The following is an extended letter written (6/70) by me at the request of I. Velikovsky to brief him on the contents of Mann’s great book, Dr. Faustus, which he had not read. Mann’s book details the biography of a musical genius, Adrian Leverkuhn, and how he was indoctrinated into the mystical worlds of alien experiences, involving strange folk movements, a speculation in the “black arts” and cosmic encounters. In my estimation it is one of the most important works ever written examining the roots of the rise of Nazism and the eschatological obsessions of the End of the World that gripped the cultural consciousness of Nazi Germany.
Note: Caveat: I am unable to locate my copy of Dr. Faustus, so all the page numbers are not given. I trust the passages cited are correct. When I find the book, I will update the page numbering. Most are there.

June 12, 1970

Dear Dr. Velikovsky:

I am very pleased to present to you various passages from Mann's great masterpiece, Dr. Faustus, which I believe is pertinent to your work, particularly your concept of collective amnesia. Dr. Faustus is, in my estimation (and not only mine I am sure) a novel which joins the great tradition of educational confessions. The subject is particularly important as it deals with nothing less than the cultural roots of Germany's catastrophic consciousness, destined to have such tragic consequences for the whole world. Mann, who was linked by the senses to German consciousness, has provided the world with a valuable experience of poetry and understanding, art and analysis. Surely he must have considered the writing of Dr. Faustus a very great personal responsibility—to the German people and the World. All of us can derive great satisfaction from the singular accomplishment of this great German writer. I would think you, in particular, Dr. Velikovsky, would recognize what a great undertaking was his.

I am tempted to give a synopsis of the main movement of this novel, yet I must confess it has always been difficult for me to render into a few words the theme of any great work. Suffice it to say that the story of Adrian Leverkuhn (his fictional biography) is the story of a musical genius who, under the influence of mythic identification, concluded a death-pact with the Devil. His childhood, his educational development, his aloof, divided soul, theological fears of sex, and aesthetic and intellectual preoccupations, all conspired to this dread contract. The biography of Adrian Leverkuhn is the biography of Germany's catastrophic consciousness. Mann explicitly tells us they are to be seen as one.
It would not be possible for me to inquire into all the major aspects of the relationship of mythic identification and catastrophic consciousness. You, no doubt, had you the opportunity to read the novel in full, would be far better able to analyze its many ramifications. I will only attempt to set in bold relief what I consider to be some of the more fundamental dimensions. It will be necessary for me to make a few of my own remarks as I think they are called for.

As a child Adrian was exposed through his father to the science of the day. It was an odd science, odd in the sense that it did not view objective phenomena in an objective, non-ontological sense. No, it was a science permeated with the subjective sense of the diabolical, “the "darker world." It was a science immersed in religious forebodings. Concerning Adrian's father it is said:

But alongside the religious cast his readings took another direction which in certain times would have been characterized as wanting to speculate the elements. In other words to a limited extent and with limited means he carried on studies in natural science, biology even perhaps in chemistry and physics, helped out occasionally by my father with material from our laboratory. But I have chosen that antiquated and not irreproachable description for such practices because a twinge of mysticism was perceptible in them which would once have been suspect to a leaning to the black arts. But I will add, too, that I have never understood this distrust felt by a religious and spiritual minded epoch for the rising passion to investigate the mysteries of nature. Godly fear must see in it a libertine traffic with forbidden things, despite the obvious contradiction involved in regarding the Creation" God" Nature and Life as a morally depraved field. Nature itself is too full of obscure phenomena not altogether remote from magic equivocal moods,
weird, half hidden associations pointing to the unknown—for a disciplined piety not to see therein a rash overstepping of ordained limits. (p. 13)

Under microscopes the child Adrian viewed with his father the small sea-creatures:

All these windings and vaultings executed in splendid guidance, with a sense of form as bold as it was delicate, these rosy openings, the iridescent faience splendors—all these were the work of their own jelly like proprietors. At least the theory that Nature makes itself, and leaving the Creator out, the conception of Him as an inspired craftsman and ambitious artist of the original pottery works is so fantastic that the temptation lies close at hand - nowhere closer- to introduce and intermediary deity the Demiurge. (15-16)

I should like to point out one thing in regard to the relationship between science and the mystical in Adrian’s education -- destined to become intensified throughout. Mann repeatedly lays bare the fact that the old humanism is not want to view the mysteries of the physical world in a non-mystical light. Serenus, Adrian's childhood friend and chronicler of these events, who is a full fledged member of this old humanism says:

For my part I leave it to the reader’s judgment whether that sort of thing is a matter for laughter or tears. But one thing I will say, such wierdnesses are exclusively Nature's own affair, and particularly of nature arrogantly tempted by man. In the high-minded realms of the humanoria one is safe from such impish phenonemas. (20)

These are important observations, I think, and the substance of them may
bear directly upon charges by scientists and scholars alike, that your work constitutes a dabbling in the black arts.

