

CHAPTER – IV

Tragic Humanism in Kafka

I shun people not because I want to live quietly, but rather because I want to die quietly.

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, July 28, 1914.

Max Brod in his biography on Franz Kafka notes a conversation which he had with him on February 28, 1920: "He: "We are nihilistic thoughts that came into God's head." I quoted in support the doctrine of the Gnostics concerning the Demiurge, the evil creator of the world as a sin of God's. "No," said Kafka, "I believe we are not such a radical relapse of God's, only one of his bad moods. He had a bad day." "So there would be hope outside our world?" He smiled, "Plenty of hope- for God- no end of hope – only not for us" (B, 75). This conversation bears the essence of tragic humanism in Kafka. Humanism is a philosophy which seeks to provide dignity and value to man; being derived from the word 'humanitas', which means the education of man. The Greek philosopher Protagoras (481-411 B.C.) defines humanism in a simple but profound sentence-"Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not." Accused of impiety, Protagoras was unfortunately hounded to death. Likewise Socrates (469-399 B.C.), another great humanist emphasized the need for self-knowledge: "The unexamined life is not worth living." Humanism is basically a philosophy which places man at the centre although, as the American historian Professor Edward P. Cheney says in **The Philosophy of Humanism**, humanism has meant many things:

It may be the reasonable balance of life that the early Humanists discovered in the Greeks; it may be merely the study of the humanities or polite letters, it may be the freedom from religiosity

and the vivid interest in all sides of life of a Queen Elizabeth or a Benjamin Franklin; it may be the responsiveness to all human passions of a Shakespeare or a Goethe; or it may be a philosophy of which man is the centre and sanction. It is in the last sense, elusive as it is that Humanism has had perhaps its greatest significance since the sixteenth century.

(Lamont, 1965, 11)

However, humanism has also been used to designate the philosophy of existentialism. All existentialists, both Christian existentialists like Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel; or existential atheists like Martin Heidegger or Jean Paul Sartre are agreed in one common principle- "Existence comes before essence." Sartre clarifies it further in his

Existentialism and Humanism:

We mean that man first of all exists, as the existentialists sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing- as he will be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.

(Sartre, 1948, 28)

If humanism places man at the centre then Kafka's life is a search for a centre throughout. This sense of tragic humanism permeates through all his works, and this was greatly aggravated by the post-war mood of disillusionment. The Humanist tradition which placed immense faith upon man's capability to improve his lot, and man being a reservoir of immense possibilities was thoroughly ruffled up after 1914. Humanism which is opposed to every kind of irrationalism or faith in external

guidance does not hold any meaning for Kafka. All his works are imbued with an air of tragic humanism. Much of his early stories like **Children in the country road**, **Unhappiness**, **Reflections for Gentlemen Jockeys**, **A Wish to be a Red Indian**, **Advocates**, **On the Tram**, **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphoses** were written between 1904 and 1912. These early pieces were compiled in a slim volume **Meditation** which was published in the year 1912. Much of these stories published in this volume presaged the existential themes that Kafka was to use again and again. **Description of a Struggle** is a man's attempt to cover a part of his wholeness by his unremitting struggle against the excessiveness of living. The story, unfinished, though written in 1904-05, Kafka wanted to destroy it but finally let Max Brod keep it. Here the narrator is not only estranged from the world but from himself too. However, the human desire to connect is unmistakably present in the narrator, for when the acquaintance hums a song in course of their walk, his mind rues: "Why wasn't he speaking to me, anyway? And if he didn't need me, why hadn't he left me in peace in the warm room with the Benedictine and the pastry? It certainly wasn't I who had insisted on this walk" (CS, 11); and his mind continues to ramble: "Why, by the way, was I so intent on staying with him? No, I ought to go away- and this at once to my relatives and friends who were waiting for me. But if I didn't have any relatives and friends then I must fend for myself (What was the good of complaining!), but I must leave here no less quickly" (CS, 16). Yet this desire to commune is not free from grotesque thoughts of the narrator. He now imagines the acquaintance drawing a dagger underneath his coat and plunging it into him; and the acquaintance changing his form into a hyena. It is in the second section of the story **Diversions or Proof That It's Impossible to Live (A Ride)**, that the animal streak in him becomes more pronounced. Leaping into the shoulder, urges the narrator to 'trot' and each time he

stopped, he kicked his belly with his boots or boxes his ears. When the acquaintance collapses the narrator writes: "Since he could no longer be of any use to me, I left there on the stones without much regret and whistled down a few vultures which, obediently and with serious beaks, settled down on him in order to guard him" (CS, 22). It is in the section **A Walk** that the narrator makes clear how it is impossible to escape one's suffering. Then comes from the thicket four naked men carrying a monstrously fat man on a litter. The fat man's wail of being cut off from the world outside; the mountains, cloud, sunset, sky, remind him of their unattainable ness. Kafka closes by making the fat man carried by the river, perhaps suggesting oneness with nature. His story is followed by the story of the supplicant, doubting his own existence, threatened constantly by the outside world. Interestingly the supplicant is seen controlling this world by the power of words. Kafka himself had profound faith in the power of language. It was this power of language which helped Kafka sustain the crises in his life after his discovery of Judaism and the failure of his engagement.

Marthe Robert explains in **Franz Kafka's Loneliness**:

Between this universe, crumbling though indubitably real in the eyes of people at large, and the figures struggle announced in the title can obviously not take place. The adversaries are too much alike in their precariousness, and, indeed, the story describes no actual struggle, but merely tells what makes a struggle impossible and how the struggle is constantly averted. It shows adversaries in no condition to confront each other, partly because of their common weakness and partly because of the heterogeneous nature of their respective powers, which permits each to triumph continually in his own sphere but to be continually defeated on the enemy's ground.

(Robert, 1982, 139-140).

Hence man flounders in search of becoming a whole. Hence the exasperation experienced by the narrator to hear the whole truth is understandable: "Out with your stories! I no longer want to hear scraps. Tell me everything, from beginning to end. I won't listen to less, I warn you. But I'm burning to hear the whole thing" (CS, 20).

The boundaries between things are in a flux; they move between two realms. There remains no one concrete form of existence-inner or outer- and man is doomed to be a part of this state of suspension. The struggle, therefore, forming the theme of all that Kafka wrote hereafter, is a search for a whole. It is only out of this fragmented scrap that he attempted to create a meaningful harmony. However there is always a disjunction between what is and what is described. The change that takes place between seeing and interpreting in Kafka is always negative as things tend to lose their pristine beauty and serenity. In Kafka's world view, it takes the shape of a moral problem, for reflection tend to limit, schematize and distort events and things. Hence we find in Kafka how construction of notions of truth and whole is reduced to futility.

The observed events as something incomprehensibly strange is again found in **Wedding Preparations in the Country** which was found in Max Brod's library together with **Description of a Struggle**. As Eduard Raban journeys to meet his fiancée; a train of thought passes his mind. This alienation from the world is manifest in the split between the personal 'I' and the impersonal 'one': "One works so feverishly at the office that afterwards one is too tired even to enjoy one's holidays properly. But even all that work does not give one a claim to be treated lovingly by everyone; on the contrary one is alone, a total stranger and only an object of curiosity. And so long as you say 'one' instead of 'I' there's nothing in it and one can easily tell the story; but as soon as you admit to yourself that it is you yourself, you feel as though transfixed and are horrified" (CS, 53). Raban views the outside events as

meaningless and incomprehensible. He lacks the temerity to move forth out into the world and join the human harmony. Therefore his wish to remain home in bed transformed into a 'bug' and send his clothed body out into the world. He would prefer to go 'hibernating' away from the consciousness of living. Even the joy of seeing one's loved one fails to generate any happiness in Raban; and thus the entire fragment only registers what he sees on the street, in the railroad car and in the station; and his musings over them. Max Brod in 1924 describes its subject matter as the 'anxieties of somebody who wishes to marry.' Like Kafka, Raban found it impossible to love, impossible to work, and impossible to live. The last line of the above quote extract shows how the moment one begins to put into words these anxieties one becomes 'transfixed'. Kafka's hesitancy as a writer and therefore his art rests on this hesitancy which is both self-defeating and self-annihilating. This dread to face the world outside and therefore the desire to transform into an animal ('Raban' is a translation of the name 'Kafka'; *Rabe* meaning jackdaw, raven) could symbolize the profound wish in man to a "state of man before he thinks, that part of him that is pre human and early human, a part that is always present along with everything else within his soul" (Emrich, 1984, 141). The wish to liberate oneself into an animal is reminiscent of fairy-tales where children would often be seen as rescued by animals when pursued by evil shapes. But in the world of Kafka, one turns into an animal without being conscious of this profound change. In **The Metamorphosis**, Gregor Samsa is oblivious to his change into a vermin. He hopes to get dressed right away, have his breakfast and take the next train to work. The self-sacrificing and dutiful son now becomes a source of embarrassment. Locked into a room, he is cut off from the human circle. Although his sister takes care of his needs, she refuses to touch anything that has come into contact with him. Gregor realizes how repulsive his sight

must be when his mother swoons upon seeing him, and the father shoos him away savagely and hurls him a fatal blow with an apple. "He must go," cried Gregor's sister, "that's the only solution, Father. You must try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor. The fact that we've believed it for so long is the root of all our trouble. But how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature, and he'd have gone away on his own accord. Then we wouldn't have any brother, but we'd be able to go on living and keep his memory in honor. As it is, this creature persecutes us, drives away our lodgers, obviously wants the whole apartment to himself, and would have us all sleep in the gutter" (CS, 134). His family refuses to perceive that Gregor's case is a case of self-banishment. Even in his dying moments Gregor thinks of his family with 'tenderness' and 'love'. Outwardly his metamorphosis is accompanied not just by a change in his appearance and voice, but his distaste for fresh food and craving for stale left-over thrust him into the other territory. In spite of his being transformed into an outcaste mysteriously, what is tragic in Gregor is his futile attempts to get back into the human community. Kafka's artistic mastery is seen in the way he has been able to portray his own condition as an impossible one. The charwoman disposes the body of Gregor with a routine mundaneness because for her Gregor is only a 'thing'. But if he were only a 'thing', how did she move him? The text hints that the music is the 'nourishment' he longed for, perhaps the nourishment he could not find in human society. Interestingly Gregor's family parallels Kafka's own parents and his sister Ottla with whom he shared close ties. When Gustav Janouch suggested that Gregor Samsa looked like a cryptogram for Kafka, Kafka corrected him thus: "It is not a cryptogram. Samsa is not merely Kafka and nothing else. **The Metamorphoses** is not a confession, although it is- in a certain sense-an indiscretion" (GJ, 35). Unlike **The**

Judgment which was the creative production of a single night, **The Metamorphoses** took him almost three weeks and it remains one of his longest and rarely completed story. Kafka himself called it 'imperfect almost to its very marrow' (D, January 19, 1914); but the tinge of human regeneration and resilience is unmistakable. With Gregor's death, the family's source of embarrassment is gone and the novella ends with a picture of spring, love and marriage of his sister. In his essential loneliness, ceasing to be human or even an animal, Kafka is supposed to have found affinity with Kierkegaard and Kierkegaard's failed love for Regina Olsen. It is from him that he had realized that it is only in such moments of forsakenness that there is an awareness of the tragedy of being human. Ronald Gray writes: "In **The Metamorphoses**, he had seen in his own existence as though from outside, in its relation with other lives, and though there was always another self which watched this self, he had recognized the need for this self to die. It was a personal affair, and he had no more of it than that, in this story. Had he realized the implications, he might never have written in the same vein again. Within a short while, however, the conviction that his own state could represent a universal fact of existence entered his consciousness, and the stories he wrote after this are given a more general symbolic value" (Gray, 91-92). His sister's final outburst exposes the falseness inherent in genuine human relationship. Gregor destroys himself providing for his family even when the father had been hoarding enough. Gregor sacrifices his self but the tragic pathos lies in the fact that the change seems to be only in body and not in mind and spirit. Unlike Raban in **Wedding Preparations in the Country**, who dreaded the very thought of contaminating his self by his contact with the outside world, Gregor Samsa takes the risk of moving out into the world and thereby destroying himself in the process. His real change into a beetle, unlike Raban's hypothetical wish to be a bug, is a result of the cleavage

between action and contemplation. Hence the tragic humanism here consists in the idea that modern living incapacitates one from action. It also appears that existential humanism is closely related to 'human subjectivity' and '*being*'. Subjectivity is not to be understood in terms of self-centeredness but as Sartre clarifies "Subjectivism means, on the one hand, the freedom of the individual subject and, on the other, that man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity. It is in the latter sense which is the deeper meaning of existentialism. When we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men"(Sartre,1948, 29). Thus Sartre's concept of subjectivity is double edged, implying that each man is responsible for his own existence; and at the same time responsible also for mankind as a whole. In fact Man is a creature whose very existence poses a problem. Nietzsche recognized this problem when he referred to man as the 'not yet determined animal'. The phrase is apt for it points out that the nature of man or what exactly man is not yet determined, and that man is an 'unfinished' creature. Now if existentialism starts with the premise that existence is prior to essence; then the idea of existence would preclude all freedom. The mystery of birth shows that there really is no freedom of choice with regard to man's existence. On the other hand, there is a greater freedom of choice with regard to our essence. It is Kierkegaard who discerns this mystery endemic to all human situations: "Where am I? Who am I? Who is it that has lured me into the world and now leaves me there? Why was I not consulted?.....How did I obtain an interest in this big enterprise they call reality? Why should I have an interest in it? Is it not a voluntary concern? [Why am I] compelled to take part in it?" (Kierkegaard,1942,114). These words of Kierkegaard echo a similar statement of Pascal, the first philosopher who can really be called the predecessor of the existentialists: "I am frightened, and

am astonished at being here rather than there; for there is no reason why here rather than there, why now rather than then. Who has put me here? By whose order and direction have this place and time been allotted to me?" (Pensees, No.205). Thus freedom actually consists in acting according to one's own will giving a greater opportunity of exercising one's humanity which is the one real essence. It is this essence which gives meaning and wholeness to existence. In Kafka's world, there is no place for essence for the outward world does not provide for an opportunity to man to develop his essence, and also his existence is also constantly under threat. Thus, tragic humanism is the awareness of nothingness and the danger of enjoying this nothingness.

