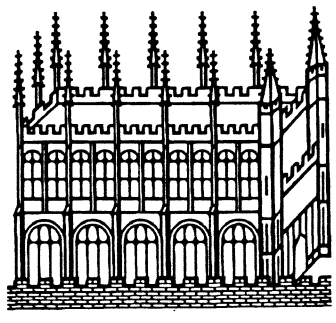
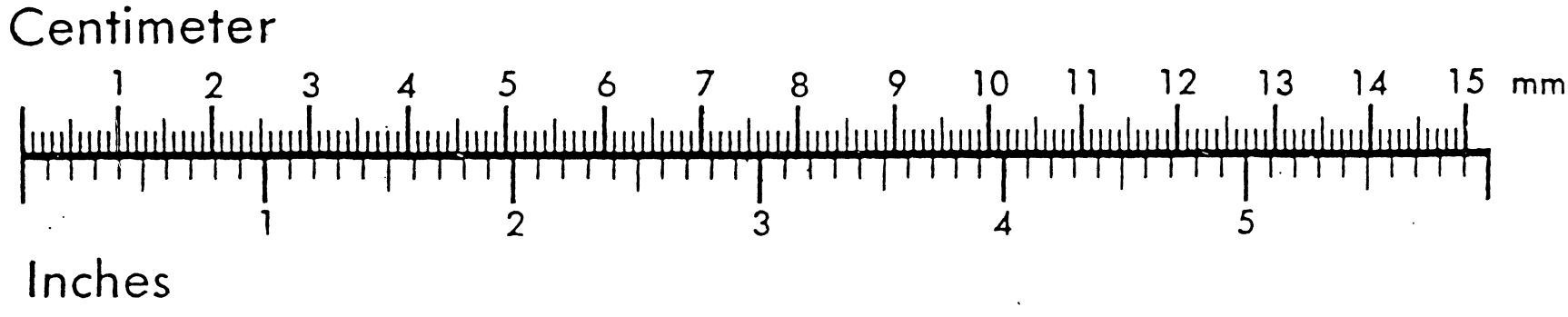
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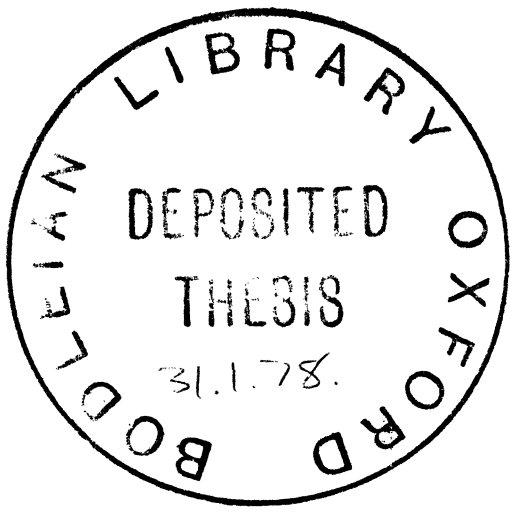
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Franz Kafka's relation to Judaism

Thesis submitted to the University of Oxford
for the degree of D.Phil.

by

Anne Oppenheimer



Lady Margaret Hall
Oxford

Trinity Term
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Introduction

This thesis aims to examine Kafka's life and work in relation to what is arguably the crucial factor in his complex historical, cultural, literary and religious background. The particular relevance of his Jewishness is a subject that has occasionally been discussed in the study of Kafka; attention has been drawn to it especially by his Jewish contemporaries and friends, but the issues involved in it have not yet received exhaustive investigation.

The main part of my thesis is devoted to the subject of Kafka's interest in Jewish mysticism, notably its Hasidic form, in the later years of his life. It shows how his search to regain a sense of participation in Jewish tradition, combined with religious impulses deeply inclined towards an esoteric spirituality, led him to practise his art in the light of this interest as a religious pursuit with unmistakably mystical intent.

What I hope also becomes clear from my work is the course of individual development by which growing concern for his relation to Jewish tradition led Kafka to deeper appreciation of his historical situation, and guided his increasing sense of moral and spiritual commitment to his time, despite (or because of?) the deficiencies he perceived in it, in a 'task' undertaken through the medium of his art.

In selecting nine stories from the Landarzt collection for commentary in the final chapter, I have chosen to concentrate on a crucial period in Kafka's literary development that began in 1916/17, when his continuing, earnest assessment of his position as a Jew had an evident influence upon his choice of narrative subject and technique. The stories have been considered not in the published sequence of the Landarzt collection, but in an order that seems appropriate to discussion of various aspects of their Jewish content.

Where possible, my commentaries upon these stories are related to themes previously identified in discussion of the Oktavhefte, which were begun soon after the collection was completed and contain the chief evidence of Kafka's growing mystical pre-occupations.

I wish to express my gratitude for the award of a grant from the Jewish Memorial Foundation, which made it possible to further my research in Israel. This enabled me to find the Hasidic stories in Das jüdische Echo, which Kafka knew (see p. 118ff.); four hitherto unpublished letters from Kafka to Martin Buber, described in Appendix A (see p. 292ff.); and some details of Kafka's acquaintance with the writer and former Hasid, Jiří Langer, described in Appendix B (see p. 301ff.). As far as I am aware, all these items add small but significant new details to what is known about Kafka; and they support the evidence of the importance of Jewish associations and influences in his life and work. For similar reasons, I am grateful to Schocken Books for permission to quote from the Kafka manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, on pp. 205, 206 and 286.

I also wish to thank Mrs. Nelly Engel for sharing her memories of Kafka with me, and am very grateful to Professor Chimen Abramsky for his interest and assistance in my work. I particularly wish to express my thanks to my typist, Mrs. Daphne Bartrum, for her part in producing this thesis, and to Mr. J.M.S. Pasley for his always patient, wise and generous supervision.

Lady Margaret Hall
July, 1977

A.O.

Abstract

Chapter 1: **The dilemma of the Western Jew in the 19th. century and after - the historical and contemporary background to Kafka's problematic rediscovery of Jewish tradition.**

Illustrious past of the Prague Jewish community; its decline by the late nineteenth century; upheaval, divergence of belief and confused sense of Jewish identity as the aftermath of emancipation of the Jews.

Significant developments in European Jewry prior to emancipation: Shabbetai Zevi, Jacob Frank; Spinoza; Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment); association of Kabbalah with Prague Jewish community; Hasidism opposed in Eastern Eruope by proponents of Haskalah.

The emancipation of 1782 and after; its impact upon the Prague community during the nineteenth century; break in Jewish tradition, and psychological tensions suffered by many Jews in consequence; crisis in traditional concept of Jewish identity; changed aspect of traditional Messianic belief.

Jewish responses to emancipation, Enlightenment and admission to Christian society; Moses Mendelssohn; assimilationist tendencies fostered in Haskalah movements; baptism among Jews - Rahel Varnhagen, Heinrich Heine, et al.; various individual responses to the post-emancipation dilemma of the Western Jew - Fritz Mauthner; Gustav Landauer; Sigmund Freud - and points of comparison between them and Kafka.

Major Jewish intellectual movements in response to the nineteenth-century situation: Haskalah, Wissenschaft des Judentums, the Reform Movement; Kafka at the Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1923-24; Zionism.

Martin Buber - interpreter of Hasidism to the West; through his influence the gap between Eastern and Western Jewry begins to be bridged; Buber in

Prague; impact of the First World War on resurgent Jewish consciousness; Buber's leadership; Der Jude, periodical founded in 1916.

Chapter 2: A biographical outline of Kafka's relation to Judaism - the main stages of Jewish influence upon Kafka's vision, using evidence from his letters and diaries.

Marriage versus literature as irreconcilable alternatives in Kafka's quest to regain a sense of participation in Jewish tradition.

German-Jewish Prague in Kafka's generation; Judaism as an issue in Kafka's Brief an den Vater; beginning of the life-long friendship between Kafka, Brod and Weltsch in 1902; first signs of Kafka's involvement in 'the Jewish question' first encounter with the Yiddish theatre, 1911; review of Brod's Jüdinnen, 1911

Interview with Rudolf Steiner, 1911: Kafka's search for a spiritual discipline or system to accommodate his literary investigations.

The impact upon Kafka of the Yiddish theatre and his first encounter with Eastern European Jewish life; the stimulus to his inquiry into the nature and problems of Jewish identity, and exploration of Jewish history and tradition; Schema zur Charakteristik kleiner Literaturen, 1911: the role of the writer and literature in national culture and tradition; the beginning of Kafka's relationship with Felice Bauer; the writing of Das Urteil in a Jewish context; the close relationship between literature and Judaism in Kafka's life from 1911/12 onward.

The war: Kafka's further acquaintance with Eastern European Jewish life through meeting refugees in Prague; meeting with Jiří Langer, and visits with him to two Hasidic rabbis in 1915 and 1916.

Diagnosis of Kafka's tuberculosis, followed by the final break with Felice Bauer in late 1917; Kafka's reaction to this crisis in the inter-related spheres of literature and Judaism; intensification of his literary and spiritual quest, and of his interest in Kabbalah and Hasidism.

Kafka's relation to Judaism, and the relation between Judaism and his writing, as discussed in his letters to Jewish friends and Milena Jesenská after 1917; Jewish writers' hopeless search for 'new ground': 'eine von allen Seiten unmögliche Literatur'; the place of Kafka's Jewishness in his relationship with Milena.

1922: indications of Kafka's looking toward Jewish tradition, especially Jewish mystical tradition, for the revitalization of German-Jewish literature; the need for a new spiritual impulse from Jewish traditional roots; Kafka's apparent admission of defeat, and sense of being a Jewish exile.

Kafka's Jewish ideal of domestic life, and reference to writing as a pathetic, artificial replacement for it; his relationship with the Hasidic Jewess, Dora Dymant, during the last year of his life.

Kafka's attitude to Zionism and prospects of emigration to Palestine; his apparent scepticism regarding the Zionist endeavour; his unwillingness to undertake a journey to the Holy Land, since he apparently considered himself spiritually unsuitable for it; his declining the opportunity to go symbolizes his recognition of human imperfection and the sense of a spiritual ideal that was not for him to attain.

Chapter 3: Prophetic undertones in Kafka's letters and journals

'Kampf' and 'Aufgabe': further consideration of Kafka's inner conflict over the irreconcilable ideals of marriage versus literature; imagery used by Kafka in discussing the problems and impossibilities of his relationships with

women reflects the development of his Jewish consciousness when he ironically compares himself with Jewish Volksführer figures - the prophets, and the patriarch Abraham; Kafka's characteristic use of reversal and the absurd in these comparisons, expressing the state of division within himself with regard to quasi-'heroic' spiritual ideals that lie beyond his reach.

Kafka's analysis of his condition of alienation from Jewish religious tradition and community, likewise using imagery with distinct Jewish connotations - the wilderness and the Promised Land; failure to gain the 'Promised Land' of a positive relation to Judaism through woman and Jewish family life is again expressed through the reversal of a Jewish image in the 'umgekehrter Wüstenweg' away from Canaan and into the wilderness, the place of exile.

The image of the prophet, and above all the ambiguousness of the prophet's marginal position in the community, perhaps the only appropriate and possible accommodation for Kafka in the Jewish sphere, owing to his profound complex of ambivalence toward Jewish ideals, community and tradition, and sense of entrenched alienation from them.

Kafka's sense of his relation to his time and negative relation to Judaism the self-imposed task of re-creating for himself the life-giving 'law' of which he was deprived; his corresponding sense of being 'Anfang oder Ende' in a time of spiritual decline; in claiming the task of regenerating the 'law' and in claiming to represent the negative aspects of his time, Kafka asserts possessio of certain exceptional powers; these could be associated with the characteristi prophetic tasks of warning and exhorting the people to return to God's law, and standing as a mirror to the defects of the generation.

The limits to Kafka's claim; aspects in which he might be described as

the opposite of the Old Testament prophet - the 'anti-prophet' of a solipsism opposed to the Jewish principles of faith in divine Revelation and knowledge of God through creative, righteous living within the community.

Kafka's Jewish sense of history: its implications for his art in terms of Jewish values; the religious significance of language as an element of Jewish historical consciousness; it is consistent with this that Kafka should seek 'salvation' by linguistic means, possibly hoping to construct through it a personal substitute for a sacred literature which is the receptacle of spiritual truth.

Chapter 4: An outline of the major features of the Kabbalah and Hasidism preliminary to investigation of their reflection in Kafka's thinking from 1917 - reference is made where possible to sources on the subject that Kafka knew.

Decline of the Kabbalah in the West after the 18th. century, a situation only beginning to alter in Kafka's generation.

General definition and broad characteristics of Kabbalah, the secret doctrine of Jewish mysticism; brief description of the Kabbalists' conception of the sacred or mystical qualities of language, and of the sacred or mystical text.

Outline of the cosmological concepts and images of Lurianic Kabbalah (one of the historically most influential developments of Kabbalist thought, which originated in the 16th. century).

Consideration of aspects of Hasidism, which arose in Eastern Europe in the 18th. century as a new offshoot of Lurianic Kabbalah: its mystical values; social organization of the Hasidic community; the Hasidic tradition of the sacred anecdote, parable and story-telling; basic characteristics of the Hasidic tale.

Chapter 5: The influence of Kabbalah and Hasidism on Kafka's thinking from 1917.

Difficulty in accepting traditional Judaism perhaps a factor which led Kafka in the direction of esoteric religion; mystical elements available to him before acquaintance with Kabbalah.

Published information on Kabbalah known or possessed by Kafka; stimulus received via Brod in 1921; Kafka's apparent comparison between himself and Josef Caro (leading 16th.-century Kabbalist); first-hand acquaintance with Hasidism gained through Jiří Langer; analysis of Hasidic stories in Das jüdische Echo; probable reasons for their appeal to him in the context of his situation in September, 1917, and signs of their reflection in his writing.

Kafka's re-interpretation of his spiritual task in relation to 'the world' in which redemption of the latter embraces the goal of personal salvation according to a fundamentally esoteric outlook; evidence of kabbalistic influence in Kafka's use of the term 'das Unzerstörbare', apparently designating both the world and the 'soul'; and in discussion of the qualitative change of consciousness described as the transition from 'Diesseits' to 'Jenseits'; spiritual regeneration through the metaphorical death of creative 'self-destruction' and self-transcendence; Good and Evil; Paradise, the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life; paradoxical reconciliation of opposites and dualistic perception on a superior level of spiritual existence; the image of the 'Wagen'.

Kafka's re-assessment of his relation to the human community, showing the apparent influence of Hasidic values: the spiritual struggle as a communal task; this and 'das Unzerstörbare' as universal factors binding the human community together; humility; writing as a form of prayer, reflecting the Hasidic concept of prayer; the possibility that Kafka sought in his own way

to emulate the model of the zaddik, the Hasidic holy man and leader of the spiritual community; a double echo of the kabbalistic belief in the mystical significance and potency of language in contemplative prayer.

Chapter 6: Jewish elements in the 'Landarzt' cycle.

Ein Landarzt: Kafka's dedication of the entire cycle of this name indicates its Jewish significance for him; Hasidic antecedents of the story Ein Landarzt: detailed description, and analysis of Kafka's modification of themes derived from them in his story; numerous esoteric implications in the themes of the story reflected and worked out subsequently in the meditations of the Oktavhefte.

Ein altes Blatt: published in the Selbstwehr for the Jewish New Year, 1921; significance of this religious festival, and its implications for interpretation of the story; narrative details derived from the Book of Jeremiah and implications of Kafka's discreet travesty of this prophetic antecedent; comment upon two details in the Bodleian MS., one of which could be evidence of Kafka's growing sense of affinity with kabbalistic elements.

Ein Traum: published in Das jüdische Prag, 1917; symbolically implies Kafka's acknowledgement of responsibility to combined principles of 'art' and 'Judaism', and whatever spiritual element they shared.

Vor dem Gesetz: Published in Selbstwehr for the Jewish New Year, 1915; reflection of traditional Jewish imagery as in sources known to Kafka, including Buber's Die Legende des Baalschem; written directly after Ein Traum, and probably concerned with the consequences of failure to make a direct commitment to Judaism, as opposed to an alternative position (e.g. art?) 'seitwärts von der Tür'.

Eine kaiserliche Botschaft: Published in Selbstwehr for Jewish New Year, 1919; Jewish derivation of imagery; form as 'legend', and implications of this concerning the nature of tradition; remarkable capacity for esoteric interpretation as a 'mystical' text.

Die Sorge des Hausvaters: fundamental theme of 'hidden truth'; may be interpreted in an esoteric context, which is concerned with the ultimately unknowable mysteries of the soul; characteristics comparable with those of the mystical text; possible realization, in Kafka's terms, of 'Schreiben als Form des Gebetes'. Published in Selbstwehr for Hanukkah, 1919.

Der neue Advokat: discreetly and mildly satirizes Kafka's situation and experience as a modern Western Jew; imagery related to traditional Jewish Alexander legends.

Schakale und Araber: Published in Der Jude, 1917; fantasy and satirical comment upon aspects of the contemporary Zionist debate.

Ein Bericht für eine Akademie: Published in Der Jude, 1917; related to fundamental aspects of theme and imagery in the story Ein Landarzt; element of satire on contemporary Jewish assimilationism; theme of spiritual guilt and the Fall from Paradise, deliberately concealed, as comparison with the Bodleian MS. shows; but clearly related to discussion of the same theme in the Oktavhefte.

Appendices

A: Kafka and Martin Buber: Kafka's acquaintance and correspondence with Martin Buber, including description of and quotation from four hitherto unpublished letters from Kafka in the Jerusalem Martin Buber Archive. Kafka's basically ambivalent feelings toward Buber and his work.

B: Jiří Langer: biographical notes on the Czech writer and former Hasid, a friend and apparently kindred spirit of Kafka's. Translations of a poem by Langer in memoriam Kafka, and of recollections of Kafka published by him in Hebrew.

C: The Jewish family: its religious values: information complementary to comments on Kafka's longing for a Jewish wife and home; indications of its reflection in his attitude to his literary work.

D: The Old Testament concept of the prophet: fundamental aspects of this concept, complementary to the discussion in Chapter 3.

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Chapter 1.

'...mein Volk, vorausgesetzt, dass ich eines habe.'
Briefe, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1958, p.183.

The dilemma of the Western Jew in the nineteenth century and after.

Franz Kafka was born in Prague in 1883, in a house on the border of the Jewish ghetto. During his childhood the ghetto was being cleared to make way for a modern sanitation scheme; for those who watched its disappearance, it must have symbolized the disintegration of a community and a tradition which, according to legend, had existed in Prague since the time of Joshua, Son of Nun. History recognizes the Jews' presence there from the middle of the tenth century, or before. Prague subsequently became one of the most revered communities of European Jewry, a centre of rabbinic learning and mystical tradition situated between North and South, East and West, joined by Jews from all over Europe from the Balkans and even the Near East, and was the home of outstanding Jewish scholars; and in 1512 it became the first city north of the Alps where Hebrew books were printed. Its Hebrew press remained active until the threshold of the nineteenth century. When Prague became the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, the Jewish community was favoured. The statue of Kaiser Rudolf II's contemporary, the Great Rabbi Loew of Prague, is now an emblem of the city; and the famous legend of his golem commemorates the past Jewish community's glory and status on the map of European culture - for Rabbi Loew, who was born in Posen around 1512 and died in Prague in 1609, was Chief Rabbi of both cities in turn, and his family, disciples and teachings were renowned throughout Europe. He was an outstanding Talmud scholar, but the mysticism of the Kabbalah was also essential to his thought. It is perhaps this element in his work (and in Prague's Jewish tradition) that is celebrated in the legend of the golem[1].

By the time of Kafka's youth, the ghetto was more real in memory than in fact. Gustav Janouch records Kafka's tribute to it towards the end

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1. See Friedrich Thieberger.: The Great Rabbi Loew of Prague, London, 1955, Chajim Bloch: Der Prager Golem, Berlin, 1920; Gerschom Scholem: On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, London, 1965, pp. 158-204.

of his life:

> Die ungesunde alte Judenstadt in uns ist viel wirklicher als die hygienische neue Stadt um uns. Wachend gehen wir durch einen Traum: selbst nur ein Spuk vergangener Zeiten. (Gustav Janouch: Gespräche mit Kafka,[1] Frankfurt-am-Main, 1968. p.116.)

which echoes Kafka's diary entry of 24th October, 1911: 'Ich glaube, dass nur noch Erinnerungen an das Getto die jüdische Familie erhalten'. (Kafka: Tagebücher, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1967[2], p.83.) Like many entries in Kafka's diaries, it observes and contrasts the memory and the actuality of Jewish existence, with the characteristic blend of wistfulness and irony, verging not infrequently on desperation, with which he reflects on 'mein Volk, vorausgesetzt, dass ich eines habe.' (Kafka: Briefe, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1958[3], p.183). Kafka regarded himself as a paradigm of the spiritual isolation of the Western Jew of his time.

Their grandparents' life inside the ghetto, or the Czech villages from which the 'Übergangsgeneration' had migrated to the capital, was unknown to children like the young Kafka. When he came to know life in the Bohemian countryside, it was to have a lasting fascination for him, representing an existence still based on living traditions in a community such as he longed for - although he never wrote on the theme without a measure of the irony he applied to the subject of traditional religion and society. Both Kafka's parents were of provincial origin. His father moved to Prague and entered the commercial life that was now open to Jews, abandoning his Czech tongue for the social advantages of German. Kafka's mother came of a family with a tradition of rabbinic scholarship - but Hebrew remained unknown to many Jewish children of Kafka's generation; and one of Kafka's strongest reproaches to his father in the letter of 1919 was his failure to rear his son with adequate knowledge of, and

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1. Henceforth referred to in this thesis by the abbreviation J.
2. Henceforth referred to by the abbreviation T.
3. Henceforth referred to by the abbreviation Br.

reverence for, the faith and ritual of Judaism. According to Kafka, his father, like many others, had preferred to ignore his Jewish background, within the limits of a respectable, Jewish middle-class outlook[1].

Writing to Max Brod in 1921, Kafka directly relates the problem of 'fathers and sons' to the creativity of the modern German Jewish writer:

> Besser als die Psychoanalyse gefällt mir in diesem Fall die Erkenntnis, dass dieser Vaterkomplex, von dem sich mancher geistig nährt, nicht den unschuldigen Vater, sondern das Judentum des Vaters betrifft. Weg vom Judentum, meist mit unklarer Zustimmung der Väter (diese Unklarheit war das Empörende), wollten die meisten, die deutsch zu schreiben anfingen, sie wollten es, aber mit den Hinterbeinchen klebten sie noch am Judentum des Vaters und mit den Vorderbeinchen fanden sie keinen neuen Boden. Die Verzweiflung darüber war ihre Inspiration. (Kafka: Br.337)

What had caused the isolation of so many Jews of Kafka's generation, the disintegration of the ghetto and the tensions Kafka describes within the Jewish family? And what made Kafka, the 'enterbter Sohn' (H.205) of religion, tradition and community as multi-national as that of Jewish Prague in former centuries, call himself 'der westjüdischeste' of all?[2]

The answers must be sought in the events and conditions that had affected the social and intellectual life of German-speaking Jews from the end of the eighteenth century, whence most of the religious, social and psychological problems and pre-occupations of Jews in, and since, the nineteenth century derived their particular character. They amounted to a crisis of religious and national consciousness - which, for a people united not so much geographically and politically as by their faith, were inseparable elements in the traditional concept of Jewish identity.

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1. See Kafka: Hochzeitsvorbereitungen, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1953, pp.197-202. This volume is henceforth referred to by the abbreviation H.

2. Kafka: Briefe an Milena, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1965, p.247. This volume is henceforth referred to by the abbreviation M.

The coming pages show something of the way in which German Jewish tradition and thought were affected by emancipation, the Enlightenment and their consequences. The general picture that emerges is one of upheaval, divergence and uncertainty, suffered through exposure to a new social environment, and secularizing forces which engendered profound ambiguities in Jewish attitudes to Judaism and Jews; these were complicated by efforts both to resist and to comply with the standards of Christian society.

In the period concerned, Prague Jewry, despite its geographical situation, was to a remarkable degree a German Jewry; conversely, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of which Prague had once been the capital,

> was of the utmost importance to the whole inner development of Jewish life and Judaism during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century because in this multinational state...there also emerged a unique mixture of Eastern and Western Jews...
>
> No evaluation of German-speaking Jewry is possible without regard to this important fact. Not only did the intellectual climate and the mutual influence of East and West create specific conditions for the transformation and modernisation of Jewish thinking but often the very men who later appeared as representatives of German Jewry were in fact geographically of Eastern origin.
> (Robert Weltsch (ed.): Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook[1] III, London, 1958, p.x.)

Lastly, it must be indicated that it is impossible here to deal with the subject of reciprocal influences between German and Jewish cultures during this period, a matter of great importance and complexity. I have concentrated on the problems of Judaism and Jewishness as considered by German Jews chosen as examples, and not on the Jews' assimilation of German culture, or the cross-fertilization of German thought or literature by Jewish influences. It is of greater concern here to observe the per-

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1. Henceforth abbreviated in this thesis as LBIY.

sistence in the Jewish mind of the messianic idea as expressed in the context of secularization, and in modern, socially and ethically orientated trends in Jewish thought; or the existence, often in the thought of one individual, of mystical elements alongside critical, sceptical, radical or outright revolutionary ideas in the fields of religion, philosophy, science, and socio-political theory. These characteristics may be encountered again in the work of Franz Kafka.

In observing the emergence of the modern 'Western Jew' it would be mistaken to assume that the legal emancipation begun in the late eighteenth century occurred as an historical bolt from the blue. Rather, it was an event that marked a crux of historical change within a continuous tradition. On the Jewish side, the preceding 150 years had seen the inflammation and disillusionment of messianic hopes in the mass mystical and heretical movements led by Shabbetai Zevi (1626-76) and Jacob Frank (1726-1791); it has been suggested that trends within these movements are related to the subsequent rise of rationalistic ideas within Judaism that gained strength after the emancipation during the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment). Orthodox Jewry was cleft apart by the Shabbetean episodes, a major blow in the shattering of united Jewish consciousness that continued throughout the nineteenth century; the credibility of traditional messianic beliefs faltered; and because of its irrationality and suspected associations with heresy, Jewish mysticism came to be viewed with such antagonism by the Orthodox as well as by the Maskilim (proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment) that in the West its tradition became discontinued.

Spinoza (1632-77) had taken the radical step of replacing the supremacy of religious tradition with principles of rational and scientific thought, and reduced Judaism from a question of religion to one of

nationality long before Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86) became the recognized father of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), or before the Maskilim continued questioning the traditions of Talmudic Judaism, Messianism and the concept of revealed religion, redrawing relationships and making distinctions between Jewish religion and nationality, faith and culture, Jewish nationhood and political identity.

The eighteenth century contributed to many changes and innovations engendered in the nineteenth once the turning-point of emancipation was accomplished. Frankist groups within the Jewish fold now played a significant role in reform and liberal movements - as was the case in Prague which had been, in the early nineteenth century, a centre of Frankist intellectual activity. Contemporaneously, the later eighteenth century was, as mentioned above, a period of controversy and upheaval regarding the Jewish mystical tradition, the Kabbalah.

Kabbalah had reached its height in the sixteenth century, under Isaac Luria (1534-72) and Moses Cordovero (1522-70) and the Safed School in Palestine, whence it extended to Western Europe and Poland. A major part in its dissemination was played by Isaiah Halevy Horowitz (c.1565-1630), a pupil of Rabbi Loew, and himself Rabbi of Prague from 1614-41. Mysticism had been part of Jewish tradition for centuries already in Prague which, in the thirteenth century, had received influences from Regensburg, city of the mystic Judah ha-Hasid, with an influx of immigrants to the ghetto from Germany. Another figure connected with Prague was Avigdor ben Isaac Kara (d.1439), who is regarded as the originator of a movement which aimed to find common ground between Eastern European Kabbalah and Spanish teachings. Kabbalah was studied by several Chief Rabbis of Prague from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries including Rabbi Loew, Horowitz, and David Oppenheim (1664-1736).

In Eastern Europe, mysticism flourished anew in Hasidism, the new popular mysticism founded by Israel Baal Schem Tov (c.1700-1760). Hasidism was opposed by both Orthodox and Maskilim for presumed Shabbetean and Frankist associations, and despised as a popular movement of the uneducated, which combined emphasis on emotional fervour and religious ecstasy with hostility to rabbinic authority. Ezekiel Landau (1713-1793), born in Poland, and Rabbi of Prague and Bohemia - one of the highest positions at the time - from 1754-93, was one of the most vigorous opponents of Hasidism, which he considered deviant from the authentic road of Judaism. He was the first to enter the attic in the Altneu Synagogue where the remains of Rabbi Loew's golem were supposed to lie; but he is said to have remained silent about what he did, or did not, find, and to have forbidden anyone else to go there. He was famed for arbitrating in the controversial dispute between Jonathan Eybeschütz (1690-1764) and Jacob Emden (1697-1776) over the former's suspected Shabbetean inclinations. Eybeschütz, later Rabbi of Hamburg, had studied in Prague, where he settled in 1715, becoming a famous preacher and head of the yeshivah (Talmud school) there.

Prague, then, by virtue of its geographical position and status as a centre of Jewish learning, had witnessed its share of the major developments in Judaism in the eighteenth century. The Eybeschütz dispute was the most controversial indication of tensions then at work in Jewish tradition; it reflected the rise of rationalism and the decline of Kabbalah in the West, both factors that clearly signalized the barrier arising between East and West in European Jewry, and the beginnings of intellectual, cultural and political pre-occupations that were typical of Jewish thought in the West during the nineteenth century.

As regards Christian attitudes in the West, the emancipation of the

Jews was partly the result of the rationally-based social, political and humanist values of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, values which the new Jewish citizens embraced from their first reception into western society. New economic and utilitarian ideas accompanied new moral and social attitudes: not only were Jews to be accepted as citizens, irrespective of creed, in accordance with the ideals of liberty and equality; they were to be assimilated as individuals with an economically useful contribution to make within their host society[1]. However, under the Enlightenment, policy towards the Jews was in sudden contrast to what it had generally been only a generation previously when - to use the example of Prague once more - heavy taxation, expulsion and compulsory restriction of the number and size of Jewish families had been the normal way of extracting maximum profit from the Jewish population at the cost of minimum competition. Under Maria Theresa, the Jews were banished from Bohemia and Moravia in 1745-8, but then allowed to return.

Joseph II inaugurated the emancipation in the Empire with the Toleranzpatent of 1782[2], designed to make Jews useful to the state within a modern economic system. Jews who founded manufacturing enterprises were allowed to settle outside the Jewish quarter. The use of Yiddish and Hebrew in business transactions was forbidden; Jews were obliged to take German names and encouraged to pursue a course of German and secular education. The process continued throughout the following century. The

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1. Royal and state treasuries had always maintained a special relationship with Jews. Those of Prague, like the rest in Europe, had been servi camerae regis since the thirteenth century, which entitled them, against payment of heavy taxes, to protective privileges from the sovereign. The 'Court Jew' was a familiar official of the absolute monarchs from the end of the sixteenth to the middle of the eighteenth century.

2. For discussion of emancipation and its effect upon the mentality of German Jewry, see H.D. Schmidt: 'The Terms of Emancipation 1781-1812', in LBIY I, London, 1956, pp. 28-45.

Jewish population of Prague - at around 10,000 still one of the largest in Europe[1] - was granted equal civil rights in 1848, and the process of legal emancipation was completed by 1868. The ghetto was abolished and incorporated as the fifth district of the city, renamed 'Josefstadt', in 1852. Half of Prague Jewry still inhabited it in 1870; by 1900, less than a quarter still resided there. The Jewish population of Bohemia concentrated increasingly in the capital; Jews were assimilated mainly into the middle class, in the commercial sector, as manufacturers of textiles, and as white-collar workers. That the Kafka family was of provincial origin and among later comers to the Prague community is reflected in their Czech name. They were typical of the migrants from rural existence and maintained tradition to urban life and neglect of tradition from motives of social ambition.

The Chief Rabbinate of Prague continued throughout the nineteenth century to be occupied by outstanding scholars, including Solomon Judah Rapoport (1840-67), Markus Hirsch, (1880-89) and Nathan Ehrenfeld (1890-1912); but the mainstream of Jewish life was no longer dominated by the rabbinate. It is of no small symbolic significance that the restoration of the Altneu Synagogue was completed in the year of Kafka's birth. By 1872 it had been in such bad condition that the elders requested funds from the community for repairs. These were refused; and ten years later the building was in such a dangerous state that the City Council forbade its use until the necessary work had been done; this was completed by 1883. It is said that during the restoration the remains of Rabbi Loew's golem were nowhere to be found in the attic[2]...

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1. Figures, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the entry Prague in the Jewish Encyclopaedia, Jerusalem, 1973.

2. Milada Vilimková: 'Seven hundred years of the Old-New Synagogue,' in Judaica Bohemiae V/i, Prague, 1969, pp. 72-83.

The tensions of Diaspora existence for German Jewry during the nineteenth century were initiated precisely by those innovations intended to bring the Jews into the world outside the ghetto as citizens of modern, secular society. Emancipation and the Haskalah were followed, in an environment where ancient prejudices persisted and new ones arose, not only by continued friction between Jewish and Christian society and authorities, but by strong divergences of opinion within the Jewish community itself, and for many, though not all, individual Jews, by acute psychological tensions. The continuation of traditions of Jewish learning focussed around this crisis, which was a crisis of Jewish identity. Its gravity lay in the fact that it was, inevitably, a crisis of belief - for the sense of Jewish identity is traditionally inseparable from religious community and the essence of Israel's calling as a nation 'holy unto God', where 'holiness' involves not only dedication to sacred duties, but also separation from all that is alien to them. Moreover, the sacred duty that divine purpose imposes upon Jews is a particular mission of fulfilling the laws of holiness in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, who will redeem Israel and rule in an age when the whole earth 'shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' To a considerable extent, therefore, tensions between Jewish and Gentile worlds are inbuilt in Judaism, for Jews see themselves as a people apart from, but also essentially part of, the community of nations which the Kingdom of God will ultimately unite.

Messianic expectations had been disillusioned in the eighteenth century; but at the end of that century the prevailing spirit of the European Enlightenment, with its rational and humanistic ideals, provided a common footing for reformer spirits on either side of the ghetto wall. This community of spirit is epitomized in German culture of the epoch in the

friendship between Lessing and his model for Nathan der Weise: Moses Mendelssohn.

In the conditions brought by emancipation, belief in the future coming of the Messiah to redeem Israel changed to expectation of a messianic era that would be for all mankind; progress in the western world, liberalism, emancipation, social reforms, and better educational opportunities were hailed as its harbingers. In time, Reform Judaism erased prayers for the return to Zion from the Prayer Book. Haskalah and reform increasingly tended to see their activity in spreading rational monotheism as a kind of messianic 'mission'. As time went on, however, experience led to awareness that the supposedly liberal tradition of bourgeois society fell far short of its promises. Anti-Semitism was sad proof of this, and the ambiguousness of their position in society was to lead many Jews

> to a much more general and more radical problem, namely, to questioning the relevance of the Western tradition as a whole. (Hannah Arendt (ed.): introd. to Walter Benjamin: Illuminations, Fontana, 1973, p.37.)

The spirit of reform commonly became more critical, radical and even revolutionary.

Moses Mendelssohn, the central figure of the Haskalah, opened the way for Jewish participation in German and European civilization through the gateway of the Enlightenment. Wishing to show that Judaism was compatible with rationalism, he transformed the traditional concept of the religion by refusing to recognize any article of faith save what unaided reason could discover (the existence of God, of Providence, and the immortality of the soul), truths common to all persuasions because of their common rationality; and by asserting that the essence of Judaism was

not revealed religion, but revealed law. The particularism of Jewish religion was thus overcome in favour of a denominator common to all rational humanity.

Following this example, the Haskalah supported the autonomy of reason and the rejection of dogma, rabbinic authority, and tradition. In religion, it placed central importance on Bible study. Its aim became the pursuit of general culture and the assimilation of western cultural values; with these goals before them, the Maskilim stressed the central value of secular learning and philosophy as means of rising to the highest spiritual level - which would elevate both the human and the social status of the Jew. Their belief in the efficacy and desirability of rational and secular education led them to discard Hebrew in favour of German. Mendelssohn produced a German translation of the Pentateuch. Many Maskilim identified themselves as Germans and adopted the view of the Christian Enlightenment - that religious belief was a matter for individual, voluntary choice. Jewish identity accordingly belonged to those who chose Judaism, and was not a question of nationality; patriotic identification was made with the state. Assimilationist Jews commonly described themselves as 'Germans of the Mosaic persuasion', denying affiliation to any Jewish group or community. By the end of the Haskalah period, the well-educated German Jew might actually pride himself on his lack of Hebrew and Jewish knowledge.

One corollary of assimilation was baptism, for which Anti-Semitism was commonly the incentive. Conversion was a phenomenon which continued throughout the nineteenth century. Three of Mendelssohn's children were converted, including Abraham, the father of the composer, who educated his children as Protestants to improve their social opportunities, and Dorothea, who married Friedrich Schlegel. In the words of Heine, who

became Lutheran in 1825 - and thereafter came increasingly to recognize and value his Jewishness - baptism was 'an entrance ticket to western civilization'[1]. Despite the idealism of the Age of Reason, many Jews eager to find a place in German culture and society discovered that Jewishness was a stigma that their Christian brethren seldom disregarded.

The aftermath of emancipation in Germany was complicated by taking place on a cultural watershed, where the Enlightenment was succeeded by Romanticism and the beginnings of modern nationalism. This was a disadvantage for emergent Jewish citizens, and it reinforced discrimination against them on the grounds that Jews could not belong to a German ethnic community. Nevertheless, the Jews, who had eagerly upheld the values and traditions of German classicism (and continued to do so), participated in the Romantic movement also. Here, at its beginning, they were represented by the admired Berlin Jewesses, Henriette Herz (1764-87), Dorothea Mendelssohn (1765-1839)and Rahel Varnhagen (1771-1833), Goethe's understanding acquaintance.

Rahel knew what suffering Jewishness could cost. She became a Protestant in 1814, yet she gradually came to terms with her Jewishness, and on her deathbed in 1833 acknowledged it with pride and gratitude[2].

Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne were among countless others who, dogged by the impossibility of being Jew and German, followed Rahel's example. Karl Marx, although Jewish on both parents' sides, came of a converted Christian family. For many Jews, as for Abraham Mendelssohn,

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1. cf. a wealthy Prague Jewish family in Kafka's generation: (Die Familie Grab) war so reich, dass sie sogar getauft war - was in Prag in gewissen Kreisen als die höchste soziale Stufe galt, die man erklimmen konnte...(Max Brod: Der Prager Kreis, Stuttgart, 1966, p. 204.)

2. Hannah Arendt: Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess, London, 1957, pp. 176-185.

conversion was neither more nor less than a matter of social convenience. By others it was undergone amid psychological torment, or became a source of cynicism and guilt which was as difficult to accept as Jewishness itself[1]. Tragic to a less drastic degree than some cases were the emotional sufferings of men like the members of the short-lived Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums, of which Heine was secretary in 1822[2]. The society dissolved in 1824; its president, Eduard Gans, became (after preliminary baptism) Professor of Roman Law at Berlin. These cases were related to what Kafka diagnosed in himself as the psychosomatic consequences of his internal struggle to reconcile, among other conflicts, that with his Jewishness. Kafka, too, had his 'getaufter Onkel', Rudolf Kafka. (T.402f.)

Kafka's older contemporary and compatriot, the linguistic philosopher and historian of atheism, Fritz Mauthner[3] (who contributed to the Prague Jewish students' anthology Das jüdische Prag in 1917) presents an extreme case of negative reaction to his Jewish ancestry. Mauthner was born in 1849 in the small Bohemian town of Horcize. Although from a predominantly Czech environment, the family were German-speakers, and moved to Prague when Mauthner was about six. Like Kafka's family, they had only nominal connections with Judaism, of which the father was ignorant, although he would speak derogatorily of 'heathenishness'. Mauthner was educated at the Kleinseitner Gymnasium, then studied law at Prague university. He was pursued by the question, was he a German or a Jew? which led him into a brief attempt at observance of Judaism; but at seventeen, upon en-

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1. Carl Cohen: 'The Road to Conversion', in LBIY VI. London, 1961, pp. 259-279.
2. See H.G. Reissner: 'Rebellious Dilemma: The Case Histories of Eduard Gans and some of his Partisans', in LBIY II, London, 1957, pp.179-193.
3. See Gerschon Weiler: 'Fritz Mauthner: A Study in Jewish Self-Rejection', in LBIY VIII, 1963, pp. 136-148; and Max Brod: Der Prager Kreis, pp.39-42.

countering Prussian troops in Prague, he was converted to the vision of a strong, united Germany. In 1876 he settled in Berlin, where most of his life was spent.

Mauthner's Sprachkritik and history of atheism went hand in hand. The former theory led him to believe that belief in this world is sheer 'Wortaberglaube'; he accordingly unmasked theology as a pseudo-science which distorted religious experience by fixing the articles of belief in verbal form, and attacked Christianity as Wortaberglaube of the worst kind. His rejection of Jewish religious tradition was apparently made 'entirely on Christian grounds, under the influence of Christians who had rejected Christianity'[1]. Mauthner represents a tendency of assimilationist Jews whose attitude was determined by eagerness to comply with the prevailing outlook of non-Jewish society. He was representative also in his infinite contempt for 'Ostjudentum'. Interestingly enough, nevertheless, he was impressed, upon meeting Martin Buber, with the latter's renderings of the tales of the Hasidic Rabbi Nachman, whom Mauthner described as his 'Vorgänger in sprachkritischen Ideen', and could not help admiring: '...Ein armer polnischer Jude ohne Bildung und solche Pracht der Bilder!'[2]

Mauthner greatly admired Meister Eckhardt (cf. Kafka: Br.20), and professed a mysticism of his own. At his funeral in 1923 the funeral oration made allusion to

> the nameless dread Mauthner felt before the ultimate mysteries of the world and of life, and of Mauthner's godless mysticism as the essence of true religion. Mauthner died as he had lived, an atheist with a mystical awareness yet without any tie to any denominational group[3].

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1. Gerschon Weiler: op.cit., p.141f.
2. Letter to Clara Levysohn, 31.5.06, quoted ibid., p.147.
3. ibid., p.138.

Many of the emotional and intellectual features sketched in Mauthner's portrait, and some of the problems that pre-occupied him as a philosopher, are comparable with those of Franz Kafka as an artist.

By contrast - although influenced by Mauthner's critical theory of language - his friend Gustav Landauer (1870-1919)[1] took a thoroughly positive attitude to his Jewishness, warmly acknowledging it as the core of his personality and thought. Of himself as German and Jew, Landauer wrote in his essay Sind das Ketzergedanken?, first published in Vom Judentum,(also issued by the Prague Zionist students' organization, Bar Kochba, in 1913):

> Mag sein, dass die Muttersprache irgendwelcher aus meinen Lenden entsprossenen Nachkommen hebräisch sein wird; es rührt mich nicht; meine und meiner Kinder Sprache ist deutsch. . . Wie zwei Brüder, ein erstgeborener und ein Benjamin, von einer Mutter nicht in gleicher Art, aber in gleichem Masse geliebt werden, und wie diese beiden Brüder einträchtig mit einander leben, wo sie sich berühren und auch, wo jeder für sich seinen Weg geht, so erlebe ich dieses seltsame und vertraute Nebeneinander als ein Köstliches und kenne in diesem Verhältnis nichts Primäres oder Sekundäres. (Gustav Landauer: Der werdende Mensch, Herausgeber Martin Buber, Potsdam, 1921, p.125f.)

The unity of German and Jew that Landauer prized in himself was the foundation of an outstandingly versatile and creative personality. Landauer was both artist and politician, essayist, man of the theatre, and anarchist; he lectured and wrote a book on Shakespeare and, besides a novel and short stories, published, in 1903, a modern German version of the writings of Meister Eckhardt and Skepsis und Mystik, a semi-mystical philosophy of the organic relationship of all being.

Landauer's positive attitude to Judaism and Jewishness evolved under the influence of his friend Martin Buber. In maturity, just as he con-

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1. Paul Breines: 'The Jew as Revolutionary: The Case of Gustav Landauer', in LBIY XII, London, 1967, pp. 75-84.

sidered his Jewishness and his Germanness inseparable, he stressed the essential unity between his Jewishness and his socialist activity - for to be a Jew was to share his people's messianic task:

> ...was anders ist die Nation, als ein Bund solcher, die... in sich eine besondere Aufgabe für die Menschheit spüren? Nation sein heisst ein Amt haben. (ibid., p. 124.)

The Jewish nation is defined by its mission, 'die Revolution und Regeneration der Menschheit'.

Landauer remained an individualist, unattracted by mass organizations. He remained outside Zionism, believing the Diaspora to be basic to the Jews' redemptive calling, since it enabled them to transcend nationality and perceive the future unity of humanity, and he opposed revolutionary Marxism. Landauer was committed to the task he felt was that of the Jewish people among nations. His concept of nationality was a semi-mystical one of Volk as a national and cultural community and was linked to Romantic and Jewish traditions and to modern socio-political theories. Socialism to him was the way towards moral and spiritual regeneration of individuals within such a community. He hoped for a revolution in which not the proletarian masses but individuals would lay the foundations for a new mode of living, by personal example, rather than by politics or party.

Lastly, Freud, although he came of an assimilated Jewish family, never concealed his intense dislike of anything concerning Jewish religion, and was mostly ambivalent toward Zionism, nevertheless acknowledged the emotional importance of Jewishness to him. Addressing the Vienna B'nai Brith society in later life, Freud analyzed his sense of Jewishness:

> ...es blieb genug anderes übrig, was die Anziehung des Judentums und der Juden unwiderstehlich machte, viele dunkle Gefuhlsmächte, umso gewaltiger, je weniger sie sich in Worten erfassen liessen, ebenso wie das klare Bewusstsein der inneren Identität, die Heimlichkeit der gleichen seelischen Konstruktion.

> Und dazu kam bald die Einsicht, dass ich nur meiner jüdischen Natur die zwei Eigenschaften verdankte, die mir auf meinem schwierigen Lebensweg unerlässlich geworden waren. Weil ich Jude war, fand ich mich frei von vielen Vorurteilen, die andere im Gebrauch ihres Intellekts beschränkten, als Jude war ich dafür vorbereitet, in die Opposition zu gehen und auf das Einvernehmen mit der 'kompakten Majorität' zu verzichten. (Freud: Gesammelte Werke, XVII, London, 1941, p.52.)[1]

Kafka too speaks as the outsider, whose vision becomes more penetrating and profound through isolation from the kompakter Majorität, and as one for whom his difficult position is paradoxically advantageous, a source of unique, mysterious powers:

> denn er sieht anderes und mehr als die anderen, er ist doch tot zu Lebzeiten und der eigentlich Überlebende. (T.392)

The personalities here selected, from Rahel Varnhagen to Freud and Kafka, are only a few among many artists, thinkers and social theorists, who confronted the dilemma of the Western Jew after emancipation: the necessity of adapting to conditions and standards prevailing in secular life, and recognizing - even if Judaism were rejected - their indelible Jewishness. Some, like Landauer, found a positive solution; yet for Landauer the price was murder by counter-revolutionary soldiers after the overthrow of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, in which he had accepted a Ministerial post. Of the similar fate that befell Walther Rathenau[2], Kafka remarked:

> Unbegreiflich, dass man ihn so lange leben liess,...es war so sehr glaubwürdig, gehörte so sehr zum jüdischen und zum deutschen Schicksal... (Br.378)

Others found no solution but to reject their Jewishness, while for others again, life was a gradual rediscovery and re-evaluation of their Jewish heritage, although not necessarily a return to the religious fold, nor even to any particularly strong association with Jewish communities.

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1. cf. S. Rothman and P. Isenberg: 'Freud and Jewish Marginality', in Encounter, Dec. 1974, pp. 46-54.
2. See Robert A. Pois: 'Walther Rathenau's Jewish Quandary', in LBIY XIII, London, 1968, pp. 120-131.

Broadly speaking, three notable trends in Western Judaism developed following the Haskalah. Each was concerned with the central problem of assimilation versus - or in conjunction with - preservation of the indeterminate 'essence' of Judaism or Jewishness, as conceived by Jewish reformers and thinkers in terms of religion and nationality. These were, first, in the field of religious practice, the Reform Movement founded by David Friedländer (1750-1834), a disciple of Moses Mendelssohn; in scholarship, the movement called Wissenschaft des Judentums[1]; and finally, in the last part of the century, Zionism, as formulated in political terms in Theodor Herzl's Der Judenstaat (1895). In opposition to the political form, 'Cultural Zionism' was founded by the Russian Jew, Asher Ginzberg (1856-1927), who wrote under the pseudonym of Ahad Ha-Am, 'One of the People'.

It is possible here to give only the briefest account of these movements. Of the Reform Movement inaugurated by Friedländer and continued by Israel Jacobson (1768-1828), Samuel Holdheim (1806-60) and Abraham Geiger (1810-74), it must be said that while it was designed to some extent to stem the drift away from Judaism by pouring old wine into new skins, an equally powerful underlying motive was the desire for assimilation. The reforms were calculated to preserve loyalty to Jewish life and practice, with minimum distinction from the spirit and culture of the peoples in whose life and history the Jews were now involved, and adapted the forms of Jewish worship considerably to Christian patterns. Holdheim, in 1849, replaced Sabbath services with Sunday ones.

In the Reform Movement's later, more radical phase, its leaders asserted that Judaism was entirely a religious affair, with nothing

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1. See Gerschom Scholem: The Messianic Idea in Judaism, London, 1971, pp. 304-313.

national about it. To be Jewish, therefore, was merely to belong to a particular religious sect. In 1854, Abraham Geiger, one of the main representatives of this view, accordingly eradicated from the Prayer Book all prayers for the restoration of the Jewish state in Palestine and the rebuilding of the Temple, and all references to the messianic hope of homecoming from exile. He stressed the importance of moving with 'the spirit of the age' rather than observing rigidly the traditional laws enjoined in the Bible and Talmud. This fostered individualism and diverging opinions within the movement as to what constituted Judaism and Jewish life, and contributed many uncertainties and disagreements to the problem it attempted to resolve.

From the second generation of the Haskalah, alongside the encouragement of secular education, acquisition of general culture and assimilation, the Wissenschaft des Judentums came to represent a complementary educational trend. The Maskilim emphasized the spiritual value of learning and culture, while seeing them as a means to equality and recognition in non-Jewish society. The term Wissenschaft des Judentums first appeared after the initial years of the Haskalah during the 1810s and 1820s, amongst young intellectuals in whom Jewish consciousness was re-awakening. This was partly in reaction to increasing Anti-Semitic propaganda, and to counteract the image of the modern Jew as one whose ignorance, if not shame, of his past earned him his contemporaries' moral and intellectual scorn. These Maskilim desired to return to a House of Israel which they could present to Jews and non-Jews in all its cultural and historical splendour. Their intentions in some ways redressed those of the Reformers, with whom they were not always in total agreement:

> They believed that civic equality of the Jew, which was not accompanied by the recognition of the cultural value of his Judaism, was of little importance...Serious research

> would also serve as a solid basis in the struggle for the survival of the Jewish community and would lead to the complete adaptation of Jewish life within state and society. That life would thus benefit from a new and more spiritual image of Judaism, of which it stood so much in need. (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Wissenschaft des Judentums.)

The task undertaken by the Science of Judaism thus included spiritual re-unification of the Jewish people. The early scholars marked the beginnings of interest in the nature of Judaism, Hebrew linguistics, Jewish law, literature, etc., to which it applied modern, scientific methods of research and evaluation.

The movement was born under its particular name in 1818, in Leopold Zunz' essay Etwas zur rabbinischen Literatur. Zunz (1794-1886) was founder of the earlier Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft des Judentums. When the society disintegrated in 1824, the foundations of modern Jewish learning had already been laid by scholars like Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865), Nachman Krochmal (1785-1840), and Solomon Judah Rapoport (1790-1867), who became Chief Rabbi of Prague. Krochmal's Guide for the Perplexed of the Times, whose title alludes to Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed of the twelfth century, attempted to answer the problem of the time, and to preserve Jewry by making it conscious of its unity, at least partly salvaging the authority of religious tradition, and adapting it to its future task. Rapoport, to whom Zunz owed much, was also important for his evolution of critical method in the study of Jewish history and literature. An opponent of the Reform Movement, he, too, was anxious to preserve the national character of Judaism.

