CHAPTER FIVE

PACKAGE OF IDEAS

It is conceivable that Alexander the Great, despite the martial successes of his youth, despite the excellent army he had trained, despite the strength he felt within him to change the world, might have remained standing on the Hellespont and never crossed it, and not just out of fear, not out of indecision, not out of weakness or will, but because of the weight of his own body....224

The point made is that Franz Kafka was for ever torn between the empirical physicalness and the metaphysical reaches. His dilemmas can be safely traced to this traumatic condition of life.

Several concepts have been constant sources of inspiration and guidance to Kafka. They have contributed to shaping his personality and his attitude towards various aspects of life. The ideas that he deals with directly or indirectly in his Œuvres reveal the extent to which Kafka was influenced by them. Throughout his writings a perceptive reader detects as if in a collage the

different ideas that worked in the mind of Kafka, transforming his whole personality. Once detected, they help in comprehending better, not only Kafka the man, but also the depth and profundity of his art.

Many concepts have to be jointly acknowledged for their role in shaping Kafka, the multifaceted artist. It is in the light of these that Kafka is to be studied.

Kafka's short fictions are quite intelligible as stories. They are simple and clear, that even a child can follow them; but through that apparently transparent front, the author has expressed or concealed his philosophy.

In this context one cannot but consider the value of the Syntopicon and relate it to Kafka's Package of Ideas:

The term Syntopicon is a reference resource that the ancient rhetoricians might have wished were available in their time as a guide to the relatively more specialized knowledge that the speaker or writer needs when he has to develop a particular subject....

Mortimer J. Adler makes a pointed observation on this monumental work:

The exact reverse of the great comptometers which are fed data and do the thinking for the people: the Syntopicon feeds people the data—the issues and the various positions taken on them and lets the human mind do its own thinking....226

The Syntopicon available today is a world-digest, that contains valuable and exhaustive information about all the ideas and the concepts, right from the beginning of time. It is different from the Encyclopedia which gives information about everything. The Syntopicon in fifty-four volumes deals with four hundred and eighty-two ideas. It deals only with ideas that have been responsible for civilizing and reforming human minds. It promotes higher levels of mentation. The ideas contained therein, are those of people, who have contributed to the maturation of civilization. A notable tendency of the Syntopicon is that, it leans more heavily on Western concepts and abstractions than on Grecian and other European ideas. The Western concepts are given definition in

conclusive terms. Yet they are not closed chapters. They can still be developed further.

The argument preferred here is that Kafka's Oeuvres are similar to the Syntopicon. They depict a variety of concepts, that contribute to a better understanding of Kafka's mind and art.

It is a known fact that, the notion of chastity as believed and accepted in the days of yore has undergone critical and drastic changes in tune with passing time and situations, which too are radically altered now.

Thus earlier ideas get transformed, changed, modified and developed, whether relegated backward or enjoy a sharper focus. They are always open-ended.

Kafka was a precursor of Jorge Luis Borges and the latter observes thus:

Our reading of Kafka sharpens and deflects our reading of the earlier writers; through the looking glass of his work, we receive a fresh view of his precursors. And just as his work modifies our conception of the past, it will modify the future....227

The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies the conceptions of the past as it will modify those of the future.

In the growth of a nation, the history of ideas contributes to its civilization. The American history began with the upbeat of optimism. Soon a national pride was engendered by the victory over Spain in 1898. This new nationalism fired in Americans a love and enthusiasm for the wild West.

The West had meant many things to Americans—Eldorado, free land, escape from family and creditors, big game, fabulous wealth from mines, herds and lumber. In 1900 it was beginning to mean something new—a land of vanishing glory. People were eager to set forth on the Oregon or Santa Fe Trails. They were determined to survive with boldness among Indians and deep snow in the mountain passes. Besides these, Puritanism, Westward Ho, the Mississippi Frontier, Oregon Movement, the Leather Stocking Movement, the Gold Rush in the black hills of Dakota, Transcendentalism, the Alaska Gold Strike, logging years in Michigan's upper Peninsula, the American brand of Communism, Acceptance, Humility, Frontier
readiness, Determination, will power to face hardships, Colonialism, Quakerism, Republicanism, Equalism, Democracy, Liberty—all these have been passed on down the generations as a package of ideas.

One can never view America without this package of ideas. The study of a nation in any context is never possible without relation to a similar package.

An examination of the exhaustive ideas offered by a Syntopicon is necessary for understanding the civilization of a nation. Similarly to appreciate the nature of a great intellect like Kafka, one has to examine the ideas that have shaped his mind and art. What the Syntopicon gives in a macrocosmical manner Kafka gives in his Oeuvres in a microcosmical level. Kafka epitomizes the ideas that shaped him into a genius and philosopher.

Kafka's early works up to Preparations For A Wedding appear as almost essays marked by accurate topographical description. But they have already undertones of Dostoyevsky, Strindberg and Przybyszewski, Kierkegaard, Freud and Jakob
Bohme. The Mystics seem to have not only entered into the writer's orbit at about the same time but also to have brought about the spirit characteristic of Kafka that pervades all his works.

L.B. Kreitner, contemporary of Kafka offers this testimony to Kafka's interests:

His main interests then lay with philosophy and Judaism, and when discussing these subjects, his look became intent, almost fiery....228

Strelka Joseph makes a pointed assertion:

The presentation of human condition as such is Kafka's literary aim. He draws a total picture of man, from the sensual sphere through the intellectual to the metaphysical. Because of the breadth of this universal human scope, many different individual readers' perspectives, each with only a partial viewpoint, were projected into Kafka's works....229


Among the various ideas that have shaped Kafka into an intellect, those worth remembering are of love, sex, marriage, union and freedom all which influenced him more on the physical level. On the philosophical and psychological levels the most important concept that has exercised Kafka's mind is that of Original Sin.

The ideas that agitated Kafka's mind on the physical level generated a series of fresh thoughts such as, whether marriage is safe or whether love is a true reality.

His probings led to a constant analysis of defined actual sin and undefined sin and the pros and cons of every issue.

At one point or the other a line has to be drawn and at that point there has to be an indulgence in acceptance. Kafka, the intellectual, kept these choices open ended and unending. The concept of rebellion or submission exercised his mind as much as whether to be submissive or assertive. Kafka could not resolve between these two antipodal forces.
Kafka's thinking was so sharp and pointed that his indecisiveness was not a sign of mental weakness but one of mental sharpness. Cummings briefly puts this idea in a sentence:

Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question....230

A great intellectual like Kafka resolved that no answer is the ultimate one. His intellectual probings were of a higher plane, where he was not satisfied with the limits of human knowledge. He was only dissatisfied because he could not probe deeper than the deepest knowledge.

Bartleby, the Scrivener's, long continued motionlessness behind his screen where he stood near a window naked in one of those dead-wall reveries of his was a deliberate attempt to cross all human limits with the same intention. But Kafka attempted to get over his doubts and indecisiveness through his writings.