Stories in the same vein feature in the early stories which were written between 1904 and 1912. **Children on a Country Road** deals with the innocent world of children in their play. Enthused like some wild beasts or cuirassiers of war stomping about speak of the heroism that can be found only in the world of children. But this too comes with a feeling of deep tiredness—"Everything was equably warm to us, we felt neither warmth nor chill in the grass one only got tired" (CS, 380). The last few lines are about the village folk who never sleep-

"And why not?"

"Because they never get tired."

"And why not?"

"Because they're fools."

"Don't fools get tired?"

"How could fools get tired!" (CS, 382).

The children getting tired is indicative of pure heroism and energy marred by a sheer sense of tiredness; and if one never gets tired as the queer village folk it is because they are incapable of the human feeling of 'tiredness'. Similarly, **Unhappiness** is a

conversation between the narrator ('existence') and a ghost ('essence'). The perfectly casual talk between the two symbolizes how conversation with creatures of the other world is much easier than with one's fellow-being. In contrast to the shaky confidence of the adult narrator, the child ghost seems more in control of the situation. The following clarifies the situation: "We needn't worry about that. I just want to say: my knowing you so well isn't much protection to me, it only relieves you of the effort of keeping up pretenses before me" (CS, 392). Thus what torments the narrator is not the fear of the ghost for he, himself calls it ".....only a secondary fear. The real fear is a fear of what caused the apparition. And that fear doesn't go away. I have it powerfully inside me now" (CS, 394). The same sense of the other is dealt in another short piece **Reflections for Gentlemen-Jockeys**, where winning a race elicits the same response from friends, rival-competitors and on-lookers. The best friends having no faith upon his horse now turn away, the rival competitors put on a brave face beneath their defeat, and for the ladies the victor cuts out a ridiculous figure. The satirical portrayal of inflated pride with never-ending handshakes and salutations can be seen in both **The Trial** and **The Castle**. There is not a single person in the crowd who shares with the victor a genuine feeling of camaraderie in his victory. Perhaps, the last line of this brief piece says it all: "And finally from the now overcast sky rain actually begins to fall" (CS, 390). The rain, dampening everything that it falls upon symbolize that all earthly achievement is only a fall. Kafka prescribes that a human fall may be inevitable in either going forwards or moving backwards; but one must not quit moving in spite of it all. The possibility of an escape through evanescence is suggested in both **A Wish to be a Red Indian** and **Advocates**. The narrator in the **Advocates** puts up a brave front: "But back I cannot go.... Under your climbing feet they will go on growing upwards" (CS, 45). The search for the advocate can be a

search for peace that Kafka longed all his life, the kind of peace that is best expressed in another of his early piece **On the Tram**. Here the narrator gives a close description of a desirable girl in the tram. The peaceful serenity of the girl arouses no sensuous desire in him, but makes him give way to amazement: "How is it that she is not amazed at herself, that she keeps her lips closed and makes no such remark?" (CS, 389). The narrator here fails to comprehend that man is a unity of body and consciousness and therefore the failure of responding in the normal human manner.

The Judgment is a novella and not just a short story for it encompasses an extraordinary event in the ordinary flux of living. Perhaps, that is why Martin Greenberg in his **The Terror of Art: Kafka and Modern Literature** brackets Kafka with the great Italian novella writers like Kliest and Stendhal. Goethe defined the novella in his conversation with Eckermann in January 29, 1827 as, "What else is the novella but an unheard occurrence that has taken place?" Here the novella opens with the long reverie of Georg Bendemann oscillating about whether or not to convey to his friend in Russia the news of his engagement. However this reverie is tinged with condescension rather than on genuine fellow feeling. Proud of his business success and now of his personal success, his tone borders on arrogance: "What could one write to such a man, who had obviously run off the rails, a man one could be sorry for but could not help" (CS, 77). Thus Georg conveys to his friend only unimportant items of gossip; and when his fiancé wanted to know why Georg's friend won't be coming to their wedding, Georg replies dismissively: "....don't misunderstand me, he won't probably come, at least I think so, but he would feel that his hand had been forced and he would be hurt, perhaps he would envy me and certainly he'd be discontented and without being able to do anything about his discontent he'd have to go away again alone. Alone-do you know what that means?" (CS, 79-80). It is not

surprising for us to discern Georg's lack of understanding for his friend. Even his father is an image of neglect and although Georg resolves to take care of his father henceforth, there is no doubt that he is more concerned of himself than anyone else. However, the old father will not tolerate the son's usurpation of power and his sudden transformation into an image of a bellowing strength overtakes Georg by surprise. Georg is now 'driven' to his death and before he jumps into the river, he whispers in a low voice-"Dear parents, I have loved you, all the same" (CS, 88). These final words, been likened by Kafka to an orgasm, marks the essence of tragic humanism. Georg Bendemann lacked the natural human instinct of reaching out to fellow human beings; and it is only at the climactic moment that he realizes that to love is not really a momentous issue. In many ways the figure of Georg can be likened to Kafka himself. Both the proper names bear the same number of alphabets; and the 'mann' as in Bendemann, as Eric Heller, notes, has been supplied to the hero with a little manly strength in his struggle. **The Judgment** revealed to him his true vocation as an artist. The long drawn conflict between art and life is resolved once Kafka decides to dedicate the rest of his life to writing. But his dedication to writing took him away from the joys of human life. Thus he could not marry Felice and lead a settled life.

This search for a domestic centre is again reflected in the main parts of **Amerika** also called **Lost Without Trace** which was written between 1911 and 1912. Here Kafka perhaps saw America as a symbol of hope and escape from this sense of tragic doom looming large over individuals. In Kafka's world one cannot escape the pain of the condition of being human. In 1915 he writes: 'Rossmann and K., the guiltless and the guilty, both of them alike, in the end, punitively killed the guiltless one more gently, rather pushed aside than beaten down.' Although Kafka himself had confessed to his publisher Kurt Wolff that barring the first chapter **The Stoker** he found the rest of the

novel as 'a complete failure.' **The Stoker** was first published separately in May 1913 which receiving immediate favorable reviews. It was to be a story of a simple émigré from Hamburg who is packed off to America for a new life after he was seduced by a woman servant and got herself a child by him. Karl had not really committed so big a crime to have as to have deserved a sentence of exile from his parents. It is in such a moment of loneliness that makes him find sympathy for the Stoker who was dismissed from his job. His uncle who unexpectedly bumps into him is able to diagnose his situation when he comments that the Karl's parents had packed him off 'shamefully unprovided-for' to a foreign land for fear of alimony and the disgrace which they would have to face by being involved in the scandal and shoo him away as one would shoo an annoying cat out of the house. This also explains why Karl without actually trying to know the truth of the whole case takes up the cause of the stoker although the sole complaint of the stoker was that the Chief Engineer of the ship was an exacting man with anti-German feeling. It is enough for Karl to take up his case by passionately delivering an inspired speech before a tribunal consisting of the Captain and other officers of the ship. All this while a feeling of self-congratulation overtakes him, and the feeling becomes tinged with a nostalgic desire to display this heroism before his parents: "But Karl felt more strong and clear-headed than perhaps he had ever been at home. If only his father and mother could see him now, fighting for justice in a strange land before men of authority, and, though not yet triumphant, dauntlessly resolved to win the final victory! Would they revise their opinion of him? Set him between them and praise him? Look into his eyes at last, at last, those eyes so filled with devotion to them? Ambiguous questions, and this the most unsuitable moment to ask them?"(A, 30). A change in thought is brought over when he is unexpectedly recognized by his uncle turning the formal state of tribunal into a formal

family reunion scene. Kafka's works envision a world where every effort to reach out to fellow men becomes an act of transgression and violence. We see how Karl's uncle is embarrassed to disturb the not so official business with a personal family reunion scene; even Karl feels bemused to find why his Senator Uncle should debase himself by his profuse apology to the Captain. In a way he becomes an emblem of the self-made man trapped in the cold world. As this uncle assures Karl of a safe stay in America, he is able to quickly shed off his relationship with the stoker urging him henceforth to defend himself. With this the first chapter ends with Karl contemplating whether this uncle would be able to replace the stoker. From the very beginning of the novel Karl does seem to suffer from persecution-mania, a feeling that there are forces outside him threatening to annihilate him, thus forcing him to be on his guard always. In the very beginning Karl was convinced that a certain Slovak was determined to steal his suitcase and how for five nights he was on an alert throughout for he felt that the Slovak was merely waiting for him to doze off for a minute so that he could steal it. His preoccupation with his box almost exhausts him. Even when he is sitting with the stoker in his room Karl is haunted with a feeling that the world shut outside was conspiring against him. The comfort of a haven offered by his Uncle Jacob in Chapter two proves to be illusory. Looking down from Karl's room on the sixth floor of a house, one was bound to be dazzled by the stream of traffic below on the road. However, Karl is denied even the pleasure of loitering in the balcony by the annoyed frown of his uncle. America, a world of opportunity and glamour to be purchased with a high price of sweat denied the solitary indulgence of idle laziness. Although Karl is given ample opportunity to hone his talents while not realizing that a true personality can only be developed through contact with others. When Mr. Pollunder invites Karl to his country house, his uncle permits him to leave with reluctance. Ironically it is in

the country house which is here more a symbol of peaceful retreat and freedom that Karl is appalled by the overbearing personality of Mr. Green. The hospitality offered by Mr. Pollunder and his raunchy daughter Clara ends up making Karl feel sick. Clara's erotic behavior bordering on sadism is not uncommon in Kafka's works. It anticipates the scene where the Head doorman embracing Therese forcefully who pleads for Karl during the interrogation. It is also reminiscent of the court officials in **The Trial** engaging in a sexual play within the Court while Joseph K. engages in a desperate oration on the unjustness of his trial. After finishing his dinner with tortured slowness, Karl is invited by Clara to her room but all Karl has in mind is to return to his uncle and imagined how he would surprise his uncle by meeting him early in the morning and he could even have breakfast with him. Unable to extricate himself from Mr. Pollunder's house, Karl gets a rude shock from his uncle in the form of a letter announcing his decision to sever his help for Karl. Having now required to fend for himself, Karl finds employment as a lift-boy in the Hotel Occidental. Here Karl is to work under tiring conditions which he takes it in his stride. The Hotel Occidental is a cold world of mechanization where all human feelings are put on the back-burn. But Karl is ready to work extra-hard in order to make up for the loss of time. But Karl is not allowed to prove his worth as he is soon dismissed from his job as a lift-boy on a flimsy pretext of having left his post vacant for few minutes. For strange reason the Head Waiter's animosity for Karl results in a series of other charges like not greeting the Porter and letting the drunken Robinson sleep in the dormitory which Karl does to help his old acquaintance. It is a reflection of a world where simple feelings of camaraderie and love is always replaced by shallow egoism. So the burly Head Doorman's ego needs to be constantly massaged by his subordinates. Ironically while robbing the dignity of others, he is himself robbed of

his own dignity. The charges against Karl were not serious enough for him to be dismissed from job but a world where everyone can easily be replaced by everyone the smallest pretext is enough to be thrown out. Thus Karl rightly thinks, 'It is impossible to defend one self where there is no good-will' (A, 185). And hence after having made to bear the ignominy of being discharged unscrupulously, Karl gets an important insight: "Remembering these things, Karl told himself that he had suffered enough as a lift-boy and yet it had all been in vain, for his job had not proved, as he had hoped, a step to something higher, but had rather pushed him farther down, and even brought him very near prison" (A, 185). Thereupon his new-found freedom is once again threatened in chapter seven when Delamarche forces Karl to serve him and his woman. There is an abrupt break-off after chapter seven for without letting us know how Karl extricates himself from the forced slavery of Delamarche, we see Karl looking for employment in the final chapter **The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma**. The invitation to join this theatre of the road where 'Everyone is Welcome!' (A, 246) promise to Karl a world where there will be justice and where he can live without the fear of being persecuted anymore. Karl is also overjoyed to meet his old friend Fanny who is dressed as an angel perched on a pedestal. The novel ends with Karl having joined the theatre and traveling the first of its itinerary amidst a high expanse of mountains. It is noteworthy that the novel imbued heavily with industrial depravity should end with the freshness of nature, perhaps the indication of the soothing effect of Kafka having just met Felice Bauer.

