

FRANZ KAFKA

"INVESTIGATIONS OF A DOG"

AN APPROACH
TO THE ARTISTIC PURPOSE
OF
FRANZ KAFKA

By

Albert Peter Foulkes, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Albert Peter Foulkes, B.A. (Sheffield)

SUPERVISOR: James Burhans Lawson

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This study, an attempt to understand and define some of Franz Kafka's literary aims, rests mainly on an examination of the story "Forschungen eines Hundes". The thoughts which appear in this story, and the methods which Kafka uses to express these thoughts, are compared with certain ideas and modes of expression which appear in his notebooks, in the story "Josefine die Sangerin oder das Volk der Mause", and in some of the other fiction.

Because of the extreme divergence in the interpretations of Kafka's works, there will be in this study no discussion of the secondary literature.

Works of criticism have, however, not been disregarded, and a list of consulted texts will be found in the Bibliography.

PREFACE

A preface to a study of Kafka's literature should perhaps take the form of an apology. Millions of words have already been written on the subject, and no doubt millions more are yet to be written.

Kafka's writings, many of them unfinished and fragmentary, most of them intended by the author's last wish to destruction and oblivion, offer a challenge. Neither an exposition of ideas nor an analysis of form can explain the impact which this author's fiction has on the reader's mind.

It may be that we, who live in the twentieth century, are least able to understand the power of Kafka's literature; yet who is to understand it, if not the people who live and think in this century, who have surely inherited the chaos and the gloom which Kafka inherited? It has been said that the present era above all others will be known to future ages as a time of fear and of uncertainty. Perhaps the literary historian of the future will understand Kafka's literature, just as he will "understand" the twentieth century, but he will experience neither. The experience must be for the present.

The writer of these pages first became interested in Kafka at the University of Cologne, where he had the opportunity of hearing Professor Emrich's lectures on the Twentieth Century German Novel.

Participation in a graduate seminar on the Modern German Novel conducted by Mr. J. B. Lawson of McMaster University deepened the interest in Kafka, and the writer would like to extend his thanks to Mr. Lawson, who willingly supervised the thesis, and who gave the writer many new and valuable insights into modern German literature.

Thanks are also due to Professor Denner of McMaster University, who gave much helpful advice, and whose stimulating interpretations of literature were a constant source of encouragement throughout the year.

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ABBREVIATIONS

All direct quotations have been identified in the text by means of a letter and a number, indicating respectively the book title and the page number. The letters and numbers are enclosed in parentheses directly after the quotations.

Details of editions used are listed in the Bibliography. The titles have been abbreviated as follows:

- B Franz Kafka, Beschreibung eines Kampfes.
- E Franz Kafka, Erzählungen.
- H Franz Kafka, Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande.
- M. Franz Kafka, Briefe an Milena.
- MBB Max Brod, Franz Kafka: Eine Biographie.
- P Franz Kafka, Der Prozess.
- S Franz Kafka, Das Schloss.
- TB Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The immediately striking feature of Kafka's fiction is that it does not deal exclusively with the reality of everyday life. There is almost always a departure from the perceivable reality of the material world.

In "Die Verwandlung", Gregor Samsa's transformation is superimposed upon, and clashes with, the background of the everyday world.

In Der Prozess, and to some extent in Amerika, it is the everyday world itself which repeatedly loses its familiar contours, and in Das Schloss, the everyday contours are nebulous from beginning to end, one of the only links with the empirical world being the Landvermesser's attitude towards the conventions which govern the thoughts and actions of the other characters.

Even in stories such as "Der Hungerkünstler", and "In der Strafkolonie", where the reality of the perceivable world is retained, there are statements which seem to push the subject matter of the stories into new dimensions of thought. A panther appears, which "seems to carry freedom" in its jaws. The faces of people about to die become radi-

ant with enlightenment.

Apart from the writings in which everyday reality is dissolved, or in which an unreal world makes an intermittent or continuous appearance, and those which ostensibly describe events taking place in the world as it is, there are other works, which neither describe everyday reality, nor use it as a starting point, but which plunge the reader immediately into a world which has conventions of its own. These conventions are a norm, and no comparison with the everyday reality of the reader's world is made in the stories, although many similarities are indicated. The stories Forschungen eines Hundes, and Josefine, die S^ängerin, oder das Volk der M^äuse, are examples of this type of work, the convention being that the narrator of each of the stories is an animal whose thoughts are limited both to and by his own sphere of existence.

The above remarks imply that Kafka's works can be divided into three groups according to the author's treatment of reality. The division is possible, but it would be arbitrary, and would be only one of many possible divisions according to outer form. The significance, if any, must lie in the divorce from reality itself, which is so consistent and immediately apparent that it has become for many people the most characteristic aspect of Kafka's work, and has led to the word 'Kafkaesque' becoming synonymous with all that is dream-like, fantastic, illogical, and unreal.

The unreality, however, is not the only denominator of Kafka's fiction. In spite of the diverse subject matter, there is a great similarity of thought in the stories. There are indications of this in the subject matter itself. References to hunger, music, childhood, truth etc., occur in stories which at first glance seem to have only the unreality of atmosphere in common.

The recurring themes mentioned above are really external signs of recurring ideas. The basic problems and thoughts which pervade Kafka's fiction spring from the author's views on life, and these views have little to do with variety of subject matter.

Kafka's diaries, notebooks, and other personal writings make it clear that the author was deeply concerned with the problems of existence. There is nothing which suggests that the author had any particular interest in circuses, in the Great Wall of China, in foreign penal colonies, or in the personal life of a Prague banker. Kafka used this material as a means of expressing his ideas, and it is interesting to try to find out why such a wide range of subject matter was necessary.

The author provides a partial answer to the question himself. "Die Sprache", he wrote, "kann für alles ausserhalb der sinnlichen Welt nur andeutungsweise, aber niemals auch nur annähernd vergleichsweise gebraucht werden, da sie, entsprechend der sinnlichen Welt, nur vom Besitz und seinen

Beziehungen handelt." (H 45)

Since Kafka's thoughts were not limited to things of the material world, he had to face up to the shortcomings of language if he were to express his ideas. That he had difficulties in this respect is evident from the eight octave notebooks and from the fragments printed in H, where thoughts are expressed, re-expressed, partially expressed, brought from the abstract to the concrete, cast into similes, metaphors, analogies, and even embodied in episodes and short dramatic narratives.

It is clearly the thought content which causes Kafka to experiment in this way, because a single thought can be traced through a variety of differing means of expression.

Let the following serve as an example: Kafka is describing man's place in the world, and is writing of the limits imposed upon man by physical existence. He says, quite prosaically, "Er hat das Gefühl, dass er sich dadurch, dass er lebt, den Weg verstellt" (B 292) Immediately after this statement, the same thought is expressed again, in a much more emphatic and poetic way: "Sein eigener Stirnknochen verlegt ihm den Weg, an seiner eigenen Stirn schlägt er sich die Stirn blutig."

Elsewhere in the notebooks, the same idea is expressed in the form of an episode:

"Ich bin gewohnt, in allem meinem Kutscher zu vertrauen. Als wir an eine hohe weisse seitwärts und oben sich

langsam wölbende Mauer kamen, die Vorwärtsfahrt einstellten, die Mauer entlang fahrend, sie betasteten, sagte schliesslich der Kutscher: 'Es ist eine Stirn.'" (H 152)

When Kafka does describe true everyday events, when he writes about his journeys, or about anything else which is directly and exclusively concerned with the material world, he meets with no linguistic difficulty, and expresses his thoughts in lucid, concise German.

The diversity of the subject matter in the fiction does not reflect the author's changing interest in external phenomena. Kafka was not an author who began to write about men and subsequently wrote about animals. He thought deeply about the world, about existence, about man, and man's place in the world, and looked for appropriate means of expressing his thoughts and feelings.

This leads to one of the most difficult of the problems which confront the interpreter of Kafka's fiction. If the subject matter of a story is examined, and an attempt is made to reach a definite meaning by saying that certain things are symbolical, others literal, others perfect examples of a subconscious father-complex, others typical of the influences to which a German-speaking Jew living in Prague at the turn of the century would be exposed; if all this is done, then the inner meaning of the work has not really been touched.

If, on the other hand, the critic sees, or thinks he has seen, the inner meaning of the work, and then tries to re-tell it in his own words, he is doing Kafka a wrong in many ways. First of all, any attempt to say what Kafka said in an 'intelligible' fashion, is a suggestion that the author deliberately concealed his meaning, that he was incapable of expressing his meaning in normal language, or that he did not know what the meaning was.

That the author was unable to express his views in the logical language of philosophy may well be true. His thoughts concerning the inadequacies of language have been quoted above. When the critic separates an idea from the literary context, however, he often finds that the idea is so intensely abstract that he is compelled to express it in a personal analogy, and may not know that there is in all probability a much more suitable analogy by Kafka himself, which could not be used in the story because of the conventions governing that story. (See Appendix)

There is a greater injustice in the approach which seeks an independent meaning, however, and it lies in the assumption that the meaning is independent.

Kafka did not write philosophy, he wrote literature, and wanted not only to express his views on life, but to express them in a certain way. He once described his ar-

tistic purpose as follows:

Es handelt sich um folgendes: Ich sass einmal vor vielen Jahren, gewiss traurig genug, auf der Lehne des Laurenziberges. Ich prüfte die Wünsche, die ich für das Leben hatte. Als wichtigster oder als reizvollster ergab sich der Wunsch, eine Ansicht des Lebens zu gewinnen (und - das war allerdings notwendig verbunden - schriftlich die anderen von ihr überzeugen zu können), in der das Leben zwar sein natürliches schweres Fallen und Steigen bewahre, aber gleichzeitig mit nicht minderer Deutlichkeit als ein Nichts, als ein Traum, als ein Schweben erkannt werde. Vielleicht ein schöner Wunsch, wenn ich ihn richtig gewünscht hätte. Etwa als Wunsch, einen Tisch mit peinlich ordentlicher Handwerksmässigkeit zusammenzuhämmern und dabei gleichzeitig nichts zu tun, und zwar nicht so, dass man sagen könnte: "Ihm ist das Hämmern ein Nichts", sondern "Ihm ist das Hämmern ein wirkliches Hämmern und gleichzeitig auch ein Nichts", wodurch ja das Hämmern noch kühner, noch entschlossener, noch wirklicher und, wenn du willst, noch irrsinniger geworden wäre. (B 293-4)

The above words are very revealing. Kafka wanted to present his views on life in a manner which would actually preserve his picture of life. The constant departure from reality may not be a literary device intended to elicit a naive thrill from the reader. It may form an essential part of the author's complete purpose, which was not merely to express his views, but to express them in a picture of life in which at the same time and no less clearly, life would be recognised as a "nothing, as a dream, as a hovering".

If a work of art cannot speak for itself, it cannot be a work of art, and the fulfillment or otherwise of an author's own definition of his aims cannot be used as a criterion in judging the artistic merit of that author's

works.

The nature of Kafka's wish does, however, suggest a possible critical approach to the author's works, because a study of Kafka which was limited either to the thought content or to the outer form of the stories would be ignoring the cumulative effect which the author mentions, and which is in fact present in his literature.

The best way of feeling this effect would be to read the stories of course. Another way might be to find out what Kafka's views concerning life were, and then to examine in detail the way in which these views are presented in some of the fiction.

This latter approach has been adopted in this study of Kafka. An attempt has been made to discover what the author's views on life were, to show how these views form a core of meaning for the fiction, and to show how the author's modes of expression were the inevitable outcome of his views on life.

This study rests mainly on a detailed examination of Forschungen eines Hundes. This story has been placed side by side with other fictional works and with passages from the notebooks, and patterns have been traced in what appeared to be the recurrent and significant thoughts and themes of the literature as a whole.

Apart from the account of Kafka's views excerpted mainly from the notebooks, no attempt has been made to

arrange these patterns in a logical sequence and to exhaust them one at a time. The sequence has been determined by a step-by-step analysis of the story, and although this method has the disadvantages of digression and repetition, it nevertheless seemed to avoid a sharp division between meaning and form.

The detailed study of "F"¹ has been prefaced by a critical approach to the story "J"¹. "J" is treated as a self-contained whole, and an attempt is made to understand and appreciate it without cross-reference to other of Kafka's works, or to any secondary literature. The reasons for this minor study were twofold: firstly, the results of the investigation were used as a source of reference in the more detailed study; secondly, it was hoped that this approach to "J" would support the argument advanced at the end of the main study - that Kafka's works are self-contained works of art, and should be read and appreciated as such.

¹For the sake of simplification, the title "Forschungen eines Hundes" has been abbreviated to "F" throughout this study, and the title "Josefine, die Sangerin, oder das Volk der Mause" has been abbreviated to "J".

CHAPTER II

JOSEFINE, DIE SÄNGERIN, ODER DAS VOLK DER MÄUSE

The situation described in this story is simple and can be expressed in a few words: Josefine is a singer who attracts great audiences by the power of her art. She demands greater recognition than that which she claims the people give her, and asks for certain concessions. These are denied her, and she finally disappears.

That is the basic situation. The story is told, however, in the first person, and the narrator takes up most of the story with his comments and explanations. To him, the basic situation is not simple, because he sees a great paradox in the situation. He is unable to reconcile the power which Josefine's song has on the people, with the nature and quality of her singing, which, he says, is not really a singing at all, but a whistling, in no way unique, because all mice whistle after all. They whistle better than Josefine even, because their whistling is spontaneous whereas she has to exert herself, and even then does not have quite the power to produce the normal everyday whistling:

"Ja, vielleicht reicht ihre Kraft für dieses

übliche Pfeifen nicht einmal ganz hin, während es ein gewöhnlicher Erdarbeiter ohne Mühe den ganzen Tag über neben seiner Arbeit zustande bringt." (E 270)

The narrator now states the whole problem which is tormenting him: "Wenn das alles wahr wäre, dann wäre zwar Josefinens angebliche Künstlerschaft widerlegt, aber es wäre dann erst recht das Rätsel ihrer grossen Wirkung zu lösen."

The story then, appears to be concerned with art. It is the attempt of the narrator to define, explain, and solve the puzzle in his mind: How can something ordinary be art? How can something so everyday have such an uncommon effect?

The narrator puts forward answers to the questions, but none of them satisfy him. His arguments are illogical both in method and thought. Since he never denies the power of Josefine's performances, he attempts to explain the origin of this power - an approach which leads to much confusion, because as soon as he thinks about, and describes an actual performance, the more clearly he is aware that the power is tremendous, and the more impossible it becomes for him to see that something ordinary can be the cause.

This method leads to certain contradictory statements. At the beginning of the narrative he says, "Unsere Sängerin heisst Josefine. Wer sie nicht gehört hat, kennt nicht die Macht des Gesanges." (E 268) A little later, how-

ever, he denies even that Josefina produces "song", because her art is not in accordance with certain preconceptions and intuitions of the mouse folk concerning the nature of that art:

Ist es denn überhaupt Gesang? Trotz unserer Unmusikalität haben wir Gesangsüberlieferungen; in den alten Zeiten unseres Volkes gab es Gesang, Sagen erzählten davon, und sogar Lieder sind erhalten, die freilich niemand mehr singen kann. Eine Ahnung dessen, was Gesang ist, haben wir also, und dieser Ahnung nun entspricht Josefina's Kunst eigentlich nicht. (E 269)

Likewise, the narrator thinks the power may have something to do with the formality of the occasion. It is necessary to see Josefina, he says, not merely to hear her: "Es ist zum Verständnis ihrer Kunst notwendig, sie nicht nur zu hören, sondern auch zu sehen." (E 271) This rationalisation is not true because when he later forms in his mind a vivid picture of a performance, he says that most of the onlookers do not watch Josefina at all, but bury their faces in their neighbours' fur. (E 278)

The puzzle is essentially the narrator's, not the reader's. The reader is not bound by the conventions which bind the narrator - the conventions of a world of mice - and he is able to see how these conventions lead the narrator into such a confusion. The reader may even begin to wonder whether his own conventions limit his vision.

The conventions are the conventions of a mouse world, not of the mouse world. There are many statements

in the story - references to musical tradition, to schools, history, operatic coloraturas, - which show that the human world provided a foundation, upon which the author built the conventions of a world of mice. The vision of the narrator is limited by these conventions, and therefore the 'simple' situation is for him a problem.

This is clear at the beginning of the story when the narrator first formulates the situation as a problem. At the human level of existence, art has so many different media of expression that it would be difficult to imagine someone questioning the validity of any particular medium, if it produced an effect on every human being as powerful as Josefina's song produced on mice. No one would say, "Shakespeare writes; we all write; therefore, Shakespeare is not an artist." If a famous soprano cut her coloratura notes, it would surely be noticed, and would have an appreciable effect on the power of her performance. The effect produced by Josefina's song remains the same, however, whether she shortens the coloraturas, includes them, or leaves them out completely.

