Kafka Unleashed

Stories, Dreams & Visions

by: **FRANZ KAFKA**

*Translated by Phillip Lundberg*

*with*: A Preface on the Modern Age,
An Addendum of an Ape,
A Postscript on the Translator’s Art
Final Thoughts: Kafka & Esoteric Christianity

*As well as* translations of:

Two Meditations by **Rudolf Steiner** &

Selected Passages from Chapters 11-12 of:
**Walter H. Sokel’s**

**FRANZ KAFKA – TRAGIK UND IRONIE**
# Table of Contents:

- Preface: The Age of the Consciousness Soul  ix-xxii
- Kafka's Diary: May-June, 1910 xxiii-xxv

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Judgment – A Story</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metamorphosis</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Penal Colony</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josef K.! - including the parable: Before the Law (The Trial)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Country Doctor {Ein Landarzt}</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Murder {Ein Brudermord}</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Dream</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Report to the Academy</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Addendum to an Apé's Report)</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Advocates {Fürsprecher}</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Messenger, Barnabus (The Castle)</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nocturnal Deliberations (The Castle)</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Burrow {Der Bau}</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigations of a Dog or On Substance</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Hunger Artist</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine, Soprano or The Mouse Folk</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Silence of the Sirens</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postscript: On The Translator's Art</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Meditations by Rudolf Steiner</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected passages, Chapters 11—12 of Walter Sokel's: FRANZ KAFKA – TRAGIK UND IRONIE</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts: Kafka and Esoteric Christianity</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kafka Unleashed

The Age of the Consciousness Soul

**Coming of age** in our age, that is in the latter part of the 20th century, and indeed in the U.S.A. – well, what can one say? One doesn’t expect all that much from the powers that be, and whether they be close and personal (family, friends), or more distant and generally impersonal (associates, academia, publishing houses, the state, etc.). “It is what it is” seems to be the catchphrase that typifies our times. All the same, having experienced a bit of the Sixties reminds one of the possibility for revolution, that there can be exceptions to the rule, a faint glimmer of hope coming from god knows where. No doubt it is precisely this state of affairs that helps to explain why Franz Kafka has been *so admired* in our times. He appears to capture the absurdities of modernity and yet also seasons them with a ray of hope from “**Far off**” – to quote the first two words from my excerpt from *The Trial*: **Josef K.**!

To make sense of Kafka’s great parable, *Before the Law*, to crack the nut of existence in this modern world, such is the task (at least as best as I can see it) of someone, *anyone*, me, “K.” – such is the task of those who still yearn for ‘real meaning’ in this Darwinian age, an age where the distinction between man and animal is generally viewed as basically a matter of so many thousands of years of evolution or, better yet, simply an anthropomorphic prejudice, fundamentally, don’t you know?— there is no difference, one species amongst so many!

In July of 2008 a rather curious book on Kafka was published which, I would maintain, is quite indicative not only of the general thrust of a great deal of current Kafka research but, much more importantly, likewise of our times as a whole. Its title: “Why You Should Read Kafka Before You Waste Your Life” (by James Hawes, St. Martin Press, NY). With such a pretentious title one might expect some penetrating insight into why it is that Kafka is generally recognized as such a pivotal author in the field not only of modern literature but also, perhaps, in the fields of psychology and philo-

---

1 Kafka’s *Investigations of a Dog* is key to my Kafka interpretation: “… that everyone is doing all that they can to investigate the depths of existence and that it wouldn’t just be the rare exception who’s hunkered down with his minuscule discoveries, overlooked, forgotten, someone who’s beyond my reach due to the **twilight of the age** and all the pressures, the fantastic crush of our current way of life.” (pp. 255-256).
Yet nothing could be further from the truth! Quite to the contrary, the main thrust of the arguments advanced in the book are centered around dispelling all of the ‘myths’ that have arisen since Kafka’s rise to fame. That his father was actually a better than average guy, that Franz was quite well off financially, that he was anything but shy when it came to sex, etc., etc. The title and the contents of the book seem to be totally at odds, its title should rather be: “Debunking Kafka’s Status of Sainthood,” or something along those lines. In the appendices (Further Reading) one finds a remarkable opening quote: “This is easier than it sounds because ‘there are no more than three or four introductions to Kafka published anywhere in the world that are worth reading’ (Reiner Stach).” Please note that this is an Oxford educated Kafka author quoting one of Germany’s leading Kafka experts. Now what is an unknown non-entity from the American heartland to say to that? - Quite a bit, actually.

Of course to begin with one must give credit where credit is due and of the tens of thousands of books and articles published on or about Kafka there can be little doubt that, indeed, the vast majority of them can and should be ignored; it’s the same here as anywhere else: there’s a lot of research generated merely for the sake of doing research. All the same I would have to maintain that there is a fair amount of wheat despite all of the chaff, much more than just “three or four books”! But to return to the topic at hand (Hawes’ Why You Should Read Kafka…) – in the very last chapter of this book we do finally get a taste of what Hawes actually finds so important in at least one of Kafka’s stories, indeed a pivotally most important story, The Judgment. And what does this analysis show? Well, it displays most concretely the utter superficiality of Hawes’ grasp of the story. When the father asks whether it can be possible that Georg has a friend in St. Petersburg, one needs to recall that ‘the father’ already posed a similarly odd question before, and that’s where he supplied the key to his meaning, namely where the emphasis falls:

<<Nach Petersburg?>> fragte der Vater.
<<Meinem Freunde doch>>, sagte Georg und suchte des Vaters Augen. —<<Im Geschäft ist er doch ganz anders>>, dachte er,
<<wie er hier breit sitzt und die Arme über den Brust kreuzt.>>
<<Ja. Deinem Freund>>, sagte der Vater mit Betonung.ii

ii See page 6: “To St. Petersburg?…Right, your friend…” (My underlining, and italics & emboldening, Kafka doesn’t highlight the “Deinem” in any way, it’s left solely up to the reader to discover where the emphasis (Betonung) falls.)
Georg doesn’t really {eigentlich} have a friend in St. Petersburg, he’s so inauthentic that he doesn’t know what a friend or, for that matter, what a father is, otherwise he wouldn’t have been writing this buddy of his such trivial letters for the last so many years, nor walking right by his father’s office with “a vacant stare upon his face.” Despite Mr. Hawes’ assertions to the contrary, it is right and also fitting that we humans have expectations of justice— and Kafka’s stories actually do satisfy this expectation, if indeed generally only through their tragic endings. It’s not merely a question of “raw power” as Hawes would like us to believe, that, as he claims: “logic goes right out the window”:

“... And it is indeed the ideal genre for our post-religious world because in Detective Fiction, evil is revealed and punished, things are set right, not by the mill-wheels of the Lord, but by human reason. There can be justice without God—what message could be more reassuring for a world after Darwin?”
In “The Judgment,” Kafka turns this new genre inside-out, setting out what will become his most essential creative thesis: that all this exact, reasoned observations just doesn’t deliver.” (p.225)

However it does deliver, and there is “consolation”—albeit only for those who read carefully and can see through the surface fog of the stories and parables to something that, indeed, is far removed from what, alas, all too often does take place “in our world.” Yet sooner or later the chickens are bound to come home to roost. The tragedy of our times is accentuated by this bias toward a detailed examining of the material reality at the expense of any deeper appreciation of Kafka’s genius, indeed—as this one example so clearly illustrates—turning what should by now be self-evident upside down in order to promote the status quo, that there are no hidden depths.

It is quite remarkable that the connection {Verbindung} between the father and the friend is a story within the story, namely the “unbelievable” story of the Priest {Geistlicher} in Kiev who cuts a “blood cross” onto his palm and holds it up as he addressed the multitudes. Christian imagery plays a critical role not only in The Judgment, but likewise in almost every one of Kafka’s short stories as well as The Trial and The Castle. Although I don’t at all like having to spell it out and spill the beans, as it were—since it’s certainly best for the reader to discover the connections for him- or herself as well as, and this I do leave up to the reader, resolving as

iii “Be Just!”—In the Penal Colony, p. 99; or My Advocates, pp. 158-160.
to how much faith one gives to such connections and what/whether Kafka himself consciously intended such. Georg’s leap into death vindicates his father’s judgment—why else would he have been driven thither!—and the unnamed friend in St. Petersburg is the key to what is so wrong in our modern, post-Darwinian world: that any spiritual orientation is—post ipso facto—“unbelievable.” In exactly the same way, it is high time that the scholars pay a little more attention to Gregor’s death scene in *Metamorphosis* and how precisely it finds a parallel in the Bible, a book that Kafka certainly treasured. I would mention four things that seem to me to add up, taken all together, as being rather substantial. *First* the “apple” (thrown by father)⁴ that is the ultimate cause of Gregor’s death, just as humanity's eating from the tree of knowledge and the consequent Fall from paradise being the cause of our own mortality. *Second* the love of Gregor toward his family, a love that seems quite inexplicable considering the circumstances (and of course the same can be said of Christ’s love and His making ‘us’ friends right before the crucifixion: “Love one another: there is no greater love than the one shown in that one sacrifices his life and soul for his friends.”) *Third* the faint daylight of the rising of the sun that happens at 3 AM, note that Christ too exhaled his last breath similarly at 3 PM. And finally as the icing on the cake, *fourth*: “the best news ever” which is left unspoken by the cleaning lady. Was Kafka merely playing with us, and was he himself even conscious of all of these parallels; it is very difficult to say, but that such parallels recur *time and again*, this is something that one should at least notice.

For me, if one is not “To Waste One’s Life” – well, it is only through careful consideration of the connections that are ever present and not only between Kafka’s stories to one another⁵ but likewise between his stories and the Bible, as well as to Plato’s dialogues and to other literary giants: *only so* can one read and appreciate Kafka as he so justly deserves. Hawes is right that in a way Kafka’s fiction has similarities to “Detective Fiction”—but, quite remarkably, just as it is so typical of Kafka’s protagonists, he likewise fails by missing vital clues and thus ends up with an unsolvable paradox, that the deeper meaning is that there is no deeper meaning—which

---

⁴ “Denkmal” – see my Postscript: pp. 314-315; note too that Josef K. has nothing but an apple for breakfast in the first chapter of *The Trial.*

⁵ Note that the father and the friend in *Judgment* are “herrlich verbunden” {a holy alliance} whereas Bürgel who is one of the Herren in the *Herrenhof* (*Nocturnal Investigations*) is the “Verbindungsssekretär” – the connection to another world.
is practically advocating that one forget any ideas about justice and morality: *It is what it is*: simply a dog eat dog world.

In our materialistic age I believe it to be particularly necessary to ask the right questions and one such question would be that of the “ego”—self-consciousness: I am the I AM. I particularly like it that Hegel emphatically points out that man is defined by the fact that he thinks, he is essentially a thinking being, one that is not only capable of self-consciousness (something that no animal can obtain despite any amount of “training”) and, precisely because of this, entails an existence such that one cannot but go through life intimately related to that which one pictures life to be. Hence the necessity of reading Kafka at least twice to even be able to capture and appreciate all of the allusions and wit, that what may well sound perfectly “rational” on the first reading gets flipped on subsequent perusals to be proof positive of **devilry**. Take basically anything at all that Georg says and think it through to what really (eigentlich) underlies it: Georg is pure façade, his material gains, his love life and his friend and family/”father,” nothing at all is as it seems to be. Is this not a clarion wake-up call for our materialistic age? And isn’t it this state of affairs that actually undergirds the otherwise inexplicable appeal that Kafka’s writings have for us. An appeal that, somehow, we intuit instinctively, yet one for which we also have great trepidation, that we dare not embrace it all too whole-heartedly.

Hawes’ little book on “How You Should Read Kafka Before You Waste Your Life” is, for me at least, a perfect example of the superficiality that is so prevasive in our times. The very issues that Kafka’s stories, when rightly understood, confront: inauthenticity, injustice, ignorance, superficiality, haste and arrogance—it is really quite amazing how well this little book itself exemplifies the very diabolical short-comings that are portrayed and are such central issues in Kafka’s writings. And let me not fail to mention the political ramifications when everyone in America today cannot but realize what sort of hypocrisy is rampant when torture is an accepted practice as indeed, has anyone of significance been held responsible for the atrocities that have been committed in our “war”

---

vi The categorical importance of thought as the principle which separates man from animal and is the basis of Justice, morality and Religion is expressly emphasized in Hegel’s preface and introduction to the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, 1830: pp. 3-34; Verlag von Felix Meiner, Hamburg, 1969—pages well worth the read!
on terrorism? In summation, the trap into which Hawes has fallen—if one is to think matters through—namely that IF there should be no deeper meaning and this really is Kafka’s “most essential creative thesis,” then how is one NOT to waste one’s life: in a meaningless existence any and all life, likewise, is without purpose. It seems that this question never occurs to Hawes; another book for the ash can of history. But now it’s high time to move on.

**

Walter H. Sokel divides Kafka’s works into three somewhat overlapping phases. The first is that of “Sühne”—expiation or atonement; the second is “ambivalence”—not being able to know and/or do what one wants; and Kafka’s final word from Josephine which is already hinted at in Kafka’s novel America {Der Verschollene} is the romantic longing for song, a return to a golden “childhood” or, to be more positive, a second birth. Josef K. is the protagonist who is most central in this development, indeed “K.” and “Josephine” are both alter-egos for Josef K. who himself, of course, is Franz Kafka—as are Georg and Gregor. That Kafka’s works tend to be rather self-conscious is putting it mildly, the modern age is an age of self-consciousness, as well as an age of angst and human isolation. Throughout his life Kafka struggled between his artistic yearning toward literature and the practical necessities of work and family. Such a struggle is one which resonates—at least for me, and I would imagine for a great number of people today. Kafka made it respectable that one might mention oneself from time to time. That one might see oneself and one’s struggles as indicative of one’s time and that insight into one’s battles may be helpful for others. There was ambivalence to this too as is indicated by Kafka’s note to Max Brod that all of his papers were to be burned. Max knew better. Indeed, in relation to this decision, Brod makes the remarkable confession:

> Was wiegt ein noch so schwerer Gewissenskonflikt gegenüber dem unendlichen Segen, den ich dem Freund verdanke, der das eigentliche Rückgrat meiner ganzen geistigen Existenz war!viii

---

vii Author of Franz Kafka, Tragik und Ironie, amongst many other insightful books and articles.

viii How might one weigh such disobedience to Kafka’s instructions over against all of the blessings that I owe to my friend of 22 years, he who became the actual backbone of my spiritual strivings! (p. 226, Der Prozeß, Fischer Taschenbuch, Frankfurt am Main, 1979 & 1985)
To return to the topics at hand: apparent and underlying realities; and the expiation, ambivalence and yearning for ideals: the *romantic* strivings of humanity in the current age, an age in which the importance of the common man has become most critical as should be apparent, for instance, in the higher duty of any soldier to disobey direct orders should they contradict the Geneva convention, *something new* that was ushered in due to the grim fact of the holocaust... Not that our practices have even come close to catching up with our ideals: the darkness shuns the light if I may state the matter without equivocation.