The Wissenschaft des Judentums took root and flourished among German-speaking Jewry. Other famous names among many were Zacharias

Frankel and the reformer, Abraham Geiger, the former a scholar of Talmudic literature and Jewish law, the latter a historian of the Bible and Jewish tradition; Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891), the historian; Solomon Munk (1803-67) and Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907), both oriental philologists, and the latter also the 'father of Jewish bibliography', who compiled, inter alia, the Catalogue of Hebrew Books at the Bodleian Library.

In 1848, Zunz' proposal that the Science of Judaism be included on the curriculum at the University of Berlin was rejected. Despite this setback, the second generation of Wissenschaft des Judentums was marked soon afterwards by the establishment, in 1854, of the Jüdisch-theologisches Seminar in Breslau. It was the first institution to enable scholars to dedicate themselves entirely to the Science of Judaism, as well as training rabbis and teachers. It was followed by similar establishments founded during the remainder of the century in Germany and abroad, including, in 1870, the Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums, founded by Geiger in Berlin.

In a description of the Hochschule's pupils from earlier to more recent times, we find a portrait of the typical 'new student' of the twentieth century, in contrast to earlier students already equipped with some Jewish education:

> The "new student" had neither shared the traditionalist climate of the small Jewish community, nor did he possess any sizeable fund of Jewish learning. In all probability, one of the Jewish youth-movements which had sprung up in recent years had made him aware of the Jewish problem... and he was bursting with questions and eager to acquire a Jewish philosophy. He was deeply emotive, penitently aware of his insufficiency of Jewish learning, and sincerely anxious to acquire it together with a firmly founded Jewish Weltanschauung.
> (Fritz Bamberger: 'Julius Guttmann - Philosopher of Judaism', in LBIY V, London, 1960, (pp. 3-30), p.11.)

Kafka attended classes there in 1923-24, the last year of his life. Writing to Robert Klopstock on 19.12.1923, he says:

> Die Hochschule für jüdische Wissenschaft ist für mich ein Friedensort in dem wilden Berlin und in den wilden Gegenden des Innern, (Br.470)

and describes the school as

> schön, und (ist) im Grunde gar nicht schön, sondern eher merkwürdig bis zum Grotesken und darüber hinaus bis zum unfassbar Zarten (nämlich das Liberalreformerische, das Wissenschaftliche des Ganzen). (Br.470)

Kafka puts his finger on "the scientific character of it all"; the intellectual, analytical, critical and self-conscious spirit of the Science of Judaism could not restore the cohesion of genuine spiritual unity, being too specialized in interest and restricted in appeal. The constructive forces at work in Judaism were still unable to provide an adequate counter-active against the continuing disintegration of organized Jewish life, which was mirrored in the internal debate over which way Jews and Judaism should go, religious reforms, and the separation between religious practice and Jewish learning - traditionally complements to one another in Jewish belief, life and custom. It was not until Western Jews came into renewed contact with their counterparts in Eastern Europe, where superior standards of religious scholarship and traditional piety continued, that revitalization became possible. The Wissenschaft des Judentums, subsequently fertilized by guiding spirits like Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig and Leo Baeck, flowered in the so-called twentieth-century Jewish Renaissance.

By this time, the third response to the conflict between Jewish and Western identity had evolved in Jewish nationalism and political Zionism, which sought the regeneration of the Jewish nation in an autonomous national state in Palestine. The thought of Moses Hess (1812-75), Theodor Herzl's precursor, illustrates how the increasing complexity of the Western Jew's

dilemma made an alternative necessary - all the more as his social position and involvement in modern movements increased the ambiguousness of his situation and the vehemence of anti-Semitism.

Hess had believed for years in the desirability of assimilation, but his wooing of Germany had met with rebuff. He attempted to submerge his Jewish consciousness in cosmopolitan theories, and pleaded in Die europäische Triarchie (1841) for the creation of a new social and political order in a federation of Prussia, France and England. Hess was the first important German Socialist. He was one of the first to recognize Marx, and won Engels for Communism. From 1846-51 he himself was much influenced by Marx, and collaborated with him in shaping the doctrines of early Communism[1]. But in Rom und Jerusalem (1862) Hess judged that his former plans for Europe must fail. The Jews could have no part in it, for they were a separate nationality, indissolubly linked in spirit to their heritage and the land of their origin. Hess now envisaged the messianic realm as one of unity upon earth, in which all beings should participate at the end of a historical process that must begin with the revival of Judaism through political re-birth in Palestine. This would be the first step in the transformation of systems based on egoism and individualism into the socialistic or messianic one proclaimed by the prophets.

Twenty years after Hess' death, Herzl's Der Judenstaat was published, and under his leadership Jewish nationalism was transformed into a world-wide political organization: Zionism. Its programme was formulated at the first Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897.

In opposition to political Zionism, Ahad Ha-Am founded Cultural Zionism, which rested on the view that the Jewish problem was less a political than a

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1. On Marx, see Arthur Prinz: 'New Perspectives on Marx as a Jew', in LBIY XV, London, 1970, pp. 107-124.

cultural one, engendered by the pressures of non-Jewish environment. The remedy he proposed was an autonomous Jewish community in Palestine to serve as a spiritual and cultural centre radiating its influence to world Jewries, and welding them into a new national and spiritual bond. He regarded the establishment of a Jewish state as the necessary condition for realization of the Jews' historical role.

Of the cultural kind also was the Zionism of Martin Buber (1878-1965), rooted in the social mysticism of Hasidism, which Buber interpreted to the West. On this basis, Jewish nationalism is a religious-social ideal, in which the Kingdom of God is realized through perfect righteousness, justice and joy in a community directed wholly towards God. This was a re-unification of Jewish religious ideals with Jewish life. Buber considered that the German Jew must choose to be either German or Jew, and that the restoration of Israel to the Holy Land was necessary before the Kingdom of God could come.

Buber's life and thought represented the coming full circle of a wheel that had been set in motion at the end of the eighteenth century. The Haskalah led by the Berlin Jew, Mendelssohn, had marked the emergence of the Westjude, of whom Mendelssohn was one of the first great examples, but rapidly engendered an estrangement between East and West that continued throughout the nineteenth century. The major intellectual developments in Jewish thought during that time came from the involvement of Western Jews, particularly in Germany, with problems of civic enfranchisement, and the sacrifices it entailed for traditional Judaism. They were not only ignorant of the enduring traditions of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, but often combined ignorance with hostility and contempt. Of equal stature with Mendelssohn was Buber, the German Jew who was not simply German and a

Western Jew, but a European Jew. He restored to the West the fruit of what enlightened opinion had cast out, and some literary benefits of the Eastern European Enlightenment.

Haskalah in the East had proceeded in step with the Western parent movement, nourished by ideas disseminated by German Maskilim. The Maskilim of the East, who shared the characteristic contempt for the uneducated masses, and the Mithnaggedim, the militant opponents of Hasidism,had to some extent unintentionally contributed to the development of traditional culture through their use of Yiddish to bring culture and secular and educational improvement to the masses. In the use of Yiddish by educated writers for educational and propagandistic ends, the foundation was laid for its creative development by writers who used it for secular artistic expression.

Among the antecedents of Yiddish literature were the originally oral tales of the Hasidim, which Buber brought in his own German renderings to the West. Here even a Jew as cynical and contemptuous of Ostjudentum as Fritz Mauthner did not fail to appreciate their qualities. Buber's transmission of Hasidic thought to the West owed much of its impact to its presentation of religious ideas with a particular aesthetic appeal and - as far as his renderings of the Hasidic tales are concerned - in masterfully handled literary form:

> ...The Easterner showed the western intellectuals who were beginning to question the real meaning of their Judaism,a way of concerning themselves...with things Jewish without the need of a genuine return to religion, for which only very few were ready. Buber addressed himself to these few who gradually grew in number and influence, by making himself the interpreter of Chassidic thought...He opened up to them the active mysticism and the community-forming pious way of life particular to the Chassidim. Thus the schism between East and West was bridged, though not closed. It was left to Buber, the East-West Jew, to complement in substantial respects the political action of Herzl, the western Jew, and

> the cultural appeal of Achad Ha'Am, the eastern Jew, by leading the way back to elements of the Jewish world of faith, though at first only indirectly by way of the long detour of aesthetic sentiment. (Ernst Simon: 'Martin Buber and German Jewry', in LBIY III, London, 1958, (pp.3-39), p.12)

It seems apt that Buber, in whose thought practical religion and mysticism are re-united with social and temporal existence, had associations with Prague, the city with a past tradition of mystical, as well as rabbinic learning, and an ancient centre where eastern and western influences merged, as they did in Buber's life, thought and personality. Buber delivered his Drei Reden über das Judentum there from 1909-1911.

As elsewhere in Europe, by the late nineteenth century, Jews in Bohemia were gradually becoming aware of the compromised and precarious nature of their position, and feeling the need to examine more closely the Jewish roots upon which they had, on the whole, none too firm a hold. As elsewhere, this situation was accompanied by the rise of Zionism, and Prague itself became the leading centre of early German Zionism. The movement's success was sufficient to command two seats in the Prague Council Chamber after 1918.

Prague Zionism began in the Jewish-National students' union, which was founded in 1893 and named Bar Kochba[1] in 1899. It was at Bar Kochba's invitation that Buber delivered his Drei Reden über das Judentum in Prague; and it was largely under Buber's leadership that Prague Jewry regained something of its leadership in European Jewry. Buber clarified their

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1. after the leader, acclaimed by his contemporaries as a messiah, who led the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 132 A.D.

minds by inspiring them with a sense of Jewish identity and mission towards mankind.[1] In 1913, Bar Kochba published Vom Judentum, a collection of essays on Jewish themes, edited by Buber and including contributions by himself and, inter alia, Hugo Bergmann, Max Brod, Gustav Landauer, Jakob Wassermann and Hans Kohn. It was an important publication in the history of German Zionism. (See Hans Kohn: Martin Buber, Köln, 1971, p. 150f.)

The war introduced an important stage in Zionism. For Jews who felt concern for the values and the integrity of their people, the spectacle of European chaos was a powerful stimulus to reconsideration of the allegiances which many had previously sought in efforts to assimilate into European life. Increasingly aware of the anomalies and insecurity of their situation, they were now faced with the moral necessity of deciding to commit themselves either to European political units and the values of the societies they represented, or to the values of their own tradition.

To many Jews, warring Europe was a reminder of their own national religious status, of the concept of Jewish national unity and the Jewish people's commitment to the ideal of universal harmony and redemption of mankind. These values were intensified by renewed inspiration to observe them, championed by Martin Buber.

At the heart of his leadership lay the idea of the creative power which works to produce a holy unity from chaos itself[2]. The spirit in

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1. the following figures from the Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973, are an indication of the change that took place in Jewish self-awareness in Prague in the early 20th. century: of the city's Jews,
in 1900, 55.3% declared themselves Czech, 44.4% German;
in 1921, 53.5% " " " , 25.3% " ; and
20.1% Jewish.

2. Buber: Die jüdische Bewegung, Berlin, 1920, p.219.

which he assisted the flowering of Central European Zionism involved the revival of prophetic consciousness:

> Unsre Zeit ist eine Zeit des Unterganges, und darum ist sie auch eine Zeit, die mit heisser Sehnsucht auf Erlösung wartet,

stated a report on 'Martin Buber in München' in Das jüdische Echo V/25, 21.6.1918; it continued:

> Was sich im Leben der Menschheit im grossen abspielt, das spiegelt sich im Leben des jüdischen Volkes: in den Zeiten der tiefsten Not öffnet sich sein Herz, um die Wahrheit zu empfangen, in den Zeiten des Niederganges, der Knechtschaft und der Todesnot, stehen die Propheten auf und führen die Wahrheit dem Volke zu. Das Wort, das sie zu ihrem Volke sprechen, dringt über den völkischen Kreis hinweg an das Ohr andrer Völker - wenn auch zumeist in fernen Geschlechtern.

In April, 1916, had appeared the first issue of Buber's monthly, Der Jude. This was designed as a forum of ideas new or reviving in the German-speaking Jewish community, a rallying-point for resurgent Jewish national identity, and a guiding, creative force in the search for the new Judaism. The periodical particularly emphasized the task of depicting the vitality of 'Ostjudentum';sociological observation of the current state of Jewry and the forces influencing it; reports on the progress of colonization in Palestine; and topics of general and specific religious and cultural interest.

In his introduction to the new periodical, Buber quoted from a speech he had given in 1914:

> ...Tiefer als je hat der Jude heute seine Problematik zu spüren bekommen; tiefer als je erkennt das Judentum, was es bedeutet, unter die Völker aufgeteilt zu sein. Aber die Zeit hat nicht bloss die Frage, sondern auch die Antwort verstärkt. Im Sturm der Begebenheit hat der Jude mit elementarer Gewalt erfahren, was Gemeinschaft ist. Er hat es nicht allein gesehen, er hat es an sich selber erfahren. War doch nicht das die wesentlichste Schwäche insbesondere des westlichen Juden, dass er 'assimiliert', sondern dass er atomisiert war;...dass sein Herz nicht mehr dem Herzschlag

> einer lebendigen Gemeinschaft einstimmte, sondern dem Willkürtakt seiner abgesonderten Wünsche folgte; dass er von dem wahren Menschenleben, von dem Miteinander- und Ineinanderleben der Menschen in heiliger Volksgemeinde ausgeschlossen war. Das Judentum war nicht mehr wurzelhaft, und die Luftwurzeln seiner Assimilation waren ohne nährende Kraft. Jetzt aber hat der Jude in dem katastrophalen Vorgang, den er in den Völkern miterlebte, bestürzend und erleuchtend das grosse Leben der Gemeinschaft entdeckt. (Martin Buber: 'Die Losung' in Der Jude, I, 1916, (pp. 1-3.) p.1f.)

This was the historical and contemporary background to Kafka's problematic rediscovery of Jewish tradition.

Chapter 2

'...Alles muss erworben werden, nicht nur die Gegenwart und Zukunft, auch noch die Vergangenheit...' (M.247)

A biographical outline of Kafka's relation to Judaism.

This chapter examines the main stages of Jewish influence upon Kafka's vision, and his attempt to 'regain the past', using evidence from his letters and diaries. The subject involved most of Kafka's lifetime, and is capable of fuller treatment than is possible here.

Kafka's unsuccessful attempts to establish himself with a wife and home were determined by the same emotional and spiritual objectives that he sought through writing[1]. Although these two different approaches were apparently incompatible, and marriage plans were sacrificed to literature, 'lost Judaism' was an equally important influence in both. Literature, however, took priority; all other issues were secondary to it, important only in so far as they contributed to the mysterious workings of creativity and the spiritual exercise represented for Kafka by the act of writing. It is advisable to remember Kafka's warning to Felice Bauer:

> Hätte ich dies nicht, diese Welt im Kopf, die befreit sein will, ich hätte mich nie an den Gedanken gewagt, Dich bekommen zu wollen. (Kafka: Briefe an Felice[2], Frankfurt-am-Main, 1966, p.407)

Similarly with Judaism. Kafka never became a practising Jew, nor, apparently, showed much inclination for the ritual side of religion[3]. Only through his writing and what it meant to him can his relation to Judaism be fairly assessed; and only if Kafka's relation to Judaism is appreciated can his work be fully understood. Although literature and marriage seemed irreconcilable, literature and Judaism could form a more fruitful, though still problematic partnership; but were it not for that world in his head

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1. See Appendix C.
2. Henceforth referred to by the abbreviation F.
3. Friedrich Thieberger: 'Erinnerungen an Franz Kafka', in Eckart, 1953, (pp.49-53) p.52; F.700 and Br.437.

straining for release, Kafka might never have been drawn to 'the Jewish problem' in quite the way he was. Had he not been a Jew, of course, the world inside his head would have been very different.

The previous chapter mentioned the peculiar nature and degree of integration between Jewish and German culture in Prague during the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here the results of the emancipation and Germanization of the Jews coincided with administrative circumstances under which the Empire's central organization and official language, both German, preserved the hold of a ruling ethnic minority upon the Czech population, while Czech nationalist sentiment steadily increased. These factors combined to produce the cultural island upon which arose a unique but brief German-Jewish symbiosis. They also help to explain that the process of assimilation in Prague

> was so fast and (it) encompassed intellectual life so thoroughly that...,perhaps in one generation, the religious life of the vast majority of the Jews was almost completely devitalized...Prague Jewry was more remote from Judaism than its co-religionists in Germany.
> (Felix Weltsch: 'The Rise and Fall of the Jewish-German Symbiosis: The Case of Franz Kafka', in LBIY I, 1956, London, pp. 255 - 276).

By the time of Kafka's schooldays, only a century after the beginning of emancipation, it was no surprise in Prague to find a class-room in a German Catholic school, the majority of whose inmates were Jewish children being taught by Czech clergymen to appreciate German culture - as at the Piaristenschule, the elementary school attended by Max Brod. The situation was similar at Kafka's secondary school, the Altstädter Gymnasium, where at one time the four upper year-groups included only two Christians[1].

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1. See Felix Weltsch, ibid., p.258, and Max Brod, Der Prager Kreis, p.111.

In 1900, the percentage of Jewish students at Prague's German University was 46.5, compared with 1.6% at the Czech University[1].

Administration of Prague German cultural life lay in predominantly Jewish hands. Three Prague German newspapers were run by Jews, including the major ones, Bohemia (which published a number of Kafka's earlier works[2]); the two German theatres were supported chiefly by Jewish funds, as were other German cultural organizations. Jews predominated in economic life, industry, commerce and banking, as well as in the medical and legal professions. (The two latter were the only civil careers open to Jewish graduates, unless they were baptized.) Kafka's first choice of study was chemistry, which permitted Jews an industrial career; only when chemistry proved uncongenial did he choose law, which he originally rejected[3].

Felix Weltsch characterizes the turn of the century as an idyllic interlude, marked by 'aloofness from reality, by a surprising lack of consciousness of the past and of history, especially among the Jews'[4], although it was frequently disrupted by incidents such as that which blinded Oskar Baum, a fight between German and Czech school children. (cf.J.158) Indications of Czech anti-German feelings were only one side of the picture that lay just below the surface of the Bohemian capital's multi-national life. In time, the Jews' position there became, as in the rest of Germany, increasingly uncertain. Anti-Semitism persisted from time immemorial;

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1. Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Prague. Of Prague's German-speaking population, over 50% were Jews, according to figures given by Hans Tramer in 'Prague, City of Three Peoples' (LBIY IX, London, 1964, pp.305-319).

2. Die Aeroplane in Brescia, 28.9.1909; Zum Nachdenken für Herrenreiter, 27.3.1910; Ein Roman der Jugend, 16.1.1910; Eine entschlafene Zeitschrift, 20.3.1911. See Pasley/ Wagenbach: Franz Kafka. Ein Symposion, Berlin, 1965, p.59f.

3. See S.H. Bergmann: Speech held at the opening of the Kafka Exhibition at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem 1969 in catalogue issued by the Jewish National and University Library Jerusalem, 1969; cf. 'Erinnerungen an Franz Kafka', in Universitas 27, 1972, pp. 739-750.

4. Felix Weltsch: op.cit., in LBIY I, 1956, p.257.

but now demonstrations of Czech anti-German feeling assumed anti-Semitic colouring, and, influenced by German nationalists from the Sudeten districts, anti-Semitism took root among German-speaking Bohemians[1]. Below the surface, national sentiment ran deep amid changing political currents in the declining Empire; this gradually isolated Prague's German population, and especially the Jews[2].

In these conditions, the idea of Volkstum, especially now that it was becoming so politically coloured, acquired a powerful poignancy for Prague's urban, middle-class,German-speaking minority. It evoked the Sehnsucht of an isolated community that lacked even the Romantic security of a native, völkisch hinterland outside the city.

Writers with some knowledge of Prague in Kafka's time agree that his work cannot be separated from the atmosphere of German-Jewish life there. Felix Weltsch suggests that

> All we are justified in doing is in recognizing in many of Kafka's stories and novels the symbolic picture of the lost historical consciousness...and, especially, the loss of the ethnic connection as a source of guilt. It is this guilt that the assimilated Jew feels when he realizes their interrelationship. Felix Weltsch: op.cit., in LBIY I, 1956, p.274.)

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1. The virulence of which anti-Semitism was capable became evident in several notorious blood libel trials around this time. In Bohemia there occurred the Hilsner affair: Leopold Hilsner, a Jew, was accused in 1899 of the murder of a Christian girl, allegedly for ritual purposes, and condemned to death. Hilsner's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and he was pardoned in 1916. The affair was accompanied by anti-Semitic campaigns throughout Europe, and led to riots in several towns in Bohemia and Moravia. It was a main factor in the increase of anti-Semitism in the Bohemian countryside and the exodus of many small rural Jewish communities, and its repercussions were felt for many years.

   A similar case had occurred at Tiszaeslar in Hungary in 1882-83. The subject was treated by Arnold Zweig in his prize-winning drama Ritualmord in Ungarn (1914), which Kafka saw performed on 28.10.1916. (E. Torton Beck: Franz Kafka and the Yiddish Theatre, Wisconsin, 1971, p.216.)

2. See Pavel Eisner: Franz Kafka and Prague, New York, 1950, p.19.

In Pavel Eisner's analysis, there was in Prague in those years the equivalent of a social, linguistic and cultural ghetto, to which the German Jews attached themselves[1]. Max Brod, in Der Prager Kreis, disagrees with Eisner's picture of 'the social ghetto' and stresses the breadth of Jewish Prague's cultural horizons. Presumably a picture that accommodates both views is more accurate; the social isolation of the mediaeval ghetto was far from being incompatible with broad cultural horizons. With the replacement of the ancient ghetto's religious traditions by enthusiam for secular culture, the Jewish element in Prague German literature in the early twentieth century probably contributed to the 'paradoxical religiosity' of Prague German writers at this time[2]. Both Eisner and Brod emphasize the Prague Jews' continuing sensitivity to things of the spirit,

> ...ein Umschlagen jahrhundertealter jüdischer Geistigkeit in sprachlich neue Formen, jedoch ohne den Muttergrund dieser Geistigkeit...auch nur verleugnen zu können. (Brod: Der Prager Kreis, p.65.) 3

What little can be said of Judaism in Kafka's childhood and early youth, Kafka states in his Brief an den Vater of 1919 (H.197-202). By then, his interest in Jewish tradition was keen. The chief purpose of the letter was to describe and analyse the failure of Kafka family life,

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1. Pavel Eisner: op.cit., p.26.
2. Heinz Politzer: 'Prague and the Origins of Rainer Maria Rilke, Franz Kafka and Franz Werfel', in MLQ 16, 1955, (pp.49-62) p.51.
3. cf. Pavel Eisner: op.cit., p.34.

and especially the relationship between father and son.

Kafka's portrayal of his father supplies many clues to certain images, themes and relationships (e.g. with figures of power and authority, and women) in his novels and stories. The subject has been too frequently discussed to need comment here, except that Kafka's opinion of Freudianism as '<u>ein hilfloser Irrtum</u>' (<u>M</u>.246) indicates its inadequacy for full understanding of the father theme in his work. If observed in the light of Kafka's developing interest in Jewish tradition, the father-son conflict itself is a symbol which develops according to Kafka's perception of his 'Jewish problem'.

What is of interest here is Kafka's view, in 1919, that Judaism was significant in his relationship with his father. The letter, of course, presents recollections of Kafka's relation to Judaism as a child, and an interpretation of those facts from a later point of view[1].

Hermann Kafka, we learn, considered religion a formality to be performed occasionally for the sake of respectability[2], but sometimes upbraided himself for failing to be more conscientiously religious. His small son imitated his self-reproaches and felt guilty before his father for similar neglect. On his four annual attendances at synagogue, young Kafka was bored[3] to a degree equalled later only by dancing-classes - but with the addition of fear that he, too, might one day be '<u>zu Thora aufgerufen</u>'.

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1. The part of the letter that discusses Judaism is <u>H</u>.197-202.
   N.B. Kafka's criticism of the letter in <u>M</u>.73,80.
2. cf. Julie Kafka in a letter to Felice Bauer: '<u>Wir hielten die jüdischen Feiertage wie rechte Juden</u>.' (<u>F</u>.721)
3. cf. <u>F</u>.700.

The annual Seder[1] at home was a comic act in which the children participated with suppressed, embarrassed laughter, and he thought the Barmitzvah ceremony[2] ridiculous.

Later, Kafka's interest in Jewish matters received his father's derision and disgust. Kafka describes this as 'negative Hochschätzung', and suggests that it was his father's unconscious acknowledgement of the inadequacy of his own Judaism and his son's Jewish education. It seems that Kafka's guilt-feelings were acquired from his father, as well as aggravated by him, and altogether far from being unique. Probably Hermann Kafka himself was strongly affected by his sense of being a Jew, and its social implications. At any rate, what might have established common ground upon which father and son could meet in understanding apparently only achieved the reverse.

In view of the apparent hopelessness of the problem, the potentially reconciliatory influence Kafka ascribes to Judaism (H.197) must be considerable. He implies that the father-son conflict lay chiefly in neglect of tradition. This expression of Kafka's outlook in 1919 indicates the priority that the idea of Jewish tradition held in his mind at the time of his later work.

Kafka's rejection of Judaism at school is recalled by Hugo Bergmann, his schoolmate and later university companion:

> Franz...wollte mir meinen jüdischen Glauben unbedingt abspenstig machen. Er war ein sehr guter Dialektiker[3]. Es war im Frühling vor dem Pesachfeste und dem Sederabend, den ich um meiner Eltern willen sehr liebte...Diesmal besiegte mich die Dialektik von Franz nicht. Viel später suchte er selbst den Glauben, den er mir vergebens hatte nehmen wollen. (Hugo Bergmann: op.cit.; cf. Universitas 27, 1972, p.742.)

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1. Religious ceremony held in Jewish homes on the first two nights of Passover, in which children play an important part.
2. Ceremony undergone by Jewish boys at the age of thirteen, comparable with a Christian confirmation.
3. cf. T.159.

In 1902, Kafka and Max Brod were introduced to each other by Felix Weltsch. This began a life-long friendship à trois, in which study of Judaism became a strong influence and a uniting bond in the work of all three[1].

Brod's conversion to Zionism occurred seven years later. He heard the first two of Buber's Reden in 1909 and 1910. The decisive impetus came from Hugo Bergmann. From 1910, Brod began to consider himself 'jüdischer Dichter deutscher Zunge'[2] and in 1913 began contributing to the Zionist weekly, Selbstwehr.

A first sign of Kafka's involvement in the 'Jewish question' was the appearance of Die erste lange Eisenbahnfahrt (the first chapter of a projected novel, Richard und Samuel), written jointly by Kafka and Brod, in Herderblätter in 1911. Herderblätter was a literary journal issued four times between April, 1911 and October, 1912[3]. It was edited by Willy Haas and Norbert Eisler under the auspices of the J.S. Herderverein in Prag, which was established as a youth organization to ensure a successor for the Prague B'nai Brith lodge. The society organized meetings, lectures and readings, including one by Kafka, and in February, 1912, an 'Akademie' with Grete Wissenthal and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the only occasion when Kafka and Hofmannsthal met. (See T.179f.) Contributors to Herderblätter included Hugo Bergmann, Willy Haas, Oskar Baum and Franz Werfel, besides Brod and Kafka, whose Grosser Lärm appeared in it in October, 1912.

By then Kafka's interest in Jewish tradition had awoken. A new phase began in October, 1911, when a troupe of Eastern European Yiddish

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1. See Max Brod: Der Prager Kreis; Margarita Pazi: 'Felix Weltsch - die schöpferische Mitte', in Bulletin of the Leo Baeck Institute 13, 1974, pp. 51-75.
2. cf. Max Brod: 'Der jüdische Dichter deutscher Zunge', in Vom Judentum, Leipzig, 1913, pp. 261-3.
3. See Herderblätter. Faksimile-Ausgabe zum 70. Geburtstag von Willy Haas, Hamburg, 1962.

actors from Lemberg (Lvov) appeared in Prague. Kafka avidly attended their performances at the Café Savoy. His diaries witness his devoted admiration for the actors and their plays. (T.57 ff., 69 ff., 78 ff., 83 ff., 87 ff., 101 ff.) They had arrived at a restless period in Kafka's life, not least regarding literature.

In March, 1911, Kafka had reviewed Max Brod's novel, Jüdinnen[1]. The review illuminates his attitude at that time to 'the Jewish problem' in literature. He sees it as a moderately serious social and political issue requiring a solution; and criticizes Brod's novel for failing to indicate one, despite the fact that Zionism seems to offer one ready-made. (T.38) He also criticizes the absence in the novel of non-Jewish observers -

> die angesehenen gegensätzlichen Menschen, die in anderen Erzählungen das Jüdische herauslocken, dass es gegen sie vordringt in Verwunderung, Zweifel, Neid, Schrecken, und endlich, endlich in Selbstvertrauen versetzt wird, jedenfalls sich aber erst ihnen gegenüber in seiner ganzen Länge aufrichten kann. (T.38)

The first draft of the review seems to give an onlooker's view of the Jewish problem, with the self-consciousness of one who is not fully identified with the Jewish element in the novel. Significant is the importance ascribed to non-Jewish observers. It implies that 'Jewishness' cannot be fully recognized except in relation to a 'respectable', non-Jewish element, and that, faced with the 'respectable', the Jewish element must undergo emotional conflict and suffering before it can achieve self-confidence.

An uncompleted second draft of the review suggests that Kafka sensed

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1. See Hartmut Binder: Motiv und Gestaltung bei Franz Kafka, Bonn, 1966, pp. 10-13.

lack of integration between literary values and Jewishness, not so much in Brod's novel as in himself. Here he removes all suggestions that the reader's criticism is an accurate indication of defects in the book, or that his expectations are valid criteria. His original statements are more tentatively framed, suggesting that the average reader's criticism is determined by his customary assumptions about the 'Jewish problem', irrespective of whether these are justified.

At the same time as writing this review, Kafka visited Rudolf Steiner. His account of the visit (T.40 ff.) clearly depicts his condition at the time, besides giving insight into his thoughts on themes that pre-occupied him throughout his life. First among these is writing, the experience of creation, and the function of art, which for Kafka was always the communication of spiritual truth.

Kafka introduces himself to Steiner as a writer in a state of confusion. Anthroposophy attracts him as a system incorporating spiritual ideas that match psychic states he has experienced in the process of writing; but he is afraid to accept it, lest it interfere with his literary pursuits, aggravating his confusion. The dilemma evidently concerns his writing primarily; anthroposophy itself is secondary. Kafka considers of paramount importance the apparently clairvoyant states he has experienced while writing, in which he has felt himself to be '<u>an den Grenzen des Menschlichen überhaupt</u>'; but he is perturbed by the discrepancy between the quality of the condition and that of the writing produced. He is at a stage of artistic development where he is struggling to integrate personal experience and imagination with, and through, an appropriate literary style. Now and throughout his artistic career,

literature, for Kafka, is the response to a spiritual imperative. The singlemindedness of his development in this respect is startling; and in the interview with Steiner we see him groping for some spiritual system or discipline to accommodate his own literary investigations of the spirit.

Kafka quickly satisfied himself that Steiner had nothing to offer him. From the spring of 1911, when the visit occurred, until the autumn of that year, diary entries are sparse; but on October 1st. the Jewish theme is briefly resumed. Kafka describes the scene outside the Altneu Synagogue at the Kol Nidre service on the eve of the Day of Atonement. (T.51) Religious emotion is described with barely disguised cynicism, quite consistent with Kafka's youthful attitude towards religion as described in the Brief an den Vater. 'In der Pinkassynagoge war ich unvergleichlich stärker vom Judentum hergenommen,' he concludes morosely. Kafka's response to organized religion remained 'negative Hochschätzung'. As the draft for the review of Jüdinnen implied, Judaism had hitherto struck no positive note in him.

Yet four days later, the diary breaks into the first lengthy account of a visit to the Yiddish theatre. (T.57 ff.) The unfamiliar thrill of feeling himself a Jew among Jews, the impact of an experience wholly and equally shared by all, and an emotional response that Judaism has never yet aroused in him, vibrate in his description of Lateiner's Der Meschumed (The Apostate):

> Bei manchen Liedern, der Ansprache 'jüdische Kinderlach', manchem Anblick dieser Frau, die auf dem Podium, weil sie Jüdin ist, uns Zuhörer, weil wir Juden sind, an sich zieht, ohne Verlangen oder Neugier nach Christen, ging mir ein Zittern über die Wangen. (T.58) [1]

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1. Compare this with T.219 (1.7.1913): Der ungeheure Vorteil der Christen, die im allgemeinen Verkehr die gleichen Gefühle der Nähe immerfort haben und geniessen, zum Beispiel christlicher Tscheche unter christlichen Tschechen.

Interestingly enough, the first two characters Kafka describes (a couple who were possibly models for the assistants, Artur and Jeremias, in Das Schloss)[1] are

> ...irgendwie aus religiösen Gründen bevorzugte Schnorrer, Leute, die infolge ihrer abgesonderten Stellung gerade ganz nahe am Mittelpunkt des Gemeindelebens sind,...Leute, die in einer besonders reinen Form Juden sind, weil sie nur in der Religion, aber ohne Mühe, Verständis und Jammer in ihr leben...(T.57)

How this description of the religious Jews, and the implied evaluation of the religious world to which they belong, differ from that of four days earlier! Yet not far below the surface there is evidence of the ambiguousness which imbued Kafka's vision of the religious world. These two who seem to be Jews in an especially pure way are so precisely by virtue of their position as privileged idlers and good-for-nothings; what is striking about them, as the description continues, is their indifference to all ethical matters, their peculiar code being simply to make a fool of righteous and unrighteous alike. This odd blend of sanctity and disgrace, beatitude and impurity, reappears in later observations by Kafka. Noteworthy, too, is the pair's proximity to the 'Mittelpunkt des Gemeindelebens', paradoxical, because of their being set apart through social status as well as conduct. The theme of simultaneous exclusion from the community and extraordinary proximity to its centre through the insights exclusion yields, is one which Kafka gradually works out with regard to himself throughout the rest of his literary career. (cf.T.392)

The encounter with the Yiddish actors stimulated Kafka's inquiry into the nature and problems of Jewish identity as felt by many assimilated

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1. André Németh: Kafka ou le Mystère Juif, tr. V. Hintz, Paris, 1947, p.46; and Max Brod's note, T. 505.

Western Jews like himself. He befriended the leader of the troupe, Isaac Löwy,'den ich im Staub bewundern möchte'. (T. 70) He frequently endeavoured to assist Löwy, and in 1912 organized a 'Rezitationsabend' of Yiddish poetry read by him to raise funds for his return to Lvov. The attractions of Yiddish poetry were insufficient to bring much financial reward, for educated German Jews disdained Yiddish as a crude 'jargon', and few had Kafka's sympathetic and appreciative ear for it[1]. Kafka's diaries include a fragmentary sketch for a biography of Löwy[2], and many details of Eastern European Jewish life and lore learned from him. (T.81, 86, 91, 99 f., 127, 150 f., 169 ff.) Löwy probably also first introduced him to Hasidic legend and belief.

In the excitement of his new discovery, Kafka began exploring his Jewish tradition and background, past and present. It was now that he consciously began to see personal problems within the broader context of a Jewish cultural crisis. The tormenting question of marriage versus bachelordom now also appears in this light. (T. 114) On November 1st. he began Graetz' Geschichte des Judentums:

> Weil mein Verlangen danach das Lesen weit überholt hatte, war es mir zuerst fremder, als ich dachte, und ich musste hie und da einhalten, um durch Ruhe mein Judentum sich sammeln zu lassen. Gegen Schluss ergriff mich aber schon die Unvollkommenheit der ersten Ansiedlungen im neu eroberten Kanaan und die treue Überlieferung der Unvollkommenheit der Volksmänner (Josuas, der Richter, Elis). (T.94)

Again, he is struck by the imperfections behind hallowed tradition. This discrepancy remains central to Kafka's perception of religious tradition and community throughout his life.

He finds the Jewish present dismally lacking if measured against the

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1. See his introductory Rede über die jiddische Sprache (H.421-426); cf. T.177 and T. 179.
2. See Appendix A, p. 293f.

image of its past. His encounter with the still intact Eastern European tradition accentuated his perception of the crisis in Western Jewry. Barely two months after watching Der Meschumed, Kafka describes his nephew's circumcision and the incomprehension and unconcern of those present:

> Diese an ihrem letzten Ende angelangten religiösen Formen hatten schon in ihrer gegenwärtigen Übung einen so unbestrittenen bloss historischen Charakter, dass nur das Verstreichen einer ganz kleinen Zeit innerhalb dieses Vormittags nötig schien, um die Anwesenden durch Mitteilungen über den veralteten frühern Gebrauch der Beschneidung und ihrer halbgesungenen Gebete historisch zu interessieren...(T.146f.)[1]

The Yiddish theatre's effect on Kafka's ideas about literature is reflected in his Schema zur Charakteristik kleiner Literaturen (T.147-150) of December, 1911: it stimulated new awareness of literature's role in national culture, and of the writer's relation to tradition. From acquaintance with contemporary Yiddish and Czech literature, Kafka concluded that the chief benefit of a small nation's literature is the focussing of the nation's attention upon itself, and the intellectual and spiritual re-inforcement of national life. This 'Tagebuchführen einer Nation, das etwas ganz anderes ist als Geschichtsschreibung.' (T.147) results in

> eine schnellere und doch immer vielseitig überprüfte Entwicklung, die detaillierte Vergeistigung des grossflächigen öffentlichen Lebens,...die Veredlung und Besprechungsmöglichkeit des Gegensatzes zwischen Vätern und Söhnen, die Darbietung der nationalen Fehler in einer zwar besonders schmerzlichen, aber verzeihungswürdigen und befreienden Weise...(T.147f.)

Kafka's revelations about his personal problems are being transferred to the literary sphere; the individual's relationship to his community and tradition is particularized in the writer and in his implied responsibility, or even mission, towards the community he represents. Notable is the pro-

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1. cf. F.244.

jection of Kafka's private pre-occupations onto the level of community and literature: the keeping of a diary, the goal of deeper self-knowledge, attainment of spiritual values, and discussion of the conflict between father and son seem to be congruent with the essential activities, needs and pursuits of the community.

Tradition has central importance in the literature of small nations. Its writers confront the task of creating upon a foundation laid by past writers and the influence, past and present, of their work. Literature must forge the connection between past and present, distilling and re-vitalizing the essences with which the present is infused; and because the literary legacy of the past belongs essentially to the present,

> Die alten Schriften bekommen viele Deutungen, die gegenüber dem schwachen Material mit einer Energie vorgehn, die nur gedämpft ist durch die Befürchtung, dass man leicht bis zum Ende vordringen könnte, sowie durch die Ehrfurcht, über die man sich geeinigt hat. (T.149)

Such attitudes towards the written word, however, cannot have entirely clear or positive results:

> Alles geschieht in der ehrlichsten Weise, nur dass innerhalb einer Befangenheit gearbeitet wird, die sich niemals löst,...und durch das Sichheben einer geschickten Hand meilenweit sich verbreitet. Schliesslich heisst aber Befangenheit nicht nur die Verhinderung des Ausblicks, sondern auch jene des Einblicks, wodurch ein Strich durch alle diese Bemerkungen gezogen wird...(T.149)

Having argued the advantages of a small nation's literature, Kafka objectively considers its disadvantages. The preservation of tradition can result in inconclusiveness, evasion of facts, distortion and false evaluations; politics easily encroach upon the field of literature, which may then become established on a basis of slogans; petty concerns receive disproportionate attention. Despite his enthusiasm, Kafka is clearly aware of tradition's potential temptation to duplicity and self-deception.

Compared with the review of Jüdinnen, the study implies a considerable change of approach to the question of modern, Western European Jewish writing. Kafka has achieved deeper insight into national consciousness and its expression in literature as something very different from 'stories about groups of Jews'. (cf. T.38) Questions of national literary tradition and history have become clear to him like a new dimension in literature, just as the revelation of traditional consciousness and communal identity deepened his comprehension of the issues behind the 'Jewish problem'. He has begun to acquire a Jewish point of view and now sees the problem much more from within. Through the Yiddish theatre, he has come to recognize the meaning and value of Jewishness in a tradition still intact, and as an ingredient in his own personality. He begins to see his situation relative to the condition of contemporary Western Jewry, and his major pre-occupation, literature, begins to appear in a corresponding light. He voraciously reads Pinès' Histoire de la Littérature Judéo-Allemande:

> ...fünfhundert Seiten, und zwar gierig, wie ich es mit solcher Gründlichkeit, Eile und Freude bei ähnlichen Büchern noch niemals getan habe...(T.173)

An event commonly pointed out as a factor in the sudden artistic development displayed in Das Urteil was Kafka's meeting with Felice Bauer in August, 1912, one month before the story was written. The meeting and its consequences were vitally important for this story, and a major stimulus for a very productive period in Kafka's literary life.

Among the first things to attract Kafka to Felice were her sympathies with Zionism, which corresponded with his own new interest, and her elementary knowledge of Hebrew. The literary impact of the Yiddish theatre thus extended its influence to Kafka's personal life; and the Briefe an Felice reveal how the emotional energy derived from his involvement with her catalysed his literary creativity.

Kafka's description of the experience of writing Das Urteil (T.209f.) must record one of those 'clairvoyant states' which he had mentioned to Steiner, and one which, even by his own exacting standards, produced results of evident literary merit. Das Urteil must have represented for Kafka something of 'die Veredlung und Besprechungsmöglichkeit des Gegensatzes zwischen Vätern und Söhnen' mentioned in his Charakteristik kleiner Literaturen. Altogether, evidence suggests that the revelation of Jewishness was explosive in its effect on every part of Kafka's being - emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and, of course, literary[1].

The Yiddish theatre, then, initiated an ambiguous relationship with Judaism, the tensions of which were to mould the patterns of Kafka's creative energy and his own interpretation of it, (which was a religious one, bordering on the mystical) during the years of his mature writing. Personal problems, attitudes to marriage and family, the merits and disadvantages of community, versus isolation and devotion solely to literature, are interlinked in his work; but the uniting factor becomes increasingly clear: Jewishness and Volkstum gradually come to the fore and fix the perspective that encompasses the other problems. The overall cultural import of his situation as an individual, and especially as a writer, was the crucial realization that dawned on Kafka in 1911[2].

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1. Of remarkable significance also is the fact that Das Urteil was written during the night following the Jewish Day of Atonement (21st-2nd. September in 1912). For the symbolic and religious implications of this, see Erwin R. Steinberg: 'The Judgement in Kafka's The Judgement', in Modern Fiction Studies VIII/1, 1962, pp. 175-179.

2. For an exhaustive study of the Yiddish theatre's influence onKafka's work, see Evelyn Torton Beck: Franz Kafka and the Yiddish Theatre, Wisconsin, 1971. The book argues that his novels and stories are 'closely related to the symbols and aggregate themes of Jewish tradition, to which Kafka was exposed...during the years of his involvement with the actors and the plays of the Yiddish theatre...'(p.210)

From now on, literature and Judaism were closely related, as far as he was concerned. Complaints of flagging literary productivity are often accompanied by laments about the lack of spiritual bond with a Jewish community (e.g. T.250f.) By 1914, however, things were worse, rather than better. Kafka and Felice Bauer were engaged at the end of May, but broke the engagement within two months: the reconciliation of marriage and literature seemed impossible, and the only answer was to sacrifice one to the other. Shortly afterwards, the war began. It affected Kafka profoundly, as the diaries show (T. 300f., 312, 316, 327, 351f., 352, 366, 385). The following months were a period of gradual re-adjustment, amid qualms and self-criticism, to a life of literary isolation, ill-health, and continuation of the old conflict between literature and the demands of his office and his brother-in-law's factory, with the constant anxieties of wartime, which were

> in der quälenden Art, mit der sie mich in den verschiedensten Richtungen zerfressen, ähnlich den alten Sorgen wegen F... (T.312)

Although this time brought new insights into his creativity, it was the prelude to two further sombre years. Nevertheless, despite their literary barrenness, the years 1914-17 are crucial to Kafka's literary development - 'schöpferisch nur in Selbstquälerei'. (T.332) The pain of feeling that his creative resources were exhausted was accompanied by no less painful pre-occupation with his relation to Judaism. However, certain encounters re-inforced the foundation laid by the Yiddish theatre, and prepared the ground that sustained Kafka's work in the last seven years of his life.

Kafka's first acquaintance with Eastern European Jewish life through Löwy must have expanded through contact with Jewish refugees from Galicia and Poland, who thronged to Prague after the outbreak of war. Max Brod

became active in welfare work, including the organization of literature courses for refugee children which Kafka frequently attended as the only outsider. Moses Wiesenfeld, former Galician correspondent of the Selbstwehr, recalls Brod's enthusiastic help:

> Er kam während der Feiertage zu den Rabbinern zu Tisch und interessierte sich für die chassidischen Lieder und ostjüdischen Volkslieder. Kurz und gut, er war bestrebt, in das Innere des ostjüdischen Menschen einzudringen und seine Seele kennen zu lernen...('Begegnung mit Ostjuden', in Felix Weltsch (ed.): Dichter, Denker, Helfer, Max Brod zum 50. Geburtstag, Mähr. - Ostrau, 1934, p.57.)

The sympathetic interest of such as Brod and Kafka, however, was exceptional. For Prague Jews, this was a first encounter with a Jewish 'rabble', and for the most part they restricted their welcome to formal charity. In T.333 Kafka describes the mutual scorn at meetings between Eastern and Western Jews, and his own sense of bewilderment.

At a lecture of Brod's on 'Religion und Nation', he remarked among the audience

> ...Der Westjude, der sich den Chassidim assimiliert hat, der Wattestöpsel im Ohr...Die Gruppe der Ostjuden beim Ofen. G. im Kaftan, das selbstverständliche jüdische Leben. Meine Verwirrung. (T.335)

This was probably Georg (or Jiří) Mordechai Langer, who is later mentioned several times in Kafka's diary and letters. (T.342, 345, 350, 392; and Br.142ff., 146, 194, 273, 286)[1]

Within the critical period 1914-16, the time during which he met Langer was perhaps the most desperate that Kafka experienced. In winter, 1914-15, he remet Felice Bauer, and also left his parents' home, renting a room of his own. Considering the masochistic strength of his attachment to the parental household, this was an impressive symptom of the restlessness

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1. See Appendix B.

which was tormenting him, and which continued for some months, despite the intuition of a change ahead. Complaints recur in the sparse entries for the year, together with evidence of a persistent sense of rootlessness and alienation from Judaism. (T. 330, 332, 335, 340, 342)

On September 14th., 1915, Langer reappears: 'Mit Max und Langer Samstag beim Wunderrabbi.' (T. 342) An unenthusiastic description of the visit follows[1], characteristically noting the Hasidic rabbi's wild looks and not-too-cleanly habits: 'Schmutzig und rein, Eigentümlichkeit intensiv denkender Menschen.' A nature as strongly paternal as possible, Kafka remarks, makes a rabbi; the whiteness of his skin is such as can be remembered only from childhood; 'Damals allerdings waren auch die Eltern rein'. These details suggest how closely Kafka's personal Jewish problem combined religious difficulty with that of generation conflict, each aspect reflecting the other.

Two days later, Kafka again watches the Polish Jews on their way to the Kol Nidre service: 'Selbstmörderisch, nicht in den Tempel zu gehen.' (T. 342; cf.T.51) He has been dubiously reading the Bible:

> Von den ungerechten Richtern. Finde also meine Meinung oder wenigstens die Meinung, die ich in mir bisher vorgefunden habe. Übrigens hat es keine Bedeutung, ich werde in solchen Dingen niemals sichtbar gelenkt, vor mir flattern nicht die Blätter der Bibel. (T.343)

Early October brings several lengthy accounts of information and legends about the Hasidic zaddikim[2] imparted by Langer. In mid-November Kafka records his attendance at a Mishnah class in the Altneu Synagogue: 'Grosses Interesse an einzelnen Streitfragen' (T.349), and more information from Langer. (T.350)

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1. T.342.

2. See p. 101f., 107f.

The diary is not resumed until April, 1916, when it contains numerous literary sketches; these include the beginning of a version of the legend of Rabbi Loew and the golem. There is evidence of less negative religious pre-occupations, and reading in the Bible: 'Nur das Alte Testament sieht - nichts darüber noch sagen.' (T.360) In mid-July, a long letter to Brod from Marienbad, where Kafka had been with Felice Bauer, describes a visit with Langer to the Rabbi of Belz, who had come for a cure. (Br.141ff.)

The account is noteworthy in several respects. Underneath an apparently supercilious tone, one senses a cautious admiration similar to Kafka's less reserved enthusiasm for the two buffoons in Der Meschumed. He perceives both times a synthesis of rascality and immaculacy, of foolishness and an inscrutable sanctity imbued with some mysterious, concealed wisdom. It is possible, he says, to describe only what meets the eye - but behind appearances is veiled a truth greater than the eye can see. However, Kafka considers Langer's attempts to pinpoint the hidden deeper meanings in the rabbi's childish conversation futile, for there are none to discover. This, strangely, is for Kafka entirely satisfactory; the rabbi, ridiculous as he may appear, must be accepted as genuine, being in a true state of grace.

Only after the diagnosis of tuberculosis in September, 1917, when he was on sick-leave in Zürau, were Kafka's personal writings resumed on a larger scale. Kafka again reacted to crisis in the two interrelated areas of literature and Judaism, or his own derivative of the two[1].

As a chronic invalid, Kafka might well consider himself an outsider

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1. During his absence from Prague, Kafka regularly read the Jewish weekly, Selbstwehr, to which he repeatedly refers in his letters, and continued his study of Hebrew. See Hartmut Binder: 'Franz Kafka and the Weekly Paper Selbstwehr', in LBIY XII, London, 1967, pp. 135-148; and 'Kafkas Hebräischstudien', in Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft XI. 1967, pp.527-556.

from 'normal' society. His illness he considered to be a wound inflicted by spiritual conflicts which the mind could not endure without the aid of the lung (F.756, M. 12, 50). No longer able, as he supposed, to hope for marriage and family, he made the final break with Felice Bauer, and became more dependent than ever on what resources lay within himself, the spiritual energy sustained in him by writing. From then on his literary and spiritual quest for self-knowledge became a pronouncedly religious activity, to which he applied ideas and symbolism derived from religious language, including major Jewish religious symbols and concepts. He came to see the task of writing as a redemptive activity, the working out of his own salvation. Related to this development was Kafka's continuing interest in Hasidism and Kabbalah. He expressed a unique feeling of sympathy for Hasidic stories appearing at the time in Das Jüdische Echo (Br.172); and to Felix Weltsch he recommended Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte[1]

> auch an sich ein gutes Buch, eine äusserst grelle Selbstdarstellung eines zwischen Ost - und Westjudentum gespenstisch hinlaufenden Menschen. (Br.203)

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1. Jakob Fromer (ed.): Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte, Munich, 1911. On Kafka's pre-occupation with Hasidism and Kabbalah at this time, see Ch.5.

   Salomon Maimon (1753-1800) was born in Poland. As a philosopher, he attempted to demonstrate that the Kabbalah is based on philosophical principles, which caused the Hasidim with whom he associated to regard him as a heretic. In Berlin, he belonged for a few years to Moses Mendelssohn's circle. In Hamburg, he beseeched a Lutheran pastor to convert him to Christianity, but confessed disbelief in Christian doctrines. He studied Kantian philosophy in Breslau; of his Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie (1790) Kant judged that none of his critics understood his philosophy as well as Maimon. Maimon was buried outside the Jewish cemetery as a heretic when he died.

   Interestingly enough, Fritz Mauthner (see p.14f.) was much struck by Maimon's autobiography, for reasons probably similar to Kafka:

   > Ich bin mit meinem Maimon fertig geworden und fange an ihn zu fürchten. Nie noch vorher ist jüdischer Geist in solcher Caricatur erschienen. Und ich schaudere davor, manchen Zug bei mir leise wiederzufinden. (Quoted in Gerschon Weiler: 'Fritz Mauthner: A Study in Jewish Self-Rejection', in LBIY VIII, 1963, p.146).

