He that writes to himself writes to an eternal public....Our philosophy is affirmative, and readily accepts the testimony of negative facts, as every shadow points to the Son....85

The outstanding intellectual, and philosophically prone Franz Kafka is obsessed with the quest element. One of the dimensions of his quest propensity gets projected as his deep seated quest for identity.

Being a ratiocinating individual, Kafka is concerned primarily with the physical identity. He is conscious of the role played by the Society and Establishment in reducing man's individuality to less than a cipher. As such Kafka is aware of the twin major themes of the loss of identity and the consequential search for the same. He is practical enough to realize that the individuals are forced

to play the roles defined by the Society and the Establishment.

Barret William observes:

... the worst and final form of alienation is man's alienation from his own self. In a society that requires of man only that he perform competently his own particular social function, man becomes identified with this function, and the rest of his being is allowed to subsist as best it can—usually to be dropped below the surface of consciousness and forgotten....86

In the modern world, man's identity is lost, fractured and mutilated. Kafka's central characters have only partial identity as evident from their names. It is K, in The Castle, Joseph K. in The Trial and Karl in Amerika. K. is a cipher searching for a name, a beginning, a sign, questing for nomination and a conclusion.

Precisely, the individual loses his complete identity and turns into a $\sqrt{-1}$ which is to be less than nothing. If he is

assertive enough he enjoys a mere half identity. This is what Kafka proves by projecting the protagonists as K. and as Joseph K.

Yet again, Kafka's quest for identity gains a new dimension in his search for the Absolute. He is concerned with the Actual-Me, the Real and the Absolute. But it ought to be stressed that Kafka's philosophic quest for spiritual identity is marked by ambilectics. The dialectics is simple. In this sense he appreciates the fact that all knowledge begins in self knowledge. In other words, he aims at answering the transcendental question, "who am I?" He is concerned with self-consciousness and self-cancellation. But then Kafka's philosophic strains are governed by ambiguities. It is precisely so because one finds it difficult to identify Kafka as a Christian Existentialist or an atheistic Existentialist.

All the same, the textuality in The Castle exactly projects Kafka as one, prone towards Christian Existentialism. It is with this general background that one approaches Kafka's handling of the major themes of the loss of identity and the search for it. Incidentally, Kafka's philosophical thought
processes embrace the absurdity of life. One finds that there are overlappings and continuities as far as the absurd elements and the Nietzschean sense of negation are concerned. While seriously engaged in his quest for physical and spiritual identities, his perspectives take into serious consideration, the existential peril, the mysteries of life, the negativities at all levels and the absurdities of life.

In this context Kafka argues that the rational society denotes stability and identity. There are moments when the terror of absurdity reaches its height. There are two fundamental states of consciousness which can lead one to such clear, transpicuous moments. One is the spiritual potentiality and the other materiality. Both states lucidly apprehended and deliberately explained enable one to define himself, which is not possible with rational analyses. The perception of meaninglessness in all its clarity itself is meaningful.

Man is no longer master of himself. Individuality of the self is fast vanishing. The hero has no control over the events of his own life. He feels
helpless, unfulfilled and cheated, because even the most private acts are not his own. Though not victimized by circumstances, he is alienated from himself by these circumstances and afflicted by a sense of living in a wasteland.

Man's sense of isolation is fundamental. Massification accentuates the facelessness, rootlessness and namelessness. And obsessive loneliness springs from the simple awareness of death.

To Kafka, the act of literary production is a paradox, whereby a writer seeks to understand himself. The writer who deals with his own existential problems tells them to every conceivable person, to imply that the problems are not just individual and peculiar to him, but general.

The protagonists of The Castle, The Trial and Amerika are Kafka's alter egos. The fusion of literature with autobiography is the unique aspect in any investigative study of Kafka.
It almost amounts to identity. It is through his *Oeuvres* that Kafka portrays his innards. As stated earlier he makes the names of some of his heroes rhythmically consonant with his own name.

In the postwar period man came face to face with himself as a stranger. The negative side of modern man's progress and power is that of a desolating sense of rootlessness and vacuity.

Man endeavors to enjoy first his physical identity and then spiritual identity. But he finds it difficult as he is cut off from God, Nature and Society. In such a state he experiences only estrangement, a sense of basic fragility, contingency of existence, the threat of Nothingness, the impotence of reason and the solitary and the unsheltered condition of the individual before this threat.

An interesting running parallel is evident in W.H. Auden's oft-quoted poem "An Unknown Citizen" which makes an interesting reading in the present context and it is quoted in full below:
He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Great Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper everyday
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured.
And his Health-Card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan.
And had everything necessary to a Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researches into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace;
when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population.
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation. And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education. Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd: Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard [My Emphasis]....87

Kafka's protagonists strive to attain a clear and complete identity and recognition for themselves from their partial identity. Joseph K. is engaged in the search for his authentic self. As W.H. Auden remarks:

In The Castle, K., the letter wants to become a word, Land-Surveyor that is to say to acquire a self like everybody else but this is precisely what he is not allowed to acquire [My Emphasis]....88

The protagonist, K. of the novel, The Castle is the type of modern man. He feels that he has an identity and at the same time suffers anonymity. His name is incomplete for it is formed with just one letter K. So much of vagueness surrounds his


character. He comes to the village all of a sudden and no one knows the place of his origin. In *The Trial*, the protagonist is introduced with some identity. The identity is partial. The name is J.K. From this partial identity the character has to carve out a real identity. And that quest for lost identity is the major concern of modern man.

The overall plot of *Amerika* comprises a series of incidents which are constructed according to the pattern of offence against a rule and resultant rejection. Through this Karl is pushed down the social ladder rung by rung till he ends as a kind of drop-out.

The traditional hero disappeared from Western literature, to be replaced in one form or the other by Mr.K. the harassed victim of the haunting nightmarish novels of Kafka. Mr K. is hemmed in by a bewildering and menacing cosmos. It smothers his sense of identity. The physical quest for identity is equal to the attainment of physical selfhood. This quest is very important and essential, for in the modern context, man as an individual gets due recognition based on his personality. He is identified personally by his intellectual
capabilities and social status. The identity he attains by virtue of rank and position in the family and the power he possesses give him recognition in society.

Kafka tries to question these ideas that dominate Society and the Establishment. These identities are to Kafka personally incomplete. They are only mental equations and all are sketchy.

Sadness, loneliness, physical debility, Angst and anomie left him with a profound sense of spiritual alienation.

There were three continuously important problems in Kafka's life. The triangular conflicts, namely, Kafka the man versus Kafka, the writer, Kafka versus the concept of marriage and Kafka's conflict with his father are acutely felt by him all at once.

Franz Kuna observes:

For Kafka there was not only the social and cultural dilemma he suffered in common with others but also his personal sense of being trapped. In his "struggle against the world" he frequently sided
with the enemy, turning with suicidal vehemence against his own self....89

Kafka felt alienated from his own family. He was estranged religiously too. As a result of bitter experiences at home, Kafka lost his self confidence early in life and developed a boundless sense of guilt, moods of loss, failure and fear psychosis. This resulted in alienation.

Besides, frequent changes of residences in his childhood seemed to Kafka to be a sign of inner rootlessness and was linked to the Jewish destiny. Most of his recollections were those of the ghettos.

Kafka was born into a distinct social and cultural milieu that provided him such remarkable spiritual resources. He was not interested so much in the inadequacies of the society from which he felt alienated, as in the complexities of his own state of mind. In Allan Blunden's opinion:

Like many fathers, Hermann Kafka aspires to raise his son in his own image. But father and son are so completely dissimilar in temperament that the robust ideals represented by the former seemed hopelessly unattainable to the sensitive and timid child....90

Kafka suffered intensely under his authoritative father. The conflict with authority and at the same time the urge to receive its recognition found expression in his works.