The novel remains open-ended because whether Karl is happy indeed to be away from the ignominy of human society causing him to be **Lost Without Trace** or whether he finds perpetual acceptance in the ephemeral theatre is not sure. Many have also accepted the religious interpretation of Karl having found salvation at the end but

it is difficult to accept this proposition keeping in mind that Kafka never expressed his faith in religious leanings. Also most Existentialists find the idea of God doubtful and therefore man is in consequence forlorn like the way Karl is made to be swept away in the vast expanse of nature. Sartre's comment in this respect is important:

Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith that he is without excuse. For if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism- man is free, man is freedom. Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior. Thus we have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse, that is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free.

(Sartre, 1948,34)

Thus Existential humanism is essentially tragic in nature. Similarly, the philosophy of Humanism is also concerned not with the idea of God per se but the ultimate faith in Man and his innate capability to solve his problems through the sheer use of reason. However, in Kafka's works we realize that man is deprived of this innate ability to use this reason and thus man in consequence is doubly estranged not just from the outside world but from himself too. Reason, with its limitations, as a source of all knowledge becomes doubtful here. Humanism seeks to prevent individuals from submerging in the mass and yet at the same time seizing technology to improve the material conditions of living. For the Marxist Humanism, man is the historical product of flesh and blood; and man's humanity can only be realized in a capitalist society; and for the Christians man's humanity is only realized in his redemption or salvation.

For the existentialists humanity is to be realized by man within himself. Existential humanity is to be sought and cultivated in the existent himself. It is again different from Marxism which being an ideology of Communism, we find in it a collective effort to control and master over things and men; or Christian humanism which seeks redemption in through grace. Walter Sokel finds a correspondence between Kafka's fictional world and Marx's analysis of capital. He explains it with reference to **The Metamorphoses**: "Gregor's profound self-alienation corresponds, with uncanny precision, to Marx's definition of the 'externalization' of work under capitalism" (Sokel, 1966,1); but again there are counter-opinions by Robertson who remarks, "The analysis of Gregor's work and its effect on him is certainly unsparing, but would not be easily accommodated in a conventional Marxist view" (Robertson, 1985,85).

But the novel **Amerika** offers a picture of an industrial society operating with the hidden motive of economic and psychological coercion. Right from the beginning we notice how the stream of traffic threatens to submerge the human voice: "From morning to evening and far into the dreaming night that street was the channel for a constant stream of traffic which, seen from above, looked like an inextricable confusion, for ever newly improvised, of foreshortened human figures and the roofs of all kinds of vehicles, sending into the upper air another confusion, more riotous and complicated, of noises, dust and smells, all of it enveloped and penetrated by a flood of light which the multitudinous objects in the street scattered, carried off and again busily brought back, with an effect as palpable to the dazzled eye as if a glass roof stretched over the street were being violently smashed into fragments at every moment"(A, 44-45). Karl had realized very early in the house of his uncle how the luxury of idleness could only bring 'sheer ruination.' It is a world where man is reduced to a mere automation, with the danger of everyone of every one capable of

being replaced by everyone. Such a situation entails every individual to make headway with a breakneck speed without wasting a single moment. This can be seen in Karl's haste upon joining the Hotel Occidental to prove his best even after the Manageress showing him an overstrained Italian boy. Such a world where man is shorn of any trace of humanity is not treated as something out of the ordinary, as the Manageress explains: "But America's a strange country. Take this boy, for instance; he's an Italian. At the moment it looks as if he simply wouldn't be able to stand the work, his face has fallen away to nothing and he goes away to sleep on the job, although he's naturally a very willing lad- but let him only go on working here or anywhere else in America for another six months and he'll be able to take it all in his stride, and in another five years he'll be a strong man. I could spend hours telling you about such cases" (A, 126). Human existence is therefore not just affected by the sole process of production and consumption but how the procurement of goods for sustenance involves the steady denigration of human worth as seen in the pathetic death of Therese's mother, crashed under the weight of filth, poverty, grime and blood. The compulsion to work without stopping is exhausting but expected as natural. Karl's friend Therese in the Hotel Occidental reveals how "They expect a lot from you here. A month ago a kitchen-maid simply fainted under the strain and had to lie up in hospital for fourteen days" (A, 130). Thus it seems to be a world where- even if like the student whom Karl meets in Chapter seven, who in spite of slogging all through the day as a salesman and studying all night without his employer not even being aware of his existence- all efforts on individual self-determination remains futile. It is worthwhile to notice how Kafka presents the loneliness endemic to human condition through the cold inaccessibility of the Manageress of the Hotel Occidental or through the desired friendship of Therese or the forced company of the two tramps

Robinson and Delamarche. Each one desires a genuine contact with the other; but such a desire can only remain an unfulfilled desire. At the same time individuals when clubbed together present an image of chaotic grotesqueness as reflected in the sordidness of the lift-boys' dormitory. Any attempt for help from any quarter is also futile. The Manageress tries hard to help Karl but is rendered helpless in the face of circumstances. Thus through the novel Karl is haunted by a sense of persecution and it is only in the last chapter entitled **The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma** that Karl manages to escape from this execution mania of his self to indulge in the grandeur of the outside world. But whether Karl finds his acceptance permanently in this Theatre is not known for the novel is actually incomplete. Although many believe that Kafka intended this novel to end on a note of reconciliation but it is hard to accept such a view wholeheartedly considering that the Theatre is an organization which continues to perpetuate the division of labor. Initially, Karl is indeed impressed at the way the applicants for jobs were being treated: "What destitute, disreputable characters were here assembled, and yet how well they had been received and cared for! And the transport official must have been told to cherish them like the apple of his eye."*, but beneath this humane appearance is a world where artists are divided in such a way that there really is no way in which human camaraderie can last for long. It is here that Karl meets his friend Fanny as a pleasant surprise but Fanny engages him in no illusion when she says: "For it would be quite possible for us not to see each other at all, even though we were both engaged here" (A, 251), and sure indeed Karl is greatly disappointed to find after his recruitment that Fanny had already left for the next town on the recruiting squad's itinerary. Kafka had ample information to believe America as a place where ruthless process of dehumanization took place and the difficulties faced by immigrants. The incident of Therese's mother dying pitifully sans

job nor food nor even a place to die is an example of how not all immigrants did find a place in this country. The Humanists believe in Man's power to improve his lot through a continual effort on man's part. The Communists for the sake of propaganda describe themselves as Humanist; their principles may be same but differ widely in practice. The belief of both Capitalism and Communism in the transforming power of the machine is seriously put to doubt in Kafka's works. Man, as Wilhelm Emrich puts it, is exposed to the hostility of mechanization; just as in the primitive stage man was exposed to the ruthlessness of the harsh conditions of nature. Tragic humanism is revealed here in the excessive dependence on modern science leading to the loss of human individuality and global monotony. Both Capitalism and Communism are committed to a faith in modern science and technology. Both humanism and communism look alike in their 'anthropocentric' nature and in their concern with humane relations, mutual assistance and camaraderie; but issues like idealism and moral truth are concerns of humanism only. In the Marxist jargon, Humanism is a 'bourgeois ideology' but Humanism has never committed itself to any specific rationally organized economic or religious structure. It is against the empiricism of any economic, religious or political system which is responsible for global monotony. In **The Trial** and **The Castle** we shall meet with a description of this modern global monotony. The German Sociologist Max Weber traces the root of modern malaise to this global monotony arising from the rational ordering of economic enterprise. Marx has said "To be radical is to go to the root of the question. Now the root of mankind is man." Although Marx is here talking about the actual flesh and blood man who comes to his full humanity only in the capitalist system. But it emerges clearly in **The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of** or **Amerika**, how the labor of modern times, by contrast with that of the archaic world, represents an unmeaning, unaccented monotony in

which there no longer exists any qualitative differences in the sense of, say, successions of seasons, festive highlights, but in which everything is turned uniformly into dust. Senator Edward Jacob is not able to exercise his individual judgment in spite of possessing wealth and status. The freedom of his personality is severely curtailed by the principles of the repressed labor system, which judges an individual sans feeling. Kafka hoped that in the last chapter his hero Karl Rossmann would come home, unfortunately the novel remains incomplete. Without a patron and no identification and reference, he registers himself as "Negro"; a pointer to the system which erodes the meaningful sense of an individual. Similarly in **The Trial** when the Priest asks him if he was Joseph K.; "'Yes', said K., thinking how frankly he used to give his name and what a burden it had recently become to him; nowadays people he had never seen before seemed to know his name. How pleasant it was to have to introduce oneself before being recognized!" (T, 231). Unlike the Stoker's self-imposed trial in **Amerika**, the trial of Joseph K. takes him up by surprise. A nondescript clerk is arrested one morning 'without having done anything wrong.' The entire novel focuses on the irrationalism of the world; for it arrests a man without a specific accusation. The humor of Joseph K. presenting his bicycle-rider's license as a proof of his identity does not dilute the tragic effect. K.'s trial may be a matter of life and death and it does confound him. The warder's appropriating his underwear and eating his breakfast leads him to think hard: "Who could these men be? What were they talking about? What authority could they represent? K. lived in a country with a legal constitution, there was universal peace, all the laws were in force; who dared seize him in his own dwelling? He had always been inclined to take things easily, to believe in the worst only when the worst happened, to take no care for the morrow even when the outlook was threatening. But that struck him as not being the right

policy here, one could certainly regard the whole thing as a joke, a rude joke which his colleagues in the Bank had concocted for some unknown reason, perhaps because this was his thirtieth birthday, that was of course possible, perhaps he had only to laugh knowingly in these men's faces and they would laugh with him, perhaps they were merely porters from the street corner- they looked very like it- nevertheless his very first glance at the man Franz had decided him for the time being not to give away any advantage that he might possess over these people" (T, 10). K.'s effort to know the truth of the matter is severely restricted first by the warders and then by the Inspector. When the Inspector gives him a long address, K. is amazed: "Was he to be taught lessons in manners by a man probably younger than himself? To be punished for his frankness by a rebuke? And about the cause of his arrest and about its instigator was he to learn nothing?"(T, 19). The absolute irrationality of the arrest is exposed because the arrest does not hinder him from doing about his usual duties. What follows then is a series of less compelling events like his conversation with Frau Grubach and Fraulein Bürstner. He apologizes to her for having the interrogation in her room; although she herself found no disturbance. The absurdity of the case is further revealed when he is given hearings only on Sundays at no specified Court proper or at night. The Interrogation chamber is housed amidst a crowded tenement with the drabness of ordinary living. The Examining Magistrate too mistakes Joseph K. to be a house-painter, evoking a heavy outburst of laughter from those present leaving no choice for him but to join in the laughter. After making an impassioned speech on the meaninglessness of the court proceedings, Joseph K. hurriedly makes his way out. In spite of not receiving any summons, Joseph K. comes back the following Sunday at precisely the same time to find no other interrogation scheduled for that day. One of the most absurd situations is in Chapter V **The Whipper**.

