

# **EXISTENTIAL CRISIS IN FRANZ KAFKA**

**Thesis submitted to the University of North Bengal  
for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

*By*

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2010



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## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Miss Rosy Chamling has completed her Research Work on “ **Existential Crisis in Franz Kafka**”. As the thesis bears the marks of originality and analytic thinking, I recommend its submission for evaluation.

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## Preface

This study aims to locate the 'existential crisis' in Franz Kafka (1883-1924). The very term 'existentialism' generally gives rise to a morbid world view, as existentialism is generally regarded as a philosophy dwelling in despair and dealing with issues of guilt, death, finitude, anxiety, and nothingness. During his brief but eventful life, Kafka has been an observer and recorder of life through his fragments, parables, aphorisms, letters, diaries, short stories and three novels. His first novel **Amerika**, spelt with a 'k' instead of 'c' was deliberate to introduce an element of foreignness, was written between 1911 to 1914. Between September 1912 and early 1913 much of **Amerika** was written and the longest complete story **The Metamorphosis** was written in November and December 1912.; then he begins writing **The Trial** from 1914 onwards; and his third novel called **The Castle** was written in 1922. By 1918, Kafka had finished reading Soren Kierkegaard, generally considered to be the father of modern existentialism. It spurred him to read other existentialists like Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Martin Buber. A reticent but well read man; he was familiar with the works of Spinoza, Darwin, Goethe, Eckermann, Grillparzer, Nietzsche, Hugo Bergman, Marx and Freud. He was also deeply steeped in Jewish folklore and German literature; and often his works are regarded as emblematic of Jewish life in the Diaspora, and he is said to have attended lectures at the Berlin Academy for Jewish studies. He was deeply interested in the Yiddish Theatre Company, and he personally shared close relationship with the Yiddish actor Isak Lowy. His aphorisms (**Octavo Notebooks**) were written from fall-winter of 1917 to the spring of 1918, and they too contain a wealth of wisdom. Harold Bloom finds Kafka as an original aphorist and he places him in the same level as Wittgenstein,

Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Goethe. Kafka's narratives are suspended, there is no closure; and he says there is a 'demonic' force in his narrative.

His collection of letters, **Letters to My Father**, **Letters to Felice** (The woman who influenced him most and with whom he got engaged twice finally breaking off was Felice Bauer); **Letters to Milena**; **Letters to Minz Eisner**, not just document his personal feelings but they appear as well contrived epistolary novels in their own right. The diaries and letters are an attempt to exorcise a kind of exorcise his daemon, a sort of redemption that he sought. Such was his interest in human development that he frequently interacted with the founder of Theosophy, Rudolf Steiner. His ill-health due to tuberculosis cut short his life and Kafka died in Kierling on June 3, 1924; his burial took place in June 11, in the Jewish Cemetery in Prague-Straschnitz.

After his death, most of his manuscripts were destroyed by the Gestapo, and some were already burnt by himself or by Dora Diamant, his companion during his last years, upon his instructions. Actually he seemed to have approved only some forty short stories and vignettes. Kafka's original manuscripts were carelessly bundled with a lot of misspellings not realizing the wealth of canonical oeuvre it covered. Kafka was also impressed by Judaism and Zionism and the Hassidic literature. Yet often Kafka has written slightly of Zionism. All works of Kafka show a split between the real world and the nightmarish world. He himself confessed writing to be 'a form of prayer' besides being an attempt to be away from the 'paternal sphere'. Kafka was familiar with Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), his contemporary, whose studies of the 'id', an inaccessible part of man's personality; and how the mind is a cauldron of seething excitation which unconsciously influenced our conscious behavior. Through its apparent simplicity they hide deep philosophical insights. Max Brod his closest

friend had been instructed strictly by Kafka to burn his works after his death but Brod realizing the value of his self-critical friend defied his orders by restoring and preserving them for literary interest. Even the meeting with Kafka with his publishers, for whatever little he published during his lifetime, publishers Ernst Rowohlt and Kurt Wolff in 1912 was facilitated by Max Brod. Immediately after Kafka's death Max Brod signed an agreement on 31 July 1924 with the Berlin Publishers *Die Schmiede* to produce a posthumous edition of his works, which also put him into a legal problems regarding publishing rights with Kurt Wolff. Many have also written on the untranslatability of Kafka's works. I have heavily relied upon the translations of the first English translators, Willa and Edwin Muir. Though the Muirs were untutored amateurs, picking up German in the course of their travels in the 1920's, they found Kafka's works 'less rigid, less clotted,' and 'much easier' to translate than that of other writers. Kafka was a literary talent who was respected by Thoman Mann, Hermann Hesse and Andre Gide. He was a great storyteller, known for his wealth of imagination often with a mystical aura in his writings. "Open up", he wrote in his diary, "Let the Man come out". Really his diaries and aphorisms unlock the nethermost regions of his mind. His shorter pieces are highly rich. In fact these shorter pieces are a kind of bridge to understand his larger novels. They too document his dream like inner state of his being. It is through his rich writings that this study is going to analyze the source of 'existential crisis' in Franz Kafka. For the said purpose, I have sought to divide this work into seven chapters

This study begins by exploring in the first section of **Chapter One: Introduction** by examining the theoretical basis to the understanding of existentialism as a style of philosophizing; and by showing forth how existentialism is a philosophical orientation for which a common and comprehensive definition is rather difficult to work out. It

gives a brief traditional historical trajectory of this philosophy from Blaise Pascal to Soren Kierkegaard. It is in the second section that Kafka is introduced as a man, a writer, and a philosopher. The existentialist notion of crisis is projected here due to the split in his self.

**Chapter Two: The Critical Scene** gives an overview of existing critical commentary made in the Kafka canon. Kafka has been a subject of various literary and critical interpretations like modernist, magic realist, psychoanalytic, socio-politic, theological, philosophical, theoretical, feminist, and biographical studies. An attempt has been made in this chapter to understand the previous critical commentaries made in the Kafka canon with reference to world renowned scholars like Max Brod, Erich Heller, Gunther Anders, Edwin Muir, Heinz Politzer, Malcolm Pasley, Wilhelm Emrich, Elias Canetti, Herbert Kraft, Selma Fraiberg, Dogmar C.G. Lorenz, Elizabeth Boa, Stanley Corngold, Walter Benjamin, Albert Camus, Felix Bertaex, Edmund Wilson, Ronald Gray, Anthony Thorlby, Franz Kuna, Calvin S. Hall and Richard E. Lind, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Ernst Pawl, Henry Sussman, Ruth V. Cross and others. Seldom do these debates run totally contrary to each other; most co-exist, and most augment the existing criticism. However, individual authoritative texts have also been taken into consideration. The omission of other scholars studying Kafka in this overview may be attributed to my limited resources.

**Chapter Three: Authority and the Individual** traces the conflict that exists between individuals and the various representatives of authority threatening man like God or father-like figures, social institutions like Law, Love, Language and Death. The perennial conflict between authority and the individual is the crux of Kafka's existential crises which is why there can be multiple readings of Kafka's text. They

are not only existential reflections arising out of his profound sense of inadequacy but they also shed light on the factors that caused these feelings of inadequacy. His works are therefore a commentary on the complex bureaucracy of the Austria-Hungary empire and its red-tapism and rampant corruption.

**Chapter Four: Tragic Humanism in Kafka** makes a study of the humanistic tradition from Protagoras (481-411 B.C.) to Socrates (469-399 B.C.) to Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) who gives God like qualities to man. The humanistic tradition of retaining faith in man as a reservoir of endless possibility is deeply questioned by the existentialists. The mystery of birth and the mystery of death are interpreted through existentialist notions like 'angst', 'thrownness' 'the anguish of the here and the now' and the difficulty of realizing '*Being*' against the 'givenness' vis-à-vis freedom and responsibility; all these contribute to tragic humanism in Kafka. The chapter traces how existential humanism is essentially tragic in nature because of man's inability to move outside one self; and in consequence Kafka's quest for authentic selfhood remains futile. The existentialists also interpret human life to be constantly living in the face of death. This tragic conflict lies at the centre of each man and the existentialists stress on the maximum of this conflict. If Sartre has gone to lengths to explain how existentialism itself is humanism and if we begin with the idea that humanism is a doctrine which regards man as the source of all values then in Kafka's existential humanism is tragic as he is acutely aware of the tragedy endemic to human condition.

**Chapter Five: Realism and Fantasy** will explore how Kafka's imaginative world fit into the empirical world by a strange mish- mash of fantasy, folk lore tradition, fairy tale like element, myth, parables, dream narratives with concrete reality. Unlike the

traditional literature of transformation as practiced by Ovid and Apuleius; here Kafka uses this technique to convey the ephemeral, bizarre, and the irrational world. Also Kafka's nightmarish world cannot be interpreted with reference to the theme of the artist in exile which is common in German Literature from Kliest to Holderlin. For the existentialist Kafka, it was a difficult time for he saw no stability in external reality; he lived in two different worlds, each threatening to out run the other. What is real threatens to become fantastical and what is fantastical again threatens to take the shape of reality. Kafka oscillates between the real and the fantastic; the natural and the extraordinary; it is not a clearly divided Manichean world but highly paradoxical and hence existential.

However, the more tragic Kafka's heroes become, the fiercer is the hope of redemption. Kafka has captured the frightening elements of total despair which he himself experienced and translated them into human dimensions against a background of myth, allegory and spiritual longing. So this chapter analyses the struggle of the self with itself in the form of dream narratives because in Kafka's world-view reality can be grasped only through a fantastic approach.

**Chapter Six: Kafka's Narrative Pattern: An Existential Perspective** dismantles the conventional narrative discourse. Kafka saw a failure of the narrative mode and language which has a generalizing tendency. Kafka saw a failure of the narrative mode whereby the uniqueness of the existent is subtly brought out. The chapter will show how the existential crisis will lead to shifting paradoxes in his narrative art because of which most of his works lack closure, or any definiteness. This is also the reason why his works defy easy classification and can have multiple interpretations. His existential crisis make it difficult for his narrative to transform 'knowing' into

'telling'. So much of his works are chaotic and haphazard, and are more of speculations. It is an existential state that his narratives are dream-like, which is to say in a state of fluid suspension; and as result when one reads his works we literally are transferred into a nether world. This chapter examines how Kafka tries to approach reality through the use of dream narratives and ironic fables through the subtle use of Freudian symbols and parables. The existential crisis in Kafka could have been expressed only in terms of the parable mode because only the parable has been could help bridge gap between the unknown and the unknowable. If the biblical parable used to illuminate an ultimate truth, the parable in Kafka is used to express the existential crisis. Only the parable helped him to reveal the reality behind the apparently real world of empirical evidence. The parable is an expression of his frantic effort to grasp that reality but which always eluded him. In this way, Kafka's parables is used to expose this gap and man's dilemma of him being incapable of bridging this gap. Kafka's parables are expressions of his own sense of perpetual inadequacy.

Finally, **Chapter Seven: Conclusion** sums up the existential crises of Kafka as a writer and a man of the world. The conclusion sums up in what way Kafka was able to extricate himself out of his existential crises. Existentialism is therefore not to be understood as a philosophy of despair but rather a positive philosophy for there is always a chance before death; even if there is pain in the process of living but it is suffering becomes a proof of our existence.

## Acknowledgements

*I wish to express my gratitude to my Supervisor Professor Soumyajit Samanta, Head, Department of English, North Bengal University for guiding me in my work despite his many academic engagements; and to the teachers of the Department of English, North Bengal University, Professor G.N.Roy, Professor S.K.R.Moulik, Professor Ashis Sengupta, Dr. C.Laha, Shri B.P.Roy, and Dr. Ranjan Ghosh for their blessings. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance of North Bengal University Library, the central library of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; and the library of Jadaupur University, Kolkata for helping me with my research materials. I also wish to thank the principal of Darjeeling Government College, Darjeeling, Dr. Dipak Ray for providing me with necessary support to finish off my Phd. Also thanks to my parents for their support all through. Last but not the least, my heartfelt gratitude to Smt. Chandrayee Samanta, my first teacher and inspiration.*

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## List of Abbreviations

- A : Amerika.
- B : Max Brod, Franz Kafka: A Biography.
- C : The Castle.
- CS : The Collected Short Stories of Franz Kafka.
- D : The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-1923.
- GJ : Gustav Janouch, Conversations with Kafka.
- LF : Letters to Felice.
- LFFE : Letters to Friends, Family and Editors.
- LME : Letters to Minze Eisner
- LMF : Letters to My Father.
- LM : Letters to Milena.
- T : The Trial.

# CHAPTER - I

## Introduction

*Since I am nothing but literature and can and want to be nothing else... ..*

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, August 21, 1913.

### I

'Existentialism' is a profoundly complex and elusive term. It is often misconstrued as a philosophy dwelling in despair and negation. Generally speaking, existentialism is a philosophy which declares as its first principle that existence is prior to essence. Existence should be the sole criteria or the basis of philosophy and ultimate knowledge. For Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, existence is inextricably bound up with essence. Descartes' dictum 'I think therefore I am' gives preference to abstract thinking but for the existentialists, reason is not the only proof of our existence and so for them it is 'I am therefore I think.' Existentialism entails existence in the world through which man becomes aware of his own existence. The onus for proving his existence lies upon man himself. Man is thrown into the world yet, it is man himself who determines what he actually is. Even essence is to be created by man and not a given situation. The early predecessor of existentialism was actually Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) who was a scientist, a philosopher and a psychologist. Rejecting the Cartesian rationalism, Pascal tried to define man in rational terms. For Pascal, man is a paradox, a contradiction between the mind and the body; a contradiction which cannot be solved even by religious arguments, and hence the threat of the universe dwarfing man defines his judgment on the nature of human existence. Pascal does not approve the faith of the philosophers; rather his conception

of God is one of an irrational and mysterious figure. Hence his famous outcry: "Not the God of the philosophers, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?". Soren Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, who coined the term 'existentialism', also shared this paradox. So existentialism is rejection of ration or logic and scientific thinking. It is a way of life, a movement from the general to the individual. It is a profoundly personal philosophy because the evidence of man's existence can be reached only through one's own personal experience. In contrast to 'existence' is the 'essence' of things; 'essence' is the nature of things or ideas but since these concepts are too abstract they are often regarded as secondary to 'existence'. Existentialism believes in starting from the real and not something abstract. Jean Paul Sartre explains the principle of existence preceding essence in his **Existentialism and Humanism**:

We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything 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 after already existing as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. This is the first principle of existentialism.

(Sartre, 1948, 28)

Further, Sartre elucidates the difference between man and the other things occupying this world in terms of 'subjectivity', which for him is an acute self-awareness propelling man to move ahead:

Man is, indeed, a project which possesses a subjective life, instead of being a kind of moss, or a fungus or a cauliflower. Before that projection of the self nothing exists; not even in the heaven of intelligence: man will only attain existence when he is what he

purposes to be. Not, however, what he may wish to be. For what we usually understand by wishing or willing is a conscious decision taken- much more often than not- after we have made ourselves what we are. I may wish to join a party, to write a book or to marry- but in such a case what is usually called my will is probably a manifestation of a prior and more spontaneous decision. If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders.

(Sartre, 1948, 28-29)

This is in contrast to the idea of the ancient philosopher Plato for whom although man has no fixed essence, he makes his own essence out of the historical situation in which he is placed, or out of his freedom. Plato called these essences as ideas, and these ideas constitute a realm of absolute realities beyond time, history, change and existence, which is more real. Thus when these ideas are transferred to existence, there is a kind of fall, from a higher realm of being. This is what is meant by Plato's essentialism, which is essence being prior to existence. Kierkegaard regarded that that philosophy should not be abstract but it should be based on personal experience and specific historical situation. He formulated the concept of 'dread' or 'angst' in German; the idea of 'absolute paradox' and the idea of the leap into the unknown or the 'jump into the abyss'. Although an existentialist, Kierkegaard was a staunch Christian who had unwavering belief in God. But the God of Kierkegaard is one who acts arbitrarily with no sense of justice yet which demands blind faith leading the individual to let out a profoundly existential agony: "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). It echoes Pascal's cry in the *Pensées* (literally 'thoughts'): "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?" (Pascal,1688, No.205). Kierkegaard elaborates this paradox through the biblical figure of Job who is for no apparent reason submitted to utter misery and suffering; knows that he is good yet cannot be right in front of God; and the figure of Abraham who is willingly to sacrifice his only son upon God's order without question. For Kierkegaard knowledge and faith are two different things; if knowledge is consciously gained; faith is the acceptance of things which is beyond proof. He too believed that to discover truth one has to start from personal experience. So for all existentialists the personal is real because 'existence' is a profoundly individual phenomenon, while 'essence' is the more general human nature. Unlike Kierkegaard, Nietzsche attacks Christianity and regards religion as the neurosis of the weak. He dismisses God in **Human, All Too Human**: 'God is dead', and asks rhetorically: 'what thinker still needs the hypothesis of God?'(Kierkegaard, Vol.7, 43). Consequently Nietzsche attacks all religion and finds all religion to be devoid to of truth. Thus in spite of his differences with Darwin, Nietzsche too is influenced by him when he says in **Beyond Good and Evil** that the 'more complete men' were always the 'more complete beasts' ( Nietzsche,224). For Nietzsche in many ways heralded the birth of man as a magnificent beast of prey. In **History as System**, Ortega says that "Existence itself is not presented to [humans] ready made, as it is to the stone; rather...all that happens to him is the realization that he has no choice but to do something in order not to cease existing. This shows that the mode of being of [human] life, even as simple existing, is not a being already, since the only thing that

is given is and that is when there is human life is the having to make it, each one for himself”(Gasset, 1936,303). Therefore existentialism lays emphasis on subjectivity or inwardness. All existentialists agree that subjectivity is truth and man is required to reach out for this truth. Existentialism also analyses boundary situations like death and suffering, freedom, time and transcendence. It is in such boundary situations that even language becomes ineffective in conveying the richness of experience. Faced by numerous choices, an individual becomes aware of his ‘*being*’. It is a uniquely human situation because ‘*being*’ is an issue only with human beings. Karl Jaspers in his work **Philosophy**(1970) writes that it is only man who raises the question of ‘*being*’ and it is this search for ‘*being*’ that can lead him to anxiety. Anxiety is the awareness that there is no thing that stands between ones ‘*being*’ and ‘*not being*’. Heidegger calls this unique nature of existence as ‘*Dasein*’ or ‘*being there*’, further meaning being out in the world amidst the sordid and not just the good and the beautiful. Anxiety is not to be confused with fear because fear has an object but not anxiety; anxiety arises due to the confrontation with oneself. In the opening chapter of Heidegger’s **Being and Time**: “We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed. The being of any such entity is in each case mine. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves towards their being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. Being is that which is an issue for every such entity” (Heidegger,1962,42). Even freedom is an ambiguous issue for the Existentialists; because not to choose too is still choosing and still the freedom of choice or the choice of freedom is limited for the existentialists. If freedom is actually acting entirely by our own free will, then making the right choice is equally important. Making a right choice therefore becomes crucially important because a wrong choice can enslave us.

This is why the existentialists put stress on man as an active 'subject' and a not 'passive' recipient of all that is given. Man is organically related to his environment and therefore man's effort to recognize his '*being*' or to prove himself as an existent has to take place solely in this world. Therefore when skeptics level the charge against existentialism being a philosophy of quietism and accused of contemplation; and since contemplation is a luxury, the communists interpret it as a bourgeois philosophy, Jean Paul Sartre denies these charges in **Existentialism and Humanism**. Also, Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* meaning '*Being there*' or '*being in the world*' explains how man's being can be realized only in this world and how this being is a nascent possibility in every human being. Man's entire effort is thus directed to realize this '*being*'. The existential crisis arises when man encounters the impossibility of realizing this '*being*' or self. Man is overwhelmed by nihilism when man loses the worth of his self or any sense of dignity in his self. The best definition of nihilism is provided by Nietzsche in **The Will to Power** : "What is nihilism? The fact that the highest values lose all value. There is no aim, no answer to the question "Why?" Radical nihilism is the conviction that the highest values which one wants to accept are readily untenable, and added to this is the insight that there is no justification whatever for assuming that there is another world or a true nature of things or anything divine or a given morality" (Nietzsche, 1910, 693).

But the enigmatic character of birth shows how existence is forced upon us. We do not have any control over the historical and personal situation in which we are born into. Thus when Sartre talks of man making himself, he is actually referring to man's capacity of molding or improving his essence because one's control over one's existence is not much. Man is forever to remain man; as the French critics say and man cannot become strawberries or peas or cats. But Hegel refuses to follow Sartre's

principle and by moving from being and essence to actuality and existence. Sartre attacks this brand of Hegelian brand of objectivity. Kierkegaard's thought centers in the problem of the individual and his subjective existence. The individual's existence being his inwardness. It means turning away from the life of unexamined sensation to the intensive life of deep introspection. It means moving from the general, abstract and non-real propositions to an understanding of the particular, concrete and the real existent. The opposition of Kierkegaard to Hegel extends to all matters. For Hegel the inner and outer worlds are identical but Kierkegaard knows that there are things hidden within and which cannot be expressed.

Therefore existentialism is a philosophical orientation for which a comprehensive definition cannot be worked out. It is a philosophical orientation concerning solely with human existence and it recognizes the uniqueness of man's being and this entails that man should constantly work towards recognizing his being, it is man's constant striving: 'Existence... is a constant striving, a perpetual choice; it is marked by a radical freedom and responsibility; and it is always prey to a sense of Angst which reveals that, for the most part, it is lived inauthentically and in bad faith. And because the character of a human like is never given, existence is without foundation; hence it is abandoned or even absurd' (Cooper, 1999, 3). However, existentialism is not a body of philosophical doctrines because there is no common body of doctrine to which all existentialists subscribe to. John Macquarrie in his book **Existentialism** regards it as a style of philosophizing rather than a body of philosophical doctrines.

He writes:

The first and most obvious one is that this style of philosophizing begins from man rather than from nature. It is a philosophy of the subject rather than the object. But one might say that idealism too took

its starting point in the subject. Thus one must further qualify the existentialist position by saying that for the existentialist the subject is the existent in the whole range of his existing. He is not only a thinking subject but an initiator of action and a centre of feeling. It is this whole spectrum of existence, known directly and concretely is the very at of existing, that existentialism tries to express. Sometimes, therefore, this style of philosophizing appears anti-intellectualist. The existentialist thinks passionately, as one who is involved in the actualities of existence.

(Macquarrie, 1972, 2)

Modern existentialism arises out of the German tradition and it soon engulfed the European mind. The most important philosopher who was the first to see the inadequacies of intellectual abstraction was Henri Bergson (1859-1941). He formulated the idea how the inner experience of life cannot be measured by quantitative methods. All existentialists are common in studying the relationship between religious faith and the individual. The nineteenth century was an age of progress and with the publication of Darwin's **The Origin of Species** in 1859, religion was no longer the mainspring of life. The ruthless life and death struggle for survival is akin to the class warfare in a capitalist society, where the self finds it impossible to mingle in the social milieu. Man is therefore not only alienated from God, society but also from his own self. Existentialists also focus on the contingency of life. Human finitude is dealt by Heidegger in **Being and Time** in 1927. The same year also saw the arrival of Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy which believed in the limits to one's reason. Some of the leading existentialists in the same thought were Nietzsche (1844-1900), Dostoevsky (1821-81), Gabriel Marcel (1899-1973), Nicholas Berdyaev (1874-1948), Paul Tillich(1886-1965), Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), Miguel de Unamuno (1865-1936), Lev Shestov (1865-1938), Karl Barth

(1886-1968), Martin Buber (1878-1965) other leading French existentialists besides Sartre were Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and Albert Camus (1913-1960); and most of them have vociferously denied the label of 'Existentialists'. So it is in their philosophical style and it is in their common themes that they customarily treat that they can be said to belong to a common school of thought. There are not only diversities but grave conflicts between the different philosophers of existence.

Jean Wahl in his book **Philosophies of Existence** stresses on the fundamental difference between Sartre and Heidegger:

Sartre has said: essence follows existence. Heidegger rejects this proposition, because he believes that Sartre is using the words existence and essence in the classical sense; he has reversed the usual word order but remains, despite this reversal, within the fold of classical thought. He has failed to grasp what Heidegger regards as an essential element of his own theory. This element involves the definition of existence which, Heidegger says, must be understood to mean 'being in the world': *ex-sistere*, 'to be outside oneself'. If it is agreed that existence is this, and not the simple empirical reality, then we shall arrive at a proposition quite different from Sartre's 'essence follows existence'- a proposition made by Heidegger himself, and which is: the essence of man is existence-the essence of man consists in 'being outside himself.

(Wahl, 1969, 13)

But again Hegel believed that to exist objectively is no longer existence but a divorce from existence. For Hegel, objective truth is actually the death of existence. Gabriel Marcel begins his philosophical meditation by writing in the **Journal Metaphysique** that we are beyond truth and falsehood. We are not in possession of any truth about

ourselves. We are beyond classification and comprehension. We are nothing. This is what one would mean by existential crisis. According to Kierkegaard, ethical understanding implies understanding the claims made upon me by the others. It is only in such a way that 'disclosure' comes in and truth is grasped. He had faith in the Jewish saying that the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom. This is why he sees death as a kind of freedom. In both his important works **The Concept of Dread** and **The Sickness unto Death**, Kierkegaard makes his point by saying how man wants to be himself but yet he cannot be himself. The 'sickness unto death' is despair, which means to say that it leads to inner death or closure.

However, existentialism is not to be regarded as an utterly pessimistic philosophy but it is only that its adherents have been realistic enough in acknowledging the disorder inherent in the scheme of human existence:

To exist is to project oneself into the future. But there is always a lack or disproportion between the self as projected and the self where it actually stands. This discontinuity in existence has been noted from Kierkegaard to Ricoeur. One may call it flaw or fault, not so much in the sense in which the word is used by geologists, that is to say, to express a radical break or discontinuity. The gap is between existence and essence, as between facticity and possibility, or between the self one is and the self that is projected. But this kind of flaw is not yet a moral flaw, but rather the kind of finite being that makes mortality possible. The case is similar with Heidegger's notion of falling. He takes care to explain that this is an ontological possibility and that he is not making an ontical pronouncement on man's actual condition. Man is so constituted that he stands in the possibility of falling, that is to say, of a disproportion or a failure to measure up to the stature of his possibility. Nietzsche was clear that the flaw or impression in the way man is constituted, the fact that he is unfinished, not only makes

possible the deterioration of man but is equally the ground of the possibility of his advance towards superman.”

(Macquarrie, 1972, 158-159).

In this way the existentialists seem to have mastered the technique of reaffirming the value of life while boldly depicting its horror. Instead of defining what ‘Existentialism’ is, we must try to enumerate a certain number of concepts of the philosophy of existence and set them against the background of experience like anguish, nothingness, isolation, finitude, absurdity and guilt. These are issues or problems which need not to be solved for the existentialists but mysteries against which the response of the individual will serve to reveal his uniqueness.

## II

The existentialist notion of crisis is perhaps best expressed in the works of Franz Kafka, than in the actual philosophical treatises. Kafka’s works are a reflection of the man as an existent faced with the idea of solitude, of dread, of subjectivity, of anguish, of absurdity, of nothingness, and of death. Franz Kafka is a literary icon of both German and Austrian literature, but he is also a cosmopolitan writer whose works transcend geographical, historical and cultural limitations. He was born on 3 July 1883 in Prague, capital of the then kingdom of Bohemia in the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. He died as a citizen of Czechoslovakia on the outskirts of Vienna in 1924 barely forty one years. His parents Hermann Kafka and Julie Lowy were fancy goods merchants. The Kafkas were of a robust breed with business acumen but the Lowys were intellectual with a religious bent. He was the eldest of the six children, including two brothers Georg and Heinrich who died in infancy and three sisters Elli, Valli and Ottla who all outlived him but finally became victims of the holocaust. His parents had named him after the Habsburg emperor Franz Joseph. Ironically Franz

Kafka turned out to be everything but an emperor, his works being a reflection of his ordinariness of being to the point of nullity. In fact, all his works center on the unspoken question-“Who am I?”. Kafka puts the whole of his existential anguish to this question. He is so many things- a German speaking Jew, an Austrian subject, an inhabitant of the Czech city, a theologian, a philosopher, a literary critic; but at the same time he is nothing, not even Franz Kafka. This psychic confusion of the self bordering on eccentricity left Kafka with a fear of being regarded as a mad man, but he transposed this uncertainty about the self into his writings.

Though he transferred to his writings all his uncertainty and distrust he felt towards himself, writing soon became the source of his anguish. Kafka's notorious self-loathing is caused to a large extent by his dissatisfaction with writing. Many a times he felt an acute sense of guilt by failing to write and by not writing well enough. Upon close analysis one finds the cause lying in the discrepancy Kafka finds between his knowledge of the world and his experience. Yet writing was his salvation, writing came before life. It freed him from his isolation to revel in the spiritual joy of writing. But try as he might, man is never to be regarded as a subject shut in on himself. The political, social, cultural and familial demands threaten the subject's isolation. Such was the case with Kafka. Kafka lived during a period of intense socio-cultural changes and lived to see the two world wars, the anti-Jewish riots, and the publication of Sigmund Freud's **The Interpretation of Dreams** in 1900. Other important historical events were the first and the Second Balkan Wars in 1912-1913, the failure of the Russian Revolution in 1905 and the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the humiliating defeat of Germany in 1918-1919, and Prague becoming the Capital of independent Czechoslovakia. During this period there was an upsurge for the rise of smaller nation states like Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. These defining

historical moments had a profound impact upon the hyper-sensitive mind of Franz Kafka. There was also an air of intellectual stagnation which paralyzed much of Europe. Under such conditions, Kafka had sought to take refuge in writing but only to be enmeshed in the mire. Julian Preece elaborates:

Everything in Kafka's Europe appeared in flux and-as history was to show with a barbarism none could have foreseen-consequently under threat. His images of fractured perception, his figures' search for wholeness, and their experience of authority divorced from responsibility are modernist images of Europe on the brink of its most awful hour

( Preece, 1999, 2)

Kafka was also profoundly influenced by Nietzsche and Marx, nudism, anti-Semitism and the rising Zionist Movement. He is said to have attended the Zionist Congress in 1913. Life as a Jew was difficult because under the war conditions, a Jew had to identify himself either as a German or a Czech. Since Kafka suffered from the problem of assimilation, the rootless nature of his characters in his writings is well understood. However, in Post-war Czechoslovakia, the first President of Czechoslovakia T.G.Masaryk who being sympathetic to the Zionist cause gave due recognition to the Jews; and particularly after the anti-Semitic flare up in 1920 brought a new harmony in Czech-Jewish relations. This explains the mellowed tone of **The Castle** in comparison to **The Trial**. However, it is also difficult to imagine how an outwardly genial personality like Franz Kafka could harbor such acute pangs of loneliness. His friendship with Max Brod his biographer is well-known and he also shared close ties with his two schoolfriends Paul Kisch and Oskar Pollak. His Prague circle of friends also included Robert Musil, Carl Sternheim and Felix Weltsch. He was also close with Robert Klopstock, a Hungarian medic from Budapest, who later

died in New York in 1972. Kafka had recommended his name as a translator of his stories to his publisher, Kurt Wolff. His dietary habits were also interesting. By 1912 Kafka turns vegetarian and he was himself a frugal eater leading to speculations that he deliberately starved himself. Many of his stories like **The Hunger Artist**, **The Metamorphoses** and **Investigations of a Dog** either deal with the problem of food. Kafka admired Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Kliest and Grillparzer. He also read Darwin and Ernst Haeckel, the chief exponent of Darwinism in Germany. Strangely, Kafka formulates an inverse evolutionary order. Kafka also practiced nudism besides physical activities like swimming and hiking. His interest in nudism was his response to the cult of the natural. He also practiced 'fletschern' or rhythmic mastication after its American propagator Horace Fletcher. These activities, celebrating the human body, were followed by Kafka for spiritual regeneration. It could also explain his way of coming to terms with his frail body and its acceptance by him. He writes how he felt acutely conscious of his father's robust body starkly different from him whilst they went swimming.

Kafka felt the overwhelming experience of writing only after he had written **The Judgment** 'at one sitting during the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> from two o'clock at night to six in the morning.... The fearful strain and joy how the story developed before me as if I were walking on water' (CS, 310). It was from now on that Kafka was to devote himself to writing religiously. But constituted as he was he also knew that it was a vocation which would demand the sacrifice of his other interests. Henceforth he would write but he would have to quit living. This was the painful choice which appeared before him. At the end, he could achieve neither, leading him to experience an acute existential crisis. Kafka worked at the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia in Prague. Brod recalls Kafka's seething frustration and

anger when he saw meek workers who were victims of industrial accidents, being denied the appropriate accident insurance premium. Kafka once said to Max Brod: "How modest these men are. They come to us and beg. Instead of storming the institute and smashing it to little pieces, they come and beg" (B, 82). His job was drudgery for him from which he found release only at night when he would be writing. Paradoxically, writing becomes simultaneously the cause of his misery and potentially also the means of his escape.

The 'existential crisis' in Franz Kafka arises from his failure to grasp his real self both as a writer and as an individual. Upon close analyses we find that the split between the author and the self is deliberate so that the demons of his self do not contaminate the purity of his works. Perhaps this explains why Kafka uses the mode of the fable because it enabled the maximum effacing of the author from his works. In this way also the personal and the individual could be raised to the level of the general and universal. Unlike the other existentialists, his life of freezing solitude coupled with intense introspection does not make him aware of God or any such beneficent Higher Power. The tragedy of man's position lies in his inability to perceive and relate to this Higher Power for reasons too complex and mysterious for his comprehension. The resultant despair and irony form the thematic concern of his works. Kafka's works reveal him to be a self-analytical, self-obsessed writer. His anxious diary entries and agonizing letters perplex the reader with psychological and epistemological enigmas. From the autumn of 1912 till the time of his death, Kafka seemed to have written every single day. Kafka wrote to Max Brod from 1904-1924; Oskar Pollak from 1902-1904; Robert Klopstock from 1921-14. He also wrote to Felice Bauer from 1912-17, to Milena Jesenska, Grete Bloch who was Felice's friend and intermediary, Minze Eisner, to his favorite sister Ottla and to his publishers and editors. These

letters are no doubt personal, unlocking the labyrinthine consciousness of the soul yet so well thought out, well documented writings with clear narration and clever phrasing. It is hard to believe that they were personal outpourings because of its deliberate overtones. **Letters to Felice** almost seems like an epistolary novel put very appropriately by Julian Preece that these letters are not to her as much as about her; **Letters to Milena** is more compact and more mature in nature; **Letters to Minze Eisner** is more of a student-mentor communication where Kafka advises her on her career as a horticulturist and encourages her to be independent. **Letters to My Father** is an autobiographical document written in 1919 at the age of 36 portraying the archetypal father-son conflict, pitting the father's strength against the son's weakness. Kafka admired his father's business talents but it also horrified to see him Hermann Kafka's tyrannical manner of dealing with his employees which created an aversion for Kafka towards the shop and made him seek refuge in writing. He was appalled to see how his father's employees meekly surrendered to the scathing venom of his father. Hermann Kafka like all fathers of the Jewish Bourgeois of Prague wanted to give his son a German education. Hermann Kafka was a second generation Jewish migrant and was a practical businessman who knew that one had to speak the language of the ruling class for social and professional advancement. His schooling was at one of Prague's German Grammar schools and he later studied at the German University of Prague. His father publicly supported his son to study German, but privately he forced his son to cling to their poor preserved Czech vestige. While he was speaking Czech at home, he spoke German at school. Thus from his very childhood, Kafka was pulled apart by two contrary forces-the German language which committed him to a foreign culture but with which he seemed fairly comfortable later; and his own Jewish root. Thus according to Marthe Robert in her book **Franz**

**Kafka's Loneliness** writes: 'This, he believed, was what gave rise to his "infinite" sense of guilt' (Robert, 1982, 11) Marthe Robert further quotes from a letter written by Kafka to his father: "As a child," he wrote to his father, "I reproached myself, in agreement with you, for not going to the synagogue often enough, for not fasting, etc. In this I thought I was doing a wrong not to myself, but to you, and I was assailed by a sense of guilt which was of course always ready at hand" (LMF, 171). Robert correlates Kafka's sense of guilt with the persecution and uprooting of Jews. We find that Kafka's protagonists are identified only by a truncated initial Joseph K. in **The Trial** or simply K. in **The Castle**. It could suggest the castrated individual or Kafka himself. Besides the protagonists are seldom given proper names; most are only known by their professions be it the hunger artist or the trapeze artist, the explorer, the doctor, the hunter, the singer, the tradesman, the advocate, etc. or may simply be animals like dogs, jackals, mouse, insect, spool or even hybrid creatures as Odradek or as in the short story **The Great Wall of China** the Jews are represented as Chinese. Kafka Although Kafka shared greater affinity with German Literature yet again the disavowal of his Jewish heritage was not a happy situation for him. Kafka was isolated from the warmth of his family circle, primarily his father. Temperamentally, Kafka's intellectual agility and personal delicacy set him at loggerheads with his brutally healthy and assertive father. Kafka had an aversion for his body and the decisive factors appear to us to be the way in which he compared his body with his father's and the way in which Hermann Kafka reacted to his son's physique. These feelings of physical inferiority were made more serious by his father's overt rejection of his son. Kafka's anxiety about his father's domination is expressed in almost all his works in a physical metaphor. These are physical manifestations of an existential crisis brewing within Franz Kafka. Hermann Kafka



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was disinterested towards his son's writings; and even his friendship with Isak Löwy, the director of the Yiddish Theatre troupe was looked down upon. Kafka was impressed deeply by the Yiddish Theatre Troupe in 1911. But it was Hermann Kafka's hatred towards Eastern Jews which made him remark 'He who lies down with dogs gets up with fleas' (**D**, Nov 31, 1911). Kafka was mad with rage at this brutal attack and he chose to exorcise himself by writing. This scathing remark was also the cause of several 'dog' metaphors in Kafka's works and also the dog was an anti-Semitic epithet. In the short story **Investigations of a dog**, the investigating dog was actually an aspiring Jew or could be Kafka himself. In **The Metamorphosis**, Gregor Samsa waking up to find himself transformed into an insect is reminiscent of the 'flea'. Also the comment seemed to have inspired the open ending of the novel **The Trial**, where Joseph K. is seen himself dying cut off from society 'like a dog!' (**T**, 251). Like a dog, Kafka chose to live outside the familiarity of his community. The dog metaphor condenses in the untitled and unfinished story called **Investigations of a Dog** written in 1922. Here through the disabused old dog, Kafka investigates his own life. His investigations have no result but drive him deeper into the throes of despair. Thus Marthe Robert opines:

For his writing, directed essentially against his father's tyranny and the narrowness of his environment, was anything but an innocent game. It was a dangerous offensive weapon, the use of which brought with it a profound sense of guilt. Hence the conflict in which he was involved from the age of twenty one, and which he was able even then to formulate: "God does not want me to write, but I- I must. And so there is an everlasting up and down; after all, God is the stronger and there's more anguish in it than you can imagine.

(Robert, 1982, 37-38)

The mysterious inner law which he here called "God"- in mockery, perhaps, because at the time of this letter to Oskar Pollak he called himself an atheist, or more likely through an intuition of the true nature of the commandment only intensified its rigors as time passed, and in the end every page of his work had to be torn out of him. Although Franz Kafka was not an avid traveler himself, yet the traveler image is predominant in his significant works. In **Amerika**, Kafka writes about a country that he had never visited. Possibly, they are impressions of Kafka's two visits to Paris as noted by Hartmut Binder in **Kafka in Paris**. All these images of travel show man as an insignificant creature in his quest for understanding the vastness of the universe. Writing did serve as a therapeutic device to some extent for Kafka and so he is not confined to the paper but via the imagination of creativity, his works teem with images of the far-fetched worlds- Prague, Italy, Paris, Russia, Turkey, China, America; and his characters take various shapes like a dog, mouse, trapeze artist, bank-official, scholar etc. In all his works Kafka sees a great divide between Man and the Institution, whether it is Joseph K. in **The Trial** seeking to understand the legal implications of the court or whether it is K. in **The Castle** trying to find a way to the impenetrable castle, or Karl Rossmann's struggle in a foreign land in **Amerika**. **Amerika** can be a different kind of a novel of development *Entwicklungsroman* wherein there is a gradual regression of the protagonist. It solved the problem that all modern artists have faced regarding the difficulty of providing a definite image of man in the face of constant threat. Likewise the heroes of modern writings are often faceless and anonymous, one who is at once everyman and no man. So it is with Kafka's heroes; be it Joseph K. or K. standing for the truncated hero or the castrated author. William Barrett elaborates:

In the novels of Franz Kafka the hero is a cipher, an initial; a cipher, to be sure, with an overwhelming passion to find out his individual place and responsibility- this which are not given to him *a priori* and which he dies without ever finding out. The existence of this cipher who does not discover his own meaning is marginal, in the sense that he is always beyond the boundary of what is secure, stable, meaningful, ordained. Modern literature tends to be a literature of "extreme situation", to use Jaspers expression. It shows us man at the end of his tether, cut off from the consolations of all that seems so solid and earthly in the daily round of life-that seems so as long as this round is accepted without question.