230 E.E. Cummings, Complete Poems, p.462.
No concept is accepted at face value, but probed and analyzed to exhaustion. Kafka studied a number of philosophies, where truth ends and abstraction begins. He wanted to know why truth should end and whether the limits of truth cannot be extended.

A casual browser concludes, that Kafka is decisive, but a perceptive reader accepts that these ideas have not satisfied Kafka, the intellectual. Kafka wants to move beyond the known, to the realms of the unknown, the unpenetrated—the mystical limits of these ideas.

There is little doubt about Kafka's stature as an artist in the metaphysical mode. His concern is with the ultimate structure of human existence.

It is pertinent to record the analytical argument of Philip Rahv at this juncture:

That Kafka was a man of religious temper I have no doubt. Though the creator of a surpassing imagery of human failure and frustration, inclined to feel imprisoned on this earth, afflicted with "the melancholy, the impotence, the sicknesses; the feverish fancies of the captive" he never abandons his trust in the spirituality of existence, in the "indestructible" and is disheartened by his literary effort because he wants his
writing to attain the power of lifting the world into the realm of "the pure, the true, the immutable"....231

There is nothing in his Oeuvres or private papers to claim that he was a believer in a personal God, who gave his assent to any of the dogmatic systems associated with institutional religion. Even Original Sin, the dogma closest to the thematic center of his work, he interprets speculatively.

As Helen Weinberg puts it:

With the breakdown of traditional systems of philosophy, religion and ethics, the values of the individual man have been cut loose from universally accepted systems of thought which he might use as his own frame of reference for his intercourse with God and with other men....232

The concept of Original Sin is ramified in two ways: whether to accept that Man is the descendant of Adam or if Man is a new Adam. This idea has exercised the mind of all intellectuals across the


Atlantic. The first person to be influenced by this idea was Thomas Jefferson. And Jefferson never accepted the belief that Original Sin was attached to every individual.

America being a new world, every American considered himself a new Adam, completely absolved of all sins. What counts to him therefore are actual sins and actual sins invite punishment.

In New England, the Puritan stronghold, religious reformism in the guise of Unitarianism and Emerson's and Thoreau's Transcendentalism in philosophy, liberated the American mind from its guilty and harsh past.

The Puritans were influenced by John Calvin. The Americans completely believed in Pre-destination and Grace. According to the theory of Grace, God's ways are unknown to men. Men have to only work hard and pray hopefully. Though purity of thought and action are important, whose souls are to be saved and whose to be condemned, is not decided by the devotion to God and the holiness of man's life, but by God Himself. Hence all life is a stage for the constant struggle between the forces of good and
evil. Life is a big allegory and the struggle for the soul between God and Satan is its theme. Man's relation with the world is reduced to his Individual conscience and his direct relationship with God. John Calvin had made the idea of the eternal sinfulness of man in Christian history very popular for his disciples. Accordingly, all men are eternally guilty in the presence of God and salvation can only come to man at God's will.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, it is shown in the minister's black veil that all men are guilty and that none is capable of judging Hester. Everyone in the Boston Puritan society is sinful in one way or the other. The question of sin and redemption is a religious one, a private matter of conscience and relation with God.

In Hawthorne's day, Puritanism was a thing of the past. The strictrures of Puritanism were like a dead letter. Hawthorne had friends among the Concord Transcendentalist philosophers and he could not be completely committed to the Original Sin which the Calvinists propagated and the Transcendentalists rejected.
Hawthorne makes sexual sin, the best example of the Christian Original Sin that the Puritans believe in. It is this idea of sin and its consequences that Hawthorne has insisted upon in The Scarlet Letter. He uses three symbolic characters—Dimmesdale, Hester and Chillingworth to highlight the theme of sin and its consequences. Hester's and Dimmesdale's Original Sin of passion has caused a chain reaction of retributions—public as well as private punishment by Puritan community, the personal and secretive punishment by Chillingworth which activated a process of suffering and regeneration. Hester herself achieves social redemption by good deeds and a dutiful life according to the Calvinistic theory of good works.

Hawthorne also explores in The Scarlet Letter, the Puritan idea of the inner depravity and the lack of grace of man. He points out the guilt in the hearts of the sinners as well as the persecutors.

Chillingworth himself comments upon the tragic nature of her story in his conversation with Hester:
By thy first step awry, though didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity....233

It is the inevitability of this dark necessity which has impelled the three sinful characters to behave as they do. Hester's and Dimmesdale's suffering and triumph and Chillingworth's relentless probing are all "dark necessities" arising from the Original Sin of Hester and Dimmesdale.

The great Puritanic concerns then were the nature of God, the nature of man and the right relation between the two. The Puritans to whom the frailty of human nature was a matter of human doctrine as well as of everyday observation, believed firmly that God instituted a government by covenant among men, for the purpose of protecting them against themselves. So they set up a theocracy, a rule of the godly. As practical men they were aware that certain liberties were necessary for the people and that colonists required more liberties than others.

Yet they had no intention of subjecting a government ordained by God to the wayward impulses of a people tainted by Original Sin. This is the textuality.

Robert Penn Warren in his poem "Brothers to Dragon" stresses that all animalism is a result of Original Sin. However, Jefferson who appears as a character in the poem does not accept the idea of Original Sin. He accepts only actual sins which alone are punishable.

A Calvinist Christian believes in Original Sin. Calvinism revolves round the Sovereignty and Supremacy of God and the Bible, the Original Sin, Prefiguration of Christ Jesus and Man as predestined. A Calvinist believes in these five concepts.

According to John Calvin, wisdom comprised a knowledge of God and of Man. Men have to seek that wisdom in the scripture. Those perceptive souls who, have understood most clearly the nature of God and of themselves have been gifted with the power of communicating their experiences in writing.
Since the death of the genteel tradition, the theme of the exiled individual in a meaningless universe—a universe in which precepts of religious orthodoxy seem increasingly less relevant—has challenged the imagination of American writers with an almost overwhelming urgency. Unlike many of his contemporaries Kafka seldom inclined to Oriental speculations with their self-annihilation or absorption in Brahma or evanescence. In Nirvana, in so far as he reads or writes about religion, it is the Judaeo Christian tradition that is in the forefront. He reads The Bible and Talmud, Kierkegaard, Pascal as well as Nietzsche rather than the Upanishads or the Bhagavad Gita. The Book of Job had a special attraction for him and he writes of such events as the Fall of Adam and Eve, Hell, Paradise and the rejoicing Seraphim rather than concepts like the Naught. According to Janouch, Kafka had an aversion for Occidental religion. He was interested in the Yiddish Theater. His literary friends were Jews like Max Brod and Franz Werfel and he had sympathy for the cause of the Zionists.

The Yiddish plays represented an important factor in Kafka's literary development. Kafka's Letters
and Diaries contain the record of his continuing interest in such diverse aspects of Judaism as Jewish ritual, education and history, anti-Semitism, Zionism, Hasidism, Hebrew tradition Studies, Yiddish theater and literature, the Jewish Colonies in Palestine and conflict between Eastern European and Western Jewry.