That humanity evolves through various ages is an idea shared both by the natural scientist as well as the philosopher. That there may be *purpose* in such evolution (and I mean of course real purpose, not simply the survival of the fittest through random selection, i.e. ‘chance purpose’) is an idea to which only the philosopher may subscribe, and even he must be cautious in the way he presents such an outdated idea. Of course, humanity changes—we all agree about this—so if ideas without foundation (scientific verification in the material realm) are worthless, well then all ideas, ipso facto, will become worthless over time. Naturally, my idea is not of this variety. Hence, ideation itself must defend itself against the materialists and knowing this, knowing this quite lucidly, this is the foundation of faith. Faith is based *not upon belief* but upon a higher sort of knowledge. This may seem to be quite a digression but it’s actually not a digression at all. For we become what we believe. For there to be freedom as a possibility for humankind, it is *necessary* that a choice be made between good and evil.

Josef K. (read: “modern man, man of the Kali Yuga”) becomes worn out by his discussion with the priest {Geistlicher} in the Cathedral {Dom}. He seems to know that freedom trumps necessity but the discussion seems to be far too remote, too erudite. He walks away,

---


x And I mention this as *In The Penal Colony* should be required reading for all of our military personnel, indeed for most everyone. “Organ failure” my ass, how about brain failure! (A lawleary opinion, Mr. Bush)

xi Cf. p. 247: “And the end result is not any display of truth….so that the devil always gets the last laugh.”

xii Plato’s *Statesman*, 275a – see my website, Plato & FDE Schleiermacher.
excusing himself that he has business to attend to in the bank. Earlier on, the priest had told him that “he had all the time to give to him that he needed” and that he should stop being so “pre-occupied with the non-essentials” \textit{(Laß das Nebensächliche)}. Josef K. flunks his exam and the second rate actors will soon arrive to take him away. Being ambivalent, resting upon a stool before the gate to the Law, this, I would say, is nothing other than fear of the super-sensible with, perhaps, more than a dash of naiveté and arrogance. Josef K.’s reluctance to take any \textit{sustained} interest in the weighty existential issues simply delivers him over to play acting. Eventually the game is up.

Kafka’s final productive phase which includes \textit{Investigations of a Dog}, \textit{Hunger Artist}, \textit{The Burrow} and \textit{Josephine the Songstress} is one during which Kafka became ever more aware of his impending death—and also, remarkably, one during which Kafka experienced his greatest happiness \textit{(Glück)} as finally he was able to say good-bye to Prague, including his detested bureaucratic position that robbed him of the time he needed to write, as well as his difficult family life. Shortly after Yom Kippur he moved to Berlin and, indeed, set up his own household with a newly found soul mate, Dora Diamant, whom he loved as no other. \textsuperscript{xi} The difference between Dora and Felice Bauer—to whom Kafka dedicated \textit{The Judgment}—is quite telling. Kafka was finally able to give up all of his ambivalence about marrying Felice due to the onset of tuberculosis \textit{whereas} not even his approaching death held him back from wanting to marry Dora! Whereas in Kafka’s first major period (1912-1914) the conflict portrayed in his stories was between fathers and sons, the struggle now became a universal one of the self against the world. Indeed, in the story that has come to be known as \textit{The Burrow} \textit{(Der Bau – The Construct)} Kafka’s text has become pure interior monologue, the \textit{unnamed} protagonist has only himself and his “citadel,” built from ramming his head until it becomes bloody, this \textit{Burgplatz} that talks “silently to him”—a text that to my mind is totally unique in its poetic purity.

The “inner” (a hole disappearing into the earth/\textit{grab}/grave) and the outer (what I translate as “topsides”) – the initial tension between these two poles becomes displaced in \textit{The Burrow} by an even more bizarre one between the citadel and an “envelope of emptiness” that our hero dreams of tunneling around this central hall so as best

to admire his work. The playfulness of this burrowing creature is interrupted, however, by a hissing noise in the walls, death approaches by our hero’s labyrinth becoming attacked, as it were, by a superior invader against whom all of the defenses of the burrow are nothing but a pathetic joke. A more self-referential comi-tragedy is hardly possible to imagine; Kafka’s artistry continues to astound.

The inwardness of The Burrow and A Hunger Artist, this complete withdrawal from the world is not, however, sufficient. It is only in Nocturnal Deliberations, Investigations of a Dog and Josephine the Songstress that Kafka reaches the pinnacle of his vision. The fasting dog acquires a vision of himself “outside of himself” in his search for the ultimate. Indeed, he denigrates this discovery but at the very same time states that it’s the “only significant reality—or seeming reality”—that he managed to bring back from his time in the woods, the time of his greatest feat of fasting. I would like to suggest that such a birth of a higher reality within the self is hinted at earlier on in this story where our canine hero speaks of “a device...that makes life bearable” since it “transforms one’s sort {artverwandeln}.” As always, such allusions to a higher reality are mixed with remarks—like that of Bürgel—that “such isn’t possible in our world.” That it is precisely the same matter that Bürgel is rambling on about that does actually happen at the finale of Bürgel’s own nocturnal deliberations, I hope that nobody misses the subtle beauty in this although, as is quite in keeping with Kafka’s way, K. manages to sleep right through his deliverance, a trait that bespeaks the weakness of his ego, just as Josef K. wasn’t up to a longer discussion with the priest.

In Josephine the Songstress Kafka’s final hero becomes female, Joseph becomes Josephine, and the “K.” is dropped. Josephine the artiste is more of a child and the father-like adult narrator of this last story tells us her history, a history from a folk who are not all that adept in history given by a character who himself admits of being somewhat of a contrarian. Moreover this “folk” has no love of music and it is only music that interests Josephine—just as it is only literature that interests Kafka. I would suggest that one might understand the story best if one replaces the word “music” with “spirituality,” and the word “whistle” with “think.” To my mind

xiv “zischen” is another key word in many of Kafka’s stories, e.g. the final turning point in Georg’s battle with Father: “such was the word that slithered {durchzischt} through his mind” (see p.12).
Kafka’s great artistry shines forth in this his last story and it speaks to what is immortal not only in the individual Franz Kafka (1883—1924) but, most importantly, also potentially in every person who is fortunate enough to realize something within themselves that goes beyond themselves, to be fully human.

Phillip Lundberg, November 2015

That Kafka was exceedingly fond of Goethe is something everyone knows, but the connection of Romanticism and the issue of human versus animal which I have raised, as well as the crux of the matter in self-consciousness—all of these related issues may be pulled together by quoting the beginning of Chapter 9 “Reason”—that is found in Owen Barfield’s book, What Coleridge THOUGHT:

“It was pointed out in the last chapter that the fundamental difference between human and animal psychology is effective, not only in the understanding, but at all stages of consciousness. In other words, reason, which appears at the top of Coleridge’s scale of mental powers, nevertheless irradiates the human psyche at all stages of its natural evolution. Since this is both an unfamiliar and, in this ‘epoch of the understanding and the senses,’ a difficult notion, it may help at this point to construct an analogy, though it is one which must not be pressed too hard.

If we were to replace the parameter of psychology, to which Coleridge’s scale applies, with that of sexual relationship; and if we were to substitute ‘law’ for ‘reason,’ then understanding could be taken as corresponding to something like ‘mating.’ Permeated by law, mating becomes human mating called marriage; and, as such, it may ‘rise’ into the sphere of law itself. But the difference between marriage and mating is also effective below the ‘mating’ level, even down into the moment of copulation (corresponding with Coleridge’s ‘sense’) where it appears as, for instance, the possibility of a sacramental dimension, different in kind from that of ‘mere’ copulation. The fact that the category of sacrament is ‘higher’ than that of social and municipal law improves rather than mars an avowedly imperfect analogy. Extremes meet; and we shall be noticing later that from one point of view reason, at the top of the ‘scale,’ has a greater affinity with its octave, sense, than it has with the understanding, which it enters only to sharpen it to the point of nullity; or even with the imagination, into which it is ever willing to be transformed.

Professor Muirhead has observed that Coleridge added to the dynamic theory of reality “the conception of the principle of that activity as the nisus towards individuality.” We have already traced this in his Theory of Life, and have seen how, above the human level, the nisus is from consciousness towards self-consciousness; which is another name for individuality. It is against this background that we are bound to interpret the scale; and, in doing so, we find that the
mystery, or problem, of self-consciousness can be effectively confronted as the mystery or problem of the relation between understanding and reason; and, above all, in the circumstance that reason may be present to the understanding in two different modes, one of which we characterized as ‘dreaming’ and the other as ‘waking.’ In the former mode reason is present to the understanding, but without being realized or apprehended as reason. In the latter mode it is both present and consciously realized as present; it is ‘conscious self-knowledge.’ And progress from the former mode to the latter is the final stage of the nisus.

Coleridge found, or adopted, several different ways of formulating the distinction between the two modes: as for instance conceptual reason and ideal reason; negative reason (*lumen a luce*) and positive reason (*lux intellectus*). But when he speaks more generally of the ‘irradiation’ of understanding by reason, he does not always specify which of the two modes he is referring to. Nor is this very surprising, when we reflect that the very act of talking about negative reason is a step towards converting it into positive reason, since it involves becoming to some extent conscious of reason.” … “It was not always relevant, or even possible, for him to maintain the distinction between positive reason and negative reason; not only so, but, where occasionally the word is used in the sense of reason-ing—ratiocination—it amounts to no more than the active human understanding. This is in fact the sense in which it is most commonly used in current speech, and Coleridge himself could use it in contexts outside of philosophy and psychology, in his political writings for example.

Reason, in its proper sense, specifies the mere understanding into distinctively human understanding. And this in two ways, or by two stages. As negative, it brings about the total detachment which individuality presupposes. As positive reason, it is the being of the individual so detached. The ideas of reason ‘are of higher origin than the notions of the understanding, and by the irradiation of which the understanding itself becomes a human understanding.’ … But ‘when this light shines downward into the understanding . . . it is always more or less refracted, and differently in every different individual.’ The light of reason is thus both the origin and the abiding basis of individuality. Without the positive presence of reason to the understanding, there is no individuality, only the detachment which individual being presupposes. Reason, in both its negative and its positive aspect, is the individualizer.

And yet—and this is where the difficulty occurs for most people—reason is, not only ‘supersensuous,’ but also, as has just been seen, ‘superindividual.’ Not only so, but its whole characteristic is to be superindividual. It individualizes because it is, and by being, superindividual; by being *totus in omi parte*—‘entirely in each and one in all.’ There is abundant evidence of how well aware Coleridge was that this irreducible contradiction was at once the most unacceptable and most important truth he had to deliver. How often, and how very hard he tried! We may look in particular at the disquisition on two passages from Leighton and
Harrington in *Aids to Reflection*, or to the corresponding one on Harrington in the *Friend*, or the the *Statesman’s Manual* with its long Appendix B. But in one place and another he was always at it. As to its importance, we have already heard him insisting that, if the *Friend’s* readers would only grasp it, all else would follow. More emphatically, when he comes to read through the *Statesman’s Manual* some time after it has been printed, he adds in ink:

> Let not the Reader imagine that this distinction of the Understanding from the Reason is optional, or a mere refinement in words. It is either false and mischievous: or it is a most radical and necessary truth. I know indeed of but one other truth of equal worth and pregnancy—and that is the Primacy of the Will, as deeper than and (in order of thought) antecedent to reason. See St. John’s Gospel 1.18.

These are only two example, from many, of the heavy stress he laid on this (to many people) almost hair-splitting distinction. It should not be difficult to see why. The line drawn between understanding and understanding, in that ‘scale’ of mental powers, was no abstraction to him. It represented the stage on which the whole drama of the human mind, and with it of human destiny itself, is being played out. For it is at that point in the scale that the will may turn either way: back to negative reason and, through that, to the mere understanding, and through that, to sense; or on to positive reason. But that involves, first of all grasping that there is such a thing as positive reason. It involves knowing the reason as directly present to the understanding. Here, if anywhere, then it may be said that “Truth is self-restoration.”

For the other way amounts in the end to existential suicide. This is the truth which he saw so clearly and from which nearly all around him, including the representatives of the Churches, were sedulously looking away—with disastrous consequences. Perhaps, looking or attempting to look through his eyes, we may say that he saw the relation between understanding and reason, not as a piece of wire-drawn psychology, but rather as the relation between the tiger and the lady in the old limerick. Understanding had gorged reason, instead of being ridden by it, and the brash complacency left over from the Enlightenment was the ‘smile of the face of the tiger.’


> “Whereas gnōsis was an end, pistis, faith, was a new beginning. It was tragic that the history of Christian theology and the church placed the two in opposition to each other. As a result ‘faith’ could not be what it was supposed to have become
The Age of the Consciousness Soul

according to Paul, namely the seed of a new Christian perception. What dies at
the ‘place of the skull,’ in the human head, can arise from the human heart.
Luther felt this when he coined the sentence: ‘Faith is another sense, far beyond
the five senses.’ Yet in his distaste for thinking he would naturally have denied
that a renewal of thinking could come from faith. Intellectual thinking is pale,
cold and dead, for it has turned into a one-sided affair of the head. Without
becoming caught up in fantastic and uncontrollable elements, could there not be a
way to involve the whole human being, hence also feeling and will, in the act of
cognition? The problem today is that through the coldness of head-reasoning the
heart, too, has turned cold and stony, and the will is paralyzed. If we can speak of
Christ’s indwelling not in empty phraseology but with real meaning, could not the
spiritual fire in the blood and heart help the head to think better and more truly?
To involve feeling and will in the act of thinking does not mean that sentimental
emotions should become mixed up in intellectual thought. An intellectualism that
is coated with feelings and stirred by impure instincts of the will is far more dan-
gerous and damaging than one that merely remains in clever abstractions. In
strictly epistemological sense, it should be possible to speak of a thinking encompass-
ning all of human nature. Directions could then be indicated that would lead to
a new form of pedagogy and discipline of thinking.
What is said here concerning faith as the seed of a new cognition becomes more
comprehensible when comprehended by an anthroposophical outlook, which, while
referring to later centuries of Christian development, nevertheless encompasses
Paul’s spiritual intentions.