( Barrett, 1961, 54)

Kafka tried to escape from this existential crises brewing within himself and outside by his effort to achieve domestic serenity. Though he had had relations with several women, nothing really worked for him. Felice Bauer was an intelligent and well read woman to whom he had got engaged twice but never married. He first met Felice on 13 August, 1912. He broke off his first engagement with Felice Bauer in 1916 and then broke off and again he renewed his engagement in 1917 and fell ill. But again the same year he again broke off for good. The prospect of failed marriage with the competent Felice seems to have confirmed his sense of inadequacy. His problem aggravated because he saw marriage as a threat to his purity: "Coitus as punishment for the happiness of being together. Live as ascetically as possible, more ascetically than a bachelor, that is the only possible way for me to endure marriage. But she?" (D. August 14, 1913). Between the years 1913 and 1914, Kafka's stormy relationship with Felice Bauer was mediated by one Grete Bloch. There are speculations of Grete Bloch's romantic involvement with Kafka. Interesting the defendant of Joseph K. in **The Trial** is called by the name of 'Block' and 'Grete' is Gregor Samsa's sister in

**The Metamorphoses.** How true the liaison was remains only a matter of pure speculation. Later he had had an affair with Milena Jesenská, a Christian Czech and got engaged to Julie Wohryzek another woman from a modest Czech Jewish background. He again broke off his engagement and finally gave up all thoughts of marriage. His companion during the last years of his life was a young Jew girl Dora Diamant. All women in his life were strongly independent and intelligent. Kafka lived in a society where only the valid motives for marriage were generally love or social convenience. He seems to have been obsessed with the idea of marriage. In his diary entry of November 24, 1911, he notes a sentence from the Talmud (I:162): "A man without a woman is not a human being" (D. 126). Kafka knew that marriage would fulfill his natural right as an adult, but he also knew that it was forbidden to him. The bliss of establishing a home was denied to him due to his existence as a writer. He knew that marriage was a human and moral obligation and that to exclude from this obligation was to exclude oneself from the human race. Thus his obligation to the higher order of writing preventing him from the happy realm of marriage which only aggravated his existential crisis. Writing required 'absolute solitude, a night blacker than all other nights, the silence of the tomb where he dreams of burying himself' (Robert, 1982, 106). Before tuberculosis caught up with him, he was able to spend a few happy years with Dora Diamant. In a love scene between Frieda and the land surveyor K. in **The Castle** K. was haunted by the feeling of painful strangeness and it was in such a painful state that Klamm's voice calling Frieda from the next room almost relieves him. The father in **The Judgment** annihilates the son's individuality but when Georg Bendemann jumps to his death, it expresses his final exclusion from the world of sex and procreation. Not to marry was a difficult decision for Franz Kafka. Now for the existentialists the action of decision-making is fraught with

anxiety because to decide for one possibility is to renounce every other possibility. This is the tragic element in human existence. Choice is ubiquitous because all actions of men imply choice. For Sartre, even if one does not choose, one has chosen not to choose. Confrontation with this limitedness of choice is what causes dread in man. Kierkegaard speaks of fear or dread of confronting the nothingness or void. Heidegger sees it as an ontological constituent of the universe. Jaspers sees it as a situation that lays stress on the fragility of our existence. Kafka can also be read parallel to Lewis Carroll's **Alice in wonderland**. Alice like Kafka's protagonists is a quester seeking out new worlds but which only leads her to baffling territories. Alice too finds herself in a strange situation, in a room with many doors to choose from and at the end is a small door with a view to the ideal world. Confronted with many choices, Man is actually cut off from the ideal world. Decision brings the existent face to face with himself in a way that must stir anxiety. For Kafka, by renouncing marriage, he had hoped to strengthen his self as a writer. Writing would enable a break through out of his loneliness and guilt but when writing proved elusive at times, he experienced an anguish which threatened to engulf his total self. The concept of the self occupies an important area of concern in both Philosophy and Literature. For the philosophers, the self is the origin of all knowledge and which prods one to action; but in literature, the self is the principle of intelligibility which is the understanding of experience. Now the understanding of experience is a subjective act and only then does the existent comprehend the world outside. It was seen in the nineteenth century literature that the heroes were moving outside, marking a breakthrough from the static pre-capitalist society. If the Marxists see the Kafka heroes as men pitted against the social forces outside; for the existentialists, it is man's search for the self. A peculiar tension therefore arises in Kafka with regard to the self's tenacity for recognition and the

inaccessible other. The existential crisis arises from the distance that separates the self from the other because only from the self can meaning can be had but there is difficulty in grasping the self. Unlike Nietzsche's Superman, who is strong enough to resist the curse of existence, Kafka's heroes are overpowered as victims. What remains is only an all-engulfing weariness "Everyone grew weary of the meaningless affair. The Gods grew weary, the eagles grew weary, the wounds closed wearily" (CS, 432).

Thus writing did bring some relief but it did not bring freedom because he had to write about himself and relive the pain again and again. Soren Kierkegaard in his **The concept of Dread** regards anxiety as a vertigo of freedom, for freedom means possibility and to stand on the edge of possibility is rather like standing on the edge of a precipice. The human task is to accomplish the syntheses of body and soul, and this task is from the very beginning anxiety-ridden. Kierkegaard's talks of the deceptiveness of all earthly things and the terror of total annihilation. According to Kierkegaard, every man who awakens to the realization of infinite demands made on him begins to undergo a trial. The true meaning of **The Trial** can be understood only in the light of Kierkegaard who believed that man is infinitely guilty and that man cannot comprehend his guilt by his analogy with external frame of reference. On the other hand, Sartre in **Being and Nothingness** writes anxiety arises because according to him- 'I distrust myself and my own reactions' (Sartre, 1956, 29). In other words, there is a profound ambiguity in freedom. And for Kafka anxiety resulted from an unresolved tension between freedom with its possibilities and finitude with its restrictions and its threat of nihilation. Seen from this perspective, Kafka's works are manifestations of doom plunging into death. Life itself was a paradox for Kafka. Kafka was familiar with Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the German philosopher and he

was especially influenced by Kant's **The Critique of Pure Reason** particularly where Kant formulates the relationship between the empirical and the transcendental world which expressed itself as a paradox. Thus such paradoxes or as Kant calls them 'antinomies' seems to be working in Kafka. The events presented in his works are absurd yet true to each self. Existential crisis in Franz Kafka is also his painful awareness of the contingency of life. He even at times relished at this morbid idea of experiencing death. In his short story called **The Hunger Artist** the protagonist reaches almost absurd heights of disastrous self destruction in the interests of preserving and almost sanctifying his ego. Likewise **The Hunter Gracchus** is a sardonic commentary on death. Here the dead hunter wanders aimlessly about the earth even after he has been killed. Kafka here seems to suggest the frightening thesis that death should not be regarded as a kind of blessed release. Death, too, is a world where there are outcasts equally bewildered by the meaninglessness of their trapped state. It is in the anticipation of death that we come face to face with our own nothingness. This existential idea of finitude implying the idea of limitation and nothingness is expressed by Jean Wahl in his book **Philosophies of Existence** in the following words:

To exist is to be limited. To be limited is to depart from the absolute and the infinite. Therefore to exist is to be guilty. This idea may be traced back to the Kierkegaardian notion of existence as guilt, but in Kierkegaard the idea is part of a larger doctrine stating that existence is at once the highest value and sin. We are separated from the Wholly Other in relation to whom we live in a state of ceaseless tension. This separation is a guilty thing, but at the same time, this separation is what gives our existence all its intensity and thereby its value.

(Wahl, 1969, 69-70)

This explains the existential crisis in Franz Kafka. He professed himself to be an atheist at one time of the life and at the same time he lived his life with a kind of religious courage. This also explains why all his characters meet their end with a heroic grandeur. The French existentialist Martin Heidegger writes in **Being and Time** about the uniqueness of death as an individual exercise and further says: "In the first instance, we must characterize Being-toward death as a *Being towards a possibility*-indeed, towards a distinctive possibility of Dasein itself" (Heidegger, 1962, 305). Thus only the person who realizes that it is he alone who has to face death can truly experience his sense of individuality. The view that the consciousness of death intensifies individual self awareness is found not only in Heidegger but also in others like Unamuno, Kierkegaard and Shestov. Thus death becomes a phenomenon giving totality to life. Robert G. Olson in **An Introduction to Existentialism** explains how Sartre will have none of it: Sartre will have none of this. For him death is never a personal possibility, much less a personal possibility which we can freely resolve to assume and which will give an ultimate meaning to the series of act which constitute our individual lives. As Sartre sees it, death is merely an external limit or a 'wall' which we may encounter at any time in pursuing our personal projects but which we can never personally or freely project as an end to be pursued. More technically, death is 'an always possible nihilation of my possibles which is outside possibilities' (Olson, 1961, 203). Kafka had no faith in the Christian idea of God and Christ suffering for mankind. Rather he proposes ethical individualism where the impersonal divinity, the indestructible, lies at the centre of each individual. Suffering becomes a necessary mode to reach this indestructible. The experience of suffering can even lead one to death. Thus K.'s painful quest in **The Castle** proves destructive not only to himself but to others as well. In Kafka the difference between Heidegger and Sartre's

concept of death does not seem to bother much. In his works we see a fine coalescence of Heidegger and Sartre. Death makes one aware of his individuality but death can also remove all meaning from life. However, Kafka's works also reflect his faith in the 'indestructible' present in man. There is a tendency to regard Kafka as an artistic freak and nihilist, but his tortured analyses of the self is an attempt to reach a spiritual meaning in life. Even though his works abound with a sense of man's bewildered struggle against metaphysical odds and in spite of Nietzsche proclaiming God to be dead, but his faith in the 'indestructible' prevented him from collapsing under the weight of his existential crisis. This is beautifully summed up in **A Message from the Emperor**, the emperor sends a message from his deathbed. The messenger though strong and indefatigable has to force his way through the royal palace, the inner chambers, the stairs, the courtyards, the outer palace, each representing a space so large that the message can never reach to the addressee. But, the story concludes 'you sit at your window and dream up that message when evening falls' (CS, 5). Even if God is dead, we want a divine message, if none is available, we will dream it ourselves. Kafka says: "Man cannot live without a permanent faith in something indestructible in himself" And he adds further: "At the same time this indestructible part and his faith in it may remain permanently concealed from him, and one of the way in which this concealment may be expressed is the belief in a personal God" (B, 172). Faith being concealed permanently may explain why his important novels lack closure and why the goal is forever deferred in Kafka's shorter stories. Kafka died in June 3, 1924 barely completing his fortieth year. His life saw the publication of very little works, not more than five or six volumes. The first edition of his three novels was published only in 1931 but because of the Nazi censorship throughout 1930's,

Kafka was virtually unknown in Germany after the Second World War. His works were available openly in Germany only after 1945.

Although his works brought him recognition only posthumously, but the richness of his works has made it an inalienable part of modern study. Kafka was also influenced by Taoism and Gustav Janouch tells us how Kafka owned nearly all the volumes of the German translations of Taoist writings. But Kafka himself inherited no literary tradition; rather he created his own tradition by his unique literary imagination. If he sounds like a religious allegorist like Dante or Bunyan, it is purely unintentional. What attracts the attention of the readers is not just the form or structure of his works but the layers of meanings it veils underneath. And this mystification instead of baffling the readers only liberates us. Kafka is definitely not a religious writer. For him man was more sinned against than sinful. It is paradoxical to the concept of the original sin. His interest in Zionism is also ambiguous. He studied the Jewish folk literature, the Hebrew language and read the Talmud. In his letter to his friend Oskar Pollak he wrote: "But we need the books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished from forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us" (LFFE, 16). Hence the creative act is a kind of breakthrough to the inner self. Kafka is original in the way he perceives the world. No philosopher had looked at the world this way or was affected by the antinomy of the world. Kafka is presented as a modern Bunyan by his English translators Edwin and Willa Muir. This image clearly appealed to the age witnessing religious erosion but more than an allegorist, Kafka is an existentialist because Kafka writes as if suffering was desirable and nowhere does he voice his unease with his suffering. If Kierkegaard's anguish arises from certitude, Kafka's anguish arises from self doubt. Vacillating between

self-laceration at most times taking diabolical proportions, Kafka shares Hamlet-like dilemma and even contemplated suicide. Kafka writes, "How could Fortinbras say that Hamlet had conducted himself truly like a king?" (D. September 29, 1915). Hamlet suffered from a split within himself and the world which failed to recognize his authentic self, and estrangement between his soul and the world. Kafka makes the following entry in his **Fifth Octavo Note-Book**: "The world- F. is its representative- and my ego are tearing my body apart in a conflict that there is no resolving." But his self-criticism is an expression of his desire to love and to be loved; a wife could have taken his place; or God ; or even his sister Ottilia. But ultimately, he gives up all desire of escape and the only thing that he could do was endure.

If in German Idealism, Truth and Existence are one; but for Kafka, they are divided; and his life-long struggle is to unite truth with existence. This Manichean situation is also the source of his existential crisis. Kafka beguiles the readers. All his works open with an element of surprise. There is a sudden upsetting of the routine( like Gregor turning into an insect in **The Metamorphoses** or Joseph K. suddenly arrested one fine morning with no reason in **The Trial**; but it is at the same time not unrecognizable because of its ordinariness but soon one is transported to the bizarre but recognizable world. However, never for once the reader finds himself out of place because the air of familiarity continues until one is enmeshed in the narrative sequence. Kafka's narratives are basically speculations using the imaginative language. His myths do not have a mythopoeic historical quality and they have a contemporary feel about it. Through the unfathomable the reality is brought closer to us. The movement of Kafka's narrative is also circular where the beginnings become the end and the ends from which now beginnings may arise; while the truth is safely ensconced in the centre. Therefore one needed to possess patience to explore the hidden truth. Kafka

knew the value of patience and this he could have inherited from the tradition of the Gnosis says Bloom in **The Western Canon**: "Paradoxes are what his readers expect from Kafka, but a patient gnosticism more than a paradox. Gnosis, by definition, is a timeless knowledge, both of the self within the self and of the alien God whose spark remains in that innermost self" (Bloom, 1995, 449). So in Kafka, events keep revolving around a certain crux all quest of the individual remains futile because he is only moving in the periphery of the events. Therefore what was required of one was to be patient to understand the world as it is, this is perhaps what Kafka means when he says in one of his aphorism: "There is no need for you to leave the house. Stay at your table and listen. Don't even listen, just wait. Don't even wait, be completely quiet and alone. The world will offer itself to you to be unmasked; it can't do otherwise; in raptures it will writhe before you." Also while the tradition of myth usually stands for some idea or truth; the Kafka myth is inverted. In spite of an air of mystery prevailing in his narratives they are not the kind of detective story with which we may be familiar. Kafka clarifies this to Janouch: "On the contrary, it stares one in the face. It's what is obvious. So we do not see it. Everyday is the greatest story ever written..." (GJ, 133). Since reality cannot be comprehended within a conceptual system, many have decried the existentialists as disappointed rationalists. There is no explanations of why things are as they are and not otherwise. Even freedom for the existentialists is ambiguous. This makes Kafka the most canonical writer of the modern era. Margaret Church in her essay *Kafka and Proust: A Contrast in Time* traces two theories of time; time as a continuum as is in Proust and other such writers who follow the stream of Consciousness technique; and the other is the Platonic concept of time which is more general in nature. It is the former mode of time that Kafka presents because the mythic form and the dream-parable mode are also general

modes of narration. Although Proust and Kafka did not know each other yet Goronwy Rees in his preface to his translation of Gustav Janouch's 'Conversations with Kafka' while drawing comparisons between the two finds similarity between them in their quest for truth—"the same power of observation and penetration, the same mastery of a psychological calculus for measuring the smallest, most fatal of human actions" (GJ, ix). If Proust reconstructs time with involuntary memory; for Kafka memory is practically non-existent which is why the dream parables and myths are free from the constraints of past, present and future. Lifting the constraints of time, Kafka applies it to hypothetical situations. Today's Kafka's works are not read simply, they are scourged for his message to humanity. His two earliest English translations were done by Edwin and Willa Muir and their translations were published by Alfred A. Knopf. Credit goes to Edwin and Willa Muir for making Kafka studies popular in the United States during the 1940's. The later editions, notably the 1954 editions, included an addition of the deleted text which was translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. This edition is generally called the 'definitive editions'. In spite of several biases, they are credited with translating **The Trial, Definitive** and **The Castle, Definitive**. After Malcolm Pasley and Schillemeit completed their recompilation of the German text, the new translations were completed and published as **The Castle, Critical** (1998) by Mark Harman; **The Trial, Critical** (1998) by Breon Mitchell ; and **Amerika: The Man who Disappeared** (2004) by Michael Hoffman. These editions are often noted as being based on the restored text. However, today Kafka's works are translated into all the major languages of the world French, Italian, Czech, Polish, Spanish and Swedish. Also after his death, he has been a subject of interest to writers like Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse. "One must not cheat any body", wrote Kafka in one of his aphorisms, "not even the world of its triumph". Kafka has given birth to the adjective

“Kafkaesque” which is generally applied to man’s absurd relationship with the universe; and the Encarta Encyclopedia defines “Kafkaesque” as “grotesque, anxiety-producing social conditions or their treatment in Literature”; yet it would be a narrowing effort if one can only studies the darker side of Kafka. No doubt there is anxiety, paradox of existence, and solitude in his works, but this disquietitude is not something that his works ended with. It provided man with the strength to trudge along the path of life.

## CHAPTER-II

### The Critical Scene

*My life is a hesitation before birth.*

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, January 24, 1922.

This chapter attempts to give an overview of the existing commentary made in the Kafka canon. Kafka is one of the most interpreted writers and a subject of numerous critical studies. He has been so diversely pigeon-holed that any straight-jacketed version seems a difficult task. There have been several approaches like modernist, magic realist, psychoanalytical, socio-political, theological, feminist, theoretical and biographical interpretations to the study of Franz Kafka. Edwin Muir points out that unlike the clear-cut simplicity of Bunyan's allegory of a Christian resolutely treading the path of salvation; in Kafka, it is not so simple because "there are countless places of refuge" but "only one place of salvation"; and where "the possibilities of salvation.....are as numerous as the places of refuge"(Gray, 1962, 42). Martin Greenberg finds Kafka's works as religious allegory, rather Cabbalistic allegory, wherein Kafka's heroes struggle not to unite with God but to unite with himself and seek divinity in himself and through himself in the world. He says: "Kafka soars to the giddiest heights of Romanticism, wishing to create, not merely worlds like God (Joyce's ambition and the classical ambition of the great poet), but God Himself in himself (Blake's ambition)" (Greenberg, 1971, 219). But since it is a demand too great he plunges into the most 'dreariest' and the 'most disappointed depths of realism.' Many feel that Brod's presentation of Kafka is colored by his deep friendship. Brod essentially sees Kafka as a prophet and so a profoundly spiritual

writer. Many have questioned Brod's editorial competence, often accused him of negligence, even radically altering the texts while arranging for the posthumous publication of Kafka's works. Brod has taken liberties like cleaning up the punctuations, naming the unfinished chapters, and so the editions of Brod are generally referred as the 'Definitive Editions'. Malcolm Pasley was able to get most of Kafka's original handwritten work into the Oxford Bodleian Library in 1961. The original text of **The Trial** was later acquired through auction and stored at the German literary archives in Germany. Subsequently Pasley headed a team (including Gerhard Neumann, Jost Schillemeit, and Jurgen Born) in reconstructing the German novels; and it was later republished by S. Fischer Verlag. Pasley was the editor of **The Castle** published in 1982 and **The Trial** published in 1990. Jost Schillemeit was the editor of **Amerika** published in 1983. These editions are called the 'Critical Editions' or the 'Fisher Editions'. Kafka's principal English translator, Edwin Muir, like Brod, spiritualizes Kafka. Harold Bloom sees no divinity in Kafka and in **The Western Canon** he writes: "It is safe to say that there are not limitations, let alone representations, of divinity in Kafka's stories and novels. There are plenty of demons masking as gods, and there are enigmatic animals (and animal-like constructs), but God is always somewhere else, a long way off in the abyss, or else sleeping, or perhaps dead. Kafka, a fantasist of almost unique genius, is a romance author and in no way a religious writer. He is not even the Jewish Gnostic or Cabalist of Scholem's and Benjamin's imaginings, because has no hope, not for himself or for us anyway" (Bloom, 1995, 451). The religious aspect of Kafka's works were also pointed out in France by several eminent scholars like Robert Rochefort in 1947; Michel Carouges in 1948, Andre Nemeth in 1947 and R. Dauvin in 1949. In Germany, Kafkean interest flourished only after the Second World War. Most critics like Max Bense in 1951 saw

Kafka as a metaphysical writer, more as a thinker sharing affinity with Heidegger. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, a compilation of essays came out as **The Kafka Problem** (1946), edited by Angel Flores, where Albert Camus points out hope and absurdity in Kafka; and W.H.Auden calls Kafka a 'metaphysical' writer; and Erich Heller interprets Kafka's works as the "history of the human mind". According to Erich Heller, there is no answer to any of the givenness in Kafka. So to say why is it that guilt is never doubted and law is never in question in Kafka's worldview is because the law giver is full of caprice as in **The Metamorphosis**, **The Judgment**, or incongruous as in **Odradek**, or inapproachable as in **The Castle**, or inscrutable as in **The Trial** or absurd as in **Amerika**. Heller elaborates on this givenness:

There is no answer to any of these questions; indeed, there is no answerable question to be found anywhere in the works of Kafka. For it is in the nature of his questions that they allow of no answers: in the unfinished story **Investigations of a Dog**, the 'investigator says of himself that, like every other dog, he has the impulse to question as well as the simultaneous impulse 'not to answer'. It is even true to say that Kafka's questions are not only unanswerable but also unquestionable. This is one of the secrets of his art: he wields the magic by which to remove the question mark from the questionable. Where he succeeds, the questions have been transformed into an indisputable givenness, something as affirmative as trees or mountains or oceans or Odradeks.

(Heller, 1974, 20)

It was Gunther Anders in 1951 who calls Kafka a nihilistic writer, a precursor of 'Nazi Philosophy' suitable for condemnation, this comment provoking Brod to accuse Anders of misinterpretation. However, many like Anders see a close connection

between Kafka's art and his social background in Germany like Rudolf Fuchs, Edwin Berry Burgum, Egon Vietta, and Max Lerner. Pavel Eisner's **Franz Kafka and Prague** (1950) sees in Kafka's works the voice of the alienated Jew. Brod was of the opinion that one can have a greater insight on Jewry from the reading of **The Castle** than from the whole lot of learned treatises. Psychoanalysis helps in deciphering the individual's behavior as manifestations of psychic life whose roots lie in the unconscious. Charles Neider in **The Frozen Sea: A Study of Franz Kafka** (1948) studies Freudian fear of castration and neurosis replete with sexual, particularly phallic symbols; and Paul Goodman's **Kafka's Prayer** (1947) also invites psychoanalytical readings. Other critics with similar approach were Erich Fromm, Joachim Seypel and Frederick J. Hofman. Heinz Politzer also talks of how Kafka's writings are extensions of his own life. He shows Kafka "infatuated by words and images, their cadence and their ambivalence."<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Emrich reveals that the strangeness or the bizarre in Kafka's world is because it stands outside time and space. In contrast to Brod, Herman Uyttersprot finds a definite pattern from Kafka's works- a sudden opening, a turning point, and a denouement, most often leading to the death of the hero. Although A.E.Dyson in his book **Between Two worlds: Aspects of Literary Form** has worked out the similarity between Kafka's **The Trial** and Lewis Carrol's **Alice in Wonderland**, yet he also makes it clear that the similarity ends the moment Alice wakes up to the sanity and order of Victorian England; and realizing that after all the people of her dream were only packs of cards but in Kafka's **The Trial**, the threat of persecution continues. Dyson sees Kafka as representative of 'Everyman' who is face to face with the enigma of this universe and unable to find any solution to the malaise faced by modern man. The theme of **The Castle**, according to Max Brod is of 'that prodigious ballad of the homeless stranger

who vainly strives to establish roots in the home of his choice" (B, 219). Brod opines that while his narratives voice Kafka's uncertainties; his aphorisms are more positive. His narratives show man as confused but his aphorisms define man's way out, devoid of the nagging doubts and self-torment. Possibly in his aphorisms there is a greater self-control unlike in the narratives where man is a victim of the forces of tragedy and absurdity. Julian Preece calls Kafka as one of the most cosmopolitan writers who is preoccupied with the theme of belonging and non-belonging. Malcolm Pasley speaks of Kafka's act of writing as 'listening'>(\*David Constantine extends it to listening and 'attending' to something intense) to the point of forgetting the self. According to David Constantine, Kafka's fiction is a 'process' by passing through which the life of the author and the lives of its readers may be changed forever. Truth cannot be reached just as K. never gets into the Castle and Joseph K. fails to understand his case or Karl Rossmann fails to make his career in the foreign land. The reasoning mind fails to grapple with the truth that lies buried within the text. Anne Fuchs in her essay "A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Man who Disappeared" considers Karl Rossmann's predicament as both repression and exclusion embodying 'physical and epistemological dislocation'( Preece, 1999, 26). J.P.Stern regards Kafka's works as finely observed critique of power. **The Judgment** is a story of the return of the repressed and how Kafka 'endows a partly arbitrary ('subjective') law with the validity and power of a wholly objective law, and shows that this is what he is doing' (Stern, 1980,123) However, Kafka is an exposé of power and does not remain a passive victim. In a similar vein, Theodor Adorno proclaims Kafka's writing to be reactions to unlimited power, both patriarchal and socio-economic. Elias Canetti regards Kafka as 'the greatest expert on power' (Canetti, 1974, 80); and Herbert Kraft sees Kafka's works depicting the workings of 'hegemony'( Kraft, 1983, 204). Herbert

Kraft rereads Kafka's texts as political tracts on the nature of power where the 'law' is actually a euphemism for hegemony. Mark M. Anderson uses the concept of *Verkehr* meaning both 'intercourse' both social and sexual and how Kafka's works engages in it. Sander Gilman studies the 'pathological Jew' and studies Kafka's works as discourses about race, gender and disease. In **The Trial**, **In The Penal Colony**, **The Metamorphosis**, a healthy individual is marginalized as an outcast and reduced to a non-entity. Elizabeth Boa sees in Kafka a feminist critique. For her Kafka's work is a symptom of 'a crisis in a militaristic age of decaying traditional patriarchy in which masculinity assumes a sado-masochistic character' (Boa, 1995, 95). Boa finds in Kafka's works misogynistic and patriarchal where women are critically marginalized; for example in **The Trial** all women suffer from an intense longing for the castle Chieftain Klamm even though it involves degrading themselves; like the Landlady of the Bridge Inn Gardena who is unable to get off her love for him even after many years. If men seem obsessed in conquering the world outside, like K. attempting to penetrate the castle, the women folk are imprisoned within themselves like Amalia or if at all they seek to move out they corrupt themselves like the promiscuous Olga. The only image of the new woman is the schoolteacher called Gisa but she also is seldom presented with a voice of her own. According to Boa, the central theme of **The Judgment** is "the unveiling of the phallus to the son, the violation of the biblical taboo that calls for the death of the transgressor" (Boa, 1995, 115); the author problematizing the son's denial of sex vis-à-vis procreation by the father figure. Thus Kafka's world is a male-oriented world where women are powerless and voiceless. However, contrary to many popular beliefs, Kafka was heavily influenced by women. Women do serve to fulfill the emotional needs of the male hero as seen in all the works of Kafka. Dogmar C.G.Lorenz in her essay **Kafka**

and **Gender** notes the image of the male provider in **The Metamorphosis** and although woman suffrage was by then in order, Amalia suffered in **The Castle** by the rejection of the male as aggressor; female employment was in vogue but never in the upper levels of hierarchy as seen in the inns of **The Trial**; women in Kafka's works are subjected to positions of subordination. Only men occupy the centre stage and if there are women, they are often presented as deterrents to the plot as the maid Rose in the short story **The Country Doctor**. His works do not end in happy marriages; seldom is marriage discussed in **The Trial**. In **The Castle** mass prostitution is rampant, often women are sexually promiscuous figures like Olga in **The Castle** or Clara in the novel **Amerika** and love affairs are fraught with problems; in the short story **The Married Couple** the submissive wife is more of a maid helping the husband. As seen through ages women are often clubbed with the other marginalized communities and hence Kafka's works can also be a discourse on the Jews regards Giuliano Baioni. Baioni's **Zionism, Literature and the Yiddish Theatre** is an interesting reading of Kafka at the crossroads in 1911. Stanley Corngold in **Lambent Traces** (2004) searches for the original Kafka. He compares the complex contradiction of Kafka to a double helix, with two opposing elements swirling around each other in a confusing twist. **Lambent Traces** is a collection of essays which is heavily influenced by anti-Semitism of the early twentieth century. Sander L. Gilman's **Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient** (1995) attempts to transform Kafka's writing into a sub-conscious filtering of anti-Semitism. According to Corngold, Kafka was not just a man who was defined by his culture, but beyond. **Lambent Traces** explores Kafka's mysticism and his obsessions with immorality and the metaphysical. He divides Kafka into two parts- the notion of the 'two Kafkas'; one is the bachelor writer, an ascetic and a mystic and the other being a family man rounded in the

empirical reality. Corngold explored these elements as mutually exclusive yet joined at the hip. Finally he turns the criticism of Kafka into a critique of cultural studies. In the 1930's there were debates between Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. While Brecht considered him a 'failure' who was 'caught under the wheels' of petit-bourgeois values; Benjamin anticipated several levels of political and Jewish mythological meanings: "It is necessary to clarify Kafka, that is to say to formulate the practicable suggestions that can be extracted from his stories. It is to be supposed that such suggestions can be extracted from them, if only because of their tone of superior calm" (Benjamin, 1973,110). The psychoanalytic critics will see Kafka's works as an expression of his pathological state. There are critics who will force a relationship between the author and the sociological or psychological conditions. They analyze the text on the basis of theory which is a priori; such theories serving for a diagnostic purpose. But one needs to go beyond these frameworks; and the objective study of his work show Kafka's philosophical concepts of the world and explorations of the psychological reality. Simple allegorical interpretations are also not enough. The irrational world of Kafka is expressed through the fantastic tales yet they are not there only for the sake of literary effect; but they convey the author's unique vision of life. Albert Camus finds **The Trial** and **The Castle** as complementary works; if **The Trial** diagnoses, **The Castle** treats the problem; and at the end one begins to love what crushes us and makes hope spring up. Camus calls this 'leap' from which hope arises in his essay 'Hope and the absurd in the World of Franz Kafka'. Camus in the essay 'Hope and the Absurd in the World of Franz Kafka' from **The Myth of Sisyphus** writes:

It is strange in any case that works of related inspiration like those of Kafka, Kierkegaard, or Chestov; those, in short, of existential novelists

and philosophers completely oriented towards the absurd and its consequences, should in the long run lead to that tremendous cry of hope. They embrace the God that consumes them. It is through humility that hope enters in. For the absurd of this existence assures them a little more of supernatural reality. If the course of this life leads to God, there is outcome after all. And the perseverance, the insistence with which Kierkegaard, Chestov, and Kafka's heroes repeat their itineraries are a special warrant of the uplifting power of that certainty.

(Camus, 1942, 153)

Many reviewers have called his world 'a Torquemada cross-word lacking a framework' (*New Statesman*, April 12, 1930); or 'an elaborate and indeed a tortuous allegory' and 'an aimless rigmarole' (*Saturday Review*, April 12, 1930); or complained of being thrown into a world where people speak in endless sentences for hours and in unparagraphed pages. Felix Bertaux who has made a survey of German Literature called **A Panorama of German Literature** (1935) speaks of Kafka's 'astonishing intensity' and his 'passion for clarity that is Slav or Jewish or perhaps even French'. In England, the *Times Literary Supplement* in May 11, 1933, wrote of the 'strange and baffling' effect, 'elusive and uncertain' metaphysical meanings, displaying the author's 'habit of looking at the universe as a problem in metaphysics rather than in its material aspects'; the style which was 'careful and extraordinarily serpentine', was no more than 'well suited to his intricate turn of thought.' Even after the Second World War, England did not receive his works favorably. It was regarded as man's search for absolute verities, condemned not for his exploration of captivity but for his failure to make a simultaneous exploration of freedom. In 1946, the French Communists published an enquiry entitled 'Must Kafka be Burned?' arguing that he was a dangerous representative of 'black' literature, likely to have a demoralizing influence on society. Erich Heller further says: "It is the very spiritual uprootedness

of the age which has deprived us of all sureness of religious discrimination. To men, suffering from spiritual starvation, even a rotten fruit of the spirit may taste like bread from Heaven, and the liquid from a poisoned well like the water of life" (Heller, 1952, 160). Edmund Wilson in his essay **Classics and Commercials** (1950) compares Kafka to Gogol and Poe and sees their writings as compensation for their neuroticism. Ronald Gray is of the opinion that Kafka shared his religious affiliation more with the Christians than with the Jews, which makes Kafka more European in tradition. There are plenty of Christian symbols strewn in the texts of Kafka like a church instead of a synagogue; his diaries referring to the mention of the Messiah; but ultimately rejecting both Judaism and Christianity. In **In the Penal Colony**; the relationship between the Old Commander and the New Officer is often interpreted as the relationship between Jehovah and Christ. Austin Warren writes: "The earth is a penal colony, and we are all under sentence of judgment of sin for sin. There was once a very elaborate machine, of scholastic theology, for the pronouncement of sentence, and an elaborate ecclesiastical system for its administration. Now it is in process of disappearance: the old commander (God) has died, though there is a legend which you can believe or not, that he will come again" (Warren, 1946, 70). But again Ronald Gray is of the opinion that the officer dies proving his conviction rather than out of love for men, while the guilt of the prisoner bears no relationship to the Christian belief of reward and punishment or even of the Second Coming. Kafka sheds light on what happens when the contact between man and the indestructible is cut off. For Brod, Kafka is a religious hero, a prophet who would fight a thousand temptations to experience the transcendental. The religious approach is also vouched by R.O.C. Wrinkler and Thomas Mann regards Kafka a 'religious humorist'. However, Ronald Gray opines that Kafka has deliberately self-distanced himself by the use of

'he' in his aphorisms. Kafka as a neurotic literary artist is a common perception but Philip Rahv steers clear by regarding Kafka not just a neurotic artist but an artist of neurosis 'objectifying through imaginative means the states of mind typical of neurosis and hence in incorporating his private world into the public world we all live in" (Rahv, 1970,184); and in this way he could free himself of his burden and make the readers his accomplices. But this interpretation does not hold ground when one considers that Kafka was not a hopelessly pathological figure who sought the release of his repressed demons through his writings because he did not have the publication of his works or the general readership in mind whilst he was writing. He wrote for no one but for himself. Anthony Thorlby is of the opinion that the way Kafka's imagination responded to the world are actually ways of not asking what went wrong with the world; but to actually ask what went wrong with us. Kafka rose above the cliché of contemporary thought analyzing the barrenness of the age with metaphysical assertions. But Thorlby rejects such objective grounds:

The collapse of conventions, that cliché of contemporary thought, is a psychological collapse, rather than something that has happened 'out there' in society. Or rather, Kafka teaches us to see that the ultimate terror brought about by such a collapse is that we feel trapped inside a deluded consciousness of the world, regarding all conventional representations of existence as false, but for that every reason unable to extricate ourselves from them. Kafka's mythology makes us aware of the impossibility of distinguishing what happens 'out there' and our consciousness of it. This is like living in a nightmare, knowing it to be a nightmare, but being unable to wake up.

(Thorlby, 1974, 94)

Walter Benjamin has made a study of the mythic and folktale element in Kafka's parables. Benjamin's essay, published in 1934 is called "Franz Kafka: On the Tenth

Anniversary of his Death.” Other works in the similar direction Heinz Politzer’s **Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox** (1962). Walter Sokel’s **Franz Kafka: *Tragik und Ironie*** (1964) studies it as both parable and tragedy; aspects of literary form, paradox, irony and rhetoric. Another work which similarly studies form, rhetoric and philosophy together with the concept of the ‘true Universal’ in Kafka is Wilhelm Emrich, **Franz Kafka: A Critical Study of his Writings** (1968); and Maurice Blanchot’s **The Space of Literature** (1982) sees the need of carving of literary space amidst speculations of philosophy against the twentieth-century anathema of despair. Theodor Adorno “**Notes on Kafka**” (1984) as is norm with the Frankfurt School studies it against the philosophic, historical and socio-political contexts. James Rolleston in his **Kafka’s Narrative Theatre** writes “For Kafka, the theatrical metaphor is implicit in the very act of writing” (Rolleston, 1975, ix). One can see how his novel **Amerika** ends with the protagonist Karl joining the Nature Theatre at the end. Kafka’s world presented in his works is akin to a theatre; also the two men who execute Joseph K. in **The Trial** appear to be second-rate actors; and the entire episode though tragic is essentially theatrical. Gunther Anders in **Franz Kafka** writes: “From great warnings we should be able to learn, and they should help us to reach others. The picture [Kafka] has drawn of the world as it should not be, and of attitudes which should not be ours, will be of use to us if it becomes imprinted on our minds as a warning. It is a picture drawn by a good man, who finally came to doubt the value of his work, and even pleaded for its destruction. His work could never be of use to himself or to others as positive counsel; but as a warning it may be truly helpful to us after all.” Ritchie Robertson finds an affinity between Kafka and Conrad, calling both ‘conservative modernists’ whose narratives have an air of ambiguity but imbued with deep psychological and epistemological enigmas. Freudian and Psychoanalytical

readings have been undertaken by the following critics: Walter Sokel's *The Programme of K.'s Court: Oedipal and Existential Meanings of The Trial* in **On Kafka: Semi-Centenary Perspectives** (1976) reads Kafka as a study of the 'pure self' and Marthe Robert's **Franz Kafka's Loneliness** (1982) has interpreted Kafka's impotence with psychological impotence caused by familial struggle which was deciphered by Freud. Its origin could be infantile relating to the oedipal dream, wherein the mother becomes the earthly object of the son's sexual instinct and how later Kafka's love for Felice occupies the status of the mother and becomes an object of the incest taboo, Kafka finding it difficult to maintain normal sexual relationships with women outside his family circle; so Kafka idealizes his love for Felice to such an extent and places Felice on a high pedestal so as not to touch her and violate the blood taboo ; perhaps which also led Kafka to call Milena "mother" and his favorite sister Ottla 'big mother'. In his short story **The Knock at the Manor Gate**, the son/brother suffers from the same incestuous feelings for the sister. Many critics see Kafka as a whining neurotic like Edmund Wilson in **Classics and Commercials** who writes Kafka is "at his most characteristic when he is assimilating men to beasts- dogs, insects, mice, and apes-which can neither dare nor know...the denationalized, discouraged, disaffected, disabled Kafka [...] can in the end only let us down" (Wilson, 1950,391). Another psychoanalytic commentator writes: "the striving for syntheses, for integration and harmony which are the marks of a healthy ego and a healthy art are lacking in Kafka's life and his writings. The conflict is weak in Kafka's stories because the ego is submissive; the unequal forces within the Kafka psyche create no tension within the reader, only a fraternal sadness" (Fraiberg, 1958, 218). Calvin S. Hall and Richard E. Lind in **Dreams, Life and Literature: A Study of Franz Kafka** have analyzed Kafka's thirty-seven dreams. Kafka has narrated

Thirty-One dreams in his diaries and six in his letters to Milena Jesenska and many critics have studied it as socio-metric charts. Hall and Lind study the relation between dreams and waking behavioral pattern of Kafka and make a content analyses of his works vis-à-vis the normative sample. Their methods are based upon the objective and quantitative methods devised by Hall and Van de Castle in 1966 and not solely on the basis of Freud's free association technique nor by Jung's amplification methods. Hall and Lind have worked out seven themes from Kafka's dreams: preoccupation with the body; body disfigurement; emphasis on clothing and nakedness; Scopophilia; passivity; ambivalence; the masculinized women; and how these themes preoccupied Kafka during his waking life as well. Similarly, Hein Kohut in **The Restoration of the Self** (1977) talks of fragmentation of Kafka's protagonists caused by self-objectification and through powerful figures of authority in an impersonal landscape and he traces its origins to preexisting instincts and drives. Kohut says:

It is the under stimulated child, the insufficiently responded to child, the daughter deprived of an ideal mother, the son deprived of an ideal father, that has now become paradigmatic for man's central problem in our Western world, so it is the crumbling, fragmenting, enfeebled self of this child and later, the fragile, vulnerable, empty self of the adult that the great artists of the day describe- through time an word, on canvas and in stone- and that they try to heal.