It must have been partly because of all this that Kafka had to place his story in a world which was not governed by human conventions. The problem had to seem real, to the narrator at least, before the author could discuss it in any detail.

A closer examination of the story reveals a much more interesting aspect of the conventions. Not only is the problem a product of these conventions, but it can also be solved by seeing just what the conventions are.

What was Josefine's song? How is it that something so ordinary can exert such an influence on the whole people? These are the questions which the narrator poses. The reader would probably add one of his own: Why is it that the people refuse to acknowledge the influence, refuse to admit that Josefine is great enough to receive the particular attention which she demands?

The answers to these questions are to be found in the story. Not by the narrator, but by the reader, who, since he is governed by different conventions, is able to see how the conventions of the story limit the thoughts and vision of the narrator.

This approach is suggested first of all by the title of the story - "Josefine, die Sangerin, oder das Volk der Mause". The reader is looking on from the outside, he knows immediately that the story does not deal directly with his own world, and he sees a certain balance and contrast of ideas in the title.

This contrast is taken up in the story itself, where Josefine, as an individual, stands apart from the people as a whole. Josefine (Why Josefine!?) is the only individual in the story. The narrator is the representative of the

people. He uses "wir" and "Unser Volk" throughout the narrative. The people are subdivided in a loose way. There are Josefina's supporters, and the "opposition", to which the narrator belongs, but this subdivision fades into insignificance at an actual performance, where Josefina and the people face each other, and where the power of her song affects everyone in the same way.

It is noteworthy that the power and effect of the song are the same, whether Josefina cuts the coloraturas or sings them, whether she is tired or full of energy, the effect remains constant. At the end of the story the narrator suggests even that the effect will be just as powerful when Josefina is no longer present. The memory of the effect will replace the effect itself, the effect was in fact itself a memory, he says:

Wie werden die Versammlungen in völliger Stummheit möglich sein? Freilich, waren sie nicht auch mit Josefina stumm? War ihr wirkliches Pfeifen nennenswert lauter und lebendiger als die Erinnerung daran sein wird? War es denn noch bei ihren Lebzeiten mehr als eine blosse Erinnerung? Hat nicht vielmehr das Volk in seiner Weisheit Josefinens Gesang, eben deshalb, weil er in dieser Art unverlierbar war, so hoch gestellt? (E 290)

What can the effect be, which is produced by Josefina's performance although the performance is silent, and which will exist, even when Josefina is no longer present? However desperate the narrator's attempts to minimise Josefina's importance sometimes are; they never appear to be completely fantastic. The above statement would seem im-

possible, were it not supported by the descriptions of Josefine's performance in the story.

When he first describes a performance, the narrator says that although the sound produced by Josefine is the everyday whistling - "das landesübliche Pfeifen" -, this is only a momentary impression, and even the opposition is quickly carried away: "Schon tauchen auch wir in das Gefühl der Menge, die warm, Leib an Leib, scheu atmend horcht."
(E 273)

It is then "das Gefühl der Menge" which absorbs the audience, although the crowd did apparently come to hear the singer. The musical performance is subsidiary to the meeting of the people, however; "Es ist nicht so sehr eine Gesangsvorführung als vielmehr eine Volksversammlung" (E 277), and this statement is followed by another description of the effect produced at the performances:

"Dieses Pfeifen, das sich erhebt, wo allen anderen Schweigen auferlegt ist, kommt fast wie eine Botschaft des Volkes zum Einzelnen; das dünne Pfeifen Josefinens mitten in den schweren Entscheidungen ist fast wie die armselige Existenz unseres Volkes mitten im Tumult der feindlichen Welt." (E 278)

It is surprising that the whistling of an individual should be likened to a message from the whole people,

and that it is at the same time like the very existence of that people.

The more the effect is described, the clearer it becomes that it is produced at the performances by the people as a mass, and not by Josefina. The most evident indication of this is in the description of the performance on p. 282. Josefina is singing away, producing her notes, and giving at the same time a complete theatrical production. The audience is described as follows:

... die eigentliche Menge hat sich - das ist deutlich zu erkennen - auf sich selbst zurückgezogen. Hier in den dürftigen Pausen zwischen den Kämpfen träumt das Volk, es ist, als lösten sich dem Einzelnen die Glieder, als dürfte sich der Ruhelose einmal nach seiner Lust im grossen Bett des Volkes dehnen und strecken ... Natürlich ist es ein Pfeifen. Wie denn nicht? Pfeifen ist die Sprache unseres Volkes, nur pfeift mancher sein Leben lang und weiss es nicht, hier aber ist das Pfeifen frei gemacht von den Fesseln des täglichen Lebens, und befreit auch uns für eine Weile.
(E 282)

How can something which resembles the existence of a people give that people at the same time a release from the hardships of that existence?

The feeling which the narrator experienced when he described the whistling as being like the existence of his people may well have been a powerful awareness of the great unity of his society. The daily life of the people is described as being almost unendurable, it would be unendurable for the individual. An awareness of this fact would certainly not produce an elevated feeling of freedom. It is

more probable that the communal experience at Josefina's performances, which is both generated and shared by the people, is not like the existence, or life, which the people have to face, but is an awareness by each individual of the unified existence of the community, of the way in which the collective lives of the individuals form a cohesive whole which is able to make life bearable for the individual.

The narrator gives the following picture of his people's great unity:

Unser Leben ist sehr unruhig, jeder Tag bringt Überraschungen, Beängstigungen, Hoffnungen und Schrecken, dass der Einzelne unmöglich dies alles ertragen könnte, hätte er nicht jederzeit bei Tag und Nacht den Rückhalt der Genossen; aber selbst so wird es oft recht schwer; manchmal zittern selbst tausend Schultern unter der Last, die eigentlich nur für einen bestimmt war. (E 273)

The very rigours of existence give the people the strength to endure existence, because the rigours force them to unify. Children are absorbed into the collective existence of the people, and are thus sheltered in some measure from the terrors of life. The collective power of the people is immensely superior to any individual's power: "Freilich, der Kraftunterschied zwischen dem Volke und dem Einzelnen ist so ungeheuer, es genügt, dass es den Schützling in die Wärme seiner Nähe zieht, und er ist geschützt genug." (E 276)

The very foundation of this power is that it is collective, and must therefore exclude individual elements

in order to preserve its integrity. Heroes, Josefine included, are swiftly forgotten, and children are not allowed their childhood.

Josefine, by demanding greater recognition, and by claiming particular attention, is asserting her individuality. The narrator's descriptions show her as being temperamental, arrogant, "blinded by self-importance", and childish. It could be that the people as a collective whole sees this attitude as a threat, as something destructive to its power, which rests on unity, not discord. At the same time the people recognises that Josefine is giving its individuals nothing more than an awareness of something which they already possess.

The attempts of Josefine to prove her importance fail, because when she alters the technical nature of her song by shortening the coloraturas, and the effect on the audience remains as it always was, it is clearer than ever that her song is a means towards the effect, it is not the effect itself. Her art is a reflection of something greater than itself, something which remains constant when her art varies, something which will not be lost with her loss.

It seems clear from the story, that this greater 'something' is, for the individual, an awareness of a power which transcends his individuality and which softens the hardships of daily life. It is also said to release

him for a short while from the fetters of everyday existence.

Josefine's song was a reminder that this power existed. The power itself was not lost with Josefine, and the memory of the song will therefore have the same effect as the song, which was itself a memory.

CHAPTER III

SOME OF KAFKA'S VIEWS ON LIFE AS SEEN IN THE NOTEBOOKS

From Kafka's notebooks and diaries it is possible to form a fair idea of the author's views on life. There is never a lucid exposition of Kafkaian ontology or metaphysics, but there are statements concerning existence. Thoughts are put into language, sometimes in a straightforward way, sometimes as an aphorism, an analogy, or even as a short story.

The notebooks are valuable not only for the thought content, however. The different ways in which a single thought is expressed give the reader a glimpse into the artistic process itself.

An attempt will now be made to present an ordered account of some of the basic problems and thoughts which occupied Kafka, and which went to form the views which pervade the entire fiction. The arranging and presenting of the material follows no pattern which can be found in the notebooks. Kafka expressed the same ideas, in the notebooks, as in the literature, at different times. The three quotations - "Beweis dessen, dass es unmöglich ist zu leben" (B 23); "Alles ist Betrug" (H 45); "Es gibt ein Ziel aber

keinen Weg" (H 42), - seem to typify three aspects of the author's thought, and have therefore been used for the purposes of this study as subdivisions in the following account.

1. "Beweis dessen, dass es unmöglich ist zu leben."

Proof that to Live is Impossible:

One problem which confronted Kafka when he contemplated the world around him, was the impossibility of existing in a transient, evil world, shot through with suffering and despair. In the words of one of the author's characters: "'Was sollen unsere Lungen tun,' schrie ich, schrie, 'atmen sie rasch, ersticken sie an sich, an inneren Giften; atmen sie langsam, ersticken sie an nicht atembarer Luft, an den empörten Dingen. Wenn sie aber ihr Tempo suchen wollen, gehen sie schon am Suchen zugrunde.'" (B 59)

The world may not be evil in itself, but it is in man's eyes - "mit dem irdisch befleckten Auge" (H 73), - because his eyes are of the material world.

"Die Welt kann nur von der Stelle aus für gut angesehen werden, von der aus sie geschaffen wurde" (H 114), and this is certainly not the position of man, who, because his existence in the world is physical, is able to see only the physical world, which is evil:

"Es gibt nichts anderes als eine geistige Welt; was wir sinnliche Welt nennen, ist das Böse in der geisti-

gen, und was wir böse nennen, ist nur eine Notwendigkeit eines Augenblicks unserer ewigen Entwicklung." (H 44)

For Kafka, the evil was a reality of man's existence in the world. The author saw that life was negative, and he was not afraid to admit it. To do so was in fact part of his aim - "... ich habe das Negative meiner Zeit, die mir ja sehr nahe ist, die ich nie zu bekämpfen, sondern gewissermassen das Recht zu vertreten habe, kräftig aufgenommen." (H 121)

To negate life, which was itself a negating, became a positive attitude for the author: "Die Kraft zum Verneinen, dieser natürlichsten Äusserung des immerfort sich verändernden, erneuernden, absterbend auflebend menschlichen Kämpferorganismus, haben wir immer, den Mut aber nicht, während doch Leben Verneinen ist, also Verneinung Bejahung." (B 298)

2. "Alles ist Betrug." All is Deceit.

Almost every thought and view which Kafka presents springs from his basic picture of man's existence in the world.

In both the notebooks and the fiction Kafka develops the basic picture in two ways; he develops it in the light of his own knowledge, the knowledge that this basic picture is a reality of man's existence in the world; he develops at the same time a picture of the world as it appears to

others, to those who are blind to the reality of their material existence, who find life pleasurable, although they may at any moment recognise the disquieting reality of their material existence, a reality which can be pushed out of sight, but never eradicated.

A first sign of having seen the evils inherent to life would be a desire for death: "Ein erstes Zeichen beginnender Erkenntnis ist der Wunsch zu sterben. Dieses Leben scheint unerträglich, ein anderes unerreichbar" (H 40)

The desire for death, however, is a first sign of nascent knowledge, and although the knowledge that life is evil leads to despair, this knowledge of the reality of existence is also the knowledge that this reality is not complete reality. Since the world perceived by man is evil, decaying, fraught with suffering and hardship for the individual, then the world perceived by man cannot be the real world, it can not be permanent:

"Das Böse ist eine Ausstrahlung des menschlichen Bewusstseins in bestimmten Übergangsstellen. Nicht eigentlich die sinnliche Welt ist Schein, sondern ihr Böses, das allerdings für unsere Augen die sinnliche Welt bildet." (H 49)

"Es gibt nichts anderes als eine geistige Welt" (H 44)

"Die Tatsache, dass es nichts anderes gibt als eine

geistige Welt, nimmt uns die Hoffnung und gibt uns die Gewissheit." (H 46)

The knowledge that the reality of man's existence in the world is a deceptive and incomplete reality does not alleviate the sorrows of existence, nor does it open up the door to complete reality, to the "geistige Welt". The knowledge will in fact increase the frustration of the individual, who becomes aware of something which transcends his physical existence, and yet is unable to attain it because of his physical existence:

"Alles ist Phantasie, die Familie, das Bureau, die Freunde, die Strasse, alles Phantasie, fernere oder nähere, die Frau; die nächste Wahrheit aber ist nur, dass du den Kopf gegen die Wand einer fenster - und türlosen Zelle drückst." (TB 546)

3. "Es gibt ein Ziel, aber keinen Weg"

There is a Goal, but no Way

A knowledge of the reality of existence, a knowledge that this reality is incomplete, and an awareness of higher reality; these three concepts are the essence of Kafka's thoughts.

When he points to the evils of existence, the author is not urging man to fight the world, he is not showing man what weapons would be required in such a battle: "... Nicht

um dir zu zeigen, was¹ dir fehlt, sondern, dass dir etwas fehlt...." (H 115) Nor does Kafka indicate the existence of a permanent and higher reality so that man may reach it: "Theoretisch gibt es eine vollkommene Glücksmöglichkeit: An das Unzerstörbare in sich glauben und nicht zu ihm streben." (H 47)

The author is concerned with stating the problem, not solving it. When he writes: "Im Kampf zwischen dir und der Welt, sekundiere der Welt" (H 44), he is not ordering mankind to follow a certain path, he is stating an inevitability of human existence, an inevitability inferred from the premise: "Man darf niemand betrügen, auch nicht die Welt um ihren Sieg." (H 44)

Of the three concepts mentioned above (p. 24), it is to be noted that the third is the one which transcends everyday reality, it is an awareness of the existence of the spiritual world.

Kafka's words concerning the limitations of language were quoted in the Introduction (p. 3). The author said that language could describe those things which lie outside the material world only by hinting at their existence - "andeutungsweise". This is precisely the method which the

¹In this study certain quoted words have been underlined in order to draw the reader's attention to specific aspects of the original. Words which were italicised in the original have been interspaced, e.g. 'm a n', for original italicised 'man'.

author adopts, not only because of the inadequacy of language, however, but also because of the inadequacy of man, who can know of the spiritual world, but cannot know it.

What the author does is to give constant indications of the existence of a higher reality. It is the light which sends art recoiling backwards in blindness: "Unsere Kunst ist ein von der Wahrheit Geblendet-Sein: Das Licht auf dem zurückweichenden Fratzensgesicht ist wahr, sonst nichts."

(H 46)

It is truth, which can neither be known, nor can it know itself, because it is indivisible: "Wahrheit ist unteilbar, kann sich also selbst nicht erkennen; wer sie erkennen will, muss Lüge sein." (H 48)

It is the Indestructible, which is each man, and which is common to all men: "Das Unzerstörbare ist eines; jeder einzelne Mensch ist es und gleichzeitig ist es allen gemeinsam, daher die beispiellos untrennbare Verbindung der Menschen." (H 47)

Man, who is truth, is yet separated from truth by life, by everything which holds him to the material world, and the material world would have to be destroyed layer by layer if man were to reach the truth within him, and were then to unite it with the universal truth:

Vor dem Betreten des Allerheiligsten musst du die Schuhe ausziehen, aber nicht nur die Schuhe, sondern alles, Reisekleid und Gepäck, und darunter die Nacktheit und alles, was unter der Nacktheit ist, und alles, was sich unter dieser verbirgt, und dann den Kern, und den Kern

des Kerns, dann das Übrige und dann den Rest und dann noch den Schein des unvergänglichen Feuers. Erst das Feuer selbst wird vom Allerheiligsten aufgesogen und lässt sich von ihm aufsaugen, keines von beiden kann dem widerstehen. (H 104)

An impossible task for this life of course, where physical existence - "Lüge"- wants to see truth, and yet blocks the way to truth. The most that man can do is to see the reality of his position in the world, is to see the picture to which Kafka constantly draws his readers' attention, and to recognise himself in that picture: "Er hat Durst und ist von der Quelle nur durch ein Gebüsch getrennt. Er ist aber zweigeteilt, ein Teil übersieht das Ganze, sieht, dass er hier steht und die Quelle daneben ist, ein zweiter Teil aber merkt nichts, hat höchstens eine Ahnung dessen, dass der erste Teil alles sieht. Da er aber nichts merkt, kann er nicht trinken." (B 299)

Those who do not see the reality of material existence, who find life pleasurable and not evil, in no way contradict the author's views. On the contrary, he cites the pleasures of the material world as a proof that the material world is transient:

Das Verführungsmittel dieser Welt sowie das Zeichen der Bürgerschaft dafür, dass diese Welt nur ein Übergang ist, ist das gleiche. Mit Recht, denn nur so kann uns die Welt verführen und es entspricht der Wahrheit. Das Schlimmste ist aber, dass wir nach geglückter Verführung die Bürgerschaft vergessen und so eigentlich das Gute uns ins Böse, der Blick der Frau in ihr Bett gelockt hat. (H 53)

Es ist der alte Scherz, wir halten die Welt und klagen, dass sie uns hält. (H 114)

When the individual has seen through this "joke", there can be no question of his turning back to the world and its seductions with an untouched mind. He must seek other ways of making life endurable, must use his knowledge about the nature of existence as an article of faith, must be able to say:

"Glauben heisst: das Unzerstörbare in sich befreien, oder richtiger: sich befreien, oder richtiger: unzerstörbar sein, oder richtiger: sein." (H 89)

"Das Wort 'sein' bedeutet im Deutschen beides: Dasein und Ihmgehören." (H 89)

The question remains: Can the individual do this?