The ‘filioque’ controversy, which in the ninth century led to the split of
Christianity into the Byzantine Eastern church and the Roman Western church,
resulted from uncertainty in regard to the nature of the Holy Spirit and spirit in
general—an uncertainty already noticeable for centuries. The ancient confessions
of faith had stated that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. The East
unyieldingly clung to this formulation, even when, in the West, the opinion
became increasingly prevalent that the Spirit must be pictured as proceeding from
the Father and from the Son—a view finally included in the Credo as: qui ex
patre filioque procedit. Though even then lacking clarity of thought, the Western
Church was groping for a truth with which the early Christian age in its imagery
had certainly been familiar. This truth was presupposed everywhere by Paul. In
creation’s primal beginning, the Father bestowed upon mankind a spirituality that
was sacred because it was still divine, not yet human. After the Fall, humanity
increasingly obscured and used up this sustenance, and by the time of Christ clear
signals of its exhaustion had become evident. It was then that the Father, who in
the beginning had sent the Spirit, sent the Son. And when Pentecost followed
upon Good Friday and Easter, a new fountainhead of the Spirit sprang forth. It
was not as if the ancient Holy Spirit had simply been renewed. Fifty days after
Easter, the disciples looked with prescience into the development of a new
spirituality which would heal and sanctify the fallen consciousness and being of
humanity, for it poured into the stream of transformation proceeding from Christ’s death and Resurrection.

As a result now the Father alone did not send the Spirit; the Son sent the Father’s new Spirit. When Western Christianity sensed that this should be expressed in the text of the Credo, people vaguely felt that in this way they would comply with the step taken out of the collective, group-soul element into the individual realm, something that had long since been embarked upon by the more progressive among humanity, and for which they had even then received a sanctifying content in the Christian experience of faith. After all, the principle of the Son was the ego element in the higher sense. One must remember, however, that as soon as western theologians had carried through the filioque issue, they made the individual character of the new Christian Holy Spirit illusory again through the dogma of 869 AD which attributed merely body and soul to man, but no individual spirit.

…Despite the commitment to the filioque formula, the West did not truly utilize the new spiritual source. This would have had to be done by overcoming the chasm between faith and knowledge, through the development of a new thinking and perceiving based on faith. Thus dogma would have to be renounced.

…In the Pauline sense, the Son-principle exerts its influence not from outside but from within. Through the indwelling of the Son, the sonship comes about in man as an intensified and fulfilled egoity. Man turns himself into ‘the Son of God.’ Therefore a Son-imbued spirituality is of a kind that creatively originates in the human being through the fact that the higher ‘I,’ the Christ-filled spiritual ego, turns into the subject who perceives and thinks. Then the blossom of faith flowers into knowledge; in it, the heart helps the head to attain to a better, truer thinking and perceiving.

The tragedy of the whole modern machinery of civilization lies in the unrecognized fact that man in his true nature is not fully within his thinking. The brain thinks, not the spirit. The content of consciousness, assimilated through sense perceptions and absorbed intellectually, is brought increasingly closer to the ideal of the machine. Is it any wonder that man’s perception penetrates only to the external phenomena? Not until man in his true nature, his spiritual (higher) self, becomes the subject that thinks, can he expect the true spiritual essence of the world to become apparent to his perception. Man presumes to think; in reality an It is thinking through him, but a cold, impersonal It, not a higher, divine one. The unavoidable consequence of this is that like his thoughts man finally no longer has any control over things. With apocalyptic intensity, our age is teaching us what has become of the ancient Holy Spirit: an unholy, soulless spirit, a demon.”
great distance without any effort whatsoever; he couldn’t understand how he’d been able to manage such a long trek just a little while ago and now he was so weak that he could barely move at all. Being totally absorbed in his crawling activity he didn’t even notice how quiet it had become, not a word was uttered, nobody in his family disturbed him by calling out. It was only as he entered into his doorway that he attempted to turn his head and look back—it would only turn just so far before stiffening up—but he could see that nothing had changed except that sister had stood up. His final glance fell upon mother, she had now fallen asleep entirely.

Barely had he entered into his room when the door was slammed shut behind him, locked and then double-bolted. Due to this sudden and unexpected noise Gregor became so terrified that his legs gave out from underneath him. It was his sister who had been so quick on the uptake: she had already stood up and was poised there, just waiting for her chance. Light upon her feet she sprang into action as soon as Gregor had entered his room—Gregor didn’t even hear her coming—she cried out “Finally!” to the parents as she twisted the key.

“And now?” Gregor asked himself and looked around in the darkness. It didn’t take him very long to discover that he had lost all powers of movement. He didn’t wonder about this very much, rather what he found surprising was that he had ever actually been capable of moving at all upon such thin, flimsy legs. For the rest he found that, relatively speaking, he actually felt pretty good. Indeed, his entire body was aching but he thought that the pain was becoming less and less and that after awhile it was bound to go away entirely. The rotten apple that was embedded in his backside and the inflammation surrounding it—everything was covered over by a soft layer of dust—he didn’t perceive any sensations coming from this area, basically nothing worth the mention. He fell into thinking about his family and his love for them, he had become very emotional. His opinion about this need for him “to go” was, if anything, even more emphatic than sister’s. In such a condition of peace and emptiness, it was thus that he remained in the same spot until the clock on the steeple struck three AM. The start of sunrise had only just begun, he perceived that it was becoming a bit lighter outside his window, then, weakly, he slowly breathed out his last breath of air through his nostrils as his head fell, completely limp, upon the floor.
Far off, from upon the main altar, K. perceived the flickerings that came from a great, triangular candelabra. He couldn’t even say with any certainty as to whether he had noticed this earlier on, perhaps the candles had only just been lit. The comings and goings of the caretakers in these cathedrals, such servants—quiet, ghostlike creatures—are practically invisible, one just doesn’t notice them. As by chance K. turned himself around, he noted yet another tall, stout candle that was burning brightly outside a columned alcove, one that was much nearer to him, the candle was firmly attached to the column. It was really remarkable, how beautifully the light fell upon the painting that was concealed within the darkness of this side altar, indeed the solitary candle was totally insufficient—it accentuated the darkness much more than illuminating the art. It wasn’t merely rude of the Italian not to have shown up as he had promised, rather too a clear indication of his intelligence: there wasn’t anything worth seeing here now, it would only be possible to view the art at the cost of running down the batteries in K.’s pocket flashlight. And just to see how much his flashlight might help, K. ventured inside a small alcove that was closest to him and went up a couple of steps that led him upon a marble sacallum where, leaning over the balcony, he shone his light upon the painting that hung there, over the altar. The effect was unsettling, how the eternal light danced over the snatches of this large painting. The first thing that K. half saw, half intuited, was a great, armored Knight who was placed upon the outer edge closest to him. He was supporting himself upon his sword that he had thrust into the bleak earth that lay in front of him, only a few meager tufts of grass could be discerned here and there. It seemed that his attention was riveted upon whatever was playing out in the center. It was astounding how he just stood there, coming no closer but seemingly frozen on the periphery. Perhaps that was intended, his role was just to stand watch {Wache zu stehen}. K., whose interest in art had fizzled out years ago, was now gazing intently upon this figure despite the circumstance that the greenish light from his flashlight bothered his eyes—he kept blinking. As then he finally turned his light over the rest of the painting he discovered that it was only a typical rendition of Christ’s burial. Moreover, the painting was relatively recent. He put his light back into his pocket and returned to his waiting spot.
Most probably there wasn’t any point in him waiting there any longer for the Italian, the rain outside was now coming down in torrents but, then too, it was warmer here than K. had expected and so he decided that he might just as well wait a little more. Right there in the immediate vicinity was a great pulpit and upon its small round ceiling the ends of two crosses lay tip to tip, they were hollow and covered in gold. The outer wall of the parapet and the transition to the supporting balusters were decorated with green foliage upon which small angels were perched, some resting, others seemingly active. K. walked over to the pulpit and examined it from every side. The stonework was exceptionally intricate, between and behind the foliage the deep dark stone appeared as if caught in a netting, held fast. K. laid his hand inside an opening and carefully felt the cold stone, up until now K. hadn’t even been aware of the existence of this massive pulpit. Then, out of the corner of his eye, K. chanced to notice that a sexton was standing behind him in the next row—he was dressed in church garb, a long black frock that billowed down to the floor, in his left hand he was holding a snuff-box and, evidently, he had been watching him. “Now what does he want?”—K. thought to himself—“Have I been acting suspiciously? Maybe he’s just looking for a handout . . .” As the sexton noted that he had been observed so he used his right hand—yet holding a pinch of snuff between finger and thumb—to motion in a direction that only mystified K. Indeed, K. couldn’t make heads or tails out of his gestures and so he simply stood there a little while staring at the man but the fellow wouldn’t let up with his gesturing and, indeed, it became even more intent as he started into nodding his head off to one side. “What in heaven’s name?”—K. spoke his question out loud though ever so softly as he didn’t want to risk blurring his question out too loudly; then he pulled out his wallet and forced himself through over to the next row so as to be able to approach him. But now the man immediately began to wave K. away, his shoulders cringed as he started hobbling off with one stiff leg. His hasty retreat had all the appearance of when K. was a child playing ‘ride ‘em horsee.’ “He’s reached his second childhood,” K. thought to himself—“the only work that he’s yet capable of performing is cleaning up the church pews. Look how he stops whenever I stop and how he keeps his eye on me, whether I’m going to keep following along after him.” Smiling, K. did continue along after the old galoot and crossed over through the entire side gallery, practically all the way to the central altar where the roof reached up into the heights, the man never let up in his gesturing but K. had made a point of ignoring that, his gestures were only meant as a ruse
to mislead him, he had no intention of falling for that trick. Finally, he decided that he had better leave off with his chase, he didn’t want to upset the poor fellow all too much and then too, you never know, what if the Italian were to show up, all this running about might end up scaring him off.

As he entered into the nave looking about for the place where he had left his album, he noticed that within an alcove bordering the row of seats that are reserved for the choir there was yet another small pulpit, a very simple one this time that was constructed from a plain whitish stone. The alcove was so small that seen from afar it appeared as being nothing more than an empty niche that had been intended for the placement of some holy statue. It was a certainty that anyone giving a sermon from there wouldn’t be able to take a single step backwards without banging his head upon the arched ceiling. And moreover, the way that this pulpit was encased so deeply and with such a confounding pitch—indeed there was no ornamentation at all—and yet rising up into the heights so that anyone who was moderately tall wouldn’t be able to stand upright but would have to lean forward so as not to bang his head. The whole thing seemed to be constructed with the express intent of being an agony for the pulpit,er, and there was no sense in it anyway, what’s the point of having a second pulpit seeing as how the other one, being so large and beautifully ornate, could be used just as well. K. wouldn’t have even noticed the presence of this second pulpit hadn’t it have been the case that a lamp was burning within the alcove, it looked as if preparations had been made for a sermon. Was it possible that there could be a sermon now? In an empty church? K. directed his vision to the narrow set of stairs that led down from the pulpit and into the alcove, it was so narrow that it seemed to be constructed not for a human being but merely as ornamentation. But then at the very base of the pulpit—K.’s astonishment caused him to break out into a smile: there really was a priest standing there with one hand already gripping the banister, obviously ready to make his ascent, and he was looking right at K.!

A moment later he nodded to K., a very slight nod of his head, whereupon K. crossed himself and made a slight bow, something that he should have done earlier. With a slight plunge upward the priest began his way up the narrow staircase taking any number of quick, short steps in order to reach the pulpit. Can it really be possible that a sermon is about to begin? Then perhaps that sexton wasn’t really as crazy as he seemed and had been intending to steer K. over this way purposefully—which indeed would make perfect
Josef K.

sense in an otherwise empty church. As far as that goes there was also an elderly lady somewhere about, K. had seen her devoutly kneeling before an image of the Virgin Mary, she should come over too. And then if there really was going to be a sermon, why hadn't there been any music announcing it from the organ? But there was perfect stillness in the heights where K. could just make out a glimmer from the pipes reflecting a bit of light from out of the immense darkness that loomed above.

The thought immediately came to K.: he had better get out of here post haste, if he didn’t go now there wouldn’t be any hope of getting away once the sermon had started, he’d have to wait it out until the end and he’d already lost a great deal of time this morning in the office, not to mention all the time he had wasted here, his patience was already a great deal more than courtesy requires. He stole a quick peek at his watch, it was already eleven. But could it really be possible that there would be a sermon? Would K. all alone even qualify as a congregation {Gemeinde}—? How could that be, what if he were simply an outsider {Fremder}, a tourist just wanting to see the inside of the cathedral? And essentially that’s all that he really was. It didn’t make any sense, the more you thought about it the less sense it made: how could there be a sermon at 11 AM on a work day, and then the weather outside couldn’t possibly be worse! The priest, there wasn’t any doubt as to whether he really was a priest, a young man, clean shaven with a somber look to him, it was obvious—he’d only gone up those stairs in order to extinguish the lamp that someone else had lit in error.