Allan Blunden rightly remarks:

The father was responsible for Kafka feeling that he lacked strength, health, a hearty appetite, a powerful voice, eloquence, self satisfaction, a supreme sense of assurance, stamina, presence of mind, a knowledge of human nature and a certain generosity....91

Kafka's loss of identity, personality and his turning impotent and effeminate in life are all due to the overpowering influence of the father. The father's rhetorical method of bringing up his son with abuse, threat, irony and spiteful laughter damaged considerably Kafka's psyche. To Kafka, of all his father's methods none was more potent than irony. As Allan Blunden affirms:

90 Allan Blunden in The World of Franz Kafka, p.12.

91 Idem.
Kafka's lifelong fear of his father had its deepest roots here. The Trial and The Castle images of distant and arbitrary regimes later spring from the same soil... 92

Added to the miseries attendant on him were his tuberculosis diagnosed in 1917 and the deeper, inner turmoil occasioned by his repeated engagements.

The tuberculosis that Kafka suffered from, became a psychosomatic means of avoiding Felice, to escape from being entangled in marriage. This situation is consequent to his sense of inferiority complex in the face of his domineering father.

He felt so desperate that even normal sequence of thoughts were full of despair. Nothing was to be trusted. Kafka felt he was destined to spend his whole life lost in sleep, dreams and fearfulness. At times suicide as the only panacea to his sense of Angst dominated his mind. And at other times his writing alone saved him to some extent from becoming a neurotic or psychological wreck.

Yet again, there was the conflict within him whether to write or not to write. He felt that God did not want him to write. He argues thus:

My [Kafka] life is essentially composed of attempts to write, and that's how it has always been with me. These attempts have failed for the most part, but if I didn't write I felt like a piece of garbage on the floor, ready to be swept out the door... Tomorrow I shall begin writing again and I shall go at it full tilt: for I know that if I don't write I shall be thrust out from among the living without mercy....93

His writing was the means for his psychic substitute gratification. Marriage would be compatible with his office work he thought, but not with his existence. As a writer, Kafka was constantly vacillating between literature and marriage.

Kafka's inner isolation did not always surface. There were periods when he yielded to grief and despair. He felt trapped between earning a living and fulfilling his creative drive.

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93 Allan Blunden in The World of Franz Kafka, p.18.
In such a sociological and personal background, the quest for identity is the lot of every modern man. Socrates' command to his followers, "Know Thyself", serves as the launching pad for contemporary man to start on his journey of self knowledge.

Joseph K. is attacked by critics for failing to realize that the meaning of his trial was an invitation to self analysis and self choice. Joseph K. refused the invitation at every opportunity, thereby condemning himself to continued guilt and early death.

On the metaphysical level, the question arises whether the self is corroded by the Original Sin. The same question crops up whether the self has to gain purification and illumination, facilitated by the various stages of the dark night of the soul. In the dark night of the soul, there is the soul's union with God and the emergence of the self, resurrected by the Higher Soul. This is a Christian concept used by St. John of the Cross, renowned Spanish theologian, saint and mystic, in the poem "The Dark Night".
The poetic figure, "The Dark Night" provided St. John with a mysterious sounding metaphor to designate the entire journey leading to union with God. In the dark night of the soul, the mortification of the appetites, the journey of faith and God's communion with the soul take place.

The soul in its conduct along the spiritual road has to depart from love of the self and of all things, through the method of true mortification, which causes it to die to itself and to all things and to begin the sweet and delightful life of love with God. The dark night thus signifies purgative contemplation which passively causes in the soul a negation of self and of all things.

It is interesting to record at this point the path chosen by St Augustine:

He is united to God by confession of his sins and by sincere, total and abiding repentance for them; by belief in all that God has revealed, by the testimony of all that his own powerful mind could discover, by his gratitude for God's goodness and by his acts of praise for what God is and does. He is united to God by sanctifying grace and by such mystical experiences as he describes or hints at in his confessions. These three ways, the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive, are not to be thought of as
completely separate in time, so to speak, as if the second succeeded entirely to the first, and the third displaced the second. St. Augustine illustrates the fact that purgation is a lifelong process. For him, the light flooding his soul constantly grows stronger and his union with God constantly grows closer and deeper....94

First the senses are purged and accommodated to the spirit. The spirit is then purged and denuded as well as accommodated and prepared for union with God through love:

One dark night,
Fired with love's urgent longings
Ah, the sheer grace! —
I went out unseen,
My house being now all stilled;

In darkness, and secure,
By the secret ladder, disguised,
- Ah the sheer grace! -
In darkness and concealment,
My house being now all stilled;

Oh that glad night,
In secret, for no one saw me,
Nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
Than the one that burned in my heart.

This guided me
More surely than the light of noon
To where He waited for me

- Him I knew so well -
In a place where no one else appeared.

O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
The Lover with His beloved,
Transforming the beloved in her Lover.

Upon my flowering breast
Which I kept wholly for Him alone,
There He lay sleeping,
And I caressing Him
There in a breeze from the fanning cedars.

When the breeze blew from the turret
Parting His hair
He wounded my neck
With His gentle hand
Suspending all my senses.

I abandoned and forgot myself,
Laying my face on my Beloved;
All things ceased; I went out from myself,
Leaving my cares
Forgotten among the lilies.95

Yet again, one detects a running parallel in
Whitman's "Song of Myself", which makes interesting
reading:

These become mine and me everyone, and
they are but little
I become as much more as I like
I become any presence or truth of
humanity here

And see myself in prison shaped like another man
And feel the dull unintermitted pain...96

The chief benefit of the dark night is the knowledge of self, and the soul recognizes the truth of its own misery which it was ignorant of till then. It considers itself to be nothing and finds no satisfaction in the self, because it is aware of itself; it neither does nor can do anything.

Hence St. Augustine said to God:

Let me know myself
Lord and I will know you...97

A person procures spiritual humility through self knowledge. From this humility stems love of neighbors. Henceforth, he will esteem them, not judge them as before. He will practise the virtue of fortitude because he draws strength from


97 St. Augustine, quoted in Collected Works of John of the Cross, p.323.
weaknesses, difficulties and aversions experienced in his life and thus becomes strong.

When God communicates the bright ray of His secret wisdom to the soul, He causes thick darkness in its intellect. Oppressed by the dark night, man feels very vividly the shadow of death and the sorrows of hell. He also feels forsaken and despised by his fellow men. Such a person finds neither consolation nor support in any doctrine of spiritual direction.

Since the dark night impedes his faculties and affections he cannot beseech God or raise his mind to Him. This night is a painful disturbance involving many fears, imaginings and struggles within a man. Due to all these he feels lost forever.

Sometimes the mystical knowledge is serenely communicated to the intellect and the will is left to dryness.

The soul advances by suffering. And suffering is a surer and even more advantageous road than that of joy and action.
In suffering, first the soul gains strength. Secondly, in suffering virtues are practiced. The Master teaches the soul and dwells in it where, neither the devil nor the natural senses, nor the intellect can reach.

Faith darkens and empties the intellect of all its natural undertakings and prepares it for the divine wisdom. Faith, hope and charity are the three theological virtues by which the soul enjoys the favor of God. Besides, they help the soul advance safely fortified against the three enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh. One doubts whether to identify Kafka as an atheist or a theist. However, Kafka appears to be a pronounced atheist, stressing on the Original self but he is not an atheist. He also presents the mystical through human beings shrouded in Christian myth. This emphasis tempts the perceptive reader to argue that Kafka is a Christian existentialist.