CHAPTER IV

FORSCHUNGEN EINES HUNDES

The foregoing exposition of Kafka's views will now be examined in the context of the author's literature. An attempt will be made to show how these views were transformed into fiction by examining the notebooks themselves, the more complete literary works, and above all the story "F".

1. The Notebooks and the Fiction

The process by which Kafka was able to take an abstract thought and weave it into a description or event has been demonstrated. There is, however, an important difference between the thoughts and views as they appear in a full-length, self-contained piece of fiction, and the manner in which they are expressed in the notebooks.

In the case of the notebooks, Kafka was sometimes expressing his views for their own sake, was sometimes experimenting with modes of expression. He seized upon any material which might enable him to express his ideas effectively. If the material did not seem suitable, he could leave the description in an unfinished form and make fresh attempts with fresh material. There are countless examples of unfinished stories and descriptions in the notebooks.

If, on the other hand, he hit upon a description which was particularly expressive for a certain thought, he was able to play with the description, and perhaps incorporate it in a short narrative. Sometimes, he would arrive at two or more ways of expressing the same idea, and would explore them both for effect. A good instance of this is to be seen in the way the author treats the idea of existence as an obstacle. One way of expressing this, and of developing the means of expression was mentioned in the Introduction (pp. 4-5).

Kafka expressed the same idea elsewhere, using a different picture: "Der Dornbusch ist der alte Weg-ver-sperrter. Er muss Feuer fangen, wenn du weiter willst."
(H 84)

This different picture too is taken into an event, and animated by introducing a person. No statement is made about the properties of the thorn-bush this time. They can be seen from the part which the bush plays in the narrative, just as the nature of the wall (Stirn) was recognised in the previous example. The passage begins; "Ich war in ein undurchdringliches Dorngebüsch geraten" (H 403)

In the stories, Kafka did not have this freedom of selection and experiment, because the background of life, the events and situations which went to form the narrative, was no longer a background to a picture which represented an idea, but was an important element in a piece of litera-

ture, had assumed a significance of its own, a significance which might eclipse that of the idea or ideas, if it were described with too much detail.

The stories, moreover, do not deal with one aspect of the author's thought, as do many of the passages in the notebooks, but reflect Kafka's complete views on existence, and the background which the author selected had therefore to be versatile enough to carry ideas which he had found difficulty expressing singly in the notebooks, and for which he had used all kinds of different figures of speech.

In many of the stories, the universality of idea is preserved by blurring the identity of the main character. The thorn-bush is a thorn-bush, and the person who is entwined within it could be anyone. In some works, the author declines even to give his heroes a name, perhaps lest the reader should attach too much importance to that person as an individual, and forget that the world in which the hero lives is also the reader's world, and that the problems of the hero are universal problems.

Kafka's aim, however, was not merely to transmit his views; he wanted also to project his views into a picture of the world which was itself a view of existence. He wanted to retain the reality of life, and present the reality at the same time as a "nothing, as a dream."

In many of Kafka's works which have as their leading characters human beings, the author seems to bring about

this cumulative effect by heightening the miseries of existence on the one hand, and on the other, by making the events appear unreal, illogical, and dream-like. Kafka was able to utilise the outer form of these stories only to a certain point, because events taking place on a human plane are bound to possess a variety of connotations which have no direct bearing on the author's purpose.

There was the danger that readers would either ignore the dream-like incidents, or else interpret them in a Freudian sense, and they have in fact, done both.

It can never be known whether Kafka was aware of this danger, but in the animal stories "J" and "F", he seems to approach his task in a different way.¹ In these stories the form is skilfully made to add its own direct contribution to the thought content in a way which would be impossible if the stories took place on a human plane.

In the examples taken from the notebooks, it was the picture of the "Stirn" and of the "Dornbusch" which led to the central idea, and a person, any person, had to be introduced in order to make an episode of the idea. The technique is similar in Das Schloss, where the static pic-

¹No attempt has been made in this study to trace a differing approach through Kafka's literary development because the chronology of the works is still in doubt. "F" is probably Kafka's final story, but in the diaries there is an entry which suggests that the author may have been at least working on the story as early as 1915. (See: TB 462-3)

ture, - the village and the castle together with their inhabitants and conventions, - becomes meaningful with the arrival of K.

In "F" it is not necessary to efface the personality of the central character, because the central character is a dog, - "kein Haarbreit ausserhalb des Hundewesens", (B 251), who typifies the rest of his race. That the character be a dog is essential to the story and to the way Kafka develops his thoughts in the story, but at the same time the dog typifies humanity just as K. does in the novel Das Schloss.

This becomes clear in the story itself. The title, "Investigations of a Dog", indicates what is to follow. Through such commonly used phrases as "auf den Hund kommen", and "es nimmt kein Hund seinen Bissen Brot von ihm", the word "Hund" has acquired in German linguistic connotations which will be ever present in the reader's mind. When life seems worthless and futile, then it is a dog's life. "Es möchte kein Hund so länger leben" were the words which Goethe's Faust used to describe his wretched life.

If a dog is going to appear in fiction and give an account of its life - "ein Hundeleben" - then the word's field of meaning will influence the account, in the reader's mind, if not in the story itself.

In the case of "F" these shades of meaning must have been intentional. An attempt was made in the previous chap-

ter to show that for Kafka, the tormented life of man was in fact the figurative "Hundeleben". In the novel Der Prozess, Josef K. dies "like a dog". (P 272) In Das Schloss, K. and Frieda embrace each other like dogs; "wie Hunde verzweifelt im Boden scharren, so scharrten sie an ihren Körpern." (S 60)

In "F" too, the word with its figurative and ironical nuances is put into the mouth of the narrator himself. One instance of this is where he is telling of the laws which govern his society (B 253). Once a dog has acquired food, he says, it would be inconceivable that he should be expected to share the food with others, who may be starving. Because such an action is inconceivable, it has become a law, and is not therefore selfishness; "Das ist nicht Eigennutz, sondern das Gegenteil, ist Hundegesetz." (B 253)

One might reply, "Eben, es ist Hundegesetz."

A second, and much more powerful use of the word and its connotations appears in the passage where the narrator is discussing his forefathers, and is comparing the greater possibilities of the past with the relentless rigidity of the present; "Die Hunde waren," he muses, "ich kann es nicht anders ausdrücken, noch nicht so hündisch wie heute" (B 268)

Could the author have packed so much meaning into a single word, had he been giving a direct description of the human scene? It would not seem so. Much explanation

would be necessary before the reader saw the exact way in which the author was questioning the concept "menschlich".²

The ironic subtlety itself is certainly not lacking in the author's accounts of the human scene. In the sketch "Auf der Galerie" (E 154), Kafka makes use of the subjunctive mood to describe what is happening, and the indicative to describe what the onlooker sees happening.

²The connotations of the word "Hund" also have the effect of making the story seem less distanced from the human world. The narrator's address to the reader: "Hunde wie ich und du" (B 245) strengthens this effect.

2. Introduction to "F"

The story can be summarised as follows: the narrator, a dog living in comparative seclusion, is examining his life in retrospect. He feels that there is something amiss with his society, but is unable to discover exactly what.

He stresses repeatedly that he is as much a member of his race as anyone else, but explains how it came that he devoted his life to his investigations, and how he seems to have a nature which puts a distance between him and his fellows.

He tells how his outlook on life was altered after a strange encounter with seven dogs, who were accompanied by powerful blasts of music. This meeting made the narrator look more critically at the world around him, and he began his investigations concerning the origin of food.

The research which the narrator describes leads him ever further from the conventional trend of thought governing his society, and culminates in a fasting experiment, which again brings the narrator into contact with a musical dog.

The fasting experiment is the last investigation which the narrator describes, but it is not his last investigation. He tells us that he turned his attention to the field of knowledge which lay between the science of nurture ("Nahrungswissenschaft"), and the science of music ("Musikwissenschaft").

The story, which was unfinished, stops at a point where the narrator is praising "freedom" - "ein kümmerliches Gewächs."

Even in the summarised form, the story has an affinity with the interpretation of Kafkaian thought offered earlier. A thinking being examines the world around him, is dissatisfied, looks more penetratingly, and is still dissatisfied.

The story seems to be a condensed account of all the problems which confronted the author when he contemplated existence. The title of the story - "Forschungen eines Hundes" - is the first indication of this. Kafka had no compunction in comparing his own life to that of a dog: "... dann genügt doch für die Klage, wenn er sein Leben lang wiederholt 'Ich-Hund, ich-Hund und so fort,' und wir alle werden ihn verstehen" (H 331)

At the beginning of the story, the narrator describes life in terms which might have been taken straight from Kafka's notebooks. The dog is aware of "ein leichtes Unbehagen" of "eine Bruchstelle" in life. It is only by means of frequent respites that he has been able to withstand the terrors of life - "die Schrecken meiner Jugend ... und die Schrecken des Alters" - and has been able to survive, i.e. grow old.

Later in the story, the narrator becomes more bitter in his comments. Dogs have been given strong hearts

and powerful lungs "wie aus Bosheit", he says. (B 258)

These descriptions of existence are not products of the animal convention; they could appear anywhere in Kafka's writings.

The significance of the animal convention, and its relationship to humanity is thrown into sudden sharp relief at the beginning of the story, however, and makes the reader see that the narrator of "F" is no mere Aesopian beast, epitomising some foible of mankind.

"Es gibt", says the narrator, "ausser uns Hunden vielerlei Arten von Geschöpfen ringsumher, arme, geringe, stumme, nur auf gewisse Schreie eingeschränkte Wesen, viele unter uns Hunden studieren sie, haben ihnen Namen gegeben, suchen ihnen zu helfen, zu veredeln und dergleichen." (B 241)

This could be a human being speaking. Ironically it is not. The dogs are aware of creatures at a lower level of existence, but not at a higher. The reader does of course know of a plane of existence higher than that of the dog. Or does he? And if he does, does he have any proof that his perceptive powers, at their level, are any less limited than those of the dog, at his?

The same tinge of irony appears later in the story, perhaps to direct the reader's attention to this aspect of the dog-human similarity; "... mich kümmern dur die

Hunde, gar nichts sonst. Denn was gibt es ausser uns Hunden? Wen kann man sonst anrufen in der weiten leeren Welt? Alles Wissen, die Gesamtheit aller Fragen und aller Antworten ist in den Hunden enthalten." (B 255)

A third theme is introduced at the beginning of the story, which, although significant in itself, must be related to the two already mentioned - the wretchedness of life and the ironical dog-human similarity - it is the persistence of the narrator in saying that he is one of his race:

"Man darf eben nicht ausser acht lassen, dass ich trotz meiner Sonderbarkeiten, die offen zutage liegen, doch bei weitem nicht aus der Art schlage." (B 241)

"Ich bin kein Haarbrett ausserhalb des Hundewesens."
(B 251)

"... sonderbar ist nur mein Wesen, aber auch dieses ist, wie ich niemals ausser acht lassen darf, im allgeneinen Hundewesen wohl begründet." (B 264)

The fusing of these three themes in the story leads to a picture of "ein Hundeleben" which is also a human life, and also the human life.

3. The Musical Dogs

The meeting with the seven Musical dogs is the first important event which the narrator describes.

In considering this incident, it must be remembered that the narrator is describing it in retrospect. Before he tells of the details of the encounter, he says; "An sich war es nichts Ausserordentliches, später habe ich solche und noch merkwürdigere Dinge oft genug gesehen, aber damals traf es mich mit dem starken, ersten, unverwischbaren, für viele folgende richtunggebenden Eindruck." (B 243)

The retrospective aspect of the narrative must be borne in mind throughout the story. The narrator's outlook on life after the fasting experiment is not the same as it was before, and he is able to pass comments on his past life as he is telling the story, in a way which would not have been possible at the time when the events he describes took place. This leads to apparent contradictions in what the narrator considers to be the purpose and meaning of his investigations. It is sometimes very difficult to know whether he is thinking according to his past or present opinions.

Another problem which arises from the narrator's accounts, is that these accounts are in the first person. To an extent, the reader is able to see more than the narrator sees, and is able to see how the personality of

the narrator colours many of his descriptions.

This latter aspect of the story is well illustrated in the episode concerning the Musical Dogs, because the narrator describes what happens and describes what effect the happening had on him, both at the time of the occurrence, and in later life. This offers the reader a unique opportunity of comparing the encounter with the narrator's interpretation of it.

The words with which the narrator introduces the encounter do not suggest that he considers it to have any great intrinsic significance. It was unusual, but he has seen other unusual things in life. It just happened to catch him when he was young, and that is why it had such a strong impression; "... aber damals traf es mich mit dem starken, ersten, unverwischbaren, für viele folgende richtunggebenden Eindruck." (B 243)

The encounter made him think, made him begin his investigations, but he can not complain about that because his nature would have compelled him to investigate sooner or later. The "concert" made it happen sooner, of course, and that robbed him of his childhood happiness, but there are more important things than childhood. (B 250-1)

The two paragraphs above show the narrator's attitude to the incident. In later life he has very little to add. When he sees that his questions will remain unanswered because of the silence of his fellows, it reminds him of

the way the Musical Dogs behaved; "es ist nicht viel anders, als es damals war, da ich als Kind die Musikerhunde anrief und sie schwiegen." (B 256) He seems to treat this as a coincidence, however. The silence of the Musical Dogs impressed him more than anything else, and it has casual significance that his fellows too are silent.

The music of the episode he ignores completely, and he admits towards the end of the story that he may have been wrong in doing this, "Auch war zwar die Musik bei jenen Hunden das zunächst Auffallendste, aber wichtiger als ihre Musik schien mir ihr verschwiegenes Hundewesen, für ihre schreckliche Musik fand ich vielleicht überhaupt keine Ähnlichkeit anderswo, ich konnte sie eher vernachlässigen Vielleicht hatte ich darin Unrecht." (B 288-9)

The narrator's remarks on the encounter leave many questions unanswered. Why did the episode terminate the happiness of his childhood? What is the meaning of the silence? Why does the narrator begin to feel that he was wrong in ignoring the music?

The narrator's position in the scene, and his relationship to the Musical Dogs foreshadow in detail his future life and his future relationship to his fellows. The complete significance of this, and the meaning of the music in the episode, will be discussed in the chapter dealing with the fasting experiment. The following remarks will be limited as far as possible to the material

in hand at present.

It is not only the silence of the Musical Dogs which typifies the narrator's future contacts with his fellows. It is the fact that he is severed from the Musical Dogs, and it is not actually the silence which holds him apart, it is the music; "... kaum fühlte ich die gute, vertraute, hündische Verbindung mit den sieben, war wieder ihre Musk da" (B 245) The music separates him from the Musical Dogs, although he says that music is an element of his own life; "... hatte mich doch die Musik schon seit meiner Säuglingszeit umgeben als ein mir selbstverständliches, unentbehrliches Lebenselement" (B 244) In later life the narrator is separated from his fellows, although he is "kein Haarbreit ausserhalb des Hundewesens." (B 251)

The narrator can no more comprehend the power which enables the Musical Dogs to endure the music, than he can later find out exactly how his fellows endure life.

His momentary escape from the overpowering din gives him an opportunity to breathe, "... ein wenig zu verschnaufen". (B 246) In later life he explains that the silence of others oppresses him, he wants to pierce the silence so that he may breathe; "Wir sind die, welche das Schweigen drückt, welche es förmlich aus Lufthunger durchbrechen wollen." (B 264)

In the encounter the narrator ignores the music, he sees only that the Musical Dogs are breaking the "law",

both by refusing to answer, and by strutting along on hind-legs: "Das empörte sich in mir, fast vergass ich die Musik. Diese Hunde hier vergingen sich gegen das Gesetz." (B 247) Later he is aware only of the silence of his fellows, and turns his attention to defects in their "laws"; "... nur durch die Gesetzeslücken, für die ich eine besondere Witterung habe, schwärme ich aus." (B 281)

The performance of the Musical Dogs - feet on ground, dancing to music, body uplifted towards the sky - is mirrored in the later description of the narrator's silent fellows: "... dass unser Volk, leidenschaftlich wie es nun einmal ist, unsere alten Volksgesänge in die Lüfte klagt und Sprungtänze aufführt, als ob es sich, den Boden vergessend, für immer emporschwingen wollte." (B 274)

The immediacy and abundance of the above similarities suggest that they are not incidental. There is much in the story to make one suppose that the narrator's encounter with the Musical Dogs is an encounter with life itself, just as the rest of the story describes the particular problems of existence which the narrator has to face. The impression which the encounter makes on him is essentially the impression which life makes on him, and there is no reason to suggest that Kafka wanted to prophesy the future impression, and a mere prophesy within the story would not in itself have an effect, would not rob the narrator of his childhood happiness.