The Original Sin committed by Adam caused human nature common to all men to fall into a state in which it bears the consequences of that offence. The incident of the murder of Abel shows how succeeding generations not only suffered the consequences of the punishment of Adam's sin, but they themselves fell before temptation. Because of Adam's sin, his descendants became vulnerable to temptation though they possessed the power to overcome it.

Consequently, it is not only hardships and physical death one has inherited, but rather weakness too. St. Paul goes a step farther in saying that one inherits from Adam besides a tendency to sin, a state of guilt. Whatever comes to the soul through the corruption of the first sin has the character
of guilt. This inheritance of guilt is as much incomprehensible as Original Sin.

The Pauline concept such as the Fall as the Original Sin when put against the Jewish concepts does seem to be universal in Christianity and not exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church.

Helen Weinberg emphasizes:

To put it most simply, one need only look at the basic difference between the Hebrew "messiah" and the Christian "Christos" to know that the salvation, the redemption, and the grace of which Christians speak depend on a concept of a soul locked in a condition of sin from which it must be loosed and is loosed by a saviour - like figure, a Christ....234

She contends that the Jewish Messiah is not clearly defined. He will be defined only when he is. The task of the Jewish Messiah is defined in minimal and is an open definition. About the salvation of the soul, there is nothing because the Hebraic interpretation of the Fall was varied and did not settle on the idea of Original Sin. There is no established theological opinion on such subjects in Judaism.

With such a background in mind one examines Kafka's attitude towards received Christian concepts and etiological bases. As such, Kafka often meditated upon the Biblical story of *The Genesis* and other mythical stories that symbolize human condition, enable one to grasp life as a whole and to have faith in life's ultimate meaning. He pondered over why men have to die because Adam was beguiled through Eve wanting to know of good and evil.

The myth of Adam and Eve may be an account of how mankind came to be deprived of meaningful life which would be Paradise. Anthony Thorlby argues:

Kafka's own writing has a similar mythological quality, in that his imagination conceives symbolic stories of man's deprived spiritual state. His myths symbolize the ills of modern self-consciousness, the self-destructive urge to know oneself, assert one's innocence and rights, and through knowledge and determination to achieve freedom....235

Kafka's *Oeuvres* differ from those of ancient tradition. Those of tradition are based on a belief in the objective reality of spiritual forces and

values embodied in the world. Kafka's modern skeptical intelligence prevented him from believing this. His myths like his seemingly religious attitude towards his writing, point not towards the world but inwards against himself.

Caroline Gordon agrees on Kafka's theme:

Kafka's subject matter is the scheme of redemption, as set forth in neo-calvinist theology and the "philosophy of crisis", and his allegorical symbolism is as exact, if not as full, as Dante's, but his faith is not as complete....236

In his school years he declared himself an atheist and socialist. One of Kafka's aphorisms reads thus:

Why do we lament over the fall of man? We were not driven out of Paradise because of it, but because of the Tree of Life, that we might not eat of it....237

In Martin Greenberg's opinion:

God the Supreme bureaucrat hates life and denies it to man; man does not fall. God turns him out of the house of life....238


237 Franz Kafka, quoted in Martin Greenberg, Kafka and the Literature of Truth, p.20.

238 Martin Greenberg, Kafka and the Literature of Truth, p.20.
Kafka reiterates:

We were created, to live in Paradise. Paradise was destined to serve us. Our destiny was changed; that this also happened to the destiny of Paradise is not stated....239

Kafka's symbols resemble a second myth of the fall, with the difference that they are not set in the context of a God-created-Paradise that man has lost, but of a man-made hell he cannot escape from.

A new Adam does not believe in Original Sin. Kafka raises the question whether there is Original Sin. If one were to accept the Original Sin it would mean he has accepted the Christian God as his philosopher, moralist and religious thinker. It would also be an acceptance of the faith that there is something above all men arbitrating everything, judging and adjudicating with a punishing rod in his hand.

This is one concept of the unseen superior force. It is in man's hands whether to believe or not in the concept. Belief in Original Sin would mean believing also the concept of the Fall of man. A rationalist would only move away from such belief.

239 Franz Kafka, quoted in Franz Baumer, Franz Kafka, p.41.
When Kafka writes:

We are sinful not because we have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, but also because we have not yet eaten from the Tree of Life. The condition in which we find ourselves is sinful independent from guilt....240

he is talking of the true life, the life in the transcendental state, the life outside Man's existential form. Men have not been privileged to partake of that absolute life and consequently our condition is sinful and not through our own guilt.

Sin refers to a condition, a state and not an act. In other words sin consists in a state of non-acting, in existence within a condition which requires one to act, yet prohibits one from acting, since it does not endow people with the strength to act within the frame-work of their knowledge of good or evil.

This in turn provides Man with the interpretation of the much discussed little aphorism:

240 Franz Kafka, Dearest Father, p.43.
There are two main human sins from which all others are derived: Impatience and indolence. Because of impatience they were driven out of Paradise, because of indolence they do not return....

Here impatience is *hubris* of the act and indolence the state of non-act. It is because of the act outside of human limitations, that Adam and Eve were driven from Paradise. Once outside, cursed with the knowledge of good and evil, the strength for the act was lacking and they do not return. One can agree with Max Brod who captures the truth about Immanence of God thus:

The Absolute is there--but it is incommensurable with the life of man--this would seem to be a fundamental experience of Kafka's. From the depth of his experiences it takes on ever new variations; in the bitterest irony, in despair, in unexampled self-abasement, and in a tender hope that sings through all his savage skepticism, not often, but all the more unmistakably, here and there....

Man is too weak to grasp the Absolute. Next to Kafka's belief in the Absolute, stands his consciousness of human insufficiency.

241 Franz Kafka, *Dearest Father*, p.34.

Kafka's gaze rests, with the endless pity of understanding on everything that expresses incommensurability and brings it into silent relation with the most fatal and greatest of all misunderstandings, which is the failure of man in the sight of God.

Solomon J. Spiro comments in this regard:

The civil law, because it is essentially a device to harmonize society, defines guilt in terms of deeds rather than feelings, but in the perimeter of man's mind they are one....243

Kafka's Oeuvres provide a kind of inverted theology to explain the inverted myths of his fiction. Despite the theological critics, Kafka knew that man has been expelled from Paradise permanently and eternally. There is no going back. Whatever is eternal must be found in fallen man.

God's infinite estrangement is because of the bestial crimes his creatures are capable of. Hence God remains foreign. Despite hopes, wishes and prayers, the degree of alienation can be reduced but not brought to zero. The fact of Man's estrangement has nothing to do with the Fall.

Alienation is meant to be portrayed as arbitrary and unanticipated. Man is fated to suffer cosmic losses. He is driven from Eden. Alienation is his chronic mental state, possibly his eternal condition.

In the Christian adumbration of the human drama, the basic issue of alienation remained central. Not only was man reminded of his degeneration and estrangement of himself as a species, but also his energies on Earth were continually turned towards the establishment of union with his Creator, in the hereafter and within Christian theology. The concept of alienation spread from its focus on the separation of man from God, to include man's separation from his own body.