The individual self is constantly on the move in quest of the Supreme Self, which is also the Absolute. Thus in identifying with the greater other self, the soul of the individual yearns to strike a merger with the other higher self. This is
the aim and purpose of life on this earth. This Quaker quest is emphasized by the search of Joseph K. for the higher court through several media like Titorelli, Huld and Leni. Titorelli, endeavors to reach the Absolute through the medium of art. When the individual self tries to strike a merger with the Higher Self it does so through any possible means. But the efforts of the characters prove a futile attempt. Yet the quest remains a sustained factor in Kafka's life. The characters adopt every available means to reach their desired goal. Donald M. Kartiganer further explains this point with regard to Joseph K.:

The tasks of the hero is to reject the temptation to insert a mother-image, such as Frau Grubach, or the washerwoman between himself and the Court, or to find less stringent and forceful father-image, such as Huld, as a substitute for the true father, the only one who has the power to unite the hero with the self. But J.K., of course is slow to learn this lesson. He spends the bulk of the novel collecting various advocates and aids, highly-sexed women to utilize their wiles on his behalf, lawyers to draft affidavits and formal pleas, confidants of the Court to enhance his status with bribery and cajolery. His is a continual search for mediation...98

Kafka's protagonists explore the self in its shifting relation with environment and they all indicate some kind of a paradoxical conclusion toward which the hero strives in the infinitely developed stages of his quest.

It is such an attempt, that leads to struggle, failure and death for Joseph K. who vainly exhausts his energy in trying to solve his problems in a human manner.

K. too tries desperately to reach the Castle by every possible trick, shortcut and conspiracy without ever getting beyond the village. Both protagonists fail in their quests because their basic error is the attempt to attain by human means, that which lies beyond human limitations. This appears to be the meaning of Kafka's remark:

Moses fails to enter Canaan not because his life is too short but because it is a human life..."99

When the quest for understanding fails, Kafka's heroes are stranded in a state of despair and

Angst. Though untiringly and persistently they confront the world, they fail to penetrate into the puzzling mysteries shrouding existence. K. is the quester in solitude though he is in a society. Kafka reminds one of the nature and conduct of Walt Whitman who was at once a loner and a mixer. He struggles in pursuit of his goal, in the world that is dark and absurd. Besides he has no competitors.

People often help him but such people instead of taking him closer to the Castle only increase the distance. K. is not prepared to retreat from his journey to the Castle. Frieda in The Castle sets an example which K. cannot follow. Frieda is an enterprising and aggressive young woman, but her sense of self and her feeling of superiority are based entirely on her status, her job at the inn and her contact with Klamm. She cannot bear separation from Klamm. K. can never understand Frieda's situation. The problem about his quest is that unlike Frieda he has never experienced anything purer than his immediate self.

Franz Kuna critically remarks:
Frieda's own quest for spiritual union with K. is frustrated by K's inability to surrender self-consciousness and forget himself in another self rather than in the search for abstract love. In his dealings with real things and people, K., suffers from an acute sense of unreality....100

Edwin Muir elaborates Kafka's quest for the Absolute thus:

What essentially concerned him was how man could walk the way of salvation in this present confused and deceptive life, where "There are countless places of refuge" but "only one place of salvation", and where accordingly "the possibilities of salvation... are as numerous as the places of refuge". It is not that he did not believe in the fundamental certainties of religion, divine justice, divine grace, damnation and salvation, for they are the very framework of the world of his imagination. The problem of which all his stories are the direct imaginative statement is how man, stationed in one dimension, can direct his life in accordance with a law belonging to another, a law whose workings he can never interpret truly, though they are always manifest to him....101

Kafka was one of the most dramatic witnesses of modern man and his struggle with nothingness.

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Kafka's works discuss the experience of man in an unintelligible universe, attempting to come to terms with a remote incomprehensible and Absolute Power.

Hardly anyone has surveyed the spiritual desert of the modern world as Kafka did. He himself suffered the curse of the marked man, whose art was payment for service to the devil.

Kafka wrote:

Man cannot live without a permanent faith in something indestructible in himself. At the same time, this indestructible part, and his faith in it, may remain permanently hidden from him. One of the possible ways in which this concealment may be expressed is belief in a personal God....102

Kafka did not find salvation from loneliness, fear and alienation at home, in school or in his Judaic religion. Kafka offers in "The Letter to his Father", his most extensive autobiographical statement about religion:

102 Franz Kafka, quoted in Franz Baumer, Franz Kafka, p.88.
Here Salvation would have been conceivable... But what a Judaism I got from you... As a child agreeing with you, I reproached myself for not going often enough to the synagogue, for not fasting etc. I believed I had done an injustice not to myself but to you, and my sense of guilt always ready, overwhelmed me... Later, as a young man I could not understand how you who knew so little of Judaism could reproach me...103

There is evidence in the diaries, that though from a religious point of view, Kafka accepted and was fully absorbed by the cultural aspects of Judaism, he rejected its religious aspects.

Each man has his own God, his protector and judge. Priests and rituals are only crutches to support the crippled life of the soul...104

It is therefore evident, that Kafka was truly a religious man seeking after God. For him God is more than a delusion born of a compulsion neurosis.

Kierkegaard and Pascal starting from similar observations sink roots much deeper into the

103 Franz Kafka, quoted in Franz Baumer, Franz Kafka, p.28.
104 Gustav Janouch, Conversations with Kafka, p.93.
mystery of existence. Kafka's world bears witness to the wretchedness of man without God or without the possibility of Grace.

The Providence of the Castle is of a peculiar nature. One would not know as to how and when the grace is received. The patient efforts, the pious conviction, the hopeful confidence and the constant frustration get further exemplified when Olga tells K.:

> It makes me doleful to hear Barnabas say in the early morning that he is going to the Castle. In all likelihood a quite useless journey, a lost day, a completely vain hope...105

Max Brod and Thomas Mann clearly state that to be near God was identical with living rightly. Kafka repeatedly realized that one could reach God through an authentic existence, living a right life and following the right profession.

It thus becomes clear that reaching the Absolute is within man's capacity and not beyond his reach.

Like the theist existentialist, Kafka too believed in a universe where man could look upon God for sustenance and strength. Jean-Paul Sartre and his followers believed in a Godless universe.

Though man is endowed with reasoning capacity, this capacity is inadequate to cope with the mysteries shrouding existence.

Kafka treated his tuberculosis of the pharynx as the symptom and symbol of a more general failure—the failure to understand the mystery shrouding existence.

Man is troubled by his seeming distance from God whom he acknowledges as his creator and seeks as his Redeemer. Man's destination is the divine human encounter which is his salvation. In Western civilization the great source book of man's meeting with God is The Bible.

Most great works do complement The Bible, speaking directly to those who would be brought to a conviction of their sin and attesting to the fact that if God has been driven out of the world, he has not been driven out of existence.
Reading of modern fiction eventuates in a self knowledge alerting the reader to Biblical affirmation which had previously gone unnoticed. In the opinion of Albert Camus:

The Castle is perhaps a theology in action, but it is first of all the individual adventure of a soul in quest of its grace, of a man who asks of this world's objects, their royal secret and of the women the signs of the God that sleeps in them....

The Castle wrestles with the secrets of existence. It effects a clarification of the fundamental forces that dominate Kafka's life. For the author, it is one way of gaining self knowledge. There are explicit observations of a purely religious nature in Kafka's private remarks, though scarcely ever in his published works. In so far as he read or wrote about religion, it was the Judaeo Christian tradition that was in the forefront. He read The Bible, The Talmud, Kierkegaard, Pascal and Nietzsche. The Book of Job had a special attraction for him and he wrote of such events as the Fall of Adam and Eve, Hell and Paradise and the rejoicing of the Seraphim. He was interested in the

Yiddish theater. His literary friends were often Jews, like Max Brod or Franz Werfel and he had sympathy for the cause of the Zionists. Yet he did not attend the synagogue or the church.

Certainly none of his fictional works is explicitly about a Jew. Joseph K. in The Trial crosses himself. The Cathedral scene is clearly a Christian building. K. in The Castle thinks of the Castle in connection with the church in his home country and not a synagogue:

K. could see only one tower and it was impossible to tell whether it belonged to a dwelling - house or a church....107

The fairly frequent references, in his diaries and conversations, to Christ and the Messiah show by the skepticism, that he paid allegiance ultimately to neither Judaism nor Christianity.