It might have this effect, if the narrator understood that this was to be his life, but he does not understand that at all; he sees in the encounter only what he sees in later life, and ignores what he ignores in later life. The similarities between the encounter, and life as it is depicted in the story, extend beyond the mental grasp of the narrator. Both the description of the encounter, and the description of existence have an objectivity which can be recognised by the reader, but not by the narrator. The very fact that the narrator sees so few similarities indicates this.

The complete explanation of the encounter, as a prophetic foretaste of existence, objective and subjective, and as an incident which put an end to the narrator's happy days of childhood, is probably to be found in the words of the narrative which make it seem that the encounter was an inner vision.

Shortly before the appearance of the Musical Dogs, the narrator says, "Ich war damals lange durch die Finsternis gelaufen, in Vorahnung grosser Dinge ... machte plötzlich halt in dem Gefühl, hier sei ich am rechten Ort ... da - als hätte ich sie heraufbeschworen - traten aus irgendwelcher Finsternis ... sieben Hunde ans Licht."

(B 243)

After the encounter, the Musical Dogs disappear into the same darkness, together with the noise, and even with the light "... sie verschwanden mit allem Lärm und allem Licht in der Finsternis, aus der sie gekommen waren."

(B 248)

If the encounter is a result of the narrator "looking within", and the above remarks do suggest that this may be the case, then the scene could be interpreted as the narrator's exploration of his own being, intentional or unintentional. This probing into the recesses of his mind has evoked a vision of the complete reality of earthly existence, has produced an external picture of Kafka's description of man, the acting being, and his relationship to his soul:

In meinem Fall kann man sich drei Kreise denken, einen innersten A, dann B, dann C. Der Kern A erklärt dem B, warum dieser Mensch sich quälen und sich misstrauen muss, warum er verzichten muss, warum er nicht leben darf. C, dem handelnden Menschen, wird nicht mehr erklärt, ihm befiehlt bloss schrecklich B; C handelt unter strengstem Druck, aber mehr in Angst, als in Verständnis, er vertraut, er glaubt, dass A dem B alles erklärt und B alles richtig verstanden hat. (H 336)

That the above concept should be expressed in an external description is in keeping with Kafka's literary approach. It is suggestive of the way in which the author uses the word "Stirn" to indicate the obstacles which life presents, and how he weaves the word into an external event.

That the nature of physical existence can be experienced through self-contemplation is apparent in many of Kafka's pronouncements (Compare: -- "Es ist nicht notwendig, dass du aus dem Haus gehst. Bleib bei deinem Tisch und horche. Horche nicht einmal, warte nur.. Warte nicht einmal, sei völlig still und allein. Anbieten wird sich dir die Welt zur Entlarvung, sie kann nicht anders, verzückt wird sie sich vor dir winden." H 54), and the result of this experience would be to show that complete knowledge of the soul is impossible:

Der Beobachter der Seele kann in die Seele nicht eindringen, wohl aber gibt es einen Randstrich, an dem er sich mit ihr berührt. Die Erkenntnis dieser Berührung ist, dass auch die Seele von sich selbst nicht weiss. Sie muss also unbekannt bleiben. Das wäre nur dann traurig, wenn es etwas anderes ausser der Seele gäbe, aber es gibt nichts anderes. (H 93)

It is clear that the author is equating "Seele", in the above passage, with "geistige Welt", in other remarks. (See Chapter III)

The world, then, may offer itself "to be unmasked", but there is no guarantee that it will be unmasked, and even then, what does the unmasking consist of? - It is a knowledge that the world can neither be known, nor know itself.

Whether this recognition accompanies the act of self-contemplation or not, however, it may have the effect of terminating happy childhood with its unsuspecting dreams, merely because it is a contact with the reality of existence. In this respect, there is a noteworthy entry concerning the

termination of childhood in Kafka's diary: "Ewige Jugend ist unmöglich; selbst wenn kein anderes Hindernis wäre, die Selbstbeobachtung machte sie unmöglich." (TB 579)

The picture of the Musical Dogs as a picture of the reality of existence would be interpreted as follows:-

The music, or rather "die eigentliche Melodie inmitten des Lärms" (B 248) is used to indicate the spiritual world, or truth, which is indivisible and cannot therefore know itself (H 48). It is at the same time the soul of the individual, what the narrator calls "ein mir selbstverständliches, unentbehrliches Lebenselement" (B 244) which cannot know itself; "... dass auch die Seele von sich selbst nicht weiss." (H 93)

The noise ("Lärm") which surrounds the truth and cannot be separated from it, is earthly existence, and the narrator's attitude to it is identical to his attitude towards existence - it is something infinitely diverse, but can perhaps be fought; "... alle seine ('Lärm') Fülle, die schrecklich war, aber vielleicht doch zu bekämpfen." (B 248)

In the terms of the above description from the author's notebooks ("In meinem Falle" H 336) the Musical Dogs, whose movements appear to be relaxation, but are at close sight recognised as extreme effort and tension, "Freilich erkannte ich ... bei genauerer Beobachtung, dass es nicht so sehr Ruhe, als äusserste Anspannung war" - represent the acting being, G, who "acts under extreme

pressure."

Since the vision portrays complete existence, the reality of the material world can be seen. It appears indecent and comical, and seems topsy-turvy: "die elenden taten das gleichzeitig Lächerlichste und Unanständigste.... War die Welt verkehrt? Wo war ich? Heir durfte ich um meines eigenen Bestandes willen nicht mehr zögern, ich machte mich los aus den umklammernden Hölzern, sprang mit einem Satz hervor und wollte zu den Hunden, ich kleiner Schüler musste Lehrer sein" (B 247-8)

This last passage is the most telling of all. The material world is indecent, comical, topsy-turvy, and the narrator wants to draw attention to this, wants to do something about it, but finds that he is powerless.

Later in life, his investigations lead him to make an attempt on the reality of existence, and once more he finds that he is completely without power; "... nur ein hilflos ins Leere schnappende Hund," (B 283)

4. The Investigations

What were the investigations then, which go to make the title of the story? What did the narrator want to achieve? What did he achieve?

It would be an impossible task to summarise the thread of thought which runs through the narrative from the encounter with the Musical Dogs to the fasting experiment. The Forscher tells us that his researches are a means of enduring life, and yet they spring from an enquiring nature which makes life unbearable. They are hopeless, but indispensable. Truth is his goal, but it will never be reached. He is tormented by a multitude of questions which can not be answered, but the most important question in his life is one which he can answer himself.

The list could be extended until the reader's head began to reel. It is very probable that the reader's head will reel when he reads the story.

Most of the above contradictions are results of the retrospective nature of the narrative, however, and have an important literary function. They are part of the author's attempt to express his views in an image of life which would be as deceptive as life itself, and for that reason no attempt has been made here to resolve the train of thought into a straightforward pattern: to say, "This is what the narrator thinks now, this is what he thought

when the event he is describing took place."

This approach would in any case be impossible, because many of the narrator's investigations are not investigations, but reflections, and many of these reflections take place in the present of the story. The discussions which take place in the present add weight to the narrator's statement that he possesses a "Forschernatur", and help to establish a more direct contact between reader and narrator, but they do not encourage an analysis of thought sequence.

It is the enquiring nature which commands the most attention at first, because it is this which severs him from his fellows, and which explains the remark, "Ich habe dieses kindhafte Wesen behalten und bin darüber ein alter Hund geworden." (B 250)

The encounter with the Musical Dogs thus robbed him of the blessedness of childhood, but not of the child's enquiring mind. "Es ('Konzert') hat mich um einen grossen Teil meiner Kindheit gebracht, das glückselige Leben der jungen Hunde" (B 250-1)

Other dogs may have the desire and urge to question. The narrator himself admits this, but other dogs are able to suppress the urge, are able to live a life of silence in a questionable world. The silence of others, and the questionability of what he perceives, are the bane of the narrator's existence. The more he investigates, the more he sees that his fellows will always be silent, and

the more he recognises that this silence is worse than all the dubious aspects of the perceivable world, - "Wie lange wirst du es (recognition of perpetual silence of others) ertragen, so lautet über alle Einzelfragen meine eigentliche Lebensfrage: Leider kann ich sie leichter beantworten als die Einzelfragen: Ich werde es voraussichtlich aushalten bis zu meinem natürlichen Ende." (B 258)

The narrator despairs at the silence because it is the one question he can answer, and because the answer is worse than an unanswered question could be. The silence becomes for him one more questionable aspect of life.

The narrator regards his main body of investigations as hopeless, but as an indispensable means of enduring life: "Zurückgezogen, einsam, nur mit meinen hoffnungslosen, aber mir unentbehrlichen kleinen Untersuchungen beschäftigt, so lebe ich" (B 241) "Aber was wollen denn die Fragen, ich bin ja mit ihnen gescheitert, wahrscheinlich sind meine Genossen viel klüger als ich und wenden ganz andere vortreffliche Mittel an, um dieses Leben zu ertragen." (B 265)

This attitude has little in common with a positive approach to the variety of the world. It is the outlook of a person who looks around, finds that certain things are questionable, and begins to question, if only for the sake of his own peace of mind.

This is in fact the attitude of the Forscher. The diversity of external phenomena produces no naive enthusiasm in him, it depresses him: "Ich begann damals meine Untersuchungen mit den einfachsten Dingen, an Material fehlte es nicht, leider, der Überfluss ist es, der mich in dunklen Stunden verzweifeln lässt." (B 251)

Kafka considered the diversity of the perceivable world to be a means of seduction, an incitement to live, and a proof that the world is transitory.

The diversity is a kaleidoscopic picture produced by man's tortured senses. This idea is brought out vividly in a passage from the notebooks where Kafka described the human situation in an analogy of rail-travellers stranded after an accident in a long tunnel. The light of the entrance can no longer be seen, the light at the end of the tunnel is elusive and deceptive. The description goes on; "... rings um uns aber haben wir in der Verwirrung der Sinne oder in der Höchstepfindlichkeit der Sinne lauter Ungeheuer und ein je nach der Laune und Verwundung des Einzelnen entzückendes oder ermüdendes kaleidoskopisches Spiel" (H 73)

Another passage from the notebooks presents an interesting parallel to the problem of the narrator of "F";

"Abraham (Kafka originally wrote "Ich"; Anm. H 445) ist in folgender Täuschung begriffen: Die Einförmigkeit

dieser Welt kann er nicht ertragen. Nun aber ist die Welt bekanntlich mannigfaltig, was jederzeit nachzuprüfen ist, inden man eine Handvoll Welt nimmt und näher ansieht" (H 125)

The Forscher probably develops some insight into the nature of the perceivable world during his investigations, - when he says for instance that his researches do not reveal truth, but rather the complexity of the deceit; "und es zeigt sich dabei nicht die Wahrheit ... aber doch etwas von der tiefen Verwirrung der Lüge." (B 262), - but he does not have this insight at the beginning of the investigations, partly because of the conventions of the story, and partly because too much knowledge at the beginning would exclude development of theme.

The narrator does not have to look far to find a suitable object of investigation, he begins with the most natural thing in the world, the most important object of thought in his society - food: " Ich begann zu untersuchen, wovon sich die Hundeschaft nährt. Das ist nun, wenn man will, natürlich keine einfache Frage, sie beschäftigt uns seit Urzeiten, sie ist der Hauptgegenstand unseres Nachdenkens" (B 251)

The Forscher then, does not find everything questionable. He expresses his intention of investigating the nourishment of dogs, but seems to be totally oblivious to the possibility that the problem may not be so impor-

tant after all, just as he seemed oblivious to the dubious value of a law which condoned self-advantage. Like the narrator of "J", he is bound by his own conventions, and if he is destined to be a revolutionary, then it has to be within the limits of these conventions.

The reader, of course, is not bound by these particular conventions. He may have blinkers of his own, but they are not the blinkers which the animal narrator wears, and he will immediately question many of the things which the narrator of "F" takes for granted.

This is a brilliant facet of the animal stories "J" and "F", and in "F" especially, it works towards the picture of a world completely questionable. In everything else which Kafka wrote, these glimpses into the minds of other creatures are the most effective ways of presenting his ideas concerning existence. The physical world is not simply the sum total of what WE or I or HE sees; it has as many dimensions as there are minds to contemplate it, and this fact alone is enough to condemn as inadequate what I, WE or HE sees.

There seems to be a hint of this literary development with the animal-narrators in one of the author's aphorisms:

"Verschiedenheit der Anschauungen, die man etwa von einem Apfel haben kann: Die Anschauung des kleinen

Jungen, der den Hals strecken muss, um noch knapp den Apfel auf der Tischplatte zu sehen, und die Anschauung des Hausherrn, der den Apfel nimmt und frei dem Tischgenossen reicht." (H 40)

In "F" there is a "Verschiedenheit der Anschauung" which is at times almost too startling, and too revealing, for the imagination.

The impact of the different viewpoint is often softened by humour. The cold, and, for the reader, incredible, statement, - "sie ist der Hauptgegenstand unseres Nachdenkens," - is carried to extremes by the narrator's subsequent remarks:

...zahllos sind die Beobachtungen und Versuche und Ansichten auf diesem Gebiet, es ist eine Wissenschaft geworden, die in ihren ungeheueren Ausmassen nicht nur über die Fassungskraft des einzelnen, sondern über jene aller Gelehrten insgesamt geht und ausschliesslich von niemandem anderen als von der gesamten Hundeschaft und selbst von dieser nur seufzend und nicht ganz vollständig getragen werden kann (B 251)

This breathless reverence to knowledge, humorous as it is by itself, is made absolutely comical when the narrator adds his own viewpoint with the intimacy of a Shakespearian aside, - "Mir genügt in dieser Hinsicht der Extrakt aller Wissenschaft, die kleine Regel, mit welcher die Mütter die Kleinen von ihren Brüsten ins Leben entlassen: 'Mach alles nass, soviel du kannst.' Und ist hier nicht wirklich fast alles enthalten?"

This kind of humour is very much part of Kafka's purpose. It is not merely a stylistic trait. It is a humour which springs from a philosophy on life which has as a basic tenet; "Alles ist Betrug." The deceit is exaggerated to the comical, sometimes to the grotesque, but in spite of, or should one say, because of the distortion; the perceivable world, "our" world, can be recognised. The discomforting aspect of the whole process is that the distortion is not distortion, it is the reality of material existence. Real truth cannot be known, let alone described, and so the author presents to his readers' eyes a sharper image of the deceit, perhaps lest they forget that it is deceit.

The reader of "F" looking on from the outside is able to laugh, just as he would laugh, were he able to examine his own "important" objects of thought with the same objectivity, although the laugh might constrict his throat.

This interpretation of the humour is supported by a passage from Max Brod's biography of the author, where the laughter, - a laughter in which Kafka participated, - is described which resulted when the author read from his novel "Der Prozess." Max Brod says of the laughter, "Gewiss, es war kein durchaus, gutes, behagliches Lachen." (MBB 218)

There is also a striking passage in the notebooks which indicates the role of laughter in Kafka's considera-

tion of man's place in the world:

Du willst fort von mir? Nun, ein Entschluss, so gut wie ein anderer. Wohin aber willst du? Wo ist das Fort-von-mir? Auf den Mond? Nicht einmal dort ist es, und so weit kommst du gar nicht. Also warum das alles? Willst du dich nicht lieber in den Winkel setzen und still sein? Wäre das nicht etwa besser? Dort in den Winkel, warm und dunkel? Du hörst nicht zu? Tastest nach der Türe. Ja, wo ist denn eine Tür? So weit ich mich erinnere, fehlt sie in diesem Raum. Wer dachte damals, als dieses hier gebaut wurde, an so weltbewegende Pläne, wie es die deinen sind? Nun, es ist nichts verloren, ein solcher Gedanke geht nicht verloren, wir werden ihn durchsprechen in der Tafelrunde, und das Gelächter sei dein Lohn.

(H 128)

The reader of "F" has a privileged position at the discussion table.

Although the ideas of food, hunger, thirst etc., have acquired special connotations in Kafka's works, these connotations are not important in "F" when the narrator first considers the problems of nourishment. It is again his attitude which commands attention.