According to Frank Johnson:

Man is seen not only separated from God but as separated from meaningful experience with other men, institutions, Nature and himself. Theologians wrestle with man's relationship to God as a paradigm for his relationship to man; God himself, being seen as an abstraction whose real existence is, at times, seriously questioned....244

A religious person argues that mere faith is enough. A rationalist argues that mere faith is not enough and therefore a concrete visible verifiable proof is necessary.

A theist would overcome all the mystical doubts and misunderstandings of life, by the great Leap of Faith. But the philosophically prone Kafka, fluctuates between these two--to or not to take the Leap of Faith, because philosophical ideas exercise his mind.

As stated earlier, doubts about Original Sin and the Absolute Reality, about what is truth, and whether there is a God or Force exercised Kafka's mind. So his works become a package of ideas.

In them Kafka speculates on the reasons, explores possibilities for solutions, and gropes for salvation, but provides no or at best only most tentative answers.

The Kafkan hero's quest is basically the quest for an absolute sense of significant meaning in life, the search for some ultimate answer that man is more than physical being and is in some way divine
or somehow partakes of the divine. But this quest is open ended.

Kafka's novels are like *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Crime and Punishment* novels of spiritual search in which there is finally a fulfillment for the suffering and struggle. But the novels too are like Kafka's parables, parodies, as there is no fulfillment of the heroes' efforts.

None of Kafka's characters turns to God, even in desperation and the sermon in the Cathedral of *The Trial* presents a message of despair, of opportunity lost, and of the impossibility of salvation.

Kafka declares:

There are for us two kinds of truth, as they are represented by the Tree of knowledge and the Tree of Life. The truth of the acting and the truth of the resting. In the first the good is separated from the evil, the second is nothing other than the good itself, it knows neither good nor evil. The first truth was really given to us, the second only intuitively. This is the sad aspect. The happy one is that the first truth belongs to the moment, the second to eternity. Hence the first truth is extinguished in the light of the second....245

245 Franz Kafka, *Dearest Father*, p.91.
Existence is absolute good. Knowing neither good nor evil is only a divine spark in our beings. That is the eternal, the transcendental idea. If only man had the ability, or the potential to act accordingly, life would no longer be a curse and man would be relieved of the ponderous responsibility of his fateful knowledge and could live in a state of goodness knowing neither good nor evil.

Thus man is seen to possess the knowledge to act and with it the responsibility of action, but lacking the strength to act. In this state of expectation comes the experience, but never in the form in which it is expected. The result is agony and death. This is the crime for which Joseph K. is tried. The Castle shows the aspect of expectation extended in its most finely drawn out detail.

Kafka further argues thus:

We have lost Paradise by our sinfully being cast into the world, but then we have sinned once more, this time against the world, by not living in it courageously and abundantly. For Kafka's Tree of Life is certainly not the other tree of Eden, the Lord felt he had to protect from so ambitious a creature as man, intent upon himself becoming God, but is a tree that grows in the fields
cultivated by Adam and Eve in the sweat of their brows....246

In his collection of short aphorisms Kafka has noted down:

Since the Fall we have been essentially equal in our capacity to recognize good and evil; none the less it is just here that we seek to show our individual superiority. But the real differences of worth begin beyond that knowledge. The opposite illusion may be explained thus: nobody can remain content with the mere knowledge of good and evil in itself, but must endeavour as well to act in accordance with it. The strength to do so, however, is not likewise given him, consequently he must destroy, himself trying to do so, at the risk of not achieving the necessary strength even then; yet there remains nothing for him but this final attempt. Now faced with this attempt, man is filled with fear; he prefers to annual his knowledge of good and evil; yet the accomplished cannot be annulled, but only confused. It was for this purpose that our rationalizations were created. The whole world is full of them, indeed the whole visible world is perhaps nothing more than the rationalization of a man who wants to find peace for a moment. An attempt to falsify the actuality of knowledge, to regard knowledge as a goal still to be reached....247

The best definition of Kafka's spiritual situation is given by George Lukacs:

246 Erich Heller, Franz Kafka, p.87.
247 Franz Kafka, Dearest Father, p.43.
The abandonment of the world by God is evident in the incongruity of soul and achievement. Human endeavour lacks transcendental co-ordinates....

Kafka remained its victim. His soul could never assuage its immortal longings but they could never be fulfilled and only tormented him like an uncertain gleam through a doorway or a misty outline on a hill. In none of his writings does one find, any mitigation of this bleak despair. All of Kafka's characters are spiritually maimed.

In one of his letters Kafka said, "There is only one illness and medicine hunts it blindly like a beast through unending forests"....249 The illness he speaks of is individual existence itself. For Kafka sensuous life as such was the disease for which there was only a single cure—death.

For Kafka, neurosis such as Angst which for ever haunted him was a fact of faith. Angst like religion is man's desperate effort to find a resting place in his distress, his frantic search for the anchor in his thrownness.

248 George Lukacs, quoted in The World of Franz Kafka, p.114.

249 Franz Kafka, quoted in The World of Franz Kafka, p.147.
It is worth quoting Olafson in this regard:

Kafka's compulsive recurrence to the God-man antithesis begins to make sense only when these theological puzzles are understood as a coded expression of conflicts and neuroses that can be traced in Kafka's personal life....250

Olafson further observes thus:

Far from being a helpless victim of the religious predicament, Kafka was in fact an unusually clear-eyed and lucid commentator upon it and his commentary is of a kind that requires a degree of critical detachment and moral self-ownership with which he is not usually credited....251

Man tries to avoid facing God; Adam hid himself behind the trees of the garden. And modern man moves away from the sea of faith and God by drowning himself in materialism. Man does not wish to respond to God. He feels himself responsible for everything in the literal sense of the word. Yet there is also this most important difference between the biblical Adam and Kafka's man. The voice of God, if it is uttered at all does not


251 Idem.
reach Kafka's man with clarity. As such, Kafka's protagonist no longer knows exactly what his task is. The total work of Kafka only records repeatedly, that the relationship between Man and Transcendence has been disturbed. Kafka speculates on the reasons, explores possibilities for solutions, gropes for salvation; but he provides no or at best only most tentative answers. Erich Heller records a similar opinion:

There is no answerable question to be found anywhere in the works of Kafka... Kafka's questions are not only unanswerable but also unquestionable. This is one of the secrets of his art....252

Erich Heller further testifies to this fact:

The Law without a law giver, Original Sin without a God to sin against; this is the essence of the negative theology that pervades Kafka's stories and novels. The protagonists are sinful almost because there is no God to disobey, guilty almost because there is no Sinai, for although there is no God and no law-giver, their souls are cast in the mould in which the fear of God and obedience to His laws is inscribed. Sin and guilt more often than not appear to lie not in any doing but in being, in being a separate individual....253