If only!—much to the contrary the priest set about adjusting the wick and managed by a twist on the key to make it burn brighter still. Then he slowly turned himself around toward the angular ledge that he grasped firmly with both hands. He stood there a little while totally immobile with his face pointing straight ahead, but his eyes were darting every which way, all around. K. had scuttled back along the pew as far as he might, he rested his elbows upon the back of the first row. K. glanced nervously about and noted that the sexton, now at peace with himself and quite satisfied by the results of his mission, had a hunch in his back as he crouched down somewhere out of the way. K. couldn’t even say as to where it was that he had concealed himself. But how still things had become within the cathedral! {Was für eine Stille herrschte jetzt im Dom!} Though it didn’t take K. long to disturb this silence, he had no intention of waiting here any longer. It may well be the priest’s
duty—and no matter what the circumstances—that he give his eleven o’clock sermon, and he can go right ahead and deliver it, it would succeed just as well in K.’s absence as it would in his presence, his listening certainly wouldn’t essentially change anything. And so leaning upon the pew in front of him, K. slowly rose and began tip-toeing as quietly as at all possible out toward the main walkway and reaching it he continued on undisturbed—except that no matter how softly he placed his feet, all the same the stones made a clanging noise with every step and the vaulted enclosure produced a weak but steady echo which reverberated in perfect synchronicity. K. was overcome by a haunting feeling of being left to himself as he made his way—most probably under the watchful eye of the priest—between the empty pews, he was all alone, and it also seemed to him that the oppressive immensity of this cathedral touched upon the absolute limit of what any human being could bear. As he passed the place where he had left his album he made a quick grab for it without altering his pace in the least, having snatched it he held it close. Now, finally, he had practically made it beyond the pews and into the freedom of the entrance hall which is all that yet separated him from the exit. That’s when for the first time he heard the voice of the priest: a powerful voice, one that was well practiced. How it resounded throughout the entirety of the cathedral which seemed poised, ready to prove itself acoustically. But the voice wasn’t directed at the congregation, the priest’s address was emphatically unambiguous {ganz eindeutig}, and there was nowhere where K. might escape from it, he called out: “Josef K.!”

K. stood stock still and looked down in front of himself at the floor. For the moment he was still free, he could simply keep on going and make his way out through one of the three small dark wooden doors that were only a few paces away. All that this would mean was that he didn’t understand—or that indeed he did understand but that he didn’t want to concern himself about it. But then, if he were to turn himself around, then he would be stuck for this would indicate that he had a good understanding of the situation, that he really was the one whose name had been called out and that he also was ready to acquiesce to whatever might follow. Were it the case that the priest would’ve called out his name a second time, K. wouldn’t have hesitated any longer but would certainly have left straight-away, but since everything remained still—basically waiting for K. to make his decision—so K. turned his head slightly as he wanted to see what the priest was doing now. He was calmly standing there exactly as
before but, then too, it was obvious that he knew that K. had turned his head. If K. didn’t turn himself fully around now then matters would degenerate into a child’s game of peek-a-boo. He did turn around and the priest calmly gestured to him with his finger, that he might come closer. Since now there was no point in concealing anything, so K. started running—due as much to his own curiosity as well as his interest in saving time—taking long, flying steps as he approached the pulpit. He came to a stop next to the front row but the priest still considered the distance to be too far and he used his index finger to point downward to a spot immediately in front of the pulpit. K. acquiesced though at this close distance he had to strain his neck in order that he might look upward and see the priest. “You are Josef K.?”—the priest asked him and at the same time he raised one hand from off the pulpit with which he made an obscure gesture. “Yes” K. replied, and the thought crossed his mind how his name had become a burden to him. Earlier in his life he had had no qualms in saying who he was, but for the last so many weeks it seemed that people whom he had never met already knew it. It was much pleasanter \( \text{wie schön} \) that one first introduced oneself and only thereafter was one addressed by name. “You’ve been indicted?”—the priest asked, and his voice was practically a whisper. “Yes,” K. replied—“I’ve been informed.” “Then you’re the one whom I was seeking” the priest said—“Allow me to introduce myself, I’m the chaplain for the prison.” “Ah, I see” K. said. “I have arranged that you might come here so that I could speak with you.” “I had no idea” K. responded—“I had thought that my visit here was to show the cathedral to an Italian.” “You’re too pre-occupied with the non-essentials,” \( \text{Laß das Nebensächliche} \) the priest declared—“and what is it that you’re holding there in your hand? Is it a prayer book?” “No,” K. answered—“it’s an album for tourists that contains what’s worth seeing in our city.” “Well let go of it, you won’t be needing it” the priest said. K. threw it down so forcefully that it crumpled the pages as it slid across the stone floor. “Are you aware of how bleak your case has become?”—the priest inquired. “That’s my impression too” K. responded—“I’ve been doing everything possible but so far I haven’t even managed to get onto first base. However, I’m still working on my petition.” “And just how do you picture the final outcome?”—the priest asked him. “Earlier on I was quite sure that everything would work out for the good,” K. said—“but now I’m often in doubt myself. I really have no idea anymore where this will end. Do you know?” “No, I don’t,” the priest replied—“but I’m afraid things may go from bad to worse. They think that you’re guilty. It’s quite possible that your case will be decided in the
lower courts and no appeal will be possible. In any event, at this point they consider the evidence to be irrefutable.” “But I’m not guilty” K. said—“It’s all a mistake. How is it even possible for a human to be guilty . . . We’re all human beings here, each and every one of us.” “That’s right,” the priest replied—“but then that’s also precisely what the guilty ones say.” “Have you already made up your mind about me?”—K. asked him. “No, I haven’t” the priest replied. “I thank you” K. said—“But everybody else who has anything to do with the proceedings is prejudiced against me. And that’s not all, it seems to be contagious: whoever has any contact with ‘them’ also ends up being against me. Things just get worse and worse.” “You’re mis-reading what’s actually happening” the priest said—“The judgment doesn’t happen with one stroke, it’s a gradual process with the judgment building up over the course of time and only happening at the end.” “So that’s how it works” K. said, and at the same time he lowered his head. “What are your immediate plans, how do you intend to present your case?”—the priest asked. “I’m looking for someone who can help me” and he raised his head again so as to see how the priest would respond—“There are still certain options that I haven’t tried as of yet.” “You’re always looking for outside {fremde} help,” the priest declared in a deprecating tone—“and particularly from women. Haven’t you figured it out yet, that they’re not the true source of help?” “Generally and indeed for the most part I’d be in agreement with you about that,” K. said—“but not always. Women are a source of great power. If only I could succeed in getting just a few women whom I know to work together with me on this then there’s just no way that our efforts wouldn’t succeed, we’d push through this. And particularly with these magistrates, practically every last one of them is infatuated by sex. If the chief magistrate catches so much as the whiff of the fairer sex from his bench, you can believe me, he wouldn’t hesitate a moment but would be in such a rush that he’d knock over both the defendant and the table with the evidence in his haste to take her out on the town.” The priest leaned forward and tilted his head over the edge of the pulpit, only now did the restrictive dimensions of this pulpit seem to have any oppressive effect upon him. Meanwhile the storm outside was raging more violently than ever, it wasn’t merely dark outside, it seemed to be blackest night. There wasn’t even the merest hint of light shimmering through the stained glass windows. And then, this would be the precise moment when an acolyte approached the main altar and began extinguishing the candles, one by one. “You’re not mad at me?”—K. asked. “Perhaps you’re not even aware of just what sort of justice system you’re serving.”
There was no response from the priest. “I have to call them just as I see them, it’s my experience”—K. said. Still, there was no reply at all from the priest. “It wasn’t my intent to insult you, not at all”—K. mumbled. That’s when the priest screamed down at K.: “Are you so incapable that you can’t even see two steps ahead?” It was screamed out in anger but at the same time it seemed to have been totally involuntary, like someone who screams in fright when he sees somebody else who’s about to fall off a cliff.

Now there was a long silence. It was certain that the priest could barely see K. in the darkness that prevailed below whereas K. had a clear view of the priest who was standing in the light beneath the lamp. Why didn’t the priest come down? It’s not as if he were actually giving a sermon, rather he had merely informed K. of a few particulars—and indeed what he had said, if you considered it carefully, was more likely to be harmful to K. rather than helping him in any way. All the same, K. had no doubts about the priest’s good intentions, it was quite possible that K. and the priest would find themselves in agreement {sich einigen} regarding important matters if he would just come down—indeed, it was more than just possible that the priest had some advice that could prove to be decisive, advice that K. could accept, not that he’d have any real influence on the judicial process per se but, for instance—how one might be able to break away from the process all together, that there may be some way of bypassing ‘the system,’ that somehow one might find some mode of existence {Leben} in a different realm entirely. There had to be such a possibility, K. had thought about this a great deal as of late. If the priest were to be aware of such a possibility then perhaps all that K. had to do was to ask him and even if he didn’t intend to, it’s likely that he’d spill the beans, as it were. And that despite the fact that he himself was part and parcel of the legal system and also despite the circumstance that up until now he had suppressed his softer side {sanftes Wesen} and, indeed, had even ended up screaming down at him.

“Would you be so kind as to come down?”—K. asked—“There’s really no need for sermonizing. I’d greatly prefer that you come join me here below.” “Now I’m quite ready to join you” the priest replied, perhaps he was sorry about his earlier outburst. As he was unfastening the hook that held the lamp, he continued on: “It was necessary at first that I speak to you from a certain distance, otherwise I’m too easily influenced and I forget whom it is that I serve.” K. waited for him at the bottom of the stairway. The priest
reached his hand out to him already from near the top. “Would you spare me a little of your time?”—K. asked him. “I can spare all the time that you need” replied the priest, and he passed the small lamp over to K. so that K. would be the one carrying it. Even from up close there was a solemnity, a certain sparkle in the priest’s gaze that was unchanged. “I feel that you’re a real friend” K. said. They were now pacing back and forth through the darkness of the side gallery. “You are an exception from all of the others who belong with the system. I can trust you much more than any of them, at least judging from the ones that I’ve met. I feel that I can open myself up when I speak with you.” “Don’t deceive yourself” the priest declared. “In what am I deceiving myself?”—K. replied. “As regards the court {Gericht} you are deceiving yourself” the priest responded, and he went on—“Within the introductory writings to the law this is what stands written as regards this deception:

“Before the threshold to the law there stands a guardian {Türhüter}. A landsman approaches the guardian and pleads with him that he might enter into the domain of law. But the guardian says that he’s unable for now to allow it. The man considers this and then he asks whether, then, he will be allowed to enter later on. ‘It’s possible,’ the guardian says—but not now.’ As the entranceway to the law is open—as it always is—and the guardian steps off to one side, the man leans himself over so that he might see what lies within by peering through the entrance. As the guardian notices this he laughs and says: ‘If you find it so tempting, go ahead—attempt to get inside despite my having forbidden it. But do take note, I am powerful. And I’m merely the lowest of the guardians. Proceeding from chamber to chamber there are more guardians and each is more powerful than the one who precedes him. I myself am unable even to bear the gaze of the third guardian.’

The landsman had never considered that such difficulties were to be expected, really {doch} the law should always be accessible to everyone, this is what he thought. But now as he takes a closer look at this guardian in his massive fur coat, his long pointy nose, the long black strands of his tartaric beard, so he decides that after all it’s better that he wait until he has permission to go inside. The guardian gives him a stool and allows him to sit down off to one side of the entranceway. There he sits, days become years. He makes countless attempts to gain entrance and the guardian grows weary of hearing his pleading. But the guardian doesn’t disdain to speak with him about other topics, he proves to be an excellent conversationalist espousing selflessly on all sorts of things—asking him about his homeland and so on: the typical banter at
which great lords are so adept. Though at the end it always comes back to
the same thing: that he’s yet unable to let him enter. The man who
was quite well-provisioned for his trip uses it all, everything that he has
and even his most valuable possessions, as bribes for the guardian.
Indeed he’d accept each item but then he’d say: ‘I’m only accepting this
so that you won’t believe that there’s anything else you might do.’
During all of these years the man was constantly watching the guardian.
He forgot all about the other guardians and it seemed to him that just
this first one was the only obstacle preventing him entrance to the law.
During the first years you could hear him loudly cursing his bad luck, that
fate had treated him cruelly; later on as he aged his curses became
fainter and fainter, his mutterings were more like a drone. He became
childlike and since after years of watching he had become acquainted
with all of the fleas that lived in the fur collar of the massive coat, so he
even pleaded with the fleas that they might help him to change the
guardian’s mind. Finally his eyesight was dimming and he didn’t even
know whether it was really growing dark or whether it was just his eyes
that were tricking him. But now in the darkness he was well able to
perceive a shimmering luminescence that streamed unabatedly out from
the entranceway. His life was nearing its end. Before his death all of the
experiences that he had acquired over this whole time congealed in his
mind to form one last question, a question that he never yet had posed.
As he was no longer capable of straightening up his stiffening limbs, so he
motioned to him to come over. The guardian had to bend deep-down
since their relative proportions had altered significantly, much to
the man’s detriment. ‘Now what else is it that you want to know?’—the
guardian asked him—‘You’re insatiable.’ ‘Everyone strives after the law,’
said the man—‘so how come after all of these years nobody but me has
attempted to enter in through the entranceway?’ The guardian was
cognizant that the man was at the brink of death and so as to be heard
he bellowed out his answer: ‘Here nobody but you could gain entrance
as this entrance was intended for you and for you alone. Now I’m going
to go lock22 it up.’’”