He resolves the complex problems relating to food into a question which is altogether too pertinent for his fellows, who do not understand or at least pretend not to. The question which the narrator poses is too simple in its directness. He asks: "Woher nimmt die Erde diese Nahrung?" and goes on to say, "Eine Frage, die man im allgemeinen nicht zu verstehen vorgibt." (B 253)

This is one of those basic questions, which, in the framework of this story, amount to a question concerning the validity of life. Such questions are avoided be-

cause to think about them would be to threaten the integrity of one's mental well-being. In "F", all questions concerning food are by right the object of scientific enquiry and Science cannot of course lower itself to the contemplation of a question as simple as the one which the narrator asks. Science occupies itself with details, with the manifestations of the physical world, and leaves the "simple" things to the amateurs.

"Das Leben ist eine fortwährende Ablenkung, die nicht einmal zur Besinnung darüber kommen lässt, wovon sie ablenkt." (H 334) Science is quite content to examine and explore every aspect of the "diversion", is ready to discuss the nature and quality of food ad infinitum, but dare not look too closely at the meaning of it all.

As he is telling the story, the narrator is aware of all this, he realises that his questions are a destructive threat to the structure of life. Compare the following passage from "F" with the two ideas from the notebooks:

"F"

Frage ich dann genau genommen, zumindest seit ich erwachsen bin, die Hundeschaft deshalb, damit sie mir antwortet? Habe ich so törichte Hoffnungen? Sehe ich die Fundamente unseres Lebens, ohne ihre Tiefe, sehe die Arbeiter beim Bau, bei ihrem finstern Werk, und erwarte noch

Notebooks

Früher begriff ich nicht, warum ich auf meine Frage keine Antwort bekam, heute begreife ich nicht, wie ich glauben konnte, fragen zu können. Aber ich glaubte ja gar nicht, ich fragte nur. (H 43)
Erreiche es nur, dich der Mauerassel verständlich zu machen. Hast du ihr

immer, dass auf meine
Fragen alles dies beendet
zerstört, verlassen wird?
(B 256-7)

einmal die Frage nach dem
Zweck ihres Arbeitens bei-
gebracht, hast du das Volk
der Asseln ausgerottet.
(H 334)

The Forscher's fellow-dogs are able to preserve the structure of life because they are silent to the deception and questionability of the perceivable world.

The narrator seems to know this although he is unwilling to admit it outright, just as he knows that the truth which he is seeking will be destructive to the physical world, yet persists in the search.

He feels that his fellows, who would prefer to fill his mouth with food than to endure his questions (B 254) are trying to divert him from a path which they dare not walk themselves, but which may not be completely false; "Wollte man mich damit einlullen, ohne Gewalt, fast liebend mich von einem falschen Wege abbringen, von einem Wege, dessen Falschheit doch nicht so über allem Zweifel stand, dass sie erlaubt hätte, Gewalt anzuwenden?" (B 254)

The atmosphere in these lines is reminiscent of the position of K in Das Schloss, who is told that he has no insight, that he has the understanding of a child, that he does not comprehend life in the village, and who is nevertheless allowed to proceed in his own way, and who arouses the kind of attention which the narrator of "F" describes when he says, "Durch meine Umgebung ging ein Raunen" (B 276)

In the imaginary conversation which the narrator conducts with himself (B 276), his whole problem can be seen. He has been saying of dogs: "Alles Wissen, die Gesamtheit aller Fragen und aller Antworten ist in den Hunden enthalten" (B 255), and he now imagines that another dog is asking him why he does not supply the answers to the questions himself, since he too is a dog, and is therefore in possession of the knowledge mentioned above.

If the narrator were to use this knowledge, the argument goes on, and speak out the answer, all other dogs would agree, and he would have what he seeks: "Wahrheit, Klarheit, Eingeständnis."

There can be no doubt that this is what the narrator seeks, because he creates the entire conversation himself. For this reason too, it is noteworthy that the imaginary interlocutor conditions his urge that the narrator lead the way to "hohe Freiheit" and "ganze Wahrheit"

(B 256):

Das Dach dieses niedrigen Lebens, dem du so schlimmes nachsagst, wird sich öffnen und wir werden alle, Hund bei Hund, aufsteigen in die hohe Freiheit. Und sollte das Letzte nicht gelingen, sollte es schlimmer werden als bisher, sollte die ganze Wahrheit unerträglicher sein als die halbe, sollte sich bestätigen, dass die Schweigenden als Erhalter des Lebens im Rechte sind, sollte aus der leisen Hoffnung, die wir jetzt noch haben, völlige Hoffnungslosigkeit werden, des Versuches ist das Wort doch wert, da du so, wie du leben darfst, nicht leben willst." (B 256)

Each 'sollte' in the above passage is a rhetorical and powerful reminder that what the narrator wants will

benefit him, because he finds life unbearable in any case, but it will be destructive to the silent dogs, to the "preservers of life".

A little later the narrator seems to say that he considers the highest truth to be destructive to himself too. He likens the object of his quest to the marrow of a bone, then hastens to add that the likeness is a figure of speech only, because what he seeks is poisonous, "Doch ist es nur ein Bild. Das Mark, von dem hier die Rede ist, ist keine Speise, ist das Gegenteil, ist Gift." (B 257)

The object of the narrator's search is the "light", is pure spiritual truth which will dissolve the physical world:

"Kannst du etwas anderes kennen als Betrug? Wird einmal der Betrug vernichtet, darfst du ja nicht hinsehen, oder wirst zur Salzsäule." (H 119)

"Mit stärkstem Licht kann man die Welt auflösen."
(H 45)

5. The "Preservers of Life"

The Forscher, who finds life unendurable, often tries to console himself in the course of the story, but the consolation invariably adds to his despair.

He looks back over his life, trying to find the great mistake which he must have made, "der alles verschuldende Fehler," (B 258), because, he says, if he had not made this mistake, and yet had not achieved his goal through a long life of honest work, then what he wanted must have been impossible, and "völlige Hoffnungslosigkeit würde daraus folgen."

This idea does not afford much consolation, however, and the narrator does not look for too long, perhaps out of fear that he will not find the mistake, and thereby be damned by his own logic.

He turns elsewhere for consolation, tries to persuade himself that his is no isolated case, "So schlimm kann es mit mir nicht stehen" (B 259), and repeats that he is like everyone else, "Ich bin grundsätzlich wie jeder andere Hund Nur die Mischung der Elemente ist verschieden Und nun sollte die Mischung dieser immer vorhandenen Elemente innerhalb der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart niemals ähnlich der meinen ausgefallen sein ...? Das wäre gegen übrige Erfahrung." (B 260)

There seems to be a hint of wishful thinking in the argument, which is emphasised when the narrator continues

to talk of the variety of occupations of dogs, and digresses at length on the floating-dogs (Lufthunde), who are first mentioned in connection with the different occupations.

The digression does not help him to find his "Artgenossen", but makes him realise that he would hardly recognise his like if he saw them - "... und ihr Dasein wird mir niemals sichtbar helfen, schon deshalb nicht, weil ich sie kaum je erkennen werde." (B 263)

He explains what he means by his "Artgenossen", and uses the first person plural in the explanation, perhaps to console himself: "Wir sind die, welche das Schweigen drückt, welche es förmlich aus Lufthunger durchbrechen wollen, den anderen scheint im Schweigen wohl zu sein." (B 264-65)

The attempt to find his like, however, an attempt which was in the first place intended to provide some measure of consolation, soon becomes a lament in its own right: "Wo sind denn aber meine Artgenossen? Ja, das ist die Klage, das ist sie eben. Wo sind sie?" (B 266)

The narrator considers his neighbour, asks himself whether his neighbour is his "Artgenosse", but dismisses the thought, adding that his neighbour is clever enough, "Zwar ist er klug, und für unsere Verhältnisse hier, gebildet genug ... aber suche ich Klugheit und Bildung?" (B 266)

He goes on to describe what he means by "unsere Verhältnisse hier", and adds to his misery rather than palliates it, because as soon as he has defined or described, his own questions appear and torment him: "... hier kann kaum jemand helfen, fast jede Stunde gibt neue Aufgaben und jedes neue Fleckchen Erde seine besonderen." (B 267)

The stating of the problem leads him to ask: "Und all diese unendliche Mühe - zu welchem Zweck?" (B 267)

The narrator, who looks at life in its various forms, and adds his "Zu welchem Zweck?", is in many ways saying with Kafka, "Ich habe das Negative meiner Zeit ... kräftig aufgenommen." (H 121)

Kafka felt the evils of existence and the futility of life as keenly as anyone could. There is a terrible passage to this effect in one of the letters to Milena, where he speaks of his tuberculosis:

Es war so, dass das Gehirn die ihm auferlegten Sorgen und Schmerzen nicht mehr ertragen konnte. Es sagte: "Ich gebe es auf; ist hier aber noch jemand, dem an der Erhaltung des Ganzen etwas liegt, dann möge er mir etwas von meiner Last abnehmen und es wird noch ein Weilchen gehen." Da meldete sich die Lunge, viel zu verlieren hatte sie wohl nicht. Diese Verhandlungen zwischen Gehirn und Lunge, die ohne mein Wissen vor sich gingen, mögen schrecklich gewesen sein. (M 13)

Kafka did not only feel the evils of life, however, he was able to use his basic impressions as a picture which could be developed in many ways. Life can be "ermüdend" or "entzückend" according to the perspectives of

the individual. (H 73)

It would be more in keeping with the reality of existence to experience life as "ermüdend", and this is the course taken by the narrator of "F". This is not a simple outlook made by conscious decision, however, it is an awareness of the deceptive evil of the physical world and will make life unendurable. The individual must seek to live with this awareness.

The people who experience life as "entzückend" or who, though not actually happy, fail to see that life is wretched, are the "preservers of life", the silent ones, and the person with knowledge will be torn between his knowledge and the way others live.

Kafka developed the situation in two ways. On the one hand he said: "... für das Glück aber genügt das Schweigen nicht nur, sondern es ist das einzig - Mögliche." (H 331), and he defines a possible "way out" as follows: " ... Ein Ausweg läge darin, dass das Erkennen als solches Trost ist. Man könnte sich ohne Fälschung dieser Erkenntnis aufrecht erhalten, am Bewusstsein, es erkannt zu haben" (H 71)

The true "Ausweg" is neither a blind conforming, nor a vain aspiration for "hohe Freiheit". It is the conforming which is the result of having seen the physical world as being evil and transitory, and having consequent-

ly realised that conforming is the sole possibility - "das einzig - Mögliche." It is the conscious decision to live, made after one has realised that life is impossible.

This is a possible way out, but it has no appeal for the narrator of "F". It does represent a possibility, however, and is treated as such in the author's literature elsewhere. The ape of the story "Bericht für eine Akademie" embodies this possible outlook.

The Ape knows that "Freiheit nach allen Seiten" is unattainable and therefore devotes himself to the task of finding a "way-out". He does this by becoming a member of the society around him. Unparalleled effort earns him the educational standard of an average European, and this helps him out of his cage. He knows that life is irksome, and he has no real desire to imitate those around him: "Es verlockte mich nicht, die Menschen nachzuahmen; ich ahmte nach, weil ich einen Ausweg suchte, aus keinem anderen Grund." (E 194)

The Ape is aware of his position, and realises what must be done: "Ich hatte keinen anderen Weg, immer vorausgesetzt, dass nicht die Freiheit zu wählen war." (E 195)

This is a way out, not the way out, and Kafka is sometimes exceedingly bitter about the outlook of those people who have never seen the truth concerning life, and who grab others, who have seen it, under the arm, to prevent them from collapsing, "... das nennt man hierzulande,

'einem unter den Arm greifen', solche Hilfe ist immer bereit; einen, der ohne Grund umsinken könnte und liegenbliebe, fürchtet man wie den Teufel, es ist wegen des Beispiels, es ist wegen des Gestankes der Wahrheit, der aus ihm steigen würde" (H 249)

It is the bitterness which is passed on to the narrator of "F". He fights against the silence of his people because he sees it as a pale of deceit, erected to obliterate the true picture of life, which is unendurable. At the same time, however, he refuses to give up his aspirations for "higher freedom", for "complete truth".

The wall of silence, which helps to conceal the wretchedness of life, is in "F", as elsewhere in Kafka's writings, described as a conforming process which robs the child of its individuality. The narrator sees more of the negative aspect of the process than of the positive aspect, though in the course of his investigations he develops an insight into the complete situation.

The necessity of conforming, of giving up the individuality inherent to childhood in order to endure life, is a central theme of Kafka's writings.

In the fragmentary "Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande", the idea is expressed by Raban, who is standing in the rain, exhausted after hard work: "Und solange du m a n sagst an Stelle von i c h , ist es nichts, und

man kann diese Geschichte aufsagen, sobald du aber dir eingestehst, dass du selbst es bist, dann wirst du förmlich durchbohrt und bist entsetzt." (H 8)

The Ape in "Bericht für eine Akademie" had to conform, had to give up memories of his early life and suppress his individuality: "Gerade Verzicht auf jeden Eigensinn war das oberste Gebot, das ich mir auferlegt hatte." (E 184)

Children must suppress their individuality for two reasons:

The first is for their own good, for their personal well-being, however relative it may be. The process of growing up, with its accompanying pressures, effects this and lightens the burden of life. "Soweit ich es erfahren habe, arbeitete man sowohl in der Schule als auch zu Hause darauf hin, die Eigentümlichkeit zu verwischen. Man erleichterte dadurch die Arbeit der Erziehung, erleichterte aber auch dem Kind das Leben" (H 227-28) There is then a useful aspect to this pressure, which comes out again a little later in the same passage: "... diese in gewisser Hinsicht aner kennenswerte Unterdrückung." The conforming process may not have intrinsic value, but it wards off the dangers associated with a strong awareness of individuality: "Hervorhebung der Eigentümlichkeit - Verzweiflung." (H 232)

The second reason causing children to conform is

that their enquiring nature presents a threat to the well-being of others' lives. By refusing to conform, they are not only making life more wretched for themselves, but are drawing constant attention to the reality of existence, to the truth concerning life, and therefore to the wall of deceit itself.

The application of this concept in the story is left purposely vague. The narrator was not to see everything as clearly as this, he was to wonder about the value of the silence and work out his own opinions.

In a passage which Kafka did not include in the story as we find it, there is a clear statement by the narrator concerning the "education of children";³

"Wie ja allerdings wahrscheinlich alle Erziehung nur zweierlei ist, einmal Abwehr des ungestümen Angriffs der unwissenden Kinder auf die Wahrheit und dann sanfte unmerklich-allmähliche Einführung der gedemütigten Kinder in die Lüge. - Um so schlimmer wurde es, als ich erwachsen war und doch nicht nachgab." (B 352 Anm.)

³A further discussion of the way in which the narrator of "F" expresses Kafka's views, and a comparison of the modes of expression will be found at the end of this work as an appendix, where a passage from "F" (B 267-69) is placed side by side with passages from the notebooks.

6. The Fasting Experiment (i)

Perhaps the most vivid of Kafka's descriptions of man and his place in the world is one from the notebooks:

'Wie bin ich hierher gekommen?' rief ich. Es war ein mässig grosser, von mildem elektrischem Licht beleuchteter Saal, dessen Wände ich abschnitt. Es waren zwar einige Türen vorhanden, öffnete man sie aber, dann stand man vor einer dunklen glatten Felswand, die kaum eine Handbreit von der Türschwelle entfernt war und geradlinig aufwärts und nach beiden Seiten in unabsehbare Ferne verlief. Hier war kein Ausweg. Nur eine Tür führte in ein Nebenzimmer, die Aussicht da war hoffnungsreicher, aber nicht weniger befremdend als bei den anderen Türen. Man sah in ein Fürstenzimmer. Rot und Gold herrschte dort vor, es gab dort mehrere wandhohe Spiegel und einen grossen Glaslüster. Aber das war nicht alles. (The fragment ends at this point.) (H 389)

The above description is so concise that it could be used as a key and placed side by side with countless other variations of the same idea in the fiction.

In the terms of the description, the narrator of "F" would be living in the luxurious room with everyone else, but would be aware that this position was a substitute for the true picture - an unbearable life.

In his own words: "Ich berannte die Mauern meines Volkes wie ein Wilder", and speaking of the established laws of his society he says: "... nur durch die Gesetzeslücken, für die ich eine besondere Witterung habe, schwärme ich aus." (B 281)

The narrator thus sees himself at the walls of his people's existence. The defects in the established order

of his society are the objects of his investigations, and he hopes that his investigations will lead him to a "higher truth". Rather than admit to himself that what he wants is implicitly out of reach, rather than stand in the first room, open the doors, see the "dunkle glatte Felswand" before him and then return to his fellows, knowing not only that they have a protective bulwark of silence and deceit, but also why they have it; rather than follow this course, the narrator investigates the ramifications of the deceit itself.