A significant part of Maimon's autobiography concerns his acquaintance with Hasidic communities in eighteenth-century Poland. Further, Kafka commented to Weltsch:

> Da Du ins Religiöse kommst, wundert Dich? Du hast Deine Ethik ursprünglich...ohne Fundament gebaut und nun merkst Du vielleicht, dass sie doch Fundamente hat. Wäre das so merkwürdig? (Br.203)

From 1916-17 onwards, Kafka's investigation of spiritual truth through the medium of language and imagery makes its closest approach to ideas derived from the Jewish religious and literary tradition which he strove to regain. This subject is more thoroughly examined in the following chapters. The proximity between Kafka's spiritual (even mystical) and literary preoccupations from this time is such that to separate them is to risk serious misinterpretations.

The diaries of 1917-1924 are scant, compared to the bulk of previous years. There are no entries for 1918, which is represented instead by the Oktavhefte. The literary work of 1917-1920 contains pieces of aphoristic or fable type, while the last diaries reflect thoughts also more readily expressed in aphoristic form than in the more journalistic style of previous years. The boundary between Kafka's diary and artistic writing, always a tenuous one, seems here to have become blurred out of existence.

The reason for this is partly the fact that from 1917 Kafka was frequently ill or convalescing at some distance from his friends in Prague, so that the paucity of diary material is more than compensated for in prolific correspondence with Brod, Weltsch, and three new acquaintances: Minze Eisner, a young Jewish girl to whom Kafka began writing in winter 1919-20; his young Jewish doctor, Robert Klopstock, whom he met in 1921; and the non-Jewish Czech, Milena Jesenská, with whom Kafka conducted another epistolary

love-affair from 1920-22, comparable to his previous correspondence with Felice. The Brief an den Vater of 1919 must not be omitted from the list; it provides a fine example of the artistry with which Kafka moulds personal experience into literary form.

A major subject in Kafka's letters to his friends - all, with the exception of Milena, Jews - is his relation to Judaism in the context of his generation, and that between his Jewishness and his writing. His observation of the Jewish problem has led to the conclusion

> dass wir verzweifelte Ratten, die den Schritt des Herrn hören, nach verschiedenen Richtungen auseinander laufen, z.B. zu den Frauen,...ich in die Literatur, alles allerdings vergeblich. (Br.431)

Literature, in the final analysis, is for Jewish writers a last refuge or an illusory foothold on the crumbling soil of lost tradition, an inspiration of despair:

> Zunächst konnte das, worin sich ihre Verzweiflung entlud, nicht deutsche Literatur sein, die es äusserlich zu sein schien. Sie lebten zwischen drei Unmöglichkeiten, (die ich nur zufällig sprachliche Unmöglichkeiten nenne , es ist das Einfachste, sie so zu nennen, sie könnten aber auch ganz anders genannt werden): der Unmöglichkeit,nicht zu schreiben, der Unmöglichkeit, deutsch zu schreiben, der Unmöglichkeit, anders zu schreiben, fast könnte man eine vierte Unmöglichkeit hinzufügen, die Unmöglichkeit zu schreiben (denn die Verzweiflung war ja nicht etwas durch Schreiben zu Beruhigendes, war ein Feind des Lebens und des Schreibens...), also war es eine von allen Seiten unmögliche Literatur...(Br.337f.)

By 1923 Kafka was resigned to the view that both literature and the other road to truth in which he had once hoped - that which lay through woman, family, roots in community and a personal relationship open to the spiritual realm - afforded only a mirage of the ideal which he sought. The letters to Milena are those of a man grasping for a symbol of life; for Kafka, Milena is more symbol than individual; she represents something

transcending the personal and, like the other women (all Jewish)with whom Kafka conducted inconclusive relationships, becomes a focal point for the attachment of his major pre-occupations. Nowhere is the longing to realize life as something sacred more evident than in Kafka's letters to Milena; and nowhere is that ideal made more remote by the flaw of human impurity, or the consequent sense of guilt and fear more intense. Kafka's hope of achieving atonement and salvation by living 'dans le vrai'of family, community and tradition (-the impossible alternative to literature-) is reversed into despair and a sense of the spiritual criminality of his aspiration:

> Jeder Versuch, hier mit eigenen Kräften durchkommen zu wollen, ist Irrsinn und wird mit Irrsinn gelohnt...Ich kann aus Eigenem nicht den Weg gehn, den ich gehen will, ja ich kann ihn nicht einmal gehn wollen, ich kann nur still sein,...ich will auch nichts anderes. (M.248)

Not by chance does Kafka write to Milena of the past that he can never regain, and of the fear, guilt and self-hatred that he explains by his Jewishness[1]. She, a Christian, is the focal point in his struggle with Jewishness and the hopes, fears and illusions which had nourished his creative genius throughout his life. Finally, the major link between writing and Jewishness also re-emerges. The failure of Kafka's relationship with Milena is not just that of a personal relationship and a struggle with his Jewishness, but also a literary failure - that of a relationship constructed and betrayed in writing:

> Menschen haben mich kaum jemals betrogen, aber Briefe immer und zwar auch hier nicht fremde, sondern meine eigenen...(M.259 ; cf.M.260.)

Kafka wrote similarly to Robert Klopstock in January, 1922 (Br.369), and to Brod in October, 1923 (Br.452f.) The letter to Brod, which refers

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1. References to Jews and Jewishness in the letters to Milena are: M.45ff., 48, 57, 94, 122, 161, 182, 220f., 240, 266, 268.

to the point of contact between literary communication in letters and in art, contains evidence that there is close connection for Kafka between his relationship with Milena and the crisis over the 'impossibility' of literature.

The correspondence with Milena, to sum up, is significant in three inter-related respects: those of the personal relationship, the spiritual quest and struggle with Jewishness, and the credibility of literature and writing altogether (the level which embraces the other two). Central to all three is a search for the 'truth' which makes life its symbol, and for a way to atonement or redemption.

At about the same time as his last letters to Milena, Kafka wrote to Brod of literature in extraordinary terms:

> Das Schreiben ist ein süsser wunderbarer Lohn, aber wofür? In der Nacht war es mir mit der Deutlichkeit kindlichen Anschauungsunterrichtes klar, dass es der Lohn für Teufelsdienst ist. Dieses Hinabgehen zu den dunklen Mächten, diese Entfesselung von Natur aus gebundener Geister, fragwürdige Umarmungen und was alles noch unten vor sich gehen mag, von dem man oben nichts mehr weiss, wenn man im Sonnenlicht Geschichten schreibt. Vielleicht gibt es auch anderes Schreiben, ich kenne nur dieses; in der Nacht, wenn mich die Angst nicht schlafen lässt, kenne ich nur dieses. Und das Teuflische daran scheint mir sehr klar...Ich habe mich durch das Schreiben nicht losgekauft...(Br.384f.)

This is echoed in the diaries for 1922, where Kafka speaks again of intense fear, and of being hounded to the brink of madness by invisible spiritual forces which he cannot resist.

Yet precisely when art seems to fail utterly as a spiritual discipline, hope of reversal remains:

> ...die Jagd geht durch mich und zerreisst mich. Oder aber ich kann - ich kann?-, sei as auch nur zum winzigsten Teil, mich aufrechterhalten, lasse mich also von der Jagd tragen. Wohin komme ich dann? "Jagd" ist ja nur ein Bild, ich kann auch sagen "Ansturm gegen die letzte irdische Grenze"...

> Diese ganze Literatur ist Ansturm gegen die Grenze, und sie hätte sich, wenn nicht der Zionismus dazwischengekommen wäre, leicht zu einer neuen Geheimlehre, einer Kabbala, entwickeln können. Ansätze dazu bestehen. Allerdings ein wie unbegreifliches Genie wird hier verlangt, das neu seine Wurzeln in die alten Jahrhunderte treibt oder die alten Jahrhunderte neu erschafft und mit all dem sich nicht ausgibt, sondern jetzt erst sich auszugeben beginnt. (T.398f.)

There can be no clearer indication of Kafka's looking to Jewish tradition as the ground from which German-Jewish literature might spring anew, and indeed to Jewish mystical tradition[1], by this time, as a spiritual framework for which he felt greater affinity than he had for anthroposophy in 1911; and it proves Kafka's desire before this time to graft his own work onto the rootstock of tradition, while remaining true to his own situation and personality. That these were so largely engaged in a battle with his tradition was the tragic part of it:

> Als ich noch zufrieden war, wollte ich unzufrieden sein und stiess mich mit allen Mitteln der Zeit und der Tradition, die mir zugänglich waren, in die Unzufriedenheit, nun wollte ich zurückkehren können. Ich war also immer unzufrieden, auch mit meiner Zufriedenheit... (T.404)

The lines that run consistently through Kafka's literary development are clear at each successive stage. In 1911, when he visited Steiner, he was seeking a spiritual discipline to support his creative activity. Shortly afterwards, stimulated by the Yiddish theatre, he investigated the element of tradition in national literature - an outward sign of changes going on in his mind at the time, as comparison with the earlier review of Jüdinnen suggests. In the Charakteristik kleiner Literaturen he was beginning to see literature as an activity which fulfils a spiritual function within a community, and one in which tradition is preserved through constant re-interpretation and re-assimilation. At the same time, Kafka

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1. See Ch.4 and 5.

was aware of the risks inherent in a close relationship between national literature and national consciousness, which easily becomes politicized. Now, in 1922, Kafka surveys the way he has come in a direction first revealed eleven years before. The problem remains unsolved, but its constituent elements are basically the same: those of personal, Jewish spirituality, and its realization in literature; the potential role of literature in the spirituality of a community; its need for a new impulse from Jewish traditional roots, the essence of the past; and the risk incurred by a politicized sense of Jewish nationality.

From Kafka's letters and diaries it is clear that literature and spirituality, the two elements that dominated his creative life from the start, found the fullest integration of which he was capable under the aegis of Judaism; yet Kafka remained disinclined to practise this religion. For him, the means, not just the receptacle, of religious experience was literature. Grace and salvation had to be attained by constant effort, or conjured by unremitting literary search. Ultimately, Kafka seems to have admitted failure and defeat in this quest. Yet the imagery of the Judaism he could not accept belonged to the language of Kafka's existentialism, most fully at the very time when he recognized art's assault upon truth as treacherous, and his faith in it underwent its final crisis. Tormented by guilt over the life of isolation and self-absorption he had chosen for the sake of his art, Kafka described himself as a Jewish exile whose wanderings in the wilderness had fulfilled no promise, but brought only dislocation in time and space. (T.407)

In 1922, at the time of his correspondance with Milena and disillusionment with writing, Kafka more than once suggested in his diaries

that his life in literature was merely an inadequate substitute for a happy family life:

> Für alle gibt es künstlichen, jämmerlichen Ersatz: für Vorfahren, Ehe und Nachkommen. In Krämpfen schafft man ihn und geht, wenn man nicht schon an den Krämpfen zugrunde-gegangen ist, an der Trostlosigkeit des Ersatzes zugrunde. (T.402)

This statement represents one side of the picture; but in the light of Kafka's engagements to Felice Bauer, for instance, it is obvious that marriage - to consider the problem in reverse - was no substitute for literature. It did, however, represent for Kafka a means to the end that he sought through the alternative of writing: a place in a community, a tradition, and a spiritual realm[1]:

> ...vielleicht braucht die Frau wirklich das Volkstum weniger für sich, aber der Mann braucht es und so braucht es auch die Frau für ihn und ihre Söhne, (Br.282)

Kafka had written in 1915;

> Einen haben, der...Verständnis hat, etwa eine Frau, das hiesse Halt auf allen Seiten haben, Gott haben. (T.340)

And by a strange, not to say ironical, turn, the last year of his life brought a happy relationship with a woman whose understanding provided the double security of domestic comfort and spiritual support for his creative energy. Dora Dymant, with whom Kafka lived in Berlin, was a Hasidic Jewess. She had come to the West 'weil ich glaubte, dass das Licht aus dem Westen käme'. Her expectations were disappointed, however, when she recognized a profound restlessness in the hearts of Westerners:

> Irgend etwas fehlte ihnen. Im Osten wusste man um den Menschen; vielleicht konnte man sich dort nicht so frei ... bewegen und wusste sich nicht so leicht auszudrücken, aber man wusste um die Einheit von Mensch und Schöpfung. Als ich Kafka das erste[illegible] sah, erfüllte sein Bild sofort meine Vorstellung vom Menschen. Aber auch Kafka wandte sich mir aufmerksam zu, als ob er etwas von mir erwartete.
>
> (J.P. Hodin: 'Erinnerungen an Franz Kafka', in Der Monat I, 8/9, 1949, (pp.89-96) p.91.)

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1. See Appendix C.

She continues:

> Für ihn war alles mit kosmischen Ursachen verknüpft, selbst die alltäglichsten Dinge. Man findet diese Einstellung auch im Osten, dieses Verlangen nach Ganzheit des Lebens. Es gibt im Osten geistige Voraussetzungen, die bedingungslos erfüllt werden müssen, wenn man nicht lebensunfähig werden will. Kafka fühlte das. Der Westen hat es vergessen, und darum hat Gott ihn verlassen. Das scheint mir einer der Gründe zu sein, weshalb man sich heute so für Kafka interessiert: das Bewusstsein, dass Gott uns verlassen hat. (ibid., p.93)

The comments of this Eastern European Jewess indicate points of similarity between Kafka's vision of life, or of what it once was and still should be, and the continuing European Jewish vision. There could perhaps be no more reliable confirmation than hers of Kafka's mental affinity with the Eastern European Jewish tradition which had immediately attracted him upon his first meeting with it in 1911. (cf.M.220) Dora Dymant also has interesting information about Kafka's writing:

> Pour lui l'être humain avait une importance analogue à celle qu'il a pour le savant. Il en avait besoin d'abord comme un objet d'investigation sur son chemin vers l'éclaircissement. Il se trouvait (encore!) au stade du dissecteur - froid, pratique, doué d'une main sûre. Il s'exercait sur les hommes, écrire consistait à ordonner le materiel, à le passer au crible. En ce sens, sa création littéraire était encore un travail de dissection. C'est pour cette raison qu'il ne pouvait pas le laisser derrière lui à ce stade. Il n'a pas eu le temps de mener jusqu'au bout les recherches qui eussent pu le rapprocher de la solution de sa tâche; le résultat devait être la mise au grand jour du monde dans son ordre immuable. (in Marthe Robert: 'Une figure de Whitechapel - Notes inédites de Dora Dymant', in Evidences 38,1952, (pp.38-42) p.42.)

Kafka would have liked to marry Dora, but her father refused his permission. Nevertheless, the months he spent close to the Jüdisches Volksheim in Berlin shortly before his death were clearly a time when Kafka felt more at ease as a Jew than he had before in his life. (See Br.436f.) Despite physical weakness, he occasionally attended lectures at the

Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums. (See Br.466.) He also apparently entertained the idea of emigrating to Palestine, although more as dream than probability. (cf. M.268)

Despite his evident interest in Zionism and ideas of going to Palestine, Kafka's early sympathy for Zionism seems to have waned quickly. He left the eleventh Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1913, disappointed and pessimistic:

> es war ein nutzloses Jagen und etwas Nutzloseres als ein solcher Kongress lässt sich schwer ausdenken. (Br.120 cf.F.462)

In 1923 his opinion was scarcely different[1], for he wrote to Minze Eisner, whom he was encouraging to attend agricultural school in preparation for emigrating to Palestine:

> ...Es ist ein ganz verzweifeltes jüdisches Unternehmen, aber es hat, so weit ich sehe, Grossartigkeit in seiner Verzweiflung...Man kann nicht die Vorstellung abweisen, dass ein Kind verlassen in seinem Spiel irgendeine unerhörte Sessel-Besteigung oder dergleichen unternimmt, aber der ganz vergessene Vater doch zusieht und alles viel gesicherter ist als es scheint. Dieser Vater könnte z.B. das jüdische Volk sein... (Br.428f)[2]

For Kafka to describe the Zionist endeavour thus is consistent with what we know, for he must have seen it within the full religious and cultural context of the Jewish problem in the West, and not merely as a political alternative to the indignities, ambiguities and difficulties of Jewish life in the Diaspora[3]. (This contrasts strongly with the simplistic solution to the Jewish problem originally assumed in the review of Jüdinnen.) A journey to Palestine would have been for Kafka a spiritual undertaking, and one to be embarked upon only by a person spiritually prepared for it. In response to Hugo and Else Bergmann's invitation to accompany them to

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1. cf. Langer's evidence, p. 303.
2. See also F.598, 698.
3. 'Der Zionismus, wenigstens in einem äussern Zipfel, den meisten lebenden Juden erreichbar, ist nur der Eingang zu dem Wichtigern.' (F.675)

Palestine, Kafka wrote in July, 1923, that for him the journey would be

> im geistigen Sinne etwas wie eine Amerikafahrt eines Kassierers, der viel Geld veruntreut hat, und dass die Fahrt mit Ihnen gemacht worden wäre, hätte die geistige Kriminalität des Falles noch sehr erhöht. Nein, so hätte ich nicht fahren dürfen, selbst wenn ich es hätte können... (Br.437f.)

The religious and spiritual earnest of Kafka's quest was such that its goal might not be approached except in a state of purity, whether through literature, in marriage, or in Palestine. According to Hugo Bergmann,

> 'er fühlte sich zu dieser Zeit nicht rein genug, um die Alijah schon auf sich zu nehmen'. (Hugo Bergmann: op.cit.; cf.Universitas 27, 1972, p.748.)

It was a journey which had to be understood, in the spiritual sense of the Hebrew word, as a 'going up'. Kafka's declining to make the journey he had contemplated partly in jest is entirely consistent with that attitude; that which he believed he was unable to attain had been the inspiration of his creative genius:

> 19. Oktober. Das Wesen des Wüstenwegs. Ein Mensch der als Volksführer seines Organismus diesen Weg macht, mit einem Rest (mehr ist nicht denkbar) des Bewusstseins dessen, was geschieht. Die Witterung für Kanaan hat er sein Leben lang; dass er das Land erst vor seinem Tode sehen sollte, ist unglaubwürdig. Diese letzte Aussicht kann nur den Sinn haben, darzustellen, ein wie unvollkommener Augenblick das menschliche Leben ist...Nicht weil sein Leben zu kurz war, kommt Moses nicht nach Kanaan, sondern weil es ein menschliches Leben war...(T.392)

So, in 1921, Kafka uses the Exodus as a metaphor for his own quest for psychological and spiritual integration and self-fulfilment. In keeping with the symbolic terms of the image, to journey literally to the Holy Land might be to arrogate to oneself something Moses had not been granted to know. It might then also be to destroy, by destroying the analogy, the claim to be one's own Moses. Above all, it would be to disregard the truth behind the image: that the goal is inaccessible, in this life, to unassisted human

imperfection. One is reminded of what had struck Kafka on November 1st., 1911:

> ...die Unvollkommenheit der ersten Ansiedlungen im neu eroberten Kanaan und die treue Überlieferung der Unvollkommenheit der Volksmänner. (T.94)

Chapter 3.

'So schwer war die Aufgabe niemandes, so viel ich weiss'. (T.401)

Prophetic undertones in Kafka's letters and journals.

'Es ist nicht an dir,das Werk zu vollenden - dennoch darfst du nicht untätig abseits stehen,' is a maxim from the Pirke Avoth (Sayings of the Jewish Fathers) which Kafka frequently quoted[1]: a reminder of the individual's duty to participate in the task entrusted to Israel, and to work for the messianic ideal he is privileged to serve, expressed in the knowledge that fulfilment of the task lies in a time transcending any human span.

Kafka's quotation of this maxim implies some commitment on his part to the Jewish values that it reflects; but how far did Kafka accommodate his 'Grenzland zwischen Einsamkeit und Gemeinschaft' (T.394) - literature and a bachelor existence - to those values? Since he dissociated himself from the Zionist vision of more politically-minded contemporaries, and since he reached no personal solution of the problems of Jewishness, no obvious reflection of the messianic vision rooted in a Jewish national community can be anticipated in his work. The problem of Jewish Volkstum was for Kafka the impossibility of committing himself to a Jewish community:

> Ein durch seine Lebensumstände und durch seine Natur gänzlich unsocialer Mensch,...durch sein nichtzionistisches ...und nichtgläubiges Judentum von jeder grossen, tragenden Gemeinschaft ausgeschieden, (F.598)

he found no answer to the problem, much rather a cognate dilemma, in the conflict between marriage and literature.

The complexities of the developments reflected in Kafka's work may become clearer if guide-lines are offered to the themes of this chapter. Underlying the material is Kafka's threefold problem of

a) inner conflict over the irreconcilable ideals of 'marriage' and 'literature'. This is subsumed in the inter-related terms 'Kampf' and 'Aufgabe'.

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1. Max Brod: Der Prager Kreis, p.98.

b) the psychological factor of the 'divided personality' (obviously linked with the preceding point), one side of which is in conflict with the other. This condition is reflected in a group of images which Kafka uses with reference to his situation: images of 'leaders of the people' engaged in both 'task' and 'conflict' - Napoleon, the prophets, and the patriarch Abraham.

c) the development of his Jewish consciousness. This is reflected in the progression from the image of the non-Jewish leader-figure, Napoleon, to the Jewish leader-figures of the prophets and Abraham, through which elements a) and b) are presented at successive stages in Kafka's life.

Through the development outlined in c), Kafka comes to view his personal conflict in a new perspective, translated from a more or less individualistic level (in the narrowest sense) onto a cultural and religious level where it is expressed in imagery with distinctly Jewish connections. This includes imagery of the wilderness and the Promised Land; the concepts of commandment or law (Gebot) and of a condition where the commandment is lacking (e.g. exile); and the issue referred to in terms of Kampf and Aufgabe, affected by the development of Kafka's progressively more Jewish consciousness, tends to be worked out in a context of Jewish prophetic and messianic associations[1].

In the complicated context of Kafka's psychological, social and cultural background, a profound association is generated between the ideal of marriage as symbol of Volkstum and domestic and spiritual existence rooted in the traditions of a religious community, and the attempted adoption of literature as a more acceptable, substitute mode of existence infused with spiritual meaning. Although these two ideals remain irreconcilable, they are nonetheless inseparably linked by the polarity of their opposition in the quest for a spiritual remedy for defective Judentum. Where 'marriage' is concerned, 'literature' is likely to be implied with it. On 1st.November, 1912, for example, in one of his earliest letters to Felice, Kafka links

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1. See Appendix D.

the two:

> ...Gibt es also eine höhere Macht, die mich benützen will oder benützt, dann liege ich als ein zumindest deutlich ausgearbeitetes Instrument in ihrer Hand; wenn nicht, dann bin ich gar nichts und werde plötzlich in einer fürchterlichen Leere übrig bleiben.
>
> Jetzt habe ich mein Leben um das Denken an Sie erweitert...Aber selbst dieses steht mit meinem Schreiben im Zusammenhang, nur der Wellengang des Schreibens bestimmt mich und gewiss hätte ich in einer Zeit matten Schreibens niemals den Mut gehabt, mich an Sie zu wenden. (F.66)

That the relationships to both Felice and literature were linked with the Jewish element is implicit in the immediate continuation of the letter:

> Das ist so wahr, wie es wahr ist, dass ich seit jenem Abend ein Gefühl hatte als hätte ich eine Öffnung in der Brust, durch die es saugend und unbeherrscht ein-und auszog, bis sich mir eines Abends im Bett durch die Erinnerung an eine biblische Geschichte die Notwendigkeit jenes Gefühls wie auch die Wahrheit jener biblischen Geschichte gleichzeitig bewies. Wie Sie nun aber auch mit meinem Schreiben verschwistert sind, trotzdem ich bis dahin glaubte, gerade während des Schreibens nicht im geringsten an Sie zu denken, habe ich letzthin staunend gesehen...(F.66)

This simultaneous conjunction and opposition in the context of the spiritual problem is reflected in Kafka's idea of the Aufgabe and its inseparable correlate: Kampf, with inevitable defeat in the aspiration towards a goal or reconciliation that is beyond his powers. In terms of the associative logic - or ambiguity - of imagery, it is significant that in several examples Kafka transposes the problem of marriage, domesticity and paternity into a context of Kampf and Aufgabe, the idea of the Ehemann being juxtaposed with that of the Volksführer, and the idea of the task being associated with defeat.

In the first examples, the leader is Napoleon Bonaparte. Although he is obviously a secular and non-Jewish figure, his role as Volksführer makes him comparable with the figures of the prophets and Abraham in

Kafka's later images. Not only is Napoleon an almost archetypal personification of Kampf, and perhaps also of Aufgabe, in the sense of heroic exploit and destiny. He is associated with revolt against a tradition, and with construction of a new order out of post-revolutionary chaos: the 'prophet' or 'messiah' of a new age and a new community of nations in European history. His ambitious vision proved to be his downfall, in Russia (the land associated, for Kafka, with revolt against tradition, extreme isolation and distance from 'home')[1]; and he died in exile, cut off from the community on an island reminiscent, perhaps, of Robinson Crusoe's, to which Kafka later compared his writing. (Br.392) Altogether, there seem to be enough associations in Napoleon's career to stimulate Kafka's imagination and explain his evident self-projection after reading Berühmte Aussprüche und Worte Napoleons von Korsika bis St. Helena in 1911:

> Wie leicht wird man augenblicksweise ein Teilchen der eigenen ungeheuren Vorstellung Napoleons! (T.75)

Hartmut Binder, referring to Kafka's quotation of Napoleon's 'Es ist fürchterlich, kinderlos zu sterben' (F.221), suggests that the quotation reflects the 'Vorstellung, durch Heirat und Kinder dem Vater gleich werden zu wollen,' and indicates Jewish values at work in Kafka's mind[2]. If the associations suggested above are correct, Kafka's Napoleon apparently reflects other Jewish connotations of a prophetic or patriarchal figure. Support for this argument lies in the fact that, in the context of the problem of marriage, Kafka's Napoleon images are linked to those of the prophets and Abraham through a similar psychological and literary structure.

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1. See T.166; Erinnerung an die Kaldabahn, T.302ff.; the 'Freund in Petersburg' in Das Urteil (Kafka: Die Erzählungen, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1961, p.53).
2. See Hartmut Binder: 'Kafka und Napoleon', in Festschrift für Friedrich Beissner (Herausg. Ulrich Gaier and Werner Volke), Tübingen, 1974, pp. 38-66.

This is shown by analysis of three images in chronological order of their occurrence.

1) (April, 1921) Having described himself to Brod as 'der krumme Westjude' unable to love anything he cannot place inaccessibly above himself, (in this case, Milena Jesenská), Kafka continues:

> ...damit muss ich mich abfinden,und meine Kräfte sind in einem solchen Zustand, dass sie es jubelnd tun. So kommt zu dem Leid noch die Schande, es ist etwa so wie wenn Napoleon zu dem Dämon, der ihn nach Russland rief, gesagt hätte: "Ich kann jetzt nicht, ich muss noch die Abendmilch trinken," und wenn er dann, als der Dämon noch fragte: "Wird denn das lange dauern?" gesagt hätte: "Ja, ich muss sie fletschern." (Br.318)[1]

Here, Kafka simultaneously compares and contrasts himself with Napoleon, using the twist of absurdity to indicate the infinite distance between the heroic ideal and its actual reverse. Prospective marriage is implicitly compared to the epitome of heroic endeavour in war (Kampf), and the fate of outstanding prowess defeated; the 'call' of woman is likened to a demon, tempting the hero with his supreme task, which is reversed into catastrophe. Kafka's enfeebled condition is his pretext for evading the call, a source of triumphant relief, which contributes to the situation's absurdity. By constructing an analogy between himself and the hero and simultaneously, through the ridiculous, dichotomizing or reversing it, Kafka creates an 'anti-Napoleon' or an absurd Kafka-Napoleon incapable of realizing his destiny through appropriate action. The image corresponds to the position of the 'krumme Westjude' unable to realize his Jewishness through the requisite marriage. Jewishness itself, an ideal placed inaccessibly above him in the symbol of woman, 'defeats' him as part of his personality that is beyond his control, and a goal superior to his powers.

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1. cf. earlier allusions to Napoleon: F.221, Br.161, Briefe an Ottla und die Familie, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1974, p.40.

2) In an undated letter to Milena, Kafka describes himself in response to the 'call' of woman as:

> so entsetzt im gleichen Sinn, wie man von den Propheten erzählt, die schwache Kinder waren (schon oder noch, das ist ja gleichgültig) und hörten wie die Stimme sie rief und sie waren entsetzt und wollten nicht und stemmten die Füsse in den Boden und hatten eine gehirnzerreissende Angst und hatten ja auch früher schon Stimmen gehört und wussten nicht, woher der fürchterliche Klang gerade in diese Stimme kam...und wussten auch nicht, denn es waren Kinder, dass die Stimme schon gesiegt hatte und einquartiert war gerade durch diese vorausgeschickte ahnungsvolle Angst...(M.40f.)[1]

All the elements of previous Napoleon comparisons are reproduced here. The Aufgabe is implied in the summons which, as fear, already occupies the prophet's mind; the Kampf is manifest in the psychological struggle against the call. The destiny imposed on the reluctant prophet has already vanquished his inferior powers. The characteristic distancing effect of the ridiculous in the Napoleon examples is replaced by a tone of scepticism as Kafka continues (replacing reversal by negation):

> ...womit aber noch nichts für ihr Prophetentum ausgesagt war, denn die Stimme hören viele, aber ob sie ihrer wert sind, ist auch objektiv noch sehr fraglich und der Sicherheit halber von vornherein lieber streng zu verneinen...(M.41)

Characteristically, Kafka constructs an analogy between himself and a model which he can place far above himself; then, by a reductio ad absurdum, subverts the comparison, one side of himself defeating the other by removing the ground beneath it.

3) Writing to Robert Klopstock in June, 1921, Kafka uses the image of Abraham.(Br.333f.) He alludes to the Abraham of Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling; and the 'Angst' of his Jewish self and of his relationship with Milena (cf. previous example) is probably also vivid in his mind. The discussion of Abraham is central in Kafka's discussion in the letter of the state of his Jewish faith, in which the attitude to woman and family plays ,

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1. cf. p. 313.

as already indicated, a crucial part. Kafka's reflections on Abraham are concerned, therefore, with finding a variation of the image that fits his own situation[1].

The image again concerns a call or destiny to which home and fatherhood are fundamental. Again, the call implicitly involves defeat, in that Kafka's 'other Abrahams' are not equal to their task, and fail spiritually 'höher geführt zu werden'. The original Abraham could be led higher precisely because he had a son, and sufficient faith to obey the call to sacrifice him, while Kafka presumably saw only too clearly the irony of the contrast with himself, who had neither a son nor the independence from the parental home that a child of his own would represent[2]; or who had in a different sense 'sacrificed' the child of promise by failing to marry and (the reverse of Abraham) so prevented himself from being led higher through the test of faith.

Kafka's first Abraham fails to meet requirements, despite willingness to sacrifice, because he is unable to leave home. In this respect, Kafka may be like him; but this version does not satisfy him, not being sufficiently unlike the real (or ideal) Abraham. In the second version, he chooses the opposite case: the Abrahams who are unprepared, having as yet no home but a mere building-site and possibly not yet even a son to sacrifice. These are the contrasting ridiculous ones ('Sarah hat Recht, wenn sie lacht'), whom one may suspect of intentionally failing to finish their houses and who

> das Gesicht in magischen Trilogien[3] verstecken, um es nicht heben zu müssen und den Berg zu sehn, der in der Ferne steht. (Br.333)

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1. cf. H.125, where 'Abrahams geistige Armut...' replaced the original 'Meine geistige Armut.' (See note, H.445)
2. cf. Sokel: Tragik und Ironie, Munich/Vienna, 1964, p.571f.
3. An allusion to Franz Werfel's Spiegelmensch. Magische Trilogie, München, 1920.

They are deliberately preventing themselves from being led higher by evading their call, as Kafka no doubt felt he was doing in failing to abandon the bachelordom of literature for marriage.

The final Abraham provides an analogy with the characteristics noted in the examples of Napoleon and the prophets: he allows Kafka to identify with an ideal while subverting the image, turning it from the sublime to the ridiculous, so that the hero figure is reversed and 'defeated' by its opposite. This Abraham is correct in every way, including the manner of his faith - except that he

> nicht glauben kann, dass er gemeint ist, er, der widerliche alte Mann und sein Kind, der schmutzige Junge. (Br.333)

He has, then, the familiar blend of faith and impurity found in some of Kafka's other images of religious men[1]; and he is divided against himself by his own sense, and fear, of the ridiculous, so that Aufgabe is sabotaged by inner, psychological Kampf:

> Er fürchtet, er werde zwar als Abraham mit dem Sohne ausreiten, aber auf dem Weg sich in Don Quixote[2] verwandeln...Hauptsächlich aber fürchtet er, dass diese Lächerlichkeit ihn noch älter und widerlicher, seinen Sohn noch schmutziger machen wird, noch unwürdiger, wirklich gerufen zu werden. Ein Abraham, der ungerufen kommt! (Br.333f.)

The image again illustrates the absurd operating as a distancing device, expressing the psychological conflict or ambivalence that removes the self from its model of the ideal, in this case, the man of faith, the patriarch. Within the wider context of the test of faith, the Abraham image retains undertones of the more obvious marriage theme of the Napoleon images, for the ideal that is here inaccessible is the Jewish archetypal father.

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1. cf. T.57, 342.
2. A close relative of Kafka's Napoleon and Abraham. Obviously evoking absurdity and the impossible task, suitably a warrior engaged in pursuit of an inaccessible ideal, he represents (with and without Sancho Panza) the conflict between two sides of a dual personality. (See Marthe Robert: L'ancien et le nouveau: de Don Quichotte à Franz Kafka, Paris, 1963.)

These last two examples, like the previous Napoleon cases, reflect the psychological dynamics of the 'krumme Westjude' able to love only that which he can construct as an ideal inaccessibly above himself, the subject of a conflict in which one side of the self defeats the other. As distinct from the Napoleon example, on the other hand, these two images have an extended sphere of reference: they represent the idea of marriage in relation to that of religious faith. Faith is explicitly involved in the Abraham example, and implicitly in the example of the prophets, not only in the use of scepticism as a distancing effect, but in the very concept of fear- fear of an overwhelming power beyond the prophet's control, which Kafka described to Milena as 'die Angst alles Glaubens seit jeher'. (M.105)

Kafka concretizes the same fear in a related 'prophetic' image in January 1921. To Brod's question, 'Warum vor der Liebe mehr Angst haben als vor andern Angelegenheiten des Lebens?' he replies: 'Warum nicht vor jedem Dornbusch die gleiche Angst haben wie vor dem brennenden?' (Br.297; cf. H.84) Characteristically, the call of woman is associated in the image with that of the Volksführer, in this case Moses, whose task was to 'lead up' the Children of Israel from Egypt, through the wilderness, into the Promised Land.

This last allusion anticipates the image which is the final development in this series centred on the call and the task, that of the 'umgekehrter Wüstenweg' (T.406f.), the opening notes of which express, upon the failure of Kafka's relationship with Milena, a sense of despair before an inconceivably difficult task:

So schwer war die Aufgabe niemandes, soviel ich weiss.

> Mann könnte sagen: es ist keine Aufgabe, nicht einmal eine unmögliche, es ist nicht einmal die Unmöglichkeit selbst, es ist nichts, es ist nicht einmal so viel Kind wie die Hoffnung einer Unfruchtbaren. (T.401-2)

The diary for that month (January, 1922) repeatedly dwells on the sorrows of bachelorhood. The impossible Aufgabe, characteristically compared to desperate hope for a child, is clearly that of achieving 'le vrai' of domestic life[1]; or of finding, singlehanded and presumably through literary creation, a substitute for it, and making good the Mangel des Bodens, der Luft, des Gebotes (H.120) which Kafka believed to be the chief cause of failure in all the major areas of his life. (H.120, T.403) In other words, which allude again to Moses, it is the task of being his own lawgiver[2], the Volksführer seines Organismus (T.392) on a lone journey through the wilderness. This is a metaphor for striving to achieve perfection, by his own effort, in his own lifetime, in isolation and literary activity - an inaccessible spiritual goal:

> Nicht weil sein Leben zu kurz war, kommt Moses nicht nach Kanaan, sondern weil es ein menschliches Leben war. (T.392)

Now, in January 1922, Kafka looks back as if to recall the point of his departure, and his lone progress to the point of no return. He writes of present isolation and unhappiness as of a fate imposed upon him:

> Mir scheint es auch, als wäre ich gar nicht hierhergekommen, sondern schon als kleines Kind hingedrängt...,nur das Bewusstsein des Unglücks dämmerte allmählich auf, das Unglück selbst war fertig, es bedurfte nur eines durchdringenden, keines prophetischen Blicks, um es zu sehn. (T.405)

Irrespective of whether this remark indicates belief on Kafka's part that he had a 'prophetic' vision and task (and there are indications, discussed below, of such belief), the diary entry of January 28th., 1922 describes his predicament in a way that makes it comparable with the prophet's condition of ambiguous separation from his native environment[3]:

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1. See Appendix C.
2. cf. H.120.
3. See p. 311, p.313.

...Freilich komme ich auch hier zur 'Schuld', denn warum wollte ich aus der Welt hinaus? Weil 'er' mich in der Welt, in seiner Welt nicht leben liess. So darf ich es jetzt allerdings nicht beurteilen, denn jetzt bin ich schon Bürger in dieser andern Welt, die sich zur gewöhnlichen Welt verhält wie die Wüste zum ackerbauenden Land (ich bin vierzig Jahre aus Kanaan ausgewandert, [1]) sehe als Ausländer zurück, bin freilich auch in jener andern Welt - das habe ich als Vatererbschaft mitgebracht - der Kleinste und Ängstlichste und bin nur kraft der besondern dortigen Organisation lebensfähig...Muss ich trotz allem nicht dankbar sein? Hätte ich den Weg hierher finden müssen? Hätte ich nicht durch die 'Verbannung' dort, verbunden mit der Abweisung hier an der Grenze erdrückt werden können? Ist nicht durch Vaters Macht die Ausweisung so stark gewesen, dass ihr (nicht mir) nichts widerstehen konnte? Freilich, es ist wie die umgekehrte Wüstenwanderung mit den fortwährenden Annäherungen an die Wüste und den kindlichen Hoffnugen (besonders hinsichtlich der Frauen): 'ich bleibe doch vielleicht in Kanaan', [2] und inzwischen bin ich schon längst in der Wüste, und es sind nur Visionen der Verzweiflung, besonders in jenen Zeiten, in denen ich auch dort der Elendeste von allen bin, und Kanaan sich als das einzige Hoffnungsland darstellen muss, denn ein drittes Land gibt as nicht für die Menschen. (T.406f.) [3]
(My underline.)

The words underlined, with the image of the reversed journey through the wilderness, contain the central node - or the heart of contradictions - where the ideas of the Volksführer and the Ehemann meet, attempt to combine, and diverge. Not marriage, the task or struggle, here sets the dominant note of the chord, but its opposite, symbolized in the wilderness which - if cognate with the 'Robinsons Insel' of Br.392 - is the isolation of writing and exclusion from the 'other world' of community, which Kafka considered entering through marriage.

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1. Kafka's own age is reflected in the forty years' wandering of the Children of Israel in the wilderness. The history of the people is reflected in the life of the individual - or, in Kafka's case, reversed in it. On the principle of 'corporate personality' in Judaism see M. Sekine: 'Erwägungen zur hebräischen Zeitauffassung', in Vetus Testamentum Suppl. 9, 1963, pp.7-28.
2. The fragment 'Das Tier in der Synagoge' (H.398ff.) expresses a similar idea, with obvious Jewish associations.
3. Compare this message and T.392 with T.247 (17.12.1913), Kafka's reflections after hearing Hugo Bergmann lecture on 'Moses und die Gegenwart'.

The Volksführer and the Ehemann, who had come as close as they could in the dichotomized analogies between Kafka and Napoleon, the prophets, and Abraham, are here finally separated. The Napoleon who fails to reach Russia, the prophets who hear the voice, but whose worthiness to be called is doubtful, the Abraham who sets out on the wrong track because he is not called, or who fails to ascend Mount Moriah, unable to believe he has been called - all these whose destination was placed in doubt have had their orientation reversed and have departed from the goal, here the Promised Land. The image of the Volksführer, defeated, has yielded to its reverse: the lone exile departing from the Land. Woman no longer represents the ambiguous temptation which may lead to defeat; she is named as the object of Kafka's vain hope of remaining in the realm of community which he has abandoned.

Thus the cancellation of the Volksführer image after the failure of the relationship with Milena, and the exit from Kanaan (spiritual promise) to Wüste (spiritual failure and desolation) reflects the cancellation of two hopes: marriage, which is void, and literature, which is turned from spiritual quest to spiritual confusion. The Kampf seems lost, the Aufgabe is uncompleted and unmentioned.

Written after the point of no return in the 'Grenzland zwischen Einsamkeit und Gemeinschaft' (T.394), the passage's very structure reflects a wilderness region of 'Visionen der Verzweiflung' in the mind precariously existing between the human social and cultural world (symbolized as cultivated land) and the realm of spirit. Kafka's rambling sentences, disjointed rhetorical questions, and associations of images and concepts are intelligible only in terms of a double focus, and the ambiguous inter-relationships of meanings it generates. Inverted commas enclosing the words 'Schuld', 'er',

'Verbannung', suggest a metaphorical and ambiguous, as opposed to literal or obvious sense: the words operate, like the images to which they are related, by loosely integrating facets of possible meaning that correspond to the double vision of the inner mental realm between 'dieser anderen Welt' and 'jener anderen Welt'.

Kafka's negative image of the 'umgekehrte Wüstenwanderung', if juxtaposed with the biblical positive from which it is derived, illustrates the effect of double focus created through reversal. Canaan is the Promised Land Kafka has left behind in one reality, but also the inaccessible ideal that lies ahead in another reality; and, as a symbol, it is part of the 'Vatererbschaft' brought from the first world into the second where, but for the first, Kafka would have no hope of survival.

'Vaters Macht' must mean,first of all, the biographical fact of Hermann Kafka's influence (cf.Br.164,361) - but this interpretation alone is inadequate if the term is related to the ambiguous 'er', master of the world from which Kafka is outcast. The pronoun may stand for an unnamed, supernatural power, suggesting the just and jealous God who visits the sins of the fathers ('Vatererbschaft' in another sense) upon the sons, unto the third and fourth generations[1].

On the other hand, 'Vater' may be the same as in Kafka's letter to Minze Eisner of 1923: Dieser Vater könnte zum Beispiel das jüdische Volk sein. (Br.429)

These are basic Judaic associations of the imagery Kafka uses in this passage. The ambiguities elude final resolution, and reproduce the con-

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1. cf. T.383, where 'Vater' apparently refers to God.

fusion of the wilderness (as opposed to a world ordered according to a spiritual law), and the mind placed, by a power beyond its comprehension, in opposition to its native community[1].

The passage, with its Old Testament-related imagery, arises from three basic facts. One is Kafka's sense of guilt and grief at failing to gain the inaccessible 'Promised Land' through marriage. Another is his sense of being the '<u>Volksführer seines Organismus</u>' (<u>T</u>.392) on a lone spiritual journey with an inaccessible goal. The third concerns the question of his prophetic consciousness, which is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The analysis so far has centred on Kafka's use of <u>Volksführer</u> imagery in the private context of his inner conflict over marriage (the symbol of a spiritual responsibility entrusted to him as a Jew, and the eldest son in his family) versus bachelordom (guilty exclusion from <u>Volkstum</u>, in dedication to a lone spiritual quest conducted through literary creation). It has shown, in the imagery in which Kafka depicts his problem, associations with a 'prophetic' task of leadership.

If it is correct that the issues of marriage and of literature function as opposite poles in Kafka's spiritual dilemma, the imagery in which the marriage problem is discussed should be reflected in discussion of the alternative task, literature. Values and concepts which define the Jewish meaning attached to human life should also be reflected in the meaning Kafka attributed to the substitute existence that he sought in literary creativity (<u>T</u>.402) - for they constitute the <u>Vatererbschaft</u> he brought with him (just as Robinson Crusoe preserved in isolation on his island the values of his native society and culture). Their application to literature must be the only alternative basis for the hope, '<u>Ich bleibe doch vielleicht in Kanaan</u>'.

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1. compare Kafka's rendering of his experience with that of Jeremiah's <u>Lamentations</u>, III: 1-3;9;11; cf. p.202f.

Within the Jewish context, or rather, on the edge of it, the prophetic role, and above all the ambiguousness of the prophet's marginal position, seem to provide the only area where Kafka, with his profound complex of ambivalences towards Jewish community and tradition, including marriage, could conceivably settle, and where his frontier-mentality could be as close as possible to 'remaining in Canaan'. The image of the prophet, set apart on the borders of the community by a will more powerful than his own, could accommodate Kafka's sense of separation from the social world through a combination of ill destiny and vocation to literature, associated as the latter was, for him, with the experience of 'inspiration' by extraordinary psychic powers.

Kafka could claim familiarity with the prophetic condition in the crucial respect which concerns his sense of his relation to his time. He came to consider himself endowed with an extraordinary asset in the very deficiencies he suffered as '<u>der westjüdischeste</u>' of Jews. (<u>M</u>.247) In 1918, having named <u>Mangel der Luft, des Bodens, des Gebotes</u> (<u>H</u>.120) as the source of his wordly and spiritual failures, Kafka continues with the idea of restoring all he lacks by creating the life-giving law himself:

> 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. ...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 oder Anfang. (<u>H</u>.120f.)

Analysis of this passage discloses much concerning Kafka's relation to

Judaism and his sense of a prophetic task. Beginning with the idea of restoring, in and for himself, knowledge of the 'way' revealed in the past, and neglected in the present, Kafka proceeds, consistently with Judaic concepts, towards the idea of the prophet (one who proclaims the law and preaches return to the truth of its way[1]). The idea is implied, not stated, but receives in Kafka's concluding words a characteristic expression, related to the pattern observed in the examples of Volksführer imagery investigated above. These words reverse and dichotomize Jesus', 'Ich bin...der Anfang und das Ende' (Offenb.22:13), and echo Kafka's device of dichotomizing or reversing an analogy constructed between himself and the image of a Volksführer. The ambiguousness of the Jewish prophet's marginal relation to the Jewish community, and the ambivalence of Kafka's attitude toward his self-image as a leader (familiar in the context of the 'task' of marriage, and here appearing in the context of the literary task), could hardly receive a more fittingly ambiguous expression or a more striking reflection than in this verbal image, with its allusion to Jesus, the Jewish prophet who came to 'fulfil the law', and who, outcast as a criminal, was executed as 'King of the Jews'.

The passage establishes an association with the concept of the prophet, not only in linking the idea of restoration of the law with that of a new, historical beginning, of which Kafka may (or may not) be the seer, but also in proceeding from stating the nature of the particular to presenting it as an image of the general. Kafka stands, despite (or by virtue of) his isolation, for something more than himself; in claiming to represent the negative aspects of his time, he adopts the prophetic characteristic of being a mirror to the defects of his generation[2].

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1. See Appendix D, p. 311f.
2. See Appendix D, p. 314 ; cf.Kafka's comments on Picasso, J.195.

To this extent, then, it may be argued that the third fact underlying Kafka's symbol of the 'umgekehrter Wüstenweg' is a sense of the prophetic condition, and that the 1922 passage is a subjective expression of the ambiguousness of that condition.

The ambiguity in H.120f. finds its crowning manifestation in the final words, 'Ich bin Ende oder Anfang', - i.e., Kafka may be a 'prophet' or the reverse of one, and it is uncertain which he is. Basic is the question of whether a 'negative' principle can, paradoxically, be 'positive'. Kafka himself actually predicates this possibility of reconciliation of opposites, in referring to 'das äusserste, zum Positiven umkippende Negative'. He pursued this question further in imagery of unmistakably Kabbalistic derivation. (See p. 126ff., p.132ff.)

On grounds of settlement in an ambiguous realm, there could hardly be a stronger claim than Kafka's to share the prophetic condition. On the other hand, one might equally well speak, in a reversal of his own terms, of 'ein zum Negativen umkippendes Positive' - for logically he would be a prophet who is also 'anti-prophet' to an 'anti-community'. This he apparently recognized in calling himself 'Ende oder Anfang'. He claims the right to be, like the prophet, the representative of his generation; but at the point where he actually embodies its short-comings (as opposed to reflecting them), he approaches the point of becoming not a prophet, but a scapegoat[1].

It is the people's deficiencies, their moral weakness, ignorance and neglect of the law, that necessitate the prophetic message and are largely the cause of the prophets' tribulations. In this sense, the prophet is

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1. cf. Br.386. The reverse of the one who chastens the people and exhorts them to return to the law and avert destruction by an act of repentance and atonement is one who is himself expelled to suffer and atone for their guilt. The ambiguous figure of the Messiah as suffering servant falls midway between the conceptual poles of leader and victim, community and exclusion from community. See Appendix D, p. 313.

related to his generation on the basis of 'das Negative' of his time. But his task is to oppose it, rebuking the people and warning them to return to the law if they wish to avoid destruction, the consequence of their present condition. At this point, Kafka possibly diverges from the prophetic model. The prophets were radically outspoken against 'die allgemeine menschliche Schwäche' of their time, and the condition of alienation, the collective guilt of having no knowledge of God, which results from failure to observe the law. By contrast, Kafka here seems to take collective deficiency as a basis for reconciliation with a 'community' that exists only by virtue of its members' shared state of estrangement in 'Mangel des Gebotes'.

Clearly, and characteristically for Kafka, the underlying snags are those of his relationship to a community which either does not exist, or which he cannot truly accept; the familiar struggle between desire to remain within the law, and obstinate perseverance or unavoidable fate in remaining outside it; and the sense of guilt associated with alienation from it. Here, instead of placing a positive ideal out of reach, Kafka performs the reverse by accepting the negative. From a Jewish viewpoint, this might represent acceptance of collective guilt as a bond in human life, within which the task of realizing perfection cannot be fulfilled. On the other hand, if Kafka's later words to Janouch can stand as comment on his denial of any right 'das Negative...zu bekämpfen', that denial in itself implies Abfall von dem formgebenden Gesetz. (J.231)

Here again, the position may be summed up in Kafka's image of his journey from Canaan into the wilderness, bearing his inheritance with him: outside the community, which is fundamental in Judaism's conceptual structure and the social and religious way of life which expresses it, the

inter-related components of that conceptual structure remain, but are re-assembled, or disordered, in a new association which partly confirms, partly contradicts the original which generates it. Thus, insofar as Kafka can be said to assume a prophetic relationship to his time, he remains on the brink between positive and negative, between 'das Gebot' and lack of it, between the Jewish principle of community and law, and the isolation of the inner world, where he assumes the task of recreating the law for himself.

This inner world and the law created within it are ambiguous in the same sense as the literary Aufgabe which is concerned with them. If they contain a positive element, they are nonetheless negative also, insofar as they are outside the law of the positive, Jewish community. Whereas the classical prophet stood as a bridge across the border that separates men from the divine 'other' which is beyond their knowledge and understanding, as a mediator who received the revealed Word of Israel's personal God and publicized it to the chosen people in their own language, Kafka, cut off from Israel by his 'nichtzionistisches...und nichtgläubiges Judentum' (F.598) stands on the frontier between faith and unbelief, the Jewish and the non-Jewish. He has no certainty of the divine power of a Word which God communicates to Man; his inspiration, on the contrary, is the power of 'die allegemeine menschliche Schwäche', and despair at the impossibility of escaping Judaism and finding new ground outside it.(Br.337). The world of Kafka, the artist, is the reverse of the biblical world of the prophets.

This places Kafka as 'Ende oder Anfang' in another sense. The undertaking to create the law in and for himself may be another manifestation of 'das Negative', and a 'task' of self-destruction.(T.391) In this case, Kafka comes close to being the 'anti-prophet' of a solipsism which is opposed to the two Jewish principles of divine revelation received by Israel as a

community, and truth as a process of learning to know God through creative living within that community. The self as 'Volksführer seines Organismus' may subvert the Jewish idea of the law by becoming a law unto itself; the attempt to escape from the Judaism of the fathers then comes full circle as the solipsism of an alienated individual in the wilderness outside Canaan is endowed with the images and concepts of Judaism. In the utterances of such an 'anti-prophet', truth may well be hidden from a recalcitrant generation (cf. Isaiah 6:ix-x)- concealed not, as by Isaiah, upon divinely revealed instructions, but because it is withheld from the anti-prophet himself[1].