In the popular belief, humanism is friendly to science, but it cannot be for one cannot consider the subjects of science to be devil's work without seeing the same in Science itself. That is Middle Ages; the Middle Ages were geocentric and anthropocentric. (273)

It is possible that a theory of revolutionary impact might reactivate some of these hidden orientations toward science on the part of scientists themselves, many of whom had a European background, not to say German background. I leave the question for your consideration. Mann has given us a veritable treatise on these relationships of science and mysticism, in Dr. Faustus.

At any rate, Mythic Identification as you are probably aware, involves a rather unique psychic dynamism, the dynamism of the return. Life is approved and sanctioned through the past, the "lived life, that passes over and becomes "lived mythus." This return to more primitive times is likened to the return to childhood in the individual—infantilism—in short, possesses unique psychic characteristics which I do not think are well understood in our time. The playful reenactment of myth, the reliving of the stock in-trade-biography is particularly acute in the child and the artist. And yet this acute manifestation of reliving-the-myth is only the heightened, personally intensified experience, of a more generalized phenomena—one need not hesitate to say universal phenomena of man’s cultural consciousness. The penchant for reliving the myths of the past, mythic identification, becomes a singularly significant psychoanalytic insight when the catastrophic origins of many of the world’s most ancient myths is grasped and accepted. Your own work, particularly in Oedipus and Akhnaton shows how acutely aware you are of, not only mythic-biography as a relived phenomenon, but how these roots are built into historical reality. In Dr. Faustus, Mann shows how deeply this psychic phenomenon is steeped in the past, and specifically how it related to Germany’s catastrophic history.
At a profoundly critical moment in the novel Adrian __ experiencing that schizophrenic projection of objectifying his subconscious conflict—has a long dialectic with the devil—very much in the style of Ivan Karamazov's conversation with the Devil. Forcing Adrian to psychological confrontation the Devil says:

Bethinks thee what lively movement of the people was with you in Germany's midst, what press of pilgrims to the Sacred Blood at Niklosausen in the Tauberthal, what on the Rhine and allover, how full of agitation and unrest, anxiety, presentiments; children's crusades, bleeding ot the host, famine, Peasants League, war, the pest at Cologne, meteors, comets, nuns and stigmata, miraculous crosses on men’s garments, and that amazing standard of the maidens shift With the cross, whereunder to march against the Turk. Good time, devilishly German time! Don't you feel all warm and snug at the memory? There the right planets came together in the sign of the Scorpion as Master Durer has eruditely drawn in the medical broadsheet, there came the tender little ones, the swarms of animated corkscrews, the loving guests from the E’est Indes into the German lands, the flagellants. Oh, now you listen! As though I spoke of the marching guilds of penitents, the Flagellants who nailed for their own and all other sins. But I mean those flagellants, the invisible tiny ones; the kind that have scourges, like our pale Venus, the spirochaeta pallid a, that is the true sort.(xx)

And here I would like to emphasize the return theme – which is such a major element of this novel. Adrian in later life chose as residence for his concentrated artistic preoccupations a place remarkable like his childhood home:
This choice of a place to live, reproducing the earlier one, the burying of oneself in one's earliest, outlived childhood, or at least in the outer circumstances of the same -- it might indicate attachment, but in any case it is psychologically disturbing. In Leverkuhn it was the more so since I never observed that his ties with the paternal home were particularly close or emotional, and he severed them early without observable pain. Was this artificial "return" simply' a whim? I cannot think so. Indeed it reminds me of a man of my acquaintance who, though outwardly robust and even bearded, was so highly strung that When he was ill --and he inclined to illness -- he wished to be treated only by a child doctor" (26)

The psychological cord here struck is repeated and generalized in great dimension throughout this work. The village in which Adrian grew up, the psychological and cultural climate, so to speak, was steeped in a return of its own. In reference to his home, Kaisersaschern, we read:

But something still hung on the air from the spiritual constitution of the men of the last decade of the fifteenth century: a morbid excitement, a metaphysical epidemic latent since the last years of the Middle Ages. This was a practical rational modern town - yet, no, it was not modern it was old; and age is past in presentness, a past merely overlaid with presentness. Rash it may be to say so, but here one could imagine strange things; as for instance a movement of a children’s crusade might break out; a St.Vitus dance; some wandering lunatic with communistic visions, preaching a bond fire of the vanities; miracles of the cross, fantastic and mystical folk movements—things like these, one felt, might easily come to pass. . . it tends, I say,
to return to those earlier epochs, it enthusiastically re-enacts symbolic deeds of sinister significance... the stamp of the old world, underground neurosis which I have been describing; the mark and psychological temper of such a town, betrays itself in Kaisersaschern by the many "originals", eccentric and harmlessly half mad folk who live within its walls and, like the old buildings, belongs to the picture.

And here we would add;

I speak of the folk, but this old folkish layer survives in us all, and to speak as I really think, I do not consider religion the most adequate means of keeping it under lock and key. For that literature alone avails, humanistic science, the ideals of the free and beautiful human being.

Nietzsche has succinctly expressed this phenomenon in his famous dictum. “The we is older than the I.” Hitler I understand, came from just such a village—noted particularly for its psychic freaks.