Hearing the sound of sighs and groans coming from the lumber room, Joseph K. is taken aback to see the two warders Franz and Willem being taken to be flogged, apparently for Joseph K. having complained to the Examining Magistrate for appropriating his clothes. The warders justify their stand by saying how their meager incomes tempt them to appropriate Joseph K.'s things. It is a picture of a world which metes them with a gruesome punishment on a flimsy ground. When Joseph K. fails to persuade the Whipper, he slams the door and leaves the place and diverts the attention of the clerks from the harrowing shrieks of their cries by calling it 'a dog howling in the court yard.' It could be an indication of how Joseph K. himself has got embroiled in the ruthlessness of the legal system. He seems so engrossed in defending his own name and life, that there is no human concern for others. He comforts himself: "He was deeply disappointed that he had not been able to prevent the whipping, but it was not his fault that he had not succeeded; if Franz had not shrieked-it must have been very painful certainly, but in a crisis one must control oneself- if he had not shrieked, then K., in all probability at least, would have found some other means of persuading the Whipper" (T, 99). In this way Joseph K. stops himself from partaking the suffering of others. He remains incapable of suffering for others but that does not provide him a relief from suffering; but rather perpetuates suffering making him seek the lawyer Huld and the painter Titorelli to relieve him. His failure to achieving any definite conclusion frustrates him and the arrival of Leni, Huld's mistress, at this juncture is a diversion for him. Huld can only tell him that progress was being made in his case but the nature of the progress could not be divulged. Finally, when Joseph K. is convinced that his defense was not in good hands, he decides to change his lawyer. It is absurd to believe that it is the Painter Titorelli who offers him a clearer picture of his legal case. It is Titorelli who reveals about the mysterious ways of the

court's functioning and that the charges against an individual are never made frivolously, but once someone is brought to charge, the court is convinced of his guilt which can be dislodged only with great difficulty. Titorelli offers three possibilities- definite acquittal, ostensible acquittal and indefinite postponement. Definite acquittal seemed to be the best, for it depended solely on the innocence of the accused; but in such cases, the accused would require no help from outside; ostensible acquittal could not guarantee the accused would not be arrested again and indefinite postponement would restrict the accused's freedom, apart from sapping the energy in pursuing the case. We are made to realize that all the three possibilities offered by Titorelli are really no ways of relief to Joseph K.. Thus there really seems no hope of escape to the tragic situation of Joseph K. He realizes that to provide justification to his entire life before a court which seems to have taken up his life is actually beyond human power. K. is incapable of taking any action for himself and this inability to act by the Kafka protagonists has been traced by Hall and Lind to scopophilia, which is marked passivity due to ambivalence. Hall and Lind say as in dreams, so in life too, Kafka was a spectator. In his conversations with Gustav Janouch, Kafka had said: "I am an eye-man" (GJ, 88). Interestingly, his job in the insurance firm too entailed him 'looking into' the causes of accident and claiming of insurance bills.

The name 'Huld' meaning 'grace' is ironical for he offers no hope of redemption for Joseph K. The old ailing lawyer seems futilely incapable of carrying the burden of Joseph K.'s case. Huld's method of working can only make his clients despair. At one point Joseph K. ruminates- "Was the advocate seeking to comfort him or to drive him to despair?". It seems that although Huld genuinely tries to help his clients but he seems incapable. He represents the powerlessness of divine help to the seekers; his illness can also symbolize his suffering for others at his own inability. It is noteworthy

that Joseph K. is introduced to Huld by his uncle who felt that his involvement in the case had brought disgrace to the family. So when Joseph K. cuts off Huld's services, his position is not better off from where he started. In contrast to the decrepit Huld, Titorelli is cheerful and gay; but he too lies beyond all human emotion. There is a marked 'detachment' as Wilhelm Emrich puts in his character: "Titorelli's detachment is the detachment of one who has laid aside everything human. Perceiving the truth, painting monotonously the eternally same court, standing beyond all human emotions, he 'smiles' 'shamelessly' into the void." He 'smiles'- he is conversant with the comedy of existence. Titorelli's shameless smile into the void- that is the true definition of Kafka's reputed 'religious humor'. Behind it are heard 'Hell's paroxysms of laughter' over which 'the dear Lord weeps bitterly'. Unlike **Amerika**, there is no doubt that **The Trial** ends with a note of despair. The absurdity of Joseph K.'s death lies in his acceptance of his death as nothing out of the way: "Whether it was really Fraulein Burstner or not, however, did not matter to K.; the important thing was that he suddenly realized the futility of resistance. There would be nothing heroic in it were he to resist, to make difficulties for his companions, to snatch at the last appearance of life in the exertion of struggle. He set himself in motion, and the relief his warders felt was transmitted to some extent even to himself." (T, 247). Only questions accompany the end: "Who was it? A Friend? A Good Man? Someone who sympathized? Someone who wanted to help? Was it one person only? Or were they all there? Was help at hand? Were there some arguments in his favour that had been overlooked? Of course there must be? Logic is doubtless unshakable, but it cannot withstand a man who wants to go on living. Where was the judge whom he had never seen? Where was the High Court, to which he had never penetrated? He raised his hands and spread out all his fingers" (T, 250-251). His questions lack answers and

Joseph K. dies "like a dog!" and "it was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him" (T, 251). This sense of shame accompanying death is similar to the shame experienced by Georg Bendemmen as he plunges down from the bridge, or Gregor Samsa as he is swept away with the dirt by the charwoman. Theirs is no true death for true death according to Kafka lies beyond the human world.

The parable of the doorkeeper delivered by the Priest to Joseph K. is important in this context. He points out the crux of Joseph K.'s problem- he seems to seek too much outside help in his disillusion, especially from women, be it Fraulein Burstner or the Court Usher's wife or Leni. The morbidity of Joseph K.'s trial is no doubt relieved by the eroticism of these women, but it is clear that these women do derive sadistic pleasure from Joseph K.'s dependency upon them. Wilhelm Emrich writes how these women represent three possible attitudes as she relates to the court: (i). Standing outside the court; (ii). Living in conflict with it; and (iii). Succumbing completely to its power. These women put to doubt the complete self-reliant mode of existence. Kafka began to write **The Trial** in August 1914 which is significant in itself, for his diary entry of 24 July 1914 records his breaking off his engagement with Felice Bauer. The novel is also reminiscent of Kafka's expectations from Milena Jesenska. Thus although Joseph K. believes that the doorkeeper had deceived the man from the country, but the Priest clarifies that the doorkeeper was only doing his job well. The tragedy is not in the fate of the man but in the doorkeeper who had no better knowledge of the law as the man. Seen in this context then the warders who arrest Joseph K. apparently arrogant have no real powers. Thus freedom is illusory, just as the court in **The Trial**. Joseph K. wishes to rise up to the occasion and commit suicide, but he lacks the required strength. Thus he lies still in peace for the executors to stab him. This peace is akin to what Kafka wrote in one of his diary entry: "Early this

morning for the first time for a long while, the joy of imagining a knife being turned in my heart.” However, it could also imply the essential goodness within him which forbade him to commit suicide and respect human life. In spite of large gaps in this novel, **The Trial** has a definite ending, unlike the other two novels, which could suggest Kafka’s total resignation to his life fraught with pain. The novel is thus a parable of the tragic human condition, of knowledge acquired too late: “No one but you could gain admittance through this door.” (T, 237). The truth was unlike the doorkeeper who is tied to the duty of guarding before the Law, it is the man from the country who is freer to act. Unfortunately, the man from the country perceives this doorkeeper to be the strongest hurdle in his way and this act of waiting for several years altogether to gain admittance makes his freedom appear dubious. The exaltation of freedom was one of the major concerns of the Humanists. Humanists believed that Man by exalting his freedom actually exalted his capacity to form his world. Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) expressed this faith by attributing the qualities of God to Man in his **Oration on the Dignity of Man**:

I have given you, Adam, neither a predetermined place nor a particular aspect nor any special prerogatives in order that you may take and possess these through your decision and choice. The limitations on the nature of other creatures are contained within my prescribed laws. You shall determine your own nature without constraint from any barriers, by means of the freedom to whose power I have entrusted you. I have placed you at the centre of the world so that from that point you might see better what is in the world. I have made you neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal so that, like a free and sovereign artificer. You might mould and fashion yourself into that form you yourself shall have chosen.

(Edwards, 1967, Vol.4)

Humanists have always displayed this confidence in the innate divinity in man. Traditional religion is no longer to be accepted as the indubitable source of authority. It insisted on the right to test their doubts and the right to be informed of their choices before them and the right to chooses freely for themselves. Thus Humanists are opposed to the idea of predestination or universal determination and man is envisioned as possessing the freedom of choice and freedom of action. Man should be the masters of their own destiny. However, in Kafka's works the characters are all restrained in their freedom of choice and action. The pursuit of knowledge also becomes a futile effort for knowledge which should bring clarity and enlightenment only becomes a source of confusion as in **The Village Schoolmaster** or **The Giant Mole**. This story is not so much about the mole as it is about the contest between the narrator and the village schoolmaster to prove the truth of their knowledge. When the schoolmaster's discovery of the mole is brushed aside by a scholar with a scientific reason, he suffers from a sense of ignominy: 'He tells us how his wife and six children were waiting for him by the roadside in the snow, and how he had to admit to them the final collapse of his hopes" (CS, 170). For the village schoolmaster his worth of his self is hinged on the presence of this creature which no one else had seen. It is at this juncture that the narrator decides to intervene to prove 'the good intensions of an honest but un influential man' (CS, 170). However, a little while later the narrator again changes his opinion of the schoolmaster. " Yet it was not true that he was only concerned with the thing itself: actually he was very greedy for fame, and wanted to make money out of the business too, which, however, considering his large family, was very understandable" (CS, 173). The narrator's interest in the affair causes animosity in the village schoolmaster and this air of animosity can be felt throughout the text. In his letter to the narrator, the village schoolmaster writes: "The

world is full of malice, and, people smooth the path for it" (CS, 175). Besides which, the insignificance of all human effort is revealed in statements like: "Every new discovery is assumed at once into the sum total of knowledge, and with that ceases in a sense to be a discovery; it dissolves into the whole and disappears, and one must have a trained scientific eye to recognize it after that" (CS, 180). Thus like a scientific discovery, every human thought must transcend the given knowledge to reach the ultimate truth. The scientific discovery loses its value by being superseded by another new discovery, and what remains is the ordinariness of things. The narrator, of whom we know nothing of, except that he is at times referred as the 'businessman'. His quest to fight for the village schoolmaster is put to doubt when at the end, the village schoolmaster instead of explaining things remains fixated silently. His silent presence becomes a torture for the narrator. The struggle to prove the existence of the mole becomes the fight to prove the legitimacy of their faith. Unlike the other scientific discoveries, the village schoolmaster refuses his faith to be proved as something relative. The presence of a gap in knowledge is what leads to tension and man makes an attempt to solve this tension through the trappings of religion or metaphysical speculations. However, Humanism is directly opposed to every form of irrationalism whether religious or atheistic. It rejects all kind of superior guidance and the disillusionment of the post-world war was responsible for the sowing of the seed of irrationalism. Man began to realize the discontinuity in the universe in contrast to the faith in Man's power and there was now the acceptance of Kierkegaard's 'crucifixion of the intellect'.

This discontinuity is reflected in another of Kafka's works **In the Penal Colony** which was written soon after his break with Felice Bauer in 1915 but was not published as late as 1919. It is again a stark exposition of the terrible incongruity

between possible guilt and penalty. Kafka comments the following statement to Gustave Janouch on this story: "Personal proofs of my human weakness are printed.....because my friends, with Max Brod at their head, have conceived the idea of making literature out of them, and because I have not the strength to destroy this evidence of solicitude" (GJ, 32). The world as a penal colony, as Schopenhauer envisions it is mirrored here. In this colony the slightest breaking off the law invites torturing punishment. One notices the discrepancy between crime and punishment, the condemned man here is subjected to a gruesome punishment of piercing needles into his skin for not obeying his superior. What is absurd here is not just the inhuman mode of punishment but the manner in which the condemned man takes his punishment looking 'like a submissive dog that one might have thought that he could be left to run free on the surrounding hills and would only need to be whistled for when the execution was due to begin.'(CS, 140) In this penal colony, there would be no defense on the part of the guilty and the guilt would not to be known to the condemned until it is inscribed on his skin. As the officer explains to the explorer- "my guiding principle is this: guilt is never to be doubted" (CS, 145); and probably which led Wilhelm Emrich to deduce that 'guilt and being are identical'. In spite of the difficulty in maintaining this tradition of administering punishment, the officer here is seen hard convincing on the efficacy of the mode of punishment by taking the punishment himself. The tale is not only horrifying but also melodramatic. The breakdown of the machine kills the officer, causing the explorer to run away. The lack of courage on the part of the explorer to intervene in order to prevent the barbarity reveals the decadence of humanity. He comforts himself: "It's always a ticklish matter to intervene decisively in other people's affairs. He was neither a member of the penal colony nor a citizen of the state to which it belonged" (CS, 151); but when the

prisoner is freed, he is overjoyed with disbelief, and when the officer takes his place, the prisoner takes a sadistic pleasure by laughing at him. The rising of the Commander to restore his colonial rule is suggestive of the Second Coming but the explorer's escape stands for humanity's rejection of Salvation. Nietzsche in his **Genealogy of Morals** speaks of pain being a powerful aid to memory, hence the officer's death to prove his conviction. The old mode of punishment is in no way gruesome, but nevertheless accepted, and the story tells us how with the new time, such a punishment in the new order of things, there is a new approach. Thus to prove his conviction, the officer wanted an inscription 'Be Just!', but the breaking of the machine, killing the officer, marks the impossibility of being just in the new world. There is no hope of liberation, no hope of redemption- the condemned man and the explorer are seized by horror, flee away. The story is a pointer to the truth that the crises of the modern age tempts man to flee away either to the world of spirituality or to the realm of fantasy; but true Humanism encourages Man to make the best of this world in the here and the now. It is also against the compromise offered by spiritual solace and in Kafka's works the search for happiness and peace is marred by defeatism. George Santayana has indicated two traditional meanings of 'God' in his **Reason in Religion**(1905); one is the basic physical cosmic substance and unintentional force and the other is the highest good, the *summum bonum*, the goal of man's ultimate rational devotion, aspiration, commitment. Gardner Williams in his essay **Humanistic Theism** calls the basic physical substance of the cosmos the *supreme being*: 'The supreme being is omnipotent. It has, creatively and most unintentionally caused life, consciousness, purpose, reason and all the grandeur and the glory that man has ever experienced. But it has also caused frustration, despair, anguish, suffering and death. Whatever causes evil is instrumentally evil. And the

worship of evil is idolatrous' (Kurtz, 1973,68). Thus this world is fraught with as much frustration as good and it explains why Kafka was not dissatisfied with his unhappiness.

