An Analysis of Light Metaphors in Goethe's Faust

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AN ANALYSIS OF LIGHT METAPHORS IN GOETHE’S *FAUST*

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This paper examines a series of light metaphors in Goethe’s *Faust*. The purpose is to display a connection between each light metaphor and major developments in Faust’s character, namely his development from a restless scholar imprisoned in his study to a blind man shortly before his death. The order in which the light metaphors are introduced is not chronological; rather they follow a thematic sequence from night to day to night. The purpose of this particular progression is to show more clearly Faust’s movement from one mindset to the next. The order, moonlight to rising sun to rainbow to setting sun to inner light, reinforces much of what is claimed in this paper’s main argument.

I assert that a series of light metaphors are connected to Faust as the subjective extensions and expressions of his thoughts about the nature of knowledge and man’s place in relation to the Absolute in the wake of series of trials and tribulations. Furthermore, I argue that these light metaphors, when connected thematically as opposed to chronologically, trace the cyclical nature of Faust’s, and possibly man’s, intellectual enterprise. This thesis combines my own interpretation of the main text with those of other major scholars in the field in order to best argue my points. In the end it will be shown that the various light metaphors are connected to Faust’s personal development and display the perennial disposition of human activity as he searches for truth and knowledge in a world of uncertainty.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Throughout Goethe’s Faust, there are a number of light metaphors, which, when ordered thematically as opposed to chronologically, trace out Faust’s steady progression from one set of ideas to the next. Each of these metaphors appears at a period in time when Faust is contemplating, evaluating, and evolving his position in regards to his pursuit of knowledge and place in the universe. This thesis considers the various light metaphors in Goethe’s Faust to be external manifestations of Faust’s internal conflicts that are present throughout the entirety of the narrative. Ultimately, it is the intent of this thesis to delineate the meanings of the metaphors, based on both their symbolic meaning and the possible meaning implied by their position in the overarching narrative of the story, and tie them into Faust’s development as he searches for truth.

The exact nature of the relationship between Faust and the different embodiments of light should be made clear. Faust does not “make” or “construct” these metaphors in the literal sense. Never in the whole play does one see such a conscious creation and at no point does Faust usurp Goethe himself at a higher level of narrative by playing the part of the poet. Instead, this paper asserts that the connection between Faust and the light metaphors is based on the physiological properties of the eye, which were observed and detailed by Goethe in his Color Theory. “These [physiological] colors should surely be mentioned first, because they belong altogether to the subject, or in a great degree, to the eye itself.” (Goethe, 78, changes added) According to Goethe, any observer of light phenomena has a certain level of subjectivity. This subjectivity, as John Crary points out, was a revolutionary idea that changed the role of the observer in a fundamental way. “The corporeal subjectivity of the observer, which was a priori excluded from the concept
of the camera obscura, suddenly becomes the site on which an observer is possible. The human body, in all its contingency and specificity, generates “the spectrum of colour,” and thus becomes the active producer of optical experience.” (Crary, 69) It is the subjectivity of the observer that carries over into Faust and underlies the link between him and the light metaphors. Therefore, Faust ought to be considered the “active, autonomous producer of [his] own visual experience.” (Crary, 69, changes added) Faust’s light metaphors are an extension of his subjective vision. Thus, the light metaphors represent both his inner emotional and spiritual turmoil and his changing intellectual positions as he gains more experience from each episode of his journey. The subjective observer is the basis for this paper’s methodological approach. If each light metaphor can be considered in this way, reinforced by the thematic order in which they will be presented in this paper, then it becomes possible to see a clear development of Faust’s intellect, though to what end remains unclear.

Chapter two inspects the moon metaphor that Faust investigates beginning in part one act one. Here Faust’s focus is on achieving a direct connection to nature through by means of a magical ritual. The end results marks the beginning of his quest for knowledge.

Chapter three examines three metaphors that are centered on positions of the sun. In chapter three part one, the rising sun represents Faust’s desire to transcend into the heavenly realm instead of remaining any longer in his study. In chapter three part two, the rainbow, a refraction of the midday sun’s light, displays the need for an approach to learning that is focused on mediation between the earth and heaven, between human and transcendent. In chapter three part three, the setting sun becomes a manifestation of Faust’s heavenly soul that is always striving towards new knowledge and is always on the horizon of new discovery. Yet the setting sun suddenly takes on an additional meaning as the light moves inwardly.
Chapter four explains the implications of the inner light that Faust sees once he has become blind. What is this light? Where is it originating? This is perhaps Faust’s most important insight for the determination of human nature.
CHAPTER 2

MOONLIGHT

Oh sähst du, voller Mondenschein,
zum letztenmal auf meine Pein,
Den ich so manche Mitternacht
An diesem Pult herangewacht:
Dann über Büchern und Papier,
Trübsel’ger Freund, erschienst du mir!
Ach! Könnt’ ich doch auf Bergeshöh'n
In deinem lieben Lichte gehn,
Um Bergeshöhle mit Geistern schweben,
Auf Wiesen in deinem Dämmer weben,
Von allem Wissensqualm entladen,
In deinem Tau gesund mich baden! (Ln. 386-397)

As Faust addresses the moon, he expresses his feelings of pain, despair, and longing. Faust who is trapped within the high-vaulted walls of his Gothic chamber must resolve an inner conflict. Faust does not want to be at his desk bent over books and paper midnight after midnight; rather he aspires to walk freely beneath the moonlight in the company of spirits. In essence, Faust desires to leave behind the world of dust and stone and immerse himself in nature. As a result the moon becomes something more than just an object of Faust’s gaze. The moon comes to represent, in Faust’s eyes, his aspiration: to immerse himself in and be in harmony with nature so as to gain access to transcendental knowledge and the Absolute. Faust wants this harmony because he believes it will provide him with an insight of how the world, indeed the universe, works. He has come to this conclusion after spending his lifetime as a scholar trying to discover how the world around him functions. Though he is considered successful and accomplished by academia, Faust believes his lifelong investigation is a failure and the methods he has used to be little more than smoke and mirrors that have fundamental problems that prohibit his progress. The scholarly tradition, represented by the books and paper, has several
issues in particular: it tries to understand the world of the present by applying knowledge and
practices that are dead and outdated, has an unhealthy obeisance for its own tradition (Ln. 676-
677), and is literally searching for answers in the wrong place (Ln. 414-415). The other tradition,
the Christian tradition centered around the Catholic Church, which is represented symbolically
by the stained-glass window that distorts the moonlight as it enters Faust’s chamber (Ln. 400-
401), is also capable of guiding people away from truth by trying to force people’s views to
conform to its dogma. To Faust, these two options lack vision and this provides a crucial
problem that is the source of his inner conflict. “Faust’s striving is above all a striving to see, to
perceive.” (Brown, 51) These two lauded institutions prevent him, in both a passive and an active
manner respectively, from attaining a direct vision of the innermost forces that hold the universe
together (Ln. 382-383); something that Faust believes he can achieve only by being in harmony
with nature (Ln. 422-425). Faust’s quest begins when he turns to magic. He sees magic as an
alternate path that will bring him into nature’s fold. “It must be clearly understood that Faust’s
going over to magic implies his going over to nature.” (Jantz, 60) Faust truly believes that magic,
found in the book of Nostradamus and depicted in the signs of the macrocosm (Ln. btw. 429-
430) and the earth spirit (Ln. btw. 459-460), will allow him to transcend the border that currently
prohibits him and will gift him with a true, unobstructed vision of the cosmos. Faust confirms
this sentiment later when he speaks at the beginning of “Forest and Cave.”

Erhabener Geist, du gabst mir, gabst mir alles,
Warum ich bat. Du hast mir nicht umsonst
Dein Angesicht im Feuer zugewendet.
Gabst mir die herrliche Natur zum Königreich,
Kraft, sie zu fühlen, zu genießen. Nicht
Kalt staunenden Besuch erlaubst du nur,
Vergönnest mir in ihre tiefe Brust,
Wie in den Busen eines Freunds, zu schauen. (Ln. 3217-3224)
The earth spirit (Erhabener Geist) has, according to Faust, given him what he sought: harmony with nature. The language Faust uses here borders on the erotic. He is not just strolling beneath moonlight. He is feeling nature, savoring her. The earth spirit goes so far as to permit him to gaze deeply into nature’s breast, as one would gaze at the breast of a friend. Faust expresses his union with nature in such sexual terms in order to enhance the naturalness and intimacy of their harmony. Shortly thereafter, while Faust is filled with these powerful emotions, Faust’s gaze once more lands on a familiar object of light and vision: the moon. “Und steigt vor meinem Blick der reine Mond / Besänftigend herüber, schweben mir / Von Felsenwänden, aus dem feuchten Busch / Der Vorwelt silberne Gestalten auf / Und lindern der Betrachtung strenge Lust.” (Ln. 3235-3239) Just as his fortunes have ascended so does the moon into the night sky. The moon is present in each of these scenes when Faust is struck by these powerful, inner passions of the soul and is in need of a something with which to connect them. The moon remains as the representation of his desire to be in harmony with nature and through this harmony to perceive truth. The only difference between the two moments when he invokes the image is one of proximity. The former finds Faust at a far distance whilst the latter is close enough to enjoy (genießen). That Faust has arrived at this harmony brings about a certain implication. Scholarship and the Church, two established and highly respected institutions, are unable to help Faust with achieving his goal whilst magic apparently does. Why is the latter method able to give Faust the vision he seeks or at least focus his gaze in the right direction? To understand this one must return to that very first scene and examine the fundamental problems that Faust sees in these two institutions and how magic is unencumbered by any such shortcomings.

Faust states the problem he is facing within the first few lines of his opening monologue.

“Habe nun, ach! Philosophie, / Juristerei und Medizin / und leider auch Theologie / Durchaus

studiert, mit heißem Bemühn. Da steh’ ich nun, ich armer Tor, / Und bin so klug als wie zuvor!” (Ln. 354-359) These four subjects were the pillars of education during the Middle Ages and, thus, were considered sure paths to knowledge and truth.² However, in spite of a lifelong commitment to learning and scholarship, Faust feels that he is no closer to truth and knowledge than he was before. This is not a result of poor work on his part or an inability to understand the subjects at hand; as he declares later on, he is in fact more knowledgeable than his peers, making him more than well-versed in all matters of academia (Ln. 366-367). Instead Faust concludes that the problem is the scholarly tradition itself because it ultimately only leads to one unsatisfying conclusion: that one can know nothing (Ln. 364). Faust seems to have three particular criticisms of scholarship: it depends on dead knowledge and methods to investigate truth in the present and living world, it is too obsessed with its own tradition, and it is looking for answers in the wrong place. These three issues not only misdirect willing disciples by the nose (Ln. 363), but also impede progress. The very architecture of the scene displays how Faust feels restricted by the very institution to which he dedicated the greater part of his life. The high-vaulted Gothic chamber, lit only by a desk lamp, creates a sense of confinement similar to a cell in a prison and lends itself to Faust’s restless disposition.³ “Confined physically, intellectually, and historically, Faust seems to long for the transcendence symbolized by the strong verticals of the Gothic set.” (Brown, 48) The setting emphasizes both his goal and the physical, historical, and intellectual obstacles that lie in his way. Physically, the window and the high-vaulted walls prevent him from going out into nature and from seeing it more directly. Historically, the Gothic chamber represents a period of time in human history that would later be considered by those great minds of the eighteenth century to have been ruled by superstition and religious dogma. Intellectually,

however, the most important for Faust, his problem centers on the fact that scholarship lacks the ability to perceive truth, in other words it lacks insight into the cosmos while magic does (Ln. 377-385). What scholarship does offer is nothing more than dead knowledge.