One is uncertain whether Kafka speaks within the paradoxical tradition of Hegel, Kierkegaard and the German Romantic theologians whereby, the greater the lack of faith becomes, the greater is dedication to God or the chance of salvation. One

107 Franz Kafka, The Castle, p.16.
also doubts whether he means to speak with paradox simply as an atheist. Kafka in fact was not total alien to Judaism. He considered himself an alien only because of his humility.

Religion had been a structure and had encompassed man's life providing him with a system of images and symbols by which he could express his own aspirations towards psychic wholeness. With the loss of this containing frame work, man becomes not only a dispossessed but a fragmentary being.

In this regard Barret William writes:

Decline of religion in modern times means simply that religion is no longer the uncontested center and ruler of man's life and that the Church is no longer the final and unquestioned home and asylum of his being... Religion to medieval man was not merely a theological system as a solid psychological matrix surrounding the individual's life from birth to death, sanctifying and enclosing all its ordinary and extraordinary occasions in sacrament and ritual... In losing religion, man lost the concrete connection with a transcendent realm of being; he was set free to deal with this world in all its brute objectivity. But he was bound to feel homeless in such a world, which no longer answered the need of his spirit....108

Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* tells how a man becomes convinced of his sinfulness, repents and is redeemed. Pilgrim's journey from the sinful condition which dwells in the city of destruction to the redeemed condition which abides in the Celestial City is the journey of the soul's purification and the difficulty of the spiritual voyage is made clear by such physical obstacles as the Slough of Despair, Vanity fair, the Wicked monster Appolyon and the Giant with his Doubting Castle.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* makes use of similitudes, tracing the spiritual progress of its narrator from the physical agonies of the Inferno through the cleansing activity of Purgatory. The *Bible* is compounded of Odysseys of men who like Job are in search of a just redeemer. The Biblical epic in its simplest terms is the story of God's creation of a good universe whose most abundantly endowed creature commits the sin of disobedience. God's justice demands punishment, yet His mercy provides redemption for those who repent.

The repentant suffer, are graced with the power of love and are ultimately raised up to God's eternal
presence. Thus The Bible tells of man's enduring relationship with God.

Every thoughtful person must go through the truly agonizing struggle to come to some understanding of ultimate reality and some vision of God.

William Mueller confirms the concept thus:

Each one of us, I hope, will in his own way re-enact Jacob's wrestling with the angel at Peniel and will demand satisfaction before giving up the struggle. There is not the slightest doubt that the great works of literature are records of this struggle and may serve as directional markers of varying significance and assistance to us. The magnificent story of Job is the tale of Jacob expanded to epic proportions. The journey of an Odysseus or an Aeneas is not merely a geographical tour, but also a quest for understanding, as the classical convention of the descent into Hades clearly shows. The hell which Lear endures on the stormy heath is the struggle and the condition which makes a humble man of a proud one, a wise man of an ignorant one. The journey of Dante in the Divine Comedy, of Bunyan in the Pilgrims Progress, of Kafka in The Trial and The Castle - all these show in their different ways the persistent wrestling of the human spirit to come to an understanding of its relationship to God....109

Self knowledge figures prominently in the consummation of one's ultimate goal.

Several mythical characters too serve as basic material for Kafka's *Oeuvres*, namely Prometheus and Sisyphus who were cursed to endless suffering. Tantalus mirrors man's plight while Sisyphus accepts his inevitable situation and never tries to escape.

All these mythical characters faced endless suffering because, they violated the divine law and lost divine grace. The suffering of these mythical characters is a contrast to the suffering of Christian martyrs. The curse experienced by the mythical characters prompts Kafka to trace the theme of universal suffering in *The Trial* and *The Castle* which rings the note of despair. Besides the theme of alienation, the problem of Divine justice, breach between God and man because of man's violation of divine law, man's incapacity to recognize the good, to unite himself with it, and to live in the right, and the search for *The Absolute* are also basic themes of his novels.
Edwin Muir considers Kafka as a metaphysical writer preoccupied with the incommensurability of the human and divine dimensions.

Edwin Muir comments on Kafka's world:

It is a world absolutely definite in main outline, but endlessly subtle and intricate in its workings out. At its center and in its most remote manifestations lies the dogma of the incommensurability of divine and human law which Kafka adopted from Kierkegaard....110

He continues:

The Castle is a picture on a scale never attempted since the seventeenth century of the relation to God of the soul seeking salvation....111

The Castle depicts general themes, the alienation of man, the incomprehensibility of the divine and the quest of the hero for the fulfilment of an ideal. The Castle is an allegory. The Castle stands for the world damned for ever because of eternal


111 Ibid., p.42.
curse. The violation of the Divine Law had resulted in the loss of Divine Grace. It is a world of power and authority and it represents the bureaucratic government. The Castle that stands for the world is presented under the grip of Power.

Kafka contrasts this power with Divine Law and Divine Grace. This autocratic and bureaucratic power does not take into account Divine Law and Divine Grace.

The Trial is a novel of spiritual search like The Pilgrim's Progress and Crime and Punishment. Kafka's aim is to go in search of the Absolute is revealed fully in his magnum opus, The Castle and to a lesser degree in The Trial.

The Castle authorities represent The Absolute just as the unseen supervisor judge in The Trial stands for The Absolute. In The Castle K. finds that the road neither leads to nor away from the Castle.

So he resumed his walk, but the way proved long. For the street he was in, the main street of the village, did not lead upto the Castle hill, it only made towards it and then, as if deliberately, turned aside, and though it did not lead
The several attempts of Joseph K. to reach the Superior Judge are also unsuccessful. K's major concern was to reach the **Absolute** but he found that the road to it remained undefined. That explains his cry, "I ought to welcome eternity but to find it makes me sad..."113 He represents the quest of man for the **Absolute**.

In *The Trial* Joseph K's aim is to search for the absolute Authority. The Superior officer of the court that interrogates him at first belongs to the lower order. He wants to meet the Higher Court; the Superior authority. "Take me to your Superior Officer..."114 he says to the warders who have come to arrest him. Through several people he tries to reach the Superior Authority.

When the protagonist is put to trial, the element of quest follows. One big question arises whether one human being can answer the quest of another. In *The Trial*, the old lady Frau Grubach, the painter and Joseph K's uncle try to help him in his quest. Joseph K's quest is to know the chief justice and to confront him. But the meeting never takes place.

In *Amerika* when Karl is invited by Pollunder, one of his uncle's business friends, to spend a few days at his secluded country estate near New York, the Senator uncle is unwilling to let him go. As a result of the strange circumstances at Pollunder's house, Karl discovers his love for his new protector. The Senator's desire for love and union with his nephew is no less strong. But things went wrong just because of Mr. Green, his best friend, who cheated both Karl and his uncle of an opportunity to establish a harmonious relationship. Karl realizes this too late. He affronts Green:

There is one thing more you must explain: on the envelope you gave me it was merely stated that I was to receive it at midnight, wherever I might be found. Why, then, on the strength of that letter, did you keep me here when I wanted to leave at a quarter-past eleven? In doing that you exceeded your instructions"... I was insisting on going back. Does not the
inscription quite plainly convey that midnight was to be the final term for me? And it is you who are to blame that I missed it....115

Incidentally existentialism is the metaphysical science dealing with the meaning of existence. Existentialism refers in a religious sense to an instant fall into utter despair if man loses eternity and overrates the temperament. Existence in all its forms is a philosophy of the crisis of man and is concerned with man's existential being.

Man stands again before God but he remains the loner, the person who is separated from his fellow men and also from the Universe.

In Kafka there are overlappings and continuities of Sartrean and Kierkegaardian existential viewpoints.