“The guardian was deceiving the man” K. said immediately as he
had become totally taken up, immersed in the story. “Not so fast,”
said the priest—“don’t commit yourself to an outsider’s opinion
without weighing the matter yourself. {übernimmt nicht die fremde
Meinung ungeprüft.} I have recited the text precisely as it stands
written. There’s nothing there that speaks of deception.” “But it’s
as clear as day,” K. replied—“and your first interpretation was totally
right, the guardian only provided the critical23 clue {erlösende
Mitteilung} once it no longer had any usefulness.” “He hadn’t been
asked earlier,” the priest responded—“and you also need to consider
that his duty was to guard the threshold and, as such, he did fulfill his duty.” “Why is it that you say you believe him to have fulfilled his duty?”—K. asked—“He didn’t fulfill his duty. His duty may have consisted in turning back all of the others {die Fremden}, but this man, the person for whom the entranceway was intended, he should have let him pass inside, it’s quite necessary.” “You don’t have a sufficient amount of respect for scripture and you have altered the story” the priest responded, and he continued: “The story contains two important clarifications spoken by the guardian, one at the beginning and one at the end. The first one reads: ‘That he’s unable for now to allow it’ and the other—‘Here nobody but you could gain entrance as this entrance was intended for you and for you alone.’ If there were to be a contradiction between these two declarations then you’d be quite right and in that case the guardian would have deceived him. But now, there isn’t any contradiction at all. Quite the opposite, indeed the first clarification tends to support the second one. One might even go so far as to say that the guardian’s words were in excess of what his duty required in that he offered the possibility of him being allowed entrance sometime in the future. At the time that the man first approached all that it seems the guardian needed to tell him was: ‘No, buzz off.’ And as a matter of fact there are quite a few interpreters out there who are in wonder that the guardian went so far as to indicate that he might possibly get through later on—for it seems that he loved to speak with the utmost in precision and that he performed his job with exemplary wakefulness. {denn er scheint die Genauigkeit zu lieben und wacht streng über sein Amt.} He stuck to his post throughout any number of years and he only went to close the entrance at the very end. He was extremely conscious of the importance of his service for he said it himself: ‘I am powerful’; he had all the necessary respect for his betters for he also said: ‘I am merely the lowest of the guardians’; and when it came to the exercise of his responsibilities he can neither be swayed nor aggravated for it says of the man: ‘He makes countless attempts to gain entrance and the guardian grows weary of hearing his pleas’; he’s not a chatterbox for it says that during the many years of his service he only engages: ‘in the typical banter {teilnahmlose Fragen} at which great lords are adept’; and he’s above being bribed for he declares: ‘I’m only accepting this so you won’t believe that there’s anything else you might do’—and, finally, even his external appearance is a strong indication of his pedantic character: his long pointy nose, the long black strands of his tartaric beard. Can you imagine a gatekeeper who could possibly top this one?! Now, it’s not to be denied that there are other traits mixed
up in his character that are actually favorable for the person who is seeking admittance and which also make it more understandable that he might go a tad bit beyond his duty. I'm speaking of course about his overstepping the strict bounds of what duty requires when he hinted at the mere possibility of the man being allowed entrance at some indefinite time in the future. There’s no side-stepping this issue—namely that the guardian is a little naïve and, what’s closely tied to this, also a little puffed up by his own importance. When it’s also not to be denied that his utterances regarding his own power and the even greater power of the other guardians, and the unabashedly threatening reference to the third guard whose countenance is more even than he can bear—when, as I say, all of this may well be true in itself {an sich}, so all the same the manner that he brings these issues up proves rather conclusively that his own grasp of the situation has been clouded over somewhat due to his own naïveté and arrogance. Those adept at hermeneutics have explained this remarkably well when they say: the proper understanding of a particular state of affairs {Sache} and the misunderstanding of the very same matter, these do not necessarily preclude one another. In short, it’s simply not to be denied that the naïveté and arrogance of the guardian, no matter how limited their expression actually was, really did weaken him in the performance of his duty—wakefulness upon the threshold—they are defects {Lücken [holes]} in his character as gatekeeper. Added on to this it appears that he’s naturally of a friendly disposition, too friendly I’d say, he’s not through and through business-like in his dealings. Right off from the get-go he allowed himself that playful repartee of daring the man to go inside despite his express prohibition from doing so, and then he doesn’t send the fellow away, rather he’s so accommodating as to give the man a stool and he lets him seat himself right off to the side of the entrance. The patience that he displays throughout all of the years by listening to his pleadings, all the little chit-chat sessions, his acceptance of the gifts, his noble forbearance whereby he’d simply ignore all of the cursing and swear words as the man bewailed his ill-fatedness {unglücklichen Zufall}, a bad break, mind you, that was the direct result of the guardian’s prohibition, all of this allows us the presumption that the guardian was sympathetic to the man’s plight. Not every gatekeeper would have displayed so much forbearance! And then finally, at the very end, his willingness to come over and lower himself, bending deep-down and placing his ear next to the man’s mouth so that he’d have the opportunity to pose this last great question. Admittedly, there’s yet just a wee hint of impatience—indeed he knows that the end is
approaching—in his remark: ‘You’re insatiable.’ Indeed, there are more than a few commentators who go even further in their analysis of this remark and they’re of the opinion that these words ‘You’re insatiable’ express a degree of friendly amazement which, all the same, is tinged by a splash of condescension. In any event, it should be abundantly clear by now that the Gestalt of the guardian of the threshold can be seen differently than you believe.” “You’ve known the story longer than I have and have a better command of all the details” K. responded. They were both quiet for awhile. Then K. said: “It’s not your belief, then, that the man was deceived?” “Don’t misunderstand me,” the priest replied—“I’m merely showing you a range of opinions that tradition bequeaths. You really shouldn’t put too much faith in opinions. Scripture itself is set in stone and the opinions are often nothing more than an expression of our dismay {Verzweiflung} at ever getting to the bottom of it. Speaking of which, there’s even a minority view that claims that it’s the guardian who’s the one who’s deceived.” “Now that’s an opinion that’s about as far out as I can imagine” K. said—“Upon what, pray tell, is it based?” “Its basis {Begründung}” the priest replied—“starts off from the guardian’s naïveté. What they say is that he himself is unaware of the interior of the law, that all of which he has some inkling is the path which, however, he himself is unable to follow since he can’t leave the entrance. The ideas that he has, the very way that he pictures the interior, these are held to be childish fantasies and one supposes that that about which he instills fear in the man, that this is merely a reflection of his own forebodings. Indeed, his fear is even greater than the man’s since the landsman wants nothing other than to go inside, and he still wants to even after he’s heard of the terrors that await him there, whereas the guardian has no such desire, at least there’s nothing that indicates such a proclivity. Indeed there are others who assert that he had to have been inside since, after all, he’s been taken up into service for the law and that could only have happened from the inside. To this they reply that it’s quite possible that he was called into service from the inside when he himself was outside, or at least that he couldn’t have penetrated very deeply into the interior of the law in view of his inability to bear the third guardian’s countenance. Besides all of this there’s no mention at all of anything having to do with the interior besides this lone reference to the third guardian. Now, perhaps he had been forbidden to speak of the interior, but then there’s also no mention of such a prohibition. The upshot of all of this is that the guardian is ignorant as regards the interior of the law, both as regards its appearance {Aussehen} as well as regards its meaning—
and that his state, accordingly, is one of deception. But then, looked at from the other side, he’s also in a state of deception as regards the landsman—since he is actually the inferior of the two of them. And he doesn’t even know this! That he treats the man as if he were himself superior should be something that you won’t have any trouble recollecting due to any number of details of the story. But this matter that it’s actually the guardian who is inferior, this too is something that’s clearly evident when you consider the following. Above all, he who is free is always superior to someone else who is constrained. Now, as a matter of fact, the landsman is free: he can go anywhere he pleases except for this lone exception of the entranceway to the law which is off limits for him and, do note—it’s only the guardian who declares it to be off limits, nobody else. Even though he takes the stool and seats himself next to the entrance, remaining there for the rest of his life, still he does this out of his own volition, there’s nothing in the story that refers to him being forced into doing so. On the other hand the guardian is constrained by his position \( \text{Amt} \) that he man his post, there’s simply no possibility of him going anywhere else, neither anywhere outside of the domain of law nor, to all appearance, not even into the interior—despite whatever he himself may wish. Beyond this, although it is true that he is a servant of the law, still he’s only a servant for this one entrance, thus he serves merely for this one man at this solitary entranceway. Hence, this too is grounds for why it is that he is the one who is subordinate. There’s just no way around it, for a span of time that lasts through decades, throughout an entire lifetime if one discounts the initial twenty or thirty years before the landsman arrives, for this entire period the guardian has nothing to do other than, to a certain extent, perform the function of a scarecrow, and indeed one might add in any number of years before the man arrived when one would have to presume that he’d be there waiting for him to come and during this time—if it’s possible to conceive of such a waste—his duties would be more vacuous yet! And then it’s the landsman who freely decides when it is that he actually will arrive. But, then too, as regards the termination of the guardian’s duties, this too is a matter that is determined by the man for the guardian is stuck there right to the very end and, thus, he remains subordinate to the man right to the very end. And it’s always hammered in—over and over—that the guardian appears to be fully ignorant of his subservient status in all of this. Now, as remarkable as all of the foregoing is, there’s yet another rather conspicuous circumstance that many consider as being a deception that’s qualitatively worse—as this one has to do with the guardian’s
exercise of his duties. Namely, at the end he speaks of the entrance and he says: ‘Now I’m going to go lock it up.’ But then at the beginning of the story it clearly reads that the entranceway to the law is always open. Well, if the entranceway is always open, always means always, irrespective of how many years the man, for whom it is intended, may or may not happen to live. And this means that the guardian won’t be able to lock it up. Now admittedly, there’s a major divergence of opinion as regards how we’re to interpret this final declaration that the guardian makes. Some say that he’s merely talking through his hat, or that he’s simply boasting about his loyal service, and then there are others who maintain that he’s saved up all of his disdain for the man to the end and has chosen this last moment to heap it on and set the poor fellow into a state of extreme sadness and contrition. But then almost everyone agrees that he won’t be capable of locking it shut. Indeed, the majority also seem to have coalesced around the view that, at least toward the end of the story, the man is clearly superior in terms of knowledge, that he outranks the guardian because he at least notices the shimmering luminescence that streams out from the entrance, whereas the guardian would have to have his back turned toward the entrance and there’s absolutely nothing he says or does that would indicate that he’s even noticed that there’s been any alteration.” “It’s all well substantiated” {Das ist gut begründet} K. remarked, he had been rehearsing a few of the choicer passages from the priest’s litany half out-loud to himself. “Yes, there are adequate grounds for the belief that the guardian was deceived and I also believe this to be the case. All the same I haven’t relinquished my earlier opinion that the man was deceived for there’s really nothing that prevents both of these from being true, indeed each may well reinforce the other. And for me it doesn’t make that much difference whether the guardian’s vision is clear or if he’s also being deceived. My position was that the man was deceived. Now, if the guardian wasn’t deceived, well then one may well be in doubt as to whether the man is, but if the guardian can’t even apprise the situation correctly then his ignorance necessarily is going to be passed on over to the landsman. In the latter case, indeed, it wouldn’t be so that the guardian was the deceiver, but all the same he’d be such a simpleton that he would have to be chased out of office post haste. You really have to consider that the deception that afflicts the guardian doesn’t harm him in any manner, but the harm inflicted upon the man is practically incalculable.” “Now here you run up against some strong opposition” the priest remarked—“Namely, there are quite a few who decry all of this judgmental analysis of the guardian. The story
doesn’t give anyone the right to make judgments that impact the guardian. No matter how he appears to us, all the same he is a servant of the law and, thus, he belongs to that realm and, as such, is removed from the sphere of human judgment. Accordingly it’s also mere human fabrication that the guardian would be inferior to the man in any respect whatsoever. His being bound to the performance of his duty at the entranceway to the law is incomparably more than living freely in this world. The man is only approaching the law for the first time, the guardian is already there. It is the law that has placed him at his post, his service is to the law—hence, to harbor any doubts about his dignity is the same thing as harboring doubts as regards the law itself.” “I don’t subscribe to this view” K. said, shaking his head—“because if this opinion were the correct view then you would also have to believe that everything that the guardian says would be true. But that’s not possible, you yourself demonstrated how absurd that would be.” “No,” the priest replied—“one would not have to believe that everything that the guardian says would have to be true, but merely that it would have to be necessary.” “Such a mish-mash of opinions,” K. said—“the broodings of hypochondriacs, a world grounded upon lies.”

K. spoke with an air of resigned finality but, all the same, it wasn’t his final judgment. He was too tired to be able to follow all of the ramifications of the various threads of the story, then too the paths of reasoning into which these threads led him were too unfamiliar, apparitions that lacked reality, matters that were better left to the society of ‘court officialdom’ than to him. The simple story had lost all form, he wanted to brush it off himself like dust particles and the priest proved the depth of his tenderness by displaying tolerance and remaining silent as regards K.’s last remark despite the circumstance that it was a certainty that it ran counter to his beliefs.

They continued pacing for awhile longer, each was silent. K. held himself close to the priest without knowing where he was in the impenetrable darkness. The lamp that he held in his hand had gone out long ago. For a brief moment the silver statue of a saint glistened out of the darkness nearly right in front of them—a mere flash of silver that playfully was reabsorbed by the darkness from which it had emerged. So as not to be totally dependent upon the priest for his orientation, K. asked him: “Aren’t we close to the main entrance now?” “No,” the priest replied—“that’s quite a ways from here. Are you already ready to go?” Despite that this was far from K.’s intention, nevertheless he answered without any hesitation:
“Indeed, I have to go—I’m a bank manager, there’s someone who’s waiting for me, I only came here so as to meet an Italian businessman, I was supposed to give him a tour of the cathedral.” “Well,” the priest replied offering him his hand—“in that case, off you go.” “But by myself I can’t find the way out, it’s too dark” K. said. “Go to your left, to the wall,” the priest replied—“then just follow along the wall until you come across the exit, you can’t miss it.” The priest had only taken a couple of steps away when K. suddenly yelled out overly loud: “Please, wait up!” “I’m waiting” the priest said. “Earlier on you were so friendly to me,” K. said—“and you were unsparing in giving me answers. But now you send me off as if I meant nothing to you.” “But you said that you had to go” the priest replied. “Well yes,” said K.—“but let me explain.” “No, allow me to explain something to you first,” said the priest—“who I am.” “You’re the prison chaplain” K. said as he approached him. His immediate return to the bank wasn’t nearly so pressing as he had indicated, he could just as well remain here, it really made no difference. “Thus, I belong to the court” the priest said—“Why, then, should it be any concern of mine, I don’t want anything from you. The court wants nothing from you: it takes you up when you come, and it lets you go when you leave.”