Faust emphasizes this characteristic, of scholarly knowledge being ‘dead,’ with the language he invokes. He is not just surrounded by old books; worms are also eating away at the books just as one might expect them to consume a decomposing corpse. Subsequently the setting takes on a new dimension: it is no longer just a prison; rather it’s also a crypt. The books are the decomposing corpses of past scholars and the charts, glasses, and various instruments are the articles with which they have been buried so that if someone were to uncover it in a new age they could piece together what it was like in this other world (deine Welt…eine Welt, Ln. 409).

Faust’s logic leads him to the conclusion that the only insight this provides is insight into a world that no longer exists, rather than his world that exists in the present. His observation of this shortcoming does not end here.

Ist es nicht Staub, was die hohe Wand
Aus hundert Fächern mir verenget,
Der Trödel, der mit tausendfachem Tand
In dieser Mottenwelt mich drängt?
Hier soll ich finden, was mir fehlt?
Soll ich vielleicht in tausend Büchern lesen,
Daß überall die Menschen sich gequält,
Daß hie und da ein Glücklicher gewesen? –
Was grinsest du mir, hohler Schädel, her,
Als daß dein Hirn wie meines einst verwirret
Den leichten Tag gesucht und in der Dämmerung schwer,
Mit Lust nach Wahrheit, jämmerlich geirret? (Ln. 656-667)

Faust clearly does not believe that he will achieve his goal should he continue down this path. The skull comes to represent more than just the past; it also represents Faust’s own future. He has become even more assured in the accurateness of his earlier assessment of scholarship and the metaphor becomes even more acute: what was before a rotting corpse is now an empty skeleton. The skull and bookshelves, which make up the bones of the rest of the body, create a skeletal form. Altogether they represent the failed attempts of scholars in times long past to uncover truth. “With [Faust’s] apostrophe to the hollow skull that he sees among the many things crowding the shelves of his room, he makes his first direct admission that other men than himself have vainly desired truth, although this admission is only incidental to his personal feeling of the vanity of partial knowledge and of possessing instruments that can only furnish partial knowledge.” (Atkins, 31) It is to this tradition that Faust’s own corpse will be dedicated if he does not discover a new path to lead him from this fate. As Faust observes, the brain that once inhabited the skull was once like his own; it sought reality through unfulfilling means. Faust believes that transcendent truth and cosmic insight can only be reached by interacting and harmonizing with nature through magic (Ln. 422-425). Therefore, he must engage with the living world around him and not with the world of his ancestors. That is another world that is best left to the dead.

Faust identifies another major issue in the scholarly tradition, namely its obsession with itself. Faust interacts with two particular representatives of this slave-like adherence to the scholarly custom: Wagner, his assistant, and the old machine (alte Geräte, Ln. 676). Following Faust’s summoning of the earth spirit, Wagner enters and attempts to summarize what he has heard as a rendition of Greek tragedy (Ln. 523). This juxtaposes the way Faust thinks following
his magical experience and what Wagner, and the academic institution he represents, perceives as the culmination of human achievement. Wagner’s glorification of the scholarly tradition clashes with Faust’s prior criticism. “Verzeiht! es ist ein groß Ergetzen, / Sich in den Geist der Zeiten zu versetzen; / Zu schauen, wie vor uns ein weiser Mann gedacht, / Und wie wir’s dann zuletzt so herrlich weit gebracht.” (Ln. 570-573) Wagner believes there is no further progress to be made, that insight and truth has already been reached, and what can be known has already been made known by the earlier thinkers of the scholarly tradition. Hence his reckoning that man has reached his splendid heights at last and that truth lies in books, charts, and other items that have just been lambasted by Faust. Considering Faust’s later observations (Ln. 656-685), Wagner’s actions and thoughts reflect a thoughtless reverence for the authority of tradition. He is unable to recognize Faust’s mood as he enters the scene, he sees only what he wants to be there, and he is unable to take Faust’s words to heart. Instead he simply exits the chamber with the promise of future debate (Ln. 596-601). Faust’s displeasure at what he perceives to be baseless admiration for tradition is explained further on when he addresses the old machine. “Du alt Geräte, das ich nicht gebraucht, / Du stehst nur hier, weil dich mein Vater brauchte.” (Ln. 676-677) The old machine becomes a metaphor representing tradition. Faust’s tone and his derogatory comments concerning the relevance of such an outdated piece of equipment produces the sense that he considers any type of nostalgia for the past to be irrational and useless for his current endeavors. He states that the only reason the machine is there to begin with is because his father used it. This can be interpreted literally, Faust is tired of using outdated equipment, or figuratively, where the machine takes on the meaning of old mindsets and perspectives in how to see the world and measure the various forces through empirical observation. Considering the meaning of this machine in terms of the latter option, Faust rejects this method of looking at the
world because it does not bring one into harmony with and does not lift the veil of nature (Ln. 670-675). Instead these empirical methods keep Faust at a distance, merely measuring and recording minute phenomena as an observer remote from nature. Faust comes to the conclusion that what he must do is take an active role in investigating the world around him; in this he succeeds as seen in his later monologue in “Forest and Cave” (Ln. 3217-3224). “Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast, / Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen. / Was man nicht nützt, ist eine schwere Last, / Nur was der Augenblick erschafft, das kann er nützen.” (Ln. 682-685) Rather than inheriting knowledge from a world long past, rather than trying to use dead knowledge to try and gain possession of truth in the living world, and rather than simply trusting tradition to provide the answers, one must capture it for himself in the present. This is Faust’s conclusion and his solution to the problem at hand. He will acknowledge the ideas and methods of the past that have been handed down to him, but he will ultimately walk new paths on his quest.

Faust’s final critique of the scholarly tradition centers on the issue of location. Where does one go to find knowledge if not in the books and papers written by philosophers and thinkers famous for their wisdom? Clearly the Gothic chamber is not the place to be. Its restrictive and prison-like atmosphere as well as its crypt like qualities does not lend itself to being a fruitful and progressive source of truth and knowledge. Moreover, the scholarly tradition that this room represents has its gaze fixed upon areas where Faust has had no results (Ln. 354-356). Faust finds his answer as he gazes at the moon. After the moon becomes a metaphor for his desire of transcendent insight and harmony, he is left with only one option: nature. “Und fragst du noch, warum dein Herz / Sich bang in deinem Busen klemmt? / Warum ein unerklärter Schmerz / Dir alle Lebensregung hemmt? / Statt der lebendigen Natur, / Da Gott die Menschen schuf hinein, / Umgibt im Rauch und Moder nur / Dich Tiergeripp’ und Totenbein. / Flieh! auf!
hinaus ins weite Land!” (Ln. 410-418) Faust’s logic is clear. If one wants to know and understand the world around them, then one must go out into that world. Understanding of nature requires that nature be investigated! Do not remain, Faust cries, in a room with your spirit cramped and constrained. Go out into nature. It is only there you will find your answer and learn what you desire. His rallying cry to flee into the land is a projection and continuance of his own aspiration, which he explained during his address to the moon. He wishes to go out into the world and walk beneath the moonlight and look about into nature’s various features (Ln. 392-395). Some of the language he uses takes on a religious undertone; it becomes clear that he also wishes to be baptized in nature by the forces of magic (Ln. 397). This helps, perhaps, to explain his current obsession with magic. Faust narrates this experience later with erotic language at the beginning of “Forest and Cave” (Ln. 3217-3224). Truth cannot be found in a classroom of Gothic stone, but in nature’s classroom.

The scholarly tradition of the Middle Ages is not the only wrong path one can take. Christianity, its dogma and representative parties, are also capable of misleading and failing a person in pursuit of knowledge. “Wo selbst das Himmelslicht / Trüb durch gemalte Scheiben bricht!” (Ln. 400-401) Faust is unable to perceive moonlight without the interference of the stained glass window. Considering all the meaning that seems to connect Faust to the moon metaphor, his desire for harmony with nature and insight into cosmic knowledge, this presents a major problem especially when bearing in mind what this architectural feature can symbolize. Stained glass windows and high-vaulted Gothic chambers were common features of many Catholic churches located throughout Europe and more specifically Germany. One must not forget that Faust takes place prior to the Reformation, thus Europe is still under the censure of the Catholic Church. In metaphorical terms, the stained glass window represents interpretive
control akin to *censorship*. The moonlight streams down onto the high-vaulted tower where Faust resides. However, rather than remaining in its pure form it must filter through a physical barrier that alters its appearance. This act of physical alteration is analogous to *interpretation* and *censorship*. The stained glass window is filtering the moonlight and the product of this interaction is an impure, censored form. In a metaphorical sense Christian ideology and the Church present Faust with their interpretation of nature and knowledge that corresponds to their dogma, rather than allowing Faust to arrive at his own conclusions. In this regard, Goethe seems to be presenting a critique that would later, contemporaneous to the time of the narrative, be brought forth by Martin Luther: the Church should not have a monopoly on the interpretation of the Bible. By doing so it places a man, in this case the Pope, in the position of divining God’s will on Earth. Is this not the same foolishness that Faust witnessed within academia? The Church censors reality in order to control how Faust looks at the world and considering Faust’s proclivity for pursuing unaltered and unembellished forms for the sake of obtaining a clear understanding of nature, this comes across as its own ironic form of sacrilege. The end product of this religious view is as unsatisfying to Faust as the world of scholarship and he continues undeterred in his pursuit of truth.

Now that Faust has effectively abandoned both the scholarly and Christian traditions as means to discover truth and to harmonize with nature, there remains the question of what methodology remains open to him?

Drum hab’ ich mich der *Magie* ergeben,
Ob mir durch Geistes Kraft und Mund
Nicht manch Geheimnis würde kund;
Daß ich nicht mehr mit saurem Schweiß
Zu sagen brauch, was ich nicht weiß;
Daß ich erkenne, was die Welt
Im innersten zusammenhält,
Schau’ alle Wirkenskraft und Samen,
Faust has decided to use magic because it promises him unimpeded perception of the most fundamental forces of the universe; he wants to understand the same forces that govern all extents of the macrocosm and preserve its harmony. Magic will reveal all the things that lie hidden, which men have attempted and failed to grasp through words. “Faust seeks direct perception of the cosmos without the mediation of words; both in its immediacy and in its object […]” (Brown, 50) Faust’s aversion to words becomes more apparent when he scrutinizes the sign of the macrocosm in the book of Nostradamus (Ln. 419-420, 430). Though located in a book it does not provide knowledge through the medium of words; rather it is a sign, a depiction of reality that places all things that comprise the universe in order.⁴ “The sign of the macrocosm inspires an inner vision of the harmonious interplay of those forces, natural (“forces of Nature”) and at the same time divine (“forces of Heaven”), that make up the total scale of being.” (Jantz, 27) The sign of the macrocosm fills Faust with hope not only because it provides an opportunity for truth, but also because it symbolizes the harmonious totality that he desires. However, a problem arises when he scrutinizes the sign further. Faust realizes that he cannot possess the power imbued in the sign of the macrocosm, the power of creative nature (Ln. 438); rather it belongs to God (Ln. 439). Consequently he declares that the sign is merely a show and turns then to the sign of the earth spirit (Ln. 460). Its effects are immediate. He feels power, his body glows as if he had drunk wine, and he describes a newfound courage with which he can bear the sorrows of the earth (Ln. 462-465). Shortly thereafter Faust summons the earth spirit only to find that he is unable to bear its fiery form (Ln. 485). He has lost his vision and is in a quasi-blind state. One thing to consider when examining this scene is that there is only one other point in the entirety of Faust when Faust loses his vision following the appearance of the moon metaphor

and is a direct result of the actions of a magical spirit, “Midnight” (Ln. 11499-11510). Faust is blinded after the deaths of Baucis and Philemon when the spirit of care passes into his chambers and confronts him about the crimes he has committed and the pain he has inflicted on others in the blind pursuit of his goals. This is especially important when considering the moon metaphor. In this later scene, although Lynceus, the keeper of the watchtower, describes seeing the moon (Ln. 11294), it is absent at the moment when Faust becomes blind. Instead Faust sees another light burning brightly within himself (Ln. 11500). “Der Mond verbirgt sein Licht –” (Ln. 469) In the earlier scene, just before he summons the earth spirit into being, moonlight is obscured completely as well. There is one major difference between the two scenes. On the one hand when Faust summons the earth spirit into being and the moon disappears he is unable to see anything. On the other hand when Faust loses his sight as punishment for his misdeed and the moon is equally absent he is able to perceive an inner light. Could it be that these three sources of light are connected to one another? Faust sought truth and cosmic insight in scholarship and he passively dismisses any censored images of reality. He attempts to gain access to true knowledge via magic, but the spirit denies him and states that what little Faust is able to see of his form is only that which Faust can comprehend (Ln. 513-514). In the later scene he is blinded by a being of magic, the spirit of care, and is able to perceive a form of inner light. Considering Faust’s desires, how they are embodied in the moon metaphor, and how in each scene the moon disappears prior to the arrival of these spirits it can be concluded that what Faust sees within himself at the end, is that which he had sought all along, but was inaccessible to him earlier in the play: *insight into transcendental knowledge*. Problems only arose because he could not fathom that what he sought was not in the external, physical nature of the universe around him.
Hence, when he summoned the earth spirit into being he was unable to behold its form. Later on at the time of his death, Faust finally achieves insight or sight into himself.