Existentialists believe that Man suffers loneliness throughout life. Man realizes that the solitude of the self is an irreducible dimension of his life. In the end, he sees each man as solitary and unsheltered before his own death. Kafka too

115 Franz Kafka, Amerika, p.91.
suffered solitude and his singleness was an inevitable condition.

Kafka gradually felt at home in his loneliness and cherished its company very much. He felt isolation not only as an unavoidable existential situation, but also as a conducive and necessary condition of his existence as an artist. He knew also this would mean suffering. The terrible loneliness that Kafka sought after as essential condition for creative writing, forced him to sacrifice the pleasures of the world. The natural desires had to be repressed to attain his objective. But what he felt strongly could not be repressed completely. They found an outlet through his writing. Being the products of an alienated man, Kafka's works emanate odors of alienation in different ways. He is the subject and object of his portrayal. Kafka was a bachelor and was always conscious of the loneliness. Due to that, Kafka's protagonists are all loners, as they are parallels to Kafka.

Like Kafka his fictional hero K. is a loner estranged from family, controlling authority, friend, fiancées, customs, religion and spirituality. K. is also conscious
of his loneliness. He is an alien who is in constant exile. He tells the school teacher in the village:

I am to be staying here for some time and already feel a little lonely. I don't fit in with peasants nor, I imagine with the Castle....116

Left in an unknown land K. strikes a close resemblance to Kafka who went on a voluntary exile leaving his father's home. K. a man in his thirties, enters the Castle village as an alien, a total stranger to the place. No one knows the place from where he came or what his past life was. K. claims to be the Land-Surveyor whom the Castle is expecting. The Surveyor is a lone man. He is estranged from the Castle right from the beginning, through ostensible calling and denial of it.

K. longs to ward off his loneliness by becoming an active member of human society. He desires a job and a family through marriage. But he is only considered as an alien.

Joseph K.'s increasing isolation ends in a more and more marked separation between himself and the real world. However, his loneliness has a positive side, since it aims at helping the accused finally to look within. As the warder said at the beginning:

Think less about us and about what is going to happen to you, think more about yourself instead....117

Erich Neumann argues the point thus:

It is a simple and inexorable matter of fact that only the accused can help himself, no one else...118

Man's existential condition helps him to have a free will. But how one exercises one's free will is the responsibility of every individual.

Black Lee Spahr firmly says:

Destruction does not come to us; rather we come to destruction - not indeed by an act of will, but by the inevitable failure to meet the experience. Resolve, preparation, will - all may be present


118 Idem.
In Kafka's view there is a way of life for an individual which is divinely sanctioned. To Kafka, this fact itself constituted a problem of tremendous difficulty, because, he believed in a dichotomy between the divine and the human, the religious and the ethical, to be absolute. Thus though it is imperative for man to follow the true way, it is impossible for him to succeed in doing so. This is the fundamental dilemma, that Kafka believes to lie at the basis of all human effort. Existentialists recognize man's essential being. Man endowed with free will, is free to choose his own ways. The character of an individual is determined by his actions. He tries to visualize order, harmony and law behind the universe but the universe offers none.

As John Tilton clearly states:

Having been banished from his native Europe, Karl Rossmann experiences a

rebirth in a quasi paradise ruled by a figure, godlike in his power--his uncle Jacob. Willfully disobeying the proscription of his uncle, Karl is judged guilty and forced to face the world on his own. As if by providence, a second false-paradise welcomes Karl in the form of the Hotel Occidental. Again by a decision reached independently though, as earlier, influenced by agents from outside the paradise, he violates the discipline of the hotel and is expelled. Prepared now to recognize real providence, Karl heeds the call from the Nature Theater and freely delivers himself into a divinely ordained paradise--his destined place in the universe...120

Uncle Jacob forbids Karl to operate the mechanism of the desk but leaves him perfectly free to disobey if he wishes"... it would have been quite easy to lock the regulator and yet uncle Jacob refrained from doing so...."121 Likewise it would have been quite easy for Uncle Jacob to enforce his wish that Karl should not visit the


121 Franz Kafka, Amerika, p.40.
Pollunder country house. This wish, though not stated explicitly is made quite clear to Karl. Left free to exercise his will, Karl consciously and deliberately disobeys. Robinson, agent from outside appears and makes it almost humanly impossible for Karl to abide by the hotel regulation that he should never leave his post at the elevator which is an explicit order. He wilfully disobeys the regulation.

As Srinivasa Iyengar clearly states:

"...Fixed fate -- free will": that is the sum of human predicament, and the challenge can be met only by deliberate commitment to a course of action, and facing the consequences..."

The capacity to act in a given situation is no doubt an admirable trait, yet where the action proceeds not from any good of an unbreakable faith but from random impulses, wayward fancies or enthusiasms, such actions can only lead to more abysmal frustrations than ever. Absolute freedom leads only to absolute frustration and despair.

K. in *The Castle* makes his own choice and intends to continue his private pursuit of the Castle and its recognition of himself. In a friendlier moment, the landlady suggests that he may submit to an official for gaining an interview with Klamm. But K. choosing his own way states:

> My decision is made, and I would try to carry it out even if an unfavorable answer were to come. And seeing that this is my fixed intention, I can't very well ask for an interview beforehand. A thing that would remain a daring attempt, but still an attempt in good faith so long as I didn't ask for an interview, would turn into an open transgression of the law after receiving an unfavorable answer. That frankly would be far worse....123

Kafka views existence as a tragedy or a cage rather than a playground for the free exercise of the human will. Yet life offers limitless choices. Every choice is met either by the next proceeding situation or by regret.

Life is shrouded with a mystery that is unanswered. The more one tries to find an answer, the more he gets only negative answers. At this level there is

overlapping of Absurdism. Everything is useless since there is the meeting of only negativity and a sense of negation.

Hence life becomes pointless. The useless absurd overlapping negation overwhelms him. The probing ends in nausea. There is not only no human answer but no answer at all. Albert Camus makes a pointed observation thus:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity....124

To the atheistic as well as theistic existentialists, there is possibility for transformation from despair to hope, and from pain to pleasure.

Kierkegaardians accept life in the hereafter and Sartreans deny it. Both believe that the reasoning

124 Albert Camus, Myth of Sisyphus, p.18.
capacity of man is adequate to cope with the mysteries shrouding existence.

Kafka is concerned with a suprahuman justice, strictly incomprehensible, even absurd, that condemns a human being to think of himself as always individual though free. Following Kierkegaard, Kafka admitted the complete incompatibility of the suprahuman justice with human morality. His world is a universe of absurdity through which the human intelligence is groping and in the end leads only to despair. Life thus becomes an endless struggle. People suffer from pain and are highly sensitive.

Existentialists argue that only in struggle, there is existence. To them, there is no question of how to live, or of the struggle, or of facing life.

Albert Camus observes:

The classic figure Sisyphus was forced back to Hades and his hands placed against the rock by his gods. No Absolute or higher Power commands the labors of the modern Sisyphus....125

The first step in the development of the absurd is the individual's shocking recognition of the apparent meaninglessness of the Universe.

Martin Esslin observes thus:

Absurd originally means 'out of harmony', in a musical context. Hence its dictionary definition: 'out of harmony with reason or property; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical. In common usage, 'absurd' may simply mean 'ridiculous but this is not the sense in which Camus uses the word, and in which it is used when we speak of the Theater of the Absurd. In an essay on Kafka, Ionesco defined his understanding of the term as follows: 'Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... Cut off from his religious, meta-physical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd useless....126

The second step is the absurd-man's living the now apparent conflict between his inner voice and the reality which he will encounter. The third step consists in his assumption of heroic dimensions through living the conflict and making it his God. Kafka rightly points out:

We are sinful not only because we have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge but also because we have eaten from the Tree of

Life. The condition in which we find ourselves is sinful independent from guilt....127*

Sin refers to a condition, a state and not an act. Sin can also be said to consist in a state of not acting. It is also in existence within a condition which requires one to act, yet prohibits one from acting. This is so, since it does not endow one with the strength to act within the framework.* And to act in the face of guilty knowledge would be hubris.