****

20 My own title, or then again: Glimmers of Light sparkle in the Darkness.
21 cf: Ein Weg zur Selbsterkenntnis des Menschen, Rudolf Steiner, Vierte Meditation, pp. 32–38: Von dem Hüter der Schwelle. Taschenbuch #602, Steiner Verlag, Dornach/Schwiz, 1972: p. 38: We live in an age in which understanding of the laws of the spiritual world are ever more requisite if our souls are to be adequately prepared for life. This meditation in its entirety is provided in the ‘appendix.’
22 Ich gehe jetzt und schließe ihn. —The verb “schließen” can mean “to close” or “to lock up”; Das Schoß which can mean “The Lock” is Kafka’s last novel: The Castle.
23 Erlösung—can mean solving a puzzle, but more importantly it means salvation.
24 “…ich sage wenn auch alle diese Äußerungen an sich richtig sein mögen, so zeigt doch die Art wie er diese Äußerungen vorbringt, daß seine Auffassung durch Einfalt und Überhebung getrübt ist. Die Erklärer sagen hiezui: Richtiges Auffassen einer Sache und Mißverstehen der gleichen Sache schließen einander nicht vollständig aus. Jedenfalls aber muß man annehmen, daß jene Einfalt und Überhebung, so geringfügig sie sich vielleicht auch äußern, doch die Bewachung des Einganges schwächen, es sind Lücken im Charakter des Türhüters.”
In Chapter Nine of *The Trial*—“In the Cathedral” (*Im Dom*)—the priest (*Geistlicher* [spiritualist]) presents to Josef K. the best known and celebrated parable—*Before the Law* (*Vor Dem Gesetz*)—which Kafka himself dubbed a “legend.” This parable appeared in Kafka’s publication of stories which bore the title: *LANDARZT*—or, in English: *A Country Doctor*. It is unanimously agreed by all of the Kafka scholars that this parable is the centerpiece and critical to unlocking the meaning of this [unpublished] novel, *Der Prozeß*—*The Trial*. And what’s more (*Doch*), this so-called legend is also one of the most important keys to unlocking the literary treasure chest of Kafka’s entire *Gesamtwerk*. Its importance can hardly be overstated. Since we shall be considering the text in great detail it is appropriate to quote it here in its entirety:

>> Vor dem Gesetz steht ein Türhüter. Zu diesem Türhüter kommt ein Mann vom Lande und bittet um Eintritt in das Gesetz.

Aber der Türhüter sagt, daß er ihm jetzt den Eintritt nicht gewähren könne. Der Mann überlegt und fragt dann, ob er also später werde eintreten dürfen. >Es ist möglich,< sagt der Türhüter, >jetzt aber nicht.< Da das Tor zum Gesetz offen steht wie immer und der Türhüter beiseite tritt, bückt sich der Mann, um durch das Tor in das Innere zu sehen. Als der Türhüter das merkt, lacht er und sagt:

But the guardian says that he’s unable for now to allow it. The man considers this and then he asks whether, then, he will be allowed to enter later on. *‘It’s possible,’* the guardian says—*‘but not now.’* As the entranceway to the law is open—as it always is—and the guardian steps off to one side, the man leans himself over so that he might see what lies within by peering through the entrance. As the guardian notices this he laughs and says:

Solche Schwerigkeiten hat der Mann vom Lande nicht erwartet; das Gesetz soll doch jedem und immer zugänglich sein, denkt er, aber als er jetzt den Türhüter in seinem Pelzmantel genauer ansieht, seine große Spitznase, den langen, dünnen schwarzen tatarischen Bart, entschließt er, doch lieber zu warten, bis er die Erlaubnis zum Eintritt bekommt.

Der Türhüter gibt ihm einen Schemel und läßt ihn seitwärts von der Tür sich nieder setzen. Dort sitzt er Tage und Jahre. Er macht viele Versuche, eingelassen zu werden, und ermüdet den Türhüter durch seine Bitten. Der Türhüter stellt öfters kleine Verhöre mit ihm an, fragt ihn über seine Heimat aus und nach vielem andern, es sind aber teilnahmslose Fragen, wie sie große Herren stellen, und zum Schlusse sagt er ihm immer wieder, daß er ihn noch nicht einlassen könne.

Der Mann, der sich für seine Reise mit vielem ausgerüstet hat, verwendet alles, und sei es noch so wervoll, um den Türhüter zu bestechen. Dieser nimmt zwar alles an, aber sagt dabei:

>Ich nehme es nur an, damit du nicht glaubst, etwas versäumt zu haben.<

Während der vielen Jahre beobachtet der Mann den Türhüter fast ununterbrochen. Er vergißt die andern Türhüter, und dieser erste scheint ihm das einzige Hindernis für den Eintritt in das Gesetz.
Er verflucht den unglücklichen Zufall, in den ersten Jahren rücksichtlos und laut, später, als er alt wird, brummt er nur noch vor sich hin. Er wird kindisch, und da er in dem jahrelangen Studium des Türhüters auch die Flöhe in seinem Pelzkragen erkannt hat, bittet er auch die Flöhe, ihm zu helfen und den Türhüter umzustimmen.

Schließlich wird sein Augenlicht schwach, und er weiß nicht, ob es ihm wirklich dunkler wird, oder ob ihn nur seine Augen täuschen. Wohl aber erkennt er jetzt im Dunkel einen Glanz, der unverlöschlich aus der Türe des Gesetzes bricht.

Nun lebt er nicht mehr lange. Vor seinem Tode sammeln sich in seinem Kopfe Erfahrungen der ganzen Zeit zu einer Frage, die er bisher an dem Türhüter noch nicht gestellt hat.

Er winkt ihm zu, da er seinen erstarrenden Körper nicht mehr aufrichten kann. Der Türhüter muß sich tief zu ihm hinuntersteigen, denn der Großenunterschied hat sich sehr zuungunsten des Mannes verändert.

>Was willst du denn jetzt noch wissen?< fragte der Türhüter, >du bist unsäglich.< Alle streben doch nach dem Gestetz<, sagt der Mann, >wieso kommt es, daß in den vielen Jahren niemand außer mir mir Einlaß verlangt hat?<

Der Türhüter erkennt, daß der Mann schon an seinem Ende ist, und um sein vergebendes Gerhör noch zu erreichen, brüllt er ihn an:

> Hier konnte niemand sonst Einlaß erhalten, denn dieser Eingang war nur für dich bestimmt. Ich gehe jetzt und schließe ihn.<

During the first years you could hear him loudly cursing his bad luck, that fate had treated him cruelly; later on as he aged his curses became fainter and fainter, his mutterings were more like a drone. He became childish and since after years of watching he had become acquainted with all of the fleas that lived in the fur collar of the massive coat, so he even pleaded with the fleas that they might help him to change the guardian’s mind.

Finally his eyesight was dimming and he didn’t even know whether it was really growing dark or whether it was just his eyes that were tricking him. But now in the darkness he was well able to perceive a shimmering luminescence that streamed unabatedly out from the entranceway.

His life was nearing its end. Before his death all of the experiences that he had acquired over this whole time congealed in his mind to form one last question, a question that he never yet had posed.

As he was no longer capable of straightening up his stiffening limbs, so he motioned to him to come over. The guardian had to bend deep-down to him since their relative proportions had altered significantly, much to the man’s detriment.

>Now what else is it that you want to know?< the guardian asked him—>You’re insatiable. ‘Everyone strives after the law,’ said the man—’so how come after all of these years nobody but me has attempted to enter in through the entranceway’

The guardian was cognizant that the man was at the brink of death and so as to be heard he bellowed out his answer:

‘Here nobody but you could gain entrance as this entrance was intended for you and for you alone. Now I’m going to go lock it up,’ ”
The first question that comes to mind is: What are we to understand as being meant by this word: “Law” {Gesetz}? Just as the concept of justice {Gerechtigkeit} in the story In the Penal Colony goes beyond what one typically understands in normal usage, so too is it the case here with the word, Law. We are not concerned with some legal statute {Satzung}, but rather with a ‘place’ {Ort [location]}. The Law demands nothing and there’s only one thing that it forbids, namely that for now, at this very moment, you may not ‘go there’ {im gegeben Moment zu ihm gelangen [succeed in entering into ‘him’]} — entrance into the Law is not allowed for now. The man, as the priest points out later on in his interpretation, has not in any way been compelled to approach the Law, nor is he at all compelled that he remain there waiting to enter for the rest of his life. Should he do this, so it is done out of his own volition. The Law demands nothing, but it also doesn’t offer up anything {bietet, gebieten, verbieten—offer, demand, forbid}. One may hope, but no promises are given that one’s hopes shall ever be fulfilled.

Thus, the Law is two-faced: it displays both the visage of what is sought after as well as the visage of what is forbidden. It is the goal of one’s strivings but, indeed, it is guarded over by a gatekeeper, someone who guards the entrance and denies entry. The landman’s striving and the guardian’s denial {Abweisung}—these two elements together tell us or make determinate what the Law “is.” It is sought after but proves to be quite elusive. It stands there “always open” — that is clearly stated — and also that “everybody strives after it.” And yet its enticement is quite similar to the sirens. The guardian denies entry but lets you remain hopeful: he plays the game of a coquette. Never is the man granted entry and, all the same, this gatekeeper declares that the entrance was meant only for him.

The priest is quite right in pointing out that there is no contradiction in this. It is not an empty paradox, rather there is a definite content, one that is capable of being expressed. One may state the matter more or less so: Your relation to the Law is indeed your innermost belonging {eigenster Besitz [possession]}, your totally unique personal ‘calling’ {Bestimmung}, but your calling is also to be shut out and turned away. It is also necessary to add on the following qualification that along with this “calling of being turned away” belongs as well the two elements of hoping and waiting. Being denied entrance and seeking, these together make up what is entirely your own personal relation, the relationship between the
landsman and the Law. It’s simply not possible—not at this particular moment in time wherein one is actually existing—that entry might be allowed. And along with this as a further extension of his fated calling, his destiny, the landsman is given a specific task. His task is to discover when and how he might ever be allowed entry. That is his trial, that with which he is burdened. — Or, one might express this even better by saying that he has burdened himself with this trial, it is after all his own doing. His trial is made up of this seeking for clarification for his unhappy fate and the chance of freeing himself from it. The landsman, thus, belongs front and center to this novel, Der Prozeß. Josef K. and all who are indicted/accused, all such people are placed before the task, this burden: to defend one’s very existence against the accusation, an accusation that has no determinate features, it could be anything at all.

In one of his diary entries that was written shortly after his composition of this legend, Kafka remarks that the posing of questions and then waiting upon answers makes up the essence of “Klagen”—a German verb become Noun (since it’s capitalized) that encompasses: lamenting, complaining, crying out, grumbling and mourning. [An “Anklage” is an accusation, a legal term.] But such inquisitive waiting is senseless because those questions the answers to which don’t arise immediately in the posing, such questions never have answers! This diary entry [T-480] may perhaps throw some light on the legend. In the very moment that the landsman sits upon the stool and begins to wait, in the same moment he has thereby sentenced himself to an eternity of waiting. His question didn’t itself give rise to the answer and, thus, it became an eternal question which, simply because it is eternal can never give rise to an answer. From this point forward the question encompasses the entirety of existence and becomes a ‘state of being’ and a possible ‘mode of existence’. And with this change it is no longer a question at all but has metamorphized into being a Klage, a bemoaning of fate. It is precisely the [infinite] duration and totality of what is being asked about, this requires such a metamorphosis into Klage, a lamentation that will persist indefinitely, it will never be solved, it is only to be mourned. For this reason it would be wrong to place the blame

xvii It is worth noting that the “Landsmann” and the doctor of Ein Landsarzt share in this hopelessness of not being able to accomplish their ‘calling.’
on the Law {das Gesetz anzuklagen}. The landsman is responsible for the hopelessness of what he has done because he is the one who has become implacably resigned to a hopeless situation.

The consequence to such a ‘mode of existence’ is living a life that is itself disconnected from [normal] life {Die Konsequence einer solchen Existenz ist ein abseitiges [remote/esoteric] Leben.} The landsman lives out his life in total isolation from human society and everyday life. Neither within human society, nor too within the compass of the Law, rather there he sits upon this stool, his abasement and degradation could hardly be any greater. His reclusive life is now totally dedicated to his research {Forschungen}. Totally engrossed in studying the gatekeeper, observing him continuously and with painstaking care he even becomes acquainted with the fleas that live in the collar of the fur-lined coat, perhaps he’s given them all names. Could anything be more pointless than conducting such research—?

The Investigations of a Dog comes to mind. To make such objects the entire arena of one’s contemplations is comical, and it’s all so abstruse. Investigating into the fleas that crawl upon the collar of a gatekeeper’s coat, how debased can one’s life become? For a sensible, highly intelligent person to fall so low, this boggles the mind. The landsman has sacrificed his entire life to a useless and inane purity, a senseless preoccupation and concentration upon a single figure, such a mode of existing degrades his being to the level of a child, a child who has become totally dependent upon the moods of an almighty Father figure whose motives are likely enough evil and in any event defy any and all calculation, that one studies these changing mood swings so that perhaps, just perhaps one’s pleas might yet be fulfilled, or at least that one doesn’t find oneself undergoing an even more degrading punishment. It is precisely such a humiliating existence that Kafka describes as his own in his Letter to his Father. Moreover, the tartaric appearance of the gatekeeper can’t help but remind one of the nomads who are described in An Old Manuscript as well as in The Great Wall of China. Nomads, as we shall be seeing, whose evil, aggressive and unreasonable behavior call to mind the unapproachable aspects that Kafka outlined in his sketches of his father and other such figures of Power {Machtgestalt}.

Indeed, the degradation of the landsman sitting there upon the stool, such an existence is even worse than childlike, one would have to liken such an existence to that of a dog, a dog who “sits” when commanded and then looks up to his lordly master, ready to do his
master’s bidding, studying the expression upon his master’s face that perhaps he’ll get to go out for a walk or enjoy some treat. This hound-dog-like aspect of the landsman is perfectly expressed by his concentration on the fleas. Such abasement of the landsman to the vantage point of an immature child or even of a dog is made more than apparent by his sitting posture upon the Schemel, a stool that has no back support [hence, no backbone] and upon which he squats {verhockt}. From such an abased posture he looks up to the gatekeeper just as the Ungeziefer Gregor Samsa peered up to his family. Long before the age disparity effected their relationship the landsman was already overshadowed by the gatekeeper. And not only is there a physical degradation, a moral depravity is likewise on display. He attempts to bribe the gatekeeper, that this guardian might be tempted by monetary inducements to be lax in his duty of watching over the entrance. The mode of existence {Existenzform} of such pure inwardness has amoral and downright vulgar repercussions. It opens the door to superstition, irrational behavior and childlike inanities. Matters deteriorate to the point that the landsman even stoops to begging the fleas: that they might help him in his quest. In a similar manner the other ‘accused’ defendants in The Trial undergo morally depraved encounters, one need only to look at what happens with Kaufmann Block in Chapter Eight.