In this sense magic was no more successful than the scholarly tradition and the Church insofar as providing him with an answer he could readily understand or a true connection to the Absolute. However, magic gave him exactly what he needed in order to further his quest for truth. What ultimately makes magic more appropriate to Faust’s endeavors is that it engages with a living world without censorship and through feeling, rather than philosophy and dogma. Magic seems able, in the end with the spirit of care, to take all the emotions and passions that connect Faust to the moon metaphor and transport them back into him, breaking down the seemingly infinite distance that separates them. The moon disappears in both the summoning scene and blinding scene at the arrival of magical elements because they are moments of great insight when Faust is able to overcome his physical, historical, and intellectual shortcomings by at first failing and then achieving an inner harmony. In the end the moon metaphor is more than just the representation of Faust’s desires. The moon itself merely reflects the light of another source, the sun. As a metaphor it does much the same. It reflects Faust’s desires; and just as the moon gives way to the sun, so too does the metaphor eventually give way to the true source of light within Faust. Far before then, however, the moonlight and the night give way and a new light metaphor is revealed in the coming dawn.
CHAPTER 3
SUNLIGHT

3.1 The Rising Sun

At the very end of “Night,” Faust’s inner conflict continues. In his pursuit of knowledge and insight he can choose to remain in the cold, dark, and stagnant world of his study or he can take a new path into the world proper. If Faust decides to stay, if he turns his back to the earthly sun, then his existence shall become equal to that of a worm (Ln. 706-709). This particular characterization instantly brings to mind an earlier point in this scene when Faust observed and criticized many of the objects in his study, some of which were books being eaten away at by worms (Ln. 403). Considering the metaphorical context of these earlier lines, this allusion has the effect of pointing out once more the futility of that particular path to knowledge and the foolish ranks of masters and doctors who walk upon it (Ln. 360). The other option is far more difficult. The entrance to this alternate path is lined with fire and many a man has been brought to his knees before it (Ln. 710-717); nevertheless it seems to promise a higher existence and also a new means by which Faust can come closer to knowledge: through deed (Ln. 705). This stands in stark contrast to the place that Faust clearly wants to leave, which is focused either on the study of things from a time long past or the acceptance of and adherence to religious dogma. In essence Faust stands upon the threshold of two worlds and he must make a choice: to remain where he is or move forward.

As a result of this inner conflict, Faust casts his gaze about hoping to find something that will provide him with the proper impetus to choose the right path. “Doch warum heftet sich mein Blick auf jene Stelle? / Ist jenes Fläschchen dort den Augen ein Magnet? / Warum wird mir auf einmal lieblich helle, / Als wenn im nächt’gen Wald uns Mondenglanz umweht?” (Ln. 686-689)
Earlier in “Night,” when Faust’s gaze comes upon the moon and its light, he is looking for something with which he can connect his inner emotional turmoil and, to a certain extent, project his desire for knowledge and truth. At the earlier time the moon became a metaphor representing his wish to gain access to the most fundamental knowledge of the universe by harmonizing with nature vis-à-vis a magical ritual involving the summoning of an earth spirit. At the end of “Night” a new light metaphor is not immediately depicted, nonetheless the object that he does find gives him a feeling reminiscent, but not equal, to that which he felt when staring at the moon metaphor. “Ich grüße dich, du einzige Phiole, […]” (Ln. 690). In this case, Faust’s gaze ultimately lands on a vial of poison. Considered in the context of the rest of the scene, its meaning becomes fairly specific. Faust at once finds that the vial reduces the pain he feels at the rejection of the earth spirit and also calms his restless striving to a certain degree (Ln. 696-697). Therefore, he is attracted to the idea of committing suicide for two main reasons: (1) death would allow him to transcend the limitations of his mortal coil, which would then allow him access to that which the earth spirit denied him, transcendental knowledge, and (2) suicide is an act, a deed. In a very literal way death would allow him to ascend to new spheres of pure deed (Ln. 705). Faust does not drink the poison, yet his almost suicide combined with the Easter song of Christ’s resurrection brings together the ideas of death and resurrection, or rebirth, on a spiritual level. Spiritually he is renewed, reinvigorated and ready to go out into the world. He will walk that path he earlier spoke about in order to avoid living the life of a worm (Ln. 703-704).

The vial of poison affects Faust not only on a spiritual level, but also an intellectual level. Faust’s ‘suicide’ symbolizes a sharp departure from his old ways of searching for knowledge. Indeed, the manner of death is reminiscent of another famous death in the Western canon. As Plato records in his Apologia, Socrates is ordered to kill himself due to his corruption of the
youth of Athens by drinking a cup of hemlock. Socrates bids his friends farewell, drinks the poison and departs. Thus, the act of Faust using this ceremonial bowl to drink the poison implies that Faust’s ‘death’ is a departure from the tradition of Western learning at whose head stands the dominating figure of Socrates, a tradition that is an integral part of the system of academia and scholarship to which he has dedicated much criticism. Therefore, the vial of poison comes to symbolize both a spiritual and intellectual departure within Faust. However, the full effect of these two levels of change is only realized in combination with another metaphor with profound implications: the rising sun. The rising sun as a light metaphor shows a certain continuity or progress from this point of departure into the new world of experience.

Earlier in “Night,” a connection was made between Faust and the light metaphor of the moon and its light. The metaphor represented his desire to immerse himself in and harmonize with nature in order to attain cosmic knowledge and access to the Absolute. However, the methods that Faust employed in order to accomplish this harmony failed and so he looks to find a new path to knowledge, just as he did when he shifted away from academia, scholarship, and, symbolically, the Church. The establishment of a new metaphor accompanies this shift in methodology: the rising sun. The rising sun is present in this scene as well as two other scenes in *Faust*. In each case it presents a variation on the themes of rebirth and ascendance. At the end of “Night,” the rising sun displays Faust’s movement from his chamber and from the old world of stagnant knowledge into the outside world and the new sphere of pure deed (Ln. 702-719). This spectacle is continued in the following scene, “Outside the City Gates,” wherein Faust exits the city and descends toward the nearby town, all the while describing the nature around him. Faust once more describes the rising sun and the effects of its lights as he observes the movement of people from their village into the surrounding countryside as winter’s hold breaks (Ln. 903-940).
In both of these examples there is a very clear movement from an enclosed area into the surrounding world; in essence, each scene contains a “birth” or “rebirth” as a person or group of people departs from a womb-like place and arrives into the real world.

“Ein Feuerwagen schwebt auf leichten Schwingen / An mich heran! Ich fühle mich bereit, / Auf neuer Bahn den Äther zu durchdringen, / Zu neuen Sphären reiner Tätigkeit.” (Ln. 702-705) When Faust waxes poetically about the rising sun he is still imprisoned. He is still in his high-vaulted Gothic chamber and his desire to escape his confines and to achieve a higher level of clarity is even stronger. Once more Faust’s surroundings take on new meaning. The Gothic chamber has played the part as a symbol of academia and its intellectually confining qualities, as a tomb holding the “corpses” of past thinkers who tried and failed to arrive at truth, and now it plays the part of a womb. This changes the way one can look at several different things in this speech. The worm, which he shall remain if he does not walk this new path, is more than just a lowly animal; it is also a human fetus that, if unable to exit the womb on its own accord, will become a stillbirth (Ln. 707). This presents a particularly strong reinforcement of his earlier opinions on academia and its futile course. The fires lining the passage into the new world are symbolic of the pains of childbirth (Ln. 717). The fire chariot becomes the vehicle of childbirth, the placenta covered in red blood (Ln. 702). The ceremonial chalice filled with poison and the attempted suicide can be seen as a failed abortion (Ln. 720). All these different aspects of a birth are further enhanced by the content of the Easter choir’s song that praises Christ’s resurrection, or rebirth. This same symbolism of birth is present in the story of Christ’s burial, when Joseph of Arimathea also places Christ’s corpse within a tomb from which he will ultimately depart – from an enclosed space to the outside world. These overlapping themes of birth and rebirth underlie one of the things that Faust wants: a new beginning. Faust, after
realizing the error of his lifelong dedication to scholarship and after being rejected by the earth spirit, is desperate to start over. Like he did in the presence of the moon metaphor, he channels this desire for rebirth and connects it to the light metaphor of the rising sun, which in turn mimics Christ’s rise into heaven following his rebirth/resurrection. The rising sun itself takes part in a life-giving cycle: each day begins when the sun rises over the horizon signaling the birth of a new day.

Likewise, the rising sun is connected to the cycle of seasons: spring begins when the cold of winter gives way to the warmth of the sun. The rising sun gives birth to new life in transition from night to day and winter to spring. The way in which the green of the valley and multitude of colorful flowers break through the ice and snow of old winter is similar to how Faust has begun to break out from the cold, monochrome Gothic chamber. Also of note is the way the multitude of colors can be seen as an allusion to the stained-glass window from the first scene. In contrast to the windows cold and artificial features, the fields of flowers present an organic and living scene, the living nature that Faust encouraged others to seek with him (Ln. 414) In each case, the rising sun is present. Thus, the rising sun becomes a light metaphor signaling a new beginning.
and, Faust’s own rebirth and the rebirth of his intellectual pursuit in the face of uncertainty. In Faust’s view, the rising sun is fully capable of representing this desire because of its natural properties as a bringer of life and its role in the natural cycles of the physical world. However, the light metaphor and the language Faust uses to refer to it show that there is more to it than just a desire to start anew. The rising sun and how Faust interacts with it belie another longing altogether: his wish for transcendence.

When Faust was first addressing the moon earlier in “Night” and when he was attempting to assimilate himself into nature via the earth spirit, Faust had a strong desire for transcendence. “Confined physically, intellectually, and historically, Faust seems to long for the transcendence symbolized by the strong verticals of the Gothic set.” (Brown, 48) Although Brown goes on to state that there is more of a movement outward than upward, he ignores the fact that any motion outwards is, in fact, upward when considered in the context of the macrocosm. The earth being a sphere makes it possible to interpret any outward movement as also being upward; this is especially clear when considering the rising sun’s trajectory. From the vantage point of an observer, the position that Faust occupies in this scene, the rising sun would appear to be going outward; nevertheless, an observer would also be able to reference to it on a vertical axis as well.