Conversely, Kafka may represent a new beginning which is compatible with Rabbinic tradition. His self-chosen, literary task of recreating the law by inward effort, in pursuit of truth through self-knowledge, approaches the esoteric way of those who seek God as He reveals Himself in the depths of the self. At this point, the model of the prophet merges into that of the Jewish mystic.

Kafka's task of regaining the past, or restoring the law in his own inner, literary world, relates to the question of Jewish Geschichtsbewusstsein, without reference to which this section would be incomplete.

Felix Weltsch, who points to Kafka as 'ein packendes Beispiel für das Erwachen des jüdischen Geschichtsbewusstseins' distinguishes the three interlinked principles of Sprache, Abstammung and Religion as the basis of the Jewish sense of nationality ('Stammesbewusstsein') and historical consciousness[2].

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1. cf. the discussion of Ein altes Blatt, pp. 191-207.

2. See Felix Weltsch: 'Franz Kafkas Geschichtsbewusstsein', in Robert Weltsch (ed.): Deutsches Judentum: Aufstieg und Krise, LBI, Stuttgart, 1963, pp.271-288.

This is also a particular form of religious consciousness, in which the prophetic sense of time and, related to it, the moral duty and power of remembrance are fundamental: remembrance of its role in history is part of the Jewish people's eternal 'Vatererbschaft'.

What signs does Kafka show of such Jewish historical consciousness? His 'Stammesbewusstsein' remained an unfulfilled longing for 'Ehe, Vorfahren, Nachkommen' (T.402); but that it endured in keeping with a sense of relationship between race and history, (which endows marriage with a religious and historical significance), is implied in Kafka's associations of the 'Ehemann' with the figure of the 'Volksführer', and the idea of fulfilment of a historic destiny[1].

Since Kafka failed to become the Ehemann in real life, there is reason to suppose that his Jewish historical sense sought expression and fulfilment in literature (an alternative to paternity), through emulation of the counterpart Volksführer, or prophet. His remaining 'fremd dem Glauben' (Br.401) would obviously affect the nature of his 'prophetic' role, or even contradict it, but to one so much at home in paradox and ambiguity as Kafka was, it would not necessarily preclude that role.

If Kafka's Jewish historical sense were to be fulfilled at all as it developed, this had to be through literary creation, language (even if it were German) being (in accordance with Weltsch's analysis) the only foundation-stone that remained to him outside religious faith and family life.

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1. This concept of historic destiny is actually symbolized in the Jewish marriage ceremony in the shattering of a glass, commemorating the destruction of the Temple, and reminding the couple of their responsibility in the collective task of spiritual restoration and redemption.

As a Jewish parent establishes his place in his people's history through his children, so Kafka perhaps sought to do through his stories[1]. As the believing Jew serves God in daily creative living, so might Kafka, despite his agnosticism, reach out toward the unknown through creative writing as a form of prayer. (H.348; see p. 145f.)

Sacred language, written and spoken, lies at the heart of Jewish religious tradition and life: the eternal message of Revelation was received, proclaimed and preserved in the Hebrew language, the holy medium through which the divine purpose is communicated to man. It links the human and the transcendent, the present and the coming Messianic Age: it is in a sense a linguistic privilege, that indicates the historical status of the Chosen People. That status is preserved as long as the community remains faithful to Torah and the written and oral traditions based upon it. Language, the medium of revealed truth, is thus, for the Jewish people, instrumental in salvation. It proclaims their mission of moral and religious leadership among the nations, and that of the prophet in his generation: the task of leading the aliyah ('way up') to the goal of redemption.

It is possible to see certain aspects of Kafka's literary creativity in German as influenced by this element in Jewish tradition, the repossession of which became so vital to him. It is consistent with the significance of language in Judaism that Kafka should seek salvation through it (Br.401), despite 'die Unmöglichkeit, deutsch zu schreiben' by creating a personal substitute for the sacred text - a literature which amounts to the impossible (Br.337f.)

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1. cf. Jiří Langer's evidence, p. 303 ; and Appendix C, p. 308.

Chapter 4.

'...könntest Du nicht eines der kabbalistischen Werke...mitbringen?' (Br.303)

An outline of the major features of Kabbalah and Hasidism, preliminary to investigation of their reflection in Kafka's thinking from 1917.

With regard to Kabbalah, Kafka was at a greater historical disadvantage, as a 'Westjude', than in other respects: it was one of the first sacrifices Western Judaism made when it embraced European culture in the eighteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth, it was regarded by Western Jews with antagonism and contempt, if not shame, as a primitive and irrational element dangerously opposed to the rationalistic values of the Enlightenment which they embraced. This hostility was shared by the great nineteenth century Jewish historians, including Graetz (whose work Kafka knew); only after the beginning of the twentieth century did the tide of scholarship begin to turn in a less prejudiced and more favourable direction. This change was beginning during Kafka's lifetime[1]; but only since his death has Jewish mysticism been treated with true scholarship, in which an outstanding name is that of Gershom Scholem[2]. Scholem's study of the major characteristics and ideas of the Kabbalah makes it possible to perceive the depth - which Scholem points out (K.S., p.12) - of Kafka's roots in that tradition.

In order to estimate fairly how far Kafka recognized or developed in his work the seeds of 'einer neuen Geheimlehre, einer Kabbala' (T.398), as his diary for 16th. January, 1922, suggests he did, it is necessary to know something about the Kabbalah, its ideas and symbolism. The outline of the following pages therefore consists basically of

a) a general definition and broad characterization of the Kabbalah;

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1. See for example Gerschom Scholem's reviews, 'Lyrik der Kabbala?' in Der Jude VI, 1921/22, pp. 55-69, and 'Über die jüngste Sohar-Anthologie', in Der Jude V, 1920/1 pp363-369.

2. Works by Scholem used in this chapter are referred to by the following abbreviations: M.T.: Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, New York, 1946; K.S.: On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, London, 1971; M.I.: Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism, and other Essays on Jewish Spirituality, London, 1975.

b) a brief description of the Kabbalists' conception of the mystical qualities of language and spiritual or sacred literature;

c) a sketch of the cosmological concepts of Lurianic Kabbalah, one of the historically most influential developments of Kabbalistic thought, which originated in the sixteenth century, leading on to

d) a relatively long consideration of aspects of Hasidism, which arose in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century as a new offshoot of Lurianic Kabbalah. Since Kafka's acquaintance with kabbalistic thought was gleaned largely from Hasidic literature as it became known in Western Europe during his generation, emphasis is given to the tradition and basic characteristics of the Hasidic tale. 1

'Kabbalah', meaning 'tradition', designates the stream of mystical thought which co-exists in Judaism with the Talmudic tradition. It is not one consistent dogma or system, but a continuous religious movement expressed, in various cultural and historical environments,in trends which may resemble one another little, but are nonetheless inter-related by fundamental associations of ideas and symbolism. Kabbalah incorporated elements of ancient oriental cosmology and assorted religious and philosophical traditions, including Persian, Babylonian, Gnostic, Pythagorean and Platonic influences. In its development in the Ancient World, under Islam and in the countries of Western Europe (which it first reached in the eighth century) it absorbed Islamic and Christian influences into its rich and creative Hebraic rootstock. It has in turn influenced European thought within the Christian tradition, from the late fifteenth century.

Particularly striking in Kabbalah is its integration of mythical thought

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1. Quotations have been made in the following pages from works on Hasidism that Kafka knew: Buber's Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman and Die Legende des Baalschem (cf. F.60), and S.A. Horodezky's two articles, 'Vom Gemeinschaftsleben der Chassidim', in Der Jude I, 1916-17, which Kafka possessed. (See Klaus Wagenbach: Franz Kafka: Eine Biographie seiner Jugend 1883-1912, Berne, 1958, p.257). Kafka is also likely to have heard from Jiří Langer information subsequently included in the latter's Nine Gates.

with orthodox Jewish theological concepts and values. It cannot be reduced to a rational system or philosophy, however, consisting rather of a texture of symbolism, as intricate as it is grandiose, arranged in a complex cosmological pattern around the fundamental concepts of Creation, Revelation and Redemption. It combines esotericism with theosophy, which seeks to reveal the mysteries of the life of God (whose being and wisdom have been hidden from Man since the Fall), and to find, on an eschatological plane, the way for Man's return to primordial unity with God, and a messianic redemption of cosmic dimensions.

To the Kabbalist, the world is a corpus symbolicum, bearing signatures through which the divine mysteries may be revealed if a key to them can be discovered or invented. It is a world in which all that exists correlates in a total creation whose every element mirrors all others. The world below is interconnected with the spheres of the world above, and events below also take effect above; Man himself is the spiritual microcosm of a spiritual universe, able to influence the life of the hidden God through the dynamics of his relationship with divine Creation. The Kabbalist aims to attach his entire personality to the hidden spiritual realm that underlies the world in every aspect, and to integrate his thoughts and actions into the secret order to assist God in the process of cosmic redemption.

While apparently tending to emphasize immanence, as opposed to transcendence, in God's relation to the world, Kabbalah retains as its basic concept the deus absconditus who is revealed to Man only in complete inwardness, in the depths of the self. In a scheme where all things are mirrored in each

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1. See Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Christian Kabbalah. Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin and Jacob Boehme are important names in this field. On Boehme, cf. Scholem, M.T., p.237f.

other, the 'inner' and the 'outer', the 'higher' and the 'lower' are equivalents; opposites are reconciled in what may seem to be a paradoxical way[1]. Events in the process of redemption are located not only in the invisible, spiritual aspect of Creation, of which Man is part; they are also transposed into the scene of the individual soul, and the symbols which depict the soul's inner, spiritual transformation correspond to spiritual events in the world 'outside'. 'Innen und Aussen', in Kafka's words, 'gehören zusammen'. (J.57)

Like all mystics, the Kabbalist seeks a direct, personal experience of God and the oneness of Création which is beyond rational comprehension and normal linguistic communicability, and expressible (like the world in which he lives, and which he 'is') only in the language of metaphor, symbol and paradox. For him, Judaism in all its aspects is a system of mystical symbols reflecting the mysteries and hidden knowledge that he seeks, and the concepts of orthodox rabbinic theology are 're-interpreted' onto the level of mystic consciousness. This point is underlined by the basic sense of the term 'Kabbalah' - 'tradition'.

In Judaism, 'tradition' involves a particular sense of history in relation to the religious categories of Revelation and Redemption. This historical association is present in the term 'Kabbalah', and indicates

> the basic differences between the Kabbalah and other kinds of religious mysticism which are less closely identified with a people's history. (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Kabbalah.)

The Kabbalist projects the historical events of his religion into his inner experience as

> symbols of acts which he conceives as being divorced from time, or constantly repeated in the soul of every man. Thus the exodus from Egypt, the fundamental event of our history, cannot,

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1. cf. Rabbi Nachman, quoted on p.104.

> according to the mystic, have come to pass once only and in one place; it must correspond to an event which takes place in ourselves, an exodus from an inner Egypt in which we are all slaves. Only thus conceived does the Exodus cease to be an object of learning and acquire the dignity of immediate religious experience. (Scholem, M.T., p.19)

Jewish history becomes symbolic of the cosmic process, and the Torah symbolic of the cosmic law. Within this system of correspondences, personal experience of Revelation comes to the Kabbalist as the mystical illumination of hidden knowledge, affirming the idea of the symbolic 'timeless' historical event as something absolute, which must become part of spiritual experience.

The Kabbalists, then, realized the meaning of 'Kabbalah' through an often radical translation of the events and values of historical tradition onto the level of mystical experience, and the translation of mystical experience, vice versa, into the structure of a symbolic, historical, and secret theology:

> It is a remarkable fact that the very term Kabbalah...is derived from an historical concept...The very doctrine which centres about the immediate personal contact with the Divine, that is to say, a highly personal and intimate form of knowledge, is conceived as traditional wisdom. The fact is, however, that the idea of Jewish mysticism from the start combined the conception of a knowledge which by its very nature is difficult to impart and therefore secret, with that of a knowledge which is the secret tradition of chosen spirits or adepts. Jewish mysticism, therefore, is a secret doctrine in a double sense, a characteristic which cannot be said to apply to all forms of mysticism. It is a sacred doctrine because it treats of the most deeply hidden and fundamental matters of human life; but it is secret also because it is confined to a small élite of the chosen who impart the knowledge to their disciples. (M.T., p.20f.)

A fundamental aspect of the Kabbalists' Geheimlehre is their attitude towards language. To them Hebrew, as a sacred language received from God, and as language in its purest form, has mystical value. It reflects the spiritual essence of the world, for Hebrew was the instrument of Creation:

it is said that God created the world according to the prototype contained in the Torah, which had been created 2,000 years before. Correspondingly, the mystical symbolism of language is considered a key, by means of which to penetrate the deepest mysteries of Creation and - since all is interconnected - unlock the soul for its encounter with the hidden God. The human power of speech is considered a faculty of ruah, the spiritual grade of the soul.

Related to the idea of Revelation as an everlasting spiritual event which is realized constantly anew in the individual soul was the tradition of mystical exegesis of the Torah, according to the 'unlimited mystical plasticity of the divine word' (Scholem, K.S., p.76), through which the hidden God, as incomprehensible as He is infinite, reveals Himself to Man. To the adept with sufficient mastery of the mystic secrets of language, the hidden knowledge is revealed, according to the level of his spiritual understanding, in the depths of his inner self.

The Kabbalist Sefer Yezirah (written before the 6th. century A.D.) contains the foundation of this tradition of the mystic symbolism of language. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet possess numerical values; different words of the same total value can be related to one another through Gematria, the permutation of letters and combination of numbers (partly Pythagorean, partly Jewish); in Notarikon new words are derived by the acrostic method, from the first or last letters of others; in Temurah a word may be altered by transposing letters. These are only three examples of how infinite spiritual potencies may be generated through mystical analysis and manipulation of language[1].

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1. This subject is discussed by Scholem, with particularly striking examples, in a chapter devoted to the Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia: M.T. pp. 119-155.

Kafka probably knew of this tradition concerning the mystical value and creative power of language from his friend Jiří Langer[1] and from Martin Buber's introduction to Die Legende des Baalschem,[2] which quotes Hasidic sources on this subject. Although Polish Hasidim of the 18th. century and after had less esteem for the intricate linguistic and numerical formulations which were fundamental to the contemplative techniques of their predecessors in the Lurianic school (established in the 16th. century), they did not reduce the value of language in prayer, the supreme mode of communication with God:

> ...in jedem Zeichen sind Welten und Seelen und Göttliches, und sie steigen auf und binden sich und vereinigen sich mit einander, und danach vereinigen sich die Zeichen, und es wird das Wort, und die Worte einen sich in Gott in wahrhafter Einung, da ein Mensch eine Seele in sie geworfen hat, und alle Welten einen sich und steigen auf, und die grosse Wonne wird geboren. (Buber: B.S., p.29)

The idea of the mystical value of language was part of the Kabbalist tradition of mystical exegesis of the Torah. The most important of all Kabbalist works is a mystical commentary on the Torah, the Zohar, written by Simeon ben Yochai in the 2nd. century A.D. and the Spanish Moses de Leon in the 13th. This tradition rests not on the idea of directly communicable or literal meaning in the sacred text but, on the contrary, on the principle that 'no single interpretation of the Torah in human language is capable of taking in the whole of its meaning'. (Scholem: M.T., p.14) The divine word does not have 'a meaning'; it is pregnant with hidden meaning, with which it is imbued by the infinite divine Intelligence which Man cannot hope to understand. The sacred texts embody the infinite absolute, and so are infinitely interpretable; their holiness 'resides precisely in their

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1. See p. 93f.
2. Martin Buber: Die Legende des Baalschem, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1908. Henceforth referred to by the abbreviation B.S.

capacity for such metamorphosis'. (Scholem: K.S., p.12)

This concept of the Torah's infinite meaning reinforced that of the Torah as an organism, its literal sense being the 'body', while the 'soul' was the secret essence - the divine meaning - underlying the written word. (Scholem: K.S., p.45) It represented a living hierarchy of meanings more complex than the primary opposition of literal and spiritual, exoteric and esoteric, suggests: before 1290, Moses de Leon had given the acrostic name PaRDeS (Paradise) to the hermeneutic scheme

peshat	-	literal meaning
remez	-	allegorized meaning
derasha	-	Talmud and Aggadic meaning
sod	-	mystical meaning

for interpreting the text of the Torah[1]; the Zohar advanced the thesis that every word, indeed every letter of the Torah, has 70 aspects, representing the number of nations traditionally held to inhabit the earth, and symbolizing the infinite totality of the divine word. Isaac Luria reasoned that there were 600,000 aspects to the Torah, one corresponding with each of the 600,000 souls said to have received the Law below Mount Sinai.

The Hasidim of Eastern Europe, who tended to play down the Talmudic element in Judaism, placed greater emphasis on direct personal communion with God than on rigorous study and exegesis of Torah. But the infinite mystery of the sacred text remained vital to their religious and mystical consciousness. Kafka might well have learned from Langer about the sublime 'meaninglessness' of the word that conceals the truth it contains:

> Each little letter of the Torah hides a profound mystery. The more sublime mysteries are contained in the vowels[2] while those

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1. See Scholem: K.S., p.57ff.
2. These are not normally represented in Hebrew orthography.

> that are still more sublime are to be found in the annotations. But the most sublime mysteries of all lie submerged in the undefined sea of whiteness which surrounds the letters on all sides. ...So infinite is the mystery of the whiteness of the parchment that the entire world we live in is incapable of comprehending it. ...Only in the world to come will it be understood. Then shall be read not what is written in the Torah, but what is not written: the white parchment[1]. (Jiří Langer: Nine Gates, Plymouth, 1961, p.86; cf. ibid., p.127.)

The paradox of the word as the vessel of absolute mysteries, its simultaneous vacancy and infinite plenitude of meaning, reflects the concept of the divinity in which it originates: the mystical Nothing. The En-Sof - 'that which is infinite' - of early Spanish and later Lurianic Kabbalah is also named Ayin - 'Nothing'. The concept of creatio ex nihilo, much disputed in Jewish philosophy, was a favourite of the Jewish mystics, in the sense of creation out of God:

> This Nothing from which everything has sprung is by no means a mere negation; only to us does it present no attributes because it is beyond the reach of intellectual knowledge. In truth, however, this Nothing - to quote one of the Kabbalists [David ben Abraham Ha-Laban, c.1300] - is infinitely more real than all other reality. Only when the soul has stripped itself of all limitation and, in mystical language, has descended into the depths of Nothing does it encounter the Divine. For this Nothing comprises a wealth of mystical reality although it cannot be defined. (Scholem: M.T., p.25)

The idea of creation out of Nothing gives rise to two more fundamental considerations. One is the Kabbalist doctrine of emanation; the other concerns the question of evil.

The doctrine of emanation provides a symbolic explanation of how the hidden, unknowable God manifests Himself in the acts of Creation, Revelation and Redemption. The symbolism is that of the emanation of spheres of divine light, in which God's attributes are revealed for the Kabbalist's contemplation. (The symbolism of emanation of light, and the symbolism of language

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1. cf. Scholem: K.S., p.82.

and the 'linguistic process' correspond in the cosmic process of Creation, Revelation and Redemption.) There are ten spheres, called Sefiroth. Each, with the divine attribute which it reveals, is a stage in the revelation of God's creative power. This includes the attribute of severity and stern judgement, which is related to the idea of the source of evil in God.

The mystic seeking experience of God's absolute unity proceeds from contemplation of the 'Thirty-two ways of wisdom' - the twenty-two Hebrew letters and the ten Sefiroth - through the infinite complexity of spheres and stages described in the kabbalistic texts, to the conception of God as the 'Root of all Roots' (Scholem: M.T., p.12), where all oppositions (including that of 'good' and 'evil') vanish in absolute unity. The interrelation of the ten Sefiroth, represented as the 'Tree of Life', mirrors the structure of the world organism and the spiritual aspect of the human form to which it corresponds (as macrocosm to microcosm): the form of Primordial Man, who is the sexless Adam Kadmon[1] of the time before the Fall, the image of God in whom all is contained in complete oneness. In this image too, 'inner' and 'outer', 'higher' and 'lower' worlds are one: the inner world of Man becomes identical with the realm of divinity, the 'secret of Faith' which is opened up to the contemplation of the believer. (Scholem: K.S., p.104)

The most monumental and 'philosophical' development of the doctrine of the Sefiroth is found in the school of Kabbalah established by Isaac Luria in the 16th. century. It is a vindication on a cosmological scale of Israel's exile, which becomes, according to Luria's scheme, symbolic of the true state of all being - to redeem which is Israel's task. This scheme can be briefly described by enumerating its fundamental concepts[2].

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1. cf. Jiří Langer: Nine Gates, p.155.
2. See Scholem: M.T., pp.244-286.

The cosmic process, according to Lurianic Kabbalah, originates in tsimtsum, God's withdrawal into Himself and the concentration of His essence, which becomes increasingly hidden. Through tsimtsum, a primordial space was created, without which nothing could have existed other than God and His pure essence. The light of the Sefiroth, shining from the eyes of Adam Kadmon, was to have been received by vessels containing the lower orders of light, which were to be instrumental in Creation; but the impact of the superior light shattered them. The Fall of Adam corresponds to the destruction of the vessels: his soul, too, shattered, and he shrank from his primordial, cosmic dimensions into Man's present size. Since then, nothing has been in its right place (i.e. all has been in exile), and everything in Creation has been somehow broken or unfinished. The divine light has dispersed in 'sparks' into the darkness of chaos and evil, symbolized in the image of kelipot, 'shells' which imprison the sparks below the sphere of the Shekhinah (the glory of the presence of God, and the final stage of emanation). Man's physical exile in history is parallelled by the soul's exile in the migrations of gilgul (metempsychosis)[1].

Man's task within this cosmic alienation is to effect tikkun: redemption of the dispersed light, the perfection or completion of Creation, and restoration of Adam Kadmon. By the secret magic of his acts, he must restore everything to its right place, deliver the Shekhinah from her exile in the world of darkness and evil and re-unite her, in the hieros gamos, with the Holy One, 'the husband of her youth', for whom she mourns in exile. The cosmic Redemption to which the Messiah signs his name, as it were, is thus

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1. cf. Langer, quoted on p. 105.

envisaged as a re-union of God's male and female aspects, and corresponds to a purification of God Himself.

The symbol of the Shekhinah is profoundly ambivalent. She is not only the protective presence of God which accompanies Israel in exile, a merciful mother; she also has a terrible aspect as the 'Tree of Death', cut off from the Tree of Life, and as a vehicle of power, punishment and judgement (associated with the force of evil).

The opposition between the two Trees mentioned above (defined in terms of the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life) is important to the Jewish mystics[1]. They are,in essence, one, growing from the same trunk, and represent different aspects of the Torah. That figured in the Tree of Life has remained inaccessible since the Fall of Adam: he turned away toward the Tree of Knowledge, thus preventing the life of Paradise from coming into being, destroying the unity of the two Trees in Man's life, and inaugurating the rule of the Tree of Knowledge, under which the Torah was revealed according to the principle of duality:

> The Tree of Life is entirely and exclusively holy, with no admixture of evil, no adulteration or impurity or death or limitation. The Tree of Knowledge, on the other hand, contains both good and evil, purity and impurity, virtue and vice,...the clean and the unclean. In an unredeemed world the Torah is revealed in positive and negative commandments and all that these imply, but in the redeemed future uncleanliness and unfitness and death will be abolished. In an unredeemed world the Torah must be interpreted in manifold ways...but in the redeemed future it will be revealed in the pure spirituality of the Tree of Life, without the 'clothing' it put on after Adam sinned. It will be wholly inward, entirely holy. (Scholem: M.I., p.40)

In this and related kabbalistic imagery, Redemption is envisaged as return to the origins of Creation. The Kabbalist who makes the inward 'descent' into the depths of his soul is seeking return to his source in God,

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1. See Scholem: K.S., p.68f.

the 'Root of all Roots'; seeking, in opposite terms, the 'ladder of ascent', which links all creatures downward from the source of creation, and leads the way back to the 'inward home'.

The ladder of ascent to the 'heavenly mansions' is an image which reflects some of the most ancient kabbalistic symbolism: that of the merkabah (chariot) and hekaloth (palaces) traditions[1]. The early Jewish mystics concerned with the mysteries of the merkabah aspired not to an understanding of God's true nature, but to perception of the divine majesty enthroned on its chariot. (See Ezekiel 1.) The 'descent' to ecstatic vision of the chariot was experienced as 'ascent' through pardes (Paradise), or the seven palaces of the upper worlds, at the end of which sits God, the Heavenly King, surrounded by 'majesty, fear and awe'. He is a God far removed from human comprehension; even though His glory is revealed from afar, the distance between the soul and the King remains infinite. The ascent through the heavenly palaces is beset with hazards, empty visions and angels of destruction who confound the soul. Hosts of 'gatekeepers' guard the entrance to every palace.

A Hasidic variation on the image of the chariot is described by Martin Buber:

> Menschenliebe ist nicht Erfüllung eines ausserweltlichen Gebots, sie ist Werk an der Vollendung, sie hilft, dass die Gestalt der Schekhina aus der Vergangenheit trete, sie arbeitet am 'Wagen': an dem kosmischen Träger der befreiten Herrlichkeit...
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> "Wenn ein Mensch," sagt Rabbi Rafael von Berschad, "sieht, dass sein Nächster ihn hasst, soll er ihn mehr lieben als bisher, um den Mangel auszugleichen. Denn die Liebeseinheit aller ist der Wagen der Schekhina, und jeder Sprung und Bruch darin hindert ihren Aufstieg aus den Schalen." (Buber: Der grosse Maggid und sein Nachfolge, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1922,[2] p. xliv)

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1. See Scholem: M.T., pp.40-79.
2. Henceforth referred to by the abbreviation G.M.

The Eastern European Hasidic movement[1] founded in the eighteenth century by Israel Baal Shem Tov, the 'Besht' (1700-1760), was a creative offshoot of Lurianic Kabbalah, a transvaluation of it expressed in a new system of social relations, and based on a form of communal mysticism under charismatic leadership, which proclaimed, in the words of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlaw: 'Der Chassidismus ist die Ethos gewordene Kabbala.' (Buber: Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman, Leipzig, 1918,[2] p.13)

Hasidism elaborated the Lurianic concept of tsimtsum, adapting it to a panentheistic framework, and tending to consider it as God's apparent withdrawal from the world, while in reality the divine light was progressively screened so as to allow creatures what seems to be an independent existence. The universe is God's 'garment' beneath which He is hidden in the upper worlds. When Man realizes that all is created from the divine essence, and that in reality no barriers separate him from God, all the 'workers of iniquity' are dispersed.

As in Lurianic Kabbalah, what is above depends on what is below, and vice versa:

> Aber dies ist das Geheimnis der Gemeinschaft, dass nicht bloss der Niedere des Höheren bedarf, sondern auch der Hohe des Niederen. (Buber: B.S., p.16)

Upon this principle rest the Hasidic conception of Man's part in the scheme of Creation and Redemption, and the social values of the community which undertakes it. The task of Hasidism is a corporate service that only the community can fulfil.

Fundamental to Hasidic worship and the religious social structure that rests upon it, is the concept of Avodah-be-Gashmiyyut', 'corporeal worship'.

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1. See Scholem: M.T., pp.325-350.
2. First published Frankfurt-am-Main, 1906. Henceforth referred to by the abbreviation R.N.

This accords with the belief that the spiritual is only a higher level of the material; that in order to reach the spiritual, Man must pass through a material stage, and that there is no way to liberation from the captivity of matter except the redemptive act of co-operation with it. Man worships God, and may achieve communion with Him, through his physical acts. In the life of the perfect Hasid, according to the Baal Shem, every material act can, and should, be transformed into the spiritual within a single mode of holy action which leaves no room for a separate category of the 'profane'. Man's appetites should be used to serve God; even the evil side of his nature can serve this end. The purpose of such worship is to assist 'the union of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shekhinah': to redeem the scattered sparks of divine light which are imprinted in all things, even in that which is evil, and produce cosmic harmony:

> Der Mensch soll wissen, dass sein Leid aus dem Leide der Schechina kommt... '...alles tue er um des Mangels der Gottesglorie willen, und aus sich selber wird alles gelöst werden, auch sein eigen Leid befriedet aus der Befriedung seiner oberen Wurzel. Denn alles, oben und unten, ist eine Einheit...' (Buber: B.S., p.141)

Since God is the essence of all things, writes Buber in the introduction to Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman (p. 15), he who perceives the essence of all things perceives God. God does not speak out of things, but thinks in them; He can be apprehended there only by the innermost power of the soul which penetrates En-Sof, the realm of pure thought. If this power is liberated, Man can unite with God at any time, in any place, through consecrated action, however insignificant it may appear. Through Man, that which is fragmented and dispersed can be restored to its proper place in Creation, matter being raised to the level of its spiritual essence or form.

Mystical activity is practised individually by the Hasidim ('the pious ones') within the community, although in a hidden fashion; but the indis-

pensible transformation of the material into the spiritual can be achieved and experienced only within the community. It became imperative for the Hasid to live simultaneously both in and beyond society. The dialectic between discreteness and integration in the community is subsumed in the symbolic figure of the zaddik ('the righteous one') and his spiritual connection with the Hasidic community.

The zaddik is primus inter pares, the spiritual leader and nucleus of the religious-social group; and, in the spiritual hierarchy extending between God and the upper and lower worlds of Creation, he mediates between God and Man. He is the essence of holiness in human form, the 'saint' through whom the community as a whole is sanctified:

> Der Zaddik bedeutet seinen Anhängern 'die Grundfeste der Welt', 'das Innere der Welt', 'die Seele und das Leben der Welt'. Die Menschen, die ihn umgeben, sind gleichsam der Körper, der der Seele als Hülle dient. Der Zaddik ist 'der Mittler zwischen der Menge und Gott', er ist die Schleuse, durch die das Leben aus dem Urleben in die Glieder seiner Zeitgenossen hineinströmt. Er ist ein Teil der Gottheit; 'Gott entnimmt seiner Wesenheit gleichsam ein Lichtbündel, streut es in die Welt und lässt daraus den Zaddik hervorspriessen'. Der Zaddik verschmilzt zu einer Einheit mit Gott. (S.A. Horodezky: 'Vom Gemeinschaftsleben der Chassidim' in Der Jude, 1916-17, pp. 599-608: p. 603)

Appearances, however, may contradict the zaddik's true nature. Repeatedly, Hasidic literature teaches that there is more to the 'righteous one' than meets the eye:

> 'Mögen dich deine Gedanken nicht überrumpeln, indem sie dir an dem wahrhaften Zaddik Zweifelhaftes zeigen. Denn auch darin gleicht der Zaddik seinem Schöpfer, dass manches an seinen Taten unverständlich bleiben muss. Den Chassid darf es night beirren, wenn es ihm auch scheint, dass der Zaddik, Gott behüte, gegen die Thora handle. Denn der Zaddik steht über der Thora, wie sie die Menge zu erfassen vermag. Die Thora ist in seine Hand geleben, er darf ihren Sinn nach seinem Sinn auslegen. Er selbst ist Gesetz und Recht'. (ibid., p. 603)

As the higher and the lower depend upon each other, the zaddik depends

upon his Hasidim, and vice versa. His strength comes from human sources as well as divine; but, unlike ordinary mortals, he is able to live in constant communion with Gŏd; he has an omniscience derived from powers of psychic vision that transcend time and space. He is the 'ladder' by which the higher and lower worlds communicate, a miracle-worker and healer whose prayers can exercise influence over the universe. Such is his spiritual strength that he can plumb the realm of evil - the lowest level of that which is originally and essentially good. He has power to redeem the sparks of divine light hidden in its darkness and impurity.

The intimate communion with God in which the zaddik exists is devekuth, 'cleaving to God'. It is a value frequently mentioned in Kabbalist literature as the highest ideal of the mystical life and the last grade of ascent to God. In Hasidism, according to Scholem, devekuth receives a fundamental re-evaluation, being substituted for the Lurianic messianic value of tikkun. In Hasidism, the messianic element is greatly diminished: the eschatological emphasis is replaced by emphasis on personal life and personal communion with God, in which the individual obtains, as it were, redemption in the here and now, within the state of exile. In the supreme ecstasy of communion, the Hasid transcends the limitations of time, space, and physical being:

> In der Ekstase rückt alles Vergangene und alles Zukünftige zur Gegenwart zusammen...Einzig der Augenblick lebt, und der Augenblick ist die Ewigkeit. (Buber: B.S., p.5)

Devekuth affirms God's oneness and omnipresence. To leave the state of devekuth is sinful, but in this world it is attainable only momentarily (except by zaddikim); at the final redemption it will be uninterrupted.

Prayer above all, in Hasidism, is the ladder to devekuth, an act of mystical contemplation in which thought is directed entirely, with the mystical concentration of kavvanah, toward the holy realm of the spirit. In prayer

the individual, filled with creative spiritual purpose, negates the world in turning away from it; but thereby he paradoxically contributes to its completion. Devekuth rests on the power of achieving pure, introspective thought void of all content; the voiding of thought uplifts the divinity in Man's soul to encounter the realm of En-Sof, which is pure thought, beyond finite limitations. Entry into this spiritual state is bittul-hayesh, the annihilation (or transcendence) of self in which, in Hasidic Hebrew word-play, ani(y) becomes ayin: the 'I' becomes 'Nothing'. The condition of absolute 'nothingness' is the supreme realization of Hasidic worship:

> Aber die Heiligen, die sich vom Sein ablösen und Gott immerdar anhängen, die sehen und erfassen ihn in Wahrheit, als wäre das Nichts wie vor der Schöpfung. Sie wandeln das Etwas ins Nichts zurück. (Buber: B.S., p.9)

In this state, as the language suggests, occurs 'Versöhnung der Gegensätze'[1].

> Und also ist es, wenn der Mensch will, dass eine neue Schöpfung aus ihm komme, dann muss er mit aller seiner Möglichkeit zur Eigenschaft des Nichts kommen, und dann schöpft Gott in ihm eine neue Schöpfung...(Buber: B.S., p.30)

In prayer, as in Torah study, the mystical value of language is fundamental: 'Denn die Buchstaben sind Kammern des Heiligen, gelobt sei Er, durch die Er sein Licht strömen lässt'. (S.A. Horodezky: op.cit., p.650) The Hasid must perform the contemplative act of binding himself to the spiritual element inherent in the letters of the Torah, and in prayer:

> 'Man soll die Worte sprechen, als seien die Himmel geöffnet in ihnen. Und als wäre es nicht so, dass du das Wort in deinen Mund nimmst, sondern als gingest du in das Wort ein'. (Buber: B.S., p.29)[2]

Concentration on the spirit of language is more important to the Hasid than the intricate meditations of Lurianic Gematria; Nachman of Bratzlav even commanded his Hasidim to utter their solitary prayers in the vernacular rather than in Hebrew, which they were not accustomed to speak:

> 'betet man in der Sprache, in der man spricht, dann haftet das Herz fest an den Worten des Gebets, und man heftet sich viel fester an Gott'. (op.cit., p.655)

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1. S.A. Horodezky: op.cit., p.601.
2. cf. Jiří Langer: Nine Gates, p.46.

As in all acts which serve the Hasid as forms of worship and as '<u>ein Wagen zu Gott</u>', the qualities of the heart are more important than religious knowledge acquired through formal study. Bratzlaw Hasidism had damning words for the practise of religious scholarship:

> 'Eine wahrhaft grosse Weisheit, eine grosse Kunst ist es, wie ein Tier zu sein, einfaltsvoll, ohne Klügelei...' (<u>ibid</u>., p.655)
>
> Eines der Gebete des Rabbi Nachman lautet: 'Lass es mir vergönnt sein, dir in Wahrheit, in Einfalt und vollkommener Einfachheit ohne jegliches Wissen zu dienen. Hüte mich und verschone mich in deinem grossen Erbarmen vor Forschungen und fremden Wissenschaften. Erbarme dich meiner und ganz Israels und beglücke mich in deiner grossen Gnade mit wahrer Einfalt!' (<u>ibid</u>., p.656)

Hasidism had respect for learning, provided it was not pursued at the expense of simplicity and purity of soul; for Man's being is determined by his thoughts:

> Des Menschen Denken ist sein Sein: wer an die obere Welt denkt, ist in ihr. Alles äussere Gesetz ist nur ein Aufstieg zum inneren; der letzte Zweck des Einzelnen ist, selbst ein Gesetz zu werden. In Wahrheit ist die obere Welt kein Aussen, sondern ein Innen; es ist 'die Welt des Gedankens'. (Buber: <u>R.N</u>., p.16)[1]

In the concentration of <u>kavvanah</u> the Hasid, who worships in the material acts of living, with both his good and evil sides, must be able to redeem any 'strange thoughts' that distract him in prayer. They, too, contain sacred sparks, which it is his task to extricate from evil and restore to their holy root.

After the Lurianic period, 'the doctrine of metempsychosis as the exile of the soul acquired unprecedented popularity among the Jewish masses.' (Scholem:<u>K.S</u>., p.116) A man's soul might be born in him for the first time, or be one at some stage of transmigration[2]. Hasidic stories abound in cases

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1. cf. Kafka: '<u>Innen und Aussen gehören zusammen</u>'. (<u>J</u>.57)
2. cf. Buber: <u>R.N</u>., p.11. For signs that Kafka took the idea of transmigration seriously, see <u>H</u>.73, <u>H</u>.120, <u>T</u>.404.

of re-incarnation. An amusing example is given by Jiří Langer:

> The holy Yismach Moyshe . . . used to say that this was the third time he had been on this earth.
>
> The first time he was born a sheep - one of those tended by our forefather Jacob at his uncle Laban's. The holy Yismach Moyshe would show us the strange scars he had had on his holy body since birth - marks left by blows with sticks from the time when he was one of Jacob's sheep. For our forefather Jacob was a very strict shepherd. (Jiří Langer: Nine Gates, p.167)

In Hasidism, Man himself becomes a redeemer, in the here and now. The change of emphasis from the messianic tikkun of Lurianic Kabbala to the personalistic element of redemption in devekuth in Hasidism[1] is perhaps most vividly illustrated in the idea that everyone has his personal sphere of 'sparks' to redeem:

> Um jeden Menschen ist - in die weite Sphäre seines Wirkens eingebaut - ein natürlicher Bezirk von Dingen gelegt, die vor allem zu befreien er bestimmt ist...Indem er sie in Heiligkeit hegt und geniesst, macht er ihre Seelen los. 'Daher soll der Mensch sich immerdar seiner Geräte und alles seines Besitzes erbarmen'. (Buber: B.S., p.27)

The zaddik, above others, has the task of redeemer of the soul - that of an 'un-Messianic Messiah' (Scholem: M.I., p.198); but according to a saying of the Baal Shem, 'Only when everyone attains individual redemption, will there be universal redemption and Messiah shall arrive.' (ibid., p. 195) Buber also stresses the point to which the individual, according to Hasidism, must rely upon himself: even within the indispensible framework of collective mysticism, it is in the depths of himself that he must seek experience of the absolute. (Buber: R.N., p.14)

Among the values that bind the Hasidic community together is shiflut, humility. The individual who becomes one with God through annihilation of self knows his place in the harmony of creation and in the community of men:

> ...und je reiner und vollkommener er ist, desto inniger weiss er es, dass er ein Teil ist, und desto wacher regt sich in ihm die Gemeinschaft der Wesen. Das ist das Mysterium der Demut. (Buber: B.S., p.3?)

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1. See Scholem: M.I., pp. 176-202.

Hasidic self-abandonment to the spirit and consolidation of the unity of the community coincide in the experience of joy with which every act of worship should be performed, and in the affirmation and enjoyment of all aspects of existence, physical as well as spiritual. Through man's joy, the divine joy is activated to send its blessing throughout Creation.

The full-hearted affirmation of life and human nature, which embraces the material and sees even in defects and in evil a way to good, is accompanied by emphasis on the spiritual duty of love. A man may compensate for his neighbour's deficiencies by loving him the more. Who, indeed, can know whether his neighbour is not a hidden zaddik? Hasidic stories frequently allude to the nistar, the hidden zaddik who may deliberately project an image which is quite the opposite of his true nature. A popular tradition maintains that at any time there are thirty-six such 'hidden just men' in the world, one of whom is by some legendary accounts the Messiah[1]. Consistent with this legend (once widespread in Eastern Europe) is the Baal Shem's teaching:

> Bemerkt man etwas Hässliches an einem Menschen, so darf man nicht übersehen, dass auch da Sein Name, gelobt sei er, ruht. ...Man tadle daher keinen Menschen, selbst den Frevler nicht, denn auch im Bösen liegt Gutes und die Lüge bürgt eine Wahrheit in sich.' (S.A. Horodezky, op.cit., p.600)

One of the most striking features of Hasidism, and its outstanding contribution to Jewish literature, is its tradition of ritual story-telling, in which the deeds of the zaddikim are commemorated and glorified. According to the Besht, writes Buber,

> wenn einer das Lob der Zaddikim erzähle, so sei dies, als befasse er sich mit dem Mysterium des von Ezechiel geschauten Gotteswagens. (Buber: Werke, III: Schriften zum Chassidismus, Heidelberg, 1963, p.71)

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1. See Scholem: M.I., pp.251-256.

In celebrating the memory of the zaddikim and perpetuating their sayings - for they themselves taught in stories, aphorisms and parables which were assimilated into the popular repertoire - the Hasidim celebrated the link between themselves and the divine mysteries, as well as the mystical bond of unity among themselves.

> 'The fact is (says Rabbi Nachman) that man is perpetually sunk in a magic sleep throughout his life and is unable to rouse himself except by narrating anecdotes about the saints'. (Jiří Langer: Nine Gates, p.23)

Thus the social and spiritual influence of the zaddik in the community, as spiritual leader, healer, teacher and link with the realm beyond finite time and space, is reflected or extended through the ritual of story-telling. The contact he establishes between the community and the timeless or absolute is reflected in the 'timelessness' of a constant exchange of sacred anecdotes. The spiritual, healing and sanctifying power of language is here apparent in ritual repetition of legends and tales, the content and context of which correspond to the religious and social hierarchical structure (focussed around the zaddik) which they reflect and reinforce.

Just as the zaddik functions as a conductor of spiritual energy and illumination to his community, so does the shared story. The spiritual effect of a Hasidic story is connected with the mysterious relation between word and action, and the story's effect upon the consciousness of narrator and listeners. The effect of a sacred narrative upon the narrator himself is as important as its effect upon his audience:

> Man bat einen Rabbi, dessen Grossvater ein Schüler des Baalschem gewesen war, eine Geschichte zu erzählen. 'Eine Geschichte', sagte er, 'soll man so erzählen, dass sie selber Hilfe sei'. Und er erzählte: 'Mein Grossvater war lahm. Einmal bat man ihn, eine Geschichte von seinem Lehrer zu erzählen. Da erzählte er, wie der heilige Baalschem beim Beten zu hüpfen und zu tanzen pflegte. Mein Grossvater stand und erzählte, und die Erzählung riss ihn so hin, dass er hüpfend und tanzend zeigen musste, wie der Meister es gemacht hatte. Von der Stunde an war er geheilt. So soll man Geschichten erzählen.' (Buber: Werke III, p.71)

The words of Mendel von Rymanow may stand as commentary:

> ...die Erzählung ist mehr als eine Spiegelung: die heilige Essenz, die in ihr bezeugt wird, lebt in ihr fort. Wunder, das man erzählt, wird von neuem mächtig. Kraft, die einst wirkte, pflanzt im lebendigen Worte sich fort und wirkt noch nach Generationen. (ibid., p.71.)

A frequent characteristic of the Hasidic teaching story is a presentation of its spiritual message that conceals rather than displays it. It may appear enigmatic, illogical, trivial or even vacuous. If justification is necessary, no doubt this feature may be ascribed to origin in that which is both Infinite and Nothing, and certainly beyond the customary modes and limitations of human knowledge and thought. The ineffable Nothing may well find its most apt expression in what appears to be 'holy nonsense'. Paradox and parable intimate that which is invisible or beyond the listener's present spiritual understanding, while affording a chink through which some may perceive a higher level of meaning and a superior spiritual wisdom; their intention and potential is to transform the listener's consciousness by leading it, perhaps in a sudden flash of insight, to new understanding. Probably it was typical for Hasidic disciples to approach their zaddik, and begin:

> 'Unsere Weisen haben ein Wort gesprochen, das uns keine Ruhe lässt, weil wir es nicht fassen können...' (Buber: G.M., p.45)

Once, to give one more example, some disciples went to the Maggid, who received them

> und erzählte ihnen sogleich eine Geschichte, die aus vierundzwanzig Worten bestand. Sie hörten zu, sie nahmen Abschied, sie sagten zum Fuhrmann: 'Fahr nur langsam voraus, wir kommen nach.' Sie gingen hinter dem Wagen her und unterredeten sich von der Geschichte; sie gingen den Tag und die Nacht hinter dem Wagen her. Als der Morgen anbrach, hielt der Fuhrmann, drehte sich um und zankte: 'Ist es euch nicht genug, dass ihr gestern Nachmittag- und Abendgebet vergessen habt, wollt ihr auch noch das Frühgebet versäumen?' Er musste es viermal rufen, ehe sie ihn vernahmen. (ibid., p.9)

What the story was, and meant, remains a mystery.

The first printed collections of Hasidic tales and legends appeared in the early nineteenth century, and from the mid-nineteenth century hundreds of anthologies followed. The treasury remained unknown in Western Europe until its introduction notably in the work of Martin Buber. The main surge of the Hasidic movement was over by the 1830s. By then, Hasidism was a way of life throughout Eastern Europe, having survived vehement hostility from orthodox rabbinic opponents and Maskilim; but by the later nineteenth century its truly creative period, like the period of ideological conflict which had helped to stimulate it, was past. It was carried to the West in emigrations after 1881; but interest and enthusiasm for Hasidism and 'Ostjudentum' as representative of authentic, traditional Jewish community life, were generated only after the turn of the century. This was above all due to Buber's work, the intellectual and religious renaissance of Western Jewry, and the war, which stimulated a new concern for community and tradition, and created the conditions for renewed contact between Eastern and Western European Jews, which had been severed at the end of the eighteenth century. Hasidism itself remained, and remains, a conservative element, generally opposed to change in Jewish religious values and the traditional way of life; it alienated itself from new forces that were developing in Judaism, and for the most part rejected Zionism.

Chapter 5.

'Mein Name ist Karo.' (H.273)

The influence of Kabbalah and Hasidism on Kafka's thinking from 1917.

In view of the searching introspection with which Kafka was accustomed to examine his inner life, and the spiritual inquiry which constituted a major aspect of his art, it is not surprising to discover in him the development of affinities with mystical thought. Kafka's difficulty in accepting Judaism perhaps helped impel him onto the esoteric way of those who seek to rediscover spiritual truth in the depths of the inner self. The epitome of a paradoxical urge simultaneously away from and toward Judaism is found in 1922 in the image of the journey across the wilderness 'in reverse'. (T.406f.) Written shortly after the passage in which Kafka refers to the possibility of 'a new Kabbalah'(T.398f.), the meditation on the journey out of Canaan is comparable with the example of the Exodus from Egypt, given by Scholem as an illustration of the Jewish mystic's interpretation of personal spiritual experience in terms of the historical events of his religion[1].

Clearly, other mystical elements had been available to Kafka before he 'rediscovered' Kabbalah, for example, Meister Eckhart, of whom he wrote in 1903:

> Ich lese Fechner, Eckehart. Manches Buch wirkt wie ein Schlüssel zu fremden Sälen des eigenen Schlosses. (Br.20)

He was to some extent familiar with the thought of Boehme, which is discussed at length in Felix Weltsch's Gnade und Freiheit (Munich, 1920), of which Kafka had apparently read the manuscript or proofs (Br.264), and which he, according to Brod,

> immer wieder las und mit Recht ein 'Erbauungsbuch' genannt hat. (Der Prager Kreis, p. 135)

In addition, he seems to have been fond of the writing of Angelus Silesius[2]. He was interested in Chinese poetry (F.119; Max Brod: Über Franz Kafka, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1974, p.344; J.207-11) which, judging by Janouch's in-

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1. See p. 89f.

2. See p. 180.

formation on his interest in Taoism and Lao-Tse, included its philosophical and religious background. (J.210) This, too, could have encouraged his predisposition towards mystical thought. He refers once also to Hafiz, the great Sufi mystic poet. (Br.282) Apart from this, Kafka lived at a time of enthusiastic speculation and investigation in the fields of spiritualism and other forms of occultism and theosophy, including Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. Presumably Kafka was sufficiently informed about these trends (cf. his visit to Steiner in 1911) to recognize later any affinities they had with kabbalistic elements, which could have had direct or indirect influence upon them. It would therefore be mistaken to suggest that Kafka's mystical inclination sprang only from Jewish roots. Different mystical traditions share profound similarities, beneath possibly wide contrasts in expression and symbolism; and it is possible that Kafka's interest in Kabbalah was inspired by non-Jewish mystical sources.

For the Jewish literary circle in Prague in Kafka's generation, however, the task of supreme importance was rediscovery of their relation to the values and tradition of Judaism; this certainly became true of Kafka. His interest in Kabbalah as far as it developed during his later years was the final stage in his interpretation of himself and Jewish tradition.

The origins and extent of Kafka's knowledge of Kabbalah cannot be defined precisely. Although Kabbalah is mentioned in his diary as early as 1911 (T.127), in notes which probably record information received from Löwy, there is no evidence that it became a topic of particular concern to him at that time.

Before 1913, Kafka had read Buber's two collections of Hasidic legend, but had reacted unfavourably to Buber's work. (F.260) Both volumes contain, however, lengthy and detailed introductions to Hasidic life and teaching,

which are amplified by the stories themselves. Although there is no systematic introduction to Kabbalah as the source of Hasidism, aspects of kabbalistic thought are, naturally, represented.

Vom Judentum, issued by Bar Kochba (Leipzig, 1913), contains six translated excerpts from the Zohar (pp. 274-84), representative of some major kabbalistic ideas and symbolism. Hugo Bergmann's essay, 'Kiddusch Haschem' in the same volume (pp.32-43) includes many apposite details on Kabbalah. Since Kafka possessed the book, he presumably knew this material[1].

Kafka also possessed Alexander Eliasberg's Sagen polnischer Juden (Munich, 1916). Eliasberg's introduction to the book emphasizes the Hasidic element in the stories it contains, includes a brief biography of the Baal Shem, and summarizes the principles of Hasidism, following Dubnow.

The Hasidic stories to which Kafka refers in Br.172 appeared in Das jüdische Echo in 1917, introduced by Chaim Bloch, and preceded by an essay representative of the contemporary enthusiasm for Ostjudentum. This essay sketches a portrait of Hasidic life, making use of Eliasberg's introduction to his collection. Any reference to Kabbalah itself is strikingly absent. All Hasidic stories subsequently published in Das jüdische Echo in 1917 amply illustrate the beliefs that inspired them.

S.A. Horodezky's essay 'Vom Gemeinschaftsleben der Chassidim', which appeared in two instalments in Der Jude,1916/17 (pp.599-608 and 649-661), was also in Kafka's personal collection. It provides another detailed introduction to the subject, including numerous quotations from the sayings of the zaddikim.

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1. For details of Kafka's library, see Klaus Wagenbach: Verzeichnis der Handbibliothek Kafkas, in Franz Kafka: Eine Biographie seiner Jugend 1883-1912, Berne, 1958, p.251-263.

Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte (ed. Jakob Fromer, Munich, 1911), to which Kafka refers in December, 1917 (Br.203), contains a chapter on the Kabbalah, written from Maimon's first-hand acquaintance with it in Poland in the latter half of the 18th. century, and followed by a famous chapter on the Hasidim as 'eine geheime Gesellschaft'. Kafka aptly describes Maimon's autobiography as 'eine äusserst grelle Selbstdarstellung eines zwischen Ost- und Westjudentum gespenstisch hinlaufenden Menschen'. (Br.203) While it sets out some of the main points of Kabbalah, Maimon's account gives the view of an 18th.-century rationalist and free-thinker; it is consequently a fascinating historical and social document, but a far from sympathetic or objective introduction to Kabbalah, which Maimon describes as a tradition of hidden knowledge, the hidden meaning of which has been lost, so that it is a licence, 'mit Vernunft zu rasen', while its supposed adepts 'nur das für echte Kabbala halten, worin kein vernünftiger Sinn ist' (p.153). Maimon has no reason to romanticize the primitive life of the Hasidim. His discussion, as Kafka observed, is highly, and often amusingly, coloured by his personality and opinions, in which scepticism frequently blends with sarcasm, but is seasoned with an attractive capacity for self-irony.