252 Erich Heller, Franz Kafka, p.20.
253 Ibid., p.22.
As Suzanne Wolkenfeld claims:

The misunderstandings, the confusion, the despair that permeate Kafka's writing derive from a vision of disintegration. Although the symbolic images in which Kafka expresses this vision allude, often simultaneously, to man's relation to himself, to society, and to God, it is the psychological perspective that provides the core from which the sociological and theological implications are refracted. The primal rupture is within....254 [My Emphasis]

In Kafka is seen the modern mind seemingly self sufficient, intelligent, skeptical, ironical and splendidly trained for the great game of pretending, that the world it comprehends in sterilized sobriety is the only and ultimate real one--yet a mind living in sin with the soul of Abraham. 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. The conviction of damnation is all that is left of faith, standing out like a rock in a landscape, the

soil of which has been eroded by the critical intellect. Kafka once said in the Fourth Octavo Notebook, "I should welcome eternity, and when I find it I am sad"...255 This is merely an exhausted echo of the fanfares of despair with which Nietzsche, who had some share in Kafka's intellectual education, welcomed his vision of eternity. In one of his aphorisms Kafka says:

Nobody can remain content with just the knowledge of good and evil alone, he must also strive to act in accordance with it....256

But as a human being, he is not endowed with the strength for doing good and shunning evil. So inevitably, he must destroy himself in the attempt to do so. Yet there remains nothing for him but this last attempt to do what always exceeds his strength. Man is filled with fear. He prefers to unlearn his knowledge of good and evil, which really cannot be unlearned. It can only be obscured.

The destiny of modern man can be acutely realized only through the character of an everyman like Joseph K. Just as universality of the disaster is portrayed through Adam, the universal nature of modern man is portrayed through Joseph K. The predicament of modern man can be better represented by an ordinary man like Joseph K. than a heroic or extra-ordinary character. Kafka presents the peculiar sense of evil, guilt and agony felt by Joseph K. as a universal experience. Politzer too strongly agrees that "Joseph K. is a nondescript everyman who appears as universally typical"....257

Man darkens and obscures his knowledge, that he is under judgement for his every act and failure to act, by elaborating reasons to account for himself and his life. Modern man rationalizes his life in both senses of the word; he explains it rationally in terms of cause and effect; and thereby explains away his own responsibility for it. He shifts the responsibility from himself to an infinity of reasons.

Viewed from the Paulinistic doctrine of Original Sin, Joseph K. inherits not only guilt, but also the weakness to commit sins, proneness to violation of laws and commandments. Joseph K. never bothers to visit his mother. The Cathedral does not attract him as the house of the Lord. He enjoys sex with different women whether married or not, sometimes even in the house of their masters as in the case of Leni. He visits a prostitute called Elsa once a week regularly. He makes advances to Fräulein Bürstner in the adjacent room of the boarding house. A person like Joseph K. for whom grave commitments of sin have been casual and habitual appears a normal person overtly. Once a person starts examining his past life seriously, guilt feelings evolve.

Accumulation of serious offences directs human conscience to realize that he is in the grip of an incomprehensible guilt in addition to the inherent nature of human guilt. Kafka bemoans:

> What a muddle I have been in with girls...Let me count them. There have been at least six since the summer. With all six my guilt is almost wholly inward....258

Joseph K. notes:

I seem to recruit women helpers....first Fraulein Burstner, then the wife of the usher, and now this little nurse (Leni) who appears to have some incomprehensible desire for me....259

Though sex undoubtedly is a source of guilt; it paradoxically remains the prime retreat into which mankind creeps to escape the very burden of guilt it engenders. It is precisely because, sex serves as a release mechanism as hinted at by Cummings in his serious sex poems:

One's not half two. It's two are halves of one:
which halves reintegrating, shall occur no death and any quantity; but than all numerable mosts the actual more

minds ignorant of stern miraculous
this every truth-beware of hearless them (given the scalpel, they dissect a kiss; or, sold the reason, they undream a dream)

One is the song which fiends and angels sing:
all murdering lies by mortals told make two.
Let liars wilt, repaying life they're loaned;

we (by a gift called dying born) must grow.
depth in dark least ourselves remembering love
only rides his year.
All lose, whole find...260

The Trial is an exercise of the concept of Original Sin. The novel deals with the dilemma whether to accept the Absolute or not. The idea of Original Sin is hidden in the novel. Why should Joseph K. be punished for an offence he has not committed. The idea becomes a gnostic one. The question of gnosticism is a serious preoccupation with Kafka the philosopher and intellect.

Kafka's own life and writings as a whole are proof that he was not a gnostic at heart. He regarded himself as a member of a spiritual elite and despised all earthly affections and social obligations. Quite often he allows himself an anarchic immorality in his sexual life on the grounds that since the body is irredeemable a moral judgement cannot be applied to it's actions.

The Trial analyzes whether there is truth or not in the Original Sin and whether the higher Court lies outside the boundaries of human knowledge or to believe in judgement beyond.

260 E.E. Cummings, Complete Poems, p.556.
On the deepest level, The Trial seems to be a quasi-abstract story of a man's mental and spiritual collapse, his nervous breakdown or a psychotic episode. More schematically it is the story of the disintegration of an initially none too strong ego under the onslaught of a sudden angry and implacable super ego.

This onslaught is caused by certain instinctual impulses which are unacceptable and which reactivate the emotional turmoil, the tabooed desires and above all the fears and guilt feelings associated with the Oedipus complex.

In many of Kafka's works, one can trace the influence of the Oedipal conflict that existed between Kafka and his father. Joseph K. is any man. The avenues he pursues are those tried by men in their desperate search for a resolution of their guilt. Kafka does not enter into a speculation concerning the etiology of guilt or guilt feelings.

A court is a fundamental conceptual framework that works well for an approach to resolving guilt, for it is the foremost instrumentality concerned with guilt and innocence as it applies to man. A judge's
role in adjudicating, is not to seek the ultimate causes of transgression or the origins of the law but to establish guilt or innocence. The law itself is concerned only with the issue and the only defence against guilt from a legal point of view is innocence. Kafka's legal studies prepared him admirably to present views of innocence and guilt in a legal framework.

Joseph K. stands accused in his life not only because it is his life, but also because it is a human life. Joseph K. is guilty of all sorts of sins including the misuse of his whole life which is summed up in the first chapter:

That spring K had got into the habit of spending his evenings in the following way: after work, whenever possible (for he usually stayed in his office till nine O' clock), he went for a short walk alone or with colleagues and then went to a beer-cellar where he joined a group of mostly elderly habitues and usually sat with them till eleven. There were, however, certain exceptions to this arrangements, as when for example K. received an invitation from the manager of the bank, who greatly appreciated K's capacity for work and his reliability, to go for a drive or to dine at his villa. Apart from this, K. went once a week to see a girl called Elsa who worked all night until early in the morning as a waitress in a wine-bar and then during
There are two distinct strands to the story of The Trial. There is first the story of certain specific conflicts faced by Joseph K. in the present and in the past. This phase of the story is only lightly and incompletely developed. Kafka is simultaneously telling the story of another struggle.