The Country Doctor and Other Stories was sent for publication to Kurt Wolff in 1917. This collection was held dear by Kafka, who felt his death close by and who felt his ambivalent love-hate relationship reaching a state of beyond reconciliation; and it was also influenced by Kafka's keen interest in Zionism. The figure of the country doctor is probably based on his own uncle Siegfried Lowy and the story explores the impossibilities of reaching out. The doctor in the story when called to attend a patient in the chilly winter night finds his own self threatened. The turn of events also foretell a terrible conclusion. The groom who emerges from the pigsty has a menacing veneer and the two horses which will transport the doctor to the patient look savage. In answering to his charitable impulse, the doctor has also exposed his servant girl to the lust of the groom. The patient with an open wound infested with maggots suggests a condition beyond help. The doctor is called to perform a miracle and the patient's family members fail to understand that the doctor has only a medical knowledge. With his limited medical knowledge, the country doctor is expected to heal a wound that affects the whole of human existence. The doctor lacks the spiritual power to heal the patient and in their suffering from the wound by virtue of being human. The malaise of modern living was such that no man can help the other. However, there is some moment of redemption for the country doctor when he comforts the patient by talking of those who go on living without being aware of carrying a wound: ".....your wound is not so bad. Done in a tight corner with two strokes of the axe. Many a one proffers his side and can hardly hear the axe in the forest, far less that it is coming nearer to him" (CS, 225). Paradoxically, these words do comfort the patient

but leaves the doctor exposed. The story ends with the doctor reduced to a vulnerable state: "Naked, exposed to the frost of this most unhappy of ages, with an earthly vehicle, unearthly horses, old man that I am, I wander astray. My fur coat is hanging from the back of the gig, but I cannot reach it, and none of my limber pack of patients lifts a finger. Betrayed! Betrayed! A false alarm on the night bell once answered- it cannot be made good, not ever" (CS, 225). The biographical connection would not be too far to seek. The final words could reflect Kafka's decision to live a life of isolation. Seeing his own disease not as a physical disease but as a spiritual malaise, Kafka like the country doctor lacked the capability to heal others. The doctor can also be Kafka himself and his ambivalent relationship with Felice who is represented in the figure of the maid rose. Kenneth Hughes elaborates: "He clings to the idea of being a helper, wards off resignation, is ready to sacrifice his private life for his professional ethics, and is forced in the most cruel way to recognize the vanity of his effort" (Hughes, 1993, 350). The existentialists believe that man discovers himself only in relation to others. Existential participation involves the depersonalization of man's self and to move into the world outside. Thus existential humanism seems essentially tragic in nature in man's inability to move outside oneself. Heidegger calls it 'abandonment' or 'thrownness; which is to say that man is thrown into the world outside. However, Heidegger admits that man may find himself to be thrown into the world; but man has the capability to transform the world by reaching out to others. In this manner authentic selfhood can be achieved by fusing the three temporalities of past, present and future which is the result of 'being-in-the-world.' Heidegger's work was not anthropological or anthropocentric; because its central concern was not man or human subjectivity but '*being*'. Here Heidegger gives Humanism a new and fundamental meaning- no longer man as such, but man in relation to '*being*'. Therein

lay the dignity of man. Heidegger refused to take man or subjectivity as an origin, a centre or a foundation on which to build a philosophy but the destruction of humanity should not be misconstrued as inhumanity. Heidegger like Kafka might not have believed in the idea of 'God' or some particular creator but both never professed to be agnostics. Man's deep seated fear and craving for security leads him to turn towards God and it is this belief in God that man seeks comfort from the fear of abandonment. But for the existentialists this comfort does not hold to be true and man is thus forever condemned to this world. Most Humanists reject God's existence but at the same time they believe that there must be an 'uncaused cause' which must be responsible for everything that exists. Thus although the belief in God may be consoling or it may be regarded as a kind of wish fulfillment, yet it becomes important for man to feel at home in this universe; but Existentialists agree that man is not deprived of this consolation for there never was anything except a self-appointed authority. Thus the world does not reveal its meaning on its own and so it is man himself who must contribute to the meaning of his existence by his interpretation of reality.

The Bridge deals with the antinomy not just between man and man but also between man and things; life and death. The bridge possesses the human traits of eager expectation of someone passing over it; and its thoughts too were human: "my thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle"(CS, 411); and finally in its attempts to know the human being closely, the bridge 'turned around so as to see him' and in the process ruined himself. The stones below the river which had always looked so peacefully at him had now transpierced it. This brief story is a pointer to the great divide between man and nature, forever indulging in a war of extermination with each other underlying the futility of nature to bridge this antinomy. This man crossing the bridge could be a man attempting to bridge

opposites; the futility of action, the irresolute tension marring human life. However, the man perishes in the process. Such is the tragic state of mankind that knowledge or thought can never be translated into action. Similarly, in **The New Advocate** Bucephalus presents the plight of the modern man. His appearance does remind one of the great warriors Alexander of Macedonia; yet in actuality he is only a lawyer who can only bury himself in his law books. Bucephalus has no sense of direction or purpose, unlike the ancient days where the 'royal sword' could point to the enigmatic way to India: "Today the gates have receded to remoter and loftier places; no one points the way; many carry swords, but only to brandish them, and the eye that tries to follow them is confused" (CS, 415). Thus Bucephalus is incapable of action and one is only left aware of the chasm between the private and the public, between the self and the society. Like K., Bucephalus's tryst with the law threatens to 'absorb' him and yet one does not give up. Man's continuous attempt to overcome this chasm is what gives the world its meaning. Yet at the same time the world is beset with insensitive men around as in **Upon the Gallery**. The frail equestrienne moving around and around in a horse for months on end at the crack of a whip master is sufficient enough to evoke sympathy from any of the onlooker. Here the circus represents the world full of activity while the passive onlookers are the insensitive people who crowd the world. Out of the vast majority of onlookers, the agony of the equestrienne evokes the sympathy only of one visitor who yells: "Stop!"; but since the perfect skill of the lady displays a perfect skill and "since that is so, the visitor to the gallery lays his face on the rail before him and, sinking into the closing march as into a heavy dream, weeps without knowing it" (CS, 402). Thus in one's attempt to express sympathy, one excludes one self from the general indifferent tenor of the human society. The failure to do any good is again toyed by Kafka time and again in most of the stories

belonging to this group as in **Up in the gallery**, **An Old Manuscript**, **Jackals and Arab** and culminating in **The Castle**. These are stories dealing with the theme of an outsider called upon to help in some fantastically difficult situation. The narrator in **An Old Manuscript** feels called upon to do something to prevent the savagery of the nomads. The nomads differ from the rest be it in their abomination for dwelling houses, lack of speech, or the tearing a live ox alive. Set against the raw zeal of the nomads is the utter helplessness of the Emperor in driving them out. The free savage nomads from the icy cold North represent a sphere beyond the warm comfort and security within man. The nomads defy this classification of being human and becoming 'extra human' (*Kavka=Jack-daw*). In their utter unconcern for anything outside them, the nomads represent an existence of unconcerned living. On the other hand, the concern of the tradesman dwelling in the city represent rational existence, perhaps, perceiving future threat and dislocation. In **Jackals and Arabs**, a European traveler meets a pack of jackals who begin to look upon the traveler as a kind of messiah releasing them from the torture of the camel driver. The intense hatred between the jackals and the camel driver, Ronald Gray refers to Kafka's interest in Zionism and his relationship with the leading Zionist Martin Buber who was editing the periodical called *Der Jude* where this story was published. Kafka oscillated between the Zionist and the anti-Zionist tendencies. This dual tendency could be equated with his love-hate relationship with his own father. In letters to Milena Jesenska there are portions where he speaks disparagingly of the Jews. Calling the jackals 'utter fools' the whip cracking Arab throws stinking carrion before them. The jackals feeding on the carrion displays their own lust for blood and flesh, making them victims of their own bestiality; thus making the jackals' craving for purity by killing the Arab highly ironical. The situation evokes vividly the lines from Kafka's

diary entry: "Filthy am I, Milena, infinitely filthy, and that is why I raise such a clamor about purity" (LM, 163). However, no story could ever express the existentialist sense of anxiety any better than **Before the Law**. Here the man from the country is under the illusion that every word spoken by the doorkeeper is true. He fails to understand that the only obstruction to Law is only the doorkeeper and that the doorkeeper is only 'before the law' and not 'in the law'. The door was actually meant for him and he had the full freedom to enter it during his lifetime; and unlike the doorkeeper who was tied before the Law, the man from the country was free in all respects. However, it is in his inability to realize the profoundness of his self that he suffers from anxiety. He realizes it but only when it was too late. Kafka's famous parable **An Imperial Message** is embedded in the story **The Great Wall of China**. The messenger, receiving the Emperor's words, facing several labyrinthine obstacles, unfortunately fails to reach you: "But you sit at your window when evening falls and dream it to yourself" (CS, 5). Gunther Anders links the 'Emperor' with 'God' in Kafka; and hence the image of the dying emperor echoes Nietzsche's words 'God is dead.' Likewise the building of the wall in **The Great Wall of China** was full of gaps. Man's quest for perfection is therefore faulty. The order for the building of the wall was from time immemorial, yet there is a profound confusion as to for whom the great wall is supposed to serve as a protection. Apparently the protection was to be from the people of the North; yet the narrator clarifies: "We have not seen them, and if we remain in our villages we shall never see them, even if on their wild horses they should ride as hard as they can straight towards us- the land is too vast and would not let them reach us, they would end their course in the empty air" (CS, 241). In constructing the wall, the collective will of the general people through generations is experienced. But that the wall should have gaps reveal the failure of the collective

will. The Emperor too is shrouded in mystery; people do not seem to know who the reigning emperor is and the narrator describes the Emperor as tottering ready to sink giving way to a new dynasty. The image of the tottering and distant emperor is in sharp contrast to the Christian or Jewish faith where God is forever ready to receive them whosoever calls upon him. The construction needed intellectually superior people possessing 'architectural wisdom' and 'an unremitting sense of personal responsibility' (CS, 236). It was to be 'a man who was capable of entering into individual feeling with all his heart what was involved' (CS, 236). They were also required to be away from the comfort of their homes and family. Thus the construction is to be seen as a collective task of humanity; a task which needed collective will of action as in **The Investigations of a Dog**. It is only through collective action that the individual can become a part of the whole. The wall, unlike the Tower of Babel which the narrator says failed due to weak foundation; Kafka envisages for the Great Wall of China a strong foundation for mankind's eternal dream of storming the Heavens. As critic Christian Good in his essay *Franz Kafka: Semi-centenary Perspective* writes:

The building of the wall achieves exactly the reverse of what is apparently intended. It betrays or advertises the presence of a vulnerable being who otherwise would remain unnoticed." Thus the wall has not the capacity to protect against external enemy, but more to protect from the internal fear of man. The unremitting effort of individual for a collective goal provides unity and purpose to these people. The Marxist writer Boris Suchkov sees in the story Kafka's skeptical view of humanity: "the tragic futility of both the private and the collective works of man.