Although Kafka evidently had ample information on Hasidism well before 1921, a more serious pre-occupation with Kabbalah itself probably began during that year. In two letters of 1921 to Max Brod, he inquires about the connection between 'kabbalistische Studien' and Brod's current work on David Reubeni (Br.299), and requests him to bring 'eines der kabbalistischen Werke' to Matliary. (Br.303) Kafka's disclaimer of any knowledge of Salomo Molcho (Br. 304) suggests that his historical knowledge of Kabbalah was still scanty. It appears that in Kafka's interest in Kabbalah, as on Jewish topics generally, Brod was an important stimulus and channel of information. Although only the

first four chapters of David Rëubeni (Munich, 1925) were completed before Kafka's death, Brod's work obviously alerted him to the subject[1]; it must have been at this time that Kafka read, presumably with Brod,

> ...kabbalistische Bücher - Messiashoffnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts...- die visionären Briefe des Salomo Molcho[2], den 'Maggid mescharim' des Josef Karo[3]...(Max Brod: 'Kafka und das Judentum', in Selbstwehr, 18/23, 6.6.1924.)

Remarkable in this context is a fragment of 1922:

> Ich bin ein Jagdhund. Karo ist mein Name. Ich hasse alle und alles. Ich hasse meinen Herrn, den Jäger, hasse ihn, trotzdem er, die zweifelhafte Person, dessen gar nicht wert ist. (H.273)

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1. Brod recalls:

> Meiner Erinnerung nach hat sich Kafka wohl intensiv mit Bibel und Talmud, doch nie mit Kabbala, ausser mit ihrer populären Spätform, dem Chassidismus, befasst...Als ich ihm die ersten Kapitel meines Rëubeni vorlas, der auf kabbalistischen Grundanschauungen ruht, traf ihn das als etwas völlig Neues. Wiederholt hob er hervor, wie viel er von diesem Werk erwarte, wie sehr es ihn überrasche. (Johannes Reuchlin, Berlin/Köln/Mainz, 1965, p.275)

   Brod's statement in the first sentence contradicts the information in his article in the Selbstwehr, quoted above. One suspects that Brod (- who in Heidentum, Christentum, Judentum,II, Munich, 1921, p.147, may be admitting the limitations of his own understanding of Kabbalistic matters-) was more concerned to present Kafka as a writer with Zionist sympathies, corresponding with his own.

2. Solomon Molcho (c. 1500-1532) - Kabbalist and pseudo-messiah. He met the adventurer David Reubeni in 1525. He probably met Joseph Caro while studying Kabbalah in Salonika; Caro's writings express admiration for him. Molcho saw the Sack of Rome (1527) as a sign of coming redemption, which he began to preach, and became convinced that he was the Messiah. He was burned at the stake in 1532, having refused to recant. An important messianic movement spread under his influence, which was also conspicuous in Shabbeteanism.

3. Joseph Caro (1488-1575) - author of the Shulkhan Aruch (authoritative code of Jewish law for Orthodox Jewry); like all the leading rabbinic scholars of his time, he was profoundly concerned with kabbalistic doctrine and ideals. He was regarded as a leader of the Kabbalists of Safed. Caro believed himself to be regularly visited by a heavenly mentor (maggid), who revealed kabbalistic doctrines to him; the Maggid Mesharim is a kind of mystical diary, in which Caro recorded its visitations and messages over about fifty years.

'Josef Karo' shares the initials of Kafka's Josef K. in Der Prozess.

Another point which illuminates the choice of his name is evident from Brod's remarks on Joseph Caro in Heidentum, Judentum, Christentum I, Munich, 1921, p.254f.:

> ...Josef Karo, der Schöpfer des Schulchan-Aruch. An diesem nüchternen Kodex der Riten und Gesetze arbeitet Karo zweiunddreissig Jahre lang. Ein pedantischer Religionsjurist also? ...Mit Erstaunen erfährt man aus Graetz, dass dieser Mann ganz das Gegenteil eines Juristen war, - kabbalistischer Schwärmer, Mystiker, der von der Vollendung seines Werkes den Anbruch der messianischen Zeit abhängig glaubte. Vierzig Jahre seines Lebens war er von Visionen umfangen...Und dennoch - oder deshalb - formulierte er wachen Auges, geschärften Hirns die kleinen Details der täglichen Gebote. Mystiker und dennoch Ordnungsmensch.

Kafka could hardly have failed to perceive a parallel between Caro, as here described, and himself, who was also 'Jurist', and also by this time inclined to ascribe mystical significance to the 'Visionen' that assailed him: 'ganz das Gegenteil eines Juristen'.

At least as important as printed sources was Kafka's acquaintance with Hasidism 'in the flesh', through meetings with Eastern European Jewish refugees in Prague, and with Jiří Langer[1]. In September, 1915, Kafka accompanied Brod and Langer on one of their visits to the Hasidic Rabbi of Grodeck, then a refugee in the Žižkow suburb of Prague, and watched the celebration of the end of Sabbath:

> Es ist bemerkenswert, dass Franz...eigentlich recht kühl blieb. Bewegt von den Urlauten eines alten Volkstums war er wohl, sagte aber doch beim Heimgehen: 'Genau genommen war es etwa so wie bei einem wilden afrikanischen Volksstamm. Krasser Aberglauben'. Es lag nichts Verletzendes, wohl aber nüchtern Abwehrendes in diesem Ausspruch. Ich verstand ihn wohl: Franz hatte seine eigene persönliche Mystik, er konnte nicht gebrauchsfertige Ritualien von anderen übernehmen. (Max Brod: Über Franz Kafka, p.137).

Brod's account can be compared with Kafka's own impressions of the visit, (T.342) which support Brod's, but show that, rather than dismiss what he had

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1. See Appendix B.

seen, Kafka had weighed it up carefully, though non-committally. It is significant that Kafka preferred his own, private mysticism at the time. Brod adds that the impression Kafka received was 'dennoch sehr stark und nachwirkend' (ibid., p.137), and may have inspired the 'golem' fragment (T.356) of April, 1916; this might be an instance of Kafka's 'persönliche Mystik' assuming literary form in association with the Hasidic ceremony which he had witnessed, and so anticipate his later pre-occupation with Hasidism and Jewish mystical thought. The golem, according to Scholem, was at one time a kabbalistic symbol with magical significance[1]; Kafka quite possibly sensed intuitively the symbol's potential mystical import. The fact that the golem fragment was abandoned may indicate, however, that Kafka was not yet ready to commit himself more confidently to the idea.

Kafka's description of his similar visit with Langer to the Belzer Rebbe in Marienbad in July, 1916 (Br.141-6), reveals the extent of his fascination with Hasidism - no less than its ironical, if not exactly sceptical tone. Although the letter is incomplete, it leaves no doubt of the depth of the impression Kafka received. He describes only what he himself observed, while accepting that 'Mehr als Kleinigkeiten kann man mit blossem Auge dort, wo Wahrheit ist, nicht sehn'. (Br.141f.) The words bear, in their context, the implication that he was witnessing 'truth'. However, Kafka was not favourably impressed by the rabbi's entourage of four 'Gabim':

> ...es sind die 'Nächsten', Angestellte, Sekretäre. Der oberste der vier ist, wie Langer behauptet, ein ganz besonderer Schuft...Übrigens darf man ihm daraus keinen Vorwurf machen, alle Gabim werden schlecht, die dauernde Nähe des Rabbi kann man nicht ertragen, ohne Schaden zu nehmen, es ist der Widerspruch zwischen der tieferen Bedeutung und der ununterbrochenen Alltäglichkeit, die ein gewöhnlicher Kopf nicht ertragen kann. (Br.144)

Nor did he find the rabbi's level of thought and conversation inspiring; yet

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1. Scholem: K.S., pp.158-204; M.I., pp. 335-40.

he could accept what he saw as 'durchaus Gottesgnadentum, ohne die Lächerlichkeit, die es bei nicht genügendem Unterbau erhalten müsste'. (Br.145)

The impressions made by this account support Brod's analysis of Kafka's attitude toward anything connected with Hasidism as a peculiar '...Mischung von Begeisterung, Neugierde, Skepsis, Zustimmung und Ironie'. (Br.505, n.3) Presumably this attitude, although it was unresolved, was based upon inquiry into the subject; and since Kafka felt particularly attracted to Hasidism during the critical period in the autumn of 1917, it must be considered all the more pertinent to investigation of his thought and writing from that time.

The context of his reference in late September, 1917, to the Hasidic stories in Das jüdische Echo as 'das einzige Jüdische, in welchem ich mich, unabhängig von meiner Verfassung, gleich und immer zuhause fühle' (Br.173), is evident in the diaries and letters of this period. Naturally, Kafka's inner life then centred upon the necessity of accepting a chronic disease and all that it symbolized regarding his spiritual condition, besides the impossibility of marriage, confirmed in the final break with Felice in December. It was a period of extreme psychological stress, in which optimistic determination to make a fresh start alternated or combined with moments of intense pain. The mixture of exuberant relief at the possibility of a new beginning, and the suffering of self-recognitions which belonged to the desired process of spiritual recovery, is exemplified on 15th. September, 1917. (T.379) On 1st. October was written the last letter but one to Felice. (F.754ff.) The insights it contained were evidently extremely important to Kafka (cf.T.383, Br.178); it acknowledges morally dubious motives, concealed by self-deception through which he now sees; and it marks the culmination of a week of self-examination, leading to the conclusion:

> Zerstört hast du alles, ohne es eigentlich besessen zu

> haben. Wie willst du es wieder zusammenfügen? Was für Kräfte bleiben noch dem schweifenden Geist zu dieser grössten Arbeit? (T.382)

On the same day he notes that the possibility of happiness exists for him only 'falls ich die Welt ins Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche heben kann.' (T.382) Three days later, just before the above-mentioned letter to Felice, comes intimation of a spiritual turning-point: 'Dem Tod also würde ich mich anvertrauen. Rest eines Glaubens. Rückkehr zum Vater. Grosser Versöhnungstag.' (T.383)[1]

This was written on 28th. September, two days after the Jewish Day of Atonement in 1917. (See Jewish Year Book, London, 1917.) Throughout the penitential season between the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement, then, Kafka had been examining himself, seeking to redress his false relationship to 'truth' and disperse previous self-deceptions, and working to overcome the effects of a five-year period which had been largely occupied with his inner conflict over marriage. Despite the pain of breaking his engagement, the references given above suggest that the severance was a liberation which offered Kafka hope of spiritual and artistic renewal in which, if possible, writing ('einfach gnadenweiser Überschuss der Kräfte' - T.380) might join his 'Rest eines Glaubens' in an act of atonement associated with a death which is not necessarily physical, but metaphorical, spiritual. The renunciation of marriage obliged him to affirm his isolation by taking advantage of it to perform the spiritual task that had to be completed alone. Everything indicates a determined intention to integrate his creative and spiritual powers through intensified, solitary pursuit of truth and return to a specifically Jewish approach to 'die letzten Dinge'.[1]

Such was the context of Kafka's reading of the Hasidic stories in Das jüdische Echo. Therefrom can be inferred their considerable significance as 'das einzige Jüdische' in which Kafka felt at home at the time.

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1. cf. Max Brod: Über Franz Kafka, p.147.

On numerous occasions from 1916 onwards, Das jüdische Echo published versions of Hasidic stories, retold by Martin Buber or adapted in short stories by Perez, Schalom Asch, et al., besides excerpts from M.J. bin Gorion's collection of myths and legends of the Jews, Der Born Judas (Leipzig, 1916ff.) Kafka refers in Br.172 to the series 'Aus der Welt der Chassidim', versions of Hasidic tales collected and rendered in German by Chaim Bloch, with an introductory article[1]. This introduction appeared in No.17 (27.4.1917), and the stories followed in Nos. 19 (11.5.1917); 23 (8.6.1917); 26 (29.6.1917); 27 (6.7.1917); 35 (31.8.1917), and 38 (21.9.1917)[2].

In Br.172 Kafka tells Brod, 'Um die letzte Sendung wäre besonders schade gewesen.' 'Die letzte Sendung' must have contained No.38 (21.9.1917)- and possibly also No.35 (31.8.1917). It would indeed have been a pity to miss them, for the selection in these issues is one of the most pleasing in an altogether attractive series. Although the stories were 'vielleicht nicht die besten', they possess a striking simplicity, humane wisdom, and metaphysical humour. The following summary indicates some features which could explain their attractiveness to Kafka in the frame of mind described, when they appeared.

Die Freude depicts joyful acceptance of innocent suffering, in recognition of the divine will that may transcend and direct what appear as imperfections or abuses of human justice: what is to the human mind negative or evil may be instrumental in the good of God's plan, which is beyond human knowledge.

'Bom, bom', with ironical humour and word-play, shows an offender treated

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1. See p. 112.

2. Das jüdische Echo also published in 1917 'Geschichten vom Rischiner' retold by Martin Buber (Nos. 2 and 3); 'Haknossas Kallo' by J.L. Perez, from Chassidische Geschichten, tr. A. Eliasberg (No.9); 'Geschichten vom Rabbi Mosche Leib von Sassow' (No.52).

tolerantly, and even accepted as being entitled to tread the same path as the devout and saintly. The tension between juxtaposed nonsense and sacred meaning[1] in the word which is the focus of the story creates comic effect by metaphysical humour. The anecdote has two important implications: that the word's true sense lies in the spiritual qualities of the speaker or hearer who, as it were, fulfils the word's spiritual potential; and that the essential truth residing in the word judges, but may also justify, the sinner. To Kafka, at this stage in his life, these implications concerning the potential, spiritual nature of language were perhaps extremely important.

Der 'Grobian' concerns the Hasidic ideal of serving God through the 'raw material' of everyday living, by transforming it into something precious which increases God's glory through earthly things. It is possible that Kafka wrote the first and third diary entries of 25th. September 1917 (T.382) partly in response to this story: the task enjoined in Der 'Grobian' is comparable with that of 'die Welt ins Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche heben', and the comparison with the 'Blechschmied' can be associated with Kafka's '...Wie willst du es wieder zusammenfügen?'(T.382)[2] 'Wie will ich eine schwingende Geschichte aus Bruchstücken zusammenlöten?' (T.356).

Wie man schlechte Eigenschaften los wird deals with a subject that was close to Kafka's heart in September, 1917. (cf.T.381ff.) It teaches that self-transformation through spiritual discipline is the way to overcome man's evil side, which cannot be done by trying to destroy it.

'Erst kommt der Friedhof, dann die Stadt', like Die Freude, shows sorrow and suffering joyfully accepted. The powerful image of the cemetery and the

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1. - A good example of 'holy nonsense' underlying an anecdote; cf. p.108.

2. cf. 'Wie will ich eine schwingende Geschichte aus Bruchstücken zusammenlöten?' (T.356)

associated idea of death and destruction are presented in a perspective that contrasts man's literal understanding with the spiritual understanding that perceives events, words and images as metaphors and signs of higher meaning. Suffering, death and destruction, the story teaches, are in a spiritual sense a stage which must be endured in order to approach a spiritual goal, and renewed life and hope. Again, Kafka's diary suggests his probable response to the story's message. (cf. 'Dem Tod also würde ich mich anvertrauen... Grosser Versöhnungstag.'-T.383.)

The story 'Es muss so sein, es soll so sein!' also affirms the suffering of the righteous, while Die letzten drei Stunden warns how difficult it will be to remain faithful to Judaism during the last hours before redemption from exile - hours by God's reckoning, according to which a thousand years are but a day. Again, human experience is placed in perspective beside God's standards. The image of its being as difficult 'an der Jüdischkeit festzuhalten, wie an einer glatten Eisenwand' may be echoed in Kafka's image of the steep slope, two months later:

> Gingest du über eine Ebene, hättest den guten Willen zu gehen und machtest doch Rückschritte, dann wäre es eine verzweifelte Sache; da du aber einen steilen Abhang hinaufkletterst, so steil etwa, wie du selbst von unten gesehen bist, können die Rückschritte auch nur durch die Bodenbeschaffenheit verursacht sein, und du musst nicht verzweifeln. (H.81)

Auf einem Strick übers Wasser similarly emphasizes the precariousness of the way man must tread in order to serve God as he is intended to. 'Die Hauptsache ist, keinen Augenblick zu vergessen, dass man auf einem Strick geht und dass es sich um das Leben handelt', is echoed in Kafka's image of the rope on 19.10.1917:

> Ich irre ab.
> Der wahre Weg geht über ein Seil, das nicht in der Höhe gespannt ist, sondern knapp über dem Boden. Es scheint mehr bestimmt stolpern zu machen, als begangen zu werden. (H.70f)

Zweierlei Gebote, zweierlei Zadikim contains a reminder that there are commandments comprehensible to man, and others that are incomprehensible; similarly, there are zaddikim whose conduct corresponds to the expectations of the multitude, and hidden zaddikim who apparently act in a manner contrary to the law's commandments. They, the story teaches, are themselves laws. To be such a law is greater than to fulfil laws that are comprehensible. Something that is apparently outside the law may be full of holy strength and purpose. This story may have held particular fascination for Kafka; the idea of the self as a task to be fulfilled occurs in the Oktavhefte[1].

The Hasidic stories in Das jüdische Echo presented Kafka with literary expressions of ideas and emotions that he was experiencing at the time of reading them. Their communication of the Hasidic acceptance of sorrow, suffering and imperfection, including imperfections in the self; the blend of sorrow and joy which Hasidism places so high among its spiritual values; the stories' tone of tolerance and compassion; their deft revelation, through some ambiguity or twist of word or image, of a metaphysical perspective surpassing man's experience and comprehension; their firm foundation in religious faith and hope - all these qualities must have offered Kafka the comfort, new insight and encouragement that his condition required. They had the additional attraction of a humour in which nonsense unites with profound wisdom; and they illustrated a literature which, with deceptive simplicity, implies an attitude toward language that lacks neither sophistication nor metaphysical fouhdation. This was bound to be of great importance to Kafka, not least because it was a definitely Jewish foundation.

Further evidence of these stories' importance to Kafka may be sought through examination of thematic trends in the Oktavhefte which, together

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1. See p. 141f.

with his correspondence, began to replace Kafka's diaries in September, 1917. Kafka, seeking at this time to clarify his approach to 'die letzten Dinge', was also seeking a new terminology for his ideas.

A fundamental theme in the Oktavhefte (especially during winter, 1917-1918) is that of the individual's (presumably, Kafka's) relation to the 'world'. This theme follows the important new idea of raising the world 'ins Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche', introduced in T.382. In the diary, positing his happiness on accomplishment of this task, Kafka established a new conceptual relationship concerning his inner world and its realization in writing: at this point, his relation to 'die Welt' becomes central in his literary and spiritual 'task'. The Oktavhefte examine the fundamental requirements of this task.

The idea of changing the world is connected with that of change in Kafka's relation to it, and in himself: his spiritual state will depend upon the state of 'the world' insofar as he has power to act upon it. His spiritual task, which now extends to the idea of redemption or 'Seelenheil', is inseparable from his responsibility for 'the world'. The idea of salvation as the conclusion of man's labour in the work of Creation (raising it to spiritual perfection or completion) is a fundamentally Jewish one.

The question does not receive systematic or philosophical treatment[1]. The Oktavhefte are like the meditative journal of a search, sometimes illuminated by recognition, sometimes obscured by inner conflict, which concerns the integration of the personality, through literary creativity, and in relation to Judaism. Kafka is trying to reconcile himself to the loss of Felice

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1. On the relevance of Kafka's reading of Schopenhauer at this time, however, see T.J. Reed: 'Kafka und Schopenhauer: Philosophisches Denken und dichterisches Bild', in Euphorion 59, 1965, pp. 160-172.

and to revise his position as an individual and as a 'Westjude' in relation to 'die letzten Dinge'. This involves a change of mind, which can be detected in an apparent conceptual overlap when Kafka writes, for example: 'Die Welt - F. ist ihr Repräsentant - und mein Ich zerreissen in unlösbarem Widerstreit meinen Körper.' (H.132) Here the new pre-occupation with his relationship to 'the world' is extricating itself from his emotional involvement with Felice. The need for a new perspective is grasped, and its possibility apparently affirmed, in the observation,

> 'Verschiedenheit der Anschauungen, die man von einem Apfel haben kann...' (H.40)

If the apple is understood as the Old Testament symbol of guilt, it is possible to recognize the spiritual dimension in which Kafka felt his change of mind had to take place[1].

The Oktavhefte trace Kafka's search to transcend his circumstances and himself, in order to fulfil a spiritual task associated with Judaism. The terms in which it is described include problems of Good and Evil, suffering and redemption, personal salvation, etc. In the course of Kafka's interior dialogue on these subjects, an esoteric psychology begins to oppose the psychoanalytical type so much more commonly accepted in modern times. Signs of this are contained in a letter to Brod of early November, 1917:

> Die 'Angst um die Persönlichkeit', die Stekel einmal mir... nachgesagt hat, habe ich ja tatsächlich, finde es aber, selbst wenn man es nicht der 'Angst um sein Seelenheil' gleichsetzt, sehr natürlich; immer bleibt doch die Hoffnung, dass man einmal 'seine Persönlichkeit' brauchen oder dass sie gebraucht werden wird, dass man sie also bereit halten muss. (Br. 191f.)

There is evident ambiguity or uncertainty here concerning the concepts of Persönlichkeit and Seele and the relationship between them; but this passage illustrates the transition occurring in Kafka's perspective and terminology. Here, he seems to be approaching a concept of self-transcendence (hence un-

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1. See H.72, 107, 278; cf. M. 246.

certainty about the nature and function of personality), introducing the new term, 'Seelenheil'; and 'Seelenheil', an expressly spiritual concept, is opposed (albeit ambiguously) to the terms of the psychologist, Stekel. 'Angst um die Persönlichkeit' (one of the chief obstacles to marriage with Felice), now, ambiguously related to 'Angst um sein Seelenheil' , is in transition toward a new spiritual perspective[1]. The initial conflict over a supposed spiritual sine qua non, marriage, is yielding to a religious viewpoint which transposes the question of personal survival in relation to a woman into that of 'Seelenheil' in relation to 'die Welt'. The entry of the esoteric into these matters is reflected in the same letter:

> wenn es nicht zahllose Möglichkeiten der Befreiung gibt, besonders aber Möglichkeiten in jedem Augenblick unseres Lebens, dann gibt es vielleicht überhaupt keine. (Br.192)

That is, 'Befreiung' occurs here and now, within the self. The essential identification between the inner world and the outer, which is made in esoteric thinking and imagery, appears in Br.206: 'Wer kann erlösen, ohne dass er gleichzeitig erlöst würde?' That is, redeemer and redeemed, self and 'world', the so-called 'inner' and 'outer', are identical or equivalent in an event of redemption. Thus, to 'redeem the world' is to find salvation; or, vice versa, to become 'whole' oneself is to perfect Creation.

As instances of Kafka's approach to 'die letzten Dinge' at this period, H.109 and H.114 are rooted in Judaism:

> Zerstören dieser Welt wäre nur dann die Aufgabe, wenn sie erstens böse wäre, das heisst widersprechend unserem Sinn, und zweitens, wenn wir imstande wären, sie zu zerstören... Zerstören können wir diese Welt nicht, denn wir haben sie nicht als etwas Selbständiges aufgebaut, sondern haben uns in sie verirrt, noch mehr: diese Welt ist unsere Verirrung, als solche selbst ein Unzerstörbares, oder vielmehr etwas, das nur durch seine Zu-Ende-Führung, nicht durch Verzicht zerstört werden kann, wobei allerdings auch das Zuendeführen nur eine Folge von Zerstörungen sein kann, aber innerhalb dieser Welt. (H.108f.)

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1. cf. pp.129ff.

> Die Welt kann nur von der Stelle aus für gut angesehen werden, von der aus sie geschaffen wurde, denn nur dort wurde gesagt: Und siehe, sie war gut - und nur von dort aus kann sie verurteilt und zerstört werden. (H.114)

These two passages are related to the statement of T.382 concerning Kafka's 'task' vis-a-vis the 'world' and himself. The Jewish rootstock from which they stem becomes apparent through closer interpretation of the passages.

Concerning the problem of evil: the world may appear to a human subject to be evil; but this is not necessarily so in an absolute sense. 'Böse' is defined as 'widersprechend unserm Sinn'; and 'Sinn' in this context presumes or implies firstly, that the meaning, purpose (and, by extension, task) of human existence is realized through a positive relation to the world (and that the world, correspondingly, is necessary to the fulfilment of humanity); secondly, that there is a purpose in Creation, established by a super-human Creator who pronounced it good. Thus, Man is related to the Absolute, God, or Creator, through His Creation - as Kabbalah teaches of Man's relation to En-Sof. Kafka's opinion here is based upon the biblical facts contained in the first chapter of Genesis, and affirms the Jewish position. Further, it implies that what a mistaken observer considers evil may, in an absolute sense, be good. Our conception of good and evil establishes the world as 'unsere Verirrung' on a basis of false interpretation: 'evil' is in the mind of the imperfectly perceiving subject, a deviation from truth, which he projects into the world. To be understood as it is, the world must be contemplated from the point of view of its Creator. Individual man has no right or power to condemn or destroy the world ('ein Unzerstörbares'); his task depends upon affirming it as it is and upon collaboration in the purpose of Creation. This also represents the Jewish point of view.

The choice of the term 'ein Unzerstörbares' for 'the world' is significant, since it is used elsewhere meaning Man's spiritual essence or soul. Here

there is identity or equivalence between the inner nature of Man, and the essential nature of the created world. This echoes the Kabbalists' conception of Man as microcosm. The world itself, like the hidden spiritual core in the individual, is indestructible as such, but requires completion; and 'Zu-Ende-Führung' is Man's purpose in relation to Creation. At this point, the kabbalistic term tikkun might be substituted for the German 'Zu-Ende-Führung', without altering the fundamental sense, for besides the task of completing Creation, it includes the concept of a microcosm/macrocosm relationship between the spiritual 'form' of Man and the metaphysical structure of Creation.

Finally, the paradoxical idea of the world's completion through its 'destruction' is comparable with the Hasidic restoration of the world through reducing it to nothingness. It also corresponds with the idea of self-destruction in order (as H.89 puts it) to 'release the Indestructible' in the self - and in the world, for the redemption of the two is inseparable. (Br.206) 'Subject' and 'object' are not separate, but part of one another, not opposites, but identical. This, again, resembles the kabbalistic idea of the microcosm/macrocosm relationship, and of the world 'above' being affected by Man's actions in the world 'below'. The 'release of the Indestructible' demands the destruction of aspects of the self that constitute 'Verirrung', i.e. a false perspective on Creation. To pursue this point to its conclusion in kabbalistic terms, Man, in perfecting himself, liberates the sacred energy that animates Creation, in himself; in other words, he perfects the divine image in himself and, through purified spiritual perception and corresponding action, 'ascends' to the God hidden within him[1].

Thus, analysis of these examples reveals ideas deeply rooted in Jewish soil, with a distinctly esoteric tendency and affinity with kabbalistic ideas.

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1. cf. Br.280, where Kafka substitutes 'das Göttliche', presumably as an analogue of 'das Unzerstörbare'.

The analysis relates to numerous other aphorisms. Meanwhile, two additional commentaries will be given.

The first case deals with H.108:

> Das Leiden ist das positive Element dieser Welt, ja es ist die einzige Verbindung zwischen dieser Welt und dem Positiven.
>
> Nur hier ist Leiden Leiden. Nicht so, als ob die, welche hier leiden, anderswo wegen dieses Leidens erhöht werden sollen, sondern so, dass das, was in dieser Welt leiden heisst, in einer andern Welt, unverändert und nur befreit von seinem Gegensatz, Seligkeit ist.

There may be an influence here from stories like the Hasidic tales from Das jüdische Echo discussed above; again Kafka's thought is consistent with the Judaic acceptance of suffering as part of man's spiritual destiny,[1] a means to spiritual purification and atonement. The idea that suffering

> 'in einer andern Welt, unverändert und nur befreit von seinem Gegensatz, Seligkeit ist',

can be linked to the passage on H.94, according to which each moment corresponds to something on the level of the 'eternal', and the 'Diesseits' corresponds with the eternal present of the 'Jenseits'. From the transcendent level of the 'Jenseits' (or 'das Ausserzeitliche'), the suffering of the transitory 'Diesseits' is perceived in a different perspective, liberated from, and paradoxically identical with, its apparent opposite; the transcendent world does not recognize the dualisms with which the lower world operates. This idea is related to H.109 and H.114, which suggest that, from the 'point at which the world was created', so-called evil may be annulled in the transcendence of dualism. Here, too, there is affinity with kabbalistic thought: at En-Sof, the root to which the spirit seeks return, there is no dualism. Kafka echoes this on 19.1.1922, three days after the reference to a potential 'new Kabbalah': Nichts Böses; hast du die Schwelle überschritten, ist alles gut. Eine andere Welt, und du musst nicht reden. (T.400)

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1. cf. J. 140.

The second case concerns the nature of the 'right death'. For Kafka, the 'right death' destroys the 'Verirrung' of the falsely perceived world, and is directed toward the release of 'das Unzerstörbare'. Kafka uses the idea of death in a metaphorical, spiritual sense[1], signifying a change of mind or a spiritual transition that corresponds to 'aufbauende Zerstörung der Welt'; it is an inner transition from 'die sinnliche Welt' to 'die geistige Welt', or, in alternative terms, from 'Diesseits' to 'Jenseits'. Salvation must lie through such a metaphorical death, in which self-deceiving elements in the ego are destroyed to liberate the spiritual self, 'das Unzerstörbare'.

'Zerstörung' in this sense is undoubtedly similar to the Hasidic concept, bittul-ha-yesh (annihilation of the self), according to which ani(y) (self) becomes ayin (nothing), and thereby becomes one with the Ayin which is En-Sof. In this transformation Hasidism recognizes the supreme act of mystic contemplation, which releases and redeems the 'sparks' imprisoned in the world. Kafka's idea of creative self-destruction and the Hasidic one of self-annihilation both contain the element of 'building' the world. 'Death', according to Kafka, leads to spiritual Erkenntnis (H. 81), self-knowledge and liberation of das Unzerstörbare:

> 'Wenn..., musst du sterben', bedeutet: Die Erkenntnis ist beides, Stufe zum ewigen Leben und Hindernis vor ihm. Wirst du nach gewonnener Erkenntnis zum ewigen Leben gelangen wollen - und du wirst nicht anders können als es wollen, denn Erkenntnis ist dieser Wille -, so wirst du dich, das Hindernis, zerstören müssen, um die Stufe, das ist die Zerstörung, zu bauen... (H.105f.)

This might be compared with a saying of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlaw:

> Es gibt keine Hemmung, die man nicht zerbrechen kann, denn die Hemmung ist nur des Willens wegen da, und in Wahrheit sind keine Hemmungen als nur im Geist. (Buber: R.N., p.37)

The idea is elaborated in H.80 (written previously):

> ...Verkenne dich! Zerstöre dich! also etwas Böses - und nur wenn man sich sehr tief hinabbeugt, hört man auch sein Gutes, welches lautet: 'Um dich zu dem zu machen, der du bist'.

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1. cf. I Mose 2:17.

This formulation has an additional affinity with Hasidic ideas[1], in seeing spiritual progress as something achieved by serving with the evil side of the self as well as the good, using it as a stepping-stone to the good which transcends and transforms it in a mystical unity which knows 'nichts Böses'. (T.400)[2] In H.105, Kafka reflects that the good of self-destruction is impossible unless the negative element has fully developed, establishing a foundation for positive self-destruction and self-transcendence. Here again, evil is the precondition of good, and sin the precondition of redemption.

The passage referred to from H.105 actually occurs in the context of entries where Kafka uses unmistakably mystical language:

> 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.104f.)

This passage describes how the self must be reduced to nothingness before it can enter into union with the sacred Absolute. It corresponds to the Hasidic teaching that thought must become void of all content in order to be uplifted to yihud (direct, mystical relationship with the divine power). In the line that follows, Kafka uses an image which may be that of a candle, whose flame consumes and transforms its material substance: 'Nicht Selbstabschüttelung, sondern Selbstaufzehrung'. (H.105) i.e. the physical self may not be discarded, but must be fully transformed into the spiritual; only thus can it be 'annihilated' and transformed. Moreover, that which

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1. cf. Rabbi Nachman: 'Man kann Gott mit dem bösen Triebe dienen...Und ohne bösen Trieb ist kein vollkommener Dienst.' (Buber: Werke III, p.908.)
2. cf. H.108, and Br.267 (March, 1920): Jeder hat seinen beissenden nächtezerstörenden Teufel in sich und das ist weder gut noch schlecht, sondern es ist Leben: Hätte man den nicht, würde man nicht leben... Dieser Teufel ist das Material (und im Grunde ein wunderbares), das Sie mitbekommen haben und aus dem Sie nun etwas machen sollen.

must be 'destroyed', the self and its 'Triebe', must be fully realized before it is capable of transformation. This had been Kafka's main problem concerning woman as the 'Repräsentant des Lebens' (H.118) and the symbol of the 'Triebleben' with which he could not come to terms, experiencing it as a stumbling-block in his spiritual path.

J.M.S. Pasley has pointed out the similarity between Kafka's language in the longer passage on H.105, and that from an example by Meister Eckart[1]. There is also a Jewish instance of the image of the flame in an excerpt from the Zohar, published in Bar Kochba's Vom Judentum and entitled 'Ruhe und Wandel';

> Es steht geschrieben: 'Der Herr, dein Gott, ist ein verzehrendes Feuer.' (V.Mos.4,24)...
>
> ...So meinte es Moses, als er sprach: 'Der Herr, dein Gott, ist ein verzehrendes Feuer.' Denn er verzehrt alles, was unter ihm ist - bis das Göttliche in dir zur weissen Flamme emporgeläutert ist. (Vom Judentum, p.280).

The remainder of this chapter examines further similarities in Kafka's thought with kabbalistic and/or Hasidic traditions and imagery. First is the composite theme of Paradise, the Fall, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, the first instance of which (H.94) is connected with another major theme in the aphorisms, transcendence of passing time. Kafka sees the Fall and expulsion from Paradise as an ' eternal' event or process (H.106), which is part of an absolute, constant dimension of time[2]. The 'event' is symbolic of an existential state, and functions on the level of myth[3]. The 'everlasting' nature of the event makes it possible

> dass wir nicht nur dauernd im Paradiese bleiben könnten, sondern tatsächlich dort dauernd sind, gleichgültig ob wir es hier wissen oder nicht. (H.94)

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1. See J.M.S. Pasley: 'Asceticism and Cannibalism: Notes on an unpublished Kafka Text', in Oxford German Studies I, 1966, pp.102-113: p.109f.
2. cf. the story 'Wo bist du ?' in Buber: G.M., p.90f.
3. Kafka was evidently familiar with the Jewish myths on the Paradise story collected by bin Gorion; compare H.120 and

   > Doch dies eine Mal war es, dass ein Weib vom Mann erschaffen wurde. Von da ab und weiter nimmt der Mann seines Nächsten Tochter zum Weibe. (M.J. bin Gorion: Sagen der Juden, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1962, p.66)

This aphorism is connected with the one that follows, concerning the 'Diesseits'and the 'Jenseits'. Where we are at any time relative to the eternal, Paradise, or 'Jenseits'[1], while still existing in the temporal 'Diesseits', is a matter of qualitative differences in our being or consciousness. Operating with two different but interlinked concepts of space and time, one of which transcends the other, Kafka also uses the verb 'sein' to denote two different but interlinked levels of being, one of which transcends the other (cf. H.89). The belief that one exists outside Paradise is a flaw of consciousness, which fails to recognize that at any moment one has the chance of 'returning' to Paradise through a spiritual change of mind and being.

Kafka pursues the idea of Paradise and sin in relation to spiritual cognition: 'Im Paradies, wie immer: Das, was die Sünde verursacht und das, was sie erkennt, ist eines.' (H.97) Taken as referring to Man's eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, these words may be interpreted as saying that a consciousness which distinguishes in terms of a dualism between Good and Evil not only, in consequence, recognizes what it calls sin, but thereby actually generates and propagates it. Kafka here considers (as does the Kabbalah) that dualistic perception of 'reality' is characteristic of fallen Man. He reflects that in his post-Fall frame of mind Man, acknowledging a state of alienation from God, ipso facto separates himself from grace: sin is a state of mind and being in which the expulsion from Paradise remains constant. Kafka continues: 'Das gute Gewissen ist das Böse, das so siegreich ist, dass es nicht einmal mehr jenen Sprung von links nach rechts für nötig hält.' (H. 97) It is consistent with Kafka's theme and mode of thought that he here cancels the opposition of 'Good' and 'Evil',

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1. Felix Weltsch introduces the term 'Jenseits' as an equivalent for the Hebrew olam haba ('the world to come') in Gnade and Freiheit (cf. p. 110), p.123.

implying unity at a higher level which transcends it: 'das Böse' is equated with 'das gute Gewissen' on the higher level, where evil is 'victorious' in the sense of being fully incorporated into an undifferentiated unity. There all opposites are (to borrow a Hegelian term) 'aufgehoben' - as they are, according to Kabbalist tradition, in En-Sof and the Torah of the Tree of Life. Elimination of the opposition makes 'the jump from left to right' superfluous. Nevertheless, 'evil' remains the pre-condition of transcendence, transformation and 'good', and of Man's realization that this is so: 'Wahrheit ist unteilbar, kann sich also nicht erkennen; wer sie erkennen will, muss Lüge sein.' (H.99)

A third example, H.97, pursues these ideas further. Comprehensible in the light of Kafka's concept of 'das Unzerstörbare' in the self, corresponding with 'das Unzerstörbare' of the world and the 'eternal' dimension, or 'Jenseits', the aphorism states that if there is no eternal, indestructible dimension, the supposed Fall from Paradise was unimportant. If it does exist, our beliefs are false, failing to recognize the possibility expressed in H.94: that we can 'return' to Paradise here and now, having transcended the dualisms of 'Dieseits' and 'Jenseits' and Good and Evil.

These reflections are supported by H.101: 'Wir sind von Gott beiderseitig getrennt: Der Sündenfall trennt uns von ihm, der Baum des Lebens trennt ihn von uns.' This is the kabbalistic symbolism of the two Trees and refers in the context of passages already interpreted to Man's separation from God through his dualistic mode of perception ('der Sündenfall'), and God's simultaneous separation from Man through his absolute unity.

Kafka's allusion to 'Die Vorstellung von der unendlichen Weite und Fülle des Kosmos' (H.109) indicates that by late 1917 he was inclined towards a

cosmological view of existence. The idea of sin is accommodated within this cosmological context, with a part to play in Creation:

> ...Die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies war in einem Sinne ein Glück, denn wären wir nicht vertrieben worden, hätte das Paradies zerstört werden müssen. (H.101)

This reflection suggests that the Fall gave Man a positive role in a cosmological situation where the 'eternal' can be preserved through Man's spiritual mediatorship between 'Diesseits' and 'Jenseits', the temporal and 'das Unzerstörbare', and Good and Evil. This is reminiscent of his place in kabbalistic cosmology. The distinction between 'der Mensch' and 'der paradiesische Mensch' in H.102 also perhaps parallels the kabbalistic idea of the disintegration of Primordial Man, Adam Kadmon, at the Fall.

Kafka's final reflection upon the two Trees summarizes this group of themes in the Oktavhefte:

> Es gibt für uns zweierlei Wahrheit, so wie sie dargestellt wird durch den Baum der Erkennthis und den Baum des Lebens. ...In der ersten teilt sich das Gute vom Bösen, die zweite ist nichts anderes als das Gute selbst, sie weiss weder vom Guten noch vom Bösen. Die erste Wahrheit ist uns wirklich gegeben, die zweite ahnungsweise. Das ist der traurige Anblick. Der fröhliche ist, dass die erste Wahrheit dem Augenblick, die zweite der Ewigkeit gehört, deshalb verlöscht auch die erste Wahrheit im Licht der zweiten. (H.109)

If 'Torah' or 'Law' were substituted for 'Wahrheit', this statement would fully resemble the kabbalistic concept of the mystical and the written Torahs related to the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. The image of the first truth's light which yields to that of the second, resembles the idea of the mystical Torah concealed in white light, which will ultimately annul this world's Torah inscribed in black on white[1]. Also the same as the kabbalistic concept is the idea of the Tree of Life as 'das Gute selbst', which 'does not know' Good and Evil .

The mode of mystical and mythical thought which reconciles opposites in

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1. See p.93f. and 94, n.

paradoxes which transcend logic is illustrated in 'Das Licht des Urquells' from the selection 'Aus dem Buche Sohar' in Bar Kochba's Vom Judentum (pp.274-284). The dualism and resolving paradox are here expressed in the images of light and darkness: the primordial light bestowed upon Primordial Man is concealed from Man in his sinful state, until, in the 'world to come' the worlds between Man and God are restored to their original unity. The light must emerge from the darkness in which it is at present hidden; light and dark, in a reality at present invisible to Man, are actually one:

> eins insoferne, als es kein Licht gibt als in der Finsternis und keine Finsternis als nur im Lichte. (p.283)
>
> Und die Scheidung bezieht sich auf die Zeit der Verbannung, darinnen alles geschieden ist. (p.283)

Meanwhile, the male principle resides in light, and the female principle (linked with the left or 'sinister' side, Man's sin, and evil) in darkness; 'Später werden sie in eins verbunden' (p.283). The difference between the present state of affairs and its envisaged resolution is described in terms of grades or 'Stufen' i.e., levels of consciousness[1]. This and related imagery describes a cosmic process taking place in Man's development from a 'lower' to a 'higher' spiritual level in relation to the Absolute, with which his ultimate aim is to become one. No event in Man, according to Kabbalah, fails to affect the relationship between Creation and the Absolute; Man is a mediator and transformer. As Hugo Bergmann points out in Vom Judentum in the essay 'Kiddusch Haschem' (pp.32-43), which is deeply influenced by Kabbalistic thought,

> Unendlich wertvoll ist dem Juden die Menschenseele, denn sie ist der Ort, wo das grosse Wunder der Einung vollbracht werden soll. (p.39)

Man is 'Vollbringer der Einung' (p.40) and 'Mittelpunkt der Schöpfung' (p.41) because, having evil in him, he is free to transcend it; thus evil is a precondition, and an essential part, of good. This conceptual pattern is clearly

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1. cf. comparison of Man to a ladder, ibid., p.37.

reflected in Kafka's thoughts on Paradise, the Fall and the two Trees as symbols of psychological and spiritual processes involved in the 'task' of Redemption.

Relating H.109 (of 5th. February, 1918) to H.94 (of 11th. December, 1917): one who attained the truth of 'Ewigkeit' would be in 'Paradise' and thus find salvation insofar as 'das Unzerstörbare' in him was released and returned to its indestructible source. Kafka's idea on the subject admits comparison with the kabbalistic and Hasidic idea of 'raising up' to redemption the divine sparks residing in the soul, returning them to their eternal source; he thereby restores the form of the Primordial Man, a fragment of whose soul each man bears in his own, and furthers the cosmic Redemption.

Redemption, Kafka is saying, occurs'at the end of time', in the sense of the moment of transcendence, when the 'Indestructible' is released in the spiritual dimension of the self. This represents radical individualism, simultaneously with radical self-transcendence or 'self-destruction', a paradoxical principle of individualism which is the basis of the reflection:

> Der Messias wird kommen, sobald der zügelloseste Individualismus des Glaubens möglich ist -, niemand diese Möglichkeit vernichtet, niemand die Vernichtung duldet, also die Gräber sich öffnen. Das ist vielleicht auch die christliche Lehre, sowohl in der tatsächlichen Aufzeigung des Beispieles, dem nachgefolgt werden soll, eines individualistischen Beispieles, als auch in der symbolischen Aufzeigung der Auferstehung des Mittlers im einzelnen Menschen. (H.88f.)

The passage is elliptical in its comparison between the Jewish Messianic idea and the Christian concept of redemption and resurrection. The connection seems to lie in the idea symbolized in the opening graves, i.e. 'resurrection of the dead'. This image and idea can be related to Kafka's notions of constructive self-destruction, and 'death' as companions of spiritual awakening and transformation. The individual becomes, according

to this ultimate individualism, the 'mediator' of his own salvation; he becomes a 'messiah'. This idea is also contained in the implicit comparison with Christ[1]. Once again, there is unmistakable similarity with Hasidic thought on the matter:

> 'The meaning of devekuth is the attainment of that individual redemption which pertains to one's own soul,' said the Baal Shem. Mystical and individual redemption thus become identified, in contradistinction to Messianic redemption which lost the concrete and immediate meaning it held for the Lurianic Kabbalist. 'Only when everyone attains individual redemption,' goes another saying of the Baal Shem, 'will there be universal redemption and Messiah shall arive.' This statement implies a tremendous postponement in the actual arrival of the Messiah...(Scholem: M.I., p. 195f.)

The question of whether this teaching of the Baal Shem's reached Kafka in some form is obvious, when we read:

> Der Messias wird erst kommen, wenn er nicht mehr nötig sein wird, er wird erst einen Tag nach seiner Ankunft kommen, er wird nicht am letzten Tag kommen, sondern am allerletzten. (H.90)

Examination of other themes in Kafka's aphorisms supports the evidence that his search for new terminology and imagery for the metaphysical ideas uppermost in his mind proceeded jointly with exploration of Jewish mysticism as a tributary to his artistic and religious development.

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1. The comparison was possibly influenced by parts of M. Friedländer: Die religiösen Bewegungen innerhalb des Judentums im Zeitalter Jesu, Berlin, 1905 (which Kafka owned); e.g:

> Nicht Gott noch sein Messias ist der Religion Selbstzweck, sondern der einzelne Mensch, der sich zu Gott und seinem Messias erheben soll.
>
> Und diesem Werke der Erlösung des Menschen lebte und opferte sich Jesus.
>
> So löste er die Aufgabe, die seelischen Bedürfnisse des Individuums harmonisch in Einklang zu setzen mit einer überindividuellen religiösen Idee. (P.339)

cf. 'Der Individualismus in der Apokalypse', ibid., p.24ff.

The theme examined next is that of the moment as full of potential for receiving the plenitude of the eternity that transcends it. The imagery and terminology used stand as metaphors for an inner, psychological transformation which involves a transition from one level of spiritual understanding to a higher one. The image of the relationship between moment and eternity echoes the Hasidic belief that at any moment, in any action performed with the mystic concentration of kavvanah, a man may find 'einen Wagen zu Gott', a medium through which to communicate with the Absolute. Kafka reflects upon the significance of the moment:

> Der entscheidende Augenblick der menschlichen Entwicklung ist immerwährend. Darum sind die revolutionären geistigen Bewegungen, welche alles Frühere für nichtig erklären, im Recht, denn es ist noch nichts geschehen.
>
> Die Menschengeschichte ist die Sekunde zwischen zwei Schritten eines Wanderers. (H.73f.)

Here, from a point of view which sees the moment as possessing supreme existential or spiritual value as a 'conductor' of that which transcends it and is beyond measurable time, history ('alles Frühere') is declared void. The redefinition of 'Menschengeschichte' in terms of the individual's inner, spiritual transformation recalls Scholem's emphasis on the link between the Jewish mystic's inner experience and the historical events of his people and religion, projected into the spiritual life as

> symbols of acts which he conceives as being divorced from time, or constantly repeated in the soul of every man. (Scholem: M.T., p.19)

The sense of need to reconcile or identify 'history' with individual spiritual progress may be an additional indication of the depth of the Jewish element in Kafka's mystical explorations.

The image of the 'Wagen' occurs in several instances between the winter of 1917/18 and the spring of 1922. (H.107, 128, 283, 290, 297, 352 and 405.) From the context of the Oktavhefte and Fragmente it can hardly be doubted that

Kafka is consciously using the merkabah symbol, for example:

> Die scheinbare Stille, mit welcher die Tage, die Jahreszeiten, die Generationen, die Jahrhunderte aufeinanderfolgen, ist ein Aufhorchen; so traben Pferde vor dem Wagen. (H.107)

The notes preceding and following this one abound in reflections with mystical import: self-annihilation; Paradise and the two Trees; Good and Evil; 'das Unzerstörbare', the moment and eternity. These compose a distinctly Jewish mystical context, and indicate that the cryptic allusion to 'der Wagen' must likewise be a mystical one.

Evidently, the passage is concerned with the 'historical' progression of passing time, which is associated with expectation of something that is to come. The image's curious effect lies in its evocation of 'that which is to come' as something which lies 'ahead' in passing time (associated with the forwards progression of the horses), and simultaneously as something which lies 'behind' in space (associated with the chariot following them). The imagery has a quality which defies logical explanation and suggests the need for a change of perspective or transformation of consciousness if the chariot itself is to be perceived. Having made the spiritual transition, perhaps one will encounter or be caught up in the Jenseits by what moves, in the Diesseits, constantly behind. Such a transition, which defies expression except through mystical symbolism, is precisely the subject of the merkabah symbol.

'Der wild rollende Wagen' re-appears in H.128 in an image of awesome power and abandon. It is followed by a poem (H.129), which seems to evoke a moment between blissful enjoyment of unaccustomed comfort and beauty, associated with the impetus of extreme longing, and recollection of a mysterious experience that actually eludes memory and description; this was apparently some kind of vision. The scene is an idyllic garden, the lord of which is

said to have spoken; the 'ich' has apparently heard some utterance which surpasses his comprehension, and which is referred to in terms of mysterious script. The poem's mystical aura and allusions to imagery of Paradise are unmistakable. Its change from present to past tense suggests a mysterious and crucial moment of transition or transformation. Presumably the image of the chariot that precedes the poem is associated with the same idea.

Further, we find

> Als der Kampf begann und fünf Schwerbewaffnete von der Böschung auf die Strasse sprangen, entschlüpfte ich unter dem Wagen durch und lief in der völligen Finsternis dem Walde zu. (H.283)

This image is of abandoning the chariot in a presumably spiritual struggle, i.e., desertion of the spiritual task. This could be compared with images of ordeals and conflicts that the seeking soul confronts; for example, encounters with hostile spirits on the soul's ascent in Jewish hekaloth mysticism.

H.290 - 'Der Wagen war gänzlich unbrauchbar' - takes up the image again, leaving a little more room for doubt, insofar as it depicts the chariot (if such it is) in a dilapidated and travestied form. H.297 plays with the idea of the 'Wagen' as a tram-car, in a fragment of mysterious narrative with an unmistakably supernatural flavour.

The last examples (H.283, 290 and 297) again suggest that Kafka was playing with the mystical image of the 'Wagen' in late 1920, a time when he was working on his earlier aphorisms (Betrachtungen). There may be hidden reference to this occupation and its spiritual associations in 'Ich habe eine Wagenbauanstalt und in beiden Höfen wird [illegible] gesägt und gehämmert...' (H.293) The likelihood that Kafka's 'Wagen' imagery was derived from the merkabah symbol, even in cases of its disguise, is supported by H.352, also from late 1920, which states that exaggerated effort is likely to make one miss the Wagen; however, if you are patient,

> lässt mit der Kraft des Blicks die Wurzeln wachsen tief und

> breit - nichts kann dich beseitigen und es sind doch keine Wurzeln, sondern nur die Kraft deines zielenden Blicks -,

then the chariot cannot fail to come:

> er rollt heran, wird immer grösser, wird in dem Augenblick, in dem er bei dir eintrifft, welterfüllend und du versinkst in ihm wie ein Kind in den Polstern eines Reisewagens, der durch Sturm und Nacht fährt. (H.352)

It is an image of ecstatic experience. The image of roots may be of kabbalistic derivation, all the more probably here, as it is clearly associated with spiritual vision and concentration (cf. kavvanah).

Ihr sollt euch kein Bild - ...(H.352) immediately follows this passage; it is, if anything, confirmation that Kafka is using the merkabah image in reference to a spiritual mystery, and using it with a trepidation commensurate with its potency. This self-admonition supports the probability that in preceding examples the image is deliberately disguised.