(Kohut, 1977,287-288)

The psychoanalytic and sociological dimension treatment has also been done by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in **Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature** (1986) are also of the opinion that in Kafka there is radically questioning of idealist metaphysics and that the novel **The Trial** is actually engaged in 'the dismantling of all transcendent justifications' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, 51). Peter Beiken argues that

the novel **The Trial** is a naked power struggle between two antagonistic principles, equating to indictment and justification, without a clear victory emerging.<sup>25</sup> The sociological aspect is studied by Mark Spilka's **Dickens and Kafka: A Mutual Interpretation** (1963). This work is a study of squalor, poverty, lack of space constraint and stifling environment. Writing as an expiation for sin and bad faith is analyzed by Franz Kuna in **Kafka: Literature as Corrective Punishment** (1974) where the normative existential approaches have focused on loneliness, absence of meaning and loss of faith. Paul Goodman in **Kafka's Prayer** (1947) finds meditative qualities in his aphorisms. Charles Neider in **The Frozen Sea** (1948) finds cabalist and mystical element. Theological existentialism is studied by Michel Carrouges in her work **Kafka versus Kafka** (1968) Jill Robbins in her essay *Prodigal Son/ Elder Brother: Interpretation and Alterity in Augustine, Petrarch, Kafka and Levinas* (1991) makes a hermeneutic study vis-à-vis the Kafkean son, artist and martyr. In a similar vein, it is Henry Sussman in **The Trial: Kafka's Unholy Trinity** analyzes parallel meditations of Kafka's status "...as the son of his particular family and times, as an individual who thought through his existential and intellectual problems in a process of literary creativity, and as a person who, artistically and on an imaginary level, suffered considerable familial conflict, self-doubt, isolation and loneliness"(Sussman, 1990,60). Sussman's work is a brilliant analysis of the concurrent perspectives of the way a son, artist and martyr looks and interprets the world at large. Kafka as site of linguistic study and how productions of meanings are generated through the text is found out in Stanley Corngold's **The Commentator's Despair: The Interpretation of Kafka's 'Metamorphoses'** (1973). The deconstructionist study has been done by Henry Sussman in his **Franz Kafka: Geometrician of Metaphor** (1979) where he shows how Kafka is a theoretician

anticipating several modern theoretical critical practices of the modernists; and also seeks to find affinity with the intricacies in the texts be it in the courtroom, or the castle, or the fictive American expanse. A collection of essays offering theoretical linguistic issues with contributions by Derrida, Rainer Nagele, Avital Ronell and Alan Udoff is brought out as **Kafka and the Contemporary Critical Performance** (1987). A similar view is also discerned in Stanley Corngold's **Franz Kafka: The Necessity of Form** (1988) and rhetorical point of view is studied in Clayton Koelb's **Kafka's Rhetoric: The Passion of Reading**; and modern and postmodern contextual study has been done by Henry Sussman in **Afterimages of Modernity: Structure and Indifference in Twentieth-Century Literature** (1990). Important biographical studies have been done by several scholars besides Max Brod, like **Franz Kafka: Man out of Step** (1973) by Deborah Crawford; **Kafka in Context** (1975) by John Hubberd; **Kafka: a Biography** (1982) by Ronald Hayman; **The Nightmare of Reason: a Life of Franz Kafka** (1985) by Ernst Pawel; **A Hesitation Before Birth: the Life of Franz Kafka** (1989) by Peter Mailloux; and a very important biography of Kafka is Hartmut Binder's **Kafka-Handbuch** (1979). Malcolm Pasley states that 'nothing really true or significant could be expressed except through the channel of personal experience, and that in this wide sense all his writing is autobiographical' (Pasley, 1977, 194); and Pasley points out 'semi-private' references in Kafka's works like 'eleven Sons' referring to Kafka's eleven work; also there are other such self-referential ideas like the metaphor 'horse' for the story, and 'horse-rider' for the writer, run throughout his writings. Other works which have provided invaluable insight towards Kafka's life and works are Gustav Janouch's **Conversations with Kafka** (1985), Janouch's father worked with Kafka in the same Insurance firm, and much of the conversations with Kafka were recorded by this young poet Gustav

Janouch when Kafka was bed-ridden in Prague, and Ronald Hayman's **Franz Kafka** offers a chronology of Kafka's life and works. Ernst Pawel's **The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka** (1985) gives a picture of historical details along with factual information. Another work of biographical interest is Elias Canetti's **Kafka's Other Trial: The Letters to Felice** (1974) where the 'other trial' is actually the "tribunal" at the Askanische Hof hotel in July 1914; which was the result of Kafka immediately breaking off his formal engagement with Felice Bauer and coming closer to Grete Bloch. Kafka had met Grete in October 1913, who was a secretary in a business machines firm in Berlin. Simultaneously the World War First had also just begun. Pietro Citati's **Kafka** (1990) reads Kafka's works as religious allegory; and Klaus Wagenbach's **Franz Kafka: Eine Biographie Siener Jugend** (1958) regards Kafka as the quintessential figure of modernity; where Wagenbach writes that Kafka was aware of the poor and hazardous factory working conditions due to his job in the Workers' Accident Insurance firm handling compensation cases, in this way Kafka is "the only 'bourgeois' writer of his time who had such first-hand knowledge" of industrial exploitation and its consequences" ( Wagenbach, 1958, 104) Finally the critic who regards Kafka as the harbinger of modernism in Europe is Frederick R. Karl's **Franz Kafka: Representative Man** (1991). The Modernist movement which started in 1897 prompted by the 'Vienna Secession' was a break-away from the realist tradition. Kafka as a modernist writer is supported by many critics by seeing Kafka as an ego-centric where the self is at the centre and the artist's works are regarded as personalized point of view. In this Kafka was influenced by his teacher at High School Herr Gottwald who was a Darwinist, a Positivist and an Atheist. And Kafka has also been a site of much interest for the Marxists. Marxism being a historical product of capital sees the individual also as an offspring of production and

reproduction. For the Marxists, all narratives are closely associated with factors of production and it is expressed in the language of the world; wherein the individual's destiny is closely linked with the destiny of his country or world. If one loses contact with the world then the individual's life becomes unnarratable; and being lost in the world becomes incapable of being narrated. In Kafka, the loss of the individual takes place and hence the narrator most often takes the form of animals, parables or dream narratives. The individual narrative written against the world becomes a collective narrative; and for the Marxists, the collective struggle is more important and therefore they see Kafka's protagonists as truncated individuals. In the bureaucracy being satirized, Kafka evokes Marxist interpretation. Throughout the late twentieth century a lot of critical essays sharing this perspective have been come out like **The Kafka Problem** (1963) edited by Angel Flores; **Franz Kafka: An Anthology of Marxist Criticism** (1981) edited by Kenneth Hughes; **The World of Franz Kafka** (1980) edited by J.P.Stern; and Ruth V.Cross's **Critical Essays on Franz Kafka** (1990) However, Marxists literary criticism are divided in their take on Kafka. Kafka's works came to prominence during the same period when the Stalinists were advancing the doctrine of 'Socialist Realism'; which encouraged all left-wing artists to follow the naturalists and positive portraits of the working-class life steering clear of abstractions and other such avant-garde styles. They accused Kafka of 'excessive formalism' and for creating an alienated vision of reality where individuals were reduced from active participants in life to merely being clinical observers. But the other section of Marxists regard Kafka's works as reflecting not despair but finely observed critiques of power. Theodor Adorno describes Kafka's writings as 'a reaction to unlimited power' which articulates the modern human condition where man is forced to endure the random cruelty of existence; an existence which we are unable to understand, yet

is condemned to live. If an allegory reads only behind the text; Kafka prompts us to delve deep and read into his texts. Freud saw the repressed libido as the source of neurosis. Erich Heller links Kafka's fiction to Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy of the 'Universal Will'. Arthur Schopenhauer in **The world as Will and Idea** (1906) writes how all creatures are doomed to suffer because of 'principium individuationis' which separates them from the Universal Will which is the blind force within all individuals and it is this force in Kafka's characters, which makes them imbued with a sense of guilt. Friedrich Beissner, rejecting all philosophical and theological approach, in a series of essays presents Kafka as representing the inner world. Thomas Mann reads Kafka's works as an allegory of the metaphysical quest for God. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari regard Kafka's works as more subversive and more 'joyful' than it appears to be. Milan Kundera refers to the essentially surrealist humor of Kafka. Kafka's legal background has helped him shape several legal dimensions, particularly the role of law, in his fictions. His fictions record accurate descriptions of the legal and criminal proceedings of the German and Austrian legal system of that time. Kafka also had a doctorate degree in jurisprudence in July, 1906. So it is not surprising that the Jurist Richard Posner finds a critique of the prevailing legal practice in Kafka's fictions. It is also true that Kafka involved himself with the litigation practice and was keenly aware of the legal debates of his time. Reza Banakar argues that the legal images of Kafka's works suggest a particular concept of law and legality operating parallel against the human condition. There is a profound understanding of the law and he is able to grasp the law as a form of experience. Richard Posner's **Law and Literature** (2009) is a reaction against the writings of Robin West, who has written substantially against Posner's economic take on the legal interpretations. Posner is of the opinion that literature does not have any weight

in the legal realm, and literary writers have often put law into their writings, yet those writings are not of any value to the legal studies. Hence Posner does not believe in the use of literary discourse in jurisprudential debate because he opines that the law is to be regarded only as a subject matter rather than a technique. Posner also believes that literary works have no place in judicial debate because one can never truly contemplate the original meaning of the author; and that works of fiction should only be considered in their contexts. He characterizes the discovery of law in fiction as 'ancillary' and asserts that the main subject matter of the novels is always universal human condition and not a specific legal setting. Fiction with legal background should only be considered as pure background as in Albert Camus's **The Outsider** where sidelining the legal entangle the work should only be studied as Mersault's growth of self-awareness. So according to Posner, the scholars studying the implication of law in Literature should only regard fiction with legal background as important only on a personal level and they are of no value as sources of legal philosophy and reform. Others like Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancie while agreeing with Posner, regard the Judges' moral positions determined by normative social and political forces rather than by literature. Kafka's last writings, consisting of twenty notebooks and thirty five letters to Dora Diamant was confiscated from her by the Gestapo in Berlin in 1933. Many scholars have criticized scholars who have tried to mystify Kafka, presenting him as a kind of an ascetic or as an emblem of sainthood. In an important work like **Excavating Kafka** (2008) by James Hawes condemns those scholars who are responsible for creating "the K. myth"; or as a tortured artist cum saint. In a review of this book by Hawes, Nicholas Murray writes: "It is Hawes's mission to remind us that he liked upmarket porn, consorted with prostitutes, and treated his women rather badly, none of which will be news to anyone who has any basic knowledge of Kafka

derived from recent biography.' However, it should be made clear that Hawes disliked Kafka the man but values Kafka the writer. Therefore Kafka's works are full of shifting paradoxes and this study aims to locate the existential crisis in Kafka. The study takes off from previous critical literary interpretations on Kafka and raises some fundamental questions ignored and overlooked by the previous scholars in study Kafka from an existential point of view. The apparent hopelessness and absurdity have often made it common for all to consider Kafka as a profoundly negative writer but this investigation would make a study through his three novels, complete short stories, diaries and letters how amidst this hopelessness, there still is still hope emanating. The apparent hopelessness and absurdity in Kafka's works have prompted almost every one to trace existentialism in Kafka but to consider existentialism as absolute hopelessness would only lead to a narrowing down of the context; rather the object of my study would be to show how it is through this existential crisis Kafka does not plunge to the depths of despair but makes hope possible. What makes this study unique is how the suffering faced by one individual expressed through his dream like inner state actually becomes a universal fable of hope.

## CHAPTER-III

### Authority and the Individual

*The tremendous world I have in my head. But how to free myself and free it without being torn to pieces. And a thousand times rather be torn to pieces than retain it in me or bury it.*

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, June 21, 1913.

In almost all the works of Kafka, the clash between authority and individual is exhibited. Perhaps it could be the result of the same conflict that Kafka encountered with all forms of authority in his life, be it paternal authority, the institution of Law, religion, marriage, and even love, death and writing. Kafka saw a vast divide between the individual figures and the figures of authority and in this conflict the individual is constantly threatened. His writings were an attempt to move away from the 'paternal sphere' and institutions which restricted the fullest development of the existent. The story **Eleven Sons** by Kafka is a wishful picture of fatherhood, of founding a family although apparently he had said to Brod: 'The eleven sons are quite simply eleven stories I am working on this very moment.' Authority in Kafka is a tyrannical father or father-figures, a cruel torture machine, an insensitive trial, a labyrinthine castle, which are all symptoms of man's wretchedness. Never before has the father-son conflict been analyzed with such great sensitivity as Kafka has done. Kafka's **Letters to My father**, which actually was never presented to his father, written in November 1919, is a scathing self-analysis of his relationship with his father and his relationship with his mother too. These letters throw light on how the mother's unassertive nature disappointed him; and how it pained him to see the submissiveness of the mother before the brutal authority of the father. The mother figures in Kafka's works are either ineffectual as in **The Metamorphosis** or dead as in **The Judgment**. The

**Judgment** was written soon after he had met Felice Bauer on August 13, 1912. The work can be understood as a judgment on either the hero Georg Bendemann or Kafka himself. The doddering father, suddenly transforming into an image of strength, pronounces judgment on the son with a God-like authority wherein the son-artist's version is to be challenged by the father's story. This story hints at Kafka's own tormented, almost neurotic, relationship with his father Hermann Kafka, with Felice and most importantly with his writing. The son's attempt to 'cover-up' his father is suggestive of the son-artist covering up his guilt in not taking enough care of his father, or attempting to cover up his creativity through his decision get married to Felice. In both **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphosis**, the son-artist is condemned to be outsiders from the familial-creativity circle. Max Brod finds the genesis of most stories dealing with the theme of father-son conflict, particularly **The Metamorphosis** in the following lines from Kafka's **Letters to my Father**:

While I put the whole blame on you as frankly as I mean it, you on the other hand insist you are 'over-clever' and 'over-sensitive' and want to declare me, too, free from any blame. Naturally you are only seemingly successful in the latter- which is all you want- and reading between the lines, despite all your fine words about being, and nature, and opposition, and helplessness, it appears that I am really the aggressor and everything you did was only in self-defense. So now by your dishonesty you have already achieved enough, for you have proved three things; firstly, that you are innocent; secondly, that I am guilty; and thirdly, that out of sheer greatness of heart you are prepared not only to forgive me, but, what is much more, and much less, even to go further and prove, and try and convince yourself, that I- contrary to the truth of course- am also innocent. That ought to be enough for you, but it isn't. You want to live on me altogether. I admit we fight each other, but there are two kinds of fight. There is the chivalrous fight,

where two independent opponents test their strength against each other, each stands on his own, loses for himself, wins for himself. And there is the fight of the Vermin, which not only bite, but at the same time suck the blood on which they live. They are really the professional soldier, and that is what you are. You cannot stand up to life, but in order to set yourself up in it comfortably, free from care, and without self-reproach, you prove that I robbed you of your capacity to stand up to life, and shoved it in my pocket.

(B, 17-18)

The threat of the father figure so tormented him that Kafka found any fruitful relationship in this world as impossible. The psychologists have explained this threat of the father-figure as symptomatic of the oedipal complex, yet to understand Kafka as an existential figure one has to take into consideration also the struggle of the individual self to retain his authenticity in a world threatened of annihilation. A study made by Hall and Lind of Kafka's dreams, life and literature shows that more males appeared in Kafka's dreams than females; and there were fewer aggressions (.62) in his dreams as against the norm (.80). From this we can say that Kafka was not essentially an aggressor, and Kafka feared aggression with males as against the females. A study made by Smith and Hall shows how our dreams are 'timeless unconscious', which means to say our fears and wishes of childhood continually are expressed in our dreams and these fears influence our adult behavior. Kafka was haunted throughout by the image of the brutal father, and the ineffectual mother as was a common sight in the Kafka household: "If I was to escape from you, I had to escape from the family as well, even from Mother. True, one could always get protection from her, but only in relation to you. She loved you too much and was too devoted and loyal to you to have been for long an independent spiritual force in the child's struggle. This was, incidentally, a correct instinct of the child, for with the

passing of the years Mother became even more closely allied you;.....she did more and more completely, emotionally rather than intellectually, blindly accept your judgments and your condemnations with regard to the children" (LMF, 59). In **The Metamorphosis**, the usurping son is hurled back to his secondary role. In the beginning of the story, we get an image of how Gregor Samsa is the sole breadwinner of the family. Gradually, the father regains his position of paternal authority and youthful vitality. The following textual quote hints of how Gregor is forced to take upon himself the role of the family provider:

If I didn't have to hold my hand because of my parents I'd have given notice long ago, I'd have gone to the chief and told him exactly what I think of him..... Well, there's still hope; once I've saved enough money to pay back my parents' debts to him-that should take another five or six years-I'll do it without fail. I'll cut myself completely loose then. For the moment, though, I'd better get up, since my train goes at five.

(CS, 90)

Gregor would only have been too relieved to give up this role reversal. He exclaims in exasperation: "The devil take it all!" (CS,90). If his father is an image of absolute command; his mother too fails to understand Gregor although she professes her love for him. It is only when his father finds his territory being threatened that he comes to stake his claim. Gregor's transformation into a vermin restores the confidence of his father and he begins to bully his son. Likewise the image of the Head Clerk too is one of terror. He comes to meet Gregor at his home, threatens to call a policeman and sack him. Confined to his room, Gregor is cut off from all human community. In contrast, the picture of a lady in fur adorning the wall in his room is suggestive of his deprived sexuality, the titillating picture is as if teasing and mocking his sterility. Even Grete,

the charwoman, substitutes Gregor's position by playing coquette to the Head Clerk and the gentlemen boarders to the utter neglect of Gregor, echoing the family's belief that it was impossible to live with a beast. Gregor spares his sister the disgust of his sight and he begins to see his death as atonement for his guilt. Ironically, like all Kafka's characters and like Kafka himself, the cause of the guilt is unknown. The treatment of the Samsa family towards the son betrays a bourgeois ethics according to which anything or anyone that is not of any use has to be got rid off. Strangely enough the metamorphosis brings a change also in his nature like his preference for stale food. However, Gregor's new found susceptibility for music is amazing because it is something that he could not apprehend as a human being.

Kafka's works are replete with images of such power conflicts in which he saw himself as constantly threatened by the demands of the external world. Kafka was acutely conscious of his physical self and his frail constitution which caused him a sense of lack as compared to his father's healthy figure. It is not uncommon to see healthy father-figures in Kafka's works; and in **The Judgment** we notice how the old and doddering father is converted to an image of brutal strength at the cost of his son. Kafka wrote to his father: "I remember, for instance, how we often undressed in the same bathing hut. There was I, skinny, weakly, slight; you strong, tall, broad. Even inside the hut I felt a miserable specimen, and what's more, not only in your eyes but in the eyes of the whole world, for you were to me the measure of all things" (LMF, 19). Kafka had dedicated one of his books **The Country Doctor** to his father, and it hurt him to see that it only elicited a cold response: "Put it on the table by my bed." The father as the yardstick of perfectibility as against his own imperfect form continued to haunt him throughout his life; and it even prevented him from forming any healthy relationship with the woman he wished to marry. Kafka writes to Felice

on May 15, 1913, after meeting her family: "I felt so very small while they all stood around me like giants with such fatalistic expressions on their faces...." (LF, 286 ). What emerges from these highly sensitive lines is how emotional relationships become a site for power feat; and how Kafka was obsessed with his physical inferiority as against the corresponding images of strength of the others. It is not surprising that the image of body and bodily disfigurement was common in Kafka's dreams. Again in another of his letter to Felice he coins the phrase 'the terror of standing upright', where interpreting a dream of her he writes; "Had you not been lying on the ground among the animals, you would have been unable to see the sky and the stars and wouldn't have been set free. Perhaps you wouldn't have survived the terror of standing upright. I feel much the same; it is a mutual dream that you have dreamed for us both." (LF, 447) Here 'standing upright' signifies the power of man; but it also signifies the in this one is most exposed, visible and vulnerable. Kafka uses animal metaphors but we also notice that the animals that his protagonists transform into or the animal protagonists are normally harmless ones; weak as against the strong.

In the novel **Amerika** too, the insignificance of the individual as against the vast expanse of the American land is portrayed. America is a land of uninhibited prosperity but also a land where individuals are sacrificed at the altar of human and material progress. The economic motif runs through out the novel, and although this is one of the few happier works of Kafka, the theme of economic coercion and industrial exploitation of individuals gives out a sordid picture. Such an economic system can not lead to fulfilling lives but only generate global monotony. Klaus Wagenbach writes: "Kafka is the only bourgeois writer of his time who had such first-hand knowledge of industrial exploitation and its consequences" (Wagenbach, 1985,

104). Here too the clash between the figures of authority and individual is brought out, be it in the form of an economic system or father-like figures is imminent. Karl tries hard in this new land to adjust to the new economic system, but he is never accepted. It is a ruthless world where his apparent innocence becomes the cause of his 'guilt'. In Kafka's works, the guilt is suffered by the individuals and the cause of the guilt is never made clear. According to the philosophy of existentialism, man is condemned to suffer from guilt because of the disproportion between what he is and what he projects to be. In both **Amerika** and **The Trial**, guilt is a foregone conclusion. In **Amerika**, Karl is not guilty, but the text reveals how every act of Karl and Joseph K. is driven by their aim to come out of their guilt-conscience. Notice when Karl states: "It's impossible to defend oneself where there is no good-will" (A, 173) The text too proliferates with tyrannical father-figures, who are also images of persecution, be it his Uncle Jacob, or Mr. Pollunder, or the Head Porter Mr. Green. The first line tells us how Karl had been packed off by his parents to America because 'a servant girl had seduced him and got herself with child by him' (A, 13); his father having packed him off 'shamefully unprovided-for' to avoid alimony and or to save the family's name from scandal. However, the moment he in the ship leads to another fight for justice for the Stoker, who complains bitterly of the injustice inflicted upon him by the ship's engineer. There Karl coincidentally meets his Uncle Jacob, an emigrant who had worked hard to become a Senator. The matter is solved by Karl's initiative and as he senses a feeling of jubilant triumph as he fights for justice for the Stoker. Even then the desire to prove his mettle before his family is strong: "But Karl feeling himself 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?"(A, 30). The family as the first institution that thwarts an individual is also supported by Otto Gross, a radical psychoanalyst. Kafka had personally known Otto whom had got introduced through Max Brod in 1917. Gross considered the family as the source of patriarchal authority which must be cast off to develop one's self. The scene of a happy family reunion does not last long, at Uncle Jacob's house, Karl is subject to a new world. His freedom is curbed as his days are packed with routine engagements of taking up piano classes, English lessons, riding lessons. Any idle indulgence is frowned upon by his self-made Uncle. When Karl is introduced to his Uncle's friend Mr. Pollunder, Karl is again tormented by their relationship. Upon his invitation by Mr. Pollunder and his daughter Clara, 'it seemed to Karl that in behaving like this Green was pointing his conviction that each of them, Karl on his part and Green on his, must fight for his own hand and that any obligatory social connection between them would be determined in time by the victory or destruction of one of them" (A, 67). Soon Karl is banished from his Uncle's house for disobeying his Uncle, and overstaying in Mr. Pollunder's house. When rejected by both Mr. Jacob and Mr. Pollunder, Karl takes the comfort of his family photograph, observing how his mother 'sunk into herself in a chair' while the father stood erect behind his mother with a clenched fist. He tries to catch his father's eyes from various angles and found, "But his father refused to come to life, no matter how much his expression was modified by shifting the candle into different positions' (A, 99). He now meets the two tramps Delemarche and Robinson; both are emigrants seeking out new roots, Delemarche being French and Robinson, an Irishman. The two tramps torment him and put him to trouble, he is able to free himself from their torments once he finds engagements as a lift-boy in Hotel Occidental. The Hotel Occidental's magnificent sheen hides the sordid condition of

the workers who serve it, the sickly workers due to overwork and the ruthless system where on slightest pretext one can lose one's job. Such is man's fate that even when he is free he makes the following comment: " 'Yes, I am free', said Karl, and nothing seemed more worthless than his freedom" (A, 124). The kindness of the Manageress is in sharp contrast to the men whom Karl meets. The hotel, again like the castle hierarchy is a hierarchical world, and Karl is engaged as the lowest and most easily replaceable position of the lift-boy. Like the vain Judges of **The Trial** or the vain castle officials of **The Castle**, the head porter of the hotel too is a vain man, who is offended for Karl not greeting him on passing his office and addressing him as 'Sir'. Karl falls prey to the persecuting nature of the head porter who dismisses him from service for the slightest offence; the appeals of the Manageress fall weak. In Kafka's world the father figures dominate the submissive mother figure as in actual life where Kafka's mother was docile before his authoritarian father.

**The Trial** is one of the most important works by Kafka where an individual's struggle against authority takes almost a violent turn because of its suddenness. In spite of the prevalence of rules and laws, Joseph K. on the morning of his thirtieth birthday is taken aback by his sudden arrest which initially Joseph K. had thought it to be a bad birthday joke. However, much of the assault is presented in an air of familiarity. Joseph K. is arrested in his bedroom and the warders who come to arrest him are of an accommodating nature. K.'s trust with authority is one of perfect amicability for the trial lacks any sort of legal formality. The court room is housed in a shabby tenement and the proceedings take place on Sundays. The court has a 'foggy' atmosphere blinding judgment and an irrational charge is drawn against Joseph K.. The Court is also a house of indecency for the Law books contain indecent pictures and Joseph K. himself is drawn to a woman forgetting his own case for a while. The corruption of

the court is unmistakable and therefore the judgments pronounced by such a court is highly dubious. Joseph K. takes up several measures to face the charges against the court; engages a lawyer; and meets anyone who could be of slightest help to prove his innocence. However, what is disturbing is when Joseph K. himself occupies any power of authority; he himself takes on a violent role. His complaint against the warders who come to arrest him cause them to be mercilessly flogged but Joseph K. shows none of the genuine concern for them. He remains as indifferent to other's suffering as the court is to him. It is a fight of a bourgeois individual in the court's stifling environment, labyrinthine proceedings, crowded chambers, the shabby judges, Joseph K.'s case becomes more muddled rather than being clearer as he is pulled into the mire of legal intricacies. He is unable to understand the perverse logic of the court, reflective of his own legal delusions and self-oppression. The court is housed in a cramped and stuffy room. Joseph K. feels dizzy; question might arise as to how justice can be delivered in such a disorienting atmosphere. He seeks release by forming a network of informants; but he realizes the futility of all collective endeavors, and takes death alone. Often the trial can also be seen as a regressive novel. In contrast, the scene outside the court premise is much more relaxed like men relaxing by the window, the gramophone blaring, children playing and the women with their washing. K. finds the Court as a mechanism of power which is both attractive and repulsive; remember he calls the court an 'aimless institution.' (T, 171)

The all pervasive nature of the court is summed up in Titorelli's statement: 'You see, everything belongs to the court' (T, 167). Titorelli's studio is housed in the court premise; even the teasing girls belonged to the court. The Commercial Traveller Block was the client of Huld for several years, besides which he employed other five advocates. This novel too has a proliferation of domineering fathers or father-figures

admonishing the son on the lack of filial duty; where guilt is a foregone conclusion; and the son takes up the guilt of the father- figure or family. The son/artist becomes a kind of guilt-collector for the family, which ultimately takes his individuality away. Chapter six introduces Joseph K. in the scene, who has come into the scene to admonish him on the neglect of his filial duty and being a disgrace to the family: "Joseph, my dear Joseph, think of yourself, think of your relatives, think of your good name. you have been a credit to us until now, you can't become a family disgrace" (T, 105). Everyone who comes into contact with the court or the Law is reduced to a state of exhaustion, be it the frail Huld, or the Tradesman Block. But the subordinates working under Law have absolute faith in the Law. This blind investment of power upon the figures of authority creates an aura of mystique, making the divide wider: "We are humble subordinates who can scarcely find our way through a legal document and have nothing to do with your case except to stand guard over you for ten hours a day and draw our pay for it. That's all we are, but we're quite capable of grasping the fact that the high authorities we serve, before they would order such an arrest as this must be quite well informed about the reason for the arrest and the person of the prisoner. There can be no mistake about that. Our officials, so far as I know them, and I know only the lowest grades among them, never go hunting for crime in the populace, but, as the Law decrees, are drawn towards the guilty and must then send out our warders. That is the Law" (T, 12).

The trial saps his energy and in one of his futile recourse Joseph K. goes to discuss the legal implications of his case with the court Painter Titorelli. Titorelli's room is shrouded in darkness and emanating foul smell and Joseph K. upon entering it, may almost literally be said to be journeying towards death. Towards the end of the novel, Joseph K. is assigned by the bank with the task of accompanying an Italian colleague

to a cathedral. Joseph K. is curiously drawn to the altar-piece of a small side chapel which had a picture of an armored knight guarding the tomb of Christ. It is here that Joseph K. encounters a priest who tells him the parable of the man from the country. Perhaps no other section of Kafka's works narrates the conflict between authority and individual as beautifully as this parable 'Before the Law'. It is a story of a man from the country who is denied the entry to the Law by a burly gatekeeper until years pass away and the man from the country dies awaiting his turn only to die near the gate. The gatekeeper discourages the man by saying that there were more obstacles the man would encounter if he were to insist going inside and the man passively awaits his fate sitting on a stool provided by the gatekeeper. The individual's faithful resignation to the tales of the gatekeeper shows that the individual himself has to be blamed for his defeat, for believing in the gatekeeper's story the man makes no active effort on his part to enter the Law. It is not the Law itself which consummates the individual but the aura that man invests in all figures of authority that actually undoes him. After a year of his arrest, Joseph K. is summoned by two men with whom Joseph K. collaborates to his death. It is to be remembered till the end Joseph K. proclaims his innocence and therefore the question of his willful death remains an existential situation. Perhaps it is only by his death that Joseph K. can understand the meaning of life. Harry R. Garvin calls the trial as "a parable of man's grudging journey to moral awareness" (Garvin, 1977, 160). **The Trial** begins: "Someone must have been telling lies..." and with this statement an air of mystery envelops the narrative. Joseph K. is always in a state of suspension by the inscrutable authorities as he is taken up unexpectedly by the charge. He uses his common sense to make out of this unexpected occurrence: "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning" (T, 7). The

phrase 'without having done anything wrong' shows that Joseph K. is not guilty, yet Kafka creates an air of ambiguity by saying 'guilt is never to be doubted.' Who should the 'someone' be and why should this 'someone' work against Joseph K.; and each effort to unravel this mystery leads to further complications and he finds himself in a world where no logic or rationality works. His protests lead no further to solving his problem or clarifying his situation. The extreme intrusiveness of the authority upon individuals is seen in the manner in which the warders who come to arrest Joseph K. in his bedroom eat his breakfast and even confiscate his underwear. He is taken unawares, prompting a long interior monologue: "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 crude 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); but language here breaks down leading to a discontinuum of the familiar frame of reference and meaning. This leads to the missing of the actual point. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), the Viennese philosopher, analyzing the play of language and logic in Kafka has found the language surreal and deceptive. **The Trial** is really a dense text with

language packed with layers of meaning, codes and images, but there is difficulty of interpreting them due to the elusive nature of language. Kafka's experience of having worked in a Workers' Compensation firm might have provided him with the experience of the power that engulfs any bureaucratic structures. The court seems to be guided by 'higher powers' but the powers of this court is paradoxical. This existential crisis arises from being guilty and at the same time not being guilty tormenting the individuals. Kafka's own comment in one of his aphorism is worth mentioning: "We are guilty not only because we have eaten of the tree of knowledge but also because we have not yet eaten of the tree of life." Although Joseph K. is outwardly free to carry on his business of living as usual, and much of the trial is conducted only on Sundays and at night time. This is Kafka himself attending to his task of real living at night time through the creativity of writing. After the first interrogation held on a Sunday, Joseph K. could make out the nature of the Law that has overtaken him-'there can be no doubt that behind all the actions of this court of justice, that is to say in my case, behind my arrest and today's interrogation, there is a great organization at work. An organization which not only employs corrupt warders, stupid Inspectors, and Examining Magistrates of whom the best that can be said is that they recognize their own limitations, but also has at its disposal a judicial hierarchy of high, indeed of the highest rank, with an indispensable and numerous retinue of servants, clerks, police and other assistants, perhaps even hangmen, I do not shrink from that word. And the significance of this great organization, gentlemen? It consists in this, that innocent persons are accused of guilt, and senseless proceedings are put in motion against them, mostly without effect, it is true, as in my own case. But considering the senselessness of the whole, how is it possible for the higher ranks to prevent gross corruption in their agents? It is impossible. Even the highest judge in

this organization will have to admit corruption in this court" ( T, 55). In **The Trial**, the nature of love is ambiguous, the law books are obscene, the law officials are corrupt, women are morally loose, the legal documents are lost, the tenement housing the court is sordid; and there is absolutely no hope of definite acquittal. The figures of authority are remote and invincible. If Joseph K. is entangled within Law, then the legal authorities also cower and hesitate to meet Joseph K. The impenetrability of law is exemplified by the inset parable 'Before the Law'; as Titorelli says that the court before which Joseph K. is tried is completely impenetrable by argument; just like the man from the country who never gains admittance. Joseph K. himself does not reach any satisfactory conclusion from the parable. K.'s guilt is in not knowing the Law, so his very crime results from being ignorant about the Law: 'I don't know this Law' (T, 13); and he only saw the Law as a big business deal. At one point, K. even decides to sack his lawyer and take the case upon him self. But the Law is actually only an endless hierarchy of corrupt officials, amongst whom the higher Judge are never visible; only the lower judges preside over the proceedings; the Examining Magistrate lacks 'dignified composure' as he is pictures sitting 'on a kitchen chair, with an old horse-rug doubled under him'(T, 120-121). The image of these corrupt and venal judges show how they are already engulfed by the Law. Thus the parable 'Before the Law' narrated by the Priest to Joseph K. contains the key to the understanding of the Law and to the novel a whole. The man from the country is 'before' the Law and not 'in' the Law; the man is prevented by the following words of the door-keeper: "If you are so strongly tempted, try to get in without my permission. But note that I am powerful. And I am only the lowest door-keeper. From hall to hall, keepers stand at every door, one more powerful than the other. Even the third of these has an aspect that even I cannot bear to look at" (T, 235); while actually the doorkeeper is as

ignorant about the Law as the man from the country who is denied admittance to the Law. Joseph K.'s advocate Huld is old and frail yet he demands absolute trust of the clients. But Joseph K. has absolute no faith upon Huld who he believes conveys more despair than hope in his case. He now seeks mediation from the court-painter Titorelli. Although Titorelli is only a court painter, yet he offers more knowledge of the workings of the court than Huld himself, has knowledge of 'truth'. He is outside the grasp of Law yet he paints more authentic pictures of the intricate workings of the court, and perhaps this explains why he is more cheerful and gay than the grim looking court officials. Perhaps it is his detachment which makes him be the possessor of 'truth'. Titorelli's painting of the court and its judges is again not real; he showcases them as more than actually powerful. The judge's inspiring painting in a large robe was actually done sitting on a kitchen stool, when in fact, the judge was a tiny man. The court is self-obfuscating like the vain judges. Titorelli's painting shows the gap between the actual legal power and representational falsity. Thus the court may appear to be a supreme mechanism of power but in reality, its power is illusory. Joseph K. observes closely the painting which Titorelli claims to be the Goddess of Justice and the Goddess of Victory in one. The imposing figure has bandaged eyes and carrying scales, with a pair of wings attached to her heels, provoking Joseph K. to say: "not a very good combination, surely," said K., smiling. 'Justice must stand quite still, or else the scales will waver and a just verdict will become impossible' ( T, 162); and therefore this strange painting looked more like a Goddess of the Hunt in full cry which is once again a picture of persecution. There can be no simple intellectual analyses of the parable of the doorkeeper and Joseph K. too is unable to pacify the priest with his interpretations. The question that baffles our mind at this juncture is whether Joseph K. is simply haunted by persecution complex

or is he only a whining neurotic, the question is indeed baffling. Taking cue from the parable of the man from the country Joseph K. could have walked out of the Law's clutches; but it is his existential fate that he dies exposed, even his cry of death is camouflaged by the howling of a dog. For ordinary people, not directly involved with the court like Joseph K.'s landlady, Frau Grubach, it gives her 'the feeling of something very learned' (T, 27); and how 'the court of law has a curious attraction for her' (T, 33). The court represents the complexity of an age in which Kafka lived. It represents the political turmoil of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It could also stand for the fate of the Czechoslovakian Jews controlled by a repressive authority. Joseph K.'s dilemma can be understood in the light of Nietzsche's theory on the divide between the authority and man. In many ways, the strong emblems of authority have been able to weave myths of their superiority and govern over the rest, and in this way generate fear and awe which are not founded on actuality. The figures of authority use this moral code as a device to control and contain the vast majority like the castle authorities creating a myth of its strength and power; and consequently the weak suffer from a sense of guilt or 'bad conscience' as Nietzsche says in the **Genealogy of Morals**, where he explodes the notion of independent, self-sufficient individual. Such 'bad conscience' is experience by the individuals for internalizing these aggressive and bold drives which would have helped him to surmount authority. The German word '*Schuld*' may mean either guilt or debt; both meanings conveying a sense of lack and in this respect all Kafka's protagonists suffer from '*Schuld*'. A.E.Dyson calls Joseph K. everyman face to face with the enigma of the universe. As Everyman, Joseph K. is on trial before a tribunal whose very rules and nature Joseph K. is unable to comprehend. As in the Talmud and The Old Testament where God sits in judgment over Man; here too Joseph K.'s plight is the existential plight of a man suffering the

unexplained '*Schuld*' and whose existence is endangered by unseen forces. A.E. Dyson further states that the attempt to centre all reality on 'self' has made of 'self' as labyrinthine. In contrast to the romantic notion of the glorification of the self, here there is the annihilation of the self where a man must die in order to live. Joseph K. is incapable of any positive action like the man from the country in the parable, his lawyer upon whom he had initially heaped his trust is mostly confined to his bed; and his commune with the Priest leaves him weary and exhausted so that the only positive action for Joseph K. seemed to plunge the dagger into his heart. K. dies not expecting God to overcome his guilt. Unlike Kafka, the theistic existentialists like Kierkegaard, thought it necessary to become conscious of one's sin to realize the presence of God. For the theistic existentialists, to exist is to realize man's sinful nature. But most existentialists like Kafka did not believe in the idea of a benevolent God; God is the image of an authoritarian figure which will try to curb the individual's freedom. Karl Barth considers God as inaccessible and passing terrifying judgments like the Kafkaesque figures of Authority. For Barth, it is preposterous for the finite Man to seek the infinite God. So we should happily accept and acknowledge the radical estrangement from God, but for Martin Buber, God is always available to us. Kierkegaard too saw a problem in communication, for him all communication with others is a kind of detour in the form of communication with God. Kierkegaard explains the emergence of the word 'God': "But what is this unknown against which the understanding in its paradoxical passion collides and which even disturbs man and his self-knowledge? It is the unknown. But it is not a human being, in so far as he knows man, or anything else that he knows. Therefore, let us call this unknown the God. It is only a name we give to it" (Kierkegaard, 1985, 39). Decision or choice brings the existent face to face with himself in a way that it stirs anxiety. In

**Either/Or**, Kierkegaard explores the nature of choice involving three cases of marriage, friendship and vocation. His observations are no doubt based upon his own failed relationship with Regina Olsen and his physical problem. To choose a particular vocation, is also to renounce a number of other possibilities. Thus the existent never escapes from the tension between possibility and facticity. If on the one hand, man is open with many possibilities; on the other hand man is again limited by many other factual situations. Facticity therefore becomes one way of describing finitude. In Kafka too, every individual's search for the ultimate truth only ends up with the realization of his own finitude. In Kafka, the individuals search for the unknown to overcome his finitude is often translated as the search for God, unfortunately what Joseph K. never meets the high judge who has sentenced him to trial and finally to death, or K. never gets to meet the owner of the castle Count West-west. Kafka did not believe divinity or God as something pure, radiant, as seen in Kafka's court housed in a sordid tenement, or the castle shrouded in fog and mist. All the encounters of K. with the castle superior Klamm is only fleeting or momentary in nature. The castle superior is called 'Klamm', his name suggestive of clamps, or claustrophobia is an authority wielder. Klamm and the other castle authorities are only seen in parts; one can only have a fleeting glimpse of them. It is their fragmented image as seen from the peephole that prevents the individuals from forming 'wholes' of them. Klamm appears different to different people; he is elusive like the nature of the law; but K. fights to get a clear picture of him and the castle as a whole because truth of his existence is based on this fight between his existence and the all-powerful castle officials. Although K. is never able to meet the elusive Klamm; yet he is tortured by his aura of presence. The letter K. receives, the telephone conversation that he overhears, and the two assistants who are assigned to him; all these make K.

believe in the reality of his appointment as the Land Surveyor of the village; yet K. constantly feels the need to move from the periphery to the centre, face-to-face with authority. The villagers think of K.'s contact with the castle as figments of his imagination: "You haven't once up till now come up into real contact with our authorities. All those contacts of yours have been illusory, but owing to your ignorance of the circumstances you take them to be real" (C, 73); but K. is not to be deterred; rather he boldly answers: "I don't want any act of favor from the Castle, but my rights" (C, 75). Thus K. is an isolated figure in the crowded village; he tries to overcome his isolation through his love for Frieda. The novel shows how Frieda attempts to penetrate authority through her own means not understanding that she will forever remain a hostage of Klamm. The Sortini episode is like a parallel to Kierkegaard's **Fear and Trembling**, where God requires Abraham to sacrifice his son; but it leads us to think if God finally refused to accept the sacrifice, could the same fate await Amalia had she succumbed blindly to the command of the castellan. However, only at the end K. realizes the futility of resistance. Institutions or representatives of authority are conspicuous structures erected only to signify man's progress but in Kafka they are only power mechanisms which assault man. The law courts are governed by the caprice of whimsical authorities, the laws are arbitrary and irrational. This great organization remains in a state of delicate equilibrium. On the one hand, Kafka thought his writing strictly personal in function; yet on the other hand, he thought of it as a form of transcendental communion with his fellow men. Thus God, for man, is an ill-defined idea. The tyrannical father condemning the son to death by drowning is the Freudian image and at the same time the God of Judgment rising in His wrath to destroy man's illusion of self-sufficiency in this world. Kafka did not believe in any personal God or in any such dogmatic belief associated with the

institution of religion. His piety defies categorization but which finds expression only through the language of art. The German writer Franz Blei, who was personally acquainted with Kafka speaks of him as 'the servant of a God not believed in.' According to Harold Bloom, there is no God: "There are plenty of demons masking as angels and as Gods; and there are enigmatic animals (and animal-like constructs), but God is always somewhere else, a long way off in the abyss, or else sleeping, or perhaps dead" (Bloom, 1995,481). Therefore the hope of anything transcendent can only be a mockery. The spiritual centre in Kafka is the indestructible and as Kafka has remarked in one of his aphorisms: "Man cannot live without a permanent trust in something indestructible in himself." The Freudians reduce this hope in the indestructible betraying a yearning for a father but for Kafka hope is more secular and more individualistic, wherein man's faith is not to be sought in the religious impulses but in man's spirit of constant striving to look for the kingdom of God which is to be sought within us. The truth, the unattainable for Kafka is not to be sought in the outside world be it in the obtrusiveness of the castle or the intricacy of the court but within truth lies hidden each man. Unfortunately, language becomes incapable of expressing this truth of '*Being*'; which is why Kafka uses strange even bizarre images and symbols to convey this truth. Kafka himself stood outside the law; he was the law himself even if this position meant harrowing torture. Kafka was aware of the importance, nay necessity of suffering to realize the value of being human. Though not religious in the strict sense, he said if Christ suffered for mankind, then mankind must also be ready to suffer for Christ. It is through his writing that Kafka makes us aware of this fundamental truth. The village superintendent too is not keen to have him around: "You've been taken on as Land Surveyor, as you say, but, unfortunately, we have no need of a Land Surveyor. There wouldn't be the least use for one here.

The frontiers of our little state are marked out and all officially recorded. So what should we do with a Land Surveyor?"(C, 61). What is a matter of serious concern is only termed by the Village superintendent as a "trifling miscalculation.", which is bound to occur in any great bureaucratic organization. But still according to him everything in the village is engineered by the castle: " even you being summoned was carefully considered,' said the superintendent; it was only certain auxiliary circumstances that entered and confused the matter, I'll prove it to you from the official papers" (C, 64). Even Sordini, a castle official of efficiency is reduced to a subordinate position, perhaps because of overwork. Therefore there remains no doubt that the castle is an erroneous organization. K.'s long discussion with the superintendent makes him grasp the complicated nature of the control authorities: "But I fancy that two things must be distinguished here: firstly, what is transacted in the offices and can be construed again officially this way or that, and secondly, my own actual person, my myself, situated outside of the offices and threatened by their encroachments, which are so meaningless that I can't even yet believe in the seriousness of the danger" (C, 67). The castle is a chaotic place, the telephone calls may not be attended by the right person, and the line between the private and public affair is blurred. Everything about the castle is uncertain and ambivalent as the village superintendent tells K. : "Nobody keeps you here, but that surely doesn't amount to throwing you out" (C, 75).