And a passage that might particularly strike your attention:

You see your humanism is pure Middle Ages. Its concern is a cosmology proper to KAESERSASCHERN and its towers: it leads to astrology, to observation of the position of the planets, -- the constellations and its favorable or unfavorable indications—quite naturally and rightly, for nothing is clearer than the in time interdependence of the bodies of the cosmic group so closely bound together as our solar system, and their near neighborly mutual reference. . . I still defend it today,” he answered. “Astrological times knew a lot. they knew, or divined things which science in its broadest sense
is coming back to. That disease, plagues, epidemics have to do with the positions of the stars was to those times an intuitive certainty. Today (around 1914) we have got so far as to debate whether germs bacteria, organisms which we say, can produce an influenza epidemic on Earth came from other planets—Mars, Jupiter, or Venus. (273-4)

And again

“Contagious diseases, plague, black death, were probably not of this planet, as almost certainly indeed life itself has not had its origins on our-globe but came hither from outside. He, Adrian, had it on the best authority that it came from neighboring stars which are enve1oped in an atmosphere more favorable to it, containing much methane and ammonia like Jupiter, Mars and Venus. From them or one of them—he left it to my choice—life had once, borne by cosmic projectiles or simply by radiation pressure, arrived upon our formally sterile and innocent planet. My humanistic homo Dei, the crowning achievement of life, was together with his obligation to the spiritual in all probability the product of the marsh gas fertility of a neighboring star. (274)

In this we displayed the preoccupation with self which is peculiar to us: our naive egoism finds it important, yes, takes it for granted, that for the sake of our development (and we are always developing) the rest of the world, further on than ourselves and not at all possessed by the dynamic of catastrophe, must shed its blood. (300)
The time of which I write was for us Germans an era of national collapse, of capitulation, of uprisings due to exhaustion, of helpless surrender into the hands of strangers. The time in which I write, must serve to set down these recollections here in my silence and solitude, this time has a horribly swollen body, it carries in its womb a national catastrophe compared with which the defeat of those earlier times seems a moderate misfortune, the sensible liquidation of an unsuccessful enterprise. Even an ignominious issue that now hangs over us, such as fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, such as the first time we had not at all invoked. (336)

What kind of music did Adrian Leverkuhn write? Catastrophic music: In fact there is apocalyptic tradition which hands to these ecstatic visions and experiences to a certain extent already framed, however odd it may seem, psychologically —that that a raving man should rave in the same pattern as another who came before him; that one is ecstatic not independently so to speak, but by rote. Still it seems to be the ease, and I point it out in connection with the statement that Leverkuhn in the test for his incommensurable choral work by no means confided himself to the Revelations of St. John, but took in this whole prophetic tradition, so that his work amounts to the creation of a new and independent Apocalypse, a sort of resume of the whole literature. (357)

The effect is extremely uncanny. But most shattering of all is the application of the glisando to the human voice, which after all was the first target in organizing the tonic material and ridding song of its primitive howling over several notes:
the return, in short, to the primitive stage, as the chorus of the Apocalypse does it in the form of frightfully shrieking human voices at the opening of the seventh seal, when the sun became black and the moon became as blood and the ships are overturned. (375)

There are other passages, Dr. Velikovsky, scores of them, which are so suggestive and explicit that I cannot doubt the great relationship that exists between this novel and your own work.

But to return for a moment to the "return" unfortunately I am not aware of your own thoughts on this matter of collective amnesia. Perhaps it would not be inappropriate for me to make an observation or two of my own on this subject.

Collective amnesia, mythic identification, and catastrophic consciousness: can it be doubted that they are profoundly related? Can it be doubted that there exists an archaic dynamism, a dynamism that partakes of that dreamy, child-like mythic world, reaching back into primitive time. It may even be that there is even some genetic relationship here, though I must confess, I have my doubts—doubts which fortify themselves on the grounds that there is more than likely a subconscious assimilation of cultural experience which itself creates its own subconscious dynamic.

Mann has presented here a mythic biography, the re-enactment of the Faust myth—Wotan and Frigg were not far behind. That the ancient Gods play such a prominent role in our cultural lives and values that many of those Gods and eschatological visions meet in the focus of catastrophe must have been born out of man's experience, "by rote" so to speak they are carried into the future. And the future, its liberating vision has always been and must continue to be man's search for a rational understanding of man's great psychological ills. I, too, make no doubt that, in time, and the time may not be far away, mankind will recognize and will be liberated through that recognition that man's future is in knowledge and the celestial worlds of reason, faith and love.
In *Dr. Faustus* is to be found medical consideration of Adrian’s "problem, how he was very bound to his cultural environment, his mythic identifications also with Beethoven, the “fire and ice” theme, Adrian’s retirement into the darkness and physical disease (very much like Nietzsche) his reliving the brothel scene, taken no doubt directly from Kierkegaard), Adrian’s mystical symbols, how he wore a ring when he wrote (Wagnerian trappings) etc. etc. So much bears so greatly upon your own work.

I hope this material may be of some use to you.

Eric Miller

P. S. I just learned that in the June 2 issue of the “Psychiatric and Social Science Review” review are two article which deal with the subjects of German’s “regression neurosis” the return theme, epidemic disease, and psychotic behavior.