Another point of contact between the Oktavhefte and Hasidic thought lies in Kafka's pursuit of the idea of the self as its own task, and an esoteric approach to the idea of redemption. It may be related to the Hasidic idea of man's becoming or being a 'law', as in Zweierlei Gebote, zweierlei Zadikim'[1], which Kafka must have read shortly before writing, on 19th. October, 1917:

> Wie willst du an die grösste Aufgabe auch nur rühren, wie willst du ihre Nähe nur wittern, ihr Dasein nur träumen, ihren Traum nur erbitten, die Buchstaben der Bitte zu lernen wagen[2], wenn du dich nicht so zusammenfassen kannst, dass du, wenn es zur Entscheidung kommt, dein Ganzes in einer Hand so zusammenhältst wie einen Stein zum Werfen, ein Messer zum Schlachten. (H.71)

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1. See p. 122.
2. cf. p. 149.

The significance of these images is illuminated in a second image of the stone on 12th. November, when self and task are identified in the context of the spiritual 'Way':

> So fest wie die Hand den Stein hält. Sie hält ihn aber fest, nur um ihn desto weiter zu verwerfen. Aber auch in jene Weite führt der Weg.
>
> Du bist die Aufgabe.Kein Schüler weit und breit. (H.83)[1]

The last line seems to state that 'you are the task; and there is no-one else to solve it.' The idea is evidently related to the task of raising the world 'ins Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche', which depends upon the level of the redeeming agent's spiritual consciousness, and is comparable with the kabbalistic concept of 'tikkun', the process of perfecting Creation by returning everything to its 'proper place', which includes returning spiritually, oneself, to one's 'proper place'. In so doing, Man redeems the world as he himself is redeemed; Kafka echoes this correspondence:

> Wer fühlt sich denn nicht 'krank, schuldbewusst, ohnmächtig' im Kampf mit seiner Aufgabe oder vielmehr als Aufgabe, die sich selbst löst? Wer kann erlösen, ohne dass er gleichzeitig erlöst würde? (Br.206)

Clearly, this way of thinking must include the idea of 'being a messiah', both in the 'Weltgeschichte deiner Seele' (H.273) and to the 'world' itself[2].

Kafka's meditations on spiritual matters in the Oktavhefte, and his probing of the boundaries of personality and individuality in relation to his esoteric pre-occupations, are linked with a re-assessment of his relationship to the human community. This aspect in his thinking is introduced on 19th. October, 1917: 'Sinnlosigkeit (zu starkes Wort) der Trennung des Eigenen und Fremden im geistigen Kampf.' (H.70) This observation pro-

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1. cf. H.106f.
2. For discussion of the re-interpretation of messianism in Hasidism, to which this bears some resemblance, see Scholem: 'The Neutralization of Messianism in early Hasidism, in M.I., pp.176-202.

ceeds to an important re-definition of the 'Kampf':

> Alle kämpfen wir einen Kampf. (Wenn ich angegriffen von der letzten Frage nach Waffen hinter mich greife, kann ich nicht unter den Waffen wählen, und selbst wenn ich wählen könnte, müsste ich 'fremde' fassen, denn wir haben alle nur einen Waffenvorrat.) Ich kann keinen eigenen führen; glaube ich einmal selbständig zu sein,..., so ergibt sich bald, dass ich infolge der mir nicht gleich oder überhaupt nicht zugänglichen allgemeinen Konstellation diesen Posten übernehmen musste...Es gibt keinen selbständig Kriegführenden. (Demütigung) der Eitelkeit? Ja, aber auch notwendige und wahrheitsgemässe Ermutigung. (H.70)

Kafka is here pre-occupied, in the context of the spiritual 'struggle', with eliminating the boundary between self and others, 'das Eigene' and 'das Fremde'. It is overcome in the presupposition that all are engaged in one and the same struggle, in which it is impossible to fight in independence or isolation.

A later passage attaches spiritual value to assimilation of 'das Fremde' by the self, and transcendence of the boundary between them in an extended consciousness, in which they become one:

> ...von einer gewissen Stufe der Erkenntnis an muss Müdigkeit, Ungenügsamkeit, Beengung, Selbstverachtung verschwinden, nämlich dort, wo ich das, was mich früher als ein Fremdes erfrischte, befriedigte, befreite, erhob, als mein eigenes Wesen zu erkennen die Kraft habe. (H.110)

'Das Fremde' and the self, united, share in a spiritual transformation:

> Es hat nicht aufgehört, fremd zu sein, sondern nur überdies angefangen, Ich zu sein. - Aber die Fremde, die du bist, ist nicht mehr fremd. Damit leugnest du die Weltschöpfung und widerlegst dich selbst. (H.110)

The last sentence, although ambiguous, may be interpreted as saying that creative annihilation, or transcendence, of self occurs in the union of 'Ich' and 'das Fremde' . Kafka discusses this further in H.110f. as 'das Gebot zur Einigkeit'. It implies the interdependence of world and spirit, and, indeed, unity of 'self' and 'world' in the event of redemption. These ideas may be compared to the Hasidic concept of a spiritual hierarchy in which 'der Höhere des Niederen bedarf', and vice versa - the principle on which rests the Hasidic

conception of Man's part in the scheme of Creation and Redemption and the social values of the community that undertakes it. The comparison between Kafka's outlook in the Oktavhefte and Hasidic religious philosophy is not over-strainedif his concept of 'das Gebot zur Einigkeit' is compared to the Hasidic belief that each person has a duty to redeem the sparks that are embedded in the particular sphere of his own life, in order to contribute ultimately to a cosmic harmony[1].

At this point, revising his relationship to 'the world', Kafka considers himself and the human community not divided from one another, but as interdependent, with an identity shared by virtue of 'der geistige Kampf', in which they are all involved, and a universal, spiritual nature:

> Das Unzerstörbare ist eines: jeder einzelne Mensch ist es und gleichzeitig ist es allen gemeinsam, daher die beispiellos untrennbare Verbindung der Menschen. (H.96f.)

The concept of 'das Unzerstörbare' transcends the opposition of 'das Eigene' and 'das Fremde', uniting the human community in its spiritual task. The idea of the individual's spiritual potential and duty to realize the 'messiah' in himself and become a redeemer is related to that of Man's union in 'das Unzerstörbare': to become a redeemer (and simultaneously find redemption) is to reach a spiritual level, where the self is annihilated, stripped to the point where only the Indestructible remains.

A similar concept of the unity of all human existence rests on another reflection on the universality of suffering.(H.117) Kafka again mentions Christ as an example, which demands due recognition, since it might otherwise be interpreted in a non-Jewish sense. From what has so far been said of Kafka's apparent interpretation of Messianism, however, there is no discrepancy here, where Christ presumably stands as a symbol of das Unzerstörbare

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1. cf. Denn das ist der Dienst des Menschen in der Welt bis zur Todesstunde, Mal um Mal mit dem Fremden zu ringen und es Mal um Mal einzuheben in die Eigenheit des göttlichen Namens. (Buber: G.M., p.2)

in Man, Man in the condition of Ewigkeit, in his essential spiritual form. (cf. the Kabbalists' image of Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man). In the Betrachtungen, the reference to Christ is omitted from this passage:

> Alle Leiden um uns müssen auch wir leiden...So wie das Kind durch alle Lebensstadien bis zum Greis und zum Tod sich entwickelt..., ebenso entwickeln wir uns (nicht weniger tief mit der Menschheit verbunden als mit uns selbst) durch alle Leiden dieser Welt. (H.52f.)[1]

Kafka continues with the reflection that suffering is no cause for pride, nor a sign of merit. (H.53) This point is linked with the concept of humility, and with a religious concept of community. The above observations are followed after a five-day interval, on Feb. 25th., 1918, by:

> 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.119)

The development of a new concept of community is consistent with the general trend in Kafka's thought at this period, and with the attempt to transcend dichotomies that govern the customary logic of our thought and perception. Again, it clearly reflects Hasidic values, and if, at this stage, Kafka already entertained the idea of Schreiben als Form des Gebetes (H.348), it shows an unmistakable affinity with Hasidic teaching on prayer. The community is fundamental to Hasidic religious thought and practice[2]; this is echoed in Kafka's reflection upon the inter-relationship between cohesion in the community and the individual life of spiritual aspiration, on H.119. His recognition that every position in the spiritual battle that all fight is governed by the 'allgemeine Konstellation' also implies that the community is crucial; and this involves humility in the individual's acknowledgement that he depends

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1. N.B. H.51: 'Nur hier ist Leiden Leiden...' - in the 'other world', 'Jenseits', beyond the world of opposites, suffering is 'Seligkeit'. Cf. H.108, H.278, Br.425.

2. See p. 100f.

on the community and is no more outstanding than autonomous.

This resembles the Hasidic value of shiflut (humility), a social value uniting the community regardless of individual differences, and the mystery of which is that the purer and the nearer perfect a man is: 'desto inniger weiss er, dass er ein Teil ist, und desto wacher regt sich in ihm die Gemeinschaft der Wesen.' (Buber: B.S., p.33) Clearly, Kafka's association of this recognition with humility and the attitude of prayer is consistent with Hasidic values.

This chapter would be incomplete if a final question were not raised: could Kafka have sought to emulate the Hasidic holy man? All that can safely be answered is that it is possible, indeed probable, that the image of the zaddik caught Kafka's imagination. The zaddik is the spiritual leader and nucleus of his community, a sort of spiritual primus inter pares; he represents the 'particular among the general', but is endowed with superior spiritual discernment and powers; and from previous discussion, it is clear that Kafka, by winter 1917/18, saw himself in comparable terms, as H.120 well illustrates. His sense of endowment with 'eine riesenhafte Kraft', albeit through standing in exceptional proximity to 'das Negative meiner Zeit', could perhaps provide special grounds for comparison with the zaddik, who deals with evil with a directness beyond the power of lesser spiritual beings, as Horodezky notes:

> Zuweilen gibt sich der Zaddik preis und steigt von seiner Höhe herab, um die Gefallenen zu sich emporzuheben. 'Wer seinen Nächsten aus dem Sumpf heben will, muss sich selbst hineinstürzen.' (Der Jude, I , p.603)

This image is a powerful one; possibly it is echoed in:

> Das heisst dann wirklich, an den eigenen Haaren sich aus dem Sumpf gezogen haben. Was in der körperlichen Welt lächerlich ist, ist in der geistigen möglich...(H.71f.)

and (in a letter to Werfel):

> Sie sind gewiss ein Führer der Generation, was keine Schmeichelei ist und niemandem gegenüber als Schmeichelei verwendet werden könnte, denn diese Gesellschaft in den Sümpfen kann mancher führen. Darum sind Sie auch nicht nur Führer, sondern mehr. (Br.424f.)

Kafka is here admonishing Werfel for betrayal of his generation, and of his own task of leadership; the reprimand illustrates how seriously Kafka considered the writer's responsibility as the moral and spiritual leader of his generation. His remarkable claim, 'Ich bin Anfang oder Ende', has been discussed in examination of the concept and imagery of the Volksführer; in view of evident Hasidic influence, it is probable that Kafka found the zaddik a congenial model of the spiritual leader.

While the zaddik is outstanding as a 'spiritual superman' and 'Grundfeste der Welt', he depends upon his community of Hasidim, as they upon him, in accordance with the cosmic principle of mutual interdependence of the higher and lower:

> Der Zaddik ist eng mit seinen Chassidim verbunden. Er bedarf ihrer, wie sie seiner bedürfen, wie der Körper die Seele und wie die Seele des Körpers bedarf. Der Zaddik ist wohl 'der machtvolle Held', aber er kann seiner Anhänger als Mithelfer im Kampfe nicht entbehren. (Horodezky, op.cit.,p.603)

The 'powerful hero' has his place alongside the Volksführer in Kafka's imagery (although he may be shown in an ironical or ambiguous light). His undertaking is of vital importance for the world. Two new examples in the Oktavhefte are Alexander the Great and the Titan, Atlas. Of Alexander, Kafka writes that it is conceivable that, 'trotz den auf Veränderung der Welt gerichteten Kräften, die er in sich fühlte,' Alexander might never have crossed the Hellespont, owing to 'Erdenschwere'. (H.87) This term gives a

clue to interpretation of the symbol: it implies that Alexander was too firmly bound to material and physical existence to resist the pull of its metaphorical gravity and make the ascent or transition vital to accomplishment of his task. That transition must be more than an earthly manoeuvre: it symbolizes a decisive spiritual advance, the precondition (by further analogy with Alexander) of conquest, and the establishment of a realm that will be of lasting consequence for humanity. If the Macedonian hero symbolically conveys the predicament of the Jewish Kafka, messianic undertones are disguised in this passage, the Macedonian Empire suggesting the messianic Kingdom of God; Alexander's enterprise stands for nothing other than 'die grösste Aufgabe' (H.71), the 'weltbewegende Pläne (H.128),'die ungeheure Aufgabe' (H.303), which have been defined in terms of a 'messianic' task. The image of Atlas (H.107) may also be an adaptation of the phrase 'Grundfeste der Welt', which Kafka must have read in Horodezky's article in Der Jude.

There is, in many cases, a marked ambiguity about the zaddik as mediator between Man and God; inhabiting the borderland between the known and the unknowable, gifted with spiritual powers of omniscience and familiarity with the supreme mysteries, he has the nature of a being intermediate between Man and God. The most obvious example of this ambiguity is the 'hidden zaddik': by virtue of his outlandish behaviour, generally outside the Hasidic community and its religious conventions, a hidden zaddik may appear to be anything but the holy man he actually is. To beings lower down the spiritual ladder, such a man naturally appears to be outside the Law.

Kafka must have known the legend of the thirty-six hidden just men:

> Nur sechsunddreissig Gerechte gibt es, nach der jüdischen Legende, in jedem Zeitalter. Niemand kennt diese 'Lamed-Wufniks' und doch steht insgeheim auf ihnen die Welt. (Brod: Heidentum, Judentum, Christentum I, p.318)

The image of the hidden zaddik is certain to have attracted Kafka; feeling so much outside the Jewish community, and having such deep-seated ambivalences towards it, he would have found solace in the figure of the holy man who appears to be outside the community and the law. Kafka's pre-occupation with the idea of the self as its own 'task' was perhaps related to the Hasidic idea that the supreme spiritual state is that of the man who has himself become the law - a state achieved by the hidden zaddik, par excellence. His dislike of publicity and preference for a life and art 'im Verborgenen', together with his devotion to 'the task', make it likely that he found in the hidden zaddik a supporting image, and moral encouragement.

It is apparent that Kafka's concept of 'Schreiben als Form des Gebetes' (H.348) was influenced by Hasidic beliefs, and two other pieces of evidence support this conclusion. Firstly

> Wie willst du die grösste Aufgabe auch nur rühren,...ihren Traum nur erbitten, die Buchstaben der Bitte zu lernen wagen... (H.71; my underline.)

Secondly, there is the independent sentence: 'Nichts davon, quer durch die Worte kommen Reste von Licht.' (H.293) [1] These examples use images which clearly reflect the kabbalistic belief in the mystical significance and potency of Hebrew letters, and their function in contemplative prayer. Horodezky also refers to this:

> Der Chassidismus fordert für das Talmudstudium reine Absicht, Studium um des Studiums willen, 'um sich in Heiligkeit und Reinheit den Buchstaben potentiell und wirklich, in Wort und in Gedanken anzuschliessen.' 'Denn die Buchstaben sind Kammern des Heiligen, gelobt sei Er, durch die Er sein Licht strömen lässt.' (Der Jude I. p.650.)

The mystical significance of language in the traditions of Kabbalah is something that Kafka, obviously, could associate with writing as a form of prayer.

If writing is a form of prayer, it produces some form of religious text.

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1. This follows the passage which contains 'Ich habe eine Wagenbauanstalt...' (q.v.p. 140.)

While Kafka's comparison is between writing and prayer (as distinct from other modes of religious expression), it can be suggested that the Hasidic tradition of 'heilige Erzählungen' was also important in certain implications concerning the nature and function of the tale (or text) in the community, as a conductor of spiritual energy and meaning. This suggestion belongs more to the discussion of Kafka's stories themselves, but can be supported for the time being by reference to a letter of late July, 1922:

> Es ist vielleicht möglich, ich weiss es nicht, dass ein das Chaos beherrschender Mann zu schreiben beginnt; das werden heilige Bücher sein. (Br.400)

Lastly, there is the case of 'Talent für Flickarbeit' (T.419), which Kafka wrote in his diary in June, 1922. Brod gives an explanation of this term in Kafka's usage:

> Alles, was nicht in solcher Selbstvergessenheit und Hingabe geschaffen wurde, hiess bein meinem Freunde 'Flickarbeit'. Dies war das Wort, das er häufig gebrauchte, war das Verdammungsurteil, das er kaum je gegen andere, allzu oft gegen sich selbst aussprach. Und zwar nicht nur in Dingen der Literatur, sondern auch in Angelegenheiten des Lebens, in denen er gleichsam (ohne es je zu formulieren) verlangte, dass das Gute, das Vollkommene in einem einzigen grandiösen ununterbrochenem Strome hervorbrechen müsse. Anders war es eben nur Flickarbeit und taugte zu nichts. (Brod: Über Franz Kafka, p.231f.)

'Flickarbeit', however, is also the title of a story in Buber's Der grosse Maggid (p.108). The diary entry T.419 must refer to this, since Kafka had been reading the book at this time. The story's correspondence with Brod's explanation of 'Flickarbeit' is clear: it describes spiritual ineptitude on the part of a Hasid who has undertaken a fast that is beyond his powers. By comparison, there is in Der grosse Maggid an example of 'Flickarbeit' of a different order:

> Henoch war ein Schuhflicker. Mit jedem Stich seiner Ahle, der Oberleder und Sohle zusammennähte, verband er Gott und seine Schechina. (Buber: G.M., p.xxvii)

In Kafka's terse and ironical note, both are implied: the sublime ideal, and the pathetic level of actual achievement.

The same irony penetrates a fragment describing a character described as a priest who, in his capacity as intercessor and intermediary for his community of believers, has something in common with the zaddik. Too little is said about him to place the likeness beyond doubt; the significant point is the irony with which the priestly activity is described:

> Auf der Freitreppe des Tempels kniet ein Priester und verwandelt alle Bitten und Klagen der Gläubigen, die zu ihm kommen, in Gebete, oder vielmehr er verwandelt nichts, sondern wiederholt nur das ihm Gesagte laut und vielmals. (H.313)

This, and the further brief example of the priest's intercession: 'A. hat heute einen grossen Verlust gehabt, sein Geschäft geht zugrunde,' re-iterated over and over again, amounts to a deftly scurrilous portrayal of the community of believers[1], and ridicules their unquestioning faith in the activity of the priest, who is probably, like the rest of them, either a fool or a rogue.

By failing to draw attention to the negative side of the picture as Kafka saw it, or at least his sceptical vision, this chapter on Hasidic associations in Kafka's thought and imagery would have neglected an important aspect of the subject. Typically, Kafka's dedication to 'die ungeheuere Aufgabe', and (if it was such) his emulation of the spiritual leader, leave room for doubt and suspicion, the community of religious rogues, the deceptive priest who makes no difference to anything or anyone, the 'Wagen' that is 'gänzlich unbrauchbar'. They leave room, as does the tradition of the Hasidic tale, for the talented 'Flickarbeiter' of this world to be remembered;and for profound self-irony.

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1. cf. The negative picture of 'Gemeinschaft' in the passage following that quoted.

Chapter 6

'...aber ich hätte doch etwas getan, wäre, wenn schon nicht nach Palästina übersiedelt, doch mit dem Finger auf der Landkarte hingefahren.' (Br.237)

Jewish elements in the 'Landarzt' cycle.

Ein Landarzt

Kafka's references to the Landarzt collection indicates that it had considerable personal significance, not least for reasons connected with his own case of 'the Jewish problem'. The material of which the collection was composed was submitted, before publication in the final form, to Martin Buber for publication in Der Jude; Buber selected 'Zwei Tiergeschichten', Schakale und Araber and Ein Bericht für eine Akademie, for the October and November issues of 1917. Altogether, seven of the fourteen stories in Ein Landarzt appeared in Jewish publications between 1917 and 1921. By 1918, when Kafka decided to dedicate the collection to his father, Ein Traum had appeared in Das jüdische Prag and Vor dem Gesetz in the Selbstwehr, besides the two stories in Der Jude. The Selbstwehr subsequently published Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, Die Sorge des Hausvaters (both in 1919) and Ein altes Blatt (in 1921). Of the chosen dedication, 'Meinem Vater', Kafka wrote to Brod:

> Seitdem ich mich entschlossen habe, das Buch meinem Vater zu widmen, liegt mir viel daran, dass es bald erscheint. Nicht als ob ich [illegible] versöhnen könnte, die Wurzeln dieser Feindschaft sind hier unausreissbar, aber ich hätte doch etwas getan, wäre, wenn schon nicht nach Palästina übersiedelt, doch mit dem Finger auf der Landkarte hingefahren. (Br.237)

This is evidence that Kafka considered the Landarzt collection to represent recognition of, or commitment to, his Jewish origin and tradition insofar as he could reconcile himself to it, or at least scrutinize it through the medium of his art. The title he originally contemplated for it, 'Verantwortung', suggests that behind the collection lay a sense of moral responsibility, possibly related to a Jewish sense of vocation or 'task'.

Since Ein Landarzt was the story selected to give the collection its title, it seems that it had - apart from its literary merits - characteristics

which Kafka felt reflected major themes in the collection as a whole, so that its title established the unity of the stories it covered. If so, it may well, in the light of the dedication, reflect one that he recognized as Jewish.

It is likely that the decision to dedicate the collection to Hermann Kafka, the token of an imaginary trip to Palestine, was affected by events that occurred in Kafka's life between the date when he first discussed publication with Kurt Wolff (in late July, 1917), and January, 1918. The crucial event of this period was the diagnosis of his illness on 4th. September, followed by the breaking of his engagement to Felice in December. The reason for supposing that these are connected with the dedication of the collection and the implied acknowledgement of its Jewish background is the significance that the story Ein Landarzt apparently had for Kafka during the self-examination that began in September, 1917 (several months after the story was written). As has been discussed, Kafka was seriously re-assessing the role Judaism played in his life; and the process was linked to his interpretation of his 'Lungenwunde' as a symbol with spiritual significance. He clearly associated this 'wound' with the symbol he had created in Ein Landarzt, for only a few days after its medical diagnosis he wrote to Brod: 'Auch habe ich es selbst vorausgesagt. Erinnerst du dich an die Blutwunde im 'Landarzt'?' (Br.160)[1] Kafka probably had the same image in mind when he wrote shortly afterwards:

> Allerdings ist hier noch die Wunde, deren Sinnbild nur die Lungenwunde ist. Du misverstehst es, Max,...aber ich missverstehe es auch vielleicht und es gibt...überhaupt kein Verständnis solchen Dingen gegenüber, weil es keinen Überblick gibt, so verwühlt und immer in Bewegung ist die riesige, im Wachstum nicht aufhörende Masse. (Br.161)

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1. cf. T.406, where an image from Ein Landarzt is also used to refer to Kafka's own situation.

These words recall those of the doctor to his patient: 'dein Fehler ist: du hast keinen Überlick', besides the actual description of the wound in the story: it is enormous ('handtellergross') and, in terms of its complexity and its likeness to open mineworkings (possibly also to the labyrinth, another image Kafka used during his later period), it is 'verwühlt'; it is full of movement and growth, and further complicated, both literally and symbolically, in that it harbours a writhing cluster of worms. The victim himself is described not only as lacking 'Überlick',but also as being 'geblendet durch das Leben in seiner Wunde'; this suggests an image for the condition in which Kafka pondered the inscrutable ramifications of his own 'wound', as he presumably did those of his story. T.212 suggests that he was accustomed to scan his stories after writing them, seeking 'alle Beziehungen, die mir in der Geschichte klar geworden sind'. As he wrote to Felice in 1913, soon after interpreting Das Urteil for himself:

> Das was im Innern klar ist, wird es auch unweigerlich in Worten. Deshalb muss man niemals um die Sprache Sorge haben, aber im Anblick der Worte oft Sorge um sich selbst. Wer weiss denn aus sich selbst heraus, wie es um einen steht. Dieses stürmische oder sich wälzende oder sumpfige Innere sind wir ja selbst, aber auf dem im geheimen sich vollziehenden Weg, auf dem die Worte aus uns hervorgetrieben werden, wird die Selbsterkenntnis an den Tag gebracht, und wenn sie auch noch immer verhüllt ist, so ist sie doch vor uns und ein herrlicher oder schrecklicher Anblick. (F.306)

From the context of letters and diaries of September, 1917, it seems that 'der herrliche oder schreckliche Anblick' of the wound in Ein Landarzt , and, of course, the story in its entirety, were important to Kafka in revealing the symbolic associations of his disease, for example, the inner conflict arising from his ambivalence toward marriage.(See T.379.) What is certain is that this story was very much in his mind while he was seriously involved in clarification of 'die letzten Dinge' as a Jew. As an artistic achievement too, Kafka rated Ein Landarzt as highly as his extremely self-

critical judgement permitted. The diary for 25th. September suggests that he considered it one of his best and, possibly, the point from which he had to proceed towards his Jewish literary ideal:

> Zeitweilige Befriedigung kann ich von Arbeiten wie 'Landarzt' noch haben, vorausgesetzt, dass mir etwas Derartiges noch gelingt (sehr unwahrscheinlich). Glück aber nur, falls ich die Welt ins Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche heben kann. (T.382)

It may be supposed, then, that Ein Landarzt is a symbolic expression of themes and concepts which Kafka recognized as having Jewish significance; and that it is a story which he thought was open to an interpretation based on aspects of Judaism that required clarification in his own mind. It will reflect Jewish ideas and values as the foundation of the subjective, psychological experience that Kafka's imagination and artistic powers enabled him to objectify as literature. Ein Landarzt is also an example of literary expression that contains elements drawn from Jewish literary sources. Preliminary investigation of the latter will help establish a foundation on which to substantiate interpretation of this story.

The two motifs contained in the Jewish antecedents of Ein Landarzt are the mysterious or miraculous excursion, and the healer. Two of the collections of Hasidic tales that Kafka knew include examples of mysterious journeys comparable with that of the country doctor, or instances of miracle-healing. They are Buber's Die Legende des Baalschem, and Alexander Eliasberg's collection, Sagen polnischer Juden (Munich, 1916)[1]. The relevant tales are, from Buber's collection:

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1. q.v. Bluma Goldstein: 'Franz Kafka's Ein Landarzt: A Study in Failure', in DVjs /42 (1968) pp. 745-59; and Hartmut Binder: Motiv und Gestaltung bei Franz Kafka, p.53f.

Das Gericht (pp. 109-118);
Der Psalmensager (pp. 153-162);
Der zerstörte Sabbat (pp. 163-173);

and from Eliasberg's collection:

Auferweckung der toten Braut (pp. 40-44) - a version of the story retold by Buber in Das Gericht;
Von der Macht des Arztes (pp. 109-111);
Rasche Fahrt nach Wien (pp. 182-183).

Das Gericht (alias Auferweckung der toten Braut)contains both motifs. Here, Baal Shem sets off on a journey to Berlin, with a purpose unknown to any of his companions. He travels in an unaccustomed manner, which fills at least one of his passengers with incredulity:

> Und auch dazumal fuhr er in einer knappen Stundenzahl eine grosse Strecke des Weges, wie es ja allen bekannt ist, dass dem Willen des Meisters Ort und Zeit nicht Fessel und Hindernis bedeuteten wie einem unter uns. (Buber: B.S., p.109)

The miraculous purpose of the journey is the resurrection of a Jewish bride who died just before her wedding. She is laid in the grave in an open coffin, but within fifteen minutes, Baal Shem has restored her to life, and the wedding-ceremony proceeds, conducted by Baal Shem. The sense of the title in Buber's version relates to facts disclosed later on at the wedding, Baal Shem having saved the girl by pronouncing judgement on the spirit of a dead woman, who had caused her death:

> 'Du Tote, die du keinen Teil mehr an der Erde hast, lass ab von ihr. Denn siehe, bei den Lebendigen ist das Recht...' (ibid., p.117f)

This story thus celebrates the superhuman spiritual might of the zaddik, who exists on a plane unconstrained by the limitations of time and space that confine the experience of the 'normal' world, and whose powers give him control over life and death. Spiritual rebirth in this story, with its bridal imagery, implies the soul's resurrection for the union of the archetypal hieros gamos . Baal Shem's sentence on the malevolent spirit represents transcendence of the conflict between physical and spiritual realms, and in the raising of

the bride, the female figure becomes a symbol of spiritual integration and promise of fulfilment.

In Der Psalmensager, Buber retells the story of a man

> der zu den stillen seltenen Zeiten seiner Einkehr in sich selber dem Dienste Gottes gar hold war, gemeinhin aber dem bunten Treiben und einer herzhaften Geselligkeit hingegeben die Güter seiner Seele brachliegen liess. (ibid., p.153)

One day, while holding a feast for his friends, the man is impelled by anger to curse one of his servants, a humble, pious man known as 'der Psalmensager', whose profound and quiet spiritual nature is in complete contrast with his own. This injustice is the cause for a mysterious episode that amounts to a 'trial' of the rich man for his offence. A stranger summons him to his master, and he is conveyed by supernatural transport away from the festive scene:

> Nach einer Weile, die dem Mann nicht kurz noch lang schien, bemerkte er, dass der Hufschlag der Pferde verstummt war und der Wagen dennoch weiter raste. Es war kein Weg mehr, und rechts und links war nimmer, keine Luft um ihn, und nichts, dessen sein Erkennen sich hätte bemächtigen dürfen...Er fühlte, er hatte den Schritt hinüber getan, und was gegolten hatte, galt nun nicht mehr. (ibid., p.156)

He disembarks in the midst of a frozen, forest wilderness and continues on foot: 'und sein Gehen war ohne Mass und Vergleich wie vordem seine Fahrt.' (ibid., p.157) He finds a house, and enters. In contrast to the outside world, unrecognizable through fog, the interior is warm, light, and fragrant; the air is crystal-clear and sings in his ears. The man hides behind the stove, and here undergoes his 'trial' before none other than the three patriarchs. His accuser, who defends the rights of the Psalm-sayer, is King David. He demands the man's death; but Baal Shem, also present, pleads for him and averts the King's wrath. The trial's conclusion is as strange as its beginning:

> Dem Mann hinter dem Ofen fuhr ein weisser Strahl über die Augen. Er stand in seinem Haus und hielt die Klinke seiner Stubentür. Da waren die Gäste und wuschen ihre Hände vor der Abendmahlzeit. (ibid., p.162)

This story, too, celebrates the zaddik's sublime spiritual authority and judgement. It also depicts the mysterious intercommunication between the 'normal' world and the supernatural realm 'beyond'; and the miraculous expansion of a moment into the eternal. As in Das Gericht, the weird journey, in which the 'normal' dimensions of time and space dissolve, symbolizes the crossing of the boundary between the two worlds, and the transformation of spirit or consciousness that may occur in the individual who crosses it. In Der Psalmensager, the psychological transformation is suggested, for example, when the man crosses the threshold of the house, passing from wilderness, obscurity and cold outside to clarity and warmth within, which mysteriously appeal to all the senses and create the atmosphere for his encounter with the eternal. The actual moment of enlightenment finds him, symbolically, back home, the latch of his own door in his hand. In addition to the zaddik's prowess, Der Psalmensager takes the theme of an experience of revelation, interwoven with that of guilt and judgement. The rich man is granted an experience that brings about a change of consciousness, and an opportunity to strengthen his will and, presumably, act upon it after his return home.

In the third example, Der zerstörte Sabbat, Baal Shem, exceptionally, fails to control his situation. His horses are too strong for him, and he is irresistibly carried toward an unknown destination:

> Da wollte er umkehren und rief es laut und fasste selbst die Zügel, aber er hatte keine Macht über die Pferde, und sie liefen, dem Geheiss seiner Hand entgegen, in scharfem Trabe weiter, wohin der unsichtbare Zwang sie trieb. (ibid., p.163)

The horses rush into the deepest thicket of a wood, where they stop. To increase the distress of Baal Shem and his companions, it is the eve of Sabbath (which, since Jews are forbidden to travel on the Sabbath, would remove all hope of reaching a suitable place to keep the holy day). In the forest they

discover only the rough and dirty house of a huge, uncouth man, who refuses to let them keep the Sabbath as they should. Baal Shem and his party are helpless, and have to acquiesce; 'Den Baalschem hatte alle Kraft des inneren Blickes verlassen, und die heilige Weisheit war von ihm gewichen...' (ibid., p.171) Their host confines them until the fourth day of the week. When at last he opens the door, they fear murder; but instead, a beautiful woman enters and invites them to remain to keep the following Sabbath. The extraordinary incident is clarified: she was formerly a servant-girl of the zaddik, and once broke his Sabbath dishes; when his wife struck her, the Baal Shem had remained silent. The girl married the uncouth man - a hidden zaddik; and the events of the past days have been Baal Shem's penalty, in fact to spare him a severer punishment for his silence. Baal Shem's sentence in the world to come having been cancelled, his spiritual gifts return to him.

As in Der Psalmensager, the mysterious journey is here linked with a summons from a superior spiritual force, which is incurred through an offence, but which concludes with mercy after a nominal ordeal has been undergone. As is customary in the Hasidic tale, apparently minor incidents in the material world are revealed as being of great consequence on the spiritual level. The encounter with the hidden zaddik and his wife underlines the fact that the boundary between the two worlds may be illusory, if indeed it exists at all, except as a defect in human perception; it also shows in what unexpected circumstances the absolute realm may disclose itself in the material world.

Eliasberg's Sagen polnischer Juden offers another instance of the supernatural excursion in Rasche Reise nach Wien, where a servant accompanies Rabbi Lejb Sores on a journey:

> Und als sie aus der Stadt herausgefahren waren, schien es dem Diener plötzlich, als ob sie durch die Luft flögen, und er

> sah unten Städte und Dörfer. So fuhren sie zwei Stunden. Endlich kamen sie in eine grosse Stadt, der Rabbi stieg vom Wagen und befahl dem Diener, auf ihn zu warten. Der Diener stand wie ein Verrückter da und wusste nicht, wo er war: ob unter Menschen oder unter Geistern. (Alexander Eliasberg: Sagen polnischer Juden, p.182)

The story Von der Macht des Arztes is one to which Ein Landarzt bears a close relationship. It tells of a Vilno Jew who comes to the Maggid of Mezritch desiring to test his wisdom, and is told by the zaddik:

> "Merke dir, mein Kind, dass es nicht die Arzneien sind, die den Kranken heilen, sondern die Ärzte selbst: denn jeden Arzt begleitet ein Engel, und den grössten Arzt - der Engel Raphael selbst." (ibid., p.109)

The man does not understand the Rabbi's saying. Not long afterwards, however, he falls ill. No doctor can help him. It is rumoured that he is dying, and members of the community flock to his house. When news arrives that the King of Prussia is visiting the town, they obtain permission for the royal doctor to visit the sick man; but when he sees the patient,

> "Bin ich denn ein Gott," sagte er, "dass ich einen Toten lebendig machen soll?" und er wollte das Krankenzimmer verlassen, konnte es aber nicht, denn die Leute, die mit ihm zugleich gekommen waren, standen so dicht gedrängt, dass er nicht einmal zur Türe gelangen konnte. Also blieb er noch eine Weile im Zimmer. (ibid., p.110)

Upon closer inspection, however, the patient seems to have improved. The doctor sends a prescription to the apothecary, but when he looks again, the patient has further improved so far as to make it unnecessary. This is repeated several times, the patient's rapid recovery being a lesson in the truth of the Maggid's words, as he explains to the doctor:

> "Ich bitte Euch, bleibt noch ein wenig bei mir. Eure Anwesenheit ist's, was mich heilt...Also kann ich ganz ohne Arzneien gesund werden. Damals verstand ich nicht, was der Rabbi meinte, doch heute sehe ich, dass er die Wahrheit gesprochen hat." (ibid., p.111)

The royal doctor is a Jew, and having learnt that his patient refers to the Maggid, he later travels to see him himself - 'und wurde mit der Zeit selbst ein heiliger Rabbi und Wundertäter.' (ibid., p.111)

In this story there is a distinct relationship between the physical cure, and the accompanying spiritual enlightenment. The patient's physical recovery might be described as symptomatic of a state of being arising from new understanding, which restores harmony of body and soul and renews physical and spiritual strength. Most significant of all, the doctor himself benefits from the miraculous cure that his presence has effected, insofar as he shares, and is fulfilled by, his patient's spiritual recognition.

Finally, on the subject of healing, S.A. Horodezky quotes Rabbi Jakob Josef von Polna in Vom Gemeinschaftsleben der Chassidim in the issue of Der Jude for December 1916 (about the time when Ein Landarzt was written):

> 'Ein treuer Arzt, der seinen Patienten liebt und ihm volle Heilung bringen will, muss vorerst die Wunden und kranken Glieder blosslegen. Erst dann kann er mit der Heilung beginnen. Ebenso ist es mit der Zurechtweisung. Wer dem Gebote: liebe deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst, nachleben will, muss die kranken Stellen, die Gebrechen der Seele aufdecken, um eine Heilung für sie zu finden.' (Der Jude I, 1916/17, p.601)

A summary of the points on which Kafka's Ein Landarzt can be compared and contrasted with the relevant Hasidic source-material yields valuable insight into the Jewish element (both literary and psychological) in this work. The modification of features of the Jewish tales and their transposition into the context of Kafka's story express in subtle symbolic form aspects of his experience of Judaism, and illuminate the 'Selbsterkenntnis' bound up with that experience. The first, most obvious contrast between Ein Landarzt and its Jewish antecedents lies in the absence of allusion in the former to anything connected with Judaism or Jews.

In the stories summarized above, the weird journey occurs in the context of a purpose which, although mysterious and concealed at the beginning, is both fulfilled and explained at the episode's conclusion. The supernatural

mode of transport, although outside the 'normal' order of things, functions within an ordered scheme which transcends the laws of the physical world, but affects both the physical and the spiritual destiny of its inhabitants. In Das Gericht, Der Psalmensager and Der zerstörte Sabbat, the journey marks the crossing of the supposed boundary between physical and metaphysical spheres, and serves the end of restoring the necessary order or harmony between the two, which has somehow been disturbed. In Das Gericht, the restoration of the spiritual order is fulfilled in the miracle worked by Baal Shem. In the other two stories, the journey assumes the aspect of a sudden arrest at the instance of a mysterious, spiritual authority. It serves the purposes of divine justice, the trial and ordeal of the arrested person for some spiritual offence; and, with his pardon or return home (equivalent to purification from guilt), the excursion is fulfilled in the restoration of harmony between human and divine spheres.

In Ein Landarzt, the journey reflects both functions indicated in the Hasidic stories. Its apparent purpose is a cure which demands the performance of a miracle; it also has overtones of an 'arrest', i.e. in terms of the Hasidic prototype, the apprehending by a supernatural authority of one whose lapsed relationship with that authority demands remedial treatment. The suggestion of an arrest may be based on comparison with Der Psalmensager and Der zerstörte Sabbat: in all three stories the traveller is uncontrollably carried off into a situation that is not of his own choosing. By contrast with the Jewish tales, however, the mysterious events in Ein Landarzt remain unresolved and unexplained, and the doctor's circumstances have deteriorated, not been set right, at the outcome. Also by comparison with the Jewish prototypes, it appears that the journey in Ein Landarzt represents the crossing of a boundary between two worlds; that the doctor's failure to cure his

patient symbolizes a failure to effect re-integration of the physical and the spiritual as achieved in the Hasidic examples; and that the failure to heal the boy and realize the harmony the cure would symbolize also represents (in association with the element of an arrest in the journey) the doctor's failure to pass through an ordeal that could redeem or purify him of an unspecified fault of his own.

In keeping with the concept of an ordered universe, the Hasidic stories narrate events which, though mysterious, receive explanation. They belong to a way of life that is built upon faith, and presume familiarity on the part of their audience with the workings of the supernatural. Acceptance of miracles as part of 'normal' life is essential to the psychology of the Hasidic tale, as is an attitude of openness to spiritual transformation; a vital function of the Hasidic tale is, indeed, to contribute to such transformation in its listeners. As remarked above, Der Psalmensager symbolizes the experience of a man coming to new spiritual awareness. The miraculous healings in Das Gericht and Von der Macht des Arztes - a resurrection from death to new life, or a return from sickness to health - symbolize, in these religious folk-tales, the completion of a spiritual transformation. In Von der Macht des Arztes, the patient's sickness and cure (both bodily and spiritual) are instrumental in his understanding of the spiritual truth he had failed to grasp upon first hearing it from the Maggid. Not only the patient but also the doctor is changed as a result of the miraculous cure; the latter also recognizes the truth taught by the Maggid, and in due course becomes a zaddik himself. Comparison with Ein Landarzt on this point illuminates the reversal in Kafka's adaptation of events: the country doctor fails to heal his patient, and at the end of the story remains totally without insight into the nature of his condition, drawing no conclusion except that he is the one who has been betrayed, and that there is no hope for him. Faith,

in the Hasidic story, contrasts with its absence in the country doctor's narrative; it is noticeable that the doctor's lack of faith equals or exceeds that of his clients, upon whom, in effect, he blames his impotence. His own spiritual vision is sufficiently dim to make revelation inaccessible to him, although he may have been offered an opportunity of attaining it; the presentation of events from the doctor's point of view correspondingly depicts them as disconnected, without purpose, explanation, or a comprehensible place in a higher order of things.

Comparison with Der zerstörte Sabbat here may substantiate the interpretation that the doctor's lack of spiritual vision is crucial in the narrative perspective cast on the events of Ein Landarzt, since in the former, Baal Shem's involuntary trip is accompanied precisely by loss of spiritual vision and power. It also leads to an encounter with an apparently sinister male figure, who turns out to be allied with a girl whom Baal Shem once failed to defend: this failure brings unpleasant consequences, placing him at the mercy of the man. It is quite probable that the triangular relationship between Baal Shem, his former servant girl and the wild man is parallelled in that between the country doctor, Rosa and the Pferdeknecht. The obvious contrast is that Baal Shem's host is a hidden zaddik, and that the power emanating from him that controls Baal Shem's horses, contrary to initial impressions, is benevolent, whereas the power of the groom that sets the doctor's horses moving and ravishes Rosa shows no obvious sign of being other than sinister and destructive. Baal Shem's journey ends with good fortune, redress of his offence, restoration of his powers and re-establishment of harmony between him and the spiritual world; the country doctor's excursion, on the contrary, ends in calamity and deprivation of the wordly assets he possessed at the outset.

The combination of parallelism and reversal between Der zerstörte Sabbat

and Ein Landarzt, whether premeditated on Kafka's part or not, is too distinct to be ignored; it supports the interpretation so far suggested, which reveals in the story a lucid and balanced reversal or travesty of Hasidic imagery and ideas. To generalize the relationship between the two, it may be said that all positive features of the Hasidic tales compared with Ein Landarzt are reversed in the latter into negative imagery. Where there is success in the former, there is calamity in the latter; fulfilment is substituted by failure and frustration; understanding, faith, revelation and spiritual progress yield to ignorance, disbelief, confusion and inability to achieve insight; order and unity are replaced by disorder and disharmony; forgiveness, restoration or 'atonement', integration of the physical and the spiritual, simultaneous healing of body and soul, patient and doctor, are replaced in Ein Landarzt by their absence, by disintegration, decline, and a continuing state of 'impurity'. Although the story ends, the doctor's journey does not, and he is certain that there can be no homecoming for him, whether literally or on the level of a spiritual symbol.

This generalization must now be amplified by detailed analysis of the text of Ein Landarzt itself.

The opening words of Ein Landarzt, 'Ich war in grosser Verlegenheit', indicate an essential aspect of the story as a continuous episode of perplexity and confusion. The introductory term,'Verlegenheit' , if its associates, 'verlegen' and 'Verlegung' are taken into account[1], also im-

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1. For similar examples of Kafka's playing with the literal meanings and associations of words, cf. 'Versenkung' (H.390) and 'Weg-Versperrung', H.251.

plies 'displacement' or 'dislocation', regarding both the physical movement and the psychological condition of the doctor. In the light of the parallel with the Hasidic stories outlined above, his miraculous journey perhaps represents 'displacement' from the 'normal' reality of the phenomenal world to the so-called 'supernatural' reality of a spiritual realm, and the crossing of a boundary beyond which human consciousness may be miraculously transformed. Further play upon the idea of 'Verlegenheit' implies (as in 'einem den Weg verlegen') an'obstruction' - in the doctor's case, a psychological handicap which debars him from a particular spiritual influence or goal. Ein Landarzt is evidently the story of someone who is 'displaced' relative to a spiritual authority that he fails to discern in the events that take control of him. The doctor's psychological state of 'Verlegenheit' thus seems open to interpretation in terms of a spiritual predicament, attributable to a spiritual defect for which, if he could but see it, he is being called to task.

The doctor's crisis is explained literally by the death of his horse the night before his call. Symbolically he is prevented from reaching his destination and fulfilling his life-saving function because a certain life-force in himself is deficient[1]. This interpretation is supported by evidence that materially, by contrast, the doctor possesses everything else he needs: a suitable vehicle, his bag of instruments, his 'flourishing practice', and, not least, his fur coat identify him as the 'rich man' of religious parable, whose material prosperity is the companion of spiritual deficiency. The fact that no-one will lend him a horse implies that he is reduced to straits in which no aid can come except from within himself. The

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1. On this and other points, cf. Ewald Rösch: 'Getrübte Erkenntnis. Bemerkungen zu Franz Kafkas Erzählung 'Ein Landarzt', in Dialog. Festgabe für Josef Kunz (Herausg. Rainer Schönhaar), Berlin, 1973, pp. 205-43.

horse's death and the doctor's impotence, like his state of Verlegenheit, are symbolic of his own inadequacy: unable to find any 'possibility', 'immer unbeweglicher werdend stand ich zwecklos da'. Drawing upon the comparison with the Hasidic stories, this inadequacy may be defined as lack of spiritual will and power, of 'Kraft des inneren Blickes' and the support of 'heilige Wahrheit'.

In a Jewish context, such spiritual impotence and perplexity would be associated with a condition of impurity. Such is the case in Der zerstörte Sabbat, where the Baal Shem is prevented from keeping the Sabbath in kosher fashion. In Ein Landarzt , there is a similar association with the concept of impurity: the doctor's horses eventually emerge from the pigsty. (Judaism considers the pig unclean.) The quality of uncleanness is represented additionally in the groom, who is discovered in an animal-like, cowering position in the pigsty, from which he emerges on all fours. The animality of his nature is also underlined in his addressing the horses as 'Bruder' and 'Schwester'.

Rosa's comment, 'Man weiss nicht, was für Dinge man im eigenen Hause vorrätig hat', may be taken literally, but it also underlines the symbolic aspect of the discovery, i.e. the presence of impure forces lurking in the shadier corners of one's own being, as Kafka had noted in his diary on 7th. February, 1915:

> Bei einem gewissen Stande der Selbsterkenntnis...wird es regelmässig geschehn müssen, dass man sich abscheulich findet...Der Schmutz, den man finden wird, wird um seiner selbst willen dasein, man wird erkennen, dass man triefend von dieser Belastung auf die Welt gekommen ist und durch sie unkenntlich oder allzu gut erkennbar wieder abgehn wird. Dieser Schmutz wird der unterste Boden sein, den man finden wird,...Er wird das Unterste und das Oberste sein, und selbst die Zweifel der Selbstbeobachtung werden bald so schwach und selbstgefällig werden wie das Schaukeln eines Schweines in der Jauche. (T.330-331)

There is double dramatic irony in Rosa's words: firstly, they assume a symbolic meaning which neither character recognizes; secondly, the doctor

had been unaware not only of the means of transport literally concealed in his house (and of the impurity that Kafka calls the deepest stratum of one's being), but also of Rosa herself. It will become clear that the discovery of the pigsty's inhabitants marks the simultaneous erotic 'discovery' of Rosa. Thus the idea of spiritual deficiency is linked with that of an impurity associated with sexuality in the self. The laughter of the doctor and Rosa at her remark is a minute narrative detail of great dramatic significance: it suggests a moment of psychological intimacy, and hints at an erotic inclination of which neither character is yet conscious; Rosa, referring to the inmates of the pigsty, is unaware that the doctor now discovers her, too, 'in his own house'. Their laughter is stimulated by shared recognition of a secret, but the real secret, that of the incident's symbolic meaning and metaphysical implications, is concealed from both. The irony created through the play between literal and symbolic levels of meaning, and the couple's ignorance of the full import of what has happened, is thrown into relief by its sinister sequel.

Their failure to understand what they are dealing with in the groom and horses is suggested in Rosa's almost dismissive reference to them as '<u>Dinge</u>', and in the doctor's uncertainty as to how to treat the groom after the latter's vicious embrace of Rosa. He does not know whether to treat him as an animal, or with the respect due to a benefactor:

> "Du Vieh," schrie ich wütend, "willst du die Peitsche?" besinne mich aber gleich, dass es ein Fremder ist; dass ich nicht weiss, woher er kommt, und dass er mir freiwillig aushilft, wo alle andern versagen. (Kafka: <u>Die Erzählungen</u>, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1961[1], p.12)

The doctor's uncertainty again indicates his '<u>Verlegenheit</u>' and confused understanding of an admittedly inscrutable course of events. The perplexity of his vision is reflected at this point in the narrative in the switch from past to present tense:

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1. Henceforth referred to by the abbreviation <u>E</u>.

> Doch kaum war es bei ihm, umfasst es der Knecht und schlägt sein Gesicht an ihres... (E.126)

On the symbolic level, the incident suggests the doctor's lack of self-knowledge, insofar as the groom represents a force existing in his own, subconscious inner self. To the doctor least of anyone does it occur that 'Innen und Aussen gehören zusammen'. (J.57) Yet immediately following this, there is a suggestion that they do, for the groom seems to know the doctor's thoughts; similarly, later on, the sick boy's whispers in the doctor's ear seem to be intimate with the doctor's inner state, like an expression of his repressed thoughts. The changes from past to present tense also mark the point where the supernatural element in the story begins to direct the doctor's situation, without his really attempting to come to terms with it. The doctor's anger with the groom is all the more ineffective for being irresolute; it is the groom who controls the situation, like an embodiment of a psychic influence over which the doctor is powerless because he fails to recognize it. He himself seems relatively unperturbed by the intrusion of the irrational into his life. His satisfaction with the horses distracts him from the extraordinary character of the occasion; he has no premonition of the supernatural influences that are dealing with him. He proceeds to address the groom according to the conventions of a master-servant relationship, acting on the assumption that he is the one in authority as he states that he will drive the horses. His superficial and misguided view of the situation is promptly contradicted when it becomes obvious that he himself is at the mercy of the groom, who controls the horses.

As the carriage departs, the separation of the groom, on the one hand, from the horses and the doctor, on the other, is ominous. It suggests on the psychological level the state of a divided, or even disintegrated personality: the groom and horses should belong together as a trio, but

this trio has been split up, since the doctor's strength, unequal to that of the groom, fails to keep the three united. The groom stands in one respect as a vital energy that mediates between the lower and higher, animal and human forces in the personality, and that should harness the animal spirits of the dark and impure 'pigsty' of the self in order to raise or transform them ('das Unterste und das Oberste') to the higher level where they contribute to the creation of wholeness - integration, healing and purification. On a conceptual level, Jewish teaching on the nature and function of the 'evil urge' is clearly reflected here.(cf. p.306.)

The loss of the groom therefore symbolizes, in relation to the horses and the doctor, a state of disintegration (and impurity) in which the unconverted animal force runs away with the human. The doctor's powerlessness over the horses means that, like Baal Shem in Der zerstörte Sabbat or the rich man in Der Psalmensager, his own strength has deserted him because of his unclean condition.

One might well begin to wonder with a little foresight at this point whether the doctor's mission is likely to be successful. It starts to appear that his task of healing (i.e. transforming a state of disease (impurity) into one of renewed health (purity))corresponds on a symbolic level not only with his patient's need of a cure, but with his own. To support this interpretation, no more is needed than the recognition that 'Innen und Aussen gehören zusammen', and that that which is impossible in the natural world is possible in the spiritual world (cf. H.71f.); it is on this basis that the doctor in Von der Macht des Arztes is affected by his cure no less than the patient he has healed.