The rising sun, or even the sun on its own, possesses different qualities and has different symbolic associations than that of the moon, which will be discussed at length later on. This marks a major shift in Faust’s approach to knowledge: if he cannot breach the veil that lies between him and transcendental truths on earth, i.e. his episode with the earth spirit, then he will have to follow a more transcendental trajectory. “At the same time, the direction of Faust’s striving has changed. Up until the sunset speech his attempts to escape were all appeals to heaven or calls for a spirit to descend, that is, all vertical motions. In the “Prologue in Heaven”
Mephistopheles had compared man to a grasshopper; the image is exactly appropriate to Faust’s repeated unsuccessful leaps into the infinite. The characteristic motion of Nature in this play, by contrast, is circular: the archangels described a cosmos in constant rotation.” (Brown, 59) Faust hints at this assimilation and his subsequent ascendance by referring the rising sun as a fire chariot (Ln. 702) He is alluding first of all to the Bible, specifically the story of Elijah’s ascendance into heaven. “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” (2 Kings 2.11) Faust equivocates his feeling of ascension with that of Elijah’s. But one cannot forget that the chariot of fire was also an important part of Greek mythology. It was the vehicle upon which Apollo, god of the sun, rose every day to the highest parts of the heavens and descended in the evening. Moreover, Apollo was not only the god of the sun, but also of knowledge and poetry. In this sense, the light metaphor of the rising sun and Faust’s reference to it as a fire chariot is perfect for Faust as it becomes a metaphor that represents his desire for transcendence and, in connection with the imagery of Apollo and his godly traits, a return to Faust’s original goal, the search for knowledge, which, when considering all of Apollo’s traits, inevitably draws Faust in the direction of poetry– he utilizes poetry particularly well when describing the beatific scene of spring (Ln. 903-915). In both cases there is the movement from one a low point to high point, which traces the same path Faust wishes to ascend upon.

“After the earth spirit scene the focus of striving shifts openly from gnosis to mediated knowledge of the Absolute through activity in the world.” (Brown, 57) Deed, rather than the word will be the medium through which he gains knowledge. Hence, in “Before the City Gate,” Faust has decided to venture out into the world. No longer will he dally in the world of his study
and instead he will learn to interact and experience nature. As Brown points out, this is due to a shift in the focus of his striving. Thus, as the many different people venture out for the Easter celebration Faust sees the scene as a moment of seasonal change. This brings to mind once more the connection between Faust and the rising sun metaphor and so assimilates him further into the nature’s cycle whilst highlighting his departure from the old world, or in this case the world of winter. However, it must be noted that while Faust has left his chamber he does not mix himself into the crowds of people. He remains an observer throughout the duration of the scene. “Despite any momentary self-identification with the mass of humanity, Faust is so much an individual that he no more merges with his environment than does the Wagner who is so conscious of being out of place.” (Atkins, 35) Faust occupies an aloof position as an observer, which connects Faust once more with the metaphor of the rising sun. The sun occupies a place that is in the highest realm, the outermost circle, of the macrocosm found in the book of Nostradamus and well above the earth; yet it always remains connected via its light. This indicates the shift in Faust’s approach to his intellectual undertaking even clearer. He believes that by going out into nature and observing it more directly he will be able to discover truth; he is reiterating the point he made in scene one when encouraged everyone to go out into living nature (Ln. 414). Therefore, the rising sun is the perfect metaphor with which Faust can connect while his intellectual perspective undergoes major changes. He realizes that he cannot achieve an unmitigated connection to the Absolute vis-à-vis magic in his study shut off from nature, so Goethe provides a light metaphor that correctly portrays his newfound ambition to rise like Elijah, Apollo and Jesus to the heavenly realms of the macrocosm. The rising sun is something, which seems to extend and thrust out into the sky. This particular character of the light metaphor comes to fruition when Faust describes the features of his soul.
Du bist dir nur des einen Triebs bewußt;
O lerne nie den andern kennen!
Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;
Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust,
Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen. (Ln. 1110-1117)

One of Faust’s two souls together contains the same qualities of the rising sun and this
characteristic has been on display throughout the last two scenes where the light metaphor has
been present. The poison, something that would have allowed Faust to transcend his mortal form
and join the Absolute, calmed his striving to a certain degree (Ln. 697). That is because his
transcendent soul would have been freed from its earthly prison. This also explains Faust’s
spiritual reawakening upon hearing the Easter choir (Ln. 770). Christ leaves behind the world
and his soul transcends into heaven. Thus, Faust’s transcendent soul is once more mollified by
the idea of a resurrection/rebirth. However, because Faust does not drink the poison, his soul is
never able to fully escape and in time Faust comes to believe that it will only be fully satisfied by
him attempting to achieve transcendence without any type of shortcut; through deed Faust must
transcend the boundary that separates him from the higher sphere of truth. Hence, the
establishment of the rising sun metaphor ultimately comes to emphasize all these aspects of
Faust’s desires in his pursuit of truth.

The rising sun, just as the moon in “Night,” has become a metaphor for Faust’s desires. It
represents his longings for rebirth and transcendence into the higher realms of the macrocosm for
the sake of pursuing knowledge. How Faust refers to the rising sun and the context in which this
light metaphor plays a role allows the sun to accumulate more and more meaning that is integral
to understanding the fundamental shift Faust’s perception of knowledge undergoes. He no longer
believes that he will be able to achieve some perfect connection to the Absolute through magic.
Instead, he realizes that he must reach out to this knowledge through deeds and actions. By experiencing the world he will be able to arrive at a higher level of understanding that his former methods have denied him, just as the earth spirit did. The rising sun clarifies entirely his new methodology and enlightens him as to what he ought to do next in his quest. He must act and through that action transcend into the heavens like Elijah, Apollo, and Jesus. However, as Brown points out, his dialectical movements upwards are bound to fail and like a grasshopper, how Mephistopheles describes humans, no matter how high he jumps he is bound to fall back to earth (Brown, 59). Unfortunately, it will take a devastating experience, his love affair with Margarete, to reveal to him the shortcomings of his newfound beliefs and methods. In their stead a powerful new way to find knowledge will be revealed and this new methodology will be accompanied by a light metaphor that is the far different from the one in this scene: the rainbow.

3.2 The Rainbow

If the rising sun metaphor represents Faust’s wishes for rebirth and ascension to a higher realm of understanding and knowledge, then the meaning that is imbued in the rainbow within the “Charming Landscape” is the result of a sharp lesson in the story of the foolishness of mortals trying to become gods. The nature of Faust’s fall from heaven is rooted in the horrible ramifications of his love affair with Margarete who, after killing her child, is executed for infanticide. Faust, so shocked by the madness of it all and knowing that his own desires were the source of their misfortune, is overcome with grief. From there he falls into a depression; he is no longer Apollo or Elijah on a fire chariot climbing into the heavens, rather he is Icarus who ignored his father’s warnings of vanity and whose downfall came after flying too close to the sun.
It is here in the “Charming Landscape” and the beginning of part two of the play that Faust’s perspective on knowledge and the Absolute changes once more. It is the change in perspective that leads Faust to another visual phenomenon of light that becomes a metaphor: the rainbow. Essentially, the rainbow represents Faust’s acceptance of the limitations of his mortality in connection to knowledge and the Absolute – he cannot grasp this knowledge directly, access to the Absolute must be mediated. Faust will always need a medium in order to see at least a reflection of what lies behind nature’s veil. The rainbow also represents his understanding of the various types of knowledge that exist and the many different types of experiences that one can undergo to reach them. The rainbow, alluding to the covenant between Noah and God following the great flood, also shows Faust’s acceptance of the order of the macrocosm and his place on earth in sharp relief to the other celestial bodies that represent the realm of God. This great transition of Faust’s mind comes at the same moment of change from part one of the tragedy to part two, foreshadowing the many changes to come and the movement from the small world into the world at large – Faust, just like the green landscape about him, is renewed.

Wenn der Blüten Frühlingsregen
Über alle schwebend sinkt,
Wenn der Felder grüner Segen
Allen Erdgebornen blinkt,
Kleiner Elfen Geistergröße
Eilet, wo sie helfen kann,
Ob er heilig, ob er böse,
Jammert sie der Unglücksmann. (Ln. 4613-4620)

The scene opens with the words of Ariel, a spirit who was also present during the preceding scenes in part one. Faust’s unconscious body is being surrounded by elven spirits as they do their best to revive him amidst the early morning darkness. The actions of the elven spirits and Ariel depict a scene that Faust longed for at the beginning of part one. “For the nature that Ariel and the other spirits weave about Faust is nothing other than the Nature he sought in that perennial
speech to the moon, where he longed to hover and weave with the spirits in the moonlight. In that speech and in the vision of the macrocosm Faust longed to bathe; here the elves actually do bathe him, in order, as they say, to return him to the light.” (Brown, 136) The religious nature of this scene becomes ever more overt in regards to his rebirth, which is understandably connected to the arrival of the rising sun. The rising sun, which is connected to Faust’s desire for rebirth, comes right at the moment that he and the surrounding landscape come back to life. “The symbolism of bathing as an act of rebirth is even more open here than in those early passages. There we had to hear the religious overtones in the language, but here they are explicit: Faust rises as a new Adam in Paradise.” (Brown, 136) All of this is connected to his experiences in the previous scenes of part one. The tragic ending to his love affair with Margarete seems to have had a traumatic effect on his psyche. Hence, he is bathed in the water of the Lethe. The Lethe River was renown in Greek mythology for its ability to make the drinker forget his past memories. Therefore, Faust forgets, or at least dulls, what he experienced prior to his arriving in the Charming Landscape. This presents yet another point of departure. This is not dissimilar to the departure point in “Night” when Faust begins his foray into magic and later when he tries to commit suicide prior to the arrival of the rising sun and the Easter chorus. The question now is: what is his destination and why?

In order to answer these questions, one must first consider the setting of the departure point, namely part one as a whole. “The speech recreates the world […]” (Brown, 137). Faust’s speech does not just recreate the world, but also shows a clear transition from night into day. The world is recreated not only by the oncoming dawn, but also by Faust’s starting location. For one, he is no longer within any type of confined place like a Gothic chamber or city. The scene begins and ends with him in the open-air landscape surrounded on all sides by nature. This displays the
lack of conflict between spaces that was present earlier when Faust was forced to conceive of far off spaces of nature from the perspective of a subjective observer. The end effect of this is to transport the reader and Faust from the small, inner world that is the primary perspectival setting in part one to the large, outside world that is the setting of part two. This makes sense especially when taking into consideration Faust’s many adventures in part two that bring him into contact with multiple worldly powers, i.e. the German emperor. Another effect of this change is that Faust’s, and by extension man’s place in the overarching macrocosm is reaffirmed. Without even considering the rainbow, which also has much to do with emphasizing this, Faust’s position out in nature has the effect of bringing both vertical and horizontal reference points together: vertically, he recognizes the hierarchy of the sun over his place on earth, horizontally, he no longer has to project his longing since he is not within an enclosed space looking out at nature. Faust is standing immersed in nature. This explains his more objective viewpoint that he uses to describe the landscape he sees after he wakes (Ln. 4679-4685). With both the vertical and horizontal axes set into place, the plot can move forward with lasting effects on Faust’s ideas regarding his quest for knowledge.

Des Lebens Pulse schlagen frisch lebendig,
Ätherische Dämmerung milde zu begrüßen;
Du, Erde, warst auch diese Nacht beständig
Und atmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füßen,
Beginnest schon, mit Lust mich zu umgeben,
Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschließen,
Zum höchsten Dasein immerfort zu streben.
(Ln. 4679-4685)

Faust’s speech begins with a description of both his and the surrounding landscapes rebirth. Life’s pulse is once more pounding away after a long night that is ending with the coming dawn. The rising sun, therefore, arrives once more at the moment of rebirth following his spiritual baptism at the hands of the elven spirits. There is, however, a subtle difference between Faust’s
reaction to the rising sun in this scene and the earlier ones in “Night” and “Before the City Gate.”