This is the struggle against generalized authority, guilt against the super ego, the court whose jurisdiction cannot be escaped this side of death or madness, because it is part of man's personality itself.

The degree of abstractness in The Trial, corresponds to the situation which usually prevails in life itself.

Donald Kartiganer testifies that:

Like Joseph K, most of us know our own suffering, but we know ourselves less well. Though we may be aware of some of the weaknesses in our selves against which we must struggle, we can seldom track down the original weaknesses, the more remote failures, which may have

261 Franz Kafka, The Trial, p.33.
burdened us with such an abiding sense of guilt that even hard-won victories over temptation in the present can relieve it only temporarily....262

K. of The Castle is not simply a Land-Surveyor who cannot do his work because the authority which employs him has got into a muddle, but is a soul, anxious to serve God, but who cannot find out what it is that God wills him to do nor even how to conceive God.

For Joseph K. salvation is absolutely beyond the power of man. It becomes clear to him on his march to the place of execution that the year long trial had taught him one truth, that, it is futile to plead innocence.

Kafka noted in his diary:

Today I got Kierkegaard's Book of the Judge. As I suspected, his case, despite essential differences, is very similar to mine, at least he is on the same side of the world. He bears me out like a friend....263


From Kierkegaard, Kafka could have taken the view that the condition of his own mind was that of all men who had experienced dread, in the sense of awareness of infinite guilt, and he could have gained the impression or had his impression confirmed that this was a proper state for all men to be in.

One idea constantly reiterated is that, good and evil, truth and deceit are divided by a sharp line, which is as clean-cut as that between the physical and the metaphysical world. This is an idea which Kafka could have found in Goethe whom he greatly admired.

Kafka dominated by the passion for the Absolute is the spiritual son of Kierkegaard who accepts man's fate even to the limit of his worst agony and from his sufferings draws the basic elements of his greatness.

Kierkegaard placed the question of guilty or not in the center of his conception of the relation of man to God. His principle of religion is absolute paradox and beyond reason. His justification of it in terms of the suspension of ethical human norms
in the face of the Divine, find their creative echo in Kafka's stories and novels.

Nonetheless, it is mistaken to believe that Kafka accepted Kierkegaard's system of theology. Far from the vantage point of that system, Kafka never reached the religious stage but remained in the ethical stage that is, within the limits of purely human strivings.

From the psychoanalytic point of view The Castle and The Trial built on the theme of guilt are enormous projections of self punishment, of imagined wrong doing and atonement. No measure of suffering can atone for the unnamed guilt continually welling up from the unconscious.

When Kierkagaard deals with the problems of guilt, it is not the theological question of sin and forgiveness which moves him, but the question of what the possibility of personal experience is in the light of personal guilt. Thus Abraham, the man, who intends murder has his son restored to him. Job has his possessions doubled. Kierkagaard's notion of the existential subjectivity which is genius's transcendental reward, looks much like punishment
but that is a necessary element in Kierkegaard's thorough going demonism. The faith of the religious man is that in suffering there is life. From the existential angle struggle is existence. This concept is captured in the life pattern of Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* which reads thus:

> Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated....264

To exist essentially is, in Kierkegaard's sense to be religious. The intensity and the action of intensity is suffering. Salvation can be apprehended only in terms of its mode of acquisition. The mode is Faith--an inexplicable Leap of Commitment. No man can recount another's leap, because that would be to objectify, to alienate faith, which each man must experience for himself, existentially and subjectively.

The Leap of Faith assumes that he who has faith nevertheless persists in a state of absolute uncertainty, dependent upon the absurdity of Divine

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grace and that is his faith thus remains incomprehensible to the faithful and to all other men.

Kierkegaard set himself the task of determining whether a civilization still nominally Christian must finally confess spiritual bankruptcy and all his ideas are simply sparks, thrown off in the fiery process, of seeking to realize the truth of Christ in his own life.

To Nietzsche God is dead. An honest and courageous European would know that this death has taken place in his own soul. No concept or system of concepts lay at the center of the philosophies of Nietzsche or Kierkegaard, but rather the individual human personality itself struggling for self realization. What is common to all Existentialists is that the meaning of religious faith is recast in relation to the individual.

Kierkegaard's works also reveal a spirit, obsessed with a sense of sinfulness. The theist believes in a cosmic drama, where birth, life and death are made meaningful by the great denouement of the Redemption. Passion in its original meaning of suffering is the gateway to the Kingdom.
Albert Camus observes:

Despite the persistence of institutional Christianity as measured by church construction and attendance modern man seems continually less able to find order and meaning in his life. While he seems increasingly reluctant to take the Leap of Faith nihilism rarely produces card carrying agnostics....

Kafka believed in nothing but felt that the condition of believing in nothing was dreadful. The insight that reason may not be assimilated to existence has been the starting point for Jewish thinkers as well as for Existentialists.

Kafka approached the abyss of Angst from a background unlike that of Kierkegaard who was a Christian apologist. But their psychological discovery is similar in that, it springs from a confrontation between a modern self conscious intelligence and the mysterium tremendous of temporal existence.

265 Albert Camus, The Myth of the Absurd, p. 5.
Titorelli in The Trial explains the possibilities of acquittal open to Joseph K. "that is definite acquittal, ostensible acquittal and indefinite acquittal"... 266

The first possibility being available only to the completely innocent, is extremely rare and Titorelli cannot recall having encountered a single case, though such acquittals have most probably occurred in the past:

Such acquittals... there must certainly have been. Only it is very difficult to prove the fact. The final decisions of the Court are never recorded, even the judges cannot get hold of them, consequently we have only legendary accounts of ancient cases. These legends certainly provide instances of acquittal; actually the majority of them are about acquittals, they can be believed, but they cannot be proved. All the same, they should not be entirely left out of account, they must have an element of truth in them and besides they are very beautiful. I myself have painted several pictures founded on such legends... 267

The point is that Faith rather than the application of reason is called for, when dealing with the Law. The way of faith is not Joseph K.'s way.

266 Franz Kafka, The Trial, p.160.
267 Ibid., p.177.
"It will take more than legends to alter my opinion, K. said, "and surely one can't cite these legends as evidence in one's defence before the Court, can one....268

He is right in his belief that the legends cannot be used in evidence against the will and purpose of the law. But he is wrong in assuming that these legends or our sacred books and stories have no cognitive value at all.

Ostensible acquittal is a state of provisional freedom. Titorelli is prepared to write down on a sheet of paper an affidavit of Joseph K.'s innocence and take it to the judges he knows. These judges do not have the power to absolve Joseph K. from guilt "but they do have the right to take the burden of the charge off their shoulders"....269

This procedure resembles the Catholic absolution after confession. But acquittal is only possible on a temporary basis. In the case of definite acquittal all records and charges relating to the investigation are destroyed, but in this case the whole dossier as well as the affidavit continues to circulate.