We may suppose that the peasants' home and the sickroom symbolize the condition in which the doctor arrives in the supernatural reality on 'the other side' of the phenomenal world - actually on 'the other side' of a line

that represents a division and a flaw in human perception. In symbolic terms, the peasants' home is an extension of the doctor's 'own house', the inner space of his spiritual being:

> denn, als öffne sich unmittelbar vor meinem Hoftor der Hof meines Kranken, bin ich schon dort.

The doctor has passed to that other world, from Diesseits to Jenseits; but there is no sign that he recognizes the nature of the transition he has made, the place in which he is, or the sense in which he 'is' there. In the mysterious gift of the magnificent horses, he had already been given more than he bargained for; the gratuitous addition of a second horse to the replacement of the lost one may indicate the generosity of a spiritual authority that is offering him, in the midst of adversity, a double opportunity for recovery. By analogy with both the rich man in Der Psalmensager and the sick man in Von der Macht des Arztes, he is being subjected to a trial which entails the chance of achieving new spiritual awareness, purification or cure. The doctor perceives the irony of his situation, but fails tragically to recognize its offer of spiritual renewal. The word 'lästernd' draws attention to the irony of his misapprehension:

> "Ja," denke ich lästernd, "in solchen Fällen helfen die Götter, schicken das fehlende Pferd, fügen der Eile wegen noch ein zweites hinzu, spenden zum Überfluss noch den Pferdeknecht - " (E.128)

That the doctor has passed not only literally from his own courtyard to his patient's, but figuratively into the domain of 'that which, or one who, is sick' within himself, may be detected in the repetition of the possessive pronoun: 'als öffne sich vor meinem Hoftor der Hof meines Kranken'.

For an instant's respite, motion ceases, the weather and the moon clear, there is a hint of smoother progress as the doctor is received by the patient's family; but before the sentence describing his arrival is completed, that momentary promise recedes as he is almost bodily hoisted from his carriage (again moved passively, rather than at his own will), and his predicament of

'Verlegenheit' continues. Not only has he been transferred into another world; he is in the company of people whom he cannot understand: 'den verwirrten Reden entnehme ich nichts.' Perhaps the failure of verbal communication, no words being exchanged between the doctor and the healthy members of the family in the scene that ensues, suggests that they 'do not speak the same language'. The only person with whom the doctor has a verbal relationship is his patient; the particularity of this relationship makes it significant, not only because of the intimacy it establishes between the two characters, but also because, ironically, it too is fraught with incomprehension on the doctor's part, and all verbal communication between them is therefore ineffectual.

The doctor's entry into the house may be compared with that of the rich man in Der Psalmensager. The latter wanders through frozen wilderness, forest and fog before arriving on foot at the house where his eyes are opened, as his 'trial' takes place. The doctor, however, as his patient later expresses it, is 'nur irgendwo abgeschüttelt, (kommt) nicht auf eigenen Füssen'. He has arrived in a spiritual sense 'on the wrong footing'. The man in Der Psalmensager passes from the wilderness outside to the clarity, warmth and fragrance of the pure interior; the doctor, by contrast, enters from momentary calm and clarity into an interior that is dull upon the senses, stifling and impure: the air is hard to breathe, the windows are closed, the neglected stove is smoking. Here again, comparison suggests that the rich man in Der Psalmensager is enlightened spiritually inside the threshold he has crossed - i.e. he has crossed a boundary and surmounted an obstacle in himself, as well as a line that might be drawn in physical space - while the doctor is in the reverse condition. His 'Verlegenheit' is, if anything, greater once inside the sickroom. The specific mention of the stove is noticeable in both cases.

In Der Psalmensager, the accused hides behind it; in Ein Landarzt, the stove is smoking because it has been neglected. The stove is apparently an identifiable folk-tale motif which may be associated with the idea of psychological transformation[1]. This supports the supposition that Ein Landarzt presents the theme of neglected opportunity for spiritual regeneration. The theme of 'enlightenment' is further implied, negatively, in the closed windows of the sickroom. The doctor does not execute his intention of opening them (from the inside!); instead, when they are opened, it is the doing of the horses on the outside.

Wherever there are images of 'opening up' in this story, they are not associated with enlightenment, or a psychological opening up to beneficent understanding; they are instances of violent intrusion; the kicking open of the pigsty door; the groom's breaking into the doctor's house; the windows burst open by the horses' heads[2]. The instances are associated with the presence of something violent, sinister, destructive and uncontrollable, phenomena that belong to the category of disorder and impurity. Rather than being straightforwardly negative, however, these are ambiguous; they are experienced as intrusive and violent from the doctor's viewpoint because of his powerlessness to master his situation and convert negative circumstances into a positive result by the influence of his own will. Such is the case later with the opening up of the boy's wound.

Undivided by any paragraphing from the first emergence of the groom and horses from the pigsty, the doctor's narrative, now in the present

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1. See K.J. Obenauer: Das Märchen - Dichtung and Deutung, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1959, p.182ff. For an instance of the image of the stove used presumably in this sense in a Hasidic tale, see Das Gleichnis vom Holzhacker' in Buber: G.M., p.39ff.; cf. 'Das Gleichnis vom Ofenheizer' in Eliasberg: Sagen polnischer Juden, pp. 126-130.
2. cf.Ewald Rösch, op.cit. p.222.

tense, proceeds with his first, cursory inspection of his patient. From this point until the doctor's final escape, the relationship between the two is one of mysterious intimacy. The boy's whispered death-wish seems to be intended for the doctor's ears alone, and is uttered as if it were a conspiratorial invitation. The doctor looks round, almost guiltily, as if subconsciously tempted by the boy's words, but no-one else has heard them. His uneasiness, if such it is, may well be justified: what sort of death may be intended on this 'other side' of the normal physical world? With the brisk surgical gestures of his profession, he tries to resist the boy's request, but listlessly puts down his forceps. It is, like his earlier treatment of the groom, a conventional gesture, which he makes as if defending and re-assuring himself by going through the motions of professional efficiency in a situation which lies, as even he now perhaps senses, beyond rationality and straightforward medical treatment.

As the doctor remembers Rosa, the horses break open the window to look at 'the patient'. Is their gaze focussed simply on the boy, or could '<u>der Kranke</u>', again, be the doctor, whom they seem to be addressing?

> 'Ich fahre gleich wieder zurück,' denke ich, als forderten mich die Pferde zur Reise auf, aber ich dulde es, dass die Schwester, die mich durch die Hitze betäubt glaubt, den Pelz mir abnimmt. (<u>E</u>.128)

The two horses' heads stuck through the windows emphasize the division in the doctor's mind between his duty to Rosa on the one hand, and to the boy on the other. The scales have turned: formerly his intentions lay towards his patient, from whom he was separated, while Rosa lived unnoticed in his house; now he is with his patient, but his desire is to save Rosa, from whom he is separated, while he is apparently prepared to ignore the boy. When he does approach the boy, one horse neighs, but not the other. This anticipates the disharmony between the pair at the doctor's departure.

Perhaps he is like his patient, '<u>nicht kalt, nicht warm</u>'[1]. While he permits the removal of his fur coat - a symbolic vesture of his habit-formed identity - he declines the father's offer of rum, again as if in self-defence. Yet the glass of rum is referred to as a 'treasure', implying that the doctor is refusing some precious elixir, and the recognition that it might miraculously bring, but which he subconsciously fears, preferring to avoid communication with the unfamiliar or uncanny. He is similarly reluctant to examine the boy, and has to be lured to the bed by the mother. Although one horse applauds his examination of the patient, the doctor sees only what he believes he knows: he is unable, unwilling or afraid to discover anything wrong. He disclaims responsibility for the patient, but still has to defend himself, as if repressing a sense of guilt:

> Ich bin kein Weltverbesserer und lasse ihn liegen. Ich bin vom Bezirk angestellt und tue meine Pflicht bis zum Rand, bis dorthin, wo es fast zu viel wird. (<u>E</u>.128)

There is irony here of the kind already noticed, involving conscious and subconscious meaning in the doctor's words. He seems to be rationalizing his situation, excusing his passivity, and resisting the recognition of a dimension beyond the 'normal' which he now, apparently, dimly suspects, but attempts to dismiss. Having been transported across the boundary into another world, he is rejecting the opportunity to enter an appropriate new '<u>Denkkreis</u>', or to be enlightened. What perhaps is being offered is the chance to recognize that he <u>is</u> called to become '<u>ein Weltverbesserer</u>'; he <u>is</u> required to cross the line he has drawn, and to do his duty beyond the limits of his medical responsibility, '<u>wo es fast zu viel wird</u>'. He laments again the death of his horse, repeats sarcastically that he is obliged to take others from the pigsty; his experience of the miraculous so far, dis-

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1. cf. <u>Revelation</u> 3: 15-16: <u>Ich weiss deine Werke, dass du weder kalt noch warm bist. Ach, dass du kalt oder warm wärest! Weil du aber lau bist, und weder kalt noch warm, werde ich dich ausspeien aus meinem Munde</u>.

concerting as it may have been, has failed to fertilize his mind with the idea that, having reached this point, he might by appropriate thought and action use the negative circumstances of his situation toward restoration of health, purity and order. Disorder, impurity and evil have actually been placed at his disposal in the Hasidic sense, as an opportunity for creating good; but the doctor uses them to excuse his inertia, and continues stubbornly thinking in the terms of the world he has left behind.

His stronger inclination to return home reflects his desire to return, as he thinks, to an existence exempt from the demands of this metaphysical sphere; again, he thinks of Rosa, in the passage beginning:

> Noch muss ich für Rosa sorgen, dann mag der Junge recht haben und auch ich will sterben. Was tue ich hier in diesem endlosen Winter! (E.128)

Why should he express the desire to die? On the surface, these words ironically express his resignation, frustration, and low vitality ('Mein Pferd ist verendet.') But they also, obviously, have implications regarding the symbolic relationship between doctor and patient. They support the suspicion that the boy presents the doctor with a mirror-image of his own condition, and that the boy's death-wish is a repressed death-wish of the doctor's, whispered into the latter's ear as if for him alone to hear, an inner voice from beyond the boundary within himself that he is unwilling to cross. Probably what is being put to the doctor is the demand for 'the right death', i.e. in a spiritual, not necessarily physical sense. This demand the doctor prefers to evade in his newly-awakened feeling for Rosa, which he makes a pretext for his contrary wish to return to his old way of life.

The doctor's mind and spirit, then, are divided between his new aware-

ness of Rosa and the demands made upon him by the mysterious family:

> ...aber dass ich diesmal auch noch Rosa hingeben musste, dieses schöne Mädchen, das jahrelang, von mir kaum beachtet, in meinem Hause lebte - dieses Opfer ist zu gross, und ich muss es mir mit Spitzfindigkeiten aushilfsweise in meinem Kopf irgendwie zurechtlegen, um nicht auf diese Familie loszufahren, die mir ja beim besten Willen Rosa nicht zurückgeben kann. (E.129)

The reference to Rosa here recalls the discovery made in the pigsty: 'Man weiss nicht, was man im eigenen Hause vorrätig hat'. The verbal resonance re-inforces the dramatic irony of the earlier remark, and underlines the correspondence between the discovery of the groom and horses and the discovery of Rosa. Whereas the doctor was previously insensitive to her presence, it is subtly conveyed that now, simultaneous with his transportation into the 'other world', sexual attraction for her has awoken in him. Re-examining the symbolism of the horses, it becomes evident that in the death of his single horse the previous night, a certain way of life ended for the doctor: one based on an innocent consciousness, untroubled by knowledge of dualism in the world, or dichotomizing tendency in the mind. Its end marked the beginning of a new stage distinguished, in the appearance of not one but two horses, by a new experience of duality and the opening of a mental and spiritual schism in the personality. This schism is associated with the inter-related awakening in the doctor of both sexuality and embryonic spiritual awareness, the latter as yet only dimly and reluctantly sensed, if at all.

This, again, helps explain the state of spiritual 'Verlegenheit': unable or unwilling to perceive or accept the change that is taking place in him, the doctor cannot adapt in thought and action to his new predicament. He seeks security in social and professional roles that have hitherto sufficedin the world from which he has been irrevocably torn away, and to

which, contrary to all possibility, he hopes to return. His desire to get home is the desire for a previous psychological state, undisturbed by sexual or spiritual intrusions. These sexual and spiritual impulses conflict within the doctor, represented in terms of his pre-occupation with Rosa, whom he cannot reach, on the one hand, and his reluctance to be drawn into the peasant family on the other. His dilemma concerns the fact that the emotional demands and spiritual task required of him are, for a man of his particular nature, mutually exclusive and irreconcilable - while, paradoxically, neither can be fulfilled independently of the other. The doctor faces the impossibility of transcending the duality of body and spirit, of which he has so shatteringly become aware. His condition is that of man following the Fall, 'sündig...,unabhängig von Schuld'. (H.101)[1]

Irrationally, the doctor blames the peasant family for the loss of Rosa, and has to restrain himself by complicated and absurd rationalizations from attacking them, since they cannot restore her to him. Having looked at the boy and convinced himself that nothing is wrong, he becomes more concerned with regaining the comfortable past: he closes his bag, the symbol of professional status and security, and motions for his fur, the comforting insulation of his familiar ego, evidently preparing to leave. Ready to depart, and feeling safer, the doctor is now more able to admit, in response to the family's agitation, that the boy may in fact be ill. He is now moving back towards the opposite pole in his inner conflict; and ironically, since he is almost resolved to go, it is now that he discovers his patient's morbid condition. The suggestion of an intimate symbolic association between doctor and patient is again discernible in the boy's smile, like the sign of a secret understanding, or silent recognition of an

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1. cf. p.281.

auspicious situation. It seems to say that the doctor himself is about to be received benevolently, having presented himself in a more favourable frame of mind. The hint of optimism is heightened by the whinny of both horses: 'der Lärm soll wohl, höhern Orts angeordnet, die Untersuchung erleichtern - und nun finde ich: ja, der Junge ist krank.' (E.129) Their neighing is like a sign of approval from some higher power: the doctor's discovery has spiritual importance, which he may not realize. The fact that both animals neigh together may symbolically announce the possibility of overcoming psychological division and the state of conflict indicated before - and this possibility must be associated with the new symbol that now opens up, the wound in the boy's side. Almost mathematically, the dual symbol of the horses, now neighing in unison, is succeeded by the single symbol of the wound; and the latter counter-balances the former symbol of undivided being, the doctor's single horse.

The wound's colour, 'rosa', provides a clue and establishes a vital connection. The homology between it and the girl's name suggests that the boy's illness and the doctor's desire for Rosa are related, if not symbolic equivalents. The sexual awakening and the discovery of spiritual sickness (which amounts to a spiritual awakening) are, if not identical, inseparable in the objective correlative of the wound that is 'opened up' before the doctor's eyes. He has discovered the wound; however, there is no certainty that he perceives its significance.

With the wound's appearance, a new level of symbolism enters the story. It is likely that the image is derived from another Jewish source, a legend about Job, which describes his affliction as follows:

> Würmer nagten an seinem Fleisch; sie bohrten Löcher in seinen Leib und stritten miteinander um die Fleischfasern. Und Hiob steckte jede Made in ihren Gang und sprach: Das Fleisch ist

> mein, und ihr zankt darum. In diesem Augenblick ward sein Herz weh, und er rief aus vor dem Herrn: Es ist kein Schiedsmann zwischen uns, der seine Hand auf uns beide lege; er nehme von mir seine Rute und lasse seinen Schrecken von mir. (M.J. bin Gorion: Sagen der Juden, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1962, p.766 - reprint from Sagen der Juden I: Von der Urzeit, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1913, which Kafka owned. cf. P. Matenko: Two Studies in Yiddish Culture, Leiden, 1968, p.137f.)

In Job's case, disease is ultimately a means to spiritual growth, and acceptance of the divine mystery that surpasses his understanding. If there is a parallel between Job's wound and that of the boy in Ein Landarzt, it underlines the story's concern with the problem of spiritual development, and the part played in it by 'evil' and impurity. It also hints at the theme of trial, and connects in this respect with the involuntary journey as an 'arrest'. The Biblical story of Job very much concerns the theme of psychological resistance to the suffering imposed by God's will; and the doctor's apparent resistance to the spiritual opportunity offered in the guise of what he considers unmerited adversity may be compared with Job's initial inability to accept what seems an unjust fate.

Further, however, the wound contains elements of Christian symbolism: for example, Bluma Goldstein has pointed out Angelus Silesius' image of 'Rosa-Wunden' referring to the wounds of Christ[1]. These, like Job's, are symbols that refer to the theme of spiritual rebirth - one which is further reflected in Ein Landarzt in the parodic suggestion of the traditional Nativity scene inside the peasants' house[2], centred around a family that is not holy but 'unholy', insofar as the child in it lies sick. For all its morbidity, his wound is also a symbol of life: 'Wirst du mich retten?' flüstert schluchzend der Junge, ganz geblendet durch das Leben in seiner Wunde. (E.130)

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1. Also the associations of the rose with Venus, goddess of love: the combination of these with the religious imagery reflects the fusion - and conflict - between sexuality and spirituality in Ein Landarzt. See Goldstein, op.cit., p.756.
2. cf. W. Sokel, Franz Kafka. Tragik und Ironie, Zur Struktur seiner Kunst, p.269.

His plea is for a cure that may be more than physical: he apparently seeks it in the additional sense of 'salvation'. If, in this respect, his request is related to his previous, 'Doktor, lass mich sterben', then the doctor's task is clearly that of helping his patient to die 'the right death', in a metaphorical, not physical sense. It is not merely a case of his having to save his patient, but also, insofar as the latter embodies his own spiritual unhealth, a case of 'physician, heal thyself.' (Luke, 4:23).

If the doctor senses the nature of the boy's request, he immediately dismisses it. He relates the situation to the question of religious faith, but rejects the idea that his patient's spiritual needs concern him, as a doctor:

> Den alten Glauben haben sie verloren; der Pfarrer sitzt zu Hause und zerzupft die Messgewänder, eines nach dem andern; aber der Arzt soll alles leisten mit seiner zarten chirurgischen Hand. (E.130)

He recognizes the spiritual demands being made upon him, but refuses to meet them. He is offered the opportunity of healing his patient, and thereby himself, like the doctor in Von der Macht des Arztes; as Kafka wrote at the end of the year in which he produced the story: 'Wer kann erlösen, ohne dass er gleichzeitig erlöst würde?' (Br.206) The country doctor, however, brushes his chance aside, preferring professional divisions of labour. With the spiritual impotence that comes with evasion of a higher reality and the task it imposes, he blames his helplessness on his clients' unbelief. Yet it is not so much they as himself who lacks faith. Not even his experience of the miraculous has converted him.

The doctor seals his fate by rejecting his fortune; rationalist as he is, he resigns himself to the peasants , with what amounts to a denial of faith:

> Nun, wie es beliebt: ich habe mich nicht angeboten: verbraucht ihr mich zu heiligen Zwecken, lasse ich auch das mit mir geschehen. (E.130)

In mind he turns away from his patient and back to the opposite pole, Rosa: 'was will ich Besseres, alter Landarzt, meines Dienstmädchens beraubt!' His thoughts of her exclude once more the possibility of spiritual enlightenment. Now,besides, he seems to be resigned to the loss of Rosa also.

In the following scene, the undressing of the doctor represents final deprivation of all he has brought with him from the world he left behind, and the protection that his sense of personal and professional identity previously afforded. Nevertheless, inward resistance continues as he insists upon his equanimity, still refusing to acknowledge the state of conflict within him: 'Ich bin durchaus gefasst und allen überlegen und bleibe es auch, trotzdem es mir nichts hilft.' 'Nicht kalt, nicht warm', the doctor has now reached spiritual apathy; totally passive, he seems, ironically, convinced of his self-control. As he is laid in bed at the boy's wounded side and the peasants leave the room, the moon is covered by a cloud, symbolizing his succumbing to a state of spiritual obfuscation. He has become, to all intents and purposes, equal with the patient he has failed to cure. This ultimate representation of their identity underlines the irony of the doctor's failure to cure the boy and thereby find healing himself.

The dialogue between the pair recapitulates the main themes of the story. The doctor's failure to come 'auf eigenen Füssen' was failure to come with the faith and strength of will to serve his calling, on a sure footing free of misguided attitudes. The boy's rhetorical wish to scratch his eyes out is appropriate to the doctor's spiritual blindness. The patient describes his wound as 'schön', and the sole asset he brought with him into the world. This poverty contrasts with the material advantages previously enjoyed by the doctor; and although the boy's remarks may be ironical, there plays in them the theme of physical affliction and 'evil' as a precondition of spiri-

tual growth; 'schön' may be taken in this sense. The doctor is able to do no more than make feeble excuses and try to persuade the dying boy that his wound is not so significant after all. To the last, he fails to see it for what it is, or refuses to recognize its importance to himself. The lack of 'Überblick' with which he reproves the boy is his own: as before, he adopts the psychological ploy of sheltering in his professional status and projecting his faults onto others.

Having pacified the boy, the doctor turns to think of 'Rettung' - not 'salvation' for his patient or himself, but escape and self-preservation. In the form of his clothing, fur and bag, he grabs the paraphernalia of his professional self - a gesture of reclamation, symbolic of his failure to divest himself of his old ego, or to die the 'death' which would be equivalent to a rebirth. One horse obediently withdraws from the window: this one supports the side of the doctor that is attracted by the pole of Rosa and his previous life. Mounting it, he symbolically harnesses it to his will. The second horse, all but disconnected from the first now, represents the doctor's psychological handicap, the other side in the inner conflict, which he now abandons: the spiritual 'task' embodied in the sick boy. Trailing the salvaged remains of his shattered personality (his previous prosperity or 'riches'), following an erratic course at a pace as slow as that of old men, the doctor and his pair depart in disarray into a wilderness of snow. The impetus with which he had been endowed has entirely deserted him, for just as he has failed to harness the pair of horses, he has failed to harness the creative, healing potential of the elemental vitality they represent in his inner self. He has returned to the wilderness; his condition and fate anticipate Kafka's later image of the 'Wüstenwanderung' in reverse, away from Canaan, for the doctor has failed

to fulfil the promise that was extended to him. His departure into the frozen waste contrasts with the home-coming of the rich man in Der Psalmensager who, having travelled through it, had his threatened life returned to him and found himself back 'im eigenen Haus'.

The symbolism of the final paragraph is that of the exile who will never get home, 'so', in the condition of a mind and spirit crippled by internal division, and seeking return to an irrevocable and inaccessible past. The personality has been deprived, literally and metaphorically, of its former 'riches'. Now his 'house' (his inner self) is at the mercy of the wanton Pferdeknecht who, beyond the doctor's control, abandons his service and makes Rosa his victim: the uncontrolled intrusion of sexuality destroys any potential promise in relationship with a woman. His inability to control the horses, one male, the other female, reflects his inability to restore the health of his patient (a male figure, whose wound is a feminine symbol) or to rescue Rosa (a female figure violated or 'wounded' by the male). The pattern of symbolic relationships rests on the idea of conflict between the sexes, powerlessness to prevent the destruction of each by the other, or to maintain a harmonious balance of male and female principles. The significance of this symbolism in the context of Ein Landarzt, however, relates not to the theme of sexuality alone but to that of spiritual impotence induced by confrontation with sexuality and inner conflict over it. In this respect, Ein Landarzt reverses the associations of spiritual promise that are attached to the resurrected girl in Die Auferweckung der toten Braut. The doctor's failure to heal his patient, his loss of Rosa, and the conflict not only between the sexes, but also between sexuality and spirituality, amount to the complete opposite of the theme of spiritual renewal symbolically associated with marriage in the latter tale. The problem is one which the

doctor refuses to confront, both consciously and subconsciously: 'ich will es nicht ausdenken'. His refusal to 'think it out' is an evasion of 'Selbsterkenntnis', an obstruction of his own spiritual growth; and therefore, being without spiritual defence, he describes himself as 'Nackt, dem Froste dieses unglückseligsten Zeitalters ausgesetzt'. Whatever the age, he is exposed to its miseries through failure to develop adequate spiritual reserves for protection. The loss of his previous material security and insulation from spiritual suffering (i.e. the loss of his fur, which has been a leitmotif throughout the story) sounds the conclusion. He is reduced to such a state that, far from saving his patients, he expects them to save him. To the end he continues to believe that malicious destiny has played him foul: 'Betrogen! Betrogen! Einmal dem Fehlläuten der Nachtglocke gefolgt - es ist niemals gutzumachen.' Naturally (preferring to blame others), he fails to recognize that he has betrayed himself by failing to recognize or believe in the true nature of his situation and opportunity. In this sense it is true to say that he has lapsed from previous 'innocence' into a state of guilt, has failed to redeem himself, and has therefore been 'cut off' and cast into spiritual exile.

This interpretation of Ein Landarzt suggests probable reasons for its importance to Kafka during the period that began in late 1917. Its symbolism - apart from unmistakable Hasidic derivation - discloses themes that distinguish his mental encounter as a Western Jew with 'die letzten Dinge', and prefigures many important ideas with which he was pre-occupied in the aphorisms and reflections of 1917-18. The latter might well, indeed, be read as the 'thinking out' of ideas explored in Ein Landarzt. With reference to the story, these may be summarized as follows.

1) - the theme of guilt and the Fall.

Ein Landarzt makes no explicit reference to 'the law' or to the concept of 'sin'; the story's presentation from the doctor's point of view, and corresponding reflection of the spiritual flaws in his uncomprehending vision, goes far in accounting for the disguising of this theme. Yet it describes the destruction of 'innocence' in terms oonsistent with Kafka's later meditation on the Fall in the Oktavhefte: linked with the problem of sexuality and woman, it shows symbolically a man's lapse into a state of divided consciousness. While this schism is portrayed in Ein Landarzt chiefly as a conflict between sexuality and spirituality, it involves the awakening of the latter as much as the former. The doctor confronts the image of his own impurity and 'sinfulness'. This confrontation extends the possibility of accepting 'Erkenntnis', and, associated with it, a 'death' which could be the first stage of spiritual rebirth and transcendence of his divided and therefore 'evil' being. The country doctor resists this possibility, which Kafka himself analyses more profoundly in the reflections of 1917-1918. (cf. H.101, 105f., 108, 118, 122f.) Kafka had been meditating on the Fall and the related idea of sin when he read the Old Testament in the summer of 1916. (cf. T.359ff.)

2) - the redemptive task.

This theme also becomes more distinct, and is more fully thought out, in the reflections of 1917-18, as Kafka begins to work out the conflict over woman and marriage after the final break with Felice. At this later stage, the theme of his relationship to the 'world', through the redemptive task, starts to replace that of his troubled attitude to woman (although the latter remains a fundamental problem). In Ein Landarzt, the theme of woman

and sexuality seems to dominate that of the redemptive task, but the latter is unmistakably there. The doctor fails to accept responsibility for it; this places him (especially if he is contrasted with the Hasidic prototypes and interpreted as a travesty of the zaddik figure) in the category of Kafka's absurd Volksführer characters, whose spiritual authority is undermined by failure to rise to a task or ideal that proves impossible or inaccessible. The implication that Rosa is a symbolic cause of the doctor's failure to heal, and of his consequent exile into the frozen waste, justifies the suggestion that the story presents a variant of the Napoleonic model, expressing the interdependent ideas of failure to achieve a successful relationship with a woman, and failure to fulfil the calling of the 'Volksführer'.

In the doctor's reference to the peasants' religious lapse, and the description of how he is put to bed with his patient, there may be ironical allusion to the figure of Moses:

> Dann bin ich entkleidet und sehe, die Finger im Barte, mit geneigtem Kopf die Leute ruhig an. Ich bin durchaus gefasst und allen überlegen...(E.130)

The details of the inclined head and the fingers in the beard may reflect the familiar pose of Michelangelo's Moses[1]. In that case, the doctor ('ja, was erwartet denn das Volk?') is indeed a 'leader of the people' who has gone thoroughly astray, resisting his calling much like the prophets of whom Kafka later wrote to Milena.

The theme of a messianic attitude to 'the world' is suggested in the doctor's abdication of his responsibility: 'Ich bin kein Weltverbesserer...' This element in the story helps explain the diary reference of 25.9.1917 (T.382), which suggests that Kafka, by now committed to the task of raising

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1. For evidence of the possibility that Kafka knew and made literary use of Freud's essay on Michelangelo's Moses, see J.M.S. Pasley: 'Two literary sources of Kafka's Prozess', in FMLS,3, 1967, pp.142-147.

the world to the level of 'das Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche', recognizes the theme of a similar task in Ein Landarzt, which, he says, can give him only temporary satisfaction; as if to give a more emphatic statement of his task than that veiled in the symbolism of his story, he formulates it more decisively in his diary.

3) - symbolism containing Christian elements.

An interpretation of Ein Landarzt, albeit as a story that contains the essence of Kafka's Judaism, would be incomplete if it omitted mention of some unmistakable Christian overtones - just as the reflections of the Oktavhefte in 1917-18 include comparisons between certain parallel Jewish and Christian concepts. As Bluma Goldstein has discussed[1], Ein Landarzt reflects the Christian legend retold by Flaubert (one of the writers Kafka most admired) in Saint Julien l'hôpitalier. If the suggestion of a mock Nativity scene in the peasant home is accurate, the parallelism between doctor and boy hints at a Christian parallel for the doctor as a potential (but, of course, failed) saviour figure. The conceptual parallel behind the symbolic one is presumably that later drawn by Kafka himself in H.88f., where he compares the coming of the Messiah (in his own particular interpretation, probably influenced by Hasidism) with the Christian teaching of 'Auferstehung des Mittlers im einzelnen Menschen'. In Ein Landarzt too, the Christian element in the symbolic figure of the boy must be seen as an extension of, and not an alternative to, an element that reflects the Jewish figure of the Messiah. The boy's wound may echo the Jewish legend according to which the Messiah sits among lepers outside the gates of Rome, binding and unbinding his wounds; this must have been known to Kafka, since it is included in the Bar Kochba volume, Vom Judentum[2]. The doctor's failure to

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1. op.cit., p.752.
2. M.J. bin Gorion: 'In Bethlehem, Jerusalem und in Rom. Fünf messianische Texte', in Vom Judentum, pp.267-273: p.272.

heal his patient and himself would therefore be failure to realize in himself 'die Auferstehung des Mittlers im einzelnen Menschen'. Ein Landarzt would, through this interpretation, correspond to a type of Jewish story in which the protagonist learns too late that he has failed to recognize the Messiah[1]; this, indeed, is similar to the point of the text given in Vom Judentum, where Rabbi Josua, having been told by the Messiah that he will come 'this very day', is disillusioned:

> Da sprach Rabbi Josua: Aber unwahr war, dass der Messias gesprochen hatte; er sagte, er würde heute noch kommen und ist nicht erschienen. Da antwortete Elia: Also meinte er es: Ich komme noch heute, wenn ihr auf Gottes Stimme höret. (Vom Judentum, p.273)

The country doctor, like Rabbi Josua, has missed his chance of bringing redemption through failing to understand the signs; he too considers that he has been deceived.

4) - failure to experience 'eternity' through the 'moment'.

Ein Landarzt presents the negative image of the idea, discussed by Kafka in the Oktavhefte, of attaining the realm of the eternal through the moment, or of passing from 'Diesseits' to 'Jenseits'. As a Wandering Jew figure, the doctor seems doomed to eternal entrapment in an endless present, barren of hope or relief. His 'eternity' is thus the opposite of that pre-supposed in Kafka's later reflections[2].

5) - the esoteric level of meaning.

The Hasidic derivation of Ein Landarzt has been discussed at length. The story may be cited as an outstanding literary reflection of ideas developed

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1. e.g. Jiří Langer: Neun Tore, pp.171-174.
2. cf. D. Cohn: 'Kafka's eternal present: narrative tense in Ein Landarzt and other first-person stories', in PMLA 83, 1968, pp.144-150.

in Kafka's own thought through his encounter with Hasidic influences. Central to it is the idea of a higher reality communicated to those with 'eyes to see and ears to hear', a mysterious truth that permeates the phenomenal world. The doctor's failure may be attributed to a defect of inner vision which fails to perceive in the miraculous events of the 'outside' world the reflections of the 'inner' world - the spiritual dimension in which he himself might be transformed. Lacking both the vision and the devotion to achieve an inner change of consciousness and spiritual renewal, the doctor must also fail in the redemptive task which, according to Hasidism, depends upon the spiritual ascent of the soul that succeeds in transcending the egoistic level of self. The esoteric implications contained in Ein Landarzt are more fully worked out in 1917-1918, particularly in Kafka's meditations on the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life in relation to the Fall, and on the self as its own 'task'. Ein Landarzt may certainly be taken as an example of a story of which Kafka might later say that it contained the beginnings of 'a new secret (or esoteric) teaching.'

Ein altes Blatt

Ein altes Blatt, Vor dem Gesetz and Eine kaiserliche Botschaft form a triad of stories which appeared in Rosh-ha-Shana issues of the Selbstwehr. Rosh ha-Shana, the Jewish festival of New Year, is a major occasion of the Jewish liturgical year. The blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) is a special part of the day's ceremonial, symbolizing the call to spiritual awakening and repentance, a reminder

> that the kingdom of God can be realized in our hearts and in our personal lives, even in the world in which we live. (Louis Finkelstein: The Jews. Their Religion and Culture, New York, 1971, p.511)

The festival is particularly devoted to prayers for peace and prosperity for mankind,and for life and happiness for all individuals. Other names for Rosh ha-Shana are Yom ha-Din: Day of Judgement, and Yom ha-Zikkaron: Day of Remembrance, in allusion to God as 'He who remembers'. On this day, because of its association with God's judgement, recognition of him as King of the Universe is emphasized. Rosh ha-Shana is all the more solemn for being the first day of the 'Ten Days of Penitence' that culminate in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. During this period everyone is expected to maintain particularly high standards of ethical and ceremonial conduct.

The circumstances of their publication invite a Jewish interpretation of these three stories. It is likely that Kafka and his close friend Felix Weltsch, who edited the Selbstwehr from 1919 until 1939, agreed that Ein altes Blatt and Eine kaiserliche Botschaft should be presented in the particular light that would be shed through publication in Rosh ha-Shana issues of the Jewish weekly. It may be that their appearance in 1921 and 1919 respectively is indicative of Kafka's outlook at that later period, rather than at the actual time of writing them in the spring of 1917. This

would not, however, invalidate a Jewish interpretation; Kafka himself was evidently accustomed to extract latent meanings from his stories after writing them and presumably this included re-interpreting them on occasion. A Jewish interpretation of these two stories might therefore complement or illuminate their significance within the context of the Landarzt cycle where they first appeared. The emphasis given at Rosh ha-Shana to the idea of God as King, for example, suggests that the emperor in the stories may be taken to symbolize God. It is equally legitimate to suppose that by 1919 at the latest, Kafka would consent to such an interpretation, which is latent in the stories by virtue of the tradition of 'King' parables in Talmudic literature[1] and the idea of God as King in the Judaeo-Christian tradition as a whole. Their appearance as pieces appropriate to Rosh ha-Shana, moreover, highlights certain themes that will be examined in the following interpretations.

Like Ein Landarzt, Ein altes Blatt depicts a situation of disorder, as experienced by a narrator whose understanding is in certain respects severely limited. It shares with the former story the motif of the extra-ordinary horses (remarkable, in Ein altes Blatt, for being carnivorous); these embody a crude animal vitality associated with the distinctive impurity of a disturbed order. Insofar as Ein altes Blatt can be related to Ein Landarzt on the basis of this triple core of imagery and concept (impaired understanding; disorder; 'animal' impurity), it may also involve some of the deeper ideas symbolized in the title-piece of the collection to which it belongs. For example, in Ein Landarzt the inadequate understanding of the 'Ich-Erzähler from whose viewpoint the story is told is associated with the general situation of metaphysical disorder of which he is a component; his impotence, a consequence of his flawed perception, is shown in his inability to control the vital force in the horses which originated from

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1. See Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Parable.

the impure source of the pigsty; and in the light of the total structure of image and meaning examined in discussion of Ein Landarzt, his obstructed perception and powerlessness to introduce order or 'purification' into the situation of which he is part are complementary elements in a spiritual failure. Having abandoned the opportunity to fulfil a spiritual task, the doctor has been weighed in the balance and found wanting; his own conduct has condemned him. It is likely that a similar configuration of meanings is expressed in the similar combination of imagery and perspective in Ein altes Blatt.

The title 'Verantwortung', which Kafka originally contemplated for the Landarzt cycle, suggests an approach to Ein altes Blatt. R. Kauf, having considered the story in the light of the idea of 'responsibility' concludes that it depicts people in a situation they cannot handle, 'burdened with a responsibility they cannot discharge'[1]. Although the general truth of this is obvious, it is open to deeper analysis.

The opening sentences of the story hint at the theme of responsibility, but as a subject which the narrator is not prepared to consider in relation to himself and the community he represents:

> Es ist, als wäre viel vernachlässigt worden in der Verteidigung unseres Vaterlandes. Wir haben uns bisher nicht darum gekümmert und sind unserer Arbeit nachgegangen; die Ereignisse der letzten Zeit machen uns aber Sorgen. (E.133)

The impersonal subject, passive voice and subjunctive mood express the idea that something has gone wrong through neglect, but avoid any suggestion of responsibility on the speaker's part. Just as all grammatical relationship between speaker and circumstances is avoided, so any moral relationship between them is being ignored, obscured, or subconsciously rejected. The

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1. R. Kauf: 'Verantwortung'. The theme of Kafka's Landarzt cycle, in MLQ 33, 1972, (pp. 420-432) p.427.

speaker plays the role of observer, and does not view himself or the group to which he belongs as agents in the situation that has arisen. (His second statement is ambiguous: 'darum' could refer either to the state of neglect, or to the task of defence. Although the distinction is slight, the suggestion of the inhabitants' lack of concern for the neglect that 'has occurred' implies shunned responsibility, whereas the suggestion of 'absence of anxiety about defence' may not.) The citizens' attention to their work may have an over-tone of self-justification; i.e., like the doctor in Ein Landarzt, they claim that they have always discharged their duty and conducted themselves like respectable citizens, performing the 'normal' responsibilities of 'normal' circumstances, beyond which they have no obligations.

Following the report on the current situation, as witnessed by the narrator, the final sentences of the story express his comment and also relate to the subject of responsibility:

> Uns Handwerkern und Geschäftsleuten ist die Rettung des Vaterlandes anvertraut; wir sind aber einer solchen Aufgabe nicht gewachsen; haben uns doch auch nie gerühmt, dessen fähig zu sein. Ein Missverständnis ist es, und wir gehen daran zugrunde. (E.134)

Here, the suggestion that the people have been entrusted with the task of saving their country bears the tone of reproach against the imperial authority to which they look, but by which they feel they have been abandoned, if not betrayed. They reject responsibility by claiming inadequacy, and justify their lack of initiative and courage by saying that they never claimed to possess these necessary qualities. Their rejection of the 'abnormal' demands made upon them, and the implication that as artisans and businessmen they cannot fairly be expected to undertake the duties of defence, echo the initial 'wir haben uns bisher nicht darum gekümmert und sind unserer Arbeit nachgegangen'. Possibly moral indignation, besides frustration and despair,

is expressed in the summing up: 'Ein Missverständnis ist es, und wir gehen daran zugrunde.' This final sentence echoes the first: it distances the situation from the speaker, obscuring the idea of responsibility for having created it, and removing that of responsibility for the remedy. Responsibility for the 'misunderstanding' is attributed to the imperial authority which, in the citizens' eyes, is failing to do as it should and leaving the vital task to people incapable of it. There is no suggestion that they may themselves be guilty of 'misunderstanding'.

If anything is obvious from this story it is the citizens' failure to understand their situation. They are uncertain of their relationship with the imperial authority; their position is politically unresolved; they have no idea how the invaders came to occupy their territory. The invaders' customs are inscrutable to them, and they are unable to communicate with them. The empirical facts are obvious; but the invisible connections of cause and effect, political or other forces,are totally unknown to the people. They perceive only disorder, and lack a sense of any order which might indicate the action they themselves should take to set things right.

The impossibility of communicating with the nomads recalls the country doctor's difficulty in understanding his patient's family. The comparison can be extended: in both stories, a confrontation occurs on a psychological as well as a physical and social level between the 'normal' world and the unfamiliar or uncanny[1], a sinister, potentially destructive sphere with which the 'normal' socialized mind cannot communicate, and which it cannot control. The country doctor was transported away from the normal world into that other sphere; in Ein altes Blatt the position is reversed, the

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1. Kafka's use of 'the uncanny' in this and other stories with a metaphysical level of meaning may be illuminated by S.S. Prawer's The Uncanny in Literature, Inaugural Lecture, London, 1965.

normal world being invaded by the sinister force. In both cases, the protagonists are psychologically ill-equipped for self-defence or for regaining self-possession on 'the other side'. The doctor's defencelessness was diagnosed as a spiritual deficiency, which prevented him from achieving the 'salvation' of his patient or himself; 'Rettung', even in the debased sense of self-preservation, failed. It may be supposed that the 'Aufgabe' in Ein altes Blatt - 'Rettung des Vaterlandes' - concerns a comparable spiritual responsibility, which the citizens fail to recognize, let alone fulfil. Their material position, according to this interpretation, would be an omen of spiritual circumstances which they fail to perceive. The individual predicament of Ein Landarzt is here transposed onto a communal level. This implies that in the Jewish context of the Selbstwehr, Ein altes Blatt may be read as a parable of Israel, an image of a community of backsliders which fails to recognize its guilt, or to read its situation as an omen of judgement for betraying its spiritual calling.

In this case, the writings of the Old Testament prophets[1] must be a literary source for Ein altes Blatt. The citizens' neglect and denial of responsibility for their country's defences, their excuse of unfitness for the task of 'saving' it, the moral and psychological blindness which prevents them from understanding their situation, and their failure to suspect that they are guilty of the 'Missverständnis'of which they complain, amount to the equivalent symbolized in the Old Testament image of the breach in the nation's wall, which is caused by the people's neglect of their spiritual task, ignorance of God's will, and understanding obscured by their own waywardness. In Old Testament terms, the people's sin has destroyed their spiritual defences, and through the breach in their wall God's wrath will enter to destroy them, if no prophet can be found to step into it and stand

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1. See Appendix D.

between them. (cf. Ezekiel 22:30-31; Ps. 106:23.) The relevance of this theme to a 'Day of Judgement' is obvious.

Kafka's barbarous 'Nomaden aus dem Norden' are apparently derivatives of the invaders from the North, through whom God threatens wayward Israel in the Book of Jeremiah. They share with the latter not only a northerly origin but also the characteristics of an incomprehensible language (cf. Jer. 5:15), voracious appetite for the natives' livestock (Jer. 5:17), equestrian habits, and weaponry. (Jer. 6:22-23; cf. Kafka on the last-mentioned point: 'Sie beschäftigen sich mit dem Schärfen der Schwerter, dem Zuspitzen der Pfeile, mit Übungen zu Pferde.') Appropriate quotations from Jeremiah are as follows:

> Und der Herr sprach zu mir: Von Mitternacht wird das Unglück ausbrechen über alle, die im Lande wohnen.
>
> Denn siehe, ich will rufen alle Fürsten in den Königreichen gegen Mitternacht, spricht der Herr, dass sie kommen sollen und ihre Stühle setzen vor die Tore zu Jerusalem und rings um die Mauern her und vor alle Städte Juda's. (Jer. 1:14-15)
>
> Siehe, ich will über euch vom Hause Israel, spricht der Herr, ein Volk von ferne bringen, ein mächtiges Volk, ein Volk von alters her, ein Volk, dessen Sprache du nicht verstehst, und kannst nicht vernehmen, was sie reden.
>
> Sie werden deine Ernte und dein Brot verzehren; sie werden deine Söhne und Töchter fressen; sie werden deine Schafe und Rinder verschlingen; sie werden deine Weinstöcke und Feigenbäume verzehren; deine festen Städte, darauf du dich verlässest, werden sie mit dem Schwert verderben. (Jer. 5:15, 17)
>
> So spricht der Herr: Siehe, es wird ein Volk kommen von Mitternacht, und ein grosses Volk wird sich regen vom Ende der Erde,
>
> die Bogen und Lanzen führen. Es ist grausam und ohne Barmherzigkeit; sie brausen daher wie ein ungestümes Meer und reiten auf Rossen, gerüstet wie Kriegsleute, wider dich, du Tochter Zion. (Jer. 6:22-23)

The likelihood of a literary relationship between Kafka's Ein altes Blatt and the Book of Jeremiah is great, in the light of internal evidence, and of Kafka's comment: 'Nur das Alte Testament sieht - nichts

darüber noch sagen'. (T.360) This was written in the diary in early July, 1916. His reading of the major prophets was evidently complemented by several small volumes in the series Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher which he possessed, including one on Jeremiah[1]; it is probable that for personal reasons Kafka felt sympathy and a certain affinity with Jeremiah as described autobiographically in the Old Testament, and in the relevant issue of the Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher[2].

Additional foundation for an association between the story and the prophet is found in two other images in Jeremiah. Both liken those carried away by their own wickedness and abominations to horses, and possibly the image of the horses and its significance in Ein altes Blatt are partially based on them:

> Ein jeglicher wiehert nach seines Nächsten Weibe wie die vollen, müssigen Hengste. Und sollte ich sie um solches nicht heimsuchen? spricht der Herr...(Jer. 5:8-9)
>
> Ich sehe und höre, dass sie nichts Rechtes reden. Keiner ist, dem seine Bosheit Leid wäre und der spräche: Was mache ich doch! Sie laufen alle ihren Lauf wie ein grimmiger Hengst im Streit. (Jer. 8:6)

Here the horses are images for the people's waywardness. They may perform a similar function in the context of Ein altes Blatt, presenting the citizens with an omen of their own condition.

In terms of symbolic relationships, the terrible horses in this story (although they belong to the nomads) may be intended, together with their masters, as a living image of the citizens' abominable state, similar to those just quoted from Jeremiah. There may be simultaneous analogy with those in Ein Landarzt, which are associated with an impurity in the pro-

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1. Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher für die deutsche christliche Gegenwart. (Herausg. F.M. Schiele): R. Liechtenhan: Jeremia. II Reihe, 11. Heft, 1909.
2. See p. 202f.

tagonist that impels him toward catastrophe. While the erotic element (associated with the image of the horses in both Jeremiah and Ein Landarzt) is omitted in Ein altes Blatt, the animals' carnivorous habits in the latter story obviously symbolize cruder aspects of physical existence. Possibly via the mediating symbol of the horses in Kafka's previous story, Jeremiah's horses have been reduced from a specific simile for persons tempted by sexual desire to a more general level, where they represent a barbarous, impure, animal energy unrefined by spiritual discipline. If the images of the emperor and the imperial palace are read as allusions to a divine power, this interpretation is supported by the lines

> Aus diesem stillen, immer ängstlich rein gehaltenen Platz haben sie einen wahren Stall gemacht. Wir versuchen zwar manchmal...den ärgsten Unrat wegzuschaffen, aber es geschieht immer seltener, denn die Anstrengung ist nutzlos und bringt uns überdies in die Gefahr, unter die wilden Pferde zu kommen... (E.133)

The pollution of the square outside the palace suggests the horses' association with a spiritual impurity and neglect on the citizens' part.

Certainly the relationship between the citizens on the one hand, and the nomads and their horses on the other, can be interpreted in a Jewish light as implying that the native community is guilty of abomination, an offence against laws of ritual purity. The occasion of Rosh ha-Shana, with its emphasis on the importance of high standards of ceremonial conduct, would spotlight this point. The Selbstwehr's Jewish readership would probably also attach significance to the situation that focusses on the butcher, who might suggest the shohet, the Jewish butcher responsible for providing the community with kosher meat according to strict regulations of ritual purity. The nomads' treatment of the butcher and his unwilling but helpless compliance with their demands - which culminate in their ghastly devouring of the live ox - might, in Jewish terms, suggest desecration of

kosher rules, worsened by the community's acquiescence; for rather than resist, they collect money to compensate the butcher for his losses, thus maintaining the state of disorder and compromising themselves by financial contributions.

According to this interpretation the community is psychologically, ritually and spiritually impure - which further confirms the diagnosis of their condition as sinful. Worst of all is their failure, through considering themselves innocent victims of 'ein Missverständnis', to perceive this aspect of their situation: the possibility of their misfortune being an omen of judgement and retribution for neglect of their spiritual task does not enter the narrator's mind. Their self-righteous sense of betrayal is comparable with that of the country doctor. Regarding this essential though implicit theme in the story, there is additional likelihood of a literary relationship with Jeremiah, where the following is written of the people's 'misunderstanding':

> Ich dachte aber: Wohlan, der arme Haufe ist unverständig, weiss nichts um des Herrn Weg und um ihres Gottes Recht. Sie verleugnen den Herrn und sprechen: 'Das ist er nicht, und so übel wird es uns nicht gehen; Schwert und Hunger werden wir nicht sehen'. (Jer. 5:13)

That is, in terms of Ein altes Blatt, 'there has been neglect of the defence of their country'; and Kafka's citizens are comparable to those whom the prophet admonishes as 'ihr tolles Volk, das keinen Verstand hat, die da Augen haben, und sehen nicht, Ohren haben, und hören nicht!' (Jer.5:21)

One further point, an additional source of mystification to the citizens, must be elucidated: the emperor's withdrawal from the events affecting his people. Apparently, he never enters the outer chambers of his palace, yet the narrator believes he has glimpsed him surveying the scene from a window. Whether it was the emperor is as uncertain as his relationship to the

community is undetermined - at least (an important qualification), as far as the narrator's limited powers of comprehension can discern. If he was visible, it marks the exceptional nature of the situation; Kafka may have intended thereby an ambiguous hint concerning the divine presence. Is the emperor's apparent inertia (as the narrator interprets it) a sign that he is at a loss to tackle the nomads he has supposedly attracted? If the nomads have been lured by the palace, is this unintentional on the emperor's part? In terms of an Old Testament-based interpretation, the emperor, as God, might well have summoned the invaders without intending to oppose them. The imperial palace has indeed, from the people's point of view, cut itself off from them:

> Das Tor bleibt verschlossen; die Wache, früher immer festlich ein- und ausmarschierend, hält sich hinter vergitterten Fenstern. (E.134)

Conversely, in Biblical terms, the people have been 'cut off' from God, the ultimate penalty for sin, from which there is no 'Rettung' or salvation. Thus, Jeremiah: 'Darum heissen sie ein verworfenes Silber; denn der Herr hat sie verworfen.' (Jer. 6:30) In this case, there can be no deliverance for the people from the 'Missverständnis' of unrecognized sin, and they may well perish; the messianic longings possibly hinted at in their 'Wie lange werden wir diese Last und Qual ertragen?' could hardly be fulfilled.

If Ein altes Blatt is related to concepts of neglect and retribution in Jeremiah - as the motif of the northern invaders indicates - one inference remains to be drawn, concerning the role of the story's 'Ich-Erzähler'. An obvious contrast between Jeremiah and Ein altes Blatt is that the 'Ich-Erzähler' Jeremiah is a prophet, his recalcitrant people's leader, whereas Kafka's narrator, anything but that, is an undistinguished craftsman, presumably typical of his community in his poor level of understanding, which

is obscured by the mental habits and the values of the group. In moral cowardice, he is neither better nor worse than his fellows. The people in Ein altes Blatt, as ignorant of their transgressions as they are of the unmentioned law (- and this is the ultimate level of spiritual degeneracy, as emphasized by the prophets -), are without a prophet and leader. They have abandoned or rejected their spiritual task; their capitulation to the invaders represents desertion of the spiritual struggle, the 'Kampf' generally associated in Kafka's reflections and imagery with the concept of the 'task'.

The recurrent theme of Kafka's personal inner conflict over 'Kampf' and 'Aufgabe' is expressed in this story in the image and theme of the community. The way in which the narrator reflects his community in the story may correspond to Kafka's belief that he himself, imbued, as he later expressed it, with 'das Negative meiner Zeit', could represent his time without being entitled to combat it. The extreme ambivalence of his view of himself, if not as a spiritual leader, at least as one with spiritual responsibilities to fulfil, is here clothed in the theme of the community that has abandoned or neglected its calling. The focus of the story is on 'das Negative meiner Zeit', so to speak, rather than on the individual, psychological and spiritual conflict that underlies it. Still, the motif of the inadequate, dubiously-qualified leader may well have been accommodated invisibly in the adaptation of themes and images from Jeremiah into Ein altes Blatt, and the reversal from prophet-narrator in the former to the ignorant, morally and spiritually unperceptive narrator in the latter: the spiritual mediator between God and his people, conductor of the divine message and intercessor for his community, has been replaced by a personification of 'the negative' in circumstances unilluminated by metaphysical dialogue between human and transcendent realms.