“This is really the first time in the play (although the speeches at the beginning of the “Walpurgis Night” tend in this direction) that Faust speaks objectively about Nature and not about his reaction to it.” (Brown, 143) This difference indicates a major change in Faust’s way of thinking and would have been unthinkable throughout much of part one. This is, in fact, an affirmation of the immeasurable difference between his place in the macrocosm and God’s. His use of logos as opposed to deed shows that he is retreating from his earlier position. Then he was asserting his belief that his place would be amongst the heavens, the place of God who holds creative power over the cosmos. Now, by using logos, “word,” instead of pure deed, he makes it clear that he no longer considers the idea that man could have any access to such absolute power and knowledge valid. “[…] He describes only what he actually observes, accurately and vividly, with none of the insistent intrusion of his ego that there belied the apparent objectivity of his measured words. Nature is still God-Nature – hence the “paradise” in which he places himself as almost impersonal observer – but there is no equating of the dynamic interplay of its forces with the very different phenomena of sentient human life.” (Atkins, 103) Faust now recognizes his place in the macrocosm and this is reflected in his more impartial stance to the rising sun and its earlier metaphorical implications. Lacking the “intrusion of his ego” the rising sun metaphor becomes a useful point of contrast for the moment when the rainbow metaphor is introduced, showing a clearer and more distinct transition from one way of thinking to another. “Sie tritt hervor! – und leider schon geblendet / Kehr’ ich mich weg, vom Augenschmerz durchdrungen.” (Ln. 4702-4703) Faust rejects his earlier position further when he turns his gaze away from the sun. These two lines present an intratextual reference to Faust’s reaction to the Earth Spirit (Ln. 482-485) and the rising sun on Easter morning (Ln. 708-709). In the first, Faust was unable to bear the
sight of the earth spirit and this represented his inability to access the Absolute and absolute knowledge. At the time, he took this to mean that he had simply not yet found the right path, but here it becomes clear that Faust is willing to accept the utter impossibility of ever doing so. “This speech recreates the world around him, this renounces direct vision of the sun-Absolute to accept the world as the proper sphere of activity for man.” (Brown, 137) This realization humbles him and allows him to reconsider a person who averted their gaze. Hence, he is less radical in his judgment of that type of person. Earlier he believed that the person who does this is a fool and shall live the life of a worm. He made it clear that he considered this type of existence a rather horrid possibility and this helped to push him towards a new path. Now, however, things have changed and his experiences have taught him otherwise. An averted gaze is not the indication of a worthless life and instead it is the inevitable position for any mortal. It is at this point, when Faust relinquishes his earlier preconceptions, that Faust once again inserts himself and his feelings back into the story. Shortly thereafter comes another light metaphor to reflect his new ideas.

So bleibe denn die Sonne mir im Rücken!
Der Wassersturz, das Felsenriff durchbrausend,
Ihn schau’ ich an mit wachsendem Entzücken.
Von Sturz zu Sturzen wälzt er jetzt in tausend,
Dann abertausend Strömen sich ergießend,
Hoch in die Lüfte Schaum an Schäume sausend.
Allein wie herrlich, diesem Sturm ersprießend,
Wölbt sich des bunten Bogens Wechseldauer,
Bald rein gezeichnet, bald in Luft zerfließend,
Umher verbreitend duftig kühle Schauer.
Der spiegelt ab das menschliche Bestreben.
Ihm sinne nach, und du begreifst genauer:
Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben.
(Ln. 4715-4727)
It is with the rising sun at his back that he moves forward. This implies greatly Faust’s opinion of his earlier ideas. He was neither Apollo, nor Elijah, nor was he ever Jesus Christ being born again in immortal form and leaving the earth behind; rather, Faust is a man and his place is on earth. The rising sun is no longer an appropriate light metaphor to represent his newfound mindset in the wake of these recent revelations. Something else must be found that is more adequate and draws a proper relationship between his ideas and the light metaphor’s own characteristics. His eye, as he points out, is too weak to gaze directly into the sun, into the Absolute. Instead, Faust must look for another type of light. In “Night,” Faust was able to bear the sight of the moon because moonlight is weaker than sunlight. This is because moonlight is only a reflection of another source of light, the sun. This also explains his many misconceptions and his confusion when faced with the earth spirit since it also was a pure source of light. He emphasizes his intellectual shift by turning his back to the pure sunlight and instead he directs his gaze to a mediated form of light: the rainbow. For this reason, the rainbow is a perfect specimen for Faust. “Indeed, such is his present objectivity that the rainbow appearing and disappearing in the shifting cloud of vapor above the falls suggests to him not the usual symbolic associations of hope or transcendental promise but, as its impermanence demands, a mirroring of human endeavor.” (Atkins, 104) The rainbow’s physical properties present a clear connection to what Faust now considers to be the limits of human endeavor. Refracted light is an indirect representation of the sun-Absolute and it also presents the entirety of the visual color spectrum, which Goethe studied to a great extent in his Color Theory. “We observed that all nature manifests itself by means of colors to the sense of sight.” (Goethe, 73) This is a broad statement on the ability of the eye to see the world by varying degrees and differences of light and color. Without variation, as one can see in the rainbow, the eye would be unable to properly observe
the outside world and would be useless. Therefore, when Faust declares that one should fasten his sight on this point to gain insight (Ln. 4736), he infers that by careful study of mediated natural phenomena one can pierce the veil of nature, to which he referred in “Night” (Ln. 670-675), and gain a small measure of understanding of the fundamental nature of the universe. This is a marked difference from his earlier goal of upturning the veil entirely.

The rainbow also presents another possible meaning for Faust. In the Biblical story of Noah, following the great floods that wiped out much of the human race from existence, God and Noah made a pact: that God would never again send a flood (Genesis 9:8-17). This pact was emulated by Mephistopheles’ pact with Faust, which reminds one indirectly of the pact Mephistopheles also made with God that causes one to remember that God is still present in the drama. In this scene, the rainbow has two meanings one of which harks back to this story. The one that mimes the scene from Noah indicates God’s willingness to forgive Faust for the tragic results of his earlier actions in part one. Essentially, all is forgiven and Faust should move forward. The other meaning plays on this very story as well. Faust, instead of being Elijah or Jesus Christ, has become Noah. In contrast to these other two figures, Noah never ascended into heaven – his place was on earth. The covenant also has the secondary effect of making clear the position of man in reference to God. Man belongs to the mortal realm of earth until the time of his death. “Faust’s initial desire to achieve transcendence through immersion in nature was fundamentally paradoxical, as all dialectical movements are. But now we can see how the resolution of that paradox is achieved through the double renunciation of transcendence and total immersion in nature. A new nature and a new attitude toward it have replaced the original ones: Faust has now defined his proper sphere as the middle one between earth and the Absolute, the realm of nature.” (Brown, 59) In addition, taking into consideration both the covenant and the
metaphorical nature of the rainbow light metaphor, Faust is in a way coming to an agreement with himself. The rainbow as metaphor assumes the lofty and abstract position of God whilst Faust the man remains where he is. Faust’s two souls, each having battled against one another throughout part one, seem to have come to an agreement.

Ultimately, the rainbow metaphor comes to retain several different meanings that reflect the metamorphosis of Faust’s character from part one to part two. Faust’s metamorphosis is reflected quite clearly in the language the elven choir invokes, namely the use of the word *Schale* (Ln. 4661): “By implication the awakening Faust is compared with a newly hatched bird emerging from its shell [Schale], or a butterfly emerging from the chrysalis. This is to be a new Faust.” (Heffner, 256, my emphasis) This becomes clearer when one connects this term with his earlier use of the word *Wurm*. He is by all means living the life of a worm, however, because he has changed his opinion on the matter the worm becomes a butterfly whose colors are as varied and reflective of the sun’s light as the rainbow. The rainbow is resplendent with his newfound insight: that as a mortal Faust must accept that he cannot access the Absolute or absolute knowledge directly. Instead, he must always search for a medium by which he gains some small measure of insight into the fundamental nature of the universe – a sharp instrument to pierce nature’s veil. The rainbow has the physical properties and religious implications to properly represent this new perspective. The rainbow is merely a refraction of direct sunlight on water that ultimately reveals heretofore-unobservable aspects of light, i.e. the color spectrum that is resplendent in the burgeoning plant life about Faust. Its religious symbolism helps to further cement Faust’s newfound belief that his place is on earth as opposed to in the heavens, therefore affirming in his mind the cosmic order of the macrocosm, which he had abandoned in “Night.”
The rainbow sets the stage for the entirety of part two. Faust will no longer preoccupy himself with grandiose delusions of heavenly ascension, rather his gaze will remain riveted on what is before him: the earthly realm of nature. However, Faust does not end his pursuit here after his revelations. Instead, he will continue to move forward onto the horizon in hopes of finding new experiences and knowledge about the world. The result will be a further shift in his thinking that will be represented by yet another change in the ever-present light metaphors. The midday sun lights up the rainbow. As the drama moves into its later phase and Faust comes closer to more profound discoveries, the sun will descend from its heavenly zenith and onto the horizon as well.

3.3 The Setting Sun

Du bist dir nur des einen Triebs bewußt;
O lerne nie den andern kennen!
Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;
Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust,
Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen. (Ln. 1110-1117)

When considering the light metaphor of the setting sun, one must take the preceding lines into consideration. Here, Faust lays bare to his assistant Wagner the fundamental inner conflict that drives him to such extremes, such as abandoning the traditional scholarship that the young Wagner holds so dear. Faust reveals that he is subject to two primary urges; in essence, he has two souls one of which is constantly trying to separate itself from the other in its search for transcendental truths. This heavenly soul is the source of his restlessness. The heavenly soul becomes connected to a light metaphor that is present in both this early scene and towards the very end of the play: the setting sun. In fact, as the play comes to its end the setting sun becomes
the final external light metaphor related to Faust’s ever changing intellectual and emotional mindsets. That the setting sun metaphor is present in “Before the City Gate,” “Open Landscape,” and “Palace” attests to the fact that the inner turmoil that Faust faces in these early lines will persist for the entirety of the tragedy and will never really develop or progress until the very end (Ln. 1070; Ln. 11098; Ln. 11143). And it is only upon the resolution of this problem, the unraveling of the dichotomy of Faust’s soul in “Midnight,” that Faust finally accepts his fate and passes from the mortal world to the next. The metaphor of the setting sun is one in a long line of external light metaphors that shows a steady progression of Faust’s understanding of his own mortality and the limits of human knowledge and understanding in regards to the Absolute. The moon metaphor was imbued with Faust’s desperate need for harmony with nature, which he saw at the time as the only way to gain knowledge of the Absolute. Through magic he would embrace nature in its fullest without the presence of a medium. When this failed, Faust aspired to higher knowledge and wished, following a failed suicide attempt, to ascend into heaven on a chariot of fire. He would not rely on magic; rather he would attempt to achieve this goal through deed and real experience in the world. Faust’s feelings and thoughts are then reflected in another light metaphor: the rising sun. However, Faust came too close to the sun and in his vanity had fooled himself into thinking that he could acquire transcendental knowledge. Like Icarus, Faust fell from the heavens. After recovering from the Margarete tragedy, he awoke in a “Charming Landscape” to the realization that, as a mortal being, he could never truly lift the veil of nature. Indeed, as the light metaphor of the rainbow demonstrated by means of its own physical properties, Faust would only ever be able to acquire certain truths of the Absolute through mediated knowledge and careful observation of nature and natural phenomena.
Each movement from one metaphor to the next shows a clear development in Faust’s understanding of his place in the universe. The moon, the rising sun, and the rainbow represent particular phases whereby Faust learns a valuable lesson that forces him to reconsider a prior idea and to overturn a preconception; he learns and he progresses although the endpoint remains unclear. The setting sun is similar to the rising sun because it represents a part of the dichotomy of Faust’s soul, specifically the heavenly portion that is always striving upon the horizon and that provides the fundamental drive that pushes Faust from one phase to the next. To an observer, the setting sun is always pushing back against the darkness of the night: “Ich eile fort, ihr ew’ges Licht zu trinken, / Vor mir den Tag und hinter mir die Nacht” (Ln. 1086-1087) Faust likes the idea of always having the night to his back and the day to his front. Interesting is that, despite the reversal of this pattern in “Charming Landscape,” he seems to have reverted back to this stance in perceiving the world. As such, he finds the qualities that define the setting sun incredibly endearing and so he wishes to follow a similar path because such a position would naturally help to sate his need to always be moving forward, if not his need to ultimately reach true knowledge. This drive remains present throughout the whole drama regardless of events and personal developments. The tension between the earthly soul and the heavenly soul that seeks and strives for new knowledge is a constant that provides the entire impetus for the play. It is within the later scenes, “Open Landscape” and “Palace,” that the setting sun metaphor takes on a new level of meaning. Whereas in the earlier scene, “Before the City Gate,” it represented the heavenly portion of Faust’s dichotomous soul, which is unable to reconcile with the earthly portion and ultimately pushes Faust to make his pact with Mephistopheles, in the latter scene the setting sun indicates an inwardly movement. Considering the setting sun’s overall context in the drama as well as its proximity to both the end of the play and the major revelation following the moment
when Faust is blinded by the spirit of care, namely Faust’s realization of his true desires and the synthesis of both the earthly and heavenly parts of his soul.