The uniqueness of the individual for the existentialists is best brought out when Soren Kierkegaard chose for his epitaph the words 'that individual'. His whole life was an attempt to understand the individual in the scheme of the universe. The individual is secondary which is in sharp contrast to existentialism where the existence comes first including choice and action which are ontological proofs as formulated by Kant. Thus

any conceptual framework or philosophical system evades being comprehended. In many ways existentialism is to be understood against the background of metaphysical rationalism but "perhaps, we can relate existentialists as disappointed rationalists when they announce that reality cannot be comprehended within a conceptual system or that individual existence cannot be comprehended, they identify the role of a conceptual system with the notion of an all-embracing set of necessary truths derived by deduction from some axiomatic starting point" (Edwards, 1967, Vol.4). Thus there seemed to be no truth from which an understanding of reality could be comprehended. The universe as a total system presided by a creator or God went side by side with the concept of the irrational universe. Most existentialists accepted the limitations of Reason but however, with some exceptions like Jaspers who believed that reason needed to be understood in less restrictive ways. Also there is really no freedom for as Sartre clarifies that even in not choosing, it involves the choice of not choosing. Thus all actions imply choice; choice has no rational grounding; they are ubiquitous. Thus the question of why things are as they are and not otherwise are absurd, Heidegger calls this as 'fallenness'; the experience of which causes anxiety. Moments of truth are revealed only when an individual comes face to face with this void; when man recognizes his own finitude in the vastness of the universe as Heidegger believed; or as Jaspers has said when the fragility of our existence is brought home to us. In Kafka the divinity is not to be sought in the world outside, but deep within each individual. It is perhaps this truth that Kafka was trying to drive home through his writings.

It is truth which leads to the distortion of reality like Plato's symbol of man's pitiable ignorance seeing the real world as a play of shadows in **The Republic**. The castle symbolizes power and authority. It houses a hierarchy of officials actually leading to no where. On the face of it, it consists of a familiar world of Inns, barmaids, officials,

messengers, appointments and absurdity lurks at the heart of this familiarity. Erich Heller correlates K.'s problem with that of Kafka's: "Thus he knows two things at once, and both with equal assurance: that there is no God, and that there must be God. It is the perspective of the curse: the intellect dreaming its dream of absolute freedom, and the soul knowing of its terrible bondage" (Heller, 1959, 207). Nietzsche in his **The Will to Power** talks of the 'eternal recurrence'; that is, existence, without meaning or goal, but inescapably recurrent, without a final fall into nothingness; but such ideas is not revealed in Kafka's writings. Kafka's works show how man is crushed beneath the weight of this overbearing authority as there remains no scope of being better than he was. He remains what he was with all his limitedness. K. is nowhere near the castle and his understanding his predicament is no where near at the end than what he was at the beginning. Unlike Nietzsche's Superman, Kafka's heroes are knocked down by the figures of authority and what makes Kafka appear morbid is the acceptance of what he is. Joseph K. considers the various opinions offered on the parable to be only expressions of despair. The parable 'Before the Law' tells how everyone strives for the Law but few gain admittance inside it; and hence the onus is upon individuals to prove his existence meaningful. Institutional authorities only are only deterrents to reaching the higher truth. Those who believe in the validity of these deterrents are doomed to remain outsiders perpetually. For that matter, even the doorkeeper, is only a keeper of the Law, he too is bounded by the Law. The Priest makes this point clear to Joseph K.: "Now the man from the country is really free, he can go where he likes, it is only the Law that is closed to him, and access to the Law is forbidden to him only by one individual, the door-keeper. When he sits down on the stool by the side of the door and stays there for the rest of his life, he does it of his own free will; in the story there is no mention of any compulsion. But the door-keeper

is bound to his post by his very office, he does not dare strike out into the country, nor apparently may he go into the interior of the Law, even should he wish to. Besides, although he is in the service of the Law, his service is confined to this one entrance; that is to say, he serves only this man for whom alone the entrance is intended. On that ground he too is subject to the man" (T, 241). The parable highlights how the door was indeed meant only for him and shuts the door, preventing him to partake the radiance streaming from the door of the Law.

Most existentialists including Jean Paul Sartre consider God as a superior sort of artisan. Just as any manufacturer of a product has a concept in his mind before he produces the product; like wise for the individual, man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence. Now for the atheistic existentialists, if God does not exist, then man is what he conceives himself to be. This proposition gives tremendous importance to man as the creator of his own self and nature. The emphasis is also on 'subjectivity'; for now it is man who is to be responsible for his own existence. However, for many existentialists, the idea of God as not existing is profoundly disquieting. Even Sartre agreed that God should not be regarded as a useless hypothesis for it is God who provides value to an *a priori* existence. Sartre clarifies in **Existentialism and Human Emotions**: "Indeed everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can't start making excuses for himself" (Sartre, 22). Thus for Sartre, existentialism is profoundly optimistic whose doctrine is the doctrine of action. But in Kafka's works we see that his characters are reduced to a state of perpetual suspension and forever condemned to inaction. In another of his brilliant short piece **In the Penal Colony** Kafka allows for a confrontation between an old fashioned military codes with his own liberal humanitarian attitude. Here the law is

never made clear both to the condemned and the on-lookers; rather the sentence is directly inscribed upon the body of the condemned. This particular convict would be inscribed: "HONOR THY SUPERIORS!" (CS, 144). Ironically the one who bestows justice arbitrarily has no place of burial after his death; the Old Commandment is refused burial in the Church, and hence he is befittingly buried in the tea-house, suggestive of the rootless and homeless intellectuals of Europe during the mid-nineteenth century. The bitter self-recriminations and self-inflicted wounds is the desire for freedom. Tuberculos gave him the freedom to evade marriage. But freedom from authorities in Kafka is not possible; law is all-pervasive just as nearly everything and everyone belongs to the Castle; or the extreme intrusive nature of the trial. In this respect, all existentialists have focused on the individual and the concept of freedom. Nikolai Berdyaev considers freedom as emanating from an irrational and primordial abyss, but in spite of which man is encouraged to seek freedom. The Sartrean doctrine of freedom implies essentially that man is always free in all situation; but at the same time freedom implies a lack; that we are condemned to be free. All existentialists agree that freedom does lead to self-negation; but it should be remembered that freedom leads to the manifestation of transcendence; considering that beyond the threshold of existence is the domain of freedom. Freedom is a struggle against facticity, as if man were impelled by some brute force to the state of freedom, and not due to man's willing effort. For Sartre, in freedom, the *pour-soi* (for-itself) transforms itself into the *en-soi* (in-itself). For Sartre freedom is always on the verge of disappearing, on the verge of being swallowed up by the in-itself. We are limited by the facticity of things, and that is why we are always in a state of guilt. To be limited is to depart from the absolute and the infinite. Therefore this separation is the cause of guilt but this is what gives existence an intensity and thereby its value.

The figures of authority in Kafka's works take over the individual's lives with an air of such familiarity into a world that is completely alien. Henry Sussman comments:

The paradoxes of the law belong not to the violations but to its very nature. The warders and their messages can only appear, to Joseph K. and the novel's readers alike, as ridiculous and absurd. Yet there is another sense, the transcendental's understanding of itself, in which everything the warders say is realistic and true. It is the nature of the artwork to sustain and arise from the tension. For this reason, the most striking illuminations of the law in the novel assume the form of anecdotes, parables, and portraits. The artwork is the medium, for Kafka as well as for Kant, through which the inscrutable workings of the transcendental upon the human environment make themselves intelligible.

( Sussman, 1993, 77)

Thus it becomes rather difficult to understand the interplay of meanings inherent in the structures of the language. In this clash between the unknown yet powerful court and Joseph K.'s insistence on his own innocence, the individual's innocence is never accepted by the Court, the court likes to function without any interference from the accused: "One must lie low, no matter how much it went against the grain. Must try to understand that this great organization remained, so to speak, in a state of delicate balance, and that if someone took it upon himself to alter the disposition of things around him, he ran the risk of losing his footing and falling to destruction, while the organization would simply right itself by some compensating reaction in another part of its machinery- since everything interlocked-and remained unchanged, unless, indeed, which was very probable, it became still more rigid, more vigilant, more severe, and more ruthless" (T, 134-135). Most of the protagonists seem to seek escape

through exile like Karl or Geor Bendemann's absent friend in *The Judgment*, or the ethnographic traveler *In The Penal Colony*. Like Karl in *Amerika*, K. in *The Castle* has also left his home to confront another world and K. is like the man from the country who attempts to penetrate the impenetrable; or is Kafka trying to force meaning into the slipping language through his exiled or displaced characters remains a paradoxical supposition. K.'s information of the castle is confused like Joseph K.'s information about the nature of the trial. The sight of the castle at the distant arouses a train of thought about the nature of authority that has overtaken him; like the sudden arrest of K. K. is amazed at the castle officials who keep the villagers waiting at their whims, like Erlanger who summons people in the middle of the night, and even then no body objects to the inconvenience. The castle could symbolize the coldness of Kafka's own intellect; his attempt at trying to enter the muggy terrain of thought, and the difficulty of trying to convert that thought into writing. The castle officials are overworked; Klamm sleeps most of the time and so do the other Village Superintendents. In the beginning K. appeared to be a man intent on holding his right to self-determination unperturbed by disapproving comments like: 'we have no need of a land Surveyor' (C, 61), giving up the comfort of his home and hearth. The castle is forever shrouded in mist blurring his vision and there is very little hope since the time he entered the village if he could ever make up to the castle. Wilhelm Emrich enlightens:

Since he cannot, as a finite human being, survey the infinity of possibilities of existence, and since, on the other hand, he is compelled to make such a survey- if a true, valid, 'free' position is to be achieved- his own activity must to him appear as a nothingness; he cannot see it and evaluate it as actual land surveying, and, indeed, may not regard it as such at all. The 'land' that he surveys must remain hidden from him,

for it cannot be measurable land with definite boundaries. And his most urgent craving must be gain 'in person' a direct, 'free' glimpse of that most mysterious, never-attainable life potency incorporated in Klamm, and to deal with it face-to-face, in order to be able to attain to final clarity about the essence, meaning, and compass of his own existence.

(Emrich, 371-372)

K. wages a battle which saps his energy but in which freedom has to be maintained at any cost to retain his individuality. It is indeed a Herculean task for the entire village to suffer from the repression of the castle. The farmers in the village have tortured faces; Gerstacker, the wagoner looks 'visibly ill', Hans Burnswick looks upon K. as a 'teacher' and Freida considers K. as a kind of rescuer. Their averted faces are perhaps meant to avoid any direct confrontation with the all powerful castle authorities. The protean nature of Klamm is revealed in the manner in which every meeting with Klamm in person by K. is missed by a hair's breath. Also Klamm is described in fleeting terms, he is never described as a 'whole' person; nobody had claimed to have seen Klamm's private, personal side. Even when one presumes to have met Klamm, one does not know if it is really Klamm and not a look alike of Klamm that they have met. But he seems all-pervasive, the women ready to dedicate their life for him and men all in acquiesce. The landlady at the Bridge Inn swears by his shawl that he had gifted to her when in love years ago, and Frieda laments that there was no place in earth for the fulfillment of their love. But Klamm is locked within himself; like the sound of heavy clamping, he is incapable of any fruitful exchange of love with anyone. The women agree: "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). These women swooning over

Klamm's tyrannical love are similar to K. who in spite of setbacks and disapprovals from all quarters still want to reintegrate in the village and settle down. Always dressed in the same 'black frock coat', very much reminiscent of the long dark coat of Joseph K. in **The Trial**, Klamm suggests the inevitability of death. Critics like Malcolm Pasley regard clothes as representatives of psycho-spiritual states, and really the forever brooding Klamm, dressed in black is a morbid view. The actual owner of the castle is called Count West-west, his name again indicating death, suggesting the hereafter and beyond. Although the Count West-west is conspicuously absent but his deputy Klamm rules the castle and the village down with absolute authority. Perhaps the person who enters the castle by force, by defiance, by fate, by chance, must only enter the castle at his risk of meeting the ultimate figure of authority, which is death. The castle is a wasteland covered in snow and mist; it is a picture of freezing death and solitude and it is therefore surprising that an outsider like K. should decide to settle down in such an uninviting place. Actually K. disturbs the atmosphere of the place for here was a place where people lived by the law of the castle without question. Anyone who dared deny the whim of the castle order would meet with the same fate as the ostracized Barnabas family because their daughter Amalia had refused to entertain the letter of Sortini, the castle official. Often the Sortini-Amalia episode is interpreted in terms of the God's unjust demand upon Abraham to sacrifice his son. Here too Amalia suffers for no fault of hers though her sight is said to have distracted Sortini from his official duties. In three years of that fateful day, Amalia's family is reduced to helplessness, her parents old and suffering, no work and rejection from every one. Amalia's silence confirmed her guilt and she became 'dull' and 'cold', a living proof of people who defied authority. No body knows what the guilt of the family Barnabas was; was it the simple refusal of entertaining the whim of a castle

official or something more grave offence, for they are not just made to suffer economic decline but they seemed to suffer from a spiritual wasteland. Or is it the defiance of God or the Scripter of life that was the cause of their downfall remains an enigmatic question. Amalia suffers from the guilt of being the cause of her family's problems, even though it was no fault of hers. Her silence more than her words are meaningful, suggesting the inadequacy of language in Kafka's worldview. On the other hand due to her proximity with Klamm, Frieda rises from being a stable-girl to the position of a chambermaid and then to a Barmaid at the Herrenhof. Frieda's beauty is complemented by her proximity to Klamm's power but Frieda is dissatisfied because of Klamm's indifference towards her. The landlady had complains that Klamm had only called her only three times and then called her no more and forgotten her altogether. Perhaps, this is why Frieda gets close to K.; although K. had thought of using Frieda as a way to Klamm. Such is the spell of Klamm that Frieda's once closeness to Klamm at one point of time makes her attractive to K.. K. encounters the village secretary Burgle when he was looking for Erlanger who was looking after his case. Burgle works as a liaison between the village and the castle, someone who is supposed to know the workings of the castle. Burgel tells K. how the castle officials are forever in a state of tiredness and Burgel too could barely keep himself awake while talking to K.. As in **The Trial**, here also the castle secretaries meet their applicants at night and conduct their activates at night time, although Burgel chalks out certain deficiencies of transacting official business at night time in private chambers: " One tends involuntarily to judge things from a more private point of view at night, the allegations of the applicants take on more weight than is due to them, the judgment of the case becomes adulterated with quite irrelevant considerations of the rest of the applicants' situation, their sufferings and anxieties, the necessary barrier

between the applicants and the officials, and even though externally it may be impeccably maintained, weakens, and where otherwise, as is proper, only questions and answers are exchanged, what sometimes seems to take place is an odd, wholly unsuitable changing of places between the persons" (C, 246). In this way man finds the integration of his self with the world as difficult. Kafka in one of his aphorism writes; "The entire world is perhaps nothing but a motivation of man, who wishes to rest for a moment." It is the quest for rest which leads to unrest, an existential condition.

**The Castle** is in many respects an allegory like Bunyan's **Pilgrim's Progress** which is the quest of the Christian to overcome set temptations, each victory leading closer to the goal. Unfortunately in Kafka one gets no more nearer to the goal than when one started the journey. The castle is remote, elevated and inscrutable, and the castle is joined to the village. The castle and the village are two different things; if the castle is the goal, the village is the way through which one can reach the goal. Unfortunately K. lacks the sensibility to mingle with the villagers; hence his plight is that neither can he mix with the village folk, nor with the castellans. K.'s desire for immediate face to face contact with Klamm is indirect conflict with what the Innkeeper's wife Gardana's presupposition that Klamm's only links to the village are like language, representational and referential. Klamm can be reached only through established rituals of protocols mediated by his representatives in the village. K.'s refusal to acknowledge the difference between the castle and the village involves his rejection of the mediations between them; and therefore breaking the protocol. That an elaborate medium of communication exists between the castle and the village exists is attested by the Mayor's description of the castle telephone system. The Mayor explains that what the villagers hear as a dial tone is actually the Castle's

communication with utmost incomprehensible velocity. K.'s skepticism regarding the medium of communication is borne out by a letter from Klamm in which he is praised for taking up the task of the land surveyor when actually, he is only serving as a school janitor. Even Gardana makes K. understand that the castle official Momus actually acts in Klamm's name. Gardana, also a former mistress of Klamm, has saved three tokens of their love, a photograph, a wrap and a night cap; her love for Klamm, whom she had met only three times, is now only reduced to a lasting burden of memory. Even his name had now become a burden, she can't bear to listen his name, she insists K. to refer Klamm as 'him'. What gives an overbearing presence of Klamm is his silence; he could deal with the most pressing issues of the village without actually breaking the silence. His silence is his remoteness; any person deeply influenced by the castle is influenced by its eerie silence. Such is Amalia's state too when the family is brought into the bad books of the castle, she becomes an image of silence. Olga describes her: "But Amalia not only suffers, she had the understanding to see her suffering clearly, we saw only the effects, but she knew the cause, we hoped for some small relief or other, she knew that everything was decided, we had to whisper, she had only to be silent. She stood face to face with the truth and went on living and endured her life then as now" (C, 197). The existential silence exposes the problematic nature of language in communication. In **Fear and Trembling**, Kierkegaard brings out powerfully how impossible it is for narrative and even for language ever to convey what the individual is going through as he faces the choices life puts before him. For both narrative and language generalize and so lose what is unique to the individual. Kierkegaard shows how Abraham's relationship with God is that one of absolute with another; there is no language to express the uniqueness of their relationship. It cannot be confined to the moral order or the universality of Law:

morality has to be 'teleologically suspended.' The text of the Genesis talks of Abraham's silence in the period between hearing God's command and the setting off for Mariah, his faith remaining untouched by doubt: "But he did not doubt, he did not look in anguish to the left and to the right' (Kierkegaard, 1983, 22); but as Abraham's resolution is never known because at the precise moment an angel intervenes. So it could suggest that Abraham knowing that God would not demand in actuality his son leads him to act in way reflecting blind obedience to God. Thus it is not God who is testing Abraham but Abraham who is testing the love of God. But ironically the remoteness and silence of the nature surrounds the castle with a superior mystique, but it is a power that forever leaves out the ordinary mortals. In Chapter eight, when K. makes a move towards the castle: " The castle, whose contours were already beginning to dissolve, lay silent as ever; never yet had K. seen there the slightest sign of life-perhaps it was quite impossible to recognize anything at that distance, and yet the eye demanded it and could not endure that stillness" (C, 97). The castle caused anxiety to anyone who came into its precincts. Kafka solves the problematic nature of language in communication by calling both the assistants of K. as 'Arthur'; and the way K. maltreats them by making them stand outside in the freezing cold. This image of exclusion runs throughout in Kafka's works; the son is excluded from the familial circle, the artist is excluded for the joy of living a normal life, likewise K. too is forever in a state of suspension, for he does not know till the last pages of the novel if at all he is the Land Surveyor of the village. This is similar to Barnabas's dilemma which is although he seems to be working for the castle, but whether the person he speaks to is Klamm or not is not clear to him. Even when K. is dismissed from his post as the janitor by the teacher, K. insists on remaining there and throws the notice. The entire episode becomes a power struggle and when K. throws the assistants out in

the cold, he refused to let them in, as 'it had the incidental effect of showing the teacher what it was to be strong enough not merely to give notice but to enforce it'(C, 131). Thus K. is contaminated by the castle; as seen if K. is given the chance to exercise his authority, he becomes Authority itself. And like all the other women who lose their beauty and vigor after being associated with the castle, Frieda too begins to lose her charm in her liaison with K. : " It was in the nearness of Klamm that had made her so irrationally seductive; that was the seduction which had drawn K. to her, and now she was withering in his arms" (C, 132). As Frieda realizes that her only value to K. being her nearness to Klamm at some point of time. In matters of love too, K. is a selfish player and he is rightly accused of betraying and exploiting Frieda and the other women of Herrenhof: "In your apparently solicitous inquiries about her I could see quite nakedly your simple preoccupation with your own affairs. You were betraying that woman even before you had won her"(C, 151). The first accusation that K. is charged on immediately setting his foot in the village by the son of a castellan Schwarzer was to respect the authority of the court. K. is ambivalent, he wants to a part of the village community, yet at the same time he knows that the ways of the castle won't suit him. It is essentially his individualistic nature which leads him to remark: "I like to be my own master." (C, 13); K.'s essential camaraderie and honest opinion is exposed when he tells the landlord, "for between you and me I'm not really powerful. And consequently I suppose I have no less respect for the powerful than you have, only I'm not so honest as you and am not always willing to acknowledge it" (C, 14). This air of defiance is strengthened in K. as he recalls his jubilant childhood memory of climbing aloft the graveyard wall after several failures. The landlady rebukes K. with derision by calling him an unwanted stranger corrupting Frieda: "You're not even capable of seeing Klamm as he really is, that's not merely an

exaggeration, for I myself am not capable of it either. Klamm is to talk to you, and yet Klamm doesn't talk even to people from the village, never yet has he spoken a word himself to anyone in the village. It was Frieda's great distinction, a distinction I'll be proud of to my dying day, that he used at least to call out her name, and that she could speak to him whenever she liked and was permitted the freedom of the peephole, but even to her he never talked" (C, 52). In a like manner, K. is convinced from the start that penetrating the castle in spite of these teething obstacles would not really be an impossible task. K. is adamant on meeting Klamm. But K. is not dissuaded by the landlady's arguments: "If I only succeed in holding my ground there's no need for him to speak to me at all, it will be sufficient for me to see what effect my words have on him, and if they have no effect or if he simply ignores them, I shall at any rate have the satisfaction of having spoken my mind freely to a great man" (C, 53). So K. knew that perhaps he would never be able to meet Klamm, which is again a forgone conclusion, but continues to wait for him in the cold snow. Even K. tells Barnabas that the messages he brings from the castle are of no importance in themselves, rather that they come from Klamm gives them value. It is therefore the individuals who invest the figures of authority with power. K. in fact has fixed his hopes are wrongly placed because Barnabas is not really a castle messenger. Without his castle uniform, he too is like K. whose appointment as the Land Surveyor is unclear. Barnabas is like the man for the country in the parable 'Before the Law', here too Barnabas is not really allowed to enter the castle, his entrance is forbidden by the frontier Chiefs who are only one of the several barriers preventing his meeting with the actual owner, the Count West West. The castle intermediary Momus too is a wrong kind of an official intermediary who is contaminated by the castle, he is said to falsify information. The official papers, many a time soiled by the food at the Herrenhof, even if they do not

reach have the approval of Klamm, such is the control of the castle. The novel, being incomplete, lacks a definite closure but there is no indication of getting to reintegrate in the castle; K. denied the fulfillment of meeting the authority. He sums up his situation to Olga in a very moving manner: " 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 for ever" (C, 293). **The Castle** is the story of a man who spends all his strength trying to penetrate the castle and be accepted by the authorities but till the end it remains an elusive effort. Any questioning individual is seen as an outsider, he who is willfully cut off from the rest of his fellow community. The investigating dog in **Investigations of a Dog** should be given credit for at least not following the ways of the established laws of authority; he has a peculiar power of perception, although it is a different matter that he leads himself to false conclusions. The story beautifully portrays the existential crisis that rips the individual from the society. The visionary scene in this story is a recollection of Kafka's childhood, holding the mystery of art, or how Kafka was impressed by the performance of the Yiddish Theatre troupe. The investigations of a dog on the decline of canine culture and the origin of food has actually a very simple answer of their human masters throwing food from above; but the investigating dog puts in a lot of scientific and spiritual speculations regarding the origin of food; all the results of this investigation are illusory. Such is the shortsightedness of man who in his limited consciousness refuses to accept the truth but forms his own ideas. At the same time a simple artistry performed by a group of dogs is interpreted by this investigating dog as a mystical interpretation on the nature of dogdom and accuses the performing dogs as "violating the Law"(CS, 283). He interprets their sin of walking on their hind legs, which for him was against the

decency of dogdom , and he interprets their silence as emanating from ‘ a sense of shame’(CS, 283). The delusion of the investigating dog is the delusion that modern man suffers. There is a gap between knowledge and the means in which this knowledge is sought. From this Kafka comments on the willful solitariness of man. This work also reflects his interest in Zionism and the Jewish faith, particularly during the last phase of his life. The impulse to question remains the same but only the questions don't provoke any answers, only what remains is that knowledge is to be sought in the questioner himself. Thus knowledge is always relative, limited and historicized. Like the village schoolmaster's attempt to prove the existence of the giant mole in **The Village Schoolmaster or The Giant Mole** all these investigations only makes truth elusive. The artistic display of the aerial dogs, according to Wilhelm Emrich, have been identified with art and the artists in this world and their silence could be the silence of the artists, but silence being golden conveys more truth than where language an has failed. One can gain a greater understanding of existentialism crises by reading Kafka's works than from a whole lot of philosophic discourses. **Josephine, the singer, or the Mouse Folk** possesses more ‘power’ over the nation by virtue of her art; but the world fails to recognize the value of her art. Her singing is only squeaking for the other mice; but the text reveals how her power of singing redeems not just herself but her nation as a whole. The conflict of the artists with the world does not deter the real artists. The animal in **The Burrow** dreams of digging the perfect burrow, where burrowing being a metaphor for writing; in actuality it is the flight of the artists from the rigor of this world. Inside the burrow is a ‘new world’ with perfect peace and it is conducive for the artist to realizes his true self. In **Amerika** too, Karl finds fulfillment only in the last chapter where he joins ‘The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma’ where everyone's talent is welcome, a place for

everyone possessing some artistic talent. Karl gives away his name as 'Negro', a suggestion of primitiveness; a suggestion of primeval simplicity where man is free from the constraints and limitedness of the real world. Although this world of theatre looked so unreal even grotesque, with images of angels, devils, and other grotesque figures; Karl is seen enjoying every moment of their company. This world is indeed really liberating after Karl's series of encounter with various forms of authority, it is here that Karl finds for the first time a sense of acceptance.

Another scholarly investigator in **The Great Wall of China** is also set apart from other people. In this brilliant piece of analysis, Kafka is analyzing through he metaphor of the wall analyzing man's relationship with God, or the artist's relationship with his product of creation. The great wall is not continuous but has gaps, similar to the structural gaps between words in the sentence. The right meaning of the words and also a single determinant meaning can never be stamped by any one; just as in the parable 'An Imperial Message,' the message sent by the Emperor never reaches its destination; just as God's words are lost in the modern age.; " But you sit at your window when evening falls and dream it to yourself" (CS, 5). Even if the message reaches, there is a wide gap between the real message and the received message; just as in writing the meanings are lost the moment the author has undertaken to put it in pen and paper. In this respect, Kafka's works are reflections not just of the obscurity of this world but of language itself, like the nomads from the North in **An Old Manuscript** whose language is like the screeching of the Jackdaws, incomprehensible not only to others but amongst themselves too as the emperor silently watches himself, helpless in chasing away the nomads. The language of **The Trial** is also disorienting; the meaning of the English word 'trial' has a different

connotation from the German word '*Prozess*' which also suggests entanglement or a muddle. J.M.Berstein in **Practical Reason: Marxism and Modernism** writes:

Language, the theoretical modernists tell us, is constructed of difference; the relation between signifier and signified is mediated and constituted by the diacritical relations holding between signifier and signified. Language can only signify as a system or totality of relations between the continuum of thought; everything is defined by what it is not, by its relations to everything else. Thus every apparent signified is in fact only another signifier in the endless chain of signification. Representation is always second-hand, a halted moment in the play of language.

(Bernstein, 1984,233)

Thus representation is 'neither innocent' nor 'naively attainable' and hence conversion of thought to language is always a failure. There seems to be a conflict between the autonomy of language and mimeses. The familiar preoccupation of modernists with the self and the self in search of identity and self-fulfillment is also seen in Kafka. In all three novels of Kafka we see the central protagonists moving outside form the confines of the self to the world outside but such a search is only futile. All three novels therefore have a frustrating trajectory, a pattern followed by other great modern writers like Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, who trace the isolation of the self and the impossibility of recognition of the self in society. However, in another of his short story **Wedding Preparations in the Country**, we see the primacy of language; how language enables the individual to judge the value of things and to judge himself. Even language can be a source of authority, for the individual is forced to use the language of the world to demand his place in the world: "One works so feverishly at the office that afterwards one is too tires 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 as 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). In **The Burrow** too where burrowing becomes a metaphor for writing, also the animal fortifying himself against predatory animals and protecting himself against unknown enemy is expressed using the language of despair. This animal is prevented the joy of seeing the light of the day, revelation for him is forever deferred. Language is befooling in Kafka; language imprisons the self; just like the false confident opening of the text: "I HAVE COMPLETED the construction of my burrow and it seems to be successful. All that can be seen from outside is a big hole; that, however, really leads nowhere; if you take a few steps you strike against natural firm rock" (CS, 325). Language is 'holed' for Kafka as much of the biographical details from his life are only veiled references; and as Kafka realizes his inability to bury himself in his writings. The existentialist is also concerned with language as an existential phenomenon. All language is someone's language; all language is addressed to someone. Thus existentialism studies language primarily in the context of being-with-others. In Martin Buber's **I and Thou**, he speaks of 'primary words like 'I', 'It', 'Thou', relating the speaker always to the other person. The "-Thou' language is spoken with the whole being and expresses the whole person, while "I-It' language never does so. "Idle talk" (*Gerede*) is Heidegger's expression for the kind of discourse that does not really communicate or disclose entities as they are. This 'idle talk' far from opening things closes them up. Such 'idle talk' is characteristic of the 'they' or the 'crowd' and it prevents any original and meaningful existence.

The existential crisis is experienced when one finds the individual both inside and outside the purview of the Law, forever in a state of suspension. **The Hunter Gracchus** reflects the difficulty of finding the final destination even after death. The dead hunter says: " My ship has no rudder, and it is driven by the wind that lows in the undermost regions of death" (CS, 230). The Hunter Gracchus knows the truth yet accuses the others of suppressing it, of forgetting it; knowledge being every where from the children to the chronicles of the historians. It is like the narrator of the short story **Description of a struggle** who wishes to force the acquaintance to come out with his story: " Tell me everything, from beginning to end. I won't listen to less, I warn you. But I am burning to hear the whole thing" (CS, 20). Yet it is the knowledge that cannot be communicated by words, it is only the understanding of true knowledge can universal love be attained. Wilhelm Emrich writes: " True is also the understanding of true human nature, the understanding of that which man actually is. In such complete, undisguised cognition, however, only love is possible, since this true human nature "cannot but be loved". Universal knowledge is universal love" (Emrich, 1984,52). The strange star- shaped spool Odradek in **The Cares of a Family Man** defies classification; it is neither an object nor is it a human being. Now since Odradek does not participate in life, it is deathless. The grotesque creature is an image of liberation like **Children on a Country Road**. This sense of liberation is missing from other characters of Kafka , be it Joseph K. of **The Trial**, K. of **The Castle**, their energies being sapped in their effort to be accepted by the inaccessible authority. Stories of transformations are replete in Kafka, human beings taking the shape of animals; also animals playing human roles and displaying human thought. Perhaps when man reaches the limits of being a slave to the figures of authority, these transformations are external evasive mechanism. In **Wedding Preparations in the**

**Country**, the tired Raban wishes to change into a bug and send his body on his journey to meet his bride; or Gregor in **The Metamorphosis** is perhaps his hesitancy in facing the world; in **A Report to an Academy** an ape succeeds in overcoming his apehood; or take the absurdity of the Jackals seeking release from the Arab through someone else in **Jackals and Arabs**.

Liberation or freedom is hard to come by in Kafka; perhaps it is only in man's acceptance of his guilt that man can commune with the truth or God. K. behaves as if he were guilty; he blames it to 'someone', he apologizes to his landlady and his fellow tenant, he feels guilty of bring disgrace to his family and even feels responsible for his advocate's sickness. He finds himself unable to seek solutions to his problem and he seeks much outside help, especially from women, first Fräulein Bürstner, then the Law-Court Attendant's wife, then Leni. Little does he realize that each man should seek the help only from himself, the onus is upon the himself. Seeking outside help is like the man from the country seeking help from the fleas that infest him in the course of waiting for gaining admittance inside the law. Thus the individual is always outside the Law; the irrationality of the Law is seen in the mingling of the private and the public sphere of a man's life. Even under arrest Joseph K. could still pursue his normal business of living, making him at one time to remark: "Then being arrested isn't so bad" (T, 21). If the gravity of law and its sentence is inscrutable to the individuals, it is because the first interrogation of Joseph K. takes place on a Sunday in a sordid tenement where the Examining Magistrates have no power to control the court proceedings, and confuses K. for a house-painter. Finally when he bravely puts up his case, Titorelli reminds him that it is very difficult to dislodge the court's conviction. The second interrogation is based on his own assumption on the following Sunday but finds the chamber empty. Like K. in **The Castle** who is some sort of a

rescuer; here too Joseph K., forgetting his own case turns into a rescuer of the wife of the Law-court Attendant from sexual exploitation. The law is ambiguous because proceedings of the court was not recorded, written defense was useless, law petitions were crammed with Latin, legal records and actual charge sheets were inaccessible to the accused; so that defense was totally at the mercy of the personal connections with the court officials. Thus the concept of justice was partial and subjective. In the case of Joseph K. the outcome of his case was also a foregone conclusion: "he must say that K. had very greatly damaged his case by his discourtesy to the Chief Clerk of the Court" (T, 135). Even the advocates were hopeless before the court who could only state that progress was made but the nature of the progress was not known. Therefore each meeting with his advocate to discuss his case would only end in promiscuity with his maid Leni. Kant in **The Critique of Pure Reason** writes how the relationship between the empirical and the transcendental world can be expressed only in a paradox. Thus it is paradoxical that K. reaches no more nearer to the castle than when he started. Joseph K. realizes the futility of his resistance and he calmly accepts his death. The natural scenery at the final hour with the moonlight streaming, the calm water body, the dense foliage, the neat flower-beds, the gravel paths, all maintain a harmony as K. walked with his executors in harmony. After courteous exchange, Joseph K. willingly succumbs to death, albeit noticing someone, evoking several unanswered questions: "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 favor 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?" (T, 250-251).

Joseph K. dies with the pain of remaining an outsider like K. in **The Castle**. One can ignore the fear of death by creating a distance with death by calling it a natural process or a mere episode in the vast life; through this one can also achieve spiritual freedom. Kierkegaard, in this respect, quotes Epicurus: 'Death is not to be feared: when it is, I am not, and when I am, it is not.' But personal experience tells us that the pain and fear accompanying death more than the actual occurrence of death can never really be ignored. Kierkegaard in his **The Sickness Unto Death** is speaking of despair because for him, life is a motion towards death. Wilhelm Anz in his essay "Kierkegaard on death and Dying" sheds light upon life being a movement towards inner death or 'non-being' because of which we are forever divided against ourselves. According to the Jewish faith, God's message can reach to any one who is ready to open himself to Him. Kafka lacked this Jewish faith; the Emperor is unable to reach his subjects. His image of the emperor here is a helpless glory unable to rescue his subjects or someone who is frail and weak as in the parable **An Imperial Message**. Similarly **The Problem of Laws** is a short story illuminating how faith has given only false comfort through out the history of mankind. There is no absolute Law and hence no salvation. The individual is rendered helpless as there is no escape from the law. In another short story **The Conscription of Troops** the girl is rejected by the law, yet the girl continues to suffer with the weight of 'shame'. It is the same 'shame' that the son figures normally suffer from in Kafka's fiction; in **The Judgment** even in dying the son retains a sense of 'shame' at the inconvenience that his death may cause to his father. Kafka himself is said to admit that the absent friend in the story was actually a link between the father and son. There is no escape from the figures of authority and law in any way and hence no hope of salvation. **Advocates** illustrates: "Within the law all is accusation, advocacy, and verdict; any interference by any individual here

would be a crime" (CS, 450). The law demands the sacrifice of the self to its altar as seen in **The Refusal** where the colonel, who is actually only a tax-collector, wields enormous power due to the unknown and mysterious Law of the land. He is a powerful figure of authority who discharges his functions through a large hierarchy of officials. It is the other people who invest him with such great power, and when people go with a petition he "As on all solemn occasions the colonel stood upright, holding in front of him two poles of bamboo in his outstretched hands. This is an ancient custom implying more or less that he supports the law, and the law supports him" (CS, 266). Thus true Law cannot be formulated, and truth therefore remains hidden. Kafka has expressed this existential crisis through a series of aphorisms which helps in getting a clearer view of the great divide between man and the institution. In one of his aphorism, he writes on the confusion caused by our divination: "He is thirsty, and cut off from a spring by a mere clump of trees. But he is divided against himself: one part overlooks the whole, sees that he is standing here and that the spring is just beside him; but another part notices nothing, and has at most a divination that the first part sees all. But as he notices nothing he cannot drink"; and on the impossibility of transcending this state: "You are the problem. No scholar to be found far and wide." Thus K. in **The Castle** gets no certainty of his appointment, or gets no clearer to his goal; yet he persists. There exists also a great divide between the individual and the society. K. is doomed to be an outsider replicating the fate of the racial isolation of the Jews. Gregor Samsa by turning into a vermin cuts off from human community, and his father now regains his vitality. Kafka's father exercised almost God-like authority over the sensitive Franz Kafka. Although he knew the comfort one gained from marriage, he could not muster enough strength to get married. He often read and quoted the Talmud: "A man without a wife is not a human

being" (D.126), but could not apply it to himself. The mood of the castle is also absolutely grim; there is a lot of speculations among the villagers about the nature of authority presiding from the castle. Although no one has seen them, the 'higher ups' only exist through hear say. It is this mysterious truth or figures of authority the both Joseph K. and K. seek to explore. The mysterious working of these institutions also echo the mysterious workings of heaven or God. And perhaps the questing individual represents Kafka seeking to overcome his bachelorhood, or the ordeals of an assimilated Jew. All his stories are commentaries on the relationship between God and Man. Kafka's moral problem arose not because he felt there was no God; but because he felt that there is no God but there must be God. Unlike Nietzsche's 'Superman', Kafka's characters are engulfed by this abyss. So there is an overwhelming sense of weariness pervading his work, as rightly pointed out in the fourth legend of Kafka's Prometheus: "...everyone grew weary of the meaningless affair. The Gods grew weary, the eagles grew weary, the wound closed wearily" (CS, 432).

The individuals are pulled more and more into the vortex of conflict and K. knows the workings of the bureaucratic hierarchy as fight against a formidable organization, yet he would gladly fight and perish, rather than meekly succumb to the dark powers. The Law is not to be doubted although many serious questions on the nature of the Law and the law-giver is ambiguous; and why the innocent is always sacrificed at the altar of Law. **In the Penal Colony**, the torture machine is upheld as a sacrosanct institution. The Law is never questioned in Kafka; it is an existential situation where individuals suffer due to an inexplicable logic. What appears as a kind of givenness for others like Erich Heller is something that Kafka tried to grapple all his life; to understand its meaning. Through something as useless as a star-shaped spool with

tattered threats like Odradek or the constantly jumping two celluloid balls exasperating the elderly Blumfeld, Kafka takes upon himself to seek answers to the existence and purpose of such incongruous objects. Kafka may also be expressing the anguish experienced as a German-speaking Jew and the guilt that he suffered due to his sin of being an outcaste all through. Erich Heller sheds light: "Sin and guilt more often than not appear to lie not in any *doing* but in *being*, in being a separate individual, or, to use Schopenhauer's terms, in the *principium individuationis* itself-an unprincipled *principium individuationis*, as it were, for it is only individual sons and not the individual fathers and friends, only the Gregor Samsas and not the parents, sisters, or lodgers, only the K.'s and not the other citizens in their towns or villages who are fatally affected by the principle's machinations" (Heller, 1974, 22).

