to Frau Schwerdtlein to come to good terms with her. The scenes where he plays 'she loves me... she loves me not...' creates a playful atmosphere

that stands in stark contrast to the gravity of the generally metaphysical film and the evil character of the devil.

## THEMES

### PHILOSOPHY

**Good vs evil** Faust is a metaphysical film that is characterized by the juxtaposition between good and evil. The good is symbolized by various characters and qualities such as the archangel's moral ideals and values, Gretchen's innocence and loving-kindness, the pure love between Gretchen and Faust, humanity's striving for truth and justice, and actions for a better world. Evil, on the other hand, is seen in the greed for worldly pleasures the trap into which Faust falls. Likewise, the devil's greed for world domination is a symbol of what is evil in reality. In the end, it is love that makes the devil's plans not work as he wishes them to. Thus, the film becomes a declaration of the superiority of the good over evil. We see the triumph of the good and love as the spirits of Faust and Gretchen fly up to heaven. Another instance of this triumph of the good is when the archangel and the devil meet at the very end of the film, and the archangel stands in a higher position than the devil where we only see the back of the devil whereas the face, wings and magical scepter of the archangel is seen in all their impressiveness towering above the devil.

**Finiteness of human perception versus the infinity of knowledge** The capabilities of humans are finite because the power of their minds and perceptions is finite. Humans are neither omnipotent nor omniscient beings. Therefore, they can always strive to learn more about existence and accomplish more according to their desires. However, they will always fare short of perfection, meaning they will never achieve perfection as knowledge is unlimited, yet there are a lot of limitations imposed on them. It is essentially this trapped situation that Faust finds himself in that causes a lot of dissatisfaction in him. He wishes to soar above all available knowledge, but he cannot even save people from a plague. Seeing how limited and incapable he is, causes a lot of distress and dissonance in him. This is one of the reasons he accepts the pact of the devil to overcome his *human* limitations and attain supernatural might and power. Therefore, the finiteness of humans versus the infinity of knowledge or existence builds a conflict that is the source of true dissatisfaction of Faust.

**Pleasure and virtue** The life that the devil offers Faust is a life of material pleasures of wealth, lust, and power. However, Faust soon grows tired of the life of pleasure. He yearns for something more, that is *home*. Home is where Faust will find the true love of Gretchen and will understand the importance of virtue and goodness which are long-lasting and more powerful than worldly pleasures. The film's message is clear in that the virtuous life triumphs over the life of pleasure, with parallels in Gretchen's love triumphing over the lust of the Duchess of Parma, in the archangel's winning of the bet against the devil and in Faust's virtues triumphing over his worldly greed and ambitions.

### SOCIETY (Religion)

**Religion** (Faith and heresy) Religion, that is Christianity, plays a prominent role throughout the film. The people of Faust's town are devoted Christians. Even when the plague causes half of the town to die, people still believe that those with faith will be saved from the sickness. The cross symbolizes the divine spirit. That is why Faust cannot look upon the cross once he has agreed to the bargain with the devil. The devil himself cannot look at the symbols of Christianity, he cannot move near the statue of Mother Mary nor can he enter the church during the Easter celebrations. Gretchen's faith in Christianity, on the other hand, shows her devotion and makes her a symbol of goodness. Thus, the Christian faith is a symbol of goodness, virtuousness, and devotion throughout the film whereas the heresy of Faust brings only calamities upon the town and whoever he comes into contact with.

### FLAW (Greed)

**Greed** It is Faust's greed that causes him to bargain with the devil. His dissatisfaction, hunger for knowledge, and greed for material pleasures ultimately bring his downfall. His flaw also causes the



deaths of three innocent people, the Duke of Parma, Gretchen's brother Valentin and Gretchen's baby. The antidote to greed is generosity which is born out of love. Faust's love for Gretchen causes him to see the foolishness and futility of his ambitions. He transforms himself into a better human being by getting rid of his greedy qualities, and even sacrifices himself for Gretchen which is the ultimate act of generosity which is the opposite of greed.