In the story, the situation is not depicted in such absolute blacks and whites. The narrator does know that truth is out of reach - ("Und es zeigt sich nicht dabei die Wahrheit - niemals wird man soweit kommen" B 262), he does know that his fellows are silent because silence is the only possibility: "Dann hätte ich mich aber auch gar nicht absondern müssen, hätte ruhig unter den andern bleiben können, hätte nicht wie ein unartiges Kind durch die Reihen der Erwachsenen mich hinausdrängen müssen, die ja ebenso hinauswollen wie ich, und an denen mich nur ihr Verstand beirrt, der ihnen sagt, dass niemand hinauskommt, und dass alles Drängen töricht ist." (B 271)

The admission is immediately qualified and pushed out of the narrator's mind: "Solche Gedanken sind allerdings deutlich die Wirkung meines Nachbarn." In the same way the narrator rooted out of his mind the disturbing

possibility that his neighbour might be his "Artgenosse", and pays no attention to the concord, "eine über blosser Worte hinausgehende tiefere Übereinstimmung," (B 270) which he feels in the relationship.

It was stated earlier that the narrator seems to be totally oblivious to the questionability of some aspects of his society. It may well be that the narrator is wilfully oblivious to these aspects, that he, as well as Kafka, is speaking tongue in cheek.

That he wilfully overlooks his own explanation of his fellows' silence may have other reasons still.

The narrator does, after all, regard his investigations as a means of enduring life, and he must have something to investigate. As a creature of the earth he has no choice, it is only that "wir sehen Erde, wohin wir uns auch wenden" (H 72) and the paradoxical picture is explained of someone whose driving urge in life is "Lufthunger", and whose aim is "ganze Wahrheit", grovelling on the ground, snout in earth: "Ich machte mir später eine Grube für die Schnauze und sang so und deklamierte, dass nur der Boden es hörte" (B 274)

There is yet another factor governing the Forscher's outlook. It is his negative approach to life, his "Zu welchem Zweck?" which accompanies his reflections of life, and his investigations often seem to be his attempt to show just how absurd everything is.

The fasting experiment must be considered in the light of these many facets of the narrator's outlook.

Ostensibly, the narrator decides to fast in order to support what he considers to be a valid fact deduced from an earlier experiment. He wants to prove that he, and not the earth, attracts food from above: "Ich wollte beweisen, dass, wenn ich vor der Nahrung zurückwich, nicht der Boden sie schräg zu sich herabzog, sondern ich es war, der sie hinter mir her lockte." (B 276)

Why does the narrator want to prove this? The series of investigations which culminate in the fasting experiment are based on a "merkwürdige Vereinfachung", which the narrator has discovered in the teachings of Science: "Sie ('Wissenschaft') lehrt, dass in der Hauptsache die Erde unsere Nahrung hervorbringt, und gibt dann, nachdem sie diese Voraussetzung gemacht hat, die Methoden an, mit welchen sich die verschiedenen Speisen in bester Art und grösster Fülle erreichen lassen." (B 272)

The subsequent discussion of this "Gesetzeslücke" is typical of the narrator's confusion of mind, typical of the way in which he is torn between belief in, and mistrust of established convention. He desperately wants to find something to investigate, something which will lead somewhere, but the parts prove to be as elusive as the whole.

The discussion makes it increasingly clear that the narrator is opposed to the precepts of Science. It is difficult to know whether the customary humility, the "Who am I, after all?" approach, is a sign of the narrator's environmental conditioning, or a rhetorical device. Whether the Forscher knows it or not, his drawn-out discussion could be expressed in a few words - "Science is wrong. I am right. I am going to prove that I am right."

The narrator begins the discussion by saying that he has found a remarkable simplification - "eine merkwürdige Vereinfachung" - in the teachings of Science. Science teaches the cultivation of the soil, and the auxiliary process of incantation, dance, and song, as a means of obtaining food, all of which is produced by the earth. The narrator will not settle for this explanation because most food comes from above, - "von oben" - but he is quick to add, "Damit sage ich noch nichts gegen die Wissenschaft, die Erde bringt ja auch diese Nahrung natürlich hervor." (B 272)

He tries to excuse Science by saying that the only thing which really matters is the cultivation of the soil, the "Bodenbearbeitung", but he knows that this is not the case, because Science does stress the other process - "die Ergänzungs-Verfeinerungs-Arbeit in Form von Spruch, Tanz, und Gesang." (B 273)

Since this latter ceremony is directed upwards, the narrator thinks that it must be this process which attracts food from above, otherwise Science would surely rule that the song and dance be addressed to the earth, which is, according to Science, the sole producer of food.

The narrator's apparent attempt to examine the problem impartially from every angle, suddenly becomes very revealing. On the one hand, Science is correct, 'correct' because the narrator insists that it is correct, he makes Science accept the inevitability of his own conclusion - that the song and dance should be addressed to the earth. On the other hand, he says: "Hier scheint das Volk die Wissenschaft richtigzustellen, ohne es zu wissen und ohne dass die Wissenschaft sich zu wehren wagt." (B 273)

He follows this statement by a description of the paradox in action:

Und nun das Merkwürdige, das Volk richtet sich mit allen seinen Zeremonien in die Höhe. Es ist dies keine Verletzung der Wissenschaft, sie verbietet es nicht, lässt dem Landwirt darin die Freiheit, sie denkt bei ihren Lehren nur an den Boden, und führt der Landwirt ihre auf den Boden sich beziehenden Lehren aus, ist sie zufrieden, aber ihr Gedankengang sollte meiner Meinung nach eigentlich mehr verlangen. Und ich, der ich niemals tiefer in die Wissenschaft eingeweiht worden bin, kann mir gar nicht vorstellen, wie die Gelehrten es dulden können, dass unser Volk, leidenschaftlich wie es nun einmal ist, die Zaubersprüche aufwärts ruft, unsere alten Volksgesänge in die Lüfte klagt und Sprungtänze aufführt, als ob es sich, den Boden vergessend, für immer emporschwingen wollte. (B 273-4)

This "als ob" clause, added to the description of the paradox, is probably the real source of the narrator's

mental distress. He has sacrificed all possible happiness to his longing for higher truth and freedom. His urge in life is "Lufthunger". Other dogs, represented by his neighbour, are maddeningly happy: "... er ('Nachbar') macht mich melancholisch; und ist für sich fröhlich genug, wenigstens höre ich ihn, wenn er in seinem Bereich ist, schreien und singen, dass es mir lästig ist." (B 271)

And yet these other dogs who silently acquiesce to the deceit of their society, who would prefer to fill the narrator's mouth with food than listen to his embarrassing questions, who are not apparently made miserable by "Luft-hunger", or by anything else which may lead them outside the boundaries of their earthbound existence; these very dogs look up to the heavens for nourishment, for the food which will prolong their physical life. Indeed, they leap upwards as if they wanted to leave the ground for ever. It is this scene which is so contradictory to the narrator, "Von der Betonung dieser Widersprüche ging ich aus"

If his fellows are going to say: "Give us this day our daily bread", then they should address the request to the appropriate place, to the earth.

A similar paradox is apparent to , but does not torment, another of Kafka's narrators, in the story "Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer." (B 67 ff.) The narrator there is considering the theory that the Great Wall is to be a base for a successful Tower of Babel, and is wondering how

something which does not form a circle can be regarded as a foundation for a tower, and not only is the Wall the wrong shape for such a project, but it is incomplete and has many defects, - "viele grosse Lücken". (B 67)

This means that the project must be considered as being abstract, and the narrator asks himself how something tangible can be thought of as a base for something spiritual: "Die Mauer, die noch nicht einmal einen Kreis, sondern nur eine Art Viertel - oder Halbkreis bildete, sollte das Fundament eines Turmes abgeben? Das konnte doch nur in geistiger Hinsicht gemeint sein. Aber wozu denn die Mauer, die doch etwas Tatsächliches war, Ergebnis der Mühe und des Lebens von Hunderttausenden?" (B 72)

7. The Fasting Experiment (11)

Ostensibly then, the narrator is going too fast in order to prove that he, not the earth, attracts food from above.

The fasting could be considered also as a renunciation not only of society, but of life itself.

The narrator freely admits on several occasions that his quest is for "freedom" and "truth". His first question, "Woher nimmt die Erde unsere Nahrung", was not prompted by concern for the earth - "... kümmern mich etwa der Erde Sorgen? Nicht im geringsten" (B 255)

When the Forscher digs his head into the ground and recites the spells, he is trying to prove that the earth does not attract food from above, because when he thinks that the experiment has been successful, that the earth is not the means of attraction, he is ready to rejoice: "Manchmal bekam ich das Essen nicht, und schon wollte ich jubeln über meine Entdeckung" (B 274)

The narrator has defined his goal as "freedom" and his urge as "Lufthunger". The fasting experiment is just as much an outcome of this urge, as it is an attempt to refute the findings of Science. The narrator seems to have fused these two aims into one, however. When he is on the point of death, he explains the purpose of the experiment, "... um zur Wahrheit hindüber zu kommen, aus dieser Welt der Lüge." (B 284) At the same time he thinks the experiment

will be for the common good; as he begins to fast, he imagines the acclaim which his community will grant him for his work. (B 279)

The narrator thinks that a refutation of Science will expose the deceit of the world for all to see, and will also take him a step nearer to freedom and truth.

"F" was found in a notebook which also contained the story "Der Hungerkünstler", and the similarity of theme in the two stories invites a comparison.

The Hungerkünstler does not try to justify his asceticism by pointing to the falseness of Science, or to a longing for "truth". When asked why he has fasted for so long, he says simply, "Weil ich nicht die Speise finden konnte, die mir schmeckt. Hätte ich sie gefunden, glaube mir, ich hätte kein Aufsehen gemacht und mich voll gegessen wie du und alle." (E 267)

There seem at first sight to be a difference between the asceticism of the Hungerkünstler and the experimental zeal of the Forscher, but this difference is merely apparent.

In the notebooks there is an interesting passage which sheds light on both stories:

Die Unersättlichsten sind manche Asketen, sie machen Hungerstreike auf allen Gebieten des Lebens und wollen dadurch gleichzeitig folgendes erreichen:

1. eine Stimme soll sagen: Genug, du hast genug gefastet, jetzt darfst du essen wie die andern und es wird nicht als Essen angerechnet werden.

2. die gleiche Stimme soll gleichzeitig sagen:

Jetzt hast du so lange unter Zwang gefastet, von jetzt an wirst du mit Freude fasten, es wird süsser als Speise sein (gleichzeitig aber wirst du auch wirklich essen),

3. die gleiche Stimme soll gleichzeitig sagen: Du hast die Welt besiegt, ich enthebe dich ihrer, des Essens und des Fastens (gleichzeitig aber wirst du sowohl fasten als essen).

Zudem kommt noch eine seit jeher zu ihnen redende unablässige Stimme: Du fastest zwar nicht vollständig, aber du hast den guten Willen und der genügt.

(H 334-35)

These people who voluntarily fast are trying to separate earthly ties from spiritual. They do not know how to satisfy spiritual hunger, but at least they can refrain from satisfying physical hunger, refrain that is, until a voice is supposed to say, "Du hast die Welt besiegt."

It is, however, impossible to conquer the world, and live. This is what the voice does in fact tell them, the voice which has been present "seit jeher", when it says, "Du fastest zwar nicht vollständig."

It is impossible to conquer the world in this way because personal existence is not independent of the world. Life itself is the very thing which prevents the victory; "Er hat das Gefühl, dass er sich dadurch, dass er lebt, den Weg verstellt...." (B 292)

Physical hunger is an integral part of life. The Forscher becomes painfully aware of this in the early stages of the experiment: "Das ist der Hunger, sagte ich mir damals unzählige Male, so als wollte ich mich glauben machen,

Hunger und ich seien noch immer zweierlei und ich konnte ihn abschütteln wie einen lästigen Liebhaber, aber in Wirklichkeit waren wir höchst schmerzlich Eines!" (B 280)

The statement "Du fastest zwar nicht vollständig", is not merely the expression of a fact deduced from a lack of success as described in the above lines. It is an inevitability of existence. To fast completely would be to give up the world completely, and that would result in death.

At the height of his fasting, the Forscher cannot escape the compelling reality of his physical existence; "Hier war ... ein Hund, der zwar noch kramphaft eilig, ohne es zu wissen, immerfort den Boden besprengte" (B 283) The narrator can no more shake off his physical existence than Atlas could drop the world - "Atlas konnte die Meinung haben, er dürfe, wenn er wolle, die Erde fallen lassen und sich wegschleichen; mehr als diese Meinung aber war ihm nicht erlaubt." (H 107)

This is the tragedy of life for Kafka. Man has the capacity to want to leave the world, but not the capacity to reach heaven. He is fettered to both heaven and earth by a chain which will throttle him if he strives too far in either direction. (See H 46)

The only escape from the terrors of physical existence is death, and there can be no complete freedom or truth where there is physical existence.

The Ape (E 184) sees this when he says that he would have to cut the flesh from his body in order to regain the freedom of his past, and says that if he had been a seeker after higher freedom, he would have preferred death in the ocean to the "Ausweg" which presented itself: "Wäre ich ein Anhänger jener erwähnten Freiheit, ich hätte gewiss das Weltmeer dem Ausweg vorgezogen, der sich mir im trüben Blick dieser Menschen zeigte" (E 191)

The Hungerkünstler does die. His distaste for physical existence is carried to its relentless conclusion.

The Forscher, however, remains alive, although he feels the approach of death.

The significant thing is that when the narrator feels that he is on the point of death, he declares that he is dying not of starvation, but on account of his isolation and the indifference of his fellows: "... als stürbe ich gar nicht durch Hunger, sondern infolge meiner Verlassenheit Ich ging an ihrer Gleichgültigkeit zugrunde." (B 284)

This is an extremely pertinent point, and leads to what is probably Kafka's strongest and most direct indication that a spiritual world exists, and does in fact manifest its presence within the plane of material existence.

The narrator's attitude towards his fellows is consistently ambivalent throughout the story. There is little evidence to suggest that Kafka endowed the Forscher with the compassion which the Ape displays when he refers

to the sailors; "Es sind gute Menschen, trotz allem."

(E 189)

The narrator feels attracted to his fellows, but he seems to fight against the feeling. The author does not allow him to make objective comments on the feeling, to speak of "das wahre menschliche (bez. hündische) Wesen, ... das nicht anders als geliebt werden kann." (H 46)

The Forscher investigates his relations with his fellows as coldly as he investigates other problems. When he feels that his neighbour is influencing his thoughts unduly, he decides quite calmly to break off the relationship - "Ich werde, wenn er ('Nachbar') nächstens kommt, mich verkriechen und schlafend stellen, und das so lange wiederholen, bis er ausbleibt." (B 271)

It is painful to see the narrator reach this decision after having accompanied him on a futile search for his "Artgenossen", and having heard him insist so often that he is no different from his fellows.

The narrator fights these feelings from beginning to end. The pity in his situation is not that he feels no attraction, but that he does, and wards it off.

At the beginning of the story, he gives a general description of the highest happiness accessible to dogs - "das warme Beisammensein". (B 242) This happiness is brought out in particular from when the narrator speaks of his neighbour, and feels the urge to say, "... Komm, zu

zweit ist es süsser." (B 270), but does not say it.

During the fast he explains the reward he hopes to receive in recognition of his efforts: "... die ersehnte Wärme versammelter Hundeleiber werde mich umströmen, hochgezwungen würde ich auf den Schultern meines Volkes schwanken." (B 279) When the Musical Dog appears, however, and approaches the narrator "lovingly", the narrator becomes even more vehement than he was when he decided to discontinue social intercourse with his neighbour, and screams "Weg!" (B 271)

The isolation, and even the indifference of the other dogs, which the narrator claims are causing his death, are at least partly self-imposed. He makes no secret of this. He knows what the highest happiness of dogs is, and yet refuses to participate in it, because he feels that this happiness is a superstructure built upon a false picture of the world. He promises himself the joys of participation only when Science will have approved of his results, will have admitted that the earth can not attract food from above. Until Science makes the admission, and of course, Science never will, he guards himself against indulging in the highest happiness much as he guards himself against uttering the commonly accepted piece of deceit concerning the function of the floating dogs, whose value is said to lie in their contributions to Science, although everyone knows that their contributions are worthless and

tiresome. (B 262-3)

The highest happiness ("... die Sehnsucht nach dem grössten Glück, dessen wir fähig sind, dem warmen Beisammensein." B 242), however, is not quite so earth-bound as the narrator would persuade himself. In two places the narrative suggests that the Forscher knows this. Once, he says that the "höchste Glück" is achieved only in moments of rapture - "in überschwenglichen Augenblicken". (B 242) Another time, he is aware of a relationship to his neighbour which perhaps transcends words: "Es gibt doch vielleicht eine über blosser Worte hinausgehende tiefere Übereinstimmung mit meinem Nachbarn." (B 270)

This transcendent link is in fact the collective and individual soul of existing beings. It is "das Unzerstörbare", which is each man, and common to all. (H 47) It is "Der Kern des Kerns" and "Das unvergängliche Feuer", (H 104), the indestructible element which makes life possible ("Der Mensch kann nicht leben ohne ein dauerndes Vertrauen zu etwas Unzerstörbarem in sich" H 44).