He knew that marriage required the sacrifice of his writing because writing needed seclusion, as Kafka quotes a line from his favorite Chinese poem, 'Not the seclusion of a hermit but that of a dead man.' Kafka warned Felice against marriage with him, that as his wife she would have to lead a 'monastic life at the side of a man who is peevish, miserable, silent, discontented, and sickly', and who is 'chained to invisible literature by invisible chains' (D, August 22, 1913). Death as the great unknown was also explored by Kafka. Existentialists have interpreted the fear of death as the cause of anxiety, hence purges death of its morbid associations. Kafka remarked to Gustav Janouch, before leaving for the sanatorium: "Thus suffering becomes enchantment, and death- it is nothing but an element of sweet life itself." (GJ, 108) And again: "In the moment of death man probably surveys his whole life. For the first time-and for the last time" (GJ, 95). It is from an individual's attitude towards death that one can make an understanding of man's relation with the world. Joyce, Mann and Proust all regarded art as an answer to the pressure exerted by death. One cannot understand life

in isolation from death and that is what makes life so precious. Even Freud in his essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' says 'The goal of all life is death.' Thus knowledge of life is also the cognition of death. The philosopher and Sociologist Georg Simmel's (1858-1918) in his landmark essay "Metaphysics of Death" (1910) regards life and death as thesis and anti-thesis, each necessary to the other. Their synthesis, is what, he called 'reality' or unity which has to be lived and experienced. In his "Observations on Sin, Suffering, Hope, and the True Way", written between 1917-1918, Kafka writes: "a first sign of beginning cognition is the wish to die." Most of Kafka's works end with the death of the protagonist; and those that don't end with death, perhaps points to the impossibility of arriving at a certainty. The reality of the Law is not denied to the man from the country, but it is only denied to the man in his life time. One can find the during Kafka's time, two concepts of time could be formulated; one was the Kantian philosophy of Law as enshrined in the legal code of the German Empire (1871); where punishment was accorded in accordance with the nature of the crime; and the Austrian legal code whereby the guilt was to be judged not only be the act but by the intention of the doer as well and the focus in more upon the criminal than upon the crime. The predatory nature of authorities stalking man is an existential situation. The country doctor too suffers from guilt in his authorial self neglecting his maid and thus when he sees the wound of his patient festering with maggots , the wound is perhaps also reflective nature of his guilt-ridden conscious. Kafka bore this guilt all his life; guilt of not being strong enough to resist his father's diktats, guilt of not being just to the woman whom he had promised marriage, guilt in not being a attentive at work nor being able to write well enough. Kafka bore this guilt with 'silence'. The nature of authority is arbitrary; the father putting the son to an unjust death. Joseph K. dies never meeting the Judge that sentenced him to death

face to face nor does K. become successful in entering the castle, they suffer from spiritual anxiety but they do not die as neurotics, but as men who face disappointment, even death boldly. There is no flinching from death; they die as questers, dying in quest of truth, their real knowledge. In **The Judgment** we see the old bellowing father transforming into an image of strength. Max Brod reveals how Kafka had discussed with him how he would have wanted the Castle to end: "The presumed land-surveyor finds partial satisfaction at least. He doesn't relax in his struggle, but dies worn out by it. Round his death bed the community assembles and from the castle comes this decision: that K. has no claim to live in the village by right- yet taking certain auxiliary circumstances into account, it is permitted him to live and work there" (C, 1954, iv). It is ironical that it is in his dying moments that K. is finally given the right to settle in this village. Ironically, it is only after his death, that Kafka's literary talent has been exposed. Max Brod writes of Kafka: "O, all too conscientious friend! Your literary work itself was after all for you only the symbol of a life well-lived, but it was at the same time something much more too, it was the thing itself, it was your life, it was the right and proper use of the powers you were born with. It was that which you demanded of yourself and of all mankind: not to misuse the good powers one has been given, not to let them decay, but to make every use of them to fulfill the "Mandate", and in this way to enter the "Law", thrusting aside the wicked man at the gate who tries to keep one from entering it. It is difficult, all the same" (B, 96). The psychoanalysts claim that the concept of God is based on the man's awe for the father or father-figures. Man is inherently weak so he needs the protection of these father figures. The early Existentialist, Nietzsche tried to do it otherwise in his creation of the 'Superman', the 'blond beast', combining the strength and beauty of an animal with great intellectual prowess. This superman would be ruthless and would not

require "God" to protect him. Kierkegaard's three main ideas of existentialism is the concept of 'the absolute paradox', dread, the German 'angst'; the 'jump into the abyss'. The accident of birth is therefore the most painful phenomenon for the existentialists because man does not have control over the family, place, race, age into which he is born, man is just thrown into this world, the freedom of choice is actually arbitrary because there is no free will. This is very similar to what the predecessor of modern existentialism Blaise Pascal said: "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?" (*Pensées*, No.205). Kierkegaard cites the example of Job who knows that he is in the right against God, yet he must have faith in God for everything. His faith require him to make 'movement of faith, [I must] shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd" (Kierkegaard, 1941, 44). Thus Kierkegaard's man makes a jump willingly into the abyss, it is why Abraham is willing to sacrifice his only son, enduring three long days of agony, with complete trust. Kierkegaard uses the phrase to describe Abraham's case as the 'teleological suspension of the ethical.' We shall jump, says Kierkegaard, 'into the open arms of God.' But in Kafka, unlike Kierkegaard, he had no such faith in external agency, man jumps but into nothingness. Man gain knowledge by this act of jumping. Now faith is different from knowledge because knowledge requires effort; but faith is a spontaneous feeling. In Kafka's world, man cannot have easy faith because of the insurmountable pressures that he finds himself engulfed with; yet what makes man worthy enough is his effort to gain knowledge by his bold jump. The sense of nothingness is felt so acutely that it awakens a desperate longing for some positive achievement. Therefore both Sartre and Heidegger demand for an 'authentic life'

which cannot be shattered by or terrifying figure of authority. For Heidegger, 'being there', that is being in the world is the only authentic act of living, where an individual follows his or her own freely chosen project. Karl Jaspers in his preface to **Philosophy** (1932) notes that it is only human being who raise this issue of being: "Awakening to myself, in my situation, I raised the question of being. Finding myself in the situation as an indeterminate possibility, I must *search for being* if I want to find my real self. But it is not till I fail in this search for intrinsic being that I begin to philosophize. This is what we call philosophizing on the ground of possible Existenz, and the method used is transcending" (Jaspers, 1932, 71). The statement echoes the opening lines of the first chapter of Heidegger's **Being and Time**: "We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed. The Being of any such entity is in each case mine. These entities in their Being, comport themselves towards their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. Being is that which is an issue for every such entity" (Heidegger, 1962, 42). There is a disjunction between the world and the individual and the language is insufficient to communicate this gap. And for many other existentialists even death is the ultimate boundary situations. Heidegger is often criticized for glorifying death. He maintains that to understand *Dasein* as a whole we must understand it as "being-towards-death". Heidegger regards dying as a uniquely human phenomenon; even Rilke and Malraux have referred to death as a human phenomenon. Heidegger elaborates, death is the most private thing, death is the only thing which nobody can do for me. Man is the only creature who knows he has to die; thus man is certain of his death but uncertain about as to when death would occur. This constant threat of the possibility of death any moment is the source of anxiety. Wittgenstein wrote: "everything which we feel like saying can, a priori, only be nonsense. Nevertheless, we do run up against the limits of language"

(Wittgenstein, 1978, 80). Wittgenstein problematizes the concept of God by saying if the 'limits of my language mean the limits of my world', and 'God does not reveal himself in the world' (Wittgenstein, 1966, 5.6); then God appears not in the world but in our feeling and thinking about the world. Our idea of God depends on the construction and topology of our world. Wittgenstein tried to give the word 'God' logical and phenomenological grounding, and the transcendence of God lies in our ability to talk about the world. Miguel de Unamuno in his philosophical work **The Tragic Sense of Life** (1911-12) talks about the conflict that each man faces; the fact of death and the desire of man for immortality; and although reason is unequipped to provide a solution for this conflict, yet it is this conflict which kicks us to live. To be living in confrontation with death, the rush of adrenalin that one feels at the prospect of meeting death unawares is a human phenomenon. Though the precise moment of clinical death is uncertain, death is already present as a certain possibility, but death is clearly different from other human possibilities. As Heidegger puts it, death is 'the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all' (Heidegger, 1962, 207). Death is the last possibility of all, the final proof of all absurdity of both man and Universe. All existentialists insist on the need to face death as a reality. The consciousness of death releases human energies and enables man to break through the mundaneness of ordinary life. This is exactly what Nietzsche was trying to put in **Thus Spake Zarathustra** while explaining the concept of 'free death'. Unlike Kierkegaard, Sartre sees death in **Being and Nothingness** merely as an external limit or 'wall', which we may encounter at any time in pursuing our personal project, death is "an always possible nihilation of my possibles which is outside my possibilities" (Sartre, 1956, 533). Unamuno extols suffering as an inalienable part of life and the highest pitch of suffering, he calls anguish. It is in suffering which makes man at one with God. Thus

it is not that God does not offer his hand in support of us, but that God cannot offer his hand to us: "God, the consciousness of the Universe, is limited by the brute matter in which He lives, by the unconscious, from which He seeks to liberate Himself and to liberate us. God suffers in each and all of us....and we all suffer in Him. Religious anguish is but the Divine suffering, the feeling that God suffers in me and that I suffer in Him" (Miguel de Unamuno, 207). The beauty and simplicity of Josephine's singing which is wordless is a proof of it, that what is felt through the heart is the only real. The ordinary mouse folk are mesmerized by Josephine's piping although they do not understand the meaning of it. Gregor Samsa lured by the music played by his sister's violin seeks redemption through art. The hunger artist claims that his art is only based upon his personal weakness. Kafka identifies in **Letters to My Father**(page 90-91) the two kinds of truth; the first is represented by the tree of knowledge and the second represented by the tree of life; the truth of active principle and the truth of the static principle. The first truth is given scientifically, objectively; and the second to be grasped only intuitively. Therefore, it is the truth of life which requires a greater sensitiveness on the part of the individual; while the truth of knowledge is actually pragmatic and calculative. Knowledge divides the world into good and evil; and knowledge actually makes us divide the world into polar opposites. All of Kafka's character achieves 'radiance' after achieving knowledge be it the hunger artist or the explorer in the penal colony. Assigning the world into good and evil attributes actually makes the world static or timeless which lead us to be forever trapped like the hunter gracchus between the two worlds. Kafka experienced a similar torture in his vacillation between 'to love' and 'not to love'. The private father-son feud is also a conflict between authority and individual, art and artists. Like the hunger artist, Kafka must necessarily starve himself of any earthly nourishment. Although

Carl Jung in his essay "Literature and Psychology" published in 1933 dissociates any relationship between the artists and his personal. He draws a fine distinction between the man and the artist, the man objective and impersonal- even inhuman- but as an artist he is his work, and not even a human being. Kafka exemplifies a similar split between the man and the artist. Kafka once told his in his conversation to the seventeen year old Gustav Janouch: "My seriousness might act like poison on you. You are young." (GJ, 133) but at the same time he knew the transformative power of words/art; he writes "it is the ecstasy of raising the world into the pure, the true and the immutable." (D, September 25, 1917) The split between the conscious knowledge or intellect and the unconscious side of life which is the soul is found in **The Castle**. The entire novel is the struggle of the intellect to know the soul. K. wants to meet Klamm not knowing that although in the possession of Frieda, they are actually united. Barnabas is excited about the arrival of the new Land Surveyor, for he himself has been fighting for his appointment for the last three years. K. dies in **The Trial** without making any headway in his case. The deluding effect of art is made clear: "Art is a mirror, which goes 'fast', like a watch-sometimes." (GJ, 143). The image of the artist as doomed and solitary is also present in Thomas Mann, the writer whom Kafka admired, but Mann is a historical novelist analyzing the breakdown of European civilization; but Kafka records the breakdown of the self. Joyce Carol Oates speaks of Kafka's life long struggle to synthesize the tree of knowledge with the tree of life; to realize himself a Franz Kafka in life. Perhaps it was the fear of losing the means by which he defined the soul, as he hints in his diary entry of 1922: 'evil does not exist; once you have crossed the threshold, all is good. Once in another world, you must hold your tongue.' However, Shestov thinks that all sufferings of man is rooted in man's obsession with knowledge: " God forbade plucking the fruits of this tree not

out of fear that man would obtain more than what had been granted to him and not out of jealousy. The accused Serpent deceived Eve and blinds all of us to this day. The tree of knowledge does not increase our powers but, on the contrary, diminishes them. We must choose between the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life” (Shestov, 1968,157). For Shestov, the fall of man is the result of excessive dependence on science and reason. For both Sartre and Kierkegaard freedom is synonymous with existence; our action implies freedom, and for the existentialists, freedom is not to be proud, but is rather a postulate of action. It is already there as a condition of our existence. But in Kafka freedom is highly ambiguous, it serves for his existential crisis. Jean Paul Sartre considers God as a superior sort of artisan. Just as any manufacturer of a product has a concept in his mind before he produces the product; like wise for the individual, man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence. Now for the atheistic existentialists, if God does not exist, then man is what he conceives himself to be. This proposition gives tremendous importance to man as the creator of his own self and nature. The emphasis is also on ‘subjectivity’; for now it is man who is to be responsible for his own existence. However, for many existentialists, the idea of God as not existing is profoundly disquieting. Even Sartre agreed that God should not be regarded as a useless hypothesis for it is God who provides value to an *a priori* existence. Sartre clarifies in **Existentialism and Human Emotions**: “Indeed everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can’t start making excuses for himself” (Sartre, 22). Thus for Sartre, existentialism is profoundly optimistic whose doctrine is the doctrine of action. But in Kafka’s works we see that his characters are reduced to a state of perpetual suspension and forever condemned to inaction.

Finally, if the existentialists see existence as an illness which must lead to death; thus death is the final proof that life is meaningless. For Kierkegaard, death is a challenge because the knowledge of its inevitability confronts us constantly with eternity and infinity, so that we are constantly forced to focus our attention upon the transcendental. Kafka wanted to reveal the false aura of authority that surrounds individual and all other fraudulent assertions of authority which press upon us. Kierkegaard speaks of transcending the empirical individuality. Limitations can become a positive value; for if life were not to be contingent, all things of the world would cease to hold any attraction. Our awareness of the beauty of this limitedness is the creative process of the artist. Sartre shows that transcendence and situatedness are interdependent. For Derrida, the idea of God is only a 'transcendental signified', it is no more than a symptom of a desire for a fixed stabilizing point outside language. Derrida's discussion on the 'silence' of Abraham, and why Abraham keeps his plans secret from Isaac would make an interesting observation. Derrida tells that Abraham communes with God, but can tell no one else what he is doing or why. Derrida is trying to grasp what Kierkegaard meant by subjectivity, and its need for secrecy and indirect communication. What he proposes is a dramatic translation of the language of God:

We should stop thinking about God or someone, over there, way up there, transcendent, capable, more than any satellite orbiting in space, of seeing into the most secret of the most interior places. It is perhaps necessary, if we are to follow the traditional Judeo-Christian-Islamic injunction, but also at the risk of turning it against that tradition, to think of God and of the name of God without such idolatrous stereotyping or representation.

(Derrida, 1995, 108)

Thus for Derrida, God is the power of interiority, of being-with-oneself, and of reaching to my inner self and hence capable of producing invisible sense. In Kafka the existential crisis arises because for him there is no secrecy, no interiority into which the self can indulge in. If Kierkegaard in **The Sickness Unto Death** argues that the self must be constituted in relation to God; then the role of self in Kafka is highly problematic. Kierkegaard in **The Sickness Unto Death** comments 'since everything is possible for God, then God is this- that all things are possible' (Kierkegaard, 1980, 40). God is then hope. Thus there is hope of the singular emerging out of the universal. Also one is so trapped in the ego that the language fails to transcend the individual to the general and the universal. The excessive use of rations and intellect fails to convey the real essence of the mind. While Joseph K. and K. try hard to achieve their goal through their intellect, we see how intellect fails to guide them in their endeavor and they are trapped in the smallness of their ego. What they look for stands not outside them but what already exists within them.

## 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 Fraülein 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 parables, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

## CHAPTER - V

### Realism and Fantasy

*How incomplete a moment is human life, incomplete because a life like this could last forever and still be nothing but a moment.*

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, October 19, 1921.

The literature of transformations or the fantasy of transformations has attracted many writers from Ovid to Apuleius and from Donne and Keats to Virginia Woolf. Kafka is a writer who has unconsciously produced a body of literature of transformations where the play of realism and fantasy are finely worked out. Should these transformations be regarded as flight from reality; or is there still the autonomy of the self or the existent; and what effect do these transformations cast upon the others; or does it imply a split between the mental domain and the physical domain because the transformations are only at the physical level; these are questions that will be discussed in this chapter. Kafka does not provide simplistic answers to these questions or else how would one explain the transformed creatures responding like a human being in his works. To begin with, Kafka is an eternal dreamer. All his works – aphorisms, parables, diaries, letters and novels, both in its form and content, are an expression of his dream-like inner life. They may be ephemeral and bizarre but real, revealing the dark condition of being human. We see in these works the existential sensibility plagued by irrational world and neurotic ambivalence. Normally dreams serve as an outlet for meeting those psychic needs that are not fulfilled in the conscious day-time but for Kafka, the demons of his repressed self tear at him with increasing violence. Kafka mercilessly dissects the nethermost depths of his being, which serve as materials for his works. His works, though dream-like, are not

unorganized. Kafka had full control over what he was writing which is explained by the use of an objective narrator in most of his works to convey such deeply subjective experience. They are actually as Calvin S. Hall and Richard E. Lind in **Dreams, Life, and Literature: A Study of Franz Kafka** (1970) calls it 'the highly disciplined and refined product of a powerful intellect'. Through the use of this dualism of realism and fantasy, Kafka is able to convey the dark terrors of his existential angst that threatened him at every step. His life was beset with estrangement not only from his family, his Jewish identity, and his soul-destroying job and most important of all, his estrangement from himself. These conflicts both outside and within him made Kafka take refuge in the dream world. "The clocks are not in unison", <sup>wrote</sup> Kafka in his diary entry of January 16, 1922. For Kafka the conflict between the two worlds while competing to outrun the other threatens him to death or insanity. Yet, Kafka could objectify the inner world without losing its inward ephemeral nature. The reality of the inner world is thus experienced by plunging straight into the reality of this inner world. The disordered flux of a dream is absent because Kafka tells his dreams not from a dreamer's point of view but as a waking observer of dream. There is no doubt that Kafka was influenced by Plato's doctrine of ideas without ascribing to Plato's eternal essences because Kafka believed in subjective reality. The outside and the inside co-exist in Kafka and unlike the 'monologue interior', Kafka uses the language of the outer world to express the reality of the inner world. This feature as Max Brod points out, brings Kafka and Kliest together, as in both of them realistic detail is counterbalanced by their tendency to create a dream-atmosphere. The artist as an exile from reality was a common preoccupation in German literature from Goethe to Grillparzer and Thomas Mann. The conflict between the 'real' world and the 'spiritual' world was also a common preoccupation with Kliest and Holderlin too. In

Kafka, realism and fantasy are mingled leading to a paradoxical situation. In **The Castle**, K. needs to confirm his appointment as a land-surveyor first even before accepting the reality of the castle. However, his appointment or K.'s contacts with the castle are considered as figments of his imagination. The villagers of the castle tell K.: "You haven't once up till now come into real contact with our authorities. All those contacts have been illusory, but owing to your ignorance of the circumstances you take them to be real" (C, 73). Kafka's style is also influenced by some other German-Austrian-French writers like Stifter and Grillparzer. For Grillparzer 'life acquires the character of a dream and the dream maintains an uncanny reality.' Kafka shared the same uncanny feeling of being trapped in the crisis of modernism. There are no logical explanation, no linear progression of action, and no development of characters. All that one encounters in Kafka is a world fraught with existential absurdity and this is presented with the concrete images and the precise lucidity. One of his translators Edwin Muir has aptly pointed out the imaginative power of Kafka by which he is able to create a world more real from the real, and how it is only at such moments that truth, the higher reality, can be discerned.

Kafka does not just give banal photographic representation of life but an insight into the things that is more compellingly truthful than reality itself. Thus what appears fantastical is actually the truth of the matter, the reality of the author's vision. While both realism and fantasy claim exclusive epistemological and symbolic validity within their separate spheres, neither can hide its roots in the other. In Kafka, both realism and fantasy operate at all levels of narrative wherein a critically evaluated content, situation or characters are taken to fantastic heights to produce significant meanings. Impossible events occur with an air of inevitability and Kafka does not bother to give explanations for it. Perhaps, it was an expression of his existential necessity, or the so-

called anguish of being. Kafka shared with the Existentialists the conviction of the contingency of human life. Robert G. Olsen explains: "The anguish of being is properly the anguish one experiences at the thought that nothing and nobody might have come into existence or that everything and everybody might go out of existence in an instant" (Olson, 1961, 31). Human reason seems to be incapable of explaining this anguish of being and therefore absolute existence remains shrouded in mystery. Kafka acutely felt this anguish of being which consequently alienated him from any sources of his being; but rather than plunging into despair, Kafka tries to fathom the meaning of his being through his writings. Like most leading modern realist writers, Kafka focuses on the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in man. Ontologically speaking, man is by nature solitary, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings. Georg Lukacs quotes Thomas Wolfe in his book **The Meaning of Contemporary Realism** :

My view of the world is based on the firm conviction that solitariness is by no means a rare condition, something peculiar to myself or to a few specially solitary human beings but the inescapable, central fact of human existence.' Man, thus imagined, may establish contact with other individuals, but only in a superficial, accidental manner; only, ontologically speaking, by retrospective reflection. For 'the others', too, are basically solitary, beyond significant human relationships.

(Lukacs , 1962,20)

The existential awareness of one's own being as a fact that is to be accepted is designated by the word '*facticity*', a term which is used to designate the limiting factor in existence. No one chooses to be, he simply finds himself in existence. Martin Heidegger has used the expression '*thrownness-into-being*' (*Geworfenheit Dasein*) , a metaphor for man's factual condition. Human possibilities are always set against a

framework of facticity, sometimes broad offering many choices, at other times narrow, almost stifling. But in most cases, the threat of tragedy due to the frustration of possibilities looms large because for all that man is, man really does not know why he exists. He is forsaken or thrown unfathomably, which further implies that man neither develops nor is developed by his contact with the world. In this respect, the external world of reality appears static; it is only the narrator or the examining subject who changes in course of time. Therefore the existentialists insist that it is only in action that existence attains concreteness and fullness. Through the phrase 'self as agent', both Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel support the dynamic view of man, but which is not to be confused with the functional view of man. As John Macquarrie elucidates:

Man is more than the task he performs and the role he plays. He is the unity of a person who expresses himself in all these activities or, perhaps better expressed, makes himself in these activities. His actions are more than empirically observable deeds, for in them he is both projecting and realizing an image of personhood.

(Macquarrie, 1972, 137)

Kafka's existential crisis lies in his inability to realize his self as a whole. In this respect, Kafka's two chief early works **Description of a Struggle** and **Wedding Preparations in a Country** would make an interesting study. The first draft of the unfinished story **Description of a Struggle** was written in 1904-05. The story opens with the narrator's solitariness in the midst of a feast of life. He is estranged not only from the others but also from his own self as well until his solitariness is intruded by a new acquaintance much to his chagrin. The descriptive detail till here is realistic until Part -ii which is a phantasmagoria of dissolving landscape and figures, a reflection of the narrator's conflict-ridden self to effect changes in a minute, his wish to dissolve

himself. The narrative is now a series of disconnected conversations, reflections and fantastic images. The narrator relies on his imaginative power to transform the landscape to surrealistic heights of the dream world to come to the truth that all this in this earth boil down to nothing. When the Supplicant says to the interlocutor: "And I hope to learn from you how things really are, why it is that around me things sink away like fallen snow, whereas for other people even , a little liqueur glass stands on the table steady as a statue" (CS, 34); the illusory quality of reality that all things lack cohesiveness is revealed. Even the supplicant has doubts in his own existence and has to look outside himself as a proof to his reality. **Description of a Struggle** is a fantastical situation presented as real, where the narrator, by the power of his words is able to bring about fantastic changes in the world outside. He calls them "Diversions, or Proofs That It Is Impossible to Live". He walks on a wintry night on the streets of Prague, the only story in which actual Prague is mentioned, but takes on fantastic proportions as he commands the world outside with his words. Words can create a phantasmagoria of images where the self is no more a flesh but a pure spirit and then there is no divide between the two worlds. Marthe Robert has rightly put it:

This is the world of all-powerful thought, where desires are fulfilled more magically than in magic, before they have been formulated; but it is also a purely linguistic realm, where a well-constructed sentence instantly makes its content a reality and, anticipating the desire that dictated it, provokes the event instead of representing it. In this realm the weakest, most disarmed of persons is endowed with fantastic strength by reason of his weakness, which forces to be pure spirit.

(Robert, 1982,136)

Likewise, **Wedding Preparations in the Country** starts with a realistic descriptive realism with Eduard Raban looking at the pavement, people walking on the pavement,

girl holding puppy, two gentlemen exchanging information, lady carrying ribbon and flowers, men smoking and talking- realistic description to the point of banality. Eduard Raban, apparently getting ready to meet his fiancée, finds himself cut off from this feast of life. All that he wishes to do is dream himself being changed into a beetle to avoid life and love: "The form of a large beetle, yes. Then I would pretend it was a matter of hibernating, and would press my little legs to my bulging belly. And I would whisper a few words, instructions to my sad body, which stands close beside me, bent. Soon I shall have done- it bows, it goes swiftly, and it will manage everything efficiently while I rest" (CS, 56). In 'The Wedding Preparations in a Country,' the stranger tells the story of the fat man who wishes to recreate the outside world to suit himself. The Fat Man again tells a story of the man who contests with the instability of the outside reality. Thus here one inset story is meshed with another inset story; and reality is embedded beneath the layers of appearance.

This obsession with being transformed into an insect or animal is worked out more rigorously in **The Metamorphosis** and other works like **A Country Doctor**. The first of his great stories is **The Judgment**, written in one long stretch of time on the night of September 22-23, 1912. It is a triumphant release of his imaginative powers. The story opens with a perfectly realistic description and yet in many ways a strange one: "It was a Sunday morning in the very height of spring. Georg Bendemann, a young merchant, was sitting in his room on the first floor of one of a long row of small, ramshackle houses stretching beside the river which were scarcely distinguishable from each other in height and coloring" (CS, 77). It is the story of Georg, who writes a letter to his friend in Russia about his professional and personal success; and the ensuing dialogue between father and son; and the absurd sentencing to death by drowning by his father. The superficial impression of the story is the personal success

of Georg against the failure of his friend in Russia; the domestic comfort of home enjoyed by Georg to the cold alien ness associated with his friend. Never for once does the narrative betray the actual position of his friend first hand as the conversation between the father and the son becomes increasing unreal and grotesque. To the question of the father asking if the friend in St. Petersburg was real; Georg avoids a direct answer. Rather, he concentrates on the decrepit father not taking care of himself and his own guilt in his neglect. The image of the senile and decrepit father is strengthened as Georg puts his father to bed. But no sooner is he put to bed, he regains his lost strength and immediately springing erect in bed explodes: "You wanted to cover me up, I know my young sprig, but I'm far from being covered up yet. And even if this is the last strength I have, it's enough for you, too much for you. Of course, I know your friend. He would have been a son after my own heart. That's why you've been playing him false all these years. Why else? Do you think I haven't been sorry for him? And that's why you had to lock yourself up in your office- the Chief is busy, mustn't be disturbed – just so that you could write your lying little letters to Russia. But thank goodness a father doesn't need to be taught how to see through his son" (CS, 84-85). Georg is made to see the reality of the father's version of reality with such force that even Georg begins to acknowledge that truth. The reality of Georg's world is spilled into the fantastic with the transformation of the weak father into the image of strength. The phrase 'cover me up' stands for the son's effort to bury the father's presence but the father is not ready to be usurped by his son. The meekness and devotion which Georg shows for his father, supplemented with the maid's utterance of the word "Jesus!" upon seeing him running to submit himself to his father's order of death is sufficient to provoke the image of Christ and his willful sacrifice. Realistic presentation also makes use of linguistic, physical, historical,

cultural and psychological elements. In Kafka, instead of mimetic realism, there is a pronounced psychological realism wherein the individual subject is the locus of presentation. In each of the other elements of realism, the narrative at times oversteps them and such transgression leads to a fantastic interpretation of the real world. It is interesting to note that Kafka's faithfulness to external descriptive art makes him appear almost a naturalist like Emile Zola but Kafka's genius lies in his ability to go beyond the surface reality, to reach the truth. Realism constantly attempts to capture what is a 'true to life' aspect of a constantly shifting society which makes it a relative phenomenon. On the other hand, the narrative use of fantasy does not push realism into a world of abstraction but rather Kafka x-rays through the real world to reach surrealistic heights. He gives a bold vision of the 'real' unreality which lies behind, beneath, and beyond the frontiers of realism in other writers. This fracture between the real and the fantastic in **The Judgment** is a reminder of the fractured existential world. Like dreams, the surface of the text hides shadowy depths of meaning. There is a greater truth underlying the psychological one, of oppressor-father and victim-sons. It reflects the uncertainty of the world we live in. Thus what started with prosaic realism ends with poetic fantasticality. **The Judgment** was his first story where Kafka experimented with his dream narrative form, continued to use it in **The Metamorphoses** and thereby perfecting its use in **The Trial** and **The Castle**. Kafka is the consummate modern man with a fragmented, morose self. The fragmentation of his personality finds a parallel in the disintegration of the outer world represented in his works. The literature of realism should not only aim at the truthful reflection of reality, but also demonstrate both the abstract and concrete potentiality implying a description of plausible events and emotion which is the result of healthy interaction between man and his environment. But Kafka's protagonists are maladjusted

creatures which explain why there is a constant negation of outward reality. The descriptive detail of his works deal with palpable characters but behind the realistic veneer lie the fantastic even nightmarish world whose function is to evoke angst. Thus there is an inter-dependent relation between the negation of reality and the dissolution of personality. Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated fragments. He is as inexplicable to others as to himself. How the personality is severed by the destruction of this complex tissue of man's relationship with his environment can be understood by an existential analysis of **The Metamorphosis**. The narration here does not explain the occurrence of the extraordinary event but the effects which this extraordinary event causes upon this network of associated events and people. The breakthrough he made in **The Judgment** continued in **The Metamorphosis** where the real dabbles with the unreal. Unlike a purely fantastical work which begins with a perfectly natural situation to move into the unreal; **The Metamorphosis** starts with the supernatural event (Georg's metamorphosis into a vermin) moving into the natural. The fine blending of realism with fantasy lies in the reader's willing participation in the text, so that the readers get a feel that the metamorphosis of Georg into a vermin may be fantastical but possible. The opening sentence shows Georg's metamorphosis as though it was a dream yet Georg does not stop looking around for a rational explanation for it: "As GREGOR SAMSA awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (CS, 89). The element of realism is introduced in Gregor's recognition of his room, the cloth samples, picture frame of a woman in furs, alarm clock, furniture, keys, living room, family chief clerk, so much so that even his details of his transformed body is impeccably meticulous and scientific. His metamorphosis into a disgusting vermin is no dream but a revelation of a truth. The temptation to call this work as a piece of

fantastic literature is strongly present. Tzvetan Todorov (1939- ), the French literary critic writes: "The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty" (Sander, 2004, 136); and by 'uncertainty' Todorov means the hesitation experienced by the characters between the real and the supernatural. He was of the view that if this tension is given a logical explanation, the narrative falls into the genre of the uncanny; and if supernatural, the narrative would move into the realm of the marvelous. He regards only works remaining in 'hesitation' as the fantastic. In **The Metamorphosis**, Gregor's transformation leaves him uncertain about his transformation. Thinking it to be an 'uneasy dream', Gregor gradually looks around seeking rational explanation and comes to the conclusion that his metamorphosis may be unusual but possible. When his family members call for him 'his immediate intention was to get up quietly without being disturbed, to put on his clothes and above all eat his breakfast, and only then consider what else was to be done, since in bed, he was well aware, his meditations would come to no sensible conclusion. He remembered that often enough in bed he had felt small aches and pains, probably caused by awkward postures, which had proved purely imaginary. Once he got up and he looked forward eagerly to seeing this morning's delusions gradually fall away. That the change in his voice was nothing but the precursor of a severe chill, a standing ailment of commercial travelers, he had not the least possible doubt" (CS, 92). He felt he could still really catch the eight o' clock train to work. Gradually he resigns to his situation for now he can relieve himself of the unnerving responsibilities both at home and at work; and even resigns himself to death that his family desires for him. Many see *The Metamorphoses* as "an ultimately serious and universally human parable of man's fate"; or as an exposé of the "persistent primitiveness of man", or as in such existential situation the animal-identity is felt deeper. The fantastic here hovers

between the uncanny and the marvelous; and the hesitation or uncertainty that Todorov speaks of is overcome as the nightmarish irrational stance is presented with perfect oneiric logic. **The Metamorphoses** is the change brought to him by his soul-destroying job, the pressure of being the dutiful son and the father-son opposition changing him into a parasite. His resignation to death is the result of his failure to enter the human-circle. Thus we see that Kafka's works dabble between two opposing but complementary dialectic propositions, as there lies no immutable external reality as our preconceptions of the impossible are assaulted each day. Being works of art they represent not just the external perceptions but are legitimized by their own internal rules, so that the totally fantastic is contradicted by the profound reality underneath the things. The unreality of fantasy gives to Kafka's works a kind of separate existence, a unique reality and autonomy of its own. The mode of the fantasy can be used to mimic the absurdity of modernist Capitalism. The grotesqueness of social realism has made the Marxists interested in the fantastic. China Mieville (1972- ) in his brilliant essay **Marxism and Fantasy: An Introduction** writes, "Real" life under capitalism is a fantasy: "realism", narrowly defined, is therefore a "realistic" depiction of an absurdity which is true yet absurd. The Marxists reveal how our social and personal relationships are to be governed in the same way as a commodity. This explains why Gregor is important to the family only as long as contributes to the material welfare of the family. It is also a projection of the bourgeois family values that Kafka was fed with. Marx and Engels in **The Communist Manifesto** said about the bourgeois as such: "The bourgeoisies, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than

callous 'cash payment'.....It has resolved personal worth to exchange value" (Marx and Engels, 1952, 35). The same kind of tedium of workplace reducing an individual to a mechanical work piece and erosion of self-worth is again seen in another little story **Poseidon**. Even though the nightmarish quality of **The Metamorphoses** is absent here but beneath the apparent hilarity is the agony of being tied with Poseidon, the mythical God of the Seas, with the trident, confined to earthly matters, reveals the soul-wrenching mechanism of modernism. The use of myth by Thomas Mann and other German writers was no accident; Mann used biblical and Germanic myth to recreate the grandeur of the heroic past in the present. No doubt Kafka was inspired by Mann but Kafka uses mythical background to explore the social and psychological insecurity inherent in the very act of living. Marthe Robert elucidates:

An imitator, as befits a latecomer in the world where everything has already been done, said, and written, he appropriated the harmony of the ancients in order to show the discord of his own being and the imposture of what was offered to him under the name of established order. Veiling his sick, irresolute self with the eternal youth of the epic, he anchored the transient and fortuitous in the millennia, the present in the timeless literature of the past, and his own instability in the permanence of the sacrosanct tradition. But his purpose in borrowing the mask of a Greek armed with unshaken confidence in his heroes and his gods was certainly not to proclaim his attachment to the purported humanism of the 'average cultivated European' but, by contrast, to expose the wandering Jew that he himself was in the infinite misery of his loneliness.

(Robert, 1982, 166)

However, unlike Mann, Kafka uses myth to explore the grandeur of the present, though often self-defeating, yet ennobling. The mythical Poseidon was used by Kafka to illustrate the reality of modern day capitalism, one that reduces everything to the

level of a commodity. Similarly in another short tale **Prometheus**, Kafka presents four variants of the Promethean Legend instead of one authorized real version. Prometheus, tied to the rock in the Caucasus, perpetually punished by Zeus, by making an eagle feed his liver for thousands of years until all is forgotten due to weariness. The entire process of torture is detailed with precise realism but the cause unknown: "There remained the inexplicable mass of rock. The legend tried to explain the inexplicable. As it came out of a substratum of truth it had in turn to end in the inexplicable" (CS, 432). The Promethean tale of betrayal and suffering is entrenched in the modern world, for the 'wounds closed wearily' but not healed ; and Prometheus and the massy rock becoming one reveals how the torture of the world causes the individual to lose the last vestiges of his humanity. Kafka also uses the element of myth to explore the atavistic fear present in man, that fear the reality of which confounds man as seen in the thin line between realism and fantasy in stories like **The Great wall of China**, **The Burrow** and **The Old Manuscript**. Yet again in **The Silence of the Sirens**, which is an ironic reworking of Homer's **The Odyssey**, Kafka shows how Ulysses could escape the alluring sirens by the resoluteness of his faith. The sirens of Kafka, mythically known for their power of their songs to allure men, here are seen using the other tactic of alluring Ulysses, by their silence. It was believed that the songs of the sirens could pierce through everything, yet Ulysses ignorant of it was confident that his handful of wax was enough to save him from the potent songstresses. Ulysses, thinking that they were singing even in their silence defeats the sirens: "They no longer had any desire to allure; all that they wanted to hold as long as they could the radiance that fell from Ulysses' great eyes." (CS, 431) This use of the myth of Ulysses, apparently fantastical echoes strong reverberations of modernism. It bespeaks of the power of transformations caused by fantasy to bring

effective changes in reality. For the Marxists it is of interest to see that the demands of fantasy should met lest it should cause disruption in the society. Lenin writes in his article *What is to be Done? Burning Questions of our Movement*: "The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes in his dreams, if he attentively observes his life, compares his observations with his castles in the air, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously of his fantasies" (Lenin, Vol.5, 509). Both Lenin and the radical critic Pisarev believed that " If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well." Even in Kafka's most fantastical works, one can discern social, polemical, cultural, political and psychological reality, and this would be of interest to the Marxists, which can bring transformations in the way we perceive the world. Thus **The Great wall of China** is a commentary on the Jewish life in the Diaspora, the separateness of the Jews and their insecurity expressed in the story through the need to build a wall. Interestingly the narrative also throws light on how the very manner of constructing this wall does not actually serve to protect , rather the very manner of piece-meal construction with many gaps only make them more conspicuous and vulnerable. Also the wall standing in a deserted region makes it susceptible to be pulled down with ease. The narrator who is a contemporary scholar trying to explain his country's imperial history also finds no logical reason for the building of the wall-"Against whom was the Great wall to serve as a protection? Against the people of the North. Now, I come from the south-east of China. No northern people can menace us there.[ . . ] . 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). Thus there seems to be no real external dangers against which man needs to

be protected with and in such a situation man dream of an internal danger. The messenger with an imperial message 'Just for you' never reaches its goal forcing us to dream the message by our self can symbolize the need for self-reliance. Like the futility of building a wall against unseen danger is similar to the elaborate and labyrinthine burrow that the badger builds to fortify himself against an illusory enemy in **The Burrow**. The constantly threatening noise in the burrow is a reflection of the last stages of Kafka's tuberculoses gnawing his life. Likewise in **An Old Manuscript**, the nomads from the North, with their savage ways of living, failing to communicate not just in language but also in signs, and the helplessness of the Europeans to tackle them points to the terror of darkness residing within man beneath the veneer of civilization. The fine line between man and beast is blurred as in **A Country Doctor**, where the country doctor is awoken in the middle of a cold night to attend a seriously ill-patient. The doctor's thought is broken by the sudden appearance of a groom with giant-horses breaking into supernatural force while the bestial groom stays behind to assault the servant girl. The end is a pitiable picture with the doctor exposed to the cold of the weather and his patient. He now realizes the disappointment of his vocation as a healer. The doctor's 'earthly vehicle' borne by 'unearthly horses', again symbolize his state of dubious existence. Here is the pathetic figure of the doctor who can neither face the harshness of reality nor escape into the fantastic. Kafka's own sense of betrayal is unmistakable here. Kafka's approach to the dualism of realism and fantasy can be also be derived from his **Diaries**. Plato in his Republic expresses man's pitiable ignorance about the true nature of the Ideas where reality is to be deciphered by the play of shadows. Kafka's works show a similar illusion where ultimate reality and truth continually evaded. Kafka puts it succinctly in his diary entry of December 16, 1911: " I am separated from all things by a hollow space, and I

do not even reach to its boundaries.”; and again in November 19 and 21, 1913, he writes: “ Everything appears to me construed...I am chasing after constructions. I enter a room, and I them in a corner, a white tangle.”; finally the most hopeless statement of Kafka is made on October 21, 1921: “All is imaginary- family, office, friends, the street, all imaginary, far away or close at hand, the woman; the truth that lies closest, however, is only this, that you are beating your head against the wall of a windowless and doorless cell.” This is Kafka, the tortured soul, trapped in the reality of clock-time, unable to carry the burden of past and future. “What is it here”, he asks, “ to tie me to a past or a future? The present is a phantom state for me.” (D, 1914-1923, p.126.) This forms the essence of all his novels. **Amerika** is perhaps the most realistic of his writings in its use of actual geographical exploration and historical name; and as Edwin Muir in his introduction to the novel tells there is very little trace of allegory in it. Kafka had no first-hand knowledge of America; and much of his information is based on his imagination and personal contacts. His cousin Otto emigrated to America in 1906 to work as a porter in a corset-manufacturing firm and by dint of his hard work had made his way to become its export Manager. Otto later found his own business, the Kafka Export Corporation. Otto’s brother Franz joined him in 1909 in New York. Another cousin Emil emigrated in 1904 and did quite well. Thus it was natural for Franz Kafka to picture America as the New World, the rebirth place of average Europeans. He himself called the novel as ‘an imitation of Dickens’ in its picaresque features. Thus its realism is closely associated in its likeness to the novel of adventure and the novel of education. But there are a lot of dream-distortions of reality that make this novel open not only to psychoanalytical and existential interpretations. Containing no inaccessible castles and no mysterious courts of justice, this novel deals with ordinary people not intended with any symbolic ramifications;

yet what makes **Amerika** correspond to the two novels is the quality of its imagination. It is not nightmarish as the novel is the one of the happier works rare in Kafka. It is a work where grotesque realism is set against pure comic fantasy. The novel opens with a realistic backdrop of America: "Karl Rossmann, a poor boy of sixteen who had been packed off to America by his parents because a servant girl had seduced him and got herself with child by him, stood on the liner slowly entering the harbor of New York, a sudden burst of sunshine seemed to illumine the statue of liberty, so that he saw it in a new light, although he had sighted to long before. The arm with the sword rose up as if newly stretched aloft, and round the figure blew the free winds of heaven"(A,13). The statue of liberty holds aloft not a torch but a sword; the maddening traffic dazzling the eye; Uncle Jacob's imposing residence with six over ground and five underground storey and his business power-house; the multi-storied Hotel Occidental with thirty lifts makes 'both recognizable and disfigured' (Anderson, 1992,105). The distortion of these American icons and images reflect the destabilization of the protagonist's perception because of which Karl fails to undergo the process of self-formation. His refusal even to associate himself with his name is the outward projection of his inadequate self. The split between the self and the world point to the fragility and instability of subjectivity in a hostile modern world. Karl's search for his umbrella like his search for his self takes a labyrinthine journey: ".....and he had painfully to find his way down endlessly recurring stairs, through an empty room with a deserted writing-table until in the end, since he had taken this route no more than once or twice and always a crowd of other people, he lost himself completely"(A,14). During the trial scene in the Captain's cabin he notices the bustle of the boats and ships on the river. In chapter 2, Karl gazes down similarly on the perpetual stream of traffic and foreshortened human figures visible from his uncle's

balcony. At the end of the same chapter, we see Pollunder's car taking a complicated route through the busy streets of the New York suburbs where it further bifurcates into side-streets as the main road is blocked by a workers' mass demonstration. The experience of reality as a labyrinth points to the physical, perceptual and psychological disorientation suffered by the self who cannot assimilate in a hostile environment. If making sense depends upon one's ability to register reality then Kafka highlights the consequence of when such distinctions are abolished, the boundaries of self are dissolved and hence one can no longer differentiate between the inner and the outer world. The novel also debunks America as land of wealth and opportunity, for beside the technological feats lie the sordidness of the crowded tenements and the dehumanizing process of the modern world. Kafka took keen interest in socialism and it is not difficult to discern elements of social realism. The Stoker is thrown out of his job in spite of being efficient and every positive step undertaken by Karl only serves to lower his social standing culminating in the highly fantastic last chapter 'The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma'. The ethereal theatricality is presented in the form of the Oklahoma theatre promising jobs for everyone. Karl goes to try his luck admiring hundreds of women dressed as angels in white robes with huge wings on their shoulders. Throughout the chapter there is an air of carnival permeating with performers performing, hordes of people queuing for jobs, staffs enrolling all and sundry. The entire chapter though incomplete is without doubt, was to be the conclusion Kafka intended. Max Brod corroborates: "From what he told me, I know that the incomplete chapter about the nature theatre of Oklahoma....was intended to be the concluding chapter of the work and should end on a note of reconciliation." This chapter is a kind of wish-fulfillment, a place for everyone in this world. It is a figment of a world which respects individuals unlike the American

system. Karl is amazed at the care they were taken at: "what destitute, disreputable characters were here assembled, and yet how well they had been received and cared for!" (A, 266). The novel ends with Karl traveling with the troupe through the high range of mountains. Thus realism and fantasy is worked by Kafka's peculiar approach to reality which is both mimetic and anti-mimetic., but which Anne Fuch says ' cannot be explained by Kafka's lack of first-hand experience of American Life. Rather it has to with the way he employs modern America both as the main locus of social contest and as a metaphor' (Preece, 1999, 25). Kafka gave up the Dickensian experiment after **Amerika** for he was more at home in the reality of the fantasy. Like **Amerika**, **The Trial** presents kaleidoscopic images of urban reality- the court and its labyrinthine corridor, crowded streets, law offices, dusty attics and other concrete pictures of social misery and filth. Kafka has even meticulously presented the smallest of detail to provide a naturalistic effect- men shopping, vendors shouting, children playing or men relaxing at the windows. **The Trial** is also a surrealistic journey of Joseph K. through a phantasmagoria of the modern city. Even though external reality is presented through the consciousness of Joseph K., but again it is a highly disoriented world which serves to reveal his inability to associate with his environment. Like Kafka who had known the bourgeois-capitalist security, Joseph K. cannot participate in the throbbing life of the Proletariats. The influential Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs has explored in **Franz Kafka : An Anthology of Marxist Criticism** (1981) how Kafka's writings are actually reflections of man's impotence in the face of modern capitalism. Also **The Trial** is a search for a ration between the court's inexplicable accusation and Joseph K.'s insistence on his innocence. However at the very outset only, it is not difficult to see that Joseph K.'s arrest is a foregone conclusion. He is arrested by an unknown but powerful authority. Initially he thinks it

as a joke planned for him on his thirtieth birthday by his friends until the warders don't just arrest him but also intrudes upon his private space by eating his breakfast and confiscating his underwear. The court itself is highly unreal in its utter lack of legal sense and grave administrative defects, for instance, the Examining Magistrate does not even know for sure who exactly is Joseph K. . He thinks him to be a house painter, and yet it does not matter. No doubt, the image of the court is real but its trappings are without any logic of cause and effect. Joseph K. tries hard to bring the court within the grasp of his rationality, but the court refuses to fit into any sort of logic mastered by Joseph K.'s moral and legal knowledge. The court intrudes all spheres of his life – the courtroom situated in the tenement and its representatives whom he meets in the streets, and so Joseph K. finds ' a summary court in perpetual session.' The reality of the court is produced with concreteness yet reality moves into the realm of the fantastic as the trial begins to take on a purely subjective colour. Joseph K. presents himself for his hearing even uncalled under the tacit presumption that he is to report himself again at the same address and at the same time. Therefore Joseph K. sits in self-judgment and this makes him regard all mediators between him and the court as useless ; even dismissing his lawyer Huld , and Joseph K. absurdly trusting court-painter Titorelli. Titorelli advises him how definite acquittal would be the best possibility for him bespeaks of the absurdity of the law: "As far as I know, there is no single person who could influence the verdict of definite acquittal. The only deciding factor seems to be the innocence of the accused. Since you're innocent, of course it would be possible for you to ground your case on your innocence alone. But then you would require neither my help nor help from anyone." (T, 169)