Erich Heller observes:

The Law without the lawgiver, Original Sin without 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 lawgiver, their souls are cast in 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....128

127 Franz Kafka, Dearest Father, p.43.

* This bears repetition.
Man is fated to an unnamed sin, a sin to which all mankind is subject. According to Leslie Fiedler, the most honest and promising vision of man, which serious literature in our time can present is:

...not, as so often in the past, a view of man struggling to fulfil some revealed or inherited view of himself and his destiny: but of man learning that is the struggle itself which is his definition....129

Kafka is acutely conscious that man is a prisoner who cannot escape his fate. His life is to a certain extent inhibited by it. What Kafka asserts is, the helplessness and essential victimization of man by his own worldly schemes, his sacrificing of himself to the rationalists' dry-souled routines of life and its petty contest for meaningless power.

Joseph K. is perhaps no more guilty of routinizing his life, thus losing himself, than his fellow workers at the bank. Yet he is seemingly, arbitrarily, and suddenly accused one morning. What establishes his guilt is his acknowledgement of the

129 Leslie Fiedler, "No! In Thunder," in Esquire, 54 (September 1960), p.79.
accusation, and his willingness to engage in legalistic procedures in pursuit of a favorable judgement. His acknowledgement grows out of his fear of any authoritative voice and his pursuit of favorable judgement is motivated by the desire to save appearances. He is entirely mystified when the priest in the Cathedral, in the crucial episode towards the end of the novel, tells him the parable of the law which shows that the final truth of the law is its mystery. The priest consoles Joseph K. saying:

The scripture is unalterable and the opinions are often merely an expression of despair on the part of the commentators. In this case one opinion has it that it is the door keeper himself who is deceived....130

But not for long, even the priest fails to assure Joseph, K.:

"You were being so kind to me earlier", K said "and you were explaining everything to me, but now you are sending me off as if you weren't interested, in me. But you have to go", said the priest, "Well, yes", said K, "you must understand that...But you must first understand who I am", said the priest. "You are the

prison chaplain", K. said moving closer to the priest... "Therefore I belong to the Court", the priest said "So why should I want anything from you? The Court doesn't want anything from you. It receives you when you come and it dismisses you when you go"... 131

To an existentialist, Man cannot remain content with the knowledge of good and evil alone. He must also strive to act in accordance with it. 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 an attempt to do so. Yet, there remains nothing for him but this last attempt. Therefore, man is filled with fear. He prefers to unlearn the knowledge of good and evil, but that can never be done. Knowledge of good and evil can be obscured by reasons to account for his life and himself.

The whole world is full of realization of man's wish to find peace for a moment from his knowledge of good and evil and the obligation it lays on him.

Joseph K. too prefers to unlearn his knowledge of good and evil. In the first statement of the novel he pleads innocent of any wrong doing.

Kafka writes:

Someone must have been spreading lies about Joseph K. for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one morning....132

The court never specifies what the charge against him is till the end. Joseph K. demands:

How on earth can I be under arrest... I am being charged although I cannot discover the slightest grounds for any accusation... The main question is who is making the accusation? What authority is conducting the proceedings....133

To this the Inspector replies:

You have been arrested that's true, but I don't know any more than that....134

The manifest injustice of the court does not relieve Joseph K. of his own responsibility. It only makes his own responsibility manifest. He makes an outcry about feeling innocent. His argument culminates in the Cathedral, in the declaration of innocence in general.

133 Ibid., p.219.
134 Idem.
The priest says that guilt has been proved. Joseph K. says he is not guilty for, how in general can a man be guilty. He protests:

'But I am not guilty', said Joseph K. It's a mistake. How can a person be guilty at all? Surely we are all human beings, here one like the other...135

To this the priest replies:

That's right, but that is the way the guilty are wont to talk...136

Kafka says that the term, Fall of Man can be traced back not to man's disobeying God and eating the apple of the Tree of Knowledge, but to a thoroughly naturalistic origin of the fear man feels, when he has to act according to the knowledge of good and evil, because he lacks the strength for such action. Fall of Man is not getting the knowledge of good and evil through disobedience of God; it is forgetting it through fear of human weakness. Original Sin is not a fall into knowledge but


136 Idem.
falling away from it, a defection from the ethical task imposed on one by one's nature and of fear, because one's nature lacks the strength for the task. Original Sin is one's loss of innocence. The Original Sin, the ancient wrong committed by man consists in the complaint which man makes and never ceases making, that the Original Sin was committed upon him.

Joseph K.'s wrong doing consists in the complaint which he never ceases making until just before his end that a wrong has been done to him.

The story of the Biblical Adam enables one to grasp life as a whole and to have faith in life's ultimate meaningfulness, even though the myth is an account of how mankind came to be deprived of that meaningful life which would be Paradise. Kafka's myth symbolizes the ills of self consciousness. The self-destructive urge to know oneself, asserts one's innocence and rights, and through knowledge and determination strives to achieve freedom.

Quentin in The Sound and the Fury commits suicide. And suicide is no answer to life's plight and predicaments: Indecision too is no answer. Life has
to be met squarely. It has to be faced; it has to be lived. *The Old Man and the Sea* teaches that in struggle there is existence. This is the textuality.

Ernest Hemingway's protagonists too were hemmed in like Mr K. by the bewildering and menacing cosmos. Santiago Hemingway's hero of *The Old Man and the Sea* is one such victim who is confused and bewildered in a world, dominated by violence and death. The individual is practically left with few choices and he feels more like a person to be manipulated and pushed around than an individual who is a free being and has the freedom to make significant choices.

Santiago, in spite of his old age, exhaustion, hunger, and the knowledge that he might eventually lose, does not let the marlin escape. He fights the battle to its bitter end until he reaches the shore with the skeleton of his catch. It is with the same courage and dignity that he defends his prize against sharks. He knows that it is a useless struggle and it would be too much of a luck to get away with his prize. His greatness lies in what he has attempted elsewhere --... But I will show him
that a man can do and what a man endures.... 137 the way he has endured pain and his stoic acceptance of his defeat. He does not care who kills who at the final hour. He must go on fighting come what may.

Joseph K.'s life is one long struggle till his death. He is hungry early in the morning. But nobody brings his breakfast. Only later does he find out that the warders had eaten it up. He realizes that he ought to put an end to the farce of a trial. As he goes in search of the judge to various dirty places, he meets several people whom he does not want to meet. He cannot avoid it for he is a helpless victim. At the end of his experiences Joseph K.'s death like a dog presents him more as a victim. The mystery of life itself is a victimizer. Man is a victim from the time of Original Sin and Jesus is the first victim of mankind.

Moreover according to Finkelstein Sidney:

Through thought man became aware of his own death, discovering that our pleasures are only vanity, that our evils are

137 Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man And The Sea, p.57.
infinite and lastly that death which threatens us at every moment must infallibly place us within a few years under the dreadful necessity of being for ever annihilated or unhappy ... there is nothing more real than this, nothing more terrible....138

Martin Greenberg is of the opinion that:

In a world in which man lacks the strength to carry the ethical task imposed on him by his nature...death is the inevitable consequence of man's trying to live in the world in accordance with his nature....139

If man fails in his attempt due to ignorance of his responsibility, it means he is done to death. To accept the responsibility also leads to one's own destruction.

Man is conscious not of birth point, but only of the Death point. This creates a fear increasing to Dread of Death. Existential reality is very harsh. Death is a human and existential actuality.


Knowledge about what awaits one after Death is an eternal mystery. Hence even if people assume a poise of bravery and say that they are not afraid of death, it is to be concluded, that such people are lying. But one cannot constantly be conscious of impending Death. That would increase concentration on Death and man will never enjoy or even live his life.

Calpurnia, wife of Julius Caesar is most reluctant to permit Caesar out of the house. She fears for him because she had heard strange sounds and had seen strange sights, signs of bad omen. Fearless Caesar replies:

Cowards die many times before their death. The valiant never taste of death but once. It seems to me most strange that men should fear seeing that death, a necessary end will come, when it will....140

In A Farewell to Arms, Katherine while in labor tells her lover Henry:

I won't die. It is silly to die.
I don't want to die...
I am not brave enough any more
I am broken. I won't die. I am not afraid.
I just hate it. It is just a dirty trick....141

Given his burden of guilt, man can only conclude from his perspective that he should die in order to return to the original innocence of nature. However, this imperative which makes self-destruction the essential restorative symbolic act cannot be accepted by man's erotic drive to sustain life. This is Existential reality.