268 Franz Kafka, The Trial, p.177.
269 Ibid., p.181.
One day, quite unexpectedly some judge will take up the documents and look at them attentively, recognize that in this case the charge is still valid, and order an immediate arrest....270

and

The third possibility is indefinite possibility. Titorelli explains that postponement "consists in preventing the case from ever getting any further than its first stage....271

This can be achieved by restricting the case, artificially to a small circle of lower judges who can be appeased by appearing before them more or less casually but at regular intervals. While one would acknowledge one's status as an accused, there would be no sudden arrests and one would be free from the strain and agitation inevitable in the achievement of Ostensible acquittal.

Postponement is the mediocre way of securing a freedom which is no freedom at all. In his own way Titorelli highlights a paradox which Joseph K. is not yet ready to accept. Whereas man will never be

270 Franz Kafka, The Trial, p.176
271 Ibid., p.177.
free, postponement is necessary, for, it is to find ways and means of striving for freedom, lest man perishes in the knowledge of the impossibility of freedom.

The modern men and women have to commit themselves to the penal fantasy of God as Supreme Judge, if they want to take cognisance of both their imprisoned existence and their need for freedom. Joseph K's tragedy is indeed that of a modern man in that, he lost his ability to live by fictions which admittedly would not secure his freedom, but which would at least meaningfully dramatize his paradoxical predicament. Instead the moderns stake everything on manipulating their own consciousness until they gradually discover, that this is the very evil they tried to exorcise in the first place. So the priest is right when he says to Joseph K. in the Cathedral:

The verdict is not so suddenly arrived at, the proceedings only gradually merge into the verdict....272

Kafka's attitude to man's predicament is a nihilistic one. In metaphysical terms Joseph K.'s

death is without meaning, -- a brief but violent expression to restore the nothingness which Joseph K. attempted to invade and conquer with his mind. He sees:

With a flicker as of a light going up, the casements of a window there suddenly flew open; a human figure, faint and insubstantial at the distance and that height, leaned abruptly forward and stretched both arms still farther....273

This is the modern gesture of spiritual hope, the equivalent of medieval man kneeling before the altar. It is a gesture both of absolute terror and intense beauty, the only consolation rising above the horizon of the human enterprise. It is like the absolution given to the penitent sinner at the stake. John Kelly offers a religious interpretation of The Trial:

There is an infinite distance, an incommensurability between God and man. God is transcendent and absolute.... Any quest for Him on the part of man is pointless, for there is no way up to Him....274


At his moment of crisis, Joseph K. accepts his trial. From that moment bit by bit, the continuity of his life is broken down and all his reliances, habits and safeguards cease to operate.

He is in the grip of the Law. Kafka works out Joseph K.'s problem by basing his allegory on the prophetic writings of *The Old Testament*, and on Calvin's Pauline Christianity absorbed through Kierkegaard. The most bewildering problem which confronts Joseph K. after his arrest is that of his guilt.

K.of *The Castle* is in some ways like Abraham. And Abraham is great only by a virtue of his which is purely personal. His act is a private undertaking, not conforming to moral virtues acclaimed universally. In much the same way it is through personal actions and not through a universally acknowledged moral action, that K. strives towards the Castle. K.'s hope to reach the Castle through the intercession of Frieda, former mistress of Klamm is an earnest one. His sacrifice of Frieda is similar to Abraham's sacrifice to please the incomprehensible order.
Martin Greenberg observes:

The Castle is the fruit of K's land - surveying, an imagined concrete universal about striving for an impossible, real concrete universality....275

In this sense Kafka's religious goal is to aesthetize life and he could not stop content at the aesthetic goal of writing works of literature. K. seeks being and consciousness, the innocence of Paradise and the freedom of self which the Tree of Knowledge confers. He wants to have the Adam's apple and eat it too. He wants to unite the village and the Castle. True village and castle are united as the teacher tells him, :"there is no difference between the peasantry and the Castle; peasants and officials are united in the abjectness under the yoke of the laws of life....276

The Castle is no doubt the highest realm K. is capable of perceiving. This misled critics, but not Kafka himself into equating it with God. But it is certainly not quite irrelevant that in his personal


276 Franz Kafka, The Castle, p.17.
confusion Kafka hardly even utters that the incessant striving of his spirit was directed towards God or promoted by amor Dei. Almost all the time his soul is preoccupied with the power of Evil, a power so great that God had to retreat before it into purest transcendence forever out of reach of life.

The few communications K. receives from Klamm exasperate him because they seem to evidence confusion and even ignorance of his plight.

K. is informed:

The surveying work you have carried out thus far has been appreciated by me. The work of the assistants too deserves praise. You know how to keep them at their jobs. Do not slacken in your efforts. Carry your work on to a fortunate conclusion. Any interruption would displease me. For the rest be easy in your mind. The question of salary will presently be decided. I shall not forget you....277

Yet, unless he is to lose faith in the integrity of the Castle K. must conclude that it is his logic,

277 Franz Kafka, The Castle, p.150.

* This bears repetition.
not Klamm's that is inadequate. His own power of reasoning must be unable to bridge the gulf between himself and the mysterious attentions of the Castle authorities. But though K experiences this failure of rational strength repeatedly, he never loses faith in the belief, that the Castle forces have the power to define his position. Heroically he sacrifices his own ego in order to preserve his faith in the Supreme Authority. K.'s refusal to accept the advice or values of the villagers, and his refusal in short to accept the human situation have their sources paradoxically in his great skepticism and in his great faith. Experience has shown how the mind is capable of continual dialectic that it cannot achieve functionality in its own terms. Thus he stands convinced that finality must come from the suprarational source, an authority inside the community of men. The great majority of the villagers find K's persistence irritating and absurd. His monomania, they feel binds them to all of the virtues and pleasures of village life. He appears inhumane and at times insane - unwilling to accept what they regard as the normal common condition. His uniqueness provokes resentment, criticism and on certain occasions outraged opposition.
K. is the unique spirit abstracted and epitomized. He represents the dark side of the sensibility which normally prefers sleep and oblivion to the fortunes of active seeking for reliable authority.

The Castle and the village are united in their subjection to a world in which, being is enslaved by ignorance to automatism, and knowledge is that automatism becomes conscious of itself and haughtily elevated above the life it controls. K. wishes to conjoin Castle and village so that the two merge into one to free being through knowledge and to verify knowledge through being. Martin Greenberg is of the view that:

K wishes to recover innocence through increased consciousness—as Kleist put it, he wants to "eat of the Tree of knowledge a second time in order to fall back into the state of innocence". K's highly unfulfillable demand is for a second Fall of the fallen world forward out of history back into Paradise....278

The Castle invalidates at almost every point, the critical estimates that place Kafka, in the line of descent from Kierkegaard to the theologians of crises. Kafka is associated with these philosophers

and moralists who share an aversion to theodicy and defend the autonomy of morals against those who insist on metaphysical or religious sanctions.

An assimilation of Kafka to a well defined philosophical tradition, blurs his special quality in one way or the other. The prevailing emphasis on Kafka's affinity with Kierkegaard and his descendants, also obscures centrally important features of his writing.