In “Before the City Gate,” Faust and Wagner make their way back to the town while they engage in a conversation about Faust’s past. The story of Faust’s father’s and his efforts to cure the plague that had ravaged the people of the town quickly evolves into a conversation about the merits of following in the footsteps of one’s father. “Wie könnt Ihr Euch darum betrüben! / Tut nicht ein braver Mann genug, / Die Kunst, die man ihm übertrug, / Gewissenhaft und pünktlich auszuüben? / Wenn du, als Jüngling, deinen Vater ehrst, / So wirst du gern von ihm empfangen” (Ln. 1056-1061). Clearly Wagner disagrees with Faust’s attitude concerning the matter. In Wagner’s opinion, Faust should rejoice that he was able to finish the work of his father and further his own understanding as a result rather than making himself miserable, as he seems determined to do. Wagner is unaware that Faust had spent time lambasting the very thing he proposes in an earlier scene (Ln. 656-685). Faust, because he sees things differently, feels free to comment on what he finds to be the shortcoming and possible naivety of Wagner’s position.

O glücklich, wer noch hoffen kann
Aus diesem Meer des Irrtums aufzutauchen!
Was man nicht weiß, das eben brauchte man,
Und was man weiß, kann man nicht brauchen.
Doch laß uns dieser Stunde schönes Gut
Durch solchen Trübsinn nicht verkümmern!
Betrachte, wie in Abendsonneglut
Die grünumgebnen Hütten schimmern.
Sie rückt und weicht, der Tag ist überlebt,
Dort eilt sie hin und fördert neues Leben.
O daß kein Flügel mich vom Boden hebt,
Ihr nach und immer nach zu streben!
(Ln. 1064-1075)
Faust’s experiences have left him feeling restrained and unfulfilled by the work in which Wagner takes such pleasure and puts so much authority. In his opinion much of what is known, the object of Wagner’s studies, is useless and everything that they need to know is beyond their grasp. This displays a fundamental difference between Faust’s character and Wagner’s. “The difference between Faust and Wagner, then, lies in their drives […] The drive of Wagner is centripetal, striving toward containment, toward the encompassing and ordering of accumulated knowledge […] The drive of Faust is centrifugal, striving toward expansion, the conquest of new realms of knowledge and insight. While the one tends to trim the world down to his size, the other tries to enlarge his capacity to the ever increasing dimensions of his developing understanding.” (Jantz, 106-107) Wagner is clearly an individual more concerned with traditional scholarship, something that Faust has just decided to leave behind in the earlier scene, “Night.” Faust is far more restless and he wishes to always be moving forward, broadening his horizons of knowledge. It is for this reason that he moves his gaze to the setting sun. Its constant forward progression reflects these thoughts and emotions. The setting sun, as he puts it, is always breeding new life and moving forward in a never-ending cycle. The light metaphor ties in perfectly with the centrifugal nature of Faust’s character. This becomes acutely clear when Faust states his wish that he could have wings to follow in the setting sun’s wake. This is, of course, before his later revelation in the “Charming Landscape” when he realizes the limitations of his mortality. In “Before the City Gate” he still strives for transcendental knowledge and believes that he will be able to access the Absolute. “[…] The most important aspect of the sunset speech is the establishment of a symbol for the Absolute.” (Brown, 60) The setting sun as a symbol of the Absolute creates a great deal of irony in regards to Faust’s ambitions. On the one hand, Faust’s attempts at knowledge mimic the path of the setting sun across the sky, on the other hand, it also displays the futility of Faust’s
aspirations of gaining access to transcendental knowledge. If the setting sun is always on the horizon, then Faust will never be able to actually reach it, and in the process he will discover that he has simply been going in circles. The futility of Faust’s venture is, in retrospect, only matched by its danger. Faust’s desire for wings brings to mind the story of Icarus, who, when escaping with his father Daedalus from the island of Crete and the rule of King Minos, flew too close to the sun. Upon flying too high the glue that held the wings together melted and so Icarus fell to his death. The parallels between the fall of Icarus and the tragic end of the love affair with Margarete, which leaves Faust unconscious in the “Charming Landscape,” are clearly established in order to draw attention to the vanity of any such endeavor by a mortal being.

The tense conversation between Wagner and Faust leads to arguably one of the most important pieces of dialogue in the play. This dialogue takes on new meaning once it is considered with the revelations Faust has following the Margarete tragedy. “Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust, / Die eine will sich von der andern trennen; / Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust, / Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen; / Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust / Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen” (Ln. 1112-117). Faust declares that there are two souls in his breast: one that belongs to the earth and the other that strives for the heavens. This is the establishment of the dichotomous nature of his soul, which is intimately tied into the light metaphor of the setting sun. The setting lends evidence to this. While Faust speaks he is resting upon a boulder, earth, and the sun continues to set in the distance. As Faust states, he wishes that he could fly forth after the setting sun, but instead he must rest upon a boulder. The boulder could be considered a metaphor for the earthly soul. It is at rest and anchors Faust to the ground beneath him. In spite of the stable ground he stands on he remains restless and he cannot tear his gaze from the setting sun: “Daß sein Gefühl hinauf und vorwärts dringt, / Wenn über uns, im
blauen Raum verloren [...].” (Ln. 1093-1094) He is lost in a feeling of ascending movement as his gaze lays fixed upon the setting sun. The emotions and feelings he then attributes to the heavenly part of his soul are preceded here in these earlier lines while his gaze rests upon the setting sun. “Although Faust knows more of the labyrinthine complexity of the human soul than does Wagner, his knowledge is but finite too. Although he has achieved insight into the harmony of the macrocosm and into the harmony than can exist between man and nature, he still cannot reconcile the material and spiritual aspirations of man, the “two souls” that dwell within his breast.” (Atkins, 36) Just as he could not fathom the earth and sun to coming together, Faust cannot conceive of the idea of harmonizing his two souls. Therefore, he considers Wagner’s lack of restlessness to be indicative of his naivety or lack of experience; hence his imperative statement telling Wagner never to know the other part of his soul (Ln. 1111). “Wagner’s two souls, therefore, become problematic only rarely and mildly. For him learning is an end in itself and a sufficient validation of life. Through his profession he is satisfying his “higher” soul to the limit of his capacity, and also taking good care of the creature comforts of his earthbound soul. […] By contrast, Faust is obsessed by this other drive, the restless expansive one of the speculative mind, of the full-blooded, active genius impelled both by an insatiable lust for life and by an unconquerable thirst for transcendent ultimates.” (Jantz, 107) The tension that exists between Wagner and Faust parallels that of the metaphorical tension between the boulder, or earth, and the setting sun.

In “Before the City Gate,” the setting sun represents the portion of Faust’s soul that is never content with staying still and must instead always be striving for transcendental knowledge. This does not change for much of the play and for good reason: Faust is never able to satisfy that need nor come to terms fully with its futility. There is a development, however,
right towards the end of the play that adds an increased level of significance to the metaphor of the setting sun. “Komm nun aber und genieße, / Denn die Sonne scheidet bald.” (Ln. 11097-11098) Philemon at the end of “Open Landscape” makes this observation of the sun setting. A similar observation is made by Lynkeus in the following scene “Palace:” “Die Sonne sinkt [...]” (Ln. 11143) The setting sun is once more present at a moment in the play when an interesting phenomenon occurs. Schneider reflects on it in the following manner:

Signifikant für die übermenschliche (überkreatürliche) Anmaßung ist die Anstrengung, mit der Faust die innere Helle des Bewußtseins und das Licht seiner Vision gegen das schwindende Sonnenlicht aufbietet, das ihm die äußere Welt entzieht und in dem sich sein eigenes zur Neige gehendes Leben spiegelt. Das dramatische Geschehen des fünften Akts ist begleitet von einer fortschreitenden Verdunkelung der Szene, vom nahenden Sonnenuntergang über „Tiefe Nacht“ (nach V. 12817) bis „Mitternacht“ (nach V. 11383). Sie findet ihren Höhepunkt und ihre figurenpsychologische Motivierung, als Faust unter dem Anhauch der Sorge erblindet. (Schneider, 1)

As Schneider points out, the setting sun comes to represent the unraveling of Faust’s life. Just as the day comes to an end, so too does his own life and at the termination of the day Faust begins to realize the futility of his strivings. Ironically, this dusk that takes place in the external world leads to the dawn of his inner world (Ln. 11499-11502). Therefore, the setting sun here has an additional meaning as result of this movement inwards: the setting sun, which signals the end to daylight, represents the moment that the heavenly portion of Faust’s soul comes to rest. “In this respect, we must understand the act as a genuine coming-together of the concerns of the drama, whether or not it successfully synthesizes the various polarities of Goethe’s dialectic.” (Brown, 231)

Once again, it is the setting and the position of the various characters in both “Open Landscape” and “Palace” that emphasize the original dichotomy and then ultimately lead to its
deconstruction. Throughout these two scenes, though the majority of the descriptions are in “Open Landscape,” dialectics, which can be considered the external manifestations that mirror Faust’s dichotomous nature, are constructed: old and new, classic and modern, God-given and man-made, day and night, and, finally, external and internal. “Whatever we may ultimately conclude about the achievement of a final synthesis at the end of Faust, there can at least be no doubt that Act V proceeds dialectically.” (Brown, 231) Upon closer scrutiny it becomes clear that dealing with these dialectics is at the heart of the entire tragedy and not just the fifth act.

“Kluger Heeren kühne Knechte / Gruben Gräben, dämmten ein, / Schmälerten des Meeres Rechte, / Herrn an seiner Statt zu sein” (L. 11091-11094): These lines bring into consideration one of these dialectics: God-given and man-made. According to Philemon, the emperor gave Faust the rights to the surrounding land and Faust has decided to steal a plot of land from the sea through unnatural means. Faust’s plan to ‘create’ land from the sea is akin to the creative powers of God. As Oberkogler describes further, this creative paradise is a usurpation that promotes Faust’s, and man’s, creative powers over that of the divinity:


This difference between God-given and man-made harks back to the earlier discussion between Wagner and Faust. To the pious Philemon, Faust’s creative act reeks of the supernatural or unnatural because the land beneath the sea was not intended to be lived on by human beings. What Faust has done, goes directly against her ideas of what constitutes the realm of man. Like Wagner when he speaks of scholarship or men’s fathers, Philemon is content with what has been
“given” to her. Faust, just like in the earlier scene, is not satisfied with what is given. The setting sun in the background only highlights this notion that is attributed to his heavenly aspirations.