It is the inner truth which can be known of, but can not be known and can not be described.

In short, it is the spiritual world itself, which appears on the earthly plane as the link which holds men together, ("Das Unzerstörbare ist eines; jeder einzelne Mensch ist es und gleichzeitig ist es allen gemeinsam, da-

her die beispiellos untrennbare Verbindung der Menschen". H 47), it is the "über alle Worte hinausgehend tiefere Übereinstimmung", which the Forscher feels.

The existence of this truth is indicated in "F", as elsewhere in Kafka's fiction⁴, by music. By its nature, music is beyond words, it cannot be analysed like a thought, it cannot know itself. In "F", it is music which is both near and distant, which is a part of collective and individual existence. (B 246) Music is able to silence the woods, - "diese Stimme, vor deren Erhabenheit der Wald verstummte," (B 287), - as the "brightest light" is able to dissolve the world. (H 45, "Mit stärkstem Licht kann man die Welt auflösen").

⁴See: Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka, Bonn: Athenäum-Verlag, 1958, pp. 152ff.

8. The Fasting Experiment - Conclusion

In the remarks concerning the narrator's encounter with the Musical Dogs an attempt was made to show how this encounter could be interpreted as a vision of the complete reality of existence, and how the narrator's latter attitude towards existence was in many ways to be determined by the impression which this vision made on him.

The narrator's attitude towards the music of this vision is important, and an understanding of it leads to a more complete understanding of the investigations, especially of the latter stages of the fasting experiment.

All in all, the narrator attached no great importance to the music in the first vision. He sees this himself in retrospect, and says that it is because he never came across anything like the awful music in later life, whereas silence was to meet him everywhere. (B 288) Because of this, he assumes that the "nature" of dogs is their silence, and since his aim is "In das Wesen der Hunde einzudringen" (B 289), he feels that he can safely ignore the music of the encounter. (B 288)

He is forced to modify this opinion after his second contact with music, however, and he does so in his characteristic manner; "Vielleicht hatte ich darin Unrecht." (B 289)

For the reader, who sees both the vision of the Musical Dogs and the effect it had on the narrator, and life and the effect it had on the narrator, there can be no "per-

haps."

The narrator was, after all, seeking truth. Throughout the story he defines his aims in many ways, but the word "Wahrheit", as aim, is the most consistent and prevalent. The truth which is accessible - "Das Unzerstörbare, das ... allen gemeinsam ist" - he ignores, in the encounter with the Musical Dogs, as in later life.

His difficulty in this respect seems to be twofold. Firstly, an awareness of this truth is possible only through existence; secondly, it is possible only through communal existence.

The fine distinction concerning Kafka's use of music to indicate the existence of this truth has been mentioned. It is the melody in the noise of life which suggests truth: "ein klarer, strenger, immer sich gleich bleibender, förmlich aus grosser Ferne unverändert ankommender Ton, vielleicht die eigentliche Melodie inmitten des Lärms" (B 248)

The truth is apparent in the "choir" of humanity, "... Erst im Chor mag eine gewisse Wahrheit liegen." (H 343)

The manifestation of this truth on the earthly plane is the link joining all men, "... die beispiellos untrennbare Verbindung der Menschen."

It is the relationship of this truth to existence which torments the narrator of "J". He feels the close tie which the truth has with existence, and is aware of the great unity which holds his people together, but he is unable to

see what any of this has to do with an everyday whistling.

It is truth inseparable from existence which prevents the Forscher from being one of the Musical Dogs; "... kaum fühlte ich die gute, vertraute, hündische Verbindung mit den sieben, war wieder ihre Musik da, machte mich besinnungslos, drehte mich im Kreise herum, als sei ich selbst einer der Musikanten" (B 245-6), - just as it is his negative outlook towards existence which later prevents him from admitting that his relationship to his neighbour - "eine ... über alle Worte hinausgehende tiefere Übereinstimmung" (B 270) - may be of value.

In the encounter with the Musical Dogs too, it is existence which the narrator thinks he may be able to combat, were it not for the presence of truth, which forces him to his knees: "Vielleicht hätte ich in meinem Eifer sogar ihm ('Lärm', den ich doch nun schon kannte, widerstanden, wenn nicht durch alle seine Fülle, die schrecklich war, aber vielleicht doch zu bekämpfen, ein klarer ... Ton ... geklungen und mich in die Knie gezwungen hätte." (B 248)

In the course of his investigations, the Forscher pits himself against life, just as he did in the vision. He refuses to participate in the communal existence and happiness of his society, because it is existence. He thinks he can combat life through his questions and investigations, in spite of "alle seine Fülle, die schrecklich war", which he expresses in the words: "... an Material fehlte es nicht,

leider, der Überfluss ist es, der mich in dunklen Stunden verzweifeln lässt." (B 251)

The investigations are futile, because the narrator, whose desire is "In das Wesen der Hunde einzudringen," (B 289) and "zur Wahrheit hindüber zu kommen" (B 284), has severed himself from dogs, and therefore from truth. The truth which can be lived, but neither known nor described, is anathema to the narrator, because it does have to be lived. The narrator is in the unfortunate position of knowing this as he is telling the story: "Eiserne Knochen, enthaltend das edelste Mark, kann man nur beikommen durch ein gemeinsames Beissen aller Zähne aller Hunde Ich will diese Versammlung aller Hunde erzwingen, will unter dem Druck ihres Bereitseins den Knochen sich öffnen lassen, will sie dann zu ihrem Leben, das ihnen lieb ist, entlassen und dann allein, weit und breit allein, das Mark einschlecken." (B 257)

It must be the fasting experiment that gives the narrator the insight to know that this desire can never be fulfilled, because the fasting experiment is in fact the narrator's supreme attempt on life, his utmost effort to separate truth from existence, to satisfy spiritual hunger without satisfying physical hunger. In these respects the experiment is a failure, but it does bring the Forscher's attention to the truth which is accessible, and to the way in which the truth is accessible.

The "eigentliche Melodie inmitten des Lärms" appears before him for the second time. It cuts short his attack on existence for the second time, but it does not force him to his knees. It gives him new power which suffuses his whole being and sends him flying "von der Melodie gejagt, in den herrlichsten Sprüngen dahin." (B 287)

Although the music of each vision indicates truth, the effect of this truth on the narrator is different in each vision. This difference seems to be the result of the Forscher's changing attitude towards life which precedes the second contact with music.

When he is on the point of death, the narrator begins to feel the lack of communal warmth more deeply than the lack of absolute truth. The self-inflicted misery of his seclusion is making him long for his fellows, and an undertone of true humility appears in his thoughts. He begins to think that truth may not be so far distant after all:

Hatte ich nicht diese Verlassenheit gewollt? Wohl ihr Hunde, aber nicht um hier so zu enden, sondern um zur Wahrheit hinüber zu kommen, aus dieser Welt der Lüge, wo sich niemand findet, von dem man die Wahrheit erfahren kann, auch von mir nicht, eingeborenem Bürger der Lüge. Vielleicht war die Wahrheit nicht allzuweit, und ich also nicht so verlassen, wie ich dachte, nicht von den anderen verlassen, nur von mir, der ich versagte und starb. (B 284)

This abject confession is followed by the appearance of the Jäger (dog), and by a feeling of power: "... als ich

aufwachte, und die Augen erhob, stand ein fremder Hund vor mir. Ich fühlte keinen Hunger, ich war sehr kräftig, in den Gelenken federte es meiner Meinung nach" (B 284)

The strange dog is not really strange at all. He is normal enough, but the narrator feels that he sees something more in him: "Ich sah an und für sich nicht mehr als sonst, ein schöner, aber nicht allzu ungewöhnlicher Hund stand vor mir, das sah ich, nichts anders, und doch glaubte ich mehr an ihm zu sehen als sonst." (B 284)

The narrator sees something more, because for a time at least, his outlook is changed. He is beginning to feel drawn towards his fellows, and at the same time admit that he is one of them even to the extent of calling himself an "eingeborener Bürger der Lüge." It is the humility of these feelings which is strengthening the common bond, and which is giving the narrator his newly found sense of power.

The whole scene could be a practical application of an idea expressed in the notebooks:

Die Demut gibt jedem, auch dem einsam Verzweifelnden, das stärkste Verhältnis zum Mitmenschen, und zwar sofort, allerdings nur bei völliger und dauernder Demut. Sie kann das deshalb, weil sie die wahre Gebetsprache ist, gleichzeitig Anbetung und festeste Verbindung. Das Verhältnis zum Mitmenschen ist das Verhältnis des Gebetes, das Verhältnis zu sich, das Verhältnis des Strebens; aus dem Gebet wird die Kraft für das Streben geholt. (H 53)

The hunter stands for the compassionate aspect of personal relationships. He begs the narrator to leave for the narrator's own sake: "Ich bitte dich, ... dass du ...

fortgehst ... um deinetwillen", and says sadly that the Forscher's cares are also his own cares: "'Lass das meine Sorge sein,' sagte ich. 'Es ist auch die meine,' sagte er, traurig wegen meiner Hartnäckigkeit" (B 285) The hunter approaches the narrator "lovingly" and shakes his head "gently" at the other's wilful rudeness.

This is an approach which the narrator can scarcely comprehend: "Und ich sah ihn, der auf meine grobe Antwort nur sanft den Kopf geschüttelt hatte, mit immer grösserer Begierde an. 'Wer bist du?' fragte ich." (B 286)

The paradoxes and contradictions of life, which had always tortured the narrator, are completely unknown to the Jäger, who hunts because he "must" and sings "without knowing it". "Es ist daran aber auch nichts zu verstehen, es sind selbstverständliche, natürliche Dinge," he explains to the Forscher. And a little later: "Was für ein Widerspruch denn?" sagte er, "du lieber kleiner Hund, verstehst du denn wirklich nicht, dass ich muss? Verstehst du denn das Selbstverständliche nicht?" (B 286)

The hunter's way of life represents a possibility, perhaps an impractical possibility, but it is a possibility within the perceivable world, and is as close to truth as life can be in the perceivable world.

The hunter does not seek truth in a world of deception, as does the narrator. Nor does he seek fresh illusion to obliterate the old, as do the other dogs in the

story. "Nicht jeder kann die Wahrheit sehen, aber sein", is the thought which lies behind the portrayal of the hunter. (H 94)

His life may well be the theoretical happiness described by Kafka: "Theoretisch gibt es eine vollkommene Glücksmöglichkeit: An das Unzerstörbare in sich glauben, und nicht zu ihm streben." (H 47)

The silent dogs, who make the goal of education a deceit, (B 352), the narrator himself, who prides himself on his ability to smell out this deceit, and the hunter, who leads an unreasoned, spontaneous life - all represent an attitude to Kafka's basic picture of existence:

Alles ist Betrug: das Mindestmass der Täuschungen suchen, im üblichen bleiben, das Höchstmass suchen. Im ersten Fall betrügt man das Gute, indem man sich dessen Erwerbung zu leicht machen will, das Böse, indem man ihm allzu ungünstige Kampfbedingungen setzt. Im zweiten Fall betrügt man das Gute, indem man also nicht einmal im Irdischen nach ihm strebt. Im dritten Fall betrügt man das Gute, indem man sich möglichst weit von ihm entfernt, das Böse, indem man hofft, durch seine Höchststeigerung es machtlos zu machen. Vorzuziehen wäre also hiernach der zweite Fall, denn das Gute betrügt man immer, das Böse in diesem Fall, wenigstens dem Anschein nach, nicht. (H 45)

The Jäger's song, the truth in the vision, gives the narrator new life - "... und neues Leben durchfuhr mich dabei, Leben wie es der Schrecken gibt" (B 286) - and a heightened sense of shame, a keener awareness of the filth of his physical existence.

Und ich versenkte in unendlicher Angst und Scham das Gesicht in der Blutlache vor mir Wer war ich, der

ich noch immer hier zu bleiben wagte und mich vor ihr ('Melodie') breitmachte in meinem Schmutz und Blut? Schlotternd erhob ich mich, sah an mir hinab; so etwas wird doch nicht laufen, dachte ich, aber schon flog ich, von der Melodie gejagt, in den herrlichsten Sprüngen dahin." (B 287)

The proximity of truth casts the reality of physical existence into disrepute just as it did in the vision of the Musical Dogs. In that earlier vision, the narrator neither included himself in that disrepute, nor had he the power to withstand the onslaught of complete existence. Now, however, he is for a moment as one with the rest of his race, and the truth, besides accentuating the ugliness of life, also gives him the power to "fly" away in glorious leaps and bounds.

In the earlier vision, he was aware only of the perversion of earthly laws, when they are seen in the perspective of complete existence, including truth. This perversion made him almost forget the music. Now, however, he is aware of the truth, of something which transcends the earth, which floats in the air according to its own law - "nach eigenem Gesetz" -, which is independent of both him and the hunter, and yet which seems to exist only on his, the narrator's account, and which is part of the hunter. The Forscher sees, "... dass die Melodie, von ihm ('Jäger') getrennt, nach eigenem Gesetz durch die Lüfte schwebte, und über ihn hinweg, als gehöre er nicht dazu, nur nach mir, nach mir hinzielte ... aber der Melodie, die nun bald

der Hund als die seine zu übernehmen schien, konnte ich nicht widerstehen." (B 287)

The narrator has made communion with his fellows on both the physical and the spiritual plane. The Indestructible, which is common to all, can never be separated from the blood common to all, from life. The narrator has dipped his head into the universal blood, and has become aware of the universal truth: "Ich versenkte ... das Gesicht in der Blutlache⁵ vor mir." (B 287)

Is the narrator able to derive any lasting comfort from this experience? It would not appear so. He does, after all, have this experience behind him from the very beginning of the story. He knows that truth is indivisible from life, that blood is not the only thing common to all,

⁵Scattered through the works are many other instances of the 'blood' motif which is used so strikingly in the above scene from "F".

In a table listing the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, the author describes an advantage as: "... ich ziehe aus dem Blutkreislauf des menschlichen Lebens alle Kraft, die mir überhaupt zugänglich ist." (H 238)

The narrator of "Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer" gives the following ecstatic picture of his people's unity: "Einheit! Einheit! Brust an Brust, ein Reigen des Volkes, Blut, nicht mehr eingesperrt im kärglichen Kreislauf des Körpers, sondern süß rollend und doch wiederkehrend durch das unendliche China." (B 71)

In the sketch "Der Geier" (B 113), a narrator tells how a vulture (The world, which cannot be cheated of its prize?) tears through his clothes and flesh, and finally lunges down like a spear through his mouth, and is drowned in the narrator's blood: "... Zurückfallend fühlte ich mich befreit, wie er in meinem alle Tiefen füllenden, alle Ufer überfließenden Blut unrettbar ertrank."

but that the Indestructible, which is also common to all, is as inseparable from existence as is blood. In spite of this knowledge, he is still given to vain dreams of separating truth from life. He can say, "Nicht nur das Blut haben wir gemeinsam", and then outline his hopeful plan of making each dog yield its part of "das edelste Mark" and then be dismissed back to life, to the life which it enjoys. The plan is a dream, however, and the narrator knows it: "Das Mark, von dem hier die Rede ist, ist keine Speise, ist das Gegenteil, ist Gift." (B 257)

In the vision of the Musical Dogs, the narrator had wondered above all how those dogs were able to withstand the noise; he had marvelled at their courage: "Wahrhaftig ... wunderte ich mich über ihren Mut, sich dem, was sie erzeugten, völlig und offen auszusetzen, und über ihre Kraft, es, ohne dass es ihnen das Rückgrat brach, ruhig zu ertragen" (B 246)

The narrator has now experienced this power, but he is as dubious about it as he is about everything else. The food which makes physical life possible, is the food of the earth. The 'food' which makes physical life endurable, is the food from above. Both forms of nurture are integral parts of life.

The sight of other dogs drawing their power to live from above, as well as from below, should no longer be a paradox. The narrator must know this, because after the

fasting experiment he begins to investigate the field of knowledge which stands between "Nahrung der Erde" and "Musikwissenschaft". He now concerns himself with "die Lehre von dem die Nahrung herabrufenden Gesang." (B 289)

He would like to dismiss the vision of the hunter and the strange power of the music: "Heute leugne ich natürlich alle derartigen Erkenntnisse und schreibe sie meiner damaligen Überreiztheit zu" (B 287) When he looks back at the whole event, however, he cannot refrain from saying: "Durch das Hungern geht der Weg, das Höchste ist nur der höchsten Leistung erreichbar, wenn es erreichbar ist, und diese höchste Leistung ist bei uns freiwilliges Hungern." (B 280) Later, he refers to the experience as "die einzige, wenn auch nur scheinbare Wirklichkeit, die ich aus der Hungerzeit in diese Welt herübergerettet habe" (B 287)

"... das Höchste ist ... erreichbar, wenn es erreichbar ist"; "die einzige, wenn auch nur scheinbare Wirklichkeit" The highest attainable, if it is attainable; the sole reality, if but an apparent reality. The narrator thus dismisses the power of music - of higher truth. Before the reader's very eyes, a shadow is cast across a clear picture of higher reality - across a most compelling indication of the spiritual world. What promised

to be enlightenment becomes a "nothing, a dream, a hovering." The "fettters" which pull man to heaven are rendered powerless by the chains which hold him to earth; art recoils before the dazzling light.