Due to the various dissenting factors in life, a dejected Kafka constantly questioned whether a diseased person as he could marry or not and whether he was fit to be a competent partner. For healthy people Kafka proposes "life" as only an unconscious and unavowed flight from the consciousness that one day one must die. Illness is always a warning and a trial of strength. So illness, pain and suffering are most important sources of religious feeling.

The argument of Norman Mailer in The Naked and the Dead is that, sexual satisfaction promotes love. If there is no sexual compatibility there is violence within and outside the house.
Kafka though diseased was still capable of loving. Othello though very strong and apparently healthy was sexually impotent. He stoops to the level of murdering Desdemona unable to sexually satisfy her. He has grave doubts about her loyalty towards him. More than Iago, Othello himself poisons his thoughts. As a result of repeatedly exercising his mind over the idea, there developed a sort of indecision within his mind over the idea.

It is accepted that marriage is related to freedom and independence. At all periods of his life women felt themselves drawn to Franz Kafka. He himself doubted whether he had this effect. But the fact cannot be disputed.

Sex ramifies itself into over-sex, under-sex extra-marital sex, pre-marital sex, permissive sex, sharing of partners, homosexuality and Lesbianism. All these concepts are open ended.

If sexuality brings pleasure indivisible from pain, pleasure itself is a vileness that alienates personality. This is seen in Kafka's gallery of monster women, Johanna Brummer whose name means meat-fly and seedy Brunelda, the web-fingered Leni,
lover of Joseph K. and Frieda the bar-maid. A traumatic self estrangement necessarily arises from the character of man's sexual nature. Sexual intercourse if referred to at all is presented brutally by Kafka within the human sphere. Everything that is of the flesh is treated with a sense of nausea and disgust. The nuptial embrace between K. and Frieda takes place amidst puddles of beer on the floor of a public bar; the room still filled with the stale smell of an evenings business, while mass prostitution is carried on in the stable of the inn. In a sense, Kafka's writings constitute a series of Freudian Marchionism drawn from the sexual underworld.

From the beginning there is the air of indecency even obscenity about the inscrutable rule of the Castle. The newcomer in the village, K. meets the teacher in the company of children. K. asks and Frieda replies, ..."please remember there are innocent children present..."279

The souls of women seem to be allowed to enter the next realm if they surrender their bodies as a sort of pass to the officials. They are then married off to some nincompoops in the village with their drab existences rewarded only by occasional flashes of voluptuously blissful memories of their sacrificial sins. Damnation is their lot if they refuse, as happens in the case of Amalia, Barnabas's sister who brought degradation upon herself and her family by declining the invitation of the official Sortini.

Franz Baumer states:

> Although Kafka never sank to the snobbish level of a fashionable brothel cavalier, he was no stranger to the milieu of Prague's famous "salons" with their gilded Renaissance splendour....280

Amalia's act of refusal of Sortini is right and reasonable K. tells her. That is in accordance with rational standards. Amalia however, eventually senses the truth that her act was a defiance of the demands of faith -- demands which are loathsome, incredible and repulsive. Kafka is attempting to say here and elsewhere, that one cannot judge the demands of one's God in terms of rational being. It

280 Franz Baumer, Franz Kafka, p.57.
is in the acceptance of the irrational that one transcends rational ethics and enters into a hitherto inexplicable relationship with God.

Finally, the answers Kafka sought, are related to how the Mystery of life engaged his life; what love is, and the mystery of mysteries. All feelings, particularly love and Truth constantly become relative. Not one of them is an Absolute. Out of exigency a person is permitted to tell a lie. Thiruvalluvar the great Tamil poet has said:

Even falsehood has the nature of truth, if it confers a benefit that is free from fault....281

Hence if the outcome is to be good, one need not think twice about telling a lie. So the value of goodness is to be inferred.

Machiavelli's Prince argued that the question is not regarding the means but the end. That is his Absolute Truth. Mahatma Gandhi gave equal importance to means and ends and stressed that both

must be good and that truth cannot be compromised. Contrarily Thiruvalluvar declared that Truth can be compromised. Thus ideas and values become relative. These have exercised the mind of Kafka.

Lukacs concludes:

Kafka is a realist of the dehumanized world: but also its exalter. He is a moralist: but does not enquire after the good or evil of a world which he respects in all its ignominy.

He wants to arrive in the world: but he reaches it by way of disaster.

He demands a paradise: but his only concern is how to get into it, not how to create it.

He is frightened by the overwhelming power of the dehumanized world of things: but he passes on his terror through the images of his creation.

He distorts the truth in order to isolate it clearly for our better understanding: but he isolates and immobilizes our understanding as-well--he paralyses us.

He discusses rights: but does not even know if he has the right to do so.

He is an atheist: but makes of atheism a theology.

He is a philosopher: but an agnostic.
He is a skeptic: but one who is skeptical of his own skepticism. Whatever is, is to him, if not reasonable, at least justified: to him might is right and those who have no rights are guilty.

His philosophy is that of the ineffectual conformist who sees himself with the eyes of the authority he has courted in vain....282

Kafka's novels may not encourage any kind of one-sided happy action and self satisfaction. But they prove to be more powerful as literary works. With regard to literary values, Kafka's narratives are superior.

Joseph Strelka records his findings about Kafka's uniqueness thus:

The truth-seeking of an uncompromising and utmost sincere personality, indeed genius.

The unusual sensitivity and energy of love for persons who were neutral and cool if not hostile to him.

The deep insight into the relativity of different viewpoints and indeed of truth itself as it became especially clear to him because of the social and historical structure in the old Austrian

monarchy...he could understand all of them...inspite of different, even opposing viewpoints; but when it came down to himself he was not at all sure. Because of this deep and consistent insight into the relativity of different viewpoints of truth and reality, his entire outlook on the world began to change. This change also led to the creation of a literary landscape more dream-like than naturalistic....283

However one interprets Kafka, his Oeuvres in their right perspective, embody ambiguous emotional experiences and inconclusive mental explorations. Attempts were made to find in the works of Kafka an unequivocal statement of philosophical concept or a moral or a message.

Kafka, the man with his personal integrity, his warmth and freedom from false pathos, remains untouched by indictments. There are many witnesses, direct and indirect, to testify to the friendliness of heart. It reaches us through all the paralyzing entanglements of his prose.

The rising tide of interpretations of Kafka's works—THEOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL, EXISTENTIAL, ETHNIC, PSYCHOANALYTIC, EVEN MEDICAL—all these abstract and learned interpretations are now decried, since Kafka was not a philosopher, but a creative artist. Any attempt to derive a philosophy from his work is to render it too rational and thus to falsify it.

Not only is it wrong to force a general philosophy of life out of Kafka's works, but it is a warning against subjecting his individual writings to puzzle-solving treatment and against seeing in them allegories and symbols beyond the words, which Kafka uses as counters of expression. The images and statements are in themselves the meaning of his works; and these constitute the package of ideas which are relevant, significant, and consequential. And Kafka's package of ideas has stood the test of time and thus his ideas have gained universal character.