As suggested above, Jeremiah was probably a figure to whom Kafka felt

attached through a personality and destiny with which he could to some extent identify. Jeremiah's resistance to his calling and task is an appropriate equivalent for Kafka's ambivalence towards his own sense of vocation:

> Jeremias Wesen sträubt sich gegen diese übermenschliche Aufgabe, er bebt vor dieser Last. Denn er ist keine kampfesfrohe Kraftnatur, er neigt mehr zur Reflexion als zum Handeln; was er erlebt, erschüttert ihn ins Innerste. Aber nicht aus Feigheit werden wir diesen Widerstand erklären, der sich in die Worte fasst: ich bin zu jung, sondern aus dem aufrichtigen Gefühl: diese Aufgabe ist für mich zu gross...Dass Jeremia die seinige dem eigenen Ich abringen musste, gestaltete sein Leben zum fortwährenden schweren Opfer. (R.Liechtenhan: op.cit., p.7)
>
> Jeremia soll darauf verzichten, eine Lebensgefährtin an sein trauriges Geschick zu binden; er soll keine Kinder haben, da ja doch die Zeit über sie kommen würde, wo der Jubel der Wonne und Freude, der Jubel von Bräutigam und Braut verstummt... Wenn man bedenkt, welche Schande die Kinderlosigkeit bei den Juden bedeutete, ermisst man erst, welches Opfer damit Jeremia seinem Beruf gebracht hat...(ibid., p.40)

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that the appearance of Ein altes Blatt in the Selbstwehr as a piece for Rosh ha-Shana, the Day of Judgement, illuminates themes in the story that are never explicitly expressed, but rather profoundly concealed. The Jewish element in the story is contained in what it never directly spells out, which is consistent with the depiction of a situation in which no 'truth' is disclosed, and with a cycle of stories in which striking examples of 'hidden meaning' remain to be examined. The understanding which the narrator lacks must be provided by the reader for its meaning to be appreciated; Ein altes Blatt is a story which requires 'those who have eyes' to see, and 'those who have ears' to hear. This feature places it in the tradition of prophetic parable[1]. While Ein altes Blatt is clearly

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1. See Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Mashal; Parable.

related to Ein Landarzt through similarities of image and concept, it is in terms of a shared Jewish background that the profoundest link between the two is revealed. This background is manifested (or concealed) in Ein altes Blatt much as it is in Ein Landarzt. The Jewish element in the latter can only be fully appreciated through comparison with particular Hasidic prototypes and the reversal of motifs they contain,and the Jewish element in Ein altes Blatt similarly gains significance from a Jewish foil: the meaning of the Rosh ha-Shana festival, the background to its publication in 1921. This religious context again emphasizes the opposition between positive and negative, order and disorder. While Rosh ha-Shana, New Year and Day of Judgement, recognizes God's power and authority, acclaims Him as the one who 'remembers', affirms the supreme order of his Creation, and celebrates spiritual renewal and harmony among nations through repentance and recognition of Him, Ein altes Blatt depicts the opposite of what the festival enjoins: a community embroiled in disorder, from which it cannot extricate itself, having lost all sense of the order previously maintained by an authority which it accuses of neglect and desertion. In the light of the adaptation from Jeremiah, it may be said that Ein altes Blatt depicts a community undefended by a prophet, one to which the divine word and will are not communicated. Thus the context of the major Jewish festival - and the tradition which it celebrates - highlights in this story the theme of its opposite: the distress of lost or confused tradition, and the sin of'mis-understanding'. Nevertheless, the two poles are not merely opposite, but also complementary. Negative as the story situation is, it bears, like the prophets' reprimands and warnings, a positive message, which must be read, so to speak, between the lines of the Selbstwehr.

The theme of disrupted tradition is suggested in the title, 'Ein altes

Blatt'; the idea of the relic of a context now unknown, a scrap of historical information accidentally transmitted from the past, clearly mirrors the sense of disconnection from a coherent, meaningful past, of which Kafka complained, for example, on the occasion of his nephew's circumcision in 1911. (T.146f.) The title's play upon the idea of the text perhaps hints of the principle or whim that underlies Kafka's games with 'the text itself' in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft and Die Sorge des Hausvaters, which were also selected for publication in the Selbstwehr. The placing of all three stories in a Jewish context provides a basis for supposing that Kafka, in concerning himself with the idea of the text in these examples, was directly or indirectly commenting upon the contemporary state of a tradition that had been, until his own time, so impressively transmitted in the form of sacred texts and voluminous commentaries.

Interestingly enough, the original manuscript from which the published version of Ein altes Blatt was prepared describes the story's content as a fragment of an ancient Chinese manuscript:

> Diese vielleicht (?ein wenig) europäisierende Übersetzung (? einiger alter) chinesischer Manuskriptblätter stellt uns ein Freund der Aktion zur Verfügung. Es ist ein Bruchstück. Hoffnung, dass die Fortsetzung gefunden werden könnte besteht nicht.
>
> Hier folgen noch einige Seiten, die aber allzu beschädigt sind, als dass ihnen etwas bestimmtes entnommen werden könnte. (MS. Bodleian, Heft C[1])

These lines in Kafka's manuscript follow the narrative published as Ein altes Blatt; the idea which they express was clearly intended to indicate a relationship between it and the fragment Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer. Kafka evidently discarded the idea of extending the story by 'noch einige Seiten'; he also omitted the reference to a supposed Chinese manuscript in

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1. This and the following quotation from the MS. are by kind permission of Schocken Books, New York.

the final version. The reason for this was probably (apart from his preferring not to publish Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer) the desire to let the story speak for itself at a level unrestricted by specific, although fictional, geographical and political references. The absence of anything Chinese in Ein altes Blatt means that its essence is preserved in a form unobscured by the specific.

One other difference between the manuscript and the published version of Ein altes Blatt is relevant to the present discussion: the omission of the figure 10 from the original sentence.

> Kaum öffne ich in der Morgendämmerung meinen Laden, sehe ich schon die Eingänge aller 10 hier einlaufenden Gassen von Bewaffneten besetzt. (MS. Bodleian, Heft C; cf. E.133)

The point of interest here is that ten is the number of the Sefiroth or Paths of Wisdom, according to Kabbalist tradition. Kafka may have chosen the number for reasons connected with the beginnings of his acquaintance with Jewish mysticism. In this case, Ein altes Blatt could also be read as an image of individual, inner spiritual struggle. It is probable that it had occurred to Kafka by this time to treat the familiar theme of his own 'Kampf' and 'Aufgabe' in a mystical light. In this case, the private and otherwise redundant play upon his family name, 'Unter einander verständigen sie sich ähnlich wie Dohlen. Immer wieder hört man diesen Schrei der Dohlen'[1], might be read as hinting that the complex disharmonies of the ego are the major barrier between the self and spiritual reality.

Whatever less profound reasons Kafka may have had for alluding to this 'Schrei der Dohlen' - which suggests at the very least that Ein altes Blatt was written with his own personal (and correspondingly, Jewish) circumstances in mind - the possibility that definite awareness of the above-

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1. As is familiar to Kafka critics, the word-play lies in the meaning of the Czech Kavka - 'jackdaw'.

mentioned mystical idea underlay the writing of this story is important. With regard to Kafka's later reference to the possibility of 'a new secret doctrine', it might therefore be said of this story (although not over-emphatically), '<u>Ansätze dazu bestehen</u>'. If so, overtones of the prophetic in <u>Ein altes Blatt</u> nevertheless dominate suggestions of the mystic.

Ein Traum

Although Ein Traum, written in 1914, was probably conceived in the context of Der Prozess[1], Kafka removed it from this context for publication, evidently considering that it could stand independently. On the three occasions of submission for publication, it was offered in its own right, or as part of an integrated cycle, i.e. Ein Landarzt; and it was submitted on all three occasions for publication in a Jewish context:

1) for publication in the first volume of Der Jude, Oct. 1916. On this occasion Buber rejected it.
2) published by Buber in Das jüdische Prag, 1917.
3) published in Ein Landarzt - a collection dedicated to Kafka's father, and associated with his own Jewish experience.

Ein Traum heads the list of titles which Kafka wrote in mid-June, 1917 (H.447) while assembling the Landarzt collection, and is followed by Vor dem Gesetz and Ein kaiserliche Botschaft, in second and third places respectively. Possibly reasons other than chronology account for its position at the head of a compilation of later stories; there is the likelihood of a thematic link between Ein Traum and the latter two stories[2]. These two and, in addition, Ein altes Blatt, appeared in Rosh-ha-Shana issues of the Selbstwehr; they may therefore form a group thematically related to the meaning of that festival. It should be possible to learn more about the 'Jewish' significance of Ein Traum by considering it in connection with this distinct sub-group of stories in the Landarzt cycle.

The story's title makes it clear that it describes not 'literal' or physical, but psychological reality. Its interpretation therefore depends

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1. Hartmut Binder: Kafka-Kommentar, Munich, 1975, p.182.
2. Ein altes Blatt, which is placed fifth in the list, may be similarly linked.

upon appreciation of every significant symbolic detail which expresses that psychological reality.

'Es war ein schöner Tag und ... K. wollte spazieren gehen' - Josef K. decides to go out: the story is perhaps about a state of emergence and psychological transition from one fixed or 'enclosed' point to one that is more open, offering new scope. 'Kaum aber hatte er zwei Schritte gemacht, war er schon auf dem Friedhof'. Apparently independently of conscious volition, his destination (symbolically, and in a psychological sense) is the cemetery - which is called by Jews the 'House of Life'. What looks like a rendezvous with death need not necessarily indicate a negative or destructive sequel; a symbolic 'death' can have strong associations with the idea of a rebirth to follow. As far as this story is concerned, it is of course premature for the interpreter to decide on this point.

With curiously effortless movement, Josef K. glides down one of the pathways in the cemetery, unhindered by the fact that these are 'unpraktisch gewunden'. As if attracted by an irresistible inner motivation or necessity, he is extremely eager to reach a fresh grave-mound which is visible from afar. At times it is concealed behind flags that flap vigorously against each other: thus he is not fully aware of the meaning or purpose of his progress or goal. In a psychological sense, his vision is still obscured; but his approach is apparently a cause for celebration: 'man sah die Fahnenträger nicht, aber es war, als herrsche dort viel Jubel.' Possibly the flags flapping against each other also suggest some disturbance or conflict associated with K.'s destination.

Since his gaze is still directed into the distance, K. is surprised when he suddenly recognizes the grave beside his path - indeed, almost behind him, for the path continues 'rushing on' under his feet. Possibly a spatial

illusion has been described, implying that K.'s sense of distance is unsure, and with it, symbolically, his perception of the connection between himself and the mysterious grave. Significant, surely, is that K. halts voluntarily at the grave, a moment before actually passing it, rather than allowing his rapidly continuing path to carry him away into the indeterminate distance beyond. He leaps off the path and lands uncertainly - 'schwankte (er) und fiel gerade vor dem Grabhügel ins Knie.' He is perhaps only half in control of his situation, having landed in a position that is ambiguously 'neither up nor down'; perhaps his kneeling position indicates submission or deference to whatever the grave represents, with an element of welcome self-surrender to his chosen stopping-place.

K. is immediately 'put on the spot', indeed, almost 'rooted' to it: as soon as he appears, two men standing behind the grave ram a gravestone into the earth, 'und er stand wie festgemauert....' Could these two represent some unidentified subconscious power, by which K. is 'arrested' and transfixed?

A third figure now appears, whom K. immediately recognizes as an artist; he surely is the figure of something in K. himself (and, since he is an artist, of something in Kafka, too). He is dressed simply and negligently, and wears 'eine Samtkappe' on his head. This could well be the yarmolka, the skullcap traditionally worn as a sign of Jewish piety (cf. Binder, Kafka-Kommentar p. 182). Probably it would be identified thus by Jewish readers who first read Ein Traum in the context of Das jüdische Prag, and so may provide a clue to Kafka's choice of a Jewish context for this story. The figure of this man presumably embodies the elements of artist and Jew, which Kafka was coming to feel so powerfully within himself at the time of writing Ein Traum.

The artist prepares to make an inscription on the gravestone. Curiously,

he avoids setting foot on the grave. This perhaps symbolizes reluctance to make direct contact with death, in whatever sense. He completes the words 'Hier ruht' in gold letters, described as 'rein und schön'. Their quality suggests association with a diary entry of mid-December, 1914 (i.e. the period during which Ein Traum was written - cf. Binder, Kafka-Kommentar, p.182), in which Kafka reflects on the link between his best writing and the idea, or even experience, of 'death':

> ...dass das Beste, was ich geschrieben habe, in dieser Fähigkeit, zufrieden sterben zu können, seinen Grund hat. An allen diesen guten und stark überzeugenden Stellen handelt es sich immer darum, dass jemand stirbt, dass es ihm sehr schwer wird, dass darin für ihn ein Unrecht und wenigstens eine Härte liegt und dass das für den Leser, wenigstens meiner Meinung nach, rührend wird. Für mich aber, der ich glaube, auf dem Sterbebett zufrieden sein zu können, sind solche Schilderungen im geheimen ein Spiel, ich freue mich ja in dem Sterbenden zu sterben, nütze daher mit Berechnung die auf den Tod gesammelte Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers aus, bin bei viel klarerem Verstande als er, von dem ich annehme, dass er auf dem Sterbebett klagen wird, und meine Klage ist daher möglichst vollkommen, bricht auch nicht etwa plötzlich ab wie wirkliche Klage, sonderm verläuft schön und rein. (T.320f.)

One could imagine Kafka writing this passage as a reflection upon Ein Traum, and interpret the story as a secret 'Spiel' with the depiction of a death which the protagonist (as we shall see) resists. The passage supports the idea of a 'death' that is secretly and unconventionally understood in a positive sense (i.e., in T.320, as something of which Kafka's best art is the fruit). The last lines -

> meine Klage ist daher möglichst vollkommen, bricht auch nicht etwa plötzlich ab wie die wirkliche Klage, sondern verläuft schön und rein -

bring us back to Ein Traum and the gold-lettered epitaph inscribed by the artist. The situation that follows from the completion of 'Hier ruht-' suggests strongly that the writing of Ein Traum stimulated T.320-321; for while Josef K. seems almost to resist the idea of his own death to begin with, the artist (who is probably a symbolic complement to K. in Kafka's own psycho-

logical constitution) is intent on producing an epitaph which is 'schön und rein'. For the mysterious Jew-artist to achieve this, it is necessary for K. to accept death (and symbolically allow Kafka 'in dem Sterbenden zu sterben');the 'game' can then be completed.

The artist, as pointed out before, will not step on the grave, perhaps as if this would be trespassing on territory that belongs to K. or sacrificing a superior position. Having completed the first two words of his inscription, he turns round to look at K., as if expectantly. K.'s attention, however, seems to be fixed on the wrong thing, the stone and the inscription, rather than the artist. He fails to observe the latter's apparent appeal for collaboration from himself. The man makes as if to continue writing, but cannot:

> es bestand irgendein Hindernis, er liess den Bleistift sinken und drehte sich wieder nach K. um. Nun sah auch K. den Künstler an und merkte, dass dieser in grosser Verlegenheit war, aber die Ursache dessen nicht sagen konnte. (E. 153)

This psychological drama answers the anticipation of excitement or conflict created by the flapping flags K. had seen from a distance; K.'s problem in understanding the requirements of the Jew-artist figure reflects the way in which they obscured his view of the mound. Something prevents communication between K. and the Jew-artist, who, for his part, cannot tell K. what obstacle halts completion of his task; apparently K. must realize it himself. Thus the state of 'Verlegenheit' is reflected in both as they confront each other before the mound. In psychological terms, the situation seems to symbolize resistance to conscious recognition of some factor that would permit communication between the 'K.' and the 'Jew-artist' elements in the personality (presumably Kafka's own). Something must be accepted by 'K.' if the 'Jew-artist' is to be able to perfect his task. There is something uncomprehended in the self, and failure to understand the situation as a whole establishes a barrier between, as it were, two fundamental sides of the self (the artist

being surely an alter ego of K.); the artist's previous vitality is suffering detriment.

To increase the discomfort of the situation, the bell of the cemetery chapel begins to ring. At a sign from the artist, it ceases, but recommences, and soon breaks off again: under the circumstances, it seems the bell has nothing to contribute to the situation, except to underline the impression of an impasse. K. is in despair:

> K. war untröstlich über die Lage des Künstlers, er begann zu weinen und schluchzte lange in die vorgehaltenen Hände. Der Künstler wartete, bis K. sich beruhigt hatte, und entschloss sich dann, da er keinen andern Ausweg fand, dennoch zum Weiterschreiben. (E.154)

This can be read as a symbolic depiction of the writer at a loss how to continue, feeling some indefinable psychological obstacle to the expression of experience, emotions or ideas, which can actually only be clarified through writing. Despite frustration and interruption of the flow of inspiration, he has to go on, hoping for further illumination as he writes - just as the Jew-artist in Ein Traum apparently hopes K. will be illuminated if he continues his inscription.

This begins to happen; at first, K.'s recognition is reluctant and clumsy, as reflected in the artist's script, although he experiences the first stroke of resumed work as 'eine Erlösung':

> der Künstler brachte ihn aber offenbar nur mit dem äussersten Widerstreben zustande; die Schrift war auch nicht mehr so schön, vor allem schien es an Gold zu fehlen, blass und unsicher zog sich der Strich hin. (E.154)

The artist continues to show frustration and impatience, and hardly has he completed the first letter, a J, when he stamps violently on the gravemound (thus setting foot on it for the first time). This almost brutal gesture marks the final dawning of K.'s understanding. Scrabbling the soil away with his fingers, he sinks ecstatically into the grave beneath. As

it receives him, he sees his own name writing itself across the gravestone. The completion of the artist's work seems to have become automatic, once K.'s resistance has vanished. His yielding to the grave represents a self-abandonment that can presumably be called his 'Erlösung'.

At the moment of apparent death, K. regains consciousness and re-awakens to the world. This conclusion is ambiguous: it could represent a rebirth, the resurrection of a personality restored and renewed by its 'death'; or it could be read in a negative sense as an almost cynical indication that 'dream' equals 'illusion', that no 'real' deliverance can have been experienced, and that K. awakens to the drab 'reality' of the familiar world. The first alternative is perhaps preferable, and will be supported below; to the second, it can be rejoined that even if Ein Traum is 'only a dream', the dreamer may awaken subtly altered in mind, and therefore enter into a new and different relationship with the world's 'reality' - possibly one better than before.

The foregoing discussion of Ein Traum leads to the conclusion that the interaction between Josef K. and the artist symbolically depicts the dream-like process and experience of producing a work of art, as Kafka knew them from his writing. We are shown a state of emergence into the unknown, and destination for a remote, mysterious goal, amid the excitement, and even conflict or disturbance, of expectation and surprise. The interplay of art and death depicts the necessity of the individual's total self-surrender to the unknown and incomprehensible if the artist in him is to be able to achieve his work; this idea is illuminated by T.320f., where Kafka muses upon his own pleasure 'in dem Sterbenden zu sterben' as if it were some private

game, and upon the fact that his best writing correspondingly springs from descriptions of a protagonist's reluctant death. Associated with this idea of artistic fulfilment through 'death' is that of dawning consciousness and psychological transformation, described in the story as 'eine Erlösung'. This 'redemption' is shown as following internal resistance to the unknown, conflict between the 'individual' and the 'artist' in the personality - and as a sudden breakthrough to new consciousness that comes through the very effort of writing, as an experience of almost ecstatic relief and self-surrender to 'death'. Engagement in the struggle of art is shown as an act undertaken voluntarily, at the outset, by the individual.

Two later excerpts from Kafka's diary support the interpretation of the experience of art derived here from Ein Traum:

> Mir immer unbegreiflich, dass es jedem fast, der schreiben kann, möglich ist, im Schmerz den Schmerz zu objektivieren, so dass ich zum Beispiel im Unglück, vielleicht noch mit dem brennenden Unglückskopf mich setzen und jemandem schriftlich mitteilen kann: Ich bin unglücklich. Ja, ich kann noch darüber hinausgehn und in verschiedenen Schnörkeln je nach Begabung, die mit dem Unglück nichts zu tun zu haben scheint, darüber einfach oder antithetisch oder mit ganzen Orchestern von Assoziationen phantasieren. Und es ist gar nicht Lüge und stillt den Schmerz nicht, ist einfach gnadenweiser Überschuss der Kräfte in einem Augenblick, in dem der Schmerz doch sichtbar alle meine Kräfte bis zum Boden meines Wesens, den er aufkratzt, verbraucht hat. Was für ein Überschuss ist es also? (T.380)

Here Kafka wonders what sort of power it is that enables him, through writing, to transcend individual suffering. Although unhappiness and pain may be the stimulus of art, the element of playfulness remains in the artistic processes of imagination that engender their written expression. The mysterious access of energy that apparently transforms the artist's being at the point of total exhaustion is reminiscent of the sudden ease with which the inscription of Josef K.'s name races over the gravestone at the moment of his total surrender. Kafka's reference to the adornment of his unhappiness in its literary expression with 'verschiedenen Schnörkeln' is also reminiscent of

the appearance of K.'s name 'mit mächtigen Zieraten'.

> Merkwürdiger, geheimnisvoller, vielleicht gefährlicher, vielleicht erlösender Trost des Schreibens: das Hinausspringen aus der Totschlägerreihe, Tat-Beobachtung. Tatbeobachtung, indem eine höhere Art der Beobachtung geschaffen wird, eine höhere, keine schärfere, und je höher sie ist, je unerreichbarer von der 'Reihe' aus, desto unabhängiger wird sie, desto mehr eigenen Gesetzen der Bewegung folgend, desto unberechenbarer, freudiger, steigender ihr Weg. (T.406)

This passage also communicates the experience of abandon in which the writer rises, in artistic creation, to a level above the harsh reality of being. Kafka describes the consolation thus derived as having a 'redemptive' element, as suggested in Ein Traum; and once again the experience of artistic creation as that of an autonomous and almost automatic surge of energy is stressed. Through it, higher consciousness and transcendence of mortality are achieved; this point supports the view that in Ein Traum Josef K.'s vision of his death involves psychological restoration or renewal through expanded consciousness, rather than an experience of disillusionment on re-awakening to the 'real' world.

Ein Traum, then, seems to be concerned with the creative process and experience of the writer; and commentary on the story requires mention of the importance writing had for Kafka as a means to heightened consciousness and self-knowledge, in his life-long spiritual search. Art was the medium through which he conducted that search, and through which he hoped to find 'redemption'. These facts are reflected in Ein Traum in the sudden dawning of consciousness in Josef K. as the artist writes his epitaph - a dawning referred to as 'eine Erlösung'. The idea of spiritual fulfilment which comes as a form of 'death' (metaphorical, rather than physical) is one that Kafka explored in depth three years after writing Ein Traum, in the Oktavhefte; this exploration is anticipated in T.320f., written at the same time as Ein Traum.

It must be the story's treatment of these themes that earned it a place in the Landarzt collection, written mainly three years later, in which the related themes of 'Erkenntnis' and 'Erlösung' are pursued in various forms. This may be to some extent anticipated by indicating briefly the major features which Ein Traum shares with some other stories in the Landarzt collection:

1) the protagonist's mysterious conveyance towards a destination associated in some way with death (see e.g. Ein Landarzt).
2) the associated themes of 'Erkenntnis', 'Erlösung' (also linked with the idea of death), and some impairment of the protagonist's understanding which leads him to resist 'death', and/or the spiritual implications of his situation. (See e.g. Ein Landarzt, Vor dem Gesetz, Ein altes Blatt.)
3) the intrusion of the irrational or incomprehensible into the 'normal' world of the protagonist, bringing with it the apparent possibility of some revelation concerning himself and his situation. (See e.g. Ein Landarzt, Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, Ein altes Blatt, Die Sorge des Hausvaters.) Linked with this theme is the motif of a puzzling situation or object presented to the protagonist in order for him to 'make something of it'.
4) the difficulty experienced by the protagonist in recognizing the mysterious and joining hands with the 'irrational' (see e.g. Ein Landarzt, Die Sorge des Hausvaters).

With regard to the discarded title for the Landarzt collection, 'Verantwortung', the following points can be made about Ein Traum. The individual who is also an artist bears responsibility for knowing his situation (and himself) at a level above the ordinary. The Jew-artist figure in the story requires from Josef K. the collaboration that can only spring from

deepened insight in the latter; lacking sufficient understanding, Josef K. is not at first able to give what is demanded, and in consequence, the artist's work shows imperfections. Bearing in mind that Kafka regarded the purpose of art as the communication of spiritual truth (to himself or others), it can be said that Ein Traum indicates the individual's 'responsibility' to harness the power hidden in the subconscious to that purpose. In a letter to Grete Bloch, written in June, 1914, Kafka refers to this idea as 'raising oneself from the underworld':

> Jeder bringt sich auf seine Weise aus der Unterwelt hinauf, ich durch das Schreiben. Darum kann ich mich, wenn es sein soll, nur durch das Schreiben, nicht durch Ruhe und Schlaf, oben erhalten. (F.595)

This leads to a final point regarding a major question raised by this interpretation of Ein Traum: what is the significance of the artist figure's Jewish aspect? It must be that in combining the elements of 'artist' and 'Jew' in the mysterious figure, and through the symbolic interaction between him and Josef K., Kafka was acknowledging his own responsibility to the combined principles of 'art' and 'Judaism'. Thus, in fulfilling his responsibility as an artist, and what he considered the spiritual demands of genuine art, he might be fulfilling a responsibility compatible with the spiritual demands of Judaism. It has been suggested that art was, for Kafka, something of a substitute for the religion he so painfully felt he lacked, an alternative means, in default of genuine traditional faith and practice, to spiritual truth and experience. Ein Traum thus implies Kafka's conscious or unconscious desire to serve a spiritual element which art (as he understood it) and Judaism possibly shared. His eagerness for the story to be published in a Jewish context correspondingly suggests the desire for Jewish approval of his art, and by extension, approval of the experience of inner transformation which he received from it.

Vor dem Gesetz

Vor dem Gesetz was written immediately after Ein Traum[1]. This is probably why it follows the latter in Kafka's list, H.447. It is likely that Vor dem Gesetz develops some aspect of the main theme of Ein Traum, accentuates whatever Jewish element the earlier piece contains, and represents a further stage in Kafka's literary, Jewish 'Selbsterkenntnis'. This is supported by the fact that, discounting Richard und Samuel, published jointly with Brod, Vor dem Gesetz was Kafka's first independent publication in a Jewish periodical: it appeared in the Rosh-ha-Shana issue of the Selbstwehr in 1915. Thus the only two pieces Kafka selected for publication from the material of Der Prozess appeared in the forum of contemporary Jewish ideas. In the present discussion, therefore, Vor dem Gesetz will be examined without reference to its relation to Der Prozess[2]. The intrinsic connection of both the novel and, apparently, Vor dem Gesetz itself with Kafka's relationship with the Jewess Felice (T.329) supports rather than disqualifies the view that they have much to do with the theme of 'Jewishness'.

'Vor dem Gesetz steht ein Türhüter' - the opening sentence immediately evokes examples of traditional Jewish imagery, such as three Kafka would have known before writing Vor dem Gesetz. The first occurs on p.10 of Buber's Die Legende des Baalschem; it has been quoted in full on p.239f in the dis-

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1. Hartmut Binder: Kafka-Kommentar, Munich, 1975, p.183.
2. This has been excellently discussed by Ingeborg Henel in 'Die Türhüterlegende und ihre Bedeutung für Kafkas 'Prozess'', in DVjs 37, 1963, pp. 50-70.

cussion of Eine kaiserliche Botschaft. The second comes from the same source:

> ...und es war dem Prediger, als ob Tor um Tor vor ihm aufspringe, alle Schatten und Dunkelheiten wichen, alles Trübe und Unreine sich kläre und sein Herz dem grossen Herzen der Welt nahe sei. (Buber: B.S., p.237)

The third example is in 'Von Henoch-Metatron' in the first volume (Von der Urzeit) of M.J. bin Gorion's Sagen der Juden (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1913ff.):

> Aber ehe noch der Herr Metraton zum Diener seines Thrones machte, öffnete er ihm die dreihunderttausend Tore der Weisheit und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Vernunft und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Klugheit und zeigte ihm die dreihunderttausend Tore des Lebens und die dreihunderttausend Tore des Friedens und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Kraft und der Macht und der Tapferkeit und die dreihunderttausend Tore des Wohlgefallens und der Gnade und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Liebe und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Lehre und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Barmherzigkeit und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Demut und die dreihunderttausend Tore der Gottesfurcht. (M.J. bin Gorion: Sagen der Juden, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1962, p.126f.)

These, and probably other, similar Jewish sources[1] must be the origin of the image that opens Vor dem Gesetz, and its development in the words of the doorkeeper:

> 'Merke aber: Ich bin mächtig. Und ich bin nur der unterste Türhüter. Von Saal zu Saal stehn aber Türhüter, einer mächtiger als der andere. Schon den Anblick des dritten kann nicht einmal ich mehr ertragen.' (E.135)

In the three examples of probable sources given below, the imagery clearly reflects that of the merkabah and hekaloth traditions of Kabbalah[2]. The discovery that Kafka's doorkeeper has unmistakable associations with the imagery of these traditions shows something of the foundations for Scholem's remark upon the depth of Kafka's roots in Jewish mysticism[3], and for Kafka's much later claim. (T.398) The inclusion of

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1. A suitable example for comparison is the passage 'Door within door' from Nahum Glatzer's A Jewish Reader, quoted in translation from the Zohar and reproduced on p. 240f., in the discussion of Eine kaiserliche Botschaft. The title of Jiří Langer's Nine Gates also reflects the use of the traditional imagery in Hasidic tradition.
2. See p.98.
3. Scholem: K.S., p.12. See p. 258.

the early Ein Traum and Vor dem Gesetz, with the fruit of an apparently new phase in Kafka's writing (i.e. the Landarzt collection, written mainly during 1916-17) certainly suggests that in the later stories Kafka was developing the early beginnings of a potentially 'mystical' theme.

Proceeding to the second sentence of the story, 'Zu diesem Türhüter kommt ein Mann vom Lande und bittet um Eintritt in das Gesetz' we correspondingly find that this figure has Jewish roots (as other interpreters have suggested[1]) in the am ha'arez (- Hebrew: 'one from the land'), one who is ignorant of the law, lacking education in the scholarly traditions of 'official' Judaism. T.127 (Nov., 1911) shows that Kafka knew the Hebrew term. The am ha'arez is mentioned in two books Kafka had read (T.173): Jakob Fromer: Der Organismus des Judentums, Charlottenburg, 1909, p. 64f., and M. Pinès: L'histoire de la littérature judéo-allemande, Paris, 1910, p. 470, n.1. The term receives fuller explanation in a third book, which Kafka owned and may have read by 1914: M. Friedländer's Die religiösen Bewegungen innerhalb des Judentums in Zeitalter Jesu, Berlin, 1905, where we learn on p.78ff. that it referred historically to a person spurned by the Pharisaic Jews of that period as ignorant, degenerate, unclean, and not practising orthodox rites or scholarship in the scriptures.

To return to Vor dem Gesetz: the reader might conclude on the basis of the above that such a person's request for admission to see the law is in itself a sign of his ignorance, and incommensurate with the nature of the law. In any case, the man's request for admission pre-supposes the possibility of refusal. Perhaps a psychological defence-mechanism is operating in his behaviour, a willingness to accept exclusion, or even unconscious reluctance

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1. J.H. Schoeps: 'Theologische Motive in der Dichtung Franz Kafkas', in Die neue Rundschau 62/1, 1951, (pp.21-37) p.22; and H. Binder: Kafka-Kommentar, p.183.

to enter the law. His words claim a right that his subsequent actions do not assert. The events that follow the man's arrival and request imply that what counts in approaching the law is the would-be entrant's attitude and that the qualification for entrance is not a constitutionally guaranteed right, but a question of psychological predisposition and understanding.

This possibility is not contradicted by the doorkeeper's response, 'dass er ihm jetzt den Eintritt nicht gewähren könne. "Es ist möglich," sagt der Türhüter, "jetzt aber nicht."' Nor does the doorkeeper's refusal necessarily contradict the Rabbis' teaching that 'the gates are open at every hour, and whoever wishes to enter may enter'[1] (i.e. any Gentile sincerely wishing to convert to Judaism may do so); for this makes attitude the criterion for admission to 'the law'. In Vor dem Gesetz, too, the doors are always open:

> Da das Tor zum Gesetz offen steht wie immer und der Türhüter beiseite tritt, bückt sich der Mann, um durch das Tor in das Innere zu sehn. (E.135)

It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the law in Vor dem Gesetz is based on a concept comparable, if not identical, with that of the Torah. The doorkeeper seems to hint that the man's very being is put to the test through a challenge to his avowed desire and the power of his free will.

When the man looks inside, he is invited to try to enter: the doorkeeper's attitude has modified, apparently relative to his action and attitude . The doorkeeper laughs as he utters the invitation - whether ironically or in a relenting tone is uncertain, but it is somehow complementary to the man's apparent inclination. Instead of an outright refusal, the doorkeeper warns of what lies within, but he offers the man a choice.

The interpreter is led to wonder what exactly is 'das Innere'? It

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1. Shemot (Exodus) Rabbah, Ch.19, para. 4.

is hardly what the man had expected:

> Solche Schwierigkeiten hat der Mann vom Lande nicht erwartet; das Gesetz soll doch jedem und immer zugänglich sein, denkt er, aber als er jetzt den Türhüter...genauer ansieht,...entschliesst er sich, doch lieber zu warten, bis er die Erlaubnis zum Eintritt bekommt. (E.135)

Confronted with prospects that contradict his expectations, the man abandons **curiosity** for caution. Moreover, he stands by his previous assumptions about the law. There is nothing in the above words to confirm or contradict what is stated merely as the man's opinion of its nature. It may indeed be open to everyone, at all times, and the conclusion of the story supports this view; but the sight of the doorkeeper deters or distracts the man from his goal. On the other hand, this man, if he is an am ha'arez, has no real knowledge of the law, only his own assumptions. Confronted with the unexpected, he should perhaps be able to revise his opinions and **reach** new insight into the nature of the law. Whatever the case, he sticks to his accustomed habits of thought and attitude, and mental reservations get the better of his intention; he perhaps lacks single-mindedness.

The text leaves the interpreter none the wiser as to the nature of 'das Innere'. The following considerations can be offered.

'Das Innere' lies on the 'other side' of both a boundary, and a doorway. This may tell us, in symbolic terms, that 'inside' is a different 'reality'. The protagonist gains no further knowledge of it, and so further information is withheld from the reader, whose view is limited by the protagonist's perspective. On the other hand, if the meaning of the imagery in Vor dem Gesetz is related to the Jewish sources that almost certainly inspired it, this imagery may be, as in the Jewish mystical examples, a mysterious 'key' (if properly deciphered) to another 'reality ', which it depicts. Recalling Kafka's early reference to Meister Eckart's writings as 'der Schlüssel zu fremden Sälen des eigenen Schlosses' (Br.20), one might ask whether the halls

of which the doorkeeper speaks, and into which the man timidly peers, do not stand for the 'unknown halls' of the inner self. By analogy with the spiritual powers described in the traditions of merkabah and hekaloth mysticism (and vividly exemplified in the myth of Metatron referred to above), Kafka's Türhüter would stand as one of those fearsome spirits which, in the mystic landscape of the soul, beset the seeker on his spiritual journey. In this case, the man is shrinking from the 'inner reality' of his own spiritual life and, wary of the doorkeeper, failing to prove himself at the first obstacle that blocks his way: one that lies within his subconscious self.

As before, the doorkeeper's action is complementary to the man's: he now consolidates the latter's decision by giving him a stool beside the door. The man has deviated from his intention of approaching the law, and is now symbolically ensconced in a position aside, which gives no view into the inner centre. He has sacrificed the advantage he was given when, in response to his bending to look in, the doorkeeper stepped aside to let him see.

It is striking that the doorkeeper is not, apparently, malevolent; he remains aloof from the man's requests and the 'teilnahmslose Fragen' which he himself asks. His final words are always to the effect that the petitioner cannot be admitted to the law. There is no change in the man's situation - probably because, if the above observations are correct, none can come unless he himself undergoes a change of heart and approach. Certainly the doorkeeper cross-questions him occasionally, but he makes no attempt to influence him. There seems to be no positive communication between the two, and no information or change of heart seems to be forthcoming from the doorkeeper: the man must reach his realizations alone. In the situation Kafka describes, we are perhaps presented with the image of a

person standing spiritually in his own way - '<u>er verstellt sich selber seinen Weg</u>.'[1]

Attention is next drawn to the material provisions the man has brought. (There may be a parallel here with the material 'riches' in <u>Ein Landarzt</u>.) He is prepared to pay with all he possesses for access to the law; but once again his action, the renunciation of his property, rests on a faulty assumption, i.e. that he can negotiate the right to enter on a material basis. Moreover, he is attempting to enter the law by means that are, by any standard, illegal. His attempt to bribe the doorkeeper betrays an attitude incompatible with his aim. Again, there is no exchange; the doorkeeper remains impassive, and again it does not seem to occur to the man to alter his approach, despite the doorkeeper's hints on each occasion: '<u>Ich nehme es nur an, damit du nicht glaubst, etwas versäumt zu haben</u>.' (<u>E</u>.135) As before, the doorkeeper's behaviour complements the man's approach: the man offers, and the doorkeeper accepts, but to no effect. It is as if he were simply a mirror to the man's attitude and actions, which constitute the spiritual barrier between him and the law.

The man lacks single-mindedness: his attempted bribery has begun to distract him from the law itself. Significant now is not so much that the doorkeeper stands literally in the man's way, as that he becomes the object of his distracted attention: the man comes to concentrate on the obstacle even more than he attempts to surmount it. Nor does he see any connection between himself, the doorkeeper and the law, except for '<u>Zufall</u>'; he fails

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1. cf. Kafka: <u>Beschreibung eines Kampfes</u>, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1954 (henceforth referred to by the abbreviation <u>B</u>.), p.292. cf. <u>T</u>.13 (1910): "Du allerdings, wer weiss, was alles in dir steckt, Mut hast du, wenigstens glaubst du ihn zu haben, versuchs doch, was wagst du denn - oft erkennt man sich schon, wenn man aufpasst, im Gesicht des Dieners an der Tür."

to perceive any order or meaning in his situation. He achieves no insight into his plight, but blames chance, holding some external agency responsible for his exclusion (and hence still fails to assert freedom of will, as the doorkeeper originally invited him to try). Ineffectiveness proves the pointlessness of this idea and the man's acquiescence in the situation as he conceives it. Again, **there is** no communication with the doorkeeper: 'als er alt wird, brummt er nur noch vor sich hin'. His utterances have **become** an irrelevant, purposeless repetition, since he has succumbed entirely to his mental habits, lacking all sound conviction. His misguided attention to irrelevant circumstances and useless means is taken to an extreme in his requests for help from the fleas in the doorkeeper's fur collar. He declines, in the course of years of unaltering mental habit, into childish confusion.

'Schliesslich wird sein Augenlicht schwach' - this is the final sign that his powers of perception have deserted him: 'er weiss nicht, ob es um ihn wirklich dunkler wird, oder ob ihn nur seine Augen täuschen.' Now, at least, he no longer trusts his own vision (literal or metaphorical) so 'blindly'. And so, as he doubts his own vision for the first time, he recognizes 'jetzt im Dunkel einen Glanz, der unverlöschlich aus der Türe des Gesetzes bricht.' Thus, as death overtakes him, he at last sees something of the other, inner reality that has **eluded** him all his life, and summoning his last energy just before he dies, he asks a question he has never asked before:

> 'Alle streben doch nach dem Gesetz,' sagt der Mann, 'wieso kommt es, dass in den vielen Jahren niemand ausser mir Einlass verlangt hat?' (E.136)

Now that it is too late, he takes the first step towards new understanding. Instead of persisting in his egocentric attitude, he includes himself in the concept of a community or group, 'alle'. Through the formulation of this

question and the answer he receives, he learns finally that the door to which he had come could admit him alone to the communal goal. All possibility of maintaining his previous self-righteousness is bound to vanish at this discovery: the foundation of the man's life crumbles, as at the moment of death the doorkeeper goes to close the entrance that was intended solely for him.

This interpretation shows Vor dem Gesetz to be the story of a man who fails to set foot on the spiritual road intended for him because, although he has come to the right place, his own personality, habitual assumptions, and a stubborn attitude which he fails to question or transcend, separate him from the 'law' at the very entrance. In Jewish terms, separation from the law would mean Man's separation not only from God, but also from his fellow men, and from his true inner self. The isolation of the 'man from the country' from his fellow men is high-lighted in his failure to reach the communal goal; and the mystical associations of the imagery of Vor dem Gesetz, as indicated above, suggest beyond doubt that the protagonist's ultimate failure lies in his exclusion from the universal spiritual mystery concealed in the innermost hall of 'his own castle'. The tragic conclusion of the story may be illuminated by comparison with the later Kabbalah's widely accepted dictum

> that the Torah turns a special face to every single Jew, meant only for him and apprehensible only by him, and that a Jew therefore fulfils his true purpose only when he comes to see this face and is able to incorporate it into the tradition. (Scholem: M.I., p.297)

Vor dem Gesetz could be described as a parable about spiritual misapprehension and a man's failure to attain enlightenment (and the self-knowledge that would be involved in attaining it), despite his being in certain respects in a unique position to do so. This is confirmed by the introduction to the parable in the context of Der Prozess:

> 'In dem Gericht täuschst du dich,' sagte der Geistliche, 'in den einleitenden Schriften zum Gesetz heisst es von dieser Täuschung:...' (Kafka: Der Prozess, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1953, p.255)

'What is the nature of this law?' is evidently the essential but undefined point of the story. Concerning the validity of any interpretation, suffice it therefore to say that the reader is placed, regarding this question, in the same position as the man from the country (and, presumably, as Kafka himself - cf. T.329); and that he may approach it under the same misapprehension. Another point the story makes is that the law is precisely not what one might most readily assume; therefore it provokes the mind to seek a new perspective, and a new awareness of the existential situation depicted.

This law can hardly be interpreted as a civil code which regulates social conduct and defines rights and penalties; there is no evidence in the text to suggest this, and much more, if the Jewish derivation of its fundamental imagery is taken into account, to indicate that this law represents a spiritual goal conceived in Jewish terms. It is a goal which the seeker must approach from within himself and, if separated from it, he must seek the barrier also within himself. If he cannot transcend his own inappropriate mentality, 'ego' or self-righteousness, he must remain 'outside' the law, for he is unable to take even the first step to cross the threshold of 'das Innere'. The doorkeeper, as suggested above, may be an objectification of psychological obstruction originating in the self.

Because of his misapprehension, it seems that the man is prevented from taking the right decision at the entrance to the law. This story is also concerned with the problem of making a certain kind of decision and, in connection with it, with the question of freedom or free will. The decision and the freedom are those involved in committing oneself to a spiritual discipline.

Judaism is emphatic in the belief that a man's commitment to the law and the life of piety which it prescribes is an act of free will: 'Alles liegt in den Händen Gottes, nur die Gottesfurcht nicht', as Max Brod quoted in Heidentum, Judentum, Christentum I, Munich, 1921, p. 86, from the Sayings of the Jewish Fathers. In his article 'Unsere Literaten und die Gemeinschaft' (published in Der Jude in October, 1916) - which Kafka applauded as 'unerschütterlich, wahr, durchsichtig, erkenntnisreich, zart und ausserdem noch blendend' (Br. 248) - Brod expressed the view that a common symptom displayed by culturally and spiritually disorientated Jews of his and Kafka's generation was a psychological inability to take decisions or show resolution on principles that demanded a personal commitment, especially principles associated with Judaism. This problem was one of which Brod's Jewish contemporaries were well aware; the Selbstwehr VIII/18, 8.5.1914, published comments by Buber on the subject. Vor dem Gesetz depicts precisely the condition of a man who fails when confronted with the necessity of taking a decision, making a commitment or acting with conviction in spiritual matters. This interpretation is one which the prison chaplain proposes to Josef K. in Der Prozess, emphasizing in particular the question of the man's freedom:

> Vor allem ist der Freie dem Gebundenen übergeordnet. Nun ist der Mann tatsächlich frei, er kann hingehen, wohin er will, nur der Eingang in das Gesetz ist ihm verboten, und überdies nur von einem einzelnen, vom Türhüter. Wenn er sich auf den Schemel seitwärts vom Tor niedersetzt und dort sein Leben lang bleibt, so geschieht dies freiwillig, die Geschichte erzählt von keinem Zwang. (ibid., p.262)

As the story of a man who fails to take the right decision and misses the opportunity of attaining spiritual enlightenment offered him under the disguise of unexpected circumstances, Vor dem Gesetz has an obvious place under the title of Ein Landarzt, in which it was included three years after it was written. With respect to its relationship to its contemporary and

companion, Ein Traum, Vor dem Gesetz does represent a development from the earlier story in terms of the Jewish element discernible in both. Ein Traum, concerned with the attainment of a certain kind of higher consciousness and self-knowledge, apparently raised the problem of an association in Kafka's mind between art and Judaism, or of a compromise between them. If he was aware of such a compromise, it need come as no surprise that the piece he wrote immediately afterwards was concerned with the question of commitment to Judaism, and self-discovery and spiritual development according to its law, versus the alternative of taking a seat 'seitwärts von der Tür' and accepting the consequences depicted in Vor dem Gesetz.

Eine kaiserliche Botschaft

The third of Kafka's stories to appear in a Rosh ha-Shana issue of the Selbstwehr was Eine kaiserliche Botschaft. Written about March/April 1917, it was published for the Jewish New Year in 1919 (14.9.1919). Although it is part of the text of Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer, Kafka decided that it should stand independently; it was the only part of Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer he published. The present interpretation therefore considers it within the framework of the Landarzt cycle where he placed it, and in the light of its submission to a Jewish readership.

In terms of its imagery Eine kaiserliche Botschaft is obviously related to Vor dem Gesetz and Ein altes Blatt, the two other pieces published in the Selbstwehr for Rosh ha-Shana. It can be compared to the first on the basis of the spatial imagery that expresses the individual's separation from the spiritual source with which he desires contact. The innumerable chambers and courtyards of the imperial palace, through which the imperial messenger can never pass to the intended recipient of his message, are equivalent in this story to the many gates separating the 'Mann vom Lande' from the law in Vor dem Gesetz. It can be compared with Ein altes Blatt in terms of the imagery of a disrupted relationship between subject and emperor. In contrast to the other two stories, however, this combination of imagery in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft does not seem obviously related to the theme of guilt or judgement, despite the fact that a Jewish reader would presumably associate the image of the emperor with the King of the Universe[1].

The significance of Rosh ha-Shana as 'Day of Remembrance' may give more clues to the publication of Eine kaiserliche Botschaft on the occasion of that festival; so may the meaning of the blasts blown upon the ram's horn:

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1. See p. 191, p.192.

the call to spiritual awakening and repentance, and the reminder that God's Kingdom can be realized in the heart, even in this world. Emperor and subject in this story have no direct communications; for this very reason their relationship may be described as one in which remembrance is all the more important. The emperor, remembering his subject on his deathbed, has sent him a message; the individual 'remembers' the message which he can never receive, but which - so 'it is said' - has been despatched to him: 'Du aber sitzt an Deinem Fenster und erträumst sie Dir, wenn der Abend kommt.' From the subject's point of view, his relationship with the emperor is (taking words from Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer) 'hoffnungslos und hoffnungsvoll': hopeless, because the emperor's message can never arrive, hopeful, because there is nevertheless remembrance on both sides; hopeless, because it is said that the emperor is dying, hopeful, because the message nevertheless survives and is eternally on the way, because the idea of it is real, and because the subject who dreams of it at his window at sunset realizes his intended relationship with the emperor, as far as in him lies - within his heart.

Insofar as realization 'within the heart' is important in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, it is connected via the idea of 'Erkenntnis' to the other stories from the Landarzt cycle so far examined. It can be read as an image of the inner self seeking to transcend psychological obstruction and stirring towards spiritual enlightenment, a theme indicated by the image of the window and the subdued imagery of the sun. The spatial imagery can be read, like the equivalent imagery in Vor dem Gesetz, as symbolic of the labyrinth of the inner self, through which the spirit must pass in order to meet, ultimately, 'das Allerheiligste' (H.104f.) which is concealed at its deepest, central point[1].

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1. Re. the idea of the labyrinth, cf. H.50, 117f. and M.28.

The sense of double perspective and opposing directions conveyed by Eine kaiserliche Botschaft can be interpreted as supporting this reading. The dominant perspective in the first part of the story seems to lie in 'outer' space (i.e. outside the self), through chambers, palaces and courtyards which the reader is invited to imagine from the viewpoint of the struggling messenger, as well as from that of the waiting addressee. The dramatic quality of the present-tense narrative here is such that the reader experiences the situation as if simultaneously from two positions: he is induced to identify in imagination with the imperial messenger and to look towards himself, visualizing the infinite partitions and spaces of the imperial palace as the messenger travels endlessly through them; at the same time he is conscious of being 'opposite' the situation that is described, as the 'Du' before whom it unfolds, looking towards the awaited messenger who can never arrive. The last sentence seems to reverse the hitherto dominant 'outer' space, projecting it into the inner, psychological space of the dreaming self[1]. The direction of the messenger approaching the reader yields to the direction of the 'Du's' thoughts as they are projected, in imagination, out towards the inaccessible emperor. The personal address that introduces and concludes the story, the use of the second-person 'Du' (capitalized as if in an actual message) has the effect of transposing the main, third-person narrative part of the story into the reader's consciousness. This is another story in which 'Innen und Aussen gehören zusammen'; and as the story is read, it assumes the quality of a meditation, or of a conversation held with, and within, the reader's self. The infinite palaces and courtyards are no doubt derived from the esoteric hekaloth imagery of the Kabbalah, which apparently inspired Vor dem Gesetz[2].

1. This trick of narrative perspective is curiously parallelled in a statement Kafka allegedly made about perspective in his drawings:
   'Meine Figuren haben keine richtigen räumlichen Proportionen. Sie haben keinen eigenen Horizont. Die Perspektive der Figuren, deren Umriss ich da zu erfassen versuche, liegt vor dem Papier, am anderen, ungespitzten Ende des Bleistiftes - in mir!' (J.58)

2. See p. 98; p.224.

If the story is read as an objectification of inner reality, the obstacles in the messenger's way being interpreted as psychological barriers to the spirit, lying within the self, the rumour that the emperor's message has been sent 'von seinem Sterbebett aus' may be read not as 'objective' fact, but as symbolic of the 'dying' of some spiritual force that also exists within the self. The emperor is referred to as 'die kaiserliche Sonne', the source of light (or enlightenment) from which the self, a tiny shadow, has fled to an infinite distance. The suspicion that the emperor is dead or dying need not be taken literally, but as the sign of a soul which 'walks in darkness', separated from the source of life-giving light. The idea of the emperor's having sent the messenger from his deathbed may symbolize the soul's reluctance to acknowledge the light- and life-giving force within itself; and the impossibility of the emperor's message being delivered may indicate the soul's inaccessibility to the 'word of God' by which man lives. It is within the self that the channels of communication between the transcendent and the human are no longer clear; nevertheless, the self is conscious of an Absolute wishing to communicate, and still apparently desires to enter into a personal relationship with it, despite the inner doubts and obscurities that confound its spiritual vision. Regarding this probable state of spiritual obstruction and confusion, the image of 'die Mitte der Welt, hoch geschüttet voll ihres Bodensatzes' may be read as a symbol of the impurity that is inevitably recognized in the self at a certain level of spiritual self-knowledge[1]. It would, therefore, parallel the images of impurity in Ein Landarzt and Ein altes Blatt.

On this level, Eine kaiserliche Botschaft may be read as rendering the theme of Erkenntnis and spiritual conflict. Thus it would be relevant to the theme of Rosh ha-Shana in showing that the emperor (in Jewish terms, the

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1. cf. T.330.