Paradoxically, Joseph K. never escapes from the shadow of the court. Chapter 10 'The End' reaches surrealistic heights when Joseph K. realizes the futility of his

resistance after peering into his murky self and so willingly submits to his death, the truth of the clash within his self having dawned upon him. His execution is full of 'odious' ceremony and ironical 'courtesy'. Thus **The Trial** is a plunge into a nightmarish world where the charge against Joseph K. is never specified but his indictment is confirmed right from the very first chapter. Seen from this angle the Joseph K.'s efforts to prove his innocence has been all along not only futile but absurd. This is what Martin Heidegger means by '*thrownness*'. The court is a subjective reality but a reality which permeates through all spheres of his life in spite of its irrationality; we can also say whether the court is real or not is immaterial but the way Joseph K. reacts to it is real. Like the first novel **Amerika**, this novel is also full of eccentric characters and absurd situations. Even the various identifiable places defying order and logic like the crowded tenement which houses the court offices, the lawyer Huld's claustrophobic house serving also as his office, the dusty atelier of the painter Titorelli and the cathedral lack the tangibility of reality; and appear more as hallucinations of the estranged consciousness of their author Franz Kafka. Being '*thrown*' into this world makes it difficult both for the author and the protagonist to relate to any outside physical objects. Herman Hesse, after reading Max Brod's version of **The Trial** found it a delightful book conveying through its gossamer construct the guilt of life itself. Brod mentions the joy Kafka himself derived from reading the first chapter of **The Trial** aloud to his close friends. **The Trial** is thus a brilliant piece of fantastic literature, almost bordering on the uncanny; and at the same time, very real in its essential truth it conveys. Like the man in the parable of the Doorkeeper, Joseph K. meets with the same fate. Like the man in the parable Joseph K. does not walk out off his agonizing situation but rather submits to it; failing to understand the meaning of the Doorkeeper's words: "No one but you could gain

admittance through the door, since this door was intended for you" (T, 237). Thus **The Trial** can also be seen as an emblem of man's self-trial in his pursuit of the ultimate truth which would entail the total abrogation of the clock time. The dream-like quality is further carried on in **The Castle**, where the castle like the image of the court remain intangible ideas existing at all realms. **The Castle** opens with K., of whose past we know nothing of presents himself as the land-surveyor of a village which is ruled by a castle. After the initial skepticism, the telephone conversation with the castle authorities his appointment is confirmed; yet K. himself is never sure of his own place in the village. Even the villagers later believe that his appointment with the castle authorities is only illusory. In this way the question of whether K. had really been summoned by the castle authorities or is K. only imagining or pretending is never made clear by Kafka. But we never doubt the sincerity with which he pursues his goal of gaining entrance into the castle, be it by appropriating Frieda, the mistress of a higher castle official, Klamm; or the physical hardship that he endures in the hostile cold and snow to go to the castle; or the nuisance he tolerates of his two assistants Arthur and Jeremiah provided by the castle authorities. This elusive nature of the castle is present right from the beginning when the castle is pictured as 'hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show that a castle was there.' (C, 9) Thus K. adopts the Herculean task of making an entry into the castle and on the first morning, he makes straight for the castle only to realize that the road 'did not lead up to the castle hill, it only made towards it and then, deliberately, turned aside, and though it did not lead away from the castle it got no nearer to it either' (C, 73). But this does not deter him from seeking out the castle. Thus **The Castle** can also be interpreted as man's effort to overcome his singularity by reaching out to the outside world to build meaningful relationships. It is only by

reaching out that man derives meaning of himself. The existentialists have stressed on the importance of human relationships. Sartre says that our '*being-for-others*' is as fundamental as our '*being-for-ourselves*'. The concept of being-with or '*Mitsein*' is an important point of discussion in Heidegger's **Being and Time**. Jaspers also writes: "The individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone I sink into gloomy isolation- only in communication with others can I be revealed" (Jaspers, 1970, 147). It seems paradoxical that a movement so intensely individualistic should devote so much space to the analyses of human relationships. However, for the existentialists, individualism does not mean physical seclusion or even indifference. They do believe that interpersonal relationships are impossible because of the very nature of the human condition. Yet, man is peculiarly aware of his matter-of-factness. No one chooses to be, he simply finds himself in existence. Man is 'forsaken' just as Christ was forsaken. For Kafka, God as an entity did not exist. Now even if he presumes that only God could give meaning to the world, then the world was apparently meaningless for Kafka; and even if God did exist, there are not really any definite ways to prove that the world was made for man, just as K.'s appointment as a land surveyor is never proved. K. greatly desires for the village to adopt him and so his whole effort is directed towards removing the tag of an outsider from himself. But he fails to realize that to be on the outside is a strategic strength and so when K.'s appointment is apparently confirmed initially, his strategic strength is converted to weakness. Just as we realize that K. has forfeited his freedom by changing his position but the image of the castle of brooding impenetrability confuse our minds: "**The Castle**, whose contours were already beginning to dissolve, lay silent as ever; never yet had K. seen there the slightest sign of life- perhaps it was quite impossible to

recognize anything at that distance, and yet the eye demanded it and could not endure that stillness. When K. looked at the castle, often it seemed to him he were observing someone who sat quietly there in front of him gazing, not lost in thought and so oblivious of everything, but free and untroubled, as if he were alone with nobody to observe him, and yet must notice that he was observed, and all the same remained with his calm not even slightly disturbed: and really one did not know whether it was cause or effect- the gaze of the observer could not remain concentrated there, but slid away" (C, 97). Martin Greenberg explains it in the following way:

Much of the surface confusion of the novel is due to the fact that K. strives simultaneously after two contradictory goals- to settle in the village (Life) and to penetrate into the castle (thinking-about-life) – without recognizing the contradiction. He is the man in the joke who rushes out of the house in opposite directions. His failure to recognize the contradiction is ignorance of the world, of reality, which is why the landlady of the Bridge Inn, that expert on reality calls him "the most ignorant person in the village". But what is confusion, madness, impossibility in the perspective of the world and its reality, is courageous effort in the perspective of the spirit. K.'s worldly confusion (ignorance) is at the same time spiritual effort (awareness).

(Greenberg, 1971,168)

But this goes against the idea that K. wants to settle in the village so that his admittance becomes easier as a part of that community, as an insider. **The Castle** is the image of the unattainable ideal and in spite of man's heroic unavailing strength till the end we realize that K.'s situation is no better than when he started. The confusion becomes clear to see K. not as a quester but as the one who is pursued, one subjected to a nightmarish world of weariness rather than the strength of the pursuer. The existential tragedy of K. lies not only in the impossibility of K. reaching the castle and

his returning back home becomes more difficult still. The desire for settlement to overcome the coldness of being outside the human circle is portrayed with child-like fantasy in **Blumfeld, an elderly Bachelor**. With no wife, no children waiting for him at home, Blumfeld decides to take up a dog to fill the void in his life only to give away the idea by the thought of dirt, contagion and inconvenience the dog would cause. Thus Blumfeld continues to suppress his loneliness only to have two jumping small white celluloid balls with blue stripes waiting for him at home. The inner harmony which Blumfeld had maintained till now is disturbed by the constant rattling of these two jumping balls. Finally Blumfeld is able to shut the two balls in lock and key, and goes to the office only to be harassed by two hopeless assistants. The two bouncing balls, though inert in composition yet possessing peculiarly active human characteristics have their contrasting counterpart in these two timid and lazy assistants. The story is therefore a commentary on Blumfeld's loneliness which is juxtaposed with his infantilism by the shirking off of responsibilities which starting a family would entail. These two assistants of Blumfeld remind us of the two assistants of K. in **The Castle**, Arthur and Jeremiah, but who know nothing of surveying. There is nothing noteworthy in them except for their marked physical similarity between the two like the two bouncing balls. Kafka's stories are fraught with such fantastic aberrations of singing mices, investigating dogs, reporting apes, giant moles, man turned insects or animals, but the strangest quintessential Kafka figure is the Hunter Gracchus floating in his 'death ship' for fifteen years. Although this peculiar story **The Hunter Gracchus** opens with a highly realistic description- two boys sitting near the harbor wall playing dice, a man reading newspaper, girl filling bucket at the fountain, fruit seller selling his wares, men drinking wine and the wine-seller dozing away. Such a picturesque idyllic description is interrupted by the arrival of a boat

from where alight men carrying the bier of Hunter Gracchus. The crowd is cleared in the second half of the story which consists largely of the enigmatic exchange between the Burgo master of Riva and the arisen Hunter Gracchus, their conversation dealing with who the hunter is, his origin, how and why the hunter died. The inability of the Hunter Gracchus to reach the other world is symbolic of the plight of the modern man: "My ship has no rudder and it is driven by the wind that blows in the nethermost regions of death" (CS, 230). The religious allegory of Christ's crucifixion and questions of man's redemption is unmistakable here. This is one short story where the geographical locale can be identified- Riva or Lake Garda; a hint on the visit to the same place by Max Brod and Kafka in 1909)- but such boundaries dissolve with the existential anguish of universal suffering. The Hunter Gracchus will never find rest, his tragedy being his not belonging to neither to this world nor to the other. But this sense of non-belonging brings with it a peculiar freedom- a simultaneous belonging to nowhere and everywhere. The ultimate challenge lies in 'going over' as in the parable "**On Parables**"- "When the sage says: "Go Over", he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labor were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something that he cannot designate more precisely either, and therefore help us here in the least" (CS, 457). Like the Existentialists, Kafka believed that it is only in action that existence attains concreteness and fullness. By '*self as agent*', Soren Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel shed light on the dynamic view of man, but which is not to be confused with the functional view of man. As John Macquarrie elucidates:

Man is more than the task he performs and the role he plays. He is the unity of a person who expresses himself in all these activities or, perhaps better expressed, makes himself in these activities. His actions

are more than empirically observable deeds, for in them he is both projecting and realizing an image of personhood.

(Macquarrie, 1972, 137)

Another interesting aspect of the fantastic in Kafka's works is the use of hybridity : man-animal as in **The Metamorphoses**, **Investigations of a Dog**, **Josephine**, **The Country Singer** and **A Report to an Academy**; man and rock as in **Prometheus**; the living and the dead as in **The Hunter Grachus**, or in the use of doubles like the two assistants (Arthur and Jeremiah) of K. in **The Castle**; or the rogue companions (Robinson and Delemarche) of Karl Rossmann in **Amerika**, or the two intrusive warders ( Franz and Willem); or even the two bouncing parasitic balls in **Blumfeld.**, **the Elderly Bachelor**. Such duplication is symptomatic of the split within Kafka's own psyche. Kafka's brilliant use of his imaginative fantasy is also revealed in the creation of such creatures like a cross between kitten and lamb; and a spool like unearthly creature Odradek; but in their emotional make-up these curious creatures are more real than human beings. The half-kitten, half-lamb of **A Crossbreed** takes from the cat its head and claws; and from the lamb its size and shape. The crossbreed defies classification, it flees from cats and makes to attack lambs; and strangely it is not a cat in its inability to mew and in its hatred for rats; and neither can it be more of a lamb in its animosity for lambs. Its grotesqueness is further worked out when the narrator says: ' In long draughts it sucks the milk in through its fang like teeth' (CS, 426) and when ' not content with being lamb and cat, it almost insists on being a dog as well' (CS,427). The aggressiveness of the cat is toned down by the gentleness of the cat. In its desire to communicate with its owner and the joy it displays in its understanding of their communication makes it more real and human. However, the irony lies in the last paragraph when the narrator says: "Perhaps the knife of the

butcher would be a release for this animal; but as it is a legacy I must deny it that” (CS, 427), points to complexity that Kafka bore of the legacy of being a Jew. Its playfulness is combined with its morbidity- tears rolling down imploring on end to its lonely life, or dancing with joy in its supposed understanding between the narrator and the cross. It is not difficult to discern the cross as an extension of Kafka himself; a bundle of contradiction. Another story in the similar vein is of another incongruous creature Odradek in **The Cares of a Family Man**. Although the strange creature is given rational interpretation to its physical existence- its name bearing the Slavonic or Germanic influence; its shape being flat star-shaped spool ( the image of a cross) and in its nimble agility., but in its wheezing laughter ‘as if it has no lungs’ it is not just grotesque but reminiscent of Kafka’s suffering with tuberculoses. But the language of the story is a series of contradiction- Odradek appearing ‘unfinished’ or ‘unbroken’ but ‘in its own way perfectly finished’; it being ‘ extraordinarily nimble’ again juxtaposed with its ‘wooden’ appearance. Such a creature cannot help arising several questions in the mind of the narrator- greater questions of its fate, death and after-life; but for the narrator the idea that he is likely to survive him pains him. So questions of life and death have no final answers as Odradek suspends between life and death; finally revealing its inaffinity with anything animate. Its star-shape echoes Jewish sentiments and Odradek having no ‘fixed abode’ an indication of the Jewish Diaspora that Kafka faced of being at once German, Czech and Jewish. Thus these stories apparently dealing with fantastical creatures, defying any logical categorization, points to the truth of Kafka’s own anxiety and security.

According to the German Idealist Hegel, truth and existence is one in the Absolute; but in Kafka truth and existence are mutually exclusive in the absolute. For Kafka existence or life is but a dream- like state expressed in his writings and this explains

his dream-like quality of his works. Also Kafka found the real world sordid; the court in **The Trial** is housed in the claustrophobic and crowded tenement; the inn houses in **The Castle** is nauseating with dirty beer puddles everywhere and rampant prostitution; and the picture of the foreign land in **Amerika** is disorienting. Nature descriptions in Kafka offer no freshness with an exception in the short story **Descriptions of a Struggle**. In Kafka's world there is so much anxiety that reality is forfeited. In the short story **Unhappiness** the exchange between the narrator and the ghost is conceived in normal way where terror is underplayed. **The Judgment** is a kind of a waking dream and the diary entry of this period notes: "Open up let the man come forth." Claude-Edmonde Magney finds the story so far away from reality unless it were a representation of a mad world. So difficult is the attempt to categorize the story that it points to the fundamental irreducibility of things and events. Others like Kate Flores see a dichotomy of Kafka whereby Georg represents the Kafka of the outer world, the son of a well-to-do merchant; and the absent friend represents the Kafka of the inner world, the tortured artist. The dichotomy continues in **Amerika** which is the dichotomy between innocence and guilt. Karl is punished by all father figures for expressing his sexual fulfillment. As in **The Trial** and **The Castle**, here too in **Amerika**, Karl does not know for sure what or who he is essentially looking for. However, the world of reality is never doubted in Kafka; the physical transformation of Gregor into a beetle in **The Metamorphoses** is tangibly real to see for all to see, Gregor's thoughts and feelings are described in human terms; we do not doubt the reality and the ability to think and speak like a human being; everyone believes the trial of Joseph K. to be real; K. in **The Castle** accepts his appointment as the land surveyor to be true; investigating dogs, singing mice, giant moles, war-horses transforming into human lawyer and other such talking animals are all

plausible in Kafka's fictions. Also K. is acutely conscious of his existence and hence his right in the castle, yet consciousness fails to interpenetrate into the complex and vague castle organization. **The Castle** as a way to God is dubious in Kafka although K. does not want to meet Klamm but the owner of the castle Count West West. In many ways these stories may be echoing Kafka's doubts as a writer; it leads the readers to question if Kafka is doubting his credibility as a writer just as K. in **The Castle** doubts his appointment as a land surveyor; also no where in the text does K. hint at doing or speaking anything about surveying. It is also easy to surmise that the torture machine of **In The Penal Colony** represents the torture of writing; and the act of burrowing in **The Burrow** can be a metaphor for writing.

Dreams take the shape of reality; but dreams in actuality don't persist for long; in **The Metamorphoses** the entire episode takes place after Gregor is said to have awoken from 'uneasy dream'; so is Joseph K. in **The Trial** arrested immediately after having woken up one fine morning; **The Country Doctor** is woken up in the middle of the night. Here it is as if after having woken up the dream like situation persists thereupon taking up nightmarish yet more real proportions. These situations are unbelievable but true due to its matter-of-factness which is existential. In actuality there is no stable reality but only versions of reality and Kafka seems to problematize reality. Kafka was also impressed by the Hasidic movement founded by Baal-Shem-Tov, who called for a spiritual renaissance and especially the Hasidics believed in the continuity of earthly reality and the unreality. Kafka's narratives have a chimeral powers, there is a fluidity in its tenor, one is carried into the fluid world without losing the matter-of-factness of things as they are in one of his notebooks, he writes that he wishes to recreate life in such a way that "while still retaining its natural full-bodied rise and fall, it would simultaneously be recognized no less clearly as a nothing, a dream, a

dim hovering..... Considered as a wish, somewhat as if one were to hammer together a table with a painful and methodical and technical efficiency, and simultaneously do nothing at all, and not in such a way that people would say: 'Hammering a table together is nothing to him', but rather 'Hammering a table together is really hammering a table together to him, but at the same time it is nothing', whereby certainly the hammering would become still bolder, still surer, still more real and, if you will, still more senseless." According to the Phenomenologists like Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl, the object of man's belief or emotion is not to be sought in the external but that it is to be realized in the internal world which they call the 'intentional object'. Perhaps in this they agree to the gap that exists between knowledge of oneself with knowledge of the others. When the others are viewed from the others point of view, judged by the emotions and beliefs of the others, then such a perspective falls into the danger of reducing the others into simply objects. In this regard the phenomenologists differ from the existentialists because for the existentialists to reduce others to objects would be to see the existent as other than what he is.

Like most modernist writers, Kafka too rejects mimesis and there is a kind of social amnesia. Kafka did not represent the pure empirical reality. J.M. Bernstein tells how the problem of mimetic representation can lead to the twin errors of either 'metaphysical reification' or 'Empirical Reduction'. Let me quote Bernstein:

What we call reality is a 'complex formation of montages of notions, representations, images and of modes of action, gestures, attitudes; the whole ensemble functioning as practical norms which govern the concrete stance of men in relation to the objects and problems of their social and individual existence.' Marxists may call this the world of practical ideology; Proust, and with him Josipovici, denominate it the

domain of habit. Whatever it is called, it is not reality in itself. Realism, then, does not represent reality, but only repeats the received forms in which a society presents the world to itself and itself to the world. Instead of alerting us to the fiction we call reality, realism dulls our awareness of the problematic status of our representations and auto-representations, immuring us more deeply in the repetitions of social existence precisely by treating them as representations of reality.

(Bernstein, 1984, 232)

Further Bernstein therefore argues that modernist texts are in reality a self-validating constructions rather than as something given and produced by the writer, and hence meaning is always to be constructed rather than to be formed of mimetic representation of external reality. Now since representation is 'always second-hand', so Kafka has rightly adopted a form that very easily slides from realism to fantasy. For the Marxists behind the phenomenon of representation is the reality of capitalism. Many people see modernism as a move against realism as life is not presented as we live or experience it. In Kafka there is breakdown of pure realism because realism is seen as a demythologizing force. Kafka's protagonists are like Plato's man chained in the cave in Republic. This man sees not the real world but the hopeless distortion of the real world caused by the play of shadows. In Kafka's world, the reality does not correspond with the normal sense-perceptions. It is like the crisis which arises from the conviction of the existence of God, but apparently there is no God. In German Literature, the artist as an exile from reality is traced by many writers from Goethe's Tasso and Grillparzer's Sappho to Thomas Mann's Tonio Kroges. Even authors like Kliest and Hölderlin have traced this split in reality. Kafka mingles reality with fantasy because reality is constantly threatened; also reality being illusory; the Kafkean Hero tries to grope with the truth that lies buried within reality. However, his

search in this world is reduced to mockery. In *The Castle*, it is not the village authorities who is against K. but it is actually K., who in his defiance, refuses to live life according to the laws of the land. **The Bucket Rider** is one such strange story, written in the fantastic mode. However, the juxtaposition of the freezing cold suffered by the bucket rider with the warmth enjoyed by the coal dealer and his wife is also a pointer to the post-war economic slump. The bucket rider's plea for a shovelful of coal is ignored by them. The streak of cruelty in the bucket rider's wife is rarely to be found in Kafka's portrayal of women characters. The story ends with the bucket rider shouting back: " 'You bad woman! I begged you for a shovelful of the worst coal and you would not give it me.' And with that I ascend into the regions of the ice-mountains and am lost forever" (CS, 414). The futility of seeking help from heaven or earth by the suspended bucket rider in air is unmistakable here. His cries for help only cause him to be wiped away from the face of this universe forever. In such a case the dualism of realism and fantasy would play an important role in Kafka to present the dream-like contour behind the concreteness of things. It is the consequence of what the existentialists would call the '*anguish of here and now*'. Man is reduced to nothing but a temporal being constricted by the restraints of time and space. Philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Spinoza have all believed that man could escape through the anguish of here and now with the help of mind or intellect. This argument shows that all these thinkers tend to gloss over the duality of man, the observer and man, a part of the historical process. But Existentialists see no way in which this duality can be overcome. If man is seen as actively engaged in the historical process, he can sufficiently detach himself from his involvement to adopt a perspective on the whole of things. But even if he detaches himself to exist only as a spectator, he still fails to gain a vision on the whole of things because being a spectator, he would still

fail he could not be possibly be included in that vision. Therefore, there remains no longer a stable reality in the external world. What exist outside are only versions of reality which is again uncertain and inadequate. Thus Kafka does not aim to take his readers to marvelous heights of fantasy. Rather, his works jerk us out of our self-complacency to profound self-knowledge, where existence and consciousness dissolve. Kafka's existential crisis is conveyed by using descriptive realism as a precondition, but the structure and presentation making for an adequate image of the objective world depends on the writer's attitude towards reality as a whole. For Kafka, the world, being beset with anxiety, seeks refuge in the world of art, which makes the external world an equally incomprehensible terrifying place. Objective reality is subjectivized and distorted to help grasp the ultimate truth redeeming man. The subjectivizing of objective reality leads to angst. According to Kierkegaard, to undergo dread is necessary to appreciate fully the nature of existence; or else one is cut off from reality. However, the reality of existence is achieved at the cost of destroying one's faith. Reality is not static or quantifiable. Like Kant, Kierkegaard refused to believe that logic was the key to reality. Rather, Kierkegaard's maxim was 'subjectivity is truth', hence, Kierkegaard believed that it is only by turning inward that man discovers his real self and discovers freedom. In Kafka angst as a dominant existential condition leads to the reduction and distortion of reality. Thus the concrete novelty of Kafka's works makes one aware of the transcendent reality and Kafka's images become cryptic symbols of the unfathomable transcendence. Truth emerges out of the dream-like state in Kafka; and this is the truth that leads man to a better understanding of his existence. His stories exercise a magical effect, but his magic is not the magic of illusion but of revelation.

## CHAPTER- VI

### Kafka's Narrative Pattern: An Existential Perspective

*To have the feeling of being bound and at the same time the other, that if one were unbound, it would be even worse.*

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, December 21, 1910.

Narrative is one of the essential constituents to the understanding of reality. To raise the question on the nature of narrative is to raise question on the very nature of culture and humanity. As Roland Barthes puts it in his landmark essay on narrative: "All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself" (Barthes, 1982, 252). Since narrative involves translating *knowing* into *telling*, the understanding of a writer's text, no matter how different or exotic, his burden of culture can easily be transmitted with the help of a suitable narrative. This suggests as W.J.T Mitchell writes, "Narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (Mitchell, 1981,2); and such a stance would presume that the absence of narrative would indicate an absence of meaning itself. In this respect, Franz Kafka's narrative pattern would make an interesting study because in the works of Franz Kafka we see a total absence of the legitimate act of *knowing* into *telling*. At the same time all human beings are readers who seek to reconcile what they read with what they see. Such interpretative contexts are dependent upon each other to make sense of the fragmentary into the whole; or in other words in which the texts come to life or is concretized. This concretization of

the world buried within the sign of the text is a gradual but steady unfolding. This interaction of the three signified system – the presented world, the presentational process and reader- constitutes the ‘structural theory of context’ in proper fiction. Therefore any metastructural interpretation ought to be rooted in the interaction of these three signified system. Basically all texts start with an authorial reference to the world. In other words, the texts provide statements to establish what takes place so that seldom the readers are put to doubt as to the meaning of the text. But in Kafka, there is a continuous disjunction between the three signified systems – the presented word frequently has no spatial or temporal locus, the presentational process constantly shifting between different realms, and the reader is seldom a partner in contextualizing the meaning of the text. In other words, the existential crises in Franz Kafka results not just in the negation of inter-textuality and therefore the extraction of meaning in Kafka’s works would involve a special kind of reader. This reader is discouraged from asking any question but accept the presented word as it is. It is as if God’s act of creation cannot be understood in relation to anything else, but only as such. Thus what is present is the cold objectivity and the constricting impression of a singleview narrative; holding the reader a prisoner as in a nightmare.

However, according to Friedrich Beisner, Kafka’s ‘mono-perspective narration’ presents the external reality through the filtering process of the consciousness of the protagonist, where the narrator is not distinct from the protagonist; where free indirect speech with each word is drawn from the vocabulary of the focal character and recast in the third-person statement of the neutral narrator. Hence the protagonist seems more important than the author but the textual evidence shows that that the narration is not always mono-perspective. Similarly Rolf J. Goebel in his essay *The Exploration of the Modern City* in **The Trial** does not think that there could be a mono-

perspective narration in Kafka, for 'K.'s subjective perspective is frequently interrupted and supplemented by what can either be identified as a superior narrative consciousness or as K.'s own self-distancing, reflexive insights' (Preece,1999,45). Roy Pascal and others have focused on the dual perspective of the narration; which is one of the protagonist and the other of the narrator's consciousness. There are others like Patrick O' Neill in **Franz Kafka: His Craft and Thought** (1986) where he argues for Kafka's fiction reflecting a playful narrator's self-reflection. The unique narrative pattern of Franz Kafka is symptomatic of his existential crisis. Kafka was a Bourgeoisie product who represented in a very real sense the middle class awareness of spiritual starvation and moral disintegration. The world war plunged Germany into a long reign of historical complexity involving social, economic and political turmoil. Perhaps no other writer epitomized this crisis as beautifully as Franz Kafka. The plight of his heroes represents his own existential crisis, the representation of man as a being estranged from the world around him, haunted by feelings of guilt and governed by an all powerful and inscrutable authority. Torn by such cross – currents, we also find in Kafka a desperate search for an ordered pattern of faith on the other hand. Thus it is only natural that Kafka's narrative pattern should involve a blending of the neo-romantic with the surrealist, the spiritual with the realistic, and the allegorical with the symbolic. Rightfully, Kafka also makes use of the dream-narrative form. All these are fused in a stylistic lucidity rarely achieved in works with such great complexities. In a normal narrative situation, the author tries hard to win the attention of the listener or the reader or to stir their expectation in order to read a satisfactory conclusion. In fact, the entire framework of the story is governed by this fact. But this is not so in Franz Kafka because he was not writing with a reader in his mind; much of his works were chaotic, haphazard with no chronological sequence until Max Brod,

his close friend, confidante, and biographer compiled them together much against his wish even after his death; and as a result all his major works are fragmentary in nature and devoid of any meaningful conclusion. All his three fragmentary novels have been written with the help of an impersonal narrator. Perhaps the use of the impersonal narrator was an excellent way to describe the infinite variety of setting and mode; and the impersonal narrator narrating with an objective authority enjoys the privilege of the whole number of characters and situations unlike the personal narrator whose views can be blurred with his involvement in the real-life situation. However, Kafka's existential crisis is based upon Sartre's attack on the impersonal narrator who with the knowledge of the inner working of the characters and situation turns accident into destiny. Sartre was of the opinion that such a role totally misrepresented the nature of human existence. Sartre attacks the impersonal narrator as a 'piece of obscurantism, encouraging us to evade the truth of life.' It may be of significance to also refer to one of the best analyses of Kafka's narrative form by Harmut Binder who equates Kafka's narrative pattern with that of Flaubert, where the impersonal narrator narrates events from the outside, at the same time the narrative is also the narration of the characters themselves. But Kafka is an elusive writer who denies any attempt to associate his technique with any tendency. The existential Kafka struggled throughout his life to find a suitable form to suit his purpose. All his works begin with a realistic setting, situation and characters only to embroil us in the nightmarish world. There is also no clearing up of details at the end. Both **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphosis** is apparently narrated by an objective narrator but whose voice reflects the chief character's angle of vision. It was with **The Judgment** that Kafka thought he has reached his own mature method of self-expression. It is here that Kafka's narrative brilliantly fuses fantasy, realism, speculation and psychoanalysis into a new unity.

**The Judgment** has a conventional beginning, an initiation to an idyllic Sunday morning with Georg Bendemann having just finished off writing a letter to his old friend in Russia, announcing his professional success and personal success of being engaged. The narrative consisting of a long reverie throws much light on Georg's life of how he shared the house with his father; the death of his mother two years ago and his business ventures. At the same time, there are narratorial intrusions in the descriptions of the family adjustments after the death of the mother's death; or in statements containing the narrator's assumptions regarding his friend: "Should one advise him to come home, to transplant himself and take up his old friendship again- there was nothing to hinder him- and in general to rely on the help of his friends? But that was as good as telling him, and the more kindly the more offensively, that all his efforts hitherto had miscarried, that he should finally give up, come back home, and be gaped at by everyone as a returned prodigal, that only his friends knew what was what and that he himself was just a big child who should do what his successful and home-keeping friends prescribed' (CS, 78). The two perspectives are finely interwoven by plentiful use of free indirect speech which lends more objective observation but the line between subjectivity and objectivity is blurred in this dream-narrative. Georg reproaching himself for the apparent neglect of his father cannot be the statement of the narrator but of Georg's divided self- "The not so particularly clean appearance of his underwear made him reproach himself for having been neglectful. It should have certainly been his duty to see that his father had clean changes of underwear" (CS, 84). This could also be an instance of the narrator relinquishing his separate view to express the experience of the character. Thus there is no single authoritative voice in Kafka's works and therefore the temptation to look for symbolic and allegorical interpretations. Kafka's narrative lacks the purity of an

allegory as in *The Pilgrim's Progress* or *The Romance of the Rose*; rather the complex narrative pattern of Kafka, with its repository of symbols does not offer a key to the understanding of texts but makes it more baffling after each reading. A symbol is what it represents; but an allegory represents what it is not. Allegory refers to abstractions but a symbol is something that is specific and concrete. Thus Kafka's works have more symbolist value than as an allegory. Many of Kafka's narrative is expressed in mythopoetic terms where myth is used to elucidate structures or meanings that lie finely hidden beneath it to convey an eternal truth. Although despair emanates from it yet one cannot miss the humorous element in Kafka. Yet it is not the bitter laughter of Swift or the robustness of Rabelais's satire. It is comic irony with a mix of slap-stick humor. Kafka's humor is also disquieting with spiritual gravity. Clemens Heselhaus regards Kafka's works '*Anti-Marchen*', which is a form of narrative where failure is predestined and so the hero fails to reach his goal.

**The Judgment** can also be discussed as a parable as Ellis has done who regards Georg as a stay-at-home son echoing the biblical parable of the prodigal son and the St. Petersburg friend as the favored son. However, Roy Pascal writes:

Quite apart from the fact that there is no external, objective corroboration of the father's charges (that he is in league with the St. Petersburg friend, that he has Georg's customers 'in his pocket', that Georg is thoroughly incompetent in business etc.), there is such spiteful malevolence in his behavior that we have no right to believe either the truth of his accusations or the justice of his sentence. It is strange that the acumen that detects the inner falsity of Georg should not recognize that of the father. But, it may be argued, the abject failure of Georg in their contest and his consent to the death-sentence prove the truth of the father's assertions.

(Pascal, 1982, 29)

What is important is not the truth or falsity of arguments, but the existential conflict of love and hate culminating in the father's collapse and the son's suicide. The son accepting the death sentence only reveals the absurdity of such a judgment. There is guilt, there is also suffering but there is no clarity as to why should man suffer so; or the relationship between guilt whose cause is unknown and the acceptance of willful suffering culminating in death. There is no such simplistic answer to such profoundly agonizing existential complexity but makes characters like Georg Bendemann or Gregor Samsa unique individuals like Abraham. Soren Kierkegaard's **Fear and Trembling** deals with the story of Genesis where Abraham is commanded by God to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. Ethically and morally, Abraham under such circumstance should not be condemned for carrying out God's command. Abraham becomes ready to sacrifice his son on the absurd premise that through Isaac's murder, he will carry out God's command and still retain his son. Thus absurdity lies at the heart of one's existence. This also explains the father-son conflict in **The Metamorphoses**, where the father is the cause of the son's death. Gregor's metamorphoses only bring hatred in the father, embarrassment in his mother and disgust in his sister. Such filial relationship bound by hypocrisy is laid threadbare. Gregor's agony under his changed exterior is narrated no doubt by an impersonal narrator, but as in **The Judgment**, the narrative voice in **The Metamorphosis** strongly identifies with the character. The Aristotelian form of narrative is violated with the climax taking place in the first sentence itself: "As GREGOR SAMSA awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (CS, 89). Parallel to the narrator's objective vision is Gregor's thoughts and impression which is recorded with a high degree of subjectivity: "If I didn't have to hold my hand because of my parents, I'd have given notice long ago,

I'd have gone to the chief and told him exactly what I think of him" (CS, 90) ; or his resentful reflection on his job: " Well, there's still hope; once I've saved enough money to pay back my parents' debts to him- that should take another five or six years- I'll do it without fail. I'll cut myself completely loose then" (CS, 90). Here also the authorial intrusion is determined by the consciousness of Gregor. When the text continues: "What has happened to me? He thought. It was no dream" (CS, 89); the first sentence is distinctly Gregor's thought and so is the conclusion 'It was no dream'. The details of the room are Gregor's thoughts as his eyes travel around his room but the words in the parentheses, 'Samsa was a commercial traveler' is an information provided by the narrator. The narrator also provides other information about the three lodgers, the char woman, his sister and the dwindling family fortune. There is a total change in perspective at the moment of Gregor's death and because the story ends with the main character's death, many find in it the reason why the first person narrative could not have been used here. However, the dream-narrative involves a state of suspension, where the first person 'I' cannot be the narrator and the object of narration because the object of narration is the 'I' itself. As in a dream the self is faced with his own self.

Kafka was hesitant to publish much of his works but he was especially eager to publish **The Metamorphosis**. Although at first he was hesitant to send for publication to Kurt Wolff in April, 1913; but he did send it to Robert Musil in 1914. Kafka was 'particularly eager' to see its publication. In contrast to the many works of Kafka which are fragmentary in nature, this is a complete work combining intense self-recrimination and ironic melodrama and grotesque humor. Gregor Samsa trying to get a better view from the ceiling or peeping through the chink of the door can be correlated with the readers skimming through the beetle's vision and trying to get a

clearer picture of the narrative. Both **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphosis** are novellas not just in terms of its length but novellas in the tradition of Kliest, Stendhal and Goethe. In the nineteenth century, the novella was already an established form of the shorter narrative fiction particularly in Germany. The novella being of a slightly longer length than a short story, allowed for complexity of plot and psychological analysis; and Kafka did write a number of novellas. The novella narrates something new and unusual event which is expressed with a great economy of form. The theory of the novella as given by Ludwig Tieck in 1821 is as follows:

A genuine novella may be bizarre, arbitrary, fantastic, witty, garrulous, losing itself completely even in the presentation of side issues, tragic as well as comic, profound and saucy- all of these qualities are possible in the novella- but it will always have that extraordinary and striking turning-point which distinguishes it from every other narrative form.

(Tieck, Vol.XI, lxxxv)

Goethe calls the novella as an unheard event, but which has taken place, for Goethe debates whether an untrue story could be of any interest to the readers. From this perspective, the purely fantastic lies outside the realm of the novella. Also the objectivity with which it narrates an event supplies the writer with the opportunity to express his own subjective feeling. In Kafka the objective is presented in a profoundly subjective manner and so for him the novella suited his purpose of portraying his inner self. Paul Ernst, a theorist as well a practitioner of shorter narrative fiction in the twentieth century writes: "The improbable, that may be intensified to the impossible, is the very atmosphere in which the Novella, that sister of the fairy tale, is most at home. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure for the poet as far as this type of composition is concerned, to represent the improbable in such a manner as to give the impression

of the purest probability" ( Ernst, 1928, 288). The movement of the novella is circular moving against a fixed point as against the other linear narrative forms. Kafka's novellas like **The Metamorphosis**, **The Judgment**, **Description of a Struggle** and **Wedding Preparations in the Country** all centre on a fateful event, presupposing an irrational view of life. The narrative is kept close to the consciousness of the author's; yet the distancing is such that the personal becomes political; whereby the readers are in a position to judge the events.