(Hughes, 1981,174)

He further argues that such a grandiose project is therefore unrealizable. The concept of the whole man is a recurrent concern with Humanists. The Greek and the Renaissance Humanists see the whole man as one who is physically, mentally, ethically and spiritually well integrated. The whole man enjoys the satisfaction of a richer kind derived not from solitariness but one derived from his integration with society; as the Greeks so well understood, the whole man finds his spiritual, intellectual and physical fulfillment within the community. **The Bucket Rider** exposes the cruel insensitivity that one human being can have for another. Unlike the Humanist value which encouraged compassionate concern for fellow human beings, here the pleas for a bucket of coal go unheeded; and so the bucket rider narrates: 'and with that I ascend into the regions of the icy mountains and am lost forever' (CS, 414). The flight of the bucket rider from the warmth of the earth into the icy realms echoes K.'s sojourn in the icy track and the country doctor's visit to his patient on a chilly night. This turning away from the warmth to the icy coldness suggests a quest for a genuine form of existence. In aphorism number sixty, Kafka writes: "Anyone who renounces the world must love all men, for he is renouncing their world too. He therefore begins to have a glimpse of the true essence of humanity, which cannot be other than loved, provided one is on a level footing with it." By renouncing the world, one enters into the essence of things, and in the process begins to see the essence of humanity. Such is the importance of love in human life realized Kafka, and this love has to be on a 'level footing' with no barrier between the self and the others. In **The Trial** K. first analyses his situation which prods him to analyze his relationship with others like his landlady, his neighbor, his colleague, and the world at large. Thus no man can live in isolation; and similarly in **The Metamorphoses** Gregor longs for human company. Shut off inside the room he presses against the door and longs to

take part in human conversation. Even the parable's meaning and its interpretations are left incomplete. The Priest calls the parable a 'scripture' but ironically every interpretation is beyond man's understanding. The meaning of the parable could be man in quest of truth but man is betrayed in his quest.

A Report to an Academy deals with an ape who attempts to shed off his apehood in order to adopt the ways of a human being although the 'wound' at the ape's hip is a painful reminder of his former self. Yet this knowledge is bought dearly at the cost of his freedom. The ape admits that freedom was lost and what required was 'only a way out.' Taking on a nature completely alien to him, the ape takes on a 'hybrid existence.' Therefore one is either robbed of one's natural self hood or one is reduced to a bundle of nerves as in **My Neighbours**. **My Neighbours** also explores the need for trust between neighbours and the serious implications of distrust. And even when there is trust, the trust is always one sided. There is no room for simple trust at any level as in *The Crossbreed*. The strange crossbreed displays a sense of fidelity towards its owner and yet the owner has no qualm of harboring the thought of subjecting the animal to the knife of a butcher. The series of questions that the crossbreed evokes are like the questions that can be asked about Kafka himself and his state of peculiar loneliness: "Why there is only one such animal, why I rather than anybody else should own it, whether there was ever an animal like it before and what would happen if it died, whether it feels lonely, why it has no children, what it is called, etc.?" (CS, 426). The monstrous crossbreeding has set it apart from other animals but in the end the crossbreed almost takes on human characteristics as the narrator decides to spare it until its breath voluntarily leaves its body 'even though it sometimes gazes at me with a look of human understanding, challenging me to do the thing of which both of us are thinking' (CS, 427). Similarly in **The Cares of a Family Man**, Odradek is a

strange crossbreed with its 'unfinished', 'unbroken' and 'wooden' appearance. The spool partakes both of the non-human world in its 'wooden appearance' and the human world in its ability to stand upright as if on two legs and its 'extraordinary nimbleness'. Even the word Odradek partakes two languages because of which neither its origin nor its meaning can be fixed. The duality here again becomes a source of confusion and uncertainty. Such is the nature of man's self that it refuses any fixedly rational classification. But in its strange laughter as if produced without lungs adds grotesqueness to its creature, and thus on the whole, Odradek is an image of decay. The uncertainty of man's existence can perhaps seek a solution only through death. The very thought of Odradek defying human classification and hence defying death is what torments the narrator. But in its totality, it is self-contained. Unlike the human narrator who is only a tiny speck in the vast sea of humanity, Odradek is outside the cycle of life and death and so it makes the narrator painfully aware of his own limitedness. It is the immortality of this spool makes the narrator painfully aware of his own mortal existence. However in contrast to the two bouncing balls in Blumfeld, an Ederly Bachelor who obeys mechanically the law that governs them, Odradek is sensitive. Marthe Robert writes:

Indeed, there is every reason to identify Odradek with Kafka, all the more since Odradek, who is endowed with rudimentary speech-he knows his name and when asked for his address he replies, "No fixed residence"- has in common with his author not only the fact of being at once German, Czech and Jewish, which accounts for his life of perpetual vagrancy, but also the sort of "laughter with no lungs behind it" that would soon be Kafka's. Indeed the kinship between the author and his spool seems so close as to suggest total identity.

(Robert, 1982, 194-195)

Blumfeld, the Elderly Bachelor wishes to throw away his two useless childish assistants and the blind old man from his office wishing to plunge himself to willful forlornness: "So Blumfeld will remain alone, after all; he really feels none of the old maid's longing to have around her some submissive living creature that she can protect, lavish her attention upon, and continue to serve- for which purpose a cat, a canary, even a goldfish would suffice- or, if this cannot be, rest content with flowers on a window sill" (CS, 184). So when the two bouncing celluloid balls enter his room it overwhelms him. These two balls could represent a feeling of guilt towards the two maltreated assistants for they too had the right to existence. The last story belonging to this collection **The Country Doctor and Other stories** is **The Warden of the Tomb**. The warden of the tomb dispensing his service for thirty years and now serving the young prince is become an image of decay and frailty. It is the Steward, appointed only for six months comments on the dual nature of the prince. The tomb 'representing the frontier between the Human and the 'Other' must have an additional warden as a demonstration of reverence for the illustrious dead.

The Castle was Kafka's last and the greatest achievement in the novel form. Here the battle between the individual's right to self determination and the alleged forces of life reaches its climax. Unlike the professional smugness of Joseph K.'s, K. of **The Castle** is presented as an image of rootless ness. He only claims he has been appointed the Land Surveyor and demands his right to stay in the village. In spite of his strong efforts, he continues to be an outsider in the village. Thus each chapter is a failure, a 'new frustration', as Camus puts it; but the tragic quality is not to be seen in this failure but in K.'s untiring efforts. In September 1917, Kafka himself was diagnosed with the fatal tuberculosis that was to take his life and by 1922, tumultuous change had taken over his life. He sensed he did not have long to live; but that did not

calm the raging battle within him between art and life. By December, 1917, he had broken off his second engagement with Felice Bauer and this time thinking it for good. His deteriorating health and personal failure with the doom of impending death hovering over his head could explain the oppressive nature of **The Castle**. **The Castle** is always shrouded in mist and darkness; most of the time it is snowing or is night time. K. finds the rooms of the inn to be crowded with people but he never receives any hospitality from any quarter. A village dweller explains: 'You're probably surprised at our lack of hospitality', said the man, 'but hospitality is not our custom here, we have no use for visitors'(C, 19). A sense of loneliness and frustration overtakes him as the castle becomes illusive: "He felt irresistibly drawn to seek out new acquaintances, but each new acquaintance only seemed to increase his weariness" (C, 17). Although we are never told why K. wants to meet Klamm, the only indication that K. had been appointed as a land-surveyor, was the arrival of the two assistants- Arthur and Jeremiah. The arrival of these two does not improve K.'s situation for they know nothing of surveying; and except for their names, both were alike in all respects. K. finds a very simple solution of solving the confusion by calling them both 'Arthur': "I'll call you both Arthur. If I tell Arthur to go anywhere you must both go. If I give Arthur something to do you must both do it that has the great disadvantage for me of preventing me from employing you on separate jobs, but the advantage that you will be equally responsible for anything I tell you to do. How you divide the work between you doesn't matter to me, only you're not to excuse yourselves by blaming each other, for me you're only one man" (C, 24-25). The statement throws light on the tragic quality of the lack of human individuality. One man is to be no better or different than the other one. What also stands out in this novel is not just the apparent childishness of these two assistants but of the other

peasants in the village, leading K. to reflect: "When he saw them sitting like that, however, each man in his own place, not speaking to one another and without any apparent mutual understanding, united only by the fact that they were all gazing at him, he concluded that it was not out of malice that they pursued him, perhaps they really wanted something from him and were only incapable of expressing it, if not that, it might be pure childishness, which seemed to be in fashion at the inn;..." (C, 31). These men, behind their apparent childishness, wish to avoid taking the burden of responsibility that adulthood entailed. The village folk thus go on living unencumbered as children do, engaged in the juvenility of everyday existence. K. is also infected with this air of juvenility as when in a fit of irritation he throws a ball of snow at Gerstacker's ear, or looking for the two assistants with a willow rod with a gleeful expectation of giving them a whack, or oscillating between Frieda and Leni. Although K. proclaims his love for Frieda he never does behave like a matured lover. Also K. claims to be a land-surveyor, no where in the novel does K. show any knowledge about surveying, or conducts actual surveying. This dubiousness of his profession is an extension of Kafka's own doubt as a writer. The Burgel episode in **The Castle** is similar to Joseph K.'s interview with the Priest in **The Trial**, for both offer an insight into their predicament. However, Burgel's insight offers more hope but K. by falling asleep at that crucial juncture exemplifies the seizing inaction overwhelming individuals. This can be explained in terms of the Hegelian philosophy – man, the individual, the Spirit as 'the All' – as done by Ronald Gray. The greater is the man alienated from his spirit, the greater will be the tendency to suffer a reversal, and therefore achieve 'Wholeness'. So K.'s sleep induces in Burgel the greater desire to help him out of his predicament, to become a 'quasi-divine power'. Ronald Gray elaborates:

But Búrgel is not represented as divine in any Christian sense, nor does he seem to feel any love for K., nor does K. seem to feel any love for him or anyone else. The whole scene is inverted, in comparison with orthodox Christian mysticism. Búrgel is only telling K. all this because he himself wants to get to sleep, and thinks he can talk himself into that state.

(Gray, 1973,161)

Unlike the divine image of strength and grace, Búrgel is a Secretary perpetually tired, without being able to sleep and in spite of being the liaison officer between the castle and the village secretaries, he needed to be always ready to travel. Búrgel makes no bones of being ruthless towards the applicants. Búrgel gives an explanation to the complaint of the secretaries that they are forced to conduct most of the village interrogations during the night. According to Búrgel, the nocturnal interrogation, colored by personal worries and troubles, jeopardizes the official nature of the complaint. Thereby the judgments lose their official sanctity. By Búrgel's readiness to help K., he is attempting to gain universal freedom. Although K. has taken upon himself to wage a battle against a mighty system and to demand his rightful place is something to be admired for. But as a human being, he finds his existence threatened by forces beyond his control, and it is this unending struggle which commands our respect for K.. However, on more than one occasion, K. is faced with an existential dilemma. On the one hand, K. demands a place in the village, and hence his innate wish to be a part of the same life-sapping system, and on the other hand he is acutely conscious of his freedom. Thus he remains perpetually an outsider; and perhaps that is why the villagers in the village with 'veritably tortured faces' look upon K. as a messiah who would rescue them from their trapped existence. It is reminiscent of the jackals looking upon the Arab as their rescuer in 'Jackals and Arab'. But when a

telephone call from the castle confirms his position as a land-surveyor, the farmers of the village 'flocked out with averted faces lest he should recognize them again next day'. Even the wagoner Gerstäcker who wades K. through the snow is described as 'stooping' and 'ill-used'. K.'s maltreatment of Gerstäcker, hitting him with a snow ball in the ear, only evokes a simple question, 'What do you mean?'. But the very fact of K. being an outsider provides him a superior position for all at the mercy of the castle look upon K. as a rescuer to improve their situation; be it Frieda or Pepi or Hans Brunswick or the Barnabas family. Like K. the ostracized Barnabas family are also outsiders as the daughter Amalia had let down a sexual proposal of a Castellan. But unlike K. whose position as an outsider makes him superior to others, the Barnabas family wallow in neglect. K. knows that being close to the castle would enable him to share the warmth of community living; but it also entailed being subordinated to the pressures of everyday living. It could reduce him to being one of the physically and morally dilapidated farmers, who go on accepting every word of what was dictated by the invisible castle authority. In such a situation any assertion of the free will would lead one to be pitted against the castle authority. Although K. never meets the ultimate castle authority Count West-west, he is immediately responsible to Klamm. Because of his 'Proteus Nature' as pointed out by Wilhelm Emrich, he remains forever elusive and lacked definiteness. Always dressed in black, he like the owner of the castle Count West-West, his name too means 'the Hereafter beyond death, the victory over death.' Although K. professes his love for Frieda, he attempts to reach the castle through Frieda for she had once been a mistress of Klamm. However, K. refuses to display his personal side, not even with the women he called his mistress and there sits somehow an air of impossibility to communicate personally with him. Olga sheds light on this aspect of Klamm: " Klamm's a kind of