Living apart from human society, this mode of existence of the pure ego {das reine Ich} is, thus, extreme degradation. And what is even worse – it is all for nothing. The landsman shall never step over the threshold; the entrance that was meant for him and for him alone shall be sealed shut when he dies. His fated task, gaining access into the Law, has not been achieved {erlangt [succeed] > Erlanger/"K."}. Everything that he has sacrificed: the joys of life, a normal existence, reason, human dignity – it’s all been sacrificed for no purpose. His entire existence was sacrificed to obtain an objective {Ziel–telos} and this objective has proven to be beyond his reach. His existence has shown itself as being empty, senseless and impotent: a complete waste. Thus, Josef K. has become an instance of Kafka’s diary entry: Questions that don’t give rise to immediate answers, that is normally occurring answers, such questions shall always be senseless. All the same, it is the destiny of the pure I that it cannot tear itself away from the posing of such questions. The irony of such a destiny is self-contained: it is senseless precisely because it is a searching for the sense. Only those who have no need to seek, those people who already know all of the answers, since they arise immediately in
the questioning, such people can live sensible lives... again precisely because they are not seeking but having sense.\textsuperscript{xviii}

The vain emptiness of such an existence expresses—looked at from the other side—the sadism of the Law. The essence of Law is defined for us only through its relation to the landsman. The Law fascinates the man and draws him ‘in’ just as do the sirens; and the end result is the same as always: being smashed upon the rock, a life wasted. The Law makes a mockery of human expectations. It is always “open” and yet forbids that one enter in. From within a “shimmering luminescence” is perceived \textit{(unverlöschliche Glanz)}, it gleams unabatedly. This inner light has a dual purpose. On the one hand it expresses the mystical element of the Law since it is only perceived by him as his physical senses are in severe decline, the landsman is losing his eyesight for the physical world as his death draws nigh—and the light of the spirit begins to shine. All the same \textit{dich}, this luminescence is likewise a tease and the Law’s last laugh—since it only becomes apparent when it is too late to be of any help, there’s no joy. That after which the landsman spent his entire life pursuing announces its presence, its majesty \textit{(Herrlichkeit)} precisely in the moment in which he no longer has any hope of attaining it, it is merely a parting insult. Such a cruel irony reminds one of the spiteful gesture of a coquette who in bending over to shake your hand \textit{good-bye} makes a display of her alluring figure. And yet as a final capstone to the parting ‘inner light’ is the belated remark of the guardian who bellows out into the landsman ear: “this entrance was intended for you and for you alone.” With this shocking pronouncement still ringing in his ears, the horrendous waste that his life has shown itself as being, so dawns the atrociousness of his existence into the landman’s consciousness right along with his last dying breath. There is nothing consoling in any of it, his fate has proved to be a cruel one right on to the very end.

Mixed in with the crassness of such an existence—and starting right from the very beginning—there is likewise this teasing, humorous element in which the gatekeeper excels: he makes a joke about everything, playing with the man like a cat with a mouse. As he notes how fervently the man desires to see what lies within, so he laughs and tells him to “go right ahead” despite his warning. But then he also doesn’t refrain from continuing on to inform him about all of the other gatekeepers whose terrors far surpass any that he

\textsuperscript{xviii} Erich Fromm’s most excellent book comes to mind: \textit{To have Or To Be}. 
might possess. And so the man decides that, after all, it is better that he wait. We shall return to our discussion of the merriment \(\text{Spaß}\) of the gatekeeper, but first let’s make a more in depth examination of this opening comment made by the priest.

The priest notes that the landsman is free, he doesn’t have to follow this enticement, he can just as well go back from where he came, or go anywhere else he may wish. He didn’t have to let himself be drawn hither. – But then, isn’t this an essential quality of the Law: its essential being \(\text{Wesen}\) is that one “wants” to go there. Indeed, it is due precisely to this that the Law exerts such power \(\text{Macht}\), that it is able to enslave and torment the landsman. The hold that the Law in an infinitely spiritualized sense has for the landsman finds a more earthly parallel in Kafka’s early novel, \textit{Amerika}, where-in Brunelda’s hide-away \(\text{Asyl}\) sets the scene. Brunelda’s enticing allures give her and her keeper \(\text{Türhüter}\) Delamarche an absolute power over Robinson. The physical torments under which Robinson suffers so greatly find a more refined and spiritualized suffering in the landsman’s monomaniacal striving after the Law, a striving that robs him of his reason and degrades his existence to the level of a dog. Moreover the parallels between this legend, the novel itself and Kafka’s later writings are also quite apparent. The complete and utter degradation of Block’s existence due to the court proceedings against him, his \(\text{Proceß}\), this is what puts Block underneath the cudgel of his advocate. In Block we get a clear picture of this ‘trying process’ and the resulting hound-dog state of his existence: his humiliation and “forgetfulness of the world,” the total identification of one’s “self” with its existential focus: his \textit{personhood} has been reduced to an absolute minimum. That which has driven Block into the existential mode of the ‘pure I’ is his consciousness of guilt that proceeds from the charges \(\text{Anklage}\) that initiated his trial. In Kafka’s earlier works the source of this existential state is to be found in escape \(\text{Flucht} \) \(\text{[flight]}\). The pure ego in \textit{Judgment} and likewise already in \textit{A Description of a Struggle} and in \textit{Wedding Preparations} is in each case a retreat from the world. Yet already with the officer in \textit{Penal Colony} and the landsman as well as \textit{The Village Schoolmaster} (both from late Fall, 1914), in all of these later stories we can note that Kafka makes a radical adjustment in the motivating factors—why his heros are being drawn into this existential state of pure inwardness. Purity is no longer sought after due to a wanting to escape or as a consequence of one’s consciousness of guilt. Purity is now sought after for its own sake, a longing for the unknown \(\text{die unbekannten Nährung}\), for fulfillment, and
investigations into the meaning of existence. Such a pure seeking is present right from the start in the figures \{Gestalt\} of the landsman as well as the [heroic] dog of Forschungen eines Hundes. “Everyone strives after the Law” — that is the Begründung [basis] upon which the landsman clarifies his own striving. In that he poses his [seemingly oddball] question as regards nutrition [/substance], the dog of Investigations is merely fulfilling the “law of dogdom” which commands that one leave no question unanswered, seeking after the answer to any and every question. The pure I, thus, is in both of these stories the ideal of existence, the fulfillment of the law of the entire species.

Unlike Kaufmann Block [who is concerned about his own existence], the dog is burdened by universal, metaphysical, the final questions. Just as with Goethe’s Faust—and the dog belongs amongst Kafka’s Faustian characters that appear in his later period which includes A Hunger Artist, The Tower of Babel and the land-surveyor K.— the dog stakes his life into this play for the answer to the question as regards [ultimate] knowing, and this is the essence of the Faustian character, this unification of knowing and being \{Erkenntnis und Existenz\}. This metaphysical question as regards the final source \{Urgrund\} of nutrition, and thereby as well the final source of our existence \{des Daseins\}, this he makes into his own most personal concern. That is why he fasts, why he renounces his life within the hound-dog community – and it is precisely due to his being a normal dog, one that is faithful to the Hundegesetz, thus in the Platonic sense an ideal exemplar of what it really means to be a dog. This existential shift away from the merely physical assertion of self to the universal, philosophic concern of knowing in an absolute sense, this marks the turning point \{Wendung\} from Kafka’s early period to his late one. But, all the same \{doch\}, we shouldn’t fail to note what both periods share in common, namely this metaphor of hound-dog like existence. The deep inner connection between the novel, The Trial, and Investigations of a Dog is abundantly provided in the final scene of the novel wherein Josef K. ends up dying like a dog.

The landsman of the legend strives to enter into the Law, whereas the dog’s striving is that the “Law,” the absolute is forced to enter into him, right into his waiting jaws!

In Kafka’s Werk guilt and sense \{Schuld und Sinn\}, punishment and fulfillment are interwoven. Ever greater the guilt, so too is the
sense’ that much closer to truth and purification. Ever the more bitter one’s punishment and suffering, so much the deeper shall be one’s liberation, the peace of knowing \{Befriedigung des Wissens\}: that there really is a deeper sense to the world and that we do have a homeland \{Heimat\}, even if we have totally lost our connection to it. However it is also the case that when punishment no longer plays such a prominent role in life, that is as our lives becomes freer, more disconnected \{unabhängiger\}, and more ‘rational’ – so ever the more do our lives lack in any [deeper] meaning, [or, as Bürgel puts it: “the consolation is nil”—see pp. 189-190: \{trostlos\}]. Both Georg Bendeman and Gregor Samsa find consolation, a sense for their suffering, in their guilt, that is due to the clarification of their tasks which brought their lives to an end and \textit{that does make sense}: the sense, namely, that inheres in art and specifically in the deeper meaning inherent in all tragodies. Matters change significantly in Kafka’s \textit{In the Penal Colony} as here guilt has—in a certain way—become fabricated, and the punishment and transcendence \{Seligkeit\} \{of the sixth hour: the dawning realization of the “splendor of Righteousness”\} are derived \{erzeugt\} \textit{from a machine}! With the destruction of the \textit{Apparatus} we arrive at a new phase: \textit{Antwortlosigkeit}: there are \textit{no answers}. From here onwards the lack of any meaning \{telos\} is the only punishment that remains.

\textit{The Trial} and \textit{Investigations of a Dog}, now, are works which occupy a mediating position between Kafka’s earlier and late periods since the heros in this middle period insert between themselves and the senselessness \{of existence\} the question of guilt or, by extension—the error: what is the reason behind the forlorn, disconsoling nature of their existence. Something is amiss, an error must have occurred and somehow, in some sense I must be guilty otherwise it couldn’t be possible for my existence to be so senseless and forlorn. What the dog is able to express consciously and think it through \{durch-denkt\}, this same matter underlies what Josef K. experiences unconsciously, it only finds its expression in the action, how the events in the novel reach their culmination without the root causes ever having been formulated. Such a formulation of insights is that in which Kafka’s late stories excel. Whereas the dog is seeking for guilt consciously, without ever being able of finding it, so too Josef K. is seeking for guilt unconsciously, and likewise he’s also incapable of finding it. As we shall see in the following chapters, guilt, which as Josef K.’s gendarmes \{Wächter\} tell him ‘the court has hitched’ \{erzogen \[pulled]\} upon him \{in Chapter One of the novel\} is the result of his own seeking, his being drawn towards it, his own fascination
with it. The life of the dog, however, is a conscious seeking for the mistake, and is therefore equivalent both to a self-accusation (Selbst-anklage) as well as a self-investigation (Selbstforschung). Josef K.’s life would have the same forlorn aspect to it if he were to spend his evenings [as he sometimes intends] working out his defense, this all-embracing and spectacular brief which lays out where things have gone amiss, something of course that he never managed to find the time to bother with. For there is this overt connection between Josef K. and Kaufman Block—both of whom, parenthetically, are called dogs—precisely the same relation as that which pertains between our heroic dog of the Investigations and all of the other canine folk, those who may be neatly divided between the ones who remain mute on the issue, and then the others who blather away non-stop. The dog who not only thirsts but goes so far as to really hunger after knowledge is like Block; Josef K., however, divides his time between keeping mum and rambling on nonsensically, whatever may come to mind.

**

Selected passages from Chapter 12:
ODYSSEUS UND DAS GESETZ DER MACHT

When the gatekeeper notices how fervently the landsman desires to enter into the Law, so he laughs and says that if he is so enticed—“go right ahead despite my having forbidden it,” and then he goes on to threaten him with the yet greater terrors of the other guardians. The landsman decides that, after all, it would be better to wait.

. . . Neither in the text of the parable nor in the interpretations that the priest presents to Josef K., nowhere are we told of what the outcome might be had the landsman taken up this ‘jovial challenge’ (Spaßhafte Aufförderung). It also is never said why the gatekeeper should forbid the man from entering. Yet it is quite clear from the text that there wasn’t any physical compulsion, rather fear (Furcht), a deficiency in self-confidence and trust in himself, this is what held the man back from taking up the challenge offered him by the guardian. Indeed, this is quite the opposite to his determination, yet all the same (doch), it is both of these taken together that essentially define his predicament, this eternity of waiting. Together they neither allow him to leave, nor that he may enter in. The twofaced nature of the Law of which we have spoken is, thus, a corollary to a contradiction that essentially defines the landsman.
The exact opposite to the landsman is given to us in Odysseus, the hero of *The Silence of the Sirens*. As the inverse to the landsman’s guilt and punishment by his inability either to leave or to enter, Odysseus is both innocent and escapes any punishment. Odysseus spurns the allures of the sirens; he’s not in the least bit enticed by their charms. Rather he commands *beherrscht* and has taken measures to ensure his safety against the enticements toward which all others are driven. Hence, he succeeds in getting past the sirens. In Homer Odysseus allows himself to be lashed to the mast, whereas it is the oarsmen who have their ears stuffed with wax. Kafka changes the story as Odysseus not only lets himself be tied but likewise the wax goes into his ears, there’s not a word spoken in regard to any oarsmen. Thus, in Homer’s text one rational means suffices—and because it is merely one, this is what makes it rational. With Kafka one has to protect oneself on two levels and therefore actually in an *irrational* manner, only thus is one protected from the dangers of the mystical, the deathly embrace, the temptations that their silence contains, something that is even more corrupting than their song. So great is the power of the sirens, and so cautious and perspicacious is Odysseus’ will to survive *Lebenswillen*.

“He had an absolute trust in his handful of wax and the rope that bound him, and so in a state of pure innocence he joyously sailed straight for those menacing rocks, the lair of the sirens.”

The complete trust in himself [and in his devices *Mittelchen* [means]], this is what assured his triumph. Confidence, trust in oneself, this removes the guilt restoring innocence and likewise putting one in a position of power. Freed from the burden of guilt the weak has become strong. Trust, innocence and power: thus Kafka proclaims the threefold blessing.