The novella tended to break away from its nineteenth century tradition of external realism in the hands of writers like Thomas Mann, Kafka and Stephen Zweig to explore psychological dimensions. The earliest writer of the novella form was Boccaccio who used short, simple language to explore moral and social issues. The novella in its original form as practiced by Goethe dealt with the contemporary and the local. But much of Kafka's shorter narratives are in the form of parables and fables; possibly because contemporary German society during the time of Kafka and particularly after 1945 did not allow for free and open discussion of topical issues. A parable is a concise fictional narrative through which moral issues are worked out. Kafka regarded his works as 'prayers' which does suggest that although he was not fanatically religious; he did consider his writings as a sacred undertaking. His narrative pattern has biblical simplicity; the puritanical simplicity of language conveys a wealth of thought that is unique in itself. Also it has almost a fairy-tale like quality in its distant other worldly ephemeral quality through animals as protagonists. His dream narratives as they are called are because of their ability to churn out images, giving a feel of the exotic and the picturesque. But paradoxically, in Kafka the fairy-tale becomes anti-fairy tale; and dreams take the shape of nightmares. But these novellas dealing with 'unheard of occurrence', using the form of the dream-

narrative, also do not have conventional endings with a perfect sense of closure but reveal the perpetual sense of unfinished ness. Apparently, Kafka adopted for all three novels the impersonal narrator. The opening long sentence of **Amerika** gives an impression that the novel is going to be narrated by an objective narrator: "As Karl Rossmann, a poor boy of sixteen who had been packed off to **Amerika** by his parents because a servant girl had seduced him and got herself with child by him, stood on a liner slowly entering the harbor of New York, a sudden burst of sunshine seemed to illumine the statue of liberty so that he saw it in a new light although he had sighted it long before" (A, 13); but what is narrated immediately after is the world outside seen through Karl's observations- the 'endlessly recurring stairs', the 'corridors with countless turnings', and when the narrative goes- " In his bewilderment, meeting none and hearing nothing but the ceaseless shuffling of thousands of feet above him, and in the distance, his faint breathing, the last throbbing of the engines, which had already been shut off he began unthinkingly to hammer on a little door by which he had chanced to stop in his wanderings" (A, 14 ); the identification of the narrator with the character is complete. But unlike the other two novels **The Trial** and **The Castle**, the readers are not made to feel the dark subjectivity of the central character's vision; or the horror of abandon as found in the dream-narratives **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphosis**. **Amerika** appears more in the genre of the picaresque novel, recounting the experience of a young boy's transition from innocence to experience. It shares a great deal of resemblance with **Oliver Twist** and **David Copperfield**, evidence of Kafka's familiarity with Charles Dickens. The speedy flow of narration in the first chapter coincides with the flow of traffic; and the facts of Karl's life back home is presented in a piece-meal manner. Karl's encounter with the Slovak echoes Pip's encounter with Magwitch at the start of **Great Expectations**. The narration of

Karl's employment at the Hotel Occidental shows how Karl overdoes to please one and all, in spite of it Karl is dismissed from his service. Warren Austin puts it aptly; "Kafka is a metaphysical poet in symbolist narrative. His is a city world. Like Dickens' London, it flourishes in grotesque." The different chapters of the novel are episodic narratives loosely strung together so that each chapter can be seen as a whole in itself, at the same time not appearing unitary as a whole novel. Chapter one called 'The Stoker' deals with Karl Rossmann's encounter with the stoker after having lost his way. The exchange between Karl and the stoker is in direct speech; and in their essential loneliness they strike an instant rapport. Karl even takes a bold step of fighting for the cause of the stoker against the injustice meted out to him by Schubal. The first chapter ends with Karl unexpectedly meeting Uncle Jacob. Chapter two 'Uncle Jacob' deals with Karl adjusting himself to a new world of comfort from a world of destitute; but it still is a world of confusion with streaming traffic and high-rises dazzling the eye. Instead of feasting his eye on the new world, Karl spends his time playing the piano, learning English, learning to ride and meeting Uncle Jacob's friend. Chapter three 'A Country House near New York' deals with Karl's visit to Mr. Pollunder's house much against the disapproval of his uncle where he is subjected to strange treatment by his daughter Clara until Karl extricates himself from the house only to find himself thrown himself out by his uncle at the end. It is in chapter four 'The Road to Rameses' that Karl is subjected to the vulnerability of the outside world and his meeting with a pair of rogues- Robinson and Delemarche. Chapter five is called 'The Hotel Occidental' and here Karl is taken up by the kind Managress as Karl begins a new life as a lift-boy. The only diversion from Karl's adventurous life is the pathetic story of Therese's mother. Chapter six entitled 'The Case of Robinson' deals with Robinson's unexpected visit to Hotel Occidental and Karl is thrown out off

his job as a result of Robinson's drunken behavior. In Chapter seven 'The Refuge' Karl is forced to stay as a servant to Delemarche and Brunelda. How Karl manages to escape from this forced slavery is not clear as the narrative breaks off suddenly and opening in the chapter called "The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma" with Karl finally out in the open air of freedom. This brief glance at the chapters of **Amerika** shows that each chapter can be treated as a whole in itself. Thus the narrative here is in the tradition of the picaresque and Karl Rossmann as the 'upside down Picaro', who doesn't lose his innocence till the end in spite of encountering a range of experiences. Although there are anomalies in the narrative description right from the beginning where we see Karl's sympathy for the stoker slackening because of Uncle Jacob's recognition of him as a relative. Besides the narrative also shifts its focus on the outside world, for beneath the apparent sheen is the sordidness of modernism and capitalism. If the narrative is successful in conveying the order, primness and aristocracy of the Hotel Occidental, it also conveys the sordidness, seediness and filth of the same people living in crowded tenements working hard to convey the apparent sheen. The narrative is also important in conveying the existential loneliness of man, which Kafka believed was endemic to human condition. The young Gustav Janouch once asked Kafka if he was as lonely as Kasper Haus, to which Kafka reportedly laughingly replied-"More worse than Kasper Hauser. I am as lonely as -as Franz Kafka" (GJ, 70). What draws Karl to the stoker was his loneliness- "Perhaps I should join with this man,' the thought came into Karl's head, 'Where am I going to find a better friend?' (A,15). Karl incorporates in him the existential angst of incompleteness from which he can emerge wholesome only in communion with his other fellow human beings. To quote the German existentialist Karl Jaspers: "The individual cannot become human by himself." Thereafter, ironically Karl is never left alone- be

it in the hustle and bustle of the Hotel Occidental or the cramped dormitory where he sleeps with other sado-masochistic inmates. To make matters worse, the two former companions, Delemarche and Robinson cling to him and finally when the Head Cook asks Karl if he is really free of them, Karl answers- " Yes, I am free', said Karl, and nothing seemed more worthless than his freedom" (A, 125). The narrative here conveys the emptiness of freedom and perhaps this is what Soren Kierkegaard meant when he remarked "We are condemned to be free." Thus existentially freedom implies isolation. Freedom implies freedom from the causal chain of cause and effect, cutting off from one's past, and to negate all those things which might prevent one thing moving into another. **Amerika** contains the image of the New World, a world of infinite possibilities but also a world where against the blow of impersonal forces, individuals can be crushed. The inset story of the death of Therese's homeless mother crushed by the Capitalist system is a case in point. Even in the grandiose image of freedom in the last chapter 'The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma', the placard which read:" Everyone is welcome', it said. Everyone, that meant Karl too" (A, 246). But just when Karl had thought of applying for the job of which he need not be as amend to his burden of past; and soaring with the promise that he too would find acceptance and dignity is soon deflated when he feels deeply ashamed to utter his own name, and instead gives his name as 'Negro', the nickname he had had in his last post. The incidence echoes his reluctance to utter his name also in Chapter one which can be an indication of his lack of a proper self. Thus it is on this duplicity that Karl Rossmann is absorbed in the Theatre of Oklahoma till the narrative breaks off abruptly. The novel remains unfinished, although it is said that Kafka had intended this novel to end on a happy note, perhaps with his hero finding again his dignity that he had been

robbed off. Although the narrative progression from one chapter to another is aimless, the last chapter is undoubtedly more out of sync with the earlier chapters.

The narrative pattern of **The Trial** is complex. When Kafka sent the first chapter of **The Trial** to his publisher Kurt Wolff, he called the rest five hundred pages as a 'complete failure', but it is this failure which will give it a complete wholeness. The novel appears like a moral autobiography; or at most a psychological narrative of guilt. In Kafka there is the failure of the narrator as the source of fictive discourse and also the centrality of the protagonist's perspective is mixed. Richard Walsh in the essay *The Pragmatics of Narrative Fictionality* deals with the problem of relevance and the problem of truthfulness in narration where he notes that the issue of relevance is largely contextual yet there are gaps and incompleteness keeping in mind the world beyond the fictional text. K.'s death at the end of **The Trial**, according to Richard Walsh occasions many relevance from the readers like conflict between the State and the Individual; structure and agency; authority of the superego and guilt. Joseph K. thinks someone had played foul with him and that he was being implicated. The narrative suggests K.'s perspective but a little later there is authorial intrusion.

The same kind of episodic movement is seen in **The Trial**. Here also each chapter deals with specific characters and soon forgotten in the following chapters; for instance after the first chapter Fraulein Burstner is heard no more, we get a fleeting glimpse of her only in the last chapter; likewise several other characters like the Advocate, the two warders, the painter Titorelli, and K.'s Uncle are carelessly forgotten. One even feels that chapter nine "In the Cathedral" containing the essence-bearing parable "Before the Law" ought to have been placed much earlier. But to say **The Trial** is episodic would be too simplistic but the narrative here consists of two

parallel strands of movement. On close scrutiny, we find that the subject of **The Trial** is not Joseph K. who seems to be absurdly implicated in an unspecified charge, but the court itself. Thus the unfolding of the narrative actually works to show the blind and irrational working of the court to which all human characters only play a subordinate role. But at the same time the narrative also reveals the effect of such an irrational system inflicting on Joseph K. who till his thirtieth year had evidently led a perfectly normal life. The irrationality of his arrest leads to a series of reflection in Chapter one "The Arrest": Who could these men be? What were they talking about? What authority could this 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?" (T, 10). These reflections on the absurdity of the court seem to be that of Joseph K.'s as much as of the impersonal narrator. Joseph K. now seriously attempts to prove his innocence in Chapter two "First interrogation" and in chapter three "In the Empty Interrogating Chamber- The Student- The Officer". When no summons for him come, Joseph K. himself 'assumed that he was tacitly expected to report himself again at the same address and at the same time'. Chapter four "Fraulein Burstner's Friend", Chapter five "The whipper", Chapter six "K.'s Uncle-Leni", Chapter seven "Advocate-Manufacturer- Painter", and Chapter eight "The Commercial Traveller- Dismissal of the Advocate" –all these chapters tighten the trial upon Joseph K. and deal with people whom he thinks as the narrative indicates could help Joseph K.. He is deluded because all of them only help to make his case more complicated; that the trial exists everywhere intruding upon Joseph K.'s life , and most important of all the trial is there in the inside of his mind. "Nothing is so difficult as not to deceive yourself," Wittgenstein says and thus the existential question of whether we can escape willful self-deception is quite tricky. The reader's share the anxiety and

disorientation that Joseph K. suffers from as the narrative does show that being on trial does sap one's energy, a distinctly human attribute. However, existential anxiety arises from an unknown quarter and Joseph K. is jerked from the pseudo-normalcy of his life and self-delusion and his willingness to be executed is the final proof of this absurdity. For Sartre, anxiety is a heightened awareness that there is nothing that stands between one's being and not being. Therefore at the moment of death, an individual can give himself a reason for living. But for Kafka there was no reason for living reflected in Joseph K. relinquishing his will to live. The novel's ultimate revelation lies in the parable "Before the Law" which is a proof of beauty amidst the tragedy of human life. The door keeper in the parable deceives the man from the country by not letting him in only to reveal at the end that the door was only meant for him. The Priest interprets the parable by saying that it is not the doorkeeper who deceives but rather he is the one who is deceived for the man enjoys relative freedom compared to the doorkeeper who is tied to the door meant solely for the man. The doorkeeper who stands for 'law' thus not only deceives but also is deceived. Likewise, Joseph K. is deceived in thinking that he can free himself from the legal entangle, not realizing that he was already condemned from the beginning. Early in chapter one, Joseph K. finds the idea of committing suicide 'senseless' but after a year having ceaselessly tired of fighting the case, he realizes this futility of resistance and so willingly submits to death. There is an obscure sense of "betrayal" at the heart of Existentialism. Albert Camus in **The Myth of Sisyphus** says "a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying". Thus the narrative in **The Trial** does not lead to the gradual unfolding of the events but only a deepening of a foregone conclusion, already taken in the beginning. That is why the various intercessors cannot actually help Josephs K. when Joseph K. tells the priests that he was going to get more help

the priest sardonically comments – ‘You cast about too much for outside help, especially from women. Don’t you see that it isn’t the right kind of help?’ (T, 233). Joseph K. could have helped to salvage his situation if only he had looked for help within himself than casting about for outside help. The two strands of narrative which never does, rather which cannot merge, makes the narrative of **The Trial** susceptible to multiple interpretation commenting on the density of this text.

Kafka uses the device of understatement; dramatic economy and much of what is concealed becomes more meaningful than what is apparent. Often Kafka’s narrative pattern is called the symbolist narrative. Kafka manages to create an air of mystery in his narrative. In **The Castle** there is an aura surrounding the “higher-ups”, the villagers gossiping and speculating on the true nature of the authority. Thus there are multiple interpretations of the same event; the same event is viewed from several perspectives. Unfortunately, what results is only a muddled vision. K., an outsider, is aware of this fault as he reprimands Olga: “Amalia’s act was remarkable enough, but the more you say about it the less clearly can it be decided whether it was noble or petty, clever or foolish, heroic or cowardly” (C, 187). In **The Trial** too several interpretations of the same situations is provided in the Priest’s discourse at the cathedral. “I am only showing you different opinions about it”, he says, “You mustn’t have too much regard for opinions. The text is unchangeable and opinions are often only an expression of about it” (T, 240). What ultimately comes out is that one can no longer reach the truth. It is from such a situation that Martin Greenberg in **The Terror Of Art : Kafka and Modern literature** still finds a kind of a ‘vision’, really requiring no connectives.

The meaning, the unity is there, but K. struggles against seeing it; his constant complaint, which is not really a complaint but a cause he

defends, is that the court and all its works are senseless , a ridiculous joke . But as K. is gradually forced to think about himself , to peer into the murk of his own self , the incoherencies of his soul's trial became resolved – the parts of the novel became connected into a unity by an act of perception which consists in K.'s having deeper and deeper insight into the connections of his self.

(Greenberg, 1971, 179 )

**The Trial** has a lot of Chaplinesque music hall grotesque humor. Also there are a lot of missing links and several incidents and episodes; and the characters lack connections. Fraulein Burstner is heard no more although we get a fleeting glimpse of her in the last chapter; the warders, Joseph K.'s Uncle, the advocate and Titorelli disappear from the novel. Kafka carelessly leaves these loose ends without tying them up. However, **The Trial** and **The Castle** are complementary to each other as Albert Camus in his essay **Hope And the Absurd in the work of Franz Kafka**. **The Castle** is the culmination of Kafka's literary effort and one the most ambitious work where the narrative not only reflects the illusory quality of the castle but also provides the reflections of a man resolved on finding a place in the village. The narrative in the first chapter presents the image of the castle 'veiled in mist and darkness', and K. claiming to be the land-surveyor appointed by the castle authorities, but appearing more as a vagabond tramp, 'a disreputable-looking man in the thirties, sleeping calmly on a bag of straw minute rucksack for pillow and a knotty stick within reach' (C, 11). But here again the dual voice of the narrator submerging with the central character is used. After much initial deterrent and disrespect for being there without the village permit, the telephone call made by Schwarzer, the son of the under-castellan clears K.'s appointment for the time being. K. considered it quite 'unpropitious' for him in spite of his insouciant manner of a tramp. Thereafter the

narrative unfolds to reveal K.'s attempts to familiarize himself with the new community; but such attempt only makes his singularity more pronounced. As K. confesses to the village teacher: "I am to be staying here for some time and already feel a little lonely. I don't fit in with the peasants nor, I, imagine, with the castle." ; to which the teacher retorts: " There is no difference between the peasantry and the Castle." The narrative focuses on the existential condition of man, on the essential loneliness endemic to human condition irrespective of class. K. feels irresistibly drawn to seek out new acquaintance but each new acquaintance only serves to increase his weariness; and in spite of his best efforts to move closer to the castle, was actually no nearer to it. K. takes the route to the castle, he leaves behind a warm world of densely packed humanity into the freezing world of solitariness. The only communication K. receives is the letter from the castle signed illegibly the 'Chief of Department X' borne by Barnabas. And when Barnabas presumably leads him to the castle the objective narrator observes: "Where were they? Was this the end? Would Barnabas try to leave him? He wouldn't succeed. K. clutched his arm so firmly that it almost made his hand ache. Or, had the incredible happened, and were they already in the castle or at its gates? But had they not done any climbing so far as K. could tell. Or had Barnabas taken him up an imperceptibly mounting road?" (C, 35). The deviation in the narrative comes with the inset story of the ostracization of the Barnabas family because the sister Amalia had rejected the advances of a castle official. At the village inn, K. happens to hear of the Chief Klamm staying there and when all efforts for a direct meeting with Klamm is frustrated, he gets betrothed to Frieda, a barmaid and Klamm's mistress. The narrative now shifts to K.'s attempts to find a place in the village in spite of the unassuring words from the Superintendent. K. is not going to take things lying down now that he had renounced all that he had, a

wife and a child back at home.- "No, absolutely," said K. , 'I don't want any act of favor from the castle but my rights." Interestingly, the narrative now begins to deal with K.'s involvement in his new life with Frieda, and the replacement of Frieda with Pepi in Herrenhof; K.'s long conversation with Burgel and the Barnabas family. All these individual episodes can form narratives in their own way narrated from the point-of-view of different characters involved. Such a case of multiple interpretation makes the major narrative of K.'s sojourn into the castle more illusory and K. loses track of his being a land-surveyor in the first place. In the final chapter, we even find the landlady mistaking him for a tailor. It is rather amusing that she refuses to understand his proclaimed profession: "'What actually is it you are?' 'Land surveyor'. 'What is that?' K. explained; the explanations made her yawn.' You're lost telling the truth. Why won't you tell the truth?" (C, 297). By denying recognition to the 'truth' of the matter, she is indeed pointing to the existential lack of self, closely related to the ontological uncertainty about whether one really exists or not. K. is never out of the castle precincts, he neither meets the castle Chief Klamm , neither does he ever gain admittance into the castle or officially confirm his appointment as the land surveyor. Austin Warren in his essay **Franz Kafka** writes: "Kafka is a metaphysical poet in symbolist narrative." and regards K. as a man in search of salvation. As the narrative pierces through one inset story to another inset story, the narrative implies that truth may after all be hidden beneath layers of appearance. Here the device of the framework technique is used to break down the normal narrative; the security of well rounded characters and three-dimensional outside world. Olga's narrative is a story within a story; but is a commentary on man's relation with a woman which is full of contempt. But Olga's narrative throws the reader into a state of greater confusion. Amalia rejecting Sortini, the Castellen, is not a sign of Amalia

not being in love with him. Unlike Kierkegaard's 'teleological suspension of the ethical' in *Fear and Trembling* where God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son is accepted without question; in Kafka it takes the shape of 'bad faith'. The text is replete with a number of ambivalent phrases like 'to a certain extent', 'perhaps', 'probably' 'and yet', all of it suggesting a kind of indeterminacy. After long passages of monologues; the Burgel episode is the only passage from dialogue is used; but K. falls asleep at this climactic moment, thus achieving no finality. The narrative is strewn with Chaplinesque comedy in describing the activity of the castle officials who are seen shouting, clapping, rejoicing, pouring water over each other, lacking seriousness and behaving more like petulant children. It is possible to read several levels of allegorical meanings in his text. The image of the castle can stand for Heaven and K.'s inability to penetrate the castle could symbolize the incomprehensibility of man to understand the mysterious ways of God. At the same time there can also be other symbolist interpretation. According to his biographer friend Max Brod, the figure of K. is also a projection of Kafka as a Jew, his exclusion from mainstream society, and his earnest desire for reintegration into it. K. could also symbolize Kafka as a bachelor seeking companionship through marriage which he could never fulfill in his life, and most important of all K. could also stand for man in his loneliness. Thus Kafka's works are not simply about man's relation to God but man's relation to man, because his existential crises arises from the fact that the major concern of the existentialists is not God or abstract ideas or theoretical formulations but mankind and the contingency of his life.

**In the Penal Colony** was written in October 1914. The opening describes the impersonal narrator describing the nonchalance of the explorer, the last minute adjustments of the officer and the dog-like submissiveness of the prisoner. These

suggestions imply an impersonal narrator who seems to be actually present at the site. But it is from the third paragraph onwards that the narratorial stance focuses more on the explorer's thoughts, in spite of the officer's long drawn account of the history of the apparatus, apparently to justify the legal system of the penal colony, while the explorer is all content to remain as an outside observer. Statements like 'the explorer intended to make no answer, but he felt the prisoner's gaze turned on him; it seemed to ask if he approved such goings-on' (CS,145), actually seem to be the narrative perspective not of the impersonal narrator but of the explorer. It serves to highlight the dialectical contradiction between the explorer's desire to remain an observer and the officer's insistence that he take sides. The apparent confusion of the narrator with the explorer is because the scene is limited to what the explorer sees and experiences, and the narrator is as ignorant about the officer as the explorer. The narrator is also as indifferent as the explorer in the officer's lengthy explanation. All that the narrator serves to do is to reveal the sadistic pride of the officer in his execution-apparatus, his blind acceptance of the penal system which acknowledges no right to the convict, his conviction in the absolute truth of his commandment, and his readiness to submit himself to the same torture to prove that truth. The convict's behavior and thought is interpreted from the explorer's point of view. For instance when the officer announces his release, free indirect speech is now used- 'Was it true? Was it only a caprice of the officer's, that might change again? Had the foreign explorer begged him off? What was it? One could read these questions on his face. But not for long. So whatever it might be, he wanted to be really free if he might, and he began to struggle so far as the Harrow permitted him' (CS, 161) ; or statements like- "The condemned man especially seemed struck with the notion that some great change was impending. What had happened to him was now going to happen to the

officer. Perhaps even to very end. Apparently the foreign explorer had given the order for it. So this was revenge. Although he himself had not suffered to the end, he was to be revenged to the end. A broad, silent grin now appeared on his face and stayed there all the rest of the time" (CS, 163). On the other hand the officer's thoughts are always prefaced by an 'as though' implying an observer reporting the officer's behavior- 'The officer smiled at the traveler *as though* he now expected him to .....'; or 'He looked sideways *as though* talking to himself.' This kind of aligning the narrator with the explorer helps to enhance the existential meaning of the story. It is a tale of horror, but even at its most painful moment Kafka undercuts the pain with humor; like the play with the ladies handkerchief by the condemned man in his last hour. The narrative filtered through the mind of the narrator help the reader's to understand the complex mental processes of the characters. It is a form which was already used by Thomas Mann in **Death in Venice**. Like K. in **The Trial**, here also the true motive of the hero is not revealed. Nothing is told about the past of the explorer or the purpose of his visit. Although his feelings of revulsion at the inhumanity of the execution make him appear as humanitarian, Kafka is able to eliminate the subjective responses on the explorer's past. Perhaps **In the Penal Colony** is one of the few complete stories written by Kafka where he has befittingly used the impersonal narrator. Kafka himself was dissatisfied by the ending of this story. The officer dies for his conviction but there is no such finality with the explorer as the flight of the explorer signifies refusing to take with him people who wanted to join him in his inadequacies. The story only continues to perpetuate an existential world fraught with uncertainty and doubt which the explorer carries with him. **In the Penal Colony** can be looked upon as a religious allegory with the officer religiously ritualizing the process of torture and death, and his death does invoke the idea of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The

officer's devout conviction, the belief in the Second Coming of the Commandment exemplified in the profound faith in the legal system no matter how brutal and illogical it may seem give it an aura of religious symbolism. The moral inconclusiveness of the ending suggests the deeper nature of problems which shall continue to gnaw mankind.

After having written **In the Penal Colony**, Kafka shows a marked preference for a personal narrator in the form of a major character. In **Blumfeld an Elderly Bachelor** written in 1914 there is a steady disintegration of the impersonal narrator. It has a very conventional opening like **The Judgment**: "One evening Blumfeld, an elderly bachelor, was climbing up to his apartment- a laborious undertaking, for he lived on the sixth floor" (CS, 183), making us ready to hear a story told retrospectively. The frequent reference to Blumfeld by his name is a pointer to his deep set insecurity and his desire for self-importance. Also there is a switch from the past tense of the reported speech to the present tense by the second paragraph helps us to have an access to the character's thought with ease. It requires no intellectual gymnastics to see the total alignment of the narrator with the character in statements like: "While taking the key from his pocket outside his room, he is startled by a sound coming from within. A peculiar rattling sound, very lively but very regular. Since Blumfeld has just been thinking of dogs, it reminds him of the sound produced by paws pattering one after the other over the floor. But paws don't rattle, so it can't be paws" (CS, 184-85). Henceforth whatever the reader sees and hears, follow the consciousness of Blumfeld. The narrator's function of the reporter of events or any other function associated with the traditional artifices of story-telling is reduced to nothingness. Perhaps the diffuse kind of an ending to this story is not an accident. Many regard this story as an 'artistic failure', but another story in the same mode is A

**Hunger Artist**, which is one of the most flawless works of Kafka. Unlike the earlier tales, the narrator here is in full control of the hunger artist's mind and situation. The peculiar authoritative stance of the narrator makes the plight of the hunger artist more real. It is to Eberhard Frey to whom goes the credit of giving an in-depth study of its style. The story was written as early as in 1922, but was published only in 1924 when it came out together in other stories- **First Grief; A Little Woman; and Josephine the Singer**. Frey points out the narrator's use of superlatives and the heavily emotionally loaded speech and how the narrator identifies with the hunger artist. Frey also points out some lapses in the narratorial description which are at times contradictory. For instance, the narrator begins by saying how the whole town took a lively interest in the hunger artist, but very soon he again reports, "On fine days the cage was set out in the open air, and then it was the children's special treat to see the hunger artist; for their elders he was often just a joke that happened to be in fashion" (CS, 268). Although the story starts as a treatise on the dying art of fasting but soon the narrative is a tale of disillusionment faced by the artist: "During these last decades the interest in professional fasting has markedly diminished. It used to pay very well to stage such great performances under one's own management, but today that is quite impossible. We live in a different world now" (CS, 268). Interestingly, it is also in the first paragraph that the narrator narrates the obsessive devotion to his art by the hunger artist in one long sentence of Two Hundred and Forty Eight words. The narrator reports with absolute clarity the plight of the artist when the watchers become lax in carrying out their duties by playing cards so as to give the hunger artist a chance to take a little refreshment, 'nothing annoyed the artist more than such watchers; they made his fast seem unendurable; sometimes he mastered his feebleness sufficiently to sing during their watch for as long as he could keep going, to show

them how unjust their suspicions were. But that was of little use; they only wondered at his cleverness in being able to fill his mouth even while singing” (CS, 269). The narrator is unmistakably one with the artist in his anguish. The longest period of fasting which was fixed by the impresario was of forty days. On the fortieth day the cage would be bedecked with flowers amidst cheering spectators and the playing of the military band as the Hunger Artist would be helped by two young ladies, blissful at the honor. At this juncture, the narrative changes its flow as the hunger artist is filled with obdurate pride thinks: “Why stop fasting at this particular moment, after forty days of it? He had held out for a long time; why stop now, when he was in his best fasting form, or rather, not quite in his best fasting form?” (CS, 267). **The Hunger Artist** reveals the obsession with fasting and as such with the body. The body is one of the important preoccupations of the existential philosophy. It is deemed to be the site of immediate awareness of one’s being-in-the-world and through one participates in the world. The body for the existentialists is also the centre upon which the world reflects back, making man a kind of microcosm. Therefore the hunger artist through the renunciation of his bodily claim of hunger seeks to achieve a heightened awareness of his being-in-the-world. This heightened consciousness results in existential transcendence which is a kind of mystical trance. But the Hunger Artist fails to achieve this state as the narrative describes the aftereffects of fasting, melancholia with fits of violence, upon him. The dramatic revelation comes in the honest confession of the Hunger artist at the end of the story: “...because I couldn’t find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else” (CS, 277). In this way there is a gradual obliteration of the narrator towards the end of the story and much of the conversation now takes place in direct speech. Also the narrator had been assuming the role more

of a showman entailing him focus not on the mental agony of the hunger Artist who wanted to prove his dedication to art but more on fasting as an art. By the end of the story, the narrator's presence is totally wiped off because in extolling the virtue of fasting; the existential agony could be conveyed not by the narrator narrating the event from the outside but by the Hunger artist himself who was undergoing the process. Thus, the dramatic revelation proves the great showman, the perfect salesman selling the power of endurance, wrong.

As the years went by, Kafka now begins the use of the personal narration, which is a reflection of his new attitude towards fear and anxiety. His pet theme of the fate of the artist in the modern world is again used in **First Grief**. If fasting only tested the power of endurance with no worthy motive, the trapeze artist is a narration of his superb technical feat. It was published posthumously although it was written in Spring, 1922. **First Grief** is the story in this group of stories making use of the impersonal narrative. The trapeze artist is described as a brilliant performer, again obsessed with his art of airy suspension. The only thing that discomforts him were the journeys that they needed to undertake while shifting from one town to another. In spite of the great care taken by the manager, the journey still 'got on the nerves of the artist a great deal.' It is during one such journey that the lying on a luggage rack opposite the manager expresses the desire to have two facing trapezes instead on one. The manager at once agrees to it saying two trapezes could indeed produce more variety. This positive answer only distresses the trapeze artist to the utter disbelief of the manager. Finally when the matter of having two trapezes is settled and the artist is pacified with great difficulty, this time it leaves the manager deeply unsettled. The story ends with the following reflection of the manager: "But he himself was far from reassured, with deep uneasiness he kept glancing secretly at the trapeze artist over the

top of the book. Once such ideas began to torment him, would they ever quite leave him alone? Would they not increase in urgency? Would they not threaten his very existence? And indeed the manager believed he could see, during the apparent peaceful sleep what had succeeded the fit of tears, the first furrows of care engraving themselves upon the trapeze artist's smooth, child like forehead" (CS, 448). In this way the narrative has no definite closure or a dramatic outcome as such. The tension outgrows the story. The impersonal narrator who had described the trapeze artist's situation as idyllic in the beginning calling it ' quite healthful up there' or ' live peacefully like that' but what was apparently idyllic was not actually so. The narrator was oblivious of the fact that the desire for two trapezes was his desire to have a companion in his loneliness, a natural human instinct; and this time it was not to be a ' fellow acrobat crossing him at times, or the workman repairing the roof, or the fireman framing the emergency light as in the gallery' (CS,447) ; the trapeze artist now earnestly desired for a true companion.

**The Village Schoolmaster** or **The Giant Mole** is narrated by the chief participant, who is a businessman fascinated by the rumor of the appearance of a giant mole. The businessman finds his affinity in the schoolmaster in their common interest in the giant mole and also in their obsession to make a mark in this world through it. Although the story begins by narrating how the schoolmaster wanted to 'write a defense of the teacher, or more exactly, of the good intensions of an honest but uninfluent man' (CS, 170), but after a few lines the narrative goes, 'For it is in his heart he was convinced that I wanted to rob him of the fame of being the first man publicly to vindicate the mole' (CS, 172); and still more when the narrative betrays the businessman's insincere motives. The final paragraph shows the businessman's condescending attitude towards the village schoolmaster. The last line ends: 'As I

contemplated the stubborn little old fellow from behind, while he sat at the table, it seemed an impossible idea even to show him the door' (CS, 182). The story may be as Roy Pascal observes, a symptom of Kafka coming to terms with his own tormenting neuroses. "When you cannot do away with it, you can at least accept it", Kafka writes in another of his story **My Neighbour**. The first person narrator here is so tormented by the idea of his imagined rival neighbour that his sense of threat becomes almost comic: "Perhaps he doesn't wait even for the end of the conversation, but gets up at the point where the matter has become dear to him, flies through the town with his usual haste, and, before I have hung up the receiver is already at his goal working against me" (CS, 427). Another similar story dealing with this neurotic state of mind is **The Burrow**. The first person narrative of the badger is his obsession with fortifying his burrow against unforeseen danger. Even after digging a series of passages and cells, the badger tests it by watching it from above the ground. Having done all he can to fortify his burrow, it is the badger himself who gives away the reason of his ungrounded fear; that the anxiety lies not outside him, but in his inside. He tells: "These anxieties are different from ordinary ones, provides 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 makes the badger and his burrow 'indissolubly together', and that even in its silence, the burrow seems to 'answer' him, until he is disturbed by a persistent noise. The narrative ends with the badger investigating the cause of the noise and making presumptions of the invisible creatures gnawing his burrow. The ending of the story has again a sense of continuity, as if the story could not have had any finality. The ending is very much like the ending of **The Castle** where the incomplete sojourn seemed designed to be incomplete in principle, rather than by accident.

Another story of obsession is **A Little woman** written towards the end of 1923, narrated in the first person. The story has no conclusive ending, in spite of a concrete beginning and the use of the present tense through out. The narrator seems to force the reader's attention on the unreasoned rancor of the little woman over him. Interestingly unlike the other tales in these stories of obsession; **A Little Woman** focuses more on the painful neurosis endured by the little woman caused by him: "Every now and then, and more frequently of late, information is brought to me that she has risen of a morning pale, unslept, oppressed by headache and almost unable to work; her family are worried about her, they wonder what can have caused her condition, and they have not yet found the answer . I am the only one who knows that it is her settled and daily renewed vexation with me" (CS,318). The narrator is so obsessed with her hatred for him that he imagines the little woman waging a public conspiracy against him. However, there are no concrete evidence to prove it. In fact the narrator even doubts her symptom of illness. This does not deter him still from believing that even his death would not pacify her rage. The suggestion of his friend to leave the city for a holiday also is rejected by him. Thus he continues to live under a state of paranoia, until he decides to live his life 'untroubled' by the world, despite all the outbursts of the woman. These stories of obsession leading to anxiety are an indication of an existential state of mind. Anxiety is not to be confused with fear here, for fear is caused by an object but anxiety is totally ungrounded, be it the neuroses of **The Village Schoolmaster** by a groundless cause of an imagined giant mole, or the neuroses suffered by the narrator because of his imagined rival in **My Neighbour** , or the unidentified threat faced by the badger in **The Burrow** . Existential Anxiety causes the existent to flee from oneself unable to confront oneself; and supposing all else to be ordered until the realization that the order is actually unstable and can be

discarded at will. Such preoccupation with existential anxiety which was a pet theme of Kafka could only be brought out because of his unique narrative mode. On the other hand, many of Kafka's shorter stories are in the form of fables and parable. Although the simplicity and bare objectivity that marks these forms are found in Kafka but no definite interpretation can be given to them. Unlike a fable as a parable, whose primary motive is moral and spiritual injunction, the stories of Kafka are open-ended inviting several interpretation and every interpretation as Ingeborg Henel says is 'equally meaningless'\* Heinz Politzer's **Franz kafka : Parable and Paradox** provides an in depth and scholarly study of Kafka's parable with meassages linking it to the Jewish tradition. Human aspirations are here translated through the form of the fable, whereby a solitary individual waits for divine mediation.

Kafka also uses a lot of animal symbolism derived from Jewish folklore; and as transformations were often regarded as punishments for transgression in the Jewish folklore from this angle Gregor Samsa's transformation can be seen as a punishment for transgressing the authority of his father. One of the common motif of the Jewish folklore is the implication of the common mortals in crime as seen in Joseph K. implicated in *The Trial* and who willingly succumbs to the power of the law. Form the very outset the narrative suggests that the trial would be a farce. Before the Law is a kind of rabbinical discourse. The metaphor of the 'trained animal' for the assimilated Jew is taken from the novel by Mendele called **The Mare** (1876). Kafka's interest in Zionism is inspired by his reading of several books and particularly Richard Lichtheim's **The Zionist Programme**. Lichtheim describes forced assimilation of the Jews in the following manner:

The systematic aping of foreign manners, anxious glances in the direction of the 'others', the artificial covering up of anything that

could be seen as distinctly Jewish, this becomes the Law of Life. Already we have a Jewish anti-Semitism which attempts to demonstrate, in a comic and repugnant fashion, justifications for anti-Semitism and Jewish inferiority. Zionism wants to lead us out of this spiritual wasteland.

(Lichtheim, 1913,22)

**The Animal in the Synagogue** is a fragmentary narrative where a martin like creature, engraved in a synagogue comes alive and the Rabbis considering these images as distraction for prayers makes an effort for its expulsion. It is a kind of commentary on the Jewish scriptures. **Investigations of a Dog** echoes the myth of the wandering Jew, the dog's metaphor is used for the Jewish life in exile. Like many Zionists, the dog narrator thinks it not right that the dog community should obey the commandments of a foreign law. The silent willingness on the part of the dog community recalls one of Ahad Haam who said that 'the Jews are no longer the people of Scripture but the slaves of Scripture.'<sup>11</sup> Kafka had read this book with great interest. The predicament of the Jews is also referred by one of Kafka's school friends Hugo Bergmann (1883-1975): "The Jews want the *Guluth* [Exile]" (Bergmann, 1919, 36). The story **Investigations of a Dog** has no linear narrative as the narrative breaks down at several points and it is interspersed with humorous anecdotes at several points. These humorous anecdotes are like Rabbinical texts. The dog narrator's encounter with the 'musical dogs' could imply Kafka's love for Yiddish theatre and Jewish mysticism. Also the 'air dogs' could symbolize the tenacity of the Jews. Iris Bruce correlates this story to Kafka's growing interest in Jewish Children Literature. Reference may be here made of the fact that in the year 1920, the Jewish Elementary School was founded in Prague and Kafka along with Felice Bauer collected children's literature instructional materials. A discussion on the narrative pattern remains

incomplete without discussing these animal parables composed mostly during the last phase of Kafka's life. What attracts our attention is the anthropomorphic treatment of these animals. These animals are not just simple narrators of events but also characters involved. These animals think and act as humans do, making us believe that they are not animals but human beings with masks of animals. The objectivity marking the earlier tales is distinctly missing with the tenses virtually shuttling between past and present, and like most of Kafka's stories these animal tales also do not have a rounding off of events or a definite closure. Most of these parables have a non-personal narrator as in **Little Fable**, written in 1920 about a mouse and a cat. Traditionally, mouse and cat can symbolize various human qualities of timidity and ferocity, hunter and hunted, and the like; and this little fable could provide a moral like not to trust your every as not to follow the same path all life. But the fable, apparently simple does not provide any definite moral lesson; it merely baffles the mind. The narrator occupies an authoritarian stand and the parable ending with a simple yet final phrase 'and ate it up' is a supreme example of dramatic economy in narrative art.

Kafka's narrative pattern is simple and lucid; one can find a sense of reality even in the most extraordinary circumstances. While in the biblical parables, meanings are to be deduced from concrete images; in the parables of Kafka varied meanings tussle to suggest only meaninglessness. The narrative technique in Kafka moves from being a purely realist narrative to a grotesque nightmare. In **On Parables** the parable of 'going over' is actually the movement away from the real world to a dream like state, which is uncanny, fantastical, even absurd resulting in the 'Kafkaesque'. **The Castle** the jerky movement of the narrative prose hints at the frustrated effort of K. in reaching the castle. The long winding sentences and convolutions in Kafka's narrative

points to the difficult exhaustion due to the threat of the unknown. Yet one cannot ignore the tenacity of Kafka's protagonists in their effort to reach their goal; this explains much of the urgency in the narrative. Also the narrator shows a cold detachment as seen **In the Penal Colony** where the narrator displays complete indifference in explaining the cruel torture machine.

**Jackals and Arabs** is a first person narrative of a person woken up by a pack of jackals, instigating him to relieve them from the clutches of the Arab, seeing him as a kind of messiah. The man only expresses like inability – "I am not competent to judge; it seems to me a very old quarrel; I suppose its in the blood and perhaps will only end with it" (CS, 408). The dramatic entry of the whip – cracking Arabs ridiculously changes the situation. There is comic irony for the savior now becomes the saved by the Arab from the menacing jackals, who immediately flee the place to pounce upon dead carrion thrown by the Arabs. The lust for the Arab's blood is forgotten, and the beast remains not only 'fools' but bestial fools. In the parable "**Give it up!**" written in 1922, the narrator himself is involved in a particular situation. Finding his way to the station, the narrator turn to the policeman, who could only say, 'Give it up, give it up' (CS, 456) with a flourish. The parable could send a message of uncertainty of the individual in a world of disorder but Politzer sees it bearing no existential message. But '**Give it up!**' could also mean giving up one's existence, the threat of the very annihilation of oneself gives the parable a terrifying conclusion. The first person t is successful in conveying the bewilderment at failed help from expected quarter. **Testimonials**, written in 1922, is more in the parabolic form with a moral injunction. In it we see the narrator formulating a way of survival. The narrator here is undoubtedly Kafka himself learning to make painful adjustment in his life as a marginalized Jew and his soul-destroying job. The switch from the past tense to

present tense makes it more personal. Another parable on a similar vein is **Poseidon**. Notice the comic irony in Poseidon. Poseidon the name mythically associated with the God of the Seas , and brother of the mighty Zeus , should here be so prisoned down by earthly matters .The narrative device of understatement is glimpsed in the last line of the tale : ‘ just before the end and having gone through the last account , he could still make a quick tour’ (CS, 435). It is enough to convey a glimmer of escape from the Kafkaesque trap.

Now the use of myth in the narrative art of Kafka is an interesting observation. Most Romantic philosophers and poets and literary figures of Germany see in the power of myth a higher spiritual insight. They identified the myth with reality just as the way they identified poetry with truth. Realism in Kafka is not naturalistic realism although his interest in scientific naturalism has evoked many scholars like Wilhelm Emrich to look for naturalistic traits in Kafka. Emrich mentions how in his exactness of descriptions and precision of details that are graphically and concisely recorded make him similar to Arno Holz and Emile Zola. Kafka’s works are often considered as surrealist rather than naturalist realism. It is as if he were trying to break through the frigidity of concrete reality to release the latent energies inside. In naturalism there is accumulation of outside fact, massing of details; characters are reduced to standard types and the outside environment displacing the hero. Unfortunately it would be a representation of an inert world possessing no depth only length-wise dissection of consciousness. It was from myth that “they saw all things in a new shape. They could not return to the common world- the world of the *profanum vulgus*” ( Cassier, 1946, 5). The resurgence of the cult of the myth in the modern age could be due to factors like the fulfillment of the neo-primitivistic urge; or nostalgic archaism; or because it offered a release from the flux of temporality. The stability of the myth encourages

Kafka to use the mythic form because it provided to him a sense of groundedness and made his existence concrete when his own history threatened to erase him from the face of the universe. Often myths as narratives is linked with rite; hence for Kafka too, in his mythic stories the process of writing then becomes a kind of ritual enactment which made him feel more purer and more whole. Cassirer perhaps derived his idea of the myth as a ritual or sacred act from S.M.Hooke who writes:

The originators were not occupied with general questions concerning the world but with certain practical and pressing problems of daily life. They were the main problems of securing the means of subsistence, of keeping the sun and moon doing their duty, of ensuring the regular flooding of the Nile, of maintaining the bodily vigor of the King who was the embodiment of the prosperity of the community.....In order to meet these needs the early inhabitants of Egypt and Mesopotamia developed a set of customary activities directed toward a definite end. Thus the coronation of a King consisted of a regular pattern of actions, of things prescribed to be done, whose purpose was to fit the King completely to be the source of the well-being of the community. It is in the sense in which we shall use the term 'ritual'.