tyrant over women, he orders first one and then another to come to him, puts up with none of them for long, and orders them to go just as he ordered them to come” (C, 185). Perhaps why Frieda gave up the prestige associated with her relationship to Klamm is because K. in his elemental simplicity promised her love at the personal level. But again the very nature of this world prevents the fulfillment of such love as reflected in the picture of domestic confusion of K. setting up a household in a school; and Klamm is forever trapped in his officialdom, without being able to establish meaningful personal relations with anyone, forever sitting ponderous and dully silent. Like Klamm, the castle hidden amidst the snowy wasteland is an image of impenetrability which forever eludes K., and hence this makes K. forget his land surveying and only broods on reaching the castle. The girls working as chamber maids at Herrenhof are required only to serve the filth left behind the drunken revelers. These girls laboring hard besides providing an element of eroticism make pathetic sight. When Pepi is raised to the position of a barmaid, she overdoes it by borrowing a dress for herself. But even at that time she begins to see K. as ‘a hero and a rescuer of maidens.’ But K. can never replace Frieda for Pepi long after Frieda had left him, and so when the novel peters out we see K. the prospective rescuer asking to be rescued: “That is unfortunately true, I did neglect her, but there were special reasons for that, which have nothing to do with this discussion; I should be happy if she were to come back to me, but I should at once begin to neglect her all over again. That is how it is. While she was with me I was continually out at those wanderings that you make such a mock of; now that she is gone I am almost unemployed, am tired, have a yearning for a state of even more complete unemployment. Have you no advice to give me, Pepi?” (C, 290). But again K. finds affinity with Pepi: “One might rather say that by sacrificing what she had and what she was entitled to expect she has

given us both the opportunity to prove our worth in higher positions, but that we have both disappointed her and are positively forcing her to return here. I do not know whether it is like this, and my own guilt is by no means clear to me, only when I compare myself with you something of this kind dawns on me: it is as if we had both striven too intensely; too noisily; too childishly; with too little experience, to get something that for instance with Frieda's calm and Frieda's matter-of-factness can be got easily and without much ado. We have tried to get it by crying, by scratching, by tugging- just as a child tugs at the tablecloth, gaining nothing, but only bringing all the splendid things down on the floor and putting them out of its reach forever. I don't know whether it is like that, but what I am sure of is that it is more likely to be so than the way you describe it as being" (C, 292-293). Frieda breaks off with Klamm for K. because K. has none of the mystical unattainable ness. Her contact with K. arouses in her pure and simple harmony of love. But this harmony is disturbed when K. interacts with the Barnabas family. Love and sex are baffling issues in Existentialism. It is through sex that one discovers love and though man is psychophysically one of the animal species yet sex is an issue that becomes a source of discomfiture. We notice how K. is never able to define his nature of love with any one of the women that he comes across. Existentialism proclaims of man's dignity being in danger by his reference to love and sex and therefore needed the sanction of society. Thus his strained relationship with Frieda whose love he failed to comprehend and the embarrassment he feels when he attempts to start off a grounded relationship with her. Existentialists take a leap forward when they proclaim of love not having its origin in this world. Love is experienced as something incomprehensible that overtakes man like a flash of lightening. Love is therefore like a chain which should bind lovers and curtail their freedom by demanding the lover's unquestioned loyalty. Thus love is

bondage and perhaps this is the reason why none of the characters in Kafka's works revel in the joys offered by love. Here it explains why Frieda seeks to release herself from Klamm or why K. is so baffled by his relationship with Frieda or Pepi. On the other hand, the treatment of Amalia by Sortini, the castellan, the refusal of which causes the Barnabas family to be ostracized echoes God's demand of a sacrifice of his son as in Kierkegaard's **Fear and Trembling**, a book that Kafka read with great interest. But God's demand of Abraham the sacrifice of his son to Sortini's demand for a sexual favor is defatigable. There is certain loftiness in Amalia compared to the frail furrowed Sortini known for his 'retiring' qualities which makes him attracted to refusal to come down from his pedestal of officialdom. Sortini had to literally look up to her as she was much taller than her, and it also symbolic of the taming influence of Amalia over him. Amalia challenges his superiority by making him fall for her as Olga explains to K. : "And it wasn't a love letter, there wasn't a tender word in it, on the contrary Sortini was obviously enraged because the sight of Amalia had disturbed him and distracted him in his work" (C, 181). But Amalia not just tore the letter but also threw it at the messenger's face. It is Amalia's 'loftiness' which makes K. long for Frieda, and therefore he gets ruffled to see Olga debase Frieda: " – yet I now already have a position and real work to do, I have a promised wife who takes her share of my professional duties when I have other business, I'm going to marry her and become a member of the community and besides my official connection I have also a personal connection with Klamm, although as yet I haven't been able to make use of it" (C, 187); and finally concludes: " Frieda in her innocence has achieved more than Amalia in all her pride" (C,188). The move from Frieda to the Barnabas sisters had been a movement from simple trusting love to the complexity of human relationships. K.'s love for Frieda was similar to Kierkegaard's love for Regina

Olsen. True that Amalia in her self-condescending attitude to the world found affinity neither with the villagers nor with the castle. Like K. she is to remain an outsider carrying with her the coldness of the snow outside, not even attempting to be a part of it. Her family is reduced to the brink of starvation but she continues to maintain a stoic silence and she herself becomes dull and stone like for it is only she who saw the truth. The father tries to make amends and the brother Barnabas too tries to find an employment with the castle like the sister Olga. However all efforts prove wasteful because the castle is inscrutable and hence they are blighted to be outsiders perpetually. Tragic humanism in Kafka consists in his protagonists unable to find a place in their community; these characters have no control over their social and personal destiny. K's court is perhaps an invention of his own alter-ego. In one of his parable, Kafka envisions a prisoner, who seeing a gallows being erected in the courtyard of his prison, "mistakenly" believes it to be meant for him, and that night he slips out of his cell and hangs himself. The concept of home as cosmic security is also lacking in **The Castle** and the evolutionary mode of production and consumption; and the reduction of all human beings to commodity value is tragic in Kafka. K. is without a home, without a wife, without his job; he represents the dispossessed modern man. Kafka accepted this cleavage between good and evil; and in one of his aphorisms he writes, 'Evil knows of good, but good does not know of evil'. So it is evil by its knowledge and recognition of good that is his cause of pain; and Kafka's self-recrimination vis-à-vis the goodness of the world. In Kafka the knowledge of good is to be acquired by evil or the desire for justice stems from injustice as best seen in the whipping scene in **The Trial** where K. remains indifferent to the flogging of his warder.

The Later Stories were written between 1917 to 1923 and it is here that Kafka becomes frighteningly morbid in his preoccupation with death. According to Karl Jaspers, "Fear of death is the fear of nothingness." Kafka, like the Hunter Gracchus, battled throughout his life trying to grapple the meaning of death; moving between the here and the hereafter. A meaningful story **The Hunter Gracchus**, relate the tragic situation of human life. Suggesting how during the course of one's life, human beings have 'their handful' fulfilling the ordinary business of living. Just as the Country Doctor was called to action from the safe comfort of his home by the 'mistaken ringing' of the night bell: the Hunter Gracchus too is shoved out by 'the wrong turn of the wheel'(CS, 228). The name 'Gracchus' etymologically, comes from the Latin 'Gracchus' as *graculus* meaning 'jackdaw'. The Czech word *Kafka (Kavka)* likewise means 'jackdaw'. Like Kafka himself, even The Hunter Gracchus fails to understand the meaning of life. The Hunter Gracchus is neither dead nor living, and thus has no fixed abode. He flits through different worlds like a 'butterfly', forever in a state of suspension. However the Hunter Gracchus explains the hidden truth by two possibilities- either the Burgomaster of Riva was suppressing the truth about the Hunter Gracchus or was he confusing his story with another. The plight of the Hunter Gracchus is the plight of the modern man. As Ruth V. Cross says " ... We are hunters, seeking our prey everywhere. Shooting wildly at the details that come into range" (Bloom, 2005,109). It is the deliberate ignorance displayed by human beings that makes them fail to understand one's true existence, the inability to communicate knowledge outside oneself and if communicated can turn into falsehood. The more one tends to know, the less one has the ability to communicate that knowledge. Thus man is forever doomed to be ignorant. This proposition is brought out more clearly in **The Investigations of a Dog** where the investigating dog finds it impossible to

convey the truth hidden from the other dogs. This unfinished story was written when Kafka was undergoing the feeling that his literary creativity was drying up. Apparently **The Investigations of a Dog** is about a dog's investigations of his life and the rules of dogdom. But it is only in his dying moments that he is instilled with a desire to live life anew by a strange dog and his music. Unlike the other kind of music, this music liberates him from the hardship of living. The investigating dog is isolated because only he dares to make an effort to find out the hidden truth. The word 'dog' has been an anti-Semitic word. Even Kafka is associated with dog in many ways. It also brings to our mind Kafka's friendship with Isak Lowy, the Director of the Yiddish Theatre troupe, and their friendship had provoked one of the most scathing remark from Kafka's own father revealing his hatred for the Eastern Jews: "He who lies down with dogs gets up with fleas." It is revealed from his diary entry of 3rd November, 1911, that this brutal attack on his friend drove Kafka half-mad. From hence onward there word 'dog' had come to signify in Kafka's works bearing painful suggestion. It is reminiscent of **The Trial** where Joseph K. is seen dying 'like a dog'; or as **In The Penal Colony**, the Explorer cries aloud-"I'm a dog if I allow that to happen", and a moment later he is seen running on all fours. Also Kafka writes to Brod apprehending his death using the dog metaphor: "My future is not rosy and I will surely- this much I can foresee-die like a dog" (LFFE, 24). It is an important pointer to the human being reduced to a state of animalism. In this context, note the several images of other animal figures like the beetle as in **The Metamorphoses** or as the mice as in **Josephine the singer**, which is again an image of a detested and harried creature. These animal images are no less different from **The Great Wall of China** where the Jews are represented as Chinese probably because of the antiquity of

their culture. While Ritchie Robertson sees in this story 'the Jewish life in Diaspora', and 'Kafka's criticism of the Jews remoteness from history'. Marthe Robert writes:

If, for example, a Jew is a dog, then the dog is a Jew; there is no grammatical objection to this second proposition, but since its absurdity is self-evident, while the first proposition passes for plausible, it glaringly exposes the absurdity of this insult. Thus the dog is a Jew; an inquiring intellectual, he is also the representative of his author who by nature and necessity is also a specialist on questions that should not be asked. He is the double, denatured but recognizable by his make-up, whom Kafka created for the requirements of his "autobiographical inquiry"- the inquiry that guided his entire work, but that seemed to him more necessary than ever in the year 1922, when, to understand and if possible surmount his inability to write, he looked into his own past.

(Robert, 1985,15-16)

Finally the dog's opinion on the superiority of the canine race point to the bruised ego of Kafka himself. The investigating dog sees the dogdom as a marvelous institution but he himself is different from his species. What amazes the dog is how the other creatures of this world are seen as 'wretched', 'limited', and 'dumb' and 'how little inclined they are, compared with us dogs, to stick together.' The dogs irrepressible longing for community and boundless individualism make them exalt in their superiority. The story also underlies the importance of the collective will. And it is only this collective will that can lead to the unraveling of the ultimate truth. The dog also comes to the conclusion that it is only through renunciation of the self that true nature of existence can be understood. In many ways the dog's investigation on food is similar to man's investigations on religious nourishment. Although the reasons for abstinence of nourishment is never really clear in Kafka's works, nevertheless, in

Kafka the starver always reaches a point of enlightenment. Both Georg Bendemann and Gregor Samsa die thinking of their families and in **The Hunger Artist** the starver's ascetic denial of life is replaced by the affirmation of the panther. In **The Hunger Artist** the professional artist is in fact hungering for genuine admiration from the onlookers. However, there is none of the Biblical beatitude associated in the fasting of the hunger artist. His dying words itself is self-explanatory: "because I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe us, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else" (CS, 277). The apparent nonchalance is seen in the insensitiveness of those around him who replace without the slightest qualm the body of the hunger artist with a young panther. When the hunger artist's ascetic denial of life is examined, it is revealed that food for him was only a matter of taste; the entire gamut of reaction, the feat of the hunger artist is deflated. The feat had nothing to do with right or wrong; righteousness or unrighteousness. The Hunger Artist admits: "To fight against this lack of understanding, against a whole world of non-understanding, was impossible" (CS, 273). The figure of the hunger artist is a commentary on the modern man and his spiritual starvation. His starvation is not a willful denial of the life-forces. However, till the end the hunger artist remains essentially human in his capacity to reach out for love. Therefore the hunger artist dies not being boastful of his achievement but as someone who has learnt the painful truth of life the hard way. In **The Great Wall of China**, Kafka explores the limitedness of man. The whole incident of building the wall also gives rise to a series of poetic speculations on the relationship between Man and God.