The Forscher's doubts do not spring from an unreasoned pessimism. The "Randstrich" where body meets soul, has been reached, and this is the point at which Kafka halted. The picture of life in the fiction is as unreal, as deceptive, and as hovering, as life appeared to the author, and at the same time, life retains its "natural heavy rise and fall."

It would be difficult to read "F" without sharing the frustration, the despair, and the confusion of the narrator. A complete analysis of the story would be as difficult as a complete analysis of life. A higher truth, a transcendent reality, is indicated, but never described.

The Forscher himself can offer no more than indications to his fellows: "Andeutungen, die zu unterdrücken ich mich nicht bezwingen konnte, verloren sich spurlos in den Gesprächen." (B 288) In the same way, Kafka knew that language could describe the spiritual world "nur andeutungsweise". (H 45)

Kafka's works bring up questions which the author himself left unanswered. These questions will remain when the form has been stripped away and analysed layer by layer. These questions have no more been answered in this account

of "F" than they were in the chapter devoted to "J".

Literature is art, however, and art has its own affinity to truth: "Die Kunst fliegt um die Wahrheit, aber mit der entschiedenen Absicht, sich nicht zu verbrennen. Ihre Fähigkeit besteht darin, in der dunklen Leere einen Ort zu finden, wo der Strahl des Lichts, ohne dass dies vorher zu erkennen gewesen wäre, kräftig aufgefangen werden kann." (H 104)

The art of Josefina was described in the following words: "... dieses Nichts an Stimme, dieses Nichts an Leistung behauptet sich und schafft sich der Weg zu uns" (E 278)

The narrator compares the strange yet everyday quality of her song to the cracking of a nut:

Eine Nuss aufknacken ist wahrhaftig keine Kunst, deshalb wird es auch niemand wagen, ein Publikum zusammenzurufen, und vor ihm um es zu unterhalten, Nüsse knacken. Tut er es dennoch, und gelingt seine Absicht, dann kann es sich eben doch nicht um blosses Nüsseknacken handeln. Oder es handelt sich um Nüsseknacken, aber es stellt sich heraus, dass wir über diese Kunst hinweggesehen haben, weil wir sie glatt beherrschen" (E 270-1)

Could this not be a description of Kafka's artistic wish? Is this perhaps the table, which he is hammering together, and yet doing nothing, "... wodurch ja das Hämmern noch kühner, noch entschlossener, noch wirklicher, und, wenn du willst, noch irrsinniger geworden ist." (B 294)

The ultimate judgement which could be passed on Kafka's works would be the author's assessment of himself. He defended the negative nature of his writings in these words:

Es ist nicht Trägheit, böser Wille, Ungeschicklichkeit - wenn auch von alledem etwas dabei ist, weil "das Ungeziefer aus dem Nichts geboren wird" - welche mir alles misslingen oder nicht einmal misslingen lassen: Familienleben, Freundschaft, Ehe, Beruf, Literatur, sondern es ist der Mangel des Bodens, der Luft, des Gebotes. Diese zu schaffen ist meine Aufgabe, nicht damit ich dann das Versäumte etwa nachholen kann, sondern damit ich nichts versäumt habe, denn die Aufgabe ist so gut wie eine andere. Es ist sogar die ursprünglichste Aufgabe, oder zumindest ihr Abglanz, so wie man beim Ersteigen einer luftdünnen Höhe plötzlich in den Schein der fernen Sonne treten kann. Es ist das auch keine ausnahmsweise Aufgabe, sie ist gewiss schon oft gestellt worden. Ob allerdings in solchem Ausmass; weiss ich nicht. Ich habe von den Erfordernissen des Lebens gar nichts mitgebracht, so viel ich weiss, sondern nur die allgemeine menschliche Schwäche. Mit dieser - in dieser Hinsicht ist es eine riesenhafte Kraft - habe ich das Negative meiner Zeit, die mir ja sehr nahe ist, die ich nie zu bekämpfen, sondern gewissermassen zu vertreten das Recht habe, kräftig aufgenommen. An dem geringen Positiven sowie an dem Äussersten, zum Positiven umkippenden Negativen, hatte ich keinen ererbten Anteil. Ich bin nicht von der allerdings schon schwer sinkenden Hand des Christentums ins Leben geführt worden wie Kierkegaard und habe nicht den letzten Zipfel des davonfliegenden jüdischen Gebetmantels noch gefangen wie die Zionisten. Ich bin Ende ohne Anfang. (H 121)

The only way in which a discussion of Kafka's literature could be completed would be to quote a single, self-contained line from the notebooks:

"Nichts davon, quer durch die Worte kommen Reste
von Licht."

(H 293)

APPENDIX

The following textual comparison of a passage from "F" with passages from the notebooks is intended to illustrate the process by which Kafka's views became literature, and to show how the descriptions in the literature are often developments of a basic picture or concept, and represent differing outlooks towards this basic picture.

"F":

"Man rühmt oft den allgemeinen Fortschritt der Hundeschaft durch die Zeiten und meint damit wohl hauptsächlich den Fortschritt der Wissenschaft. Gewiss, die Wissenschaft schreitet fort, das ist unaufhaltsam, sie schreitet sogar mit Beschleunigung fort, immer schneller, aber was ist daran zu rühmen? Es ist so, als wenn man jemanden deshalb rühmen wollte, weil er mit zunehmenden Jahren

Notebooks:

"An Fortschritt glauben heisst nicht glauben, dass ein Fortschritt schon geschehen ist. Das wäre kein Glauben."
(H 44)
"Das entscheidend Charakteristische dieser Welt ist ihre Vergänglichkeit. In diesem Sinn haben Jahrhunderte nichts vor dem augenblicklichen Augenblick voraus. Die Kontinuität der Vergäng-

Älter wird und infogedessen immer schneller den Tod sich nähert. Das ist ein natürlicher und überdies ein hässlicher Vorgang, an dem ich nichts zu rühmen finde. Ich sehe nur Verfall, wobei ich aber nicht meine, dass frühere Generationen im Wesen besser waren, sie waren nur jünger, das war ihr grosser Vorzug, ihr Gedächtnis war noch nicht so überlastet wie das heutige, es war noch leichter, sie zum Sprechen zu bringen, und wenn es auch niemanden gelungen ist, die Möglichkeit war grösser, diese grössere Möglichkeit ist ja das, was uns beim Anhören jener alten, doch eigentlich einfältigen Geschichten so

lichkeit kann also keinen Trost geben; dass neues Leben aus den Ruinen blüht, beweist weniger die Ausdauer des Lebens als des Todes." (H 115)

The above comparisons bring out the negative aspects of existence in the light of past "progress". The use of the adjectives "alt" and "jung" with "Generationen", is leading to the parallel development of individual youth and age, and racial, or historical, youth and age, the idea being that in both stages of youth, the possibility of seeing the truth about existence is greater. The present is worse than

erregt. Hie und da hören wir ein andeutendes Wort und möchten fast aufspringen, fühlten wir nicht die Last der Jahrhunderte auf uns. Nein, was ich auch gegen meine Zeit einzuwenden habe, die früheren Generationen waren nicht besser als die neueren, ja, im gewissen Sinn waren sie viel schlechter und schwächer. Die Wunder gingen freilich auch damals nicht frei über die Gassen zum beliebigen Einfangen, aber die Hunde waren, ich kann es nicht anders ausdrücken, noch nicht so hündisch wie heute, das Gefüge der Hundeschaft war noch locker, das wahre Wort hätte damals noch eingreifen, den Bau bestimmen, umstimmen, nach jedem Wunsche ändern, in sein Gegenteil verkehren

the past, because the only childhood left is that of the individual.

"Die Kette der Generationen ist nicht die Kette deines Wesens und doch sind Beziehungen vorhanden. - Welche? - Die Generationen sterben wie die Augenblicke deines Lebens.-Worin liegt der Unterschied?" (H 113)

The "greater possibility" of youth is expressed succinctly in another passage:

"Die Grundschwäche des Menschen besteht nicht etwa darin, dass er nicht siegen, sondern dass er den Sieg nicht ausnützen kann. Die Jugend besiegt alles, den Urtrug, die versteckte Teufelei, aber es ist niemand da, der den Sieg auffangen könnte, denn dann ist die Jugend schon vorüber. Das Alter wagt an den Sieg nicht mehr zu rühren und die neue Jugend, gequält von dem gleich einsetzenden neuen Angriff, will ihren eigenen Sieg. So wird der Teufel zwar immerfort besiegt, aber niemals vernichtet." (H 318)

können und jenes Wort war da, war zumindest nahe, schwebte auf der Zungenspitze, jeder konnte es erfahren; wo ist es heute hingekommen, heute könnte man schon ins Gekröse greifen und würde es nicht finden. Unsere Generation ist vielleicht verloren, aber sie ist unschuldiger als die damalige. Das Zögern meiner Generation kann ich verstehen, es ist das Vergessen eines vor tausend Nächten geträumten und tausendmal vergessenen Traumes, wer will uns gerade wegen des tausendsten Vergessens zürnen? Aber auch das Zögern unserer Urväter glaube ich zu verstehen, wir hätten wahrscheinlich nicht anders gehandelt, fast möchte ich sagen: Wohl uns, dass nicht

The parallel between individual and historical development is drawn quite strongly by the narrator of "F", but he does not apply it directly to his situation in the present. He is able to exonerate the present generation from guilt, at the same time saying that the actions of past generations were inevitable, but he does not complete the analogy by saying that his fellows are equally guiltless as individuals.

That his ancestors wandered from the path, lost sight of the deceit of the world, began to enjoy life for its own sake, is unfortunate. The narrator is able to reach a measure of objectivity when he discusses the past. The present is a different case, however. When he tried to take his fellows to the scene of his encounter with the Musical Dogs, to tell them of his vision of complete life, they shake him off, and laugh at him.

Thus the narrator, who finds life unendurable, and who is surrounded by others who neither share nor respect his feelings, can not bring himself to extend forgiveness to his fellows of the present.

The course taken by past generations as described in "F", and the attitude of the narrator - "Ich sehe nur Verfall", - are descriptions springing from Kafka's basic picture of the world:

"Das Verführungsmittel

wir es waren, die Schuld auf uns laden mussten, dass wir vielmehr in einer von anderen verfinsterten Welt in fast schuldlosem Schweigen dem Tode zueilen dürfen. Als unsere Urväter abirrten, dachten sie wohl kaum an ein endloses Irren, sie sahen ja förmlich noch den Kreuzweg, es war leicht, wann immer zurückzukehren, und wenn sie zurückzukehren, zögerten, so nur deshalb, weil sie noch eine kurze Zeit sich des Hundelebens freuen wollten, es war noch gar kein eigentümliches Hundeleben und schon schien es ihnen berauschend schön, wie musste es erst später werden, wenigstens noch ein kleines Weilchen später, und so irrten sie

dieser Welt sowie das Zeichen der Bürgerschaft, dafür, dass diese Welt nur ein Übergang ist, ist das gleiche. Mit Recht, denn nur so kann uns diese Welt verführen und es entspricht der Wahrheit. Das Schlimmste ist aber, dass wir nach geglückter Verführung die Bürgerschaft vergessen und so eigentlich das Gute uns ins Böse, der Blick der Frau in ihr Bett gelockt hat.
(H 53)

There are many variations and developments of this basic picture in the notebooks. Three of them will be given here. The final passage would represent the narrator in "F", and, no doubt, Kafka himself:

"Ich war völlig verirrt in einem Wald. Unverständlich verirrt, denn noch vor kurzem war ich zwar nicht auf einem Weg, aber in der Nähe des Weges gegangen, der mir auch immer sichtbar gewesen war. Nun aber war ich verirrt, der Weg war verschwunden, alle Versuche, ihn wiederzufinden, waren misslungen. Ich setzte mich auf einen Baumstumpf und wollte meine Lage überdenken, aber ich war zerstreut, dachte immer an anderes als an das Wichtigste, träumte an den Sorgen vorbei. Dann fielen mir die reichbehängten

weiter. Sie wussten nicht,
 was wir bei Betrachtung
 des Geschichtsverlaufes
 ahnen können, dass die
 Seele sich früher wandelt
 als das Leben, und dass
 sie, als sie das Hunde-
 leben zu freuen begann,
 schon eine recht alt-
 hündische Seele haben muss-
 ten, und gar nicht mehr
 so nahe dem Ausgangspunkt
 waren, wie ihnen schien,
 oder wie ihr in
 allen Hundefreuden
 schwelgendes Auge sie
 glauben machen wollte. -
 Wer kann heute
 noch von Jugend
 sprechen? Sie waren die
 eigentlichen jungen Hunde,
 aber ihr einziger Ehrgeiz
 war leider darauf gerichtet,
 alte Hunde zu werden, etwas,
 was ihnen freilich
 nicht misslingen

Heidelbeerpflanzen
 rings um mich auf, ich
 pflückte von ihnen und
 ass".
 (H 268)

"Er singt im Chor.-
 Wir lachten viel. Wir
 waren jung, der Tag war
 schön, die hohen Fenster
 des Korridors führten
 auf einen unübersehbaren
 blühenden Garten. Wir
 lehnten in den offenen,
 den Blick und uns selbst
 ins Weite tragenden
 Fenstern. Manchmal sagte
 der hinter uns auf und
 abgehender Diener ein
 Wort, das uns zur Ruhe
 mahnen sollte, wir
 verstanden ihn kaum, nur
 an seinen auf den steinernen
 Fliesen tönenden Schritt
 erinnere ich mich, an
 den von Ferne warnenden
 Klang."
 (H 301)

"Es ist keine öde
 Mauer, es ist zur Mauer
 zusammengepresstes süssestes
 Leben, Rosinentrauben an
 Rosinentrauben."-"Ich
 glaube es nicht."-"Koste
 davon."-"Ich kann vor Nicht-
 glauben die Hand nicht
 heben."-"Ich werde dir
 die Traube zum Mund reichen."
 -"Ich kann sie vor Nicht-

konnte, wie alle
folgenden Generationen
bewiesen, und unsere, die
letzte, am besten."

(B 267-9)

glauben nicht schmecken."-
"Dann versinke!"- "Sagte
ich nicht, dass man vor
der Öde dieser Mauer ver-
sinken muss?"

(H 331)

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Secondary Materials:

The following works of criticism were examined for the purposes of the foregoing study. Except for Professor Emrich's book, perhaps the most complete assessment of Kafka's literature which has so far appeared, the works listed below were selected as being representative of the many approaches to Kafka's writings. The criticisms range from a psychoanalytical interpretation of Der Prozess (Erich Fromm), to a suggested improvement of the chapter sequence and structure of Der Prozess and Amerika (H. Uyttersprot).

More complete bibliographies of Kafka criticism can be found in Franz Kafka Today pp. 251-85, in Emrich's Franz Kafka pp. 429-40, both of which are listed below, and in:
 Hemmerle, Rudolf. Franz Kafka, eine Bibliographie. München: Robert Lerche-Verlag, 1958.

Beissner, Friedrich. Franz Kafka der Dichter. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1958.

Emrich, Wilhelm. "Franz Kafka", in: Deutsche Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert, hrsg. von Hermann Friedmann und Otto Mann, Heidelberg: Wolfgang Rothe Verlag, 1954, pp. 230-48.

----- . Franz Kafka. Bonn: Athenäum-Verlag, 1958.

Flores, Angel., and Homer Swander (editors), and others. Franz Kafka Today. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1958.

Fromm, Erich. The Forgotten Language. London: Gollancz, 1952, pp. 213-24.

Grenzmann, Wilhelm. Dichtung und Glaube. Probleme und Gestalten der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur. 2., ergänzte Auflage. Bonn: Athenäum-Verlag, 1952, pp. 142-63.

Heller, Erich. The Disinherited Mind. Philadelphia: Dufours, 1953, pp. 157-81.

Kayser, Wolfgang. Das Grotteske. Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung. Oldenburg und Hamburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1957, pp. 149-61.

Uyttersprot, H. Eine neue Ordnung der Werke Kafkas?
Zur Struktur von "Der Prozess" und "Amerika".
Antwerp: C. de Vries - Brouwers, 1957.