The phenomenon of Death as Existentialists observe has always been the closest intimate of mankind. No matter how obsessively men have striven to outstrip death, the effort has been futile. Death demands that each individual face and come to terms with his mortality. It is therefore not difficult to understand why the human imagination has always, specially in times of crises, like the present, mythologized, has made something of this terrible negation.

Existentialism becomes meaningful if man meets Death cheerfully. The basic truth of the inevitability of Death should be accepted by man. One should be mentally and culturally prepared to face Death. That is one reason why the intellectuals conceive Death in pleasing images, as a fond mother whose embrace is so tender. Death is metaphorically presented as a pleasant mansion full of loving things. It is sometimes likened to a child's playroom filled with toys. Such is the conception of Death by intellectuals. In a very romantically conceived picture of Death, it is seen as a bridegroom waiting to embrace the bride.

Emily Dickinson in her poems, quite often talks of Death. In the Poem "Because I could not stop for Death", she says:

Because I could not stop for death,  
He kindly stopped for me;  
The carriage held but just ourselves  
And immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,  
And I had put away  
My labor, and my leisure too,  
For his civility.

We passed the school where children strove  
At recess, in the ring.
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

Or rather he passed us.
The dews grew quivering and chill,
For only gossamer my gown -
My tippet only tulle.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than day
I first surmised the horse's heads
Were toward eternity....142

The inevitability of Death was realized and recognized by Sisyphus. The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. Sisyphus is fully aware that the stone will never come to rest at the top. Yet he never contemplates taking rest. He never sulks over his lot nor bemoans or curses the gods, but cheerfully engages in his work. The silent joy of Sisyphus is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His

rock is his thing. By meeting the inevitabilities of life one becomes the absurd hero.

The absurd man says 'yes' and his efforts will henceforth be unceasing. If there is a personal fate, there is no higher destiny or at least there is but one which he concludes is inevitable and despicable. For the rest, he knows himself to be the master of his days. At the subtle moment when man glances backwards over his life, Sisyphus returning towards his rock, in that slight pivoting, he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus, convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling....

For human beings at least, death will bring an end to existential suffering. But Sisyphus punished by the gods was wont to eternal suffering. When he could be stoical, why not man? Meeting the absurdity of the existential situation, he becomes the absurd hero.

In Kafka's works what impresses the reader is a vision of an incomprehensible world, a mood of

total impotence in the face of the unintelligible power and of circumstances, as a consequence of which the inner world of the subject is transformed into a sinister inexplicable flux, requiring exorcism by the hardest punitive measures. Yet it is equally true that beneath the nightmare a more positive assessment of reality can be detected.

Kafka's works could never be of use to himself or others as positive counsel, but as warning, they are truly helpful. His works present man in a labyrinth which he will never understand. Every reader of The Trial experiences the trial in his own person because he identifies himself with Joseph K. and would in fact behave as he does.

The man of Kafka's world is indicted through freedom which is an intolerable condition. He aspires to a judgement, to a formulated law that would allow him to know exactly where he stands. But his attempts prove futile. Only the religious teachings of good and evil, of sin and forgiveness, give a deeper meaning to life. In The Castle and other works there are veiled references to this.
The existential situation permits limited freedom. It is incompatible with comfort. The freedom is a defined and qualified one, determined by Society and the Establishment. The freedom is bound by law and only within the limits of law can one enjoy his freedom. In the modern context, the freedom of the press, legal freedom, educational and ethical freedom, all these are held in check. Once man crosses the limits to express his freedom as he wishes, he loses his freedom. But if he himself restrains his free spirits, he experiences a mental discomfort. Physical discomfort results, if a man is not allowed to marry a person of his choice, just because family, religion or society do not permit it for their own incomprehensible reasons.

Intellectually, if the radical view points are suppressed and not allowed to be expressed, man ceases to be what he is. Frieda says to K.:

How forsaken I feel since knowing you.
When you aren't with me.... 144

144 Franz Kafka, The Castle, p.63.
The plot of *The Castle* is rigorous in development. K. is named Land-Surveyor to the Castle and he arrives in the village. K. persists in seeking his way, makes every advance, uses trickery and expedience, never gets angry and with disconcerting good-will tries to assume the duties entrusted to him. Each chapter is a new frustration to him. But when K. telephones to the Castle he hears confused mingled voices, vague laughs and distant invitations which are enough to feed his hopes.

Kafka's characters provide an image of what a man should be if he is deprived of his distractions and utterly consigned to the humiliations of the divine. The great hope of K. is to get the Castle to adopt him. Unable to achieve this, his whole effort is to deserve this favor by becoming an inhabitant of the village and by losing the status of a foreigner that everyone makes him feel.

What he wants is an occupation, a home, the life of a healthy normal man. He cannot stand his madness any longer. He wants to be reasonable. He wants to cast off the peculiar curse that makes him a stranger to the village. The episode of Frieda is significant. If he takes as his mistress this woman
who has known one of the official of the Castle, it is because of her past. He derives from her something that transcends him, while being aware of what makes her for ever unworthy of the Castle. For Kafka this is not a mistake. It is a doctrine and a leap. There is nothing that is not God's.

Even more significant is the fact that the Land-Surveyor breaks with Frieda in order to go towards the Barnabas sisters. The Barnabas family is the only one in the village that is utterly forsaken by the Castle and by the village itself. Amalia, the elder sister has rejected the shameful propositions made to her by one of the Castle's officials. The immoral curse that followed has for ever cast her out from the love of God. Being incapable of losing one's honor for God amounts to making oneself unworthy of His Grace. The path followed by Kafka's hero, from Frieda to Barnabas sisters is the one that leads from trusting love to the deification of the absurd.

K's attempts to seek external help to solve the riddles of the secrets of the Castle delude him of his success. His ambition to realize his cherished goal proves futile. In such inevitable situations
man experiences only struggle, suffering, anxiety and Angst. Like religion, Angst is man's desperate attempt to find a resting place in his distress. It is his frantic search for the anchor and for a refuge in any material soil that promises stability. George Lukacs asserts:

Kafka is the classic example of the modern individual's arrest by blind and panic stricken Angst in the face of reality ... His routinized life forced him to a realization that freedom from his existence was unthinkable....145

To Thorlby:

Angst is the experience evoked in a man by the awareness of selfhood and of the infinite discrepancy between what he knows and what he is. It is the experience that is symbolized and to some extent communicated by Kafka's writing....146

Angst is a generalized uneasiness, tension, anxiety, dread or fear channelled through his existence. It also includes the dread of a nothingness of human existence.


Thorlby realizes:

Kafka believed in nothing but feels that the condition of believing in nothing is dreadful....147

Kafka firmly believed that since pain is inevitable in life till death, it is but to be accepted with the least protests. If one despised this fact, the goal would be missed. Therefore, humility to suffer the various misadventures of his life is what is expected of every person and that is the only way to attain the goal. If life is to be made liveable, man has to confront these realities and harsh actualities.

Freud believed that the goal could be attained only by strengthening one's ego, in the face of his id and super ego. With such an attitude and approach, man would be able to lead a relatively peaceful life.

Thus he will atleast be free from neurosis. The neurosis Angst is evoked in a man by the awareness of his selfhood and of the infinite discrepancy of what he knows and what he is.