The desire for human company is best expressed through the trapeze artist in **First Sorrow**. The trapeze artist spending days and nights suspended on the trapeze apparently looked like his quest for perfection in his skill yet what he actually craves

is for a genuine human contact and not just a fellow acrobat passing near him or builders, workmen or firemen repairing the gallery providing him occasional company. His genuine demand for a second acrobat takes the Manager by surprise: "Only the one bar in my hands- how can I go on living!" (CS, 448). It is a profound realization by the trapeze artist of the need for genuine human company. On the other hand when there is company, there is little space for toleration as in the monologue **A Little Woman**. The little woman finds the very existence of the narrator unendurable. Here Kafka is analyzing himself from within, like torture in the form of an inexplicable crime as in **The Trial**. Similarly for some inexplicable reasons, the little woman's rancor towards the narrator remains mysterious. His presence irritates her but even his death would evoke only rage: "Her objection to me, as I am now aware is a fundamental one; nothing can remove it, not even the removal of myself; if she heard that I had committed suicide she would fall into transports of rage" (CS, 320). Humanists believe that men are designated for the community and it is the community which shapes the individual. Therefore no individual can realize himself without being a part of the community because self-determination in community provides both the meaning of human life and a standard for moral judgment. Hence existentialism involves personal awareness, of the awareness generated through personal participation. Paul Roubiczek in his book **Existentialism: For and Against** elaborates:

We become conscious of our own existence, of the 'I', by meeting others-by meeting the 'thou'.....for our self-awareness is awakened by other persons and by experiencing objects, all of which therefore become real to us simultaneously with ourselves. If we grew up in complete isolation, we could not develop a human mind and our

existence would remain veiled to us in unconsciousness—that is, it would be unknown.

(Roubiczek, 1966, 120)

It is Martin Buber who deals in great detail the problem of personal relationships in his small book **I and Thou** published in 1922. Here Buber distinguishes between two kinds of fundamental relationships which he calls “I-It” and ‘I-Thou’. Here the ‘I’ is not the individual in isolation but the ‘I’ is completely involved with the “It” or “Thou”. Further Buber places personal relationships or “life with men” in the middle stage rooted between the first stage ‘life with nature’ and the third stage ‘life with the spiritual.’ Using the theory of Gestalt, Martin Buber explains how it is in this middle stage that one can experience the ‘Thou’. Buber says: “Just as the melody is not made up of notes nor the verse of words nor the statue of lines.....so with the man to whom I say *Thou*. I can take out from him the color of his hair, or of his speech, or of his goodness. I must continually do this. But each time I do it he ceases to be *Thou*’ (Buber, 1937,8-9). To experience the *Thou* means to have an immediate knowledge of the the whole man. Martin Buber also sees three stages of life: life with nature; life with men; and life with spiritual; and life with men is expressed through language and hence the importance of language in communicating with the others.

The subject matter of **Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk** is the isolation of art and the artists in relation to society. By making the protagonist a mouse, Kafka dismantles the exalted position held by art and artists; and in portraying the agony of Josephine, Kafka voices the agony of the artist who is unable to transmit the meaning of his art to society. Humanism believes in the widest possible development of art and awareness of beauty so that the cultivation of aesthetic experience may become a pervasive reality in man’s life; but Kafka here portrays how the modern age was not

conducive to this aspect of man. In the present story, Josephine complains of 'singing to deaf ears' and bemoans the lack of enthusiasm and applause to her art. Though the narrator too presents her like a pretentious Prima Donna and wonders if Josephine's singing can be called singing at all. Yet there is no denying that her piping is not that of an ordinary mouse folk. Her piping is capable of generating in them "mouse like stillness; as if we had become partakers in the peace we long for, from which our own piping at the very least holds us back, we make no sound" (CS, 362). With old age her voice was falling off, but she continues to wage her battle for recognition. What is redeemable in her is her spirit to reach for the highest. The narrator explains: "she reaches for the highest garland not because it is momentarily hanging a little lower but because it is the highest; if she had any say in the matter she would have it still higher" (CS, 373). The final tragedy is when Josephine simply vanishes and the narrator interprets- "Of her own accord she abandons her singing, of her own accord she destroys the power she has gained over people's hearts" (CS, 376); and dismisses Josephine: "She is a small episode in the eternal history of our people, and the people will get over the loss of her" (CS, 376). Kafka here attacks the worth of art that exists only as an art. There is no magical power in Josephine's singing; but it is in her squeaking that the other mouse folk identify themselves. It is in the peace and security that her song emanates that Josephine's song holds the mouse folk in trance. All other forces of existence are forgotten and it is in forgetting that mankind can hope to redeem himself from his tragic situation. Or one can attempt to create a safe haven as the animal does in **The Burrow**. The animal is paranoid of an impending threat to his very existence. The animal admits that the burrow provides a comfortable degree of security yet the anxieties from within persists. He ruses: "These anxieties are different from ordinary ones, prouder, richer in content, often long repressed, but

in their destructive effects they are perhaps much the same as the anxieties that existence in the outer world gives rise to" (CS, 339). This anxiety is compounded by the hissing noise, growing louder every hour and suggesting coming nearer. It is a situation which should have demanded an immediate attention like working out a plan of defense; but the animal undergoes a strange response: "I have no wish to discover any further signs that the noise is growing louder; I have had enough of discoveries; I let everything slide; I would be quite content if I could only still the conflict going on within me" (CS, 352). There is here a paralysis of action as the animal here continues to live in fear of a world which cannot be classified. When the animal guards the entrance of the burrow, he belongs neither to the world inside the burrow nor to the world outside. The borderline existence, often seen in the sleeping or the unconsciously sleeping animal, is a tragic situation. The dream of the animal to create a 'wholly perfect burrow' with quiet and peace never materializes. Rather the story ends with the animal being pursued by a noise. Although his burrow is fortified with careful design to prevent outside danger; the tragic irony is the futility of such an arduous labor for there is nothing to prevent the noise from within. The hissing sound could echo Kafka's tryst with tuberculosis. Thus man is never meant to be solitary; the animal can never exclude himself from this world. Finally harassed by the sound, the animal begins to destroy his own burrow. Like the Great Wall of China, the burrow too creates an opposite effect. Instead of sheltering the animal, the labyrinthine shelter becomes a persistent source of concern for further fortifying his bastion. Hence to seek calm and security in this world are only to be illusory effects. The story is reminiscent of Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe**, particularly the footprint episode which drives Crusoe paranoid of unwanted company, which Kafka did read with a lot of interest. Here too the animal is driven out of his nerves terrified

by the incomprehensible noise, and in his frenetic attempt to safety. While Crusoe exorcizes his fear by rationality and words from the Bible; the animal here is doomed to a state of perpetual threat. Ironically, in **The Refusal** the entire petition refused by the Colonel representing the 'imperial government' is accepted by the delegation with relief. Here the image of power is embodied in the frail Colonel and power is witnessed here as corroding. The refusal of the petition do not evoke outright disappointment and Kaka here seems to be hinting at the idea that only disappointment cannot bring a change in the way law is administered or cannot validate the power exercised by the decaying Colonel. The way in which power intimidates man is best expressed in **The Conscription of the Troops**, where at the precise moment of conscription a man goes missing. The narrator explains: "He is never out of the house, never really intends to evade military service, it's only fear that has prevented him from turning up, yet it's not fear of the service itself that keeps him away, it's the general reluctance to show himself, for him the command is almost too great, so frighteningly great that he cannot appear of his own accord" (CS, 439). Power demands a sacrifice of the self. In fact the conscription can be seen as an example of collective call to sacrifice one's self. But as in **The Trial** where women appear more resilient to the diktats of the inscrutable law courts, here also women see the process of conscription as 'a debt which they pay to their sex' (CS, 440). Unfortunately in return she is meted with ignominy; her sacrifice is regarded as sacrilegious. The vultures hacking the narrator's feet in **The Vultures** meets a more painful end when offered help by a passing gentlemen. An outside help to retrieve man from his painful existential condition can only erase him from the face of this earth like the wound suffered by Prometheus. Prometheus meets with tremendous suffering in his quest for truth like Poseidon. In **Poseidon** the weary image of

Poseidon and his soul-torturing job is reminiscent of Kafka for whom too the drudgery of every day work sapped his energy. For both only death could release him from this drudgery. It is like the mouse in **A Little Fable** running in all directions until it reaches the trap of the cat. Hence for all that man can aspire for is only futility as best expressed in the brief story **Give it up!**. Humanism aiming at a new morality is critical of the dehumanizing and depersonalizing aspect of technology. Humanism also aims to recover the past glory of man in the post-industrial society and Kafka's works reflect the difficulty of achieving this new state be it in the form of K.'s futile sojourn in **The Castle** or Karl Rossmann in **Amerika**. In Kafka's works the rediscovery of creativity, fraternity, mutual growth, moral freedom and excellence are all difficult ideals.

Existential humanism therefore believes that there is no other universe than the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity; and Sartre, concludes his ideas on existential humanism by relating it with transcendence:

This relation of transcendence as constitutive of man (not in the sense that God is transcendent, but in the sense of self-surpassing) with subjectivity (in such a sense that man is not shut up in himself but forever present in a human universe)- it is this that we call existential humanism. This is humanism, because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realization, that man can realize himself as truly human.

(Sartre, 1948, 55-56)

Sartre's main aim here was to understand man and what went into the making of what he called "the singular universal". The expression 'singular universal' is a Hegelian

term because he conceives all human behavior in terms of a single basic drive of becoming completely independent. Sartre has further argued that all human beings find themselves in a certain situation or 'givenness', be it physical, biological, historical, geographical, or social; and therefore the characteristic human mark would be to transcend the 'givenness'. Therefore the full human effort would be to continually transcend the given situation through a series of willful choice and responsibility. The other alternative would be to remain 'walled in', 'caged in', 'trapped' in the 'givenness'. For Sartre being human would constitute in the ability to transcend the 'given'. However, in Kafka the other alternative is seen at work. His characters, being unable to transcend the 'given', either bury themselves in law as Bucephalus in **The New Advocates**, or Joseph K. in **The Trial**; or 'caged in' as **The Hunger Artist** or "walled in" as in **The Burrow**; or 'barred out' as in **Before the Law**; or left to flounder as in **Upon the Gallery, America** or **The Castle**. If Sartre's aim has been to free man from the 'givenness'; then Kafka's aim has been to show how impossible it is for man to free himself. Humanism involving the transformation of the self by the knowledge of the human condition is annihilating in Kafka. It is also worthwhile at this juncture to remember Montaigne who said that to live well was to accept the limits of being human and thus to escape from the limits of human would be the greatest folly. He remarked: "That is madness: instead of changing into angels they change into beasts; instead of raising themselves, they lower themselves." Thus the only viable solution for Kafka was to accept the given human nature; for the philosophy of humanism also required man to be human and not 'inhumane' or 'inhuman' for both are outside the human essence. The nineteenth century creed was belief in progress and as such humanism goes hand in hand with this creed. In spite of the great catastrophes taking place in the world, there was still the hope that the worst

can bring about the best. This is best reflected in another early existentialist Nietzsche who wanted to fashion a superman, the noble barbarian combining in him the beauty and strength of an animal with great intellectual prowess which would enable him to conquer not only the world but also fate. But when the same visionary Nietzsche proclaimed "God is dead; we have killed God; God has died" he was announcing the loss of 'the vision of the earth' and the loss of faith. Things were worse with Darwin's ruthless life and death struggle. This nihilist approach was further developed with the idea of 'eternal recurrence'. In **Thus Spake Zarathustra** Nietzsche announces the discovery of a new idea of 'eternal recurrence', the belief that everything which has ever existed or happened must return again and again unchanged. Man instead of becoming a superman may deteriorate losing his humanity or may revert to some animal-like state denying any hope of progress, and forward development. What begins with belief in progress therefore culminates in despair and lack of faith. However, there seems to be great longing for some kind of faith and because there is no such faith the longing is experienced as all the more acute. For Kafka it was difficult to envisage any faith with so much of disintegration all around him. Even belief in transcendental reality is difficult on the face of totally indifferent scheme of the universe. It is Kierkegaard who makes a distinction between knowledge and faith. Knowledge involves a conscious effort of thinking, while acts of faith requires acceptance of things which are beyond proof. The knowledge of death forces the existentialists to have faith upon transcendence. At the same time there is no knowledge that is absolute and comprehensive as well. The knowledge of our existence is also doubtful. Nietzsche's proclamation of God being dead together with the certainty of man's death makes us realize that Humanism is only a kind of a smoke-screen to evade the somber truth. When Spinoza declares that 'the free man

never thinks of death but only of life', he is said to be evading a reality he could bear to face. Such is the tragic fate of being human and Kafka's works are all specimens exposing the essential finitude of man. The Humanists are not unrealistic by envisioning a utopian world where all conflicts ceased to exist. There is no static perfection that mankind can hope to reach because man is not and never will be a complete product himself. However what they do believe is in Man's capacity to make himself by his close interaction with the environment and it is this confidence in man's creative power that gives meaning to human life.