“Der Lindenraum, die braune Baute, / Das morsche Kirchlein ist nicht mein.” (Ln. 11157-11158) Faust’s description of the church belonging to Baucis and Philemon displays how old it is. Thus, several of the dialectics come forth: old and new, past and present, and, lastly, classic and modern. Faust’s new, grandiose palace stands in stark contrast to the small house and chapel on the hill. As Philemon stated earlier, this palace was built only recently while it is clear that Baucis and Philemon have been there for most, if not all, their lives (Ln. 11043-11058). Philemon in particular looks upon Faust’s home with barely veiled contempt, hence his use of the word “godless” (gottlos, Ln. 11131) when referring to Faust. It is also revealed in both this line and the following that Faust desires to remove them from their home so that he may hold dominion over all things. Indeed, this is reinforced by Faust’s comments in the following scene, when he is angered by the chapel bells (Ln. 11151-11161). This brings about a fundamental question: what is sacrificed in the name of progress? On one hand, there are two people who have lived in the open landscape possibly their entire lives. They are also revered in both this drama and in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* for their hospitality and goodwill. On the other hand, what Faust has done is a marvel of modern engineering. This question also reflects on much of what Faust has given up in dogged pursuit of transcendent truths and knowledge. He has sacrificed security and faith, if Baucis is to be believed, and must depend a great deal on Mephistopheles. Furthermore, it could be asserted that this question could be applied to what has happened in the modern world in the name of progress whose endpoint seems as elusive as Faust’s own.

Another dialectic that is presented is that of classical and modern. Baucis and Philemon are in a moral fable as part of book eight of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In Goethe’s work, the very
same values these borrowed characters discuss when comparing themselves to Faust are classical in nature and contrast greatly with Faust’s own principles, which seem to be centered more on the individual. Baucis and Philemon are more attuned toward nature, hence the descriptions of the wanderer upon seeing their small home and church. They also have a strong reverence for God’s power, which explains Baucis’s dislike and distrust of Faust. Moreover, they are the characters borrowed from a famous piece of classical Rome, from Ovid no less! All these characteristics build two figures who are clearly representative of a classical ideal. Something that has only become clearer as a result of Faust’s machinations that are also aided by the magic of Mephistopheles.

The pair holds fast to religious ideas of hospitality and this results in Baucis’ mistrust and outright accusatory tone regarding Faust. Meanwhile, Faust concerns himself less with a desire to appease old customs, which are present in much of classical literature and theatre, and more with the further expansion of the capacity of his understanding. Faust’s only intent, regardless of how it may effect others, is to create, to give birth to something that is still only a part of his imagination.
By taking Philemon and Baucis’s land he would come into possession of what he needs in order to gain absolute control of both parts of his nature. The palace in which he currently resides represents his human or creative nature. By bringing that and the natural part of his being together, he would finally become whole. Nevertheless, this problem goes up in flames, Baucis and Philemon’s home is literally burned to the ground, and the setting sun continues to move onto the horizon.

The final two dialectics that are addressed in this scene are day and night as well as external and internal. Both of these are intimately connected and represent a sharp reversal from the very first scene of the play, “Night.” In the first scene, night gives way to day and the confining, Gothic chamber, which is representative of Faust’s inner self, gives way to the outside world. In this last scene the exact opposite happens. With the sun setting in the background, the day comes to an end and, as stated earlier, the light moves from the external world into Faust. It is important to remember that the earlier scene where Faust came to the realization regarding his mortal limits, represented by the rainbow light metaphor, was called “Charming Landscape.” Here, at the end of “Open Landscape” and in the following scenes Faust comes to an even greater realization. Whereas in “Charming Landscape” he came to realize that he would always need mediated knowledge in order to discover some fundamental truths about the Absolute in the external world, in “Open Landscape” and the following scenes he comes to the realization of internal balance as well.

In order to understand this one must look at Wagner, Faust’s assistant, whose own souls seem to be in sync, as an example (Jantz, 107). As Jantz points out, Wagner is perfectly at ease; he pursues knowledge and is rarely bothered by the many such strivings as Faust is (107). This
may be, as Faust points out (Ln. 1110), a mere happenstance that can be contributed to Wagner’s ignorance. However, it seems more likely in the face of his later death that Faust also sought this internal balance all along. Considering the stipulations in the pact with Mephistopheles (Ln. 1692-1698), that Faust will only lose the pact should his striving abate, and that the moment of his death is after the external source of light identified as a metaphor for his heavenly soul turns into him, the case can be made that the internal turn is the last step in the reconciliation of the two souls. Mediation in Faust seems to be precisely that: a balance between two forces, denying all extremes and absolutes, that allows for some measure of understanding and the creation of content, or in this case contentedness. Therefore, the importance of the last two dialectics, especially when considered in the presence of the setting sun metaphor, lies in the way they lead to the pacification of Faust’s striving. The dialectics are never completely resolved even though their conflicting nature mirrors so well the dichotomy within Faust’s breast. Instead, Faust comes to realize shortly before his death that it is the work done in pursuit of unraveling them that is the most important. It is the deed, the action that appeases the heavenly soul and brings it into alignment with the earthly soul. However, he does not realize this until he undergoes one more experience.

Thus, it can be concluded that the setting sun metaphor represents the heavenly portion of Faust’s soul and often one side of a particular dialectic. The setting sun is present in three scenes, “Before the City Gate,” “Open Landscape,” and “Palace,” that are integral to both the development of Faust’s character and his main impulse of striving and its eventual resolution and pacification. In “Before the City Gate” Faust expresses the dichotomous soul he possesses: one earthly and one heavenly. It is this heavenly component, which invokes the feelings of restlessness and his desire for striving after transcendent knowledge that connects to the setting
sun in the form of a metaphor. At no point in the drama do these feelings subside and this is what sets it apart from the other external light metaphors. Despite any personal developments, it always remains the same. This is necessary. Without this need to strive there would be no *Faust*, no dichotomy, and none of the dialectics that are constantly in question. It is only in the alter scene, “Open Landscape,” that the setting sun takes on the additional, if not ironic, meaning implicated by an inward progression that ultimately brings Faust to his final resolution that leads to his death. The setting sun, just as it is in nature, is both the beginning and end of the day. A Janus-headed metaphor with far-reaching implications that are only resolved once Faust becomes blind.
CHAPTER 4
INNER LIGHT

The final light metaphor takes a sharp departure from those that precede it; namely, the final light metaphor exists within Faust, rather than outside of him. This move inwards began with the setting sun. The setting sun represents Faust’s heavenly soul, which is always striving, always moving forward, and is seemingly never satisfied. Indeed, this soul is the cause of Faust’s restlessness that keeps him from at any moment gaining a true sense of satisfaction from his work or from truly accepting some of the more poignant lessons he ought to have learned from certain experiences. For example: Faust ought to have learned from the tragic ending of his love affair with Margarete that he should think before he acts. Instead he impulsively orders Mephistopheles to clear the older couple, Baucis and Philemon, from their plot of land in the open landscape, so that he can construct a tower from which he will view the surrounding world (Ln. 11275). This ends in the death of the elderly couple as a raging inferno of fire (created by Mephistopheles) burns down both the house and the chapel much to Lynceus’, Faust’s watchman, horror (Ln. 11319). However, there is more to the events prior to Faust blindness than one might at first suspect. As Schneider points out, the setting sun as well as the onset of night steadily darken the scene leading up to the moment when Faust is blinded by the spirit of care (also translated as ‘worry’) (Schneider, 1). As asserted in the earlier chapter, this produces a secondary effect. The light not only goes down, but also inwards; this becomes all the more recognizable when Faust sees the inner light after he has been blinded (Ln. 11500). This inner light is the final light metaphor and its meaning and implications are widely disputed.

As my paper has shown so far, a series of light metaphors are present at important intervals in the play. Specifically, they appear when Faust realizes something important about
knowledge, which has wide reaching effects on how he sees the world. The moon, rising sun, rainbow, setting sun; each reflects important insights that, when put together in this thematic order, show a clear progression from one set of ideas to the next. In this sense, much of Faust’s quest has the effect of making him learn not only about knowledge, the Absolute, nature, but also about himself and the place he occupies in the world. This comes to a head in act five when, shortly before his death, Faust delivers a final speech that contains his final observation concerning human nature. He only comes to this realization, however, after an encounter with the spirit of care at which point a light metaphor is established. As in each of the prior cases, these light metaphors are meant to clarify Faust’s progressing insights. In order to delineate the possible meanings of the inner light, it must be considered within the context of both act five and the play overall, especially since “the end of a drama […] gives the author the opportunity to stop the hands of the clock for one ideal moment” to reflect on many different concerns of the play (Lämmert, 94). In this paper, it will be asserted that the inner light that Faust sees is in fact the heavenly soul that was always beyond his reach in the external world. Moreover, the sudden reemergence of this soul within Faust implies that a balance or synthesis has been achieved between Faust’s two souls; allowing him to then harness this inner power belonging to his transcendent soul and commit himself to a truly sublime and creative act. However, before he can see his new vision come to fruition he passes away; a result of his newly achieved inner harmony and his final conclusion on human nature, which was arguably what he sought all along.

“Die Sonne sinkt […].” (Ln. 11143) Lynceus states his observation at the beginning of “Palace.” This is the moment that the last vestiges of the day give way to night and that the movement inward is nearly complete. There are two particular things to consider in this scene:
the position of Lynceus and the position of Faust. Lynceus is Faust’s watchman. His place is far above the city in a high watchtower, his gaze overlooking both the ocean and the land. In this position, he is figuratively Faust’s eye: “Rather it is his vocation, indeed his very nature, always to see “the eternal design” (l. 11297; cf. Fletcher’s “kosmos”). Lynceus is the last vestige of what Faust has brought with him from the fulfillment of Act III, the capacity to perceive beauty, vision.” (Brown, 233) It is his job to see the world and, therefore, to perceive the beauty of Faust’s design as it slowly changes the natural world under the forces of human endeavor. In the absence of a light metaphor, when the sun has gone down and the moon has yet to be described, Lynceus occupies the highest vertical position relative to Faust who is in his chamber in the palace. This effectively reinforces the dichotomy of Faust’s soul on an abstract level; Lynceus is a visionary extension of his heavenly soul that is always trying to see into the distance and into nature. Faust, on the other hand, now occupies a familiar space: chambers. His location is striking because he has seemingly retreated, Lynceus notwithstanding, from the open world back into the smaller world that he occupied at the very beginning of the drama. Once more walls surround him and the only difference is that these are ones he created himself. In a grand and ironic twist Faust, after all his adventures and endeavors, is right back where he started: in the small world and in night. Furthermore, just as the light moved inwards at the end of “Open Landscape,” so too does Faust move inwards. The setting sun metaphor and Faust parallel each other’s movement.

The inner light metaphor is established after Faust is confronted by the spirit of care (Ln. 11420). The spirit of care is one of the four crones that arise from the burn out husks of the chapel and hovel that once belonged to Baucis and Philemon (Ln. 11384-11391). It is the only spirit of the four that is able to pass through the keyhole and into Faust’s chambers. There is
much debate as to the nature of this spirit. Why is care of all the spirits the one to gain access to Faust’s chambers?

It is to a Faust haunted by the ghosts of an irresponsible past that Care appears in person, and her appearance symbolizes Faust’s readiness to assume the personal responsibility which alone can endow his life with truly universal human significance. What the Earth Spirit was to Faust the seeker after knowledge, this is what Care is for Faust the moral agent – the symbol of an enigma to which the human spirit seeks the solution, this time perhaps with more hope of a satisfactory one. *To renounce magical irresponsibility demands great courage*, and even Faust hesitates […]

(Atkins, 251, emphasis added)

Care is able appear to Faust because it is the one thing that remains from the old world of classical antiquity and is connected to magic, which Faust has depended upon for most of the drama (this should bring to mind the series of dialectics discussed in the previous chapter). It represents the last vestiges of magic, which, as Atkins points out, Faust must forswear in order to open himself up to the chance of the full human experience. “For if Death is the ultimate symbol of human finiteness, care is only second to it, it is the embodiment of man’s awareness that nothing is his forever, is the symbol of a universal sense of human limitations, whether men consciously acknowledge its existence or not […].” (Atkins, 251) If the spirit of care symbolizes conscious awareness of man’s limitations, then what does Faust achieve by renouncing it?