Kafka like every man was more afraid of the pain accompanying death than by death itself. This pain that cannot be endured or wiped out, leads to Angst which soon becomes an inseparable part of man. Kafka explains the nature of this fear and its existential nature thus:

As it is I have no one, no one here but Fear locked together. We toss through the night... this fear, is after all not my private fear... this is only part of it and terribly so... but it is as much the fear of all faith since the beginning of time....148

So conscious was Kafka of existential suffering, that he tried to trace it in every part of this life. If he did not experience suffering in proximity, he embraced the sufferings of his fellow men as his own. Franz Baumer's analysis reveals:

One reason for Kafka's agony was self consciousness. Acutely sensitive to the dangers caused by self awareness, Kafka succumbed to fear and Dread. Kafka never attempted to be free of pain. He took suffering as a positive element which he considered the only link between the world and the positive world of art....149

148 Franz Kafka, I am a Memory come Alive, p.187.
149 Franz Baumer, Franz Kafka, p.56.
In his writings Kafka found an effective medium to express all his emotions, especially his Angst. He felt pain and suffering were not only essential for his art but were also the sustaining force in him. He says:

I am a little affected by all the misery and am firmer in my resolve than ever. But I will write inspite of everything, absolutely it is my struggle for self preservation....150

With originality Kafka formulates his anguish, creating with irresistible necessity, the things and structure of objective reality, which that anguish is supposed to evoke and which are supposed to correspond to it. For Kafka, escape from Angst was in his writing. He writes in his Diary entry of October 2, 1917:

Finally I say it, I am in the grip of a great fear; everything in me is ready for creative work, and such a work would be heavenly solution and a real coming alive for me, while here in the office I must rob my body, which is capable of such happenings, of a piece of its flesh for the sake of some miserable document....151

151 Ibid., p.387.
It is true that all of Kafka's works are written in the shadow of a fear that verges on insanity.

Antony Thorlby records Kafka's feeling thus:

Perhaps there is another way of writing but the only one I know is this, at night when I cannot sleep for Angst - that is the only sort of writing I know and it seems to me quite clear why it is devilish. It is the vanity and pleasure seeking practice of whirling around one's own person all the time or around someone else's. The movement then repudiates itself producing a solar system of vanity and of enjoying them -- the thing an extra ordinary simple man sometimes wishes, I would like to die and see how the people are sorry I have gone is what a writer actually keeps doing, he dies and is perpetually sorry for himself....152

Joseph K. suffers from persecution mania. He is constituted by a hideous circle of fear. He is afraid to accept any responsibility that involves leaving the bank on business or undertaking a short journey. Yet for fear of betraying this fear he does not dare to excuse himself from commissions of this kind, even if he is ill and would have had excellent reasons for refusing to leave the office. If one wants to escape all pangs he should follow the divine. Kafka, the Prague Jew, nourished on

152 Anthony Thorlby, Kafka : A Study, p.20.
the Talmud, haunted by the search for and despair of the law, later deeply influenced by the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard gives one of the most moving and most apt symbols of modern man at the mercy of God and at the same time ignorant of Him. Kafka's entire work is dominated by the theme of judgement, sentence and acquittal.

Whitman says,

I am the man... I suffered... I was there...153

Man is incapable of apprehending the Divine Law and it is possible for the Divine law to appear immoral in his eyes. Kierkegaard founded his argument on the sacrifice, demanded by God from Abraham which according to human standards was arbitrary and unjust. On the other hand, it is man's duty to direct his life in accordance with this law, -- whose workings he cannot understand, -- if all aid from Heaven should be denied to him.

Walt Whitman expresses a similar idea;

Agonies are one of my changes of garments;
I do not ask the wounded how he feels...I myself
become the wounded person,
My hurt turns livid upon me
as I lean on a can and observe....154

Before the birth of Christ, the Judaic law and the Commandments served as the restraining force for mankind. But even before the Law was given, salvation was possible through one's faith in the Absolute. One such person is Abraham. Faith in God could redeem the Jew without a redeemer. This faith is the dramatic foundation of Kafka's greatest work, The Castle. In Kierkegaard's terms, every man who has awakened like Joseph K. literally wakes one morning to the realization of the infinite demands made on him and the infinite possibilities that lie before him, has begun to undergo a trial whose possible end is total damnation. Yet the whole process is educative, in which the individual learns to throw away the shrewdness of finitude and to rely on faith alone.

A man who thinks on finite terms, will calculate his good and evil by means of his own ends. When faith comes, dread will eradicate what it has itself produced and calculation will cease. In *Amerika* as John Tilton states:

The Nature Theater demands of all takers of its providential opportunity an act of self-renunciation and trust in providence tantamount to an act of faith.... 155

Karl can perform his act of faith because his experiences have taught him that providence is possible and because he has developed into an independent and responsible moral agent who can recognize and freely decide to accept the salvation offered by the divinely ordained theater. Karl's stages of development suggest a repeated pattern of the story of the Fall.

Absolute faith in something above man has to be the principle in life.... The implicit faith that something or someone above man has caused man to exist. Such firmness is the basis of fundamental reason of existence.

In true faith the essence that is outside or within one's life becomes meaningful. There arises hope based on the belief. The truth that Death is not an end by itself but a means to eternity is revealed. Death then is seen as a pathway to something better. Such a belief is a necessary condition to cross the transition from physical to metaphysical stages of life. To live in this faith and this hope, another condition is, to be charitable.

Charity is impossible without a feeling of togetherness. No concept of life can be put into practice in isolation, segregation or singleness. The existential condition of man being a loner is a contradictory situation.

The Christian concept, "Love thy neighbor as thyself"...156 can be put into practice only by taking into account the concept of the other Self. Although Kafka likes alienation he still longs to be in touch with the world.

156 The Bible, St. Matthew, 19:19.
Pascal thought that the idea of death must lead man to faith in God. Faith is a gift of God not a gift of reasoning. Walter Sokel observes:

Dying is seen by Kafka as a parallel road to writing, but one that leads further and further and more efficiently to the common goal — redemption. Seen in this context, the artist is the embodiment of the writing self that kills and sacrifices the living self for the sake of literature....157

Kafka does not quarrel with God but only with himself. He believes in the existence of the Absolute but he knows that it is immensely difficult to reach it. Man is too weak. Kafka the modern man and specially the modern Jew is too weak for faith and trust required.

On the one hand, Kafka sees an element of the divine in his relationships and accounts Joseph K. guilty for being unable to make relationships. On the other hand, Kafka seeing the flesh as a repugnant barrier to the spirit, doubts that relationships can be anything other than mutual exploitation and enumerates Joseph K. on the grounds that his 157 Walter H. Sokel, The Kafkan Debate New Perspective for our time (New York: Gordian Press, 1977), p.338.
inability is an inevitable part of the human situation.

Leni, Block and other people tempt the accused to turn aside from the central object which is the trial. The fact of seeking aid is a mistake in principle which leads one away from the one thing needful. Genuine help seems to be hidden in Leni's love for the accused man. Apart from the true way of self development through the trial, the only way out of the trial is to be found in relationship with her.

Man never succeeds in surpassing human anguish. In Kierkegaard's terms:

Everyman who has awakened to the realization of the infinite demands made on him, and the infinite possibilities that lie before him, has begun to undergo a trial whose possible end may be total damnation. Yet the whole process is an education, in which the individual learns to throw away the shrewdness of the finitude....158

158 Ronald Gray, Franz Kafka, p.45.
To do so dread must oppose the merely finite perceptions of ordinary life. K. sets out to mould his life in the pattern of divine will. He neither gets acknowledgement from Heaven nor is he granted an earthly vocation by which he can live honestly. Nevertheless he fights on getting further and further from his goal.

At last quite exhausted by the struggle he lies on his death bed when word comes from the Castle.

With each experience comes crisis. At the point where man has to decide whether to make a choice or not, to make a choice results in agony, anxiety and despair.

Thus it is established that the major concerns of Kafka are related to erosion of individual identity by the Society and the Establishment and the consequent search for it.

In his attempt to gain a personal, individual, physical and spiritual identity Kafka becomes aware of the existential peril and how the plights, problems and despairs of life, the Angst, and Anomie affect the life of the modern man. Moreover,
the absurd situations and Nietzschean negativism are studied in an interlinked manner. He admits that the identity of the modern man is no identity at all. At best it is only a half identity. In the process Kafka becomes aware of the crises experienced by modern man.