What sort of trust is it that brings about Odysseus’ ability to evade the den of the sirens—and in Kafka’s story, *The Married Couple*, gives to the wife the power to overcome the [apparent] death of her husband? One must not confuse this trust with the Christian’s trust in God since, as both of these examples illustrate, this triumphant trust is first and foremost a trust in oneself and in life *Lebensvertrauen*. The counter-examples [of Josef K., etc.] reinforce this as it is always a deficiency in belief in oneself that is the underlying fault. The landsman lacks the necessary confidence in himself as he takes a closer look at the imposing figure of the gatekeeper and then decides that it would be better to wait rather than rising to the
occasion and boldly going forward, risking everything and so entering into the Law. Odysseus, on the other hand, has complete trust in his own devices, and so he manages to sail right by the sirens without the least concern of shipwreck \(\text{unbeirrbar}\). — —

It is the weakness of the I over against the Might of the father, this results in fear as the source of guilt \(\text{Erbschuld}\) in Kafka’s mythology. In one of his aphorisms Kafka speaks of self-confidence, that self-confidence that overcomes the world:

“It isn’t necessary that you leave your house, remain at your table and focus \(\text{horche [listen!]}\). Don’t even focus, just wait. Don’t even wait; be still, totally still and alone. The world offers itself and unfolds, it has no choice, ecstactially it unwinds itself before you.”

... The fundamental difference between K. and Odysseus lies in this, that Odysseus is not motivated by a will to power, rather merely from his will to survive \(\text{Willen zum Überleben}\). K. and practically all of Kafka’s other heros, they all strive after power, they want a piece of the action, as it were. The heros of Kafka’s early works desired to become re-\text{united} with the ‘will to power’ through their punishment and self-annihilation; the heros of his late phase through \text{Kampf}, the fight for recognition and acceptance. Odysseus isn’t seeking power, he sails right by this and proceeds onward into a future all his own\(^{96}\) \(\text{Er will an ihr—die Macht—vorbei und von ihr fort in sein eigenes Leben fahren}\).

****

\(^{96}\) As always, see Endnote #52 on page 226. It may also be good to note that the “devices”\([/\text{means}]\) of (1) mast and (2) wax may well refer to the ego’s ‘power of standing up straight’ and to ‘focus on what is within’\(/\text{hörchen}\) as the physical world ‘evaporates.’
Final Thoughts: Kafka and Esoteric Christianity

As Walter Sokel’s most important book on Kafka rightly claims and as the book itself conclusively demonstrates: there is a thematic structure that runs through Kafka’s writings and any proper understanding of Kafka has to understand the interconnections, how all of Kafka’s stories and novels relate to one another and to the whole. Moreover, the central importance of both *The Trial* and *Investigations of a Dog* as these relate to the *Ambivalence of Josef K.* is a matter of utmost concern. Mankind in the modern world is truly facing a major problem, in a way the same problem as always—our spiritual development—but also a unique problem since we now live in the age of the consciousness soul and, hence, our problem has become the relation of the “I” to its own ideals, its higher calling, its higher self. Whereas Freud postulates, theoretically, a super-ego that somehow tries to keep all of the desires of the “Id” in check, and whereas most of modern philosophy has given up any hope for finding any substance to spirit, it seems to me that Kafka—who once described himself as being “the spiritual center of Prague”—was actually wrestling with this quest for spiritual awakening through literature, it was all very real to him. Let us consider what Sokel has to say in Chapter Thirteen about this affliction of ambivalence as this relates to mankind:

“If Kafka’s writings have a prophetic ring to them, so it is because he made the split {Spaltung} of contemporary human consciousness into two conflicting aspects, namely the decent, respectable façade that we all are quite comfortable displaying and, on the other hand, the horror filled underbelly of all that is detestable regarding which hardly anybody is particularly eager to discuss: Kafka made this split the structure within which his works are enveloped. Josef K.—read modern man par excellence—becomes a beast {Hund} because he insists upon upholding the court {das Gericht}. With his shameful covering up of reality, so he goes about not only defending his good cosmopolitan reputation and proves his readiness to sacrifice human life in the name of an ‘enlightened humanity,’ rather too he demonstrates his hidden love for torture and murder which, in that they are able to thrive, go beyond being merely low level criminal aberrations. Josef K. doesn’t allow the illegal proceedings that surround him to come to light and not even then as he himself is being dragged off by ‘bad actors’! In this last chapter as he is en route to his demise he goes so far as to protect his executioners, who hold him in their iron grip, from the police—just as earlier on [in Chapter Five] he kept the lid on what was transpiring in the rumple
room so as to keep his fellow bank affiliates unaware of the horrific
beating that was happening practically right under their noses.
When a large segment of European citizenry built up a *Wall of
Silence* around the beatings and murder and did all that they could
to look the other way, so it is basically the same as the panic
exemplified by Josef K.”

It is one thing to pay lip service to the *ideals* so often touted in
America and abroad, another thing entirely actually to uphold them.
The black sites, Abu Ghraib, water boarding, Guantanamo and our
latest killing *machines*, ‘drones’—these are all matters that anyone
with any knowledge of current historical events is well aware. And
yet where is the outrage, where is *justice*—another concept that finds
a central place in Kafka *and his kin*.

In my opinion Sokel’s very impressive analysis of Kafka’s writings
brings one right up to the edge of solving the mystery behind Kafka’s
genius, one needs only to open up the perspective to include the
realm of the supersensible, regarding which I am not the first to
make mention.98 I may, of course, be wrong—to which you may also
want to tack on the names of some of my fellow co-conspirators,
listed in historical order: Plato, John the Evangelist, Plotinus,
Schelling, Steiner, Emil Boch, Friedrich Rittelmeyer *and many
others* who are so bold as to dabble and speculate into esoteric
matters—and I make no pretense of having any direct supersensible
experience besides that supersensible experience in which all
humans partake: consciousness of being an “I.” There are, all the
same, any number of insights and hints that come to light through
reading and studying Kafka (and the others just mentioned) over the
course of my life. Besides the concluding comment by the Guardian
about his going to “lock up the entrance”—an entrance that is
“always open”—and many other subsequent hints by the priest as
e.g. – the “major divergence of opinion as regards how we are to
interpret this,” I would like now to show how everything that the
priest says can be brought into harmony if *only one has the ear to
hear* what is said, as I do love reminding everyone that one must
listen “in-between” the lines.99

Not only is the entrance into the Law “always open,” so too is the
door to the secretaries [Bürgel, p. 174]. The guardian’s “closing” of
this door is, I hope that this may be sufficiently apparent by now,
simply the landsman’s *actually entering into the world of spirit*
upon his death. What sense would it possibly make for the door to
still be “there and open” when the landsman isn’t! How can there be any divergence of opinion on this?! Let alone “major divergence”—this is Kafka being Kafka *par excellence*.

The parable/legend, *Before the Law*, is given to the landsman as an example of how he shouldn’t be deceived—“**As regards the court *Gericht* you are deceiving yourself.**” As Sokel rightly points out, the Law is, in its primary sense, a place. That this place is the place that one enters upon death, this shouldn’t be difficult to see once we understand why it is that the door (that is always open) is “shut” upon the death of the landsman. That judgment occurs after death is likewise something that has an important place in esoteric lore as well as, of course, in the *New Testament*. Thus the court that truly administers Justice is a spiritual fact, justice in the earthly realm is certainly an ideal, but an ideal that may be terribly messy in its realization! If one is “not to be deceived” as regards the court, one needs a spiritual framework to understand judgment and Justice in their real sense. Following Plato, there is the realm of the cave where shadows are cast upon the wall, and then there is a realm “outside of the cave” where the true images *Urbilder* [archetypes] may be perceived.

Returning now to the priest’s elucidation of the parable. He states not merely that there is a major divergence of opinion as regards the locking up of the entrance, in a more overall sense he likewise says that “I am *merely* showing you a range of opinions that tradition bequeaths. You really shouldn’t put too much faith in opinions. Scripture itself is set in stone and the opinions are often nothing more than an expression of our dismay at ever getting to the bottom of it.”

The subtle truth which fits in so well with Kafka’s *modus operandi* is that these so called “mere opinions”—when viewed correctly—do actually make perfect sense, they are *signage* that points toward the spirit. They all fall into two sorts: (1) the exact opposite of what they say, and (2) precisely what they say. Then there is a third mediating sort which is included in the above two primary types, viz. (3) being extremely funny and/or deep. Let us now run through the

---

\textsuperscript{xix} See John, Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{xx} “The divine one whose oracle is in Delphi speaks neither directly nor obscurely, but gives a sign.”—*Remembering Heraclitus*, p. 25; Richard Geldard, Lindisfarne Books, 2000
gamut though not without first mentioning that the three sentences directly above this paragraph can be taken in all three senses: the priest is showing the “opinions” that tradition bequeaths, and when understood properly these opinions are not merely “opinions” but rather “the truth”— hence, (1) (2) and (3) all apply, assuming that my analysis is correct and the priest {der Geistlicher} is the spokesman for our spiritual heritage.

Josef K. immediately jumps to the conclusion that the landsman is being deceived by the guardian as he should have been allowed to enter into the Law since the entrance was meant “for him and only for him.” As both Sokel and the priest point out, Josef K. is wrong, this seems to be his constant condition, he’s never able to rise above his impulses. There is nothing contradictory in what the parable has stated—and since the guardian didn’t deceive the landsman in what he said so the fault must lie with the landsman, that he couldn’t rise up from his “stool” and make his way through the portal that was always a possibility for him and for him alone. Since there was no deception, hence there must be a real connection between the landsman and the guardian. What is this connection? And why was the guardian “so friendly” to the landsman just as the priest is friendly [coming down from his pulpit] toward Josef K.—? But first things first.

Besides pointing out that there was no deception per se in the guardian’s not allowing the landman entrance and then running through the entire parable once more with a bit of commentary, such things as: “the guardian’s words were in excess of what his duty required”; and “Can you imagine a gatekeeper who could possibly top this one!”; and [my favorite] “his pedantic character”— the priest ends up with the declaration:

“There’s no side-stepping this issue, namely that the guardian is a little naïve and, what’s closely tied to this, also a little puffed up by his own importance. When it’s also not to be denied that his utterances regarding his own power and the even greater power of the other guardians, and the unabashedly threatening reference to the third guard whose countenance is more even than he can bear—when, as I say, all of this may well be true in itself so all the same the manner that he brings these issues up proves rather conclusively that his own grasp of the situation has been clouded over somewhat due to his own naïveté and arrogance. Those adept at hermeneutics have explained this remarkably well when they say: the proper understanding of a particular state of
affairs {Sache} and the misunderstanding of the very same matter, these do not necessarily preclude one another. In short, it’s simply not to be denied that the naïveté and arrogance of the guardian, no matter how limited their expression actually was, really did weaken him in the performance of his duty—wakefulness upon the threshold—they are defects {Lücken [holes]} in his character as gatekeeper.

Again we have an instance where (1) (2) and (3) are all applicable. It is not the guardian who is naïve and arrogant, rather it is the landsman and, by extension, Josef K. and modern man. All of us, that is, all who deny the spiritual realm its precedence and proper place, assuming of course that there is a spiritual realm as tradition might lead us to believe. The duty of the Guardian IS to be the “hole” the passageway into the spiritual realm, and that is why he is attached to the landsman, he is the “higher I,” the true self that incorporates not merely one time, but many many times throughout history. This also explains why there is no contradiction, the landsman did not achieve enlightenment during his life, he sat upon his stool. But at least he was somewhat aware that enlightenment is a possibility, he was drawn toward the esoteric and not completely taken up in the worldly happenings, this realm of seemings, of maya if we are to use a word from the East. And this also immediately explains why the gatekeeper was “so friendly,” the question that was posed two paragraphs up.

When viewed in this context, further remarks such as the priest’s comment of the guardian being “unaware of the interior of the Law, that all of which he has is some inkling is the Path...” — I don’t see much need in explaining what should by now be rather obvious. However, there does remain the issue of the “other” guardians, particularly the third whose visage even scares this first gatekeeper. The number three, to me in any event, helps identify who is being indicated—as does my interest in esoteric literature, particularly the New Testament. It is not only Kafka, rather too Jesus Christ often uses animals in his parables, sheep and shepherds to be more precise, not to forget gatekeepers. The seven “I AM” passages in John are worthy of meditation: “He who follows me shall not wander in darkness but be in the Light,” and the chapter of this book that I have entitled “Joseph K.!” will now also be given the title: “Glimmers of Light Sparkle in the Darkness.”
What is most curious and well worth noting is the picture \(\text{Bild}\) toward which Josef K. is drawn as he first enters into the cathedral \(\text{Dom}\) and his thought as he walked away from this picture: “that it was only a typical rendition of Christ’s burial \(\text{es war übrigens ein neueres Bild}\).” [p.107] — Understatement, and Josef K.’s initially being so drawn toward the Knight who is “frozen on the periphery. Perhaps that was intended, his role was just to stand watch. K., whose interest in art had fizzled out years ago…”

Need I say more, here we have a preview of the guardians discussed, K.’s deep interest in the first, his “higher I,” and then his total lack of interest in Christ. Needless to say, I do not think the same applies to Kafka who knew a bit of Greek and who assiduously studied the Bible throughout his life. Key concepts that are currently ‘out of vogue’ but are [in my mind] critical to a thorough-going comprehension of the arguments presented here are (1) karma and (2) reincarnation—both being fundamental tenets of eastern religions as well as arguably implicit in certain passages of the New Testament [see e.g. John, chapters III, V and VIII]. Of course, I am well aware of how outlandish such an esoteric interpretation may appear in our contemporary age and everyone must weigh their innermost convictions with the utmost care. At the same time it is also imperative that one follow through with the implications inherent in one’s beliefs: Are humans simply another species of animal that has evolved from ‘below’… or is there real purpose and wisdom inherent in the world? —I am merely posing the question, “showing you a range of opinions that tradition bequeaths. You really shouldn’t put too much faith in opinions. Scripture itself is set in stone and the opinions are often nothing more than an expression of our dismay at ever getting to the bottom of it.”

****

97 Rather than being an imitation of the Freemason Lodge’s re-enactment, I would be so bold as to say that Kafka himself was quite aware of his higher Self which is probably the only thing which can explain his crazy idea of serving in the military during WWI!—so great the desire to overcome the fear, so great the maya.

98 See e.g. June Leavitt’s The Mystical Life of Franz Kafka, Oxford University Press, 2012

99 see my Modern Language Address, Philadelphia, Dec. 27/30, 2009 which is available as a free download from the Download page of my website: home.earthlink.net/~ushaphil/id5.html