(Hooke, 1949,6)

Thus the origin of the myth has less to do with scientific and philosophic speculations but more to do with satisfying the emotions. Myth also provides refuge from the burden of history; however, this supplanting does not provide comfort to Kafka because he linked art with creativity and not stagnation. Unlike the mythic imagination, in the artistic imagination there is certain freedom, certain liberation from the actual, the material and the objectifying power of the myth. So it is due to the timeless unity of the myths that there is totality, unity of thought and action, word and deed. Kafka uses the mythic form as a mode of self-revelation. **A Report for an**

**Academy** is the earliest of the animal tale published in the collection **A Country Doctor** in 1917. It is a report reported by an ape to the members of a Academy narrating the account of his former life. He narrates how he was shot in two places – once in the cheek where the wound earned him the name of Red Peter and the second shot below the hip. What ensues is a series of human maltreatment until the ape realized that he had to stop being an ape – “I had no way out but I had to devise one , for without it I could not live ” (CS, 253). His ‘way out’ was not the thought of escape, for either way he could only meet more punishment or death. So the ape starts to mimic man, he learns to spit, smoke, drink; and once even uttered ‘Hallo’ to the absolute delight of men around. In this way the ape tells us his development by adopting ‘the average, culture of a European’, in a highly official language as in a formal report. The ape’s narration shows no regret in having to forget his inheritance and having to adjust in a new environment: “I repeat: there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason” (CS, 257). Many critics like W. Emrich and Heinz Politzer see in the ape the abandonment of selfhood. The existential crisis here is in the ape, a symbol of the marginalized as a Jew, but also because when you had doubts about your own ability of living with your own community. The comic irony is seen in the ape adjusting to the ways of the human society about whose efficacy one seriously doubts. The narrative is authentic in a sense it reveals the great divide that lie between two ways of life. For instance the ease with which the ape could pull down his trousers before the visitors show where the shot went in; or when he says: “A fine clear train of thought, which I must have constructed somehow with my belly, since apes think with their bellies” (CS, 253). The narrative of the ape seems quite honest when he speaks about the concept of freedom. Freedom was not his choice, like the

existential man, he was only interested in a 'way out'. The narrative of the ape is devoid of any emotion for the story ends with the ape proclaiming that his report was specifically meant for a learned society. This tale is different from **Investigations of a Dog** which is more of a metaphysical rambling of a narrator dog, written in 1922. It is a cumbrous speculation of a dog – world where the dog wants to find place yet is painfully aware of his singularity. The tale echoes Aesop and Apuleius' **The Golden Ass**; or Swift's **Gulliver's Travels** and Orwell's **Animal Farm**, where these anthromorphic animals provide a commentary on human society through their own social attitudes and relationships. The dog suffers from a sense of self-delusion as when he gives a metaphysical dimension to the group of dancing – dogs, for we, as readers, can understand that there is really nothing mysterious about a pack of dogs performing in a circus. Similarly, the investigations undertaken by the dog regarding the source of food which comes 'from above' willfully refusing to accept the simple fact of food actually being thrown by their human masters from above, calling it the 'theory of incantation' (CS, 315). At the end, the dog lies in a pool of bloody vomit proving his test (reminiscent of Kafka's ill-health due to consumption at this stage), until he is overwhelmed by the sudden music reverberating in the air. Thus the dog dies with his convictions speculating on freedom: "Prize freedom higher than everything else. Freedom! Certainly such freedom as is possible today is a wretched business. But nevertheless freedom, nevertheless a possession" (CS, 316). It is fitting that a series of investigations regarding existence should end with the idea of freedom, for existence is inextricably linked with freedom.

**The Emperor's Message**, published in 1919, is about the message which the emperor in his death-bed whispers to the ear of his messenger to 'carry to you the humble subject'. The messenger passes through obstructing walls, crowded rooms, one

chamber after another, for thousands of years. Interestingly, the supposedly objective narrator knows that never shall the message reach the outer most gate. And if he should, the narrator confidently tells, "the imperial capital would be for him, the centre of the world, crammed to bursting with its own sediment. Nobody could find his way through here even with a message from a dead man. But you sit at your window when evening falls and dream it to yourself." Thus the parable ends on a note of hope ascertaining the power of faith which is not there in **Home-Coming** (1920). The parable **Home-Coming** is clearly an inversion of the biblical parable of the Prodigal Son. But unlike the biblical parable, here the prodigal son, also the narrator, does not submit himself to the forgiveness of the father and family. The narrative conveys the hesitancy of the returning son: "Who will receive me? Who is waiting behind the kitchen door? Smoke is coming from the chimney, the coffee is being made for supper. Do you feel at ease, do you feel at home? I don't know, I am very uncertain" (CS, 445), until at last the returning son removes all thoughts of his happy reunion. The rambling narrative in present tense is enough to convey that the barrier is his own creation. It is who himself who is alienated and lacks the temerity of entering his Father's home. While the traditional parable bespeaks of hope through moral tales, Kafka's parable bespeaks of the perpetuation of uncertainty, but which can be overcome by going out. The existential philosophy postulates that man is not to be a self-enclosed entity. Man derives meaning only by reaching out, but Kafka, like the returning son, faced a thousand thoughts and thousand deaths, before crossing the bar to achieve transcendence. Man is an existent first, rather than a thinking subject; what gives meaning to being is not the involvement with the thoughts behind the act of living-in-the-world, but with the simple fact of existence. Perhaps, this idea is best summed up in the parable **On Parable**, where the objective narrator states that

the incomprehensible is best left incomprehensible; for what threatens existence is not the incomprehensible but the banality of everyday struggle.

The last story completed by Kafka was **Josephine, the Singer, or the nation of mice**, published in the year 1924, the year Kafka died. The narrator here is a mouse narrating the piping talent of a female mouse, Josephine. The narrative here lacks the insight to Josephine's mind and so while conveying the prowess of Josephine, also shows how she is different from the mice-community. He presumes that the mice community can understand Josephine's singing, while she believes she was 'singing to deaf ears.' The narrative makes plenty of generalizations of how the mice-community are not a music-loving race, and how their life is fraught with other concerns. Thus, in the beginning itself, the narrator tries to find out the meaning of Josephine's music, and if at all Josephine's piping could be called singing. Like the dog in **Investigations of a Dog** here the mouse investigates why people throng to listen to Josephine's songs overcoming several obstacles. In submitting to Josephine's caprice like a father to a child's and even risking their lives. Although Josephine thinks it is she who protects the people through her singing, but the narrator mouse thinks contrarily: "May Josephine be spared from perceiving that the mere fact of our listening to her is proof that she is no singer. An intuition of it she must have, else why does she so passionately deny we do listen, only she keeps on singing and piping her intuition away" (CS, 368). The narrator leads us to no final solution to the mystery surrounding Josephine and her music, and further digresses by making generalized statements on the mouse-community- the lack of youth in mouse, their rapid proliferation by breeding, and finally to her prayers from the exemption of daily work citing physical stress hampering her singing. Interestingly, the mice-community is repeatedly addressed as people, so that we are often bound to forget that we are

only reading about animals. Their 'impenetrable front' makes her cut short her grace notes; pleads she is physically drained out; bursts into tears and ultimately vanishes. The narrative ends with a number of questions, still no where to solving the enigma of Josephine's music, even a sense of bewildered astonishment at the ease with which she shed off the power she had assumed through her art. The narrative ends with a fitting tribute to Josephine and the last paragraph reads like an epitaph on Josephine's grave: "So perhaps we shall not miss so very much after all, while Josephine, redeemed from the earthly sorrows which to her thinking lay in wait for all chosen spirits, will happily lose herself in the numberless throng of the heroes of our people, and soon, since we are not historians, will rise to the heights of redemption and be forgotten like all her brothers" (CS, 376). Although we are not presented with an insight to Josephine's mind, we do begin to understand the functioning of the mice-community through their social attitudes to Josephine. The linguistic sophistication and official jargon present in the early animal tales is absent here. There is a lot of comic irony in between the pages, like Josephine's audience becoming still as a mouse; or the way in which the crowd thronged in multitudes with messengers and sentries involved. The humor is not meant to provoke laughter but to point out the oddity involved. The narrator mouse identifies not with Josephine but with the general mice-community, and unabashedly joins them in their cold meanness. When Josephine hurts her foot, the narrator mouse echoes the sentiments of their community: "Granted that her frail body is extra-sensitive, she is yet one of us and we are a race of workers ; if we were to start limping every time we got a scratch, the whole people would never be limping" (CS, 375). This confirms our suspicion that Josephine has not really been represented truthfully by the narrator, but more as a primma-donna given to childish tantrums at the drop of a hat, and thus forgotten to

oblivion once she vanishes. There are several allegorical meanings in the story. Max Brod sees the mice-community as the allegory of the segregated and endangered Jew community; Roy Pascal sees in it the tragic fate of the artist in the modern world; and Heinz Politzer sees it as a commentary on the unwholesome relationship between the artist and the community. However, for the Existentialists alienation is chiefly understood in terms of its inwardness, meaning the danger of being alienated from one's own self, and thus the quest for authentic selfhood. Assumed that Josephine may be alienated from her mice-community but what redeems is her passionate effort of reaching out through her singing. The idea of Josephine reaching 'heights of redemption' relegates into background the idea of Josephine's nullity. It is a positive resurgent image of a creature liberated from the tiredness of putting-up of a continuous show to an insensitive community. It can also be interpreted as a kind of spiritual affirmation, and even in her death, Josephine continues to find her place in their lives, unknown and unacknowledged by them.

Kafka was a careful observer of life and events; and this was the reason of his highly ingenuous narrative pattern. Max Brod while talking on his narrative pattern appreciates it for its 'matter-of-factness'; while Edwin Muir, one of his major translators calls it 'exquisitely just'; still others use epithets like 'absolute precision', 'complete honesty', 'scrupulous care', 'scientific lucidity', and the like for Kafka's narrative pattern. His narrative pattern is also known for its impression of clarity, purity and naturalness. Friedrich Beissner finds a 'uniqueness of meaning' in Kafka's narrative style. We saw how the narrator submerged into the central character's point of view; thus constantly evading the fixity of any final meaning, not even by the narrator or the characters involved. In most of Kafka's fiction there is very little forward progression; and thus the static nature of narration only delays rather than

postponing any finality. The readers are left in a state of suspense, straddling between the network of metaphors and denied the joy of finding any ultimate meaning. Likewise it is difficult, rather impossible to deduce any definite meaning out of his host of writings; his language being mercurial almost impenetrable like the castle. Both the maze of the castle or the intricacies of the court reflect the ramifications of the thought consciousness. Kafka is known for his simplicity of prose style, shorn off all artificial embellishments, uninfluenced by the affected nineteenth century European style. Kafka's narrative pattern is different from the comic satire of Rabelias or the bitter laughter of Swift. Rather one can find elements of Manippean satire in its use of the fantastic, moral-psychological experimentation, representation of aberrant state of psyche, dreams, split personality, eccentric behavior, and its concern with current and topical issues or 'the creation of extraordinary situations from the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea, a discourse, a truth, embodied in the image of a wise man, the seeker of this truth." Kafka's works are also not exactly allegorical although the conceptual framework to existential human situation is temptingly present, and his works as a commentary on his life as a marginalized writer, or his time with historical upheavals cannot be overlooked.

## CHAPTER - VII

### Conclusion

Kafka was a writer for whom writing was an existential necessity. The existential crisis in Franz Kafka has therefore been the cause of the rise of a wealth of Kafka literary canon. Although, existentialism as a style of philosophizing is generally misconstrued as a philosophy with painful and morbid associations, but it is existentialism which has prodded a great many writers to analyze the very condition of '*being*'. 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. This is why existence becomes paradoxical for Kafka because freedom becomes a highly ambiguous state. The theistic existentialists like Jean Paul Sartre derive consolation from the idea of God as a superior sort of artisan involved in the act of creation. Just as any manufacturer of a product has a concept in his mind before he produces the product; like wise for the individual, man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence. Now for the atheistic existentialists, if God does not exist, then man is what he conceives himself to be. This proposition gives tremendous importance to man as the creator of his own self and nature. The emphasis is also on 'subjectivity'; for now it is man who is to be responsible for his own existence.

For Kafka, God as an entity did not exist. If we presume that only God can give a meaning to the world, then the world was apparently meaningless for Kafka and even if God did exist for Kafka, there is not really any definite way to prove that the world

was made for man; just as whether K. in **The Castle** had been summoned by its authorities to act as the Land Surveyor or whether he pretends or imagines it, remains an open question in the novel throughout. According to the Jewish faith, God's message can reach to any one who is ready to open himself to Him. Unfortunately, Kafka lacked this Jewish faith. However, for many existentialists, the idea of God as not existing is profoundly disquieting. Even Sartre agreed that God should not be regarded as a useless hypothesis for it is God who provides value to an *a priori* existence. Thus for Sartre, existentialism is profoundly optimistic whose doctrine is the doctrine of action. For both Sartre and Kierkegaard freedom is synonymous with existence; our action implies freedom, and for the existentialists, freedom is not something to be proud of, but it is rather a postulate of action. It is already there as a condition of our existence. But in Kafka's works we have seen how his characters are reduced to a state of perpetual suspension and forever condemned to inaction. However, the existentialists may have the tendency to see world as meaningless but it is the quest for meaning that remains an essential part for Kafka. Thus existentialism has encouraged men to focus from a mere thinking entity to a meaningful '*being*'. Even literature is to be regarded as a mode of action and not one of contemplation. For this the existentialists have believed in the concept of the here and the now; so if man is to be given any meaning, then it has to be here, which is in this world and now, which is at this moment. Existentialism also deals with the whole man, which also includes unpleasant things like pain and suffering. Authentic living is acceptance of these issues as well rather than overlooking them or denying their existence. This existentialist notion of crisis is perhaps best expressed in the works of Franz Kafka, than in the actual philosophical treatises. Kafka's works are a reflection of the man as an existent faced with the idea of solitude, of dread, of subjectivity, of anguish, of

absurdity, of nothingness, and of death. But what redeems Kafka figures is their ability to face these limitations of '*being*' in the world.

A literary icon of both German and Austrian literature, Kafka is also a cosmopolitan writer whose works transcend geographical, historical and cultural limitations. Kafka rose above the narrowness of familial, cultural and provincial background. In spite of being acutely conscious of his Jewish identity, he found the claims of his Jewish background as rather suffocating. He once asked rhetorically what he had in common with the Jews when he didn't even have anything in common with himself. He advises the young Minze Eisner to escape the restrictiveness of her background: "the world, the spiritual world above all, is much bigger than the accursed triangle, Teplitz-Karlsbad-Prague." (LME, Nov-Dec, 1920) Thus we see how his works transcend the geographical limitations of place, and narrow nationalism giving place to internationalism. And when he finds it difficult to assimilate within the geographical terrain, he takes recourse to the eternal world of myths. Writing did serve as a therapeutic device to some extent for Kafka and so he is not confined to the paper but via the imagination of creativity, his works teem with images of the far-fetched worlds- Prague, Italy, Paris, Russia, Turkey, China, America; and his characters take various shapes like a dog, mouse, trapeze artist, bank-official, scholar et al. In all his works Kafka sees a great divide between Man and Institution, whether it is Joseph K. in **The Trial** seeking to understand the legal implications of the court or whether it is K. in **The Castle** trying to find a way to the impenetrable castle, or Karl Rossmann's struggle in a foreign land in **Amerika**. Though he transferred to his writings all his uncertainty and distrust he felt towards himself, we saw how writing soon became the source of his anguish. Kafka's notorious self-loathing is caused to a large extent by his dissatisfaction with writing. Many a times he felt an acute sense of

guilt by failing to write and by not writing well enough. Upon close analysis one finds the cause lying in the discrepancy Kafka finds between his knowledge of the world and his experience. Yet writing was his salvation, writing came before life. It freed him from his isolation to revel in the spiritual joy of writing. But try as he might, man is never to be regarded as a subject shut in on himself. The political, social, cultural and familial demands threaten the subject's isolation. Such was the case with Kafka who lived during a period of intense socio-cultural changes. His existential crisis was aggravated by his sense of inadequacy as a writer. Kafka felt acutely his inadequacy as a writer. Perhaps, it was because of his existential fear of failure as a writer is why most of his works are unfinished. Kafka was writing in an age that heralded a rise in urban centers, scientific advancement and new modes of communication. But these advancements also led to the rise of psychological instability and lack of individualism. All his characters are nameless; or possess truncated names; or their names are suggestive of their occupations: trapeze artist, hunger artist, the Chief Clerk, the emperor, the Messenger, the gatekeeper, even Poseidon who is mythically the God of the seas, the brother of the mighty Zeus in Kafka's world is a tormented soul. His letters are suggestive of the intense feelings crowding his memory as seen in one of his letters to Robert Klopstock: "Letters can cheer me up, move me, or arouse my admiration, but they used to mean much more to me, too much for me to see in them now an essential form of life. I have not been deceived by letters but I deceived myself through them; for years I warmed myself in the warmth they would produce when the whole lot got thrown on to the fire." (D, January 1922; BI: 369). It was because of his existential crisis that most of his works have the motif of self-destruction be it in **The Judgment**, **In the Penal Colony**, **The Hunger Artist**, **Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk**, **The Burrow**.

We also notice a peculiar trait in Kafka with regard to the self's tenacity for recognition and the inaccessible other. The existential crisis arises from the distance that separates the self from the other because only from the self can meaning can be had but there is difficulty in grasping the self. Unlike Nietzsche's Superman, who is strong enough to resist the curse of existence, Kafka's heroes are overpowered as helpless victims. Kafka had no faith in the Christian idea of God and Christ suffering for mankind. Rather he proposes ethical individualism where the impersonal divinity, the indestructible, lies at the centre of each individual. Suffering becomes a necessary mode to reach this indestructible, and Kafka accepts suffering as an essential part of his being: "Balzac carried a stick with the motto, 'I break every obstacle' - my motto would rather be, 'every obstacle breaks me' (B, 52). We also examined so far the clash between authority and individual as a perennial concern in Kafka, be it in the form of the Law, paternal sphere, the Institution or language. We noticed how Kafka's works proliferate with images of brutal fathers or father-figures, with the mother occupying a submissive role in the family structure. Personally, the threat of the father figure so tormented him that Kafka found any fruitful relationship in this world as impossible. Temperamentally, Kafka's intellectual agility and personal delicacy set him at loggerheads with his brutally healthy and assertive father. Kafka had an aversion for his body and the decisive factors appear to us to be the way in which he compared his body with his father's and the way in which Hermann Kafka reacted to his son's physique. These feelings of physical inferiority were made more serious by his father's overt rejection of his son. Kafka's anxiety about his father's domination is expressed in almost all his works in a physical metaphor. These are physical manifestations of an existential crisis brewing within Franz Kafka. He tries to escape his existential crisis by his attempt to achieve domestic serenity. Kafka knew that

marriage would fulfill his natural right as an adult, but he also knew that it was forbidden to him. The bliss of establishing a home was denied to him due to his existence as a writer. He knew that marriage was a human and moral obligation and that to exclude from this obligation was to exclude oneself from the human race. Thus his obligation to the higher order of writing prevented him from the happy realm of marriage which only aggravated his existential crisis. The psychologists have explained this threat of the father-figure as symptomatic of the oedipal complex, yet to understand Kafka as an existential figure one has to take into consideration also the struggle of the individual self to retain his authenticity in a world threatened of annihilation. Kafka's works are replete with images of such power conflicts in which he saw himself as constantly threatened by the demands of the external world. Kafka was acutely conscious of his physical self and his frail constitution which caused him a sense of lack as compared to his father's healthy figure. Also the court machinery represents the complexity of an age in which Kafka lived. It represents the political turmoil of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It could also stand for the fate of the Czechoslovakian Jews controlled by a repressive authority. Joseph K.'s dilemma can be understood in the light of Nietzsche's theory on the divide between the authority and man. In many ways, the strong emblems of authority have been able to weave myths of their superiority and govern over the rest, and in this way generate fear and awe which are not founded on actuality. The figures of authority use this moral code as a device to control and contain the vast majority like the castle authorities creating a myth of its strength and power; and consequently the weak suffer from a sense of guilt or 'bad conscience' as Nietzsche says in the **Genealogy of Morals**, where he explodes the notion of independent, self-sufficient individual. Such 'bad conscience' is experience by the individuals for internalizing these aggressive and bold drives

which would have helped him to surmount authority. The German word '*Schuld*' may mean either guilt or debt; both meanings conveying a sense of lack and we have examined this state of guilt as an existential condition. As in the Talmud and The Old Testament where God sits in judgment over Man; we see how Kafka's protagonists suffer from the existential plight of a man suffering the unexplained '*Schuld*' and whose existence is endangered by unseen forces. The court makes absolute claims upon the individual as clarified by the Priest whom Joseph K. meets in the cathedral: "The court makes no claims upon you. It receives you when you came and it relinquishes you when you go" (T, 244); suggesting the utter indifference on the part of authority wielding institutions. However, most of the protagonists seem to seek escape through exile like Karl in **Amerika** or Georg Bendemann's absent friend in **The Judgment**, or the ethnographic traveler **In The Penal Colony**. Like Karl in **Amerika**, K. in **The Castle** has also left his home to confront another world and K. is like the man from the country who attempts to penetrate the impenetrable; or is Kafka trying to force meaning into the slipping language through his exiled or displaced characters remains a paradoxical supposition. The Freudians reduce this hope in the indestructible betraying a yearning for a father but for Kafka hope is more secular and more individualistic, wherein man's faith is not to be sought in the religious impulses but in man's spirit of constant striving to look for the kingdom of God which is to be sought within us. The truth, the unattainable for Kafka is not to be sought in the outside world but in the obtrusiveness of the castle or the intricacy of the court but within truth lies hidden each man. Unfortunately, language becomes incapable of expressing this truth of '*Being*'; which is why Kafka uses strange even bizarre images and symbols to convey this truth. Kafka himself stood outside the law; he was the law himself even if this position meant harrowing torture. Kafka was aware of the

importance, nay necessity of suffering to realize the value of being human. Though not religious in the strict sense, he said if Christ suffered for mankind, then mankind must also be ready to suffer for Christ. It is through his writing that Kafka makes us aware of this fundamental truth. The existential silence exposing the problematic nature of language in communication has also been analyzed particularly by referring to Kierkegaard's **Fear and Trembling** and contextualizing Abraham's silence. The existential crisis in Kafka arising from the restraints of language has also been dealt with here because of the generalizing tendency of both narrative and language and so losing what is unique to the individual. Thus even language can be a source of authority, for the individual is forced to use the language of the world to demand his place in the world as seen in the short story **The Burrow** where burrowing becomes a metaphor for writing, also the animal fortifying himself against predatory animals and protecting himself against unknown enemy is expressed using the language of despair. This animal is prevented the joy of seeing the light of the day, revelation for him is forever deferred. Language is befooling in Kafka; language imprisons the self; just like the false confident opening of the text: "I HAVE COMPLETED the construction of my burrow and it seems to be successful. All that can be seen from outside is a big hole; that, however, really leads nowhere; if you take a few steps you strike against natural firm rock" (CS, 325). Language is 'holed' for Kafka as much of the biographical details from his life are only veiled references; and as Kafka realizes his inability to bury himself in his writings. The existential concern with language as an existential phenomenon has also been dealt here since all language is someone's language; and all language is addressed to someone. Thus existentialism studies language primarily in the context of being-with-others. In Martin Buber's **I and Thou**, he speaks of 'primary words like 'I', 'It', 'Thou', relating the speaker always to

the other person. The “-Thou’ language is spoken with the whole being and expresses the whole person, while “I-It’ language never does so. “Idle talk” (*Gerede*) is Heidegger’s expression for the kind of discourse that does not really communicate or disclose entities as they are. This ‘idle talk’ far from opening things closes them up. Such ‘idle talk’ is characteristic of the ‘they’ or the ‘crowd’ and it prevents any original and meaningful existence. Existentialism therefore proclaims that one should not be lost in the ‘they’; the public or herd mentality, which can only lead to ‘bad faith’. Man should rely only upon himself; he should look within himself for his authentic existence.

This brings us to deal with the philosophy of humanism, which too focuses on the primacy of the individual man. 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. That is why humanism becomes an existential situation with a tragic overtone. 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. 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. Thus existential humanism seems essentially tragic in nature in man's inability to move outside oneself. Heidegger calls it 'abandonment' or 'thrown ness; 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 literature of realism should not only aim at the truthful reflection of reality, but also demonstrate both the abstract and concrete potentiality implying a description of plausible events and emotion which is the result of healthy interaction between man and his environment. But Kafka's protagonists are maladjusted creatures which explain why there is a constant negation of outward reality. The descriptive detail of his works deal with palpable characters but behind the realistic veneer lie the fantastic even nightmarish world whose function is to evoke angst. Thus there is an interdependent relation between the negation of reality and the dissolution of personality. Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated fragments. He is as inexplicable to others as to himself. How the personality is severed by the destruction of this complex tissue of man's relationship with his environment can be understood by an existential analysis of Kafka's works. Another interesting aspect of the fantastic in Kafka's works is the use of hybridity : man-animal as in **The Metamorphoses, Investigations of a Dog, Josephine, The Country Singer and A Report to an Academy**; man and rock as in **Prometheus**; the living and the dead as in **The Hunter Grachhus**, or in the use of doubles like the two assistants( Arthur and Jeremiah )of K. in **The Castle**; or the rogue companions (Robinson and Delemarche)of Karl Rossmann in **Amerika**, or

the two intrusive warders ( Franz and Willem); or even the two bouncing parasitic balls in **Blumfeld., the Elderly Bachelor**. Such duplication is symptomatic of the split within Kafka's own psyche. Kafka's brilliant use of his imaginative fantasy is also revealed in the creation of such creatures like a cross between kitten and lamb; and a spool like unearthly creature Odradek in **The Cares of a Family Man**. Similarly, the half-kitten, half-lamb of **A Crossbreed** defies classification, it flees from cats and makes to attack lambs; and strangely it is not a cat in its inability to mew and in its hatred for rats; and neither can it be more of a lamb in its animosity for lambs. In its desire to communicate with its owner and the joy it displays in its understanding of their communication makes it more real and human. The transformations be it the human-animal or the animal-human; both these transformations are not perfect, they belong to the hybrid realm; neither human nor animal, neither freedom nor bondage. It is a purely existential condition.

In such a case, the dualism of realism and fantasy would play an important role in Kafka to present the dream- like contour behind the concreteness of things. It is the consequence of what the existentialists would call the anguish of the here and now. Man is reduced to nothing but a temporal being constricted by the restraints of time and space. Philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Spinoza have all believed that man could escape through the anguish of here and now with the help of mind or intellect. This argument shows that all these thinkers tend to gloss over the duality of man, the observer and man, a part of the historical process. But Existentialists see no way in which this duality can be overcome. If man is seen as actively engaged in the historical process, he can sufficiently detach himself from his involvement to adopt a perspective on the whole of things. But even if he detaches himself to exist only as a spectator, he still fails to gain a vision on the whole of things because being a

spectator, he would still fail he could not be possibly be included in that vision. Therefore, there remains no longer a stable reality in the external world. What exist outside are only versions of reality which is again uncertain and inadequate. In Kafka angst as a dominant existential condition leads to the reduction and distortion of reality. But we have also analyzed how Kafka has given a bold vision of the 'real' unreality which lies behind, beneath, and beyond the frontiers of realism in other writers. This fracture between the real and the fantastic in **The Judgment** is a reminder of the fractured existential world. Like dreams, the surface of the text hides shadowy depths of meaning. There is a greater truth underlying the psychological one, of oppressor-father and victim-sons. It reflects the uncertainty of the world we live in. Thus what starts with prosaic realism ends with poetic fantasy. But Kafka does not aim to take his readers to marvelous heights of fantasy. Rather, his works jerk us out of our self-complacency to profound self-knowledge, where existence and consciousness dissolve. Kafka's existential crisis is conveyed by using descriptive realism as a precondition, but the structure and presentation making for an adequate image of the objective world depends on the writer's attitude towards reality as a whole. For Kafka, the world, being beset with anxiety, seeks refuge in the world of art, which makes the external world an equally incomprehensible terrifying place. Objective reality is subjectivized and distorted to help grasp the ultimate truth redeeming man. The subjectivizing of objective reality leads to angst. According to Kierkegaard, to undergo dread is necessary to appreciate fully the nature of existence; or else one is cut off from reality. However, the reality of existence is achieved at the cost of destroying one's faith. Reality is not static or quantifiable. Like Kant, Kierkegaard refused to believe that logic was the key to reality. Rather, Kierkegaard believed that truth lies in subjectivity and so it is only by turning inward that man

discovers his real self and discovers freedom. The concrete novelty of Kafka's works makes one aware of the transcendent reality and Kafka's images become cryptic symbols of the unfathomable transcendence. Franz Kafka's narrative pattern would make an interesting study because in the works of Franz Kafka we see a total absence of the legitimate act of *knowing* into *telling*. At the same time all human beings are readers who seek to reconcile what they read with what they see. Such interpretative contexts are dependent upon each other to make sense of the fragmentary into the whole; or in other words in which the texts come to life or is concretized. This concretization of the world buried within the sign of the text is a gradual but steady unfolding. This interaction of the three signified system – the presented world, the presentational process and reader- constitutes the 'structural theory of context' in proper fiction. Therefore any metastructural interpretation ought to be rooted in the interaction of these three signified system. But in Kafka, we see a continuous disjunction between the three signified systems – the presented word frequently has no spatial or temporal locus, the presentational process constantly shifting between different realms, and the reader is seldom a partner in contextualizing the meaning of the text. In other words, the existential crises in Franz Kafka results not just in the negation of inter- textuality and therefore the extraction of meaning in Kafka's works would involve a special kind of reader. This reader is discouraged from asking any question but accept the presented word as it is. It is as if God's act of creation cannot be understood in relation to anything else, but only as such. Thus what is present is the cold objectivity and the constricting impression of a single- view narrative; holding the reader a prisoner as in a night-mare. For Kafka existence is but a dream-like state expressed in his writings and this explains his dream-like quality of his works. Also Kafka found the real world sordid; the court in **The Trial** is housed in

the claustrophobic and crowded tenement; the inn houses in **The Castle** is nauseating with dirty beer puddles everywhere and rampant prostitution; and the picture of the foreign land in **Amerika** is disorienting. Nature descriptions in Kafka offer no freshness with an exception in the short story **Descriptions of a Struggle**. In Kafka's world there is so much anxiety that reality is forfeited. In the short story **Unhappiness** the exchange between the narrator and the ghost is conceived in normal way where terror is underplayed. **The Judgment** is a kind of a waking dream. Basically, Kafka's narratives are basically speculations using the imaginative language. His myths do not have a mythopoeic historical quality and they have a contemporary feel about it. Through the unfathomable the reality is brought closer to us. The movement of Kafka's narrative is also circular where the beginnings become the end and the ends from which now beginnings may arise; while the truth is safely ensconced in the centre. Therefore one needed to possess patience to explore the hidden truth.

Besides, novellas, much of Kafka's shorter narratives are in the form of parables and fables; possibly because contemporary German society during the time of Kafka and particularly after 1945 did not allow for free and open discussion of topical issues. A parable is a concise fictional narrative through which moral issues are worked out. Kafka regarded his works as 'prayers' which does suggest that although he was not fanatically religious; he did consider his writings as a sacred undertaking. His narrative pattern has biblical simplicity of language conveys a wealth of thought that is unique in itself. Also it has almost a fairy-tale like quality in its distant other worldly ephemeral quality through animals as protagonists. His dream narratives as they are called are because of their ability to churn out images, giving a feel of the exotic and the picturesque. But paradoxically, in Kafka the fairy-tale becomes anti-fairy tale; and dreams take the shape of nightmares. Kafka uses the device of

understatement; dramatic economy and much of what is concealed becomes more meaningful than what is apparent. Often Kafka's narrative pattern is called the symbolist narrative. Kafka manages to create an air of mystery in his narrative. In **The Castle** there is an aura surrounding the "higher-ups", the villagers gossiping and speculating on the true nature of the authority. Thus there are multiple interpretations of the same event; the same event is viewed from several perspectives. Unfortunately, what results is only a muddled vision. Kafka also uses a lot of animal symbolism derived from Jewish folklore; and as transformations were often regarded as punishments for transgression in the Jewish folklore from this angle Gregor Samsa's transformation can be seen as a punishment for transgressing the authority of his father. One of the common motifs of the Jewish folklore is the implication of the common mortals in crime as seen in Joseph K. implicated in *The Trial* and who willingly succumbs to the power of the law. From the very outset the narrative suggests that the trial would be a farce. The animal parables were composed mostly during the last phase of Kafka's life. What attracts our attention is the anthropomorphic treatment of these animals. These animals are not just simple narrators of events but also characters involved. These animals think and act as humans do, making us believe that they are not animals but human beings with masks of animals. The objectivity marking the earlier tales is distinctly missing with the tenses virtually shuttling between past and present, and like most of Kafka's stories these animal tales also do not have a rounding off of events or a definite closure. In Kafka's simple and lucid parables, meanings are to be deduced from concrete images and the meanings have to be literally excavated. In spite of having a bible like simplicity of the parables of Kafka, the varied meanings tussle to suggest only meaninglessness. Thus Kafka's narrative moves from being a purely realist narrative to a grotesque and fantastical,

even absurd resulting in the 'Kafkaesque' In **The Castle** the jerky movement of the narrative prose hints at the frustrated effort of K. in reaching the castle. The long winding sentences and convolutions in Kafka's narrative points to the difficult exhaustion due to the threat of the unknown. Yet one cannot ignore the tenacity of Kafka's protagonists in their effort to reach their goal; this explains much of the urgency in the narrative. Also the narrator shows a cold detachment as seen In **the Penal Colony** where the narrator displays complete indifference in explaining the cruel torture machine. Kafka was a careful observer of life and events; and this was the reason of his highly ingenuous narrative pattern. Max Brod while talking on his narrative pattern appreciates it for its 'matter-of-factness'; while Edwin Muir, one of his major translators calls it 'exquisitely just'; still others use epithets like 'absolute precision', 'complete honesty', 'scrupulous care', and 'scientific lucidity', for Kafka's narrative pattern. His narrative pattern is also known for its impression of clarity, purity and naturalness. Friedrich Beissner finds a 'uniqueness of meaning' in Kafka's narrative style. We saw how the narrator is submerged into the central character's point of view; thus constantly evading the fixity of any final meaning, not even by the narrator or the characters involved. In most of Kafka's fiction there is very little forward progression; and thus the static nature of narration only delays rather than postponing any finality. The readers are left in a state of suspense, straddling between the network of metaphors and denied the joy of finding any ultimate meaning. Likewise it is difficult, rather impossible to deduce any definite meaning out of his host of writings; his language being mercurial almost impenetrable like the castle. Both the maze of the castle or the intricacies of the court reflect the ramifications of the thought consciousness. Kafka is known for his simplicity of prose style, shorn off all artificial embellishments, uninfluenced by the affected nineteenth

century European style. Kafka's works are also not exactly allegorical although the conceptual framework to existential human situation is temptingly present, and his works as a commentary on his life as a marginalized writer, or his time with historical upheavals cannot be overlooked. Max Brod's tribute to the richness of Kafka's language is fittingly put in his biography on Kafka writes: "If the angels made jokes in heaven, it would be have to be in Franz Kafka's language. This language is fire, but it leaves no soot behind. It has the sublimity of endless space, and at the same time it palpitates with every palpitation of things created." (B, 132)

Thus writing did bring some relief but it did not bring freedom because he had to write about himself and relive the pain again and again. Soren Kierkegaard in his **The concept of Dread** regards anxiety as a vertigo of freedom, for freedom means possibility and to stand on the edge of possibility is rather like standing on the edge of a precipice. The human task is to accomplish the syntheses of body and soul, and this task is from the very beginning anxiety-ridden. Kierkegaard talks of the deceptiveness of all earthly things and the terror of total annihilation. According to Kierkegaard, every man who awakens to the realization of infinite demands made on him begins to undergo a trial. The French existentialist Martin Heidegger in **Being and Time** has reflected on death being an individual enterprise. So only the person who realizes that it is he alone who has to face death can truly experience his sense of individuality. Death is therefore non-relational because no one can die for me and also the impending nature of death denies any sense of closure. The view that the consciousness of death intensifies individual self awareness is found not only in Heidegger but also in other existentialists like Unamuno, Shestov and Gabriel Marcel. The preponderance of the issue death in Kafka makes him an existential writer. In his works we see a fine coalescence of Heidegger and Sartre. Death makes one aware of

his individuality but death can also remove all meaning from life. For all existentialists, death is the final proof of man's life as meaningless but not for Kafka because out of nothingness awakens a desperate longing for some positive and tangible achievement. The nourishment that the characters of Kafka crave for at the end could be the craving for spiritual appetite. However, death may be indefinite but it is certain, hence the threat of death. But because of its certainty, one must anticipate death as a part of life rather than trying to cover up. In this way death becomes a phenomenon giving totality to life. In Camus's **The Myth of Sisyphus** Sisyphus is condemned by the Gods to eternal torment, which is very similar to what Kafka felt about mankind that man is condemned rather thrown into this world, but Kafka's works reveal how man can still retain faith in the indestructible which gives meaning to life in spite of it all. Kafka wanted each man to be aware of oneself even if it meant going through the destruction of the self. Kafka feels the need to undergo self-destruction, the need to go through the fire of purgatory to release one's demons. Hence suffering becomes a necessity, like the suffering of Christ to redeem man. But here again, if Christ died for humanity, in Kafka's worldview, each man is responsible for himself. It is suffering that connects us with the world of higher reality. This explains the existential crisis in Franz Kafka. He professed himself to be an atheist at one time of the life and at the same time he lived his life with a kind of religious courage. This also explains why all his characters meet their end with a heroic grandeur.

However, Kafka's works also reflect his faith in the 'indestructible' present in man. There is a tendency to regard Kafka as an artistic freak and nihilist, but his tortured analyses of the self is an attempt to reach a spiritual meaning in life. Even though his works abound with a sense of man's bewildered struggle against metaphysical odds

and in spite of Nietzsche proclaiming God to be dead, but his faith in the 'indestructible' prevented him from collapsing under the weight of his existential crisis.

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 to be dead, he was announcing the loss of faith and things took a bitter turn with Darwin's idea of the 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. 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. Kafka attempts to combine faith with knowledge. Kafka through a parable asserts how in reality we always win, but it is only in parables, or rather in the speculations of the mind that we fail. In Kafka there is also the realization of the self, and in all his stories, his characters in spite of the destruction of the self, they achieve a 'radiance', and enlightenment for which they have not hesitated to destroy the bodily self. The body is annihilated, but the true self, or Truth is realized. Joseph K. in **The Trial** never meets the judge who sentences him, K. in **The Castle** never penetrates the castle, and **Amerika** is open-ended. The only reality was the existence of the person involved. To be human is what becomes important for him no matter how difficult it was for him, no matter what it took. Only Milena knew it and puts it in one of her letters to Max Brod: "He possesses not the slightest refuge. For that reason he is exposed to all those things against which we are protected. He is like a naked man among the clothed" (B, 230). Thus if Kafka's works

are to be considered as literature of revelations, then Kafka reveals the necessity of sheer existence. In his aphorism No.50, he writes: "Man cannot live without a permanent trust in something indestructible within himself, though both that indestructible something and his own trust in it may remain permanently concealed from him." This aphorism means that man may not trust yet the absence of trust is trust all the same. In aphorism No. 70-71, Kafka writes: "The indestructible is one; it is every individual man, and at the same time it is common to all, and this is the reason for the unparalleled, inseparable union of mankind." Many a times we feel like questioning if there is really any sense of the indestructible, or is it only a parable of deliverance. All characters of Kafka die achieving a sense of redemption. Georg dies thinking of his family affectionately; the hunger artist dies in his attempt at self-discipline. Often Kafka's failure as a man is often equated with his failure as an artist, yet our analyses of his works reveal a sense of contentment in him. In Kafka's world, reality at many times may threaten into incoherence, yet what redeems Kafka is the fantastical world becoming more real than the real. Also there is a sudden efflorescence of things whereby the hidden truth is revealed. The quest for this truth is what provides dignity to man and not to objects. Also truth about myself must be understood in relation to others. My truth can be grasped only by my contact with the others. The others therefore become indispensable in my quest for truth. Therefore, existentialism becomes a positive doctrine, a doctrine of action as against a philosophy of mere contemplation. One takes the risk and jumps into the abyss; and then one has a positive experience. This enlightenment can never be had unless one has taken the risk to jump into the unknown. That is why for all existentialists, despair is the source and not the result. There is self-awareness at the end and good will arise out of evil. Thus there should be acceptance all through, acceptance even of the evil

and the morbid. The man and the indestructible are to be the same. Kafka accepts the absurd and man is resigned to accept the absurd, but out of this absurdity there is the firm belief of hope. In this way Kafka puts the split borne out of the cumulative calamity of the century together in his works. Although Kafka had strict instructions for Brod to destroy his works, but his works were not incinerated by Brod, who perhaps sensed its literary value. After the untimely death of Franz Kafka, Felice Bauer fled to the United States to escape Hitler where she died in 1960; her friend Grete Bloch was not so lucky. Grete fled to Italy but she perished in the Holocaust; Milena Jesenska died in a concentration camp in 1944 for her political activities; Dora Diamant fled Hitler and died in London in 1953. Max Brod fled to Palestine to escape the Nazis where he died in 1968; and Robert Klopstock died in New York in 1972. Kafka's two close school friends Paul Kisch and Oskar Pollak also met with the tragic fate of being a Jew in those dangerous times. Oskar Pollak perished in Auschwitz and Paul Kisch was killed in the First World War fighting for the Austrian army in 1915. Thus after his brief but eventful life, the Kafka legend still survives; films on Kafka and Kafka in popular literature testify to Kafka's universal appeal. It is not just his morbidity which must have attracted a whole generation of readers to Kafka; rather it is his jest for life because of which the Kafka legend still survives.

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