#### **RELATIONSHIP** (Love – Attraction/desire)

**Love** Faust's love for Gretchen builds a contrast to his earlier debauchery. He learns what it means to truly care for someone and love someone unconditionally as at the very end of the film, he accepts to burn at the stake with Gretchen. Faust and Gretchen's love triumphs over all the pain and suffering they endured, and expiates all their guilt. This love is not selfish, compassionate, and pure. Thus, the message of the film is that love and care are enough to extinguish and triumph over evil qualities such as those exhibited by Faust at the beginning of the film; greed for power, domination, knowledge, wealth, and worldly pleasures.

**Attraction/Desire** Faust is attracted to the beauty of the Duchess of Parma, and the material pleasures that she represents. Because Faust has been a scholar who has spent his life among the dust and mold of books, a beautiful woman means something utterly unknown to him. That is the reason he falls into the trap of the infinite material pleasures that the Devil offers him. Faust's attraction to the Duchess of Parma and materiality is also what causes him to finally be a slave of the devil forever. It is because of his attraction to and desire for materiality which is represented in the figure of the Duchess of Parma that his trial day turns into eternal slavery for Faust.

#### **POLITICS** (Intrigue)

**Intrigue** The secret plans that the devil conspires are intricately woven as the true desire of the devil is world domination, a very ambitious goal. To reach this goal, the devil thinks that any means are justified. Thus he does not hesitate to wreak havoc upon Faust's life and all people close to him. The plague that erupts in the town not only takes the lives of many innocent people but also shatters the belief that Faust had in religion and the divine spirit. Faust's doubting the truthiness of his faith paves the way for the devil to strike him with his promises of infinite pleasure, wealth, and power. The devil kills both the Duke of Parma and Gretchen's brother Valentin because these people present obstacles to Faust's desires. Thus, the viewers see once again how the lives of innocent and upright people do not matter in the devil's eyes. The devil brainwashes Faust so that he also does not take into account the consequences of his actions, or how his actions may cause suffering in the lives of others. The devil also does not inform Faust about how Gretchen has been suffering after he left her and how she killed her baby in a moment of delusion. By withholding information from Faust, the devil ensures that Faust will be an eternal slave of his.

#### **PSYCHOLOGY** (Sadness)

**Sadness** Faust spends days and nights trying to find a cure for the plague. His faith in God and the divine spirit encourages him to continue his studies. However, the gravity of the plague and the number of deaths that occur cause him to lose his confidence in his knowledge and even in God. The first instance his confidence is broken is when a girl comes to ask Faust to help her ill mother. Faust tries to heal the woman with his potion, alas the potion does not work and the woman dies. The second instance that shatters Faust's confidence in his studies is when he sees the preacher fall dead by the plague. Even though everyone in the town believes that Faust can help them, Faust is hopeless and desperate. Faust utters finally that neither faith nor knowledge is any help. He feels betrayed and deceived. His faith in God or any divine spirit is broken. The point where he later burns all his books and also the Bible is the culmination of his sadness.

#### **QUEST**

Faust is dedicated to helping people. When the plague breaks out, he does everything he can to heal the sick. He makes use of his knowledge of alchemy and prepares potions. However, none of the knowledge

he possesses is enough to overcome the plague. Faust's desire to find a cure for the plague is the reason why Faust becomes someone for the devil to prey upon. He has a good heart which according to the devil, is a weakness to be exploited. After becoming a slave to the devil, Faust heals one man. However, he cannot heal a woman holding a cross in her hand, as he cannot look upon the Holy Cross. As soon as people understand that Faust bargained with the devil, people shy away from him in fear and hatred. Thus, even though Faust has had good intentions, he does not succeed in helping to find a cure for the plague. Later on in the story, he completely forgets about other people and thinks only of himself in an egoistic fashion.