Unselige Gespenster! so behandelt ihr
Das menschliche Geschlecht zu tausend Malen;
Gleichgültige Tage selbst verwandelt ihr
In garstigen Wirrwarr netzumstrickter Qualen.
Dämonen, weiß ich, wird man schwerlich los,
Das geistig-strenge Band ist nicht zu trennen;
Doch deine Macht, o Sorge, schleichend groß,
Ich werde sie nicht anerkennen.
(Ln. 11487-11494)
Faust is declaring his emancipation from the limitations of old beliefs. He will never accept or recognize the power of care and he believes that care has held sway over human action for far too long. Faust considers care to be a pervasive force of antiquity that would seek to limit him by instilling him with any number of worries. As Brown points out, Goethe considered the cosmos to be at times “malicious where it impinges upon human limitation.” (253) Magic and its representatives are part of this cosmic order. Therefore, if Faust wishes to throw off the chains of the ancient world, he must swear against the use of magic and instead rely upon his human abilities, which he states quite clearly in his final speech (Ln. 11575-11576). This means taking responsibility for the deeds he committed earlier on in the drama, whose punishment is now meted out by the spirit of care, which deprives him of his sight. Yet in spite of this punishment that inflicts blindness upon him, Faust is undeterred in his determination to see. It is at this point, following this major upheaval, that the final light metaphor is introduced. The darkness of the night becomes ever deeper and all that remains is an inner light. This inner light spurs on Faust’s intention to finish the designs he has for his paradise and he calls all the workmen back to their stations.

Die Nacht scheint tiefer tief hereinzudringen,  
Allein im Innern leuchtet helles Licht;  
Was ich gedacht, ich eil’ es zu vollbringen;  
Des Herren Wort, es gibt allein Gewicht.  
Vom Lager auf, ihr Knechte! Mann für Mann!  
Läßt glücklich schauen, was ich kühn ersann.  
Ergreift das Werkzeug, Schaufel rührt und Spaten!  
Das Abgesteckte muß sogleich geraten.  
Auf strenges Ordnen, raschen Fleiß  
Erfolgt der allerschönste Preis;  
Daß sich das größte Werk vollende,  
Genügt ein Geist für tausend Hände. (Ln. 11499-11510)

It is of great note that from here on until the moment of his death there is no other source of light than the inner light. It is also important to notice that Lynceus is never again mentioned. This is a
curious occurrence considering that much of the play has been focused on the external world. Even in “Night,” when Faust is still trapped in his chambers, Faust’s focus and vision is outward in the physical realm. Here it is the opposite. Faust can no longer see the real world; rather he only sees the ideal world of his inner, subjective vision. This subjective vision has, until this point in the drama, been connected to the four other external light metaphors. Each of these metaphors possesses a meaning or meanings that are a balanced sum of its own characteristics and the additional implications assigned by Faust’s subjective perspective. The inner light is completely different because it lacks a form that is anchored in the real world and is thus beholden only to Faust’s vision. When he moves to make his vision a reality, he is participating in an act of creation, consequently the object of Philemon’s earlier criticism. This is what leads to Faust using the terms “Herren Wort:” “Das sind Worte, die der göttlichen Weltschöpfung Konkurrenz machen. Fausts Vision, die ja zugleich ein Befehl ist, zielt auf die performative Gewalt des Schöpferwertes, deren groteske Verfehlung in der Fehldeutung der von außen eindringenden akustischen Todessignale manifest wird.” (Schneider, 2) Because this inner vision is completely subject to the whims of Faust’s imagination and because he then moves to bring that vision into the external world, Faust is elevated to the position of creator. Schneider calls this usurpation. “Die Usurpation göttlicher Schöpfermacht ist ein Grundzug der Goetheschen Faustfigur, die hierin die Problematik des neuzeitlichen Autonomieanspruchs austrägt.” (Schneider, 2). In my view, he is correct. The movement from internal to external is a transgression against the classical limitations of human striving. Should Faust have preoccupied himself with this inner world only, there would have been no real usurpation. This inner world is beholden to Faust alone. It is only when Faust seeks to impose these plans on the outside world that Faust becomes a usurper.
There is another matter at play here as well and it is tied into the final external light metaphor, the setting sun. The setting sun, it was asserted, is the metaphorical manifestation of Faust’s heavenly soul. Considering that much of the preceding scene wherein the setting sun plays an important role for Faust’s inwardly movement, his steady retreat from the outside world inwards, it can be argued that the heavenly soul returns back into Faust. Thus, the inner light that Faust sees is actually a metaphor for the transcendent soul that was previously beyond Faust’s grasp. A possible objection to this suggestion could be that the soul was never technically external to Faust. He states quite clearly that there are two souls in his breast (Ln. 1112). Yes, the soul itself does reside in Faust’s breast, but the metaphor that represented it was anchored in the external world. That a metaphor for the transcendent soul is now internal as opposed to external then implies that Faust has arrived at a new and final insight, which also has the effect of continuing the overarching thematic sequence of light metaphors. This is in direct contention with Eberhard Lämmert who asserts the exact opposite when he writes that: “For that reason it is highly important to note what follows these two lines in Goethe’s text. Faust’s ‘inner light’ does not lead him to new insights.” (Lämmert, 102) Lämmert bases his observations on the actions that immediately follow when Faust calls his workers to further toil. Once again he seems to not have learned a thing and others must pay the price in blood, sweat, and tears in order to maintain Faust’s ‘delusion’ (Lämmert, 103). However, this was never the focus of Faust’s striving. He has been consistent in his pursuit of knowledge and truth and others have suffered as a result of his endeavors. However, considering his dismissal and revolt against the spirit of care, which lead to him becoming blinded, he clearly divorces such feelings from his intellectual pursuit. The insight Lämmert is referring to would be emotional in nature; yet Faust’s insights have always been intellectual. Considering these observations in addition to the overarching theme of his
development, it is clear that Faust’s focus has always been trained for the most part on his intellect and the attainment of truth. To claim that Faust does not come to new insight is to miss these many concurring themes and their implications.

It is in Faust’s final words that he makes his last observations and his last statements on the nature of man. It is also the moment when the two souls that inhabit Faust’s breast come into complete harmony. The creation of inner harmony is what allows Mephistopheles to consider their pact complete and take his soul, causing Faust’s death. This resolves the inharmonious tensions that had plagued him throughout the story and results in his death. This assertion is certainly in opposition to several interpretation of this scene. Lämmert, for example, suggests that one should ignore the question of the pact’s fulfillment altogether. “Faust’s blindness makes any true fulfillment of the pact impossible […] it is not worthwhile looking back now on both parts of the tragedy to see whether he ever achieved a calm and true insight into the reality unfolding before his eyes.” (Lämmert, 104) Yet if this were the case, then why does Faust die and ascend into heaven? Clearly the contract has been fulfilled and the intervening force is a result of the pact between Mephistopheles and God. The two options of win or lose fulfill the
traditional style of the dialectic of the drama and this dialectic is only one of many others present in the drama. One could also assert that there is no harmony; indeed, Faust has simply gone from one extreme, the pursuit of transcendent ideas and knowledge, to another, the imposition of subjective vision illuminated by the inner light, which is a metaphorical representation of Faust’s heavenly soul, on the external world. Instead of coming to a ‘calm and true insight,’ he is once more bringing himself to a manic state of extremes. Indeed, much of the last scenes supports this: Faust tries to impose his vision on the external world, to fulfill this he forces his workers back to work and toil, and the process of reconquering each day seems antithetical to harmony (Ln. 11575-11576). The first and second matters have already been discussed; it is the final one that requires further interpretation. The word “Augenblick” seems to be indicative of Faust’s desire to live in the moment. This seems likely and considering that this takes place at a seemingly euphoric junction where Faust is both blind to the external world and immediately aware of his impending death furthers such an interpretation. However, the day-to-day toil that is necessary for the preservation of the human condition is still a movement aligned with the ideas of renewal, rebirth, and cyclical movements. Considering this in turn with the location of the internal light metaphor that reflects the heavenly part of Faust’s soul, which is synonymous with this constant striving, one can come to the conclusion that in this last scene Faust has come to the realization that his restless soul is the norm, rather than something that needs to be fully completed. This in turn explains the vision that comes before Faust’s eyes following the introduction of the inner light metaphor: it is a moment of play. This play, which results in a burst of imaginative creativity, occurs as a result of Faust accepting that his natural state, and to a certain extent man’s, is to be in a constant state of play between the soul at rest and the soul that strives. Therefore, in a paradoxical way, Faust, and man, is able to fulfill himself only when he strives,
which means that nothing can ever be truly perfected in the transcendent sense, but also not negated as Mephistopheles characterizes it (Ln. 11601). The extreme qualities of human existence are the norm.

It is in the moment that Faust realizes this that he passes on. After a long series of upheavals that forced him time and again to reassess his intellectual positions, he finally arrives at a perspective that allows him to understand himself and his place in the world to the fullest. The moon and each subsequent metaphor show Faust’s steady progression to this point, where Faust must look inwards for answers as opposed to outwards. It is there, in himself, that he sees the final light metaphor, the inner light; a light metaphor that represents Faust’s heavenly soul in harmonious balance with the other, earthly one. Following this revelation Faust quickens to realize his vision in the real world. However, the limitlessness that characterizes the inner world of his imagination, which is illuminated by the inner light metaphor, cannot be imposed upon the real world in its totality. Realizing that this is the closest he, or any mortal, could ever come to his goal, he states that one must work everyday in order to appease the restless striving that everyone carries. This carries with it the paradoxical stipulation that the ideal outlook on human nature is its inherent imperfection and inability to achieve the transcendent ideal. Therefore, the inner light presents Faust’s greatest insight.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the series of light metaphors that are present throughout *Faust* represent the various intellectual and emotional phases that Faust assumes. The moonlight was present first and foremost when he was approaching the world and knowledge without a belief in mediation. He believed that he would be able, through magic, to attain direct access to the Absolute and transcendent knowledge. Moreover, his opinions in regards to academia and other institutions are decidedly negative. From this point, Faust develops in a direction counter to the old world and its institutions. The various phases of the sunlight in addition to the rainbow represent many new, and in some cases foolhardy, perspectives on man and truth. As he proclaims at the end of “Night,” when the sun rises, he wishes to enter a realm of pure deed and as, he points out in “Study Room,” “in the beginning was the deed!” (Ln. 705; Ln. 1237). “Faust’s consciousness reflects the ideal of active masculinity, of energetically getting things done. In this sense, he is a doer, a creature of the modern age whose development has gained momentum since the Enlightenment.” (Gerber-Münch, 149) He is motivated, convinced by his rereading of the Bible that he must go out into the world and explore what it has to offer him. Following the disastrous Margarete affair, Faust realizes the need for an approach to truth that is mediated and begins to accept the limitations of human endeavor. The setting sun presents the beginning of an inward turn, a step on the road to Faust’s greatest insight concerning his nature. The inner light brings everything full circle. The inner light symbolizes the heavenly part of the soul as it becomes balanced with Faust’s earthly soul and they achieve harmony. In spite of his physical blindness, Faust comes to terms with his limitations whilst simultaneously realizing the potential and, ironically, limitlessness of human striving.
These observations and conclusions regarding the light metaphors bring one to answer a final question: what does this say about Faust as a theme? If one accepts the above conclusions concerning the light metaphors and their connections to Faust’s intellectual development, then "Faust" can be defined as a lab in which Goethe presents and tests various ideas and approaches to truth, knowledge, and the other difficulties that plague human existence. Whether or not these exact ideas are all offshoots of Goethe’s personal life experiences is yet to be seen. However, approaching Faust in this fashion allows one to consider the advantages and shortcomings of each philosophy from a unique and subjective perspective, which was fashioned by one of Germany’s greatest minds.


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